

occurs in the "Lounger's Common-Place Book," 1805, under the heading "The Black Assize," and, as illustrating the kind of opposition which the introduction of lucifer matches met, is very interesting.

"The recusant papist perhaps might have been able to have performed the task assigned to him [the alledged setting fire to a poisoned lamp-wick by Rowland Jenks, whilst being sentenced to death for seditious and treasonable words spoken against Queen Elizabeth] had he been furnished with *phosphorus matches*, that invention of modern times, by which the chemist and the philosopher have so effectually forwarded the purposes of house-breakers and nocturnal assassins, but which, like its cotemporary discovery, the air balloon, cannot, I believe, be applied to any purpose of utility or convenience."

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### ECCLESIASTICAL RECORDS.

TO THE HONORABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF  
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED,

*The Humble Petition of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

SHEWETH,

That the members of this Society have learned with great dissatisfaction that, in a bill introduced into your Honorable House, intituled "An Act for better enforcing the Laws Ecclesiastical respecting the Discipline of the Clergy; amending the constitution and regulating the mode of procedure of the Ecclesiastical Courts; and regulating the government of the Ecclesiastical Registries in England," clauses have (without any public enquiry) been introduced by the Lord Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, providing for a transfer to himself, and the placing in the Public Record Office of London, of various deeds, wills, processes, acts, proceedings, registers, and other documents relating to the various dioceses of England and Wales, unless the respective bishops thereof shall, within two months after the passing of the act, certify that the same several documents have been duly sorted, classed, and indexed, up to a period within five years ending December last: and that another attempt is to be made to obtain the removal of parish registers.

That these clauses would enable a continuation of the removal of local records to London, whereby local students are practically debarred from the use of them, great local mistrust has arisen, the general progress of historical knowledge in this kingdom is impeded, and the costs of legal proceedings and the hindrances to the honest administration of justice are seriously increased.

That the documents in question in the North of England have been largely used by the antiquaries of that part of the country in the compilation of the noble works relating to it, and that there exists a systematic use of the records in their respective places. The Surtees Society, which has already printed 54 volumes from original MSS., is at present engaged in the publication of a volume devoted to the Register of Walter Gray, Archbishop of York from 1215 to 1255.

That official copies or abstracts of local records made or printed at London neither are nor can be so accurate, judicious, and satisfactory as the labours of gentlemen possessed of the requisite local knowledge of persons, subjects, and places, and that it is most inexpedient to discourage or destroy local schools of history by depriving them of records.

That hardly any proper calendars or indexes of the more ancient and valuable contents of the Public Record Office have as yet been published, while the period of two months mentioned in the objectionable clauses is manifestly insufficient for sorting, classifying, and indexing according to modern ideas, however desirous the custodians of records may be to do so.

That there is no reason to suppose that a removal of episcopal registers and other records would conduce to their publicity. That no provision is made for the removal and publicity of the valuable parliamentary surveys (similar to those open to the public at Lambeth) and other documents removed from Auckland Castle by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. That such of the Durham records as have been removed to the Public Record Office were so removed at the commencement of 1869, yet rolls of which much use was made by historians in the country are not even distinguished, and such few calendars as have appeared for Durham are imperfect, inconvenient, and inexact; while the well known great surveys, and rolls of account, and registers which have repeatedly been decided to be of a public character, are not now produced to the public.

That it cannot, from experience, be expected that the records proposed to be removed would be sorted, classed, or indexed, in the Public Record Office, within the period of two months, or be made more useful than they are at present within any reasonable time, unless it be also expected that local enquirers shall be at the trouble and expense of a prolonged absence in London gratuitously for the purpose.

That, although it has not been found that access to records in the country generally has been denied to the public in the manner that access to such of the Durham records as have been under London control has been, it is, nevertheless, suggested that to prevent misunderstandings, it might be well to enact that all documents relating to estates,

the revenues whereof have been devoted to the general welfare of the Established Church, should, in common justice to all concerned, be declared, in express terms, to be public; and that their custody, sorting, classification, and indexing, in their respective localities, should be provided for out of the palatine, episcopal, and capitular revenues originally liable thereto, before such revenues should be diverted for the public benefit. The attention of your Honorable House is more particularly directed to this subject, inasmuch as, notwithstanding the enormous revenues of the franchise and see of Durham, no supervision of the records thereof was exercised by their owners after the Bishops of Durham ceased to have the full beneficial enjoyment of the franchise and see, until, under colour of the Public Records Act, the records were *de facto*, and, as we believe, *de facto* only, and not *de jure*, removed to the Public Record Office, because the authorities of the county of Durham, in the discharge of their duties, properly declined to comply with the request that the records should be kept at the expense of other funds.

That your petitioners, on grounds of public policy, object to the removal of the parish registers, which, in any case, should be removed, if at all, to the General Registry at Somerset House, for public and free access, which, practically, is generally enjoyed at present, as far as ancient registers are concerned.

Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray your Honourable House not to pass into law the clauses hereinbefore referred to.

And they also humbly pray your Honourable House to institute public enquiry into and to redress the grievances as to the removal and present dealings with the records relating to Her Majesty's franchise and the see of Durham, and all ecclesiastical records in the Public Record Office and in the possession of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and all other records in their possession.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

Given under our Common Seal and the signature of our President the fourth day of April, 1872.

RAVENSWORTH, PRESIDENT.