

to the Durdans, and walked within the yard, and to the Bowling Green, where I have seen so much mirth in my time; but now no family in it, my Lord Berkeley, whose it is, being with his family at London. Then rode through Epsom, the whole town over, seeing the various companies that were there walking; which was very pleasant to see how they are there, without knowing what to do, but only in the morning to drink waters. But Lord! to see how many I met there of citizens, that I could not have thought to have seen there; that they ever had it in their heads or purses to go down thither." His quiet scorn for such poor people as do not happen to belong by birth to "the quality," is amusing, and worthy of Horace Walpole himself.

In the summer season the town was always full, the company being attracted by the races on Banstead Downs, and by the other fashionable diversions. On one occasion, in July, 1663, Samuel Pepys found the town so full that he could not get a lodging, and had to go towards Asstead, where he got accommodation at a small wayside inn.

In the "Memoirs of Sir Ralph Esher," by Leigh Hunt, will be found some lively pictures of the above-mentioned period. Sir Ralph Esher is an adventurer in the Court of Charles II., where he is introduced by luckily securing a feather that escapes from the hat of one of the ladies of the Court on horseback. The work opens with some account of the writer's family, of some antiquity, in the county of Surrey, and in one of the early chapters he describes one of Charles's visits to Durdans, a rural retreat in the outskirts of this town. The opening has all the freshness of a race-day morning at Epsom:—"The bells awoke me in the morning ringing a merry peal. When the wind died, they seemed to be calling towards London; when it rose again, they poured their merriment through the town, as if telling us that the King was coming. I got up, and went into the street, where the people were having their breakfasts under the trees, as the gentry do in the time of the races. It was a very animated scene. The morning was brilliant. A fine air tempered the coming warmth. The tables set out with creams and cakes under the trees, had a pretty country look, though the place was crowded. Everybody was laughing, chattering, and expecting; and the lasses, in their boddices and white sleeves, reminded me of Miss Warmestre."

The arrival of the King and his mistress is graphically told, as are the costumes described, nay, coloured, for they are like highly finished portraits:—

"The King!—The silence now seemed to become more silent; and in spite of the opinions in which I had been brought up, I felt what it was to be in the presence of one who inherited sovereign power. His Majesty himself alighted first, and together with Buckingham, presented his hand to assist the Queen. Then came a handsome boy, Mr. Crofts (afterwards Duke of Monmouth); and last, assisted by her cousin the Duke, the long-looked-for beauty, beautiful indeed, triumphantly beautiful. She looked around, and the spectators could hardly refrain from another shout.

"The dress at that time was well calculated to set off a woman to advantage. Lady Castlemaine was dressed in white and green, with an open boddice of pink looped in diamonds. Her sleeves were green, looped up full on the shoulders with jewelry, and showing the white shift beneath, richly trimmed with lace. The boddice was long and close, with a very low tucker. The petticoat fell in ample folds, but not so long as to keep the ankles unexposed; and it was relieved from an appearance of too much weight by the very weightiness of the hanging sleeves, which counterpoising its magnitude, and looking flowery with lace and ribbons, left the arms free at the elbows, and fell down behind on either side. The hair was dressed wide, with ringlets at the cheeks; and the fair vision held a fan in one hand, while the Duke led her by the other. When she had ascended the steps, and came walking up the terrace, the lowness of her dress in the bosom, the visibility of her trim ankles, and the flourishing massiness of the rest of her apparel, produced the effect, not of a woman overdressed, but of a dress displaying a woman; and she came on breathing rosy perfection, like the queen of the gardens.

"I did not see all this at the time; there was not leisure for it; but I had the general impression, which I reduced into detail afterwards. The spectators forgot everybody but the King and her. His Majesty at that period of his life (he was little more than thirty) looked at his best, and I thought I never saw a manlier face, or a more graceful figure. He was in mulberry-coloured velvet and gold. He not only took off his hat in return to our salutations, but persisted in keeping it so, as if in the presence of the whole people of England. This fairly transported us. The royal features were strong, somewhat grim even, and he had a black brow and a swarthy complexion, reminding us of the southern part of his stock; but there was good temper in the smile of his wide though not unhandsome mouth; and his carriage was eminently that of the gentleman.