

CHAPTER III.

The Rectors of Wigan—John de Mansel—The King—Primitive Burgesses of Wigan—The Church—Wakes—Prices—Customs—Fairs—Guilds—Trial by Jury—Burleymen—Local Self-Government—First Royal Charter—Frankpledge—Wigan Streets—Church Bell—First Burghal Charter—State of Trade—Livings of de Mansel—Cotton and Linen Trade—Ince—Difficulties and end of De Mansel: His Character, by Matthew Paris.

THE Rectors of Wigan must have been born under lucky stars, for when men once obtained that rural living, it generally proved but an adjunct to others. Yet, how different, and often indifferent, were their characters. Some were philosophical divines, others psychological guessers, some scientific dabblers, others distinguished *literati*. Some were most enthusiastic bigots, while others were most pliable latitudinarians, and not a few were hard students, seeking fortune and fame; but in one peculiarity there was uniformity; they were all, in olden times, pluralists. Temporal necessities were first served, as they were of the first importance. The battle-field was the road to glory, and the Church was the sure path to wealth, the desire for which grows stronger with every new possession. No wonder, then, that clerical ambition soared not to the cross and crown, but to society and lucre. No wonder the tastes of the age were studied and fostered by future rectors and bishops. Preferments were seldom given for zeal in visiting the poor, the fatherless and widows in affliction, but rather were the first-fruits of a glib tongue and sycophantic manner in the mediæval drawing-room. As education spread, the human failings of bishops and priests became a part of the popular knowledge, and, human-like, they and their offices were equally condemned because they were considered inseparable, and new philosophies of freer thought, new sects and creeds sprang up, so much so that the simple apostolic doctrine first introduced into England was divided into over a hundred sects, while many believed that all creeds were unreasonable, misleading, and wrong. The church was supposed to be crumbling into ruins through exposure and neglect; but in all ages there have been and will be pessimists who lament the degeneracy of all things in their own time, and bewail the irreparable loss of the golden past.

Date of Institution.	Rectors.	On whose Presentation.	Cause of Vacancy.
Before 1245...	John de Mansel.		
1299-1300...	Pympton (?)		
Sept. 22, 1303...	Robert de Cliderhou ...	John de Langeton.	
1309...	Richard Fulshagh (?)		
June 15, 1334...	John de Langton ...	Robert de Langeton ...	Death of Robert de Cliderhou.
1344...	John de Cransno ...	Ditto.	
April 26, 1349...	John de Winwick ...	Edward III.	
	Henry de Chaddeeden...	Held for John de Winwick during some litigation; died 1354.	
July 10, 1359...	Richard de Langeton ...	Robert de Langeton.	
Sept. 4, 1359...	Rob. de Looctock ...	Ditto ...	Resignation of Richard de Langeton.
Jan. 4, 1361...	Walter de Campeden ...	John, Earl of Lancaster (minority of Ra. Langton)	Resignation of Robert de Looctock.
Aug. 24, 1370, and was living in 1400	James de Langeton ...	Ralph de Langeton ...	Death of Walter de Campeden.
1441...	James Lanton (?)		
Aug. 9, 1503...	Thomas Langton ...	Trustees of another Ralph, deceased.	
Aug. 16, 1506...	Rich. Wiot (or Wyett) ...	Henry VII., by minority of Thos. Langton, son and heir of Ralph ...	Death of Thomas Langton.
Oct. 10, 1519...	Thomas Lynacre, M.D. ...	Thomas Langton ...	Resignation of Richd. Wiot.
Aug. 8, 1543...	Richard Langton Richard Kyghley ...	Thomas White. Ditto ...	Death of Richd. Kyghley. Ditto.
March 2, 1554...	John Harbert... Richd. Smyth ...	Ditto ...	
Aug. 9, 1558...	Richard Gerard ...	Edward, Earl of Derby, by grant of Thos. Langton, Kt.	Death of Richd. Smyth.
	Thomas Stanley, Bishop of Sodor and Man ...	John Fleetwood and Peter Farington, patrons for this turn on the grant of Sir Thomas Langton, Knt. ...	Death of last Incumbent. Resignation of last Incumbent
Feb. 8, 1571...	Edward Fleetwood ...		
Oct. 1604...	[Bryan Vincente]		
Oct. 12, 1604...	Gerrard Massie ...	King James.	
1615...	John Bridgeman (afterwards Bishop of Chester).		
About 1645...	James Bradshaw...		Sequestration of Dr. Bridgeman.
	Chas. Hotham (ejected 1662)		Removal of Bradshaw for not observing the Parliamentary Fast, 1st June, 1650.
1662...	Geo. Hall, Bishop of Chester	Sir Orlando Bridgeman ...	Ejection of Charles Hotham.
1668...	John Wilkins, do.	Trustees of ditto ...	Death of Bishop Hall.
1673...	John Pearson, do.	Ditto ...	Death of Bishop Wilkins.
1686...	Thos. Cartwright, do.	Ditto ...	Death of Bishop Pearson.
1689...	Nicholas Stratford, do.	Ditto ...	Death of Bishop Cartwright.
1700...	Edward Finch.		
April 30, 1714...	Samuel Aldersey ...	Sir John Bridgeman, Wm., Lord Digby, and Orlando Bridgeman, Esq. ...	Resignation of Edward Finch
May 12, 1740...	Roger Bridgeman...	Sir John Bridgeman, Bart., and Wm., Lord Digby ...	Death of Samuel Aldersey. Death of Roger Bridgeman.
July 9, 1750...	Shirley Coates ...	Ditto ...	Death of Shirley Coates.
July 30, 1776...	Guy Fairfax ...	Sir Henry Bridgeman ...	
July 30, 1790...	George Bridgeman ...	Sir Henry Bridgeman, Richd. Hopkins, and John Heaton	Cession of Guy Fairfax.
Feb. 26, 1801...	Hon. Geo. Bridgeman...	Orlando, Lord Bradford, Hon. J. Simpeon, & Hinton	Cession of Geo. Bridgeman.
Jan. 4, 1833...	Henry John Gunning...	Earl of Bradford ...	Death of Hon. G. Bridgeman.
1864...	Hon. G. T. O. Bridgeman...	Ditto ...	Resignation of Sir H. J. Gunning, Bart.

All Europe had been the slave of tyrannical Papacy. Money was drawn from our already impoverished country to fill the coffers, and minister to the unrestrained licentiousness, of Rome. The drunken priests at home spent their time in taverns and at gaming tables, and, being the only men of letters of the age, bishops and deans were drawn from their livings and appointed as judges, ministers, and ambassadors; and the Church thus being left, like a flock without shepherds, her parishes and livings were, not unusually, filled by royal favourites, who knew nothing about, and cared less for, ecclesiastical matters. Many benefices were thus bestowed on favourite laymen, and one of the most fortunate of these royal favourites, not a layman, but divine, was John Mansel, of Wigan. He was a descendant of Phil. de Mansel, who came over with the Conqueror. He was a sound divine and worthy master of Queen's College, Cantab, and a general scholar in all literature.

From the very first, King Henry III. had given great dissatisfaction on account of his prevailing tendency to favouritism. His own subjects were despised and ridiculed, whilst foreigners were confided in and enriched. The more the natives were provoked at his kindly treatment of aliens, with the more infatuation did he favour them, until his originally weak will was brought altogether under foreign control. He had despised and lost the affections of his people, so he sought the favour of continental rulers, and even of petty chiefs. If any rapacious adventurer asked his assistance he at once, at the expense of his already overtaxed subjects, sent them armed forces, in return for which he was quite pleased to receive nothing more than conventional flattering thanks. By this means and the exactions of the Popes, half the money was taken out of England, for which there was neither moral nor commercial return. Often he overtaxed his people unconstitutionally, and begged benevolences to pay for a bubble reputation on the continent. The subjects of the Emperor Frederic II. were in rebellion, so Frederic applied to him for help, and Henry very complacently sent over well-appointed troops under Henry de Trubleville, and of course paid all expenses with his usual lavish extravagance. The Emperor was in no haste to send back veteran troops so well maintained, as he received all the glory they gained without sharing any of the expenses they incurred. One of the bravest soldiers of this distinguished corps was John Mansel, who, Judas-like, carried the bag of English money with which the soldiers were paid. Thus, in 1238, is the first mention made of him, more to his credit as a soldier than as a priest, for he had already taken holy orders. He distinguished himself alike in single combat and in general warfare, indeed so bravely had he acquitted himself that, on his return, he was received with royal favour; and to be a favourite of Henry's meant being treated like a spoilt child, and pampered with everything asked for. As a scholar of good reputation, and as a hospitable host, he might

have attained great social distinctions, but the favours heaped upon him by the king caused him to be looked upon with bitterly jealous feelings by the clergy. The king was governed by Mansel quite as much as ever he had been by De Burgh, or De Roches, and on one occasion when the Bishop of Lincoln had appointed a parson to the Church of Tame, which was in his gift, Mansel represented to the king that it was a desirable living for himself, and so desired him to dislodge the duly-appointed priest and place him in his stead. The wish of the favourite, of course, was sufficient, and Mansel was appointed. But he had not placed himself on a bed of roses. The bishop and archbishop interfered in vain, and the latter, knowing that the king would not easily budge, tried to flatter him into allowing the bishop to exercise his ecclesiastical right, and at the same time reward Mansel. He said: "What reason is there now for causing dispute or injury to either party? For considering the merits of the said John, who is a circumspect and sufficiently learned man, his Grace the Bishop of Lincoln will, at your request, and that of himself, be easily influenced to provide him with as good, if not a richer benefice, and the bestowal will be lawful and honourable on both sides; and the bishop, with all humility and devotion, begs that it may not be otherwise, for he is prepared to pronounce the anathema against all those who may injure or encroach upon the dignity of his church."—(*Matthew Paris.*)

When Mansel heard of this determination, not because he felt conscience-stricken by his own guilt, but in fear of evil consequences, he went to the king and begged, in language befitting a Uriah Heap, to be relieved of the living, lest he should be the unworthy means of causing dissension in high places, for, said the submissive and somewhat sycophantic John, "God will sufficiently provide for me at his own good pleasure so long as you are alive." The king was pleased with his religious self-denial and loyal submission, and purposely delayed giving his decision that Mansel might the longer retain the benefice; but when the then bishop was about to excommunicate all the disturbers of his church and dignity, Mansel resigned, and received from the king the far richer living of Maidstone, for which town he afterwards obtained a charter; and, in the same year, for to him that hath shall be given more abundantly, the rich benefice of Hovedon was also bestowed on him.

In the previous reign the barons and people had determined to dethrone King John, and set his relative, Louis, then Dauphin of France, on the throne. At their invitation Louis landed in England with a French army, but, luckily for England, John died rather suddenly, and the rebels determined not to punish the son, Henry, for the sins of his father, John, and so politely told Louis his services would be dispensed with, as they had unanimously agreed to give their support to the true heir, Prince Henry. Louis was disappointed, and, determining to take the kingdom

by force, was defeated and sent back to France, where he seized some of the English possessions, and, of course, this insult to the British crown and flag had to be avenged by war. Several battles were fought, and one of the most distinguished soldiers in them was John Mansel. In 1242, at the battle of Saintes, he showed special bravery in capturing the Count of Boulogne's seneschal, Peter Orige. In the following year, however, the brave soldier and learned priest came to grief, but his lucky star, as usual, brought new preferments as balm to his wounds. His exploits on this occasion are well described by his contemporary, Matthew Paris, who says:— "One of the king's clerks and special councillors, named John Mansel, a man brave in arms and of undaunted spirit, reproached the assailants with their slothfulness and loss of time; and just as he was setting an example to the others by more effectually rising up against the enemy and wishing to prepare a road, one of the besieged, situated in a higher part of the church, shot on the said clerk a stone of great weight and crushed his leg with the joints and marrow in his bones. And while the same man was preparing to overwhelm the rest of his body with stones, his friends, who were most sincerely attached to him, covered him with their own bodies and large shields, called targets, and thus with difficulty freed him from the peril of death. And the same John, severely wounded in body, was for a long time languishing and weak. And when, by the skill of the surgeons, he was restored, and began to breathe, the king, seeing his great valour and loyalty, from being a special councillor, made the said John a more special councillor still, as, from his well-proved merits, he deserved to be ranked among the highest in England."

English freedom has been gained through many revolutions, rebellions, civil wars, agrarian revolts, and the political struggles of craftsmen in our towns. At first the baron of Wigan was the owner of the town; it was part of his property, and the inhabitants were his tenants, who could do nothing without his consent. It was as much a part of his estate as the ground on which his manor was built. The townsmen either paid for their privileges by money or by labour. All were bound to help the lord of the manor in sowing and reaping, and his labourers were compelled by law to work for him all the year round. He held about one-fourth of his estate as a home farm or demesne in his own hands, his labourers living together in the town (in Hallgate) for protection, or to be ready in case of their being called upon to serve on an emergency in a military capacity. He was judge and governor, had a Court Leet and prison at his manor house, appointed bailiffs, exacted fines and forfeitures, and received all fees and tolls at fairs and markets. Citizens were (legally) entirely under his control before the granting of the Charter. Gradually, however, the better and more prosperous class of citizens first made bargains with him, and after long usage claimed these bargains as rights. Long leases, by custom,

became personal property. Guilds among the merchants regulated their own commercial laws. Townsmen soon became so powerful as to govern and tax themselves, and so got the town into their own possession, sometimes by purchasing the rights and sometimes by claiming the custom. Generation after generation added liberties, and better laws of trade, justice, and government, until by their influence and wealth special charters were granted to them, making the influential inhabitants citizens, burgesses, or freemen of the town.

When De Mansel first came to Wigan is not known, but when he did come he found an energetic, law-abiding people, who proved themselves quite capable of justly punishing transgressors of the homely laws of their community. At this time the powerful barons under the Earl of Leicester, the king's brother-in-law, rebelled; civil war ensued, the king was taken prisoner and compelled to vote according to the wishes of the people, and Parliament was for the first time composed of King, Lords, and Commons. This rude constitutional government was modelled from the customs of government long prevalent in the towns. Intelligent communities were persuaded of the necessities of upholding law and preserving order, in order to gain commercial prosperity and social comfort. Such were the feelings of the inhabitants of Wigan when Mansel became its rector and baron. His parish was a large and lucrative one. For several centuries it included all the townships for many miles round, including Hindley and other places afterwards made into separate parishes. All Saints' Church was the only place of worship in the great area. At the present day the parish is bounded on the north by Eccleston, Standish, and Bolton; on the south by Prescott, Winwick, and Leigh; on the east by the parish of Dean; and on the west by the parish of Ormskirk. It is ten miles long by six broad, and contains 27,610 statute acres.

Wherever the Normans went, their customs, manners, and language mingled with those of the Saxons. On the Continent they had been accustomed to see churches of not greater solidity, but of grandeur superior to those of the Saxons. As their manners were more refined, so were their tastes in architecture, and their peculiar style of round-headed arches, solid buttresses, small windows, and thick walls are still to be seen in extant castles and cathedrals. The simple parallelogram-shaped Church of Wigan must, at this period, have been very old, if not altogether decayed by age. The Normans replaced it by one of their own design, in the shape of a Latin cross, and occupying the same area as the present edifice. At the intersection of the nave, choir, and transepts on the south it was their custom to erect a lantern tower, although it is remarkable that the tower of Wigan Parish Church is on the north. There were no seats in the church, but the congregation stood or knelt, according to the forms of the service, on the clay, or stone, floor. For ages after, it was

customary for those who wished to sit to bring a stool with them, and when seats were first introduced, as the property of the building, they were for the use of women only, the men still using the floor as before. The floors were often damp, and always cold, and the ancient Saxon custom was still preserved of bringing rushes to spread on the floor to add to the comfort of the worshippers. The rushes were cut from the neighbouring moors and river banks, and carried ceremoniously in large sheaves, especially by the poor, who were often paid for their services. It was not unusual to leave the rushes in the churchyard until they were dried.

About two thousand years have passed since the ground on which the Parish Church stands was first consecrated, but the building itself has frequently been entirely replaced and often repaired during that period. Although the later edifices have occupied the same area and site, yet the architecture and appearance of each have been very different. The wattlework mud building of the early Saxons was long an obsolete style of ecclesiastical architecture when the stately edifice of the Normans was raised. The present construction is not yet adorned with the venerable weather-worn marks of age, but, stained with that poisonous smoke which kills or stunts all the local trees, is the very antipodes of the dilapidated building of two hundred years ago, when it was limewashed within and without, as white as the surplices of the priests, and thus stood in the midst of the busy town, not like a whitewashed sepulchre, but an emblem of purity. The church of De Mansel was unlike that of Fleetwood, which again differed from the present, like the manners and customs of the two ages. Though the religion is unchangeable, yet the houses, their builders, and the ministers of the doctrines, are historical examples of the change and decay both of human nature and national fabrics. On that sacred spot oblations have been offered to the unknown God; thence the modern ribald Fair sprang, and many holy ceremonies, long dead and corrupted, originated; there were Satanic orgies held and sacred shrines adored; there the bondslave and the tyrannous master worshipped; there have mouldered the bones of the ancient heroes of the town, while trophy flags, long crumbled to dust, draped their silent tombs. Civil war has been advocated within its walls; Puritanism, Ritualism, and Papacy have been there alternately supported and condemned according to the religious fashion of the day. Heretical zealots and Christian hypocrites have knelt with the humbly devout before its altars. There the eagle eye of the law has taken careful cognisance of the attendants, and marked the regularity of the parishioners, judged whether they prayed devoutly and received the sacrament with becoming solemnity. Litigations about its advowson and its rector's rights have embroiled it in the meshes of the law. It has been stormed by sacrilegious soldiers

and despoiled by iconoclasts. Their material doles have been given to the poor, while the rich were spiritually sent empty away.

An Irish wake is a mere meeting of friends who feast and drink in the presence of the dead lying in state, but an old English wake was a very different thing. It was the religious ceremony of a whole parish. In Wigan the great wake of the year was on the eve of All Saints, to whom the Parish Church is dedicated. All Saints' Day is one devoted to all saints and martyrs, who have not been sufficiently honoured by having a day set apart specially to each individual. This is a necessity, as there are at most only 366 days in one year, whereas of saints and martyrs their numbers are legion. The parishioners gathered together in the churchyard and in the church, and kept vigil by praying and feasting all night. Booths were erected outside, where festive provisions could be obtained. People came from long distances to join in the feast, and in many cases took away provisions with them for their families, so much so that these wakes were actually the origin of fairs, as larger amounts of provisions were annually required for the night and for home consumption. Pipers, or musicians, answering to our modern bands, used to play the people to church, and, by-and-bye, there was less praying inside than attention to the lively airs of the pipers outside, for there are many people who cannot have music without tripping to its notes. The churchyard became the scene of festive dances, or rings of lads and lasses who kissed adroitly at every pause of the music, whilst the booths, or temporary taverns, were patronised by idle men and gossiping women, who scrupled not to carry their beer within the sacred edifice, and drink it amid the noisy laughter of unholy jokes, and thus turned the, originally, purely religious ceremony into a ribald meeting productive of every social evil. To such fashionable carousals people would willingly and naturally flock, and, of course, persons of a speculative character would use their utmost endeavours to make money at them. Inducements were held out to the people to come to the feast by caterers for public amusements; games, also, of all sorts were introduced, in which the public were the competitors, and useful articles, cakes, and treacle-loaves, were the prizes. Bull-baiting, horse-racing, donkey-racing, foot-racing, sack-racing—often for ladies—fiddle matches, and cock-fighting, and such like, filled up the programme for the day. Such things brought the people to Wigan in great numbers; the townspeople got their pence for providing them with food and pleasure, and many country people brought their wares to vend to any buyers. So desecrated at all fairs did this consecrated ground become, by these originally nocturnal revels, that the Reverend Mr. Fleetwood (aided by Lord Derby), the great purger of his period, summarily put a stop to them.

Land and provisions were at a low price, but money was scarce, so much so that a coin of the realm was quite a curiosity for many of the dependent classes to

behold. A bull cost four shillings; a sheep with fine wool tenpence; whilst one with coarse wool was only worth sixpence, showing that the wool was much more valuable than the flesh. Swine's flesh was the principal animal food, and a sow or boar cost tweldepence. Hugh le Norris, i.e., the Norwegian, held a carve of land in Blackrod, for which he paid two marks and two horses for the chase; whilst Hugh Blackrod held one carve of land and a charter from the king for a mere nominal price.

But for the happy and opportune innovations of the Normans, the Anglo-Saxons might have exterminated themselves by their semi-savage habits, for they ate till they were satiated and drank till they were sick. When not at war they spent their time at carousals, with the concomitant consequences. The Danes, whole armies of whom were often found helplessly drunk, strengthened the natives' habitual wish for intoxicating pleasures, and, however beneficial the influences of the Norman social civilisation, these habits were very far from being eradicated. Men and women met in town taverns, were joined by dissolute monks and priests, drank their ale and mead, a decoction from honey spiced with herbs, with all the natural results of debauchery—dancing, immorality, headache, and reflection. Several drank from the same cup, even at the feasts of the better classes; both ladies and gentlemen were requested to wipe their mouths carefully before drinking, "lest any grease" should get into the cup or horn, and so make the wine disagreeable for the next imbiber.

Public documents relating to the affairs of the ancient borough have by no means been tended with that religious and jealous care apparent in other English towns. Recently, historically speaking, their remains have been collected and buried in a strong chest that looks like a mausoleum erected by moderns to commemorate the ancients. What a trunk! what an official tomb it is! Chaos, oblivion, abode of dust and of rubbishy papers which ought long ago to have made their second journey through the mill. It is a burgh dust-bin where papers, parchments, accounts, books, election circulars, voters' lists, habeas corpus warrants and pleas, lie as if shot there like debris into a pit or coal into a cellar. It is a spot for an antiquarian revel that would reveal little. There, at the Borough Courts, they lie unknown. Not an inventory even of the contents is known to exist. No one living has hitherto examined the arcana. Though not pearls cast before swine, they are unheeded treasures that might be lying "where pearls lie deep." Although now carefully collected and carelessly protected, it is the old mistake of locking the stable door after the steed has been stolen. In their previous repository in the Town Hall the great box containing them was left open, or rather had no lock, and the idle and curious public dived into it in what manner they pleased, with that unhallowed carelessness always displayed when liberty is too freely obtained. Many papers and

parchments must have been long and interesting, and, no doubt, with the laudable intention of perusing, studying, or transcribing them, many were taken home and forgotten, like borrowed umbrellas. Some say they were destroyed at the Cromwellian visit to the town, but I am inclined to think that official carelessness and a reprehensible curiosity have destroyed more of them than ever the ruthless scapegoat Cromwell did. The charters have, happily, been more sacredly guarded, and are now fairly well protected in the Town Clerk's office. It is vain to regret the irretrievable, but it is impossible to suppress the useless wish that our official forefathers had been more conservative with such trusts. They may have been handed about as hieroglyphic curiosities to contemporary Pickwickians, or as parchment works of art to connoisseurs of articles of *virtu*, some of them being beautifully designed, and that of Charles II. being remarkably so. On it there is a very extensive heading and border of well-executed florid work, with an excellent likeness of the king on the left, and one of his queen on the right. His is a noble and serious face, full of expression, with heavy and very dark moustache. No sooner does the eye light on it than one exclaims—"Tis a royal Stuart's face!" This charter is as clear, bright, and legible as ever it was, and, I understand, was once photographed. But what shall be said of the Elizabethan charter? I have been unable to find it, and, as far as I know, the last authenticated beholder of it was Richard St. George, Norry King of Arms, in 1613. (Gregson's Fragments, p. 286.) Where is it? Has it, too, found its way into the old curiosity shop? As I know nothing about it, perhaps the best way to give it an honourably historical ending would be to aver that the prototype of iniquity (Cromwell) made a horse-blanket of it. There is in the Town Clerk's office what seems to be a draft copy of it on paper, but even that has mouldered to uselessness. All the other charters I have seen and examined.

It seems a remarkable thing that the charter of Elizabeth should be the only one of the Wigan charters which cannot be accounted for. I can find no authenticated reason for its loss or disappearance, and at the same time I wish to give, from contemporary history, what I believe to be a good reason for its disappearance. I conclude it has neither been lost nor stolen, but wilfully surrendered by the Corporation in exchange for one from Charles II. For an explanation it is necessary to review a part of the history of that time, when an attack was made on the Corporations for reasons detailed in histories of the kingdom. In order to institute a precedent, a special attack was made on the charters of London, which succeeded, and the charters were forfeited. The Wigan charters were, in a manner, similar to those of London. Boroughs trembled for the safety of their privileges. The afterwards notorious Jeffreys was Chief Justice, and he, anxious to do anything for the king's

pleasure, is said, in his circuits, "to have made all the charters, like the walls of Jericho, fall down before him, and to have returned laden with surrenders, the spoils of towns." Boroughs, troubled at the unhappy prospect of losing their honours, presented sycophantic addresses, beseeching special favours and exemptions. If a borough could maintain its rights to its charters by a public trial, it might retain them, but these trials were very expensive, and many boroughs, in order to avoid such expense, voluntarily gave up their old charters and received new ones in their stead. Was this not what was done with the Elizabethan charter of Wigan—the most recent in the possession of the borough? The conjecture is strengthened by the fact that there is in the, presumably, substituted charter the first mention of a Quo Warranto, whereby an assurance that the grounds upon which the Corporation claimed its rights and privileges should not be inquired into. The forbidding of the quo-warranto ran thus in the Wigan charter:—"We being also willing, and by these presents for us, our heirs, and successors, charging and commanding, as well the chancellor, barons of our exchequer at Westminster, and other justices of us, our heirs, and successors, as our Attorney and Solicitor-General for the time being; and each of them and all ministers and officers of us, our heirs, and successors whatsoever for the time being, that neither they, nor any, or any one of them, obtain, prosecute, or continue or make, or cause, or any of them make, or cause to be obtained, prosecuted, or continued, any writ or summons of quo warranto, or any our writ, or writs, or process whatsoever, against the aforesaid mayor, bailiffs, and burgesses of the borough aforesaid, or any one, or any of them, for any causes, things, matters, offences, claims, and usurpations, or any of them, by them, or any of them, attempted, claimed, accustomed, had made or usurped before the making of these, our letters, patent. Being also willing that the same mayor, bailiffs, and burgesses of the borough aforesaid, or any of them, be in no wise molested, or hindered, by any one, or any the justices, sheriffs, officers, or ministers aforesaid, in or for a debt, or claim, or abuse of any other liberties, privileges, franchises, or jurisdictions within the borough aforesaid, the liberties and precincts thereof, before the day of the making these, our letters patent, or be compelled to answer to any one, or any of them."

Many towns in the country were made boroughs by the barons, or lords, of the town, whilst to others the charters were granted direct by the king. These baronial charters simply granted legal claims of certain customary liberties to the inhabitants, and some of them were so insignificant as to be simply a special licence to buy and sell certain commodities within the town, that is, they were simply chartered as market-towns, whose inhabitants had some slight advantages over strangers or travelling merchants, who were never allowed to remain in the town longer than

forty days for mercantile purposes, and were not allowed to trade with other strangers, but with the inhabitants only. To such towns these charters only placed protective duties and laws on local trade, for, of course, the principles of Free Trade were then considered obnoxious and unfair. But there were other charters which gave far greater liberties and powers to the inhabitants on easy conditions. Such the royal charters generally were; and the charter of Wigan was issued by the king to the lord of the manor, or rector, whose living was the advowson of the Banastrea, of Newton. In this charter, not only were all the privileges of a market-town allowed to the inhabitants, but they were allowed to govern themselves and their affairs and make their own bye-laws, subject to those of the realm, after the manner, in a primitive form, of municipal bodies of the present day. A certain amount of property was given to the inhabitants within the walls, which they could retain, sell, or bestow by will as ordinary heritable, but not entailed, property. If there was no will, the property descended to the next of kin, subject to a baronial duty. For this property a rent, that could never be increased, was paid at four stated periods of the year. Not only was this property bestowed on the inhabitants, called burgesses, but certain further privileges on the demesnes of the lord of the manor were granted. These burgesses were compelled to pursue their trades or callings only within their own towns, or, at furthest, within the barony. If the burgess husband died, the relict was entitled to a living from the estate, unless she married again, in which case everything became the property of the heir. The burgesses regulated the affairs of trade, and, as jurymen, settled disputes, debts, and certain crimes before the lord of the manor, as judge. At the manor-house there were a prison for the punishment of offenders, and public hall, or halmote, where the laws of the manor were read and pleas heard. In Appendix H. 228, No. 99, of the fourth Report of Commissioners on Courts of Common Law there is a notice of the ancient Courts of Pleas for the Borough of Wigan; a court held by prescription confirmed by various charters, having, originally, jurisdiction extending over the whole township of Wigan, in personal actions to an unlimited amount. All men were not alike subject to the law; what was wrong for dependants, or slaves, might be quite legal for burgesses who were freemen. There was one law for the burgess and another for the stranger; one for the master and another for the servant, who was treated like an inferior animal. Not only had the burgess to pay a small rent and perform sundry duties for the baron, but he had to grind his corn at the baron's mills—the Rector of Wigan had two on the Douglas—and bake at his oven. The punishment for breaking a law was generally a fine of a year's rent, twelvepence. The special leave of the rector had to be obtained before any of his dependants could marry, just as soldiers of the regular army have now to

obtain permission, but members of the family of a burgess required no such licence. Not only had Wigan a Guild Merchant for the good government of town's affairs and trade, but also a hanse, or confederation of merchants, for the good usage and safe passage of goods from one town, or kingdom, to another. Although Liverpool was but a small fishing village, it had received a charter thirty-nine years before Wigan, but it was only chartered as a free sea-port town, whereas Wigan was chartered as a royal borough (1246). The rector had a vice-regal power, which was sometimes very much abused, and, by way of payment for his urban duties, and compensation for property given to the burgesses, there were confirmed to him and his successors for ever, a weekly market every Monday, and an annual fair of six days' duration, viz., one on the eve, day, and morrow of the Ascension (Thursday in Rogation week); and the other on the eve, day, and morrow of All Saints' (November). All tolls, or duties, paid by merchants at these times belonged to him. No town was allowed to hold fairs without a special charter. They were instituted for the convenience of the burgesses, who, by that means, bought goods wholesale from travelling or foreign merchants for retail purposes.

Many persons in Wigan now possessed land which their forefathers had simply obtained on lease, and consequently they were landed proprietors, although often on a very small scale. They were generally also the merchants of the town, and were always recognised as the most influential men of the burghal society. The intellectual and moral progress of the past had been very great, and these freeholders were wise enough to see that each one, as an individual, had no power against the lords of the land, but they knew that union was strength, and so, for their individual interests and civic rights, they determined to form a fraternity, which, as a whole, vowed to support, defend, and be responsible for the actions of each of its individuals; to stand or fall by every member of the body. Such societies had had an ephemeral existence on the continent; but a very summary method was there taken for their extinction, for every individual who was found to be a member of such a corporation was liable to be scourged, have his nose slit, or be banished the realm. They were not thus treated in England where such corporations were instituted for the protection of liberties, and not with a view of over-ruling established laws or opposing the monarchy. They were instituted, really, for the fulfilling of the law, so that no individually strong man might take advantage of a weak man. In Wigan, as in other important English towns, such a corporation grew out of the necessities of the town's prosperous condition. Freeholders, or persons having a special interest in the prosperity of the country, agreed to unite as members of a family who had a common interest in civic affairs. "Let us," they said, "all share the same lot; if any misdo, let all bear it." The body defended the member from violence or wrong; appeared in court with testimony

in favour of anyone falsely accused, and held itself responsible for the obedience of its members to the laws of the realm. To such guilds, or corporations, neither the lord of the manor nor the king of the country could reasonably object, for it was really a moral combination of right against possible wrong and illegal might. Such was the Merchant Guild of Wigan, which became so powerful as to have a voice in the settlement of every local question. It became, indeed, a terror to evil doers, a praise and protection to all that did well; an institution in the defence of right. At first these freeholders were agricultural men, for the town was the abode of farmers; but as trade prospered and craftsmen became important persons in the town, they, too, were admitted into the guild. After a long trial these guilds proved themselves to be the true defenders of the law and the promoters of the prosperity of the land, and, in return for the unquestioned good they did, special privileges were conferred upon them. What they had by their union insisted upon was granted them by special law. The Wigan freeholders, or burgesses, had entire control of the business and merchandise of the town. No one could carry on any trade without their special leave. Strangers, or foreigners, were not allowed to buy or sell in their market without paying the commission enforced by them. On the other hand, special privileges were retained by the lord of the manor for the rights which the citizens had received. Those citizens were by Act of Parliament allowed to judge and punish certain culprits. As a manor the town had the privilege of holding a court every three weeks; the rector was the court baron, and his freeholders were the judges and jurymen who decided all suits. Anyone damaging, injuring, or molesting a citizen was liable to a fine of £10. The rector, lord of the manor, retained the power of trying and punishing trespassers, thieves, bondmen, and villains. Such privileges were granted by royal charter to the burgesses of Wigan in 1246, through the influence of John Mansel. Everything was done to make these guilds a genuine and successful combination. The members met purposely to talk over affairs of the town, and, in order to make these meetings attractive enough, monthly guilds—or feasts, as the original word means—took place in appointed houses. If they could not afford a guild hall—and they seem not to have had one in Wigan—they met in one of the principal rooms of a tavern. There postprandial speeches were made, the social cup drunk, and civic politics discussed. The custom prevails, or rather is commemorated, to this day; nightly meetings of local politicians have their friendly gatherings in private rooms of the ancient taverns, with their similar histories, associations, and customs handed down by the fathers of the town. There the modern burgesses meet as a social brotherhood, drink the healths of each other, discuss civic and imperial affairs, exchange opinions about the news of the day, and thus renewing their friendship and giving each a special interest in the other they

part, after the ringing of the modern curfew-bell, to meet on the morrow.

Slaves who had absconded from their masters in other parts of the country became free after living a year and a day in Wigan, and in this way the number of inhabitants was much increased, although this was a feudal custom, recognised as legal, common to all walled towns.

This is a very important era in the history of the town. The greater part of the population was composed of franklynnes—those who were considered sufficiently important to offer themselves, and be accepted, as sureties for the good conduct of their neighbours—freeholders, and yeomen. These were burgesses of the town. Each had an important house of his own, with other smaller houses at the back, built round a quadrangular court, for his servants or labourers. Each had his small croft, or piece of property, with a right to certain common grounds held on certain conditions made to the lord of the manor. Each felt he had a personal and responsible right to further the prosperity of the town, and secure the general social customs, and the rights now legally granted them by charter were simply the result of common-sense principles, with which custom had long made them familiar. They were the laws which necessity had compelled them to adopt, and which their own interests made them enforce. The fashions of trial by ordeal were beginning to become obsolete; to carry a hot bar of iron a certain distance in the bare hand without being injured was looked upon as a doubtful method of proving one's innocency; to lift a stone out of a pitcher of boiling water without being scalded, or to swallow a piece of bread hastily and unchewed without being choked (in answer to a simultaneous prayer) were not so good methods of trial as those by jury, which they had recently adopted as the law of Wigan. Juries then were very different in many ways from those of the present day. The origin of the system was a good and reasonable one. The jurymen were necessarily neighbours of the accused, because they knew him best, and were most able to judge of his actions because of their knowledge of his character; moreover, they were jealous of the privileges of their community to which the accused belonged, and so they would be anxious to rid their society of him if guilty, and at the same time defend him if considered innocent, with as much zeal as if it were a personal matter. Thus, morally, and by their frankpledge, they were the best judges of the case. These jurymen were the neighbours of the accused, witnesses in the trial, and judges of the case, and it was necessary that they should be unanimous in their opinion before judgment could be legally passed. Of course, this system was often abused, for even at assizes judges and jurymen were often bribed. It was found on a parliamentary inquiry in the reign of Edward I. that there were only two honest judges in England.

It is natural to suppose that many petty grievances would arise amongst the townspeople from the carelessness of herd-boys driving the cattle to, or from, pasture in the rector's grounds. Obstreperous swine, or other beasts, would often get out and destroy gardens, and so cause much vexation to the owner. An official referee was chosen by the burgesses to see that the borough laws were enacted, and amongst his other numerous duties one was to assess the amount of damage done in this way by stray, or carelessly herded, animals. He was called a burleyman, the derivation of which is variously given, as byrelawman and byelawman.

The natives of England have always had the peculiar characteristic of wishing to be governed by themselves, and, at the same time, having a sovereign over them. In all the many revolutions for liberty and self-government, or against the abuse of despotic kings, it was never a national wish to be without a crowned head. Man is a free-will agent, but no man argues that it is therefore right to do whatever he wills. As the impulse must be kept under control by the superior powers of reason, or as all disputes in national sports even are satisfactorily referred to an umpire who is not necessarily believed to be infallible, although certainly impartial, so has the nation felt that it must have a supreme head, independent and impartial, whose very fallibility, publicly acknowledged and allowed, creates the necessity of inner circles of government dependent on local organisation, and necessary to the success of the complete national constitution. Saxon and Norman thoughts have run in the same political groove from the very infancy of English civilisation. Communities first slowly organised themselves, and made, by custom, their successful organisations necessities of their existence, and then wise rulers and diplomatists yielded to the necessities and granted charters which gave the established organisations legal authority and royal recognition. Thus it was that the necessities of the time and the intelligence of the inhabitants of Wigan demanded and received a local self-government. The charter granted to Wigan caused no local revolution or sudden change, but merely established legally what custom had long confirmed. The inhabitants had proved that they could govern themselves, and at the same time better support the national government, as well as that of the locally supreme baron. The king was convinced of this, and, therefore, he granted to John de Mansel (who was, according to the not then extinct feudal custom, the individual responsible to him) a royal charter, and he in turn, the lord of the town, being convinced of the utility, necessity, and diplomacy of the case, granted his legal charter to the inhabitants, who were actually his subjects. As this was the first of similar charters given to Wigan, a translation of the original is herewith given for the perusal of the reader. The original document I have seen and examined in the Town Clerk's office. It is legibly written in Latin on one piece of parchment, slightly larger than

a page of foolscap, to which is attached the great seal—very small when compared with the great seal in future charters. According to custom the seal of wax—in this case green—hangs by a thick cord a few inches from the parchment.

30th HENRY III. (1246.)

“Henry, by the grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy, Aquaintain and Count of Angers; to all archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, justices, sheriffs, chief ministers, and bailiffs, and his faithful subjects greeting: Know YE that we have granted, and by this, our charter, confirmed for us and our heirs to our beloved and faithful, John Mansel, parson of the Church of Wigan, that his vill of Wygayn may be a borough for ever, and that the burgesses of the same borough may have a Guild Merchant, with a treasury and other liberties and free customs to that Guild belonging, and that no one, who is not of that Guild, may make any merchandise in the aforesaid borough, unless of the will of the same burgesses. We have also granted to the same burgesses and their heirs that they may have soke and sak, and thol and theam, and attachment within the said borough, and infangenthef and utfangenthef, and that they may be free throughout our whole land, and through all the ports of the sea, from toll, custom, passage, pontage, and stallage, and that they may make no suit of the Counties or Wappentakes concerning their tenures which they hold within the borough aforesaid. We have also granted to the same burgesses and their heirs, that whatsoever traders shall come to the borough aforesaid with their merchandise, of whatsoever place they shall be, foreigners, or others, who shall be of our peace, or of our leave, shall come into our land, may come safely and securely to the aforesaid borough with their merchandise, and safely there may stay and safely from thence may return by doing there the right and due customs; we do also prohibit that no one may do injury or damage, or molestation, unto the aforesaid burgesses, upon our forfeiture of £10. Wherefore we do will and firmly command for us and our heirs that the aforesaid vill of Wigan be a borough for ever, and that the aforesaid burgesses may have the aforesaid Guild Merchant, with the Hanaper and with the other liberties and free customs to that Guild belonging, and that they may have all other liberties and free customs and quittances as is aforesaid. Witnesses hereto—Richard Earl of Cornwall, our brother, Roger le Pygot Earl of Norfolk, Peter de Saband, William de Ferrers, Ralph Fit Nichol, William de Cantilupo, John de Plessset, Paul Peyner, Robert de Mustengros, Bartholemy Peche, and others. Given by our hand at Woodstock, the 26th day of August, in the 30th year of our reign.”—(Haddock's translation.)

For the perusal of antiquarian and classical readers, a copy of the original charter is subjoined:—

30mo HENRICI III.

“Henricus Dei gratia Rex Angliæ Dominus Hiberniæ Dux Normanniæ Aquitanniæ et comes d’Andes Archiepiscopis Episcopis Abbatibus Prioribus Comitibus Baronibus Justiciariis Vicecomitibus Præpositis Ministris et omnibus Ballivis et Fidelibus suis Salutem : SCIATIS nos concessisse et hac Carta nostra confirmasse et nobis et Hæredibus nostris dilecto et fidei nostro Johanni Mansel Parsonæ Ecclesiæ de WYGAIN quod VILLA sua de WYGAYN Burgus sit imperpetuum et quod Burgenses ejusdem Burgi habeant Gildam mercatoriam cum Hansa et aliis libertatibus et liberis consuetudinibus ad Gildam illam pertinentibus Et quod nullus qui non sit de Gilda illa Mercandisam aliquam in prædicto Burgo faciat nisi de voluntate corundem Burgensium CONCESSIMUS etiam eisdem Burgensibus et eorum Hæredibus quod habeant Soke et Sak et Thol, et Theam, et Attachiammentum infra Burgum prædictum et Infangenthef et Unfangenthef, et quod quieti sint per totam Terram nostram et per omnes portus Maris de Thelonio Lestagio Passagio Pontagio et Stallagio et quod nullam Secutionem Comitatum seu Wapentachiorum faciant de Tenuris suis quas tenent infra Burgum prædictum—CONCESSIMUS etiam eisdem Burgensibus et eorum Hæredibus quod quicumque Mercatores petierint Burgum prædictum cum Mercandis suis de quocunque loco fuerint sive extranei sive alii qui de pace nostra fuerint vel de Licentia nostra in terram nostram venerint salvo et secure ad prædictum Burgum veniant cum Mercandis suis et salvo ibidem morentur et salvo inde recedant faciendo inde rectas et debitas Consuetudines.—PROHIBEMUS etiam ne quis prædictis Burgensibus injuriam vel dampnum seu molestiam faciat super forisfacturam nostram decem Librarum—QUARE volumus et firmiter præcipimus pro nobis et Hæredibus nostris quod prædicta Villa de Wygayn liber Burgus sit imperpetuum et quod prædicti Burgenses habeant prædictam Gildam Mercatoriam cum Hansa et cum aliis Libertatibus et liberis Consuetudinibus ad Gildam illam pertinentibus et quod habeant omnes alias libertates et liberis Consuetudines et quietantias sicut prædictum est—HUIUS Testibus *Ricardo Comite Cornubense fratre nostro*, Rogero le Pygot Comite Norfolcense, Petro de Saband, Willhelmo de Ferrariis, Radulpho Fit Nichol, Willhelmo de Cantilupo, Johanne de Plessset, Paulino Peyner, Roberto de Mustengros, Bartholomæo Peche et aliis—DATA per Manum nostram apud Wodestok vicesimo sexto die Augusti Anno Regni nostri tricesimo.”

By this charter the town was governed under the strictest principles of the feudal system, everyone being subject in some manner to render service to his superior. The burgesses, or guilds, were one body which pledged itself for the good conduct of its individual members. They formed really a well disposed body of unionists determined to stand, or fall, together in defence of right against might. There were many boroughs in the times of the Saxons in which the borough properties were given to the highest bidding burgesses. The Normans, however, appointed a bailiff, or

borough-reeve, of their own, fixed their own rents, and exacted them with great tyranny. They soon discovered that, after deducting expenses, they got far less by exaction than the burgesses were willing to pay on the old farming system which was again resorted to. Privileges were then granted to them, and some purchased by them, and they were allowed to choose their own mayor.

If a burgess did not pay his rent, the door was carried away from his house, and he was not allowed to restore it until he had paid. This was rather a cheaper method of evicting a bad tenant than the recently popular one of taking off the roof. The richest class of burgesses had windows made of small pieces of horn, Lancashire being specially famed for the excellence of its horns. The windows of the poorer people were simply covered by a linen cloth to keep out the wet and wind. Whether Wigan had a guild of horners it is now impossible to ascertain, but there is no reason to think it had not. Bottlemakers and horners afterwards became a united guild, for bottles and drinking cups were alike made of horn.

There were only the Market Place and four small streets in the town, Hallgate, Wallgate, Millgate, and Standishgate. In most of the old towns the chief street was called High Street, whilst in the most ancient towns the Danish termination *gate*, meaning a street, is preserved. The fact that the names of the principal streets in Wigan have this termination would not be a proof in itself that the town had once been fortified by a wall, but would simply imply that the streets or roads led to, or had direct connection with, some place indicated by the previous part of the name. Standishgate was the road to Standish, one of the oldest neighbouring townships, which has increased very little because it has no staple trade or peculiar commercial facility. Hallgate and Bishopgate led to the rectory, which was invariably called the Hall in ancient times. Millgate led to the rector's mills, for he had two water-mills. Wallgate was the road to Warrington, and as Warringtongate would have been of unwarrantable length, doubtless it received its shorter appellation simply because it led beyond the wall, or, as suggested by one writer, because it skirted the wall for some distance. Most of the other names, like the streets themselves, are modern and connected with local worthies, or have the origin common to streets in all towns.

One of the necessary parts of the sacred edifice was a belfry. Bells had been in use at least since the time of Moses, and were used for civil and military purposes by the Greeks and Romans. For both purposes was the bell used in a parish church. In all western churches it was used from the end of the fourth century for calling the people to prayer. No doubt one was placed in the belfry at Wigan by the Romans and used for military purposes, as it was certainly used long afterwards by the Normans as a signal to put out fires as well as for other civil

and religious purposes. The curfew bell is still tolled at Wigan, although not at the original time, but at half-past ten. It was believed that the ringing of bells allayed turbulent spirits, calmed the troubled sea, and put to flight the clouds, thunder, and lightning.

The old staple trades often forsake towns, and indeed countries. Tradesmen sometimes find there is a greater demand for their services, or greater facilities for their prosperity, in other towns or countries, to which they naturally go. Some trades, again, altogether die out because there is no demand for the craft; the substantial architecture of the Saxons and Normans is especially a mystery to modern people. The staple trades of Birmingham, Sheffield, and other towns are now as well known in other countries as in the towns that were alone celebrated for them in olden times. The most important craft that has altogether left Wigan is that of bell-casting. In the history of the 17th and 18th centuries notice will be taken of the celebrated bell-makers in Wigan, for whose services there was a great demand. Wigan bells are still to be found in different parts of England and Wales. The foundries must have been large ones, although it is not known in what part of the town they were. Bells were first cast in England about 940 A.D. by crafty monks, who were the carvers, gilders, and designers of their age—they alone being skilled workmen.

There is no authentic information about the re-building of the Parish Church, but antiquarian relics often record a more truthful history than written books. According to those relics, religious edifices have been erected on the same site from the time that Wigan was a Roman settlement. Whether the eminence of the hill was sacred to the Druids we have neither relics nor records to say, but part of a Roman altar found there is preserved to this day. After the Saxon edifice there was certainly built a Norman Church, as several remains of the earliest Norman architecture have been found. When a chancel was built to the church in 1821 the masons made use of the old stones, which happily in all cases they did not re-carve. One of these waste stones was a mutilated monument of a priest of the Norman period, and this, just as it was, without thinking of the historical chapter they were recording, the workmen used for a part of the foundation. A Norman arch and the bases and cylindrical piers have also been found, and thus the very stones prove the antiquity of the sacred edifice, just as the rings on the trunk of a tree tell its age. The town was the rector's property, but after it was incorporated he bestowed, by charter in 1249, special privileges on the burgesses or members of the guild and to their heirs for ever, and the granted lands from thence became freehold property. Then every burgess was given five roods of land, in return for which certain services were to be rendered by them and their heirs to the rector and his heirs. Not only was

this land given to them for cultivation, or purposes of trade, but they were allowed to take out of his woods, which were very extensive, timber for building as well as for firewood, by which the ground was cleared for cultivation, to the advantage of both parties. The principal food then was pork, and every burgess fed several swine for his household use. The lord of the manor gave them liberty to feed their swine in his forests. Moreover, every three weeks they were allowed to hold a court, in which questions of trade were legally settled by twelve jurymen appointed by, and from, themselves. For those times these were great privileges. These burgesses, however, were the rector's tenants, but could not be evicted except for the non-payment of their simple rent of threepence a quarter, and a further service to him of grinding at his mill to the extent of twenty measures without payment. Where these mills of the rector's were is not stated, but the likelihood is that they were built on the river Douglas (for they certainly were water-mills) at the end of Millgate Street, for which reason that street would receive its special name. As the rector from the earliest times has always been a large proprietor, the living must necessarily always have been a good one. In the year 1291 it was worth fifty merks (£33 6s. 8d.), but many a priest at that time, and for long afterwards, was considered well off when he had a salary of four or five pounds a year. When Thomas à Becket was Archdeacon of Canterbury he only had £100 a year.

It must have been a physical impossibility for Mansel to visit all his livings, and yet he was constantly receiving ecclesiastic and State appointments, both lucrative and important. He certainly spent little of his time in Wigan. In his day it was customary, regardless of responsibility, to accept all that was offered, and, expecting more, draw the lucrative income and appoint subordinate vicars at the lowest stipend on which it was possible to exist. The rectors easily procured exemption and absolution from the Popes for the wilful neglect of souls committed to their charge. The ecclesiastics in Rome gloated in luxurious revelry and open vice, and, to minister to their ever-craving depravities, they granted absolution, for money, from the most heinous and revolting crimes, and thus, for filthy lucre, the scandalous neglect of monks and rectors was winked at and encouraged. Thus, favoured by the indulgences of the Pope, and the gratification of his own personal ambition, Mansel accumulated wealth, accepted every proffered office, and retained all that were in his own gift. He was made Chancellor of St. Paul's Church, London, and, in 1247, Keeper of the Great Seal as Vice-chancellor. The king was very much attached to, and influenced by, his royal mother, who, soon after King John's death, married her first lover, the Count of Marche, by whom she had a son, to whom the king was also greatly attached, but his love for Mansel was greater

still. The old royal favourites had fallen into disgrace; but Mansel had fought the severe polemical battles of the king against Leicester, and so he was found "faithful, and necessary in supporting his (the king's) cares and solitudes," and, consequently, nothing desirable was kept from him. When the provostship of Beverley—a very lucrative sinecure—became vacant and offered to Mansel by the Archbishop of York, the king was desirous of giving it to his half-brother, but allowed the Wigan rector, who expressed his wish to have it, to accept it lest he should be grieved or robbed.

The charter from Henry III., granting a fair and market to Maidstone, in Kent, is witnessed by John Mansel in 1261; but long before this to the good and worthy burgesses of Wigan Mansel granted the following charter (translated) about 1249, for, whatever his failings were, he was kind and hospitable, and his liberality was as great as his ambition.

THE FIRST PARISH CHARTER.

"To all sons of our Holy Mother Church to whom this present writing may come, John Mansel, Rector of the Church of Wigan, greeting in the Lord. Be it known to all men that I have given and conceded, and by this, my present charter, have confirmed, for myself and my successors, to the burgesses in Wigan, and their heirs or their assigns, that they should have their free town and all rights, customs, and liberties, as is contained in the charter of liberty and acquaintance of the Lord King; and that each of them should have to their burgage five roods of land to themselves and their heirs or assigns; and that they should grind, at my mill, to the extent of twenty measures without payment; and that they should have in my wood sufficient for building and burning, together with quittance of pannage for the nourishment of their own pigs within my wood; to have and to hold of me and my successors to themselves, and their heirs or assigns, freely, and quietly, and honourably, with common of pasture, and with all other easements belonging to the said town of Wigan, within the town and without; and that they should have their pleas in portemote once in three weeks, and their verdict by twelve men, and amercements by the same; paying therefor annually to me or my successors, by themselves and their heirs or assigns, upon each burgage twelve pence, at the four terms, viz., at the Feast of St. John Baptist threepence, at the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel threepence, at the Nativity of Our Lord threepence, and at Easter threepence, for all secular services, exactions, and demands. And I, the aforesaid John Mansel, Rector of the Church of Wigan, and my successors, will warrant all the above-written to the said burgesses of the town of Wigan, and their heirs and assigns, against all men and women for ever. And that this donation and concession should remain firm and stable I have put my

seal to this writing, to which are witnesses:—Thomas Gretlees, William de Butler, Matthew de Redman (at that time Sheriff of Lancashire), Robert Bandastre, Robert de Lathome, William de Clifton, John de Lamar, John de Lee, Henry de Torboke, Adam de Molenex, Warren de Walton, Henry de Sefton (at that time bailiff), and others.”—(Close Roll, 27th Eliz, 2nd part.)

The professional man is full of anxiety when absent from business, but the holder of a sinecure may have pleasure free from care. Whilst Mansel's northern barony of Wigan was being attended to by the burgesses and vicar, he was basking under the royal presence and favour. He was the adviser and companion of the king, and occupied a prominent place in all public and popular royal displays and pageants. When extraordinary ambassadors were required to do distinguished work, Mansel was sure to be chosen, especially if there were payment for the service, although the great and fundamental law of political economy, service for service, was very far from being one of the first principles of his morality. Uninterrupted by his interference, Wigan progressed in the art of local government, and became comparatively self-dependent. Trade increased, wealth was accumulated, social comforts were improved, agricultural interests advanced, added to which there was an increased demand for skilled labour. But the burghers' progress towards wealth was slow and insignificant when compared with that of the rector. He had the distinguished honour of accompanying the Abbot of Westminster to Germany, in 1247, to arrange for a marriage between the daughter of the Duke of Brabant and Prince Edward, the then future King of England. His salary was sure, but his services were often failures, and they were so in this mission. Two years afterwards he accompanied the king and queen in state to view the ceremony of enthroning Boniface as Archbishop of Canterbury, but by the way, at Maidstone, he was taken suddenly and seriously ill, and the whole court was in confusion, for it was rumoured that the favourite was poisoned and was certainly dying. The most skilful physicians of the day were ordered to give him their best attention, and the result was that John Mansel was snatched from the very jaws of death.

While great and steady progress attended the Wigan borough, civil troubles were darkening the political atmosphere throughout the country, and the credulous king, fearing the threats of the people, attempted to bring them to reason by a strange strategy. He pretended to be anxious to take the pilgrim's staff for the Holy Land in company with many of his nobility, thinking thereby to distract the attention of the people from rebellion, and hoping to exact money, of which he was always in need, to pay the expenses of his sojourning. He and his nobles received the holy symbol of the Cross from the archbishop, then the money for his expenses was paid, and so, his chief wish being fulfilled, as predetermined he returned without

further progress as a pilgrim. Of course, John Mansel was in the secret, and although he, too, had pretended all along that they were seriously bent on going to Palestine, he returned with his royal master, leaving the other more zealous nobles to carry out their own intentions. Meantime the see of Winchester had become vacant, and, strange to say, Mansel, with his 700 benefices, expressed no wish to receive the bishopric, but rather did all in his power to have Ailmar, the king's uterine brother, presented, although he was but a lad, uneducated and even without holy orders. Mansel, because he was most clever in all kinds of argument, was chosen to persuade the clergy to accept the boy as their bishop. The rector was a good and indulgent baron, although a neglectful parson; a lawyer of acute observation and convincing argument; a royal flatterer and favourite. His many failings were fostered by the depravities of his age; yet he was, undoubtedly, a most benevolent and hospitable man.

From a utilitarian point of view, all national movements ought to improve commerce, and in the thirteenth century, when people knew the value of money, men were anxious to know what value their labours, or actions, were worth. Even this was so in religious matters, except in the case of devotees blind to everything but glory or martyrdom. What commercial profit could accrue from the Crusades? said worldly men, when they were young, and yet, long before they had become old, they saw the immense impetus that was given to commerce by these very Crusades. Wigan was one of the chief towns benefited by this commercial spirit. Although the Crusaders were all soldiers and Christians when they started, their lives were not entirely spent on the battle-field, and what time they did spend there was generally sufficient to cool their ardour for the cause of the Cross. Many of them turned out to be mere speculative tourists, who longed to have the treasures of the East in the markets of the West. Those who were unable to buy and sell for themselves communicated their intelligence to the tradesmen and capitalists of their own districts. This intelligence in many centres, however, was useless, for their inhabitants were either nobles, villains, or serfs. Lancashire was one of the few favoured centres whose inhabitants could seek work where they pleased, for in it there was a comparatively large surplus population, and Wigan was one of the largest, if not the largest, town in it, and one of the three towns to which a royal charter had been granted. One of the chief discoveries of the East was cotton in Smyrna and Cyprus. This cotton was shipped in large quantities to London, and then carried to Wigan and Manchester on pack horses. Thus, an important population of weavers sprang up in the town, who sent their webs back to the markets of London. Lint, or flax, was also extensively cultivated in the north of Ireland, sent over to the cotton-weaving towns, woven into linen (the females of

the house being the "spinsters"), and then returned to the Irish markets. Leave also was given to dig coal, which was largely sent to London and the neighbouring towns, although Newcastle was the chief centre from which London was supplied. Old hovels and wattlework houses were rapidly giving place to stone ones, with thatched roofs, although these were beginning to give place to tiles and stone-flags, consequently there was an addition to the town artificers of masons, carpenters, and thatchers, but the yeomen of the neighbourhood employed the majority of the population, in the seasons, for Wigan had already become the market town for a large agricultural district. Education was confined to the clergy, and even they knew very little, yet they did much to improve agriculture, in which they took a special interest even to the tossing of hay. A middle-class was already beginning to spring up from the weavers, tradesmen, and well-to-do workmen. Wages were considered good, although haymakers only got a penny a day, labourers threehalfpence, carpenters twopence, and masons threepence. For the latter trades a long apprenticeship was required, and so they came under the heading of skilled labour; we imagine, however, little architectural skill would be required to build common houses without chimneys, a hole in the roof being the only exit for the smoke, the furniture of the house not being sufficient to give even a stool to each member of the family, the majority of whom had to stand, squat on the floor, or sit on logs round the fire. Even the yeomen could only boast of one or two beds, three or four seats, and one or two dishes of brass, although in the dark evenings they generally had the luxury—one denied the poor—of a tallow candle. Tanners, too, flourished in the town, for shoes were quite an expensive article of attire, the better class of people wearing them with very long toes, pointed and twisted, like horns. Wages were not low, when compared with the price of provisions and the necessaries of life, for land cost only three shillings and sixpence an acre, and a fat ox sixteen shillings.

The royal and parish charters no doubt elated the inhabitants of Wigan, and gave new zest to their loyalty. The glories and spoils of war will always have, to some, a greater fascination than commercial toil and success, and no doubt many of the patriotic townsmen neglected their work and the progressive pursuits of peace, and now went with the Earl of Derby into Guienne to join in the war which was commenced at the instigation of the mother of the king in 1258.

The family of Ince in Aspull were the lords of the manor of Ince, which was conveyed to John Gerard when he married Ellen, the daughter and heiress of Richard of Ince in 1399. Walter, the ancestor of the Gerards, came over with the Conqueror, and was made Castellan of Windsor. His great grandson distinguished himself in what is erroneously called the conquest of Ireland in 1172, when Fitzstephen landed with

140 knights and 300 archers, and Strongbow with 1,200 men. He afterwards settled at Bryn, and by the above-mentioned alliance of Ellen and John Gerard, two of the principal Wigan families were united. Sir Thomas Gerard, Knight, was created a baronet at the first institution of that honour, the 9th James I., 1611. The house called Ince Hall, on the Peel Ditch Estate, was built by Roger Browne, in the reign of James I. He was descended from Roger Brown de Ince, gentleman, 14th Richard II., whose sons, under the names of Roger and Ralph, successively inherited the estate from that period to 22nd Henry VIII., when Ralph, dying without issue, was succeeded by his brother James, who settled the property on his son William in 2nd Elizabeth. William was succeeded by Roger, who built the hall and mortgaged the lands, which were redeemed by his brother Ralph in 12th James I. Ince Hall came to Henry, who by will dated 24th September, 1726, left it to Edward Holt, gentleman, eldest son and heir of his nephew, Robert Holt, of Wigan, Esq., and is, says Baines, "now the joint property of General Clegg and Thomas Case, of Liverpool, Esq., in right of their marriages with the two daughters and co-heiresses of Edward Holt, Esq., of Holt, in Shevington and Ince. Holt's Hall is a large, old-fashioned, wood and plaster structure, and with its gables and squares exhibits a fine specimen from the termination of the avenue (whence it is seen to the best advantage) of the old Lancashire halls, once so numerous, but now so rapidly falling into decay." Westwood House, a handsome mansion, is the seat of the Walmealey family.

The mad Parliament in 1258 had enacted revolutionary laws at Oxford, and appointed a committee to reform the State. That committee enacted that four knights should come to Parliament to represent the freeholders of every county; that sheriffs should be chosen annually by vote; that accounts of the public money should be given every year; that Parliament should meet three times a year. This meant rebellion against the king and his court; but, happily, there was disunion among the barons, and the question of dispute was put to the arbitration of the King of France, who declared in favour of the English King, but the people had been roused and would not submit, and open rebellion and civil war followed. The king was alarmed and fled to Dover, in readiness to escape to France. Mansel was left in charge of the Tower of London, and the barons and the people were up in arms. The king returned to Winchester, and immediately committed unconstitutional acts, which are well-known chronicled facts. The nation became more bitter and determined than ever. Mansel warned the king of his danger, and advised him to take refuge in the Tower from the fury of the barons, which he did. Day after day affairs became more serious against the court party, and Mansel, leaving his king to his fate, fled to the Continent for safety.

John Mansel, then king's secretary, returned and was appointed Keeper of the Great Seal, and accompanied the king on the Continent in 1262. The Lord Chancellor received five shillings a day, with a specified amount of wine, wax, and candles. It is estimated by Lord Campbell that this amount would now-a-days be equal to £4,000 a year. Whilst the king and Mansel remained on the Continent discontent was briskly brewing. After the "Provisions of Oxford" there was a strong reaction in favour of the king. Montfort lost the confidence of the nation, and went into exile. Mansel applied, in the king's name, to Pope Alexander for a dispensation to free the king from keeping his promise in regard to the Oxford Provisions, and again the national feeling opposed the king. Montfort seized the opportunity, returned, imprisoned Mansel for publishing the papal bull, confirmed the Oxford Provisions, and convoked a Constitutional Parliament in 1265.

Thus, in 1264, Mansel was a poor exile. He had held 700 benefices, and had been revered by all who knew him intimately. His hospitality was as bountiful as that of Thomas à Becket in his palmy days, for he is said to have feasted at his own house in Tote-hillfields "two kings, two queens, with their dependencies, 700 messes of meat scarce serving for the first dinner." Yet, though thus powerful, honoured, and wealthy at home, he died poor, wretched, and miserable abroad, the place of his burial even being unknown. Matthew Paris says:—"Sir John Mansel, a man, prudent, circumspect, and rich, wisely considering that the favour of a king is not hereditary, nor the prosperity of the world always permanent, founded a religious house of regular canons near by Rumney, and endowed it with very ample revenues, which he replenished with canons." Anstey's *Munimenta Academica* contains the following:—"The executors of John Pontysers, Bishop of Winchester, have given to the university of Oxford the sum of 200 marks for the use of the masters and scholars on the following conditions:—That on St. Nicholas' eve annually the said bishop shall be commemorated in a mass for the dead, with special remembrances made of John Mansel and John, nephew of the bishop, and that every year the priest making circuit of the schools with the bedell, shall recite the names of the aforesaid persons among the benefactors of the university. That, at the commencement and close of each term and in processions and masses celebrated by the university, special remembrance shall be made of the said persons; and that guardians of the chest in which the money bequeathed is kept shall be elected annually on the eve of the conception of the Blessed Virgin, and in the same form as that by which the proctors of the university are elected; that at the time of such election auditors of the accounts of the outgoing guardians shall be appointed, who shall make a written statement as to the state of the chest, the amount of increase arising from the sale of pledges deposited by borrowers, &c. These guardians shall be discreet and faithful

members of the university, and shall always be three at least. Pledges not redeemed within a year shall be sold. The statutes already in force as to other chests shall apply also to this chest. Every month the guardians shall proceed to inspect the chest, proclamation having been first made throughout all the schools. Scholars of all faculties, who are needy, may borrow from the chest as follows:—A regent master may borrow forty shillings, a non-regent two marks and a half, a bachelor two marks, a sophist one mark. And every scholar thus borrowing shall be bound to say for the souls of the aforesaid persons the Lord's Prayer and the *Ave Maria* each five times. The university accept the bequest and promise to fulfil the conditions."