

ON MURSLEY-WITH-SALDEN.—No. III.

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I proceed to notice a few persons more or less connected with this parish, as Rectors or otherwise.

In the reigns of Henry II. and John, conveyances of lands, &c., in Swanbourne and Mursley passed, on the part of Hugh Mallet and Margaret Passelai, or Passelewe, his wife, to the Abbot of Woburn and his successors.

* Cal, Inquis. post mortem.

The terms of the latter conveyance began thus :— "To all the sons of holy Church, Hugh Mallet sends health. Know ye that I have with the consent of my heirs, and of Margaret my Wife, and by this Writing, confirmed to God and to the Monks of St. Mary of Woburn, for the love of God, and the health of my own soul, and the soul of Margaret my wife, and the *souls of all my Ancestors and Successors* — and together with my body, all my lands and rights, and all the customs and services of my men of Swanbourne and Mursele — with the Church of the Town of Swanbourne, &c." This document is attested by Hamon, Walter, Nicholas, and Robert Passelewe, owners of Drayton, from which family it derives its additional name of *Parslow*, a corruption of Passelewe. Thus an interesting link is early preserved in this ancient document between the three adjoining parishes of Swanbourne, Mursley, and Drayton Parslow. Close to each other as Mursley and Swanbourne are, some other points of connexion between them may be mentioned. At the beginning of Elizabeth, the lands in Swanbourne belonging to Woburn Abbey, together with the Rectory of the Parish Church, were granted to Sir John Fortescue and Alice his wife; as also the Rectories of Whitchurch and Winslow. The old Manor House at Swanbourne, near the Church, formerly much larger than at present, was probably built by the Fortescues; and tradition reports that the house was used as a nursery for the children of the family when ill or infected with fever; perhaps on account of the greater mildness of the air there than at Mursley, as well as for the sake of separation from the rest of the household who were healthy. Another link between the two parishes was the foundation of a Free School at Swanbourne by William and Nicholas Godwin, both natives of that parish, to which eight boys from Mursley are admissible by the will of the founders. The inscription on the tomb in the Churchyard of Swanbourne, to the memory of these two brothers, describes the monument as "erected and ordered, A.D. 1724, by Ralph Carter, of Mursley, Yeoman," who seems to have been a friend of the Godwins, and was probably their trustee and executor.

Among the early Rectors of Mursley occurs the name of John Lewys, admitted Feb. 8, 1391. He exchanged or granted Mursley for Quainton, to which latter Rectory

he was instituted 1396, and where, near the steps of the Communion Table, he lies buried. Over his grave is an inscription in brass, with a figure of an Ecclesiastic kneeling. For an engraving of this, see "Lipscomb," on Quainton. Among other parochial memorials, taken, I believe, from Cole's MSS., there is an entry to this effect:— "Thomas Hackshot, a stout young man, born in this parish (Mursley), was executed at Tyburn, Aug. 24, 1601, for rescuing a Romish Priest out of the hands of an officer who had him in confinement for his religion."* Robert Wallis, A.M., was Rector of Mursley from 1621 to 1635. On leaving Mursley he took Ellesborough, having bought the Impropriation and Advowson, and held it for two years. He is then said to have disposed of them, but subsequently to have repurchased them, and held both the property and preferment, for a short period, till his death. On quitting Ellesborough, he became Rector of Gothurst or Gayhurst. In the meantime, he seems to have held Bradwell, to which he was inducted 1657. As early as 1637 he was reported as Rector of Shenley, John Portescue, Esq., Patron. In 1665 he returned to Ellesborough, and, dying the next year, was buried there. Against the South wall of Ellesborough Church, on a small stone, is the following inscription:— "*Sacram Memoriae Roberti Wallis, in Artibus Magistri, Hujus Ecclesiae quondam Rectoris et Patroni atque Pernobilis Ducissae de Richmond Capellani — necnon in medicina exercitatissimi. Anno Salutis, 1666, AEtate Octuagesimo, Julii Octavo. Spiritum Deo, Corpus Sepulchro liquit, in Christo placide Obdormiens, cui, fide, spe, et charitate, constantissime Vixit. Non Obiit Sed Abiit.*"

After the above, in the list of Rectors, at some considerable interval, occurs the name of John Gardner, who held the living during the stormy times of the civil wars of Charles I. and the usurpation of Cromwell, and witnessed the restoration of Charles II., living at Mursley almost to the end of that reign, having held the Rectory for nearly forty years.

Among those who, although not resident, were occasional, if not frequent, visitors at Mursley, was *John Mason*, Rector of Water Stratford from 1674 to 1694. This Divine had some relatives or friends in this parish, as

we find some of his published letters dated from hence, in a small volume of his "Remains," edited by his grandson, the author of a treatise on "Self-Knowledge, &c.," with a prefatory sketch of his character. (See "Mason's Select Remains." Religious Tract Society.) In his latter years he appears to have imbibed some strange, extravagant notions, and to have encouraged conduct in others singularly wild and irregular. There are several curious particulars respecting him and his followers in "Lipscomb's History," vol. iii., p. 138. (See Water Stratford.) Much information on this singular case is contained in a tract by H. Maurice, Rector of Tyringham, Bucks, entitled "An Impartial Account of Mr. John Mason, and his Sentiments." London, 1695. From this curious pamphlet, written by one who was personally acquainted with Mr. Mason, and knew all the circumstances, one extract will suffice to show the delusions under which this otherwise exemplary Clergyman laboured:—"He had for a long time left off giving the Sacrament to any, but some select persons of his own way; and since the 16th of April *gave it to none, because Christ was come. He had left off praying, because he thought nothing remained to be prayed for; and had determined to preach no more, because they should all be enlightened from above.*" (See "Maurice's Impartial Account," p. 14.) Something has been written, and much may be said on this remarkable case; but, having referred to authentic sources of information, the reader must be left to form his own conclusions on the subject.

I must now refer to another Divine, more immediately connected with Mursley: and this will lead to some notice of his ancestors. On a stone slab at the entrance of the Church is the following inscription, partially obliterated:—"Here lies interred Edward, Son of Thomas Gataker, late Minister of Hoggeston, the worthy Rector of this Parish for 15 years. He left behind him a mournful Widow and 7 Children. Ob. Sept. 16, 1729. Aetat: suae 45." The great grandfather of this gentleman was the Rev. Thomas Gataker, Preacher of Lincoln's Inn, afterwards Pastor of Rotherhithe, and one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. He was celebrated for his classical and clerical attainments, and was the author of various learned works, besides several sermons. The

grandfather of the above mentioned Edward Gataker, of Mursley, was the Rev. Charles Gataker, Rector of Hoggeston, in this county, and an adjoining parish to Mursley. He was Chaplain to Lucius Carey, Lord Falkland. Aubrey speaks of him as "Son of T. Gataker, of Redriff — a Writer — an ingeniose young gent, but *no Writer*;" *i.e.*, not in comparison with his father, who was a voluminous composer. Still he wrote several pieces on Theology, the most celebrated of which was "The Way of Truth and Peace, or a Reconciliation of St. Paul and St. James concerning Justification," published at the end of his father's "Antidote against Error," 1670. In this work he was the opponent of Bishop Bull. While commended for his good intentions, and some share of ability, he has been censured for undue warmth in controversy, and especially for publishing the loose, unfinished papers of his father on the subject of Justification, in which the Bishop accuses him of not having sufficiently consulted the reputation of his more eminent parent. (See Nelson's Life of Bishop Bull.) Respecting Edward, the grandson of this Charles Gataker, I have not been able to collect any definite particulars. He was of Oriel College, Oxford, and was presented to the living of Mursley by that University (the Patrons, the Fortescues, having become Romanists). Judging from some slight, incidental circumstances, he was probably a man of ability and learning. The family of Gatacre is of great antiquity, having been settled in Shropshire for several centuries. In the reign of Henry III., Stephen de Gatacre possessed the Manors of Gatacre and Sutton, with the lands of Cleverly, in return for military services; and members of the family were seated at the first mentioned place, in the time of Edward the Confessor.