

ART. IX.—*Kendal Parish Church Registers.* By G. E. MOSER, Esq.

Read at Kendal, December 11, 1876.

THE Kendal Parish Church Registers are unfortunately wanting in those instances of peculiar entries of ceremonials and parochial occurrences, which not uncommonly abound in the records of many parishes throughout the country, affording entertainment to the antiquarian, and subject matter for a paper of this character. The storms, rebellions, and plagues, which have from time to time visited and troubled a parish, increasing its average rate of mortality, as well as other extraordinary circumstances, which have led to the increase or decrease of its local population, are in the Kendal registers unnoticed as matters extraneous to the purpose for which they were intended, and the few words necessary to describe the solemnization of a church rite, as applying to a particular parishioner, are briefly and laconically referred to. On a perusal, page by page, of the regular columns of entries, one is reminded of the hint which a doctor gave to his patient when listening to an account of his symptoms, "Now, if you please, let your words be few and savory :" as one passes over the various names from Cicely (in all its forms) to Sibbel and from John to Thomasin, with an occasional "Guy" as a reminder that one is perusing documents which were written about the time of the great conspiracy, one is inclined to close the book exclaiming "Ex nihilo nihil fit." How it is that these books have been so regularly kept I cannot say, unless it may be accounted for by the fact that the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, being the rectors and patrons of the living, their vicar has always been a man who has kept the books with classical phraseology and mathematical precision: With whatever care in phraseology, however, the entries

have been made, the custody of the books themselves has not in olden times met with a corresponding attention, (although at the present day the case is quite the reverse). It is unfortunately a fact that between the years 1558 and 1679, a period of 121 years, the registers for 58 years (nearly half the period) are entirely wanting, and that amidst the entries existing during these years there are frequent notes to the following or a like effect:—"The rest of the entries for this year are wanting." The worst feature is, that out of these 121 years the whole register book between 1631 and 1679 (a period of 48 years) is missing. Whether this book shared the fate of the register book at South Otterington, and was devoted to the "utilitarian purpose of singeing a goose" or was made up into curl papers at a barber's shop, I cannot say. Some wag remarked that the lost register might have found its way into a lawyer's office, and never been returned. This remark, though made in joke, might be further from a very possible truth. In whatever way, however, the register has disappeared, it is difficult to exaggerate the trouble and inconvenience that might arise through its loss. It is by means of such records as these that many titles to estates and peerages are in a great measure substantiated. The lost book, moreover, contained entries of events that occurred at the very time when the greatest confusion and difficulty always arises in tracing families, and when registers, and any evidence of family relationship, are of the greatest service: the gap is so great that in tracing back a pedigree a portion of the stem with collateral branches is almost surely lost, and the difficulty of tacking together the family tree is almost insuperable, if not impossible, unless other good and conclusive evidence can be obtained. The legislature, from almost the very commencement of parochial registers, passed a law that these documents should be kept in a sure coffer, with two locks and keys, and subsequent statutes have made stringent provision

provisions for their safe custody ; but, notwithstanding these provisions, the laws in this respect have been, and in many places are, most grievously and shamefully violated ; and antiquarians and others have in vain lifted up their voices against the manner in which parochial muniments are preserved. How is it that the Society of Friends have always kept their registers in such beautiful order, so much so that the legislature has made special exceptions in their favour, and yet, in the Church, notwithstanding legislative enactments, the custody of registers is often so very loose ?

I would here remark that if any one should wish to obtain information as to the contents of the missing register book, a few of the Bishop's Transcripts for the period comprised may be found in a mouldy and chaotic heap of documents, which is now lying on the floor of a room in the Archdeaconry of Lancaster, where they came along with other important ecclesiastical documents relating to the Archdeaconry, from the vestry of the parish church at Lancaster, having been transmitted there with the assistance of a cart and pitchfork from the Archdeaconry Court at Richmond on the creation of the diocese at Ripon. Many of the bonds and other papers in this heap are half moulded away with the damp, and whether the remaining documents will ever be cared for and preserved it is not for me to say, neither can I say whether the civil or ecclesiastical or any other authority is supposed to have any jurisdiction concerning them. I am told that it would take a person three weeks to sort them. I do trust that those who feel the importance of preserving these documents will not allow them to remain in the state that they are in. I most humbly apologise for having taken up so much time on this head, but I could not let the opportunity slip, of bringing a matter, upon which I feel so warmly, before a Society who will, I am sure, so thoroughly sympathise with my feelings, and whose expressed disapprobation will be brought so much better to bear on public opinion, than any thing that I could do or say.

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The registers are as follows :

1st Book, 1558, copy, paper, good condition.

to

2nd Book, 1591, original, paper, fair condition.

to

3rd Book, 1606, copied in engrossing hand, parchment, excellent state
to of preservation.

1631.

Gap to 1679, as already pointed out, but there are churchwardens' books for this period, which show the names of persons who were buried in woollen, which might be of some assistance in tracing burials at this time.

4th Book, 1679, copy, paper.

5th Book, 1713, parchment, copied annually.

6th Book, 1732, parchment, copy.

7th Book, 1752, parchment, copy (containing copy of sentence of consecration of the old St. George's Church).

From 1754 until the present time, the marriages are kept in the form now in use, in pursuance of George II.

8th Book, 1769, paper, copied neatly.

to

1789, paper, copied.

9th Book, 1790, paper, copied, original memorandum, both still in existence.

10th Book, 1804, paper, copy.

By an Act in 1813, the registers were ordered to be kept in regular forms, and we find the Kendal registers kept in good order from that date until the present day. Having considered the registers (perhaps too minutely) as they now exist, I shall pass on to objects of interest appearing on them. The parish of Kendal is a very large one, and includes many townships, and until Lord Blandford's Act the various solemnizations of rites, if they did not take place in the Parish Church, were transmitted from the various chapelries, and copied into the Kendal registry. The point that has attracted my attention the most, in perusing the registers, is the antiquity of some of the Christian names, the most unusual of which are to be found in the entries of baptisms, marriages, and burials of persons resident in the valley of Kentmere, and some of which are still in use in that valley. These names appear to be of Celtic, Teutonic, or old German origin. I append

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a few examples. "Gisslett, the son of William Cowperthwaite, of Kentmere, christened vii. Nov. 1576." This name is the same as Grislet, and female Griselda, and is derived from old German, "gries" a stone. It occurs in the registers in feminine form as "Gisly." "Disbury, ye daughter of Ewan Gilpin, of Kentmere, christened X day March, 1576." In this entry there are two old names. The former I cannot explain. Ewan is the same as the Scotch Eoghan, pronounced Yohan, and indiscriminately pronounced Ewan and Hugh. It is derived from Og, young and divine, and signifies a warrior. In the registers we find Johanna *alias* Jennett. Thus, "Johanna *alias* Jennett, ye daughter of Roger Ayrey, of Kentmere, VII. July, 1561." "Gillian, the daughter of Anthony Duckett, of Lambrigg, born May, 1576." This word Gillian is another form of Julyan, Juliana, and Gill, from St. Juliana, the martyr. "Gawan Helme, of Witherslack, 3rd May, 1576." This word Gawan is extant in Kentmere to this day as a Christian name. It is a Celtic word, and signifies "Hawk of battle." The old Celtic Uter, and its feminine Ute, signifying "rich," is occasionally met with, both in the masculine and feminine, as is also the Celtic word Perceval, or Parcval, which is said to be derived from the Arabic *Parse* or *Parschful*, the hero of an Eastern tale of the wonderful cup, whence arose the mysterious allegory of the Holy Grail. The word Norman, which is now by no means an uncommon one, is found in 1585, in its original form Nordman, "Nordman, the son of Adam Robinson, of Kentmere, VII. April, 1585." Although the word Nordman is still used in Norse to signify Northman, it is clearly derived from "Niord," who was god of the sea, and equal to Odin. This word was in use in France and England at the time of the Conquest, 1581. "Nov. 21, Ninian Harrison, of Sleddal, and Thomas Jackson married." The word Ninian is derived from St. Ninian, a prince of Cumbrian birth, who built the first stone church between the Forth and the Clyde. Other names, such as Gervas, the Teutonic

tonic for eagerness for war; Urbin, Latin for belonging to a town; and Bartle, son of furrows, are of occasional occurrence, also Theafilis, "beloved of God." Besides these names, I find others, such as Keyther, Lrangwell, &c., which I cannot explain. The name Cicely is spelt in a dozen different ways, and is, as well as Randall, Guy, Giles, Sibbel, of very common occurrence in the early registers. The fine old name of Mary seldom occurs in the sixteenth century. Possibly the conduct of the Queen of that name, or the effects of the Reformation, rendered the name for a time unpopular—in fact it was not formerly so frequently selected as in the present day. The name of Randall was used in common with Ralph—Rondolf signifying housewolf. There are thirty-eight Randolfs in Domesday Book. The Hebrew names do not seem to have been much introduced into the registers in early times, but the first page in which I found two occurring, sensibly reminded me of the early history of man, "Adam, the son of Thomas Wade, of Skelsmergh (chr) June, 1581." "July 6th, Eden, daughter of John Lickbarrow of Sleddall." Further on, we have "Emanuel, son of Mr. Israel Wath, of Highgate, surgeon, Oct., 1583." The only cases in which the register keeper appears to have gone out of the usual stereotype form of expression are those where from the fact of a pauper being unable to pay the burial fees, his unfortunate helpless condition is referred to. Thus:—"And one man child brought up in the town which no man could show who ought him buried." "A poor woman called Black Meg, of the Highgate." "A poor crippel whose name none of Hutton could tell." "A poor lass of Hutton." "A poore child which dyed upon the Kirkland, which came out of Lancashire." "Michael Robby, a poore vagrant stranger." "Richard Peill, a poor children, a vagabond person." And lastly: "Nov., 1619, William, which God sent us, a poore ladd who dyed at Jefferey Crosbie's, Highgate." There are a few instance where people are described as slain, but only one where I saw
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the cause of death assigned :—“January, 1610, Thomas Borwick, of Grayrigg, slain with a mill.” On one of the tombs in the Parish Church occurs a memorial of a late vicar of Kendal (Mr. Ralph Tyrer). It runs as follows:—

London bred me,
Westminster fed me,
“My sister wed me.”

The last line has by some been explained to mean that the deceased was never married, but lived quietly as a bachelor with his sister (who kept his house). An entry of the birth of a son of Mr. and Mrs. Tyrer will, however, show that this idea is incorrect ; and the more likely theory is that the reverend gentleman, being much engaged in scholastic and parochial matters, was unable to devote sufficient time to the art of wooing, which was effectually carried out with success, by his sister, on his behalf. Reference has been made in a former paper read before this Society to the act of Parliament 30 Car. II., cap. 3, which, in order to encourage the wool trade, imposed a penalty where persons were buried in linen instead of woollen. By this act it was left for vicars to see, not only that the requirements of the act were carried out in the parish church-yard, but also, as the act describes, “in other common burial places within the parish.” Hence it is that reference is frequently made in parish registers to the burial of nonconformists, their friends having filed the necessary affidavit to the effect that the deceased was buried in woollen. The word “spinster” never occurs in the registers until the commencement of the eighteenth century ; the words therefore used to signify the female unmarried state being invariably “single woman.” There is just one instance I have found where a god-parent is named, viz., “Elizabeth, daughter of Alexander Lowder and Jane Warriner, of the Forest, Edward Shepherd, god-father.” The registers contain entries of the names of many persons who have made their mark in the world, and
excellent

excellent accounts of these local celebrities will be found in a book entitled "The Annals of Kendal," written by Mr. Cornelius Nicholson. I shall, therefore, only refer to one person of whom the town may be proud, and of whom we have at present no account. I allude to Thomas Hunter, the son of William Hunter, of Kendal, and whose baptismal registry appears in one record. He matriculated at Queen's College, Oxford, in July, 1734, at the age of 22. On leaving college he went to be schoolmaster at Blackburn, where he married and had issue. He became vicar of Garstang in 1750, and vicar of Weaverham, in Cheshire, in 1755, where he died in 1777, having in 1771 taken his diploma of B.A. He wrote "Moral Discourses on Providence," "Observations on Tacitus," and "A Sketch of the Philosophic Character of the late Viscount Bolinbroke." I am indebted to Colonel Fishwick, of Rochdale, for this information.

The books of the churchwardens contain a good deal of information, some of which may be valuable, and some is undoubtedly interesting to the antiquarian. They contain accounts showing the amounts received from church rates, from payments for graves, and for the use of the pall, and the amounts paid for church expenses. There are some interesting allusions to Sir Joseph Cradock, the great Archdeacon of Richmond, whose jurisdiction was very extensive, and whose powers were almost equal to episcopal. The Archdeaconry of Richmond included a great portion of the West Riding of York, it included the deanery of Cope-land and other parts of Cumberland, a part of Westmorland, and extended southward, including Furness, to the Ribble, below Preston, the southern boundary of the district of Amounderness, where it joined the great diocese of Lich-field. The Archdeacon was his own ordinary, he held his courts of corrections, and marriage bonds were more frequently given to "Venerabili viro domino Josepho Cradock, Militi, Legum Doctori" (the Archdeacon of Rich-mond,)

mond,) than to "Reverendo in Christo patri domino Johani Divina permissione Cestriensi Episcopo," (the Bishop of Chester). His visits to Kendal, where he sentenced offenders from his chair of state erected in the High Quire, were to be looked forward to with awe and reverence, yet we find him colloquially referred to in the churchwardens' books, as we now allude to the jovial squire, Sir Roger de Coverley, in the present day. "Paid for bente to Straw in the High Quire against Sir Joseph came." "Paid to the Churchwardens, which they laid out when they delivered their presents to Sir Joseph Cradock." "Paid for washing and sweeping the Church against Sir Joseph's coming to sitt his Court of Correction, which was the 7 July, 1664." "At the peremptory day, being the 18th day of October, 1664, the general meeting of the Churchwardens, whose names are under written doth order that Geo. Wilkinson shall keep the clock and chimes in better order, and shall keep swine out of the churchyard and whip the dogs out of the church in time of divine service and sermon, and remove the dung-hill and the stable door which opens into the churchyard, before the next peremptory day, and reform all abuses belonging to his office, or else the Churchwardens will make complaint so that it shall be referred to the ordinary." In the year 1664, we find the censer in use in this church. "Paid to John Webster's brother for varnishing a new censer for church use." It appears that in olden times the Kendal church had certain workshops and out-buildings connected with it, and a staff of occasional workmen who could roughcast, build, spin, repair, and in fact do anything that was necessary for the use of the church and its services. Amongst other things it possessed a bell-house which was let out (when not required for church purposes) to one of the parishioners. This house was used for repairs of the bells and clock. These repairs were constant and more frequent than would be tolerated in the present day, and there are numerous interesting items showing the

articles repaired, and how the work was performed. Respecting the bell-house we have the following entry:— “Hugh Forth behind for this whole years’ rent of the bell-house.” The spinning of ropes and splicing of the same kept several hands at times employed, as will be gathered from the following entry :—

| | s. d. |
|---|-------|
| Paid for roqr. of hemp for a new rope to the great clock plume | 2 6 |
| Paid Wm. Smith’s wife for swinging the hemp and turning hinder crooke | 2 0 |
| Paid Wm. Smith for making the said rope ... | 2 0 |
| Paid George Wilkinson for his help to make it ... | 0 6 |
| Paid for drink in time of the said work, and for one to help to twine, 6d.... | 1 6 |
| Total ... | 8 6 |

of which payment for drink exhausted about twelve per cent of the cost. It is a curious fact that no work, however trifling, could be carried on without recourse to intoxicating beverages, and the items on this head sometimes equalled twenty per cent of the total cost of the work. I give an example :—

| | d. |
|--|----|
| Paid for mending George Wilkinson’s pitchfork which was broken | 8 |
| Paid for drink in service of the same work ... | 2 |

It appears that the youths of the 17th century were as mischievous as those of the present day, for, we find from the churchwardens’ books, that not only was a “sure coffer” required for the purpose of keeping the bell-ropes out of the boys’ way, but a man was specially hired to protect them. The following entry frequently occurs :—

| | s. d. |
|--|-------|
| Paid for keeping the bell-ropes locked up from jangling of boys... | 2 6 |

The frequent coats of whitewash that were put on this large church form no inconsiderable portion of the church incidental expenses, and I am sure we may congratulate ourselves that we live in an age when the sciences of architecture

architecture and church embellishment are more considered than they were in some of the periods through which these accounts have passed. I shall close these accounts with one more allusion. On the 26th of April, 1666, it was resolved by unanimous consent of the churchwardens of Kendal, that the payment for vermin heads should be at the whole charge of the parish, and that the same heads should be delivered to the churchwardens. The first sum was paid to Isaac Hudson for a raven's head; and from the various entries, I find that the following fees were paid :—

| | s. d. |
|--|-------|
| For one wild cat | 0 4 |
| For one raven's head | 0 2 |
| For one fox's head | 1 0 |
| For one foulmart | 0 2 |
| For one cleanmart | 0 4 |
| For one brock head or badger | 0 6 |

There is one churchwardens' book missing, namely, between the years 1731 and 1777.*

At the commencement of this paper, I endeavoured to plead, as an excuse for its poverty, the want of matter of antiquarian interest in the registers, but I feel that had these records been placed in abler hands a much more interesting and instructive paper might have been written. I have, however, treated of such information directly bearing on the subject in hand as the parochial records appeared to me to afford. I feel that I have spoken somewhat harshly of the way in which some parish registers are kept, and in which the ecclesiastical documents relating to the Archdeaconry of Richmond are preserved, but this must be taken as an *ex parte* statement by one, who would (if better care were bestowed upon the custody of such documents) have all to gain and nothing to lose, and no doubt much might be said on the other side. More-

* Since this paper was read, this book has come to light amongst a number of other old books in possession of the Corporation of Kendal, and the set is now complete.

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over, it should be remembered that many registers of parishes and documents at episcopal registries are well preserved and in good order. In suggesting any improvement, therefore, I do not hint as a remedy (as some do) that registers should be taken from the custody of ecclesiastics, and placed in the hands of civilians, but merely that complete attested copy transcripts of all registers prior to the year 1837 should (where they do not exist) be made and placed (as was originally intended) in the Episcopal Registries; so that these transcripts (if properly kept) should be a cheque against loss or fraud in the original registers; and so that in the Episcopal Registry, containing the whole of the parochial registers in the diocese (save during the years I have mentioned), any British subject might, by instituting a general search among the transcripts, be enabled to obtain required information, instead of being compelled to wander from parish to parish, in search of any required entry, where the exact parish registry containing it is unknown, thereby subjecting himself to heavy expenditure and labour, with much loss of time, which would have been to a great extent obviated, could he have adopted the course I have suggested.

On the conclusion of Mr. Moser's paper a discussion took place, and Mr. R. S. FERGUSON, the editor of the Society's "Transactions," said that he felt much indebted to Mr. Moser for his paper. They had already had similar papers from other parishes, and they hoped eventually to have papers on all the parishes in the two counties. He hoped, too, that now attention had been directed to the state of the documents at Lancaster, some improvement might be affected. If the Bishop of Carlisle had anything to do with the matter, the Society might be sure* his Lordship's best endeavours would be directed to getting their condition rectified. With regard to the allu-

* During the last Session of Parliament, 1876, the Bishop of Carlisle moved the addition of a clause to the Ecclesiastical Fees and Offices Bill, which would have gone far to rectify the matter complained of. The Bill did not pass, but may do so in 1877.

sion to swine, he had found in some documents relating to a Cumberland church an order that no swine should be allowed in the church-yard unless they had rings in their noses. The entry about the censer was curious, and of course if the censer was used in post-Reformation times it was a very interesting circumstance.

Mr. G. F. BRAITHWAITE hoped that if anything could be done for the preservation of the ancient documents which had been mentioned, it would not be neglected. It was very gratifying to know what great care was generally bestowed upon such documents in our day, and also to see the manner in which parish churches and parish church-yards were kept now, as compared with some sixty or seventy years ago. He believed it was not seventy years since the parish church-yard of Kendal was open as a play place, and that access to the church was to be gained by boys who wanted to play at hide-and-seek in and around it: the consequence was that some very interesting monuments were defaced, and written over with the names of boys who attended the Grammar School.

Dr. SIMPSON added his testimony to the indebtedness of the Society to Mr. Moser for having given them such a contribution as they had heard, seeing that the Society was endeavouring to gather together a series of papers relating to the various parishes in their jurisdiction, whereby they would be able to show what real distinctions there had been between one place and another. Much of what they had heard might be found in almost any parish church of any consequence in the neighbourhood, as there was great laxity shown in the keeping of registers during the latter part of the 17th century. One special matter had been mentioned—that of a book being lost, which would be about the time when there were considerable changes in the occupancy of vicarages in this, and other parts of the country. This was in 1662, and perhaps the vicar that had been brought back before 1664 would have some object in what he did, as the vicarage may have been previously occupied by people that he would have no great love for—Nonconformists. He had noticed something of this in his own church. At the time the vicars were driven away, and their places taken by Nonconformists, the registers were not kept in regular order. Births for the time being were never entered, and the death of the vicar of the parish was the only entry for some years. As a rule he was afraid they would find that the regular registers in the parish churches did not begin much earlier than they did in the parish church of Kendal. Mr. Moser had noticed that the first book was a copy, and he believed that that had been a general custom. Notes were made of different events, and then they were afterwards copied into a book, so they found

found entries, page after page, in the same handwriting, written with the same pen and the same ink. Mention had been made of peculiar names, and he thought that political events of the time might have an influence in this respect. The name of Mary occurred very seldom at one time, and as it had generally been a favourite name, they might enquire whether the character of the Queen known as "Bloody Mary" contributed to this. It would also be interesting to ask what effect Puritanism had in the country. These were some of the observations that had occurred to him, but he would rather call their attention to another thing that had been referred to—the account books of the various parishes. He had heard it mentioned that at one time a bull could not be slaughtered without being baited, under a fine of 6s. 8d., which was not at all peculiar to this neighbourhood. It was not done merely for the amusement of the people, but because it was thought that the meat was the better of it, similarly perhaps to the idea that with roast hare it could be told whether the hare had been coursed or shot. He held in his hand a page or two of accounts, from which he would only read one or two extracts, but which might have some bearing upon what had been mentioned about the love of drink in Kendal. Probably in times gone by Kendal was as greatly famed for its ale as in the present day, and no doubt ale and beer were used in some considerable measure among workmen. But they must bear in mind that some of the ale that the churchwardens paid for was drunk by the workmen as well as themselves. He remembered, when a boy, being struck at seeing a man who was overlooking some work drink three times to once for the workmen, but he explained it by saying that he was as good as three of those men. He found from the paper in his hand that apparently enormous sums had been sometimes expended in providing Communion wine. No doubt there was a time when Kendal included all the chapelries around, and the cost of wine for all these will be included. Thus he found set down the sum of £6, and again £9, and again £11 for Communion wine, and opposite one of these items was the remark, "That is exclusive of wine used at Easter." Easter wine, he should explain, was at one time given by the vicar—he did so himself, and what they got in return were the Easter dues. It also appeared that there were some similar expenses incurred in the borrowing of money, and he had met in a register with one item which was rather remarkable. Mr. Moser had mentioned the preparations that had to be made for the visit of an Archdeacon. He found that on one occasion the churchwardens had ordered a bottle of sack, to be placed in the vestry on the visit of the Bishop. There was a collection of documents relating to the parish church and the old vicarage which he would like to see in

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print, as he believed they contained accounts of various vicars and incumbents being ejected from their livings at the time of the time of the Revolution, going into details to show that for one reason or another they had to leave their livings to make room for nonconformists, till the time when they in their turn were also ejected. It might be that when some vicar came back to the church he thought it desirable to purge some of the articles in use, and so the censer come to be varnished.
