

CHAPTER V.

Burning Wells of Wigan in the 17th Century—Fishing in Wigan—Advowson of the Parish Church—Ejected Ministers in Lancashire—Wigan Curates—Bishop Hall—Escape of the Bishop from Death by Fire: His Death at Wigan—Discovery of Gas—Dr. Clayton, of Wigan—Lathom Spa—Social Position of the Burgesses of Wigan—Award—Confirmation and Lease of Bishop Bridgeman—Clandestine Marriages in Wigan—Dugdale—Nonconformity—Evil Omens—The Great Fire and Plague—Destruction of Wigan Grammar School Property in the London Fire—Bishop Wilkins.

THE natural curiosity of man is a powerful incentive to education, but when it goes hand in hand with superstition, its deductions form a wonderful subject of curious speculation. People of the present age are amazed at the credulity of their Lancashire forefathers, who seemed to consider every extraordinary phenomenon in nature as supernatural, if they did not understand it. Those forefathers of the seventeenth century lived in an age of simple faith, with a blind and prejudiced reason. They jumped at conclusions about natural phenomena, and were almost invariably wrong. Thunder was to them the voice of the Deity, and lightning hieroglyphics in an unknown tongue written in the sky. Plagues and murrains were believed to be the works of bewitched beldames. It was one of the open secrets that the Devil could be everywhere at the same time, in all sorts of human forms. Even men of learning believed that the stars governed the destinies of nations and individuals. Many clung to the gossipy doctrine that it was possible to make an elixir of life that would cure all maladies and malformations, and debar the influences of disease and death. Indeed there is no end to the then existing superstitious beliefs that are now considered absurd, and it may be that coming generations will marvel at the absurd beliefs now credited. There were burning wells in the neighbourhood of Wigan in the sixteenth century, about which most extraordinary ideas were held. Superstitious persons with lively imaginations declared that the smell of sulphur was strong, and it was the undoubted opinion of many that the well was one of the doors to Hades, whence the Evil One issued to cut his nocturnal capers with the local witches.

Pilgrims flocked from far to see the blazing fountains with curiosity as great as the enthusiasm of Mecca or Medina pilgrims of the nineteenth century. Ignorant people looked on in awe, whilst philosophers and scientists were nonplussed. Reckless youth, regardless of might-be consequences, flocked to them with their peace eggs at Eastertide, and boiled them there, to the astonishment of visitors from neighbouring counties. Travelling merchants boasted in other towns that they had seen them. Were they still extant a limited liability company would doubtless be formed, the property bought, walled in, and one shilling charged for admission; but in those days every thought was not centered on how to make money, and the wells were free alike to the bold and the timid, the philosopher and the curious. Surely if these people were to see the lime, or electric, light they would imagine and believe the stars had come down from heaven, and were held near the earth by the conducting wires. To them the gas-lit streets would only be one of a million of extraordinary phenomena. Now, it does not seem strange that, from such an extensive coal-field as that of which Wigan is the centre, the gas should ooze out from many different places. The most important of these wells were in Pemberton, Wigan, Scholes, and Haigh. One near Scholes was called the "New Harrogate Spa." In Petoa Mala, near Tlernzota, in Italy, a well, in many respects similar to the Wigan one, exists, where carbonated hydrogen, produced by the decomposition of water acting upon ores and sulphate of iron, is spontaneously ignited. The gas of the Wigan wells was carbonated hydrogen. The Right Hon. Roger North, in his northern circuit, visited these wells, and gave the following account of them in his life of Francis North (Baines' History of Lancashire):—"In the return homewards from Lancaster his lordship took all the advantage he could of seeing great towns and places of note. He staid some days with Sir Roger Bradshaw, whose lordship is famous for yielding the canal (or candle) coal. It is so term'd, I guess, because the manufacturers in that country use no candle, but work by the light of their coal-fire. The property of it is to burn and flame till it is all consumed, without leaving any cinder. It is lighted by a candle like amber, and the grate stands not against the back of a large chimney, as common coal grates, but in the middle, where ballads are pasted round, and the folk sit about it working or merry-making. His lordship saw the pits, where vast piles of that coal were raised; and it is a pity the place wants water carriage; also London would be, in the latter part, served with it. But the greatest wonder his lordship saw was that which they call the Burning Well. The manner of it is this. First, in one place, where they know the sulphurous vapour perspires (often in a ditch) they dig up a turf and clap it down in its place again; and then they are ready for projection. When the Shew Company are come, a man takes up the turf, and after a little puffing of a brown paper match gives fire, and instantly the hole is filled

with a blue spirituous flame like brandy. It seemed to waste, and I believe would not have burnt in that manner long; but while it was burning they put water in the hole, and the flame continued upon the water as if it had been spirits. And some people said they used to boil eggs there. That which seemed most strange was that the vapour should come through the water and burn, and no bubbling of the water appear. It seems to infer that the vapour permeates the body of the water, as water through sands. But I question, if the body were not fluid, but rigid, as glass, whether the vapour would so easily pass it; for the perpetual action of the fluid parts facilitates the passage. And it is some demonstration how easily the effluvia of a magnet may permeate glass, metals, and every palpable substance we are acquainted with, as we continually observe them."

The following descriptive account of these wells is by an eye-witness:—"About the latter end of February, 1659, returning from a journey to my house in Wigan, I was entertained with the relation of an old spring, situated in one Mr. Hawley's grounds (if I mistake not), about a mile from the town, in that road which leads to Warrington and Chester. The people of this town did confidently affirm that the water of this spring did burn like oyle; into which error they suffered themselves to fall from want of a due examination of the following particulars. For when we came to the said spring (being five or six in company together) and applied a lighted candle to the surface of the water, 'tis true there was suddenly a large flame produced, which burnt vigorously, at the sight of which they all began to laugh at me for denying what they positively asserted. But I, who did not think myself confuted, began to examine what I saw; and, observing that this spring had its eruption at the foot of a tree growing on a neighbouring bank, the water of which spring filled a ditch that was near, and covered the burning place lately mentioned, I then applied the lighted candle to divers parts of the water in the said ditch, and found, as I expected, that upon the touch of the candle and the water the flame was extinct. Again, having taken up a dishfull of water at the flaming place, and held the lighted candle to it, it went out. Yet I observed that the water at the burning place did boyle, and heave like water in a pot on the fire, though my hand put into it perceived it not so much as warm. This boyling I conceived to proceed from the eruption of some bituminous or sulphureous fumes; considering this place was not above thirty or forty yards distant from the mouth of a coal pit there, and indeed Wigan, Ashton, and the whole country, for many miles compass, is underlaid with coal. Then applying my hand to the surface of the burning place of the water, I found a strong breath, as it were a thud, to bear against my hand. Then I caused a dam to be made, and thereby hindering the recourse of fresh water to the burning place I caused that which was already there to be drained away,

and then applying the burning candle to the surface of the dry earth at the same point where the water burned before, the fumes took fire, and burned very bright and vigorous. The cone of the flame ascended a foot and a half from the superficies of the earth. The basis of it was of the compass of a man's hat about the brim. I then caused a bucketful of water to be poured on the fire, by which it was presently quenched, as well as my companions' laughter was stopped, who then began to think the water did not burn. I did not perceive the flame to be discoloured, like that of sulphureous bodies, nor to have any manifest scent with it. The fumes, when they broke out of the earth, and prest against my hand, were not to my best remembrance at all hot."—(Letter of Thomas Shirley, Esq.)

Let the reader think of the following extract from Dr. Fuller's *Worthies*, p. 191, and Bailey's *Life of Fuller*, p. 743 :—"About Wigan, and elsewhere in this county, men go a-fishing with spades and mattocks : more likely, one would think, to catch moles than fishes with such instruments. First, they pierce the turfy ground, and under it meet with a black and deadish water, and in it small fishes do swim. Surely these *pisces fossiles*, or subterranean fishes, must needs be unwholesome, the rather because an unctuous matter is found about them. Let them be thankful to God, in the first place, who need not such meat to feed upon. And next them, let those be thankful which have such meat to feed upon when they need it." The researches of Colonel H. Fishwick, F.S.A., have brought this historical statement altogether outside the wonderland of impossibilities into the less fascinating one of improbabilities by simply proving that not *Wigan*, but *Formby*, on the seaside, is the place referred to. I cannot find any *conjectures* as to what kind of fishes they were : perhaps they were cockles.

The advowson of the Parish Church, which had frequently changed hands, was purchased by Sir Orlando Bridgeman about the time of the Restoration, and it remains to this day in the possession of the representatives of his family. He bought it with no intention of making it a family living, but seemingly rather as a rural living for the Bishops of Chester. The original deed of purchase has been lost, but in subsequent deeds of trust it is stated that "Sir John Bridgeman, knowing his father's intentions to be that his heirs should not take ye same to their own use, &c., pursuant of ye pious intention of his father, grants, bargains, and sells to Henry, Bishop of London, &c., the said advowson in trust, yt they shall present the Bishop of Chester or some other person as they, in your judgment, shall think fit, &c."—(Not. Cest., Vol. 21). When his father purchased it he conveyed it in trust to Gilbert, Archbishop of Canterbury. Five consecutive Bishops of Chester held the living from 1662 to 1700, not one of whom was connected with the Bridgeman family. It was nearly a hundred years after (1740) the purchase before one of the Bridgeman family was presented to the living by the patron.

The following account of Sir Orlando Bridgeman is given by Dr. Worthington in his "Diary and Correspondence," as published in the thirteenth volume of the Chetham Society's Publications:—"Sir Orlando Bridgeman, the son of Dr. J. Bridgeman, Bishop of Chester, was sent to Queen's College, Cambridge, and became afterwards an eminent lawyer. He sat in the Long Parliament for Wigan, and when hostilities commenced between the king and the Parliament, he took a decided and active part in favour of the former. On the Restoration he was created Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer, and presided at the trial of the regicides. He was subsequently made Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and few judges have ever held that office with more deserved reputation. On the 31st August, 1667, the Great Seal was delivered to him, which he held as Lord Keeper till November 16th, 1672, when he was succeeded by the famous, or rather infamous, Lord Shaftsbury. He died at his residence in Teddington in 1674. He was unquestionably an honest man and a sound and able lawyer. Some of his contemporaries have given rather a disparaging account of the manner in which he discharged the functions of an equity judge. It must, however, be recollected that he was made Lord Keeper very late in life, at a period when equity, as a science, was in its infancy; but certainly the reports of his decisions which exist show no apparent want and soundness on equitable principle. Of those who have censured him, Burnet is little to be relied upon, and Roger North had a grudge against him on his brother, Lord Guildford's, account. It should not be forgotten that Bridgeman had the courage to speak against Strafford's attainder; and that his final fall from office took place solely because he would not lend himself to the iniquitous measures of the court. In Lord Campbell's amusing Lives of the Chancellors, a biography of Bridgeman is contained in vol. III., p. 271; but the reader should be cautioned in this case, as well as in that of Lord Guildford's, against the evident want of fairness and impartiality which both articles display. When he tells us of the former that 'he turned out a most execrable judge,' and of the latter that 'he was one of the most odious men who ever held the Great Seal of England,' one cannot but regret that the vehemence of the party advocate should only be seen when we look for the still small voice of historical truth."

The three religious parties, Papists, Puritans, and Episcopalians, had fought long and struggled hard, each one in its turn of power vying with its predecessor in mercilessness. At first there were but two parties, which now won and now lost, whilst the populace in the great national arena cheered to the echo the momentary victor. The fashionable creed was clearly the result of adopting proof of the true religion by the ordeal of physical strength. Each party, as a whole, was sincere, although many individual members had not a grain of true religion in them, and were but mercenary Christians

on the stronger side, no matter whether Papist or anti-Papist. The Papists and Episcopalians fought until the wonder is they did not both succumb, like exhausted and simultaneously wounded gladiators, for scarcely had the latter been declared the victor, by the upturned thumbs of English recognition, when another powerful and full-grown opponent—the Puritans—entered the lists, and the battle was renewed, whilst the Papists lay quietly, recovering their strength and biding their time. The new foes were shocked at the manners and customs of the time, and challenged to mortal combat all who contested their stern principles. Whilst endeavouring to compel all men to live the sober lives of melancholy Christians, they eschewed all manner of evil in thought, word, and deed, talked Scripture language, sang holy hymns, and talked and prayed when worldly men believed they could innocently gossip. Joy, sport, and lively happiness were to be banished from the land, and their time was to be spent in weeping and wailing for national sin. Public statues, hewn by the skill of genius, although to the pure all things are pure, were re-hewn by their own rude masons when the drapery was considered insufficient. Every man was to be forced to live as pure a life as the founder of Christianity. Long they fought, and, of course, failed, although they had attained power in the land, and a cure for the religious troubles of the time, through their influence, excessive beyond necessity, was administered by the King and Parliament in 1662. An Act of Uniformity was passed, to which two thousand conscientious ministers would not conform. Of these sixty-seven were in Lancashire, conspicuous among whom was Charles Hotham, Rector of Wigan, who had been appointed to that living twelve years before (1650) in the place of James Bradshaw, who was removed for not observing the Parliamentary feast of 1st June, 1650.

George Hall was the first of five consecutive bishops of Chester who held the rectorship of Wigan according to the apparent wish of the patron, Sir Orlando Bridgeman, who purchased the advowson and gave it in trust to Gilbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, for himself and his heirs. This deed was seen by, or at least its contents were known to, his own son and heir, who expressed his intention of carrying out his father's wish, although he was in nowise compelled to do so, for not only had he succeeded to all his father's property and estates, but this deed of trust had been lost, as mentioned before. Bishop Hall was the son of the Bishop of Exeter, and was born in 1612 at Waltham Holy Cross. Like that of many of the clergy of his day, his life was an eventful one—now he literally rolled in wealth, and anon subsisted on charity, and then again dignified. He was collated to a prebend of Exeter in 1639, and in 1641 was made Archdeacon of Cornwall when his brother Robert resigned that office. His property, down to the very clothes of his children, was sequestered by the Parliamentarians, who refused to allow him to open a school, by which he might obtain a sufficient, although scanty, pittance to keep him from beggary and dependence

on the generosity of charitable people. With the Restoration came happier times for him and other plundered ministers. He was first made Canon of Winchester, and then Bishop of Chester and Rector of Wigan. In 1666 the Bishop (Hall) very often preached in Wigan, especially against the atheistical doctrines which were then being largely promulgated, and many people came to hear him from the surrounding districts. On the Saturday night of the 1st September he had a very narrow escape from being burned to death, for his groom had left the candle so near his bed that in the middle of the night the bishop was unceremoniously awoke by the whole place being in flames. It seemed as if the Fates had decreed that his eventful life should be terminated by some unnatural means, for, having after a long and chequered career narrowly escaped from being suffocated by smoke and consumed by fire, his pious life was at last, in 1668, within a few yards of the same spot, brought to a close by a simple accident. At Wigan he died, 23rd August, 1668, from the effects of a wound caused by his falling and accidentally stabbing himself with a knife, which was in his pocket. The accident took place in his own garden at Wigan. Of several publications of his, the chief was (1655) "The Triumphs of Rome over Despised Protestantcy."

Many are edified by what merely amuses or puzzles others. When superstitious persons stand in awe, then the scientific person looks for discovery. The Rev. Dr. Clayton, of Wigan, admired the local burning wells, and was amazed at their appearance, quite as much as amused at the superstitious ignorance of visitors. He closely examined the phenomenon, and by rude experiments first discovered that it was not the water, but an evaporating air or gas that burned; then he was anxious to know whether that special spot was the only place where it would burn, and he further discovered it could be carried away in air-tight vessels, as in a bladder, which he used, and consumed the gas wherever he pleased, finding its light far superior to many rushlights. These successful experiments only roused his curiosity as to whence this gas proceeded, and, coal having been long in use, he proceeded to *distil* it, and that with success. Thus, Dr. Clayton, of Wigan, is, as far as known, the first discoverer and manufacturer (experimentally only) of coal gas, although it did not then come into popular use. An account of the manufacture of coal gas was first *published* by Dr. Hales in 1726, but the first known account was *written* long before this by Dr. Clayton, of Wigan, although his account was only published in the "Philosophical Transactions" of 1739. Unfortunately his letter is not dated, but is addressed to the Honourable Robert Boyle, who died in 1691, and therefore Clayton's letter must have been written at least 35 years before Dr. Hales' treatise was published. Although Clayton, Hales, and others had experimented with gas, it was a hundred years after their time that it was publicly used, and, although Dr. Clayton may be

considered the discoverer, he was not the means of bringing gas into use or even into public notice.

There is an abundance of mineral in the neighbourhood of Wigan, and yet no mineral well; but such has not always been the case. One of the most fashionable inland watering-places might have been at Lathom. Even down to the end of the 17th century it was frequented by invalids from all parts of the country, and many remarkable cures are said to have been effected. The waters of Lathom Spa were said to be superior to those of Tunbridge or Harrogate. One remarkable peculiarity of the Spa was that an abundance of the remains of cockle and periwinkle shells came out with the clear spring water. Dr. Borlasse wrote a book, about 1670, commending the virtues of the Lathom Spa, and prophesying for the district a fortunate and fashionable future, which has not come to pass, for the Spa has been drained away by the coal mines of the neighbourhood. The same thing has occurred where other Spas, as the one in Harrogate Street, might have existed as popular watering places at this day. There are cold and hot water springs, with medicinal properties derived from the solution of substances through which they pass. The health-giving properties of these wells, or springs, are chiefly soda, magnesia, lime, iron, and sulphur. The Lathom Spa, and the Spa which was in the present Harrogate Street of Wigan, were chiefly *sulphureous* and *chalybeate* waters.

The more civilisation trod upon the evils of the feudal system generally the more, in particular, did the burghal classes assert their importance and rights as national necessities. The more people assembled together in towns, the more enlightened and advanced they became by the interchange of ideas, and consequently burghal concerns were far more eagerly discussed—for the numbers concerned were far greater—than those of an agrarian nature which have not even to this day entirely thrown off the feudal yoke. The history of burghal progress in Wigan is very interesting, and especially so as many documents exist to make the different grades of advancement clearly visible. A burgess of the Parliamentary period was of no mean significance. His social position could either be purchased or inherited, and both ancestry and money always were and always will be powerful social agents in Britain. A man who cannot trace his descent beyond his grandfather, nor can show a good account at his banker's, even in these degenerate days of Radicalism, is no great social power, even if his brain-power be abnormally great. So it was with the old burgesses of Wigan—blood or money was the passport to influence. As a burgh the town could look back in its advanced age with no small pride. For over 400 years the system of local government had been in course of evolution and the burghal classes rising in importance, and now added to all this was the vast interest then taken generally in the national government, coupled to the fact that the

burgesses alone could return representatives. From the small courts at the Rector's Hall, where the burgesses were simply content to act as jurymen with a protective prejudice, the town had grown to be more powerful than the Rector himself. Burgesses and inhabitants generally were still willing to honour him as the ancient head and lord of the town, but they were gradually and persistently withdrawing those powers from him that seemed to embarrass them. Local as well as national freedom was a subject of no small interest to them. Every generation seemed to be encroaching on the old baronial rights, and often the indifference of the baron went on for such long periods, and the encroaching habits of the burgesses were so steady and persistent, that when objections were raised the inhabitants were enabled to claim the custom, which in common law was always as powerful as the written law itself. Besides, the progress of the town was clearly traceable to the good conduct, perseverance, and ability of the burgesses, and therefore by the laws of common sense they were entitled to some of the profits of progress. One of the many claims raised by the townsmen against the rector was settled by arbitration in 1664, when the son of Bishop Bridgeman was Lord Chief Justice of England. According to this the powers and privileges of the town and rector were clearly defined, and this was the result of many exciting meetings held in the Moot Hall for the purpose of legitimate agitation, a means of venting political feeling or grievance dear to Englishmen of all ages. According to this new award it was clearly stated that the Baron's Court was becoming practically useless for the administration of justice in many town's affairs, and that new burghal courts were taking its place. The only thing that the Rector's Court was now useful for, said the award, would be for finding out and inquiring into the chief rents due to the parson and encroachments on the glebe wastes, and accordingly it was agreed that the Court Baron should be held but once in two years, and not oftener, and that only in the Moot Hall, instead of, as originally, at the Rectory. Neither mayor nor burgesses were there to be called upon, according to ancient custom, to pay suit or service to that court, for the town had its own courts independent of this. In 1618 the town had received its share of the profits accruing from the fairs, as mentioned in the subjoined award, herewith printed for the first time, and now one of the original documents in the possession of the Corporation :—

Burgis de Wigan } Whereas there was about the Month of february, which was in the year of
in Com. Lanc. } our Lord God One Thousand six hundred Sixty and Two, A Reference
made to the Rt. Honorable the Ld. Ch. Justice Bridgman by the Mayor,
Aldermen, and Burgesses of Wigan, for and on the behalf of themselfe and there Successors and
the Rt. Revend. father in God, George, Ld. BPP. of Chester, and parson of Wigan, on the behalfe of
himself and his successors and p'sons of Wigan (for the apeasing, quieting, and settleing of Certain Suits,
differances, and Controversies y^t were then or might hereafter be depending between the said
Corporacon and there Successors and the Parson of Wigan and his Successors), as Arbitrator,
Indifferantly Elected and Chosen between the said parties. And Whereas the said Ld. Bridgeman hath

made his Award in the premises, and whereas also the patrons of the said Church of Wigan, to Witt, Gilbert, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury; Humphrey, Lord Bishp. of London; George, Lord Bishop of Winchester, and Francis Phillips, Esq., have, under their hands and Seals, Ratified and Confirmed the said award, to be for ever kept and Observed, and the said Lord Bishp. of Chester hath, in pursuance of the said award, Seald a Lease to the said Corporacon. Wee, therefore, the Mayor, Aldermen, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of Wigan, at a Generall meeting, this day had in the Motehall, w^{thin} Wigan afores^d. having p^{used} the said Award, Confirmacon, and Lease, and Considered of the Same, Doe Agree that the same shall be accepted, taken, and p^{formed} on our part, and that the same by us and our Successors shall be observed and kept, and that the same Reference is and was made and prosecuted by our Consent. In testimony whereof we have as wel^l put the seale of the said Corporacon, as our own hands the fifth day of July, aⁿo. RR. dm. Caroli S^{edi} nunc Angl., etc., XVI. Ano. Dm. 1664.

Which said Award, Confirmacon, and Lease follows, in these Words:—

To all Xtian people to whom this present Writeing shall come, I, Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Kt. and Barrt., Cheife Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, Send Greeting in our Lord God Everlasting. Whereas the Rt. Rever^d. Father in God, George, Lord Bpp. of Chester and Parson of Wigan, in the County of Lanc^r. on the behalfe of himself and his successors, Parsons of Wigan afores^d. on the one part, and the Mayor, Bayliffes, and Burgesses of Wigan afores^d. for themselves and their successors and the Corporacon of the Burrough of Wigan, on the other part, have mutually agreed to stand to, abide, p^{forme}, and fulfill such award as I, the said Sir Orlando Bridgeman, shall make Concerning all Differances and Demands between them. Now this present writeing, Indented, wittneseth that I, the said Sir Orlando Bridgeman, takeing upon me the Burden of the said Award, Doe Arbitrate and Award between the parties Concerning the promises, as followeth:—first, I, the said Sir Orlando Bridgeman, doe declare that the Parson of Wigan is Undoubtedly Lord of the Mann^r. of Wigan, and that he and his Successors, as Lord of the said Mann^r. may from tyme to tyme, at Convenient tymes, keep a Court Barron, at which the ffehold^r. within the said Mann^r. ought to doe there Suite and Service. But for that the Mayor, Bayliffes, and Burgesses of Wigan have a Court of Pleas for trying of Actions, so that the said Court Barron will be of little use for Administracon of Justice, or of Advantage to the Parson of Wigan, Save Onely for finding out and Enquiry into the Cheife Rents due to the Parson and Encrouchments upon the Wests. Therefore, for the Establishing a perpetuall amity between the parson and his successors for the tyme being, and the Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of Wigan afores^d. and their successors for the tyme being, I doe Award that the Parson doe keep his Court Baron but once in two years, and not oftener, and that in the Moothall, in Wigan, and not elsewhere, and that at the said Court noe Pleas be held between party and party; and that neither the Mayor then being, nor any of the Aldermen who have been Mayors, shall be amerced for not doing there Suite and Service at the said Court; but that all other Burgesses and suitors duely attend at the said Court to doe there Suite and Service, and to Enquire after and find out such persons as shall detain there Rents from the Lord of the Mann^r. and to find out all Encrouchments and purprestures upon the Streets and Wasts of the said Mann^r.

And I doe further Award that, from henceforth, there shall not be any Incrouchm^{ts}. made or Cottages Erected upon the Streets or Wasts within the said Mann^r. wthout the leave of the Parson and Consent of the Mayor of Wigan for the tyme being; and that such Incrouchm^{ts}. as have been made since the year 1640 (if any such have been), shall be reasonably arrented by the Parson and his Successors; if the Corporation think fitt, they be Continued, or otherwise be pulld down and laid open. Nevertheless, alsoe, I further Award that the Potters of Wigan for the tyme being may Digg Clay in the Wasts of the said Mann^r. as heartofore Potters of Wigan have used to doe, provided the places so digged be forthwth after the Digging sufficiently amended.

Also, whereas, by an award made on or about the 23rd day of february, in the year of our Lord

God, 1618, by George, then Lord Arch Bpp. of Canterbury; Lancelot, Lord Bishop of Ely; Sir Henry Montague, Cheife Justice to the Court of King's Bench, and Sir Henry Hobert, Cheife Justice of the Court of Comon Pleas, Between the then Parson of Wigan and the Corpora^on, upon a Referrance, from the late King James, of ever blessed memory. The said Referees did order that the faire kept yearly at Wigan, upon St. Luke's day, and the Markett kept there Every ffryday Weekly, and the p^ontice and the Court of Pleas, and the Michaelmas Leet, wth the profitts of the same, shold be the Corpora^on. I doe Accordingly hereby order and Award that the Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of Wigan, and there Successors, shall for Ever, as in there own Right, have the said fairs, Markett, and Courts, with the profitts of the same. But that they shall not sue or arrest, or cause, or Willingly permitt to be Sued or Arrested, any of the famyly or menial Servants of the Parson of Wigan for the tyme being, upon or by reason of any Suite or Plea in any of the said Courts, without the leave of the said Parson; and Whereas the said Referees did order that the faire which is held in Wigan on Assenssion day yearly, and the Markett which is kept on Mounday weekly, and the Easter Leet, shold be the Parson's, I doe hereby Order and Award that the now Lord Bpp. of Chester, Parson of Wigan, and his Successors, Parsons of Wigan, shall for Ever, as in Right of the Church of Wigan, have the said faire, Markett, and Court Leet, with the profitts of the same. But for that I Conceive it will be a great means to Continue peace and good will between the said Lord Bpp. and his Successors and the said Corpora^on of Wigan and their Successors, That the said Parson shall Demise the said faire, Markett, and Court Leet to the said Corpora^on. And for that the Rt. Revernd. Father in God, John Bridgeman, Ld. Bpp. of Chester and Parson of Wigan, at my Instance did heretofore Demise the same to the said Corpora^on for 21 years, at the yearly Rent of 3 pounds 6 shillings and 8 pence. I doe hereby order and award that the said George, now Lord Bpp. of Chester, shall, before the 25th day of March next Ensuing, the date of the present, by his writing, Indented, demise, and to farm-lett unto the Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of the said Town of Wigan, the said yearly faire, Weekly Markett, and Court Leet, and all Tolls, Courts, Piccage, Stallages, Profitts, Comodityes, and Emoluments whatsoever, to the said faire, Markett, and Court Leet, or any of them belonging. To hold from the makeing of the Sd. Indenture for the Terme of 21 years then next following, Under the yearly Rent of five Marks, to be paid at Xmas and Midsomer yearly, by equall proporco^on, to the said Lord Bpp. and his successors, Parsons of Wigan. And that upon Delivery of the said Lease to the Mayor of Wigan for the tyme being, the Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of Wigan shall Cause to be delivered unto the said Lord Bpp. a Counterpart thereof, Sealed with the Seale of the said Corpora^on. And I doe further Award that, upon the Expira^on of the said Lease by Surrender, affluxon of tyme, or otherwise, the Parson of Wigan for the tyme being shall, at the Request and at the Cost and Charge in the Law of the Corpora^on of the Town of Wigan, make unto the said Corpora^on a new Lease by Indenture of the premises for the like term of 21 years, under the like Reservacion of the Rent of ffive Marks yearly dureing the said Term, and soe from Tyme for Ever. the Parson of Wigan for the tyme being shall, upon the Expira^on or Surrender of the Lease, the last in being, make a new lease by Indenture of the premises so Demised to the said Corpora^on of the Town of Wigan for 21 years, under the like Reservacion of the Rent of five Marks yearly dureing the said Terme. And that upon makeing of Every such new Lease the Counterpart thereof shall be delivered to the said Parson, Seald with the Seale of the said Corpora^on of the Town of Wigan.

And I doe further Award that the said Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of Wigan shall not maintaine, defend, or Incourage any person or persons Whatsoever in the Withholding any houses, Lands, Tenem^{ts}, or hereditam^{ts} Claim'd by the Parson of Wigan for the tyme being as belonging to him in Right of his parsonage. But Nevertheless that the parson for the tyme being shall use such as are or Come in Under Antient Tenn^{ts} to the said parsonage, or which shall not Claime or Challenge the same as there own Inheritance, with that Moderation as hath been heartofore used towards Antient Church Tennants.

In Witness to this, my Award, I, the said Sir Orlando Bridgeman, have hearunto Sett my hand and Seale, the 28th day of September, in the fifteenth yeare of our Sovereign Lord the King Charles the Second over England, &c.—Anno. Dm. 1663.

THE CONFIRMACION.—And we, Gilbert, Lord Arch Bisp. of Canterbury; Humphrey, Lord Bisp. of London; George, Lord Bpp. of Winchester, and Francis Phillipps, Esq., patrons, together with Sir Orlando Bridgeman, in the Award heareunto Anexed Menciond, of the Church of Wigan, haveing perused the Said Award, Doe hereby, as much as in us lyes, Ratifye and Confirme the same to be for ever kept and Observed as Tending to the preservation of Unity and peace between the Parson of Wigan and his Successors and the Corporacon of the Town of Wigan and there Successors.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto Sett our hands and Seales the day of in the sixteenth of king Charles the second, Ano. Dom. 1664.

THE LEASE.—This Indenture, made the four and Twentieth day of March, in the Sixteenth yeare of the Raighn of our Gracious Sovereigne Lord, Charles the Second, by the Grace of God, of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c., Between the R^t. Revernd. Father in God, George, Lord Bisp. of Chester, and Parson of Wigan, in the County of Lancaster, upon the One part, And W^m. Daniell, Esq., Mayor, and the Bayliffes and Burgesses of the said Town of Wigan, upon the other part, Wittnesseth that the said George, Lord Bisp. of Chester, and Parson of Wigan, as well for and in performance of an award made by Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Kt. and Barr^r. Cheife Justice of his Majesty's Co^{rt}. of Comon pleas at Westminster, for the Settleing of peace and Unity Between the said Lord Bishop of Chester and his Successors, Parsons of Wigan, and the said Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses of Wigan, and there Successors, bearing date the 28th day of September last past before the date hereof, as also for and in Consideracon of the Rent hereinafter Reserved, hath demised, granted, Sett, and to farme-letten, and by these presents doth Demise, grant, Sett, and to farme-lett unto the said Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses, and there Successors, all that the faire, being the Sumer faire, held in the Town of Wigan, And all that Market held each Munday Weekley within the said Town of Wigan, And all that Court Leet or Veiv of Frankpledge of all Ressiants and Inhabitants w^{thin}. the said Town of Wigan Calld the Easter Leet, And all Courts, Tolls, piccages, Stalages, profitts, Comodityes, Emolluments Whatsoever, At the said faire, Markett, and Court Leet, or any of them belonging, Incident, or apertaining, or to or wth the same had, Rec^d. or Injoyd, as part, parcell of, or belonging to the same. To have and to Hold the said faire, Weekly Markett, and Court Leet, and all and singular other the premises unto the said Mayor, Bayliffs, and Burgesses, and there Successors, from the day of the date hereof, for and dureing all the tyme, terme, and space of 21 years then next following, and fully to be Compleat and Ended, Yeilding and paying therefore yearly, during the said Terme, unto the said George, Lord Bishop of Chester, Parson of Wigan, and his Successors, parsons of Wigan, the Anuall or yearly rent of ffive Marks of good and lawfull money of England at two feast days or tymes in the yeare, that is to say, at the feast of the Nativity of St. John Baptist and the Nativity of our Lord God, by even and equall proporcons, for all manner of Rents, dutyes, and Servises due or to be due for the premises dursing the said Terme. In Wittness whereof the partyes first above-named to these presents, Indentures, Interchangeably, their hands and Seals have sett the day and yeare first above written.

William Daniell, Mayor.
James Mullyneux.
Nic. Pennington.
Robt. Baron.
William Glover.
Ra. Markland.
Math. Markland.

James Forde.
Robt. Langshaw.
Tho. Hoghton.
Myles Turner.
Ambrose Jollye.
Gilbert Barrow.
John Anderton.

Jo. Laithwaite.
 Ja. Scott.
 Will. Laithwait.
 Edward Markland.
 Richd. Cason, his mark.
 W. Bancks.
 Robt. Leatherbarrow.
 Robt. Winstanley.
 Willm. Briggs.
 Will. Langshaw.
 Robt. Markland.
 John Wakfeild.
 Edwd. Baron.
 Will. Linney.
 Tho. Marsden.
 Alex. Green.
 Ra. Holme.
 William Forth.
 Gilbert Forde.
 Christopher Sumner.
 Willm. Baldwin.
 Willm. Markland.
 Robt. Pennington.
 Ed. Mullineux.
 Seth Mason.
 Jeffrey Scott.
 Robt. Murrey.
 Willm. Cookson, his W mark.
 Willm. Foster, Br., his mark.
 Willm. Deane.
 Miles Seddon.
 James Letherbarrow, his I L mark.
 Roger Scott.
 Adam Bancks.
 George Brown.
 Gilbert Baldwin, sen.
 William Ireland.
 Hugh Moulding, his M mark.
 James Langshaw.
 Thomas Bullock.
 William Foster, Butcher, his P mark.
 James Astley.
 F. A. Prescott.
 Gilbert Green, his X mark.

Edward Bolton.
 Raph Urmston, his Q mark.
 Gilbert Deane, his mark.
 Humphrey Leigh, his H mark.
 James Bancks.
 Robert Bibby, his R mark.
 E. Laithwaite, his A mark.
 James Rigby.
 Ralph Deane, his R mark.
 Thomas Scott.
 Thomas forde.
 Thomas Burgess, his B mark.
 Carard Ford.
 Lawrence Anderton.
 Oliver Whalley.
 Tho. Parr, his O mark.
 Alex. Forth, Pewt^{er}, his T mark.
 Gilbert Langshaw.
 Gilbert Glover.
 John forde.
 Richard Scott, his R S mark.
 James Browne.
 James Hollinbed.
 Roger Laithwaite, his R mark.
 Peter Heigham.
 James Marsden.
 Charles Bancks, the B mark.
 Thomas Barrow.
 Alexander forde, Barber, A F, his mark.
 Thomas Greene, his mark.
 Thomas Butler.
 Robt. Leatherbarrow, his R L mark.
 Thomas Tarleton.
 William Marsden.
 Richard Rylands, his A mark.
 Hugh Forde.
 Robt. forde, jun.
 Raphe Langshaw.
 James Forde.
 Charles Bancks, sen., his C D mark.
 Raphe Wakefield.
 Gilbert Baldwin, younger.
 Ralph Tarleton, his R mark.
 William Greene.

At a clandestine marriage in 1663-4 (Lowe's Diary) seven of the party of runaways rode through Wigan towards Holland, each decked with a yard of twelvepenny ribbon, bought in Wigan for the purpose of marital distinction. Such John Gilpin shows were not less frequent in the town than the Gretna Green marriages of the days of our grandfathers. The couples were often pursued by irate parents, or persons interested in the fortunes of the bridal heiress. Naturally enough every such show was a nine days' wonder and food for merry gossip, old maids being specially severe on the frivolities of headstrong youth, although in most cases their lively imaginations

pictured to them the happy day when still gayer Wigan ribbons would flutter in the air on their nuptial day ; but with their inevitable ceremony there would, of course, be no scandal connected, according to their chaste and hopeful thoughts.

Dugdale, the antiquary and historian, was born 12th September, 1605, near Coleshill, in Warwickshire. He distinguished himself by his literary career and labours in the Herald's Office, and was advanced to the office of Norroy King-at-Arms after the Restoration. His "Origines Juridiciales," published in folio (1666), is adorned with excellent drawings of the heads of several men eminent in his day, one being Sir Orlando Bridgeman. When he professionally visited Wigan in 1664 as Norroy King-of-Arms he sketched a drawing of the monument of Sir William Bradshaigh and his Lady Mabel, and rehearsed their romantic history.

Up to this time the only two subordinate parishes of Wigan were Hindley and Billinge, frequent mention of each of which is made in the Wigan churchwardens' accounts, stating the supply of sacramental wine. From all the neighbourhood round people were compelled to come to the mother church at Wigan, or one of these parishes, and, if they did not come, they were reported, persecuted, and fined, or imprisoned. Nonconformist clergy had been ejected from their livings, and by Act of Parliament compelled to live not less than five miles from their boroughs. Holy but nonconforming men had frequently stood at the bar with thieves, highwaymen, and murderers, and been confined with them in the most filthy and pestilence-breeding prisons, whilst the people of the county were compelled to pay for their sustenance. Twelve thousand Quakers alone were liberated from prison, where they had been interned for Nonconformity. Richard Baxter and John Bunyan were two of the greatest imprisoned Nonconformists—for preaching in unlicensed conventicles. The people were compelled to attend divine service, and generally they came with pleasure, not because of the service or sermon, but, there being no newspapers, because round the Parish Church before and after service old friends met and discussed the news and topics of the day, just as people now do at country churches.

There had been a great drought in the land throughout the summer, so much so that even in the north of England all the wheat was shorn by the middle of August. The next summer was as dry, and wheat was garnered before the end of July. Two great blazing stars were seen in 1664, another two in 1665, and all the world wondered and believed that something terrible was to happen, for the evil omens were believed to be understood by the superstitious, who afterwards unhesitatingly connected them with the dreadful calamities of 1666—the Great Plague and Fire of London, by which even Wigan suffered great loss.

The Great Plague had decimated the mighty city, but the Furies were far from being satiated by the destructive feast of mortality, and it seemed that the Great

Fire was about to devour those left by the Plague. The streets of London were narrow, and the timber houses, pitched on the outside, projected on their upper stories so that the flames of the one easily caught hold of the other, and the fire that broke out in Fish Street Hill on the Sunday morning of September 2nd, 1666, within three furious days destroyed houses and property to an amount exceeding ten millions sterling. "The Chalice and Shepherd," property given by Mr. Bullock to endow the Wigan Grammar School, was wrecked in the general ruin. Many schools suffered in the same way, for many of the London successful merchants who had endowed schools throughout the country were of provincial origin, and their charities, proceeding from London properties, were generally bestowed on their native towns. There were many years of litigation in connection with such scholastic losses, and it was two years before Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Ralph Markland, and William Laithwayte, Aldermen of Wigan, gained the case before the Court in favour of the Wigan Grammar School against William Page and his wife, who claimed the property, which had by will been devised to Ellen, the daughter of John Bullock and wife of William Page. The petitioners were nonsuited, and the Grammar School Charity maintained. The other sources of endowment for the school were an estate called Ackhurst, in Orrell, Backshaw's lands in Aspull, and three small closes called Brown Meadows and Boor's House and Croft, all in the parish of Wigan. Both master and usher were nominated by the feoffees.

John Wilkins, a brief account of whom was commenced in the local magazine by the late Rev. Mr. Bailey, one of the curates of the Parish Church, was born when Dr. Bridgeman was Bishop of Chester. He was educated for the Church, lived in the midst of her trials and troubles, shared the idiosyncrasies of prevailing English creeds, was a Puritan or an Episcopalian according to his spiritual convictions, or, as some believed, as it seemed best for his temporal good. Some writers have spoken harshly of him, but it should not be forgotten that he lived in an age when sycophancy was the recognised and fashionable ladder by which young men of ability climbed to fortune, and that just as he had reached manhood this social evil began to die out, so that the flattering tendency which his youthful nature had acquired changed with the changed custom. He was undoubtedly an example of men of intellectual ability and struggling ambition who cannot clearly see their way to success, and yet are determined to succeed. He had good talents, but was lacking in tact to see and seize his opportunity. With all his scholastic acquirements and innate capabilities he could neither grasp the condition of his age nor understand the bent of public opinion, which is one of the primary necessities of success in public life. This itself made him inconstant, and his constant failures gave a wavering tendency to his principles, although he did not digress into the footsteps

of men who, determined to succeed, sacrificed their principles to gain their ends, and yet retained that free-thinking principle that too easily persuades it is right to try whatever methods the mind, unaffected by conscience, suggests. As a young man, Mr. Wilkins yearned for prosperity, and tried hard to succeed, but yet failed, and it is not to be wondered at that he turned to the devices of his age, and sought the patronage of men of influence by unbecoming, though to him necessary, flattery. To him this was an easily acquired habit, for he was of a pliable, easy, and hospitable disposition. It is an unhappy and degrading sight to witness a man of great intellectual ability fawn, like a cur, at the heels of an ignorant man of monetary influence, for then "wisdom stoops to folly;" but it is still worse when the cherished principles of rectitude are bartered for place and power, but this cannot be said of the young Mr. Wilkins, although he undoubtedly was blindly persuaded that his bold ambition had of necessity to stoop to conquer, and he stooped accordingly. Even sycophancy itself failed to elevate him, but he perceived that to dabble in science was to be popularly considered great, so he at once wrote an essay on the Moon, hoping thereby to have himself classed with Bacon, Galileo, or Columbus. His book had a great run, for it was full of speculation, as most books are when written by authors who are consciously ignorant of the subject of which they treat. He simply followed the unguarded bent of an ambitious mind. He believed himself to be possessed of great intellect, capable of bringing him lasting renown and temporal wealth, and naturally it was his object to discover the road to success. At length he had succeeded. The patrons at whose feet he had been willing to kneel sought his acquaintance, and begged of him to accept their patronage, for, though there be few willing to help the struggling, there are millions who will worship the successful. One success begets another effort, and consequently Wilkins wrote another book, seemingly in vindication of the Copernican theory, for he had acutely and accurately discovered that the tastes of the age demanded philosophy or science, and no man, whatever his intellectual capacities, he perceived, need hope for literary success, except by writing to please the people and to gratify the tastes of his age, and the tastes of different ages are as variable as the tastes of individuals. Science and philosophy were the hobbies of this age, and even Royalty itself condescended to be an enthusiastic Scientist, and where the sun shines brightest there the butterflies most flutter about. Drinking, scientific research in a very crude state, philosophy which was then only the art of suggesting, fiddling, and dancing, were the fashions of the day. Then the Royal Society was robed in swaddling bands and rocked in its cradle, and Dr. Wilkins was one of its first members, and to be a hero of the hobbies was the height of his ambition; but the troubles of the revolution demanded for the king the entire attention of the members of the Royal Society. The Parliamentarians

succeeded, and Dr. Wilkins, momentarily eclipsed, signed the covenant, became a Puritan, and was rewarded by Cromwell with a living and a wife, in the person of his sister Robina Cromwell, in Oxford, where many of his fellow-philosophers still reasoned and doubted together. Cromwell and Fairfax paid them a visit, and were entertained by Wilkins, and they all played "bowls" on the lawn. His entertainments were after the fashion of Thomas à Becket during ten happy years of his life. The very fact that he was the brother-in-law of the seemingly invincible Protector was sure to put wealth in his way, had it not his marriage would doubtless have been a disappointment to him. Honour and wealth were heaped upon him, but Cromwell, his great brother-in-law and patron, died, and a new era opened for England, when all the Cromwellian favourites were brought down from their lofty eminences. So down came Dr. Wilkins and his wife Robina, and there was nothing for it but to declare himself a Royalist and an Episcopalian; but it was of no use, for Misfortune claimed him for her own, until his old friend, Dr. Ward, determined to take him by the hand, which he did, and obtained for him a chaplaincy in London, where Tillotson, afterwards Archbishop, who married the Bishop's step-daughter, was his curate or reader. Thus he was as successful after the Restoration in his turned coat as he had been before it. From one ecclesiastic honour he rose to another, and, on the untimely death of Bishop Hall, Rector of Wigan, he was appointed his successor, as bishop and rector, in 1668, being recommended to the trustees of Sir Orlando Bridgeman by the Duke of Buckingham, son of the royal favourite, George Villiers. He came to Wigan in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and these livings he held for four years, and died in London, November 29th, 1672. He had many faults, but was very tolerant and unbigoted, which in those times was a great virtue.