

with his friends; Mr. Holt and Mr. Matthew Nicholson being well acquainted. The members of the party were kindly received, and the conversation turned on agriculture and horticulture. Allusion was frequently made to the Bank-Hall rose, a pretty species of wild rose which formerly grew in great abundance on the sand hills, opposite to what is now the Huskisson Dock.

Mr. Holt's appearance and manner were striking. He was a tall spare man; with a peculiar voice, resembling that of the mutilated males of Italy. His clothes were large and loose, and his land boots or shoes, with high fronts, were precisely like those which may be discerned in Hogarth's prints. The parlour contained a good many old-looking books and port folios; and some articles of furniture now obsolete.

Though not sixty years ago, a ride to Walton was then looked upon as a trip to Southport or Runcorn would be at present; and a coach from Mr. Peter Tyrer's, of Suffolk Street, then the principal posting-house, was ordered to be at the door at half-past eight in the morning.

PAPERS.

I.—BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MR. JOHN WYKE, WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE ARTS AND MANUFACTURES OF LIVERPOOL FROM 1760 TO 1780.

By W. J. Roberts and H. C. Pidgeon, Esqrs.

The name of Mr. John Wyke has on two occasions been mentioned at meetings of this Society (see vol. IV, pp. 42 and 140), and as Mr. Wyke was a man of some mark in his day, and was connected with the earliest art movement in Liverpool, it may not be thought unworthy of the objects of this Society to put on record a short notice of him, especially in connexion with the state of the town at that period.

To those who now study the manners and habits of the different classes in society, it may not be uninteresting to review the great changes which have taken place in Liverpool since the time when king George III. ascended the throne. To the lover of the fine arts, it will be gratifying to trace the manner in which they have progressed since 1769, when the first society for their promotion was established in Liverpool by Mr. Wyke and his coadjutors.

In the bye-ways of literature we sometimes meet with materials of great interest, which the dignity of history is apt to undervalue or overlook. Thus, in some published "Letters to the Earl of Cork," written, after a visit to Liverpool in 1767, by Samuel Derrick, Esq., we find a picture of Liverpool more detailed and curious than is to be found in any more pretending publication of the period. Mr. Derrick describes the town as being nearly as broad as it was long. On referring to a contemporary map of the town,* we find that, on the north, it only extended a few yards beyond St. Paul's Church; on the west, the river washed its banks; and, on its margin, there were three docks—the dry pier, old dock, and south dock. The town, on the south, extended to the Wesleyan Chapel in Pitt-street, parallel with the road to Toxteth-park, which was bounded by hedges. Wolstenholme-square was a suburb, and also the Ranelagh-gardens, on the site of the present Adelphi Hotel, which was the boundary in that direction. The Infirmary, on the site of St. George's-hall, was out of town. At the foot of Shaw's-brow commenced Town's-end-lane, now Byrom-street, from which, at the end of a few fields, a road branched off to Everton, and on the opposite side another to Tithebarn-street, which was then only partially built up on the north side. Hence we arrive where we set out, at St. Paul's Church.

In this little community there was a life which Derrick, who was the master of the ceremonies at Bath, describes minutely. An assembly once a fortnight, collected the ladies and gentlemen "to dance and play cards," and the southern beau expresses his surprise and astonishment to find "some women elegantly accomplished and perfectly well dressed." No doubt they had profited by the tuition of the French dancing master, Deville Desaubry, of George's-street, and his compeer in the sister art of music, the Italian, Alexander Frederick Daste, of Virginia-street; and Mr. Derrick might have added that they were also versed in courtly etiquette, for they addressed Queen Charlotte on the abolition of hair powder and pomatum; expressing the "unspeakable pleasure they felt in obeying her commands to wear their hair in a state of nature—unpowdered and unpomatumed—which will be the means of showing that most excellent natural ornament in its true beauty"

The London theatrical stars shone during the season, and pieces were

* Plan of Liverpool, 1766.

“really well done,” and “everything carried on with amazing propriety.” “Public business was transacted by the Corporation in noble apartments over the Exchange.” “To the credit of the town, party distinctions seemed to be banished from among the inhabitants.” To their creature comforts three inns contributed, and moderation must have guided the charges, for we are told that “for 10d. a man dines elegantly at an ordinary consisting of a dozen dishes.” The good fellowship of the townsmen was shown by a fact noticed by Derrick, who enjoyed their hospitality. “If, by accident,” he says, “one man’s stock of ale runs short, he has only to send his pitcher to his neighbour to have it filled”; and the curious in beer will be sorry that he cannot now taste the good ale of Mr. Thomas Mears, of Paradise-street, a merchant in the Portuguese trade, “whose malt was bought at Derby, his hops in Kent, and his water brought by express order from Lisbon.” “It was, indeed,” says Derrick, “an excellent liquor.” The tables of the merchants were plenteously furnished, and their viands well served up, but candour obliges us to add that “of their excellent rum they consumed large quantities in punch, when the West India fleet came in, mostly with limes,” which Mr. Derrick praises as being “very cooling, and affording a delicious flavour.” In the midst of this hospitality, he ungenerously alludes to their intellectual poverty, and adds that “few of the merchants have had more education than befits a counting house.”* It must be admitted that their energies and attention were then principally devoted to the acquisition of wealth and the spread of commerce; but though there were few, comparatively speaking, whose minds were not wholly absorbed by the charms of cent. per cent., those few devoted their leisure hours to the cultivation of intellectual subjects, and to them we owe a debt of gratitude for their instrumentality in the promotion of those objects, which we should not be unmindful to repay, by recording whatsoever incidents of their history we can rescue from the wastes of time.

At this period, one of the chief branches of industry carried on here was English porcelain, blue and white earthenware, of which there were eleven manufactories. The watches of Liverpool were said not to be excelled in Europe, and it is an interesting fact that the parish of Prescot has been the seat of the watch and watch-tool manufacture from an early period. This trade appears to have sprung from the inhabitants holding their small farms by the feudal tenure of making armour and weapons for the lord

* Derrick’s Letters from Chester, Liverpool, &c.

of the barony of Halton Castle. On the abolition of that tenure, when defensive armour was not required, instead of beating their "spears into ploughshares, and their swords into pruning hooks," the Prescottians, as Mr. Gregson, in his "Fragments relative to the History of Lancashire," states, turned their talents to the more minute and equally peaceful art of manufacturing horologies to mark the lapse of time, for which their descendants to this day are justly celebrated.

Two glass factories, salt, iron, and copper works, eight sugar houses, thirty-six breweries, and twenty-seven windmills (of which now only four or five remain), fifteen roperies, and a stocking manufactory, complete the statistical enumeration of the trade of Liverpool at that era.

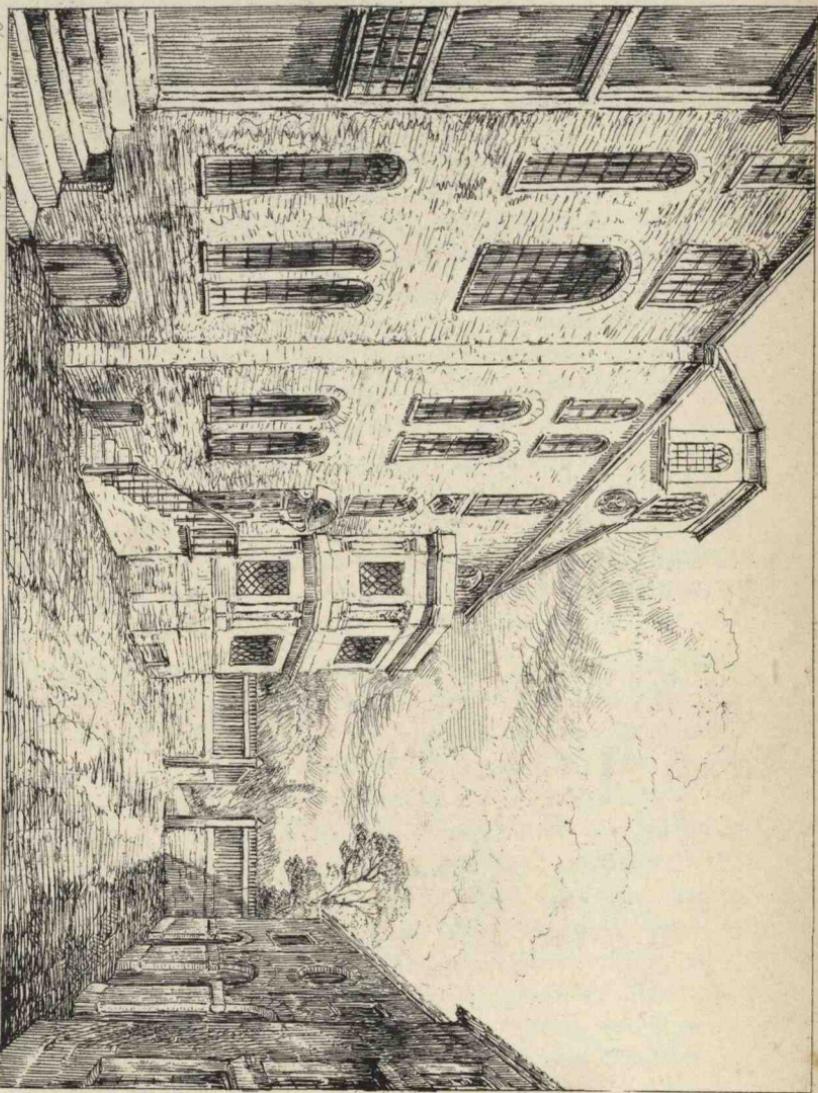
The various branches of the watch business, on a large scale, were first established in Liverpool in the year 1758, by Mr. Wyke, who was a native of the parish of Prescot. He was famous for watch tools and instruments for the cutting of toothed wheels, and excelled in all motion work, chains, mainsprings, and pinion wire, "of every size, to as many as fifty drawings," and for watches and clocks. On the dials of the latter, his favourite mottoes were "On time's uncertain date man's eternal hours depend;" and "Time wasted is existence, used is life;" also, "O time! than gold more sacred." Mr. Wyke resided, when he first came to Liverpool, in King-street.* There he made the acquaintance of his neighbour, Mr. Thomas Bentley, who carried on business with Mr. Boardman, as a Manchester warehouseman. Their friendship was connected by unity of sentiment, and congeniality of taste. Mr. Bentley (who was one the founders of the Liverpool Library, in the year 1758,) in the year 1763, originated the religious society for which an edifice of an octagonal form was erected in Temple-court; whence the term "Octagonians" was attached to the sect. His *coadjutors* in the work were Presbyterians and members of the Church of England: of the latter was Mr. Wyke. Mr. Enfield says this sect was founded with a view to the improvement of religious worship, and that several gentlemen of learning and ability drew up a liturgy for their use.† A copy that belonged to Mr. Wyke is now in the possession of Richard Brooke, Esq., a writer on the history of Liverpool, and from the mention of this Prayer-book these remarks originate.

The residences of the merchants at this period were substantial

* Evid de famil de Wyke. + Enfield's History of Liverpool, p. 47.

and well built, with more attention to utility than architectural beauty. It was a primary consideration to unite on one plot of land the house, office, warehouse, and yards. The dwelling-house was frequently erected with the first storey elevated considerably above the level of the street, with high flights of steps, in order to obtain large vaults for the stowage of merchandise. In the back part of the house there were often offices under the same roof, and a warehouse erected in the yard. In 1764-5, Mr. Wyke erected the buildings alluded to in Vol. IV. of our Proceedings, on a plot of ground, which he then purchased, fronting to Dale Street, extending from within a few yards of Dig Lane, (now Cheapside,) to the present Hatton Garden, and from Dale Street northwards about half the way towards Tithebarn Street. It was laid out for his residence, coach house, stable, and garden, with a manufactory, warehouse, and various other buildings, which formed a quadrangular court, with an entrance from Dale-street to the west, of which there was one house, and to the east five others, fronting the street. At the entrance on the west side of the quadrangle were the warehouse and manufactory, adjoining his residence, which lay to the north. This end of the court was separated from the garden by a wall, with palisading and gates. On the east side of the quadrangle, or court, opposite the house, were the coach house and stable; adjoining to which was a range of dwellings already alluded to.

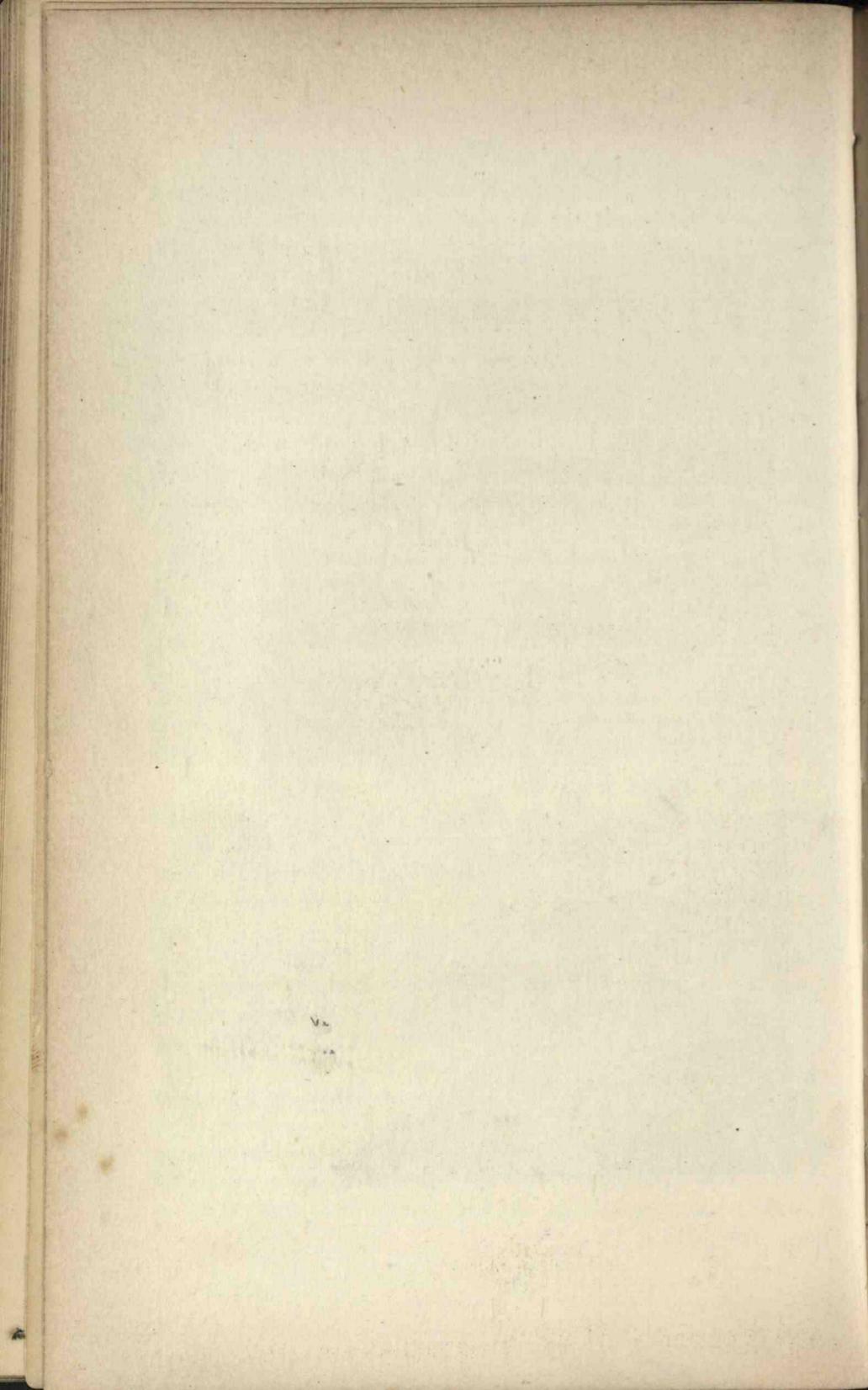
When a man erects a residence for himself, we are naturally led to look to it for an evidence of his taste: a description of this will be the exponent of Mr. Wyke's. A high flight of steps led to the first floor—the usual characteristic of the architecture of the time, its utility rendering the basement story serviceable for kitchen and domestic offices. On the north side of the entrance there was a semi-octagonal projection, executed in stone, with a window on each side, and pilasters at the angles. This specimen of architecture exhibited order above order, the lower story being Doric, with its triglyphs, &c.; above was placed the Ionic, which was plain. At the angles between the pilasters, immediately below the caps, there were circular lights, round which were suspended well-executed wreaths. The entrance, apparently, was considered an important feature. In the elevation over the door there was a semi-circular pediment, supported by carved trusses, above which were two heights of circular-headed windows, between which was a small one, of the shape of an armorial shield, with a bar in the form of a chevron. This was glazed with stained glass or,



Designed by W. G. Smith. 1817.

Residence of Mr. John Wyke, Wyke's Court, Dale Street, Liverpool.

Engraved by W. G. Smith.



charged with crosses fleury, two and one, *gules*. The elevation of the house was finished with an open pediment, with a glazed light in the tympanum, of an oval form, within which was carved in wood a lion rampant, as a crest. These lights lighted the hall and staircase; above the roof was an octagon turret, for taking transits. In the garden there was a summer house, one of the last of its character in the town. It stood in the north-west angle of the ground: to the south and east it was open with arches; on the opposite sides were seats; above was a square room with windows on each side, and the roof terminated in a point, crowned by a pine apple wrought in stone. Of the same description was the summer house, on the bowling green of the house erected near May-street, Mount-pleasant, by Mr. Roscoe, after the birth of his talented son, in which was composed the poem of "Mount Pleasant." It stood on the site of the house of the schoolmaster of St. Patrick's School, Pleasant-street, and a sketch of it is in the possession of Mr. Roberts, who saw it pulled down with ropes, and who, when a boy, had often played upon the green.

On the 18th of August, 1768, Mr. Wyke married his second wife, Miss Jane Green, an event thus recorded in the papers of the day: "Mr. Wyke, famous for instruments in the watch way, to Miss Green."* He now for the first time felt the real happiness of wedded life, and having completed his residence and works, and concentrated the whole of them on the spot, he had more leisure to cultivate those objects that dignify and ennoble life.

In 1769, the year after the foundation of the Royal Academy in the metropolis, some gentlemen of Liverpool appear to have desired that their town should have the advantage of an Institution of a similar character. Though they were unable to obtain the patronage of royalty to their scheme, they did not disdain to commence on a more humble scale. Mr. Wyke, who was one of the foremost promoters of the Institution, had for coadjutors, Mr. Richard Tate, merchant; Matthew Dobson, M.D.; Matthew Turner, M.D.; Mr. Michael Renwick, surgeon; Mr. John Eyes, attorney; Mr. Charles Eyes, Mr. John Orme, and Mr. William Everard, architects; Mr. John Baines, master of the Free Grammar School; Mr. John Sykes, schoolmaster; Mr. Richard Caddick, Mr. Thomas Chubbard, and Mr. Ottiwell Worrall, portrait painters and artists; Mr. P. P. Burdett, engraver; -Mr. Thomas Critchlow, Mr.

* Liverpool Chronicle, 1768, p. 327.

Joseph Deare (uncle of the afterwards celebrated John Deare, the sculptor, who died at Rome); Mr. Joseph Durand, Mr. William Newby, Mr. Peter Romney, and Mr. Paul Pennington (of the family whence came Mr. John Pennington, an artist well known professionally as Jack Frost, from the frequent repetitions of his frost scenes in the exhibitions). The above gentlemen founded an academy for the encouragement of designing, drawing, painting, &c. Their meetings were held in a room over the library in John-street, where they proposed to deliver lectures on anatomy, perspective, architecture, and painting. Casts were procured from the celebrated sculptor Flaxman, their principal object being to afford to artists and others facilities for the prosecution of their studies. This, the earliest institution of the kind in the provinces, languished for want of encouragement. In the year 1773 it was revived, and lectures were given by Dr. Matthew Turner, on anatomy and the theory of forms; Mr. William Everard, on architecture; Mr. Michael Renwick, surgeon, on chemistry; and Mr. P. P. Burdett on perspective. Evidences of the abilities of the last of these gentlemen for that subject are his views of the public buildings of Liverpool which embellish Enfield's history of the town. On the 17th of December of the same year, Mr. William Roscoe, who was then in the twentieth year of his age, read an elegant ode which he had written on the objects of the institution. Mr. Roscoe had been previously introduced to the society by Mr. John Eyes, attorney, one of the founders, to whom he was articled, who discovered his talents by finding on his desk some verses which he had composed on Shenstone, the poet, and his writings. The following year, 1774, their first exhibition took place, the first in Liverpool or any provincial town in the kingdom. It was so well attended that a second edition of the catalogue was required. There were 84 paintings, &c., exhibited. Amongst the contributors were Mr. Richard Tate, merchant, Gradwell-street; Mr. William Roscoe, of the Bowling-green, Mount-pleasant; Mr. Daniel Daulby, jun., merchant, Sir Thomas's-buildings, (afterwards brother-in-law to Mr. Roscoe); Mr. William Rathbone; Mr. Matthew Gregson, upholster, Drury-lane; Mr. Charles Eyes, architect and surveyor, Lord-street; Mr. P. P. Burdett; and Mr. Thomas Chubbard. Mr. Richard Tate and the last two gentlemen were among the founders of the academy, in 1769.* Two of the works then exhibited are

* MS. Books of the Academy, in the possession of my late friend, Matthew Gregson, F.S.A.

among the illustrations of a manuscript entitled "The progress of the Fine Arts in Liverpool, with Memoirs of the Artists," collected by Mr. Roberts.

In 1776, after the closing of the Octagon (as described in our proceedings by the Rev. Dr Thom and Richard Brooke, Esq.,) Mr. Wyke, returned to the bosom of that communion which he had left—an event no doubt accelerated by his friend Mr. Bentley leaving for London some time before.

In the following year, he was on the committee for conducting the affairs of the parish. It consisted of the mayor, bailiffs, rectors, justices, churchwardens, and sidesmen for the time being, and thirty-eight other gentlemen, among whom were his intimate friends Mr. Richard Gerard and Mr. Edward Chaffers.

In 1778 we find Mr. Wyke enrolled amongst the philanthropists of the day who sought to alleviate the sufferings of their fellow townsmen by instituting a dispensary. Its avowed object was to afford medical relief to the poor at their own dwellings; but medical relief was only another phrase for the introduction of a more cordial and plentiful diet, and order and cleanliness into the dwellings of those whom the medical men visited. It was directed by John Blackburne, jun., Esq., president; Joseph Brooks, Esq., treasurer; Mr. John Wyke and Mr. William Dickson, auditors; and a committee of the subscribers. Doctors Joseph Brandreth, Jonathan Binns, and James Worthington, were appointed physicians; and Mr. Wright Gleave, Mr. Edward Alanson, and Mr. James Gerard, surgeons.* The dispensary was situated between John-street and Princes-street, having a frontage in each. It was superseded in the year 1782 by a new building in Church-street. On the front of this second building there was a bas-relief of the Good Samaritan, thus alluded to by a native poet:—

"Fair Mersey's port her Dispensary rears,
Upon a liberal and well founded plan,
And on its front descriptively appears,
In sculptur'd stone—the Good Samaritan—
A noble proof of candid worth sincere,
Where trade extends to indigence her care." †

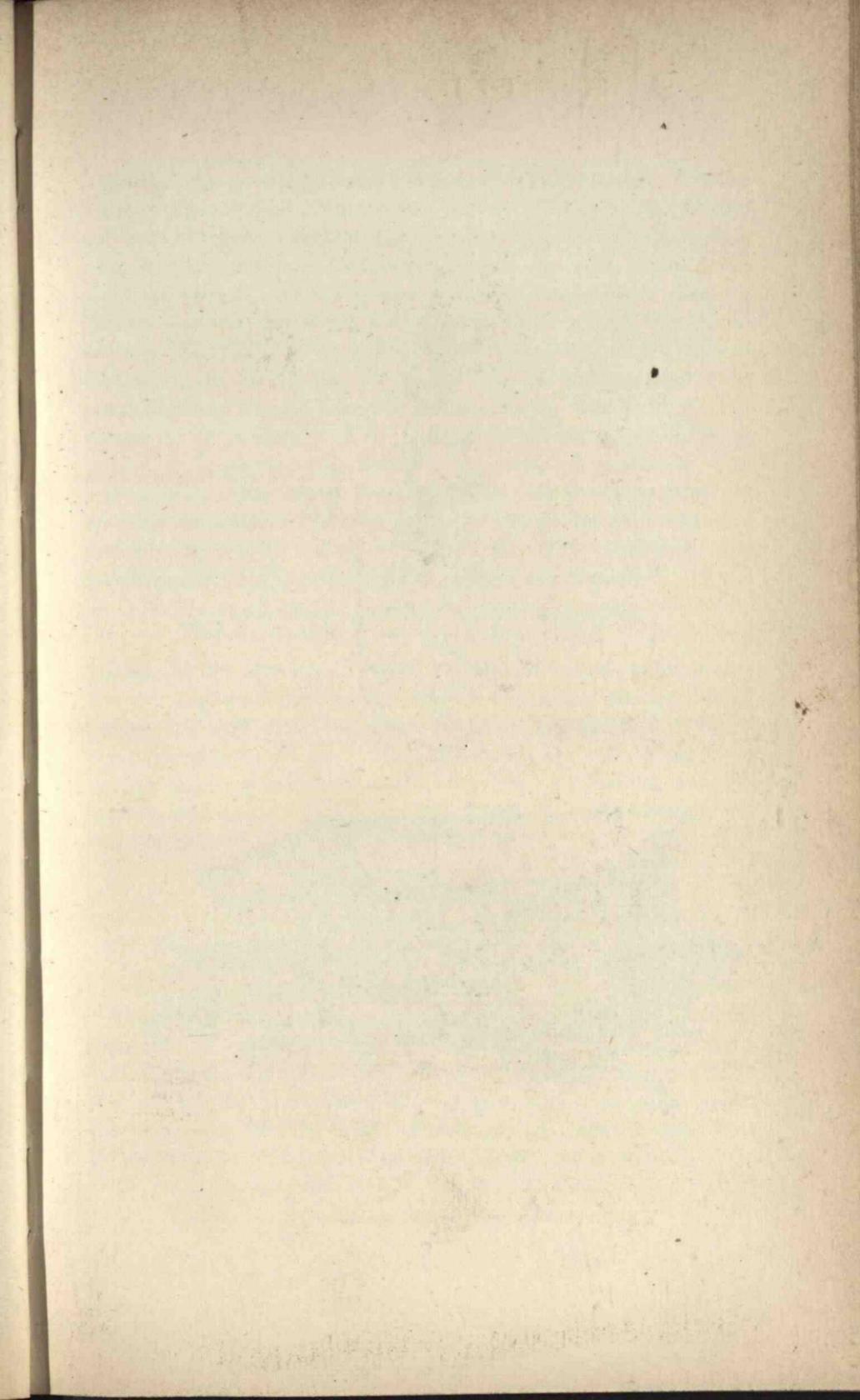
The introduction of this work of art on the front of the building must be attributed to those patrons of art Dr. Dobson, Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Wyke, Mr. John Baines, and Mr. Charles Eyes, town surveyor. With a desire to patronize a native rising sculptor, the afterwards celebrated John

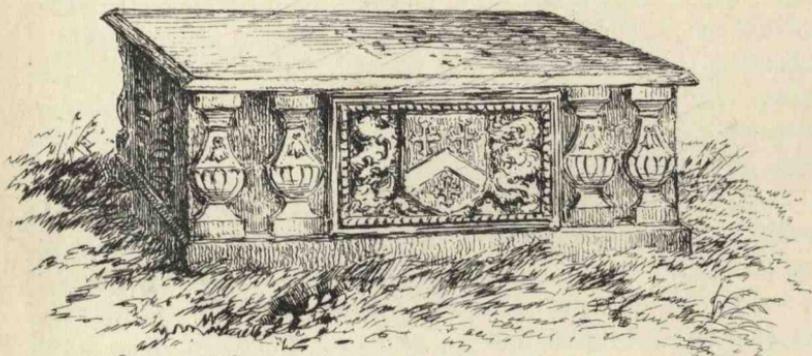
* Report of the Dispensary.

† The Dispensary, a Poem by James Clarke, in three books, 1783.

Deare, who was at this time in London, and sent a sketch book containing two designs for the above subject to his father, to whom he addressed a letter, stating that the sketch in Italian chalk he liked better than anything else he ever drew. "It makes a good group, and light and shade."* For the situation in which it was then placed on the building, it was too diminutive, and, consequently, was completely lost. On the taking down of the building, in 1829, which was purchased by Josias Booker, Esq., this bas-relief was given to the Committee, and by them judiciously inserted in the wall over the fire-place in the board room of the Northern Dispensary, then in the course of erection. Mr. Wyke in addition to the office of auditor, continued a member of the parish committee, with his friends Mr. Edward Chaffers and Mr. Richard Gerard, but in consequence of his declining health, in the following year, he withdrew from those onerous public duties which he had hitherto so ardently pursued. On the 9th of April, 1793, being in the sixty-third year of his age, he prepared to make his will. This occurrence is associated with one of the greatest names Liverpool has ever boasted, as he consulted his young friend Mr. William Roscoe, and directed him to draw it up, and he appointed his friends Mr. Richard Gerard, late mayor, Mr. Edward Chaffers, and Mr. Edward Mason, merchants, Mr. John Baines, master of the Free Grammar School, Thomas Hales, gentleman, of Wavertree, and his wife, executors. After reciting bequests to his clerk and workmen, his wife, and sister (Mrs. Mary Valentine,) also to his nephews, nieces, and others, he did not forget the charities of his native place, nor the Blue Coat Hospital, the Infirmary, and Dispensary, of Liverpool. To the last of these institutions, of which he had been one of the founders, he doubled the amount of his bequest, ordering "that it shall be particularly applied to providing fuel, and soups or other nourishing diet, for such distressed patients as may, in the judgment of the physicians, stand in need thereof."† On the authority of the elegant author of "Lorenzo de Medici," it appears that Mr. Wyke had contemplated the endowment of the Liverpool Academy—an omission deeply to be regretted; and it is remarkable that another patron of art, the late Henry Blundell, Esq., of Ince, intended to have done the same. This object, we regret, is not yet accomplished; and the academy, even at this hour, in a community like ours, with the richest corporate estate in the kingdom, and our merchant princes surrounded by munificence and splendour, languishes for support. Mr. Wyke's health visibly

* MS. Life of John Deare, by Mr. Roberts. + Wyke MSS.





Engraved by H. J. Pedgley from a drawing by R. E. Spence, Sculptor, 1862.

Arms and Tomb of Mr John Wyke.

declining, he was no longer enabled to participate in the routine of public duties which had afforded him so much pleasure. The evening of his days was spent in privacy, and cheered by the society of those intellectual friends with whom he had enjoyed his favourite pursuits. In 1787, after adding a codicil to his will, which was attested by his friend Doctor Matthew Turner, who was one of his coadjutors in the formation of the first academy, he expired at his residence in Wyke's-court, on the 10th of September, and his remains were interred in the burial ground of the parish church of Prescot, where he had erected an altar tomb, a short distance to the north-west of the tower of the church, in memory of his parents, whose ancestors had resided in that parish (as appears by documentary evidence) for nearly three centuries.* In panels on the side of the tomb are sculptured the arms and crest, already described as forming decorative lights to the hall and staircase of Mr. Wyke's residence. His funeral was attended by a long train of relations and friends—

And when he went to his reward, they shed the pious tear,
And sung the hallowed requiem, over his lowly bier.

The boys of the Blue Coat Hospital preceded the *cortège* to the foot of Low-hill, singing a funeral anthem; and, on its entrance into the town of Prescot, the children of the school there met and preceded it to the church, singing on the way. The burial service was read by the vicar, the Rev. Samuel Sewell; and, shortly afterwards, the following brief but expressive inscription, from the pen of the friend who drew up his will, was added to his tomb:—

John Wyke died September 10

1787

Aged 67.

A man of great abilities,

Industry,

and a

Patronizer of the Arts.

Thus I have endeavoured to bring before you a brief epitome of the changes in the manners and pursuits of this community at that era, and a few notes on the life of one enterprising individual belonging to it, who was the first that established on a large scale what at the present time is a most lucrative branch of business; the declared value of its exports being for the last few years more than £60,000 per annum.

* Duchy Records, and Wyke MSS.