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BEING THE NINETEENTH VOLUME.

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MEDIEVAL GRAFFITI, ESPECIALLY IN THE
EASTERN COUNTIES.

Modified from papers read December 2, 1912, and
February 8, 1915.

We have a great deal still to learn from the systematic study of masons' marks; but there is another class of marks in churches which has been left almost unnoticed, though it offers perhaps a still richer field, and especially for Cambridge students. On the piers of the tower-arch at Coton church are three rough inscriptions, scratched apparently with knife-points, one by the mason who did the work, and the others by parish clerks. The material (clunch) was evidently so tempting, and is so common in Eastern county churches, that these inscriptions suggested to me the idea of a systematic search, which has been rewarded far beyond my expectations. If we may generalize from about a hundred buildings now inspected in Cambridgeshire, Herts, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, it would seem that there are scarcely any clunch-built churches which have not tempted the medieval scribbler. Some have been so mercilessly scraped at restoration that little or nothing now remains; in other cases, the pillars are still covered wholly or in part with whitewash; in nearly all other cases medieval inscriptions may be found in a more or less legible state. It may therefore be worth while to provide here a rough hand-list of such inscriptions, deciphered to the best of my ability. Although I have here had much help from the Provost of King's, Mr E. H. Mians, and above all from Mr A. Rogers of the University Library, much must still be left to my reader's conjecture or correction. If this paper elicits more accurate readings from other observers, and especially if it stimulates systematic research and preservation

of such inscriptions in the clunch districts, it will have served its purpose.

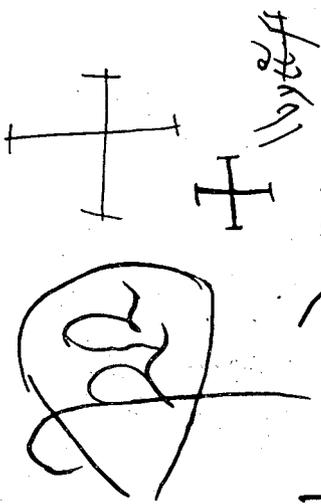
Some of these inscriptions are very conspicuous, and have already been published. The chief among them is the famous Black Death inscription, and drawing of Westminster Abbey in the 14th century (miscalled Old St Paul's), inside Ashwell tower. Legends almost equally conspicuous are inscribed upon two arches at Rushden (Northants). On one is "This arche made Hiwe Bochar & Julian hise wyf, of whos sowlus God have merci up on. Amen." The other bears "In God is all. A! God help!" At Ropsley (Lincoln) a pillar bears "Ista columna facta fuit ad festum Sancti Michaelis anno Domini M° CCC° LXXX°, et nomen factoris Thomas Bate de Corby." These, of course, were official inscriptions meant to be seen by all. Of similar character are the boldly-cut words on the jamb of a window in the N. aisle at Offley (Herts). "Dedicatum fuit istud altare in festo sancti Sulspicii (sic) episcopi, anno domini M° CCCC° XVII°," to which a contemporary hand has added "et Regis Henrici V^{ti} quarto. Billeys"; (plate X). Again, on a pillar at Little Dunmow; "Hic requiescat (sic) corpus Johannis de monte Caniso, cujus anime propicietur Deus. Amen." Such conspicuous inscriptions are deeply cut in bold letters, and have attracted their due share of notice; it is therefore better here to emphasize the multitude of others, sometimes so minute as to suggest that they may have been scratched with a pin-point, and often half-scraped away by the restorer, which seem hitherto to have escaped notice almost altogether. In a few cases, as at Barrington and Ashwell, they have been traced over in modern times with a lead pencil; but with unfortunate results, since the operators in all these cases have evidently misread (and therefore, wrongly traced) a good many letters.

Let us begin with Coton, as nearest to Cambridge and intrinsically among the most interesting. I have collected the best Coton graffiti on Plate VI. On the N. side of the tower-arch Andrew Swinhoe has recorded that he began the arch on St Wulstan's day 1481, and two parish clerks have written their names about the same date, one on the S. and one on the N. pier. These inscriptions run: "Andreas Swynnnow hoc

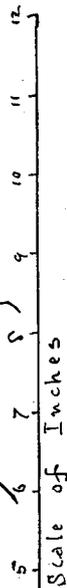
8 andreas s73yuoW +
 6 hmo i die ca vltan in cep
 8 mo d' aqillm d' cae^m octuyel
 8^m

Thomas 2328dfrid 1115 de cotys
 2110 d'oin 9 1115 de cotys
 1115 de cotys

Thomas sabbson clymcy
 de cotys d'innq / 5^m



1115 de cotys
 1115 de cotys
 1115 de cotys



Graffiti, see p. 54.

amento mei aū be di (nec r

Opere p p amā + e sōg apr s

homo s: 16 Elstow

oge p meq cōio

Ho the post fo
the ga gūtu

pat.
(an kept a
anru it)

Constance
a hūeta



Graffiti, see p. 55.

primo in die Sancti Wlstan̄i incepit, anno domini millesimo cccc° octagesimo primo"; "Thomas Bradfeld clericus de Coty[s] anno domini [MC] CCC [octa]gesimo tercio"; and again "Thomas Dobson clericus de Cotes¹ anno domini....." The rude mark before *Andreas* seems pretty plainly intended for a pair of compasses, a very common emblem of the mason's craft. On the pier of the tower-arch, about 8 feet up, is a sort of rough monogram which may possibly be read "P. R.," and may be a mason's indication-note such as we shall see later on. On the pillar near the font are two so-called "pilgrim-crosses," such as occur in very many medieval churches. The explanation of these (which is probable enough, though I have never seen documentary evidence given), is that they marked the beginning or the consummation of a pilgrim's vow. On another pillar "William" [] has scrawled his name, on the N. pier arch "Johannes Lofte," and in other places we note "th"[omas], "thom," "stobart"?, and a very minute scratch which apparently reads "Dom^s Henricus," and will in that case be the signature of one of the clergy.

With this miscellaneous collection from Coton let us compare a similar collection from the nave of the nunnery church of Elstow, Beds, which was doubtless frequented by the laity also (Plate VII). These pillars are hard and rough sandstone, so that the letters, though often large, are shallow and frequently illegible. The first runs "Memento mei cum ve...." We at once supply "-neris in regnum tuum," and this is not entirely inconsistent with what can be deciphered of the rest of the inscription. Another begins quite clearly "Orate pro anima," and then, almost as clearly, "rus boy," which may possibly be ungrammatical for "Robertus Boy." The rest is suggestive of "eujus anime propicietur Deus," though there scarcely seems room for "eujus." It is possible, however, that the word which I have read as "Boy," may be "eujus," in which case there seems scarcely room for the name of the person whose soul is prayed for. The next seems to read "Homo de muliere"... "Man" (born) "of woman" (is full of trouble). The next is possibly "Me (et) temetipsum cedis." The next

¹ Coton was called *Cotes* in the Middle Ages.

is a long inscription in large letters, but mostly illegible, "tho the goost ffo d(o)th ge..." "th(an) he shel boot..." There are a good many scarcely legible names scratched, among them "Constaunce," "de — [?]" The other figures on this plate are from Whittlesford, and of the armorial kind which we shall see more fully later; one of the Allerton family has drawn his crest, an antelope's head, repeatedly, on a tilting helmet; the same drawing and the same name occurs on a pillar at Babraham.

Plate VIII gives fresh examples of building notes.

At Ashwell (S. pier eastwards) we find "anno D^{mi} M.CCC^o LXXX^o fuit ista. [ij^a] ecclesia con[summata]"; Sawston "[Consecr]atio [] xxxviiij in die apostolorum Symonis & Jude." At Ashwell, that is, "this second church" (by which is doubtless meant the church as rebuilt after the Black Death) "was finished in 1381." At Sawston the church (or possibly the altar close to the pillar) was consecrated after rebuilding on St Simon and Jude's day 1338: the century is illegible on the inscription, but no other is compatible with the actual architecture. At Stapleford on one of the pillars is "M," doubtless for "Maria." The rest on this plate are moral saws such as are very frequently found among these medieval graffiti, although they are not always specially legible. Saws of this kind are of course commonly met with scribbled on the blank leaves or margins of medieval books. Moreover collections of them were not infrequently made in the Middle Ages. A German scholar, Jakob Werner, has published an extremely useful alphabetical arrangement of them, mainly from two MSS. at Bâle¹. He suspects a Low German origin for the best of these collections, but one of the proverbs seems to point to an English origin, since it is difficult to make sense of it in any other language². The last of the saws on Plate VIII is in one of the Bâle MSS. quoted by Werner, "ebrietas frangit quicquid sapientiâ tangit." "Drunkness breaks whatever wisdom

¹ Jakob Werner. *Lateinische Sprichwörter u.s.w. des Mittelalters*. Heidelberg. 1912. 2 mks.

² "Plus valet il quam nil," pulicem gluciens lupus inquit. "Ill is better than nil," as the wolf said when he swallowed a flea.

lo fol hio ye day such
 Tatt fol noce to ye dole
 Ryth bone to wyth ye doof
 It go abnotts of ye dole

Barrington, Cambs.

Anno d'ni m
 lxxxviii
 m'p'cc'os conu'mu

Ashwell, Herts

Quot gratias sentis tot oculis quib' m'p'cc'os

Ashwell.



Stapleford

C'no'cc'os & T xxxviii Indie
 ap'ter Symon & Iude

Sawston

paed fiiiiio tenn'c
 T'celo'paed

fiiii'it'ur' Est' & no' san' fii' m'p'cc'os

Oibz' q's' i' n' m' m' p'cc'os & p'uni

eb'p'cc'os fran'c' q' d's' p'cc'os
 t'ing'

} Ashwell

Graffiti, see p. 56.

touches." It is difficult not to suspect that the man who first invented the line wrote "pangit." Working upwards on the plate the next seems to read "Omnibus in quibus...diligit punit." The next "Finis virtutis Dei gloria, & non sancta sum omnibus." "The end of virtue is God's glory, and I am not holy to all." The next, "Patere si vis temet in coelo patere"; i.e. "Suffer, if you want yourself to be seen in Heaven." Skipping the Sawston inscriptions already noted, we come to another from Ashwell. "Quot gratias sentis tot deles crimina mentis." "As many thanks [or favours] you feel, so many faults of the soul do you wipe out." It is pathetic to think that the good priest who wrote this took *gratias* for an anapaest. The top inscription is from Barrington; it has been wholly pencilled over, so that it can only be read properly in a rubbing¹. It is an English exhortation to the sinner:

"lo fol how the day goth
Cast foly now to the cok
Ryth sone tydyth the [thee] wroth
It ys almost xii of the klok."

I have found only two similar inscriptions in English: one is from Great Bardfield, very imperfect:

"Be noght to bold
Be to buss[ness]...
Bost noght to mych..."

and the other is a portion of an English love-song on one of the pillars of the half-ruined church at Duxford:

"With wiel my herte is wa
& closyd ys w^t care
L & S sekurly
[Ca] use me to syth full far
I &
...for to smarte
V &...Y withall
.. joy come to thin hert."

¹ It may be well to mention here that by experience I find far the best rubbings can be made with a *good* (2d.) indelible pencil, and on the thin tough paper commonly sold nowadays in 6d. correspondence tablets. The pencil should be sharpened at both ends, otherwise it may wear out before the inscription is fully rubbed, which causes great difficulties.

But to return to our Latin saws. At Gamlingay is an inscription in large sprawling letters (Plate IX); "mors comparatur umbre que semper sequitur corpus"—"death is like a shadow which always follows the body." At Harlton is "si servire velis...immittere del...", evidently meant for a hexameter, but beyond my skill to decipher: as is also another in the same church, "Quod non vis longas...propheta [fatigas]." A third at Harlton runs "qui me deridet non sua facta videt"—"he who laughs at me sees not his own deeds." Before passing away from the subject altogether, one or two may be recorded which are not figured in these plates. At Ashwell we find "...autem Domini sordidi et fetentes"; "non [hac] arte [pre-munt] pungentes cornua [spinas]" and (magnificent specimen of dog-Latin) "Superbia precedit fallum." At Little Dunmow is a curious motto for a monastic church "Dum sumus in mundo, vivamus corde jocundo"; and at St Gregory's, Sudbury, on the tower-arch, a saw which Werner quotes also from a Bâle MS., "non est in mundo dives qui dicit habondo"—"there is not a rich man in the world who says 'I have enough.'"

Let us now return to Plate IX. One Stanstedé has recorded his name elaborately at Harlton; at Lavenham and Beachamwell is a puzzling τ ††, in both cases on the western tower; and at Harlton there is in the same place an equally large and legible τ . In none of these three cases is there any trace of an emblem of the Trinity. I can only conjecture that these marks are masons' memoranda of some sort.

Plate X. Among the commonest graffiti are Roman numerals, sometimes indicating dates, but in many cases certainly referring to business accounts. On the tower-arch of Walpole St Peter's is a record of a considerable amount spent for stone. At Duxford St Peter's, in the splay of the window behind the priest's seat, is "Robertus Ba (?) hic obligatur di marē," which evidently records a debt of half a mark. On the piscina at Harlton is recorded a series of shillings and pence over the signature of "Elena Crowe¹." On Gt Dunmow tower-arch are similar notes of money and one legible item "oyll." At Thaxted on one of the pillars is "P. Kyng. iij s."

¹ The Walpole and Harlton examples are not on this plate.



Gamlingay



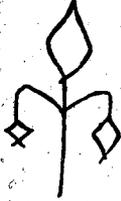
Kingston.



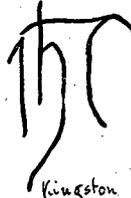
Elstow



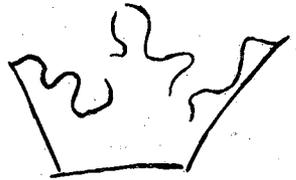
Coton.



Kingston



Kingston



Elstow

Graffiti, see p. 59.

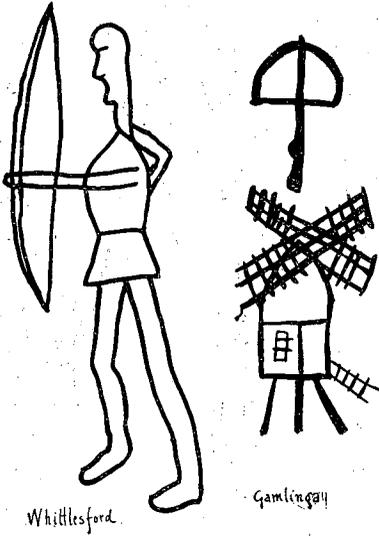
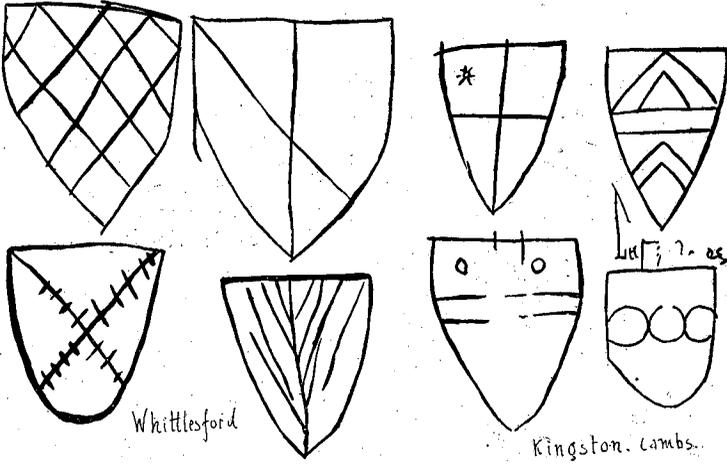


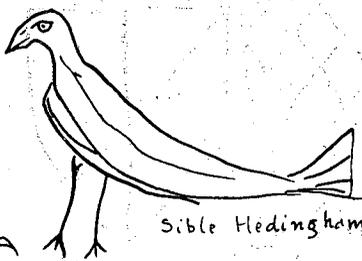
Plate X shows other business or clerical inscriptions. At Babraham "Dominus Johannes Hede funus celebravit"; also on the base of one of the north pillars "[Beverach?] & Kateryn Sant offyrit this gobyite. [Beverach?]." *Gobbet* was a medieval term for a large block of stone: no doubt these two contributed the cost of the block from which the base was wrought. At Harlton on a N. pillar; "orate pro anima Thome [] Cujus anime propicietur Deus amen." On the Swynford tomb at Lincoln, or on a pillar beside it, "Oliverus Lowode Capellanus de [Husse]." At Duxford St John's "Dominus Johannes Ranaldson [bis]. Mundi salvatrix sis michi A propiciatrix Amen." It is evident that Sir John Ranaldson misplaced his ejaculatory *Ah!* which should come after *salvatrix*. Most interesting of all is an inscription on the pillar between the choir and the S. chapel at Whittlesford. It reads "Frater Fenis apostata"; *Fenis* is evidently *Fiennes*, a name which is spelt *Fenys* in the Greyfriars' Chronicle of London recently edited by Mr C. L. Kingsford. This is dated, in contemporary Arabic numerals, 1388, and was evidently cut on the stone before the Perpendicular screen was put in its present place. This date is extremely interesting, since the internal evidence would have dated this pillar a hundred years later. It is scarcely possible to suppose that the stone is of earlier date than the rest, and that it was re-chiselled by masons of 1480 without touching the inscription. It would seem to confirm very strongly a theory to which some students of Perpendicular architecture have already been driven by other evidence—that the style ran very quickly through almost all its variations, and that what seems to us late Perpendicular was sometimes middle Perpendicular.

Plate XI gives specimens of religious emblems, a very frequent form of graffiti: three vernicles, a lily, a crown, and the sacred monogram, which is to be found almost everywhere.

Plate XII. The costume of the Whittlesford archer shows him to be medieval; the Gamlingay mill and crossbow are probably medieval also. Rough coats of arms are very common indeed; sometimes (as at Kingston) the name is given; though I cannot read it.



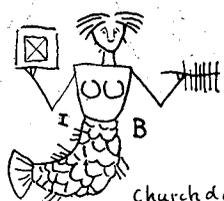
Lit. Dunmow



Sible Hedingham



Beachamwell



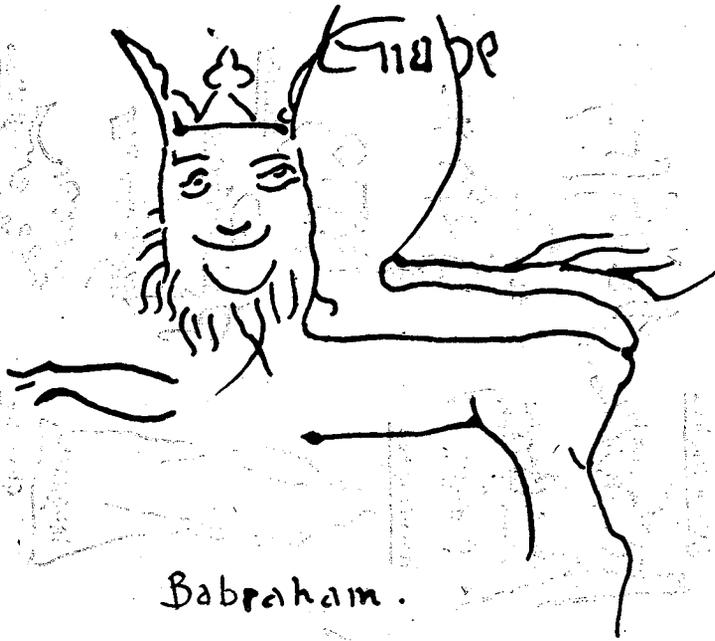
Churchdown



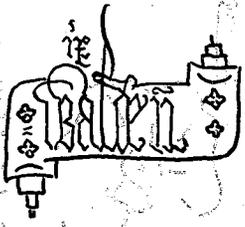
Barrington



Barrington.



Babraham.



Rickling
Essex.



18-00 14 son 11-100

Graffiti, see p. 60.

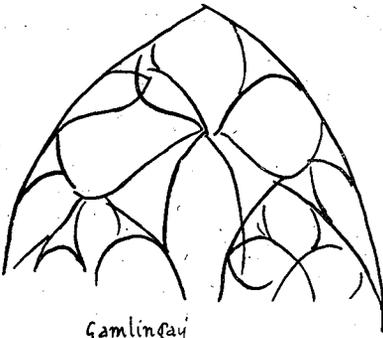
Plate XIII contains more elaborate drawings. The Church-down (Gloucs.) mermaid, if the letters belong to it, must be post-medieval. The monk at Little Dunmow, and a very delicate peacock in the porch at Churchdown (not here reproduced) are evidently by practised artists. The Sible Hedingham hawk is copied from the carved hawks on the cenotaph of the great condottiere Sir John Hawkwood, which stands just opposite.

Plate XIV. The Babraham lion is evidently heraldic, and the added name seems to be Snape. The Rickling inscription is the most elaborate of its kind I have seen; it is on both sides of the priest's door. It is evidently a tribute to the mutual affection of Isabel and Colin Walden. The numbers (IX, 45, 2435) had doubtless a mystical signification to Colin and Isabel. The heart and three roses had its parallel (as we have seen in Plate X) at Babraham: the motto *tout dis* is, of course, old French for *toujours*.

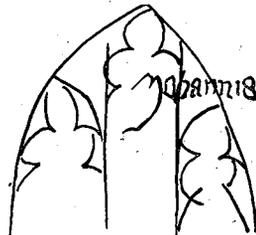
Plate XV. The Pentney and Barnston figures seem, by their hoods, to be 14th or 15th century. The Stebbing helmet has a wing for its crest. At Babraham is a chalice on one of the pillars, and the Duxford rose is on the jamb of the priest's door.

The Gloucester examples are part of a most interesting series of masons' records. At the back of almost every niche in the reredos of the Lady Chapel, is a rudely-sketched figure of a saint, with the name scrawled across it in illiterate handwriting, far less cursive in its character than are the ordinary graffiti. The examples given here are Margarete, Babtiste, Arilda (a Gloucester female saint), Sofonie, and Henos (i.e. Zephaniah and Enoch). At St Albans are similar notes of subjects to be painted on the S. choir piers—"Samson ludificatus"; "legem domini." The oak-leaf was evidently scratched by a practised hand; a similar oak-leaf, drawn on the magnificent chantry-tomb in the N. nave aisle of Sens Cathedral, can be proved to be not later than 1490.

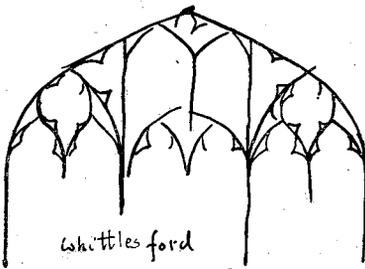
The other three inscriptions on this Plate are very tantalizing. The first two occur on the tower-arch at Sible Hedingham about six feet from the ground on exactly



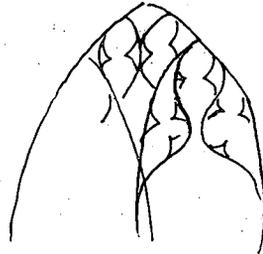
Gamlingay



Barrington

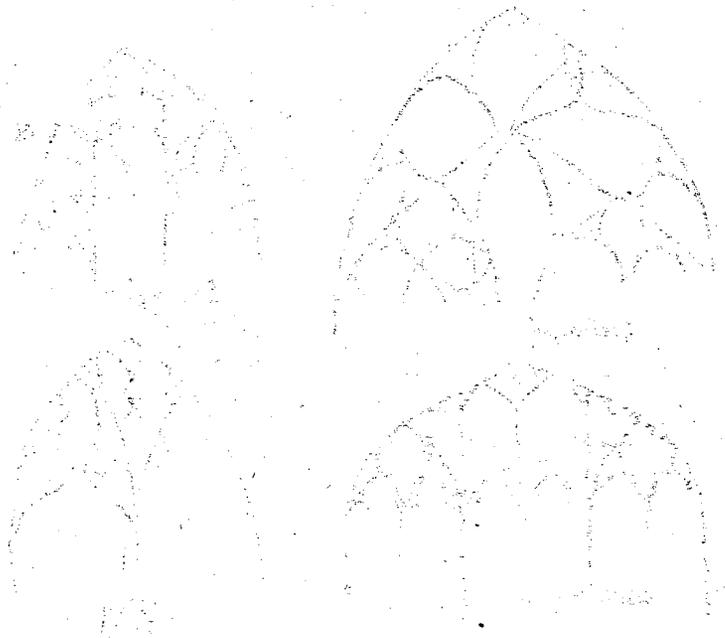


Whittlesford



Offley

Graffiti, see pp. 61-62.



PLANT COLLECTOR'S RECORD

corresponding stones of the north and south piers. Like most of the Gloucester inscriptions (and some others which I have noticed whose masonic origin is also probable), these letters seem to have been scratched with the end of a very narrow chisel rather than with the point of a knife. The Horningsea inscription, moreover, is in a position in which it would have been almost impossible to make it when the stone was in its present position (west side of entrance arch into south porch, a few feet above the spring of the arch). We are driven to the conclusion that the letters were inscribed upon the stone by the workman who had it before him on the banker. Even Mr Rogers is puzzled by the inscriptions, which are so similar as to suggest that the same word is intended in each case, and I have vainly searched architectural glossaries for any medieval word like these. Before passing on from Horningsea it may be remarked that on the other side of the same arch "[] de Templo" has inscribed his name.

The last class of inscriptions to which I come is that of masons' drawings (Plate XVI). One well-known example of such drawings is in the Archaeological Museum at Cambridge, a slab of clunch from the old chapel of St John's College, upon which a 13th century mason had worked out a simple design for tracery. Other far more complicated working-drawings are figured in an early volume of Didron's *Annales Archéologiques*; they are scratched (if I may trust my memory) on the grey slabs of slate which take the place of lead as an outer covering for the aisle roofs at the Cathedral of Limoges. At Castleacre Priory in Norfolk, in the late seventies or very early eighties, the outer coat of whitewash peeled bodily away from the pointed recess on the west side of the south transept; and this left bare, upon the original rough plaster below, a sketch of a flowing decorated window which had evidently been drawn with a point while the plaster was wet. You could see the burr thrown up as the point swept along. This sketch was 3 or $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, and, though hastily drawn, very elaborate. I foolishly neglected to take any drawing of it; and, in a year or two, another frost brought most of the plaster down as suddenly as the earlier coat had fallen. Two years ago there remained

only a few inches here and there, quite unintelligible to a stranger. The four examples collected on Plate XVI are of the same kind, scratched on pillars in every case. If proof were needed that these are rough sketches by actual masons, and not attempts by some worshipper to copy what he saw in the church, it may be noted that in none of these four cases do the sketches correspond with any existing window.

I may add that I have lately found considerable numbers of medieval graffiti in foreign churches, e.g. Calais, Arques, Bures, Guarbecques, Sens Cathedral, the porches of Notre Dame and St-Bénigne at Dijon, and, above all, the pulpitum of the old Cathedral (Valère) at Sion in the Valais. This pulpitum of about 1260 has its upper part covered with plaster of Paris, apparently contemporary with the rest; and this plaster, now as hard and smooth as marble, is covered with drawings and writings which seem to date from the early 14th century,—texts and moral saws, artists' notes, and very spirited drawings of mounted knights, duels, &c. I am more and more convinced that some traces at least of such graffiti will be found in almost all churches where the material permits them, and the restorer has not swept them away. This Society will do an excellent work if it can continue systematically the study of such ancient inscriptions, and warn the clergy not to destroy them during the process, however necessary, of removing whitewash.

G. G. COULTON.

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WITH
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MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

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n. p. means that the Communication has not been printed in full.

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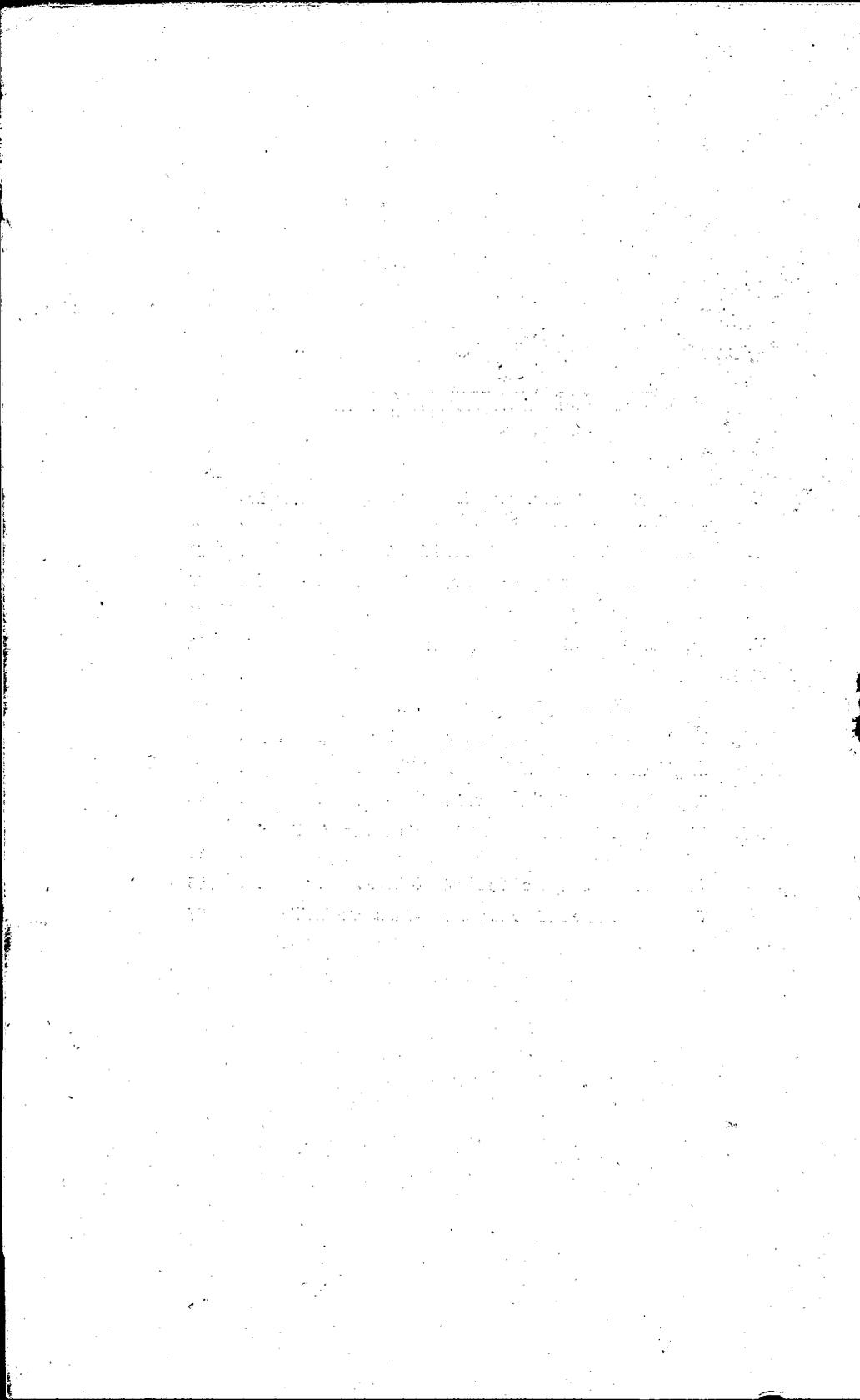
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