Reminiscences of Old Allestree.

By George Bailey.

ALLESTREE, at the Norman Survey, formed part of the Manor of Markeaton, to which Mackworth was joined. It belonged to the Earl of Chester, but it afterwards came into possession of the Touchets, ancient Norman knights, whose name is found in the Roll of Battle Abbey. In the forty-fourth year of the reign of Edward III., Sir John Touchet fell before Rochelle, fighting against the Spaniards. He had previously married Joane, eldest daughter and heiress of Sir James de Audley, of Heleigh, co. Stafford, by whom he had a son, John, who was summoned to Parliament on the 12th December, 1405, as Lord Audley. Her father, Sir James de Audley, K.G., was one of the heroes of Poictiers, and it is related of him* that for his valour at the battle of Poictiers, Edward, called the Black Prince, granted him £400 per annum. "He with his fower Esquires fought so longe in the fronte of the battle that he was very sore wonded, and having performed many noble feats of arms, was carried by his fower squires out of the field." Prince Edward, at the end of the battle, enquired after him, and, on being told he was sorely wounded, requested that if possible he might be brought to him. Accordingly, Sir James was carried to the Prince's tent by eight servants. The Prince took him in his arms and embraced him, and kissed him, saying, "I repute you (and so do all others) and declare you to be the best doer in

* "Topographer," vol. i. p. 268.

armes. And the better to furnish and encourage you to the warrs, I retayne you ever to be my knight, with five hundred markes of yearly revenew, out of my inheritance." They then carried him back to his tent, whereupon he called his four esquires, and, in presence of witnesses, spake thus, "thes four gentlemen have ever served me truly and especially this day, and the honor I have obtained is by their valiantnesse, and therefore am I bound to reward them. Therefore doe all you testifie, that when my lord the prince hath given me 500 markes of yearely revenues, I resigne into their hands the sayd gyft, to them and their heyeres for ever, as surely as yt was given me, and doe disinheryt myself of the same." This coming to the ears of the Prince, he highly commended Sir James, and gave him 600 marks for himself. The battle of Poictiers was fought in 20th Edward III., and de Mackworth was with Audley as one of his four esquires.* We think it very probable that de Adlardestreu was another of them, though we cannot find any actual record of it; the name is mentioned in deeds of the 13th century,† and members of the family of Allestry remained in the neighbourhood as late as 1682, when Thomas was incumbent of St. Peter's. They appear to have taken their name from the two *berewites*, as we find the hamlets named in Doomsday Book, but they were not held by the Touchets, Mackworths, or Allestrys at the time of that survey, though they may have been held by them soon after; for Lysons states the Touchets had the manor in 1251, and also that Thomas, son of Lord Touchet, sold it, about 1516, to John Munday, who was Lord Mayor of London in 1522, and who died in 1538 possessed of Mackworth, Markeaton, Allestree, and of land at Findern and Chester. It continued in the same family above 200 years. Allestree was then sold to Bache Thornhill, of Stanton in the Peak, who began to build the Hall, and made a park. Mr. Thornhill, however, never finished the Hall, and it acquired the reputation of being haunted, which it was, by owls. In this state the Hall remained until it was purchased by I. C. Girardot, who

* Pilkington's "Derbyshire." vol. ii. p. 111.
† Lysons' "Derbyshire," p. 153.

completed it in about 1805. He appears to have acquired his wealth in India, and it was the custom to call such persons Nabobs. He kept up great state during his residence at Allestree, driving a coach and four, with a black footman, and two spotted dogs to follow the carriage, as was the custom in those days. This gentleman was Sheriff of the county in 1818. Ceasing to reside at the Hall, he let it to Mr. Evans, the father of the present owner, who eventually bought, and greatly improved, the estate, planting the park, and causing a fishpond to be made in it, thus adding much to its beauty. There are now probably few parks of its size having so much variety and agreeable seclusion, while at the same time, from various points, commanding extensive prospects over the beautiful valley of the Derwent. Having said thus much of the lords of the soil, let us note a few particulars with regard to the old village and parish of Allestree that have now disappeared.

Very elegant things were some of the Allestree spinning wheels, and beautiful and durable were the sheets, and the table linen, to say nothing of the woollen fabrics made for hangings for beds, and also for counterpanes.

At Allestree, too, they had a flax-yard; flax was grown and prepared for use on the spot. The poorer people too would send out their children to gather the wool torn from the sheeps' backs in their travels from field to field, and a surprising amount could thus be collected, and stockings made from the yarn.

Allestree also had its Cornhill-end, a place for the sale of corn, for the people had to buy their own corn and have it ground at the mill. There is still a croft called the Butter Cellar, supposed to have been a place where it was sold when the plague was at Derby, rendering it unsafe to go there with it. These things we gather from field and place names still used, as well as from local traditions. There was the Inn, too, used in the coaching days, and still standing opposite the park gates, though now used as cottages.

In the coaching days the road between Derby and Duffield was not by any means such as we see it to-day. It was just

about as bad a bit of road as one can imagine, steep hills, banks, and bushes were then characteristic of the road—dreary and uncanny, a place for footpads. Eighty years ago it was a wild, desolate looking place; we can judge of what it must have been by noticing how the steep hills have been lowered, and the valleys raised. Those old coach horses would need a rest at the New Inn, at Allestree, after dragging the lumbering vehicle over those steep hills. It is wonderfully improved since then.

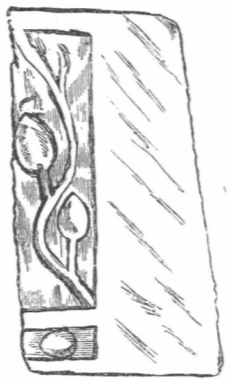
A rat and mole catcher was also a necessary adjunct to the village in those days, quite a person of distinction, wearing a badge, gaily painted, and having an air of mystery about him. How did he do it? His *modus operandi* was a secret; but if he was regularly paid, both moles and rats would disappear. Cease to pay, and there would soon be another swarm.

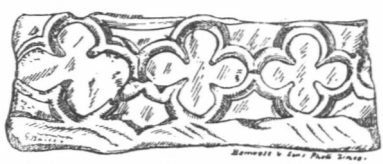
Those were quiet, peaceful days, then villagers' requirements were but few, and they were amply supplied; but this Arcadian state of simplicity did not long continue. The Arkwrights, the Evans, and the Strutts had started cotton spinning by machinery, then the spinning wheel gave place to the cotton-winding wheel. Silk and calico were also woven by looms, and a change came over quiet Derbyshire villages such as Allestree. The more ambitious yeomanry, and better class of cottagers, entered into the spirit of competition. Better employment and higher wages could be found elsewhere. Allestree, to a great extent, was forsaken. Soon the cottages and farms went to decay. For some time they battled with adverse fortune, in picturesque but inevitable ruin, but one by one they have disappeared, and quaint and dreamy old Allestree is no more. One such old place we well remember—a half-timber farm-house, with a huge wooden barn attached, like a Noah's Ark for size, and apparently as old, all patched and mended, until which was the original could scarcely be told. In the yard stood an old yew tree, and there was an old draw-well hard by, into which some farmer of olden time had fallen and been drowned. The villagers told strange tales of how his ghost would come and perform various freaks in the midnight hours, unloosing the horses in the stables, and causing a general

stampede; but now the old place and its ghost are gone, and only the old yew tree remains—a solitary evidence of what has been—standing in a field about a hundred yards north of the church. Some old whale's bones, forming an arch, still remain in the blacksmith's garden, by the turnpike road side, not far from the New Inn; but an old pair of stocks, that stood under the churchyard fence, have long since been removed; they were near the Red Cow, and not without reason, for its uproarious visitors found in them a quiet, but not desired, haven, when too much disturbed in their understandings to navigate themselves home, so the beadle found a rest for them there until they could.

The Manor House has entirely disappeared; we can find no remains of it incorporated in the very commonplace farmhouse that

stands on its site. We believe the old mulberry tree, of which we give a sketch, is all that is left to tell the tale, and, as may be seen, it is on the last verge of decay. There are not far from it a few old stones in the wall of the enclosure that may once have formed part of the walls of the house, and two rudely sculptured stones (that might have a better place) may have been part of the ornamentation of it. Rev. J. C. Cox thinks they came from the church at some previous restoration of that fabric ; there appear grounds for either hypotheses, but both may be wrong. We have thought it advisable to present a sketch of these stones in case anyone should be able to furnish any further particulars of this old home of the Adlardestreus. There are a few fine old elm trees, ancestral looking, standing in the croft near the mulberry stump. An old tree, or a few flowers are often the sole mementoes of departed greatness ; we recall the beautiful story of Findern's Flowers related to us years ago by our late friend, the author of the "History of Repton."





There are a few other old trees at Allestree. That most worthy of note is the yew tree in the churchyard ;* it must be of very great age, and though much battered by time and storms, is still a beautiful and venerable thing, green and healthy, and its branches far spreading, sheltering lovingly the sleepers beneath its shade. The bole is a perfect study for colour and strength, though it is quite hollow. Long years ago little children used to play in the hollow of its stem ; but somehow the hole appears to have partially closed, because it was not the large hole some yard or so from the ground by which they entered, but by a hole on the ground level. That hole is now too small to admit a child of five

* It measures at the height of 2 ft. 7 in. from the soil, 13 ft. 6 in. in girth.

or six years of age. This is curious, and shows what an amount of vitality there is still in the tree. Looking at this splendid and picturesque yew recently, we were much struck by its extreme beauty of form when viewed from the church porch, and we are glad to see that its value is appreciated, for it is treated with much attention and loving care to preserve it from damage, either from the winds or the rude hands of the thoughtless. There is also a very fine wych elm in the park, not far from the gates; we happen to know who planted it, and its age is now about one hundred years. Being so near the road, it has unfortunately had to have some of its branches lopped, in a measure destroying its symmetry, but it is a fine tree nevertheless. There are also a number of fine beech trees in a field above the Hall, on the road to Quarndon.

Though in most villages very few objects of antiquity remain, one could generally point to the Parish Church, until within the last thirty years, when a craze for what is called "restoration" set in; since then, in many instances, restoration has succeeded in removing every ancient thing, so that hardly a stone of these old fabrics remains untouched. We are not left quite in this state at Allestree; much of the old fabric remains, but we wish in these remarks to place on record its appearance, as far as we can do so, by means of sketches made before any alteration took place, for they may have interest in the future. We have here a view of the Church

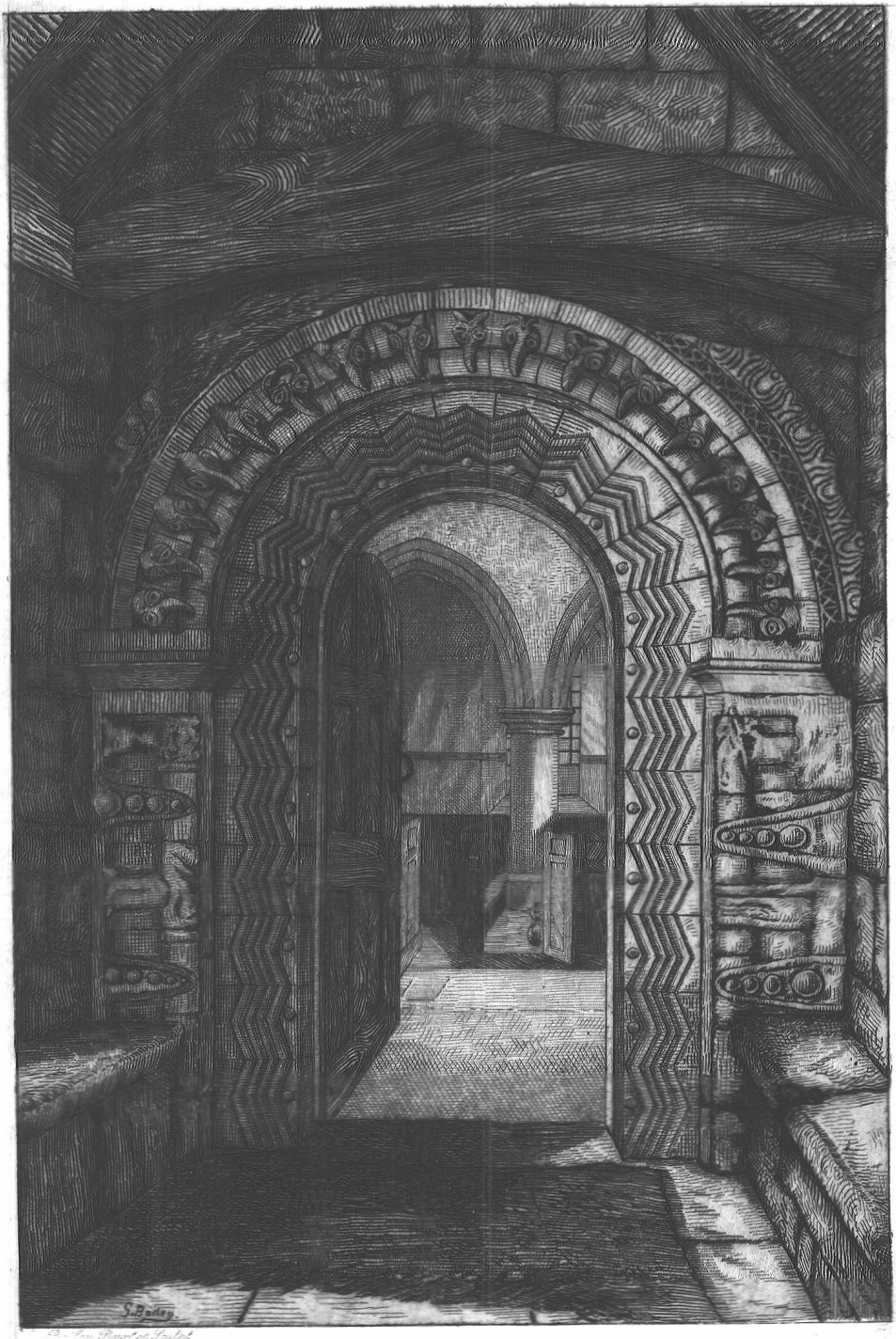
taken in 1852, from the east end, from which it will be seen that at that time it consisted of a nave and chancel, and a north aisle and vestry. The old tower had then plain pinnacles at the corners; they were removed at the restoration, and not replaced; it was said they were ugly, probably they were not handsome, but then any nose is better than none at all, and they certainly took away the ugly square packing-case appearance the old tower has been afflicted with ever since. Seen from a distance they gave a pleasant break to this lumpiness, and there can be no two opinions that it looks much uglier without them. Our next sketch shows the

view of the Church from the south-east; it was taken from the vicar's garden, and also shows the yew tree, and the position in the wall of a well designed stone pillar. At that time there was a clerestory of three windows, and one large window below; the windows of the chancel, of which there were two, had been filled up to give wall space for some mural tablets in memory of some members of the Mundy family. There was also an embattled parapet; this had been done at some former restoration, the roof at the same time being lowered; see the marks of the former roof on the tower. Our third drawing gives a sketch of the porch seen under the yew tree; it will be observed that to the west of the porch there is a projecting buttress from the tower with a row of corbels; these probably show the orginal height of the wall before the clerestory was made, and when the roof was high

pitched; a portion of the buttress and one of the corbels still remains.

The most interesting portion of the Church is the south entrance (See Plate I., the Frontispiece). The drawing from which it has been copied was made in the year 1865, before any alterations had been made; soon afterwards, the nave, north aisle, and a great part of the chancel were taken down, and the Church was enlarged, an aisle being added on the south side, which rendered it necessary to take down the ancient doorway; and although great care was taken to mark the stones, so that in rebuilding they might occupy their original positions, that, however, did not happen to several of the stones in the jambs, which,

either by accident or design, have been somewhat altered, and one or two have either been replaced by new ones, or else so much re-chiselled as to have quite a different appearance to what they had when this drawing was made. It is necessary to say this, otherwise on comparing the etching with the stones it will seem to be incorrect. The curious triangular beaded ornaments have been placed in pairs, instead of alternating with one of the skulls


S. Bailey

or heads of oxen or other animals, as was originally the case; the beaded ornament is not of common occurrence in these doorways, so far as we know, but the heads or skulls are; of these there are examples on the jambs of the south door of Kedleston Church, and other examples may be found in the remains of Romanesque architecture scattered over the country, and they appear to us to indicate that the Romano-British, Saxon, and Norman architects imitated what they had seen done by the Roman architects during their occupation of both countries.

The Romano-British imbibed much of the manners and the tastes of their Roman masters, both in dress and the various accessories of a high state of civilisation, one of the most important of which was architecture; numerous examples of temples, and doubtless Christian churches remained; for there seems no doubt at all that to the Romans we are indebted in the first instance for the introduction of Christianity. During the execrable reign of Nero, many left Rome, and some would, doubtless, find refuge in this country, which had been since the third year of Claudius, A.D. 43, a part of the Roman empire; it was only about thirty years after the Romans had left Britain, A.D. 449—577, that the Saxons—or whoever the people were—came and occupied, and are reported to have driven out the Britons and destroyed Christianity. We do not think this has been proved; we think, if some of the rudely sculptured stones around us had a voice they would tell a different tale. May not these heads be rude imitations of the skulls of animals slain in sacrifice, with which the Romans were so fond of ornamenting their temples and altars, placing them as they did in the square *Metopes* between the triglyphs of the friezes. It is not a little singular that the corbel head and zigzag ornament of the 12th century may be found on the consoles of Diocletian's palace of Spalatro,* proving clearly that both the Anglo-Saxons and the Anglo-Normans copied the Roman edifices remaining either in England or on the Continent. The long occupation by the Romans, of 400 years, could not fail to exercise a great influence of an artistic

* Eccleston's Introduction, p. 53.

kind on the minds of the people; there is evidence enough of this in the splendid illuminated MSS. preserved at Chatsworth,* and in other great libraries of this country.

The crypt at Repton is almost entirely classic in treatment, nearly every abacus and capital, and most of the ornamentation of arches, as in this at Allestree (see the three rough sketches taken from fragments at Allestree, which are portions of the outer circle of the doorway), remind one of this style. The south doorway at Kedleston, and the one in the cloister at Southwell, where there is a skull almost identical with a Roman Metope in its treatment, also owe their design to classic influence; so that though we cannot claim for this doorway a Saxon origin, yet it appears from the rudeness of its sculptures to be of an early date in Anglo-Norman times. True, this church is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey; but it was then in existence just as much as Mackworth and Kedleston were, and is, probably, older than either of them. The beak-heads round the second circle have at first sight the appearance of being rude attempts to represent skulls of sheep, some of them being horned, they are certainly not intended to represent heads of birds; they may be demons, for in early MSS., and some early remains of wall paintings, these *genii* are represented with long noses much like beaks; there is an example on one of the piers at Melbourne. Whatever they may be, it is certain that in later times they became much more decorative and ornamental in their treatment, as is the case at Iffley, in Oxfordshire, 1160,† where they are very elaborately ornamented. There are other instances in which this ornamental character is gone, and the beaks are little more than

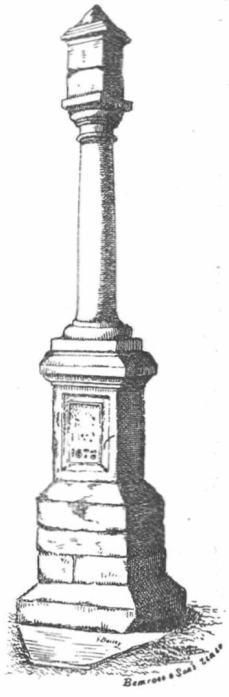
* Benedictional of Œthelwold, etc.
† "Rickman," pp. 130-2.

triangular blocks of stone. The Anglo-Saxons have been credited with a large amount of thick-headedness and incapacity, but they could not have been so stupid, else how did they paint those beautiful MSS.? It would puzzle some of their clever detractors to execute any thing at all like them; and some of our æsthetic artists have borrowed not a little from them directly or indirectly.

Though we cannot prove that this old doorway is their work, we can say it is very early work, even if we put it as of the time of Edward the Confessor, 1050; he did, there is no doubt, exercise a great influence in his time, though, perhaps, not so much as he is credited with. Monkish historians were not immaculate, they could write a man up or write him down to suit their purpose. Here we will leave the matter, just, however, calling the reader's attention to a curious and interesting article on "The Numerical Principles of Gothic Art," by Mr. Clapton Rolfe, in the "Antiquary," Vol. X., pp. 147 and 209. Much has been written on apocalyptic symbolism, in which certain numbers play an important part. These numbers are traced in the architecture of the early Christian builders;—the numbers 1, 3, 5, and 7. Looking at our etching, we see three courses of voussvoirs; the innermost has the chevron ornament, triangles, and dot, for the Trinity in Unity; next, the row of beak-heads, five without horns, for the five-fold passion of Christ; then seven with horns, for the seven-fold graces of the Holy Spirit; then a repetition of the Sacrificial number five. Then the Church at Allestree had but one aisle, and in that aisle three arches, but whether this is all mere coincidence or accident, we cannot say; but it looks very much as though these numerical principles exist in the example before us; and Mr. Rolfe says—"So persistently did Churchmen work upon these lines in the ground plans of their buildings, that every Basilicon Church erected at Rome during the first thousand years of the Christian era, was either a *one*, *three*, or *five* aisled building."

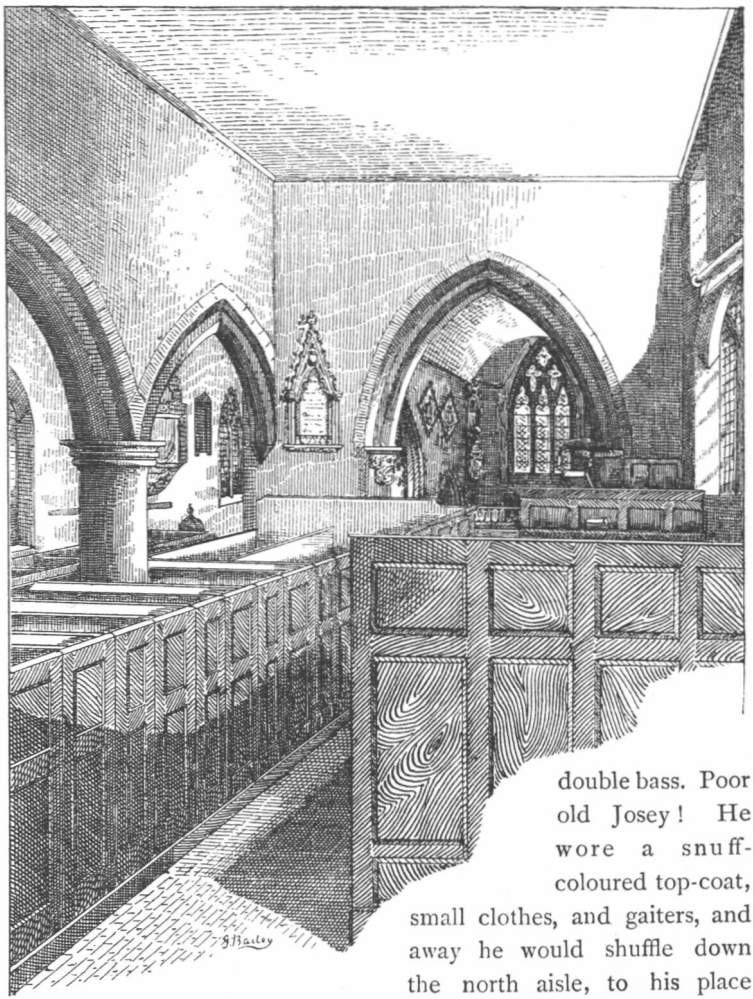
We must now return to the vicar's garden, to look at the pillar. When it was erected there was no garden or house, but a field, having a gravel path leading to the church. The front of the

pillar was toward the field. It bore a date 1678, and some letters, but they were so indistinct that nothing could be made out of them. Whether it stands in its original position we do not know, but most likely it does, as it would be placed with its inscription towards the churchyard if this had not been the case. Possibly there may have been a sun-dial fixed upon it, but no traces of it remain; it may be a relic of the Manor House, and removed to this place. This, however, is but conjecture. So far as we can ascertain, there is no record of its purpose; the ball at the top might be replaced with advantage. We will now retrace our steps, and enter the church.



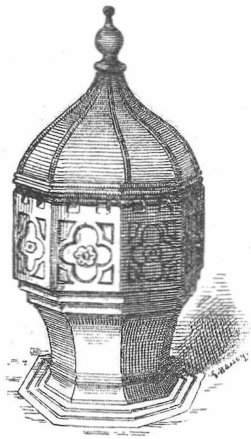
A sketch of the interior of the old church, looking east, is given on the next page; on the north side, one of the pillars is shown, and the third arch; also the cover of the font is seen. Looking through the chancel arch, which springs from bold corbel heads, now destroyed, we see the head of the arch of the Founder's Tomb on the left, and a small chapel to the east of it. Now if we turn round and look back, there is another arch resting on corbel heads, similar to those of the chancel, opening into the tower. These heads have also been taken out, and some brackets, not nearly as good, replace them. In other respects this part of the church is pretty much as it was. This recess used to be the singing loft; it had a platform or pew projecting into the nave, where the band used to be. They had a double bass, a cornet, a violin, and a clarionet, besides some male and female singers. Grand music they played, and were good singers according to their lights; indeed, they were far too clever for the generality of the unsophisticated worshippers, who often expressed a wish that they would make a less noise, and let other people be heard. It seems to have been a notion that the louder the voices

the better the singing. The pulpit was the orthodox three-decker ; the parish clerk, a very old man, had to leave his desk when the parson gave out the hymns, as his duty also was to play the



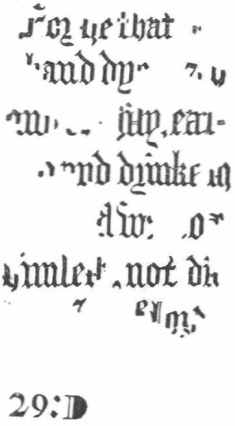
double bass. Poor old Josey! He wore a snuff-coloured top-coat, small clothes, and gaiters, and away he would shuffle down the north aisle, to his place with the other musicians in the singing loft. He was a venerable institution, but sometimes went to sleep, and said

"Eg-n-men" in the wrong place. Very unattractive, antiquated people we should think them now, though none the less hearty and sincere than we are in this more priggish or polished age—whichever be the correct term. At any rate, there was more solid oak and less veneer then than now. But all is changed, every thing is spick and span like a new pin. Poor old Josey with his bass viol, the old Squire and his fat dog, the village Schoolmistress with her huge cap and borders, and all the worshippers in the ancient fane are gone: there they lie under the green turf outside, gone to join a greater and nobler assembly! We have already noticed the cover of the font, and now give a sketch of both font and cover. We are sorry to say it has been taken away; it was not grand enough, so a much more valuable article was bought, but it had no history—the other had. Many generations had been brought to it for baptism, and it had acquired a value no money could purchase; it had the much greater mystic halo which time and old associations alone can lend. However, it is gone, and there is an end of it.



During the time the church was roofless and dismantled, we went to make some sketches of some old writing on the walls at the east end, and, while doing so, were startled by the sudden appearance of a singular individual who appeared to be left in charge of the place. He began to discourse with great loquacity on the various curious features of the ruins. Pointing to the arched recess in the chancel, which was then a doorway into the vestry, he said, "That's the Founder's Tomb, an' I have taken up his bones; his head wer there, and his feet wer there"—from which it appeared the Founder had been buried the wrong way about—"an here's one o' his tayth;" at the same time he produced the molar from the depth of his capacious waistcoat pocket. By this time it had grown dark, and we left him, and

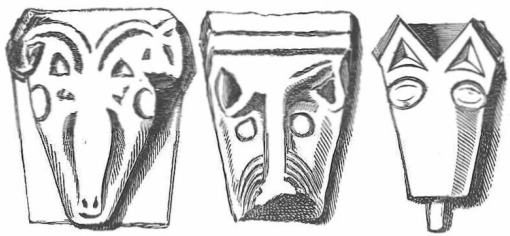
saw him no more. We have preserved the copies of the writing on the walls. That on the south side of the window was the most perfect, and here is a copy of it. It appears to have been taken either from the Rheims version, 1582, or the authorised of 1611, and is from 1 Cor. xi. v. 29. The former version reads, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of our Lord." The latter only differs in having "damnation" and "the Lord's body." We cannot decide which version it is from, but Mr. H. H. Bemrose suggests that it may be a translation, and not a copy of an English version, in which opinion the Rev. J. C. Cox agrees. There were a few letters on the other side, and a scroll on the tower, all too indistinct and imperfect to be of use. The borders round the texts in the chancel were architectural in design, and Elizabethan or Jacobean in style (for drawings of these, see vol. i. Derbyshire Fac-simile Society). The inscriptions were written in one or other of those reigns—most likely the latter, as Elizabeth did not favour the Rheims version; James, being a shuffler, might. These texts were no doubt put up after the church had undergone restoration, others being obliterated in order that these might be put in their place. Fragments of the older ones could be seen underneath. Those we have copied were entirely in black, the former ornaments had been in red.



In conclusion, we cannot do better than quote Mr. Ruskin.* He says, "When we build, let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those

* "Seven Lamps," pp. 171-2.

stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say, as they look upon the labour and wrought substance of them, 'See! this our fathers did for us.' For, indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold; its glory is in its age." If we take these words to heart, we shall, each in his sphere, be found preservers of all historic landmarks of past times.



1 AND 2, FROM WIRKSWORTH; 3, KEDLESTON.