

ART. XI.—*Poor Law documents of the Parish of Great Salkeld.* By the Rev. C. M. L. BOUCH.

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I have to thank the rector, the Rev. G. A. K. Hervey, for allowing me access to these documents.

The first mention of funds for the relief of the poor seems to be a pair of entries in the churchwardens' accounts for 1583. The first of these is "paied out to colloute Hoare xxd."; the other "we ded also collect and gather for colloute Houre as we were charged by quenes letters pattant xiiid." This collection was presumably a result of the statute of 1572 which ordered such collections to be made throughout the country. Then in 1598 accounts we have this entry "to the maymed soldiers viiis. iid."

The parish is curiously deficient in the accounts of the Overseers of the Poor (only that for 1772 has survived), but it is rich in other documents. Of these the earliest that have been found are two demand notices, one, in 1587, for money for the prisoners in Carlisle gaol, the other, in 1598, for maimed soldiers. These are of sufficient interest to be set out in full.

Cumberland Gerard Lowther and John Southaike esquires Justices of peace of or Sovaigne ladie the quen wthin the countie of Cumberland and assignes wthin the devisioun of laith ward. To the churchwardens of Saulkeld and constables there. Knowe you that whereas by the statute, made in the xiiiith yeare of the quene's maties gracious reigne that now is, it is marked, amongst other things to the relefe of the poor prisonors, that the Justices of peace shall assesse evry pish to a ratable contribution woallie for the releif of the prisoners in the gaille of the countie, soo that the same excede not viiid. in the woake and that the churchwardens collete the same, under the paine of vl to be levied of the pish constable. Therefore by force

of the said statute and accordinge to the genrall assessment made at the sessions of the peace holden at Carlell the xvi of this instant, to chardge and, in hir heignes name, to commande you presentlie to leivie weaklie the some of fouer pence untill the seaventh of August next, amountinge in the whole to seaven grotes wthin the said pish of Saukeld and the same prsentlie to send to Mr John Midleton to Carlell to be delivered over to the prisonors there and hereof faile you not under the paine of vl in the said statute lymited. Geaven at Carlell the xth daye of June this present xxixth yeare of the reigne of or most dread sovaigne ladie Elizabeth by the grace of God quene of England France and Ierland defender of the fath ano 1587.

Gerard Lowther

Jo Sohak

These ar to will and command you and every (one) of you that in all haist you collect and gather all such somes of mony as are dew for the maymed souldieus according to the statute and that you bring it to me at Newbigrige before Palm Sunday next and in default thereof know you me to be appointed tresurer of the same for this yeare in Cumberland and yor owne goods will I distrain and leavye if that in all hast you doo not collect and leavye it according to the statute in that day pryded and hereof fayle you not at yor uttmost pils.

Now beinge this xixth of March 1598

yor loving frynd

Chris Pykering

The churchwardens and constables of Salkeld and to every of them viiis. viiid.

Received of the churchwardens of Grate Salkeld viiis. & iid.

by me

Chris Pykeringe

We next come to what seems to us today a most curious document. The first part of it is a bond, dated 12 Febr. 1637, in £100 from Gilbert Jackson of Great Salkeld and others to Bishop Potter and his chancellor. Beneath this there is a statement that the said Gilbert is to keep harmless the parish of Great Salkeld from any charge "occasioned by the baptism of Beersheba, the daughter of Margaret Gosforth, the supposed wife of William Gosforth." If we are to understand the meaning of this and the other documents that follow, we must realise

that by the law at that time each parish was responsible for its poor. Thus it was the great aim of the rate-payers to ensure that no one who might at any future time be a liability on the parish got, as the phrase went, a settlement within it. In this case there was obviously felt to be such a danger. Thus before she could be baptized this bond had to be given. It is interesting to note that this was done with the bishop's approval.

The next document, dated 20 July 1688, sets out that "whereas Grace, daughter of Jane Rolfe was lately married to John Gibson, late of Ousby, by reason wherof the said John Gibson and Grace his wife and their children, if they continue in the pish. of Great Salkeld may happen to be chargeable to the pishioners therof." So to enable them to remain in the parish they had to find people willing to guarantee it against any risks. Another document of 30 May 1689 illustrates this "wheras Margaret Todd, widow, and Robert, her grandchild, have been by the countenance and protection of the above bounden Stephen Simpson adventured their settlement within the parish of Great Salkeld for a certain season there to remain" etc. They may either have been either relations or servants of this Stephan Simpson but if they were to remain he had to stand security for them. Many would regard the village blacksmith as a man of some standing but when in July 1685 William Robinson, blacksmith, and Mary his wife desired to settle "within the towne of Great Salkeld," they had to get two others of the same calling to enter into a bond for them. There are, of course, many similar documents but enough have been given to enable us to see how the system worked. While each parish was responsible for its own poor, it is difficult to blame people for acting as they did. The method obviously must have inflicted a great deal, not only of hardship

but of indignity on the poor. Fancy having to carry about a document like the following:—

“ To the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of the parish of Great Salkeld we, the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of the parish of Ainstable do hereby certifie and Acknowledge that Bridget, the wife of Thomas Richardson, husbandman (the bearer hereof) is legally settled according to law in our said parish of Ainstable and therefore we do hereby promise and oblige ourselves to receive the said Bridget whensoever she shall become chargeable to your said parish of Great Salkeld.”

This was dated 11 July 1717 and was subscribed by two justices of the peace. There are a number of similar documents among these records.

To turn to quite another class of document, there are in this collection a number of bonds about illegitimate children or bastards as they are always called. These, of course, were liable to be a charge on the parish unless the father could be found. Thus if any woman found herself about to be the mother of such a child every effort was made to get from her evidence of parentage. If this was successful then the man and someone else had to enter into a bond such as the following, which is date 19 November 1765:—

Whereas Frances Lancaster of Great Salkeld, singlewoman, hath declared herself to be with child and that the said child is likely to be born a bastard and to be chargeable to the parish of Great Salkeld, now the condition of this obligation is such that the above bounden Andrew Whelpdale of Penrith, gentleman, and Adam Dixon, innkeeper do undertake to save and keep harmless and indemnify the churchwardens etc., of Great Salkeld against all manner of casts etc. by reason of the birth and education of the said child.

Records have also survived in the form of Apprenticeship Identures which tell us something of the fate of

these and other children brought up by the parish. There is no evidence in these records of anything approaching the evils shown up by Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. In five of the seven indentures the age of the child, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 years is given. The term of service varied between the apprentice reaching 18 and 21 years of age. In three cases two suits, one a new one, were to be supplied at the end of the term; of the other four, in two cases one was to be supplied, in the others nothing is said on the subject. In two of the indentures, not only two suits but a sum of money, in one case of a guinea, in the other of two, is provided for. In one set a holiday of a fortnight in the first two years and three thereafter is named. In one case only is money, then it is £3. 10s., paid to the master. The trades are weaving 2, a miller and a tailor one each; and husbandry 3. The indentures cover the years 1769 to 1809. There is only one other document among these Poor Law records of any special interest, this is a list of the house goods of Andrew Donallson taken on 23 January 1771:—

a lang table	...	4s.	od.
a table and furm	...	2	6
a cubbert	...	1	6
a dresser	...	2	6
four pudor dishes	...	7	6
three jhars	...	3	0
barol and knop	...	2	6
two iron pots	...	2	6
frying pan and girdle	...	1	6
crook and tongs	...	1	6
bedstead and bedding	...	10	0
chest and box	...	4	0
woolwheel	...	2	0

A knop was a small tub having two stave handles.

With this document is a note that the above goods

were purchased for the use of the parish, with the consent of Andrew Macdonald, for £2. 10s. Not only have we here what is probably a typical list of the household utensils of the poor, but may we not also perhaps have a little piece of lost history from the '45. There were plenty of Macdonalds in the Scots army that retreated through Westmorland; the change of name from Macdonald to Donallson is interesting in any case. Was he then a stray Highlander who was left behind?