ABATTOIRS.

History of New-York Slaughter-Houses—Interesting and Curious Data.

At the conference of New-York butchers with the President of the Metropolitan Board of Health, recently, Mr. THOMAS F. DE VOE, a butcher, whose valuable volume upon market topics is well known and highly prized by the historical and agricultural societies of this country, presented a paper upon American and European Abattoirs. The paper was originally read by Mr. DE VOE before the Polytechnic Association of the American Institute in June last.

Mr. DE VOE begins with the killing of sheep by Abel, the first-born of men, and following the Scriptures down through the era of sacrifices and burnt offerings, he at length reaches the era of the discovery and first settlement of America, and thence down to 1656, when he finds the first statute relating to the butchering of animals. He then tells us something of

OUR ABATTOIRS IN THE OLDEN TIME.

Previous to the year 1676, cattle were slaughtered in the City below Wall-street, and on the Brooklyn shore.

Perhaps those in the City were not kept as orderly as they should have been, and perhaps they annoyed the inhabitants around them, for they were all commanded outside of the City Wall, or above the present Wall-street. This, however, gave the "Slaughter Farmer" so much trouble to examine each animal, that the authorities caused a public slaughter-house "to be built for the use of the Cytie over the water, without the Gate at the Smith's Fly, near the Half-Moone."

This "Half-Moone," represented a small half-circle battery, situated at the east end of the wall of the City, on the shore of the East River, and the site of this first public slaughter-house, or Abattoir, would now be on the east side of Pearl-street, between Wall and Pine streets.

A sworn butcher named ASHER LEVY, and GARRIT JANSEN ROOS, a carpenter, erected this public slaughter-house, and became the "Slaughter Farmers," and they set forth "That all persons should have liberty to kill and hang therein meat. these paying for the same as formerly"—that is so much per head, according to the value of the animals.

In the month of June, 1696, this public institution, or rather the slaughtering part of it, was thus ordered to be removed: "No butcher or other person whatsoever doe slaughter any cattle of any kind after ye seventh day of July next." Capt. EBENEZER WILLSON had previously obtained the privilege of building two public slaughter-houses close together near the present Peck-slip, on the shore of the East River, and a lease of the same was granted him for thirty-five years; but before his lease expires we find them under the control of the "widow CORTLANDT and JOHANNES BEECKMAN," who appear to have owned the land and purchased the lease of Capt. WILLSON or his heirs, and before the thirty years had expired the property in this neighborhood had become very much enhanced in value by the rapid growth of the City along the sloping grounds of the East River shore, and more particularly on Queen (now Pearl) street, which was then known as the "Fly," the fashionable locality representing the Fifth-avenue in the "olden time."

In 1720 we find that the progress of building fine residences in this then attractive neighborhood had been stayed by the existence of these slaughter-houses, and it became necessary to petition for their removal. Although the lease had not expired, yet the lessors, who owned the property, were quite willing that it should be removed from their lands, which now had become much more valuable for improved residences; and, no doubt, when JOHN KELLY had offered his three water-lots, of seventy-four feet wide, which he describes in a petition so the Councils as a "convenient place for the situation of a slaughter-house for cattle," he had made a satisfactory arrangement with the former lessees. The privilege was given KELLY of erecting slaughter-houses at the present intersection of Roosevelt and Water streets, and his lease was for twenty-one years from 1720.

In the month of November, 1722, "It is ordained, that all cattle for slaughter that hereafter shall be landed, or brought into this City, on the south side of Fresh-Water, (Kolck Pond,) shall be killed at the public slaughter-houses."

Before the term of the lease of JOHN KELLY had expired, the business of slaughtering at his premises had so much increased, that at certain seasons the butchers found the accommodations very much too small, and it therefore became troublesome and onerous to them, as each had to wait for his turn; this often detained them a good part of the night, or else they were without a supply for the next day; this cause, no doubt, led those who resided in the out ward to make use of their own premises to do their slaughtering in; and thus the Slaughter-Farmer was deprived of his fees. This was the means of introducing an ordinance, which was passed in 1743, forbidding persons from slaughtering "any neat cattle in his, or her, or their house, barn, stable, outhouse, yard, orchard, garden, field, or other place in the out ward of the City of New-York."

The effect of this ordinance was to drive many of the butchers back again into their former difficulties, while others moved to Brooklyn, where, on the shore below the old ferry, they established their own slaughter-houses. In the meantime, several of the prominent butchers had been in search of another place more convenient than the old one, which they found near the "Kolck," on the land belonging to Assistant Alderman NICHOLAS BAYARD, who owned a large tract on the north and east of this large pond, then known as "Fresh-Water." They had also either bought or obtained the consent of THOMAS BURNS, the then keeper of the slaughter-house on the East River, to surrender his lease, or the disposal of his right, if they were successful. So in the month of October, in the same year, (1749), the butchers' petition to the "Councils," "to be allowed to build a public slaughter-house at their own expense at Fresh-Water;" but permission, it appears, was not granted to them. But the next year Assistant Alderman BAYARD had influence enough with the "Councils" to obtain the privilege which the butchers were denied.

When BAYARD's large building became established, the law in relation to it was altered, so as to read: "That instead of the public slaughter-house by the water-side, all neat cattle to be killed at the slaughter-house belonging to Mr. NICHOLAS BAYARD, on the land on the north side of the fresh water." This site is now the southwest corner of Mulberry and Bayard streets.

BULL'S HEAD.

In the establishment of this large public slaughter-house, was also established the once famous "Bull's Head in the Bowery," where now stands the Old Bowery Theatre.

There had previously been a somewhat noted tavern called "Half-way House," kept on this spot by one STEPHEN CARPENTER, who also kept stabling and pasture-lots for horses and cattle, all of which he had leased from BAYARD, and when BAYARD had erected this public institution, he also fenced in ground enough around it for yards to inclose the cattle and sheep which the butchers brought there for slaughter. The business of the "Half-way House" being now partially changed, the landlord, whether in compliment to his new patrons or not, concluded to change at least the outward sign by which his house was known, with a very strongly-marked painting, which soon after was elevated on the extended arm of a high stout post standing in front of his tavern-door. This rough painting, alike on both sides of a square swinging sign, represented a ferocious Bull's Head, and thus this once famous public house became known as the "Bull's Head in the Bowery Lane."

In 1771 the public slaughter-house was removed to the present intersection of Broome and Delancey streets, and from this public slaughter-house every week-day morning, usually between the hours of 1 and 6 o'clock, many of the butchers were loading their meats in carts and wheelbarrows by the light of their tin lanterns, as their turn came, through storms and cold; then they took the nearest, although at that period a very rough or miry road that passed along by several mulberry trees, which afterwards gave a name to this much-dreaded route; then turned down on "Fresh-Water Hill," (which became known in 1780 as Chatham-street,) when those who belonged to the several markets on the East River—the Peck-slip, Fly, Coenties-slip, Old-slip and Exchange Markets—turned into Queen (now Pearl) street, after crossing "Kissing Bridge," and continued on down to their different markets, while those who belonged to the Broadway Market, then known as the Oswego Market, continued on down the road leading to the "Spring Garden," past the "Fields," into the Broadway, and so down to Crown (now Liberty) street, where the Broadway, or first "Oswego Market" stood, exactly in the middle of that now famous and thronged thoroughfare, "Broadway."

Mulberry-street, during or just previous to the Revolution, became usually known as "Slaughter-house-street."

During the Revolution, and while the British troops held possession of our City, there were no laws, restrictions or superintendence given to the public slaughter-house, and the consequence was that it was allowed to remain in a disgusting condition, and usually much out of repair.

After the evacuation of the city by the British troops, many of the patriotic returned; in fact, many took possession of their dwellings and other buildings before that event, and among these was the wife of RICHARD VARIAN, who immediately assumed her former duties as hostess of the "Bull's Head Tavern." Her patriotic husband, however, was then lying in prison at Halifax, having been taken in a privateer which he had joined and which while returning with a prize, was overhauled by a superior force, by whom he was stripped of all he possessed. It was several months after peace was proclaimed before he was enabled to reach his old residence; and then to be greatly disappointed to find the wretched condition of the public slaughter-house, which, no doubt, induced some of the neighborhood to petition for its removal to the East River shore. This petition was favorably received by the newly-organized Councils, who in the end decided to change its location.

In the meantime an offer from JAMES BLANCHARD had been made to lease and build a large public slaughter-house on certain conditions, which were accepted by the Corporation; but now an obstacle presents itself. Mr. BAYARD objected to having the old building removed until his claim to it was satisfied, so it was necessary to have the subject before the "Councils" again; and they, it appears, empowered BLANCHARD to make satisfactory arrangements with BAYARD, when the erection of another public slaughter-house was commenced, and we find it finished in the following December of the same year (1784.)

The butchers having been disappointed in their petition to the Councils, those who were able purchased or leased lots of BAYARD, who, it appears, gave them very favorable terms, when they put up their dwellings upon the "Bowery road," and their slaughter-houses to their rear, upon Elizabeth-street; all, however, were built above or north of the lawful line.

The butchers who had erected their dwellings and slaughter-houses near to the "Bull's-head" during the Revolution, or those who were in possession, as well as those who were not able to build above the line, were driven into the Corlaer's Hook Slaughtering establishment, or very near the present intersection of Water and Jackson-streets.

The establishment of the public slaughter-house in the new locality gave an impetus to the property in the vicinity, and to improve their vacant lands, property-owners asked the "Councils" to repair the principal roads leading to Corlaers Hook, begging "That the public road leading from the City through Division-street to Corlaer's Hook may be repaired;" and also that leading from Catharine-street to the slaughter-house, and the street or slip near the slaughter-house be filled up and leveled; these roads being at present much out of repair, and almost impassible for the butchers with their meat carts, and for other carriages, and the street opposite the slaughter-house dangerous. They can with the greater freedom make the request, and trust it will be granted, as it may be done in a short time, and with little or no expense, by employing the culprits in the Bridewell in this service." It being the custom at that period to employ the culprits, no doubt the roads were soon after repaired by them; and then we find certain inducements held out to butchers, gardeners and others, by these property-holders who advertise favorable leases for lots or squares.

Mr. BLANCHARD, as the keeper of the public slaughter-house, found it both disagreeable and unprofitable; the first caused by the law forcing the butchers into an unsuitable building and an inconvenient place; and secondly, from the fact that he lost his fees, which those above the line had moved from his grasp and pocket.

As time passed, troubles of various kinds appeared rather to increase than otherwise, and perhaps this was caused more particularly by the necessitous demands of a growing population, while the accommodations of the public slaughter-house remained the same, and thus matters remained until the month of February, 1789, when the butchers again petitioned, reciting that the butchers in general might be well accommodated if a line were drawn at Division or Fisher (now Fisher is known as Bayard) street, and they were allowed to kill on their own land above such line. In order to facilitate the measure, they secured to Mr. BLANCHARD the payment of his fees for and during the term of his office.

EUROPEAN ABATTOIRS.

In Paris abattoirs originated by a decree dated the 9th of February, 1810, under NAPOLEON I, who ordered the construction of five separate abattoirs in convenient places, and at the expense of that great city, the work to be done under the direction of a committee of architects and engineers, appointed for the purpose. Plans were accordingly prepared, with the assistance of a retired butcher. Three abattoirs were erected on the north side of the river Seine, and the other two on the south side. All were originally placed outside the wall or barrier which inclosed the city, but since that period this barrier has been removed beyond these abattoirs, and now all are enclosed in the city proper. The grounds or space which they occupy, if placed together, would measure about three-quarters of a mile, by one-half of a mile. In the erection of these buildings, and before they were ready for occupation, some eight years were consumed; however, they were put up in the strongest and most durable manner, and all inclosed with heavy stone walls, from ten to twelve feet high, with iron gates, at a cost of about $4,000,000. The income in 1853 was 1,212,167 francs; a sum which after deducting from it the necessary expense of maintaining the abattoirs represented scarcely an investment of four per cent.

The largest business abattoir or where the most slaughtering is done, is known as the Abattoir de Montmartre, and stands in the north part of the city, nearly two miles from the river Seine. It covers nearly nine acres of ground, or in other words, it is 1,167 feet in length, and 450 feet in breadth. It contains about thirty separate buildings, which outside, look like cavalry barracks. Four of the largest are used *for slaughtering purposes, but are so divided as to make* sixty-four separate places to slaughter in, each one being fifteen feet high, sixteen feet and a half wide, and thirty-three feet long. The stone pavement slopes to the gutters, that they may be the more thoroughly cleansed when the great force and quantity of water is let on. This abattoir alone requires 90,000 litres or large quarts of water daily to keep it clean. A more particular description is given of the second one, called the Abattoir de Popincourt, which is represented as being "the finest and largest in its accommodations of the five establishments of the kind in Paris, and which may be taken as a model for all others, only differing from it in size and the position of their buildings." It stands on a sloping ground, in the northeastern part of the city, about a mile and a quarter from the river Seine, and consists of twenty-three piles of buildings, all neatly arranged within an inclosure of walls. To the right and left of the central court, 438 feet in length by 291 in breadth, are four buildings, separated by a road traversing the ground in its whole breadth. These are the slaughter-houses, each 141 feet long by 96 broad; a flagged court separates them into two piles, each of which contains eight slaughter-houses for the butchers, who keep the keys of those respectively belonging to them, each of which receives air and light from arcades in the front walls. Above are spacious attics for drying the skins and depositing the tallow; and that they may be always cool, a considerable projection has been given to the roofs. Behind these slaughter-houses are two ranges of sheds, containing sheep-pens, and at their extremities two stables. Each of these buildings contains its loft for forage. Other buildings are used to smelt the fat into tallow, and the cellars are used to cool it. In the remotest part of the grounds, in front of the entrance, is a double reservoir for water, 228 feet in length, built in solid masonry, and resting on vaults, under which are stands for carts. A steam-engine of eight-horse power, and a horse engine, are required to raise water enough for use.

Parisian abattoirs are all conducted in the most rigid manner by a guild or corporate body of butchers, aided by several officers of police. The butchers in general have all their work done by regular slaughterers, at a slight cost, in fact, no rent is paid except a small octri, or duty on each animal killed, which appears to be about seventy cents more than is paid by the outsider or country butchers, who bring to the markets the meat of animals which they slaughter themselves in their own premises. The city, however, receives a gate duty or octri on each animal living or dead, as it enters the public barrier which incloses the city.

The slaughterers have also an additional perquisite in the blood, brains, and rough offal, which butchers here, are glad to get rid of or have carried away at a slight cost to themselves. The blood, perhaps, is the most valuable, as it is saved separately in stone wells, then afterwards subjected to a scientific process, after which it is used for refining sugar and manuring the earth.

In Scotland we find that Edinburgh has an abattoir, or rather an extensive range of slaughter-houses, which were erected in 1852, by the Town Council, on an area of four acres, at Lochrin, in the southwest quarter of the city, all at a cost of £22,163; and now we learn that it is found a great deal too small for their use, so that many of the animals are slaughtered elsewhere. The buildings are in a double row, extending about 400 feet in length, with a centre roadway 25 feet wide, all surrounded by a screen wall with two entrance gates.

In Glasgow there are also three public abattoirs in the city, but they are quite small—in fact, not much larger than some of our private slaughter-houses; but all are conducted by efficient and proper officers.

ABATTOIR-PLACE.

I might take up the great speculation which one LAING, a coal-dealer, undertook, in the erection of a great number of small, cheap buildings, adjoining each other, on Thirty-ninth-street and Eleventh-avenue, and to which he gave the name of "New-York Abattoirs." They were represented as being constructed with pipes to carry off all the blood and refuse, besides freeing it from unpleasant odors, so that the air from it would not be impregnated, and in every department arrangements were to be made with a view to the health of the neighborhood.

In addition to this model abattoir, he contemplated the erection of eighty more slaughter-houses of the same size, and directly opposite he intended to put up a hotel of large dimensions, and also to make arrangements in New-Jersey, directly opposite, for a Bull's Head, to contain the cattle which were to be killed on this side, and which were to be brought over in a steamboat, and I suppose that when navigation closed the cattle were to cross over or under the ice.

A portion of the press noticed these New-York abattoirs as being the largest and best arranged of any in the country, and strongly recommended the passage of a law, then before the Councils, to prohibit the slaughtering of cattle south of Thirty-fifth-street, the object of which was not so much to improve the sanitary condition of the City as it was to drive the butchers into these or other buildings above this line. But as the butchers were, like other freemen, aware of their rights, they thought that such a law interfered with the peaceable possession of private property, so they would not be driven, and more especially into these unsuitable and inconvenient buildings, even if they were granted free of rent. In the end, however, the whole scheme was exploded; the law was not made, and the additional eighty slaughter-houses, as well as the hotel of large dimensions, were not erected, but the buildings of this New-York Abattoir yet remain to view, a monument of impractical application and of a speculation destined to perform a different service from that first intended. The promised pipes which were to free the City from stench have not peformed their duty—that is, if we believe many of the travelers on the Hudson River Railroad, who daily pass by Abattoir place.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES NOT PESTILENCE BREEDERS.

The health of the neighborhood of the private abattoirs, or slaughter-houses, has been one of the prominent topics of City Inspectors' reports, one of which, made by the City Inspector in 1863, adverts "to the well-ascertained facts of the injurious effects upon the health of that portion of the community residing within these neighborhoods." He then attempts to show that the presence of these establishments induces a settlement of the poorer classes in these localities; and he truthfully adds that the want of proper household accommodations renders the usual sanitary precautions almost unavailing in these dwellings, more particularly during the Summer and Winter months. I now call your attention to a report from the pen of the distinguished Dr. STEPHEN SMITH, given in testimony on the Health Bill, before a Committee composed of Senators and Assemblymen, on the 13th of February, 1865, at the City of Albany, in which he speaks of the several wards where the deaths are greatest in the following language: "One-half at least of the population of New-York have a death rate no higher than the people of a healthy country town, while the death pressure upon the other half is frightfully severe. For example: The Seventeenth Ward, which is inhabited principally by a wealthy class, (and has also within its bounds 56 slaughter-houses, so Inspector BOOLE informs us,) has a death rate of but 17 in 1,000, or only the death rate of a rural town; but the Sixth and Fourth Wards (which have no slaughter-houses, or at least none are noticed in them by BOOLE, but which are occupied by the laboring classes) have, says Dr. SMITH, a death rate varying from 36 to 40 in 1,000. Thus it appears (continues the Doctor) that while the average death rate of the city is very high, it is greatest in those wards where the tenant-house population is the most numerous. We find this excess of mortality just where we found the cause of disease existing most numerously. And when we sight the matter further, we find that the excess of mortality is not even equally distributed over these populous poor wards, but is concentrated upon individual tenant-houses. For example, while the mortality of the Sixth Ward is nearly 40 in 1,000, the mortality of its large tenant-houses is as high as 60 to 70 in 1,000. The following is a recent census of a large but not exceptional tenant-house of that ward: Number of families in the house, 74; persons, 349; deaths, 18 or 53 in 1,000; constant sickness, 1 in 3; deaths of children, 1 in 6, or at the rate of 166 in 1,000.

A very important charge has recklessly been made against slaughter-houses, which is, that they breed and disseminate contagious diseases. If we glance back to the time of the ancients, who daily slaughtered animals in their holy places, and, no doubt, in the presence of large gatherings of people, we cannot glean any testimony of their having suffered any ill effects from their frequent visits to the places of slaughter; and we might continue on, passing through centuries of time, during which time countless millions of people have been supplied with animal food which had been slaughtered in their abattoirs; and yet not one unfavorable word have they left recorded against these places as being detrimental to health or as originating any contagious diseases.

Even our own records, although showing the several great public slaughter-houses or abattoirs which have been previously referred to as not having been kept in the best condition, more especially the one under lease to the Bayards and during the Revolution; yet nothing is said about their superinducing disease.

We may also turn to the yellow fever years in our City in 1791, 1795, 1796, 1799, 1800, 1803, 1805, 1806, 1809, 1819 and 1822, and find not one fact of the kind recorded; but we do find in 1822, while the yellow fever was fatally progressing through our City, a letter from Dr. DAVID HOSACK, one of the first physicians of his day, which he wrote to the Board of Health, and in which he says: "At this moment many parts of our City are filthy and offensive in the extreme, and yet proverbially healthy. Of this fact any person may be satisfied who will visit the streets in the northeastern part of the City occupied by slaughter-houses, where the air is loaded with the offensive vapors rising from the decomposition of blood and the other offals of those establishments; yet you will be surprised to be told that those streets are remarkable for their salubrity, and have in no instance been the seat of pestilence, even when the disease was prevailing in the vicinity of our wharves."

The author relates his own experience as a butcher, and says that from 1827, when he was apprenticed to a butcher, to the time when he gave up to others the slaughtering of animals, he was uniformly healthy, and he closes thus:

I shall now close by quoting from a report made by a special Committee of the Common Council in January, 1860, which says that "to say that a slaughter-house is, *per se*, a public nuisance is asserting a principle at war with the experience of mankind in all ages, and, we may add, with the opinions of the most eminent physicians and pathologists of modern times.

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