

THE CHARITIES.— ROBERT AND WILLIAM BLAKE'S — BARNARD SPARKE'S — ADMIRAL BLAKE'S — RICHARD CASTLEMAN'S — GILBERT BLOYSE'S — BIENJAMIN VAUGHAN'S — SAMUEL DARBY'S—ELIZABETH AXFORD'S — KING JAMES'S FREE SCHOOL — DR. JOHN MORGAN'S SCHOOL.

THE Charities of the town of Bridgwater have been fairly numerous. It is not claimed for the following list that it is complete; and in many cases we are unable to give the present disposition of the charity :—

ROBERT AND WILLIAM BLAKE'S.

A panel in St. Mary's Church records the two following :—

“ Robert Blake, of this Towne, Gentleman, did give towards pious uses ye sume of Two Hundred and Forty Pounds, which same is in ye custody of ye Common Councill of this Borough, to remain as a stock for ever, ye profitt or interest thereof to be yearly distributed at the discretion of ye Maior Aldermen and Burgesses for ye time being, towards the relief of the poore people of ye said Borough, and reparation of ye cawcies within ye said parish. He dyed Ano. 1592.

“William Blake, Doctor of ye Civill Law, and grandchild of ye above said Robert Blake, did by his last Will and Testament bequeath unto ye poore of this Towne ye sume of One Hundred Pounds, which same is in ye custody of ye Common Councill of this Borough, and the yearly interest thereof to remain to the poore people of this Towne for ever. He dyed 1667.”

BARNARD SPARKE'S.

A second panel in St Mary's Church sets forth that *“ Barnard Sparke, of the City of Exeter, Merchant, born in this towne, did out of his affection towards the place of his nativity, give to the Maior, Aldermen and Burgesses for ever, the sum of one Hundred Pounds, to be employed to the uses following, viz., that ye said sume is spent from time to time for Five Tradesmen of ye said Burrough, for ye term of three yeares together, they paying for ye same Three Pounds by ye yeare in lieu for interest thereof, and that the yearly interest be paid unto ye Maior, Aldermen and Burgesses, and by them to be distributed to ye poor of ye said Burrough, until such time as an Alms-house shall be there erected, and then the said yearly income to go towards ye relief of ye poor people therein, to be placed for ever. This gift was given Ano. 1658 The donor dyed Ano. 1668.”*

ADMIRAL ROBERT BLAKE'S.

One of the most interesting bequests to the town is that of the great Admiral Blake, referred to in his will (see page 69). It is thus set out on a panel in the Parish Church “ *The*

Hon. Robert Blake, Esq., of the town, Captain-General of ye Fleet of England, did by his last Will and Testament bequeath unto the Poore of this Burrough the sum of One Hundred Pounds, Fourscore Pounds and upwards whereof was disposed of in purchasing certain lands within this parish, then known by. the name of Jacob's Land, but now in honour of the worthy donor, called Blake's Land, consisting of a piece of ground without ye East-gate; and two small tenements in Eastover, the yearly rent whereof is for ever to remain to the use of ye said poore, to be distributed in food or apparell, at the discretion of ye trustees for ye said land. He died Anno Dom. 1657. Unto ye above is added another tenement in Eastover, adjoining to ye above-mentioned, purchased by the present trustees of Mr. Richard Drake for Forty Pounds, part of the money they have saved for the sale of lives in the two tenements aforesaid, Anno Dom. 1729.”

The property purchased with the Admiral's bequest was for about 200 years known as “ Jacob's Land.” Ultimately it passed into private hands (the purchase money being applied in aid of the endowment of King James's School); St. John's Church occupies a part of it, and the School and some villas and houses near occupy most of the remainder. Hepworth Dixon, the biographer of the gallant Admiral, whilst on a visit to Bridgwater suggested to the owners that the site should bear the illustrious name with which it is historically connected, and since that time it has been known as Blake-place.

RICHARD CASTLEMAN'S.

The interest on £100 to the Vicar of Bridgwater for the time being, towards the maintenance of a week-day lecture in the Parish Church during Lent. Richard Castleman was Mayor of the town in 1575.

GILBERT BLOYSE'S.

By this charity (full particulars of which are given in Chapter XVI General History, 1700-1800), about thirty-four loaves are given away to the poor from an aperture in St. Mary's Church porch every Sunday afternoon. The testator died in 1717.

BENJAMIN VAUGHAN'S.

The interest on £50, to be applied every ten years to apprenticing two poor children, one from the parish of Cannington, and the other from the parish of Bridgwater, recommended by the Churchwardens and Overseers of the said parishes.

SAMUEL DARBY'S.

The interest on £10, to be paid to the Vicar of Bridgwater for the time being, for preach-

ing a sermon in the Parish Church on Good Friday in every year.

ELIZABETH AXFORD'S.

Miss Elizabeth Axford, of this town, who died in July, 1847, made the following bequest:— "*I give and bequeath the sum of £300 to the Vicar and Churchwardens for the time being, of the Parish Church of St. Mary in Bridgwater, and their respective successors, in trust to invest the same in the names of them, the said Vicar and Churchwardens, in the public stocks or funds of Great Britain, at interest, with power to alter, vary, and transpose the said stocks or funds from time to time as they shall think proper, and in trust to apply the dividends and income arising therefrom yearly towards the support of a vocal choir in St. Mary's Church aforesaid. And I direct that the said dividends and income shall be paid by the said Vicar and Churchwardens to such persons, members of the said choir, and in such proportions as the organist for the time being shall consider most deserving thereof, and shall by any memorandum in writing under his hand direct to receive the same.*" The money is now spent in paying the choir boys, according to the number of attendances they make.

KING JAMES'S FREE SCHOOL.

An endowment of £6 13s. 4d., charged upon the tithes of the parish. Other charities were afterwards applied to it; including one of £100 by Messrs. Crane & Parsons; Richard Holworthy's, the interest on £50; Dorothy Holworthy's, the rent of two acres of land in Blacklands. The School was founded by Queen Elizabeth in 1561, and endowed by King James as above.

DR. JOHN MORGAN'S SCHOOL.

This School was founded by Dr. Morgan in 1723, and, endowed with two freehold farms, at Hoccombe, containing together 97a. 3r. 35p. Other charities were afterwards applied to the endowment, including Constance Harvey's, <£20; Christiana Shercombe's, <£10; William Blake's, £100; Sir John Bawden's, £40; and Francis Safford's, £4Q. The School is still in existence, and is an educational establishment of which the town may well be proud.