





WILLIAM PRYNNE,

*from a contemporary Portrait.*

ON  
PURITANISM IN CHESTER, IN 1637:  
AN ACCOUNT OF THE RECEPTION OF  
WILLIAM PRYNNE,  
BY CERTAIN INHABITANTS OF  
THE CITY OF CHESTER,  
WHEN ON HIS WAY TO BE IMPRISONED IN CAERNARVON CASTLE.

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BY THE REV. CANON BLOMFIELD.

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**D** I SUPPOSE that a considerable latitude is given to the choice of subjects in these Archaeological lectures. We may range at large through the fields of knowledge in search of matter, and bring home anything that bears upon the history, or laws, or architecture, or art of past ages, so that we do not come too near our own time. We must not choose a modern theme, and call it an archaeological one.

I assume, then, that I may consider the time of Charles I. as within the range of our view as antiquaries. It is one of the most interesting and least understood periods of our national history, and one to which much of the known history of Chester itself refers, and to which many of its most interesting buildings belong. I propose, therefore, to bring before the SOCIETY, in a very brief and humble way, a little episode of our local history of that day, as tending to illustrate the manners and customs of the people, and as forming a small item of the remarkable and characteristic incidents of that turbulent period.

We may observe that the best way to get a clear and distinct idea of the real nature of historical facts is to study, as far as it is possible to do so, the private history of individuals of the time. The letters, the journals, the biographies of any period give life and reality to the broader scenes of general history, and enable us to see the people in

their everyday social and domestic life, to enter into their ways of thinking, to understand their ideas and the established customs and notions of the time, on which the right conception of historical facts so much depends.

What I have to bring before you is indeed a report, gathered from several documents, of a trifling incident in the social life of Chester at that date ; but, connected as it is with a person who exercised an important influence on the events of the latter part of the reign of Charles I., it seems worth looking into, and may help us to realise a little of the actual life of the day, and mark the difference of it, in all its details, from that of our own more enlightened and liberal age. The incident to which I intend to refer occurred in the private history of the celebrated WILLIAM PRYNNE, who may almost be considered as the author of the troubles which convulsed the kingdom, and culminated in the death of the King and the temporary subversion of the Monarchy and the Church.

Not that he deserves to be elevated to so conspicuous a position for any merit or ability of his own, but simply that, as the first victim of a harsh and unwise persecution which drew public attention to the tyrannical measures of the government of Charles I., he became a marked man. The sympathy of the people in general was awakened towards him under his sufferings. The angry zeal of the Puritan faction was aroused to act in his defence ; and he was made the central figure of a drama, around which were grouped the religious and political parties of the day ; an instance, by the way, of the common experience of such mighty contests—from how very small a source they take their rise ! An instance, also, of the common results of persecution, which elevates insignificant persons into heroes and martyrs, and gives strength and importance to disputed questions of little moment, which would have died away and been forgotten but for this unwise attempt to silence them by force.

I am not, however, going to deal with the character of Prynne, whom the court party termed “a pestilent fellow and a breeder of sedition,” and the Puritan party hailed as “a devout Protestant who asserted his testimony for the true Gospel.” Probably the truth lay somewhere between the two. But I must refer to that part of his history which led to his being brought to Chester, in order to show the state of things then existing here, and the feeling which seems to have prevailed about him.

It was the fashion in those days, when any man was convicted of publishing, or even uttering, libels against the authorities in Church or State, to set him in the pillory, and cut off one or both of his ears; a very singular and unpleasant remedy for libel, for which at the present day we substitute the less ignominious and painful one of pecuniary fine. The only pillory in these days is the public press, and instead of a man's ears we only take his money. I don't know whether there was intended to be anything symbolical in the punishment. If there were, it might signify that the libeller was exposed to public gaze and contempt, as he had exposed others in his writings, and that he was condemned to lose his ears, as being the organs through which he had either received the slander himself, or hoped to propagate it to others.

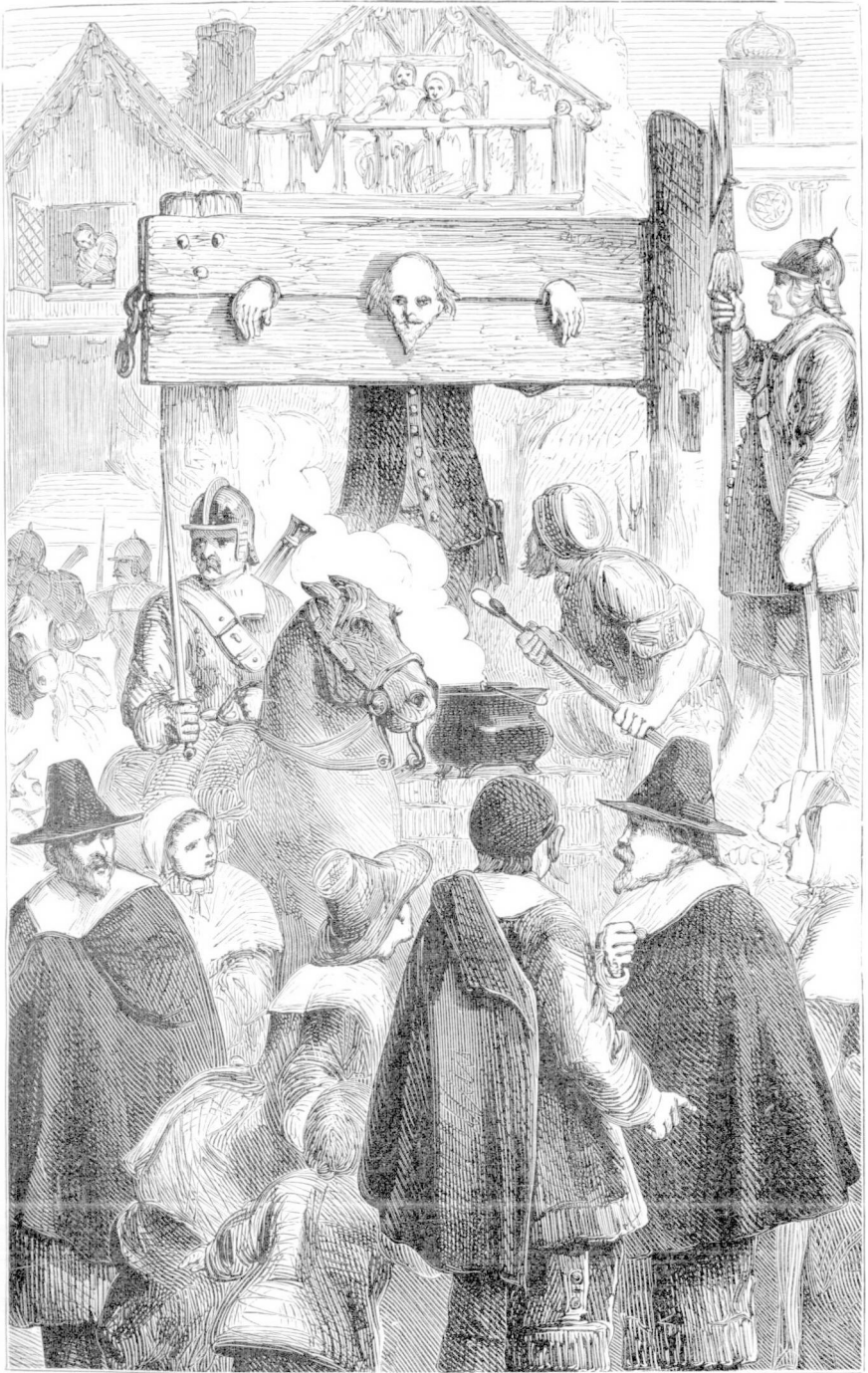
PRYNNE was a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, a bencher and reader of that learned society, and a devoted adherent of the celebrated Puritan divine, Dr. John Preston, who was at that time preacher at Lincoln's Inn. Early in the reign of Charles I. he published a book called "Histrio-Mastix, or a Whip for Stageplayers," in which he inveighed with great acrimony against all kinds of theatrical exhibitions. These happened to be very popular at court, where they had been introduced by the young Queen Henrietta Maria, she herself having acted a part in a Pastoral performed at Somerset House.

It was not unnaturally supposed that Prynne's "whip" was intended to be applied to the Queen. Fuller says, in his quaint manner, "That whip of stageplayers was so held and used by the hand of Prynne that some conceived the lashes thereof flew into the face of the queen herself, as much delighted in masques." The consequence was that the bold satirist was prosecuted in the Star Chamber; sentenced, amongst other severe penalties, to stand twice in the pillory, once in Palace-yard and three days after in Cheapside, and lose an ear each time, and to remain in prison for life, a somewhat savage punishment for a mere constructive libel. But it indicates the character of the times, and the fierce notions of those in authority. I may state, however, that Prynne did not lose the whole substance of his ears under his first sentence, as some small remainder was left to be sheared again on another occasion; for, in his report of his second trial in the Star Chamber, he says that Sir John Finch, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, stood behind him at the bar, "and spake on this manner:—'Is this Mr Prynne! I had thought Mr. Prynne had had no ears, they being adjudged to be cut off by sentence of this Court; but methinks he hath ears, and it is

fit that the Court should take order that the decrees hereof should be better executed, and see whether Mr. Prynne hath ears or no;' which caused the Lords to take stricter view of him, and the Usher of the Court was commanded to turn up his hair and shew his ears, upon the sight whereof some of the Lords seemed to be displeased that his ears had not formerly been cut closer off."

Though this sentence came from the Star Chamber, which was a Civil court, he seems to have thought that the authorities of the Church had something to do with it; and on being released from prison he commenced an attack on the bishops, in a book which he mildly entitles "An Historical Collection of the several execrable Treasons, Conspiracies, Rebellions, Seditious, State Schisms, Contumacies, anti-Monarchical practices and oppression of the English Prelates," &c. This was no doubt mainly directed against Archbishop Laud, who was a leading member of the High Commission Court, and a vigorous wielder of the sword against all schismatics and opposers of the Government. Of course the Star Chamber could not let Prynne's contumacy pass unnoticed, and he was accordingly brought before the court, together with two other offenders of a similar kind—Dr. John Bastwick, a physician, and Henry Burton, a clergyman of some London parish. The first of these two is termed by Clarendon "a half-witted crackbrained fellow:" the second a disappointed man, "more endued with malice and boldness than with learning or tolerable parts." These three persons were brought together before the court, where, says Clarendon (who was present), "they behaved themselves with marvellous insolence;" though, if one might believe their own report of the trial, they were "modest, forbearing, and deferential, and only demanded the opportunity of making a full defence." The issue was that they were all three condemned "as scandalous, seditious, and infamous persons, to lose their ears in the pillory, and to be imprisoned in several remote castles during the remainder of their lives." The official report of this trial is given in Rushworth's *Collections*, ii., 380. Their own report of it is contained in a small quarto book published at the time, and certainly two more opposite accounts of the same transaction could scarcely be given.

I may here observe that, according to our present notions of things, not only was the whole composition of this court, and the mode of trial in it, and the kind of punishment which they inflicted, thoroughly unconstitutional, unjust, and cruel, but that the part taken in it by



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PRYNNE IN THE PILLORY.





the Archbishop savours of the same character. In his trial, not very long afterwards, he says that, though present on this occasion, "I gave no vote, because they had fallen so personally upon me, that I doubted many men might think spleen and not justice led me to it." And he neither proposed nor assisted in the sentence. It is clear, however, that he thought it no more than a right and just one, though it was only for errors in political and doctrinal opinion. For this he has always been much condemned by those who maintain the principle of free enquiry and the right of private judgment. And it must always be a matter of regret that a man so essentially good and upright, should have been mixed up with such proceedings.

But it is very unfair to judge him by the standard of modern opinion. He partook of the common failing of the age in which he lived, wherein erroneous opinions, either in politics or religion, were looked upon as moral diseases which it was the duty of those in authority to treat, as it was proposed to treat the cattle plague the other day, to "stamp them out" by strong and decisive measures, so as to stop the spread of infection by getting rid of those who propagated it. Laud only did what all others did in those days—what the Puritans themselves did with ten times more severity and unscrupulousness when they came into power. But his fate, and the events of the time, have left us a lesson of the folly of punishing people for their opinions; of the certainty that persecution of any kind only serves to give undue importance to the persecuted, and to defeat its own end by spreading the knowledge of errors which it seeks to put down. We have seen some conspicuous proofs of this in our own days.

But to return from this digression to the proceedings consequent upon the sentence passed upon Prynne and his two companions. The date of the trial and sentence was, June 14th, 1637. I may say here that there is some apparent discrepancy in the dates which are given in Prynne's account, but they may be partly rectified by referring to the dates of the several warrants and orders of the court. The sentence was as follows, pronounced by the Lord Keeper; "I condemn these three men to lose their ears in the Palace-yard at Westminster; to be fined £5000 a man to his Majesty, and to perpetual imprisonment in three remote places of the kingdom, namely, the Castles of Carnarvon, Cornwall, and Lancaster." Sir J. Finch added, "Mr. Prynne to be stigmatised on the cheeks with two letters, S. L, for a seditious libeller." Prynne says this took place in the presence and at the

instigation of Archbishop Laud, though Laud himself declares that he neither proposed nor assisted at the sentence.

The sentence, as we have seen, was passed on the 14th of June. Fuller says that it was executed two days afterwards; but it was not until the 30th of June, or 16 days after, that the execution took place. On that day two pillories were erected in Palace Yard, it being within, and forming a part of the Royal Palace of, Westminster, but, yet open to the public. In one of these Dr. Bastwick was placed, and in the other, which was a double one, Burton and Prynne. It is said that the number of spectators present was so large as to fill the vast open space of Palace Yard, and that the people had strewed all the way from the house out of which they were brought up to the pillories with sweet herbs, in token of their sympathy with them, and of disgust at the cruel sentence which had been passed on them.

Passing over the account of the barbarities which were inflicted on the two first (Bastwick and Burton), I will quote that which relates to Prynne, given in detail by an eyewitness; and though, no doubt, he makes the worst of it as a partizan, the best of it is bad enough, and revolting to all ordinary feelings of humanity. Prynne, as the greatest offender, was kept to the last, in order that he might have the additional pain of seeing the sufferings of his fellow-partizans. "Last of all," says the narrative, "the executioner came to Mr. Prynne to sear him and cut off his ears. The bloody executioner performed the execution with extraordinary cruelty, heating his iron very hot, and burning one cheek twice"—*i. e.*, with the two letters "S. L."

Fuller says of Prynne that "he who felt the most yielded the least. When the spectators read the letters imprinted on his face (S. L.), some made them spell the guiltiness of the sufferer, but others the cruelty of the imposer. Of the latter sort many for the cause, more for the man, most for humanity's sake, bestowed pity upon him." Even Clarendon admits that the "sentences were executed with vigour and severity enough;" and Fuller says that two "high conformists counted it too little, and that it had been better if the pillory had been exchanged for the gallows;" yet "most moderate men thought the censure too sharp, too base and ignominious for gentlemen of their ingenuous vocation." And no doubt the sympathies of the general public of the kingdom were enlisted in behalf of these unhappy sufferers, and the feeling of disaffection to the authorities both in Church and State which had already sprung up in people's minds was immensely aggravated.

After this Prynne appears to have been kept in the Tower for a fortnight, in order that his wounds might be healed. But it is said that they were still causing him great pain, when on Monday, the 17th of July, under an order from the Star Chamber he was removed to the custody of the Wardens of the Fleet, by three of the Warden's servants. In order to avoid any popular demonstration he was taken there at seven a.m., and within one hour afterwards he was transferred to the charge of the Sub-Warden and his assistants for the purpose of his being conveyed to his distant place of confinement in Caernarvon Castle. So at eight p.m. the cavalcade started from the Fleet prison, and though the hour was so early they found the streets lined with people anxious to catch a glimpse of the now celebrated victim of Court tyranny; and all the way to Highgate, the highroad passing through the sequestered hamlet of Clerkenwell, and the pleasant village of Islington, was crowded with sympathizers, who ran along by the side of the prisoner with acclamations of pity and of praise, and some of them even accompanied him on horseback as far as St. Albans, 21 miles from London. At that town the first day's journey terminated, and they rested for the night.

It appears that this journey, even as far as Caernarvon, was wholly performed on horseback; and as they only travelled 21 miles the first day, it is evident that it was not performed very expeditiously; perhaps the physical condition of their dismembered prisoner not admitting of much fatigue. We find that they did not arrive at Caernarvon until Saturday, August 5, so that the whole journey occupied 25 days, which does not give an average of more than ten miles a day. But as they stayed three days at Coventry, and the same at Chester, and the same probably at other large towns on their way to rest their weary beasts as well as themselves, we may suppose them to have travelled at the same rate as they did on the first day—about 20 miles a day.

No doubt the popular demonstrations of sympathy with the criminal which had been made at the commencement of his journey, had been duly reported to the Star Chamber authorities; and instead of softening their feelings, or alarming their fears, the intelligence appears to have exasperated them, and produced further measures of severity against the prisoners. For on the 20th of July, *i.e.* on the third day after they left London, an order was issued to all mayors, sheriffs, justices, and other officers of His Majesty, and all loving sub-

jects whatever, to be aiding and assisting those who had the charge of Prynne, from place to place on his way to Caernarvon. And another order, dated July 30th, to which the name of Archbishop Laud is appended (the King himself having presided at the Council at which it was ordered,) forbids all access to him when in gaol, and prohibits the use of pen, ink, and paper, and of all books except the Bible and Common Prayer, and such other canonical books as are consonant to the doctrine of the Church of England.

These orders, however, were subsequent to his leaving London, and the first of them does not appear to have been known to, or at least not to have actuated, the officers who conveyed him on his way. For they seem to have made quite a pleasant journey, and to have enjoyed themselves wherever they could. They gave their prisoner considerable liberty, as, for instance, in Coventry of going twice to Church on Sunday, and at Chester of going to see sights; and not only of receiving the visits of friends at the inns where they were lodging, but dropping in for a glass of wine and a dish of chat with some of the leading inhabitants of the place. So that in all probability the spirit of disaffection had found its way into the hearts of these officers of the Fleet, or else the pleasant and moving discourse of Mr. Prynne as he rode along with them day by day, so touched their tender feelings that they viewed him rather in the light of a friend than a prisoner, and were disposed to treat him as a great man, subjected for the time to adverse circumstances, but who would rise from under them into celebrity and fame—as indeed he did.

Such seems to have been the opinion of a large number of the people, for wherever he stayed in the course of his long journey he found abundant tokens of approval and regard. As for instance at Coventry, which place they reached on Saturday, the 22nd. They rested there on Sunday, and Prynne went twice to church, for he was as yet a member of the Church of England, and professed himself a strenuous upholder of her doctrine and discipline. The rest of the day was occupied in receiving visits from some of his acquaintances who resided in Coventry, for it was said that he went no where but to church. The wife of the mayor was one of these visitors, and got her husband into a terrible scrape by her zeal. For when intelligence of her visit reached the council in London, an officer was forthwith sent down to Coventry to apprehend the mayor and six more of the sympathizers, and bring them up to London to be examined. They were





**J. BRVEN,**

*of Brven Stapleford, co. Chester.  
from the engraved portrait in  
Clark's "Marrow of Ecclesiastical History."*

detained there above a fortnight by a series of examinations before the Attorney-General, and not allowed to escape from the severe gripe of the law without payment of two or three hundred pounds costs.

No other incidents of this journey are recorded until the party drew near to Chester, which would probably be about a fortnight after they left Coventry. They travelled along the ordinary London road, which leads through Tarporley to Chester, and in doing so they passed the domain, at that time of considerable extent, embracing a large deer park, of Mr. Bruen, of Bruen Stapleford, not far from Tarvin. This was the residence of a famous Puritan family of that day.

John Bruen, the father, who had died about ten years before, had been one of the most remarkable men of his time. Descended from one of the ancient Cheshire families, who had held the estate of Bruen Stapleford and other extensive property from the Conquest, he took his place among the leading gentry of the county, and in early life entered into all the sports and amusements of a young man of fortune. But upon the death of his father in 1587 he found the estate heavily encumbered, and at once set to work to bring things into better condition. He sold his deer, converted his park into farms, gave up every pursuit which involved unnecessary expense, and applied his whole mind to the establishment in his family of a system of rigid economy combined with strict religious discipline. He had originally been inclined to Popery, but had changed his views under the influence of a son of Alderman Brerewood, of Chester, afterwards a noted Puritan divine, and from that time became a zealous supporter of the Puritan party in the City and County.

He had an old servant named Robert Pasfield, who could neither read nor write, but to help his memory of what he heard, had an ingenious device. He wore a long leathern girdle, which he divided into as many parts as there are books in the Bible, and to each of these divisions he affixed as many short thongs of leather as there are chapters in each book, and by knots in these thongs marked off the verses or subjects of the several chapters. How he applied this curious *memoria technica* I don't quite understand, but so it was, that he was able to repeat to his master all the sermons he heard, and to quote the chapter and verse from which the texts were taken. This girdle was long kept in the family, and may be still in existence somewhere.

A full and interesting account of the boundless but somewhat eccentric benevolence of this good old Puritan will be found in Ormerod,

under the head of Bruen Stapleford; and he is the subject of two special biographies by a Mr. Burghall and Mr. Hinde, both of Bunbury. He at one time lived in Chester, and his third son, Calvin Bruen (which Christian name bespeaks his father's doctrinal views,) settled in Chester and followed some trade, of what kind does not exactly appear, but probably that of a bookseller, as he is afterwards charged with having a Puritanical book in his shop, which the Bishop sent for and took away with him.

Well, to return to the travellers whom we left on the road from Tarporley. When they got to Tarvin they were met by Calvin Bruen and three other friends, and escorted by them to Chester. It became a question afterwards whether this meeting there was to be regarded as a deliberate act of offence both to Church and King; but they asserted that it took place by mere accident, and the proximity of his brother's place at Stapleford gave some colour to this defence. However, they did certainly meet or overtake the prisoner's party and rode with them into the city.

The other persons who accompanied them were Thomas Aldersey, one of the aldermen of the city; Peter Ince, a stationer; and his brother, Robert Ince, a hosier. Peter Ince had been an old friend of Prynne's, and had visited him when he was a prisoner in the Tower, and had already drawn down the wrath of the Council upon his head by so doing. An order had come to the mayor, some months before this, to search his house for seditious books, but none were then discovered.

It appears that these were not the only persons in Chester who sided with the Puritan faction. Bishop Bridgeman, who sent a report of these matters to the Archbishop of York, says that somehow the citizens of Chester appeared to get possession of all the Puritanical books as soon as they were published; and as there was no other stationer in Chester but Peter Ince, he assumes that they must have obtained them from him, "though," he adds, "he be so cunning as it will hardly be discovered, unless by his own answer upon oath."

There was also a person named Bostock, "a lawyer of the first head," who was intimate with Prynne, and circulated in the city all the Puritan pamphlets which he could procure, and they were as numerous in that day as they are now, and far more scandalous and vituperative. He is described as "a great expounder of Scripture in private families and a follower of seditious ministers, at exercises, as they were termed;" so that there was considerable leaven of these doctrines already at work



amongst the citizens of Chester, disposing them to view Prynne as a sufferer for the cause of the true Gospel, and deserving of their respect and regard.

It seems that the Mayor and Corporation had begun to waver in their orthodoxy, and to relax in their attendance on sound doctrine as delivered at the Cathedral; for Bishop Bridgeman complains that they now seldom came to the Sunday sermons in the Choir, although, that they might do so, he had ordered all the other preachers of the city to end their sermons before those in the Cathedral began. At that time sermons were preached at a different hour from the morning service, and people used to go to hear the sermon who did not attend this service. We have a vestige of this practice still existing in our University sermons.

It is interesting to connect with this complaint of the Bishop's, which was dated 1637, the erection of the great pulpit in the Choir, on which the same date is inscribed, and which it is said the Bishop placed there for the purpose of meeting the demand of the citizens for a more competent preaching place. That pulpit was a very large size, and would have admitted all the canons to preach at once; at any rate it gave ample room for the energetic, not to say dramatic, delivery of sermons which then began to be in fashion. But it does not appear that the Bishop, who provided the pulpit, provided at the same time for the popular and effective use of it; for he complains that the Mayor and Corporation did not come to the sermons in the Cathedral, "as in other cities they used to do, and therefore," he says, "he could not have his eye upon their behaviour," *i.e.*, to observe whether they were well affected to sound doctrine or not.

I suppose that the Deans and Canons of that day were somewhat dry and stiff in their orthodoxy; and, considering that their sermons ran to the length of an hour or more, and that the congregation had to stand to listen to them (for there were no pews or seats in the Cathedral at that time, except the stalls), no wonder that there was some slackness of attendance. And the people preferred to go, as they do still, to a more exciting style of preaching, in which controversial questions were vigorously handled and the doctrine was more in accordance with their own feelings.

We have seen that Calvin Bruen and his friends escorted Prynne and his guardians into Chester, and also accompanied him to the inn—at least they were charged with doing so, though in their answer they

in part deny it, and say that they did not speak to him except to tell him which was the best inn to go to. They admit, however, that they visited him at the inn and bestowed a pint of wine on his conductors—(what inn it was that was recommended to him we cannot tell, perhaps the “Feathers” in Bridge-street Row, which was the chief inn of the city at that date). On the next morning Calvin Bruen came to visit him again, and invited him to come to his house. But Prynne declined, “finding him,” says the Bishop, “(as who will not if he hear him speak) a poor silly fellow.” Certainly he seems to have had no great courage or stability, for the Bishop, who afterwards sent for him and rated him well for his schismatic tendencies, frightened him out of his wits, and made him confess a good deal which he afterwards denied.

After Bruen left the inn, the two brothers Ince came to call, and invited Prynne to take a walk in the city. No impediment seems to have been offered to this by his conductors, and he went with them to see St. John’s Church—not so much, it seems, for the sake of the church, but as being the place to which, he was told, King Edgar was rowed over the Dee by eight captive kings. They also paid a visit to several shops in the city, and Prynne took the opportunity of purchasing several articles of furniture for his future prison room at Caernarvon, which he did not expect to find very well furnished.

In the course of their walk they brought Prynne to the house of Alderman Aldersey, who seems to have been a leading man in the city, and was mayor two years afterwards. There they found not, as it appears, the alderman himself; or, if he were there, he was quite second in consideration to his wife, whom they found in her parlour sitting with a small *coterie* of female gossips, and enjoying a bottle of wine. She vows, in her defence before the Bishop, that it was only a pint, but it was probably, like her politics, of liberal measure; and they were, she admits too, only a party of females making themselves jolly. Of course she invited the visitors, who dropped in quite accidentally, as she affirms (but, as the Bishop thinks, by express invitation), to take a glass, and Mr. Prynne and his two friends sat down and were jolly like the rest; interlarding their merry gossip, no doubt, with occasional abuse of the bishops and the church, and adding some spiritual salt to give it a becoming character.

The watchful Bishop was not in Chester at that time, or he might have pounced upon them in the midst of their festivity, and routed the whole party at once. So the Puritan friends of Prynne had their way

unchecked, and appear to have made the best use of their time; for they procured the services of a native artist—a painter, or limner, as he is termed in the warrant,—whose name was Thomas Pulford, to take five portraits of Prynne, which were probably distributed amongst his friends in the city, as precious memorials of the persecuted saint. But they did not long survive, as we shall presently see.

The length of Prynne's stay in the city is not mentioned, but the time necessarily occupied in the painting of his portrait, supposing that four of them were copies afterwards made from the first, must have been two days at least, even if portrait painters were far more expeditious than they are now, and probably the work was not in a first rate style of art. However, when he proceeded on his journey, his friends rode with him over the Dee bridge across the marshes to Hawarden, where they left him to pursue his way to Caernarvon.

Now, it could not be supposed that such an audacious encouragement of false doctrine and schism and sedition could be allowed to pass unnoticed. Bishop Bridgeman returned to Chester about a fortnight afterwards, and was informed of what had taken place. Burning with indignation at the idea that "this twice censured lawyer, this stigmatised monster" should have been entertained in the cathedral town "by a set of sour factious citizens," he forthwith despatched a missive to York, to inform the Archbishop, who was a member of the High Commission Court, and to desire instructions as to his further proceeding in the matter.

In the meantime he sent for the wives of two of the suspected citizens, Mrs. Aldersey and Mrs. Ince, and examined them "punctually," as he calls it, to every clause of the articles charged against their husbands and themselves. These ladies seem to have stood the fire of episcopal wrath with sufficient courage, Mrs. Ince asserting that her husband was an old friend of Prynne's, and therefore had a right to call upon him. Mrs. Aldersey maintained that she neither expected nor invited Prynne to her party, neither did she send out for any wine for him, nor bestowed on him the worth of a penny, but merely asked him to taste a drop of the pint of wine which she and her gossips were drinking. The bishop was overcome by these two spirited ladies, and persecuted them no more.

But he forthwith issued an episcopal mandate, dated August 28, 1637, which he directed to be read in every church in the city on the following Sunday, and in which he says that "heretofore this city (God

be praised!) hath been free from any inconformity and schismatical practices, but is now much defamed by having entertained notorious and factious schismatics, whereby the government thereof as well by the temporal as ecclesiastical magistrate may in time receive some blemish ;" from which expressions we may gather that the bishop considered himself the ecclesiastical magistrate of the city, bound to administer the law, and inflict its pains and penalties upon all opposers of church doctrine and discipline, just as the Mayor was bound to do upon all civil offenders. This is not quite in accordance with our modern views of a bishop's duties, but it was the commonly received notion of those times, and Bishop Bridgeman is not to be blamed for the discharge of what he believed to be his duty to the State as well as the Church. He suffered the full consequences of it a few years afterwards, when he was deposed, and despoiled by the Parliament of all his worldly substance, and driven to take shelter for the remainder of his days in the house of his son in Shropshire.

But to return to the order, in which he says " he has some reason to suspect some of the clergy of the city of approving and encouraging the Puritan faction." He then enjoins that every lecturer " in every church in the city shall, before his lecture, read prayers, according to the Book of Common Prayer, and shall always preach in his surplice (the black gown then for the first time coming into fashion, introduced by the Puritans from Geneva, and being the mark of the sect), and that his order should be read on the following Sunday in every church in the city, and that the ministers shall in their sermons express their hearty detestation of the offences for which Prynne and his companions were censured." On which the narrative observes, " This episcopal, pious, and charitable order was immediately published in all the churches in Chester the next Lord's Day, and thereupon some of the ministers openly and by name railed sundry times in their sermons against Mr. Prynne and his visitors, calling them schismatics, rebels, traitors, factious and seditious persons, worse than any priests or Jesuits, rogues, rascals, witches" (the latter words, I suppose, applying to Mrs. Aldersey and her gossips) " stretching out their wits upon tenter-hooks to outvie one another in railing against them, to endear themselves in the Prelate's favour, and to make their libellous pasquils a stirrup to mount up to preferment, as some of them were not ashamed to confess."

But the Bishop took more stringent measures than these against

the offenders He sent their names to the High Commissioners' Court, and forthwith pursuivants were sent to Chester with warrants to apprehend them. They arrived just at the opening of the annual fair on the 10th of October, at that day a most important event to the trade and citizens of Chester—the great annual occasion of commercial intercourse between the manufacturer and the retail trade. It was considered that the warrants were executed at this time on purpose to damage them in their trade. I observe this is called “Chester Chair” in some of the documents, a name which, as I suspect, is merely a misprint for “Fair.”

So poor Calvin Bruen\* and his friends, Peter and Robert Ince, and Peter Leigh and Richard Golborne, and William Trafford, all citizens and tradesmen of Chester, were hurried off to York, having first to pay four pounds each for fees to the pursuivant; and there they were examined and re-examined, and had articles exhibited against them time after time, after the manner of ecclesiastical courts, charging them with certain great and enormous offences in visiting and entertaining Mr. Prynne. Upon their humble confession of the offence they were fined £500, ordered to be imprisoned for a time, and, on their return to Chester, to make a full acknowledgment of this great crime both in the Cathedral and in the Common Hall of the city. Some of them refused to make this acknowledgment, and were fined another £300 each.

But Bruen and Peter Ince were so thoroughly subdued by the terrors of the court that they submitted to the judgment, and consented to make the required acknowledgment. And accordingly on Sunday, Dec. 10th, Peter Ince appeared in the Cathedral, the Bishop being present, with the Mayor and civil authorities, and there, standing on a stool before the pulpit, he repeated after the preacher the form of recantation which the commissioners prescribed. This was done just before the sermon, and he had to stand there and hear the sermon which followed, and was preached by the Bishop's chaplain, Mr. Cardwell; the sermon being a sharp and bitter invective against Prynne and his Chester friends. On the following Sunday a similar scene was enacted by Calvin Bruen, the preacher then being Dr. Snell, Archdeacon of Chester and Rector of Waverton, “who used the like invectives, but with more moderation.” The same form of penance was also gone through on the Tuesday following, before the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council, in the Common Hall.

\* Calvin Bruen was an ironmonger, not a bookseller, as suggested at page 280.

It is said, but probably with a good deal of exaggeration, that the conduct of the officials who came to apprehend these unfortunate tradesmen, was so rough and violent as seriously to alarm their wives, who never recovered the shock; that others were obliged to leave Chester, their relatives and friends not daring to associate with them. Peter Leigh and Richard Golborne state in their petition that they were damnified to the amount of £1000, and their estates thereby wholly ruined. Peter Leigh says that his trade, which went to the extent of above £4000 a year, was entirely stopped, and his shop shut up for above three months, so that his wife and children were reduced to great distress.

One curious incident is mentioned in these petitions. Leigh, Golborne, and Trafford had secured the services of one of the Advocates of the High Court of Canterbury, Dr. Merrick, and paid him large sums of money in order to have an interview with Archbishop Laud. They also presented the Archbishop with two butts of the best sack, which he graciously accepted; and they gave his house steward £12, and to other servants £20 more, all under the advice of Dr. Merrick. They never got access to the Archbishop, but, in consideration of these presents, he was content to take £200 as a moderate fine, and £40 more were paid as fees, and they then were set at liberty. The probability is that the Archbishop knew nothing personally of these proceedings. They were the acts of his officers and servants, to feather their own nests. But, of course, he had to bear the blame of them in the subsequent proceedings against him; and they formed important items in the accumulation of charges by which the popular voice was turned against him, and he was marked out by the Parliament as the arch enemy of all Christian truth and godliness.

But the angry measures of the High Commissioners' Court did not stop here. Intelligence was sent them of the existence of the five portraits of Prynne, which had been taken when he was in Chester. Whereupon they first sent for the poor painter, Thomas Pulford, and subjected him to severe examination on oath, but getting nothing important out of him, they sent him back to Chester with an order to the Chancellor of the diocese to seize the pictures and deface them in the presence of the Bishop and a public notary. The Chancellor, Dr. Mainwaring, not only executed his orders, but exceeded them; for he took all the portraits out of their frames and burnt them publicly. Whereupon the Court further ordered that he should seize the frames also, which had

been given back to Pulford, and cause them to be publicly burned in the streets of Chester; as if even the wooden frames which had once surrounded the portraits of this dangerous heretic might convey the infection of false doctrine, and corrupt the inhabitants of the city. They were accordingly publicly burnt at the High Cross in Chester, on Tuesday, the 12th of December, in the presence of the mayor, aldermen, and other citizens to the number of a thousand. And it is said that the populace enjoyed the bonfire, and cried out "burn them! burn them!" "thereby," says the Chancellor, "attesting their hatred of Prynne's person and his proceedings," but, as others thought, applying these words to Prynne's persecutors, and suggesting that they should be treated in the same way as they were treating these picture frames.

I will only add one more brief anecdote in connection with the proceedings of Bishop Bridgeman, which seems to have left a special irritation on the minds of the friends and supporters of Prynne. A Mrs. Hoghton, a Roman Catholic lady living in Lancashire, had three cats. To express her contempt for the Puritan martyrs she cut off their ears and burnt one of them on the side of its face, and then gave them the names of Bastwick, Burton, and Prynne. This created a good deal of talk at the time, and was brought under the notice of the Bishop by some of the Puritan party, who were quite as eager to persecute the Papists as the High Church party were to persecute them. The Bishop, however, declined to take any notice of the information, perhaps in his heart thinking it a fair satire on the three Puritans.

This was bad enough, but he went further, for he and his servants ventured to christen an old cropped-eared horse of his with the name of Prynne, on which the writer of the narrative remarks—"I fear this horse had more charity than his lord and master the Bishop, and that his very name of Prynne will suffice to rebuke the malice and madness of this Balaam, covetous and false prophet as he is; who durst, by way of scorn, christen an irrational beast with the name of a better Christian than himself, and curse those saints whom God hath blessed (yea honoured in despite of all the prelate's tyranny, calumnies, oppositions, and aspersions), which Balaam himself refused to do."

Thus I have done with the special episode of Chester history which is connected with that of Prynne, and need not trouble you further with the incidents of his later life. It may, however, be interesting to recollect that he became afterwards the chief accuser of

Archbishop Laud and the manager of his impeachment; and under the Commonwealth he was one of the visitors of the University of Oxford, and displayed great zeal in the establishment of the Presbyterian system there. He was one of those whom Cromwell ejected from the House of Commons; and then he turned his wrath against him, and wrote with so much asperity and freedom that he again found himself under the charge of sedition, and passed some time in prison. He ended by becoming a staunch loyalist under Charles II, and, it is said, in his later days owned the folly of his former political writings, and the justice of the sentence against him, saying that "if the King had cut off his head, when he only cropt off his ears, he would have done no more than justice, and done God and the nation good service." He was so rapid and voluminous a writer that it is calculated that he must have written a sheet a day for every day of his life after he came to man's estate. His works amount to 40 vols. folio and quarto. He died in 1609.

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### CHESTER RACES IN 1754.

The SOCIETY is indebted for the communication of the following letter to Sir Philip Grey Egerton, Bart., M.P., who recently found the original amongst a mass of correspondence hoarded up at Oulton:—

"28 feby 1754

Chester.

"Dear Sr.

You have the trouble of this to acquaint you that our Obstinate Mayor\* *will* have ye Races "old stile" because he's in hopes the Weather will then be warmer and that the Lady's, from a Desire of pleasing the Men, and the sunshine Weather, will be tempted to buy his Lutestring Gowns. I hope Bennett will be able to attend you. I wish you success at the Cocking and at the Races next to.

fr. yrs most sincerely

Tho. Slaughter.

to Philip Egerton, Esq  
Oulton."

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\* Edmund Bolland, mercer, sworn Free of Chester City in 1731.