

## PREFACE TO VOLUME I.

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**W**IGAN has a history—a long and interesting one—and its claims to have that history published are indisputable. Considering its age and advantages, it has by no means risen to that greatness acquired by some of its neighbours that did not even exist in its infancy; yet, although of no mean importance now, in proportion to the national progress, it was once one of the greatest and most promising towns in Lancashire. Its history up to the middle ages is chiefly a history of All Saints' Parish Church, and from that period to the end of the last century the history of the church and the burgesses combined. The religious struggles were as keen in it, the progress of trade as important, the rise and progress of the burghal classes as interesting and instructive, the social development as wonderful, the military prowess, the political lethargy or activity as influential, and the traditions as bewitching and bewildering, as those of any town of equal size in England. Few towns can boast of such charters as it possesses or of such an honourable age. Its claims to a written history are indeed as great as those of any provincial town in England.

These volumes are not meant to be an antiquarian work, although information is inserted that must be of interest to the antiquary. My desire has chiefly been to write a history of Wigan for Wiganers. It is a local work. I have laid aside many old MSS. which are only valuable as relics, and I am by no means under the

impression that all is here published that has a local connection. Documents from the Record Office, London; rare publications in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh; all papers and books published in connection with the county, the MSS. in the strong room at the Borough Courts, in the Town Clerk's office, the Vestry of the Church, in the custody of the Governors of the Grammar School, &c, I have perused, and yet am sensible that much unpublished matter in the hands of private individuals—and even in those places I have already searched—should be published before a complete history can be obtained, although I think that for the present it is neither desirable nor necessary to do so. Such a labour could only be pursued by an enthusiast of independent means, for even these volumes could never have been undertaken nor executed except by a lover of literary work. *Labor ipse voluptas.*

There has been an occasional divergence from chronological order for the better elucidation of the subject referred to.

A history of Wigan is one worthy of the very best illustrations obtainable, but I deeply regret that the insurmountable difficulty of expense prevents me from illustrating these volumes, and I have decided, wisely or unwisely, that it is better not to illustrate them at all than to do so unworthily. Not only could old views of Wigan be obtained for faithful engraving, but *fac-similes* of many of the old documents which I have had the honour and pleasure of laboriously perusing would be rare curiosities, welcome to the interested reader. Of such documents I may specially mention the charters, poll-books, petitions, Court Leet transactions, old minute books, and the original document constituting the first Common Council, with the autographs of the first members.

Assistance in such a work is an absolute necessity, and to accept assistance without acknowledgment is base ingratitude. I have been most kindly received by all from whom I have solicited information, but as I expect that in the prosecution of the work I shall receive further help, I postpone all mention of particular names to the last volume.

I have not considered it necessary to name my authorities for every statement, as a great part of every page would thus unnecessarily be taken up with references. Where very important facts are given references are added, and I here give a list of some of the authors and books whence I have derived much valuable information.

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| <p>Aasheton's Journal.<br/>         Axon's Lancashire Folk-song and Folk-speech.<br/>         Baines' History of Lancashire.<br/>         Broadsheets, Old Newspapers, Civil War Tracts,<br/>         and MSS.<br/>         Calamy's Nonconformist's Memorial.<br/>         Camden Society's Publications.<br/>         Carlyle's Letters and Speeches of Cromwell.<br/>         Chetham Society's Publications.<br/>         Dugdale's Baronage, &amp;c.<br/>         Forster's Life of Cromwell.<br/>         Froude's History of England.<br/>         Green's History of the English People.<br/>         Gregson's Portfolio of Fragments.<br/>         Hallam's History of England.<br/>         Harland and Wilkinson's Legends and Traditions<br/>         of Lancashire.<br/>         History of Bolton.<br/>         Histories of Wales.<br/>         Hume's History of England.<br/>         Lancashire and Cheshire Historical Society's<br/>         Transactions.</p> | <p>Lancashire and Cheshire Historical and Genea-<br/>         logical Notes.<br/>         Lancashire Worthies, by Espinasse.<br/>         Local Gleanings, edited by J. P. Earwaker, Esq.<br/>         Lord Campbell's Lives of Chancellors.<br/>         Macaulay's History of England.<br/>         Manchester Historical Recorder.<br/>         Markham's History of England.<br/>         Milner's History of England.<br/>         Nichol's Literary Anecdotes.<br/>         Notitia Cestriensis.<br/>         Palatine Note Book, edited by J. E. Bailey, Esq.<br/>         Parliamentary Inquisitions, Lambeth MSS.<br/>         Pictorial History of Lancashire.<br/>         Porter's History of the Fylde.<br/>         Roby's Lancashire Traditions.<br/>         Strype's Annals of the Reformation<br/>         Whitelock's Memorial.<br/> <i>Wigan Observer</i> Local Sketches.<br/>         Wood's Athene Oxoniensis.</p> |
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*Colinfield, Wigan,  
 June, 1882.*