

CROMWELL'S CHARTER, HIGH WYCOMBE.

IN Parker's "History and Antiquities of Wycombe" (page 60) we read the following statement:—

"Oliver Cromwell granted a charter to this borough, which provided that eight burgesses should be elected as additional common councilmen yearly."

Then follows a minute from the Corporation Records, to which we shall have to revert later on. Mr. Parker proceeds:—"The increase in the number of the council was no doubt wisely ordained to correct abuses which crept in when the old select body, who were self-elected, had sole authority. The fate of Oliver's Charter is told thus:—

" 'This charter was, on the Restoration, burnt by consent in front of the Guildhall, when Mr. Lucas was Mayor.' "

Many inhabitants of Wycombe have probably felt some curiosity to know more of the charter which was thus unceremoniously disposed of, and the "abuses" it was intended to correct. It was the good fortune of the present writer, in turning over the Calendars of the State Papers in the Record Office, a few years ago, to come upon certain allusions in the minutes of Cromwell's Council of State to "the Charter of Wickham" and "the business of Wickham." Having mentioned this fact to several inhabitants of the borough, he was requested to read a paper on the subject before the Wycombe Mutual Improvement Society in March, 1895. Unfortunately, through pressure of other engagements, and the voluminous nature of the original documents, he was only able to give a general outline of several of the most important of them. Now, however, having perused, as he believes, the whole of the documents concerned, he ventures to present the readers of the RECORDS with a summary of their contents, and copies of some of the more important ones.

Readers of an article in the 1895 RECORDS, on "Some Documents Relating to Wycombe," may remember that as early as 1623, under the reign of James I., a complaint was made to the High Sheriff of Bucks by John Davenport, Mayor in that year, of the detention by "evil-disposed persons" of moneys intended for the relief of the poor, and also of factions and divisions "stirred and maintained" amongst the inhabitants of the borough. The statute of the forty-third of Elizabeth for the relief of the poor had proved very burdensome to Wycombe, owing partly to the decay of the cloth trade, the staple industry of the borough during the Middle Ages. Reference is made to the number of poor in the town, both in the charter granted by James I., in 1609, and in the memorial presented to the High Sheriff in 1623. The charter just mentioned had given power to the Corporation, not only to maintain out of the Hospital funds the Royal Grammar School and "four poor persons," but to appropriate the surplus funds for the benefit of the poor at their discretion. Unhappily, a party seems to have existed in the borough, and to have held sway for a time in the Corporation, who did not display sufficient regard to the claims of the poorer inhabitants. It was only natural that another section of the burgesses should strenuously resist such injustice. Thus we find (Parker's "History," p. 146) that the funds of the Conway, Dormer, Church, and Pelham Charities (and apparently other small sums) had been appropriated, in 1622, for building the shambles on the site of the present Literary Institute, and that timber (of the estimated value, it was asserted, of £40) had been cut down on the Hospital lands and used for the same purpose. In the same work (p. 147) we find that the funds of the Littleboy Charity, a bequest of £100 for a dole of bread, were laid out, in 1633, upon the purchase of Stock Grove, Coleshill, and that the proceeds were ordered to be expended for the relief of the poor by "the ancientest churchwarden and ancientest overseer." But complaints were rife that this was not properly administered.

Again, Richard Gibbons, during his third mayoralty, in 1631, had appropriated the funds of the Wainwright Charity for a new mace. This, it appears, he was

compelled to refund in 1633, and this occasioned the annual payment still known as "Mace Money." Another bone of contention between the two parties arose, as we shall see, out of the "market toll," a sum out of which was yearly appropriated to the relief of the poor. It had originally been £10, then 20 marks (£15), and ultimately £20. In bad years, when the toll was much diminished, there was probably a temptation to the authorities to withhold or diminish the amount.

It is pretty evident that an attempt was made, in 1633, to put things on a better footing, as evidenced by the Stock Grove purchase and the mace money award. But the old corrupt party in the Corporation had not lost their power, and it would appear that, in or about 1647, a complaint of their malversations was lodged in the Court of Chancery by three leading inhabitants, all of them apparently of the Parliamentary party—Samuel Guy, John Grove, and William Bovington. This probably explains the order recorded by Parker (p. 47) reviving the prohibition against any complaint being made without the license of the Mayor, which had been enacted in the days of Henry VII. and revived under Edward VI. However, a commission of inquiry was issued, witnesses were examined, and a decree was obtained from the Court, in 1648, which does not seem to have had much effect. The Mayor in that year was John Gibbons (probably son of Richard Gibbons). His successor was Nicholas Bradshaw, described as a man "of unquiet and turbulent spirit," who refused to pay the yearly sum out of the market toll. This probably gave rise to the riot referred to in the following letter, which was addressed by the Council of State to the Mayor on September 20th, 1649:—

TO YE MAYOR OF WICKHAM.

Sr —By an information which hath been given in unto us by . . . Wee understand that on the last Markett day at yr Towne of Wickham there assembled diverse disorderly people to the number of two hundred, who being led on by some idle and dissolute persons, did in the Markett place seize and carry away the Corne brought in by the Countrey to be sold, and that under the notion of takinge tole corne for the use of the poore, by which accõ the peace was not only then broken, but an example given to others to run into exorbitance of the like nature if some speedy and effectual course be not taken for the preventing of it for the

future. Wee are likewise informed that they gave it out that they would come with far greater numbers upon the next Markett day (being then overawed by the presence of the souldiery who assisted you for the preserving of the peace), for the hindering of which wee desire you in the meantime to use yr best endeavors to finde out some of those who were the principall Actors in the late tumult, and cause them to be apprehended and secured, and dealt with according to Lawe ; but if this cannot be effected before their next appointed meeting you are then to call to your assistance such souldiers as are quartered nearest unto you (who are hereby required to be ayding and assisting unto you), and you are to apprehend such persons as you shall bee informed are the principall leaders of the insurrection, and cause them to be secured and proceeded against according to Lawe. Wee desire you to use all care and diligence for the putting of this into execution, and to give an account to the Counsell of what you doe herein.

Whitehall, 20th Sept., 1649.

Twelve days later, on October 2nd, the following entry occurs in the minutes of the Council :—

Messrs. Martin, Holland, Scott, and Robinson to be a committee to examine the business complained of by Mr. Bradshaw, Mayor of Wickham.

All four of these persons were among the number of the Regicides—members of the Council of State—and all four were connected in some way or other with the County of Bucks. Whether two of them declined or were unable to sit does not appear, but ten days later, October 12th, we find another minute :—

Lord Commissioner Whitelock, Mr. Scott, Sir James Harington, and Mr. Holland to be a committee to hear the business of Wickham.

This Whitelock was the famous Bulstrode Whitelocke, connected with this county by his father's residence at Fawley, near Henley.

Next day, however, we find an entry of a very different character. It is the copy of a letter, as follows :—

TO THE MAYOR OF WICKHAM.

Sr—There hath been a petition presented to this Counsell by some of the inhabitants of Wickham concerning the tolle of corne, about which there hath lately been some controversy in that Towne. On examination of the matter of fact therein expressed, a Comtee is appointed by this Counsell. You are therefore forthwith to make yr repaire hither to the sayd Comtee, and

in the meane tyme not to use any force by pretence of any order from hence to the preiudice of any right of the peticonrs or any other.

Whitehall, 13th Oct., 1649.

It would seem from this that on the receipt of the petition from the reforming party, which would be all the more favourably received because most of them, at any rate, were staunch Puritans, the Council felt that they had been too precipitate, and that there was another side to the question which demanded investigation.

The Committee, as it appears, ordered Bradshaw to pay the toll money in dispute. It is evident that the reforming party now made a determined effort to get one of their representatives appointed to succeed him. On October 3rd, 1650, the Council orders as follows :—

Lord Commissioner Whitelock, Mr. Scott, Sir Henry Mildmay, and Mr. Challoner to mediate the difference at Wickham about the choice of their magistrates, that the peace of the place may be preserved.

Two days later occurs the following minute :—

To report to Parliament that for the better settling the peace of Wycombe and to promote the Parliament interest there, Stephen Bates, a discreet, religious person, nominated by the well-affected of that town, be appointed Mayor for the year ensuing. That Lord Commissioner Whitelock have power from Council to write a letter.

The necessary order was made by the House of Commons on October 9th. Bradshaw and his supporters, however, determined to set the "Rump Parliament" at defiance. The self-elected Corporation passed a vote excluding Bates from the Common Council, and on his presenting himself at the Guildhall, Bradshaw ordered him out, and threatened to have him removed by a constable. How this dispute ended there seems no evidence to show, but it is probable that the Government intervened to give Bates possession. At any rate his name appears in Mr. Parker's list as the Mayor for 1650. His three successors, William Fisher, James Bigg, and John King, do not seem to have been extreme partisans on either side. The last-named, however, died or in some way vacated the mayoralty during his year of office, and was succeeded by John Gibbons, who went back to the old

high-handed policy, and apparently refused to pay the "toll money" for the relief of the poor. He was followed, in 1654, by the redoubtable Nicholas Bradshaw, who also withheld the "toll money" as he had in his previous mayoralty. But the destinies of England were now in very different hands from those of the feeble and vacillating "Rump." The Lord Protector Oliver was more than a match for Nicholas Bradshaw. In 1655, under date November 14, occurs the following minute of a petition to the Protector's Council:—

The petition of the burgesses, &c., of Chepping Wycomb, Co Bucks, complaining that they are excluded from, and unfit persons admitted into, the Corporation by the present mayor, justices, and most of the common council—referred to Col. Tobias Bridge to enquire into the matter, speak to the persons concerned, examine witnesses, and certify.

The Mayor in that year was Henry Elliott. Colonel Tobias Bridge was a man well known in the history of the time, one of Cromwell's warlike Ironside captains.

A few days later occurs the note of another petition:—

Divers burgesses and inhabitants of Chepping Wycomb, Co. Bucks—They have been faithful, yet are excluded by the present Mayor, &c., and unfit persons admitted, whereby great suits are occasioned and the poor prejudiced.—Beg that the overseers may be restored, John Grove made Mayor for next year, they disentangled from law, the oppressed relieved, and malignants checked.

It would appear from this that litigation was still going on. An order was given to Major-General Lambert "to endeavour to compose or to certify," and the petition was referred to the Committee for Petitions.

A few weeks later Colonel Bridge made his appearance at Wycombe, and on December 19th a submission of the questions in dispute to his award was drawn up and signed by twenty-six of the leading inhabitants. A "vera copia," as it is called, is preserved ("State Papers Dom. Int.," cxxiv., 80, i.). It certifies that both parties to the controversy have voluntarily consented to refer it to Bridge for settlement, that they agree to abide by his award, and that they pray the Protector to ratify the same. The most remarkable thing, perhaps, about this submission is that the signatures are arranged in the copy in two parallel columns, with thirteen names

in each, those in the first column apparently all belonging to the reforming party, and those in the second to what we may perhaps venture to designate as the "old gang." The first column contains the signatures of Joseph Witham, Steven Bates, John Grove, Sam^l Guy, W^m Freer, Sam^l Willes, W^m Bovington, Jeremiah Stevens, W^m Silver, George Tymberlake, Joshua Grange, Tho. Hoastler, and Joseph Freeman. The second column contains the names of Henry Elliott, "Maior," Nich. Bradshawe, John Gibbons, Edw. Bedder, James Bigg, Edward Winch, Edward Humfrey, Alex. Parnam, Tho. Sedgwicke, John Boulter, Geo. Howdaile, Tho. Davids, and James Adames. An examination of the award itself will show how completely it resulted in the victory of the former of the two parties.

One can fancy the worthy Colonel Tobias, in his buff jacket and helmet, riding into Wycombe on that wintry day, probably with a guard of Ironsides, and the conscript fathers of the borough, in fear and trembling, agreeing to submit their differences to the award, one may almost say, of the sword. On January 31st, 1656 (n.s.), Colonel Bridge made his award, which is certainly a very straightforward and business-like document (cxxiv., 80, ii.), though it must have been anything but palatable to Bradshaw and his party:—

Whereas upon a Petiçon of divers Burgesses and other Inhabitants of the Burrough of Chipping Wycombe in the County of Bucks lately p'sented unto his Highnes the Lord Protector and referred by his Highnes unto his hon^{ble} Councill, It was ordered by the Councill on the 14th day of November last past that it should bee referred to mee Coll. Tobias Bridge to consider of the said Petiçon, and to informe myself of the truth thereof and the matters therein sett forth, and for my better satisfaction to treat with the persons concerned and certifie the same to the Councill. And whereas as well the said Petiçon^{rs} as alsoe the Mayor and Co^mon-councill of the said Burrough and other persons concerned therein did voluntarily submitt th' ending and finall determinaçon of all matters in difference amongst them unto mee the said Coll. Tobias Bridge and did thereby engage themselves to stand to, abide, and performe my finall order and award concerninge the same. As by a certaine writinge under their hands dated the 19th day of December last past may more fully appear. In pursuance of w^{ch} said order and submission aforesaid, having spoken with the persons upon the place, and heard and examined the parties, wittnesses, and testimonies produced on both sides; I doe award and Order therein as followeth.

first, whereas it appears unto mee as well by the oaths of severall Ancient Inhabitants of the Burrough taken by sev'all Gentlemen by force of a Comission issued out of the High Court of Chancery and by a decree thereupon made in the yeare 1648: That the Shambles commonly called the Butchers' Shambles in the Towne of Wicombe afforsaid were built and erected by and with severall sumes of money given to the use of the poore of the same Towne, amounting to the sume of 120^{lb}; Now I doe award and Order that the Maior and Aldermen of the said Burrough and their successors shall yearly for ever hereafter pay unto the Overseers for the poore of the said Towne for the tyme beinge and to and for the use of their poore the yearly sume of Tenn pounds of Lawfull money of England, and the said Shambles to bee for ever hereafter chargeable with the payment thereof. And I doe further award and Order that the said Maior and Aldermen of the said Burrough and their successors shall likewise yearly for ever hereafter pay unto the Overseers of the poore of the said Towne for the tyme beinge to and for the use of the poore thereof a further sume of fforty shillings of like money and of the rents and proffitts of the said Shambles called the Butchers' Shambles for and in leive and satisfaction of severall Woods belonginge to the poore of the said Towne, Amountinge to the vallue of 40^{lb}, formerly cutt downe and sold by the Mayor and Aldermen of the said Towne and not converted to their use; the same Shambles to be alsoe for ever hereafter charged and chargeable with the paymt of the said 40 shillings yearely to the use affors^d. And whereas it alsoe appears unto mee by sufficient evidence that severall Lands and Tenements in the said County were heretofore given by one Alice Jenings deceased to the use of the poore of the said Towne, And that about the 42th [*sic*] yeare of the Reigne of the late Queen Elizabeth John Raunce and Robert Raunce the then Lords of the said Towne and Owners of the Lands late of the said Widd. Jenings upon composition of severall suits then dependinge betweene them and the Towne concerninge the said guift did assigne a yearely rent charge of 15^{lb} p. ann. for ever in leive of the said guift, 5^{lb} p. ann. thereof to bee issuinge out of an Inne called the Antelope in the said Towne, and 10^{lb} p. ann. out of other Lands, wch about 25 yeares since was released by the then Mayor and Bayliffs of the said Burrough to Richard Archdale Esqr the then owner of the same lands in consideraçon of 180^{lb} to them paid by the said Richard Archdale, with which money and a further sume of One hundred pounds given to the Towne by one Mr. Littleboy, severall Lands in Colshill in the County of Hartford were purchased by the Towne, the proffits whereof have not accordinge to the intentions of the well disposed Doners bin converted to the use of the poore, but employed to other uses; Now I doe further award and order that as well the said 5^{lb} p. Ann. issuinge yearely out of the said Inne as alsoe the rents and proffitts yearely arrizinge out of the said Lands and Tenements in Colshill shalbe for ever hereafter employed and disposed to the Overseers for the poore of the same Towne for the tyme beinge to and for the use of their poore, accordinge to the good purpose and intentions of the well disposed Donors in that behalf. And whereas it alsoe appears unto mee by sufficient

testimony that the Lands and Tenements in Hugindon in the same County belonging to the said Towne of the yearly vallue of 5^{lb} p. Ann. were alsoe purchased with the money given by Mr. Hinde to the use of the poore of the said corporaçon ; I doe therefore award and order that the rents and proffitts of the said Lands in Hugindon afforsaid shall for ever hereafter be paid and disposed to the Overseers for the poore of the said Towne for the use of the poore, pursuant to the intent of the said guift. And I doe further order that the said Lands and Tenements in Colshill and Hugindon afforsaid, and the said Annuity of 5^{lb} p. Ann. issuinge out of the said Inne called the Antelope, and the said Annuall sumes Tenn pounds and fforty shillings per Ann. hereby awarded to the poore of the said Towne out of the Butchers' Shambles shall within three months now next ensuinge be lawfully settled and conveyed in due forme of Lawe unto and upon Six honest and substantiall Inhabitants of the said Towne and their heires for the use of the poore in such manner as councell shall advise therein, with power therein for conveyinge the same by the three last Survyvors to other Inhabitants of the said Towne and their heires successively for the uses affors^d ; The first ffeoffees therein to bee named by Mr. James Bigg, Mr. Fisher, and Mr. Joseph Wetham for that purpose. And whereas it further appeares that for the space of Threescore yeares last past or thereabouts there hath bin severall sumes yearly paid out of the Toll arrizinge in the Markett of the said Towne to the use of the poore, as namely Tenn pounds per Ann. anciently, afterwards Twenty Marks p. Ann., and for many yeares last past Twenty pounds per annum ; which paymt^t was detained by Mr. Nicholas Bradshawe when hee was first Maior of the said Burrough, And that upon addresse to the then Councell of State the said paymt^t was continued againe untill about two yeares since, at wch^h tyme the said Mr. Bradshawe was Maior againe ; Now I doe award and order that the said Twenty pounds in arreare in the tyme the said Mr. Bradshawe was last Mayor, and all such Money as is unpaid of the said yearly sume of Twenty pounds when Mr. Gibbons was last Maior shall within three months now next ensueinge be satisfisied and paid by the said Mr. Bradshawe and Mr. Gibbons proporçonably unto Mr. Samuel Guy, Mr. John Grove, and Mr. William Bovington, for the defrayinge the necessary charges and expenses disbursed by them and others in takinge forth Comissions and prosecutinge the business on behalf of the poore untill this tyme. And I doe also further award and order that the Mayor and Bayliffs of the said Corporaçon and their Successors shall yearely and every yeare for ever hereafter pay or cause to bee paid the yearly sume of Twenty pounds out of the proffitts arrizinge by the Toll of the Marketts in the said Towne unto the Overseers of the poore of the same Towne for the tyme beinge, to be disposed by them for the use of the poore.

And forasmuch as upon hearinge and examinaçon of the differences in the said Corporaçon it doth fully appeare unto mee that the said Mr. Nicholas Bradshawe is a very Contentious person, and of an unquiett and Turbulent spirit, and the originall cause of the longe and tedious suits in the said Burrough amongst the Inhabitants thereof, appearinge always in opposition to the

rights of the poor, and the well government of the said Corporaçon, and by stirringe up factions and makeinge parties to the intent to cary on his owne designes according to his Arbitrary will, contrary both to Lawe and equity, and the Charter and peace of the said Corporaçon, to the greate grieffe of the sober and well affected people thereof, and peticularly, That Mr. Stephen Bates, an Inhabitant there, beinge made Mayor by Order of Parliamt of the 9th of Octobr, 1650, and thereby to enioy all rights and priviledges wch any Maior thereof could enioy by their Charter, yet nevertheless the said Bradshawe by his malitious instigation procured a Vote from the then Maior and Common Council to exclude the said Mr. Bates from the Councell, and in contempt of the afforsaid Order of Parliamt, did command him out of the Towne hall, and threatned him if he would not bee gone hee would remand him from thence by the Constable ; Now therefore for prevençon of the like mischeifes and inconveniencies for the future, I doe Award that the said Mr. Bradshawe bee from henceforth removed from his offices of Alderman, Justice, and Burgesse within the said Corporaçon, and that Mr. Stephen Bates shall from henceforth execute the plans afforesaid to the end the said Order of Parliamt may be performed, and the Corporaçon freed from the evils incident by so evill a Governor. And I doe alsoe order that Mr. Thomas Sedgwicke, one of the now Bayliffs, be from henceforth removed from his said office, beinge notoriously Convicted for a comon Swearer and Drunkard, and soe of greate greife to the good people of the said Towne by his evill Example and Conversaçon. And I doe alsoe award and order that Mr. John Boulter the present Towne Clerke and George Howdeale Seriant at Mace bee from henceforth removed from their offices of Towne Clerke, Burgesse, and Serjant in the said Corporaçon, having bin both of them notoriously disaffected to the Parliamt and their partie, and frequently conversant in the late Kinge's Armies, and have bin and still are comon revilers and contemnners of the Governmt and those that adheare to it in scurrilous and opprobrious language, continuinge desperately opposite to the well affected and peaceable people of the sd Corporaçon and of the Nation in Genll, and soe very unfitt to beare office of trust in the same. And for redresse of the like greivances and disturbances wch may arize and growe within the said Corporaçon, and that all differences and animosities which have arizen from the late misdemeaners & miscarriages in the said Towne may be wholly removed, taken away, and forgotten, and the said Corporaçon and the Inhabitants thereof put and settled in a quiet and peaceable Condiçon, to goe hand in hand for the good of each other, and become usefull to one another in peticular and the Commonwealth in Generall ;

I doe Award that the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the said Towne shall forthwith surrender their Charter, and renewe the same from his Highnes the Lord Protector with such alteraçons as his Highnes in his grave wisdome shall thinke fitt and convenient for the better governmt of the Towne afforsaid.

And I doe lastly award and order that Mr. Jeremiah Emery, Mr. Joseph Wetham, Mr. Sam^l Wells, Mr. Robert ffryer, Mr. Joshua Grange, Mr. Richard Bedder, Mr. William Fryer, and Mr.

John Raunce, shalbe added from henceforth to the Common Councell of the said Corporaçon and to act with them as members thereof untill the new Charter shalbe granted and confirmed unto them as afforsaid, for prevençon of such Iniuries as the Inhabitants and poore of the said Towne have sustained by the indirect practices of those formerly in Government there in letting Leases for unvaluable consideraçons. In wittness wherof, I the said Colonell Tobias Bridge to this my p'sent writinge of award have sett my hand and Seal. Yeven this One and Thirtieth day of January, In the Year of our Lord God Accordinge to the Computaçon now used in England One Thousand sixe hundred fifty and five.

TOBIAS BRIDGE.

Annexed to this are three other documents. One (80, iii.) is a memorial by Bridge to the Protector, reciting the circumstances under which his award was given, and praying him to ratify it. Another (80) is a certificate by Lambert in an almost undecipherable hand and very badly spelt. It expresses his approval of Bridge's award, going through its provisions *seriatim*. The third is the copy of the burgesses' submission before described.

A little later, on February 12, 1656, we find a minute of Council that a committee should "consider Colonel Bridge's certificate in the case of Chepping Wycomb, County Bucks, and report." On February 28, there is the entry:—

Order on the petition of the burgesses of Chipping Wycombe, Bucks, to his Highness, referred by him to Council, and by them, 14th Nov. last, to Colonel Tobias Bridge. That as Bridge went down thither, and the Mayor and Aldermen, &c., voluntarily submitted their differences to him to determine all matters concerning charitable gifts to the poor, and engaged to abide by his order, which they signed, the award be ratified.

Then follows a detailed account of the provisions of the award, which are ratified by the Council.

The drafting of the new charter would naturally take some months.* It is not until November 1 that we find

* A minute may here be mentioned which has nothing to do with the question before us, but has reference to the town; it is dated October 16, 1656, and is an approval by the Council of the augmentation by Trustees for the maintenance of the living of Chepping Wycombe to the extent of £30, besides £30 formerly settled. There is also an augmentation of the living of West Wycombe amounting to £25.

a minute to the effect that the Committee of the Council on Charters should consider the two drafts of the Charter prepared by "Mr. Shepherd and the rest of the Committee joined with him—one for the Corporation of Chipping Wycombe and the other for that of Blandford, and to report." On December 25th the Council again met—Puritans as they were high days and holidays were nothing to them—and it was recorded that the report concerning the Charter for Chipping Wycombe was to be considered at the next sitting of the Council. This was on January 1, 1657, when "the Lord Lambert" reported "several alterations and additions in the Charter of Chipping Wycombe, in the county of Bucks, and the several points thereof were put to the question."

It was resolved by the Council—

That the inhabitants of Great Missenden, Little Missenden, Agmondesham, Pen, Beconsfeld, Hitcham, Taplow, Hedsor, Hugenden, and Bransfee—being adjacent parishes to Chipping Wycombe—have 14 dayes tyme to show cause why the Mayor and Recorder of Chipping Wycombe aforesayde should not hold a Court of Record every three weekes, on Munday, and to attach according to the custom of forreine attachments, London, in all actions upon the case—debts, accompts, &c., in y^{se} sev'ral parishes as well as in the sayd burrough itself, and that in case of their not showing cause to the contrary within that tyme they shall be included as aforesayd.

Another entry is:—

On the question put whether the Clause in the 52nd folio concerning serving of process shall stand, it passed in the negative. That the other parts of the sayd Report amended as aforesayd be approved. That it be referred to his Highness' Counsell learned, to consider of the draft Charter for Chipping Wicombe, with the addicons and alteracons voted this day, and to certify to the Counsell on Tuesday next therein as to matters of law, and Mr. Beck is to attend them for yt. purpose.

It may be interesting to note that at the meeting of the Council of State, where this Charter was voted, the Lord Protector presided in person, and there were also present Lord President Lawrence, Lord Commissioner Fynnes, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, Lord Lambert, Colonel Jones, Sir Charles Wolseley, the Earl of Mulgrave, Lord Strickland, Colonel Disbrowe, and Colonel Sydenham. On February 5 another meeting was held, at which the same members were present, excepting Cromwell (who at

least was present at the beginning, but went out), Sydenham and Strickland; and in addition General Montague, Sir Gilbert Pickering, and Lord Viscount Lisle.

They had before them a report signed by Edmund Prideaux, Attorney-General, and William Ellis, Solicitor-General, taking exception to certain points in the draft Charter (cliii., 89). To this is appended (89, i.) a very interesting document. It is described in the Calendar as "notes of alterations requested in the said charter," a description which seems a little misleading, as it is really a catalogue of the differences between the Charter of Cromwell and that of James I. The clauses are numbered according to the numbers in the Charter itself. Several of these clauses have been struck out; these in the present copy are italicised and placed between brackets:—

Alteracions and Addicions in the Chater [*sic*] of Chipping Wycombe, in the County of Bucks, as follow:—

8. In the old Charter the Maior was to bee elected at large out of the Burgesses; in this it is altered, and the said Maior to bee chosen out of one of the Aldermen.

9. An Addicional power to add 8 Burgesses to bee Cōmon Counsellmen of the said Borough, w^{ch} was not in the former Charter, and they to have power with the Maior and Aldermen to act as Cōmon Counsell.

10, 11, 12. The Maior to warne Cōmon Counsell, and in case of his neglect, any six of the Cōmon Counsell by writing under their hands to sūmon a Cōmon Counsell and any 11 to make and act as a Cōmon Counsell, and to appoint a chaireman.

In the former Ch^{re} they could not act or make any Lawes without ye consent of the Maior; by this they may with the greater p^{te} of the Aldermen & Cōmon Counsell.

13. John Grove in the new Ch^{re} named the first Maior.

14. George Tymberlake and Will. Silver named the first Bayliffs.

15. The first 12 Aldermen named.

16. The first 8 Cōmon Counsellmen are named and continued during their lives.

18. The Maior in the former Ch^{re} was to bee sworne before the Aldermen, in the new before the Aldermen and Cōmon Counsell and the rest of the Burgesses.

20. The Bayliffs were formerly chosen by the Maior and Aldermen; in the new Ch^{re} they are to bee chosen yearly by the Maior, Aldermen, and Cōmon Counsellmen.

23. A Clause for the power and man^r of electing Cōmon Counsell is inserted.

☞ 29, 32. [*The Recorder in the former Ch^{re} was to continue*

during good behav^r; in the new was only during good behav^r and ye pleasure of ye Maior & Comon Counsell of ye said Borough or ye maior p^t of them.] Edmund Petty is made the first Recorder.

34. A power in case of sicknes of ye Recorder that ye Recorder may appoint a Deputy to be approved by ye Maior & Aldⁿ to execute ye place till the Recorder be againe enabled to execute it himself.

35. One of ye Aldermen who the Maior & Comon Counsell shall elect is also made a justice of peace, wch was not in the former Charter.

39. A power to have a prison wthin ye Borough is added in ye new Charter, wch was not in ye former, and to hold a sessions of ye peace for matt^{rs} there arrising twice in ye yeare, namely atte Easter & Michaelm^s.

43. A clause is added to restreyne fforeyn^{rs} from exercising any trade wthin ye Borough, except hee haue served as an apprentice for seaven yeares wthin ye Borough & bee there inrolled, nor shall any fforegn^r use any stall in ye markett nor sell any [*word illegible*] in merchandise w^{ts}oever except cattell, graine, & victualls, without the license of the Maior and Comon Counsell, if they should judge ye towne not sufficiently supplied.

☞ [*And the Maior, Bayliffs, and Burgesses may take toll of corne, graine or cattell y shalbe brought into ye markett.*]

46. A power to the Maior and Recorder or their Deputy to hold a Cort of Record every three weekes on Munday, and to attach according to ye custome of forrein attachm^{ts}, London, in all acc^{ns} upon ye Case, Det, Accompt [*word illegible*], Deficit, Detinue of Ch^{res}, distresses, & all acc^{ns} reall p^{sonall} & mixed wthin ye said Burough & wthin the p^{ishes} of greate Mussenden, little Mussenden, Agmundesham, Pen, Beconsfield, Hitcham, Taplowe, Hugenden, & Brandfee, being adjacent p^{ishes}, soe as such debts or damges exceed not 500^{lb}; noe suit depending there not exceeding 50^{lb} to be removed. A grant of all ffynes & amercem^{ts} arising to the said Cort; small debts under 20^{lb} the p^{ty} to bee condemned uppon not appearance of sum^{ns} by a serrgt at mace, and ye debt to bee ordered to bee paid by app^{con}m^t of small sumes if the Maior and Comon Counsell shall think fitt.

[*Marginal Note.*] The former had Connisance of their acc^{ns} only, and had not ye p^{ishes} here mençoned wthin their jurisiçon.

49. Power to make a Serg^t at Macee and to make as many under Bayliffs as shall be needfull.

52. [*No officer to enter into ye said Borough or Lib^{ties} unles upon default of ye Maior or Bayliffs to serve any proces, but the execuçon thereof wholly to app^{teine} to ye said Corporaçon.*]

54. A power to hold a Co^{rt} Leete twice a yeare, & that ye Mayor & his Successors shall be a Coroner.

57. The Corporaçon to have ye Assise of weights & measures and all ffynes and amercem^{ts} for offending therein.

☞ [*All ffelons' & ffugitives' goods, Deodands, treasures trove wthin ye said Borough.*]

63. The Cōmon of Pasture called Ry, formerly granted to ye Borough confirmed to them.

67. Power & authority is giuen to the Mayor and Cōmon Counsell to chuse a schoolmaster for the school of ye hospital.

The report of Prideaux and Ellis is in the following terms:—

May it please your Lordships,

Wee have, according to your order of Reference, considered the Draught of the Charter of Chipping Wycombe, and doe humbly certifie, That unto the License which is granted them to purchase lands there is necessary to bee added a Clause to what value it shall bee. And wee humbly conceive the Inhibiçon upon any to use their trade in the Borough if they have not served seaven yeares, or to use a Stall or sell Merchandise there without License, are not warrantable by Lawe. And the Clause to attach money in the hands of a Third person cannot bee granted. London hath it by custome, and is confirmed by Act of Parliament. And the Clause that a Suite there not exceeding 50^{lb} shall not bee removed is against Lawe. And the Clause giving power to the Maior and Common Counsell to appoint times for payment of money where a Burgess is questioned at the Suite of any person, if they conceive him not able to paye, is against Lawe. Some other things in forme and expression are fitt alsoe to bee amended. All which wee humbly certifie.

EDM. PRIDEAUX.
WILL^m. ELLYS.

28 January, 1656.

Another document (89, ii.) apparently laid before the Council at the same time, shows that the proposed extended Court of Record, so far from awakening opposition, was thoroughly popular in the neighbourhood:—

Whereas the Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Burrough of Cheping Wycombe in the County of Bucks (by the consent and approbaçon of the Maior Generall, Justices, and Gentlemen of the said County of Bucks, and also by the approbation of the ffreeholders and able inhabitants of the hundred of Disborough and the adiacent parishes of great Missenden, little Missenden, Agmondesham, Pen, Beaconsfield, Hitcham, Taplowe, Hedsor, & Brandsfee). Considering the great benefitt that might come unto all those adiacent parishes by a more easy, cheape and speedy way of sueing or being sued than by the ordinary way of Nisi-prius in the County; did petiçon his Highness the Lord Protector for a new pattent wth enlargement of a power to the Court of the Burrough aforesaid to arrest and sue in these adjacent places and parishes. And whereas his Highnes' Counsell by their order on the first of

January 1656 did order these adjacent parishes and places wthin 14 days to shew their reasons to the contrary.

Wee whose names are hereunto written, being inhabitants wthin the places and parishes aforesaid, doe hereby certifie That wee conceive such enlargement of the p'vileges to the Court of the Burrough of Chipping Wycombe as aforesaid, will tend very much to our benefitt and the benefitt of the whole Cuntry adjacent.

DISBOROUGH HUNDRED.

Jo. Plomer.
Nathaniell ——.
William Cleydon.
Thomas Lane.
Walter Cary.
John Collar.
James Gale.
William Sanders.
William Sanders, jun.
Robert Howell.
Richard Mooreton.
Hugh Hunt.
Robert Richards.
John Cocke.
Richard Ffreer.
Thomas Howard.
Richard Playstow.
Hugh Spencer.
Tho. Morton.
John Ladbrokee.
William Howell.

HITCHENDON CUM BRANSFEE.

Thomas Lane.
Francis Barnaby.
Thos. Weedon.
Esau Fastnedge.
Christo. Ch. Harwood.
Thomas Fellow.
Will. Widmore.
Will. Lane.
Tho. Lane.
Fra. Allnut.
William Shrimpton.
William Russell, senr.
David Bovington.

BECONSFIELD.

Richard Baldwyn.
Robert Aldridge.
Joseph Grimsdale.

GREATE MISSENDEN.

William ——.
William Morton.
Joseph Claydon.
Nehemiah Spriggin.
Robert Lane.

AGMUNDESHAM.

Richard Bovington.
Henry Child.
James Hunt.
John Day (?).
Henry ——.
Andrew ——.
Paul Line.
Richard Bondman.
Andrew Burrow.
James ——.
Robert Whitehall.
— Wingfield.

LITTLE MISSENDEN.

John Shrimpton.
Robert Readinge.
William Honor.
Christopher Legge.

PEN.

Geo. Long.
George Grove.
Jonathan Shrimpton.
Richard Shrimpton.
Matth. Grove.
Henry Long.

TAPLOWE.

Robert Aldridge.
John Beck X.
Henry Burt.
Thomas Ffoster.

Unfortunately some of these worthy persons made use of very scratchy pens, and some of the Amersham

signatures are especially difficult to decipher. There is a curious error in the Calendar in the description of these signatures, which are arranged in the original in four parallel columns. The compiler has given the name of the parish at the head of each column, and counted all the names beneath, whether of persons or parishes, as belonging to the inhabitants of that parish.

The Council, at their meeting on February 5th, ordered a warrant to be issued to the Attorney-General, authorising him to draw up a charter according to the substance of the draft, but embodying the alterations suggested by himself and his colleague.

We find that John Grove served as Mayor in 1656, and his fellow reformer, Samuel Guy, in 1657. Richard Nelson was Mayor in 1658, under which year Mr. Parker (p. 60) gives us an entry of the election of eight burgesses in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. Nelson's name has not appeared in connection with the dispute; but his successor, George Timberlake, was one of the original bailiffs under the Charter. The old party, however, got into power again at the Restoration. Richard Lucas, under whom the Charter was burnt in 1660, was Mayor again in 1667 and 1672. Another member of the Gibbons family, Thomas, held office in 1661, 1663, and 1669; Henry Elliott in 1664; and Nicholas Bradshaw in 1662, and again in 1672, when his "unquiett and turbulent" career came to an end by his sudden death on the day of his election.

We trace the names of some of the reforming party among the persecuted Quakers and Nonconformists. The Crendon Lane Congregational Church first met in the house of one of the Guy family. Jeremiah Steevens and John Raunce were fined and imprisoned for holding Quaker worship. The latter was the good physician of whose kindness Thomas Ellwood speaks so gratefully in his autobiography. It is satisfactory, however, to know that the Shambles' money is paid at the present time to the Governors of the Wycombe Grammar School and Almshouse Foundation for the support of the almshouses; and the rents of the lands at Coleshill and Hughenden are

still paid to the Charity Governors for the benefit of the poor. A debt of gratitude is assuredly due to the brave men who, in the face of obloquy and contempt, opposed and defeated municipal corruption, and maintained the rights of the borough and the poor.

W. H. SUMMERS.