

**Wigan Archives & Leigh Local Studies**

**Rare Book Collection**

**“The Mayor of Wigan”, by Hillary Butler**

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**[The following paragraph consists of a Newspaper cutting, pasted onto the page.]**

A rare find. – The Librarian succeeded in securing at the hailstone sail last week, perhaps the rarest of all Wigan local books, viz., “The Mayor of Wigan, a tale, by Hillary Butler. 12mo., London, 1760.” Only one other copy is known, and the book is not to be found in the British Museum, or any other of the great libraries. In looking through the purchase the Librarian, discovered hidden between the leaves, two interesting letters, regarding the book, addressed to Mr. Hailstone, in the handwritings of the late Mr. Thomas Eckersley and the late Mr. Thomas Part. The extreme rarity of this book, and its strong local connections with the borough, is its only recommendation. The *Monthly Review* of the year 1760, of its publication, calls it “dirty story, poorly told.”

**T H E  
M A Y O R  
O F  
W I G A N  
A T a l e .**

## A TALE

THE May'r of Wigan has been long  
Renow'd in profe [prose], tho' not in song.  
When lads of Lancashire regale,  
And swig the mug of nut-brown ale,  
Some blade, for drollery and jest,  
More celebrated than the rest,  
Whilst merrily the cup goes round,  
Bids laughter frisk about, and mirth abound.  
A soft good-natured friend, if there,  
The burden of the song may bear;  
And if, - poor man! – he cannot crack  
His joke, - the fitter then to take.  
Bolts are not shot to be repell'd,  
But fast to stick in safety held,  
Hence't was an old, but useful fashion,  
In this and many another nation,  
For ev'ry venerable mansion  
To give a fool, retained, a pension;  
The butt he was for any one  
To shoot a little wit upon:

And happy were those times, you'll say,  
When fools were only had for pay:  
For, now, he is a fool who buys  
What almost ev'ry house supplies.  
Sometimes, indeed, the fool might prove  
Too sharp, for those with whom he strove;

In such assault, th' adventurous Knight  
Got very little glory by't:  
But wit, if not dilated, may  
Do harm, by passing some wrong way;  
May wound a lover; nay, offend  
A wife, or disoblige a friend.

'Twas then, a good, tho' ancient, rule  
For ev'ry Lord to keep his fool:  
Nay, men of sense, if fame say true,  
Above their neighbours would have two,  
As you, or D\_\_\_\_\_n, may do.

The fool before a king was bold:  
O strange! then truth at Courts was told.

When truth was there no more caress'd;  
Lyars the place of fools possess'd;  
Save when, phlegmatically dull,

Some fool, the hireling of a fool,  
Enlarges crack of cracked skull  
For Simile , and musty joke,  
Which nothing but a stool provoke.  
And sure he is the greater fool,  
Who laughs not at, but with a fool.  
Then come ye jolly mortals, come,  
And laugh at Simile and S\_\_\_\_\_me:  
But S\_\_\_\_\_me his Loss of place now sings,  
Since time has chang'd the course of things.  
What can the pow'r of time abide?  
Rather, what has not time destroy'd?  
For-ever eating Time+ will be,  
Till he has eat both thee and me.  
And we (such is the fate of men)  
Become as if we ne'er had been:  
Nay, I'm in doubt if he will spare,  
This hardest morsel, Wigan Mayor.  
Fools were of old in courts retain'd,  
To please the Nobles of the land;  
Whilst they, amuse'd, lay mighty still,  
Succumbent to a monarch's will.

Thus fools employ'd that wit divert,  
Which might have shook the monarch's heart;

Then, can there be a safer c\_\_\_\_\_n,  
Or one protected, like our own:

Who Gallic perfidy can fear?

Cunning has little favour here.

Pretenders, have but poor pretence,

Who lay a claim to common sense.

The man who would with us succeed,

Must be, or seem — a fool indeed.

Let France invade us if she dare:

They're men of sense, we'll never fear,

For fools alone gain footing here.

We, men of sense, kick out of doors,

Like sons, of sons, of sons, of whores.

And, if such dare amongst us come,

We presently shall starve them home;

And make them with, when 'tis too late,

They had a little bread to eat.

Then, let us fear no French invasion,

We soon shall drive them from our nation.

Fortune, propitious deity

Of fools, shall our protectress be;

In such a guardian blest, we'll make  
The French do, what I must not speak.

Our empire therefore shall extend:

The reign of Folly has no end.

If that be so, great chance but we

May very soon our empire see

Extended very far and wide,

Without an end, without a side.

Sublimest policy of men!

Where Folly's pow'r secures the r — n.

Britons ! require no proofs, —'tis known,

None can be stronger than your own.

Hence, PITT! alone, I fear for thee;

Wise men and fools, can ne'er agree.

May then great G — e, extend his sway,

Thank G — d, 'tis likely that he may;

Of old, if one fool could prevail,

To keep off wit's enormous whale,

Now Fox, Sea-lyon and Brute, agree,

How safe the British c — n must be,

Instead of one — have we not three?

Hence, tho' no fool be hir'd at court,

'Tis said there is no want of sport;  
No need, knows, to purchase, they  
Now come in plenty, void of pay.  
And, for the most part, 'tis a rule,  
For ev'ry peer to bring his fool.  
Flatt'ers, pimps, gamesters, quite enow;  
Some lord a son may have, some two.  
He's happy surely who may be  
Thus serv'd from his own family.  
Others, more happy still, are known  
To bring one, tho' they come alone:  
For thus themselves may save the booty,  
Much better fir to do the duty. \_\_\_\_\_  
The knave and devill too, who play  
The fool, without much practice may.  
Fools then, it seems, are useful things  
To fiddlers, poets, knaves and k\_\_\_\_s.  
Pardon my bard \_\_\_\_\_ if great the shame  
To join yours with a m\_\_\_\_s name.  
At fools the priest portends his rod,  
And bids adore his wooden god.

Ecclesiastically dull,  
Who minds his ravings but a fool?  
Physic itself would not survive,  
Should fools forbear to keep alive:  
And sure they have the greater wit,  
Who gave life to, than live by it.  
Pimps, lapdogs, whores, all live by fools,  
And lawyers with no better tools:  
Nay even kings by fools are chose,  
Oft senators are rais'd by those;  
Such senators, as sometimes sit  
To sell the land and traverse PITT.  
For want of fools to play upon, How  
many wise men are undone?  
Wit like a random ball is stay'd  
By cushions in its passage laid;  
If harder things its force oppose,  
It bursts, destroying friends or foes. \_\_\_\_\_  
Some common title then may fit  
To introduce the tale of wit;  
To blunt the edge of spleen severe,  
And intellectual blood to spare:



A name which, by the bye, we think  
A most poetic one for ink;  
Which tho' it flow thro' geese's quill,  
Bespeaks what better brains distil.  
But to our tale \_\_\_\_\_ from which, so long  
We've kept you, with preface song.  
As to small scrap of bread and cheese,  
The Dutchman's homily for grace;  
Which takes more time, some folks will tell ye,  
Than ev'n to fill a Frenchman's belly.  
In Lancashire that land of drinking,  
Scandal to stop and evil thinking,  
The Mayor of Wigan is a name  
Repeated oft: some think the same.  
More useful, to lay blunders on,  
Than even the bus'ness of the town;  
Except, when an election offers  
To sack the venal members' coffers.  
The Mayor of Wigan has the glory  
And heroship of many a story;  
Especially, be it a big one,  
'Tis then, who but the Mayor of Wigan?  
Talk of the judge \_\_\_\_\_ *so said the Mayor,*

*"My lord, you're great as I am here."*

Speak of red bacon and white veal;

The Mayor of Wigan makes a tale.

In short, no blunder's mention'd there,

But, ten to one, 'twas Wigan May'r:

So, tho' my tale yields him small glory,

The Mayor of Wigan founds the story.

Believe or scorn it as you please,

'Tis true, as that of Balaam's ass.

The following of an up-start mode

Oft leads us from a better road;

Perhaps the laughter of a nation

Ridiculously in the fashion:

Converts the matron to a doll,

And prostitutes the dress of Moll;

And can herself be made much less,

Who only is a thing of dress?

My lady Trollop flirts abroad

Preposterously in a mode

Which might, much better, suit such airs

When younger, half a hundred years.

How flaunts the antiquated belle!

Because her grandchild looks so well:

And, what must raise our admiration,  
She *halts* along in the same fashion.  
Reject such fool'ries and be clean,  
Age's best mode is to be plain.  
Because Cleora dresses so \_\_\_\_\_  
So Lady Bounce will figure too.  
The heydon thinks she needs must be,  
Dress'd as Cleora, \_\_\_\_\_like to she.  
Whereas, Cleora would appear,  
In ev'ry dress, divinely fair;  
Her cloaths embellish not, but hide,  
Charms that might raise an angel's pride:  
Whilst, Lady Bounce! Your dress will be  
The cov'ring of deformity \_\_\_\_\_  
Why then by dress deform you more?  
Your cloaths, like Eve's, \_\_\_\_\_for shame, are wore.  
Ne'er imitate Cleora's dress;  
The more the charms, as that is less, \_\_\_\_\_  
Apparel dims her graces; \_\_\_\_\_you,  
With pains deck up, for boys a show.  
Madam be plain then, \_\_\_take advice;  
You'll seem less dollish, but more wife.

Bless us! see that fat alderman,  
Whose golden hat-string girds his crown,  
Because it looks so well on Jim,  
Who wants two hundred weight of him.  
A prig may strut in frizzled hair;  
'Twould change a booby to a bear.  
And what a name o' G—d can seem  
Preposterous in such extreme,  
As Milo in Lord Fopling's suit,  
It makes a monster of the brute;  
And turns him out, a public show,  
Two feet too tall to be a beau.  
His grandeur rising with his height,  
Sir Bumpkin buckrams into state;  
Whose stiffened majesty grows big  
Buckled *in* dignity of wig,  
Such fights, like Hercules when spinning,  
Would set Heraclitus a grinning.  
Iberno's sword, afrights us more  
Than Gallic air and phiz before.  
See Doctor Jessamy, how grave!  
What knowledge a meer wig may have !  
Saul's armour on a stripling,

Fits as the shepherd's would the king.  
Like Falstaff, in the witch's dress,  
It shocks us more, but pleases less.  
'Twas then a mode, without more speeches,  
With Wigan beaux to wear small breeches;  
And, Wigan's May'r, you all must know,  
Was sure to be a Wigan beau:  
For, by his dress, the May'r of Wigan,  
Inclin'd to show a little breeding.  
The fashion, ask you whence? Great chance,  
As fashions mostly are, from France.  
French fashions truly so much please us,  
We've even imported their diseases.  
French tongues, French heels well-bred, won't fail  
To Frenchify an English tail.  
'Tis doubtful then that France supply'd  
The drawers their disease to hide;  
The May'r of Wigan had his pair;  
And sure he might, —— 'twas *Wigan Mayor*.  
These drawers —— which, to vary speeches,

We shall, sometimes, call little breeches,  
Were dainty-coloured, light and fine,  
For, with Sir Richard he must dine;  
And, without drawers, what a sight  
Were Wigan's May'r before a knight?  
Soon forth he stood, completely dress'd;  
At home, he did not leave his best,  
Believe me!—— Nay, ev'n his dog Tray,  
A clever dog, must go to *Hey*,  
Sir Roger's seat: so forth. The May'r  
And Tray proceed,—— an happy pair!  
But, e're he went, we ought to tell ye,  
With apple-pye he crammed his belly,  
He felt an uncouth craving, for  
He had not eat of half an hour  
It now is proper, by the way,  
To say a word or two of Tray.  
His master, truly, had ta'en care  
To give this dog a mighty share  
Of learning, he would fetch, and bring,  
And beg, most loyal! for the king.  
That dog was wise, which equal'd Tray,  
As wise as dog can need to be:

In short, of Tray, full well 'tis said,  
That he was better taught than fed.  
The tick which pleas'd his master most,  
Was going back for things not lost.  
So oft, alas! what most we love,  
Short-sighted! Mortal's mischiefs prove.  
Unfortunately learn'd, poor cur!  
Taught to no end, —— and wise to err.  
Come back, to Tray, he often said ——  
Sirrah! You make more haste than speed.  
There is a place, called Wigan-Lane,  
Beset with trees; —— a sylvan scene!  
Here cattle frisk, and birds regale,  
And Zakel sells a mug of ale.  
The road, meand'ring here and there,  
Doth make recesses ev'ry where.  
At these, when swains journey that way,  
They frequently devotions pay; ——  
And are, besides, so very kind,  
They always leave a pledge behind.  
'Twas here our May'r, in sudden motion,  
Began to think of his devotion:

The urgent bus'ness gave him pain,  
And, Oh! he felt, delay was vain.  
'Tis work which ev'n the fair go thro',  
Which none by deputy can do.  
Then why, ye lily-fingered fair,  
Why should ye laugh at Wigan's May'r?  
In short. A voice came from behind,  
In sudden, furious, blast of wind,  
It might be like the thund'ring crack  
Elijah hear'd behind his back,  
When, on the hill, he rear'd his bum,  
And found foul weather soon would come.  
The voice, in thunder-clap, that spake,  
Commanded, strait, fit place to seek,  
Where he might do the needful thing,  
Done by the punk, pope, cobbler, king.  
When nature prompts, they all obey,  
Alike, subservient to her sway;  
And who, a G——d's name, dare say nay?  
With such a loud and boist'rous gale,  
He shook the thunder of his tail,  
Norwegian witch, with all her pow'r,  
Could not have urg'd the heav'ns to roar,



A venal and propitious wind,  
So right a-poop, or full behind:  
I will not say, indeed, but it  
Might have a savour full as sweet.  
Lord Eolus, from postern vent,  
Could not so loud a blast have sent.  
Louder than canting preacher's groan,  
Or D——'s lye of kindness done.  
Loud as delirious poet's song,  
Or, louder still, a woman's tongue.  
Yet, without giving such offence,  
Had more of reason, and of sense,  
—— Perhaps too, less impertinence.  
But, nature pinch'd him with such twitches,  
He quite forgot his little breeches,  
Until the humid feel made known  
The grievous blunder he had done.  
Ill-fated! he, had let go trigger,  
And made himself a piteous figure:  
Arrear, he was, tho' not before,  
Wounded with Hudibrastic gore,  
And what adown his thighs did trickle,  
Left drawers in most woeful pickle.

He stript; ———— resolv'd to leave behind

Polluted badge of erring mind.

Now amply satisfied, indeed ————

That man may make more haste than speed.

Thus, having cast away much savour,

Now of a tolerable flavour,

His sirloins truss'd, he budg'd away;

And, with his master, follow'd Tray.

But, as the May'r was pretty big,

And bore an acre of a wig, ————

In both, Tom Osborne's type! You know,

He needs must walk a little slow.

For, had he quickened of his pace,

He would have lost a deal of grease.

'Twas all up-hill ———— a tedious way;

Oft would he stop, ———— oft turn, oft stay,

"'Tis a vile road! then, looking back,

"What charming prospects! Oh, good lack!

"'Tis scorching hot: — zounds! melting weather.

"Adzookers! ———— why, I'm all a lather!"

So did he say, or something so,  
And oft he wip'd his fatty brow:  
But thinking of his dinner — then,  
Reviv'd, he bustled on again.  
At length to verge of hall he comes,  
And Tray begins to hunt for crumbs.  
Stait [strait] Master Abner opes the gate  
To let come in the man of state.  
Important questions they pursue,  
As, how does, Sar, your Worship do?  
Your servant Abner! how do you?  
Tray, meantime, wagg'd his tale, and strait,  
With master, past inviting gate.  
Th' unthinking dog, alas! rush'd thro',  
As any other dog might do. ———  
Poor fool! he thought it right, that he  
As welcome as his lord should be.  
The love the master shares is known  
By that to which his dog is shown.  
For why then honest Tray suspect?  
Why one admit and one reject?  
But filthy dogs, — if large, you know,  
Fright Dames. — At least they tell us so.

Small they admire: such never tell,  
And bear a peccadile as well.  
Out! out! Quoth Abner, O! this cur,  
We must not let him in, good Sur!  
The May'r called loud, "go back dog! go," —  
And help'd his rhet'ric with a blow;  
And added curse: "instant away!"  
He roar'd; — and, instant, gone was Tray.  
Swift, and obedient to his lord,  
Poor Tray goes back, without one word.  
But, as 'twill, by and by, appear,  
He parted with a flea in's ear.  
His master, parlour door soon reaches,  
Nor seems to think of little breeches;  
For, as some time ago was said,  
The savour pretty well was laid,  
He scrap'd a leg or two, and bow'd  
Right Wiganly, in rural mode.  
How many speeches Mr. May'r  
Let out, now fixt in elbow-chair,  
Needs not be told ——— how often said he,  
"Dzookers! Is dinner almost ready?"

For squire, nor even priest, was able

To cut him out, at work of table.

His soul and belly both intent are,

Longing to smell the victuals enter.

Telling, to pass the time away,

The mighty deeds of mighty Tray.

“My worship’s dog, Sir Hodge, I’ll swear it,

“Without affection to his merit,

“Because the beast is mine, and he

“Doth all his knowledge draw from me,

“Nor standing to display each feature,

“Is, please your honour, a fine creature.

“He will go back, a mile or two,

“To fetch whatever was perdue.

“But, let me tell your Knightship, that,

“Unbid, he would not hurt a cat.

“Yet, at my word, I do declare,

“He’d seize upon the fanged bear.

“Ev’n like my own his sense refin’d.

“is quite above the bestial kind.”

Reply’d Sir Roger, “Mr. May’r,

“I wish this prodigy was here,

“That we might see the crafty rogue,

“This wondrous sample of a dog.”

Nay, quoth the May’r, —— “that cannot be,

“Just now I ordered him away ——

“Go back, I said, ——and gone is he.”

Meantime the dinner blest his eye,

And now there’s other fish to fry; ——

So, honest Tray! a while good b’ye.

Gay ladies, a fair scene! attend,

In charms beyond what dress could lend,

Plac’d round the table; these appear

A ring, its carbuncle, the Mayor.

With napkin fitted under chin,

And all in order to begin,

In ev’ry sense of taste exceeding,

Enrapt in thoughts of goodly feeding,

His desp’rate knife is brandish’d bright,

The prelude of approaching fight.

With smacks his luscious lips did play,

And now about him does he lay.

In furious gust, and hunger hasty,

Now, now, beware, O ven’son pasty!

His chin, with glossy fatness smear’d,

Assum’d the type of David’s beard,

With oil anointed, the bright face  
Of Isral's king shewd not more grease.  
"Hunger, avaunt," he said, "I thee  
"Will conquer, lest thou conquer'st me."  
And now, to complement the knight,  
"Well, Sir, this is a royal sight.  
"I do sincerely think, Sir Roger,  
"You live as happy as a badger.  
"Nor kings or may'rs enjoy more plenty,  
"You wallow here in ev'ry dainty,  
"The fat of the land is sent ye.  
"No pig so blest:— (and one would think  
"The pig enjoys his meat and drink.)  
"O great Sir Roger! you're quite happy,  
"Your meat is rich, your beer is nappy.  
"O blessed Wigan! didst but thou  
"The vastness of thy blessings know!  
"The earthly paradise is here,  
"If paradise be any where.  
"We Wiganers, above the rest,  
"Of men, with choicest food are blest.

“See you how thick, black, strong, our ale;

“We’re notable for blood-red veal.

“But, better still! so white our bacon:

“And O! so sound and stout our capon.

“Our mutton’s tender as a chicken;

“Good mutton’s very pretty picking.

“I say, there are not happier people:

“Why, Sir, this hall is like a steeple:

“And I, resembling Jesus, stand,

“To view the glory of the land.

“But, as I said before, you’re happy

“In sturdy beer — vig’rous and nappy.

“Your health Sir Roger, ——and my own;

“And here’s to you my Lady Joan:

“But, lest you think we know not manners,

“Your healths who wait upon our honours.

“ ’Tis very right, and but your due,

“That we should still remember you.

“Another lusty bumper bring:

“Our Worships next should drink the king.

“And now, I’ve drank the king’s good health,

“With all prosperity and wealth,



“Since neither I, nor he, can think  
“To live alone by pow’r of drink,  
“I’ll eat his royal health: so, John!  
“Here, heap half of that pudding on.  
“I’m a great fancier of such stuff,  
“When made with fat and plumbs enough:  
“But, nothing in this world, say I,  
“comes up to flummery and pye.  
“A walk’s a very pretty thing — quite right  
“To get a man an appetite.  
“Heap up my plate, Madam, and, when  
“Unloaded, I shall send again.  
“A warrant you, Mrs. Beatrice, we,  
“Just as at home, shall make quite free.  
“Faith, I can pick a bit to-day,  
“ ‘Tis a good sign, your doctors say.  
“Or right, or wrong, be that as ‘twill,  
“When I am tempted, I must fill;  
“Till, crammed like a tick, my buff  
“Threatens to burst, if more I stuff.  
“A mercy that it proves so tough.  
Thus, Mr. May’r, in full employ,

Did lay about him manfully,  
Both tongue and teeth in busy chatter,  
Distributing such sort of matter:  
For, he believ'd 'twould help his meat  
To mingle social converse sweet:  
Thoughtless, that whilst a word flew out,  
His mill would have gone once about.  
For, 'tis a saw of shrewdest kind,  
That ev'ry word prevents a grind.  
An hint of mighty use, I think,  
To such as live to eat and drink.  
Here let us leave him for a minute,  
The happiest man our isle has in it:  
For Tray, — (you must remember Tray)  
Was bustling forward on his way.  
Busy enough. ——— It has been said,  
To fetch and carry was his trade:  
And, when his master from the door  
Commanded back, as told before:  
The dog, poor fellow, what could he  
Expect, a simple dog to be.  
He did, tho' sensible enough,

Mistake his churlish lord's rebuff,  
Not understanding right his meaning,  
He ran for things that wanted cleaning:  
For Tray was of a saving mind,  
Unwilling to leave aught behind.

No marvel then, if, whilst his lord  
Did pay away pell mell at board;  
His plate, a seventh time, unloading,  
Of half a mountain of a pudding:  
In daintiest juncture of his bliss,  
Tray, in a rapture of success,  
Leaping on the table, threw  
Ill-fated drawers! All to view!  
Their odour great, and gold their hue,  
He wagg'd his tail, — and frisk'd with spirit;  
Now had he signaliz'd his merit.

O! what a dirty sight was there:  
How did each face distort appear?  
But, most, the dames it discomposes;  
Some ladies laughed, some held their noses;  
Some called for lavender, some roses.  
And some, in sharp rebukes to Tray,

Cry, sirrah! naughty curr —— away!

(And, what a tender ear can wrong,  
Like censure from a lady's tongue?)

Others, indeed, no greater winners,  
Compil'd, ejaculate their dinners:

And now, one moment undoes more,  
Than a full hour had done before.

So Homer sings, the work of men  
Is very soon undone again:

And one would think, this scene to view,  
That Homer, here, at least, told true.

In short, the table was thrown o'er,  
Poor Tray again turn'd out of door;

And little breeches, with much laughter,  
Dispatch'd immediately after:

Whilst Mr. Mayor, above the rest,  
Had vast encomiums for the jest.

'Twas pity it fell out thus hasty,  
And border'd so near upon nasty.

The knight was also much diverted,  
Although his table-cloth was dirtied.  
May'r fretted, fuam'd, and loudly- worded,  
To see what pastime he afforded:  
Whilst the good lady, with her cup,  
Contriv'd to keep his spirits up.  
From this my tale, O, Wigan May'r  
Henceforth of three small slips beware:  
The first, avoid much apple-pye;  
'Tis very op'ning ——apt to fly ——  
Or if, when you go out to dine, Your  
dog must needs the party join,  
Abuse not the poor brute, or send  
Away your partner and your friend;  
Revil'd and smit, with belly empty,  
Perhaps of intellect more dainty;  
Whilst you carouse and gorge in plenty.  
But O, good Mr. Mayor —— (it is  
A friend advises, take advice,)  
Leave forms of dress to fools and vain;  
The best of modes is to be clean.

And wisdom does not scorn the plain.



