



THE OLD BROADGATE, COVENTRY.

### The City of Coventry.

**C**OVENTRY is one of the most interesting of English towns, on account of its great antiquity, its many remarkable specimens of curious old architecture, and the notable occurrences which have taken place in its history from the beginning, almost down to the present time.

Few persons know anything of Coventry, except that it was once relieved from severe taxes, and other rigorous impositions, by the intercession of the Lady Godiva, wife of Earl Leofric, the then master of its destinies. This was in the first half of the eleventh century, and these privileges appear never to have been taken away from it, but were confirmed and added to by subsequent monarchs, down to Queen Elizabeth. Of course the most famous institutions of those early times were those formed by, or for the different orders of monks, the principal of which were the Benedictines, the Gray Friars, the White Friars or Carmelites, and the Capucines. In those days the monks were not only the ministers of religion,

but also the teachers, the providers of amusements, and the authorities to which almost all matters, secular as well as sacred, were relegated. Their lands and revenues often exceeded those of the great potentates from whom they derived them, and as the devotion of the wealthy was always measured by the amount of treasure which they gave to the church, and not by any other acts of their lives, it was common to purchase immunity from the consequences of flagrant crimes by bestowing substantial favors upon a monastery, or adding to its already ample domains and revenues. The Benedictines were the most famous of all these orders, and date back to the sixth century.

In the ancient days of Coventry, before the suppression of the monasteries, the city was known far and wide for the pageants or sacred plays that were acted by the Friars, particularly the Gray Friars, and drew an immense concourse of people from far and near. Old records furnish upward of fifty different subjects, taken from Holy Writ, upon which these performances were based. Such, for example, as "The Birth of Christ," the "Visit to Elizabeth," "Abraham's Sacrifice," "The Creation," and the like. The representation took place upon a sort of stand, erected in

front of the Monastery buildings, and of course, without scenery, or any accessories, except a curtain, a ladder for climbing up and down, and the most necessary properties, such as chairs, in which the most sacred personages were seated.

One of our illustrations gives a view of Ford's Hospital, originally a part of the Monastery of the Gray Friars, but turned, after the suppression of monastic establishments in England, by the munificence of a prosperous merchant of Coventry, into a hospital or home for the aged women, of whom some fifty, whose ages ranged from seventy to eighty-five, and even ninety, now occupy it. One of these venerable pensioners stands in the wide arch door-way, which still retains its ancient appearance, and shows by her neatness the comfort and order in which she and her *confrères* are maintained. The wide hall, or passage, into which this door-way opens, leads through the building to an inner court, or inclosed garden, once belonging to the Monastery, but now devoted to the old ladies. Here, they have each a small plot of ground, which they cultivate to suit themselves, generally preferring a crop of herbs and onions to flavor their broth, to any other product. Each old lady has a room to herself, which is furnished

with a single bed, a table, and the necessary articles of furniture, and a fire-place for warmth, and also upon the little grate fire of which she cooks her food for herself. In addition to this, one ton of coals per annum, and three shillings per week (about seventy-five cents) is supplied to each pensioner, the rest of the living coming from gratuities made by visitors, the contributions of friends, and the small reserves which some hold in their own right. The building and surroundings preserve much of their antique character, and are an interesting study to an antiquarian. The architecture is that of many old buildings in England, and almost identical with that of Shakespeare's birth-place at Stratford-on-Avon. One of the old pumps, to which the town's people came for water, is surrounded by the usual number of applicants, and the old lady who has managed to get her tea-kettle filled is evidently waited for by the one in the door-way, who is watching the momentous proceedings with interest. The pump was a great institution in old times; it was the meeting place of the gossips of the town, and its wooden arm was seldom idle.

The "Old Broadgate" gives us other quaint and very interesting specimens of old architecture, and incidentally of old customs, and old methods. A sedan-chair is being carried across the unpaved street, by servingmen in livery, doubtless occupied by a gay lady on her way to attend some grand entertainment, perhaps incidental to a visit of the court, which was

by no means unusual at that period. At the right-hand corner, there is a partial view of the ancient cross of Broadgate, which was monumental, and has now disappeared. This picture of the old Broadgate is from an old drawing, and gives a correct idea of every detail of the buildings, the windows set flat in the stone-work, the doors divided across the middle, or forming little traps, very suggestive of a state of frequent internal conflict, in which, in case of retreat, the less space there was open to the enemy the better.

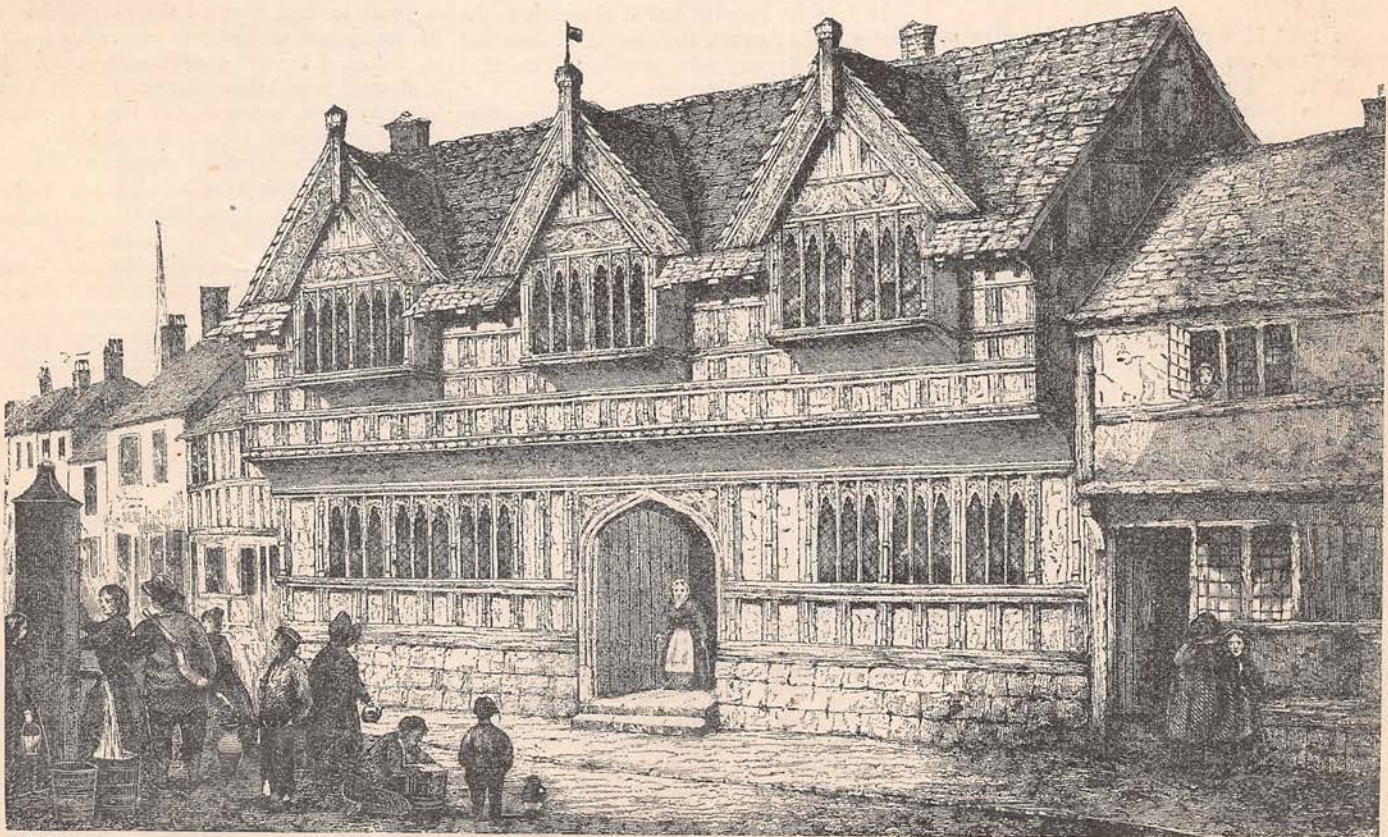
Coventry had, instead of the bands, which compose the musical forces of our cities now-a-days, a set of minstrels, called Waits, paid by the city, and furnished with a sort of uniform coat of red cloth, whose business it was to furnish nocturnal music through the first half of every quarter, throughout the year. The first quarter began in Lent, and continued to Easter, and they sang on the first four days of the week, beginning at midnight, and ending at four o'clock. The origin of the Waits dates back to the early part of the fifteenth century, and they were usually four in number, and regular musicians, recognized as part of the city dependencies. It is said to have originated in commemoration of the early salutation of the Virgin Mary, before the birth of Christ, and the music of the Waits is part of the Christmas festivities in the rural districts of England, even at the present day, although it has become anything but a musical performance, the modern Waits generally con-

sisting of boys, with an indiscriminate collection of instruments upon which they can make a noise.

Coventry is a city of gates and churches. The three spires, used as a trade-mark by the great house of Cash & Sons, consists of the spires of St. Michael's, the Trinity, and Gray Friars.

The interior of St. Michael's is very imposing, and St. Mary's Hall shows also remarkable relics of old architecture and curious customs. One of the oldest pieces of tapestry in the kingdom is in St. Mary's Hall, but is fast going to decay, and there are also memorial brasses wonderfully executed, one of which bears the date 1568.

The most famous gates are Gray Friars, Mill Lane, and Swanswell. The first of these is flanked by two towers, and by a part of the wall, whose origin is lost in antiquity. It is, of course, to antiquarians mainly, and to the lovers of antiquities, that these old sights are interesting. The new town, with its fine art school, its public baths, its great manufactories, its handsome public offices, and other evidences of prosperity, is far more practical. One of the principal elements of the modern success and activity of this old and famous locality has been found in the establishment here of the Cash Cambric Frilling Manufactories. The world-wide reputation achieved by them, the employment given to many hundreds of persons, the generosity and beneficence which guards the interests of the employees



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FORD'S HOSPITAL, COVENTRY.

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the same as their own, the buildings erected for them, the club house maintained for them, and other acts of wisdom and public spirit, have made modern Coventry much more desirable than one would imagine from the ill fortune which being "sent to Coventry" implied.

There is a wooden effigy of Peeping Tom on the corner of one of the streets of the old town, which all strangers want to see. "Peeping Tom" is now generally considered a myth, while the Lady Godiva continues to be perpetuated in the procession at the county fair year by year.

The following are some of the remarkable occurrences which have distinguished the history of this very interesting old town :

In 1043, Leofric, Earl of Mercia and his Countess Godiva founded the Great Monastery in Coventry.

In 1344, by virtue of letters patent granted by King Edward III., a municipal corporation, consisting of mayor and bailiffs, was constituted in Coventry. The name of the first mayor was John Ward.

In 1406, John Botoner, the mayor, caused the streets of Coventry to be paved.

In 1411, John Horneby, the mayor, arrested the prince (afterward Henry V.), at the Priory in this city.

In 1422 the first Cross was built in Cross Cheaping. In the same year, according to the old city manuscripts,

"A dooke stool (ducking pond) was made upon Cheykesmore Green, to punish scolders and chiders, as ye law saylls."

In 1429 bells were first hung in St. Michael's steeple.

In 1436, Henry VI. came to Coventry and kept Christmas at Kenilworth.

In 1453, King Henry and Queen Margaret came to Coventry, and slept at the Priory.

In 1483, Richard III. came to Coventry at the festival of Corpus Christi, to see the plays, and kept his Christmas at Kenilworth.

In 1485, Henry VII. came to this city after his victory over Richard III. at Bosworth Field, and lodged at the house of the Mayor, Robert Ouley, Esq., of the Black Bull Inn, Smithford Street, conferring on the mayor the honor of knighthood. The worthy magistrate had presented to the king on the part of the city £100 and a cup, and also provided, what was at that time considered a sumptuous entertainment, at a cost of £23 15s. 11d.

The following curious items are copied from the original account :

"Two dozen of bread, 2s. ; one pype of claret wyne, £3 ; one pype of redde wyne, £3 ; one cestr. of ale, 1s. 6d. ; 20 motons, £2 10s. ; Two Oxen, £2 ; Four Stokffyshes, 2s. ; Fifteen pounds of wax, and making ditto, 11s. 3d. ; 9 pots, 9d. ; 2 dozen goddards, 1s. 3d." etc., etc. The house of Sir Robert Ouley stood on the site of the present barracks.

In 1492, Henry VII., with his queen, came to see the plays performed by the Gray Friars.

In 1510 the *old cross* was taken down, and in the same year Henry VIII. and his queen came to Coventry to witness the pageants, and afterward proceeded to the Priory. Also in 1510 Joan Ward was burnt in the Little Park for heresy.

In 1519, Robert Sikeby was burnt for denying the "real presence."

In 1555, Mr. Lawrence Saunders, Robert Glover, and Cornelius Bongay were burnt in Little Park for heresy.

In 1566 Mary Queen of Scots was confined as a prisoner in the mayoress's parlor in this city.

In 1575 the old Coventry play of "Heack Tuesday" was performed before Queen Elizabeth for her entertainment while at Kenilworth Castle.

In 1586, in consequence of a great scarcity of provisions, every man, woman and child in this city was numbered, and were found to amount to 6,502 persons. Perhaps this was the origin of the census.

In 1635 old Thomas Parr passed through Coventry, aged 152 years.

In 1741, on Monday, July 20th, the *Coventry Mercury* newspaper was first printed in this city by Mr. Jopson.

In 1755 horse races were instituted in Coventry Park.

In 1760 the *Coventry Mercury* of Sept. 22d says : "On Tuesday and Wednesday last was performed here the Oratorios of *Samson* and the *Messiah* at St. Mary's Hall, under the direction of Mr. Bond, organist of Coventry, assisted by a most eminent band of celebrated vocal and instrumental performers and attended by a numerous and brilliant audience of nobility and gentry."

In 1773, on Nov. 25th, Mr. Siddons, the tragedian, was married to Miss Kemble, at St. Michael's Church. For some time during the year 1773 Mr. Kemble occupied the Draper's Hall as a theater.

In 1774, on Tuesday and Wednesday, in the last week in August, the celebrated Rowland Hill, then a young man, preached to crowded congregations in Coventry.

In 1793, on the first of January, the effigy of Thomas Paine, author of the "Rights of Man," with a copy of that book, was burnt in Cross Cheaping.

In 1798, in February, a soup institution was first established in Coventry.

## Talks with Girls.

BY JENNIE JUNE.

### DISCONTENT.



SINCE discontent was elevated into a virtue, by having the prefix of "noble" applied to it, the feeling, worthy or unworthy, has been cultivated more than ever, until it is now nearly universal, and its exhibition is paraded as an outward sign of the inward possession of qualities calculated to shed luster upon superior opportunities, position, and endowments. Discontent is such a very cheap method of showing superiority, that it is not surprising many persons indulge it who would find it difficult to display it in any other way.

There undoubtedly is a noble discontent.

but there is also a very ignoble branch of the same family, and this is far more apt to be cherished than its more worthy relative.

Noble discontent makes us dissatisfied with ourselves and our own achievements ; ignoble discontent makes us dissatisfied with our circumstances and surroundings, and inclined to lay the blame upon these that is due to our own weakness and short-comings. This makes a distinction in which there is a very great difference. It is neither wrong nor foolish to see the limitations which nature and circumstance have placed as barriers against our progress, or as obstacles to be overcome, but it is both wrong and foolish to waste one's precious time and strength in repining at them, instead of working away at whatever lies before us, and preparing, by a gradual process of self-development and self-cultivation, for the possibilities which may open up in the future.

As a rule, the most discontented persons are those who have the least right to indulge the inclination. Those who hold in themselves nothing of any great value to others, who receive constantly everything, and give nothing, or next to nothing, and that little with grudging or unwillingness, have no claim upon the future for anything better than is given to them in the present. They plant no seeds, and can expect to reap no harvest. The good that comes into our lives does not find its way through the hands of fairy god-mothers, or the unexpected finding of golden treasures ; it is the steady and successive growth from seeds which we ourselves have sown.

I think myself that this is rather a hard and disappointing fact to learn. It is so pleasant in youth to think that all the possibilities of life are open to us, and may come any time, in an unlooked-for and unexpected manner. It is pleasant to feel that what we are not born into may be sent after us, and reach us when we are not looking for it. It is only later, by length of time and depth of experience, that we learn that the true wealth which is to enrich our lives, and make them valuable to ourselves and others, is born with us, and waits the germinating influence of our own action and that of passing circumstances for development. You can modify nature, but you cannot change it entirely, and no matter how many pearls you put into a swine's mouth, it is swine still.

Mere adventitious aids, therefore, to position and distinction are of very little real consequence unless the individual is fitted by nature and cultivation to appreciate, enjoy, and make the best use of them. To almost every one the possession of more money than they have got is the one great desire of their lives. If they only had it, what would they not do with it? Yet the acquisition of money by unlawful means, or without having earned it by labor or the exercise of honest faculties, is one of the surest means of obtaining a harvest of suffering and failure. The greater the possession, the greater the responsibility, and one who has not been faithful over a few things will not be more faithful when placed in charge of many. There are thousands who, if not happy, were free from remorse, and enjoyed life moderately and well when poor, who have lost all that made it valuable by the acquisition of money, because it has released them from the