

Mr. FREEMAN then read a paper by the Rev. J. F. DIMOCK, M.A., minor canon of Southwell, on

### Vicars Choral and their Endowments.

He deeply regretted Mr. Dimock's unexpected and unavoidable absence, but one of the causes which hindered him was one which the meeting would be glad to hear of. Mr. Dimock was that day to be instituted by the Archbishop of York to the best living in the gift of the chapter of Southwell, to which that body had done their duty in presenting him, instead of any of them taking it for themselves.

Mr. DIMOCK's paper stated that the order of vicars-choral arose from a bad state of things—the non-residence of the canons. The despotic treatment of the canons was adverted to, and it was declared that the bishops, canons, and such bodies became almost useless when the king demanded their services. The sturdy opposition of St. Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, to the system of non-residence was narrated at length; and Mr. Dimock admitted that, though the evil existed to a great extent in Papal times in England,

pluralities and non-residence were never more rampant than after the Reformation. Poor vicars were engaged to do the canons' work—in some cases they were called minor canons instead of vicars. The vicars were introduced gradually. He could find no mention of them before the middle of the twelfth century. At first they were mere temporary substitutes for the canons, and the canons, if their consciences allowed them, could pocket all the money without even providing substitutes. St. Hugh took the initiatory step towards giving the vicars a distinct position. In course of time each canon was compelled to have a regular vicar. About the middle of the thirteenth century this became the rule—the canon nominated the vicar, who was instituted by the chapter. Vicars then formed a regularly organized collegiate body, became possessors of property, received benefactions from bishops and others, and separate houses were built for their accommodation.

In the course of the paper Mr. FREEMAN read to the meeting the passage of William Fitzstephen referred to by Mr. Dimock, and also a curious passage from Richard of Devizes, complaining of the non-residence of canons in his time.

At the end of Mr. Dimock's paper, Mr. FREEMAN said he wished to guard against a mistake into which some hearers might fall. When Mr. Dimock spoke of "canons," he was not to be understood as meaning the small body to which that name is, by a modern fashion, confined. Mr. Dimock used the title in its correct historical sense, a sense in which the church of Wells still had, not four canons, but fifty. Every prebendary of Wells, whether residentiary or not, was still installed into "the canonry or prebend" of So-and-so. If the non-residentiary canons of Wells had ever lost any of their ancient rights, it could

only be by virtue of the royal charter in favour of the residentiaries obtained in the time of the Queen Elizabeth. He did not profess to say what was the legal value of that document ; he left that to lawyers ; but, speaking as an historian, there was no doubt at all that, according to all ancient rule and precedent, the non-residentiary prebendaries were as much canons of the cathedral and members of the chapter as the residentiaries.

The PRESIDENT ;—"The Charter of Queen Elizabeth could not take away any rights which existed before it."

Mr. PARKER expressed his belief that St. Hugh of Lincoln originated the Early English style of architecture. He was first prior of Witham, in Somerset, about 1180. The present parish church of Witham was clearly the chapel of the priory, and there was great reason to believe it was built by St. Hugh. It was advanced transition Norman work. Lincoln Cathedral, also built by Hugh, was twenty years in advance of anything on the continent of Europe. Professor Willis thought Lincoln was French work. The best French architects who had visited it said it was undoubtedly English work, but they would not believe the date, as they had no such building in France of that date. That argument was a lame one, for the historical evidence of the date was as complete as it could be.

Mr. NEVILLE-GRENVILLE, referring to Mr. Freeman's remarks on the position of the prebendaries, said those eminent reformers, the ecclesiastical commissioners, were determined that prebendaries should not be oppressed, but suppressed altogether, and it was only by the interposition of the late Bishop of Rochester that the word "suspend" got inserted in the Act instead of the word "suppress." A great deal of interest was now being taken in that body

of men, and in their rights and privileges. This he was glad of, and he thought it would be an immense improvement if the prebendaries of this diocese would follow the example of their predecessors and restore their names to the stalls of the Cathedral. The stalls wanted a little colour, and the step would be a small one towards the recognition of the rights and privileges of the order.

The PRESIDENT was of opinion that they owed the non-suppression of the prebendaries, or non-residentiary canons, to the exertions of Bishop Denison of Salisbury, and not to the Bishop of Rochester.

Mr. SEREL said that one Bishop Hugh, of Lincoln, but not the St. Hugh whose name had been mentioned, was a native of Wells, and brother of Bishop Joceline. He remarked that the ancient statutes for the regulation of the schools of the choristers specified that, after evening prayers the boys should be put to bed, three in a bed, the two younger with their heads one way, and the elder with his head the other way.

The Rev. W. STUBBS agreed with the greater part of Mr. Dimock's paper, but thought he went too far in ascribing the rise of vicars-choral to the evil of non-residence. The present idea of canons was taken from what they saw of them now. In the Roman Catholic church the services were exceedingly numerous. Many of the junior canons might have been sub-deacons, or acolytes, and in that case six or seven might have been in residence without one being qualified to take part in the more solemn portions of the services. The canons founded minor prebendaries, who performed mass and other important services when there was no regular canon in residence to do it. Then the canons had also services in their own chapels, independent of the Cathedral services.

The PRESIDENT observed that those of the canons who could not sing would have had to appoint substitutes, necessarily.