

NOTES ON MR. ROBERT GIBBS'S "HISTORY OF AYLESBURY."*

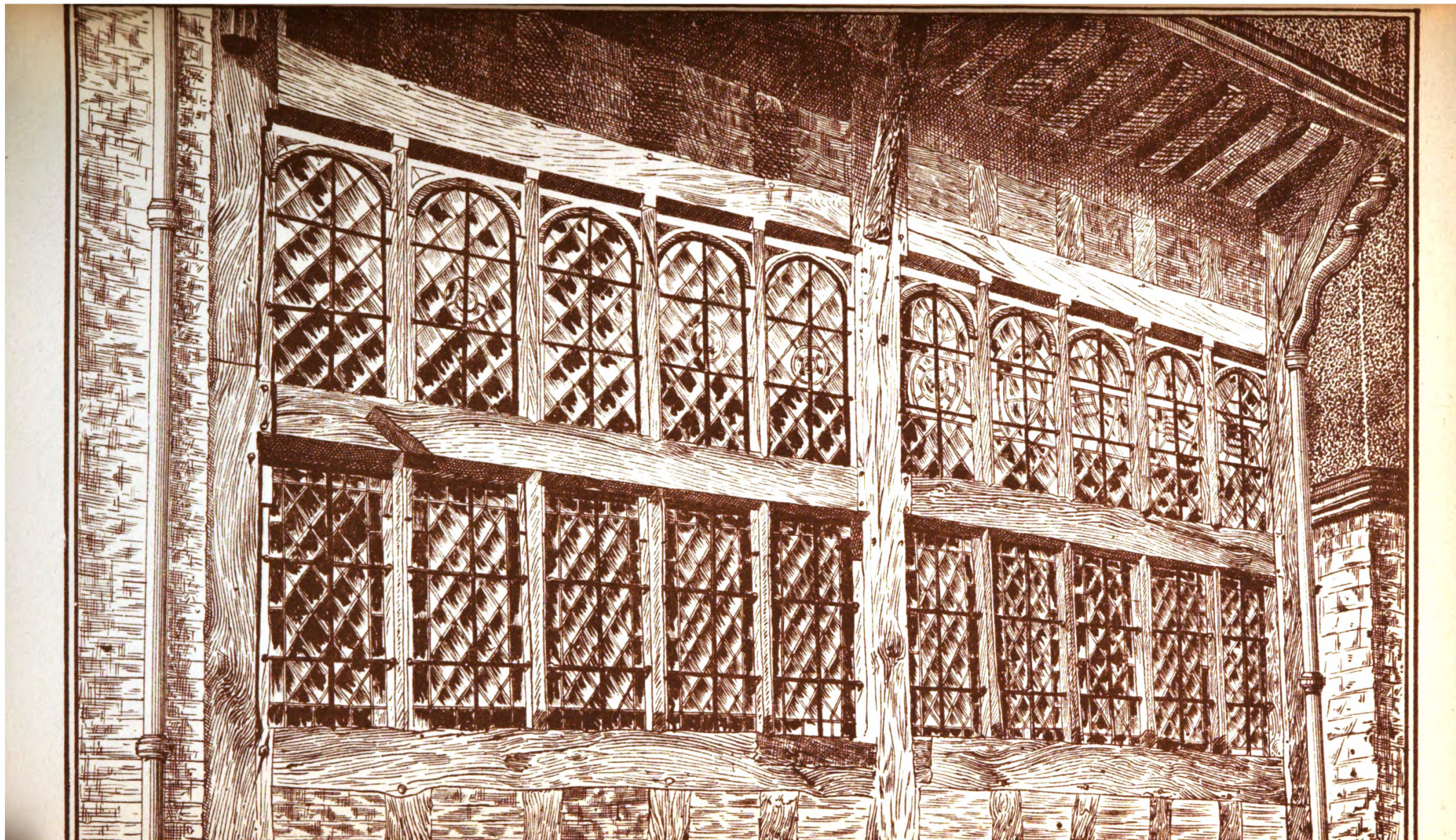
BY JOHN PARKER, F.S.A.

WHEN the history of a county town appears, it is always an event which excites a marked interest to those who live within or near the borders of the shire, and whose tastes, though perhaps not strictly archæological, lead them to desire a fuller knowledge of the spot which gave life to, and was, as it were, the heart of the surrounding district. Its foundation, its names, its vicissitudes, its worthies, each and all have an attraction of no ordinary character; and we owe a debt of gratitude to every contributor to the stock of knowledge of the annals of our old towns, which gradually accumulates through the labours of intelligent research. It would be a serious omission, if "THE RECORDS" of the Bucks Archæological Society did not specially notice the publication of "The History of Aylesbury," by Mr. Robert Gibbs, completed during the past year.

Although Buckingham, one of the four important towns of early British history, was the chief town of this county for centuries, implied by the name of the county itself, Aylesbury, another of those four British towns, also occupied from a remote period a very prominent position. It was the centre of a valley famed for its rich pasturage, it stands on a commanding spot, which attracted the attention of our early kings. Thither, as *Kingsbury* implies, the Anglo-Saxon monarch, after the Briton had been finally driven from its hold, established himself, cleared the forests, and fixed his homestead.

The name of Aylesbury is one of the first points of interest, and Mr. Gibbs gives us no less than fifty-seven variations of the name, as on record. Looking to the situation of the town, with the church standing on the central elevated spot, it is most probable that it derives its name from the word *Eglwys*, or church, which crowned the rising ground and commanded the district

* "A History of Aylesbury, with its Borough and Hundreds and Hamlet of Walton," by Robert Gibbs. 1885.



for many a league. That there had been a church from early times is still traced in the crypt under the Lady Chapel. Mr. Gibbs remarks of it :—"It is not impossible that it may have been the very site of the Saxon building where St. Osyth is said to have been buried in the ninth century" (Hist. of Aylesbury, p. 46.) After mentioning that one prominent arch is unhesitatingly pronounced to be Saxon,* Mr. Gibbs continues :—"Two of the arches form, in point of fact, the supports of the Lady Chapel, and one on the south side is immediately under the piscina and sedilia of the chapel. The ancient stone steps leading from the church were found in the west end of the crypt, and were uncovered, as far as possible, without encroaching on the south transept" (*Ib.* p. 46).

Whilst considering the site of the Parish Church, it will be interesting to dwell upon the importance of the situation in early times. In the churchyard, we are told, that "Even as late as at the commencement of the present century, it was usual to hold the borough elections in the churchyard. The candidates, their nominators and seconders, one after another, mounted an old tomb (now removed) to address the constituents. When no contest followed, the proceedings ended here; but in the case of a poll, an adjournment was made to the County Hall, where the subsequent proceedings were held. The nominations at the contested election of 1802 were made on this old tomb; this was the last occasion, as after the addition of the Hundreds in 1804, the election no longer a town matter only, all the proceedings were transferred to the County Hall" (*Ib.* p. 53).

Mr. Gibbs has hit upon the clue to these strange election customs; at all events, there is every appearance of his inference being correct. Now the churchyard is hidden away by houses and buildings, but in early times, we may imagine that it was a position on rising ground, where an assembly might well collect, being near to the sacred edifice, and at the centre of the community. I quote from Mr. Gibbs :—

"Referring to the place of the churchyard, where

* Sir Gilbert Scott, in his Report of this Church, speaks of the existence of an earlier building, but attributes it to the Norman age; in fact, of the date of the present font.

the town elections were formerly held, a thought arises as to why they took place on that particular spot. Considering that it was in the part of the churchyard where the cross at one time probably stood, it may be assumed that the churchyard cross was the usual and ancient place of meeting for transacting town business, and notwithstanding that the cross had disappeared, either through age or ill-treatment, old associations led to the continuance of the custom for the inhabitants to assemble there, as in the days of their forefathers" (*Ib.* p. 55).

There can be no doubt that, not only at the Market Cross, but at crosses within the sacred precincts of the church, assemblies were held by our forefathers for transacting business of importance to the community. As an instance, we find that the wardmote, or folkmote, being a meeting together by summons of all the inhabitants of a ward with the mayor and aldermen, was held in the City of London, at Saint Paul's Cross.*

The Church of Aylesbury, with its beautiful specimens of Early English and Perpendicular work, so judiciously restored by the late Sir Gilbert Scott, through the exertions of the townspeople, under the able leadership of the present Dean of Lichfield, needs no description to readers at all acquainted with the principal churches of Bucks; but when we contemplate its present beauty and its state in 1848, as described in the history before us, and in the Report of Sir Gilbert Scott, to which reference is made, we may well wonder that the fabric itself has been preserved to us. We are told that before the restoration only the nave and chapels, with the galleries, were used for public worship, and that these parts were partitioned off from the transepts and the chancel. The south transept was partially devoted to the purposes of the Fire Brigade, where the fire engines and their accompaniments were deposited; in other respects this important part of the church was the receptacle for lumber. But what will be our reflections, when we discover, that "in the early part of the present century the church was used as a gunpowder magazine"? That "in the times of the French war, the stock of gunpowder required for

* "*Liber Albas*"—The White Book of the City of London, by H. T. Riley. P. 92.

the local regiments was stored for safety in the innermost parts of the parish church"? (*Ib.* p. 25).^{*} In his report Scott, too, speaks of an universal failure of the foundations of the building. Nothing, indeed, could have been more serious than the condition of the fabric, when its restoration was contemplated; and, as we reflect upon what has been accomplished, we may well acknowledge the debt of gratitude that is owing to the restorer.

Before leaving the ecclesiastical side of the history of Aylesbury, we should not omit to notice that a Monastery of Grey Friars was founded in the town by James Butler, third Earl of Ormonde, the Lord of the Manor, in 1386; a figure in alabaster, deposited in the church, has been supposed to represent the effigy of the founder, though such a supposition is more than doubtful. Mr. Gibbs informs us of the report of Dr. John London, one of the Commissioners employed at the dissolution of the monasteries, as to the monastery at Aylesbury.

"He says he found them (the monks) poor and in debt, their ornaments very coarse, and there was very little stuff in household there; he left the house whole, and only defaced the church there. . . .

"The house is stated to have been a large building,

^{*} The following copy of a warrant to remove the stock of powder to some other place of safety verifies the statement quoted:—

On His Majesty's Service.

Royal Arsenal, Woolwich,
10th March, 1806.

SIR,—I have received your letter of the 6th instant representing that the ammunition deposited in the infirmary belonging to the prison has been removed into the church at Aylesbury, until a proper place can be obtained, and which was done in consequence of a dangerous fever having broke out among the prisoners, and the infirmary was required by the magistrates for the accommodation of such as are infected, and requesting to receive instructions thereon. In reply thereto I am to desire that you will look out for a proper place where the ammunition can be deposited, the rent of which, with any information you may have to offer thereon, you will communicate to me for the approbation of Lieut.-General Farrington, commanding the field train of artillery in Great Britain, but that you are not to engage a storehouse until the sanction of the general is obtained.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

THOS. GIBSON,
Commissary.

Mr. William Cross,
Conduutory of Ordnance Stores,
Aylesbury.

and was inhabited by upwards of sixty monks, but at the time of the Reformation there were only seven or eight" (*Ib.* p. 85).

On the death of Edward VI., Aylesbury was loyal to the cause of Mary as the rightful successor to the throne, and this aid seems to have induced her in 1554, the first year of her reign, to grant the town a Charter of Incorporation. In this charter the rebellion of John, Duke of Northumberland, is referred to, and the adherence of the inhabitants to the Queen is recited, and is assigned as the reason for the granting of the charter to the town. But the royal favour does not seem to have been long appreciated, as the charter appears to have soon become a dead letter. Browne Willis is probably right in the reason he conjectures for the collapse of this municipal institution. He refers it primarily to the burden of paying their representatives, and the willingness of the family of Pakington, who held the Manor, to acquit the burgesses of this burden, on condition that they, the Pakingtons, had the nomination of the representatives at their disposal.

When the representation was virtually out of the hands of the Corporation, it is more than probable that the interest in maintaining corporate privileges died out by sheer neglect and indifference. The right, therefore, of sending two burgesses to Parliament, whether elected by the choice of the inhabitants, or at the nomination of the Lords of the Manor, was all that remained to tell of royal favour as the result of the people's loyalty.

The past history of a town is generally in no slight degree indebted to the muniments of the Corporation, and when they have been as carefully preserved as those, for instance, of the City of London, they present an historical monument of the greatest importance. The historian of Aylesbury must labour under considerable disadvantage, as there are absolutely no records of the municipal proceedings of this town; and when we turn to the chief Manor of Aylesbury in the hopes of gaining knowledge from that quarter, we are reminded that the Court Rolls afforded no information to Mr. Gibbs at the time he compiled his history. It has been only within a very short period that a Roll of this Manor of the time of Henry VII. has been brought to light, which discloses

much of provincial manners of interest and historical value.

The parliamentary history of Aylesbury from the creation of the borough to the end of James I.'s reign, may be summed up as a record of the selection of representatives under royal influence, or on the nomination of the Lords of the Manor, with intervals when no returns were made, as after the parliament of 1555. In the earlier periods of our history, as Mr. Gibbs points out, when a parliament might be summoned to any part of the kingdom at the caprice of kings, the travelling expenses of the knights of the shire, and the burgesses from the towns, were considerable, and it was the practice for the counties and boroughs to allow wages to members of parliament; these payments, therefore, pressed heavily on the electors of small boroughs, and "many boroughs petitioned to be exempt altogether from what they thought an onerous duty and an expensive mode of representation." To this cause must be attributed the frequent neglect of sending burgesses to parliament, before the times when the liberty of the subject had raised the importance of a seat in the House of Commons.

Space will not allow any more than a passing comment on the representatives for Aylesbury. In James I.'s last parliament Sir Thomas Crewe, the member for the borough, filled the office of Speaker of the House. The Pakingtons, the Lords of the Manor, and their connections, occupy a large space in the list of its members. Mr. Gibbs gives an interesting account of the Verney family, whose name is still an honoured one with us, as associated with the public offices of Buckinghamshire, and particularly of Sir Edmund Verney, Knight, who, in Charles I.'s reign, was elected member for the borough by the inhabitants, the constables of the Manor being the returning officers. This Sir Edmund seems to have combined a spirit of conscientious loyalty with true love of country; he fell fighting in the king's cause at Edgehill, on 23rd October, 1642.

The continuation of the parliamentary history brings before us the state of the Aylesbury district during the Civil War and at the time of the Commonwealth; it was a district that suffered severely. The stations of the king's army were located in several of the adjacent towns and

villages, and the parliamentary forces were quartered in the town itself. Accounts are still preserved of the farmer being deprived of his last horse by the troopers, and of the soldiery wantonly destroying the seed corn for the next year's sowing, thus picturing to us the ruin which must have then prevailed.

The following account of Cromwell's visit to Aylesbury after the battle of Worcester is too interesting to omit:—

“Cromwell on his way from Worcester passed through Aylesbury, on which occasion there were grand proceedings; he travelled with all the pomp and display of a conquering hero. Near Aylesbury he was met by a deputation from the parliament. . . . All the troops in the town and adjacent places were assembled, and a grand military array was formed. The object of the deputation was to offer Cromwell the ardent thanks of the parliament, which had been voted in the House of Commons. Whitelock tells us, that ‘Cromwell received the deputation with all kindness and respect. After ceremonies and congratulations had passed, he rode with them across the fields, where Mr. Winwood, the member for Windsor, who was a-hawking, met them, and the Lord General went a little out of the way a-hawking. They then came to Aylesbury, where they had much discourse, especially my Lord St. John, the dark ship money lawyer, now Chief Justice, as they supped together.’ ‘To me,’ continues Whitelock, ‘and to each of the others, he gave a horse and two Scotch prisoners. The horse I kept for carrying me; the two Scots, unlucky gentlemen of that country, I handsomely sent home again without any ransom whatever, and also gave them free passes to Scotland.’ Next day Cromwell left Aylesbury, and proceeded on his journey towards London, driving before him some four or five thousand prisoners like a flock of sheep” (*Ib.* pp. 175, 176).

Amongst the regicides were the two members for Aylesbury, Thomas Scot and Simon Mayne, who at the Restoration were excepted from the act of free pardon; we have an account of their trial and their fate. Mr. Gibbs thus sums up the misfortunes of some of the members for the town during these times:—

“The careers of the representatives of Aylesbury at this period ended sadly and unfortunately. Sir Edmund

Verney fell at the battle of Edgehill, and Sir John Pakington" (a Royalist, and the Lord of the Manor) "was imprisoned in the Tower of London, his property confiscated, and his mansion at Aylesbury destroyed. Ralph Verney was ejected from the House of Commons by a very unjust and ungracious proceeding. Scot underwent the cruel death of a traitor at Charing Cross; and Mayne died a State prisoner at the Tower, very narrowly escaping the like punishment awarded to his coadjutor Scot" (*Ib.* p. 184).

The franchise of the borough we find in the time of William III. was in the hands of the Commonality, consisting of householders and "potwallers," a term used for persons who lodged in a portion of a house, and boiled their own "pot." We are told that

"There were at this time no lists of voters to guide the returning officers in taking the poll. All they had to take note of was, that the person tendering his vote had not received parochial relief during the year prior to the election, and that he had also been in occupation during the required term. The only document with which the officers were supplied was the overseer's pauper pay list" (*Ib.* p. 196).

This loose mode of ascertaining the qualification of the voters led to the inevitable result of disputed claims. The rejection of the vote of Matthew Ashby for Sir Thomas Lee and Mr. Simon Mayne, at the election which took place in the twelfth year of William III.'s reign, rises to the importance of an historical incident. Mr. Gibbs gives us in detail the fortunes of the litigation of this Ashby, backed up, as he is supposed to have been, by Lord Wharton against the returning officers; the case is known as that of *Ashby v. White*. He traces it from the Bucks Assizes to the Court of King's Bench, then to the House of Lords, brought to that House by Writ of Error, where judgment was given for Ashby. Next we find the House of Commons interfering, resolving that that House alone had jurisdiction to determine the rights of the electors and elected; this occasioned a difference with the House of Lords, the Lords considering that the course taken by the Commons was assuming a power to control the law of the land. At the commencement of Queen Anne's reign the case of *Ashby v. White* is

again resumed, and, emboldened by the success of Ashby, five more electors of Aylesbury commenced actions of a similar character, for the purpose of confronting the Commons. Their temerity was rewarded by warrants being issued for their committal to Newgate; then we have another Writ of Error, and a petition to the House of Lords, next an address of the Commons to the Queen, then conferences between the Lords and Commons, with no amicable results. To quote "The History of Aylesbury"—"At last the conference broke off very abruptly, and as the Commons had addressed her Majesty not to grant a Writ of Error, the Lords drew up an address and statement of the case, and requested her Majesty to give effectual orders for the immediate issuing of Writs of Error, in which address her Majesty answered, 'My Lords, I should have granted the Writs of Error in this address; but finding an absolute necessity of immediately putting an end to this Session, I am sensible there could have been no further proceedings in that matter.' There is no doubt but that the Aylesbury case broke up the Parliament" (*Ib.* p. 206).

The prisoners were liberated, no Writ of Error was granted, and Lords and Commons and the Aylesbury electors seem to have been at length satisfied, as, in the words of Mr. Gibbs, "The matter has slept ever since." Bishop Burnet, in the "Memoirs of His Own Time," refers to this remarkable case of *Ashby v. White*, in which he severely criticises the conduct of the returning officers. Unfortunately, we are not furnished with the precise reference in his work to this lengthy contention; but Burnet's allusion to the case fully justifies the prominence given to it in the history before us.

It was to be expected that in an account of Aylesbury, John Wilkes, who was at one time a resident, and its representative in 1757, and again in 1761, should be prominently noticed. About seventy letters from Wilkes to a Mr. John Dell, an inhabitant of the town, give materials which are valuable in throwing further light on the character of a remarkable man.

Just two extracts from his letters to Mr. Dell on the eve of his first election, will disclose the state of the borough at this period.

"St. James's Place, *June 22nd*, (no year).

"DEAR DELL,—I have been this morning with Potter, and he entirely relinquishes to me your good borough. . . . I am determined to offer my services, and will give two guineas per man, with the promise of whatever any one else offers. . . . If you think two guineas not enough I will offer three or even five to be secure.

"Dear Dell, your sincere friend,
"JOHN WILKES."

"Next day," Mr. Gibbs tells us, "another note arrives, saying that Charles Lowndes recommends three guineas per man. 'If you are of the same opinion don't hesitate. . . . I am determined to carry my point. Be attentive to every whisper'" (*Ib.* p. 220).

The corruption of the constituency attained an unenviable notoriety at the election of Mr. Bent, a West Indian merchant, who seems to have been a stranger to Aylesbury, but to have possessed the requisite qualification "of a long purse." As a faithful narrator, Mr. Gibbs gives a curious as well as instructive picture of the elections at the county town. In order to convey a general impression of the elections at this period, he says:—

"So open was it" (bribery) "that the town crier was often engaged to announce that Mr. So and So's 'benevolences' would be distributed at such a time and such a place; the free and independent electors would then flock in crowds to receive money from every party. . . . It was no unusual circumstance for a 'potwaller' to make £15 or £20 of his vote, not hesitating for a moment to levy 'black mail' on all candidates, many or few" (*Ib.* p. 249).

It took two days to poll 453 votes at the election of 1802, when Mr. Bent was returned with Mr. Dupre, the latter heading the poll. But no sooner was the poll declared than a petition was lodged against the return of Mr. Bent, "which created such alarm amongst his party, that several of the leaders made themselves scarce for a long time, fearing to be served with a Speaker's warrant."

The evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons must have been far from edifying, judging from the following specimen:—

“ John Wilson, the whitesmith, so prevaricated that he was committed to Newgate for contempt, and re-examined next day, when his recollection was found to be much improved. Neale the banker stated that actions against him arising out of this election were pending, amounting to £47,000, and he should not criminate himself. John Toms told the Committee that he thought that out of the 450 voters 400 took money, and the other 50 gave it away. All the witnesses gave a similar description of the proceedings at the distribution at the inns. Two bowls stood on a table in a large room, one containing guineas and the other punch; the presiding representatives of the candidate referred to a list of names, and if such list showed that the applicant had been free from parish relief for a year he was entitled to vote. Three guineas were then given to him and a glass of punch” (*Ib.* p. 253).

This state of corruption was too flagrant even for those times, and the report of the Election Committee resulted in the Act of Parliament which enlarged the constituency to the three Hundreds of Aylesbury.

In passing from the parliamentary history of the borough, it would be an omission not to mention the name of Lord Nugent, the accomplished author of “ The Memorials of John Hampden,” who represented Aylesbury from 1812 to 1832, and again from 1847 till his death.

In treating of the early history of Aylesbury, its Manors form of themselves a subject of much interest. The paramount Manor belonged to the Crown, till the time of King John, who granted it to Geoffrey Fitz Piers, the Lord Justiciary of England. To trace its possessors onwards through the families of the Botelers, Earls of Ormond, most of them foremost men of their times, and the Pakingtons, still conspicuously known in Worcestershire, would occupy far more space than can now be bestowed on the subject; but it may be that on some future occasion the history of this Manor and of its lords will, as it deserves, be separately written for the pages of these RECORDS.

The next subject in the volume before us is that of the parish registers. “ A good excuse,” says Mr. Gibbs, “ might be made for any omissions in the Aylesbury

register, as in the time of the Civil Wars the Rev. John Barton, the vicar, was for his loyalty imprisoned in the Gatehouse for a considerable time" (*Ib.* p. 338). Yet we learn that the registers have been "well kept, and are in an excellent state of preservation." The first volume is occupied with the period from 1564 to 1653.

These registers afford, as we might have anticipated, abundant sources of information of antiquarian interest. To give a few instances—we have a word about the plague of fortunate significance—"In December 1624 began the great plague, which continued till the end of December 1625, in all which time there died not one in the town of Aylesbury" (*Ib.* p. 343). A singular practice is disclosed of publishing marriages at the market; in 1656 an entry is made of the intended marriage of two country folk from the villages of Winge and Cublington, which was published "three several market days in the market-place at Aylesbury." Then we are reminded of the custom of distributing doles at funerals. At the funeral in 1670 of Mr. Ligo, a local magnate, and who seems to have been a person of public spirit, the doles given consisted of 360 small loaves. The registers, as we might have anticipated in an Assize town, give us a dreary record of the interments, which followed the Assizes, of felons whose crimes would now often meet with light punishments. Passing on, we note another instance of the strange severity of the Criminal Law. "William Darrell, late of Iver, was buried. 'He died in Aylesbury gaol, having been confined there about twenty years for a breach of the peace.'" This occurs in the entries between 1765 and 1770.

The information given from the overseers' accounts is interesting. Such an item of disbursement in 1672 as this is very suggestive:—

"To Robert Paton's Child and goody	£	s.	d.
Leighton's to carry them up to y ^e King			
to bee touched	01	: 06	: 00"

Among the ancient buildings of Aylesbury the house now known as "the King's Head" Inn presents specimens of domestic work of the Perpendicular period well worthy of inspection. The hall window, an illus-

tration of which accompanies this paper,* is described in detail in the "History of Aylesbury," to which the reader is referred. Mr. Gibbs conjectures that the building itself was erected *temp.* Henry VI., between 1444 and 1450, but no certain account is handed down of its origin and the early use to which it was applied.

Much is told us that is interesting of the gaol; as far back as the reign of Edward III., we are informed, there is proof of its being repaired out of a county fund; it is to be regretted that a reference to the actual proof does not transpire, because this would afford evidence of the importance of Aylesbury as a county town in the days of the Plantagenets. To go no farther back than the days of Howard, we have sufficient indications that the past condition of this prison was deplorable. In his report he says that six or seven prisoners had died of gaol fever at the time of his visit, and we are told that one of its defects was "the utter impossibility of proper classification and separation of the prisoners—convicted and unconvicted—old offenders and comparatively innocent youths were all huddled together" (*Ib.* p. 492).

The accounts of prison life in this volume are at once characteristic and instructive. From the early gaol attention is naturally drawn to the present County Hall, the design for which is ascribed to Sir John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim and Castle Howard. Then we are introduced to some remarkable trials that took place at the Assizes at the county town; though it appears that often, most probably from the state of the roads, the Assizes were held at Little Brickhill, this place being easier of access, and from it other Assize towns in the same circuit were more readily reached. The account of the trial at the Aylesbury Assizes in 1664, of Benjamin Keach, a Baptist preacher residing at Winslow, on the charge of publishing an unorthodox "Primer" for the instruction of children, discloses the intolerance of the times. The presiding judge, Chief Justice Hyde, was evidently strongly biassed against the prisoner. Besides a fine and imprisonment, his punishment was to stand in the pillory

* This window is lithographed in THE RECORDS, Vol. II., between pp. 256 and 257, but this illustration cannot give the details, which are obtained by photography.

at Aylesbury and also at Winslow, where his book was burnt before him by the common hangman.

Among the evidences of the state of society at any period, the mode of punishing the criminal should be reckoned. It is true that among nations far advanced in civilization life has often been held in low estimation; still, even where this has been the case, respect for the dignity of humanity has not been always left out of consideration. When we find degrading punishments, the object of which is not entirely to deter crime, gradually disappear, we are led to infer, that the tone of society is more elevated, and sights, which can only harden and vitiate, are becoming distasteful; so it comes to pass in our own day, that hanging of the criminal is no longer a public exhibition, though there would be some still living, born early in this century, who would remember notorious criminals hung on the gibbet, where they were suffered to remain exposed to the public gaze. Mr. Gibbs, as a true chronicler, has a word to say upon the discontinuance of various punishments which were formerly in use among us. Thus we find that Corbet, for a murder committed at Bierton, "was gibbeted at Bierton in 1773, near the place where he committed the crime, and this is the last gibbet we meet with in Buckinghamshire" (*Ib.* p. 531).

There were two pairs of stocks at Aylesbury; not, as we are told with a natural regard for the reputation of the town, that the drunkenness of the community required both of them, but they were there in consequence of the existence of the two Manors, the principal Manor and that of the rectory, the lord of each of which having to provide stocks. But for forty years and more the stocks have been disused, and the lords have not been called upon to refurbish them. The chief Manor of Aylesbury having "view of frankpledge," as a matter of course, had its trumbrel, or cucking-stool, for the "correction of scolds and unquiet women;" so, too, it must have had its ducking-stool for similar offenders, but when either cucking or ducking-stool was last used must remain in obscurity. It is suggested that the part of the town known as "Duck End," may in its name be a survival of the memory of the ducking-stool, and the conjecture is not without probability.

We have more distinct information about the last

days of the pillory at Aylesbury. It stood somewhere midway between the present Clock Tower and the County Hall. "At the March Assizes of 1810 John Carey Cole was indicted for felony; his trial was postponed in consequence of the absence of an unwilling witness. He was, however, kept in prison until the next Assize in 1811, when he was tried, and sentenced to stand in the pillory in Aylesbury for one hour on a market day, between the hours of twelve and two o'clock, and also to be imprisoned for three years. Cole, unfortunately for himself, was extremely unpopular with the mob, and he suffered for it . . . he was disgracefully used, and left the pillory half dead" (*Ib.* p. 537).

Mr. Gibbs concludes this description of the various punishments inflicted on offenders, with an account of the whipping at the cart's tail in the open streets of the county town. It is not agreeable reading, but, if we are to realize the life of former days, the subject is one that cannot be omitted.

Turning to a more pleasant theme, we are reminded of the sports and pastimes of our forefathers. The May-day customs at the village of Wing in the sixteenth century call to mind the innocent merry-making at a joyous season, the gradual discontinuance of which we must thoroughly deplore.

There are interesting pages, too, on the state of the roads, and the perils of travelling in bygone times, but space will not allow further extracts from Mr. Gibbs's volume. One important omission from the work, which might be supplied in a subsequent edition, is a clear reference to the authorities quoted, in the margin of the page, where a quotation appears; this seems to be a necessary accompaniment to a book bearing on archæological subjects. At the same time, it should be remarked that the systematic way in which each subject is treated, and the facilities afforded to the reader by the heading to each chapter, are all that can be desired.

In concluding these notes, I would only add that in this account of Aylesbury we see the importance of having in the midst of a community a faithful and indefatigable chronicler, whose persevering research has done so much to bring to light the past days of an interesting and historic town.