

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1898.

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Notes.

FURNIVAL'S INN.

ONE cannot but feel some regret in witnessing the constant destruction of ancient landmarks in London streets. One of these landmarks, and one of the few that remained in Holborn, was Furnival's Inn. I write of it in the past tense, as there can be little, if any part, of it still standing. As in the case of many famous London buildings, nothing appears to be known of its original foundation. Stow, writing in 1598, says:—

"Next beyond this manor of Ely House is Lither Lane, turning into the field. Then is Furnivalles Inn, now an inn of chancery, but sometime belonging to Sir William Furnival, Knight, and Thomesin his wife, who had in Oldborne* two messuages and thirteen shops, as appeareth by record of Richard II., in the sixth of his reign."

It is generally stated that it was in 1408 that certain professors and students of the law first occupied the Inn under a demise from the Lords Furnival, but the exact date appears less certain:—

* This etymology of the name Holborn appears to be an invention by Stow, unsupported by any authority. See note by T. E. T. in *Gentleman's Magazine* for May, 1856, p. 487, where the name is traced from the "Ad Holeburne" of Domesday; also an article in the June number of the same volume by Mr. Waller, entitled 'London in the Olden Time.'

"Furnival's Inn is first noticed as a law seminary in its steward's account books, written about the ninth of Henry IV."*

This statement does not show that the Inn had been just acquired for the lawyers, or that they had not possessed it still earlier. Mr. Jeaffreson in 'A Book about Lawyers' describes the character of the Inns of Chancery as follows:—

"The Inns of Chancery for many generations maintained towards the Inns of Court a position similar to that which Eton School maintains towards King's at Cambridge, or which Winchester School holds to New College at Oxford. They were seminaries in which lads underwent preparation for the superior discipline and greater freedom of the four Colleges. Each Inn of Court had its own Inns of Chancery, yearly receiving from them the pupils who had qualified themselves for promotion to the status of Inns of Court men."

Fortescue, who was Chief Justice in the reign of Henry VI., states that there were then ten Inns of Chancery:—

"As the expense of education at an Inn of Court was equivalent to about four hundred and fifty pounds a year, money of present value, the students were sons of the wealthy gentry, those of inferior rank not being able to bear the expense of maintaining and educating their children in this way."†

The fifteenth century was a period of transition, during which the great middle class was struggling upwards and asserting its rights, or what it claimed as its rights, with vehemence, and even, at times, with violence. It was also a period of great barbarity, especially so amongst the highest class, so that a modern historian has described those days as "violent and ferocious times," and "monstrous and horrible times."‡

"The English population," says a writer of about 1453, 'consists of churchmen, nobles, and craftsmen, as well as common people.' It was a novel and significant division. Traders and manufacturers took their places somewhat noisily beside their fellow-politicians of older standing, filling the whole land till it seems for a moment as if nothing counted any more in English life save its middle class—a busy, hard, prosperous, pugnacious middle class, slowly emerging from its early obscurity; in this century it had arrived at power definitely, ostentatiously, carrying a proud look and a high stomach, intent on its own affairs, heedless of the Court, regardless of ministers save when it had to bribe them, irreverent to the noble, the 'proud penniless with his painted sleeve,' tolerant of ecclesiastics and monks only so long as they could be kept rigidly within their allotted religious functions.§

* Herbert, 'Antiquities of the Inns of Court and Chancery,' 1804, p. 324.

† Denton, 'England in the Fifteenth Century,' quoting Fortescue, 'De Laud. Legum Angliæ,' cap. xlix.

‡ Gairdner, 'Life and Reign of Richard III.,' p. 2.

§ 'Town Life in the Fifteenth Century,' by Mrs. J. R. Green, vol. i. p. 60.