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There are also outside London on the north side excellent suburban wells with sweet, wholesome and clear water that flows rippling over the bright stones. Among these are Holywell, Clerkenwell and St Clement’s Well, which are all famous. These are frequented by great numbers and much visited by the students from the schools and by the young men of the city, when they go out for fresh air on summer evenings. Good indeed is this city when it has a good lord!

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truth in its perfection. Sophists who speak paradoxes are praised for their
torrent of words, while others seek to overthrow their opponents by using
fallacious arguments. Now and then orators use rhetoric for persuasion, being
careful to omit nothing essential to their art. Boys of different schools strive
against each other in verses, or contend about the principles of grammar and
the rules governing past and future tenses. Others use epigrams, rhythm and
metre in the old trivial banter; they pull their comrades to pieces with "Fescene
nine Licence": mentioning no names, they dart abuse and gibes, and mock the
faults of their comrades and sometimes even those of their elders, using So-
cratic wit and biting harder even than the tooth of Theon in daring dithy-
ramics. Their hearers, ready to enjoy the joke, wrinkle up their noses as they
guffaw in applause.

Of the ordering of the city

Those engaged in business of various kinds, sellers of merchandise, hirers of
labour, are distributed every morning into their several localities according to
their trade. Besides, there is in London on the river bank among the wines for
sale in ships and in the cellars of the vintners a public cook-shop. There daily
you may find food according to the season, dishes of meat, roast, fried and
boiled, large and small fish, coarser meats for the poor and more delicate for
the rich, such as venison and big and small birds. If any of the citizens should
unexpectedly receive visitors, weary from their journey, who would fain not
wait until fresh food is bought and cooked, or until the servants have brought
bread or water for washing, they hasten to the river bank and there find all
they need. However great the multitude of soldiers and travellers entering the
city, or preparing to go out of it, at any hour of the day or night - that these
may not fast too long, and those may not go out supperless - they turn aside
they need. However great the multitude of soldiers and travellers entering the
city, or preparing to go out of it, at any hour of the day or night - that these
may not fast too long, and those may not go out supperless - they turn aside
thither, if they please, where every man can refresh himself in his own way.
Those who would cater for themselves fastidiously need not search to find
sturgeon or the bird of Africa or the Ionian godwit. For this is a public
kitchen, very convenient to the city, and part of its amenities. Hence the
dictum in the Gorgias of Plato that the art of cookery is an imitation of
medicine and flatters a quarter of civic life.

Immediately outside one of the gates there is a field which is smooth 1 both
in fact and in name. On every sixth day of the week, unless it be a major
feast-day, there takes place there a famous exhibition of fine horses for sale.
Earls, barons and knights, who are in the town, and many citizens come out to
see or to buy. It is pleasant to see the high-stepping palfreys with their gleam-
ing coats, as they go through their paces, putting down their feet alternately on
one side together. Next, one can see the horses suitable for esquires, moving
faster though less smoothly, lifting and setting down, as it were, the opposite
fore and hind feet: here are colts of fine breed, but not yet accustomed to the

1 Smithfield
England are in a sense citizens and freemen of London, having their own splendid town-houses. In them they live, and spend largely, when they are summoned to great councils by the king or by their metropolitan, or drawn thither by their private affairs.

Of the sports of London

We now come to speak of the sports of the city, for it is not fitting that a city should be merely useful and serious-minded, unless it be also pleasant and cheerful. For this reason on the seals of the supreme pontiff, down to the time of the last Pope Leo, ¹ on one side of the lead was engraved the figure of Peter the fisherman and above him a key, as it were, held out to him from heaven by the hand of God, and around it was inscribed the verse, “For me didst thou leave the ship, receive now the key.” And on the other side was engraved a city with the inscription “Golden Rome.” Moreover, it was said in honour of Augustus Caesar and Rome, “It rains all night, games usher in the day; Caesar, thou dost divide dominion with Jove.” Instead of shows in the theatre and stage-plays, London provides plays of a more sacred character, wherein are presented the miracles worked by saintly confessors or the sufferings which made illustrious the constancy of martyrs. Furthermore, every year on the day called Carnival — to begin with the sports of boys (for we were all boys once) — scholars from the different schools bring fighting-cocks to their masters, and the whole morning is set apart to watch their cocks do battle in the schools, for the boys are given a holiday that day. After dinner all the young men of the town go out into the fields in the suburbs to play ball. The scholars of the various schools have their own ball, and almost all the followers of each occupation have theirs also. The seniors and the fathers and the wealthy magnates of the city come on horseback to watch the contests of the younger generation, and in their turn recover their lost youth: the motions of their natural heat seem to be stirred in them at the mere sight of such strenuous activity and by their participation in the joys of unbridled youth.

Every Sunday in Lent after dinner a fresh swarm of young men go out into the fields on war-horses, steeds foremost in the contest, each of which is skilled and schooled to run in circles. From the gates there sallies forth the boys in war, sons of the citizens, equipped with lances and shields, the younger ones with spears forked at the top, but with the steel point removed. They make a pretence at war, carry out field-exercises and indulge in mimic combats. Thither too come many courtiers, when the king is in town, and from the households of bishops, earls and barons youths and adolescents, not yet girt with the belt of knighthood, for the pleasure of engaging in combat with each other. Each is inflamed with the hope of victory. The fiery steeds neigh with tremulous limbs and champ their bits; impatient of delay they cannot stand still. When at last their trampling hooves ring on the ground in rapid flight, their boy riders divide their ranks; some pursue those immediately in front of them, but fail to catch up with them; others overtake their fellows, force them to dismount and fly past them.

At the Easter festival they play at a kind of naval warfare. A shield is firmly bound to a tree in mid-stream, and a small boat, swiftly impelled by many an oar and the current of the river, carries on the stern a youth armed with a lance with which to strike the shield. If he breaks the lance by striking the shield, and yet keeps his footing, he has achieved his aim and gratified his wish, but if he strikes the shield firmly and the lance remains unbroken, he is thrown overboard into the flowing river, and the boat, impelled by its own motion, rushes past him. There are, however, two other boats moored, one on each side of the target, with several youths on board to seize hold of the striker who has been engulfed by the stream, as soon as he comes into view or when he rises on the crest of the wave for the second time. On the bridge and the terraces fronting the river stand the spectators, ready to laugh their fill.

On feast-days throughout the summer the young men indulge in the sports of archery, running, jumping, wrestling, slingling the stone, hurling the javelin beyond a mark and fighting with sword and buckler. Cytherea leads the dance of maidens, and until the moon rises, the earth is shaken with flying feet.

In winter on almost every feast-day before dinner either foaming boars, armed with lightning tusks, fight for their lives “to save their bacon”, or stout bulls with butting horns, or huge bears do battle with the hounds let upon them. When the great marsh that washes the north wall of the city is frozen over, swarms of young men issue forth to play games on the ice. Some, gaining speed in their run, with feet set well apart, slide sideways over a vast expanse of ice. Others make seats out of a large lump of ice, and while one sits thereon, others with linked hands run before and drag him along behind them. So swift is their sliding motion that sometimes their feet slip, and they all fall on their faces. Others, more skilled at winter sports, put on their feet the shinbones of animals, binding them firmly round their ankles, and, holding poles shod with iron in their hands, which they strike from time to time against the ice, they are propelled swiftly as a bird in flight or a bolt shot from an engine of war. Sometimes, by mutual consent, two of them run against each other in this way from a great distance, and, lifting their poles, each tilts against the other. Either one or both fall, not without some bodily injury, for, as they fall, they are carried along a great way beyond each other by the impetus of their run, and wherever the ice comes in contact with their heads, it scrapes off the skin utterly. Often a leg or an arm is broken, if the victim falls with it underneath him; but theirs is an age greedy of glory, youth yearns for victory, and exercises itself in mock combats in order to carry itself more bravely in real battles.

Many of the citizens take pleasure in sporting with birds of the air, with hawks, falcons and such-like, and with hounds that hunt their prey in the

¹ Leo IX, 1048–54
were then known as Trinobantes, drove back Julius Caesar, whose delight was to wade through paths steeped in blood. Whence Lucan wrote, "To the Britons whom he had sought he turned his back in flight."

The city of London has given birth to several men who have subdued many realms and even the Roman empire to their dominion, and also many another whose valour has raised him to the gods as lord of the world, as was promised to Brutus by the oracle of Apollo, "Brutus, beyond Gaul, beneath the setting sun, there lies an isle washed by the waves of ocean. Thither direct thy course, for there shall be thy seat for ever. This shall be to thy sons a second Troy. Here from thy stem shall kings arise, and the whole world shall be subject unto them."

Afterwards in Christian times this city produced that noble emperor Constantine, son of the empress Helena, who bestowed the city of Rome and all the imperial insignia on God and St Peter and on Sylvester, the Roman pope, to whom he dispensed the office of a groom, no longer rejoicing to be called emperor but rather the defender of the holy Roman Church; and, lest the peace of the lord pope should be disturbed by the uproar of secular strife occasioned by his presence, he himself altogether abandoned the city which he had bestowed upon the lord pope, and built for himself the city of Byzantium. And in modern times also London has given birth to illustrious and noble monarchs, the empress Maud, King "Henry III" and the blessed Archbishop Thomas, that glorious martyr of Christ, than whom he bore no purer saint nor one more dear to all good men throughout the Latin world.

(ii) OTHER ENGLISH TOWNS

The texts in this section, which illustrate the variations of burgal privilege in English towns other than London, are merely representative of a very large class of documents. Note the different quarters from which they are granted, for not all boroughs received their charters direct from the king. Not the least interesting feature is the evidence of the wide variations in privilege and practice in different towns: the status of one town was frequently taken as a model for the privileges of another, but no town can be considered apart from the local conditions which modified its individual history.

282. charter of Thurstan, archbishop of York, in favour of Beverley (1124–33, probably c. 1130)

This is one of the earliest town charters extant. It is interesting also as evidence for the privileges of the gild-merchant and of free burgage. (W. Farrer, Early Yorkshire Charters (1914), I, 94)

Thurstan, by the grace of God, archbishop of York, to all the faithful of Christ both present and to come, greeting and God's blessing and his own. Be it known to you that I have given and granted and with the counsel of the chapter of York and of Beverley, and by the counsel of my barons, have confirmed by this my charter to the men of Beverley all their liberties by the same laws by which the men of York have them in their city. Let it, moreover, not be concealed from you that our lord, King Henry, has granted to us of his own goodwill the authority to do this, and has confirmed by his charter our statutes and laws according to the form of the laws of the burgesses of York, saving the dignity and honour of God and of St John and of ourselves and our canons; he did this that he might exalt and promote the honour of the alms of his predecessors. I will that my burgesses of Beverley shall have their Hanse house with all free customs which I give and grant them in order that they may there administer their statutes to the honour of God and of St John, and of the canons, and to the good government of the whole town, with the same law of liberty as the men of York have in their Hanse house. I grant also to them the toll for ever for 18 marks yearly, except on the three feasts on which the toll belongs to us and to our canons, namely, the feast of St John the Baptist, moreover, on these three feasts I have granted that all the burgesses of Beverley shall be free and quit of all toll. Also by witness of this charter I grant to the same burgesses free entry and exit, that is to say, within the town and without, in plain and wood and marsh, in ways and paths, and in other places except meadows and fields, as well freely and largely as anyone could grant and confirm it. And know that they shall be free and quit of all toll throughout the whole of Yorkshire, even as are the men of York. And I will that anyone who shall undo this shall be accused, as the custom of the same church of St John asserts, and as it is decreed in the church of St John. Witness: Geoffrey Murdac; Nigel Possard; Alan of Percy; Walter Spec; Eustace, son of John; Thomas the reeve; Thurstan the archdeacon; Herbert the canon; William, son of Tole; William of Bayeux; in the presence of the whole household of the archbishop, both clerk and lay, in York.

283. charter of Henry I in favour of Beverley (1124–33)

Confirmation of Thurstan's charter (No. 282), with specific mention of the gild-merchant and of free burgage. (W. Farrer, Early Yorkshire Charters (1914), I, 94)