



Walker & Co. engravers

Sir Richard Newdigate
2nd Baronet.

From a picture painted by Sir Peter Lely

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~~1522~~

CAVALIER AND PURITAN

IN THE
DAYS OF THE STUARTS

COMPILED FROM THE PRIVATE PAPERS
AND DIARY OF SIR RICHARD NEWDIGATE, SECOND BARONET,
WITH EXTRACTS FROM MS. NEWS-LETTERS
ADDRESSED TO HIM BETWEEN
1675 AND 1689

BY
LADY NEWDIGATE-NEWDEGATE

Author of 'The Cheverels of Cheverel Manor'
&c.

WITH A PORTRAIT

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CHAPTER XVII

SUNDRY ITEMS OF NEWS

IN 1683 there was an attempt to start the Spanish sport of bull-fighting in England. Fortunately the experiment ended in a fiasco ; not from any tender-heartedness in the spectators, but from a lack of combativeness on the part of the bull. The newsmen recount the event in their usual quaint language :

‘ In the Artillery Yard by Red Lion Fields is preparing a great number of Scaffolds, in which place will be performed (scarce ever before in England) the Spanish way of worrying Bulls with men on Horseback and foot, which Pastime they tell us will continue for a fortnight.’

This was written in the beginning of June, but the long-expected fighting with bulls on horseback did not come off until July 30, when ‘ a liberty was granted to the Spanish Cavalier to shew the dexterity of his Exercise against the

Bull. The place for the spectators had been some time erected, and now, the Horses having been led about the Streets like Bears to draw in Company, about three in the afternoon they began the Show.

‘The Cavalier appeared well mounted in a careless posture with a Cloak about him and a short spear in his hand, and then the Bull was let loose.

‘The Bull (not so fierce as those in Spain, but yet sufficiently taught) neglected the Don, who thereupon provoked him several times with his spear. The Bull did not yet turn to account, and so the Don with his spear gave little satisfaction. Out then springs a nimble Portuguese, who on foot attacks the Bull, vaults upon his back and bestrides him, and the Bull could no sooner acquit himself of him than he was up again; and this indeed gave some Diversion.

‘But this was not the thing the people looked for; they thought to have seen at least an horse or a man killed outright. But being bereft of their expectation, as having not mischief enough for their money, the rabble grew Couraged and fell upon pulling down the scaffold, and having destroyed a great part of it, carried away the Bull and so the Show ended.’

Amongst the current events retailed in the news-letters we find an interesting mention of the re-discovery of the medicinal spring afterwards known as Sadler’s Wells.

‘*July 17, 1684.*—In the time of popery, on the South side of the road at the hither end of Islington

was a well which was had in very great esteem for its medicinal qualities even to Adoration, which soon after the Reformation was covered and by success of time wholly forgotten.

'Last year the well was again discovered and by its curious carving enquired after, and many eminent physicians have tried the Water by Rules of Art and say it is as Medicinable as any, and comes the nearest in operation to that of Tunbridge; and its now commonly visited by two hundred in amorning.

'*August 9.*—Six people have contracted with Mr. Sadler (in whose Garden the much visited Water at Islington is) for £600 fine and £300 per an. during his lease, which is twenty years.'

During this summer an event of interest to the populace took place in the arrival of a rhinoceros, apparently the first that had reached the shores of England alive.

'On board one of the East India ships is come a Rhinoceros valued at £2,000 at the Custom house, and will be sold next week by inch of Candle.'

Accordingly, on the day fixed, the rhinoceros was put up to auction in the customary manner by the burning of a candle measured off inch by inch, and was purchased for £2,320 by Mr. Langley, 'one of those that bought Mr. Sadler's

Well at Islington, and in a day two will be seen in Bartholomew Fair.'

The enterprising Mr. Langley (possibly the same man who created a riot at Lady Tirrell's with the object of carrying off her daughter¹) proved unable to raise so large a sum. He consequently lost the rhinoceros and forfeited the £500 he had to pay beforehand.

'This evening the Owners procured a Warrant from Sir James Smith and carried away Mr. Langley and afterwards put up the beast for sale again by Inch of Candle for £2,000, but no person bid a farthing; so lies upon their hands.'

After a time the interest in the depreciated animal revived, and it became a source of profit to its owners.

'The Rhinoceros is much visited at twelve pence apiece, and two shillings those that ride him. They get fifteen pound a day.'

The news-letters give us some quaint illustrations of the intensity of political antagonism in the latter part of Charles II.'s reign.

¹ See p. 178.