

sport ; but the festival gradually declined, and within the last two years St. James' Day, the rush-cart, and the festival, have altogether ceased in Whalley. It may be observed that St. James' Day, old style, would be on the 6th August, and the rush-bearing, the 5th of August, would therefore be the Eve of St. James."

** The custom of rush-bearing was not so elaborately nor so enthusiastically observed in Cheshire as in Lancashire, though in its main features the same, and is now almost obsolete. Ormerod * describes :

"The great and peculiar feature of the festival [the wakes] as the rush-bearing, which is still in use in many parts of the county. This ceremony [as in use at Lymm, in 1817] consists of carrying to church the rushes intended to be strewed on the clay floor under the benches, which are piled neatly up in a cart, and a person constantly attends to pare the edges with a hay knife, if disordered in progress. The cart and the horses are carefully selected from the various village teams, and decorated with flowers and ribbands, and on the rushes sit persons holding garlands, intended to ornament the church for the year ensuing. These are composed of hoops slung round a pole, connected by cross strings, which are concealed by artificial flowers, cut paper, and tinsel. One is placed in the rector's, or principal, chancel, and the others in the subordinate ones belonging to the several manor-houses of the parish, and they are frequently ornamented by the young ladies of the respective mansions. The cart, thus loaded, goes round to the neighbouring seats, preceded by male and female Morris-Dancers, who perform a peculiar dance at each house, and are attended by a man in female attire (something between the fool and the Maid Maryan), who jingles a bell to the tune, and holds a large wooden ladle for money. As night approaches, the cart, with its attendants, returns to the town where the church is situated, and there the garlands are fixed, whilst a peal is rung on the bells, and the concourse of village revellers is attracted to view the spectacle."

In Coles MSS., preserved in the Harleian Collection, British Museum, there is an account of a rush-bearing at Bunbury, dated 30th July, 1755 :

"Being at my worthy Friend, the Rev. Mr. Allen's, house, at Tarporley, and hearing that there was a famous Rush-bearing, as the Cheshire people call it [to be held at Bunbury], on account of the hanging up of a new Chandelier of Brass in the Church, which cost

* "History of Cheshire," 2nd edition, 1882, vol. i., pp. 81-2.