

ASSINGTON CHURCH AND THE HALL.

The West Suffolk party had the pleasure on the return journey of a visit to Assington Church and Hall. Sir Brampton Gurdon, President of the Institute, regretted that he had to return to London, but he requested Rev. Dr. Banham to show the party the Church and the Hall, and he left some interesting notes for the assistance of the guide. The church was visited first. A church was said to have been built here after the battle between the Saxons and the Danes in 1010, by King Canute, and a religious establishment was raised on the site of the present hall to perform masses for the souls of heroes. The present church was erected late in the 14th or early in the 15th century. The chancel fell down in 1827, and was entirely rebuilt. Two of the monuments were so much injured that it was impossible to restore them. The present monuments comprise one in the chancel to Robert Gurdon (died 1577) and his wife, Rosa Sextor, of Lavenham; and John Gurdon (died 1623) and his wife, Amy Brampton, of Letton, in Norfolk. Under these were the smaller figures, representing Robert's son, John, and his daughter, Elizabeth; who married Thomas Waldegrave, of Bures, her portrait being over the chimney-piece in the dining-room at the hall. The children represented under John's monument were his son, Brampton (to whom there was a monument in the aisle), and his daughter, Elizabeth; who died unmarried at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, where there is a monument in the church erected to her by Sir Edward Clare. The monument (Assington) was raised in obedience to the will of John Gurdon. In the south aisle there is a monument to Brampton Gurdon (M.P. for Sudbury), who is placed between his two wives. He died 1648(-9). One wife was Elizabeth Barrett, the ancestors

of the Gurdons of Suffolk, and the other Muriel Sedley(?) ancestors of the Gurdons of Norfolk. The coats of arms at the sides represent the sons and son-in-laws, nearly all regicides. Next to this is a simple mural tablet to John Gurdon (died 1679). He was M.P. for Ipswich and Suffolk, and a member of the Council of State. In his time the property was forfeited, which accounted for the humility of his monument. The monument to his elder son, Robert, who married a daughter of Lord Lysk and died 1683, was destroyed by the fall of the chancel. The church was "restored" about 40 or 50 years ago, when many interesting points were destroyed. Apparently from mss. in the British Museum, there was formerly some good stained glass here, and Sir Brampton Gurdon wrote that there must be some gravestones inside the rails of the chancel. The tower was rebuilt, almost an exact copy of the original. Before the church was quitted Dr. Banham referred to the gravestones of Rev. and Mrs. Walker. In connection with Mr. Walker was related a pathetic and interesting piece of history. He endeavoured to dissuade one of the Gurdons from going to London to sign the death warrant of King Charles. Gurdon at first was not to be moved. So earnest was the pious incumbent, his appeal having failed, that on the morning when Gurdon was to drive to London, he laid himself across the path over which the coach would pass, and said, "If you go, you shall drive over my body." This so touched Gurdon that his journey was abandoned, and his signature was not on the death warrant.

The party next proceeded to the hall. On entering they were shown the five pardons (?) four from Charles II. and one from James II., from which the hall and a small part of the estate were restored. At the opposite end of the room was seen the mantel-piece (with armorial bearings) from the old dining-room. The present house is supposed to be the back part of a quadrangle, which was gradually pulled down to suit the reduced estate. The old stables were in front of the house, where the cedar trees

now stand. These were planted by Philip Gurdon about 1770. Over the dining-room door was a portrait of Robert Gurdon (in tilting armour) who died 1577. Over the door opposite the front door, were the portraits of John Gurdon and Amy Brampton. A large handsome picture, a copy of Van Dyck, of Sir Nathaniel Bacon, of Stiffkey Hall, in Norfolk, a relation of the family, was pointed out. Over the chimney-piece, in the dining-room, is a portrait of Elizabeth Waldegrave, *née* Gurdon. There were also pictures of Brampton Gurdon, who died 1648-9; a head of a monk by Van Dyck. This picture had belonged to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Sir Thomas Lawrence. Then there was "Edmund Dyer," by Sir Joshua Reynolds, painted for Edmund Burke. Near by Queen Elizabeth's Lord Essex, and Anne Boleyn, a relative of the family. In the drawing room were seen some fine pictures. The best, Sir Brampton considered, was a little Teniers, representing the "Sense of Smell"; others were by Berghem and Van Goyen, and there was "Haddon Hall" by Crossich, Sir Brampton counting these among his best art treasures.

There was, it was stated, a monastery here up to 1310. The present house was probably built not very long after this time, but of course has been several times altered; the large oak beams may be of the 14th century. It seems to have been thoroughly changed and the old windows destroyed about the beginning of the 18th century; some of these contained armorial glass. The porch, minarets, and turret at the back, were added between 1820 and 1830, when the front was faced with brick, it being really a timber house.

The registers date back to 1598. The Dyers, the Mumfords, and the Weymarkes are old names of residents. In 1681, "Mrs. An Gurdon," and in 1862 "Mrs. Brampton Gurdon" are both entered as "buried in linning" (linen).

After thanks to Dr. Banham and Sir Brampton for their kindness, the return journey was completed, Sudbury being reached just before seven o'clock.