

# CHAPTER XXI

## MANCHESTER

“He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave,  
By laboursome petition; and, at last,  
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.”

— Shakespeare, Hamlet

The Collegiate Church, now the Cathedral of Manchester, was founded about 1420 in this already ancient town by Thomas de la Warre, baron and priest, rector or parson of St. Mary's, Manchester, and lord of the manor. The flourishing town of woollen industries, introduced by the Flemings a hundred or more years earlier, demanded a new and more capacious church; and De la Warre, the last of his noble house, determined to provide buildings in which a Warden, priests or Fellows, and choristers, should be continually resident, as well as to found a new church. He gained the consent of his parishioners to the appropriation of estates belonging to the existing rectory, as an income for the college, and supplemented it from his own lands in the district. He also obtained a charter of foundation from Henry V., dated May 9. The college was dissolved by Edward VI. and refounded by Henry VIII.; but by the time of Elizabeth its lands had been plundered, sold or leased, she herself becoming a sharer in the profits of spoliation until there was hardly any clear property left. At the instance of Dean Nowell, an inquiry was instituted, with the result that the college was granted a new charter in 1578, as Christ's College, to consist of a Warden, four Fellows, and two chaplains, with choristers. Nowell and Oliver Carter were two of the first Fellows. The second Warden was Dr. Chadderton, who had been Leicester's chaplain, and was Bishop of Chester. Under him the Catholics were relentlessly persecuted, Manchester prisons were filled, and the famous Marprelate printing press was discovered and seized. Chadderton's promotion to the see of Lincoln in 1595 made an opening for our persistent place-beggar to be disposed of at last.

Dee arrived in Manchester on Monday afternoon, February 15, 1596, and took up his abode in the college. On the following Saturday he was installed in the Wardenship, between nine and eleven o'clock, as he tells us. He has unfortunately left no account of the ceremony. His first business was to become acquainted with the tenants for the college lands, and the owners of tithes which constituted its revenue. On April 2, he says Sir John Byron and his son, Mr. John Byron, dined with him at the college. This family, although Newstead had been acquired some forty or fifty years previously, were still often resident on their Lancashire estates. Clayton, near Manchester, was in fact then their chief residence. A little later in the month, Dee records the courts kept for the manor of Newton, in Manchester parish, of which the Warden and Fellows were lords. The Dean and Canons, the present representatives of Warden and Fellows, still hold a court leet twice a year for this manor.

There is an interesting letter from Dee to Robert Bruce Cotton, the antiquary, dated in May this year, throwing light on his relations with the people in his employ — copyists, assistants or apprentices. He had brought with him from Mortlake Antony Cowley, who had formerly been in Cotton's service. Dee was

anxious to know if he had departed from the employ of his late master with his good will.

“Truely, for my part, I will receyve none to my simple service (man or woman) unleast they come from theyr Masters or Mistresses with theyr well liking of suche their departure from them. Therefore, I wold, by this bearer, gladly receyve your answer herein, by word of mouth or by your letter. And so shall I be free from all offence giving to your worship, or any els in this cause: as I am most free from coveting, desyring or longing after my neighbour’s wife or any servant of his. If I might have a thousand pounds to sollicite or procure any mans servant to forsake his master or mistress, and to come to me or any other, I wold not do it, God knowes.”

In about three weeks Dee received a reply to this considerate letter, evidently not entirely satisfactory, for on June 3 he paid Antony Cowley 20s. and discharged him. Next day “Antony went forth early from my house, I know not whither.”

Dee now began to direct his whole attention to his charge: the college and the college lands. A royal commission was appointed to sit and examine its internal affairs. On June 18 “the commission for the college was sent to London to be engrossed in the Duchy office.” Dee was a layman; he had always stipulated he should have no cure of souls attached to whatever benefice he might hold. For the daily services at Manchester he employed a succession of curates (mostly unsatisfactory), to whom he paid “wages 50s. for three months.” He was far more interested in the temporal than the spiritual welfare of his college, and indeed his desire for such an appointment seems rather to have been solely prompted by the selfish, if necessary, wish for an income and means to pursue his own studies in peace. He was to find neither in Manchester.

In June he received a visit from Mr. Harry Savile, the antiquary, of the Bank, Halifax, and by him he sent a request to Christopher Saxton, of Dunningley, near Halifax, to come and arrange a survey of the town of Manchester, and consult about the parish boundaries. Saxton was a well-known character of the time, the holder of a patent from the Queen, whose arms appear upon the maps he made of the three counties of Chester, York and Lancaster. They were the first maps of Britain made from actual survey, and had been issued as an atlas in 1579, most of the maps having been engraved in 1577. His visits to Dee lasted over three weeks; notes are entered of his measuring the township and visiting Hough Hall, the seat of Nicholas Mosely, the Lancashire clothier who, two or three years later, became Lord Mayor of London and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. The boys, Arthur and Rowland; the two faithful assistants, Crocker and Walkden accompanied Dee and Mr. Saxton on the peregrination. Harry Savile seems to have made one of the party also. Unfortunately, Saxton’s Manchester survey is not now known to be in existence.

A surprise visit was paid to the Warden on June 26 by his landlord, the Earl of Derby, and a large party of ladies and gentlemen, including Lady Gerard, wife of the Master of the Rolls; her daughter Frances, and her husband, Sir Richard Molyneux, of Sefton, a former member for the county of Lancaster. Their son-in-law, Mr. Richard Hoghton, of Hoghton Towers, and others, also accompanied the Earl. The Warden says: “They came suddenly upon me after three of the clock. I made them

a skoler's collation, and it was taken in good part. I brought his honor and the ladyes to Ardwick Green toward Lyme, to Mr. Legh his howse, 12 myles off." Mrs. Legh was Lady Gerard's second daughter, so it was altogether a family party that descended so unexpectedly on the Warden, and no doubt ate merrily of his "scholar's collation." The only absence from Manchester recorded by the Warden (except the two years in London) was on August 13 this year, when he says that he "rid toward York and Halifax, returning from York on the 20th."

On September 1, Mary Goodwyn came "to govern and teach" the two younger children, Madinia, aged six, and Margaret, one year old. There was a field or two let with the College House, and the Warden now turned farmer, getting a small drove of seventeen head of cattle up from his kinsfolk in Wales to graze the pasture. They were brought up by the "courteous Griffith David, nephew to Mr. Thomas Griffith, and were a present." Dee had to visit Sir John Byron about the college tenants.

"Who pretended that we have part of Faylesworth Common within our Newton Heath, which cannot be proved, I am sure. We wer agreed that James Traves (being his bayly) and Franis Nutthall, his servant for him, shold with me understand all circumstances, and so duly to proceed."

The close of the year was marked by an episode which might have gone far towards clearing Dee's character from the aspersions still being cast upon him. Nowhere was superstition and belief in witchcraft more prevalent than in Lancashire, and in November and December of this year he seems to have been applied to for advice as regards a woman and seven children, said to have become demoniacally possessed through the influence of one Hartley, a "conjurer." Dee's curate, Matthew Palmer, happened to go in as Hartley was praying over the woman in a fit. He demanded what he was doing.

"`Praying.'

"`Thou pray! thou canst not pray,' quoth he. `What prayer canst thou say?'

"`None,' saith he, `but the Lord's Prayer.'

"`Say it,' quoth he, the which as I remember, he could not say."

Dee "utterly refused to meddle with the affair, and advised the father to consult with godlye preachers and appoint a private fast." Perhaps he remembered that when he asked, long before, if he had done well concerning Isabel Lister, vexed of a wicked spirit, the angel's reply had been "Friend, it is not of thy charge." He sent for Hartley, and "so sharply rebuked him that the children had more ease for three weeks after." The devils were finally exorcised by a godly preacher, John Darrell, or, as we suspect, by the children's release from Hartley's attentions, who was hanged soon after. Dee's library, a good part of which he must have moved to Manchester, was constantly in request at this time. It was rich in books on demonology and possession, and Lancashire justices of the peace who had to deal with these cases of witchcraft brought before them seem to have resorted to such works, for and against the persecution and annihilation of witches, as the *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basle, 1566) of John Wier, the *Fustis Daemonum* and the *Flagellum Daemonum* of the monk Hierom Menghi (Frankfort 1582, Boulogne 1586). All these Dee records lending to Mr. Edmund Hopwood, of Hopwood, a deputy-lieutenant and ecclesiastical commissioner, as well as a J.P. Wier or Weier was very likely known to Dee at Louvain. He was one of the earliest apologists for these unfortunate folk,

and pleaded that, their brains being disordered by melancholy, they merited pity, not punishment. His book contains the first account of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," from the archives of the town of Hamelin. A Spanish grammar was lent to Mr. Barlow for his son. Mr. Matthew Heton was the borrower of theological works, including the *Concordantiae Bibliorum* (1555) of Robert Stephens, the illustrious printer of the New Testament; and a Calvinistic treatise, *De Coena Domini*, written by Dr. Pezel, who had, we remember, commemorated Dee's departure from Bremen in 1589 by verses. Dee lent Heton books, but Heton lent Dee ten pounds on a bill of hand. To John Cholmeley "I lent my Latyn booke in 8vo, *De Morbis Infantum*."

The disputes over tithes and lands belonging to the college naturally affected the Warden's income, and Dee found himself compelled to borrow small sums as before. Finally he was reduced to raise money on his plate, and especially on the handsome double gilt tankard, with a cover, which was the christening gift of the Countess of Hertford to her god-daughter Frances. It weighed 22 ounces, and Dee tells how he delivered it to Charles Leigh, one of the college "singing men," to lay in pawn in his own name with Robert Welsham, the goldsmith, "till within two days after May-day next. My daughter Katherine and John Crocker [the old servant], and I myself [John Dee], were at the delivery of it and waying of it, in my dyning chamber. It was wrapped in a new handkercher cloth." All that was obtained on the tankard was 4 pounds of the current value.

In the spring of 1597, Dee records, on May 4, the last of the Rogation days of the year, a very interesting topographical event, viz., the perambulation of the bounds of old Manchester by himself, the curate, and the clerk.

Away in the south-eastern corner of England, in the little village of Bourne, near Canterbury, about this very time, Richard Hooker, the saintly scholar, was performing a similar perambulation, of which Izaak Walton has left us the immortal picture. A homily was prepared for the service, a psalm sung, and the malediction pronounced, "Cursed be he that removes his neighbour's landmark." Izaak Walton tells us that Hooker, to look at, was an

"Obscure harmless man in poor clothes, his loins girt in a coarse gown or canonical coat; of a mean stature and stooping, yet more lowly in the thoughts of his soul; his body worn out, not with age, but study and holy mortification. Yet he would by no means omit the customary procession; persuading all, both rich and poor: if they desired the preservation of loe and their parish rights and liberties, to accompany him in his perambulation; and most did so. In which perambulation, he would express more pleasant discourse than at other times, and would then always drop some loving and facetious observations, to be remembered against the next year, especially by the boys and young people; still inclining them, and all his present parishioners, to meekness and mutual kindnesses and love, because love thinks no evil, but covers a multitude of sins."

The Warden of Manchester has not left us such an impression of the ancient antiquarian custom performed as a holy rite of devotion, but as an exact topographer and mathematician he has given a highly valuable record: —

1597. "May 4. I with Sir Robert Barber, curate, and Robert Tilsley, clerk of Manchester parish church, with diverse of the town of diverse ages, went in Perambulation to the bownds of Manchester parish: began at the Leeless Birche

against Prestwicke parish, and so had vew of thre corner stake, and then down tyll Mr. Standysh new enclosure on Thelmore, wher we stayed, and vewed the stake yet standing in the back of the dich; [it] being from the corner eleven measures of Mr. Standley's stik, then in his hand, and 2 fote more; which stik I did measure afterward, and it did conteyn in length: feet 5, ynch 3. The total mesure: fete 69, ynches 9. At which place Teblow, servant to Mr. Ashton of Chaderton, did meet us. The survey geometricall of the very circuits of Manchester parish wer ended in this, being the sixth day of my work folks doings."

In the Chetham Library is a holograph letter from Dee to the rector of Prestwich, William Langley, dated two days before this perambulation, informing him of the project for making a chart of the parish bounds, and inviting him,

"As one side of our parish in Thielmore doth border upon some parts of your parish of Prestwicke, to request some one or two of the auncient of your parish to be also beholders of our bounds, notifying toward your parish in that place. My neighbours do intend to come on Wensday next, in the morning about 9 or 10 of the clok, to that part that is by Goodman Smehearst's house, and so toward the birche tree that is called the Leeless Byrche, and thereabouts, for a little space; to beggyn the vew of the bownds and meres of Manchester parish: by the order of an enjoyned work by the higher powres, for avoyding of undue encroaching of any neighbourly parish one on the other. You understand me sufficiently well, I dowt not. Pardon my boldness so bluntly to borde you with so homely a sute.

"Your wurships sincere

"Wellwisher in Christe,

"John Dee, Warden."

John Crocker and several other men were occupied for some weeks in marking the boundaries of the manor; they met with extraordinary opposition from the landowners, and on June 14 Dee alludes to a riot that took place at Newton, Captain Bradley and others endeavouring to hinder the college employees in their labour. What with opposition abroad and difficulties with his curate at home, Dee was finding the coveted appointment no bed of roses. He records another of his characteristic dreams — the dreams of a bibliophile, to whom books are treasures as dear almost as his children: —

"This night I had the vision and shew of many bokes in my dreame, and among the rest was one great volume, thik, in large quarto, new printed, on the first page whereof as a title in great letters was printed Notus in Judaea Deus. Many other books methought I saw, new printed, of very strange arguments. I lent Mr. Edmund Hopwood of Hopwood my Malleus Maleficarum to use till New Year's tyde next, a short thik old boke, with two clasps, printed anno 1517."

It was now early August. So Hopwood, who was bent on mastering the subject of witchcraft, was to have about four months to study *The Hammer for Witches*, a book first issued in 1489, after the Bull against sorcery of Pope Innocent VIII., by the three sorcery inquisitors. It was translated into German, *Hexenhammer*, and formed the text-book of procedure against witches in Germany.

Its authors give emphasis to their learned observation that witch-craft is more natural to women than men, because of the inherent wickedness of their hearts! In mediaeval times there appeared, alas! no safe and inconspicuous path for ordinary women. The entire sex consisted apparently of either angels or devils.

On a Sunday in August, Dee entertained the Earl and Countess of Derby at a “banket at my loding at the College, hora 4 1/2.” They had newly taken up their residence at Alport Park, which had been the college property before the dissolution of the monasteries. It is now in the heart of the city, somewhere near the Midland Railway works.

There was scant time for literary labours amid so much entertaining topographical work and litigation; but in September Dee sent to his former friend, now Sir Edward Dyer, a treatise he had some time written on “The Queen’s Title Royal and Sea Sovereignty in St. Georges Channel and all the Ocean adjoining to England, Scotland and Ireland.” He quotes in it so freely from his *British Monarchy* (see ante, p. 39) that he encloses a copy of that work, written twenty years before, in case his correspondent does not possess one handy. The letter gives such a graphic picture of the state into which the college affairs had fallen, and of the characteristic energy with which Dee set about to try and reform them, that it must be quoted at some length. When the accompanying volume and manuscript have been fully discussed, the writer passes on to the

“intricate, cumbersome, and lamentable affairs of estate of this defaced and disordered college, whereunto not only I am assigned for my portion of maintenance, for me and all myne, but also, by college oath, bownde to see unto the right and dignitie thereof. Which hat bred unto me already, both wonderfull care of mynde and no little payne taking, ever since my entrance, and daylie doth and will brede me more and more. And hath browght me likewise in great debt, by reason of the pore Revenue of my stipend (of only iiijs. a day for me and all myne), and that in these tymes of very great dearth here, yea, so great, that unleast (in his most fatherly Providence) the Almighty God had stirred up some mens hartes to send me, this present yere, from Dantzic, some barrells of kye; from Wales some cattall, and from Hull some fish for Lent: God knoweth that it passed all our wittes and habilitie to devise or use any other meanes, sufficient to the preserving of the lives of me and my familie together, being now but of eightene persons, most nedefull: I my wife and our children, being the one half of them. So hard and thynne a dyet, never, in all my life, did I, nay was I forced, so long to use: Neyther did ever any household servants of myne have so slender allowance at their Table. And yet all that hath not so much pynched me inwardly as the cares and cumbers for the college affaires have done, for they have altered, yea barred and stayed my whole course of life, and bereaved me of my so many yeres contynued Joyes, taken in my most esteemed studies and exercises.

“But as it pleaseth the king of heven and earthe thus to deale with me: So I beseeche him to give me grace to like best of this his long leading of me per multas tribulationes. And Beside all the rest, This encreaseth my grief: that I know no one as yet of her Majesties most honorable Privy Counsaile, who willingly and comfortably will listen unto my pitifull complainte and Declaration: How this Colledg of Manchester is almost become No College, in any respect; I say in any respect, forr I can verifie my wordes to[o] manifestly. But why do I cumber yr

wurship (thus abruptlie) with such my colledg cumbers? Pardon me, I pray you, the pang of my mynde, half amazed, when the multitude of these cumbers and of the confused and intricate causes of this Colledge, do russh at once into my fantazie. But, undowtedly, either God will give me grace sufficient and send me might help (tempore opportune) to end them, or else they will help to hasten my deliverance from these and all other vayne and earthly Actions humayne.

“Sir, how well (and that hartily) not onely I, but my paynfull Jane, and my children of discretion, allso do, at God’s handes, wich unto yr wurship, you my easily gesse, for it is our duetie.

“And so, I beseche your wurship undowtedly to perswade your selfe of us.  
Manchester, September 8, A. 1597.

“Yor wurships in fidelitie and sinceritie,

“John Dee.”

A new steward of the college was appointed: Humphrey Davenport, who afterwards became Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and as such delivered judgment upon ship money in Hampden’s case. Very few allusions to domestic and family matters occur in the diary for these Manchester years, but in November, 1597, an accident is recorded to Arthur, who was at home for a time. He was amusing himself by fencing with Edward Arnold, one of Dee’s men and his usual messenger to London, when the foyne or thrust of the rapier of his opponent damaged his left eye. The lad was now about seventeen, probably already entered at Christ Church, Oxford.

Correspondence with friends in London, as Dr. Julio, a well-known physician of the time, and Dr. Caesar (afterwards Sir Julius Caesar and Master of the Rolls), both of Italian origin, sometimes relieved the Warden’s tedious and tiresome disputes with the Fellows, the tenants and the tithe owners of the college.

To Caesar, as Master of the Requests, Dee wrote on October 2, 1596, on behalf of William Nicholson, about an action he had brought against two persons for enclosing moor and mine land at Reddish. Some idea of the lawless proceedings of the time may be gathered from Dee’s description of the injuries the plaintiff had received in having his barns pulled down and his corn and hay, “to the quantitie of a great number of loads, cast out of doors, which some of my family beheld.” Dee adds pointedly: “I shall be forced ere it be long to fly to your direction and help in causes Judiciall”; and ends by a reference to Caesar’s recent marriage, six months earlier, to a Manchester lady (Alice, daughter of Christopher Green): “God bless you and your new Joye.”

Oliver Carter was more troublesome than ever, and lawsuits were instituted by the Warden both against him and George Birch, another of the Fellows. On Sunday, September 25, Dee writes: “Mr. Oliver Carter, his impudent and evident disobedience in the church.” There was evidently a scene, though not, as Mr. Halliwell has it, caused by Carter’s “dissoluteness in the church.” There was no house for the Warden, but the fines of the Fellows for absence were by the last charter to be devoted to its provision. If they did not pay, Dee had to meet the rent himself. At the beginning of 1598 there were four lawsuits on the Warden’s hands, but he records that he “stayed” them all, for one cause or another, one until Sir John Byron returned. In Januaru the college gate and a large piece of the wall fell down at midnight, so there were repairs to be made. He had a letter from John Pontoys, the

friend who had sent him twenty-one loads of Dantzic rye, very useful for consumption. Another welcome contribution for domestic use arrived at this time, viz., “two lings and two haberdines from Mr. Harry Savill, from Lichefield.” Haberdines are dried and salted cod. He records an eclipse of the sun on February 25, with the comment that although it was a cloudy day there was great darkness about half-past nine.

In March, the entries in the diary end abruptly, and are not resumed again till June, 1600, a period of more than two years, of which there appears no record. The time was apparently spent in London or at Mortlake; the purpose of the journey was no doubt to represent to the Privy Council or other authorities the terribly involved state of affairs in Manchester, where the college had become almost “no college.”