

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECTORY, GLEBE HOUSE, &c.

1. By the Rectory is generally meant in common speech the *Manse* or *Glebe House* of the Benefice, but more correctly it is the designation of the Benefice itself with its revenues and privileges. There were formerly two Rectories in Fincham, with their proper houses, as already before shewn. The alienation of St. Martin's rectorial tithes, and subsequently the disappearance of the house, is mentioned in the account of that church. I proceed, then, to notice the benefice, as it now is, viz., "the united Rectory of Fincham "St. Michael's, with the Vicarage of St. Martin's annexed," this being its title by the Act of Consolidation obtained 1744.

By this Act the patronage of the living is settled in the Crown, and the heirs of the Rev. Joseph Forby, alternately, the latter to have the first two turns, on account of the superior value of St. Michael's, which was previously in his own gift.

The glebe lands at that time consisted of no fewer than 109 pieces, and contained by admeasurement 60 acres. These were reduced, both in the number of pieces, and total amount, by the Inclosure Act of 1772. 48a. 3r. 1p. then lying in the common fields were exchanged for 27a. 1r. 33p. nearer home. This has since been further reduced by a small grant for a school site, and by the sale of about 12 acres for the redemption of the land tax (which was £19 12s.), the total now being 31a. 2r. 25p.

Under the Tithe Commutation Act the proportion of the Tithe Rent Charge agreed to be paid to the Rector is £675, together with £15 from his own glebe ; and that to the Impropiator is £325 ; varying with the price of corn on an average of every seven years.

The Impropiator pays to the Rector the old pension of 100 shillings, settled upon the Vicar of St. Martin's when the Rectory of the same was appropriated to Shouldham Priory in 1350.

On the other hand, the out-goings are, a pension of £3 15s. 4d. to Sir Thomas Hare, Bart. ; a rent charge of £2 to Theodore V. Webb, Esq., of Great Gransden, Cambridgeshire ; and the usual synodals and procurations to the Bishop and Archdeacon re respectively, as follows :-

	Synodals.	Procurations.	Acquittance.	Total.
St. Michael's	2s.	5s. 0d.	4d.	7s. 4d.
St. Martin's	2s.	7s. 7½d.	4d.	9s. 11½d.
				17s. 3½d.

At the Bishop's primary visitation in 1858 the synodals were 5s. and the "exhibits" 13s. 4d.¹ From the gross income of the living deduct largely for rates, taxes, repairs, &c.

2. The RECTORY HOUSE is old, but commodious and well built. It consists of three stories, with high-pitched roofs and gables. By a date on the large central chimney, in one of the attic chambers, it appears to have been built, or rebuilt, in the year 1624. It presents a handsome front to the north, and is well situated, with its garden and glebe lands on the south.

¹ These *exhibits* are for the exhibition of Letters of Orders, Licenses, &c., and having them stamped.

3. Among the resident INCUMBENTS of past times reference may be made first to the Rev. Daniel Baker. He was Rector of St. Michael's and Vicar of St. Martin's 40 years, ending in 1722. Greatly tried in the furnace of affliction, he appears to have excelled in faith and patience. The register tells the melancholy tale of the death of his mother, first wife, and eight children, in quick succession. These afflictive visitations directed his thoughts particularly to the book of Job, which he forthwith wrote in verse. This work was published "at the Peacock, in St. Paul's Church-yard, London, A.D. 1706." The author says in his preface : "It having pleased Almighty God to afflict me, (as he did his "servant Job,) with great losses, and other occasions of "sorrow, I resolved to make that holy man my pattern, and to "follow his steps as near as I could, in patience, constancy, "faith and submission to the will of God." His version of what may be considered the most sublime passage of the patriarch is here subjoined, as a specimen of his ability and style :-

Oh, that my words were printed in a book,
Or deep engraven on the solid rock,
That they might stand for ever firm, and be
The witness of my faith to late posterity !
For I believe and surely know that my
Redeemer lives, and reigns above the sky.
To him all power belongs, and he will save
My soul, and raise my body from the grave.
Although my flesh, now pained with sickness, must
Hereafter fail, and crumble into dust ;
Although my skin, now spread with sores, must feed
The hungry worms that in dark charnels breed ;
Yet at the latter day I shall arise,
And meet my God descending from the skies.

JOB, xix, 25.-

In proof and illustration of the soundness of Mr. Baker's teaching in the church, we may refer to the texts from Scripture which are on its walls, and which were put up during his incumbency, in the year 1717, on the screen, and removed to their present places in 1847.

On the death of Mr. Baker, the Rev. Joseph Forby was presented to the living by his father, Mr. Thomas Forby, in 1723. He died in 1744, and was succeeded by William Harvey, who married his widow, and died in 1787. The next incumbent was Joseph, son of the aforesaid Joseph Forby, who, having married Constance Harvey, died without issue in 1799. He was succeeded by the Rev. Robert Forby, his nephew, son of Thomas Forby, of Stoke Ferry, and grandson of the first Joseph. He was taken off suddenly in his bath in 1825, the living having thus been in this family for rather more than 100 years.

Of the Rev. Robert Forby, so well known in this neighbourhood, and especially remembered by his surviving parishioners, a few words will not be without interest. He was a man of letters, strong mind, and brusque manners, "a "clergyman of the old school," "sedulously employed in the "education of youth, and an active magistrate." His biographer, the late Dawson Turner, Esq., of Yarmouth, says that "it was a source of the bitterest anxiety and sorrow to "him, ever to have been placed in the commission of the "peace," -- "an office," he adds, "barely compatible with the "real interests and duties of a clergyman."¹ And when we find Mr. Forby himself, on his return from the sessions, thus describing his own feelings, -- his "head full of parish rates, "surveyors' accounts, vagrants, run-away husbands, assaults, "petty larcenies

¹ If to these duties he added the task of tuition, and that on so large a scale as to "need an usher, he could not possibly find time for the proper discharge of "engagements so obviously incompatible." -- Spurden's *Supplement to Forby's Vocabulary*. 1858.

“militia lists and substitutes, tax duplicates and distress warrants, all jumbled together in horrid confusion,” we may very reasonably agree with Mr. Turner in his opinion.

Mr. Forby was the author of a work entitled *The Vocabulary of East Anglia*, which has not been unacceptable to the public of this county ; for he was well qualified for this task, being as an antiquarian not only well read in Anglo-Saxon literature, but “practically conversant with persons of all ranks in rural society.” His book contains some things that are mere vulgarisms, and which did not offend his own ear, but he succeeded in proving that our Norfolk tongue “is genuine English, and not manufactured at home for private use.”¹

He was also author of a public letter to Dr. Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich, in the year 1815, reflecting upon his lordship's connection with the Church Missionary and Bible Societies. Some parts of this letter are amusing, read in the light of the present day, and perhaps not a little instructive. I cannot forbear from quoting a sentence or two. In reference to public meetings for the diffusion of information on religious subjects, and obtaining support to religious and charitable institutions, he vehemently ridicules the policy and practice of these two societies ; and is especially indignant at ladies “taking their seats in the chief places of “concourse,” on such occasions. He denominates the whole thing as “a new mendicant system, for gaining contributions “from servants, children, and paupers ; -- for pinching pence “from the kitchen and the cottage.” “But, in the name of “common sense, can all this last long? The charity that is “thus excited is very likely to wax cold. To borrow a “medical phrase, the excitability will be worn out. The “societies which at present

¹ *Vocabulary*, p. 10.

“find these things answer will assuredly discover that they “must revert to the sober principles of the Old school, and “the support of those who quietly and steadily pay their “quota of contributions, never wanting these migratory “remembrancers to startle their charity from its slumbers, or “to melt it into tears !”

Now, having adopted the course recommended by the late venerable Bishop Bathurst, and all *his successors to the present time*, in the face of this pamphlet of my predecessor, and desirous of disabusing as far as possible the minds of my oldest parishioners of any fears or prejudices they may have imbibed, I must be permitted to say that the experience of these two societies has fully justified their proceedings ; the “new mendicant system” has met with an immense amount of public favour and support ; the excitability has settled down into a healthy constitutional zeal ; and instead of the necessity of reverting to “the sober principles of the old school,” the good old school itself has taken the hint, and, *with the sanction of all the Bishops*, is now most actively engaged in doing the same thing ! And why not ? It is not only their policy, but their duty ; for it is a privilege that belongs to even the poor of the church of Christ, -- to “servants, children and paupers,” -- to give of their ability to the treasury of his kingdom. And let our Lord's words be remembered, that after all, as compared with the wealthy of this world, they may many of them be giving “more than they “all.” It is a striking fact, which teaches a serious lesson on this text, that at the present time the Church Missionary Society derives no less than £23,000 of its annual income from “the pence of the kitchen and the cottage.”

Mr. Forby was also the author of two or three other pamphlets and sermons, published at different times, but which we have not space to notice.

Our learned author employed his leisure time much in the delightful and recreative pursuit of botany, in which he excelled. Fincham itself, being highly cultivated agriculturally, has become but a barren field for the botanist. Shouldham common and fen, however, are close at hand, and this, in the preface to the *Vocabulary*, is called an “exquisite spot.” The rectory garden to this day gives evidence of a botanical rather than a floricultural taste, some British plants retaining their hold upon the soil ; though for the most part “Mr. Forby's weeds” have been compelled to succumb to more showy though not more worthy occupants of the soil.

The catalogue of British plants perpetuates his name to posterity in the *Salix Forbiana*, a new willow discovered by him in the parish, and previously undescribed. He was a fellow of the Linnæan Society, and the personal friend of Sir James Edward Smith, of Norwich, its President, whose works on this very interesting study will never be otherwise than highly esteemed. Mr. Forby's awfully sudden death, “in “the rridst of life,” caused great consternation and regret amongst his parishioners.

There is a portrait of him in the Norwich Museum, from the library of the late Mr. Turner. On the back of it is this : “My old Tutor, painted about 1800.”