

The Rev. A. DU CANE read a paper on the

### Vicars Choral of Wells.

He considered their institution was much more ancient than Mr. Dimock had stated. At first their chief remuneration consisted of food and raiment. Joceline first gave them a separate endowment, and incorporated them under the appellation of vicars-choral. In Joceline's time they were paid for their food one penny per day, which was then amply sufficient. One vicar was appointed for every canon and prebend except three, and there were originally fifty-two, though only forty-nine were mentioned in the charter. This number was not excessive, considering the incessant services then enjoined. Their functions were to sing the services of the church, and officiate in the absence of the canons. They were then paid a salary and certain fees. To Ralph de Salopia they were first indebted for separate habitations. Up to his time they had lived in various parts of the city, and his charter, among other reasons for the building of the Close, specified that the lay vicars were hated of the town, and that the dwellings were allotted them in order that they might live nearer to God, and more fellow-like. Ralph gave the vicars property, and he died just five hundred years ago. Mr. Du Cane enumerated the different benefactors of the institution, and said that Bishop de Beckington exceeded them all in munificence, and was regarded as their second founder. At the Reformation the vicars were dissolved as an incorporated body, their revenues were confiscated, and they existed on sufferance only. Queen Elizabeth restored them to their ancient position, and re-

founded them as a corporate body. They then numbered fourteen. The estates mentioned in the Elizabethan charter were still possessed by the body, but from the way in which they were let the income was uncertain. The vicars' houses were plundered at the time of Cromwell, were handed over to the towns-people, and the new possessors made great alterations. Shortly after the Restoration the vicars once more took possession of the Close, and so great was their poverty that they had no means of repairing the dilapidations of the buildings; they therefore petitioned the bishop for permission to lease the houses, each vicar to have two; the privilege was granted, and was still continued. Many of the rules framed by Bishop Beckington remained in force, and the charter-day (18th November) was still yearly observed. Mr. Du Cane acknowledged the assistance he had received from Mr. Serel in the compilation of his paper.

Mr. PARKER conducted the Members over the Bishop's Palace, where they were hospitably entertained by the Lord Bishop and Lady Auckland. The Deanery and other buildings were then visited under the guidance of Mr. Parker.

At the evening meeting, Mr. DICKINSON in the chair, the Rev. THOMAS HUGO read a paper on "The Priory of Mynchin Barrow," which is given in Part II.

The Rev. G. WILLIAMS, Senior Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, then read a paper on "Bishop Beckington," which is given in Part II.

Dr. DAUBENEY read a paper on "Agriculture."

By the invitation of Mr. PARKER, the members of the Society assembled at a *conversazione* in his restored mediæval house soon after nine o'clock. The hall, which was lighted by gas pendants of mediæval design, was crowded

by a numerous and fashionable company. Choristers from the Cathedral sang part songs and glees, Mr. Lavington, the Cathedral organist, presiding at the piano-forte. The host also provided refreshments for his guests in the upper chamber, and a very pleasant evening was spent by all present.