



SEPULCHRAL SLAB DISCOVERED AT KEDLESTON CHURCH,
OCTOBER, 1884.

On a Sepulchral Slab discovered at Kedleston Church.

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WHILST the nave and north transept of the interesting little cruciform church of Kedleston were being re-seated and restored during the past autumn, under the supervision of Mr. J. Oldrid Scott, a fine old sepulchral slab was found by the workmen about six inches below the floor level, on the south side of the nave. Lord Scarsdale kindly at once communicated with me, and the stone remained *in situ* until October 29th, when I was able to visit the church. The slab was carefully turned over on its side, and the space beneath dug out. About two feet six inches below the surface the interment was found, first the skull, and afterwards other bones. These were speedily re-interred, and the earth filled in. The body had evidently been buried, as was most usual, without any coffin or protection, other perhaps than a grave shroud of a leather hide. The stone could not possibly be left in its position with any due regard to the necessary seating of the small nave, and it was therefore decided by Lord Scarsdale that it should be removed to the south transept, where a large number of the Curzon monuments are placed, and that some record should be made of its removal.

The massive grey stone measures 5 ft. 9 in. in length, and tapers in breadth from 1 ft. 10 in. at the head to 1 ft. 4 in. at the foot. The stone is about 9 in. thick. A portion is broken off at the foot, as shown on the plate, but otherwise it is in very good and clear cut condition. It is neatly bevelled at the edges. The flat surface

is ornamented with a cross in bas-relief, springing from the usual "Calvary," or base steps. There is a boss in the stem near the upper part, resembling the boss or knob always found in old processional crosses, from which the idea has doubtless been taken. The design of the floriated head of the cross is comparatively simple, but singularly effective. It is formed by four interrupted circles, with a quatrefoil within the diamond formed by their conjunction, and each circle enclosing a slipped trefoil.

The plain cross is hardly ever found upon the old monuments, whether incised or in relief. It is said that the symbolists regarded the plain Latin cross as the Cross of Shame, and it is almost unknown either in architecture or illumination of the best periods of Christian art. The floriated cross was the Cross of Glory, and by its very design alluded to the triumph over death of the Crucified One. It is indeed the cross adorned with garlands or with crowns.

The variety of designs produced by the old sculptors on their monuments by combinations of the cross and circles is simply astonishing, and says much for the fertility of their inventive power. Instead of finding many alike, it is most rare to find any two specimens that exactly correspond in design. I have looked through the books of Boutell and Cutts on monumental slabs, as well as a very large number of archæological transactions of various societies, but nowhere have I met with one that is quite similar in pattern to the handsome and interesting specimen found at Kedleston.

The slab was placed with its foot to the east, and the interment below corresponded in position. The rule was to bury a layman with his face to the altar, but to bury a cleric with his face to the people. This, therefore, is a memorial stone to a layman.

The design is beyond question of Early English or thirteenth century date. A closer study of it, and a comparison with various others, whose date is accurately or approximately known, inclines me to the belief that it is of the first part of the reign of Henry III., probably between 1225 and 1250

There was no family within the limits of the small parish of

Kedleston who would be in the least likely to use so comparatively costly a stone, save the Curzons, who were lords of the manor, and who also held the advowson of the rectory. I take it, then, to be the sepulchral slab of a layman of the house of Curzon, who died early in the reign of Henry III.

Giraline de Curzon, of Breton origin, came into England with William the Conqueror. His son, Richard de Curzon, held four knights' fees in Derbyshire, viz., Croxall, Edingale, Twyford, and Kedleston. Robert de Curzon, the son of Richard, had three sons, Richard, Robert, and Thomas. From Richard, the eldest, were descended the Curzons of Croxall, Edingale, and Twyford. Robert de Curzon, the third son, became the celebrated Cardinal of that name, the intimate friend of Pope Innocent III.; he died at Damietta, in Egypt, 1218. Thomas, the second son, inherited Kedleston, and from him Lord Scarsdale is directly descended. Thomas de Curzon died young, but left an infant son of his own name, by his wife Sybyl, in ward to his uncle Richard. This Thomas de Curzon was born in 1185, but on coming of age was debarred from taking possession of Kedleston by his grandmother, who had married a Somerville for her second husband, and who claimed the manor as dower. After a lawsuit of three years, 1206 to 1209, Thomas de Curzon entered upon the manor, and upon the advowson of the rectory, certain concessions being made to his grandmother, Alice Somerville. I have not been able to ascertain the date of Thomas de Curzon's death, but he was living in 1226.

I take it, then, that this sepulchral slab is the gravestone of Thomas de Curzon, fourth lord of Kedleston of that name, son of Thomas de Curzon and Sybyl, and nephew of the famous Cardinal Curzon, who preached the crusade against the Albigenses.