

Dr. Richard Lec, of Hatfield, and his son, Richard Lec,
of Essendon.

BY H. R. WILTON-HALL.

Among the Puritan Clergy of this neighbourhood who lived through the troubled times of Charles I., the Commonwealth and the Restoration, one of the most prominent was Richard Lee. He was born some time in the year 1611, and entered St. John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated B.A. in 1632, and took holy orders. When at St. John's College he is said to have shown a taste for music. The early part of his ministerial life appears to have been spent in the county of Essex, where he became famous as a Puritan preacher, and was very energetic in inducing those who came within the sphere of his influence to take the Solemn League and Covenant. So prominent was he that the committee at Romford presented him with a piece of plate in recognition of his services. By order of Parliament he became Rector of St. Mary, Orgar. In the following year, September, 1644, he was appointed by the House of Commons one of the twenty-three ordainers of ministers (*Journal of the House of Commons*, iii., 630), and preferments were liberally bestowed upon him.

In 1613 Henry Rainsford was appointed Rector of Hatfield, and for many years he held this living with that of Stanmore in Middlesex. Although he accepted the Covenant and Directory he was not allowed to hold both livings, and finally it was decided that the rectory of Hatfield should stand sequestered from him to the use of some godly and orthodox divine.* The "godly and orthodox divine" was Richard Lee. Though Henry Rainsford might not hold two benefices, the "godly and orthodox divine" within the next few years obtained and held twice as many livings. In 1650 he was appointed to the Mastership of Royston Hospital, Leicester. In the same year, the Parliamentary Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of Church Livings in the county, reported that the living of Hatfield

* Add. MSS. 15670, fols. 268, 345.

was worth £460 per annum, but that it was leased to the Earl of Salisbury for a term of years, of which there were still ten to run; that out of this £36 2s. a year was secured to the incumbent, who was Mr. Richard Lee, but that the Earl of Salisbury voluntarily made up the yearly income for the rector to £200. A third living fell to him in 1655, viz., that of Little Gaddesden, and Cromwell added a fourth, when he presented him to Great Berkhamstead in 1656. He became Chaplain to Monke, Duke of Albemarle, not long afterwards.

In 1652 he joined with others in signing a Petition to the House of Commons, that persons of gifts and godliness, though not ordained, should preach and receive the public maintenance, and that a Committee of Ministers and others might sit in each county to examine and approve such as are called to preach. (Journals of the House of Commons, viii. 259).

Mr. Richard Lee took a very prominent part in the religious exercises of General Monke's army when it was passing through St. Alban's in January, 1659-60; but when the Restoration came, a few months later, he changed with the changing times, and by so doing retained the living of Hatfield, and alienated his old Puritan friends. He was one of the fifty-seven ministers in this county—all of whom had satisfied the Triers, and were severally acceptable to their parishioners—who quietly conformed. On the 19th of December, 1660, the King formally presented him to the Rectory of Hatfield.

For twenty years before this time a Mr. Richard Wilkinson had been reader at Hatfield, and in 1653 he had been appointed the Cromwellian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Apparently a little friction arose between him and Mr. Lee concerning the custody of the registers. Mr. Wilkinson apparently would not give up his charge, and under date 28th August, 1660, below the last entry made * by him, he writes:—

By Rich: Wilkinson sworne Register according to an Ordinance of y^e little thing cald Parliamt.

And he did not give up the book until after Mr. Lee's appointment by the Crown, and the first entry made by the Rector, when he did gain possession of the document,

* Hatfield Church Registers. Vol. I.

is his reply to Mr. Wilkinson's exaltation of "y^e little thing cald Parliamt." It is as follows:

Memorandū y^t y^e 12th of Februa: 1660 and not before Mr. Wilkinson would deliur ye Register book though oft demanded by Tho: Hair and George Basil churchwardens. Then Mr. Lee ye Rector receiued it, and layd it up according to an Injunction in y^e case prouided, and since hath mayde entres.

RICH LEE RECTOR.

The cause of this pretty little squabble appears to have been a personal or official rather than a theological one, since Mr. Wilkinson still held his office of Schoolmaster at Hatfield as late as 1680; he outlived the rector, dying in 1697.

On the 29th of November, 1663, Dr. Lee preached in St. Paul's Cathedral to an "auditory" greater than had been known in the memory of man. It was a discourse he had previously delivered at Cambridge. The sermon was printed, and dedicated to Archbishop Sheldon. (Lee, Richard, D.D., *Cor humilitatum et contritum*—a Sermon. 1663. B.M. 4475, g. 7). Its title page reads:—

"A Sermon preached in St. Paul's Church, London, November 29th, 1663, by Richard Lee, D.D., Chaplain to the Most Renowned George, Duke of Albemarle his Grace, and Rector of King's Hatfield in Hertfordshire, wherein was delivered the Profession of his Judgement against the Solemn League and Covenant, the late King's death, etc."

His text was from Psalm li. v. 7, "A Broken and Contrite Heart."

This gave still greater offence to his quondam friends, the Puritans, who regarded it as an act of abject self-humiliation (*Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity*, by T. W. Davids, p. 206). Dr. Robert Wilde wrote a satirical poem upon Richard Lee, entitled, "The Recantation of a Penitent Proteus; or, The Changeling in the Pulpit." The following specimens will suffice to show the drift of the whole.

Three times already I have changed my coat,
Three times already I have changed my note,
I'll make it four, and four-and-twenty more,
And turn the compass round, ere I give o'er.

From Hatfield to St. Albans I did ride,
The army called for me to be their guide;
There I so spurred her, that I made her fling
Not only dirt, but blood upon my king.

My Cambridge sins, my Bugden sins are vile,
My Essex sins, my sins in Ely's isle.
My Leicester sins, my Hatfield sins are many,
But my St. Alban's sins more red than any.

Take from my neck this robe—a rope's more fit,
 And turn this surplice to a penance sheet;
 This pulpit is too good to act my part,—
 More fit to preach at Tyburn in a cart.

He had a large family of children, eight of whom were baptised in Hatfield Church, viz. :—

Daniel, baptised March 11th, 1652;
 Richard, baptised September 12th, 1655;
 Ann, baptised July 3rd, 1658;
 Mary, baptised July 19th, 1660; *
 Elizabeth, buried September 19th, 1661;
 John “was born February 2nd, 1662, was baptized
 (being y^e 10th child).” †
 Elizabeth, baptised October 23rd, 1665;
 buried November 25th, 1665;
 Emmanuel, baptised June 14th, 1667,
 “his sixt : son.”

John, born in 1662-3, was, according to the Register, the 10th child, and two born subsequently are recorded in the same Register, Elizabeth and Emmanuel, so that he had at least a family of twelve children, four of whom—the elder ones—were born before he settled at Hatfield.

Nathaniel Lee, the dramatist, is said to have been a son of Dr. Richard Lee, of Hatfield, and was born about the year 1653 (*Dict. of Nat. Biog.*, Vol. xxxii., p. 364). He was educated at Westminster School, where he was “well lasht” by the renowned Dr. Busby. He was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1665, and took his B.A. degree in 1667-8. He was in the Duke of Buckingham's “set,” and became an actor in 1672, when he attained to some reputation by his tragedy the “Rival Queens.” He died drunk, and was buried at St. Clement Danes, May 6th, 1692.

I can find no record of his baptism at Hatfield. Of Richard Lee, the second son, whose birth is recorded at Hatfield, I am able to give some little account. He was not a great preacher and eminent man like his father, nor was he a “wild blade” like Nathaniel. He was just a quiet country parson. On October 27th, 1691, he was instituted Vicar of Abbots Langley, and was then about 36 years of age. On the 22nd September, 1699, he was instituted Rector of Essendon by Bishop

* Twice entered, first by Rich: Wilkinson, and then by Mr. Lee, who, however, gives the date July 11th, 1660.

† Another entry by a different hand gives the date February 2nd, 1663.

Gardiner, on the presentation of Robert Wright. He succeeded one Robert Whichcoat, who had died in the previous April, and the first note the new Rector made in the Essendon Register reads:—

Robert Whichcot Rector buried April 26, 99. The pulpit and desk hung in mourning. Sacrilagiously taken away.

At the Easter Vestry, held April 5th, 1708, an attempt was made to prevent parish officers from spending money in "free drinks" at vestry meetings, and it was ordered "at this Vestury and agreed upon that there shall not bee any money spent upon the parish charge at any vestury time at any vestury Insuing. For the obtaing of this order Mr. Lee hath promised gratesly to give five shillings to the Churchwardens every Easter soe long as this order shall be kept by the inhabitants of the parish the same money to be spent at the same time as Easter."*

The Parsonage House in which Mr. Lee lived is thus described in the copy of an old terrier in the church chest, which seems to have been made in 1710.

"The Parsonage House is a Timber House covered with Tyles, containing a Hall, Pantry, Cellar, Milk House, Washouse, one Closset, all Brick Floors, one Water House Paved with Stone, two Parlours, Meale House, and a Closett below staires, and also a Kitchen, all Boarded Floors. Above Stairs Six Chambers, a Study, two Closetts, and three Garretts. One Large Barne for Corne containing Five Bayes, the Threshing Floor Planked, all the Walls thereof new boarded, and covered with Thatch; a New Granary and Cowhouse (adjoining to the said Barne), the sides thereof being New Boarded, and covered with Thatch. One Timber Hayebarne, and Stable, containing together three Bayes covered with Thatch, one other Stable, a Coachhouse, one Hoggs Stye all Timber and covered with Thatch, Coalhouse, and Privy House. Two little Gardens and a Court yard on the East Side of the Dwelling-house, one Large Orchard on the West and North of the Said Dwelling House with a Mote in itt, one Large Yard for Catell Fenced with Pales, the Homestall containeth togeather One Acre and upwards."†

The Church Furniture, set out in the same terrier, was:

"A Communion Table with two Basses, two Carpetts (one Turkey worke and the other a Blew Cloth), a Surplice, and a Communion Cloth; a Blew Cloth Cushion in the Pulpitt, one large Bible, two Common prayer Books, the poores Box. In the Vestrey, Chest with three locks to itt, One Table and two Formes. In the steeple Five Bells. One silver salver for the Communion, with the following inscription upon it in a circular way, viz. the Gift of Elizabeth Reynes

* Vestry Orders, Essendon.

†In Vol. II. of the Herts Genealogist, p. 297, there is a copy of this same terrier, which differs slightly from the copy at Essendon.

. . . one Silver Communion Cupp with a Cover to it, with the date of the year 1570 and Essendine upon the said Cover. All the Plate weighs Thirty Ounces: One Pewter Flaggon with a Lidd to it containing about two Quarts."

There is a little bit of the old Rectory-house still standing, now forming an outbuilding. The moat was filled in between 50 and 60 years ago. The Communion Plate noted above is still in use, except that the Pewter Flagon has gone.

In January, 1711-12, there was considerable friction between Mr. Lee and the Vestry concerning the payment of Extraordinary Tithes. The protest or minute is not in the Vestry Order Book, but on a sheet of paper now falling to pieces with age, which I found in the old Church Chest in August, 1882, among some old forgotten parish papers. It is very long, but the following extracts show its drift:—

"Wee the Churchwardens Overseers of the Poore and Severall of the Chiefe Inhabitants present to the said Vestry whose names are hereunto subscribed takeing into our Serious Consideration the Vast Expences and Charges that doe dayly increase upon the parish, by reason of poore familys that fall to decay and not able to support themselves; and to prevent abuses and Exhorbitant Practices that have of late been carryed on in our Said parish which tend to impoverishing of Severall of the Inhabitants, and consequently become Chargeable to the parish if not timely prevented. Wee, etc. . . . have resolved unanimously, and doe hereby resolve to maintaine and defend the Rights and Revenues of the Church, and that our Minister or Incumbent for the time being shall have his Tythes, Surplice Fees, and other dues, duely and truely payed him according to the Antient and Standing Custome of the parish time out of mind, and according as the same is sett downe in the Terrier kept in the Vestry for that purpose (relation being thereunto had) and not otherwise. It is therefore ordered at this present vestry that if the Minister or Incumbent for the time being shall demand, threaten, or force any poore Cottager, or any other inhabitant to pay Tythes of Bees, Gardens, or any other Fees or dues that have not been Customarily payd according to the antient and Standing Custome of the parish"

The Vestry undertakes to support the complainant against the imposition, and undertakes that the parish shall pay the costs incurred in the defence. It was not so much the paying of tithe that was objected to, but the bringing in of any changes "or innovations."

"And lastly, to show the Reasonableness of making this order, and what induced us thereto att this Vestry is to prevent the bringing in innovations and New Customs within our parish, which if tollerated and allowed by us now, may in process of time become a Standing Custome, to the great detriment and Prejudice to our posterity and succeeding Inhabitants of this Parish."

In 1720 Mr. Lee preached an Assize Sermon at Hertford on Peace and Unity, from Col. iii. v. 15 (B.M. Lee, Richard, Rector of Essendon and Bayford, Herts. London, 1720, 226 f. 11 (6)).

Mr. Richard Lee died in 1725, and was buried July 15th at Essendon.

To return now to the elder Richard.

Dr. Richard Lee died in 1684, aged 73, and was buried in the chancel of Hatfield Church. There was an inscription to his memory on his gravestone, but it is now lost. Clutterbuck, who wrote about the year 1827, says it read as follows:—

Depositum Richardi Lee, S.T.P., nuper Hatfeildi Episcopatis, alias Regalis, cum Capella de Totteridge, Rectoris, qui obiit anno Dom. 1684, et ætatis suæ 73, requiescit in spe laete resurrectionis.

The entry in the register under the date 1684—

Jan. 30 Richard Lee, D.D., late Rector of Hatfield cert. pr. Sir Francis Boteler.

On his death his library, numbering 1,621 volumes, was sold. The catalogue is an interesting document.

(B.M. Lee—Richard, of King's Hatfield. A catalogue of the library of 1685. 821, 1, 4 (10),

The title page is as follows:—

A
CATALOGUE
OF THE
LIBRARY OF CHOICE BOOKS,
LATIN AND ENGLISH,
OF THE REVEREND AND LEARNED
DR. RICHARD LEE,

Of King's-Hatfield in Hartfordshire, deceased.

Which will be exposed (to Sale by way of Auction or Out-cry, or who bids most) at the Parsonage-house in Hatfield, on Tuesday the 28th Day of April, 1685.

By the Appointment, and for the Benefit of Mrs. Eliz. Lee

Catalogues are distributed gratis at the Coffee-houses in St. Albans, Hartford, Ware, Barnet; in Hatfield at the White Lion, to all Clergymen, Gentlemen, &c., that please to send or call for them. 1685.

TO THE READER.

“The Catalogue contains the Library of Dr. Richard Lee of King's-Hatfield in Hartfordshire (lately deceased) consisting of the various editions of the Bible in the Oriental Languages, several of the best Latin and Greek Fathers, Commentators Ancient and Modern, Latin and English, etc., of the most general use and greatest esteem in their time, in all Volumes (will be exposed to Sale by way of Auction, or who bids most) a Method of Sale so long practised, and still continued in great reputation with the Reverend and Learned Clergy of the City

of London, that it hath encouraged and laid the foundation of this attempt in the County of Hartford, not without some probable Prospect that the Worthy and Intelligent Clergy thereof will heartily countenance and readily promote so commendable an Essay apparently tending to the Improvement of Learning in general, and so experimentally serviceable and really beneficial to the Relicts, and Executors of Divines and Gentlemen in the disposal of their Libraries.

The Sale will begin on Tuesday the 28th of April, 1685 at the Parsonage-house in Hatfield, at One of the Clock exactly; and so continue daily from 9 to 12 in the Morning, and from 2 to 7 in the Evening, till all the Books are sold. Therefore all Clergymen, Gentlemen, etc. are desired to be present exactly at the hour of Sale, the Books being sold in the Order as printed in the Catalogue, and those usually are, especially in this, the choicest."

Note on *Book Sales* (*Gent. Mag.*, 1788. Part II., pp. 1067-1067). Catalogue of Book Auctions gives that of Dr. Lazarus Seaman, 1676, by Will. Cooper, bookseller of Warwick Lane, and Mr. Kidner, Rector of Hitchin, by the same in Little Britain, as the oldest, so that the Sale of Dr. Lee's Library was one of the early auction book sales—probably the very first in this immediate neighbourhood.
