

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

21 OCTOBER, 1895, TO 27 MAY, 1896,

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXXVIII.

BEING No. 2 OF THE NINTH VOLUME.

(THIRD VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)

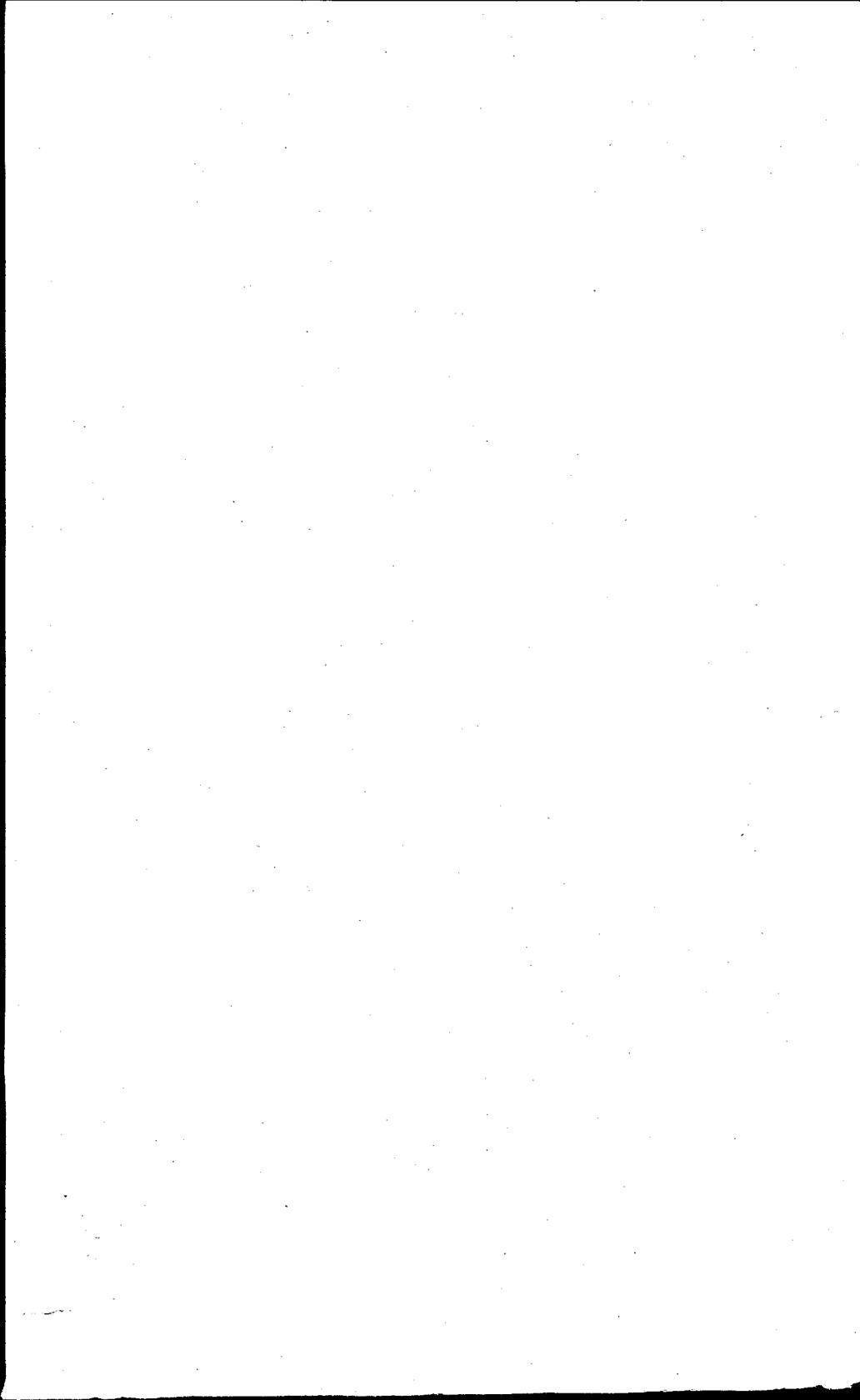
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of a very unusual kind. Mr Acland's remarks were illustrated by a series of choice specimens of Shetland and Orkney stone implements, lent by James W. Cursiter, Esq., of Kirkwall, and forming part of his great collection of the Antiquities of the Northern Islands.

Monday, May 18, 1896, at 8.30 P.M., W. M. FAWCETT, M.A.,
President, in the Chair.

M. R. JAMES, Litt.D., made the following Communication :

ON A WINDOW RECENTLY RELEADED IN KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL.

The window last releaded was that over the South Door, the westernmost but one on that side, and the last but one in historical sequence. We had always thought that if any of the windows were ever wilfully damaged by the Puritans, this one and its neighbour on the left had been the maltreated windows: and that this was the reason why the lower lights of both, and especially of that over the door, were wellnigh indecipherable.

We knew of course from Mr Clark's researches that no official or authorised defacement of the glass had ever taken place: but it seemed possible that an individual zealot might have thrown a stone or fired a gun at them. What made this probable was the fact that the lower lights of these two windows represent the Death, Funeral, Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin—subjects of an essentially pre-reformation character, and such as no Puritan could tolerate if he once perceived their import. There was interest therefore in the restoration of this particular window of a rather special kind: and we were also anxious to have an opportunity of closely inspecting the

inscriptions of the window, two of which had been only partly read, and two not read at all, from below. When we came to inspect the glass we found that the lower lights, though in dreadful disorder, were in all essentials complete; there were a great number of inverted and misplaced panels, and there were some bad breaks. But we agreed in attributing the latter to accident, not to intention, and our general conclusion was that the bad state of the window was due to the fact that the glaziers of 1705 and 1720 had no notion what were the subjects represented in the glass they were dealing with, and consequently put them up very much at random.

I will describe the window as it now stands.

The general style of the drawing is exceedingly coarse, and the glass is in many cases so ill burnt that the drawing and shading on heads and drapery has flaked off. In respect of colour, however, the window is not inferior to its neighbours.

There is no doubt that the two northwestern windows—generally attributed to B. Flower—contain the best and most delicate drawing in the Chapel. The others, with perhaps the exception of the northern one by the organ, show a far greater coarseness of execution, and the five southern windows in the ante-chapel are the coarsest of all.

The fault is not in the designs. These are, I think, not to be distinguished from those of the other windows. It lies in the execution. The windows of which I speak must have been made and put up in a very great hurry. I think this may probably explain a phenomenon in the last window on the south side which has often puzzled me. The scrolls in that window are totally blank. It is possible that in the haste of the execution the filling up of them may have been postponed and never carried out.

But to return to our special window.

The two left-hand lights at the bottom represent the Death of the Virgin. She lies in bed, her feet towards the spectator. On the left is an apostle with a long cross. His head is a late restoration—probably of the last century—perhaps older—in very bad watery glass. This has now been slightly disguised by

making it more opaque, but will always be an eyesore. Above him stands St Peter, who held a holy water sprinkler. His head is almost entirely gone. Above him is a window through which is seen a half-length figure of God the Father, in a triple crown, appearing in the sky.

The Virgin, in blue, lies in bed holding a candle between her hands. St John (on the right of the bed) leans over and supports it. He is dressed in red. At the foot of the bed is a tall candle and another apostle kneeling with an open book, which book has been at some time broken and restored in bright yellow glass.

The centre light contains, as usual, Messengers and scrolls, to which we will return soon.

The two lower lights on the R. illustrate the Funeral of the Virgin. On the R. the apostles are carrying the white-palled coffin with a gold cross on the pall towards the R. near a wall or gate. A turbaned figure holds a palm, and a tall processional cross is borne along. The palm was that which was brought by an angel to the Virgin when he announced to her her approaching death.

If you look carefully at the white pall, you may see a detached human hand clinging to it. I am doubtful if you can easily see the other: there are in fact two. In the foreground are two figures in armour, overthrown; their legs cross each other. A careful examination may reveal the fact that they each want a hand.

These figures represent two Jewish worthies who attempted to upset the bier of the Virgin as the apostles bore it towards the valley of Jehoshaphat. Their hands were smitten off and clung to the bier, and it was only on their repenting and humbling themselves to St Peter that they were restored. The written accounts of the Virgin's death, of which there are many in many languages, all give an account of this miracle; but only speak of one Jew as the sufferer, whereas here there are two. One account calls him Jephonias, another Reuben. The subject is very common in art.

I said just now that in the window a turbaned figure

was bearing the palm. If turbaned he cannot be an apostle: apostles never wear turbans. In Melito of Sardis's account of the Assumption (which is embodied in the *Legenda Aurea*) we find the explanation of this. After the Jew's hands had been healed, St Peter bade him take the palm from the hands of St John who was carrying it, and lay it upon the eyes of the rest of the Jewish mob who had come to interrupt the funeral: for when the Jew was struck, his company had all been smitten with blindness. So then two moments are represented in the window. First we see the Jew smitten, then we see him healed and bearing the palm: and if we look to the left of the coffin we shall see an aged man in a suppliant posture, who is probably meant for another Jew struck blind and about to be healed. Above his head is the open country, and a view of the mob brandishing all sorts of weapons.

We will now pass to the upper lights. Those on the L., above the Death of the Virgin, contain a picture of the type of that event, the death of the aged Tobit. He lies in bed, his son Tobias kneels in the foreground, and on the L. we see the figures of Sarah, Tobias' wife, the angel Raphael, and another. The picture does not call for further remark: it is in far better condition than those below. On the right is the type of the Virgin's funeral, viz. the Burial of Jacob. The patriarchs are bearing the coffin of Jacob, covered with a black pall, to the R. One of the mourners on the left has a large rosary. The mourners are in large black cloaks with hoods—a costume which was in use at funerals in England till within a few years. Probably many here may have seen these dreadful garments, which added a quite superfluous element of gloom and terror to the ceremony of the burial of the dead. Principally owing to the large amount of black glass, this part of the window is rather an unfortunate piece of colour.

The Messengers and scrolls are the next point. The designs of the figures are the same as those in the N.W. window, though, as I have said, they are far inferior in execution. The scrolls are sadly broken, but I think we have made out all that can be read of them. Those in the lower half of the window

are duplicates of those in the upper half, and refer to the types, not to the Death and Burial of the Virgin: another sign of careless and hasty work in the execution of this window. From the two copies of each scroll which we thus possess, it is plain that they originally read

1. "In hora mortis uocabit (*l. uocauit*) filium suum cum aliis," a loose quotation from Tob. xiv. 5.

2. "Josep cum fratribus sepeliuit Jacop," which is not a quotation from the Bible at all.

In the restoration, or rather reparation (for nothing has been *restored*) of this window, many fragments of alien glass were removed, being replaced by others of neutral tint.

Dr James then exhibited some of the most interesting of these fragments.

The Rev. F. C. KEMPSON, M.B., Caius, gave an account of some skulls recently found, behind Addenbrooke's Hospital, during the excavations for the Nurses' Home: he considered them of interest as showing the type of the ordinary East Anglian of recent times, before the effect of railways began to be felt, in obscuring the distinctive characters of inhabitants of different districts in England. The form of the skulls and other bones is with one or two exceptions uniform throughout the series, and indicates a type above the average stature with somewhat long narrow heads, prominent noses and weak chins. Two of the skulls were however markedly of the opposite type, short and round.

Some of the bones being without doubt those of women, they cannot all come from the religious house which stood close to the spot where they were found: although, as Prof. Macalister pointed out, the two round skulls are exactly such as have been found near the sites of other religious houses; and which he thinks are those of Breton ecclesiastics who came over in the Norman invasion.

The skulls are preserved in the Anatomical Museum.

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