

**A LANCASHIRE PEDIGREE CASE: OR, A
HISTORY OF THE VARIOUS TRIALS FOR
THE RECOVERY OF THE HARRISON
ESTATES, FROM 1873 TO 1886 TOGETHER
WITH A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE MANY
FORGERIES AND FRAUDULENT ENTRIES**

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J. P. EARWAKER

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IN PARISH REGISTERS, MARRIAGE LICENCE BONDS, &c.,

PUBLICLY EXPOSED AT THE TRIAL AT LIVERPOOL, MAY 25TH TO 28TH, 1886,

WITH

A PEDIGREE OF THE HARRISON FAMILY.

BY

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&c. &c.

WARRINGTON:

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1887.

TO
HIS HONOUR
HENRY FOX BRISTOWE, Esq., Q.C.,
VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER,
BEFORE WHOM
THE DECISIVE TRIAL FOR THE HARRISON ESTATES
WAS HEARD IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF THE COUNTY PALATINE,
ST. GEORGE'S HALL, LIVERPOOL,
MAY 25TH TO 28TH, 1886,
THIS ACCOUNT OF THAT IMPORTANT TRIAL,
TOGETHER WITH A HISTORY OF THE PREVIOUS LITIGATION
IN CONNECTION WITH THESE ESTATES,
IS
MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

The following pages contain an account of certain forgeries, as ingenious as they were audacious. Although it is an indictable offence to tamper with entries in Parish Registers, it is only very occasionally that such cases come into the Law Courts, whilst they have not unfrequently been made use of by writers of fiction. In this case, however, not only have numerous entries been altered and erased, but entirely fictitious ones have been inserted, where there were vacant spaces on the pages of the Registers. Again, this has not been done in one Register only, but in at least three or four, and the official "transcripts" or certified copies, returned year by year to the Bishop of Chester, and now preserved in the Registries at Chester and Lancaster, have also been tampered with, and it is feared in some cases ruthlessly destroyed. So extensive have these criminal acts been, that the entries which have been tampered with, or inserted in the Registers of Preston, Kirkham, Poulton and Lytham, as well as on the transcripts

relating to Preston, Kirkham and Penwortham, cannot fall very far short of *fifty* in number. Of the most important of these, an account will be found in the pages of this pamphlet, but there are many others, which are there only very briefly, if at all, referred to. Not content with such wholesale forgeries as these, the author or authors (for there is every reason to believe that two persons, both of whom are now dead, were actively concerned in them) were ingenious enough to forge three Marriage Licence Bonds, and to place them among the genuine Bonds, now preserved in the Bishop's Registries at Chester and Lancaster. If these forged Bonds and Register entries had had reference to modern times, the skill and industry of the forgers would have been noteworthy, but as they had nearly all to be in the handwriting of the seventeenth century, the ingenuity and audacity of these fortune-hunters become very remarkable indeed. I venture to think that there is no case on record in which such wholesale forgeries have been perpetrated, nor where so much time and money have had to be spent in their exposure, and this must in some degree be my apology for this pamphlet, if indeed any is needed.

Much attention has of late years been paid to the preservation of old Manorial Court Rolls, and to show how valuable these may become, it may here be stated that had the Court Rolls of the Manor of Lea, near Preston, not been preserved there is only too much reason to believe that the ingenuity of the forgers would have been rewarded before their forgeries

could have been exposed, and that the Harrison estates would have passed into the hands of those, who were in no wise entitled to them. These Court Rolls were kept in private hands, and so were out of the reach of the forgers, even if they had known how important they really were.

There is abundant evidence to show that those, who were guilty of the nefarious proceedings here described, had a thorough knowledge of the Harrison pedigree, for not only were their efforts directed to prove that the descendants of one person of that name were entitled to the estates, but they did everything in their power to prevent the true heirs-at-law, who have now happily succeeded, from proving their case. So cleverly were their plans laid, that it was only by the fortunate discovery of one document, which had never been referred to at any of the previous trials, that absolute *proof* was obtained of the way the Penwortham transcripts had been tampered with. It was also due to Mr. Jeans' perseverance and genealogical skill that he was enabled to discover the descendants of Ellen and Isabel Harrison, after a lapse of over 200 years, and then by means of the papers found in their possession, and of the Ryley Letters, found amongst the intestate Richard Harrison's deeds, to establish an impregnable case in favour of his clients.

If a moral may be drawn from the above facts, it is that too great attention cannot be paid to the safe preservation and custody of Parish Registers, and that no one should be

allowed access to them, except in the presence of some responsible person. If the clergy are too negligent to do this, then the sooner Mr. Borlase's Bill for the removal of all the Parish Registers to Somerset House becomes law the better. Once there, there will be no opportunities for any one to tamper with them, and such proceedings as those which have given rise to this pamphlet will be absolutely impossible.

J. P. EARWAKER.

Pensarn, Abergelc, North Wales,
January, 1887.

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