FROST THOMAS

THE OLD SHOWMEN AND THE OLD LONDON FAIRS

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Frost T.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Popular amusements constitute so important a part of a nation's social history that no excuse need be offered for the production of the present volume. The story of the old London fairs has not been told before, and that of the almost extinct race of the old showmen is so inextricably interwoven with it that the most convenient way of telling either was to tell both. An endeavour has been made, therefore, to relate the rise, progress, and declension of the fairs formerly held in and about the metropolis as comprehensively and as thoroughly as the imperfect records of such institutions render possible; and to weave into the narrative all that is known of the personal history of the entertainers of the people who, from the earliest times to the period when the London fairs became things of the past, have set up shows in West Smithfield, on the greens of Southwark, Stepney, and Camberwell, and in the streets of Greenwich and Deptford. Those who remember the fairs that were the last abolished, even in the days of their decline, will, it is thought, peruse with interest such fragments of the personal history of Gyngell, Scowton, Saunders, Richardson, Wombwell, and other showmen of the last half century of the London fairs, to say nothing of the earlier generations of entertainers, as are brought together in the following pages.

The materials for a work of this kind are not abundant. The notices of the fairs to be found in records of the earlier centuries of their history are slight, and more interesting to the antiquary than to the general reader. Newspapers of the latter half of the seventeenth century, and the first half of the eighteenth, afford only advertisements of the amusements, and of the showmen of the former period we learn only the names. During the latter half of the last century, the showmen seldom advertised in the newspapers, and few of their bills have been preserved. No showman has ever written his memoirs, or kept a journal; and the biographers of actors who have trodden the portable stages of Scowton and Richardson in the early years of their professional career have failed to glean many incidents of their fair experiences. All that can be presented of the personal history of such men as Gyngell, Scowton, Richardson, and Wombwell, has been gathered from the few surviving members of the fraternity of showmen, and from persons who, at different periods, and in various ways, have been brought into association with them. If, therefore, no other merit should be found in the following pages, they will at least have been the means of preserving from oblivion all that is known of an almost extinct class of entertainers of the people.

CHAPTER I

Origin of Fairs – Charter Fairs at Winchester and Chester – Croydon Fairs – Fairs in the Metropolis – Origin of Bartholomew Fair – Disputes between the Priors and the Corporation – The Westminster Fairs – Southwark Fair – Stepney Fair – Ceremonies observed in opening Fairs – Walking the Fair at Wolverhampton – The Key of the Fair at Croydon – Proclamation of Bartholomew Fair.

There can be no doubt that the practice of holding annual fairs for the sale of various descriptions of merchandise is of very great antiquity. The necessity of periodical gatherings at certain places for the interchange of the various products of industry must have been felt as soon as our ancestors became sufficiently advanced in civilisation to desire articles which were not produced in every locality, and for which, owing to the sparseness of the scattered population, there was not a demand in any single town that would furnish the producers with an adequate inducement to limit their business to one place. Most kinds of agricultural produce might be conveyed to the markets held every week in all the towns, and there disposed of; but there were some commodities, such as wool, for example, the entire production of which was confined to one period of the year, while the demand for many descriptions of manufactured goods in any one locality was not sufficient to enable a dealer in them to obtain a livelihood, unless he carried his wares from one town to another. What, therefore, the great fair of Nishnei-Novgorod is at the present day, the annual fairs of the English towns were, on a less extensive scale, during the middle ages.

One of the most ancient, as well as the most important, of the fairs of this country was that held on St. Giles's Hill, near Winchester. It was chartered by William I., who granted the tolls to his cousin, William Walkelyn, Bishop of Winchester. Its duration was originally limited to one day, but William II. extended it to three days, Henry I. to eight, Stephen to fourteen, and Henry II. (according to Milner, or Henry III., as some authorities say) to sixteen. Portions of the tolls were, subsequently to the date of the first charter, assigned to the priory of St. Swithin, the abbey of Hyde, and the hospital of St. Mary Magdalene. On the eve of the festival of St. Giles, on which day the fair commenced, the mayor and bailiffs of Winchester surrendered the keys of the four gates of the city, and with them their privileges, to the officers of the Bishop; and a court called the Pavilion, composed of the Bishop's justiciaries, was invested with authority to try all causes during the fair. The jurisdiction of this court extended seven miles in every direction from St. Giles's Hill, and collectors were placed at all the avenues to the fair to gather the tolls upon the merchandise taken there for sale. All wares offered for sale within this circle, except in the fair, were forfeit to the Bishop; all the shops in the city were closed, and no business was transacted within the prescribed limits, otherwise than in the fair. It is probable, however, that most of the shopkeepers had stalls on the fair ground.

This fair was attended by merchants from all parts of England, and even from France and Flanders. Streets were formed for the sale of different commodities, and distinguished by them, as the drapery, the pottery, the spicery, the stannary, etc. The neighbouring monasteries had also their respective stations, which they held under the Bishop, and sometimes sublet for a term of years. Milner says that the fair began to decline, as a place of resort for merchants, in the reign of Henry VI., the stannary, that is, the street appointed for the sale of the products of the Cornish mines, being unoccupied. From this period its decline seems to have been rapid, owing probably to the commercial development which followed the extinction of feudalism; though it continued to be an annual mart of considerable local importance down to the present century.

The description of this fair will serve, in a great measure, for all the fairs of the middle ages. Some of them were famous marts for certain descriptions of produce, as, for examples, Abingdon and Hemel Hempstead for wool, Newbury and Royston for cheese, Guildford and Maidstone for

hops, Croydon and Kingston summer fairs for cherries; others for manufactured goods of particular kinds, as St. Bartholomew's, in the metropolis, for cloth (hence the local name of Cloth Fair), and Buntingford for hardwares. More usually, the fair was an annual market, to which the farmers of the district took their cattle, and the merchants of the great towns their woollen and linen goods, their hardwares and earthenwares, and the silks, laces, furs, spices, etc., which they imported from the Continent. These, as at Winchester, were arranged in streets of booths, fringed with the stalls of the pedlars and the purveyors of refreshments, for the humbler frequenters of the fair. The farmers, the merchants, and the customers of both, resorted to the more commodious and better-provided tents, in which, as Lydgate wrote of Eastcheap in the fifteenth century,

> "One cried ribs of beef, and many a pie;
> Pewter pots they clattered on a heap;
> There was harp, pipe, and minstrelsy."

Of equal antiquity with the great fair at Winchester were the Chester fairs, held on the festivals of St. John and St. Werburgh, the tolls of which were granted to the abbey of St. Werburgh by Hugh Lupus, second Earl of Chester and nephew of William I. There was a curious provision in this grant, that thieves and other offenders should enjoy immunity from arrest within the city during the three days that the fair lasted. Frequent disputes arose out of this grant between the abbots of St. Werburgh and the mayor and corporation of the city. In the reign of Edward IV., the abbot claimed to have the fair of St. John held before the gates of the abbey, and that no goods should be exposed for sale elsewhere during the fair; while the mayor and corporation contended for the right of the citizens to sell their goods as usual, anywhere within the city. The citizens carried the point in their favour, and the abbot was induced to agree that the houses belonging to the abbey in the neighbourhood of the fair should not be let for the display of goods until those of the citizens were occupied for that purpose. Disputes between the abbey and the city concerning the fair of St. Werburgh continued until 1513, when, by an award of Sir Charles Booth, the abbey was deprived of its interest in that fair.

Croydon Fair dated from 1276, when the interest of Archbishop Kilwardby obtained for the town the right of holding a fair during nine days, beginning on the vigil of St. Botolph, that is, on the 16th of May. In 1314, Archbishop Reynolds obtained for the town a similar grant for a fair on the vigil and morrow of St. Matthew's day; and in 1343, Archbishop Stratford obtained a grant of a fair on the feast of St. John the Baptist. The earliest of these fairs was the first to sink into insignificance; but the others survived to a very recent period in the sheep and cattle fair, held in latter times on the 2nd of October and the two following days, and the cherry fair, held on the 5th of July and the two following days. Whatever may have been the relative importance of these fairs in former times, the former, though held at the least genial season, was, for at least a century before it was discontinued, the most considerable fair in the neighbourhood of the metropolis; while the July fair lost the advantage of being held in the summer, through the contracted limits within which its component parts were pitched. These were the streets between High Street and Surrey Street, and included the latter, formerly called Butcher Row; and the only space large enough for anything of dimensions exceeding those of a stall for the sale of toys or gingerbread, was that at the back of the Corn Market, on which the cattle-market was formerly held.

The first fair established in the metropolis was that which, originally held within the precincts of the priory of St. Bartholomew, soon grew beyond its original limits, and at length came to be held on the spacious area of West Smithfield. The origin of the fair is not related by Maitland, Entick, Northouck, and other historians of the metropolis, who seem to have thought a fair too light a matter for their grave consideration; and more recent writers, who have made it the subject of special research, do not agree in their accounts of it. According to the report made by the city solicitor to the Markets Committee in 1840, "at the earliest periods in which history makes mention of this

subject, there were two fairs, or markets, held on the spot where Bartholomew Fair is now held, or in its immediate vicinity. These two fairs were originally held for two entire days only, the fairs being proclaimed on the eve of St. Bartholomew, and continued during the day of St. Bartholomew and the next morrow; both these fairs, or markets, were instituted for the purposes of trade; one of them was granted to the prior of the Convent of St. Bartholomew, 'and was kept for the clothiers of England, and drapers of London, who had their booths and standings within the churchyard of the priory, closed in with walls and gates, and locked every night, and watched, for the safety of their goods and wares.' The other was granted to the City of London, and consisted of the standing of cattle, and stands and booths for goods, with pickage and stallage, and tolls and profits appertaining to fairs and markets in the field of West Smithfield."

Nearly twenty years after this report was made, and when the fair had ceased to exist, Mr. Henry Morley, searching among the Guildhall archives for information on the subject, found that the fair originated at an earlier date than had hitherto been supposed; and that the original charter was granted by Henry I. in 1133 to Prior Rayer, by whom the monastery of St. Bartholomew was founded. Rayer whose name was Latinised into Raherus, and has been Anglicised by modern writers into Rahere, was originally the King's jester, and a great favourite of his royal master, who, on his becoming an Augustine monk, and, founding the priory of St. Bartholomew, rewarded him with the grant of the rents and tolls arising out of the fair for the benefit of the brotherhood. The prior was so zealous for the good of the monastery that, perhaps also because he retained a hankering after the business of his former profession, he is said to have annually gone into the fair, and exhibited his skill as a juggler, giving the largesses which he received from the spectators to the treasury of the convent.

It was admitted by the report of 1840 that documents in the office of the City solicitor afforded evidence of conflicting opinions on the subject in former times; and it seems probable that the belief in the two charters attributed to Henry II. and the dual character of the fair had its origin in the disputes which arose from time to time, during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, between the civic and monastic authorities as to the right to the tolls payable on goods carried into that portion of the fair which was held in Smithfield, beyond the precincts of the priory. The latter claimed these, on the ground of the grant of the fair; the City claimed them, on the ground that the land belonged to the corporation. The dispute was a natural one, whether Henry II. had granted the Smithfield tolls to the City or not; and there is evidence on record that it arose again and again, until the dissolution of monasteries at the Reformation finally settled it by disposing of one of the parties.

In 1295 a dispute arose between the prior of St. Bartholomew's and Ralph Sandwich, custos of the City, the former maintaining that, as the privileges of the City had become forfeited to the Crown, the tolls of the fair should be paid into the Exchequer. Edward I., who was then at Durham, ordered that the matter should be referred to his treasurer and the barons of the Exchequer; but, while the matter was pending, the disputants grew so warm that the City authorities arrested some of the monks, and confined them in the Tun prison, in Cornhill. They were released by command of the King, but thereupon nine citizens forced the Tun, and released all the other prisoners, by way of resenting the royal interference. The rioters were imprisoned in their turn and a fine of twenty thousand marks was imposed upon the City; but the civic authorities proposed a compromise, and, for a further payment of three thousand marks, Edward consented to pardon the offenders, and to restore and confirm the privileges of the City.

The right of the City to the rents and tolls of the portion of the fair held beyond the precincts of the priory was finally decided in 1445, when the Court of Aldermen appointed four persons as keepers of the fair, and of the Court of Pie-powder, a tribunal instituted for the summary settlement of all disputes arising in the fair, and deriving its name, it is supposed, from *pieds poudres*, because the litigants had their causes tried with the dust of the fair on their feet.

At the dissolution of monasteries, in the reign of Henry VIII., the tolls which had been payable to the priory of St. Bartholomew were sold to Sir John Rich, then Attorney-General; and the right to

hold the fair was held by his descendants until 1830, when it was purchased of Lord Kensington by the Corporation of London, and held thereafter by the City chamberlain and the town clerk in trust, thus vesting the rights and interests in both fairs in the same body.

Westminster Fair, locally termed Magdalen's, was established in 1257, by a charter granted by Henry III. to the abbot and canons of St. Peter's, and was held on Tothill Fields, the site of which is now covered by the Westminster House of Correction and some neighbouring streets.

The three days to which it was originally limited, were extended by Edward III. to thirty-one; but the fair was never so well attended as St. Bartholomew's, and fell into disuse soon afterwards.

There was another fair held in the adjoining parish of St. James, the following amusing notice of which in Machyn's diary is the earliest I have been able to find: —

"The xxv. day of June [1560], Saint James fayer by Westminster was so great that a man could not have a pygg for money; and the bear wiffes had nother meate nor drink before iiij of cloke in the same day. And the chese went very well away for 1*d. q.* the pounde. Besides the great and mighti armie of beggares and bandes that were there." Beyond the fact that it was postponed in 1603 on account of the plague, nothing more is recorded concerning this fair until 1664, in which year it was suppressed, "as considered to tend rather to the advantage of looseness and irregularity than to the substantial promoting of any good, common and beneficial to the people."

Southwark Fair, locally known as Lady Fair, was established in 1462 by a charter granted by Edward IV. to the City of London, in the following terms: —

"We have also granted to the said Mayor, Commonalty, and Citizens, and their successors for ever, that they shall and may have yearly one fair in the town aforesaid, for three days, that is to say, the 7th, 8th, 9th days of September, to be holden, together with a Court of Pie-Powders, and with all the liberties to such fairs appertaining: And that they may have and hold there at their said Courts, before their said Minister or deputy, during the said three days, from day to day, hour to hour, and from time to time, all occasions, plaints, and pleas of a Court of Pie-Powders, together with all summons, attachments, arrests, issues, fines, redemptions, and commodities, and other rights whatsoever, to the said Court of Pie-Powders in any way pertaining, without any impediment, let, or hindrance of Us, our heirs or successors, or other our officers and ministers soever."

This charter has sometimes been referred to as granting to the Corporation the right to hold a fair in West Smithfield, in addition to the fair the tolls of which were received by the priory of St. Bartholomew; but that "the town aforesaid" was Southwark is shown by a previous clause, in which it is stated that "to take away from henceforth and utterly to abolish all and all manner of causes, occasions, and matters whereupon opinions, ambiguities, varieties, controversies, and discussions may arise," the King "granted to the said Mayor and Commonalty of the said City who now be, and their successors, the Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of that City for the time being and for ever, the town of Southwark, with its appurtenances."

The origin of Camberwell Fair is lost in the mist of ages. In the evidence adduced before a petty sessions held at Union Hall in 1823, on the subject of its suppression, it was said that the custom of holding it was mentioned in the 'Domesday Book,' but the statement seems to have been made upon insufficient grounds. It commenced on the 9th of August, and continued three weeks, ending on St. Giles's day; but, in modern times, was limited, like most other fairs, to three days. It seems to have been originally held in the parish churchyard, but this practice was terminated by a clause in the Statute of Winchester, passed in the thirteenth year of the reign of Edward I. It was then removed to the green, where it was held until its suppression. Peckham Fair seems to have been irregular, and merely supplementary to Camberwell Fair.

Stepney Fair was of less ancient date. In 1664 Charles II., at the instance of the Earl of Cleveland, then lord of the manor of Stepney, granted a patent for a weekly market at Ratcliff Cross, and an annual fair on Michaelmas day at Mile End Green, or any other places within the manor of Stepney. The keeping of the market and fair, with all the revenues arising from tolls, etc., was given

by the same grant, at the Earl of Cleveland's request, to Sir William Smith and his heirs for ever. The right continued to vest in the baronet's descendants for several years, but long before the suppression of the fair it passed to the lord of the manor, which, in 1720, was sold by the representatives of Lady Wentworth to John Wicker, Esquire, of Horsham, in Sussex, whose son alienated it in 1754. It is now possessed by the Colebrooke family.

The ceremonies observed in opening fairs evince the importance which attached to them. On the eve of the "great fair" of Wolverhampton, held on the 9th of July, there was a procession of men in armour, preceded by musicians playing what was known as the "fair tune," and followed by the steward of the deanery manor and the peace-officers of the town. The custom is said to have originated with the fair, when Wolverhampton was as famous as a mart of the wool trade as it now is for its ironmongery, and merchants resorted to the fair, which formerly lasted fourteen days, from all parts of England. The necessity of an armed force for the maintenance of order during the fair in those days is not improbable. This custom of "walking the fair," as it was called, was discontinued in 1789, and has not since been revived.

The October fair at Croydon was opened as soon as midnight had sounded by the town clock, or, in earlier times, by that of the parish church; the ceremony consisting in the carrying of a key, called "the key of the fair," through its principal avenues. The booth-keepers were then at liberty to serve refreshments to such customers as might present themselves, generally the idlers who followed the bearer of the key; and long before daylight the field resounded with the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, the barking of dogs, and the shouting of shepherds and drovers.

The metropolitan fair of St. Bartholomew was opened by a proclamation, which used to be read at the gate leading into Cloth Fair by the Lord Mayor's attorney, and repeated after him by a sheriff's officer, in the presence of the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs. The procession then perambulated Smithfield, and returned to the Mansion House, where, in the afternoon, those of his lordship's household dined together at the swordbearer's table, and so concluded the ceremony.

CHAPTER II

Amusements of the Fairs in the Middle Ages – Shows and Showmen of the Sixteenth Century – Banks and his Learned Horse – Bartholomew Fair in the time of Charles I. – Punch and Judy – Office of the Revels – Origin of Hocus Pocus – Suppression of Bartholomew Fair – London Shows during the Protectorate – A Turkish Rope-Dancer – Barbara Vanbeck, the Bearded Woman.

Numerous illuminations of manuscripts in the Harleian collection, many of which were reproduced in Strutt's work on the sports and pastimes of the English people, having established the fact that itinerant professors of the art of amusing were in the habit of tramping from town to town, and village to village, for at least two centuries before the Norman Conquest of this country, there can be no doubt that the fairs were so many foci of attraction for them at the times when they were respectively held. As we are told that the minstrels and glee-men flocked to the towns and villages which grew up under the protection of the baronial castles when the marriage of the lord, or the coming of age of the heir, furnished an occasion of popular revelry, and also when the many red-letter days of the mediæval calendar came round, we may be sure that they were not absent from Bartlemy fair even in its earliest years.

Glee-men was a term which included dancers, posturers, jugglers, tumblers, and exhibitors of trained performing monkeys and quadrupeds; and, the masculine including the feminine in this case, many of these performers were women and girls. The illuminations which have been referred to, and which constitute our chief authority as to the amusements of the fairs during the middle ages, introduce us to female posturers and tumblers, in the act of performing the various feats which have been the stock in trade of the acrobatic profession down to the present day. The jugglers exhibited the same feats with balls and knives as their representatives of the nineteenth century; what is professionally designated "the shower," in which the balls succeed each other rapidly, while describing a semi-circle from right to left, is shown in one of the Harleian illuminations.

Balancing feats were also exhibited, and in one of these curious illustrations of the sights which delighted our fair-going ancestors, the balancing of a cart-wheel is represented – a trick which might have been witnessed not many years ago in the streets of London, the performer being an elderly negro, said to have been the father of the well-known rope-dancer, George Christoff, who represented the Pompeian performer on the *corde elastique*, when Mr. Oxenford's version of *The Last Days of Pompeii* was produced at the Queen's Theatre.

Performing monkeys, bears, and horses appear in many of the mediæval illuminations, and were probably as popular agents of public amusement in the earliest years of Bartlemy fair as they can be shown, from other authorities, to have been in the sixteenth century. That monkeys were imported rather numerously for the amusement of the public, may be inferred from the fact of some Chancellor of the Exchequer of the middle ages having subjected them to an import duty. Their agility was displayed chiefly in vaulting over a chain or cord. Bears were taught to feign death, and to walk erect after their leader, who played some musical instrument. Horses were also taught to walk on their hind legs, and one drawing in the Harleian collection shows a horse in this attitude, engaged in a mimic fight with a man armed with sword and buckler.

All these performances seem to have been continued, by successive generations of performers, down to the time of Elizabeth. Reginald Scot, writing in 1584, gives a lengthy enumeration of the tricks of the jugglers who frequented the fairs of the latter part of the sixteenth century. Among them are most of the common tricks of the present day, and not the least remarkable is the decapitation feat, which many of my readers have probably seen performed by the famous wizards of modern times at the Egyptian Hall. Three hundred years ago, it was called the decollation of St. John the

Baptist, and was performed upon a table, upon which stood a dish to receive the head. The table, the dish, and the knife used in the apparent decapitation were all contrived for the purpose, the table having two holes in it, one to enable the assistant who submitted to the operation to conceal his head, the other, corresponding to a hole in the dish, to receive the head of another confederate, who was concealed beneath the table, in a sitting position; while the knife had a semi-circular opening in the blade to fit the neck. Another knife, of the ordinary kind, was shown to the spectators, who were prevented by a sleight of hand trick from observing the substitution for it of the knife used in the trick. The engraving in Malcolm's work shows the man to be operated upon lying upon the table, apparently headless, while the head of the other assistant appears in the dish.

That *lusus naturæ*, and other natural curiosities, had begun to be exhibited by showmen in the reign of Elizabeth, may be inferred from the allusions to such exhibitions in *The Tempest*, when Caliban is discovered, and the mariners speculate upon his place in the scale of animal being. It seems also that the practice of displaying in front of the shows large pictures of the wonderful feats, or curious natural objects, to be seen within, prevailed in the sixteenth century, and probably long before; for it is distinctly alluded to in a passage in Jonson's play of *The Alchymist*, in which the master of the servant who has filled the house with searchers for the philosopher's stone, says,

> "What should my knave advance
> To draw this company? He hung out no banners
> Of a strange calf with five legs to be seen,
> Or a huge lobster with six claws."

Some further glimpses of the Bartlemy fair shows of the Elizabethan period are afforded in the induction or prologue to another play of Jonson's, namely, the comedy of *Bartholomew Fair*, acted in 1614. "He," says the dramatist, speaking of himself, "has ne'er a sword and buckler-man in his fair; nor a juggler with a well-educated ape to come over the chain for the King of England, and back again for the Prince, and sit still on his haunches for the Pope and the King of Spain." The sword and buckler-man probably means a performer who took part in such a mimic combat of man and horse, as is represented in the illumination which has been referred to. The monkey whose Protestant proclivities are noted in the latter part of the passage is mentioned in a poem of Davenant's, presently to be quoted.

We cannot suppose absent from the metropolitan fairs the celebrated performing horse, Morocco, and his instructor, of whom Sir Walter Raleigh says, "If Banks had lived in older times, he would have shamed all the enchanters in the world; for whosoever was most famous among them could never master or instruct any beast as he did." That Shakspeare witnessed the performances of Morocco, which combined arithmetical calculations with saltatory exercises, is shown by the allusion in *Love's Labour Lost*, when Moth puzzles Armado with arithmetical questions, and says, "The dancing horse will tell you." Sir Kenelm Digby states that the animal "would restore a glove to the due owner after the master had whispered the man's name in his ear; and would tell the just number of pence in any piece of silver coin newly showed him by his master."

Banks quitted England for the Continent with his horse in 1608, and De Melleray, who witnessed the performance of the animal in the Rue St. Jacques, in Paris, says that Morocco could not only tell the number of francs in a crown, but knew that the crown was depreciated at that time, and knew the exact amount of the depreciation. From Paris, Banks travelled with his learned horse to Orleans, where the fame which they had acquired brought him under the imputation of being a sorcerer, and he had a narrow escape of being burned at a stake in that character. Bishop Morton says that he cleared himself by commanding his horse to "seek out one in the press of the people who had a crucifix on his hat; which done, he bade him kneel down unto it, and not this only, but also to rise up again, and to kiss it. 'And now, gentlemen,' (quoth he), 'I think my horse hath acquitted

both me and himself;' and so his adversaries rested satisfied; conceiving (as it might seem) that the devil had no power to come near the cross."

We next hear of Banks and his horse at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, where Bishop Morton saw them, and heard from the former the story of his narrow escape at Orleans. Their further wanderings cannot be traced; and, though it has been inferred, from a passage in a burlesque poem by Jonson, that Banks was burned as a sorcerer, the grounds which the poet had for assigning such a dreadful end for the famous horse-charmer are unknown, and may have been no more than an imperfect recollection of what he had heard of the Orleans story.

A hare which played the tabor is alluded to by Jonson in the comedy before mentioned; and this performance also was not unknown to earlier times, one of the illuminations copied by Strutt showing it to have been exhibited in the fifteenth century. When Jonson wrote his comedy, the amusing classes, encouraged by popular favour, were raising their heads again, after the sore discouragement of the Vagrancy Act of Elizabeth's reign, which scheduled jugglers and minstrels with strolling thieves, gipsy fortune-tellers, and itinerant beggars. Elizabeth's tastes seem to have inclined more to bull-baiting and bear-baiting than to dancing and minstrelsy, juggling and tumbling; and, besides this, there was a broad line drawn in those days, and even down to the reign of George III., as will be hereafter noticed, between the upper ten thousand and the masses, as to the amusements which might or ought to be permitted to the former and denied to the latter.

In the succeeding reign the operation of the Vagrancy Act was powerfully aided by the rise of the Puritans, who regarded all amusements as worldly vanities and snares of the Evil One, and indulgence in them as a coquetting with sin. As yet they lacked the power to suppress the fairs and close the theatres, though their will was good to whip and imprison all such inciters to sin and agents of Satan as they conceived minstrels, actors, and showmen to be; and Bartholomew Fair showed no diminution of popular patronage even in the reign of Charles I.

"Hither," says the author of a scarce pamphlet, printed in 1641, "resort people of all sorts and conditions. Christchurch cloisters are now hung full of pictures. It is remarkable, and worth your observation, to behold and hear the strange sights and confused sounds in the fair. Here, a knave in a fool's coat, with a trumpet sounding, or on a drum beating, invites you to see his puppets. There, a rogue like a wild woodman, or in an antic shape like an incubus, desires your company to view his motion; on the other side, hocus pocus, with three yards of tape or ribbon in his hand, showing his art of legerdemain, to the admiration and astonishment of a company of cockoloaches. Amongst these, you shall see a gray goosecap (as wise as the rest), with a 'What do ye lack?' in his mouth, stand in his booth shaking a rattle, or scraping on a fiddle, with which children are so taken, that they presently cry out for these fopperies: and all these together make such a distracted noise, that you would think Babel were not comparable to it.

"Here there are also your gamesters in action: some turning of a whimsey, others throwing for pewter, who can quickly dissolve a round shilling into a three-halfpenny saucer. Long Lane at this time looks very fair, and puts out her best clothes, with the wrong side outward, so turned for their better turning off; and Cloth Fair is now in great request: well fare the ale-houses therein, yet better may a man fare (but at a dearer rate) in the pig-market, alias pasty-nook, or pie-corner, where pigs are all hours of the day on the stalls, piping hot, and would cry, (if they could speak,) 'Come, eat me!'"

The puppets and "motions" alluded to in the foregoing description were beginning to be a very favourite spectacle, and none of the puppet plays of the period were more popular than the serio-comic drama of *Punch and Judy*, attributed to Silvio Florillo, an Italian comic dramatist of the time. According to the original version of the story, which has undergone various changes, some of which have been made within the memory of the existing generation, Punch, in a paroxysm of jealousy, destroys his infant child, upon which Judy, in revenge, belabours him with a cudgel. The exasperated hunchback seizes another stick, beats his wife to death, and throws from the window the two corpses, which attracts the notice of a constable, who enters the house to arrest the murderer. Punch flies, but

is arrested by an officer of the Inquisition, and lodged in prison; but contrives to escape by bribing the gaoler. His subsequent encounters with a dog, a doctor, a skeleton, and a demon are said to be an allegory, intended to convey the triumph of humanity over ennui, disease, death, and the devil; but, as there is nothing allegorical in the former portion of the story, this seems doubtful.

The allegory was soon lost sight of, if it was ever intended, and the latter part of the story has long been that which excites the most risibility. As usually represented in this country during the last fifty years, and probably for a much longer period, Punch does not bribe the gaoler, but evades execution for his crimes by strangling the hangman with his own noose. Who has not observed the delight, venting itself in screams of laughter, with which young and old witness the comical little wretch's fight with the constable, the wicked leer with which he induces the hangman to put his neck in the noose by way of instruction, and the impish chuckling in which he indulges while strangling his last victim? The crowd laughs at all this in the same spirit as the audience at a theatre applauds furiously while a policeman is bonneted and otherwise maltreated in a pantomime or burlesque. The tightness of the matrimonial noose, it is to be feared, materially influences the feeling with which the murder of a faithless wife is regarded by those whose poverty shuts out the prospect of divorce. And Punch is such a droll, diverting vagabond, that even those who have witnessed his crimes are irresistibly seduced into laughter by his grotesque antics and his cynical bursts of merriment, which render him such a strange combination of the demon and the buffoon.

The earliest notices of the representation in London of 'Punch's Moral Drama,' as an old comic song calls it, occur in the overseer's books of St. Martin's in the Fields for 1666 and 1667, in which are four entries of sums, ranging from twenty-two shillings and sixpence to fifty-two shillings and sixpence, as "Rec. of Punchinello, ye Italian popet player, for his booth at Charing Cross."

Hocus pocus, used in the Bartholomew Fair pamphlet as a generic term for conjurors, is derived from the assumed name of one of the craft, of whom Ady, in 'A Candle in the Dark,' wrote as follows: —

"I will speak of one man more excelling in that craft than others, that went about in King James's time, and long since, who called himself the King's Majestie's most excellent Hocus Pocus; and so was he called because at playing every trick he used to say, *Hocus pocus tontus talontus, vade celeriter jubeo*– a dark composition of words to blind the eyes of the beholders."

All these professors of the various arts of popular entertainment had, at this period, to pay an annual licence duty to the Master of the Revels, whose office was created by Henry VIII. in 1546. Its jurisdiction extended over all wandering minstrels and every one who blew a trumpet publicly, except "the King's players." The seal of the office, used under five sovereigns, was engraved on wood, and was formerly in the possession of the late Francis Douce, by whose permission it was engraved for Chalmers's 'Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare MSS.,' and subsequently for Smith's 'Ancient Topography of London.' The legend round it was, "SIGILL: OFFIC: JOCOR: MASCAR: ET REVELL: DNIS REG." The Long Parliament abolished the office, which, indeed, would have been a sinecure under the Puritan rule, for in 1647 the entertainers of the people were forbidden to exercise their vocation, the theatres were closed, the May-poles removed, and the fairs shorn of all their wonted amusements, and reduced to the status of annual markets.

There is, in the library of the British Museum, a doggrel ballad, printed as a broad-sheet, called *The Dagonizing of Bartholomew Fair*, which describes, with coarse humour, the grossness of which may be attributed in part to the mingled resentment and contempt which underlies it, the measures taken by the civic authorities for the removal from the fair of the showmen who had pitched there, in spite of the determination of the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen, to suppress with the utmost rigour everything which could move to laughter or minister to wonder. Among these are mentioned a fire-eating conjuror, a "Jack Pudding," and "wonders made of wax," being the earliest notice of a wax-work exhibition which I have been able to discover.

Whether the itinerant traders who were wont to set up their stalls in the fairs of Smithfield, and Westminster, and Southwark, found it worth their while to do so during the thirteen years of the banishment of shows, there is nothing to show; but we are not without evidence that the showmen were able to follow their vocation without the fairs. Evelyn, who was a lover of strange sights, records in his diary that, in 1654, – "I saw a tame lion play familiarly with a lamb; he was a huge beast, and I thrust my hand into his mouth, and found his tongue rough, like a cat's; also a sheep with six legs, which made use of five of them to walk; and a goose that had four legs, two crops, and as many vents."

Three years later, two other entries are made, concerning shows which he witnessed. First we have, "June 18th. At Greenwich I saw a sort of cat, brought from the East Indies, shaped and snouted much like the Egyptian racoon, in the body like a monkey, and so footed; the ears and tail like a cat, only the tail much longer, and the skin variously ringed with black and white; with the tail it wound up its body like a serpent, and so got up into trees, and with it wrap its whole body round. Its hair was woolly like a lamb; it was exceedingly nimble, gentle, and purred as does the cat." This animal was probably a monkey of the species called by Cuvier, the toque; it is a native of the western regions of India, and one of the most amusing, as well as the most common, of the simial tenants of modern menageries.

"August 15th. Going to London with some company, we stept in to see a famous rope-dancer, called *The Turk*. I saw even to astonishment the agility with which he performed; he walked barefooted, taking hold by his toes only of a rope almost perpendicular, and without so much as touching it with his hands; he danced blindfold on the high rope, and with a boy of twelve years old tied to one of his feet about twenty feet beneath him, dangling as he danced, yet he moved as nimbly as if it had been but a feather. Lastly he stood on his head, on the top of a very high mast, danced on a small rope that was very slack, and finally flew down the perpendicular on his breast, his head foremost, his legs and arms extended, with divers other activities.

"I saw the hairy woman, twenty years old, whom I had before seen when a child. She was born at Augsburg, in Germany. Her very eyebrows were combed upwards, and all her forehead as thick and even as grows on any woman's head, neatly dressed; a very long lock of hair out of each ear; she had also a most prolix beard, and moustachios, with long locks growing on the middle of her nose, like an Iceland dog exactly, the colour of a bright brown, fine as well-dressed flax. She was now married, and told me she had one child that was not hairy, nor were any of her parents or relations. She was very well shaped, and played well on the harpsichord."

This extraordinary creature must have been more than twenty years of age when Evelyn saw her, for the engraved portrait described by Granger bears the following inscription: – "Barbara Vanbeck, wife to Michael Vanbeck, born at Augsburg, in High Germany; daughter of Balthasar and Anne Ursler. Aged 29. A.D. 1651. R. Gaywood f. London."

Another engraved portrait, in the collection of the Earl of Bute, represents her playing the harpsichord, and has a Dutch inscription, with the words – "Isaac Brunn delin. et sc. 1653." One of Gaywood's prints, which, in Granger's time, was in the possession of Fredericks, the bookseller, at Bath, had the following memorandum written under the inscription: – "This woman I saw in Ratcliffe Highway in 1668, and was satisfied she was a woman. John Bulfinch." Granger describes her from the portraits, as follows: – "The face and hands of this woman are represented hairy all over. Her aspect resembles that of a monkey. She has a very long and large spreading beard, the hair of which hangs loose and flowing like the hair of the head. She is playing on the organ. Vanbeck married this frightful creature on purpose to carry her about for a show."

CHAPTER III

Strolling Players in the Seventeenth Century – Southwark Fair – Bartholomew Fair – Pepys and the Monkeys – Polichinello – Jacob Hall, the Rope-Dancer – Another Bearded Woman – Richardson, the Fire-Eater – The Cheshire Dwarf – Killigrew and the Strollers – Fair on the Thames – The Irish Giant – A Dutch Rope-Dancer – Music Booths – Joseph Clark, the Posturer – William Philips, the Zany – William Stokes, the Vaulter – A Show in Threadneedle Street.

The period of the Protectorate was one of suffering and depression for the entertaining classes, who were driven into obscure taverns and back streets by the severity with which the anti-recreation edicts of the Long Parliament were enforced, and even then were in constant danger of Bridewell and the whipping-post. Performances took place occasionally at the Red Bull theatre, in St. John Street, West Smithfield, when the actors were able to bribe the subordinate officials at Whitehall to connive at the infraction of the law; but sometimes the fact became known to some higher authority who had not been bribed, or whose connivance could not be procured, and then the performance was interrupted by a party of soldiers, and the actors marched off to Bridewell, where they might esteem themselves fortunate if they escaped a whipping as well as a month's imprisonment as idle vagabonds.

Unable to exercise their vocation in London, the actors travelled into the country, and gave dramatic performances in barns and at fairs, in places where the rigour of the law was diminished, or the edicts rendered of no avail, by the magistrates' want of sympathy with the pleasure-abolishing mania, and the readiness of the majority of the inhabitants to assist at violations of the Acts. In one of his wanderings about the country, Cox, the comedian, shod a horse with so much dexterity, in the drama that was being represented, that the village blacksmith offered him employment in his forge at a rate of remuneration exceeding by a shilling a week the ordinary wages of the craft. The story is a good illustration of the realistic tendencies of the theatre two hundred years ago, especially as the practice which then prevailed of apprenticeship to the stage renders it improbable that Cox had ever learned the art of shoeing a horse with a view to practising it as a craftsman.

The provincial perambulations of actors did not, however, owe their beginning to the edicts of the Long Parliament, there being evidence that companies of strolling players existed contemporaneously with the theatres in which Burbage played Richard III. and Shakespeare the Ghost in *Hamlet*. In a prologue which was written for some London apprentices when they played *The Hog hath lost his Pearl* in 1614, their want of skill in acting and elocution is honestly admitted in the following lines —

"We are not half so skilled as strolling players,
Who could not please here as at country fairs."

In the household book of the Clifford family, quoted by Dr. Whitaker in his 'History of Craven,' there is an entry in 1633 of the payment of one pound to "certain itinerant players," who seem to have given a private representation, for which they were thus munificently remunerated; and two years later, an entry occurs of the payment of the same amount to "a certain company of roguish players who represented *A New Way to pay Old Debts*," the adjective being used, probably to distinguish this company, as being unlicensed or unrecognized, from the strolling players who had permission to call themselves by the name of some nobleman, and to wear his livery. The Earl of Leicester maintained such a company, and several other nobles of that period did the same, the actors being known as my Lord Leicester's company, or as the case might be, and being allowed to perform elsewhere when their services were not required by their patron.

The depressed condition of actors at this period is amusingly illustrated by the story of Griffin and Goodman occupying the same chamber, and having but one decent shirt between them, which they wore in turn, – a destitution of linen surpassed only by that which is said to have characterised the ragged regiment of Sir John Falstaff, who had only half a shirt among them all. The single shirt of the two actors was the occasion of a quarrel and a separation between them, one of the twain having worn it out of his turn, under the temptation of an assignation with a lady. What became of the shirt upon the separation of their respective interests in it, we are not told.

The restoration of monarchy and the Stuarts was followed immediately by the re-opening of the theatres and the resumption of the old popular amusements at fairs. Actors held up their heads again; the showmen hung out their pictured cloths in Smithfield and on the Bowling Green in Southwark; the fiddlers and the ballad-singers re-appeared in the streets and in houses of public entertainment. Charles II. entered London, amidst the jubilations of the multitude, on the 29th of May, 1660; and on the 13th of September following, Evelyn wrote in his diary as follows: —

"I saw in Southwark, at St. Margaret's Fair, monkeys and apes dance, and do other feats of activity, on the high rope; they were gallantly clad *à la monde*, went upright, saluted the company, bowing and pulling off their hats; they saluted one another with as good a grace as if instructed by a dancing master; they turned heels over head with a basket having eggs in it, without breaking any; also, with lighted candles in their hands, and on their heads, without extinguishing them, and with vessels of water without spilling a drop. I also saw an Italian wench dance and perform all the tricks on the high rope to admiration; all the Court went to see her. Likewise, here was a man who took up a piece of iron cannon of about 400 lb. weight with the hair of his head only."

Evelyn and Pepys have left no record of the presence of shows at Bartholomew Fair in the first year of the Restoration, nor does the collection of Bartholomew Fair *notabilia* in the library of the British Museum furnish any indication of them; but Pepys tells us that on the 31st of August, in the following year, he went "to Bartholomew Fair, and there met with my Ladies Jemima and Paulina, with Mr. Pickering and Mademoiselle, at seeing the monkeys dance, which was much to see, when they could be brought to do it, but it troubled me to sit among such nasty company." Few years seem to have passed without a visit to Bartholomew Fair on the part of the gossiping old diarist. In 1663 he writes, under date the 7th of September, "To Bartholomew Fair, where I met Mr. Pickering, and he and I went to see the monkeys at the Dutch house, which is far beyond the other that my wife and I saw the other day; and thence to see the dancing on the ropes, which was very poor and tedious."

In the following year two visits to this fair are recorded in Pepys' diary, as follows: —

"Sept. 2. To Bartholomew Fair, and our boy with us, and there showed him the dancing on ropes, and several others the best shows." "Sept. 7. With Creed walked to Bartholomew Fair, – this being the last day, and there I saw the best dancing on ropes that I think I ever saw in my life." In the two following years the fairs and other amusements of London were interrupted by the plague, to the serious loss and detriment of the entertaining classes. Punch and other puppets were the only amusements of 1665 and 1666; and Pepys records that, on the 22nd of August in the latter year – the year of the great fire, – he and his wife went in a coach to Moorfields, "and there saw Polichinello, which pleases me mightily."

In 1667 the fear of the plague had passed away, and the public again patronised the theatres and other places of amusement. "To Polichinello," writes Pepys on the 8th of April, "and there had three times more sport than at the play, and so home." To compensate himself for having missed Bartholomew Fair two years running on account of the plague, he now went three times. "Went twice round Bartholomew Fair," he writes in his diary on the 28th of August, "which I was glad to see again, after two years missing it by the plague." "30th. To Bartholomew Fair, to walk up and down, and there, among other things, found my Lady Castlemaine at a puppet-play, *Patient Grizill*, and the street full of people expecting her coming out." "Sept. 4. With my wife and Mr. Hewer to Bartholomew Fair, and there saw Polichinello."

The fair probably offered better and more various amusements every year, for Pepys records five visits in 1668, when we first hear of the celebrated rope-dancer, Jacob Hall. “August 27. With my wife and W. Batelier and Deb.; carried them to Bartholomew Fair, where we saw the dancing of the ropes, and nothing else, it being late.” “29. Met my wife in a coach, and took her and Mercer [her maid] and Deb. to Bartholomew Fair; and there did see a ridiculous obscene little stage-play called *Marry Andrey* [Merry Andrew], a foolish thing, but seen by everybody: and so to Jacob Hall’s dancing of the ropes, a thing worth seeing, and mightily followed.” “Sept. 1. To Bartholomew Fair, and there saw several sights; among others, the mare that tells money and many things to admiration, and among others come to me, when she was bid to go to him of the company that most loved to kiss a pretty wench in a corner. And this did cost me 12*d.* to the horse, which I had flung him before, and did give me occasion to kiss a mighty *belle fille*, that was exceeding plain, but *fort belle*.” “4. At noon my wife, and Deb. and Mercer, and W. Hewer and I, to the fair, and there at the old house, did eat a pig, and was pretty merry, but saw no sights, my wife having a mind to see the play of *Bartholomew Fair* with puppets.” “7. With my Lord Brouncker (who was this day in unusual manner merry, I believe with drink,) Minnes, and W. Pen to Bartholomew Fair; and there saw the dancing mare again, which to-day I found to act much worse than the other day, she forgetting many things, which her master beat her for, and was mightily vexed; and then the dancing of the ropes, and also a little stage play, which was very ridiculous.”

Perhaps a better illustration of the difference between the manners and amusements of the seventeenth century and those of the nineteenth could not be found than that which is afforded by the contrast between the picture drawn by Pepys and the fancy sketch which the reader may draw for himself by giving the figures introduced the names of persons now living. Let the scene be Greenwich Fair, as we all remember it, and the incidents the Secretary to the Admiralty, accompanied by his wife and her maid, going there in his carriage; stopping on the way to witness the vagaries of Punch; meeting the Mistress of the Robes at a marionette performance in a tent; and afterwards, as we shall presently find Pepys doing, drinking in a public-house with a rope-dancer, reputed to be the paramour of a lady of rank, whom our supposed secretary may have met the evening before at Buckingham Palace.

Pepys relates that he went, in the same year, “to Southwark Fair, very dirty, and there saw the puppet-show of Whittington, which was pretty to see; and how that idle thing do work upon people that see it, and even myself too! And thence to Jacob Hall’s dancing of the ropes, where I saw such action as I never saw before, and mightily worth seeing; and here took acquaintance with a fellow that carried me to a tavern, whither come the music of this booth, and bye and bye Jacob Hall himself, with whom I had a mind to speak, to hear whether he had ever any mischief by falls in his time. He told me, ‘Yes, many, but never to the breaking of a limb;’ he seems a mighty strong man. So giving them a bottle or two of wine, I away with Payne, the waterman. He, seeking me at the play, did get a link to light me, and so light me to the Bear, where Bland, my waterman, waited for me with gold and other things he kept for me, to the value of £40 and more, which I had about me, for fear of my pockets being cut. So by link-light through the bridge, it being mighty dark, but still weather, and so home.” Jacob Hall was as famous for his handsome face and symmetrical form as for his skill and grace on the rope. He is said to have shared with Harte, the actor, the favours of Nell Gwynne, and afterwards to have been a pensioned favourite of the profligate Countess of Castlemaine. His portrait in Grammont’s ‘Memoirs’ was engraved from an unnamed picture by Van Oost, first said to represent the famous rope-dancer by Ames, in 1748.

A passage in one of Davenant’s poems affords some information concerning the character of the shows which formed the attraction of the fairs at this period,

> “Now vaulter good, and dancing lass
> On rope, and man that cries, Hey, pass!

And tumbler young that needs but stoop,
Lay head to heel, to creep through hoop;
And man in chimney hid to dress
Puppet that acts our old Queen Bess,
And man that, while the puppets play,
Through nose expoundeth what they say;
And white oat-eater that does dwell
In stable small at sign of Bell,
That lifts up hoof to show the pranks
Taught by magician styled Banks;
And ape led captive still in chain
Till he renounce the Pope and Spain;
All these on hoof now trudge from town,
To cheat poor turnip-eating clown."

The preceding chapter will have rendered the allusions intelligible to the reader of the present day.

Among the shows of this period was another bearded woman, whom Pepys saw in Holborn, towards the end of 1668. "She is a little plain woman," he writes, "a Dane; her name, Ursula Dyan; about forty years old; her voice like a little girl's; with a beard as much as any man I ever saw, black almost, and grizzly; it began to grow at about seven years old, and was shaved not above seven months ago, and is now so big as any man's almost that I ever saw; I say, bushy and thick. It was a strange sight to me, I confess, and what pleased me mightily." There was a female giant, too, of whom Evelyn says, under date the 13th of February, 1669, "I went to see a tall gigantic woman, who measured six feet ten inches at twenty-one years old, born in the Low Countries."

Salamandering feats are not so pleasant to witness as the performances of the acrobat and the gymnast, but they create wonder, and, probably, were wondered at more two hundred years ago than at the present time, when the scientific principles on which their success depends are better understood. The earliest performer of the feats which made Girardelli and Chabert famous half a century ago seems to have been Richardson, of whom the following account is given by Evelyn, who witnessed his performance in 1672: —

"I took leave of my Lady Sunderland, who was going to Paris to my lord, now ambassador there. She made me stay dinner at Leicester House, and afterwards sent for Richardson, the famous fire-eater. He devoured brimstone on glowing coals before us, chewing and swallowing them; he melted a beer-glass and eat it quite up; then, taking a live coal on his tongue, he put on it a raw oyster, the coal was blown on with bellows till it flamed and sparkled in his mouth, and so remained till the oyster gaped and was quite boiled. Then he melted pitch and wax with sulphur, which he drank down as it flamed; I saw it flaming in his mouth, a good while; he also took up a thick piece of iron, such as laundresses use to put in their smoothing-boxes, when it was fiery hot, held it between his teeth, then in his hands and threw it about like a stone; but this I observed he cared not to do very long; then he stood on a small pot, and, bending his body, took a glowing iron with his mouth from between his feet without touching the pot or ground with his hands; with divers other prodigious feats."

There are few notices of the London fairs in contemporary memoirs and journals, and as few advertisements of showmen have been preserved by collectors of such literary curiosities, between the last visit to Southwark Fair recorded by Pepys and the period of the Revolution. The public mind was agitated during this time by plots and rumours of plots, by State trials and Tower Hill executions, which alternately excited men to rage and chilled them with horror. Giants and dwarfs, and monstrosities of all kinds, seem to have been more run after, under the influence of these events,

than puppets and players. Take the following as an example, an announcement which was printed in 1677: —

"At Mr. Croomes, at the signe of the Shoe and Slap neer the Hospital-gate, in West Smithfield, is to be seen *The Wonder of Nature*, viz., A girl about sixteen years of age, born in Cheshire, and not much above eighteen inches long, having shed the teeth seven several times, and not a perfect bone in any part of her, onely the head, yet she hath all her senses to admiration, and discourses, reads very well, sings, whistles, and all very pleasant to hear. God save the King!"

The office of Master of the Revels, which had been held by Thomas Killigrew, the Court jester, was conferred, at his death, upon his son, who leased the licensing of ballad-singers to a bookseller named Clarke, as appears from the following announcement, which was inserted in the *London Gazette* in 1682: —

"Whereas Mr. John Clarke, of London, bookseller, did rent of Charles Killigrew, Esq., the licensing of all ballad-singers for five years; which time is expired at Lady Day next. These are, therefore, to give notice to all ballad-singers, that take out licenses at the office of the revels, at Whitehall, for singing and selling of ballads and small books, according to an ancient custom. And all persons concerned are hereby desired to take notice of, and to suppress, all mountebanks, rope-dancers, prize-players, ballad-singers, and such as make show of motions and strange sights, that have not a license in red and black letters, under the hand and seal of the said Charles Killigrew, Esq., Master of the Revels to his Majesty."

The only entertainment of which I have found an announcement for this year is the following: – "At Mr. Saffry's, a Dutch-woman's Booth, over against the Greyhound Inn, in West Smithfield, during the time of the fair, will be acted the incomparable Entertainment call'd The Irish Evidence, with the Humours of Teige. With a Variety of Dances. By the first Newmarket Company." Further glimpses of the fair are afforded, however, by the offer of a reward for "the three horses stolen by James Rudderford, a mountebank, and Jeremiah March, his clown;" and the announcement that, "The German Woman that danc'd where the Italian Tumbler kept his Booth, being over against the Swan Tavern, by Hosier Lane end in Bartholomew Fair, is run away from her Mistress, the Fifth of this instant; She is of a Brownish complexion, with Brown Hair, and between 17 and 18 years of Age; if any person whatsoever can bring Tidings to one Mr. Hone's, at the Duke of Albemarle's Head, at the end of Duck Lane, so that her Mistress may have her again, they shall be rewarded to their own content."

In the winter of 1683-4, an addition was temporarily made to the London fairs by the opportunity which the freezing of the Thames afforded for holding a fair on the ice. The river became frozen on the 23rd of December, and on the first day of 1684 the ice was so thick between the bridges that long rows of booths were erected for the sale of refreshments to the thousands of persons who congregated upon it. Evelyn, who visited the strange scene more than once, saw "people and tents selling all sort of wares, as in the City." The frost becoming more intense when it had endured a month, the sports of horse-racing and bull-baiting were presented on the ice; and sledges and skaters were seen gliding swiftly in every direction, with, as Evelyn relates, "puppet-plays and interludes, tippling, and other lewd places." The ice was so thick that the booths and stalls remained even when thaw had commenced, but the water soon rendered it disagreeable to walk upon, and long cracks warned the purveyors of recreation and refection to retreat to the land. The fair ended on the 5th of February.

It was during the continuance of this seventeenth century Frost Fair that Evelyn saw a human salamander, when he dined at Sir Stephen Fox's, and "after dinner came a fellow who eat live charcoal, glowingly ignited, quenching them in his mouth, and then champing and swallowing them down. There was a dog also which seemed to do many rational actions." The last sentence is rather obscure; the writer probably intended to convey that the animal performed many actions which seemed rational.

During the Southwark Fair of the following year, there was a giant exhibited at the Catherine Wheel Inn, a famous hostelry down to our own time. Printers had not yet corrected the irregular spelling of the preceding century, as appears from the following announcement: – "The Gyant, or the Miracle of Nature, being that so much admired young man, aged nineteen years last June, 1684. Born in Ireland, of such a prodigious height and bigness, and every way proportionable, the like hath not been seen since the memory of man. He hath been several times shown at Court, and his Majesty was pleased to walk under his arm, and he is grown very much since; he now reaches ten foot and a half, fathomes near eight foot, spans fifteen inches; And is believed to be as big as one of the Gyants in Guild-Hall. He is to be seen at the Sign of the Catherine Wheel in Southwark Fair. *Vivat Rex.*"

There was probably also to be seen at this fair the Dutch woman of whom an author quoted by Strutt says that, "when she first danced and vaulted on the rope in London, the spectators beheld her with pleasure mixed with pain, as she seemed every moment in danger of breaking her neck." About this time, there was introduced at the London fairs, an entertainment resembling that now given in the music-halls, in which vocal and instrumental music was alternated with rope-dancing and tumbling. The shows in which these performances were given were called music-booths, though the musical element was far from predominating. The musical portion of the entertainment was not of the highest order, if we may trust the judgment of Ward, the author of the *London Spy*, who says that he "had rather have heard an old barber ring Whittington's bells upon the cittern than all the music these houses afforded."

Such dramatic performances as were given in the booths at this time seem to have been, in a great measure, confined to the puppet-plays so often mentioned in the memoirs and diaries of the period. Granger mentions one Philips, who, in the reign of James II., "was some time fiddler to a puppet-show; in which capacity, he held many a dialogue with Punch, in much the same strain as he did afterwards with the mountebank doctor, his master, upon the stage. This Zany, being regularly educated, had the advantage of his brethren." Besides the serio-comic drama of Punch and Judy, many popular stories were represented by the puppets of those days, which set forth the fortunes of Dick Whittington and the sorrows of Griselda, the vagaries of Merry Andrew and the humours of Bartholomew Fair, as delineated by the pen of Ben Jonson. It is a noteworthy circumstance, as showing the estimation in which the Smithfield Fair was held by the upper and middle classes at this period, and for more than half a century afterwards, that the summer season of the patent theatres, which closed at that time, always concluded with a representation of Jonson's now forgotten comedy.

A slight general view of Bartholomew Fair in 1685, with some equally slight and curious moralising on the subject, is presented by Sir Robert Southwell, in a letter addressed to his son, the Honourable Edward Southwell, who was then in London with his tutor, Mr. Webster.

"I think it not now," says Sir Robert, "so proper to quote you verses out of Persius, or to talk of Cæsar and Euclid, as to consider the great theatre of Bartholomew Fair, where I doubt not but you often resort, and 'twere not amiss if you cou'd convert that tumult into a profitable book. You wou'd certainly see the garboil there to more advantage if Mr. Webster and you wou'd read, or cou'd see acted, the play of Ben Jonson, call'd Bartholomew Fair: for then afterwards going to the spot, you wou'd note if things and humours were the same to day, as they were fifty years ago, and take pattern of the observations which a man of sense may raise out of matters that seem even ridiculous. Take then with you the impressions of that play, and in addition thereunto, I shou'd think it not amiss if you then got up into some high window, in order to survey the whole pit at once. I fancy then you will say, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*, and then you wou'd note into how many various shapes human nature throws itself, in order to buy cheap and sell dear, for all is but traffick and commerce, some to give, some to take, and all is by exchange, to make the entertainment complete.

"The main importance of this fair is not so much for merchandize, and the supplying what people really want; but as a sort of Bacchanalia, to gratifie the multitude in their wandering and irregular thoughts. Here you see the rope-dancers gett their living meerly by hazarding of their lives,

and why men will pay money and take pleasure to see such dangers, is of seperate and philosophical consideration. You have others who are acting fools, drunkards, and madmen, but for the same wages which they might get by honest labour, and live with credit besides.

"Others, if born in any monstrous shape, or have children that are such, here they celebrate their misery, and by getting of money, forget how odious they are made. When you see the toy-shops, and the strange variety of things, much more impertinent than hobby-horses or gloves of gingerbread, you must know there are customers for all these matters, and it wou'd be a pleasing sight cou'd we see painted a true figure of all these impertinent minds and their fantastick passions, who come trudging hither, only for such things. 'Tis out of this credulous crowd that the ballad-singers attrackt an assembly, who listen and admire, while their confederate pickpockets are diving and fishing for their prey.

"'Tis from those of this number who are more refined, that the mountebank obtains audience and credit, and it were a good bargain if such customers had nothing for their money but words, but they are best content to pay for druggs, and medicines, which commonly doe them hurt. There is one corner of this Elizium field devoted to the eating of pig, and the surfeits that attend it. The fruits of the season are everywhere scatter'd about, and those who eat imprudently do but hasten to the physitian or the churchyard."

In 1697, William Philips, the zany or Jack Pudding mentioned by Granger, was arrested and publicly whipped for perpetrating, in Bartholomew Fair, a jest on the repressive tendencies of the Government, which has been preserved by Prior in a poem. It seems that he made his appearance on the exterior platform of the show at which he was engaged, with a tongue in his left hand and a black pudding in his right. Professing to have learned an important secret, by which he hoped to profit, he communicated it to the mountebank, as related by Prior, as follows: —

"Be of your patron's mind whate'er he says;
Sleep very much, think little, and talk less:
Mind neither good nor bad, nor right nor wrong;
But eat your pudding, slave, and hold your tongue."

Mr. Morley conjectures that this Philips was the W. Phillips who wrote the tragedy of the *Revengeful Queen*, published in 1698, and who was supposed to be the author of another, *Alcamenes and Menelippa*, and of a farce called *Britons, Strike Home*, which was acted in a booth in Bartholomew Fair. But worth more than all these plays would now be, if it could be discovered, the book published in 1688, of which, only the title-page is preserved in the Harleian collection, viz., 'The Comical History of the famous Merry Andrew, W. Phill., Giving an Account of his Pleasant Humours, Various Adventures, Cheats, Frolicks, and Cunning Designs, both in City and Country.'

The circus was an entertainment as yet unknown. The only equestrian performances were of the kind given by Banks, and repeated, as we learn from Davenant and Pepys, by performers who came after him, of whom there was a regular succession down to the time of Philip Astley. The first entertainer who introduced horses into vaulting acts seems to have been William Stokes, a famous vaulter of the reigns of the latter Stuarts. He was the author of a manual of the art of vaulting, which was published at Oxford in 1652, and contains several engravings, showing him in the act of vaulting over a horse, over two horses, and leaping upon them, in one alighting in the saddle, and in another upon the bare back of the horse, *à la Bradbury*.

Another of the great show characters of this period was Joseph Clark, the posturer, who according to a notice of him in the Transactions of the Royal Philosophical Society, "had such an absolute command of all his muscles and joints that he could disjoint almost his whole body." His performance seems to have consisted chiefly in the imitation of every kind of human deformity; and he is said to have imposed so completely upon Molins, a famous surgeon of that period, as to be

dismissed by him as an incurable cripple. His portrait in Tempest's collection represents him in the act of shouldering his leg, an antic which is imitated by a monkey.

Clark was the "whimsical fellow, commonly known by the name of the Posture-master," mentioned by Addison in the 'Guardian,' No. 102. He was the son of a distiller in Shoe Lane, who designed him for the medical profession, but a brief experience with John Coniers, an apothecary in Fleet Street, not pleasing him, he was apprenticed to a mercer in Bishopsgate Street. Trade suited him no better than medicine, it would seem, for he afterwards went to Paris, in the retinue of the Duke of Buckingham, and there first displayed his powers as a posturer. He died in 1690, at his house in Pall Mall, and was buried in the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Many portraits of him, in different attitudes, are extant in the British Museum.

Monstrosities have always been profitable subjects for exhibition. Shakespeare tells us, and may be presumed to have intended the remark to convey his impression of the tendency of his own generation, that people would give more to see a dead Indian than to relieve a lame beggar; and the profits of the exhibition of Julia Pastrana and the so-called Kostroma people show that the public interest in such monstrosities remains unabated. But what would "City men" say to such an exhibition in Threadneedle Street? I take the following announcement from a newspaper of June, 1698: —

"At Moncrieff's Coffee-house, in Threadneedle Street, near the Royal Exchange, is exposed to view, for sixpence a piece, a Monster that lately died there, being Humane upwards and bruit downwards, wonderful to behold: the like was never seen in England before, the skin is so exactly stuffed that the whole lineaments and proportion of the Monster are as plain to be seen as when it was alive. And a very fine Civet Cat, spotted like a Leopard, and is now alive, that was brought from Africa with it. They are exposed to view from eight in the morning to eight at night."

At the King's Head, in West Smithfield, there was this year exhibited "a little Scotch Man, which has been admired by all that have yet seen him, he being but two Foot and six Inches high; and is near upon 60 years of Age. He was marry'd several years, and had Issue by his Wife, two sons (one of which is with him now). He Sings and Dances with his son, and has had the Honour to be shewn before several Persons of Note at their Houses, as far as they have yet travelled. He formerly kept a Writing school; and discourses of the Scriptures, and of many Eminent Histories, very wisely; and gives great satisfaction to all spectators; and if need requires, there are several Persons in this town, that will justifie that they were his Schollars, and see him Marry'd."

In the same year, David Cornwell exhibited, at the Ram's Head, in Fenchurch Street, a singular lad, advertised as "the Bold Grimace Spaniard," who was said to have "liv'd 15 years among wild creatures in the Mountains, and is reasonably suppos'd to have been taken out of his cradle an Infant, by some savage Beast, and wonderfully preserv'd, till some Comedians accidentally pass'd through those parts, and perceiving him to be of Human Race, pursu'd him to his Cave, where they caught him in a Net. They found something wonderful in his Nature, and took him with them in their Travels through *Spain* and *Italy*. He performs the following surprising grimaces, viz., He lolls out his Tongue a foot long, turns his eyes in and out at the same time; contracts his Face as small as an Apple; extends his Mouth six inches, and turns it into the shape of a Bird's Beak, and his eyes like to an Owl's; turns his mouth into the Form of a Hat cock'd up three ways; and also frames it in the manner of a four-square Buckle; licks his Nose with his Tongue, like a Cow; rolls one Eyebrow two inches up, the other two down; changes his face to such an astonishing Degree, as to appear like a Corpse long bury'd. Altho' bred wild so long, yet by travelling with the aforesaid Comedians 18 years, he can sing wonderfully fine, and accompanies his voice with a thorow Bass on the Lute. His former natural Estrangement from human conversation oblig'd *Mr. Cornwell* to bring a Jackanapes over with him for his Companion, in whom he takes great Delight and Satisfaction."

How many of these show creatures were impostors, and how many genuine eccentricities of human nature, it is impossible to say. Barnum's revelations have made us sceptical. But the numerous

advertisements of this kind in the newspapers of the period show that the passion for monstrosities was as strongly developed in the latter half of the seventeenth century as at the present day.

Barnes and Appleby's booth for tumbling and rope-dancing appears from the following advertisement, extracted from a newspaper of 1699, to have attended Bartholomew Fair the previous year: —

"At Mr. Barnes's and Mr. Appleby's Booth, between the Crown Tavern and the Hospital Gate, over against the Cross Daggers, next to Miller's Droll Booth, in West Smithfield, where the English and Dutch Flaggs, with Barnes's and the two German Maidens' pictures, will hang out, during the time of Bartholomew Fair, will be seen the most excellent and incomparable performances in Dancing on the Slack Rope, Walking on the Slack Rope, Vaulting and Tumbling on the Stage, by these five, the most famous Companies in the Universe, viz., The English, Irish, High German, French, and Morocco, now united. The Two German Maidens, who exceeded all mankind in their performances, are within this twelvemonth improved to a Miracle."

In this year I find the following advertisement of a music booth, which must have been one of the earliest established: —

"Thomas Dale, Drawer at the Crown Tavern at Aldgate, keepeth the Turk's Head *Musick Booth*, in Smithfield Rounds, over against the *Greyhound* Inn during the time of *Bartholomew Fair*, Where is a Glass of good Wine, Mum, Syder, Beer, Ale, and all other Sorts of Liquors, to be Sold; and where you will likewise be entertained with good Musick, Singing, and Dancing. You will see a Scaramouch Dance, the Italian Punch's Dance, the Quarter Staff, the Antick, the Countryman and Countrywoman's Dance, and the Merry Cuckolds of Hogsden.

"Also a young Man that dances an Entry, Salabrand, and Jigg, and a Woman that dances with Six Naked Rapiers, that we Challenge the whole Fair to do the like. There is likewise a Young Woman that Dances with Fourteen Glasses on the Backs and Palms of her Hands, and turns round with them above an Hundred Times as fast as a Windmill turns; and another Young Man that Dances a Jigg incomparably well, to the Admiration of all Spectators. *Vivat Rex.*"

James Miles, who announced himself as from Sadler's Wells, kept the Gun music-booth in the fair, and announced nineteen dances, among which were "a dance of three bullies and three Quakers;" a cripples' dance by six persons with wooden legs and crutches, "in imitation of a jovial crew;" a dance with swords, and on a ladder, by a young woman, "with that variety that she challenges all her sex to do the like;" and a new entertainment, "between a Scaramouch, a Harlequin, and a Punchinello, in imitation of bilking a reckoning." We shall meet with James Miles again in the next chapter and century.

CHAPTER IV

Attempts to Suppress the Shows at Bartholomew Fair – A remarkable Dutch Boy – Theatrical Booths at the London Fairs – Penkethman, the Comedian – May Fair – Barnes and Finley – Lady Mary – Doggett, the Comedian – Simpson, the Vaulter – Clench, the Whistler – A Show at Charing Cross – Another Performing Horse – Powell and Crawley, the Puppet-Showmen – Miles's Music-Booth – Settle and Mrs. Mynn – Southwark Fair – Mrs. Horton, the Actress – Bullock and Leigh – Penkethman and Pack – Boheme, the Actor – Suppression of May Fair – Woodward, the Comedian – A Female Hercules – Tiddy-dol, the Gingerbread Vendor.

So early as the close of the seventeenth century, one hundred and fifty years before the fair was abolished, we find endeavours being made, in emulation of the Puritans, to banish every kind of amusement from Bartholomew Fair, and limit it to the purposes of an annual market. In 1700, the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen resolved that no booths should be permitted to be erected in Smithfield that year; but on the 6th of August it was announced that "the lessees of West Smithfield having on Friday last represented to a Court of Aldermen at Guildhall, that it would be highly injurious to them to have the erection of all booths there totally prohibited, the right honourable Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen have, on consideration of the premises, granted licence to erect some booths during the time of Bartholomew Fair now approaching; but none are permitted for music-booths, or any that may be means to promote debauchery." And, on the 23rd, when the Lord Mayor went on horseback to proclaim the fair, he ordered two music-booths to be taken down immediately.

On the 4th of June, in the following year, the grand jury made a presentment to the following effect: – "Whereas we have seen a printed order of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, the 25th June, 1700, to prevent the great profaneness, vice, and debauchery, so frequently used and practised in Bartholomew Fair, by strictly charging and commanding all persons concerned in the said fair, and in the sheds and booths to be erected and built therein or places adjacent, that they do not let, set, or hire, or use any booth, shed, stall, or other erection whatsoever to be used or employed for interludes, stage-plays, comedies, gaming-places, lotteries, or music meetings: and as we are informed the present Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen have passed another order to the same effect on the 3rd instant, we take this occasion to return our most hearty thanks for their religious care and great zeal in this matter; we esteeming a renewing of their former practices at the Fair a continuing one of the chiefest nurseries of vice next to the play-houses; therefore earnestly desire that the said orders may be vigorously prosecuted, and that this honourable Court would endeavour that the said fair may be employed to those good ends and purposes it was at first designed."

This presentment deserves, and will repay, the most attentive consideration of those who would know the real character of the amusements presented at the London fairs, and the motives and aims of those who endeavoured to suppress them. The grand jury profess to be actuated by a desire to diminish profanity, vice, and debauchery; and, if this had been their real and sole object, nothing could have been more laudable. But, like those who would suppress the liquor traffic in order to prevent drunkenness, they confounded the use with the abuse of the thing which they condemned, and sought to deprive the masses of every kind of amusement, because some persons could not participate therein without indulging in vicious and debasing pleasures. It might have been supposed that Bartholomew Fair was pre-eminently a means and occasion of vice and debauchery, and that its continuance was incompatible with the maintenance of public order and the due guardianship of public morals, if the grand jury had not coupled with their condemnation an expression of their opinion that it was not so bad as the theatres. In that sentence is disclosed the real motive and aim of those who sought the suppression of the amusements of the people at the London Fairs.

That the morals and manners of that age were of a low standard is undeniable; but they would have been worse if the fairs had been abolished, and the theatres closed, as the fanatics of the day willed. Men and women cannot be made pious or virtuous by the prohibition of theatres, concerts, and balls, any more than they can be rendered temperate by suppressing the public sale of beer, wine, and spirits. Naturally, a virtuous man, without being a straight-laced opponent of "cakes and ale," would have seen, in walking through a fair, much that he would deplore, and desire to amend; but such a man would have the same reflections inspired by a visit to a theatre or a music-hall, or any other amusement of the present day. He would not, however, if he was sensible as well as virtuous, conclude from what he saw and heard that all public amusements ought to be prohibited. To suppress places of popular entertainment because some persons abuse them would be like destroying a garden because a snail crawls over the foliage, or an earwig lurks in the flowers.

The London fairs were attended this year by a remarkable Dutch boy, about eight or nine years of age, whose eyes presented markings of the iris in which sharp-sighted persons, aided perhaps by a considerable development of the organ of wonder, read certain Latin and Hebrew words. In one eye, the observer read, or was persuaded that he could read, the words *Deus meus*; in the other, in Hebrew characters, the word *Elohim*. The boy's parents, by whom he was exhibited, affirmed that his eyes had presented these remarkable peculiarities from his birth. Great numbers of persons, including the most eminent physiologists and physicians of the day, went to see him; and the learned, who examined his eyes with great attention, were as far from solving the mystery as the crowd of ordinary sight-seers. Some of them regarded the case as an imposture, but they were unable to suggest any means by which such a fraud could be accomplished. Others regarded it as "almost" supernatural, a qualification not very easy to understand. The supposed characters were probably natural, and only to be seen as Roman and Hebrew letters by imaginative persons, or those who viewed them with the eye of faith. Whatever their nature, the boy's sight was not affected by them in the slightest degree.

The theatrical booths attending the London fairs began at this time to be more numerous, and to present an entertainment of a better character than had hitherto been seen. The elder Penkethman appears to have been the first actor of good position on the stage who set the example of performing in a temporary canvas theatre during the fairs, and it was soon followed by the leading actors and actresses of the royal theatres. In a dialogue on the state of the stage, published in 1702, and attributed to Gildon, Critick calls Penkethman "the flower of Bartholomew Fair, and the idol of the rabble; a fellow that overdoes everything, and spoils many a part with his own stuff." He had then been ten years on the stage, having made his first appearance at Drury Lane in 1692, as the tailor, a small part in *The Volunteers*. Four years later, we find him playing, at the same theatre, such parts as Snap in *Love's Last Shift*, Dr. Pulse in *The Lost Lover*, and Nick Froth in *The Cornish Comedy*.

What the author of the pamphlet just quoted says of this actor receives confirmation and illustration from an anecdote told of him, in connection with the first representation of Farquhar's *Recruiting Officer* at Drury Lane in 1706. Penkethman, who played Thomas Appletree, one of the rustic recruits, when asked his name by Wilks, to whom the part of Captain Plume was assigned, replied, "Why, don't you know my name, Bob? I thought every fool knew that."

"Thomas Appletree," whispered Wilks, assuming the office of prompter.

"Thomas Appletree!" exclaimed Penkethman, aloud. "Thomas Devil! My name is Will Penkethman." Then, turning to the gallery, he addressed one of the audience thus: – "Hark you, friend; don't you know my name?"

"Yes, Master Pinkey," responded the occupant of a front seat in the gallery. "We know it very well."

The theatre was soon in an uproar: the audience at first laughed at the folly of Penkethman and the evident distress of Wilks; but the joke soon grew tiresome, and they began to hiss. Penkethman saw his mistake, and speedily changed displeasure into applause by crying out, with a loud nasal

twang, and a countenance as ludicrously melancholy as he could make it, "Adzooks! I fear I am wrong!"

Barnes, the rope-dancer, had at this time lost his former partner, Appleby, and taken into partnership an acrobat named Finley. They advertised their show in 1701 at Bartholomew Fair as, "Her Majesty's Company of Rope Dancers." They had two German girls "lately arrived from France;" and it was announced that "the famous Mr. Barnes, of whose performances this kingdom is so sensible, Dances with 2 Children at his feet, and with Boots and Spurs. Mrs. Finley, distinguished by the name of Lady Mary for her incomparable Dancing, has much improved herself since the last Fair. You will likewise be entertained with such variety of Tumbling by Mr. Finley and his Company, as was never seen in the Fair before. Note, that for the conveniency of the Gentry, there is a back-door in Smithfield Rounds."

They were not without rivals, though the absence of names from the following advertisement renders it probable that the "famous company" calculated upon larger gains from anonymous boasting than they could hope for from the announcement of their names: —

"At the Great Booth over against the Hospital Gate in Bartholomew Fair, will be seen the Famous Company of Rope Dancers, they being the Greatest Performers of Men, Women, and Children that can be found beyond the Seas, so that the world cannot parallel them for Dancing on the Low Rope, Vaulting on the High Rope, and for Walking on the Slack and Sloaping Ropes, out-doing all others to that degree, that it has highly recommended them, both in Bartholomew Fair and May Fair last, to all the best persons of Quality in England. And by all are owned to be the only amazing Wonders of the World in every thing they do: It is there you will see the Italian Scaramouch dancing on the Rope, with a Wheel-barrow before him, with two Children and a Dog in it, and with a Duck on his Head who sings to the Company, and causes much Laughter. The whole entertainment will be so extremely fine and diverting, as never was done by any but this Company alone."

Doggett, whom Cibber calls the most natural actor of the day, and whose name is associated with the coat and badge rowed for annually, on the 1st of August, by London watermen's apprentices, was here this year, with a theatrical booth, erected at the end of Hosier Lane, where was presented, as the advertisements tell us, "A New Droll call'd the Distressed Virgin or *the Unnatural Parents*. Being a True History of the *Fair Maid of the West*, or the Loving Sisters. With the Comical Travels of *Poor Trusty*, in Search of his *Master's Daughter*, and his Encounter with *Three Witches*. *Also variety of Comick Dances and Songs, with Scenes and Machines never seen before. Vivat Regina.*" Doggett was at this time manager of Drury Lane.

Miller, the actor, also had a theatrical booth in the fair, and made the following announcement: —

"Never acted before. At *Miller's Booth*, over against *the Cross Daggers*, near the *Crown Tavern*, during the time of *Bartholomew Fair*, will be presented an Excellent New Droll, call'd The Tempest, or *the Distressed Lovers*. With the *English Hero* and the *Island Princess*, and the Comical Humours of the Inchanted *Scotchman*; or *Jockey* and the *Three Witches*. Showing how a Nobleman of England was cast away upon the Indian Shore, and in his Travel found the Princess of the Country, with whom he fell in Love, and after many Dangers and Perils, was married to her; and his faithful Scotchman, who was saved with him, travelling through Woods, fell in among Witches, when between 'em is abundance of comical Diversions. There in the Tempest is Neptune, with his Triton in his Chariot drawn with Sea Horses and Mair Maids singing. With variety of Entertainment, performed by the best Masters; the Particulars would be too tedious to be inserted here. *Vivat Regina.*"

The similarity of the chief incidents in the dramas presented by Doggett and Miller is striking. In both we have the troubles of the lovers, the comical adventures of a man-servant, and the encounter with witches. We shall find these incidents reproduced again and again, with variations, and under different titles, in the plays set before Bartholomew audiences of the eighteenth century.

May Fair first assumed importance this year, when the multiplication of shows of all kinds caused it to assume dimensions which had not hitherto distinguished it. It was held on the north side of Piccadilly, in Shepherd's Market, White Horse Street, Shepherd's Court, Sun Court, Market Court, an open space westward, extending to Tyburn Lane (now Park Lane), Chapel Street, Shepherd Street, Market Street, Hertford Street, and Carrington Street. The ground-floor of the market-house, usually occupied by butchers' stalls, was appropriated during the fair to the sale of toys and gingerbread; and the upper portion was converted into a theatre. The open space westward was covered with the booths of jugglers, fencers, and boxers, the stands of mountebanks, swings, round-abouts, etc., while the sides of the streets were occupied by sausage stalls and gambling tables. The first-floor windows were also, in some instances, made to serve as the proscenia of puppet shows.

I have been able to trace only two shows to this fair in 1702, namely Barnes and Finley's and Miller's, which stood opposite to the former, and presented "an excellent droll called *Crispin and Crispianus: or, A Shoemaker a Prince*; with the best machines, singing and dancing ever yet in the fair." A great concourse of people attended from all parts of the metropolis; an injudicious attempt on the part of the local authorities to exclude persons of immoral character, which has always been found impracticable in places of public amusement, resulted in a serious riot. Some young women being arrested by the constables on the allegation that they were prostitutes, they were rescued by a party of soldiers; and a conflict was begun, which extended as other constables came up, and the "rough" element took part with the rescuers of the incriminated women. One constable was killed, and three others dangerously wounded before the fight ended. The man by whose hand the constable fell contrived to escape; but a butcher who had been active in the affray was arrested, and convicted, and suffered the capital penalty at Tyburn.

In the following year, the fair was presented as a nuisance by the grand jury of Middlesex; but it continued to be held for several years afterwards. Barnes and Finley again had a show at Bartholomew Fair, to which the public were invited to "see my Lady Mary perform such steps on the dancing-rope as have never been seen before." The young lady thus designated, and whose performance attracted crowds of spectators to Barnes and Finley's show, was said to be the daughter of a Florentine noble, and had given up all for love by eloping with Finley. By the companion of her flight she was taught to dance upon the tight rope, and for a few years was an entertainer of considerable popularity; but, venturing to exhibit her agility and grace while *enceinte*, she lost her balance, fell from the rope, and died almost immediately after giving birth to a stillborn child.

Bullock and Simpson, the former an actor of some celebrity at Drury Lane, joined Penkethman this year in a show at Bartholomew Fair, in which *Jephtha's Rash Vow* was performed, Penkethman playing the part of Toby, and Bullock that of Ezekiel. Bullock is described in the pamphlet attributed to Gildon as "the best comedian who has trod the stage since Nokes and Leigh, and a fellow that has a very humble opinion of himself." So much modesty must have made him a *rara avis* among actors, who have, as a rule, a very exalted opinion of themselves. He had been six years on the stage at this time, having made his first appearance in 1696, at Drury Lane, as Sly in *Love's Last Shift*. His ability was soon recognised; and in the same year he played Sir Morgan Blunder in *The Younger Brother*, and Shuffle in *The Cornish Comedy*. Parker and Doggett also had a booth this year at the same fair, playing *Bateman; or, the Unhappy Marriage*, with the latter comedian in the part of Sparrow.

Penkethman at this time, from his salary as an actor at Drury Lane, his gains from attending Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs with his show, and the profits of the Richmond Theatre, which he either owned or leased, was in the receipt of a considerable income. "He is the darling of Fortunatus," says Downes, writing in 1708, "and has gained more in theatres and fairs in twelve years than those who have tugged at the oar of acting these fifty." He did not retire from the stage, however, until 1724.

Some of the minor shows of this period must now be noticed. A bill of this time – the date cannot always be fixed – invites the visitors to Bartholomew Fair to witness "the wonderful performances of that most celebrated master Simpson, the famous vaulter, who being lately arrived

from Italy, will show the world what vaulting is." The chroniclers of the period have not preserved any record, save this bill, of this not too modest performer. A more famous entertainer was Clench, a native of Barnet, whose advertisements state that he "imitates horses, huntsmen, and a pack of hounds, a doctor, an old woman, a drunken man, bells, the flute, and the organ, with three voices, by his own natural voice, to the greatest perfection," and that he was "the only man that could ever attain so great an art." He had a rival, however, in the whistling man, mentioned in the 'Spectator,' who was noted for imitating the notes of all kinds of birds. Clench attended all the fairs in and around London, and at other times gave his performance at the corner of Bartholomew Lane, behind the old Exchange.

To this period also belongs the following curious announcement of "a collection of strange and wonderful creatures from most parts of the world, all alive," to be seen over against the Mews Gate, Charing Cross, by her Majesty's permission.

"The first being a little *Black Man*, being but 3 foot high, and 32 years of age, straight and proportionable every way, who is distinguished by the Name of the *Black Prince*, and has been shewn before most Kings and Princes in Christendom. The next being his wife, the *Little Woman*, NOT 3 foot high, and 30 years of Age, straight and proportionable as any woman in the Land, which is commonly called the *Fairy Queen*; she gives general satisfaction to all that sees her, by Diverting them with Dancing, being big with Child. Likewise their little *Turkey Horse*, being but 2 foot odd inches high, and above 12 years of Age, that shews several diverting and surprising Actions, at the Word of Command. The least Man, Woman, and Horse that ever was seen in the World Alive. *The Horse being kept in a box.* The next being a strange Monstrous Female Creature that was taken in the woods in the Deserts of *Æ*thiopia in Prester *John's* Country, in the remotest parts of Africa. The next is the noble *Picary*, which is very much admir'd by the Learned. The next being the noble *Jack-call*, the Lion's Provider, which hunts in the Forest for the Lion's Prey. Likewise a small *Egyptian Panther*, spotted like a *Leopard*. The next being a strange, monstrous creature, brought from the *Coast of Brazil*, having a Head like a Child, Legs and Arms very wonderful, with a Long Tail like a Serpent, wherewith he Feeds himself, as an *Elephant* doth with his Trunk. With several other Rarities too tedious to mention in this Bill.

"And as no such Collection was ever shewn in this Place before, we hope they will give you content and satisfaction, assuring you, that they are the greatest Rarities that ever was shewn alive in this Kingdom, and are to be seen from nine o'clock in the Morning, till 10 at Night, where true Attendance shall be given during our stay in this Place, which will be very short. *Long live the* Queen."

The proprietors of menageries and circuses are always amusing, if not very lucid, when they set forth in type the attractions of their shows. The owner of the rarities exhibited over against the Mews Gate in the reign of Queen Anne was no exception to the rule. The picary and the jack-call may be readily identified as the peccary and the jackal, but "a strange monstrous female creature" defies recognition, even with the addition that it was brought from Prester John's country. The Brazilian wonder may be classified with safety with the long-tailed monkeys, especially as another and shorter advertisement, in the 'Spectator,' describes it a little more explicitly as a satyr. It was, probably, a spider monkey, one variety of which is said, by Humboldt, to use its prehensile tail for the purpose of picking insects out of crevices.

The Harleian Collection contains the following announcement of a performing horse: —

"To be seen, at the Ship, upon Great Tower Hill, the finest taught horse in the world. He fetches and carries like a spaniel dog. If you hide a glove, a handkerchief, a door-key, a pewter basin, or so small a thing as a silver two-pence, he will seek about the room till he has found it; and then he will bring it to his master. He will also tell the number of spots on a card, and leap through a hoop; with a variety of other curious performances."

Powell, the famous puppet-showman mentioned in the 'Spectator,' in humorous contrast with the Italian Opera, never missed Bartholomew Fair, where, however, he had a rival in Crawley, two of whose bills have been preserved in the Harleian Collection. Pinkethman, another "motion-maker,"

as the exhibitors of these shows were called, and also mentioned in the 'Spectator,' introduced on his stage the divinities of Olympus ascending and descending to the sound of music. Strutt, who says that he saw something of the same kind at a country fair in 1760, thinks that the scenes and figures were painted upon a flat surface and cut out, like those of a boy's portable theatre, and that motion was imparted to them by clock-work. This he conjectures to have been the character also of the representation, with moving figures, of the camp before Lisle, which was exhibited, in the reign of Anne, in the Strand, opposite the Globe Tavern, near Hungerford Market.

One of the two bills of Crawley's show which have been preserved was issued for Bartholomew Fair, and the other for Southwark Fair. The former is as follows: —

"At Crawley's Booth, over against the Crown Tavern in Smithfield, during the time of Bartholomew Fair, will be presented a little opera, called the *Old Creation of the World*, yet newly revived; with the addition of *Noah's flood*; also several fountains playing water during the time of the play. The last scene does present Noah and his family coming out of the ark, with all the beasts two by two, and all the fowls of the air seen in a prospect sitting upon trees; likewise over the ark is seen the sun rising in a most glorious manner: moreover, a multitude of angels will be seen in a double rank, which presents a double prospect, one for the sun, the other for a palace, where will be seen six angels ringing of bells. Likewise machines descending from above, double, with Dives rising out of hell, and Lazarus seen in Abraham's bosom, besides several figures dancing jiggs, sarabands, and country dances, to the admiration of the spectators; with the merry conceits of *Squire Punch and Sir John Spendall*." This curious medley was "completed by an entertainment of singing, and dancing with several naked swords by a child of eight years of age." In the bill for Southwark Fair we find the addition of "the ball of little dogs," said to have come from Louvain, and to perform "by their cunning tricks wonders in the world of dancing. You shall see one of them named Marquis of Gaillerdain, whose dexterity is not to be compared; he dances with Madame Poucette his mistress and the rest of their company at the sound of instruments, all of them observing so well the cadence that they amaze everybody;" it is added that these celebrated performers had danced before Queen Anne and most of the nobility, and amazed everybody.

James Miles, who has been mentioned in the last chapter, promised the visitors, in a bill preserved in the Harleian Collection, that they should see "a young woman dance with the swords, and upon a ladder, surpassing all her sex." Nineteen different dances were performed in his show, among which he mentions a "wrestlers' dance" and vaulting upon the slack rope. Respecting this dancing with swords, Strutt says that he remembered seeing "at Flockton's, a much noted but very clumsy juggler, a girl about eighteen or twenty years of age, who came upon the stage with four naked swords, two in each hand; when the music played, she turned round with great swiftness, and formed a great variety of figures with the swords, holding them overhead, down by her sides, behind her, and occasionally she thrust them in her bosom. The dance generally continued ten or twelve minutes; and when it was finished, she stopped suddenly, without appearing to be in the least giddy from the constant reiteration of the same motion."

The ladder-dance was performed upon a light ladder, which the performer shifted from place to place, ascended and descended, without permitting it to fall. It was practised at Sadler's Wells at the commencement of the last century, and revived there in 1770. Strutt thought it originated in the stilt-dance, which appears, from an illumination of the reign of Henry III., to have been practised in the thirteenth century.

Mrs. Mynn appears as a Bartholomew Fair theatrical manageress in 1707, when Settle, then nearly sixty years of age, and in far from flourishing circumstances, adapted to her stage his spectacular drama of the *Siege of Troy*, which had been produced at Drury Lane six years previously. Settle, who was a good contriver of spectacles, though a bad dramatic poet, reduced it from five acts to three, striking out four or five of the *dramatis personæ*, cutting down the serious portions of the dialogue, and giving greater breadth as well as length to the comic incidents, without which no

Bartholomew audience would have been satisfied. As acted in her theatrical booth, it was printed by Mrs. Mynn, with the following introduction: —

"*A Printed Publication of an* Entertainment *performed on a* Smithfield Stage, *which, how gay or richly soever set off, will hardly reach to a higher Title than the customary name of a* Droll, *may seem somewhat new. But as the present undertaking, the work of ten Months' preparation, is so extraordinary a Performance, that without Boast or Vanity we may modestly say, In the whole* several Scenes, Movements, *and* Machines, *it is no ways Inferiour even to any one* Opera *yet seen in either of* the Royal Theatres; *we are therefore under some sort of Necessity to make this Publication, thereby to give ev'n the meanest of our audience a full Light into all the Object they will there meet in this* Expensive Entertainment; *the* Proprietors *of which have adventur'd to make, under some small Hopes, That as they yearly see some of their happier Brethren Undertakers in the* Fair, *more cheaply obtain even the Engrost Smiles of the* Gentry *and* Quality *at so much an easier Price; so on the other side their own more costly Projection (though less Favourites) might possibly attain to that good Fortune, at least to attract a little share of the good graces of the more Honourable part of the Audience, and perhaps be able to purchase some of those smiles which elsewhere have been thus long the profuser Donation of particular Affection and Favour.*"

In the following year, Settle arranged for Mrs. Mynn the dramatic spectacle of *Whittington*, long famous at Bartholomew Fair, concluding with a mediæval Lord Mayor's cavalcade, in which nine different pageants were introduced.

In 1708, the first menagerie seems to have appeared at Bartholomew Fair, where it stood near the hospital gate, and attracted considerable attention. Sir Hans Sloane cannot be supposed to have missed such an opportunity of studying animals little known, as he is said to have constantly visited the fair for that purpose, and to have retained the services of a draughtsman for their representation.

The first menagerie in this country was undoubtedly that, which for several centuries, was maintained in the Tower of London, and the beginning of which may be traced to the presentation of three leopards to Henry III. by the Emperor of Germany, in allusion to the heraldic device of the former. Several royal orders are extant which show the progress made in the formation of the menagerie and furnish many interesting particulars concerning the animals. Two of these documents, addressed by Henry III. to the sheriffs of London, have reference to a white bear. The first, dated 1253, directs that fourpence a day should be allowed for the animal's subsistence; and the second, made in the following year, commands that, "for the keeper of our white bear, lately sent us from Norway, and which is in our Tower of London, ye cause to be had one muzzle and one iron chain, to hold that bear without the water, and one long and strong cord to hold the same bear when fishing in the river of Thames."

Other mandates, relating to an elephant, were issued in the same reign, in one of which it is directed, "that ye cause, without delay, to be built at our Tower of London, one house of forty feet long, and twenty feet deep, for our elephant; providing that it be so made and so strong that, when need be it may be fit and necessary for other uses." We learn from Matthew Paris that this animal was presented to Henry by the King of France. It was ten years old, and ten feet in height. It lived till the forty-first year of Henry's reign, in which year it is recorded that, for the maintenance of the elephant and its keeper, from Michaelmas to St. Valentine's Day, immediately before it died, the charge was nearly seventeen pounds – a considerable sum for those days.

Many additions were made to the Tower menagerie in the reign of Edward III.; and notably a lion and lioness, a leopard, and two wild cats. The office of keeper of the lions was created by Henry VI., with an allowance of sixpence a day for the keeper, and a like sum "for the maintenance of every lion or leopard now being in his custody, or that shall be in his custody hereafter." This office was continued until comparatively recent times, when it was abolished with the menagerie, a step which put an end likewise to the time-honoured hoax, said to have been practised upon country cousins, of going to the water side, below London Bridge, to see the lions washed.

The building appropriated to the keeping and exhibition of the animals was a wide semi-circular edifice, in which were constructed, at distances of a few feet apart, a number of arched “dens,” divided into two or more compartments, and secured by strong iron bars. Opposite these cages was a gallery of corresponding form, with a low stone parapet, and approached from the back by a flight of steps. This was appropriated exclusively to the accommodation of the royal family, who witnessed from it the feeding of the beasts and the combats described by Mr. Ainsworth in the romance which made the older portions of the Tower familiar ground to so many readers.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.