

# VARIOUS

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## BANKSIDE.—OLD THEATRES

The ancient topography of the southern bank of the Thames (or *Bankside*) between London and Blackfriars bridges is peculiarly interesting to the lover of dramatic lore, as well as to the inquirer into the sports and pastimes of our ancestors. It appears to have been the *Arcadia* of the olden metropolis, if such a term be applicable to a place notorious for the indulgence of brutal sports.

The Cut in the adjoining column represents Bankside in 1648, from which it appears to have been then in part waste and unenclosed. "It was land belonging to the crown, and on various parts of it stood the Globe Theatre, the Bear Garden, and other places of public show; here were also the Pike Gardens, some time called the Queen's Pike Gardens, with ponds for the preservation of fresh-water fish, which were said to be kept for the supply of the royal table, under the inspection of an officer, called the king's purveyor of pike, who had here a house for his residence."<sup>1</sup> On the Bankside, prior to the above date, were also the ancient Bordello, or Stews, which, according to Pennant, were distinguished by their respective signs painted against the walls, one of which, in particular, was the Cardinal's Hat; and a small court, now or till lately called *Cardinal's Hat Court*, still exists on the Bankside, and probably shows the precise site of the mansion of depravity. In like manner we find on Bankside, *Pike Garden*, *Globe Alley*, and in the vicinity a public-house with the sign of the *Globe*. On Bankside also stood an ancient Hall and Palace of the Bishops of Winchester, stated to have been built by William Gifford, Bishop of Winchester, about the year 1107, on a piece of ground belonging to the Prior of Bermondsey, to whom was paid a yearly acknowledgment. The great court, at one time belonging to this palace, is still known by the name of *Winchester Square*, and in the adjacent street was, some time since, an abutment of one of the gates. Near this Palace, on the south, at one time stood the Episcopal Palace of the Bishops of Rochester; which is supposed to have bequeathed its name to *Rochester Street*. The whole of the *Bank* shown in the Cut is now densely populated, and scarcely a pole of green sward is left to denote its ancient state. On the opposite or Middlesex bank may be distinguished the celebrated Castle Baynard.

The second Cut represents the BULL and BEAR-BAITING THEATRES, as they appeared in their first state, A.D. 1560. This spot was called Paris Garden, and the two theatres are said to have been the first that were formed near London. In these, according to Stow, were scaffolds for the spectators to stand upon, an indulgence for which they paid in the following manner: "Those who go to Paris Garden, the Bell Savage, or Theatre, to behold bear-baiting, enterludes, or fence-play, must not account of any pleasant spectacle unless they first pay one penny at the gate, another at the entrie of the scaffold, and a third for quiet standing." One Sunday afternoon, in the year 1582, the scaffold, being overcharged with spectators, fell down during the performance, and a great number of persons were killed or maimed by the accident, which the puritans of the time failed not to attribute to a Divine judgment. These theatres were patronized by royalty: for we read that Queen Elizabeth, on the 26th of May, 1599, went by water with the French ambassadors to Paris Garden, where they saw a baiting of bulls and bears. Indeed, Southwark seems to have long been of sporting notoriety,

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<sup>1</sup> Hist. and Antiq. St. Saviour, Southwark, 1795.

for, in the *Humorous Lovers*, printed in 1617, one of the characters says, "I'll set up my bills, that the gamesters of London, Horsly-down, *Southwark*, and Newmarket, may come in and bait him (the bear,) here before the ladies, &c."<sup>2</sup>

The third Cut includes the GLOBE, ROSE, and BEAR-BAITING THEATRES, as they appeared about the year 1612. Of the Globe we have been furnished with the following account by a zealous correspondent, *G. W.*:

The Globe Theatre stood on a plot of ground, now occupied by four houses, contiguous to the present Globe Alley, Maiden Lane, Southwark. This theatre was of considerable size. It is not certain when it was built. Hentzner, the German traveller, who gives an amusing description of London in the time of Queen Elizabeth, alludes to it as existing in 1598, but it was probably not built long before 1596. It was an hexagonal, wooden building, partly open to the weather, and partly thatched with reeds, on which, as well as other theatres, a pole was erected, to which a flag was affixed. These flags were probably displayed only during the hours of performance; and it should seem from one of the old comedies that they were taken down in Lent, in which time, during the early part of King James's reign, plays were not allowed to be represented, though at a subsequent period this prohibition was dispensed with by paying a fee to the Master of the Revels.

It was called the Globe from its sign, which was a figure of Hercules, or Atlas, supporting a globe, under which was written, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*, (All the world acts a play):—and not as many have conjectured, that the Globe though hexagonal at the outside, was a rotunda within, and that it might have derived its name from its circular form.

This theatre was burnt down June 29, 1613, but it was rebuilt with greater splendour in the following year. The Cut represents the original theatre. The account of this accident is given by Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter dated July 2, 1613.<sup>3</sup> "Now to let matters of state sleepe, I will entertain you at the present with what happened this week at the Banks side. The King's players had a new play called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry the Eighth, which set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the order with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats, and the like: sufficient in truth within awhile to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous. Now King Henry making a Masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's house, and certain cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the paper or other stuff, wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the thatch, where being thought at first but idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole house to the very ground. This was the fatal period of that virtuous fabrick, wherein yet nothing did perish but *wood* and *straw*, and a few forsaken cloaks; only one man had his breeches set on fire, that would perhaps have broyled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit, put it out with a bottle of ale."

From a letter of Mr. John Chamberlaine to Sir Ralph Winwood, dated July 8, 1613, in which this accident is likewise mentioned, we learn that the theatre had only two doors.<sup>4</sup> "The burning of the Globe or playhouse on the Bankside on St. Peter's day cannot escape you; which fell out by a peal of chambers, (that I know not upon what occasion were to be used in the play,) the tampin or stopple of one of them lighting in the thatch that covered the house, burn'd it down to the ground in less than two hours, with a dwelling-house adjoining; and it was a great marvaile and a fair grace of God that the people had so little harm, having but *two narrow doors* to get out."

In 1613, was entered in the Stationers' books, "A doleful ballad of the General Conflagration of the famous Theatre called the Globe."

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<sup>2</sup> The first we read of Bear-baiting in England, was in the reign of King John, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, where "thyss straynge passtyme was introduced by some Italyans for his highness' amusement, wherewith he and his court were highly delighted."

<sup>3</sup> *Reliq. Wotton*, p. 425. Edit. 1685

<sup>4</sup> *Winwood's Memorials*, vol. iii. p. 469.

Taylor, the water poet, commemorates the event in the following lines:

"As gold is better that in fire's tried,  
So is the Bankside Globe, that late was burn'd;  
For where before it had a thatched hide,  
Now to a stately theatre 'tis turn'd;  
Which is an emblem that great things are won;  
By those that dare through greatest dangers run."

It is also alluded to in some verses by Ben Jonson, entitled, "An Execration upon Vulcan," from which it appears that Ben Jonson was in the theatre when it was burnt.

This theatre was open in summer and the performances took place by daylight; the King's company usually began to play in the month of May. The exhibitions appear to have been calculated for the lower class of people, and to have been more frequent than those at the Blackfriars, till 1604 or 5, when it became less fashionable and frequented. Being contiguous to the Bear Garden, it is probable that those who resorted there went to the theatre, when the bear-baiting sports were over, and such persons were not likely to form a very refined audience.

We have no description of the interior of the Globe, but that it was somewhat similar to our modern theatres, with an open space in the roof: or perhaps it more resembled an inn-yard, where, in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, many of our ancient dramatic pieces were performed. The galleries in both were arranged on three sides of the building; the small rooms under the lowest, answered to our present boxes and were called rooms; the yard bears a sufficient resemblance to the pit, as at present in use, and where the common people stood to see the exhibition; from which circumstance they are called by Shakspeare "the *groundlings*," and by Ben Jonson, "the *understanding gentlemen of the ground*." The stage was erected in the area, with its back to the gateway where the admission money was taken. The price of admission into the best *rooms*, or boxes, was in Shakspeare's time, a shilling, though afterwards it appears to have risen to two shillings and half-a-crown. The galleries, or scaffolds, as they were sometimes called, and that part of the house which in private theatres was named the pit, seem to have been the same price, which was sixpence, while in some meaner playhouses it was only a penny, and in others two-pence.

We learn from Sir Henry Hebert, that 20*l.* was the greatest receipt for one day's performance; by that we may calculate upon the house having contained about 700 persons, at the prices before stated; that is to say, 100 for the boxes, and the rest in the other parts of the house.

Part of the site of this theatre is now occupied by the brewery of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins; and in the *History of St. Saviour's*, already quoted, we read that "the passage which led to the Globe Tavern, of which the playhouse formed a part, was, till within these few years, known by the name of Globe Alley, and upon its site now stands a large store-house for porter."

The *Rose* or smaller theatre, was erected in the year 1592, and is stated to have cost £103. 2*s.* 7*d.*—a sum which would scarcely pay half the expenses of a modern patent theatre for a single night!

These theatres appear to have been cited as nuisances by the parish officers of St. Saviour's, in which they stood; for in July, 1597-8, a resolution was agreed to by a vestry of the parish, "that a petition shall be made to the bodye of the Councill, (Privy Council,) concerning the play-houses in this parish; wherein all the enormities shall be showed that come thereby to the parish, and that in respect thereof they may be dismissed, and put down from playing: and that four, or two of the Churchwardens, &c. shall present the cause with a collector of the Boroughside, and another of the Bankside." The presentation of this petition did not produce the desired effect; for some time afterwards the play-houses not having been put down, the Churchwardens of St. Saviour's, as appears from an entry in their Parish Register, endeavoured to obtain tithes and poor-rates from the owners

and managers of the theatres on the Bankside.<sup>5</sup> This corresponds with the state of the English theatre, at this period, at the height of its glory and reputation. Dramatic authors of the first excellence, and eminent actors equally abounded; every year produced a number of new plays; nay, so great was the passion for show or representation, that it was the fashion for the nobility to celebrate their weddings, birthdays, and other occasions of rejoicing, with masques and interludes; the king, queen, and court frequently performing in those represented in the royal palaces, and all the nobility being actors in their old private houses. Alas!

What's gone and what's past help  
Should be past grief.

Dryden sung

Support the stage,  
Which so declines that shortly we may see  
Players and plays reduced to second infancy!

—What would he sing in these times!

Among the numerous memoranda of the topography of this interesting district, we find that the well-known iron foundry of Messrs. Bradley, now occupies the site of a Bear-garden. The Falcon public-house adjoining the foundry of that name, was once the most considerable inn in the county of Surrey, the adjoining foundry being anciently a part of it: and it is said that very near the Falcon was once a mill for the grinding of corn, for the Priory of St. Mary Overy.

To conclude. The accompanying Cuts are copied from one of a series of prints illustrative of the antiquities of the metropolis, published by Messrs. Boydell, in the year 1818.

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<sup>5</sup> Annals of the Stage. By J.P. Collyer, Esq. F.S.A. Vol. I.

## LACONICS

(For the Mirror.)

Amongst men of the world comfort merely signifies a great consideration for themselves, and a perfect indifference about others.

Every one who gives way to thought, must, of necessity, become wiser every day; for either the ideas that present themselves to his mind will confirm his yet rickety theories, or observation will teach him that his previous views of things were ill-founded.

Party spirit is like gambling—a vast number of persons trouble themselves about what in the end can be beneficial only to a few.

It is as difficult to win over an enthusiast by force of reasoning, as to persuade a lover of his mistress's faults; or to convince a man who is at law of the badness of his cause.

Knowledge of the world is regarded as an useful, if not an elegant, accomplishment, but this advantage, like every other good, is mixed with some alloy: the acute observer of men and manners cannot but be disgusted with the scenes that take place around him, and his knowledge may at last have the effect of souring his own disposition.

Talents, without the accompaniment of religion, are but fatal presents: they not only add strength to the vices of the individual, but what is worse they render them more conspicuous to the world.

It is strange that the eye of man should have that magic power we have all felt that it possesses. We can contemplate other bright and beautiful objects without withdrawing our gaze; and what is there in the formation of an eye that should create in us any uneasiness? It is the consciousness that the eye is the index of the mind—that when a man fixes his eye on us we are the subject of his thoughts, and that a being gifted with a soul like ourselves is employing its energies and setting its machinery at work about ourselves. It is this conviction that makes us modestly, and almost involuntarily, shrink from such an inspection.

To put ourselves in a passion, in consequence of the misconduct of others, is unquestionably very weak behaviour, but it has also something generous about it; for we are clearly annoying and punishing ourselves, when the offenders only ought to have been the sufferers.

Meanness and conceit are frequently combined in the same character: for he who to obtain transient applause can be indifferent to truth and his own dignity, will be as little scrupulous about them if, by subserviency, he can improve his condition in the world.

The most trivial circumstances are able to put an end to our gratifications; they are like beds of roses, where it is very unlikely all the leaves should be smooth, and even one that is doubled suffices to make us uncomfortable.

Garrulous men are commonly conceited, and they will be found (with very few exceptions) to be superficial as well. They who are in a hurry to tell what they do know, will be equally inclined, from the impulse of prevailing habit, to tell what they do not know.

F.

## LEGAL RHYMES

### (For the Mirror.)

According to Goguet, "the first laws of any people were composed in verses, which they sang;" and why should it not be so when Apollo was one of the first of legislators? and under his auspices they were published to the sound of the harp. Pittacus, one of the seven sages of Greece, formed a code of laws in verse, that they might be the easier remembered. The ancient laws of Spain also were chanted in verse, and the custom was preserved a long time among many nations. Mio. Psellus, who lived in the reign of Constantine Ducas, published a synopsis of the law, in verse, and in 1701, Gumaro, a civilian of Naples, taught the dry and intricate system of civil law, in a *novel*. Coke's Reports have been "done into verse" by an anonymous author; and Cowper, the poet, tells us, that a relation of his who had studied the law, "a gentleman of sprightly parts," began to versify Coke's Institutes; he gives the following specimen of the performance:

"Tenant in fee  
Simple is he,  
And need neither quake nor quiver,

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