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PLATE XVIII.

SLAUGHTERMAN.

FOR many centuries the method of slaughtering animals for the butcher appears to have existed the same as that practised at present; and excepting in Spain and Portugal, the custom seems to have been the same in most European countries: that is of killing the ox by blows of the pole-axe upon the skull, and the sheep and swine by cutting their throat with the knife; there are various representations of slaughtering animals both in painting and sculpture of ancient date that support this opinion. Of late some attempts have been made (dictated by humanity) to introduce the Portuguese method of killing the ox, by stabbing the animal in the vertebræ of the neck, which produces instant death; but custom or prejudice is in favour of the old system, and this is not likely to be adopted. The Jews who reside here have their beasts slaughtered according to the Hebrew custom; a priest attends at the slaughter houses of those who serve that people to cut the throat of the animal. The meat so killed, when exposed for sale in the market, is distinguished by having a leaden label attached to each joint. Anciently the slaughtermen formed one of the corps of the household establishment of noble families, as appears by an extract printed in the Archæologia, entitled, the Slaughterman's Charge, which states that, "he is to receive of the bailiffe or storer, by the direction of the stewarde, all such beaves, muttons, veales, lambes, or kiddes, and those to dresse faire, and clenlie, the oxeskines, and sheepskines, and both of them to be tallied with by the slaughterman. He is to see the tallowe of the oxen, and the suit of the sheepe, be safelie kepte, and to be delivered to the chandler by the weight, and to be tallied for in like sorte as the other; the calves and lambe skinnes be fees to the clarcke of the kittchine, the inmeates, as tonnges, feet, tripes, calves-heades and feete, with lambes heades and purtenancis, are to be called for by the clarcke of the kittchine. He is to keepe his office cleanlie." These must have afforded considerable perquisites, as an amazing number of persons were daily fed by the hospitality of many of the ancient nobility. The following act affords us no very high opinion of the cleanliness of our ancient countrymen. In the reign of Edward the Third, a letter was sent to the mayor and sheriffs of London to prohibit the slaughtering of beasts in the metropolis, in consequence of the plague breaking out in France, and to prevent the revival of it

in London—"because by killing of great beasts, &c. from whose putrid blood running down the streets, and the bowels cast into the Thames, the air of the city is very much corrupted and infected." It goes on to state that owing to these filthy habits, the air was rendered so noxious, that to remedy the evil, it was ordained that no animals were to be slaughtered nearer to the city eastward than Stratford, and westward not nearer than Knightsbridge, under the penalties of forfeiting the slaughtered animals, and one year's imprisonment of the butcher. Notwithstanding the metropolis is so much increased both in extent and population at the present time, yet such are our improved habits of cleanliness, that we hear of no complaints of this nature. A curious account of the tricks of butchers of former times may be gathered from a little tract preserved in the British Museum, entitled, an Assize for Butchers, published by order of the King's Privy Council in 1621, which states, that it hath been a thing carefully looked into and provided for by good and ancient laws and orders of this realm, as well as by the opinion of skilful and learned physicians, that butchers should be prohibited from selling any flesh of cattle, which were infected with a disease called the **Noren**: nor to sell the flesh of bulls unbaiten, &c. neither that they should blow the flesh, nor "geld the kidnies of their muttons, veales, or lambes kidnies to deceive the ignorant purchasers thereof, under pain of amercement, and to suffer the judgement of the pillory," with his corrupt flesh to be burnt before his face in the open market place. The subsequent regulation is so sensible that one is induced to wish it were adopted and enforced in every market. No victuels of the city shall give any rude or unfitting language, nor make any clamour upon any man or woman, in the open market, for cheapening of victuals, under pain of three shillings and fourpence.

THE

COSTUME

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

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