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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A WALK THROUGH LEICESTER ***

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A
WALK
THROUGH
LEICESTER;
BEING
A GUIDE TO STRANGERS,
CONTAINING
A DESCRIPTION
OF THE
TOWN AND ITS ENVIRONS,
WITH REMARKS UPON ITS
HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES.

"Within this hour it will be dinner-time,
Till that I'll view the manners of the town,
Peruse its traders, gaze upon its buildings,
And then return and sleep within mine inn."

SHAKESPEARE.

LEICESTER, PRINTED BY T. COMBE,
AND SOLD BY
T. HURST, PATER-NOSTER-ROW, LONDON,
1804.

ADDRESS.

p. i

The Editor of the following pages, while he has been solicitous to furnish those who *travel* with a POCKET CICERONE, feels at the same time a wish that it may not be unacceptable to those who are *at home*. The latter, though, in the subject of this survey, they trace an old, a familiar scene, will still feel that it possesses that interest which the native spot binds around the mind, and when they point out to their intelligent visitors and curious friends the most memorable objects

of their antient and honourable Town, it is his wish that this little companion may be found useful; he, therefore, while he rejoices in their support and feels their liberality, inscribes it with respect and gratitude, to the

INHABITANTS OF LEICESTER.

A WALK THROUGH *LEICESTER.*

p. 1

To the traveller who may wish to visit whatever is deemed most worthy of notice in the town of Leicester, the following sketch is devoted. And as the highly cultivated state of topographical knowledge renders superficial remark unpardonable in local description, we shall endeavor to produce, at the various objects of our visit, such information and reflections as a conductor, not wholly uninformed, may be expected to offer to the curious and intelligent, while he guides him through a large, commercial, and, we trust, a respectable town; the capital of a province which can honestly boast, that by its rich pasturage, its flocks and herds, it supplies England with the blessings of agricultural fertility; and by the industry of its frame-work-knitters, affords an article that quickens and extends the operations of commerce.

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We now request our good-humoured stranger to accept of such our guidance; whether he be the tourist, whose object of inquiry is general information—or the man of reflection, who, wherever he goes, whether in crowded towns or solitary fields, finds something to engage his meditation—or the mercantile rider, who, when the business of his commissions is transacted, quits his lonely parlour for a stroll through the streets—we shall endeavor to bring before his eye as much of interest as our scenes will afford: and as for the diligent antiquary, we assure him we will make the most of our Roman remains; and we hope he will not quarrel with the rough forest stones of our streets, when we promise him they shall conduct him to the smoother pavement of Roman mosaic.

p. 3

What may have been the name of the town we are about to traverse, before the establishment of the Romans, cannot be ascertained; for the Britons had no written monuments, and it cannot be expected that tradition should have survived the revolutions, which, since that period, have taken place in this island. King Leir, and whatever surmises may have been founded on the similarity between his name and the present name of the place, may safely be left to those who are more fond of the flights of conjecture than the solid arguments of truth.

After the establishment of the Romans, Leicester became one of their most important stations; was known, we are well assured, by the name of *RATÆ*, and was a colony, composed of the soldiers from the legions, having magistrates, manners, and language the same as Rome itself. Under the Saxon dynasty it obtained the name of *LEICESTER*, compounded of *castrum*, or *cester*, from its having been a Roman military station, and *leag*, or *lea*, a pasture surrounded by woods, for such was antiently the scite of the town. This name it has preserved, with less alteration in the mode of spelling than almost any other town in the kingdom, through the barbarous reigns of the Saxon kings, the oppressive system of the feudal times, the dark gloom of monkish superstition, and the fatal revolutions occasioned by the civil commotions of later ages.

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Such is, most probably, the true etymology of the name of the place we are now proceeding to survey; for which purpose we will suppose the visitor to set forward from the Three Crowns Inn, along a strait wide street, called

p. 5

GALLOWTREE-GATE,

(corruptly pronounced *Goltre*), from its having formerly led to the place of execution, the left side of which is the scite of the antient city walls.

At the bottom of this street, a building, formerly the assembly-room, but now converted to purposes of trade, with a piazza, under which is a machine for weighing coals, forms the centre of five considerable streets. The

HUMBERSTONE-GATE,

on the right, leads to a range of new and handsome dwellings, called *SPA-PLACE*, from a chalybeate spring found there, which, though furnished by the proprietor with neat marble baths and every convenient appendage for bathing, has not been found sufficiently impregnated with mineral properties to bring it into use. The Humberstone-Gate is out of the local limits of the borough, and subject to the concurrent jurisdiction of the county and borough magistrates; though in the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, attempts were made to bring it exclusively under the magisterial power of the town. It is part of the manor possessed by the Bishops of Lincoln, in the twelfth century, and is still called the *Bishops' Fee*.

p. 6

Southward from the Humberstone-Gate to the Goltre-Gate, very considerable additions,

consisting of several streets, have lately been made to the town.

Advancing forward, the visitor, on passing the weighing machine, enters the

p. 7

BELGRAVE-GATE,

a street of considerable extent, in the broader part of which stands what may justly be deemed one of the most valuable curiosities of the place; it is a *milliare*, or Roman mile-stone, forming part of a small obelisk. This stone was discovered in 1771, by some workmen, digging to form a rampart for a new turnpike-road from Leicester to Melton, upon the foss road leading to Newark, and at the distance of two miles from Leicester. Antiquarians allow it to be the oldest *milliare* now extant in Britain; and perhaps the inscription upon it is older than most others that have been found upon altars, or other monuments of Roman antiquity in this island. It is about three feet long, and between five and six in circumference. The inscription, when the abbreviations are filled up, may be read thus—

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Imperator Cæsar,
Divi Trajani Parthici Filius Divus,
Trajanus Hadrianus Augustus,
Potestate IV. Consulatu III. A Ratis II.

Hadrian Trajanus Augustus,
Emperor & Cæsar, the son of the most illustrious Trajan Parthicus,
In the 4th year of his reign, and his 3d consulate.
From Rataë (Leicester) 2 miles.

Such is the inscription on this *milliare*, which our industrious antiquaries seem faithfully to have extracted from among the ruins of time and the injuries of accident; an object, which exhibits a curious instance of the civilization introduced by the Roman arms into this island; for the erection of marks to denote the distance from place to place, is an accommodation, at least to the travelling stranger, which unpolished nations never devised; and which the inhabitants of Britain never generally enjoyed from the final departure of the Roman legions, till the last century, when mile-stones were again erected along our principal turnpike roads. The unlearned visitor, it is confessed, will be apt to view, with some degree of disappointment, the object of which we are speaking, and about which much busy conjecture, and learned antiquarian research has been employed; for indeed, its appearance is neither singular nor striking, the engraving being but slight, and the letters rudely formed. But the ingenious observer will esteem it a valuable curiosity; not only because it clears up the long doubted question, whether the RATÆ of Antoninus's Itinerary was the present Leicester, but because it is one of those objects which assist the reflecting mind in connecting the past with the present; and, by confirming from sensible evidence the records of history, give greater weight and effect to the lessons she may teach.

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The situation in which this stone is at present placed, has often been thought improper; for it is undoubtedly exposed to injuries from the wantonness of play, and is so little conspicuous from its place in the obelisk, that nothing appears necessarily to attract the attention of the stranger. A situation more private, though not wholly so, would be more proper; such a one as the garden of the Infirmary would afford: it would there have all the publicity the curious could wish, and all the security the antiquary could desire.

Our visitor, continuing his walk along this street, which, as he probably will know, is on the great road from the metropolis to the north-west part of the kingdom, arrives at a scene of busy traffic. Here, among numbers of newly-erected dwellings (proofs of the increasing population of the town) is the public and principal wharf on the navigable canal, near which is an iron foundery. This canal was formed, in consequence of a bill passed in 1791, for the purpose of opening a communication with the Loughborough canal, and through that, with the various navigations, united to the Trent. The line of the canal from Leicester to Loughborough is near sixteen miles in extent, and serves to supply Leicester with coal, lime, and the greater part of all the other heavy articles, which the consumption of a place, containing sixteen thousand inhabitants, requires.

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The rates of tonnage, according to the act, from Loughborough to Leicester, are—

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| For coals | 1s. 2d. per ton. |
| Iron, timber, &c. | 2s. 6d. |

Quantity of the articles brought by this canal:

| | <i>tons</i> |
|--|-------------|
| Coal annually consumed in Leicester and its vicinity | 35,000 |
| Ditto forwarded to other canals | 18,000 |
| Merchandize for Leicester | 4,000 |
| Ditto sent down (chiefly wool) | 1,600 |

Thus, whether we consider the saving of corn, &c. consumed by the horses employed in land carriage, the comparative cheapness of the conveyance, or the improved state of our roads, relieved from such heavy weights, it must be acknowledged that this canal adds more than might have been expected to the convenience of Leicester, and the greater part of its county. Indeed, these *water-roads*, as navigable canals may be termed, reflect the greatest honour on the ingenuity of man, exemplified in their formation, and prove most strikingly to the thinking mind, how boundless are the advantages of civilized life, and how inviolable the security afforded to property by laws, wisely framed and judiciously enforced. p. 13

The view from this spot, across the Abbey Meadow, extending on the opposite side of the canal, with the ruins of the Devonshire mansion, commonly termed the *Abbey*, from its being the scite of *St. Mary de Pratis*, will, by most visitors, be considered, at least, as very pleasing; but as we mean to conduct our traveller to that place, we shall, at present, forbear to particularize it.

We shall immediately, along a lane, called Arch-deacon's Lane, about the middle of which is a Meeting house, with a small burial ground, belonging to the General Baptists, guide our stranger to p. 14

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH.

This structure is rendered venerable by its tower, whose pinnacles and trefoil-work, with the niche, or tabernacle, on the corner of the south wall of the church, would have even shown it, had not its date been confirmed by Bishop Alnwicke's register, 1441, to have been the work of the era of the regular gothic. From this tower, a ring of ten bells, well known for their excellence, sound in frequent peals of harmony along the meadow and river below.

This, when the other churches of Leicester were given to the abbey by Robert Bossu, was annexed as a prebend to the cathedral of Lincoln, by the bishops of that diocese to whom it then belonged. The right of presentation is vested in the person holding the prebend, and the parish, with the neighbouring dependent parish of Knighton, is exempted from the jurisdiction of the Arch-deacon of Leicester. The inside of the church is handsome; the nave and side aisles are supported by gothic arches, whose beauty and symmetry are not concealed by aukward galleries. The organ was erected by the parishioners in 1773. p. 15

Several elegant modern monuments adorn the walls, and in the north aisle is the alabaster tomb of Bishop Penny, many years abbot of the neighbouring monastery of St Mary de Pratis. In the church-yard the military trophies of a black tomb commemorate Andrew Lord Rollo. This nobleman was an instance of the attraction which a martial life affords to an elevated mind, for he entered the service at the age of forty, when generally the habits and inclinations of life are so fixed, as scarcely to admit any change. After many years of severe and dangerous services, he died at Leicester, as the inscription informs us, on his way to Bristol, for the recovery of his health, 1765. p. 16

It is to be observed of this and the other churches in this place, that the entrance is by a descent of several steps; a circumstance proving incontestibly, that the ground without has been considerably raised, since no reason could induce the founders of these sacred edifices to sink the floors beyond the natural level; nor is the surface of the church-yards alone, higher than the floors of the churches; so caused by the continued interment of the dead: but the general level of the pavements of the streets is also higher; from which it must be inferred, that the ground on which the present houses are built has been every where raised, and that very considerably. That the rubbish produced by buildings, and particularly the consumption of fuel, should produce this effect, is what any one may readily believe; and the Bishop of Llandaff calculates in his Chemical Essays, that the quantity of coal consumed annually in London, would raise an area of ten miles square, a full inch. p. 17

But notwithstanding it may safely be affirmed that a much greater quantity of fuel is at present consumed, and more rubbish produced annually in Leicester, than at any other period whatever, yet the seeming paradox may easily be proved, that little, if any alteration in the level of the town is made now. For the demand of all the refuse of the yards for the purposes of agriculture, and the ordinary attention paid to sweeping the streets, prevent any accumulation of soil: the change of level then, of which our churches afford such indubitable proofs, can only have taken place when the streets were unpaved, and made the receptacle of every kind of offal from the houses; and when the yards, uncleared for the purposes of improved agriculture, were choaked by accumulated filth; the whole almost ever yielding in abundance those noxious steams, the loathsome parent of pestilences, which, in former days, frequently proved the scourges of our larger towns, and too often spread their contagion to the villages. Hence the entrance into our churches, among other good sentiments, may excite in the reflective mind a gratitude for the improved comforts the inhabitants of large towns now enjoy; and the same circumstances may also call forth the exertions of benevolence to promote still greater cleanliness, and to remove from the habitations of man those effects of filthiness, which, in proportion to their extent, are always offensive, and sometimes fatal. p. 18

Westward from this church-yard, extends a street strait and wide, but meanly built, called

SANVY-GATE.

Here nothing can be traced worthy of observation, except the etymologist stops to glean the remark that *Sanvy* is derived from *sancta via*, the antient name of the street, so denominated from the solemn procession that passed through it on Whitsun Monday, in its way from St. Mary's to St. Margaret's. In this procession the image of the Virgin was carried under a canopy, with an attendant minstrel and harp, accompanied by representatives of the twelve apostles, each denoted by the name of the sacred character he personated, written on parchment, fixed to his bonnet; these were followed by persons bearing banners, and the virgins of the parish. Among other oblations they presented in St. Margaret's Church two pair of gloves; one for the Deity, and one for St. Thomas of India.

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The stranger, having visited St. Margaret's Church, may proceed up the

CHURCH-GATE,

about the middle of which he will pass through an area of about an acre and a half, the property of Sir Nigel Gresley, Bart. now used as a wood yard; but formerly given by Queen Elizabeth to the freemen of Leicester, for the practice of public sports, and especially archery; whence, from the butts, or shooting marks erected in it, it is called *Butt-close*.

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There is good reason to believe that plots of ground were once destined to the like purposes in almost every village, and butts erected for the practice of that art, to which several of the most important victories of the English were certainly owing. The use of the *arbalest*, or cross-bow, was certainly very antient in Europe, and was the weapon that proved fatal to Harold at the battle of Hastings: but the long bow was not familiar to the English, or, perhaps, not known in Europe, till the return of Edward the First from the Holy Land, where he became sensible of its superior advantages from his conflicts with the Saracens.

From this period till the time of Charles the First, frequent orders were issued by the kings, and acts of parliament were passed, enforcing and regulating the exercise of the long bow. Persons of all ages, from seven years old and upwards, were obliged by penalties to appear at stated times, each with his bow of a length equal to his own height, and, at least, a brace of arrows, to try his skill and strength before the butts near their respective places of residence; and by a statute of Henry the Eighth, no one under twenty-four was allowed to shoot at any mark, at a less distance than eleven score, or 220 yards, a distance of greater length than our *Butt-close* is at present; yet it is certain that the adjoining orchard once formed part of it, and other encroachments may have been made on it, probably at the north end.

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The great execution that may be done by the bow, from the rapidity of its discharges, and the confusion a flight of arrows is likely to occasion, especially among cavalry, has inclined some to contend that it is a weapon in excellence superior to the musket. But the difficulty of procuring, in any great quantity, the proper wood for the formation of bows, the expense of arrows, and, above all, the long practice and training, even from infancy, necessary to form an archer capable of drawing *an arrow a cloth-yard long*, [23] will ever secure the preference to the latter weapon, which, though as commonly used, perhaps less certain of hitting the mark, is however capable of doing much execution at double the distance to which the bow will carry [24].

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Crossing the Butt-close, to the alley on the right, we pass the *Presbyterian*, or GREAT MEETING HOUSE, built, as appears by a date on the walls, 1708; the congregation of which was first established in 1680. The seats are calculated to accommodate eight hundred persons. An organ was erected here in 1800, a valuable advantage to the choir, who form a musical society, cultivated with great care, and justly celebrated for its excellence.

In an opposite lane, now called Causeway-lane, but formerly St. John's, leading to the Town Goal, the scite of St. John's Chapel, is a small place of worship appropriated to the service of the *Romish Church*. It is secluded from observation, being situated behind the house of the officiating priest, and is a neat miniature representation of the peculiar decorations with which the members of that religion adorn the places where they offer up their public devotions.

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Opposite the Great Meeting is a Meeting House newly erected by a society of *Independents*, which will seat six hundred persons; and in the adjoining lane, which has undergone a nominal degeneracy from *St. Peter's* to *Woman's Lane*, is another, erected 1803, by a society calling themselves *Episcopalian Baptists*. Between these two latter buildings, is an area used as a *Bowling Green*, and *Tea Garden*, with many small structures erected for the general purposes of amusement; it is known by the name of the *New Vauxhall*. Among this various assemblage of edifices stands one, which from its size will attract the attention of visitors; it is a spacious House for the reception of Lunatics, under the direction of Dr. Arnold. From hence we pass an irregular street, now called the

p. 26

SWINE MARKET,

formerly *Parchment Lane*; which may afford interest to the mind tho' not to the eye; for the reflective Traveller will not regard as unimportant the humble dwellings of those Manufacturers whose industry supplies the commercial wealth of the nation.

From this street we arrive at a spot still called the

EAST-GATES,

tho the gates of the ancient town were, some years ago, taken down to render the passage more commodious. In the massy wood of these gates were found balls of a large size, which probably had lodged there ever since the assault made upon the town by king Charles's forces in 1695, when according to a note in the pocket-book of one Simmonds, a quarter-master in the King's army, which is now preserved in the Harleian library, "Col. Bard's Tertia fell on with scaling ladders, some near a flanker, and others scaled the horne work before the draw-bridge on the east side."

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We now advance along the

HIGH-STREET,

observing on the right hand, about half way up, a lofty hexagon turret, whose top is glaz'd for the purpose of a prospect seat. It bears on the inside, marks of considerable antiquity, and is a remain of the mansion of Henry Earl of Huntingdon, called *Lord's Place*. It has a winding staircase of stone, with a small apartment on each story, and is now modernized with an outward coating of brick.

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From hence we enter a street, which was formerly upon the great north road; it leads to Ashby-de-la-zouch, and changing its denomination at different places, intersects the town from the southern extremity, where stands the Infirmary, to the North Bridge, a space of a mile and one eighth; where it is crossed by High-Street and St. Nicholas' Street, it takes the name of

HIGH-CROSS-STREET,

from a plain doric pillar bearing the name of High Cross, and which formed some years ago one of the supporters of a light temple looking building of the same name, that served as a shelter to the country people who here hold a small market on Wednesdays and Fridays for the sale of butter, eggs, &c. Here the members of parliament are proclaimed, and here also may be seen on Michaelmas day, the grotesque ceremony of the poor men of Trinity Hospital, arrayed like ancient Knights, having rusty helmets on their heads and breast-plates fastened over their black taberdes proclaiming the fair.

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Some paces lower the massy stone front of an edifice adorned with rusticated pillars points to the eye the *County Goal*, erected in the year 1791, at the expense of six thousand pounds. The spectator may perhaps be led into a reflection on the violation of propriety, when he sees the Roman Fasces and Pileus encircled by heavy chains decorating an English prison. Under these symbols the name of the Architect is fully conspicuous, and it may be observed as an example of sudden vicissitude, that the builder of this fabrick became, as a debtor, its first inhabitant.

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This prison, to which the county bridewell is now added, was erected, upon the scite of the old goal, some years after the benevolent Howard visited Leicester, and is built with solitary cells after the plan recommended by that celebrated philanthropist.

The mention of a character so widely expanding beyond the customary sphere of human action irresistibly arrests the attention of the heart that glows into admiration at striking examples of virtue, and of the head that feels interest in tracing the motives which influence the conduct of man.

Separated from the county prison, by a lane called *Free-School Lane*, is a rude heavy building, adorned with the Royal Arms. This is the FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, the æra of whose original foundation has been thought uncertain; but upon the authority of the learned topographer Leland, it is ascertained to have been founded by one of the three Wigstons interred in the collegiate church in the Newark, and who, according to the same writer, was a Prebendary of that church. This, if not the same person, was brother to him who founded the Hospital dedicated to St. Ursula, now called *Wigston's Hospital*. The master of that Hospital, had formerly the privilege of recommending, if not appointing the master and usher of the school, but this right is now exercised by the Mayor and senior Aldermen.—The present building was erected by the Mayor and Burgesses, in the fifteenth of Elizabeth, who granted them for that purpose, the materials of the adjoining church of St. Peter.

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On the opposite side of the street projects the gabel end of a building once part of the *Blue Boar*, afterwards *Blue Bell* inn, in ancient times undoubtedly the principal inn of the place. The old over-hanging window gave light to a chamber in which stood the bedstead, which has been celebrated by the name of *King Richard's Bedstead*, from the circumstance of his having slept in it a few nights preceding Bosworth Fight.

Antiquaries have spoken of this bedstead as belonging to the king rather than to the master of the house; and this opinion has been thought favoured by the circumstance of a large sum in gold coin, partly of Richard's reign, accidentally discovered in its double bottom. The bedstead is of oak, highly ornamented with carved work, and is now, in the possession of Tho. Babington Esq. M.P. There seems but little reason to suppose that a Royal General while attending the march of his Army, should unnecessarily encrease his baggage by so cumbrous a piece of furniture, or that a Sovereign, guarded by nearly all the military force of the Nation, should find it expedient to hide his gold like a private unprotected person. The bedstead therefore, it may safely be inferred, belonged, not to a monarch, but to the master of a good inn; and the money was secreted in it by some person anxious to secure his property from the dangers threatened by

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times of civil distraction.

At the bottom of *Blue Boar Lane*, which takes its name from the inn, is a small Alms-house, founded 1712, by Matthew Simons Esq. for six Widows, and endowed with 20*l.* 10*s.* annually.

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The next observable object in the High Cross Street, is the TOWN GOAL. It is a commodious building, with a handsome stone front, and built after the plan of Howard—the Architect, Mr. W. Firmadge.

In taking down the old Goal for the erection of the present edifice, in the year 1792, incorporated with the walls of the cells were discovered the remains of the chapel of St John, supposed to have been destroyed during the contests between Henry the Second and his Son. A regular stone arch belonging to this chapel, of a circular form, with ornaments of chevron work, was carefully taken from among the ruins of the old goal, and preserved by that industrious Antiquary and Historian of Leicester, Mr. Throsby.

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The small Hospital of St. John, to which this chapel belonged, joins the prison; it supports six Widows who subsist on a very scanty stipend arising from various annual donations. Bent's Hospital, being the ground floor of the same building, supports four Widows on an endowment equally small.

We are now approaching one of the most valuable traces which Leicester affords of our Roman Conquerors, a relic of their tessellated floors; preserved with great attention, in the cellar of Mr. Worthington, opposite the town prison. It was discovered in the year 1675, about four feet and a half under the surface of the earth, which beneath was found to consist of oyster shells to a considerable depth; it was sunk from its original position on one side being considerably inclined from the level.—This pavement, which is an octagon three feet diameter, represents a Stag looking intently upon the modestly-inclined countenance of a figure seemingly female, with her arm resting affectionately against his neck; in front stands a boy, whose wings and bow plainly indicate him to be a Cupid; he appears about to discharge an arrow at the breast of the female; a circumstance which renders it very certain that the subject must be the amours of some fabulous personages, but assuredly not *Diana and Actæon*; nor yet as some Antiquaries have hastily supposed, *Cypressus* lamenting the death of his favourite stag. Indeed in the whole of the *Metamorphoses*, no story can be found bearing the slightest resemblance to the subject before us.

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The elegant and picturesque Gilpin has chosen to denominate this pavement “a piece of miserable workmanship,” which can only be owing to the manner in which he injudiciously viewed it. By placing the light in a proper position, the spectator will observe that the effect of the whole piece gives the idea of good design, shade, and relief; and will be clearly convinced that it could not have been wrought by a hand which had not made considerable progress in the art of painting, as is evident from the rounding of the arm of the female, the foreshortening of the stag's horn, and the animated expression of each countenance. The tesserae are of various sizes, mostly square, but where a narrow line of light was required, as in the strait Grecian nose of the female, they are small and long. They appear to be a composition, and are of three or four distinct shades, the darkest a brown approaching to black, the next a warm or red brown, and the lightest, which forms the ground work, an ochery white.

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The admirers of this art, so much practised by the Romans as a decoration of their magnificent buildings, an art which has survived so long as to have obtained an established manufactory in modern Rome, will ascertain the pavement in question to be one of the first specimens of antient mosaic, and will, with gratified attention, here behold form and shade called up from that unmanageable material, a piece of baked earth.

The commonly received opinion of these pavements having been the floors of baths, as founded on the circumstance of their being discovered three or four feet under the surface of the earth, is not conclusive; for the soil has been raised by accidental accumulation; and had not this been the case, the depth of three or four feet would not have been sufficient for a Bath as it could not have allowed room for submersion. Neither does the vault with a floor and walls of tessellated work, and pipes in the roof, discovered near Leicester in the reign of James the first, the memory alone of which is preserved by our indefatigable topographer, Mr. Nichols, render such an opinion in any respect more certain; but that some of them were floors of sitting rooms may be justly inferred, from the flues constructed under them for the purpose of conveying heat.

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In examining the specimens of the mosaic art, we are tempted to draw a far different conclusion from that adopted by the truly learned author of the *Munimenta Antiqua*, who strongly adduces the number of *fragile* (as he terms them) tessellated floors found in Britain, as a proof of the slightness of the superstructures erected by the Romans. Now, surely it is not to be expected that a people whose architecture in their own country was so strikingly characterized by massiveness & splendor, should, in this island, which though a distant was a durable conquest, and improved by all their arts and industry, have departed from their usual principles. And farther, the taste and costly magnificence discoverable in these curious remains must lead to the conclusion that they could not have committed them to slight or ordinary buildings, for they were decorations which the experience of more than fourteen hundred years has scarcely surpassed. Even the looms of modern Brussels, in elegance and beauty of pattern, cannot fairly outvie the Mosaic Carpets of the antient Romans.

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The next object that engages the eye is the church of *All Saints*, projecting on the west end into the street, exhibiting in its clock an humble copy of the machinery of St Dunstan's, in London. It

is a small neat church with three aisles and a low tower, and nothing in its architecture attracts regard. This vicarage with that of *St Peter's*, which was annexed to it in the reign of Elizabeth, includes the antient parish of *St Michael*, and part if not the whole, of that of *St. Clement*.

A monument in this church-yard commemorates a character greatly distinguished by his large donations to the poor—*Ald. Gabriel Newton*.

Of the prevalence of alms-giving in Leicester, this parish, together with the rest, bears full testimony, in a long list of benefactors, from the Royal Grant of Charles the first of forty acres of land in Leicester forest, to poor housekeepers, (which now produces annually 33l. 11s. 4d [42]) to the donor of the penny wheaten Loaf. From the returns to Parliament in the present reign, when accounts were made of all the charitable donations in the kingdom, it appears that there are donations in the parishes of Leicester, in land and money (including the endowments of the lesser Hospitals) mostly vested in the trust of the Corporation and by them distributed, to the annual amount of upwards of 800l.—see Nichols.—

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A short space below the church is the spot where formerly stood the North Gates; here a narrow lane, which once obtained the name of *St. Clements*, from its leading to that church, but which is now degraded into *Dead-mans Lane*, is the passage to a Meeting House, belonging to the Society of Quakers. The street continuing in a right line, now takes the name of

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NORTH-GATE STREET.

and conducts us to a bridge over the Canal, beyond which is the *North or St. Sunday's Bridge*. This is an elegant stone structure, erected in 1796 and when viewed from the Abbey meadow below, it forms with the trees and slopes beyond it a very pleasing scene. Its three arches are small segments of a large circle.

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At the foot of the bridge in an area enclosed by a low wall, and distinguished by a few scattered grave-stones, the church-yard of *St. Leonard* meets the eye. The church, of which no trace remains, was demolished by the Parliament Garrison in the reign of Charles the first; as from its convenient situation it might have covered the approach of the enemy, and given them the command of the bridge. The parish still remains distinct, and the occasional duty is performed by the minister of *St. Margaret's*.

We cannot leave the North Bridge, without remarking that near this spot once stood an establishment, which as it related to a privilege exclusively royal, that of coining money, has ever been thought to confer honor on the places where it was allowed to be exercised. It is undoubtedly proved from the series of coins that has been collected, that money was coined at the *Mint at Leicester*, in regular succession from the reign of the Saxon king Athelstan, down to Henry the second. The *Monetarii*, or Governors of the mint, were entitled to considerable privileges and exemptions, being *Socmen*, or holders of land in the Soc, or franchise of a great Baron, yet they could not be compelled to relinquish their tenements at their lord's will. They paid twenty pounds every year, a considerable sum, as a pound at the time of the conquest, contained three times the weight of silver it does at present. These pounds consisted of pennies, each weighing one *ora* or ounce, of the value of 20 pence. Two thirds of this sum were paid to the king, and the other third to the feudal Baron of Leicester.

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The Leicester coins of Athelstan and Edmund the first have only a rose with a legend of the king's name, that of the Moneyer, and Leicester; from Etheldred the second, they bear the impress of the royal head and sceptre, with the same stile of legend unchanged.

In this series of Leicester coins, which has been engraved with accurate attention in the valuable work of Mr. Nichols, the triangular helmets, uncouth diadems, and rudely expressed countenances of our Saxon Sovereigns, exhibit, when opposed to a plate of Roman coinage, a striking contrast to the nicely delineated features of the laurelled Cæsars. In no instance of comparison does the Roman art appear more conspicuous. The great quantity of coins of that scientific people which have been found at Leicester, is an additional testimony of its consequence as a Roman town; these, unfortunately upon being found at different periods, have puffed into various hands, and altho' some few gentlemen here have made collections, yet it is to be regretted that by far the greater part of the coins have been taken from the town. Had those found in the last century been thrown together into one cabinet, Leicester might have exhibited at this time a respectable series of Roman coinage, both in brass and silver, from the emperor Nero, down to Valens. Leaving those whose taste shall so direct them, to pursue the train of reflections to which this most curious subject may lead, we return to our route. From the North Budge two streets branch out, that on the left the

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WOOD-GATE,

leading to the Ashby-de-la-Zouch road, and that on the right, the

ABBAY-GATE,

conducting us to the Abbey.

The name of *Abbey*, so dear to painting, poetry, and romance, naturally raises in the mind an idea of the picturesque and the awful; but we are now approaching no gothic perspectives, no "long

drawn aisles and fretted vaults," and scarcely able to bring a single instance of assimilation, we visit indeed an Abbey only in name; yet we visit a spot well adapted to the purposes to which it was appropriated. Sequestered, surrounded by pleasing objects, and dignified by the not uncertain evidences of history, it offers to the thinking mind all those interesting sensations which a review of past times, important events, and manners now no more, can possibly produce.

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An antient brick wall with a small niche of stone is the first indication of its boundaries. This is said by Leland, to have been built by Bishop Penny who was Abbot of this Monastery in 1496. This prelate continued in his Abbacy till he was translated to the See of Carlisle, and even then, when spared from his episcopal duty, he delighted to dwell among his brethren in this religious retreat, and was interred in the neighbouring church of St. Margaret. Tracing the wall, we enter the grounds by a modern gateway, and perceive, among orchards, gardens, and potatoe plantations (the land being occupied by a Gardener and Nursery-man) the front wall, facing the north west, of the mansion, once belonging to the Earls of Devonshire, which, as Mr. Grose has ascertained from a MS. in the British Museum, was built out of the ruins of the Abbey, long after its dissolution. The massy stone stanchions of the windows of this house which still remain entire, and the firmness of the walls, shew the durability of the materials. They still retain the traces of that fire by which the forces of Charles the first on their retreat northward after their defeat at Naseby, destroyed that mansion, a few days before, the quarters of the king himself.

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In these gardens, nearly thirty acres in extent, no traces now remain of the refectory, the cells of the Abbot and twelve Canons, the structures raised in the year 1134, by the great Robert Bossu, Earl of Leicester; neither is there, as might have been hoped, one vestige of that noble church, believed to have been built by Petronilla, the wife of his son Robert Blanch-mains, and adorned with the pious donation of a braid of her hair wrought into a rope, to suspend the lamp in the great choir; an offering at which some of our modern females who sacrifice their tresses with other views, may perhaps smile. Nor has the diligence of the enquiring Antiquary been more successful in the discovery of any traces of the tomb of Cardinal Wolsey, that great example of fallen ambition; who, after a life of more than princely magnificence, stripped of his honours, deprived of his eight hundred attendants, came here, sick, almost solitary, and a prisoner, performing a wearisome journey on an humble mule, to crave of the Abbot "*a little earth for charity.*"

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But, however barren this spot may seem to be of antient relicks, it is not wholly destitute of objects calculated to revive in the thinking mind, the events to which we have been alluding; for in the small garden or court before the main front of the present ruins are still to be seen the delapidated towers of that gate-way thro' which Wolsey entered in melancholy degradation, and thro' which other great, more prosperous, and often royal visitors were admitted with their stately trains.

Returning by the first entrance, and passing this interesting gate-way, and the antient stone wall of the Abbey, overhung with profuse ivy, the visitor will find himself well recompensed for the trouble of a traverse along the Abbey meadow, from the Bleach-yard at the angle of the wall, to the navigation bridge at the bottom of North-gate street.

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On crossing the antient bed of the Soar, the eye will immediately take its flight over a fine level plain containing at least five hundred acres of perhaps the richest soil in the kingdom, for that may truly be said of the *Abbey Meadow*. The right of this tract is vested partly in a number of proprietors who claim the hay, and partly in the inhabitants of Leicester, who possess the privilege of here pasturing their cows till a certain period of the year.

This ample area was formerly used as a race ground, but that annual sport is now removed to the South-side of the town, having been here frequently incommoded by the floods from the Soar.

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It has lately, at various reviews been dignified by a display of that admirable patriotism, which, while it reflects honor on the British name in general, is found in particular to glow with equal zeal and firmness in the breasts of the Volunteers of Leicester and its County.

The view to the North-ward is simply ornamented by the church and village of Belgrave, whose inhabitants in 1357, in consequence of a dispute with the Abbot concerning the boundaries of the Stocking Wood, blockaded the North Bridge, and the Fosse, with a determination of depriving the Monks of their usual supply of provision from their *Grange*, or Farm at Stoughton. This view forms a pleasing contrast to the towering churches and close grouped houses of Leicester. The eye of taste will however soon turn from these objects and dwell with greater pleasure on the noble ivied walls bounding the Abbey domains; it will proceed to contemplate the mingling angles of its ruins, and in the back ground, the rich tops of the woods in the neighbourhood of Beaumont Leys. This scene however, will not serve merely to amuse the eye, but will naturally lead the well informed visitor to interesting and affecting thoughts, while he contemplates the spot in which, in former times, were acted all the striking rites of the Romish Church, tho' he may lament the superstitious errors into which a dark and ignorant age had plunged mankind, he need not join with the destroyer of these venerable institutions in lording then memory with odious crimes, nor deem them even wholly useless. Pity and a regard to truth will lead him to acknowledge that, tho' their worship was less pure than the reformed service now happily established in this Island, yet it was calculated, by its address to the senses, to keep alive the remembrance of the faith of the Gospel, and to prevent the warring Baron and his rude vassals from relapsing into heathenism. Let it also be remembered, that Monks, odious as we are wont to consider them, were at one time, the only inhabitants of Christendom, who were at all acquainted with such sciences as then peered above the mists of overwhelming ignorance. Of history, they may be said

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to be the modern fathers, and tho' perhaps, like the age in which they lived, in some respects, blind themselves, they led, not indirectly to the enlightening of the present age. But in their own times they were far from useless; their monasteries were ever ready to receive the wearied traveller, and many persons of family, tho' of broken fortunes were honorably maintained at their board. The poor were gratuitously relieved from their kitchens, and that in a manner, upon the whole, more favorable to religion and morality than they are now by those parish rates, which the abolition of monasteries, and the partition of their property among private individuals, have rendered so oppressively necessary. To these valuable purposes the revenues of our Abbey were fully competent, for it possessed the advowsons of thirty six parish churches in Leicester and its County, which together with lands in various places, and rights in particular districts, produced annually for its disposal more than one thousand pounds.

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Quitting the Abbey meadow, and passing the North lock, we still continue our walk along pleasing rural scenes. The sweeps of the river which here beautifully meanders, wash, almost closely, a large extent of town, affording an agreeable prospect on the left, and a slope finely diversified with groves and pasturage descends gently to the meadows on the right. Approaching the Bow-Bridge, we pass a plot of ground insulated by the Soar, called the Black Friars, once the scite of a monastery belonging to the Augustine or Black Friars, of which no traces now remain. That arm of the river which flows under the west bridge, is by some supposed, from its passing under the scite of the old Roman town, to be a canal formed by that people for the convenience of their dwellings. It is now called the *New Soar*, and whether it can authentically boast the honor of being a Roman work, the antiquary may perhaps endeavour in vain to decide. A tunnel or Roman sewer, was discovered in 1793, at an equal distance between the Roman ruin, called Jewry Wall, and the river, and in a direct line towards the latter, which contained some curious fragments of Roman pottery.

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Tho' it be the leading purpose of this survey to point out existing objects, those who lament the loss of such antient remains as were justly to be prized, will pardon a brief tribute to the memory of *Bow-Bridge*. That single arch of stone, richly shadowed with ivy, spanned, at the corner of this island, the arm of the Soar. Its beautiful curve, unbroken either by parapet or hand-rail, well merited the name with which some Antiquaries have graced it, the *Rialto Bridge*. On the top of the bow, feeding on the mould which time had accumulated upon the stony ridge, flourished a spreading hawthorn; this with the stream below, when sparkling under the reflection of the western sun, the broken shrubby banks, and the distant swell of Brad-gate Park hill, formed a picture which has often allured the eye; a picture, that, as it repeatedly arrested the painter's hand, we can hardly say is now no more.

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Of this Bridge, the learned author of the *Desiderata Curiosa*, who has mistaken it for the adjoining one of four arches, has given a plate in which is represented a troop of horsemen with banners, carrying the dead body of Richard the third, thrown upon a horse, over a bridge which never exceeded three feet; a width fully sufficient for the purpose for which it seems to have been constructed, that of affording a foot passage from the monastery of the Augustines to a spring of pure water some yards distant. This spring till within a few years, was covered with a large circular stone, having an aperture in the centre, thro' which the monks let down their pitchers into the water, and retained the name of *St. Austin's Well*.

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But tho' not over this bridge, yet over the adjoining one, known also, probably from its vicinity to the other, by the name of *Bow-Bridge*, the monster Richard really passed, proud, angry, and threatening, mounted on his charger to meet Richmond; and over it, the day after the battle, his body was brought behind a pursuivant at arms, naked and disgraced, and after being exhibited in the Town-Hall, then situated at the bottom of Blue-Boar Lane, was interred in the church of the Grey-Friars near St. Martins.

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The name of this king excites in the mind a sensation of horror;—and tho' it required the overwhelming evidence of human depravity furnished by the French revolution, to make the author of the "Historic Doubts," believe his crimes possible, the concurrent testimonies both of Lancastrian and Yorkist Chroniclers, too well demonstrate them. Tho' the latter may have endeavoured to soften the picture, and Shakespear may have thrown upon it the darkest shades by working up his deformity of body and mind into a picture of diabolical horror, the original, the undoubted traits are preserved by both parties; traits, which so far from being peculiar to Richard, marked likewise the other characters of the contending houses. Nor did he deviate widely from the manners of the times when he "*waded thro' slaughter to a throne.*"

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A pleasing woody road leads from Bow-Bridge to Danett's Hall, the seat of Edward Alexander, M.D. The ground here rising in a gentle slope obtains a command of the town, and that the dryness of the soil and agreeableness of the situation, mark it as a desirable spot for residence, even the taste of the antient Romans may prove; for in the plot of ground known by the name of the "great cherry orchard," remains a relic of one of their houses. This is a fragment of a tessellated floor, discovered a few years ago, but covered over by a former possessor of the estate. It is composed of tesserae of various sizes, forming an elegant geometrical pattern, but how far it extends, has not yet been ascertained.

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Among the great number of these pavements found at Leicester, are three very perfect ones discovered in the ground belonging to Walter Ruding Esq. adjoining the old Vauxhall, near the west bridge—they also are composed in curious and exact patterns, and form entire squares; but are now filled up. Of these, together with that in the great cherry orchard, very accurate plates are given in Nichols.

To the westward of Danett's Hall, and West-cotes, the seat of Mr. Ruding, is a lane or bridle road, commonly called the Fosse, but various reasons lead to the belief that it is not part of the antient Roman road of that name. The unvarying testimony of tradition has clearly proved that the road from the town westward lay, in the reign of Richard the third, over Bow-Bridge. By attending to the Fosse, which runs nearly in the line of the Narborough road by West-cotes, it will seem likewise necessary to conclude that the approach to Leicester, in the time of the Romans, was also over a bridge situate near that spot; for as it is certain that the Fosse did pass thro' Leicester, and the Romans in forming their roads scrupulously adhered to the strait line, they would cross the old Soar near this place. p. 65

When the Romans penetrated into Britain under the reign of Claudius, they found it almost in every part, crowded with woods, and infested with morasses; and as the natives well knew how to avail themselves of these fastnesses, the island could never be considered as effectually conquered till it was rendered accessible to the march of the legions, and means were provided for speedy communication of intelligence from even the most distant parts of the provinces. On this account their Cohorts early applied themselves to the task of forming roads; nor did they cease their labours till in the time of Antoninus, they had opened passages thro' the island in all directions. In the reign of that emperor, these works, connected with others which they had already constructed on the continent, formed a great chain of communication, which, passing thro' Rome, from the Pict's wall, or north west, to Jerusalem, nearly the southeast point of the empire, was drawn out to the length of 4080 Roman, or as Mr. Reynolds has shewn, of so many British statute miles. Along these roads proper relays of horses were stationed at short distances, and it seems that couriers could travel with ease above an hundred miles a day. Two of these roads, as already observed, passed thro' Leicester. One, the *Via Devana*, leading from Camalodunum, or Colchester, in Essex, to *Deva*, of west Chester, a distance of about two hundred miles, has been lately discovered by some ingenious and able Antiquaries of the University of Cambridge. p. 66

It enters Leicestershire in the neighbourhood of Rockingham; continues a strait road for many miles till it nearly reaches Leicester, and passing thro' the town it is found to leave the county near Ashby-de-la-Zouch. The other road, called the *Via Fossata* or Fosse, always known, and every where remarkable, traverses the island in a north-east direction, from near Grimsby on the coast of Lincolnshire, passes thro' Bath, and terminates at Seaton, a village situated on the coast of Devonshire, a distance of more than two hundred and fifty miles. This road enters Leicestershire at a place called Seg's Hill, on the wolds, or antiently wild and uncultivated parts of the county; from thence it passes the village of Thurmaston and approaches the East gates of Leicester, by the street called the Belgrave Gate. On the south-west of the town it is again recognized in the Narborough road, and from that village it proceeds again a solitary lane till it enters Warwickshire at High Cross, where it crosses the no less celebrated Roman road, the Watling-Street. It is well known that in the formation of these roads, the Romans spared no cost and labour. From the remains of some of them it appears that upon a bed of sand they spread a coating of gravel, upon which the pebbles, and sometimes hewn or squared stones were laid, firmly compacted together in a bed of cement. This, we have reason to believe, was the structure of such of the roads in this island as are distinguished by the title of *Street*, a word derived from the Latin *Strata*, meaning formed of layers. But such pains were not, it is probable, taken in all cases; and from the name of one of the roads passing thro' Leicester, the *Fosse*, an abbreviation of the Latin *Via Fossata*, meaning the way ditched, or dug, we cannot but conclude that it was a road raised by the spade and formed with a rampart, and probably covered with gravel in the manner of our present turnpike roads. The same may also be said of the *Via Divana*, whose rampart, now covered with grass, the ingenious discoverers observed in many places. p. 68

When the Saxons subdued this island, after the departure of the Romans, to preserve a ready communication between distant places formed no part of their rude and simple policy. Hence the best roads of the Romans were neglected by them, and since the Romans had either forbidden, or the inclination of the Britons had dissuaded them from erecting villages on the line of public roads, those roads became useless, and their lasting materials are only to be found, tho' not distinguished, in the foundations of the neighbouring habitations. As it would always be more easy to carry away the materials of a Roman road than dig for them in a quarry, it has happened that those materials have been in general so intirely removed, as to leave almost no where any other trace, than history and tradition, of their existence. p. 69

From the departure of the Romans in 445, to the beginning of the eighteenth century, the roads of this Island received little or no improvement from the legislative powers, except by an order in the reign of Henry the second, that roads should be cleared of woods and made open that travellers might have leisure, if they should find it prudent, to prepare to resist the almost armies of robbers which were spread over the face of almost every county. Roads, being no longer regulated by any system, to pass from place to place so as to avoid as well as might be the inconveniences of woods, bogs, and sloughs, became the only business of the traveller. It was thus by accident the line of our present roads was formed, and to this their frequent circuits and other inconveniences are owing. p. 70

During the period above mentioned they were in general so bad as to be useless for the passage of any other carriages than carts, and for these only in the summer season; so that the people inhabiting the same country as the Britons, who are said to have had numbers and great variety of cars of all kinds, were so exclusively confined to the use of horses and mules, that scarcely any other mode of conveyance was known even in London, and this so late as in the reigns of p. 71

Elizabeth and James the first; for it is certain that when the great Shakespeare fled from his country and came to town, his first means of subsistence were the pittances he might earn by holding the horses of the persons who had come from different parts of London to see the plays then performed at the Bankside Theatre.

It is not indeed to be asserted that till the eighteenth century our roads never received any repairs, for necessity would frequently call for something of the kind in most places; nor yet that Toll Bars were antiently wholly unknown; for it is certain that a Gate or Bar was first erected in the reign of Edward the first, at a place now called Holborn Bars in London, for the purpose of collecting tolls for the repairs of the roads. But it must be allowed that the art of constructing a good and firm road was ill understood, and worse attended to; and when, in the beginning of the last century, turnpike roads were first made, it was imagined that the only good form was that of a ridge and furrow lying across the road on the line of its direction. Turnpike gates were also in many places considered as such impositions that even in the beginning of the reign of George the second, some persons contested the payment, several were frequently seen together, especially at newly erected gates, suffering an interruption in their journey rather than submit to what they deemed an imposition. Every one who understands the true conveniences of life will rejoice, that both the formation and repairs of roads, and also the usefulness of turn-pike tolls are now better understood; that even countries once held to be inaccessible are now open at all times and at all seasons to the traveller, and that most of our roads are now so well suited to the purposes not only of convenience but of pleasure, that we have no reason to lament the destruction of the Roman ways, or even not to think that we have within these few years greatly surpassed them in the expedition of our mails and all the conveniences and comforts of travelling.

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On this western side of the town, where its environs afford the attraction of woody scenery, the stranger is invited to prolong his stroll round *Ruding's Walk*. This walk, tho' a continuation of the plantation that encloses West-cotes, is liberally left open by its possessor, who generously shares with the public the pleasure of his cool and shady scenery. Where the walk, after winding thro' a flourishing shrubbery, enters a grove of tall and venerable elms, the churches and buildings of the town, broken by the intermediate trees of the paddock, and the long line of distance varied by villages, scattered dwellings and corn-mills, unite in a rich and pleasing prospect.

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On turning towards the West, the lover of contrast may for a moment call to his imagination the dark, heavy, and almost impenetrable forest which covered these lands in the twelfth century, and depicture figures of the inhabitants of Leicester bearing from thence their allowed load of wood, the supply for their hearths, and for this privilege, paying at the West bridge, their toll of *brigg silver* to their feudal Baron. To this picture he will oppose the present scene of pasturage, flocks, and free husbandmen, cultivating the earth under the protection of just and equal laws. The slightest glance at past ages is a moral study, that renders us not only satisfied but grateful.

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We cannot pass West-cotes, without noticing an object in the possession of Mr. Ruding, highly interesting to the admirers of the fine Arts. This is a picture in painted glass, representing Mutius Scævola affording Porsena an astonishing proof of his resolution by burning that hand which had assassinated the secretary instead of the king. The exquisite finish, and perfect preservation of this small piece bespeak it of the antient Flemish school, whose artists according to Guicciardini, invented the mode of burning their colours into the glass so as to secure them from the corrosion of water, wind, or even time. There is no department of the delightful art of painting that so much excites wonder as this. When, in examining this piece, it is considered that every tint and demi-tint of the highly relieved drapery, every stroke of the distant tents and towers, was laid on in a fusile state; that delicate command of skill which could prevent the shades from liquefying into each other, and arrest every touch in its assigned place, so as to produce the effects of the most finished oil painting, cannot be sufficiently admired.

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Entering the town we pass the Braunston Gate, to the bridge of the same name, crossing the old Soar, and soon arrive at the West bridge, which crosses the new Soar. From hence the canal, taking the name of Union Canal, proceeds toward Market Harborough. On the corner of an old house upon the bridge, is an antient wooden bracket, which formerly supported a bell, by some supposed to have been used by the mendicant brothers of the neighbouring monastery of St. Augustine, who here took their station to beg alms, or, which is more probable, it might have been the bell belonging to the porter of the gate which stood here.

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The street called Apple-gate, that leads us to the church of St. Nicholas, will not be passed without interest by those who recollect that on this spot, where the ground rises in a gentle ascent from the river, the Legions of Rome established their town; and we are now arrived at an object which brings them more forcibly to remembrance, a massy arched wall, commonly termed, from its bounding the quarter antiently inhabited by the Jews, the *Jewry Wall*.

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This ruin, so minutely described by many Antiquaries, will afford to curious and learned observers, a valuable specimen of the mode of building practised by the Romans, but the uses for which it was designed, will, most probably, for ever elude their researches. They will not however, forbear their conjectures concerning it; of these, two have obtained most credit; one, that it was a temple of the Roman Janus; and the other, the Janua, or great Gate-way, of the Roman town. The latter seems chiefly supported by the assertion of the learned Leman, that the line of the Fosse, having joined the Via Devana, runs thro' this spot. But whoever minutely examines the arches, will not easily overcome the objections which the work affords to oppose this opinion; or assign a reason why a city no larger than our Rataë should have a Gateway with so many openings; nor does any satisfactory answer occur to the query why a gate should be

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placed in what seems to have been the central part of the antient city. And perhaps all the evidence for the other opinion rests upon the dark sooty coat that encrusts the interior of the arches; an appearance which the smook of the town would easily produce in one century. Indeed, little, it seems, can be concluded from the present outside of the work; for as we cannot conceive that the Romans would have elected so rough an edifice, it must be supposed that the present remains were originally coated with workmanship more worthy of such polished builders. If, however we must indulge a conjecture, we shall be led to imagine, from the slight remain of ornament, which is only the fragment of a niche, that this wall was either part of a Roman temple or bath. Still however such an opinion rests, and must rest, on nothing but conjecture, since the remains are too scanty to afford sufficient data for a settled opinion. Thus may we take our leave of this remarkable object, which, tho' incontrovertibly of Roman origin, and likely to exist when the church built with its stolen spoils shall be no more, must continue for ever, as it is at present, an interesting mystery. p. 82 p. 83

The adjoining church of St. Nicholas is a small edifice of very rude and consequently very antient construction. It has evidently been built at different periods. It consists only of two aisles, the north one having long since been taken down; the south aisle is gothic, and the other, properly the nave, is of that massy unornamented style, in use before and at the conquest; from the circumstance of its being built with the materials of the neighbouring Roman work, it will perhaps be no anachronism to assign to it a date prior to that period. The tower is also Saxon; and the spire having been damaged by the wind is now taken down.

The area, eastward of the churchyard, is called *Holy Bones*; bones of oxen having been there dug up in sufficient numbers to induce the belief that it was once a place of sacrifice. The church of St. Augustine which stood on this spot, is supposed to have been destroyed before the conquest. p. 84

At the corner of this area is a charity school, established on the bounty bequeathed by Ald. Gabriel Newton, for the clothing and educating thirty five boys; and in the terms of the founder's will, "instructing them in toning and psalmody."

In a lane not far from St. Nicholas' church, called Harvey Lane, is the meeting house of the Calvinistic Baptists, which is capable of containing 500 persons.

From St. Nicholas' street, we again arrive at the High-Cross, and proceed southward, along High-Cross-Street. In this street, in the house of Mr. Stephens, are the remains of a chantry or chapel, established for the purpose of saying masses for the dead, once belonging to St. Martins church. They consist of a range of windows, exhibiting in curiously painted glass, a regular series of sacred history. p. 85

The next object, worthy of attention, at which we arrive, is an elegant gothic building, with an inscription "*Consanguinitarium*, 1792." It consists of five neat dwellings, to which is annexed a yearly stipend of upwards of 60l. and was built by John Johnson, Esq. a well-known Architect as a perpetual home for such of his relations as may not be favored by successful fortune.

Turning down a narrow alley, called Castle Street, we arrive at a spacious area, on the right of which is a charity school, built in 1785, belonging to the parish of St. Mary, which clothes and educates 45 boys and 35 girls. p. 86

The visitor will now have a full view of St. Mary's church, antiently known by the distinguishing addition of *infra* or *juxta Castrum*, a building in which he will perceive, huddled together, specimens of various kinds of architecture, from the Norman gothic of the north chancel, to the very modern gothic of the spire; a mixture which evinces the antiquity of the church, marks the disasters of violence, accident, and time, and proves that the neighbourhood of the castle, within whose outer ballium or precincts it stood, was often most dangerous. That there was a church, on this spot in the Saxon times, seems almost certain, from some bricks apparently the workmanship of that people, found in the chancel; and the cheveron work round the windows of this chancel proves that the first Norman Earl of Leicester, Robert de Bellomont, when he repaired the mischiefs of the Norman conquest, or rather of the attack made by William Rufus upon the property of the Grentemaisnells, constructed a church on a plan nearly like the present, and adorned it with all the ornaments of the architecture of his times. This Earl founded in it a college of twelve canons, of whom the Dean was most probably one, and among other donations for their support, he endowed it with the patronage of all the other churches of Leicester, St. Margaret's excepted. These, his son and successor, Robert, surnamed Bossu, converted into regular canons, and removed them, with great additional donations to the Abbey in the meadows. He seems however to have continued an establishment of eight canons in the collegiate church, tho' with revenues comparatively small, since their income, at the dissolution of the monasteries, was valued only at 23l. 12s. 11d. That the number of these canons remained unchanged at the time of the dissolution, appears probable from the circumstance of seven cranes and a socket for an eighth being still found in a kind of press, or ark, as it is called, in the vestry, for the purpose of suspending the priests' vestments. p. 87 p. 88

The inside of the church is spacious and commodious, and has lately been rendered still more so by converting the gothic arches of the south side of the nave into one bold semicircular arch whose span is 39 feet, and erecting a gallery in the wide south aisle, said to have been built by John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster. p. 89

In the great choir or chapel called Trinity choir, at the east end of the great south aisle, (for the aisles of our churches were formerly often divided into chapels, but of which in this church no

traces now remain), was held a *Guild* or Fraternity, called *Trinity Guild*, founded in the reign of Henry the Seventh, by Sir Richard Sacheverel, Kt. and the good Lady Hungerford. Collections were made four times a year, of the brethren and sisters belonging to this Society, whatever it might be, for Antiquaries have not rendered the point sufficiently clear, but from their meetings being held in churches, it is most probable that they were of a religious nature. The money when collected was applied to meet various expenses, but chiefly to pay the wages of their priest, perhaps their confessor, and to supply their great feast held annually on Trinity Sunday, for which, according to the account of the steward and wardens, the following articles were purchased, A.D. 1508.

p. 90

| | s. | d. |
|----------------------|----|----|
| A dozen of Ale | 1 | 8 |
| A fat Sheep | 2 | 4 |
| Seven Lambs | 7 | 0 |
| Thirty Chickens | 1 | 11 |
| Two gallons of Cream | 0 | 8 |
| ½qr. of Malt | 2 | 0 |
| Fourteen Geese | 4 | 3 |

From a curious and ingenious Mathematical Essay on the comparative prices of similar articles in different ages, presented to the society of Antiquaries, we have here the pleasure of offering to the attention of our visitor, the following valuable remarks.

p. 91

“The generality of readers when they look into the records of antient times, are forcibly struck by the seeming lowness of the prices of every article of common demand, when compared with the modern prices. When they find that an ox was formerly sold for a few shillings, and the price of a quarter of corn calculated in pence, they are led to envy the supposed cheapness of those ages, and to bewail the distressing dearness of the present. Nothing however can be more absurd than the whining complaints founded upon such facts; for since the cheapness of living depends not so much upon the price given for every article of prime necessity, as upon the means by which, to use a common expression, the purchase may be afforded, we must, if we wish to form a proper judgment on the subject, rightly compare these means as they existed in different ages, otherwise our conclusions will be not only idle, but sometimes mischievous.

p. 92

“It is very certain that money is a commodity, no less than the articles it is employed to purchase, and like them, its absolute value is depreciated or lowered by abundance. Since the discovery of America, the quantity of gold and silver brought into general circulation, and of late, the general and extensive use of paper money which represents real specie, produces the same effect as would arise from a still greater encrease of it. From this natural depreciation alone of the value of coin, it follows that were all other circumstances to have continued the same, the relative value of money would have decreased, or a greater number of pieces of the same denomination would be now required to produce the same effect as formerly, and therefore that it will be necessary to multiply any sum of money of the present age, into some certain number, in order to learn the effect of the same sum in an assigned preceding age.”

p. 93

From this multiplication it is demonstrated that the price of the dozen of Ale, for which the Trinity Guild paid 20d. is equivalent to something more than 6d. a quart;—the fat sheep at 2s. 4d. to 1l. 11s. 4d.—the seven lambs at 7s. to 16s. each;—the thirty chickens at 23d. to rather more than 2s. 6d. the couple;—the two gallons of cream at 8d. to 2s. 8d. a quart;—the half quarter of malt at 2s. to 3l. 4s. the quarter;—the fourteen geese at 4s. 3d. to nearly 5s. each.

p. 94

In the reign of the Norman kings, articles, but especially corn, were dearer than at present. In Henry the seventh's reign meat was cheaper, but other articles dearer than at present. We now return to the church of St. Mary.

In the year 1783, the spire which had several times been injured by lightening, was so much shattered by a fresh stroke as to require to be taken down to the battlements. It was rebuilt under the direction of an architect, of the name of Cheshire at an expense, exclusive of the old materials, of 245l. 10s. the height of the spire from the ground 61 yards. In this church, in which for many years he officiated as curate, is interred the Rev. W. Bickerstaffe, a man of great simplicity of manners, and urbanity of disposition; who by his laborious and minute researches materially assisted the Topographers of Leicester.

p. 95

Near the north door of this church is a passage leading under an old fashioned building forming a gate-way into an area called the castle yard. That the present structure was the gate-way of the castle when it was tenable as a place of defence, cannot, for a moment be imagined; but that there was always an entrance at this place we are well assured, for the adjoining building on the left is known by the name of the Porter's Lodge, and it must therefore be concluded that the present was built upon the scite of the antient gate-way, and that it was constructed with the timbers and other materials taken in later ages from some part of the castle which had been

taken down.

At this gateway was preserved, till within a few years past, an antient ceremony expressive of the homage formerly paid by the magistrates of Leicester, to the feudal Lords of the castle. The mayor knocking for admittance at the gate was received by the constable of the castle, while the mace was sloped in token of homage; he then took an oath of allegiance to the king as heir to the Lancastrian property; the latter ceremony, agreeable to one of the corporation charters, is still performed, but in private. The office of constable of the castle, which in the beginning of the reign of Mary, was held by Henry duke of Suffolk, with the annual fee of sixty shillings and eight pence, is now retained only nominally. p. 96

Opposite the gate-way stands a building most probably erected by the first of the Bellomonts, tho' the modern front which meets the eye effectually conceals all the outward traces of antiquity. The inside of the edifice however is a room exceedingly curious. Its area is large, being about seventy-eight feet long, twenty-four high and fifty-one broad. It is framed into a sort of aisles, by two rows of tall and massy oaken pillars, which serve to support a large and weighty covering of slate. This vast room was the antient hall of the castle, in which the earls of Leicester, and afterwards the dukes of Lancaster, alternately held their courts, and consumed in rude but plenteous hospitality, at the head of their visitors, or their vassals, the rent of their estates then usually paid in kind. On the south end appear the traces of a door-way, which probably was the entrance into a gallery that has often, among other purposes, served as an orchestra for the minstrels and musicians of former days. This hall, during the reigns of several of the Lancastrian princes was the scene of frequent Parliaments, whose transactions our provincial historians have carefully recorded. At present it is used only for the holding the assizes and other country meetings, to which purpose it is, from its length, so well adapted, that, tho' the business of the civil and crown bars is carried on at the same time at the opposite ends of the room, the pleadings of the one do not in the least interrupt the pleadings of the other. p. 97

The reflecting visitor, who may choose to compare the uses to which this place is now applied, with the purposes for which it was built, will not fail to derive from the comparison so very favorable to the present times, a satisfaction most worthy the benevolent heart. Instead of the rude licentious carousals of the Bellomonts, when the baron domineered, even in drunkenness, over his assembled slaves, we often see large bodies of the inhabitants of the county, men worthy of freedom and possessing it, assembled to consider with decorum, and to decide with unawed, unbiassed judgment, upon measures of no little importance to the kingdom of England. And instead of the savage violence, or idiot folly which mostly dictated the award of every kind of property, in those feudal times, we see happily substituted the fair examination of the witnesses, the eloquent pleadings of the barristers, the learned observations of the Judge, and the impartial decisions of the Jury, nobly co-operating to investigate truth, and to decide, according to right, the means alike of happiness and virtue. In what manner, and by what degrees this happy change was effected, the following well authenticated anecdote may serve to shew. p. 98

Robert de Bellomont, the first earl, sitting in the apartment of the keep of his castle at Leicester, heard a loud shout in the neighbouring fields. Enquiring into the cause, he found that it was given by the partizans of a combatant who was then fighting a duel with his near relation to ascertain the right to a certain piece of land in St. Mary's field. The cruelty and absurdity of such a mode of decision seems to have been forcibly impressed upon the mind of the earl, by this affecting circumstance; and he agreed with the burgesses and inhabitants of Leicester, on the payment of one penny for every house that had a gable or gavel in the High-street (a payment afterwards known by the term *gavel pence*) that all pleas of the above mentioned nature should be determined by a jury of twenty four persons. p. 99

From the county hall, or castle, as it is commonly called, a road to the right leads to an antient gate-way strongly built and once furnished with a port-cullis, and every requisite for defence. The embattled parapet being much decayed, was taken down a few years ago, and its roof is now reduced to one of an ordinary form. When this alteration was made, the arms of the dukes of Lancaster by whom the gate-way was undoubtedly built were destroyed on the outside; but on the inside, at the spring of the arch, two mutilated figures, one of a lion, the other of a bear, doubtless some of their devices, still remain. The lion passant, it is well known, formed part of the arms of that family, and the muzzled bear was a symbol used on the seal by Edward the first in his transactions with Scotland. Nothing can be more probable than that the Lancastrian princes would ornament their buildings with a figure which would serve to preserve the memory of their descent from so renowned a monarch. p. 100

The stranger must now be requested to pass thro' the uninviting doorway of the adjoining public house; and he will be led by an easy ascent up to the *mount*, or perhaps the scite of the keep of the castle, which tho' lately lowered considerably for the purpose of converting it into a Bowling-green, yet affords a pleasant station for a view of the environs of Leicester, and is the spot from which the best idea can be formed of the antient form and boundaries of the fortifications. p. 101

It is well known that the fast Saxons built few or no castles, for having nearly exterminated the Britons, during the long continued warfare that preceded their conquest of that people, they had no occasion for strong fortresses to secure the possession of the territories they had acquired; and in the later ages of their dynasty they were too indolent and ignorant to undertake such works with spirit and effect, notwithstanding the frequent and sudden inroads of the Danes, rendered such places of retreat highly necessary, and the great Alfred earnestly recommended their construction. Hence the places of defence found in this island at the conquest, were few in p. 102

number, and those generally too slight to resist the continued attacks of time. For this reason the antiquary need not endeavour to extend his researches after the state of the castle of Leicester beyond the time of the arrival of William the Norman. On the division of the provinces made by that monarch, Leicester became part of the royal demesne; a castle was erected to ensure the submission of the inhabitants, and the wardenship of it entrusted to Hugh Grentemaisnell baron of Hinckly, who possessed considerable property in the neighbourhood. This castle, like other Norman works of the same kind, would have its barbican or out-work, defending the gate and bridge over the outer ditch would be commanded by a strong wall, eight or ten feet thick, and between twenty and thirty high, with a parapet, and crennels at the top, towers at proper distances, and a gate-way opening into the town. It would, we may presume, extend from the river below the Newark round by St. Mary's church, and then, turning towards the river again, whose waters were brought by a cut across the morass lying on the west side, to wash that part of the wall, and fill the ditch, would thus enclose what was called the outer Bayle or Ballium. Within this, at a distance not now to be ascertained, but probably not less than eighty or an hundred yards, another, similar, but perhaps stronger fortification, would extend from, and to the river, and this entered at the gates already described, would enclose the inner Bayle, where stood the lofty massy keep, the hall, and all the apartments and rooms belonging to the noble and potent owners. Although the curious will be inclined to join in the pathetic laments of the writer of the memoirs of Leicester, (Throsby) that the just position of the castle and its extent in former times cannot be known; yet strong probability will almost authorize us to believe that the account here given does not vary very widely from the truth; for these conjectures are directly confirmed by the well still open on the top of the castle hill or keep, and by the entire remains of a large cellar, forty-nine feet long and eighteen wide, nearly adjoining the great hall, on the west. That more traces should not be discoverable will not appear surprising when we consider what effects may be produced by the decays of time and accident, by the accumulation of soil, and encroachments of buildings.

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During the disputes concerning the succession, on the death of the Conqueror, the Grentemaisnells seized Leicester castle, and held it for duke Robert. This subjected it to the fury of the successful partizans of William Rufus, and the castle lay for some time in a dismantled state. In the next reign it was granted by Henry to his favourite Robert first earl of Leicester, who repaired the damages and it became the principal place of residence of himself and the second earl, Robert Bossu. The third earl Robert surnamed Blanchmains, encreased his property and power, by his marriage with Petronilla, or Parnel, the heiress of the Grentemaisnells, but the violent temper of this earl involved him in disputes with king Henry the second, whose forces under the command of the Chief Justiciary, Richard de Lucy, took Leicester and its castle by assault, and reduced both to an almost uninhabited heap of ruins. Blanchmains regained however the favor of his king and was restored to his estates, but both he and his son, Robert Fitz-Parnel engaging in the crusades, the town of Leicester was but ill rebuilt, and the castle remained in a state of delapidation for many years. Fitz-Parnel dying without issue, the *honor* of Leicester, as part of the Bellomont estates were called, passed into the family of Simon de Montfort, in consequence of his marriage with one of the sisters of Fitz-Parnels. But the Montfort earls of Leicester, both father and son, were too much engaged in the busy transactions of their times to pay much attention to their property at Leicester. After the death of the latter, in the Battle of Evesham, the Leicester property was conferred by Henry the third on his second son Edmond earl of Lancaster, whose second son Henry, heir and successor to Thomas earl of Lancaster, beheaded at Pontefract, in the year 1322 made Leicester his principal place of residence, and under him and the two next succeeding earls, the castle recovered and probably surpassed its former state of splendor.

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When the dukes of Lancaster ascended the throne, Leicester tho' frequently honored with their presence, received no permanent benefit, and tho' several parliaments were held there in the reign of Henry the sixth, the castle had so far decayed in the time of Richard the third, that that monarch chose rather to sleep at an inn a few evenings before his fall, than occupy the royal apartments in the castle. From this time the castle seems to have made constant progress to decay, so that in the reign of Charles the first, orders, dated the ninth of his reign, were issued to the sheriff Wm. Heyrick, Esq. of Beaumanor (as appears from papers in the possession of that family) "to take down the old pieces of our castle at Leicester, to repair the castle house, wherein the audit hath been formerly kept, and is hereafter to be kept, and wherein our records of the honor of Leicester do now remain; to sell the stones, timber, &c. but not to interfere with the vault there, nor the stalls leading therefrom."

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From others of the same papers it appears that the timber sold for 3l. 5s. 8d. the freestone, and iron work for 36l. 14s. 4d. and that the repairs above ordered cost about 50l. Thus was the castle reduced to nearly its present state, and tho' the Antiquary may in the eagerness of his curiosity lament that so little of it now remains, yet he must surely rejoice in his reflecting moments that such structures are not now necessary for the defence of the kingdom, and that the fortunes of the noblemen are now spent in a way calculated to encourage the arts and promote industry, rather than in maintaining in these castles a set of idle retainers, ever ready to assist them in disturbing the peace of the realm, and still more ready to insult and injure the humble inhabitants in then neighbourhood.

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Descending from the castle mount, and passing thro' the south gale-way of the castle yard, the visitor enters a district of the town called the Newark, (New Work) became the edifices it contained were new when compared with the buildings of the castle. They owed their foundation to Henry, the third earl of Lancaster, and his son Henry first duke of that title. By these two

noblemen they were nearly finished, and what was wanting towards their completion was afterwards added by John of Gaunt. They must then have formed a magnificent addition to the antient dignity of the castle. The remains of the walls which enclosed this area enable us to affirm that its form was a long square, bounded on the north by the castle, on the east by the streets of the suburbs of the town, on the south by the fields, and on the west by the river.

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Judging from what remains of these walls, we feel inclined to maintain that they were rather calculated to enclose, than strongly protect, the buildings they surrounded; for if the walls now standing be the original walls, they were not capable of resisting the modes of attack usually practised in the age in which they were built; nor is the gate-way that still remains entire, formed with towers to command, or with grooves for a port-cullis to defend, the entrance. Indeed if the state of England during the age of the founders be considered, magnificence rather than great strength might be expected to be their object, and magnificent truly were the buildings of the Newark. The gate-way now known by the name of the Magazine, from the circumstance of its being the arsenal of the county, is large and spacious, yet grandly massive; and the form of its arches, which partake of the style of the most modern gothic, tho' built at the time when, according to the opinions of the most learned Antiquaries, that truly beautiful species of architecture was not generally established, prove the ready attention of the founders to the progress of the arts.

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This gate-way led to an area, which tho' nearly surrounded by buildings, was much more spacious than the present wide street, an area worthy the dukes of Lancaster. On the south another gate, similar to the Magazine now standing, opened into the court opposite the strong south gate of the castle, and on the west rose a college, a church, and an hospital, which completed the grandeur of the Newark. These latter buildings formed a lesser quadrangle or court, having on the north the present old, or Trinity Hospital, built and endowed for an hundred poor people, and ten women to serve them. On the south stood a church dedicated to St. Mary, and cloysters; the former called by Leland "not large but faire;" the "floures and knottes in whose vault were gilded," he says, by the rich cardinal of Winchester; the latter, (the cloysters,) were both "large and faire;" the houses in the compace of the area of the college for the Prebendaries (standing on the west side) the same author says, "be very praty," and the walls and gates of the college occupying the east side of the court, he says, "be very stately." Nor did the princes of Lancaster limit their designs to magnificent structures; this college was as well filled as the hospital, for it contained a dean and twelve prebendaries; thirteen vicars choral, three clerks, six choristers and one verger, in all thirty-six persons; and the endowment was adequate to the establishment, for the revenues at the dissolution amounted to 595l. 12s. 11d. Among the various donations to this college, the following taken from the Parliamentary rolls of the year 1450, will not be found unworthy the attention of the curious. The king (Henry the seventh) grants to the dean and Canons of the church collegiate of our lady at Leicester, "a tunne of wyne to be taken by the chief botteller of England in our port of Kingston upon Hull," and it is added "they never had no wyne granted to them by us nor our progenitors afore this time to sing with, nor otherwise."

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When it is considered that the castle just surveyed occupies a station most pleasant as well as commanding; that from the buildings of the Newark it derived all the splendor which the arts and taste of the times could bestow, and that its adjoining a large, well fortified, and not ill built town was calculated to contribute most essentially to the convenience of its possessors, it will appear to have been one of the most agreeable residences in the kingdom for such powerful noblemen as were the dukes of Lancaster; nor will the visitor be surprised to find that it was occasionally used as a seat by the kings, its owners.

But of all the periods of its history that will surely appear most interesting, in which Henry de Gresmond, first earl of Derby, and on the death of his father, earl and then duke of Lancaster, already renowned thro' Europe for his achievements in arms, and crowned with laurels from the fields of Guienne, where he taught the English how to conquer at Crecy and Agincourt, returned to reside at Leicester, and to add to the distinction of wise and brave the still more valuable title of *good*, which he was about to earn by the practice of almost every virtue at this place. Then indeed was Leicester castle the scene of true splendor and magnificence, for it was the scene of bounty influenced by benevolence and guided by religion, of taste supported by expense yet directed by judgment and regulated by prudence, and of elegance such as the most accomplished knight of that most perfect age of chivalry might be expected to display. This nobleman died of a pestilential disorder at the castle, in the year 1361, greatly lamented by the inhabitants of Leicester. The order of his funeral appointed by himself, and curiously recorded by our local historians, is a pleasing proof of his good sense and piety; the body being taken in a hearse from St. Mary's near the castle, to his collegiate church as he directed, "without the pomp of armed men, horses covered, or other vanities"—and the rank of the deceased alone denoted by the magnitude of five tapers, each weighing one hundred pounds, and fifty torches.

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The buildings of the Newark continued nearly in the state already described till the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538, when Robert Boone the last dean, terrified by the power of the tyrant Henry, and alarmed by the unjustifiable rigours of the king's commissioners, surrendered his house and received with the rest of his brethren, trifling pensions for life, from this period the buildings of the college being unsupported by any fund sunk into decay, or were applied to purposes widely different from the intention of the founders. The church, cloysters, and gate-way are entirely removed, with the exception of two arches of the vault under the former, which are still to be seen firm and strong in a cellar of the house, now a boarding school.

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The old hospital itself seems also to have been infected with the contagion of ruin, for tho' spared by the rapacious hand of Henry, the number of poor in the house 64 men and 36 women, are reduced from their original allowance of seven pence weekly, to the now scanty stipend of two shillings, which arises from the rents of lands and tenements in Leicester, and its vicinity. The house has been reduced to its present form by contracting the dimensions of the old one; for that standing in need of considerable repairs, his present Majesty, to whom, as heir to the dutchy of Lancaster, the expensive privilege of repairing it belongs, gave the produce of the sale of an estate at Thurnby in this neighbourhood, which had escheated to the crown, for that purpose.

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At the east end is a small chapel in which prayers are read twice a day, and where some mutilated monumental figures, probably of the Huntingdon family, are still to be seen.

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Nothing farther remains to be noticed concerning this interesting part of the town, except that the south gateway was beaten down by the king's forces at the storming of the place in the spring of the year 1645, when they left only a part of the jamb on the eastern side standing. One of the prebendal houses on the west side of the antient quadrangle of the college has, within these few years, been purchased for the vicarage house of St. Mary's parish. Opposite the old hospital a house has been lately erected as an Asylum for the reception and education of poor female children.

From the Newark, in a lane opposite to which called Mill-Stone lane, is a Meeting-House of the Methodists, we proceed along South gate or

HORSEPOOL-STREET,

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At the end of this street, situated on a gentle eminence affording the desirable advantages of a dry soil and open air, we perceive one of those edifices which a country more than nominally christian must ever be careful to erect, a house of refuge for sick poverty. The Infirmary, which owes the origin of its institution to W. Watts, M. D. was built in 1771, nearly on the scite of the antient chapel of St. Sepulchre, and is a plain neat building with two wings, fronted by a garden, the entrance to which is ornamented with a very handsome iron gate the gift of the late truly benevolent Shuckbrugh Ashby, Esq. of Quenby. The house is built upon a plan which for its convenience and utility received the approbation of the great Howard, whose experience and observation qualified him for a competent judge. It is calculated to admit, exclusive of the fever ward, 54 patients, without restriction to county or nation. Its funds, notwithstanding the exemplary liberality it has excited, are, owing to the pressure of the times, scarcely adequate to its support. Adjoining the Infirmary is an Asylum for the reception of indigent Lunatics.

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At the distance of a quarter of a mile from the Infirmary, are some remains of a Roman labour, called the *Raw Dikes*, these banks of earth four yards in height, running parrallel to each other in nearly a right line to the extent of 639 yards, the space between them 13 yards, were some years ago levelled to the ground except the the length of about 150 yards at the end farthest from the town. It was a generally received opinion that they were the fortifications of a Roman camp, till the supposition of their having been a *cursus* or race course, was started by Dr. Stukely. If it is to be admitted that they formed an area for horse races, of which the Romans are known to have been extravagantly fond, we may imagine that the sport here practiced consisted in horses running at liberty without riders between the banks; traces of such a race run in an enclosed space may be found in the *Corso dei Barberi*, now practiced in the streets of Florence; ^[125] the Italians having in many instances preserved the original customs of the Romans. But the question must still hang in a balance whether the Raw Dykes were the scene of Roman games, or

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*The massy mound, the rampart once
Of iron war in antient barbarous times.*

From the Infirmary, if the visitor wishes to close his walk, he may enter the town by the Hotel; if he feel inclined to extend it, he will find himself recompensed by the pleasure his eye may receive from a lengthened stroll up the public promenade, called the *New Walk*. This walk three quarters of a mile long, and twenty feet wide, was made by public subscription in 1785; the ground the gift of the corporation.

Following the ascent of the walk, we gain on the left a pleasing peep up a vale watered by the Soar, where the smooth green of the meadows is contrasted and broken by woody lines and formed into a picture by the church and village of Aylestone, and the distant tufted eminences decorated by the tower of Narborough. A little imagination might give the scene a trait of the picturesque, by placing among the meadows near Aylestone, the white tents and streaming banners of king Charles' camp, there pitched a few days before his attack on the garrison of Leicester; or it might advance the royal army a little nearer to its station in St. Mary's field, from whence the batteries against the town were first opened. Still continuing to ascend, the walk affords along its curving line many stations from which the town with its churches appears in several pleasing points of view.

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Returning by the London toll-gate if the traveller wishes to obtain a full view of a fine prospect, he will turn aside from the road, and mount the steps of one of the neighbouring mills. From such a station the clustered buildings of the town extend before the eye in full unbroken sweep; beyond it the grounds near Beaumont Leys varied in their tints by tufted hedge-rows, and streaky cultivated fields, blend into the grey softness overspreading those beautiful slopes of hill into which the eminences of Charnwood forest, Brown-rig, Hunter's hill, Bradgate park, Bardon and

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Markfield knoll, rise and fall. These hills, running from hence, in a northern direction compose the first part of the chain or ridge, that, from the easy irregularity and elegant line it here displays rises at length into the more grand and picturesque hills that form the peak of Derbyshire. The abbey and the adjacent villages pleasingly vary the scene on the right, from whence it melts away into the blue distance of the neighbourhood of Melton, the north-east part of the county.

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As we descend along the London road, watching the hills more and more hid by the town, the road bends into a curve, and here takes the name of Granby Street; many ranges of buildings having been here erected within the last fifteen years. Turning to the left, we again arrive at the town by the entrance into *Hotel Street*.

That ingenuity of improvement not only in the conveniences, but the recreations of life, which has lately advanced so rapidly as well in the provincial towns as in the capital, led the inhabitants of Leicester into a plan for the erection of new edifices appropriated to the purposes of public amusement. The considerable buildings, which in this place arrest the stranger's eye were accordingly erected by J. Johnson, Esq. architect, on subscription shares.

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The front of the

HOTEL,

which name it bears, having been originally designed for that purpose, may from the grandeur of its windows, its statues, bassi relievi, and other decorations, be justly considered as the first modern architectural ornament of the town. Here a room, whose spacious dimensions, (being seventy-five feet by thirty-three,) and elegant decorations, adapt it in a distinguished manner for scenes of numerous and polished society, is appropriated to the use of the public balls. Its coved ceiling is enriched with three circular paintings of Aurora, Urania, and Night, from the pencil of Reinagle, who has also graced the walls with paintings of dancing nymphs. Beside the eight beautiful lustres, branches of lights are held by four statues from the designs of Bacon.

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Uniting under the same roof, every convenience for the gratification of taste, and the amusement of the mind, a coffee room handsomely furnished and supplied with all the London papers, affords the gentlemen of the town and country as well as the stranger, to whom its door is open, an agreeable and commodious resort, while on the opposite side a spacious bookseller's shop furnishes the literary enquirer with a series of all the new publications.

Adjoining the hotel, a small theatre built also by Mr. Johnson, neatly and commodiously fitted up, nearly on the plan of the London houses, furnishes the inhabitants of Leicester with a more complete display of the dramatic art than they had before enjoyed, and has been the means of gratifying them by the talents of several performers of the first rate excellence. The popular pieces of the London stage, are here every season represented in a manner pleasing to the town and honorable to the manager.

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Proceeding thro' a street which now only nominally retains a trace of the monkish establishments that formerly occupied its ground, being called Friar Lane, we observe a charity school, for 35 boys and 30 girls, erected 1791, belonging to the parish of St. Martin. At the farther and less handsome end of this street is the Meeting House of the General Baptists. Passing down the New Street, part of the scite of the monastery of the Grey Friars, we arrive at

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ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH,

At what period after the demolition of Leicester in the reign of Henry the second, the church of St. Martin, antiently St. Crosse, was rebuilt, cannot be accurately stated. The chancel, which is the property of the king, rented by the vicar, and was erected after the main fabrick, is ascertained to have been built in the reign of Henry the fifth, at the expense of 34l. And as the addition of spires to sacred edifices was not introduced into England from the east till the beginning of the reign of Henry the third, the date must be fixed between the two intervening centuries, and if the spire was built with the church not very early after the introduction of that ornament of our churches, as the handsome, solid form of St. Martin's bespeaks considerable practice and expertness in the art.

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The church originally consisted only of a nave and two aisles; the south aisle, where the consistory court is held, which is formed by a range of gothic arches whose clustered columns unite strength with lightness, was added after the erection of the others. In contemplating the inside of this church, it is curious to draw a brief parallel between its present plain yet handsome appearance, and its catholic magnificence before the zeal of the reformation, justly excited, but intemperate in its direction, had, during its career against Romish absurdities destroyed almost every trace of ornament in our churches. And whilst we survey its present few decorations, its brass chandeliers depending from the elegant ceiling of the nave, the beautiful oak corinthian pillars of its altar piece, which is ornamented with a picture of the ascension by Francesco Vanni, (the gift of Sir W. Skeffington Bart.) and its excellent organ, we can scarcely forbear lamenting the violence with which the magnificent range of steps was torn from its high altar, then hung with draperies of white damask and purple velvet.

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Its two other altars, [135] its chapels of *our Lady* and *St George*, one at the east, the other at the west end of the south broad aisle, were also destroyed; the sculptured figures that adorned the

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pulpit, the tabernacles, and brazen eagles demolished, and, as the parochial records testify, 20d. was paid for "cutting the images heads, and taking down the angels wings." In the succeeding century after this sacred structure had exhibited this scene of demolition, it became a theatre of war. Hither fled part of the Parliamentary garrison, after being driven by the royalists from their fortress in the Newark; making a citadel of a church, which, on the arrival of the enemy to storm the hold was polluted with the bleeding bodies of Englishmen slain by Englishmen, who pursued their victory by chacing the defeated into the Market-Place, where the stragglers were slaughtered.

From this anecdote of civil discord we are led to contemplate the more rationally excited bravery of the present times, by the sight of the old colours of the 17th or Leicestershire regiment of foot, which are suspended over the royal arms at the east end of nave. They were presented to the corporation by Lieut. Col. Stovin, of that regiment, and how much their intrepid defenders suffered in guarding them, may be known from their worn and tattered appearance.

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As it is the most curious and useful branch of antiquarian research to read the manners and sentiments of an age in its public solemnities and pastimes, we will not leave the church without a wish for a better investigation of an obscure and singular custom, that antient carnival of Leicester, "*the riding the George.*" The horse of this chivalrous saint, which, when the reformation had overthrown the monkish mummeries that so inconsistently blended religion with pastime, was sold for twelve pence, stood at the west end of the south aisle, harnessed in all the trappings of Romish splendor. Notice of the day appointed for this festivity was annually given by the master of St. George's Guild; sports of every variety animated the town, and that the jubilee, was, in the strictest sense *general*, is proved from the summons issued in the 17th of Edward the fourth, ordering *all* the inhabitants to attend the mayor, to *ride the George*. Mention of the celebration is recorded so late as the 15th of Henry the eighth.

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The stranger who is an admirer of sacred harmony will not pass without particular notice, the Organ of St. Martin's. A spirited subscription in 1774, furnished the church with this noble ornament. It was built by the celebrated Snetzler, and esteemed one of the best specimens of his art. It has three sets of keys, from F in alt, to GG. The stops in the great organ are, the stopped diapason, two open diapasons, flute, and principal, trumpet and baffoon, all entire, the 12th, 15th, sesqui-altera, cornet and clarion. In the ch. organ, are two diapasons and principal. In the swell two diapasons, principal, hautboy and trumpet.

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A range of antient stone building bounding the west side of the church yard is an hospital founded about the year 1516, by W. Wigston, Merchant of the staple at Calais, and mayor of Leicester, for 12 men and 12 women, their pay about 3s. weekly. It has a master and confrater. The Chapel has a large gothic window of painted glass.

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On the north side of the hospital is a building called *the Town Library*, established 1632 by the corporation, at the motion of the then bishop of Lincoln. It consists of about 948 vols. chiefly the Latin classics and historians, to which no modern additions whatever have been made.

The building adjoining the Library which is the hall formerly belonging to the guild or fraternity of St. George, which, together with the Corpus Chrisri guild, the principal establishment of that kind in the town, was founded in St. Martin's church, was purchased, on the dissolution of guilds and chantries by the corporation, and is the guild-hall of the borough. It is adorned with several portraits among which is that of Sir Thomas White, Kt. citizen and merchant Taylor of London, who among many magnificent charities, bequeathed 10,000l. in the trust of the corporation to be lent without interest in sums of 50l. and 40l. to every freeman of Leicester for the term of nine years; a charity of peculiar value as it affords a perpetual incitement to the exertions of rising industry.

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The magistracy of Leicester is an institution of great antiquity and respectability, being a corporation by prescription, dating its establishment from immemorial usage before its first charter in the reign of king John. It consists of 72 members; 24 aldermen, 48 common council men; the officers are a recorder, town-clerk, bailiff, and steward.

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By forming cities and towns into corporations, and conferring on them the privileges of municipal jurisdiction, the first check was given to the overwhelming evils of the feudal system; and under their influence freedom and independence began to peep forth from amid the rigours of slavery and the miseries of oppression.

To be free of any corporation was not then, as at present merely to enjoy some privileges in trade, or to exercise the right of voting on particular occasions, but it was to be exempt from the hardships of feudal service; to have the right of disposing both of person and property, and to be governed by laws intended to promote the general good, and not to gratify the ambition and avarice of individuals. These laws, however rude and imperfect, tended to afford security to property and, encourage men to habits of industry. Thus commerce, with every ornamental and useful art, began first in corporate bodies, to animate society. But in those dark ages, force was necessary to defend the claims of industry; and such a force these municipal societies possessed; for their towns were not only defended by walls and gates vigilantly guarded by the citizens, but oft-times at the head of their fellow freemen in arms, the mayor, aldermen, or other officers marched forth in firm array to assert their rights, defend their property and teach the proudest and most powerful baron that the humblest freeman was not to be injured with impunity. It was thus the commons learned and proved they were not objects of contempt; nay that they were beings of the same species as the greatest lords.

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It is pleasingly curious to observe in these times the shadow of the semblance of this most useful military power preserved as at Leicester, in the array of a few of the poor men of Trinity hospital, clad in pieces of iron armour, attending the beadle while he proclaims a fair; nor is it less so to recollect that the feasts annually given by the mayor were once held in imitation of the rude hospitality of the Barons whose feasts not a little contributed to give a consequence to the commons of England, and to humanize the haughty chief by shewing him that respectability might belong to those who did not wield the sword, and that men might have dignity even tho' they had no pretensions to the glare of titles and the illusions of birth. Thus will the intelligent observer find, that corporate bodies were the true sources of law, liberty and civilization, and by rendering the occupation of trade respectable they may be deemed the first origin of that commerce which has rendered Great Britain the most powerful and most happy nation of the earth.

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These few reflections we will suppose to have occupied the time during the short walk from St. Martin's church to the

MARKET-PLACE.

In this spacious area, which is surrounded by handsome and well-furnished shops, and whose public ornaments are the plain but respectable building called the *Exchange*, built in 1747, where the town magistrates transact their weekly business, and a small octagon edifice enclosing a reservoir of pure water, the *Conduit*, erected in 1709, we must, having completed the circuit of the town, offer our farewell to our visitor.

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Here closing our little tour, which has engaged us in an imaginary acquaintance with the intelligent stranger, we beg he will accept a friendly adieu: and a wish, that as he quits the town thro' which we have conducted him, and which we have endeavoured to represent in a view not unworthy the attention of a mind that seeks for more than mere passing ideas of amusement, he may not consider that time as prodigally spent which he has passed in his WALK THROUGH LEICESTER.

APRIL, 1804

MANUFACTORY OF THE TOWN.

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The Manufactory of Stockings in this town and county, is the largest in the world; besides wove worsted hose, which are the staple article of the place, a great variety of cotton hose are now made, which from their cheapness, obtain a sale in this, and most other countries.

The machine by which these hose are made, was first invented in the year 1590, by the Rev. W. Lee, of Calverton, in Nottinghamshire, who exhibited it before Queen Elizabeth, but not meeting with that encouragement he so justly deserved, immediately left the country, and carried it to France, where he would have established it at Rouen, had it not been for the murder of the French king which prevented the execution of a grant of privilege and reward in favor of Mr. Lee and his art.

Soon after Mr. Lee died under great disappointment at Paris, and several of his workmen returning to London, laid the foundation of Stocking Weaving in this county. The manufactory has been gradually increasing, but within these last ten years has rapidly advanced to its present flourishing state. The number of workmen employed in this branch is not less than 20,000 who produce from the raw material about 15,000 dozen per week.

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† A full account of this manufactory, in all its branches, is preparing for the press, and will be published in the course of the summer.

ERRATUM.

The reader is requested to correct the account of St. Martin's organ, as follows.

Great organ, two open and a stop diapason, principal, 12th, 15th, ses-quiarta, cornet, clarion, trumpet. Choir organ, two diapasons, principal, 15th, flute, bassoon. Swell, two diapasons, principal, cornet, hautboy, trumpet.

[Combe, Printer, Leicester.]

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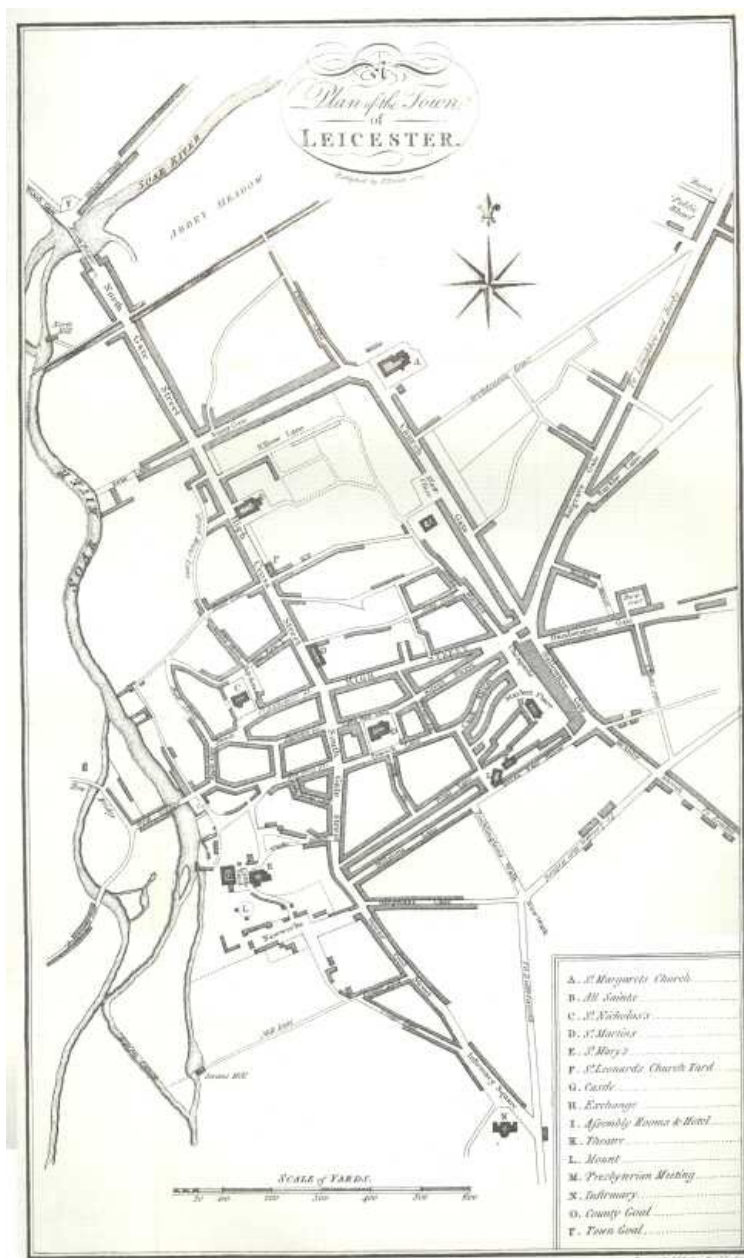
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Map of Leicester



Footnotes:

[23] "He had a bow bent in his hand,
Made of a trusty tree;
An arrow of a cloth-yard long,
Up to the head drew he."

[24] See an Essay on this subject by the Hon. Daines Barrington in the Archæologia.

[42] This sum is now distributed under the title of wood and coal money.

[125] See Starke's Travels.

[135] These altars, dedicated to St. Dunstan and St. Catherine stood, one where the present vestry is, the other in Heyrick's Chancel, so called from its containing the monuments of that antient family.

Transcriber's Notes

Original spelling, punctuation and grammar have been retained in this transcription. The following, however, have been corrected:

page 35: "to to which this chapel" has been corrected to "to which this chapel"

page 35: "joins the the prison" has been corrected to "joins the prison"

page 43: "bridge over the the Canal" has been corrected to "bridge over the Canal"

page 74: "a good and firm rood" has been corrected to "a good and firm road"

page 75: "usefulness of urn-pike tolls" has been corrected to "usefulness of turn-pike tolls"

page 90: "comparative prises of similar articles" has been corrected to "comparative prices of similar articles"

page 93: "the prssent age" has been corrected to "the present age"

page 97: "whieh meets the eye" has been corrected to "which meets the eye"

page 107: "death of he Conqueror" has been corrected to "death of the Conqueror"

page 109: "Henry the the third" has been corrected to "Henry the third"

page 118: "supported by expesne" has been corrected to "supported by expense"

Also note that "have paffed into various hands" (page 47) and "trumpet and baffoon" (page 139) are both as in the book, with the old printer's ff for ss usage.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A WALK THROUGH LEICESTER ***

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