

Some old Lawsuits connected with St. Albans.

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But for our ancestors' quarrels, we should really not know much about their personal history. There is nothing so welcome to the biographer as a reference to a good family feud (that finds its way to a court of law for settlement) with which his hero or heroine was mixed up.

And as this is so with regard to the biographer, so it is with the topographer, for it is in quarrels about property that we often get the most accurate and interesting description of localities.

More than this, in the records of our ancestors' quarrels we gain an insight into their method of daily life, and into the daily life of men and women around them.

The statements regarding the particular matter in dispute may, in the pleadings, perhaps, be coloured to accord with the contentions of the respective parties to a suit; but from the incidental facts brought out—in the mention of which, there is no need to apply the paint-brush or the tar-brush—we get what is probably accurate, and so, really valuable evidence!

Specially are these records of lawsuits valuable in early times—in times before the days of general letter-writing, and I am very glad to see that some of our local Archæological societies are taking up the printing of County Assize Rolls. Three early Assize Rolls for Northumberland, printed for the Surtees Society under the editorship of our member, Mr. William Page, F.S.A., to my mind, give a picture of daily life in that lawless border county, such as never before has been presented.

For these reasons I have been tempted to talk to you to-night about some old lawsuits concerning St. Albans and St. Alban's people.

A quarrel as to an unpaid rent which came before the court of Exchequer in 1485\* between two St. Albans men, Ralph Knyveton and Robert Pykering, inholder, gives us reference to a lease by Ralph to Robert, made in the 2nd year of the reign of Richard III., king, "de facto sed non de jure," of England, of a tenement in St. Albans called "LE CROSSKEYS," with one acre of pasture

\* Exchequer of Pleas, Plea Roll, 1 Hen. VII., m. 27-28.

to the same belonging. The defendant innkeeper denied that he accepted the lease, but the jury found that he did, and was therefore liable for the year's rent, £10, which, with 20s. damages, and £3 costs, brought the amount up to £14, and for this, judgment was issued.

In the next reign, that of Henry VIII.—the exact year I cannot give you, but, as I will prove directly, it was after 1537, and probably in 1540—we have a complaint of threatened bodily harm made in the court of Star Chamber by Ralph Rowlat, the younger, and John Maynard, against Richard Renshaw, a well-known inhabitant of our city, a benefactor to our charities, and one of the king's serjeants-at-arms.

Now as Renshaw does not vouchsafe to answer the complainants' bill, we have only their version of his threats. This is what they say of him: that "being a perverse and froward person, and a man of hawte mind and light behaviour amongst his neighbours, having in his retinewe certain lewd and combrous persons which dayly take their neighbours' sheep, horse, and other cattle, and cut off their ears and tails, and mark them with the said Renshaw's mark, to the intent the owners should not know their own cattle. Not regarding what injuries and wrongs they do, by reason that Renshaw, their master, doth maintain and support their mischieves, and beareth him bold of your grace, because he is your servaunt and so, over-fasythe your subjects in those parts; because he is justice of the peace within the shire, those that are wronged by him, dare not complain nor show their grief in the sessions, nor do they venture to procure indictments against him."

By all this, Renshaw "beareth himself so high that he hath utterly forgotten himself and his dutye and oath in that behalf taken." And daily seeks occasion to "quarrel, fall out, and fight"—words which might have been penned by dear Dr. Watts—with the Complainants and other the King's loving subjects. "Insomuch that"—and then the cause of the present complaint is set out. It seems that on "Easter Daye last past" Renshaw visited the Abbey "in most ryotous manner," wearing a long sword, and accompanied by three servants, each having "a sword and a bukler," and all purposing to slay the Complainants or any that opposed him in church. And with great violence, ejected Ralph Rowlet "out of his

seate-pewe and kneeling-place, wherein he was wont to kneel by appointment of the wardens of the said parish, and by no means would he allow either Rowlet or John Maynard, the other complainant, to again take the seat (nor had he since permitted them to do so) but gave them many obprobrious words and chekks and would have slayne and murdered them in the church upon that Easter day, but that the whole parish [I presume he means all the parishioners *in church*; an Abbey congregation of to-day does not always comprise the whole parish] perceiving the fury and great follye of the said Renshaw," rose from their seats and held him and his servants back from the Complainers.

By reason of all this, "God's service in the said church was not only letted and disturbed by the great noyse and crye of the people therein, but the minds and consciences of divers and many your loving subjects, intending then to take their rights *and to receive their Maker*, were greatlye distracted and vexed thereby. The like of which misdemeanours hath not been seen in those parts. Yet, not content with all this, Renshaw, of his further malice and high mind, in company with one Ralph Stepney and others to the number of four, each with a sword and buckler, on the same Easter day at after noone, lay in wayte for the Complainers, minding and purposing to slay and murder them as they came to hear evensong, by reason of which the Complainers, having knowledge thereof, were compelled to keep the house, and durst not come to here God's service, nor yet go about their necessary business, nor as yet do they dare to come to their parish church, since Renshaw, accompanied by divers persons unknown, with swords and bucklers, come every Holy Day to the church, facyng and bracyng, sekyng and inquiryng for your said subjects, to sley and murder them."

In consideration of all which the King is besought to command Renshaw to appear before the Council, in the Council Chamber at Westminster, there to answer for his conduct.

There is something in this bill of complaint that brings before us very vividly the scenes described, and the manners of the time. Its date may, I take it, be fixed prior to what is called the Reformation. I am not sure that the cause of the quarrel may not have been the right

to a particular seat in the Abbey, for, you see, Renshaw made no attempt to eject Rowlat and Maynard from the church, *but only from particular seats in the church*, which the complainants allege had been assigned to them. Whether the quarrel was as to the right to a seat or seats or not, the proceedings furnish incidental evidence of the antiquity of the system of seat reservation in churches—a fact which is forgotten, or, I fear, ignored by over-zealous advocates of the “free and open” system, who try and make you believe that reservation was unknown in days before the change of religion.

I have pointed out to you that Renshaw makes no defence, neither is there any record in the shape of an actual Star Chamber Order in the suit, but there is in October, 1540, an order of the Privy Council, made at Windsor, which directs that Renshaw and some of his relatives should keep the peace against those “abyden” in St. Albans. This may not be in reference to the hubbub in the Abbey, indeed it rather appears to apply to illegal interference with a lunatic’s estate, but I think from the Order that we may presume that Renshaw was something of the man that those he assaulted in the Abbey would have the King believe that he was.

But do not too hastily condemn Richard Renshaw. If he gratified the violence of his temper and filled his pockets as best he could during his life, he followed the good old rule of becoming docile as his strength left him, and generous when money was no longer any good to him. By his will, made in 1569, he gave the reversion of four houses in Spicer Street, one known as “The Vine,” to the Mayor and Burgesses, in trust that they should employ the rent of “The Vine” in keeping in repair the other three houses, which were to be used as almshouses. He died a fortnight after making his will, and was, according to Weever, buried at St. Peters.

Rowlat and Maynard, the objects of Renshaw’s attack at the Abbey, were probably then both young men. Afterwards they became noted in the county. Ralph Rowlat was owner of Gorhambury, and John Maynard, his brother-in-law, was possessed of that estate through his wife, and sold it about 1550 to Sir Nicholas Bacon.

I will now tell you about a suit commenced in Trinity Term, 43 Elizabeth, A.D. 1601, in the Court of Exchequer, concerning the Abbey Mills, which

incidentally affords a good deal of curious information. The Complainants were "John Digby, gentleman, and Thomas Preston, of St. Albans." Digby was possessed of the remainder of a Crown lease of the mills and had underlet them for a portion of his term to one Oliver, who had assigned his lease to Preston.

The Complainants start with the Queen's title: they say that she was seized in her demesne as of fee, in right of her Crown of England, of and in "One Water Corn Mill" in or near St. Albans "called the Abbey Mylle," situated upon a certain stream, brook, or river there, and of "all custom, suit, soken, and tol thereunto belonging," and they went on to allege that "the inhabitants within St. Albones towne" had ever been wont to grind their grain and corn at this Mill.

Now think what a profitable business this would imply: every bit of grain used in the town had, according to this contention, to be ground at the Abbey Mills. Such was the custom set up, and it might, of course, be a reasonable custom if this was the ancient manorial mill.

Digby and Preston's complaint was against a certain George Olebye, owner of a mill then recently erected above the Abbey Mills, at St. Michaels; the circumstances under which this new mill was built are chiefly what makes this suit of interest. This is the Complainants' version of the story:—

"The Dame Anne Bacon of Gorhamburie, widow," that is, the mother of Sir Francis Bacon, had within the last year, namely, in 1600, "erected and built one other water corn mill upon the said stream, brooke, or river," about half a mile distant from the Abbey Mills, upon certain ground which she then held, with reversion to her son, "Anthony Bacon, Esquire." This she had done, although she had a mill of her own, "sufficient for grinding all the corn thereabouts." She had demised this to Olebye, who then withdrew "all or most part of the suit, soken, custom, and grist" from the Mill, and "by himself, his servants, and carriers, does from time to time" fetch the grain from sundry persons to grind it at the new mill, and does also persuade those accustomed to patronize the Abbey Mill to come to his Mill: all which was to the great loss, damage, and hindrance" of the Complainants, and would in time grow "to the disinheritance of her Majesty," unless "this honourable

Court" could speedily afford some redress, for the Complainants would not have the wherewithall to answer their rent.

Then we come to Olebye's answer:—"True it is," he says, "that the Lady Anne Bacon hath lately erected (in the parish of St. Michael's) a mill upon the stream that falleth, and hath its currant, to Her Majesty's Mill"—the Abbey Mill,—“and hath demised the same to this Defendant.” But this new mill was fully a mile away from the Abbey Mill, and, more than that, there had been from old time another mill between the Abbey Mill and the new mill (this of course refers to the Mill at Kingsbury) which other mill was also in the Queen's possession and was conveyed by her to William Preston; and that above the new mill was yet another ancient mill—“sometime the inheritance of Anthony Bacon Esq<sup>re</sup> son and heir apparaunt of the said Lady Anne”—also in the possession of William Preston, who was, in all probability, a relation of Thomas Preston, one of the plaintiffs, and who Olebye “veryily thought” had set on foot this action.

The place where the new mill had been erected was, in the time of the late Lord Keeper Bacon *a force*, to force and bring the water to Gorhambury House; this force was erected about 23 years before the Lord Keeper's death, that is in 1556, or only a short time after he acquired Gorhambury and before he began his alterations and additions to the house, which were completed in 1558.

After his death, Lady Anne, “not finding such need of that water,” had taken down the force and erected, on its site the mill which was the subject of the present action. The removal of the “force” had, so the defendant contended, much “bettered” the stream to William Preston's mill and to the Abbey Mill, and so the new mill could be no prejudice, a statement which is borne out by witnesses.

The Defendant admits that Lady Bacon—as she had a perfect right to do—sends to his mill all the grain used in her house at Gorhambury instead of as she had done before, to William Preston's Mill; but, he says, the grain from Gorhambury was never sent to the Abbey Mill: this he knows, as 13 years before he himself had farmed the Abbey Mill.

In conclusion he does not deny that he has done his best to get persons to grind at his mill, and gives a flat denial to the existence of any such custom as that contended for,—namely, the exclusive right of the owners of the Abbey Mill to grind corn for the whole town. As for these persons not being able to pay their rent to the Queen, he offers practical proof of his disbelief in the statement. Let them hand over their estate to him; he will be able to pay the rent and put a good profit into his own pocket! Not the least interesting part of this answer is the fact that it is drawn and signed by FRANCIS BACON, who, you will remember had, in 1600, the date of the document, been at the Bar some 18 years.

Depositions\* were taken—we are not told at what house, but they were taken at St. Albans—on 7 January 43 Eliz. A.D. 1602, before Ralph Conysbye, Rowland Lytton—ancestor of Lord Lytton—and Francis Heydon, Esquires. William Pharoe, “Baker,” of St. Albans, aged about 50, says he used to grind at the Abbey Mills; now he grinds at the Defendant’s mills. The Defendant sends his servants to fetch the grain and returns it when ground, all free of charge for carriage; besides, Olebye had encouraged the Defendant’s trade, by lending him £3 in money and 20s. worth of whete; this lending “was a common use” amongst millers in the town. He admits that the new mill has damaged the business of the Abbey Mill and of other ancient mills in and about the town, but he knows of no “custom” which compelled grinding at one mill more than another.

William Norcatt of St. Albans, miller, aged 20, was evidently friendly to the Complainants, though he could not swear to the exclusive privilege they claimed; but “stopping up” water for the new mill, he said, caused the stream to overflow the land from Saundridge and “Chillwick” to Hempstead. There was a mill called “Chillwick Mill” which was a furlong nearer Gorham-bury than the New Mill; and, therefore, more convenient to Lady Bacon.

According to this witness, Mrs. Olebye was a good wife to the Defendant; and minded his interests as a wife should do. He had heard from “divers customers” that she had “persuaded with them” to leave the Queen’s Mill and come to the new one, where she would under-

\* Exchequer Depositions 43 Eliz. Hil. No. 6.

take that their corn should be ground "for less toll by a pound in the bushell" than was usually taken. He had heard, moreover, that Lady Bacon would have had her steward of Gorhambury lay a "payne," within her Court, on any of her tenants who did not use the new mill.

One more witness was Robert Shrimpton, a principal burgess of St Albans, aged 83 years. He had known the Abbey Mill and the other mill in the tenure of William Preston for full 60 years. The latter was built by a Londoner, whose name he does not remember, and afterwards tenanted by a miller named Butler and called "Butler's Mill." He, of course, remembered the days of the Abbots' sway at St. Albans, but even then he never heard of custom which compelled the inhabitants to grind their corn at the Abbey Mill. In divers dry seasons, he adds, "all the mills about were not able to serve the town, and the townspeople were forced to go 4 or 5 miles away to get their corn milled."

The only order I can find in this suit is dated 1 July, 1601.\* This states that on motion made that day "by Mr. Bacon," who informed the Court that the cause was ready for hearing, it was ordered that the same "shall be heard in the Exchequer Chamber next term."

A suit which we may just notice as it gives us a place name or two, came before the Exchequer of Pleas in 1586. It was between Robert Gyllett and Phillippa his wife, Plaintiffs, and Thomas Kylby, Defendants, complaining of the forcible entry on the defendant's part of two of the Complainants' houses in St. Albans in a certain place called "Halloway Streate" between the messuage called "le Welhowse" on the south side and the messuage of Robert Wolly on the north, on the street towards the east, and on a certain wall lately belonging to Thomas Wolly towards the west. There is no judgment entered.

We shall hear a good deal more about the family of Wolley later on.

A little before the mill suit, viz., in June, 1599, I find a judgment of the Court of Chancery in a suit in which the Mayor and Burgesses of St. Albans had complained against John Robotham and others, that they kept possession of certain copyhold lands which our

\* Exchequer Decrees and Orders. Eliz. : Vol. 27 fol. 168.

friend Richard Renshaw had left for the benefit of the school.

The judgment recites that the Mayor and Burgesses had shewn that Renshaw was seized by copy of court roll of "certain lands and grounds called '*Bullams lands*' holden of the Manor of Newlane in the parishes of St. Peter and St. Michael in the county of Hertford." These he had surrendered on trust for the schools, and it was ordered that the rent from the lands should be enjoyed by the school without further interruption of the Defendants who had alleged a title to the property; the name Gape or Cape occurs frequently in connection with this suit.\*

The site of the present Rectory House was the subject of a dispute in Chancery in 1601. Anthony Jackson, a St. Albans "Chapman," stated that Thomas Conyngsby, of Cliffords Inn, gentleman, had, for the sum of £3, demised to him a certain messuage in St. Albans called "the Pryor's Lodging and The Abbey Orchard thereto adjoining," comprising about 12 acres of land. Jackson thereupon made provision of 6 milch cows, which he placed on the ground "to eat the herbage" thereof, but these were promptly driven off by a man who had a previous lease (yet in being) from the Cliffords Inn "gentleman," against whom poor Anthony Jackson now sought redress. For this he applied "in friendly manner," but got instead "hard words and uncharitable speeches." Let us hope the Court of Chancery obtained something better than these things for poor Mr. Jackson. †

In 1606 there is passage of arms in the Exchequer of Pleas between Sir Robert Zinzan, *alias* Alexander, Knight, and Thomas Dockwra, then Sheriff of Herts. Sir Robert had received from the Queen a grant of the office of Bailiff of the "libertys" of St. Albans, and he challenged the right of the Sheriff of the County to exercise authority within the liberty; he won the day. ‡

For years after we see the Wolley family getting mixed up in litigation, which incidentally affords some useful local information. On the 14th April, 1608, Thomas Wolley filed a bill in Chancery against Thomas

\* Chancery Decree Roll No. 109, No. 6.

† Chan. Proc. Eliz, J j 1/71.

‡ Exchequer of Pleas, Plea Roll, 4 James 1, Trin., m. 47.

Wells. He was, he said, "one of the principal burgesses of the borough-town of St. Albans," and for the space of 30 years had possessed "a convenient dwelling house" in the town until "the late spreading abroad and contagiousness of the sickness called the Plague," which happened about "4 years since," *i.e.*, in 1604.

Three of his children died of the sickness in his said dwelling-house. One of them, "being a man of trade," had sundry wares in the said house at the time of his decease, and the Complainant, "being an old man and not able to deal therein," was forced to let the house to a certain Leonard Wilkes, who bought the wares.

Ever since, the Complainant had been destitute and unprovided with a convenient dwelling-house in St. Albans, although he was "the most ancient principal burgess of the said borough, and comoraunt as resiant there for the publique weale." In what capacity he was useful, he does not say. Perhaps he hired himself out, when litigation arose, as the "oldest inhabitant."

About August, 1605, the Complainant learnt of a certain messuage or tenement called "*the Chequer*," situate in a street called "the Malt Market." This, he was told, would be "a convenient abode for him," and as the fee-simple was in one of his brothers, Richard Wolley, parson of the parish church of Wyddington, in Essex, he presumed he might easily obtain it. But a lease had been already made to one Thomas Hood, and Robert Wolley, another brother, negotiated a lease for his veteran brother, a lease on reversion to commence on the conclusion of that made to Hood.

So far so good, but Thomas Wells, "inn-holder," of St. Albans, in a "very unneighbourly way," and "of purpose to cross and wrong" the Complainant, rode over into Essex secretly to see brother Richard, and to "contract with him for the fee-simple of the said premises," which "by reason of the plausible speeches and persuasions uttered by the said Thomas Wells," Richard agreed to.

Wells maintained that his only reason for wanting the fee-simple of "*the Chequer*," was that, having the adjoining "tenement or Inn," called "*the Halfe Moone*," he wanted to prevent possible annoyance from "damming up the windows or lights" of the "*Half Moon*," and offered to grant the Plaintiff a lease of the

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“*Chequer*” for 21 years at £7 6s. 8d. *per annum*, which the Complainant agreed to.

But it is pretty obvious from his proceedings from first to last that Mr. Wells did not want to have his liquor trade at “*the Half Moon*” interfered with by Mr. Wolley next door at the “*Chequers*,” and so he refused to carry out his offer. The offer said Wolley was an “agreement:” hence the action in which I have not found either an answer or a decree. We hear some more about Woolley’s quarrels with the Wells family later on.

The “capital messuage or Inn called the White Hart” was the subject of a chancery action in 1617. This was brought by one Thomas Godstowe, whose wife Anne was the widow of the former Innkeeper. She had appointed, during her widowhood, Thomas Marriott to exercise the place of tapster and ostler, and for “the preparation of victuals within the said Inn” for 17 years. The dispute is apparently as to the manner in which these duties were performed. A curious feature in it is the evident profit attending the exercise of the offices in question. Marriott got no money for exercising them, but, on the contrary, he was to pay the widow £40 a year for the *privilege* of holding the offices. \*

The year 1621 saw a good many St. Albans people mixed up in law suits—most of them about public-houses. I will deal with the complaint of Richard Baldwyn first. He was a Watford man, a tanner by trade, and his father was Henry Baldwyn, of St. Albans, who owned a good deal of town property, including a house in “Fishpool Street, sometimes called Salypathe, alias Fishpool Ward,” and two Inns, whereof one is commonly called *The Peahenne*, and the other the *Woolpacke*. The Complainant, being in want of money, agreed to sell the house in Fishpool Street to Edward Goodale, innholder, for £210, provided he could give a good title. This he could not give because his nephew refused to execute a conveyance which the nephew by his father’s will was bound to do, hence the action. †

Now let me say a word about another suit in 1621—the last I need trouble you with to-night—one of interest, as it arose in consequence of the peculiar privilege enjoyed by the Corporation of St. Albans of

\* Chan. Proc. Jas. I G 12/48.

† Chan. Proc. Jas. I. B. 8.

granting "Wine Charters," the profits of which were to be applied for the benefit of our school. I will just tell you—or rather remind you—shortly of the history of this system.

Queen Elizabeth, on the 24th March in the 12th year of her reign (A.D. 1569-70), granted, for the relief of the master and school at St. Albans, to the then Mayor and burgesses and their successors full power and authority to appoint two discreet and honest persons dwelling within the borough to sell and expose for sale all and every sort of wine.

There is something particularly interesting in this charter from the fact—which Mr. A. E. Gibbs, in his history of the Grammar School, points out—that it was granted at the instigation of "our beloved and very faithful councillor, Sir Nicholas Bacon, knight, Lord Keeper." This is, of course, a marked proof of the interest taken by Bacon in the welfare of school. There is another interesting feature about the charter, that is, that it was granted by the Queen whilst she was actually the guest of the Lord Keeper at Gorhambury, where local matters were, no doubt, discussed.

James I. on the 18th of December in the 4th year of his reign (A.D. 1606), extended the number of licences to sell wine to three: but—probably in order to show some special favour to the family of Woolley—he did not confer upon the Corporation the power of granting the third licence, but he himself conferred it, stipulating, however, that the annual payment for its enjoyment, a very small one, by the way, in proportion to the others, should be made to the Corporation, who, in turn, should devote it to the augmentation of the schoolmaster's stipend. This third licence was for three lives—that of Robert Woolley and the lives of his sons Leonard and Robert, with power to assign. The privilege granted is that of having a wine-tavern or cellar in the mansion-house—that is the principal residence—of the Woolleys' or their assigns. Mr. Gibbs, in his remarks on the charters, has been misled by the words "*in domo mansionale*," and quotes them as referring to a particular building in the town: he speaks (on p. 25) of the charter giving power to sell wine in a tavern or cellar in the '*Mansion-House*,' a remarkable place certainly to obtain refreshment!\*

\* Patent Roll, 8 James I., part 25, No. 9.

Four years after this charter to the Woolleys, the king granted the reversion of the third licence to the Corporation, who might, after the deaths of the Woolleys and their assigns, confer it upon whom they pleased.\*

This latter grant to the Corporation was evidently the outcome of jealousy at Woolley's charter. We shall learn, presently, that this charter was viewed with general hostility, and I think we have indication of this in Mr. Gibbs' extract from the Corporation minutes for 1609, where we find a direction that the town charter and the tavern charter should be renewed; the latter at the expense of William Woolley.

Now the very nature of the proceedings I have just sketched seems to suggest the probability of litigation arising thereon. In 1621 this litigation began. William Woolley, another son of Robert, an infant, by his guardian, was plaintiff, and the Corporation of St. Albans were the defendants.

The complainant's bill recites that on obtaining Queen Elizabeth's charter, the Corporation granted the two licences to Hugh Elliott and Robert Robbins, both inhabitants of the borough. In 8 James I. the Corporation desired to dispose of the reversion of these leases, as they had great need of money in consequence of the king's projected visit to the town; they therefore disposed to Robert Woolley of the reversion of the licence—either Elliott's or Robbins', which ever first fell due.

For this licence Robert Woolley nominated his son William, the complainant in the action of which I am speaking.

In due course the reversion happened; whereupon Thomas Wells, the landlord of the "Half-Moon," of whom we have heard before, "being of a greedy and covetous disposition," and seeing some flaw in the grant in reversion, combined with one Thomas Gillman to defeat William Woolley of his rightful inheritance.

Thomas Gillman had a friend at court, a brother Richard, who was servant "to the late Viscount St. Albans," Francis Bacon, and he procured his lordship's letters to the Corporation, bidding them give the reversion to Thomas Gillman.

This was the complainant's story! The redress asked for was the cancelling of Gillman's grant.

The Mayor and burgesses of St. Albans answered the

\* Ibid.

complaint on 21st Dec., 1621. Their answer is incidentally curious and noteworthy in many ways:—

They recite Edward VI.'s foundation charter of the Grammar School; by virtue of this, the Mayor and burgesses "did erect and appoint" for the said school, "an ancient chapel annexed to the east end of the parish church of St. Albans, commonly called Our Lady's Chapel, and severed from the said church," which, ever since, had been, they said, employed as the school.

They then recite the establishment of the wine-licence system for augmenting the schoolmaster's stipend, and they tell of the bestowal of the first licences, just as the complainant had set out the story.

Then they deal with the third licence granted "at a very small rent" by James I. to Robert Woolley, which they say was "to the great prejudice" of the two original holders of licences. Numerous petitions were presented to Lord St. Albans, "then Solicitor to his Majesty," against Woolley, and the whole question was referred to an arbitrator, who ordered that Woolley should pay yearly for his licence an equal rent with the other two holders of licences.

But, as we have seen by the bill of complaint, Robert Woolley, the grantee of the new licence, also desired to possess himself of the reversion of one of the two first-granted licences, and the Mayor and burgesses, "having at the time great occasion for money for the entertainment of his Majesty," consented to grant him the reversion, naming as the grantees, Robert's son, William Woolley, and his guardian.

This grant was, on reference to two masters in Chancery, found to be void; the Corporation not being able to make grants in reversion. That, of course, is an answer—if true—to the complainants' bill. The Corporation, at the request of the then Lord Chancellor, "then and now their High Steward," finding themselves greatly in want of £200 for repair of the school, granted the second of the two first licences (then actually void) to Thomas Gillman, so that was the licence which Gillman obtained.

I find no final decree in this suit, but only an interlocutory order, which directs that the money payable to the Corporation by the person or persons holding the licence should be paid into court until their title to that licence

had been settled. In all probability the matter was in the end compromised.

These wine-licences (and the manner in which they are dealt with by the Corporation of St. Albans) have formed the subject of litigation on many subsequent occasions—one as recent as the year 1876; but of these I need not speak.

Ladies and gentlemen,—I will bring my somewhat disjointed remarks to a close. If you agree with me that there is, in these old disputes, much that illustrates the life and times of the litigants, why then, those of you who engage in litigation to-day, will pay your lawyers' bills with a lighter heart; because, you will know that the record of your pleadings, no matter how dry it may seem to you, will really be of some use to the author of the 21st or 22nd century who wants to write the history of the 19th.

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