



Notes on the Chester Hand or Glove

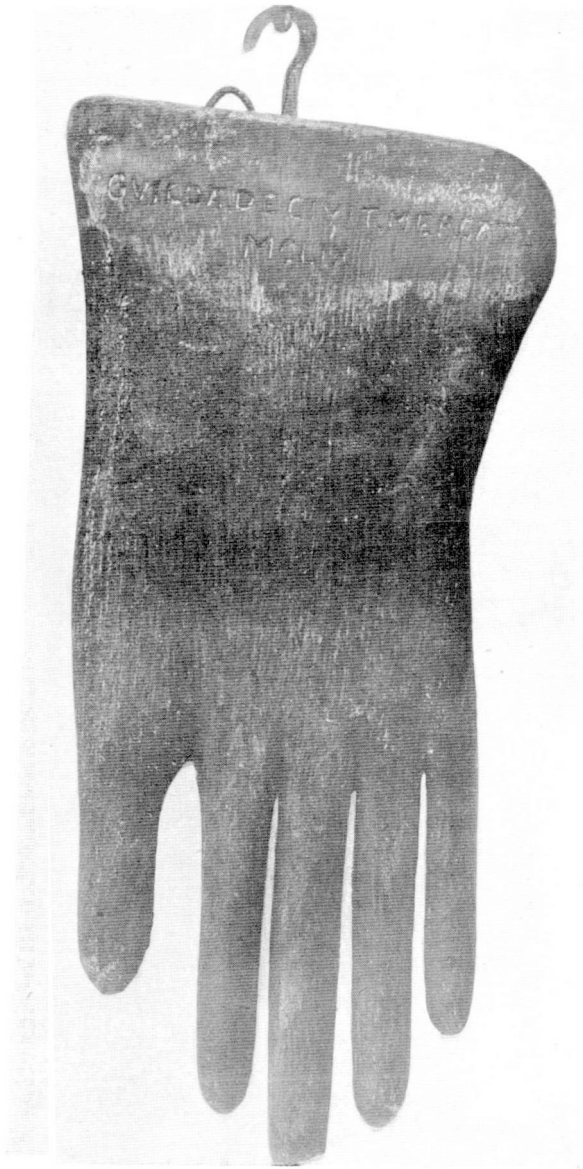
BY R. STEWART-BROWN, M.A., F.S.A.

(Read 17th December, 1912)



WITH the consent of the Museums Committee of the Liverpool Corporation, I have been able to get the Curator of the Museum, Dr. Clubb, to allow me to bring here to-night, for exhibition to you, a somewhat unprepossessing object which must, however, have considerable attraction for everyone interested in the history of the City of Chester.¹ I refer to the famous Chester Hand or Glove. As you will see, this is a rudely carved representation in wood of a hand. It measures $12\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the wrist to the tip of the second finger, and is $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in width at the wrist, and weighs $15\frac{1}{4}$ ounces. It is obviously of considerable age, and shows a certain amount of wear and tear; and a piece, at some time or other (probably, as we shall see, in 1836), has been cut out of it. It has been painted, doubtless very often, and with different coloured paint such as white, red and black. At the point where the Hand is severed from the arm there is, you will see, a metal ring and hook inserted. By these the Hand was attached to the end of a long pole, which

¹ As a result of this paper, the Town Hall Committee of the Chester Corporation decided, on the proposal of the Mayor, Mr. Dutton, to communicate with the Corporation of Liverpool, with a view to obtaining the transfer of the Hand to Chester. As it formed part of the Mayer Collection, and there were other difficulties in arranging such a transfer, the Museums Committee decided not to entertain the proposal.



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was hung out during fair-time from the front of the Pentice until that was removed, and afterwards from the battlements of St. Peter's Church. You will observe that the effect of this suspension was that the fingers of the Hand pointed downwards, and this may have some bearing upon the symbolic use of the Hand which I shall mention shortly.

As will appear from what I have to say, it seems that, in 1836, or later, the Hand passed into the possession of the late Joseph Mayer, the Liverpool jeweller and art collector; and, in 1867, his collection became by gift the property of the Corporation of Liverpool. Professor Newstead some years ago had a cast made of this Hand, which is now in your Grosvenor Museum in Chester, and is a very close representation of the original.²

The Hand bears some incised lettering round the wrist, and, when I saw it recently with Mr. Entwistle, the deputy curator of the Liverpool Museum, we carefully examined the lettering; it was, however, impossible then to make it out clearly owing to the fact that the incisions had got filled up, partly with the paint used to colour it and partly, no doubt, with a certain amount of the dirt of ages. Mr. Entwistle, at my request, carefully dissolved away the plaster, paint and dirt, with potash (which accounts for the cleaned appearance of the wrist), and a most interesting inscription (which has not in any way been touched up) was revealed as follows:—

On the back of the wrist—

HVGO COMES CESTRIA

On the inside of the wrist—

GVILDA DE CIVIT. MERCAT.
MCLIX

² This cast was exhibited at the meeting.

Cestria, in the first line, ought, of course, to be *Cestriae* or *Cestrie*, and since Prof. Newstead made his cast referred to above, someone has, most improperly, endeavoured to improve upon the original by inserting an "E" after the word on the cast.

Civit. is an abbreviation of *civitate*, and the last word is doubtless *mercatoria*, which frequently occurs with *gilda* in the charters, &c. We get, therefore, a statement upon the Hand as follows:—

"Hugh Earl of Chester. Guild Merchant of the City 1159."

It is clear that the presence of an inscription was known to Mr. Charles T. Gatty, F.S.A., the late Curator of the Mayer Museum, but he did not decipher it completely, and makes a muddle of it in the catalogue which he made in 1882; his description was:—

"Apparently VIT ME R CAT MCLIX HVGO COMES CESTRIA, which may have been cut within the last two centuries."³

This Hand is, I am sure, not of the date 1159 which it bears. I asked Mr. J. A. Twemlow, B.A., the Reader in Paleography at the University of Liverpool, to give me his opinion as to the date of the lettering. He obtained a rough rubbing of the inscription and kindly sent it to Mr. Falconer Madan of the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Both Mr. Twemlow and Mr. Madan consider there is nothing genuinely antique in the lettering.⁴ Mr. Madan, while he states that he is not an authority on cut inscriptions, considers that it may be of

³ See No. 437 on p. 68 of the *Cat. of the Mayer Museum*, Part III., Liverpool, 1882.

⁴ But the lettering should be compared with the same three words on the Sword of Earl Hugh in the British Museum. There is a remarkable similarity. See *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lanc. and Ches.*, vol. II., plate facing p. 15.



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seventeenth century date. Mr. Twemlow is of opinion that it is certainly not earlier than 1550. Now if it is true that it has been the custom from the twelfth century to exhibit a hand during the fair times at Chester, one would naturally expect, if it were of wood, that the hand would get worn out or lost, and require to be renewed. I think that it is quite likely that the lettering on the Hand is copied from the original inscription which the first, possibly of a series, of the ancient hands bore, and that perhaps sometime during the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries the hand then in use was replaced by the one you have before you to-night.

What then is the significance of the inscription? An obvious suggestion is that it refers to or commemorates the foundation of the Guild Merchant of the City of Chester. Now we know that the Charter of Randle Blundeville, dated about 1201, confirmed to the citizens of Chester their Guild Merchant with all the liberties and free customs which they had in the time of his ancestors at the said Guild. This Charter, then, presupposes an earlier grant of a Guild in the time of one of Randle Blundeville's ancestors. There is no such Charter known to exist, but it is possible that in 1159 Hugh Cyfelioc (who was of course the father of Randle Blundeville) did grant a Guild Merchant to the City of Chester, and in accordance with an ancient custom (which I shall mention later) sent, or presented, to the City a Glove as a symbol of the concession. There are difficulties in this explanation, but it is the best I can make. I am aware that Canon Morris, relying no doubt on the word "ancestors," suggests that the date

of the original grant could not be later than the time of Randle Gernons (1128-53), and might be as early as 1087-1107.

The most important characteristic of the Guild Merchant was the exclusive right of trading in the City, which was confirmed by subsequent charters, and it may be suggested that one of the "customs" referred to in, and confirmed by, the Charter of Randle Blundeville was that of allowing strangers to transact business and buy and sell within the City with impunity, during the time of fair. I shall show later on that it was usual in many other places besides Chester to exhibit a hand or glove during fair time, either as a symbol of protection or of the concession of the right to hold it, and it would seem quite natural to inscribe upon such a hand a reference to the foundation of the Guild, one of the customs of which was thus to throw open the right to trade during certain well-recognised periods. Had it not been for the inscription, one would not perhaps have considered the question of Guild Merchant at all.

A Hand is a very ancient and natural symbol of peace, protection and power, but I have not the time or space to deal adequately with the literature of the subject.⁵ A glance at Cruden's *Concordance* will show that there are hundreds of symbolic allusions to it in the Scriptures. That the King *habet omnia jura in manu sua* is a commonplace in our histories. The old English word "handgrith"—"hand-selled grith"—was used to indicate the peace, protection or security given under or by the King's own hand. In this sense we

⁵The most recent work dealing with the subject is *The Lost Language of Symbolism* by H. Bayley, 2 vols., 1912. In vol. II., p. 331, *et seq.*, will be found many drawings illustrating various symbolic uses of the Hand.



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Lettering on inside of Wrist

find it used in early English laws and compacts, e.g., *Haec mittunt hominem in misericordia Regis, infractio pacis quam per manum suam dabit alicui*. We may note also that on coins of King Edward the elder, some of which were found at St. John's, Chester, an open hand is displayed, in some cases pointing upwards, and in others downwards. Also, that a hand or glove appears sculptured on either side of an early English cross upon a tombstone found at St. John's Church. This may have been the tomb of a glover, but the symbol of peace seems to me just as likely.

There are some interesting statements about this "King's Peace," or protection, in that portion of Domesday Book dealing with Chester itself. From this we learn that there were there three kinds of "King's Peace" of varying importance. For a breach of the peace when such peace had been granted or extended by the King's own hand (*pax data manu regis*),⁶ or by his writ or authorised representative, the penalty was a hundred shillings, payable to the King. But where the protection had been granted by the Earl of Chester, at the King's command, the Earl shared in the penalty to the extent of every third penny. For breach of protection given by a subordinate, such as the royal bailiff or the Earl's officers, the penalty was only forty shillings, in which the Earl shared as before.

After the Conquest, the Earls of Chester continued to grant their "peace" to favoured persons. According to the foundation deed of the Abbey of St. Werburgh in 1093, Hugh Lupus, the Earl, granted to the monks the revenues and tolls of a three days' fair held on the feast

⁶ For this, see also Gneist's *Hist. Eng. Constitution* (trans. Ashworth, 1891), p. 151, note. I am indebted to Mr. J. A. Twemlow for this reference.

of St. Werburgh in summer. He also undertook, for the honour of the Virgin Werburga, that every thief or wrongdoer who might come to the celebration should enjoy complete protection (*firman pacem*) when at the fair unless he transgressed therein. Earl Randle II. confirmed these grants, and also, we are told in the chartulary of St. Werburgh's Abbey, pledged his peace (*affidavit pacem suam*) to all persons coming to the fairs of the Abbey.

The disputes which lasted for centuries between the City and Abbey over the fairs do not fall within the scope of this paper, but would form an interesting subject for investigation.

It may be noted here that one of the conditions of tenure by which Thomas de Crewe held his lands in the time of Edward I., was to find an armed man at the Chester fairs to guard the gates for the preservation of the King's peace.⁷

Mr. Beck, in his book on "*Gloves*" (p. 192), says:—

"Ordinary law had no jurisdiction in fairs; when 'the peace' of a fair was proclaimed at its opening, perfect liberty was allowed to all and sundry, with immunity from arrest, so that even outlaws and the fugitive bondman might walk openly in confidence through the crowd which thronged the temporary streets of canvas booths, in which, in the Spicery, the Drapery, the Pottery, the Haberdashery, or the Mercery, the various traders were congregated. Did the master meet the runaway thrall, he might neither 'chace nor take him' (*Leges Burgorum*). All offences against the Peace of the Fair, all disputes as to bargains or the worth of the wares, were referred to a court attached by right to every fair, called, from the dusty feet of the suitors who made plaint therein, the Pie-poudre court. From decisions given therein there was no appeal"

⁷ Ormerod's *Cheshire* (1882), III., 365.

Mr. Beck, perhaps rightly, treats this symbol as a glove, not a hand.

“It was part of the royal prerogative to set up markets, and fairs were established by virtue of the king’s glove, which was the authority under which any free mart or market was held.”

He then quotes from the *Speculum Saxonicum*, and proceeds:—

“The glove was ordinarily displayed as a token of security under which trade might be carried on uninterrupted, and was emblematic of the power to maintain order of the king who sent it. In *Timon of Athens*, the senators ask a glove from Alcibiades before their submission:—

Or any token of thine honour else,
That thou wilt use the wars as thy redress,
And not as our confusion ;

and in pledge of protection to all but those who were enemies to the common weal Alcibiades gives his glove. So the glove was borne aloft at a fair in sign of security, a material guarantee of justice and good governance to all the busy concourse of people who flocked thither to chaffer and bargain for the necessaries of life.”

The *Speculum Saxonicum*, or “Saxon Mirror,” referred to by Mr. Beck, is a collection of early German native customs, compiled by Eike von Repgow in the thirteenth century. The earliest edition which I have seen, was edited by Zobel at Leipsig in 1561, under the title of *Sachsenspiegel*.⁸ It contains, in Book II., article XXVI., the following statement in the original Latin text:—

“Nemini licet forum erigere uel monetam de nouo instituere sine consensu eius loci ordinarii seu iudicis. Etiam Rex in signum sui consensus suam ad hoc mittere debet chirothecam.”

⁸Folio copy in Liverpool Public Library. Another edition by K. G. Homeyer in 3 vols., 1827, and another in 1861. I have not seen these later editions.

After this comes the following translation into German:—

“Niemandt mag neue Merck oder Müntz erheben ohne des Richters das ist des Fürsten Willen in des Gerichte es leidt. Auch soll der König durch Recht sein Handtzeichen darzu senden zu einer Beweising das es sein Wille sey.”

The Latin text may be translated as follows:—

“No one may set up a new market or mint without the consent of the ordinary of the district or of the judge; and the King also, as a token of his consent to the same, ought to send his glove.”

In the translation of the passage into the German, you will see that the word *Handtzeichen* is used for the Latin *chirotheca*. The German word literally means “Sign Manual,” and it is noticeable that the sixteenth century editor did not use the word *Handschuh*, which is the ordinary word for a glove.

We have then here evidence that, doubtless, long before the thirteenth century, there was an ancient Saxon custom under which, before a market or mint could be established, it was necessary to obtain the consent of the local judge or ordinary, and to have this viséd, so to speak, by the sending by the King of one of his gloves or gauntlets.

Upon this basis we ought to treat the Chester Hand as a Glove, and the suggestion would then follow, that the right to hold a fair or to have a Guild Merchant was allowed in 1159 by Earl Hugh to the citizens of Chester, and that he then sent a glove to signify his consent. (Apparently, however, there was already a fair in, or after, 1093, when the tolls and revenues *nundinarum trium dierum* (of a three days' fair) were

granted to the Abbey, but, as already stated, I have not attempted to investigate the history of the Chester Fairs).

In view of the extract just given from the *Speculum Saxonicum*, it is worth quoting a statement from the article on "Gloves" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edition) that the hands which appear in the armorial bearings of certain German towns are really gloves, and reminiscent of the bestowal of one as a symbol of the concession whereby the town was founded or the market, or mint, there established. In these cases, the glove was sent as a pledge of personal fulfilment. An ancient example of this use (says the article) is

"the practice of tendering a folded glove as a gage for wagering one's law. The origin of this custom is probably not far to seek. The promise to fulfil a judgment of a court of law, a promise secured by the delivery of a *wed* or gage, is one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, of all enforceable contracts. This gage was originally a chattel of value which had to be deposited at once by the defendant as security unto his adversary's hand; and that the glove became the formal symbol of such deposit is doubtless due to its being the most convenient loose object for the purpose. The custom survived after the contract [undertaking] with the *vadium*, *wed* or gage had been superseded by the contract with pledges (personal sureties)

"He shall wage his law with his folded glove (*de son gaunt plyee*) and shall deliver it into the hand of the other, and then take his glove back and find pledges for his law.'"⁹

The throwing down of a glove as a challenge and the taking it up as an acceptance is really a survival of this wagering system.

Then again, there is the use of the glove as a symbol of investiture in the ancient German conveyance of

⁹ *Court Baron* (Selder Soc.) 17, and see Round's *Commune of London* 153, and the *Encycl. loc. cit.*

land, pictured to us by Maitland, in which the donor took off from his hand the war glove or gauntlet which would protect that hand in battle, and gave it to the donee who puts it on—thus his hand is invested, and equipped to fight in defence of this land against all comers.¹⁰

So much for the symbolic uses of hands and gloves. What do we know about this particular one ?

I expect there are several references to the Hand, or Glove, amongst your Chester Corporation Records, but until you follow the example of Liverpool and get your old Assembly Books and Orders printed, or calendared, very little can be done by the ordinary searcher. I have, however, obtained from the Assembly Books a reference in 1687. It is as follows:—

“At an Assembly att the Citty of Chester in the Common hall of pleas there upon Saturday the twentieth day of February Anno Regni Regis Domini nostri Jacobi Secundi Dei gratia nunc Angliae. &c. secundo. [1686-7] By Wm. Wilson Esqr. Maior of the Citty of Chester the Alderman [and] Common Councill of the same City.

That a Glove shall bee hung out to give notice of the Faire.

At which Assembly it being put to the question whether or noe a glove shold be hung forth according to the usuall custome att faire times to give notice of the approaching faire to be held the last Thursday in February according to the grant of the late King Charles the second of ever blessed memory, It is ordered by unanimous consent that a glove shall bee hung out to give notice of the said ensueing faire.

¹⁰ *Hist. of Eng. Law* (2nd ed.) ii. 85.

Mr. Partington Alsoe att the same Assembly it is ordered
 and Mr. William- by like unanimous consent that Edward
 son sent to Partington, mercer, and John Williamson
 demand the shall forthwith goe to Peter Shakerly
 Glove from the Esqr. Governor of the Castle, and in the
 Governor. name of this incorporacion demand the
 glove which was lately hung up and
 which he caused to be taken downe.”—
 Book of Assembly Orders, 1687.

Now the two ancient Chester fairs were held in July and October, and it is tolerably clear from this that the Glove was displayed, not only at these, but also at the “Hoof and Horn” Fair granted by Charles II. on February 4, 1685-6, which was to be held, probably for the first time, on the last Thursday in February 1686-7. Peter Shakerley, the governor, was a son of Sir Geoffrey Shakerley of Hulme, Co. Chester, himself also a Royalist governor of Chester, who had fought at Rowton Heath. If, on this occasion, the governor declined to give up the Glove, the Common Council of Chester may have ordered a new one to be made.

The later history of the Glove is obscure until the early nineteenth century. There may be allusions to it in some of the early guide or hand books to the City, but I have not been able to search many of these.

Accompanying the Chester Glove in Mr. Mayer’s collection (now in the Public Museum, Liverpool) was a label to the following effect:—

“No. 25. This piece of oak, better known in the City of Chester by the name of the glove, has for many centuries been occasionally hung out as an indication of the commencement of each fair. In olden times the glove was suspended from a pole in the front of the old Pentice, opposite the Cross. On the removal of the Pentice in the year 1803 (in order to widen the passage into Northgate and Watergate streets) the glove

afterwards was hung out at every fair from that period to the year 1836 from the south-east corner of St. Peter's Church. The glove has been many years in the care of one Peter Catharall, the clerk of St. Peter's, who received 3/9 per year, to recompence him for the trouble of fixing it up at the commencement, and taking it down at the conclusion of each fair. In October 1836 (end of the first year of the Municipal Reform Corporation), Catharall, the clerk, presented the glove to the Mayor (an old custom) and claimed 3/9, a customary fee for the charge of the glove. The Mayor¹¹ took the glove and looked at it very minutely, seemingly much astonished at its age. After applying his knife to prove the soundness of this piece of old Cestrian antiquity, the Mayor threw it at Catharall, and exclaimed, 'I will not allow you 3/9 for any such foolish old custom, you may do what you like with it.' It passed from Catharall to a person named Wilkinson, who sold it for two pints of ale at the Sign of the Boot in the City of Chester on 27th Dec., 1836."

On the back of the label was written :—

"No. 25. Scrap of Antiquity collected by Joseph Butler Dec. 27th, 1836. Translation¹²—Society of City Merchants 1159. Hugh Earl of Chester."

Some further details are given below as to the hands through which the Glove passed. Joseph Butler was an artist and sketcher in Liverpool and probably passed it on to Joseph Mayer, who was an omnivorous collector of curiosities.

The information on the label, but *minus* the important statement on the back of it, was contributed in March, 1882, to the columns of *The Cheshire Sheaf*¹³ by

¹¹The worthy Mayor who is really responsible for the presence of the Glove in a neighbouring city appears to have been one Wm. Cross, the first Mayor of the reformed Council. He went out of office on November 9, 1836, when Thos. Dixon succeeded.

¹²This refers to the Latin legend on the Glove, which is mentioned above, p. 123.

¹³Series I., vol. II., p. 326. There are a few immaterial verbal differences, and 27th *November*, 1836, is given as the date of sale.

Mr. C. T. Gatty, the Curator of the Mayer Museum, and led to a communication in 1884 on the subject by Mr. Thomas Hughes, F.S.A., under the initials "G.T.":—

"I can offer a few observations on this historic emblem, which, though it is of no artistic form or character whatever, has found, I suppose, a permanent home in the Liverpool Free Public Museum. As the relic has literally nothing in common with Liverpool City, but represents, on the other hand, a distinct feature in the ancient trade of Chester, in which City the Glover's was the staple article (*sic*) of manufacture . . . perhaps this unshapely emblem may be gracefully restored to its old home. Some of the particulars supplied by your correspondent, Mr. Gatty, do not quite agree with the story, as told to, and known by, myself at the time, say 40 or 50 years ago.

"I remember on many occasions in my boyhood [Mr. Hughes was born in 1824] seeing the 'Glove' dangling like an executed felon from a pole hanging forward from the roof of St. Peter's Church just over the spot where the fountain now [Dec. 1884] stands; and I was once taken indeed on to the roof to see it put out by the late Mr. Edwin Siddall, cutler, who was at that time Parish Clerk of St. Peter's, and, as such, had charge of the glove, and received some slight annual allowance from the city for attending to that customary duty. Peter Cathrall, of the 'Bridgewater Arms,' who had many years preceded him as sexton in his tenure of the keys, had been porter also of the 'Glove.'"¹⁴

Some further interesting details are given in a letter written to the *Oswestry Advertiser* by someone who signed himself "Cecil," Upton Park, Chester. A cutting from the newspaper is now attached to the cast of the Hand in the Grosvenor Museum, and is as follows:—

"I have in my possession the following statement made in July, 1858, by Samuel Brown, herald painter, of Chester: 'The

¹⁴ *Sheaf I.*, vol. III., p. 199. There is an "Epitaph on the late Sexton at St. Peter's Church" (old Cathrall) written in 1837 in *Sheaf I.*, vol. III., p. 249.

old wooden glove was suspended from the outer wall of the south spout (near Northgate-street) of St. Peter's Church, Chester—the origin of which was, tradition says, that when fairs were first held in Chester in July and October, the glove was hung out fourteen days before each fair, to represent the hand of friendship, and to invite the neighbouring towns to send their merchandise to Chester, particularly the Irish weavers of linen, great quantities of which were disposed of at these fairs. The Corporation allowed the sexton of St. Peter's 5s. per annum for taking care of and hanging out the glove, but of late years they reduced the salary to 2s., and at last to 1s. 6d., when in 1836 Peter Catheral, the then sexton, received orders to discontinue the hanging out, and was told he might do what he liked with it. Then he gave it to the then clerk, Edward Sidall, gun-maker, and in 1837 Sidall gave it to a man by the name of Joseph Huxley, an upholsterer, whose father-in-law (a Sergeant Wilkinson) begged it from Huxley, his son-in-law, and in 1837 Wilkinson sent it to Liverpool. Nothing has been heard of it since. The writer of this knew all the parties well.—July, 1858. Samuel Brown, herald painter.' The identical wooden hand is to be seen now in the Liverpool Museum, case 437, No. 5,978, with the following words: 'Wooden hand hung out for some centuries in Chester, to indicate the opening of the City Fairs.' Having made the discovery myself, might I be allowed to suggest that it would be an act of grace and courtesy of the directors of the Liverpool Museum to send the 'hand' back to the ancient city, to the Grosvenor Museum, as its future resting place?''

In confirmation of the general outline of the above stories, it may be mentioned that there is a note of a discussion in 1862 about the Hand in vol. II. (O.S.) of the *Journal* of the Chester Archæological and Historic Society, p. 418, where it is stated that:—

“It was elicited this relic of an ancient Chester custom had disappeared from the City, and that it had been last traced to the possession of a person in Liverpool whose whereabouts could not now be ascertained.”

There are one or two other references to the Hand which it may be useful to collect :

In September, 1879, Dr. T. Davies-Colley of Newton stated in a note on "Chester in 1815":—

"Formerly the Glove Trade as is, I suppose, well known, was a flourishing business in Chester; and I recollect well that the glove was regarded as an emblem of Cheshire Trade; and that at our two great Chester chartered Fairs in July and October, a glove, carved, I think, in wood, was hung out from the roof of St. Peter's Church at the Cross, to show that traders from a distance, though not sworn Freemen, might carry on their business without fear of being pounced upon by the city authorities."¹⁵

Then again in *The Cheshire Sheaf* appeared a reprint of "A Walk in the Rows of 1815," written by John Lowe of Chester, goldsmith, son of the George Lowe to whom he refers:—

"Passing Mr. Marsh's shop [in Bridge Street Row] we reach that of the highly respected Mr. George Lowe, goldsmith, who had been compelled to remove hither from the lean-to Pentice at the north west [? south-east] corner of St. Peter's Church—the Commissioners of Police having determined to remove this obstruction to the thoroughfare. Above his shop at the Cross was suspended by immemorial custom, the 'Glove' or 'hand' from the battlements of the Church, to invite strange merchants to bring their wares to the Fairs on the 5th July and 10th of October. The 'Glove' was taken in at the expiration of a fortnight when the Leave Lookers went round to see that the strangers were leaving the City; otherwise they were required to take up and pay for their freedom, or in default be summarily removed."¹⁶

Mr. G. W. Shrubsole mentions the Hand in the account of "*Gloverstone*," which he wrote in 1893. He says:—

"Fairs in the past were a great institution with which trade largely entered. Our local custom was to hang a glove out-

¹⁵ *Sheaf I*, vol. 1, p. 287. ¹⁶ *Sheaf I*, vol. 3, p. 157.

side St. Peter's Church, fourteen days before and till the close of the fair, twenty-nine days in all, when non-freemen were allowed to trade in the City. The Glove or gloved hand was not only a notification that the fair might be held, but it told a somewhat quarrelsome race and the victims of harsh laws that at this time the King's peace must not be broken. To the multitudes who met at the fair in an age when reading was rare the King's peace was declared by some symbolic proclamation, the pledge of good faith and safety to all, such as that right hand which used to swing at the first from the Pentice Court, at the City Cross. It was the only sign manual, probably, which that unlettered age could understand."¹⁷

There is a note in the same volume of your transactions (p. 340) from which it appears that this is not the first time the Hand has been shown to the Society:—

“An old wooden hand, formerly the property of Chester, now in the possession of the Liverpool Free Public Museum, was exhibited. Alderman Charles Brown said, ‘I perfectly well remember this identical glove being hung out by a rod extending from the battlements on the south side of St. Peter's Church. The rod was about four feet from the battlements. I am told this glove was found in a Museum at Liverpool—how it got there I cannot possibly tell. I believe it to be the identical glove, and I hope that some effort will be made to restore it to its old home—Chester.’”

There are two notes in Helsby's edition of Ormerod's *Cheshire*, as follows:—

“During the two annual fairs a glove used to be hung out from St. Peter's Church as an intimation that stranger traders might, during those periods only, transact business within the City.”¹⁸

“A glove is [no longer] hung out at St. Peter's Church at the site of the ancient Pentice, whilst the strangers and non-

¹⁷ *Jour. Chester Arch. and Hist. Soc.*, vol. 5 (N.S.), p. 188.

¹⁸ Vol. 1, 323 note.

freemen are [or rather were] thus allowed to exhibit their goods and is [now no more to be seen] suspended fourteen days before the commencement of each fair, the entire time being [when the custom prevailed] twenty-nine days. [The glove was suspended for the last time at St. Peter's about a quarter of a century since.]”¹⁹

In Lysons' *Cheshire*, published in 1810, there are the following remarks on page 606:—

“A glove is hung out at St. Peter's church fourteen days before the commencement of each fair, and till its conclusion, being twenty-nine days, during which time non-freemen are allowed to trade within the city, but little business is transacted before the commencement of the fairs. It is not improbable, that the glove might allude originally to what was considered as the staple trade of the city; in corroboration of which it may be observed, that at the Midsummer Show a glove was formerly delivered by the wet-glovers to the mayor, as a part of their homage, and to this day it is not unusual for the glovers to present the mayor with a pair of gloves on his election.”

Before we leave the Chester Hand for others, we may note another curious use of it in the City.

Canon Morris, in his *Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, p. 428, prints an extract from the municipal records, as follows:—

“1573, Roger Lea, Mayor, it is commanded that from hensforth non' shall sell any ale, within this Citie, above a halfpenny a quart, and the same quart wherein they sell it, to be filled full up to the topp, and to be seen full of such as shall have it, and the pott allwaies to remaine without a lidd; and when th'ale is clenched and of a nyght and a daie old, every of theyme sellings the same ale shall put out the signs of a hand made of woode, hangynge at thend of a wand, out at

¹⁹ Vol. 1, p. 371. The square brackets indicate the alterations made by Helsby in 1882 in the wording of the original edition.

some windor in the house, openly to be seen, there to remayne still, and not to be taken in, so longe as any ale in the said house is to be sold, and duringe the same tyme, non to be said naye to have a quart of ale for ob[olus=halfpenny] neyther within nor without, requyring the same as aforesaid, upon payne to forfet for every tyme beinge contrary, vi^s viii^d.”

Mr. Franklin H. Williams, of Chester, kindly informed me that about twenty years ago he purchased from a dealer's shop in Watergate Row, an interesting wooden hand, which he presented to the Grosvenor Museum, and which is here for you to see to-night. It is a representation of a glove, and consists of two portions, one being the hand part and the other being the cuff or wrist portion which is fixed to the former. They are carved in wood. The wrist portion has upon it a row of oval projections, and has a hole through it, from which, possibly, it was suspended. The glove is still covered in parts with paint. Mr. Williams takes it to be a sign which hung before the shop of some Chester glover. It occurred to me, before I saw it, that it might well be one of the wooden hands which had to be hung out of the windows of ale sellers, in accordance with the order of 1573. Mr. J. H. E. Bennett has, however, shown me a letter from Mr. W. M. Myddelton, of Woodhall Spa, Lincoln, in which that gentleman states that it is nothing else but a representation in wood of the crest of the Myddelton family, some of whom resided in Chester, and that this is so is shown by the fact that the hand stands upon a wreath, which is what the wrist portion really represents. I cannot feel very great confidence, however, in this view.

Mr. Frank Simpson, writing in the *Chester Courant* of 15th January, 1913, gives the following information about other gloves displayed in Chester:—

“The glove at St. Peter's Church was not the only one hung out in Chester; I well remember, as a boy, seeing a glove hang from the ceiling of the Row at the angle of Eastgate-street and Bridge-street. This was the emblem of the Chester Glovers' Guild, or Company, although it did not form part of its arms or crest. The shop in front of which the glove used to be displayed was occupied by a Mr. Ffoulkes, glover. He was the last of the Chester glovers who actually made gloves. His father resided in 'Gloverstone,' the actual house being that lately known by the name of the 'Royal Standard,' and forming the south-west corner of Castle-street. This house is marked on Lavaux's plan of the city as being occupied by Robert Ffoulkes. At the Chester Midsummer Show a glove was formerly presented by the wet glovers to the Mayor, as part of their homage. The Glovers' Company is still in existence, although there is not a single member who follows the occupation by which name the company is known. A little way down Eastgate-street another glove was hung out. This was suspended from a crown, and formed the sign of the licensed house still known as the 'Crown and Glove.' The sign is still to be seen, but the glove is different in design from what was formerly there.”

The Liverpool Hand.

There was also a Hand exhibited in Liverpool, but not a great deal of information is available about this.

In the Holt and Gregson MSS. in the Public Library, vol. i., 91-5 (late 18th and early 19th century), after a reference to “the protection afforded to individuals from arrests, during the fair and a certain number of days both before and after the limited time allowed for the Fair—& by which privilege those who come from a distance had the security of being exempted from arrest, having sufficient time both to come and return to their own homes back in safety,” the following statement is made:—

“The invitation of strangers may be lastly traced from the symbol still exhibited upon the top of the Exchange, usually placed on the *north eastern corner*, a Glove as it is sometimes called, or rude imitation of a hand shaped in wood—as much as to say—‘come hither under the protection of my friendly hand here stretched out to welcome the stranger.’”

Mr. Brooke, in his *History of Liverpool* in 1775 to 1800 (written about 1852), p. 113, says:—

“The Liverpool Fair . . . was held . . . near the Exchange or Town Hall on the 25th of July and 11th of November, and on ten days previously and subsequently. . . . A hand, carved in wood, was exhibited on the front of that edifice, during the days on which the fair was held; a custom which is still kept up.”

Sir James Picton in his *Memorials of Liverpool* (1878, vol. II., p. 26) states:—

“For ten days before and after the fair protection from arrest was secured within the sacred precincts marked by these stones for all persons coming to the fair on lawful business. . . . The indication of this little Alsatia was a huge hand thrust out in front of the Town-Hall, as in the act of blessing or as a sign of protection. The practice was continued down to the time of the Municipal Reform Act.”

Stonehouse's *Streets of Liverpool* (circa 1870), p. 54, has the following:—

“The memory of (the fairs) till lately was kept up by the exhibition of a hand or glove in front of the Town-Hall to indicate ‘protection’ during fair-time from arrest to any person by warrant issued from the local court.”

In the *History of the Liverpool Directories*, p. 15, Mr. G. T. Shaw tells us that from 1818 to 1865 the following appeared at the beginning of the “Annals” in Gore's Directory of Liverpool:—

“Liverpool Fair-days are 25th July and 11th November. Ten days before and ten days after each Fair-day, a hand is

exhibited in front of the Town Hall which denotes protection, during which time no person going or coming to the said Town on business connected with the Fair, can be arrested for debt within the liberties.

“In 1867 the entry became ‘was exhibited’ and has so continued.”

Mr. Touzeau, who states in his *Rise and Progress of Liverpool*, pp. 186 and 385, that the Hand was exhibited at the *south-east* corner of the top of the Town Hall for ten days before and after each fair, tells me that his authority is vol. 5 of the *Okill MSS.*, sec. xix, and points out that Okill was doubtless an eye-witness of the custom.

The Liverpool Hand has, unfortunately, disappeared.

Various Hands

The following references to Hands or Gloves of the same kind elsewhere may be of interest :—

“At several towns in England it has been the custom from time immemorial to announce a fair by hoisting a huge glove upon a prominent place. . . . The explanation has been offered, especially in the case of Chester, that the glove was selected as the sign of the fair because it was a principal article of trade. This is, however, scarcely satisfactory when extended to the other places where the usage is observed.”

The writer then refers to the passage in the *Speculum Saxonicum*, and proceeds :—

“The glove therefore was the king’s glove, the earliest form of royal charter, the original ‘sign-manual.’ ”²⁰

²⁰ Extract from “A Chapter on Gloves,” by I. S. Leadam, *The Antiquary*, vol. 2, July-Dec., 1880, page 6.

MACCLESFIELD

"A large glove was always suspended from the outside of the window of the town-hall during the holding of the fair; and as long as the glove was so suspended, everyone was free from arrest within the township, and, I have heard, while going and returning to and from the fair."—*Notes and Queries*, 1 Ser., vii., 559.

It is noteworthy that Macclesfield, like Chester, had its Guild Merchant, which was granted by Prince Edward on 29th May, 1261.²¹

EXETER

"Exeter Lammas Fair.—The Charter for this Fair is perpetuated by a glove of immense size, stuffed and carried through the city on a very long pole, decorated with ribbons, flowers, etc., and attended with music, parish beades and the nobility. It is afterwards placed on the top of the Guildhall and then the Fair commences: on the taking down of the glove the fair terminates."—Hone's *Every Day Book*.

". . . . the carrying of the glove at Lammas Fair, in Exeter, is still continued, and I witnessed the ancient ceremony this morning (19 July) [1898]. The simple procession started from Exe Bridge at 11.30 a.m., the old proclamation written on vellum, and dating from certainly so long ago as A.D. 1322, being first read. Preceded by a side drum and a fife, the huge glove, hoisted upon a pole some fifteen feet high, was carried right through the main thoroughfare of this city. The pole is of considerable antiquity and is painted, striped something after the fashion of a barber's pole. The old glove is about eighteen inches high, made of leather, and pipe-clayed annually for the display. Under it were tied garlands of flowers. Held aloft, the glove was thus carried to the site of the old East Gate at the other end of the city, where the proclamation was again read. Then the little *cortège* returned to the front of our ancient Guildhall, where the proclamation was duly read a third time, after which we

²¹ Ormerod's *Cheshire* (Helsby), iii., 741.

all took off our hats whilst 'God save the Queen' was rendered as a solo on the fife. Three hearty cheers followed, and then the glove, its garlands and the pole were solemnly hoisted by a cord to the top of the Guildhall's projecting Queen Elizabethan portico. There it was secured to the battlements, at a bevel, leaning over the grand old Roman thoroughfare, and there it will remain until noon on Friday next (22 July), when the (now quite obsolete) fair will close. According to tradition, however, Lammas Fair commenced to-morrow (20 July)."—*Notes and Queries*, vol. 9, 1898, p. 153.

"The Phœnician monuments are said to have had sculptured on them an arm and *hand held up* with an inscription graven thereon. (See *Gesenius and Lee*.) If, as stated by your correspondents, in the article referred to, the glove at fairs 'denotes protection,' and indicates 'that parties frequenting the fair are exempt from arrest,' it is at least a remarkable coincidence. The Phœnicians were the earliest merchants to the west of England that we have any account of; can any connexion be traced historically between the Phœnician traffic and the modern practice of setting up a hand, or glove, at fairs? I well remember the feelings of awe and wonder with which I gazed when taken in childhood to see 'the glove brought in' and placed over the guildhall of my native city (Exeter) at the commencement of the Lammas Fair. Has the glove been associated with this fair from its commencement? and if not, how far back can its use be traced? The history of the fair is briefly this: it existed before the Norman Conquest, and was a great mart of business; the tolls had belonged to the Corporation, but King John took one-half and gave them to the prior of St. Nicholas. Henry VIII sold the fair with the Priory; and anno second and third of Philip and Mary it was made over to the corporation, who have ever since been lords of the fair. (*Izacke's Memorials*, p. 19; *Olivers' History of Exeter*, pp. 83, 158, &c.)"—*Notes and Queries*, vol. 8, 1853, p. 421.

BARNSTAPLE

"At Barnstaple, a large glove, decked with dahlias, is hung out from the window of the Quay Hall, the oldest building of

the city, and while it hangs the fair is going on, and when it is withdrawn the fair is at an end."—Extract from "Gloves," *All the Year Round*, vol. 9, Feb.-Aug., 1863, page 425.

HONITON

"There is no reverence paid in these modern gatherings to old-fashioned ways and ancient picturesque customs, but in some places these are still observed with punctilious exactness. The quaint custom of 'proclaiming the fair' at Honiton, in Devonshire, is observed every year, the town having obtained the grant of a fair from the Lord of the Manor so long ago as 1257. The fair still retains some of the picturesque characteristics of bygone days. The town crier, dressed in old-world uniform, and carrying a pole decorated with gay flowers and surmounted by a large gilt model of a gloved hand, publicly announces the opening of the fair as follows: 'Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! The Fair's begun, the glove is up. No man can be arrested till the glove is taken down.' The pole and glove remain displayed until the end of the fair. Hot coins were then thrown amongst the children."—Ditchfield, *Vanishing England*, p. 360.

SOUTHAMPTON

"From the church-yard (St. Mary's Church), a road not very wide, and bordered on either hand by a deep and muddy ditch, leads to the ancient mill called the Chapel mill. In this road, inconvenient as it is, an annual fair is held on Trinity Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. This fair is opened by the mayor and bailiffs, with much ceremony, on the preceding Saturday afternoon. The mayor erects a pole with a large glove fixed on the top of it, near the miller's house; and the bailiff then takes possession of the fair, as chief magistrate in its precinct during the fair, and invites the mayor and his suite to a collation in his tent. He appoints a guard of halberdiers, who keep the peace by day, and watch the fair by night. During the fair, no person can be arrested for debt within its precincts. On the Wednesday at noon, the mayor dissolves the fair by taking down the pole and glove, or rather ordering it to be taken down; which till lately was done by the young men of the town, who fired at it

with single balls, till it was destroyed, or they were tired with the sport. Probably it formerly was a mark for the less dangerous dexterity of the young archers."—Englefield, *Walk through Southampton*, 1805, p. 75.

NEWPORT (ISLE OF WIGHT)

"To the list of markets at which a Glove was, or is, hung out, may be added Newport, in the Isle of Wight."—*Notes and Queries*, vol. 8, 1853, p. 136.

PORTSMOUTH

"During the annual fair at Portsmouth, locally known as the 'Free Mart,' a gilded glove was displayed above the entrance to the White House, or gaol, in the High Street."—*Notes and Queries*, vol. 9, 1898, p. 375.

GOLDSITHNEY

"At Goldsithney, near Penzance, a large fair is, or was, held on August 5th and there was a tradition that this fair was originally held at Sithney near Helston, and that some persons ran off with the Glove, by the suspension of which to a pole the fair was, by its Charter, held, and carried it off to this village, where the said Glove was hung out for many years at the time of the fair."—*Kentish Note Book*, vol. ii., p. 146.

"On the 5th of August, St. James' day (old style), a fair is held here, which was originally held in the church-town of Sithney near Helston. In olden time, the good *St. Perran the Little* gave to the wrestlers in this parish a glove as the prize, and the winner of the glove was permitted to collect the market toll on the day of the feast, and to appropriate the money to his own use. The winner of the glove lived in the church-town of Sithney, and for long years the right of holding the fair remained undisputed. At length the miners of Goldsithney resolved to contest the prize, and they won it, since which time the fair has been held in that village, they paying to the poor of the parish of Sithney one shilling as compensation."—*Popular Romances of the West of England*, R. Hunt, 3rd ed., p. 444. [I am indebted to the Editor for this reference.]