



THE BEST  
BOOTH  
in the  
FAIR

## A COUNTRY FAIR.

THE itinerant who is represented upon the little stage, is the inventor of the ingenious method of ringing the changes alone upon a set of hand bells, which were cast by himself, and are extremely musical in their tones: there is much mechanical skill displayed in their structure, as the clappers are prevented by springs, from bearing upon their sides to preserve the vibration, and they strike transversely: great ingenuity is exhibited also in the use of them; and when it is considered how few there are endowed with the ability to add any thing original to the public stock of innocent amusement, it is likely this humble mechanic might have distinguished himself, had his talents been directed to a higher employment.

Hand bells, of late years, have been introduced in dramatic performances with very pretty effect; the custom originated with the subject of the Plate: When Garrick's Jubilee, in honour of our immortal bard, appeared upon Drury-lane stage, its great success excited the envy of the managers of the other house, till at length they were induced to burlesque it, under the title of Harlequin's Jubilee; wherein appeared this player upon the hand bells; he was borne upon the shoulders of eight men, in a grand triumphal car, and wore a superb dress. As a specimen of the success attendant upon folly, it is asserted, that this piece was represented forty nights in succession, to crowded houses!

A few years ago, an idiot made a structure of wood about twenty feet high, in rude imitation of a church; in which he had the ingenuity to hang a set of small bells, with lines to pull them; and he was directed by his ear, to imitate the changes rung upon the bells in the neighbouring steeple;\* which he performed with correctness, both as to time and variety; in this place he would pass most of his time, in a state of happiness that excited much sympathy. He appeared to be about twenty-five years of age, was very harmless, and had never exhibited symptoms of reason in any other instance from his childhood.

Bell ringing was a custom peculiar to the English in the middle ages. Hand bells, according to Mr. Strutt, first appeared in the religious processions, and were afterwards used by the secular musi-

\* Christ Church, Surry.

cians, and practised for the sake of pastime. The notions of music as a science must have been very low about the time of Richard the Second: King David, in his diadem and royal robes, was represented playing upon five small bells, with a little hammer in each hand, the bells are suspended to an ornamental stand; this was painted upon a curious manuscript, and is introduced in the very ingenious and interesting work by that author.

The minstrels and joculars of old times seem to exist in the pantaloons and jack-puddings of modern wakes and fairs; many of the same grotesque amusements, and feats of agility that are now practised, were familiar to the Saxons; and the droll holding a pair of bellows by way of fiddle, and using the tongs as a substitute for the bow, as exhibited in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, has a rival in the modern scaramouch playing his accompaniment upon the salt box.

THE  
COSTUME  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN.

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