

Antient Customs of Chester.

Extracted from Archdeacon ROGERS's MSS. Cap. iiii. Pt. 2. Harl. MSS. 1948. 42.

Nowe of the lawdable Exercises and Playes of Chester, yerelye there used.

The ould homage of the Shoemakers.

Whereas the company and occupation of the Shooemakers within the cittie of Chester did yerelie (time out of the memorie of man, no man remembre the originall thereof) upon Tueseday, commonly called Shrove Tueseday, or Gotteddsday, on the after noone of the same day, at the crosse upon the roode Dee, before the mayor of the cittie did offer unto the company of Drapers of the same cittie, an homage, a ball of leather, called a footeball, of the value of 3s. 4d. or thereabout, the whiche, when it was received, the Drapers did give the same ball, psently there to be played for, by the Shooemakers and Sadlers, to bring the said footeball to any of the 3 howses, either of the mayor, or either of the sheriffes, then that side to win the saide ball, and by reson of greate hurte and strife which did arise amonge the yonge persons of the saide cittie, whiles divers partes weare taken with force and stronge hande to bring the said ball to any of the 3 howses aforesaid, much harme was done, some in the greate throunge fallinge into a traunce, some haveinge their bodies brused and crushed, some their armes, heades, legges broken, some otherwise maimed, and in peril of their liffe, for to avoide the said inconveniences, and also to torne and converte the saide homage to a better use, it was thoughte good by the mayor of the cittie, and the rest of the common counsell, with the consente of the said Drapers, to make exchange of the said ball as followeth.

The new homage now to the Drapers.

That in place thereof should be offered by the Shooemakers, unto the Drapers, the same Shrove Tueseday, vi gleaves of silver, the which gleaves they appointed to be rewardes, unto such men as woulde come, and the same day and place, passe and overrunne on foote all others, and the said gleaves were presently delivered accordinge to the runninge of everye one, and this exchange was made when Mr. Henry Gee was mayor of Chester, beinge the 21st yeare of the raigne of kinge Henry the 8th, and the yeare of our Lord God 1539.

The Sadlers ould homage to the Drapers.

Also whereas the company and occupation of the Sadlers within the cittie of Chester did yearely, by custom time out of the memorie of man, the same day,

hower, and place, before the saide mayor unto the companie of Drapers in Chester, did offer, upon the trunchon of a staffe or speare, a certaine homage, called the Sadlers ball, beinge a ball of silke of the bignes of a bowle, which was profitable for few uses and purposes as it was, the which ball the said Drapers did caste up amonge the throunge, to get it who coulde, in which throunge also much hurte was done, the same mayor and aldermen, with consente of the Drapers aforesaid, did alter and change :

The new homage to the Drapers.

That in place thereof the said companie of Sadlers shoulde offer before the mayor, unto the Drapers, a bell of silver, wayeing . . . at the leaste, the which bell was ordayned also to the rewarde for that horse which with speede runninge there, should runne before all others, and there psentlye should be given, the same day and place. This alteration was made at the same time by the same mayor, as the shooemakers footeball was before exchanged into vi silver gleaves.

The ould homage of all Married Persons to the Drapers.

Also, whereas of anchante custom, whereof memorie now livinge cannot remember the originall and beginninge, the same day, hower, and place, before the mayor for the time beinge, every person that is married within the liberties of the said eittie, and dwelled elsewhere, or that dwelled within the citty the yeare before, and was married elsewhere, did offer unto the companie of Drapers in Chester, an homage a ball of salte, of the quantitie of a boule, profitable for few uses or purposes,

The new homage to the Drapers.

The said mayor, with consente of the Drapers aforesaid, did torne the said balls into silver arrowes, the which arrowes they tooke order shoulde be rewardes given to those which did shoote the longest shoote, with divers Kindes of arrowes, as the slighte, the brod arrowe, and the buttschafte. This change was made as before is mentioned of the shooemakers footeball and sadler's ball.

Comendation given by Mr. Robt. Rogers, in this Exchange.

In the which exchange there appeared great wisdom in those anciente and sage senators, who had greate

* The homages of the Shoemakers, the Drapers, and the new-married Persons mentioned in this account, as well as the Sheriff's Breakfast, have long fallen into disuse. The same may be observed of the *Christmas Watch*, and the *Midsummer Shew*.

Mr. Rogers states the last of these exhibitions to be older than the Whitsun Plays; but the *annalist in the Vale Royal* says, under 1498, "it appeareth that the Watch on Midsummer-Eve began this year." (viz. in the latter part of that mayoralty, 1499.) Henry Hardware appears by the same authority to have removed some obnoxious parts of the exhibition in his mayoralty in 1599, but in the ensuing year they were restored.

In Harl. MSS. 2150. are numerous estimates of the expense of restoring the subjects exhibited, and a contract made by some artists for that purpose in 1657.