



The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of S. Bridget, Chester, 1811-1847

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THE late Mr. Earwaker, when reading a Paper on "The Parish Books of S. Michael's, Chester," fifteen years ago, said that it was no wonder that those of S. Bridget and S. Martin had disappeared, considering the little care which was frequently bestowed on the custody of these documents. As a matter of fact, Vestry Books and Churchwardens' Accounts have too often been in the charge of an individual churchwarden, and, on his death or removal, have been dispersed or disposed of, or even destroyed as rubbish. By a fortunate accident two of these lost books have been recovered: one referring to S. Martin's Parish, between the dates 1683 A.D. and 1816 A.D.; and the other to S. Bridget's, from 1811 to 1847. The former is, of course, by far the more interesting, and, with the Council's permission, I shall hope on a future occasion to give some account of it and the entries it contains. It is to the latter that we turn this evening. Neither of these books, it will be observed, can claim the same reverential interest as the much older books of S. Mary's, of S. Michael's, and of S. Oswald's; and they do not cover the important period when the inventories of the

vestments and other properties of the Church were taken at the Reformation. Readers of *The Cheshire Sheaf* are under a great obligation to the Vicar of S. Oswald's for the very interesting information he has for some time been giving to them from the books of that parish.

The book we are to consider this evening only goes back to 1811. Ordinarily speaking, one so recent as this would hardly be of sufficient interest to occupy our attention. But, in this instance, the fact that the entries cover the period when the Church was removed from Bridge Street, and a new one erected in Castle Esplanade; and the further fact that this latter Church has also been pulled down, and that there is at present no Church of S. Bridget in the City, seem almost to render it necessary that some attempt should be made to rescue from oblivion this portion of civic and parochial history.

The old Church stood exactly opposite to S. Michael's, and with its churchyard across the present Grosvenor Street. The east end abutted on the street, at any rate after 1785, when "the Parishioners purchased a piece of ground on the south side of the Church, and the bodies were removed from the old churchyard, a high wall taken down, and the public causeway considerably widened on the north and east sides"—that is, in White Friars and Bridge Street respectively. There was thus only the width of the street between the Churches of S. Bridget and S. Michael, and the locality was in olden days known as the "Two Churches." We are indeed told, in Henshall's History, that "formerly there was a gateway between these two Churches, erected, probably, as an additional means of defence during the incursions of the Welsh."

I am not going to enter, to-night, into the previous history of the parish, but it will be well for us to try and realise the position and the character of the Church. This is, perhaps, more difficult to do since all trace of it has long since disappeared. The existing engravings of the Church, however, are a considerable help in this direction.

The book under our consideration contains the minutes of Vestry Meetings of S. Bridget's Parish, from 1811 to 1842; and of the United Parishes of S. Bridget and S. Martin, from 1842 until 1847. A considerable number of its pages are devoted to the successive annual assessments of the different properties in the parish, for the purposes of the Church-rate; and a smaller number to the disbursements by the churchwardens; and it is from these latter, and the minutes of the Vestries, that we shall mainly glean our information.

We will look first at the condition of the fabric, so far as it is revealed by these documents. We find, then, that it was a subject of considerable anxiety to the churchwardens for some time before the removal of the Church was found necessary in making the approach to the New (or Grosvenor) Bridge. The royal assent was given to the Act of Parliament for erecting this bridge on June 10th, 1825; and no doubt all the arrangements as to property to be acquired for the purpose would have to be made some time before this date. It will be seen, however, that there was no idea of anything of the kind when the first of these entries was made. I may mention, in passing, that the Rev. Richard Massie (father of the late Admiral Massie) was then Rector of S. Bridget. On April 22nd, 1813, it was agreed, in Vestry, "that the steeple shall be repaired at the north-west corner, by Robt. Jones, Mason," who was "to take down the same

within two courses of the bottom of the window and rebuild the same, the cost not to exceed £24." Although this was done, and other sums expended on repairs from time to time, yet on August 9th, 1821, we read: "It is ordered and agreed that, in consequence of the Lord Bishop having observed that several repairs and alterations are wanting in the said Church, the same shall forthwith be carried into effect, the expenses to be paid out of the next Church-rate." In accordance with this resolution, we find a carpenter's bill of £32 in the next year's account, implying, I suppose, extensive internal repairs.

On the 12th May, 1823, just twelve years after Mr. Jones had repaired the steeple, a Vestry Meeting was summoned to consider the repairs necessary to be done to the steeple: and "the said steeple was found to be in so dangerous a state that it was agreed that the tower should immediately be taken down level with the ridge of the roof." On the 29th of the same month another Vestry was held, and it was resolved "that a plan be prepared, and a report made, by Mr. Wright, of the most effectual mode of securing the steeple, and erecting a dome or cupola for receiving *two* bells." Some expense was incurred in consequence of this, as Mr. Taylor was paid £17 11s. for surveying the Church, and Mr. Wright £21 on account.

On the 24th July of the same year the matter was again under consideration by the Vestry summoned for this special purpose; and it was resolved "that it was expedient to remove the Church to a new site, provided that such removal can be effected with the general consent and co-operation of the City, so as to entail upon this parish only the same proportional expense which shall attach to every other parish in the City."

A committee was appointed to confer with the Bishop and the Magistrates of the City and County, and to ascertain the expenses of removal of the present Church, *or repairing it*. It was also decided "that no part of the Church should be taken down until a new one had been built; and that, meanwhile, the Church should be protected from the weather in a temporary way, for the performance of divine service, as soon as possible."

Apparently nothing was done, as on the 27th May, 1824, another Vestry meeting was held, and it was resolved "that a committee of nine parishioners or leypayers (ratepayers) be appointed to ascertain what is necessary to put the Church in a permanent state of repair for the performance of divine worship, and what would be the expense of doing so; and that they report the result of their enquiry to a Vestry meeting to be held as soon after the Bishop's arrival as possible." This, no doubt, refers to the coming of Bishop Blomfield, who, in this year, succeeded Bishop Law, who had originally noted that repairs were necessary.

It will be seen from all this that the state of the Church was a matter of anxiety to the parochial authorities, though they do not seem to have moved very rapidly to set things right.¹ Under these circumstances we may suppose that they hailed with satisfaction the passing, in 1825, of an Act for "erecting an additional bridge over the River Dee in the City of Chester; for

¹ We may note here that this was not the first time that the fabric had occasioned uneasiness, and demanded attention. In 1694 a brief was issued for the rebuilding of S. Bridget's, so that, if that work was really carried out, the Church was at this time only 130 years old. In 1804 the Rector had returned answer to the Bishop's queries: "The Church and Chancel are in perfect repair"; whereas, as we have seen, in 1821 a succeeding Bishop had noted that several repairs were required; and, in April 1825, the Rector answers the Bishop's question thus: "The Church throughout is in a sad state of dilapidation, and totally unsafe."

opening and making convenient roads and approaches thereto; and for taking down and rebuilding the Parish Church of S. Bridget within the said City; and for repairing the present bridge over the River Dee." No doubt the erection of the new bridge had been under consideration for some considerable period.¹ In a plan of the City dated 1823, the "intended bridge" is indicated, but it is approached from the top of Castle Street, without any interference with the streets as they then existed. It is probable, therefore (though the Vestry book does not mention this), that the proposition to pull down the Church, and to unite the parish to some adjacent one, which was discussed two years before the Act was passed, had really some reference to providing a better approach to the bridge when it was built.² The Act provided that £4,000 was to be expended in the erecting and completing the new Church, burial ground, and avenues thereto; and a Vestry was held on December 16th, 1825, to decide what further sum should be contributed by the parish. It was resolved to raise £500, so that the north and east sides of the new Church might be cased in a style corresponding with the south and west sides, and that the new cemetery or burial-ground might be enclosed by a suitable iron railing. It was further decided that, if a general subscription throughout the City could be obtained for the purpose of making free sittings for the general poor of the City, the parishioners consented to the enlargement of the

¹ I find, for instance, in "The Stranger in Chester," a book bearing the date 1816, the following statement: "A plan was given a few years ago for a new bridge over the Dee, near the Castle, to enter into the road at Hand-bridge, near Wrexham lane end."

² In 1824 Batenham says: "It has recently been suggested to remove S. Bridget's Church to a more eligible situation. In this event, it is proposed to rebuild the Church on the place called Gloverstone, where there would also be a spacious burying ground."

Church, "provided no additional pecuniary call be made upon the parish."

The ground required for the Church and churchyard was not in the parish, nor really in the City. It was in the hamlet of Gloverstone, and so *in the County*; provision had, therefore, to be made for its transference, so that it could be used for this purpose. The plot originally proposed was not deemed sufficient, so that more land had to be purchased from the Magistrates, and an exchange of land had to be effected with the proprietors of the Gas Works, "so as to fix the new Church in a more eligible situation." All this implied time, and perhaps the parochial authorities were not as expeditious as they might have been. At any rate, after Vestries held in November 1826 and March 1827, when all preliminary arrangements seem to have been made, we find the business was not completed in July 1827, for the Bishop *is urgent* in pressing upon the parish the necessity of completing the conveyance at once, so that the ground might be consecrated without delay. This must have been most necessary, so that the new cemetery might be ready to receive the remains from the old Church and churchyard. Accordingly, arrangements were made for borrowing £200 from the bankers; the purchase was completed; and, on October 12th, 1827, the ground was consecrated by Bishop Blomfield, and the first plinth-stone of the new Parish Church was laid by the same prelate. A memento of the ceremony is the brass-plate which was affixed to the stone, and which was brought to me when the Church was pulled down in 1892. The accounts tell us that it cost £1 4s., and that £1 10s. was paid for engraving. The inscription is as follows:—

"This, the first plinth-stone of the new Parish Church of St. Bridget, in the City of Chester, was laid by the Right Rev.

Charles James Blomfield, D.D., Lord Bishop of the Diocese, on the 12th day of October, A.D. 1827, in the eighth year of the reign of His Majesty King George the Fourth. The Rev. Richard Massie, M.A., Rector.

Thomas Clayton, } Churchwardens.
 John McKinlay, }
 William Cole, Junr., Architect.
 John Wright, Builder."

We may presume that after this date the work of removing the human remains to the new cemetery went on apace; and, perhaps, that the demolition of the old Church commenced. At any rate, after April 17th, 1827, the Vestry was summoned to meet at the house of Mr. Posnett, in White Friars (which was "the King's Head," I believe), until the new Church was built; and in October 1829 Vestries were once more summoned to the Parish Church. We may conclude that the Church was being dismantled at this time, for on March 29th, 1827, a resolution was passed giving the churchwardens "power to sell for the best prices given the two bells, *shandliers (sic)*, and stove, or any other article belonging to the Church." Accordingly, in August we find that £55 17s. 1½d. was paid by Rigby, Harden (*sic*), for two bells.¹ We learn from Henshall that "the steeple contained four indifferent bells."² The Vestry must have determined to retain two for the new Church; and these, recast and so brought into tune with the others, are now the seventh and eighth of the peal of eight in the tower of S. Mary's-on-the-Hill, having been taken there when

¹ "I can find no trace as to these two bells. In S. Mary's, Broughton, tower there is a bell founded by Mears, London, in 1835. In Buckley Church a fine old bell lately was melted up, but bore the name of Dodson or Dobson as maker. Our bells are all Gloucester bells (6)."—S. E. Gladstone, Hawarden, November 13th, 1903.

² In "The Stranger in Chester," 1816, the peal is said to consist of "three bells and a piece!"

the new Church of S. Bridget was pulled down. In passing, I may remark that the older of the two was dated 1629, and bore the inscription: "God save His Church. Our King and Relme"; and on the other the date 1656, with the names of the churchwardens, "William Warrington and Thomas Bolland." The small new bell cost £5 11s.; and £5 14s. was paid for putting up the two old bells with this. Were the materials of the old Church used in the erection of the City Soup Kitchen (S. Michael's Hall), once a Baptist Chapel?

Probably, but little of the furniture of the old Church was transferred to the new one, though the mural monuments (now in the South Chapel of S. Mary's-on-the-Hill) were. It is possible that the font was taken; since nine years later the then Rector, the Rev. W. Gibson, was anxious that £7 should be allowed for a new font, though the Vestry would not sanction the expense. There is, however, an item in the accounts for 1830, which may refer to a new font or the removal of the old one: "Mr. Wright, Font, &c., £10 12s. 7d." The books, too, were no doubt taken over, for only six years later, in June 1835, "the cordial thanks of the parish were given to the worthy and exemplary Rector, the Rev. W. Gibson, for the very handsome and unsolicited gift of a quarto Bible and Common Prayer Book for the Reading Desk, and two elegant books for the Communion Table." A further resolution was passed at the same Vestry: "that in consequence of this spontaneous act of kindness, and the exceeding small sum which Mr. Gibson receives from the Tythes of the parish, resolved that he be exonerated from paying any Church-rates on Tythes in future, particularly as his predecessor did not pay."

With regard to the new Church, one extraordinary proposition was made, though it came to nothing. On September 12th, 1827, a Vestry was held "to consider the propriety of granting leave to the Penitential Committee to make *a subterraneous passage* to the new Church, and seats for the use of the Institution." The answer made to this application was to the effect "that parishioners must first be accommodated, and that when this had been done, the Vestry would consider how far they could meet the wishes of the 'Penitential Society,' without inconveniencing the Church and churchyard." I have not been able to ascertain where this Institution was then situated. It surely must have been close at hand, either in Cuppin Street or Nun's Lane, and, unless *in the County*, must have been in the parish, and so have possessed parishioners' rights.

And so the new Church was built, and was consecrated on August 5th, 1829, by Bishop Sumner. From *The Courant* I gather that "the Church was about two-thirds filled by a very respectable congregation, who contributed silver at the doors as they entered, amounting to £31. A sermon was delivered by his Lordship, from the text "Lord, it is good for us to be here"; the same sermon which His Lordship preached on a similar occasion at Liverpool. The same paper tells us "that a public notice had previously been given that a procession would form at the Exchange, at 10 a.m., by the Mayor and Corporation, to which was appended an invitation to the nobility, clergy, and inhabitants, to join in the parade. Three or four Aldermen, four or five Councillors, headed by the Mayor, preceded by the regalia and an apology for a band of music (which played 'Rule Britannia'), were there; but the Lord Bishop did not join, and only four Clergymen." "The

motley and grotesque group of personages" that followed is described in no very complimentary terms.

On this occasion £1 10s. was paid for constables; 19s. to the singers; and 15s. for writing music; but I do not find any entries corresponding to the following (which had reference to the consecration of the churchyard): "Paid at consecration of the ground, and money to the Ringers of St. Mary, and drink allowed for the workmen-masons, £2 9s. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d."

The same number of *The Courant*, however, informs us that "in the afternoon about 25 gentlemen, principally parishioners, sat down to a most noble dinner, provided by Mr. Ebrey, Globe Inn. . . . The most pleasant hilarity prevailed during the evening. . . . Amongst the toasts was 'The Bishop of London' (who had laid the first plinth-stone two years before). The company separated mutually pleased with each other."

It is hardly possible to say what the cost of the Church was upon the parish, as, for two years, current expenses were put in the same list with those connected with the building of the edifice, the total reaching nearly £1,600.¹ Of this £1,000 were borrowed on the security of the Church-rates, half of which had been repaid when the book ends in 1847.

From time to time there are references in the minutes of the Vestry to the fabric and to the churchyard. The latter gave food (or fees) to the lawyers; for, after the table of fees had been fixed, the question arose as to whether a person having a shop (and not a house) in the parish had a parishioner's right to burial; and counsel's

¹ The architect, Mr. Cole, was paid £228 8s. as commission, which would bring the cost of the Church, &c., to over £4,500.

opinion was sought on the matter. Then, when a general cemetery was projected in 1833, the parishioners, in Vestry, resolved: "that this parish, being amply provided with burial ground, thinks it unnecessary to join other parishes in the expense of procuring a general cemetery." And so, when all the other City churchyards were closed, in 1855, S. Bridget's remained open, and was so until September 18th, 1877; when, although ample space for burial still remained, it was closed by order of the Secretary of State, except to those who had vaults not yet filled. In 1835 it was decided to build a Sunday School on the eastern side of the churchyard, with vaults underneath; the school to be built by subscription, and the vaults to be used for parishioners only.

Another item with reference to the churchyard has a melancholy interest. On the 23rd of April, 1829, it was resolved "That the sum of Fifteen Pounds, paid by the Executors of the late Mr. Harrison, Arc^t, for the ground in which his body is interred, be returned to them, as a testimonial of the great estimation in which that gentleman's abilities were held by the Rector and parishioners of S. Bridget's; but that this order shall not hereafter be taken as a precedent."¹ Mr. Harrison, the architect of the New Bridge, did not live to see it completed. He died early in April, and was buried on April 6th. In the Register he is thus described: "Thomas Harrison, Esq., *Architect*, of St. Martin's Parish, aged 84 years." He died in the house which had been given to him by the County as some recognition of his services, and which his surviving daughter gave, in 1857, as a Rectory for the United Parishes of

¹ In 1835 there is a payment of £7 10s., for a vault, by Mr. Challinor; for Mr. Harrison, as a non-parishioner, the payment would be double.

S. Bridget with S. Martin. When Mr. Harrison died he was a parishioner of S. Martin's, and so was buried at S. Bridget's as a "non-parishioner." He was a native of Richmond, in Yorkshire, and was sent by his patron (Lord Dundas) to study in Rome. Whilst there he received a gold medal from the Pope for his design for improving the Square of S. Maria del Popolo. When thirty-two years of age he returned to England, and amongst his works may be mentioned: the Bridge over the Lune at Lancaster; the Prison, County Courts, Armoury, Exchequer, and Gateway of Chester Castle; the Jubilee Tower on Moel Fammau; and the Grosvenor Bridge. A portrait of Mr. Harrison will be found amongst the civic worthies at the Town Hall.

As to the fabric, we have no view of the interior of the new Church as originally built; but there were galleries on the north and south sides, as well as at the west end. The pulpit was, therefore, most probably an elevated structure. A later Rector, the Rev. W. P. Hutton, seems to have found the ascent of the stairs tedious. At any rate, the propriety of lowering the pulpit (which we may suppose would come at his suggestion) was considered at a Vestry on April 2nd, 1841, and it was deemed inexpedient to do this. But, on June 17th of the same year (when apparently the Rector was present to explain the proposal), this resolution was rescinded, and the churchwardens were authorised to alter the pulpit, at a cost not exceeding £5. In November 1841 the churchwardens were empowered to dispose of some old books and the following articles: "Brass chandelier, with branches; an old chest; an old brass vane; and an old font." The chandelier realised £1 16s.; there is no record of what the rest fetched, so they probably were not sold. The only things which

we still possess, handed down from the older Church, are: some mural monuments; the old copper collecting boxes (or pans!), dated 1746 and 1804; the bells (which I have already mentioned); and the Church plate. There is also an interesting brass tablet relating to a Bread Charity, of which I will speak presently.

In 1836 the churchwardens were "requested to take steps to improve the *psalmony* in this Church"; so that the Vestry was not satisfied with the music. It was after this that an organ was erected, and the organist and singers paid out of the Church-rate. However, in 1843, the Vestry decided that the salaries of the organist and singers, in future, should not be paid out of the Church-rate or seat-rents. This resolution of 27th July was, however, rescinded in the following month, when it was decided to pay the organist and choir out of the united-rate, the annual expense not to exceed £15. Other items referring to the music are the following: at Christmas 1822 "the singing boys" (? waits) were paid 7/6; in 1828 Mr. Taylor was paid 8/6 for "a pitch-pipe" (evidently before the erection of the organ); in 1832 it was resolved to pay Mary Roberts 15/- per quarter (instead of 6/8) for singing; and in 1843 £21 17s. 6d. was paid to the organist and singers.

In November 1841 the union of the parish with that of S. Martin was considered highly expedient, and in 1842, on the voidance of the benefice of S. Martin, the parishes were united. A proposal to pull down the Church of S. Martin was subsequently made, but was fortunately not entertained; and through the liberality of the late Mr. Roberts our Welsh brethren now have that Church for their services.

In 1829 the administration of the City Charities was, apparently, not deemed satisfactory, and proceedings

against the Corporation were contemplated; but the proposal was abandoned by the Board of Guardians on March 4th, 1830.

Turning now to the entries in the accounts; it was not to be expected that these would be so interesting as more ancient ones, yet some will be seen to be worthy of note. The loyalty of the parishioners is shown by the following and other payments:—

| | | |
|----------------|--|---------|
| 1814. | For Flambeaux (Illumination) - - - | £0 12 0 |
| Nov. 19, 1817. | For Tolling the Bell the day of the Princess Charlotte's funeral from morning till 12 at night - - - | 0 10 6 |
| 1818. | Paid Clerk for tolling death of the Queen and burial - - - - - | 0 10 6 |
| 1821. | To Clark & Ringers at the Coronation, and <i>Ale</i> - - - - - | 1 5 0 |
| 1830. | Toling (<i>sic</i>) Bell for King - - - - - | 1 3 0 |
| | For Black Cloth - - - - - | 14 3 4 |
| 1831. | Treat to Sunday Scholars on Coronation Day - - - - - | 1 0 0 |
| 1837. | July 29. Tolling Bell on death & funeral of King William the IV th - - - | 0 15 0 |
| | Cloth for hanging the Pulpit & Desk - | 12 19 0 |
| 1838. | Flag for Church at Coronation - - - | 0 2 0 |
| | For Ringing Bells (only two) - - - | 0 5 0 |
| 1840. | Treat consisting of Tea & Buns to the Singing Boys & Scholars upon the Queen's Marriage - - - - - | 1 10 0 |

Extract from "The Stranger in Chester," 1816:—

"1814. June 17. The city illuminated in consequence of the Peace. Dinners were given by the principal Tradesmen to their workmen. A Regatta took place on the Dee, and the bells of the Cathedral were rung for the first time in an interval of 60 years."

The decoration of the Church at Christmas was an item of Church expenses as late as 1841, when 2/6 was paid for holly; the same sum being paid in 1813 for

"Holin to dress the Church at Crixms" (*sic*). This latter entry reminds me that the spelling sometimes is atrocious, there being at least half a dozen ways of spelling "surplice." In December 1831 2/- was paid for "*washing the fever sheet.*"

The old custom of "walking the boundaries" was diligently kept up, and was apparently looked upon as a parochial festival. In 1825 we find £5 15s. paid for walking boundarys, Hammett Leys (an expression which I cannot explain); at other times £3 16s., £3 10., &c., were paid. The entertainment was, at times, extended to other occasions, as: the "chusing of Wardens"; and, on October 2nd, 1821, £11 11s. 8½d. was paid to "Simeon Williams, King's Head, walking boundary, &c., &c." However, on 27th July, 1843, it was agreed that such expense was not fitting; and it was resolved, in future, not to spend more than £1 at the walking of the boundary of the parish.

The term "lay-stall," commented on by Mr. Earwaker in his papers, frequently appears, and will be found on the Table of Fees painted in 1855. The charge varies from 15/- to as low as sixpence. Webster defines "lay-stall" as "a place where rubbish is laid or deposited"; and gives the following quotation from Bacon: "Smithfield was a lay-stall of all ordure and filth."

In 1840 the churchwardens, apparently anxious to fulfil their duties aright, paid 5/6 for "The Churchwardens' Guide." This *may* have been Dr. Prideaux "Directions to Churchwardens," which, in May 1841, was succeeded by a larger volume, called "Prideaux Churchwardens' Guide," which is still a standard work.

The large amount paid for wine in some years seems to point to the distribution of wine to the sick (though

there is no direct intimation of this), as occasionally we find a specific item "wine for the sacrament" (*sic*). But the sum paid annually for *bread* has, no doubt, reference to a Bread Charity. Some particulars of an old one will be interesting, though all trace of it seems to have vanished when the new scheme for the Parochial Charities was drawn up in 1890. They are taken from an old brass tablet, which was mounted on a case, with a shelf below, in which the bread was placed. This was removed from the old Church, and was placed in the north porch or lobby of the new one. When that was pulled down, it was fastened in the vestry of S. Mary's-on-the-Hill. It is now in a more prominent position under the middle window on the south side of that Church. The inscription is as follows:—

"Raph Proby of Brampton in the County of Hunt: Gent. 1605, by Will gave X^l. for brede to workinge poore of this P'ish in 4 or 8 yeares as his Exec: woulde weekely, and 1608 one of his Executors Peter Proby of Alington in the same County an Esquire for the Body to Queen Eliz: and to Kinge James and for both Princes Keeper of the records in ye Tower of London and Post M^r for Ireland. He did in his life time give and deliver unto ye Churchwardens & Parishioners of St. Brigits where they were borne sufficient meanes to provide XII penny loaves of the Assise in this Cittye for ever to be delivered in this Church every Saboth after Devine Service for ever to XII Poore of this P'ish they being no idle beggers.

"Galath 6. 10. While we have time do good to all but specialy to the household of faith.

"Proverbs 19. 17. He that hath pitye on ye poore lendeth unto ye Lord and looke what he layeth out it shall be payde hime agayne.

"Psall 41. 1. Blessed is ye man yt considereth the sicke and neady the Lord shall deliver hime in the time of trouble.
MUTÛ AUXILIUM (Mutual help)."

The three texts are evidently taken from the Offertory sentences, though in the first there is an omission of some words. These are not taken from any version of the Bible, but are a rendering from the Latin; probably made by Archbishop Cranmer.

Certain expressions in this inscription require a little explanation. "Esquire for the body": Esquire is a word adopted from old French, and literally means a shield-bearer (*scutarius*); the term "Esquire for (or of) the body" was applied to various officers in the service of a king or nobleman.¹ Mr. Peter Proby must, therefore, have been a person of some distinction, occupying an honourable place in the household of two successive monarchs; and also filling two other high offices, as Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London and Post Master (if that be the correct reading of the abbreviation) for Ireland. The registers of S. Bridget's are not early enough to give the dates of the baptisms of these two persons, who may have been brothers, or father and son. Peter Proby may have been the person whom "Lord Derby, supported by Sir Francis Walsingham and the Lords of the Privy Council, tried to force on the City as Clerk of the Pentice."²

The other expression is "loaves of the Assize." The word Assize (adopted also from old French) means "act of sitting down," "act of setting," and so "settlement." Subsequent meanings are: "A sitting of a consultative or legislative body"; "Ordinances regulating weights and measures, and the weight and price of articles of general consumption" (*assise venalium*); and so it comes

¹ In 1495 (Act II. Henry VII., c. 32, 7) we read: "David Philippe Esquier for the body of oure Sovereign Lord the Kyng."

² Canon Morris, "Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor Period," p. 192.

to mean "the standard of quality, measure, and price, regulated by such ordinances." Thus we read, in 1813, in *The Examiner* of March 15th, "The Lord Mayor has ordered the price of bread to rise half an assize."

The Act of Parliament which gave the power to local authorities to do this is a very early one, 51st of Henry III., "Assize of Bread and Ale." Mr. Henry Taylor has kindly furnished me with a copy of "The Assize of Bread" set in London on 14th of April, 1801.

BAKERS' HALL.

London } THE ASSIZE OF BREAD
 To wit } set this 14th day of April, 1801,
 By the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor,
 To take Place on Thursday next, the 16th Instant.
 That is to say:

| Avoirdupois Weight. | Wheaten | | | Household | | | To be Sold for | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|-----|-----|-----------|-----|-----|----------------|----|-----|------------|----|----|
| | lb. | oz. | dr. | lb. | oz. | dr. | Wheaten | | | Household. | | |
| | | | | | | | l. | s. | d. | l. | s. | d. |
| The Penny Loaf to weigh | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 9 | | | | | | |
| The Two-penny Loaf ,, | 0 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 7 | 2 | | | | | | |
| The Three-penny Loaf ,, | 0 | 9 | 14 | 0 | 10 | 11 | | | | | | |
| The Peck Loaf ,, | 17 | 6 | 0 | 17 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| The Half Peck Loaf ,, | 8 | 11 | 0 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| The Quartern Loaf ,, | 4 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 7½ |
| The Half Quartern Loaf ,, | 2 | 2 | 12 | 2 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 10½ | 0 | 0 | 9¼ |

N.B.—No Bread to be sold until it has been baked 24 Hours at least.

The Wheaten Loaf must be marked with a large Roman W
 The Household Loaf - - - - - H
 And every Mixed Loaf - - - - - X

And it is hereby further ordered that Six-penny Loaves are not to be made.

J. Callendar, }
 J. Rowe } Beadles.

G. Cooke, Printer, Dunstan's Hill, Tower-Street.

This would be circulated and sent round to all bakers

in the district; and the same course would be adopted in other cities.

Some particulars with reference to Chester will be found in Canon Morris' book, pp. 412 to 420. I give some extracts:—

“The Bakers of the city were required to sell their bread for prices fixed at an Assize made from time to time under the supervision of the Mayor, with certain assessors, in accordance with the price of corn in the market.”

Any breach of this regulation was punished by a fine varying from 4/- to 6d. An ordinance of 21 Henry VII. requires all who bake to observe the assize given by the Mayor, and to give in their mark at the Pentice. In 1559 (in the first year of Queen Elizabeth) we read:—

“At an assemple houlden in the comon haule of the said cytye before Henry Hardware then Mayre of the same cytye with the Aldermen Sheriffs and Comen Counsell of the same, the nynth daye of November in the yere above specified, yt was then and ther concludyd and agried by the said Mayre Aldermen Sheriffs and Comen Counsell that from thensfourth the baykers of the said cytye shall have ther assize of bred geven them by the Mayre for the tyme beinge after the rate of thre Chester bushells unto and for the comon quarter, and shall bake and make brede after the same assece and after none other which is large as much and more than by the Statute of Wynchester ys lymytyd unto them to bake after.”

Perhaps we may some day come across a similar document to that shown by Mr. Taylor, but relating to Chester.

