

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARISH CLERK, &c.

1. This is an office coeval probably with the establishment of the parochial system. It was frequently though not necessarily held by a person in holy orders (*clericus*). In accordance with the 91st Canon the appointment is with the minister of the church, and the clerk must be “of honest conversation, sufficient for his reading “and writing, and also for his competent skill in singing, if it “may be.” In the will of Adam de Fyncham (1337) there is a very interesting and important recognition of this ecclesiastical functionary, thus – “Clerico parochiali sex “denarios.” This was to the parish clerk of St. Martin's. Then again – “Roberto clerico parochiali sancti Michaelis “supertunicam meam de estate cum capicio,” i.e., “to Robert “the parish clerk of St. Michael's my summer cloak, with its “hood,” if our interpretation be correct. A bequest of “six pence,” or an “old coat,” does not seem to us to betoken very great munificence, but we can scarcely judge of the value of either at such an early period.

In the will of Nicholas Fincham, Clerk, previously mentioned, there is a curious devise and endowment in support of the parish clerk, as follows :-

“I wyll and praye, exhorte and desire, all my feoffees, wych ben “enfeoffyd in my messuages, and xxx acres of lond, in Fyncham to my use, “that they wyll suffyr myn executors, and the chyrchewardens of Sent “Martyn's churche in Fyncham, now being yn the seyd office, and all other “chyrchewardens for the tyme being, as long as yt may plese

“God that the world schall indure, yerly to take the yssues profetts and
 “revenues, upon this condicion folowyng, that ys to sey, that the seyde
 “chirchewardens schall hyer yerly an abyll and a convenient clerk, to serve
 “and to helpe to do devine servyce in the same chirche of Sent Martyn in
 “Fyncham, and to pley at the organis, and to teche chyldern, wherby that
 “God’s servyce may be the best maynteyned and susteyned ; and they to
 “give hym a marke yerly of the seyde yssues and profytts, to be payd at iiii
 “termes yn the yer, that ys to sey, at every quarter xl^d, and that the seyde
 “marke schall be no parcell of hys hyer that he takyth of the paryshe &c. ;
 “and yf yt happen ony curat¹ for non cunyng of song [unskilfulness in
 “chanting] to wythdrawe the keypyng of devine servyce by note, or by ony
 “othyr evyll. occasyon, so that the devine servyce of God ys not
 mayntenyd “or sustenyd, but by the seyde curat mynyshyd and hurt &c.,
 then the said “mark to be given to the poor yearly on Good Friday.”

It is to be regretted that this endowment is lost, experiencing the fate of thousands of parish charities, which the religion and liberality of former times had provided for the church and for the poor. The clerk is now paid by a small fixed salary from the parishioners, and by certain fees, a table of which in conjunction with those of the minister is suspended in the Vestry.

2. There is a curious item of expenditure in the old church books of the last century, already quoted, which invites attention here, viz. :-

		s.	d.
“ 1731. Apr. 5.	Paid the dog-whipper	05	00”
“ “ Dec. 26.	Thomas Copsey, for dog whipping	05	00”

This important official must have been identical with the **SEXTON**. A friend informs me that he has not

¹ Curate – minister, whether beneficed or not. -- See *Prayer for the Clergy and People*.

unfrequently met with payments to the dog-whipper in old church account books, and that his office was to “whip dogs “out of church during the time of divine service ; and to this “was frequently added the duty of keeping people awake “during sermon time.” Hence one can understand how the spirit of Wesley was stirred up in those days. Would that all his followers were like him, and caused divisions only where real occasion seemed to justify them.

In the 9th vol. of *Notes and Queries*, p. 499, some instances of endowments of this office are mentioned. At Chislet, in Kent, there is a piece of land called “Dog-whipper's Marsh,” about two acres, out of which ten shillings a year is paid to a person for keeping order in church. At York the feast of St. Luke is by some called *whip-dog day*, some hungry cur in the times of Popery having intruded so far as to the high altar, and devoured a portion of the provided elements. Hence, it is said, a persecution of the canine race there is annually revived on St. Luke's day !