

Adrian Schaell's Memoir of High Ham Church
and Rectory, A.D. 1598.

BY THE REV. C. D. CROSSMAN.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

IN the oldest Parish Register of High Ham, dating from 1569, which is still in good preservation, though somewhat discoloured by age, Adrian Schaell, the then Rector, found a few spare leaves, which he thought good to fill, in 1598, with a short memoir. It was written in Latin, and translated by him into English. The English version is given here verbatim, preserving the quaint spelling of the original. It is a genuine and most valuable record of the antiquities of High Ham in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, throwing light upon such points as : the date of the rebuilding of the Church, and the names of those who took the chief part in the work ; the connexion of High Ham with Glastonbury, and the treatment it received from the Abbots who were the patrons ; the successive Rectors from John Dyer (who built the present Chancel in 1476) to Adrian Schaell himself, and the patrons who appointed them ; the condition of the churchyard in his time ; the population of the parish ; the evils of non-residence ; the great antiquity of the *original* (not the present) Church at Low Ham, and the dependent position of its Minister ; the manner in which St. John the Baptist's day was kept be-

fore the Reformation ; and why a portion of the tithes of High Ham parish was paid to the parson of Pitney. In a few places where the English is rather obscure, the original Latin is given below.

FORASMUCH as no mention (that I know) either in writinge or other monument is left of the rectory of Higham or of the first edifying thereof, that hath come unto my knowledge, who alwaies accordinge to my understandinge and utterance have sought the benefit of that congregation comitted to my charge now the space of 28 yeares, and lest the remembrance of that Church newly erected from the foundation, together with diverse other things perteininge thereunto, throughe the continuance of time and death of the auncient inhabitantes therabout, should utterly perishe ; (to the intent that the age to come might have some breife compendious description) I have thought good, as well for the love of antiquity as for the commodity of the parishe, to comitt those thinges unto writinges w^{ch} either by relation of credible persons and the same very auncient, I have often hard, or by the windowes of the church chapple and mansion house I could collect and gather.

The Church of Higham in old time of popery after the example of the temple of Wells beinge dedicate to Saint Andrew, was builded anew from the foundacōn and trougely finished in the space of one yeare, w^{ch} was from the nativity of Criste 1476, and this was performed by John Selwood, then Abbot of Glaston, naturall patrone and donor of the rectory, and certaine other personages, as Paulett, Peter and John Rogers, John Irlond, &c., and some parishoners as Robert and John Paddogge, John Hurd and Christian Alpton and many others, w^{ch} at that time in the thicke miste of error and superstition (wth a certaine devoute intent as they thought) did both bountifully and readily contribute charges to the same. The

chauncle or quier of the same church being cunningly wrought was reddified the same time and yeare at the costes of the said Abbott and especially at the charges of the reverend man Jhon Dier, Bachler in both lawes, the person of Higham, who beinge the sonne of Ralfe Dyer of Wincanton did sett fourth or illustrate (as men call it) the originall and name of the noble Dyers, to the great praise of their family. The same Jhon after the church and chauncell was finished lived twenty three yeares and died at length the twenty of September in the yeare of our lord 1499. After whose death the Abbott of Glaston challenging the patronage of the rectory, through the favour of the King appointed no rector, but onely certaine monaches by turn *for fashions sake to serve the cure*¹ and transported frō thens out of eche personage barne by the space of 40 yeares or thereaboutes for the maintenaunce of the Abby all the corne to Glaston by botes and *litters*² through a dytch made by hand for that purpose w^{ch} ditch at this day they comonly call Hardenes ditche, whereof is yet manifest signe to be seene. The same Abbotes (lest anie thinge for the maintenaunce of the belly should be lackinge to their greasy mouthes providinge cunningely for their Society) had determined to reduce the rectory into a Vicareadge as in manie other places therabout (to encrease their substance) they had diligently effected, but when they sawe how that could not conveniently be brought to passe because the personall and lesser tithes were not sufficient to maintain a vicar, they gave over that enterprise, and impudently imposed a perpetuall yearly pension of forty shillings upon the personage, w^{ch} yea even at this day is every yeare paid into the Kinges exchequer. After these thinges the Abbot beinge compelled by lawe, appointed one Jhon Newton, a gent of the family of those w^{ch} dwelt in the parishe of Swill, parson of this church, who beinge Archedeacon of Noridge, was

(1). animarum curam perfunctoriam suscipiente.

(2). lintribus.

absent, and *taking but little care for the stocke*³ came hither very seldome, and that for the most parte at harvest, *having put fourth*⁴ his personage to his Kinsfolks.

In this man's time, when as Kinge Henrye the eight in the xxvi yeare of his raigne abandoninge from heare the pope did by most just and right title chalenge unto him selfe all tenths of this lande, and ther upon caused by the Commissioners or visitors through the whole realme in every parishe by a jury of twelve men a ratement to be made of every benefice, personage, vicaradge or whatsoever spirituall promocion; The personage of Higham was most wonderfully rated above most parishes in the diocese, very few excepted, and beyond equity wth such enhauncment rated and valued by the yearely valeue of 38 lib. and 19s. and that by reason of the hatred and ill will of the parishioners w^{ch} they had conceived against y^e parson. For that he being alwaies absent, smale regardinge his flocke, by his procters and farmers *pilled the parishioners to the nicke*,⁵ and by extreame straightnes, wronge out all duties and for all that did the parishe no good, beinge defrauded of doctrine nor anie thing distributed among the poore to relief them nor bestowed anie charges uppon the decayed places of the personage, whereuppon it happeneth that as well tenthes subsidies and pension, their is paide yearly to the Kings treasurie 13 lib. not wthout great hindaunce of the incumbent.

After whome succeded that honest man John Helpes, borne in the parishe of Meare, sometime mounche of Glaston, who professinge the art of physicke scarcely lived two yeares after his induction, and about the laste of December going late to bed well and lusty was the next morninge very erly found sodainely dead. The neighbours then livinge reported that hee surfeited wth eating fatt souse meat comonly called braune at supper beinge fryed by an old woman, a meate very hard of

(3). *caulam oscitanter curans.*

(4). *elocatâ.*

(5). *parochianos ad vivum resecaet.*

digestion, and this happened about or but a little before the death of Kinge Edward the sixthe of godly memory: wch Kinge to the greate sorrowe of all the faithfull being taken away, Queene Marie gave the personage to her chapline Anthony Salvin, borne in the northe, who all the time of Queene Marie despisinge Higham, was absent and gave the fruites and revenewes to be gathered unto a certaine citizen of London, a skinner or peltmonger of his owne name and kinred; who after the death of queen Marie at the cominge of our most gracious soveraigne queene Elizabeth, obstanately refusinge to consent and subscribe unto the *wholesome doctrine of the land*,⁶ being therunto by the space of one whole yeare and more required, was worthily deprived and put from his personage. In whose room there was placed by the noble lord John Gray (at yt utime by a grante from the prince indued wth the rentes and revenewes of the parishe of Higham, and also with the patronage of the rectory) one John Kenell, who cōpounded for his first fruits the 9^o of October 1560, and the seconde yeare of Elizabeth, being a *servant or bondslave*⁷ born at Odry, a man meanly lerned and very olde, who (under the tittle of domestical chapleine) being absent att the cōmaundement of the foresaid noble Gray set fourth his personage by the space of tenne yeares to one Anthonie Wells alias Attwell for the yearly rent of xxxv poundes, and the same being a *most miserable man*,⁸ at length became twise a child, dotinge, in short time consumed prodigally upon a most notorious harlott fower hundreth poundes, and at last being brought into extreame poverty and cast out of the house of the honorable ladie Mary Gray, widowe, having married the daughter of a certeine frenchman, a rustique rude and foolish woman adorned with no good properties, died shortly after most miserably, not without shame, in the suburbs of London at St. Giles, coṃonly called St. Giles

(6). salubribus regni statutis.

(7). servus vel mancipium.

(8). homo tenacissimus.

in feilds, *both ragged and aged*,⁹ being 90 yeares of age and upwards, greatly indebted, not leaving his wife being a widowe one farthing.

To whome I Adriã Schaell a germane (borne at ¹⁰*Roetowe* in the province of Mysne, x miles from the famous marte towne and excellent universitie Lypsia a riche and stronge defenced city under the dominion of the Duke of Saxony prince elector) after that through desire of seeing diverse countries I had often time diligently travailed the same, havinge obtained a reasonable knowledge in sundry languages, through the pour of God, called to be the scholemaster of the foresaid honourable lord Gray and fower years after made an unworthy minister of the word by Edmund Grindale then bishop of London, a most learned and sound man, of whome I had the vicaradge of Childerditche in Essex given unto me w^{ch} I governed ix yeares, at length succeeded, and being inducted the 29^o of July 1570 in the twelve yeare of the raigne of Queene Elizabeth, I undertooke the charge of this flocke and to this day for the most part live in the same *pishe*¹¹ being about the age of 68 yeares, for I was borne about St. Gregories day, about the spring equinoctiall, the yeare of the incarnation of our lorde 1530. God almightie graunt that I being mindfull of his benefittes plenteously bestowed uppon mee unworthy, may accordinge to the capacitee of my wytt (now waxing dull and decaied with drowsines) and also according to the slendernes of my strengthe and senses (being almost exhausted) alwaies spend and bestow the residue of my life that remaines to the honor of God and profit of the comō weale, and this I do humbly and earnestly pray and begge and crave of the father of all mercy through the mediation of his sonne Jesus Christe my onely saviour.

Neither is it in this place to be passed over in silence (without envy be it spoken, that as a snarling and bitter depraver of

(9). *pannis et annis obsitus.*

(10). *Rhotavii.*

(11). *parochiã.*

others vainely flattering my selfe I maye not seeme unfitly to aduance mine owne praises) that from the death of that reuerend man John Dyer, through the Abbottes greedy and imoderate desire of getting riches, through the absence of all the parsons and trouge the insatiable covetousness and unreasonable pillage of the *farmers*¹²—(as they call them, intending wholly to their owne profit)—the people livinge in utter darkness, beinge neglected perished for lack of teachinge, and the cure of soules was not regarded, sometime frenchmen sometime Irishmen and suche like unlearned curates, beinge hired for a small stipend, prophaned the holy thinges ; and also ther was no shew of hospitalitie or almes, the proctors alledging for themselves y^t they were charged with great and imoderate rentes to the parsons, the Psonage houses also wth the hedginge and other stoppinge beinge never repaired, at my cominge were in a manner utterly decayed, w^{ch} to my great charges of more than 300 poundes, not without great hinderaunce of my substance, I was constrained to repaire and altogether restore anewe. It is well apparaunt how much labour and monie I have yearly bestowed in dounge and dressinge of the personage land, before my time sett out to ungrateful Psons and such *such as maintained there owne ground onely*,¹³ in longe processe of time beinge worne out and made unfruitfull. For by this means I have susteined a greater familie, I have interteined my richer neighbours more bountiffully, and have not bin unmindfull to relive the poore. Concerninge the orchardes and gardens, what wisdom and diligence I have used in fencinge and stoppinge them, in graffinge of trees and plantinge of diverse sortes of hearbes wth greate diligence sought out of sundry places, vereye necessary as well as for the Kitchinge and man's bodie as for the delight of the senses, *the daily profittes*¹⁴ doth witnesse to the great benefitt and comfort of him that shall succede after my death.

(12). villicorum sive fermariorum.

(13). suum solummodo fundum fimo condientibus.

(14). quotidianus proventus.

Now remaineth for mee to speake somewhat of the chappelle at Neitherham w^{ch} certaine vaine old w^oman addicted to old men's fables, do dreame to be more auncient than the church of Higham, and foolishly babble to have bin in old tyme the cheife temple and receptacle of the whole parishe, for the unfolding of w^{ch} doubt to him that desireth to knowe the trueth you must understande that the narrownes of that obscure place was not sufficient to receive the fourth part of the parishioners of Higham, amountinge to above the number of 800 persons with children and servaunts. Add also that the inhabitants of Beare and Hendley ar two miles from the same chappelle, wheras the church of Higham beinge placed in the middest of the parishe is more fytt to bee come unto by all the parishioners on everye syde, and there (the church beinge placed on the toppe of an hill) the cleare firmament (in chiefe time of the yeare) through the holesomeness of pure ayre and pleasant prospect on everye side, it doth merveyulously delight the comers thereunto. The rubble also or rubbish of the walls with the oken timber and other carpentrie worke of the parish house comonly called the Churchhouse sumtuously builded after the old fashion before the pullinge downe thereof and erecting of the new schole, do pretend great antiquity : yea, and also the Churchyard so large, compassed aboute with tall and goodly elms, doth prove some hundreth of yeares since the plantinge thereof. The same church-yarde on the south side therof is repaired and maintained by none but the inhabitaunts of Neitherham. What shall I speake of the goodly marble and stone sepulchres and monuments of the dead, as well to be seene in the church as churchyard of such as have bin buried there for almost an hundreth yeares agoe, especially of the Waltons, notwithstanding their dwellinge a longe time from ther first cominge hath been in the old house called Lowhame Court. To be short, that all the infantes ar to be christened at Higham, the dead of the parish to be buried and matrimonie to be celebrated onely at higham and noe where else

lawfully and accordinge to the forme of lawe, is confirmed by the comon consent of all, and the chapple of lowham beinge compassed with no churchyard, narrow obscure and renowned with no auncient monumentes, was in old time (accordinge to the manner of noble men) erected that the gent, called Bartlett in *Bursi's*¹⁵ courte, sometime lyvinge at lowham might when they would, alone by themselves without the presence of the villagers, be present at masse, and also lest in the cold of winter foul wether and heate of sommer, their nicenes (through tendernes, lyinge in bedd) should take a journey so farr as unto the church of higham, or other wise that in the time of plague for feare of infection they might not come abroade, but might more safely be separate from others. Hence came it perhaps that such as were of the same kindred and stocke were buried in the same chapple w^{ch} thinge at this day in diverse places of this realme amongst the nobler sort is every where seene to be used. Neither was there any perpetuall vicar or curate established there, seeinge *the person*¹⁶ at the death of one was not bound to appoint another, and if any foolish and beggerly preist or steward to the gent of Lowham Court did (as often they were wont) sacrifice or say praiers, hee was not hyred or susteined by any stipend from the neighbours but onely received lowly from the person fyve markes yearly; and when there was no preist there (w^{ch} thinge hath oftentime come to passe in my time) the stipend hath ceased to be paid, neither is the person bound to pay it, the worke man ceasinge the wages also ceaseth. I have handled the matter of Neitherham chapple att large even to the wearinge of the reader to the intent that trueth might appeare and that (fables beinge confuted) yt might have his right.

Neither shall it be impertinent to say somewhat of a certaine obscure chapple at Beare, destroyed within these fifty

(15). Serlo de Burci, who held 5 hides at Low Ham (Domesday Book, quoted by *Collinson*).

(16). rector.

yeares, w^{ch} chapple as I thinke (being moved by this conjecture) was dedicated to Jhon Baptist, because, never but uppon the eveninge of the nativitye of Jhon, the parson of Pitney was wont to mumble over eveninge prayers, that on the night after they mighte play at wrestlinge in Sedgmoore, and the holy day followinge he was wont solely to celebrate masse before many youthe at that time there assembled in great multitudes that after dynner they might try masteries in runninge for ramme appointed for the course, w^{ch} whoso excellinge others by runninge could take, compted it his owne, as the reward and recompense of his obtained victory. Neither did the parson of Pittney *lose all these toyes*,¹⁷ for every yeare unto this day (by what reason or sufferaunce it appeareth not) he receiveth certaine tithes to the valew of five poundes and damage of my parsonage, the old custome beinge now utterly abolished. One William Balch, a gent (by whose appointment I know not) pulled downe the same chapple and with the rubble stones and timber thereof builded to himselfe a faire howse, wherein his sonne of the same name, William, dwelleth. These things by the way thus written and rehearsed of mee, gentle reader, after a plaine manner, accept I pray thee favorably and in good parte, and correct what is a misse, iff any thinge hereafter (worth the markinge) come to my knowledge, I promise thee assuredly that in an appendix I will committ them to writtinge.

(17). Ob has nenas in vanum navit operam.