

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE EDWARDIAN INVENTORIES OF CHURCH GOODS.

*Communicated by*

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BY the kindness of my friend Stuart A. Moore, Esq., who is engaged in the task of arranging and cataloguing the Records of the city of Exeter, I am enabled to lay before the Society a document, which, though not relating to the county of Surrey, is yet of considerable interest as an illustration of the method followed by the Commissioners in taking the Inventories of Church Goods in the reign of Edward VI. It is entitled, "Instruccions geven by the kynges maiestie to the Commyssioners before appoynted for the survey of the churche goods within hys Citie of Exeter the x<sup>th</sup> of June the vj<sup>th</sup> yere of his rayne."

For our own county we have only the bare commissions from the king without any instructions; but there is every reason to believe that the Commissioners in each county received instructions similar, or very nearly so, to those pursued in the Exeter inquiries; and had all the documents of the Surrey Commissioners been preserved, we should doubtless have been enabled to investigate their proceedings more minutely, and to have added a little chapter to the history of the county which now we are obliged to omit. However, it is no use now to bewail the loss of documents which ought to be in

existence; we must be satisfied with what we have; and I will therefore introduce the Exeter instructions at once to the notice of the Society.

*Furste appon the recepte of the commyssion by any of the commys-  
sioners he that shall ffyrste receve the comyssion shall furthwith  
wyth all convenient spedē geve knowlege to the rest named in the  
same commyssion and with them shall agree to mete and assymble with  
that spedē they can for the execucion of the said comyssion and these  
instruccions. And yf any of the said comyssioners shalbe deade sycke  
or otherwyse shalbe absent owte of the countie for the service of the  
king that he cannot with spedē attende the same in that case the reste of  
the said comyssioners so that they be to the number appoynted by the  
comyssion shall not make any delay ffrome the procedyng in the same  
comyssion but shall furthewith allote there syttynge and metyngs for  
the same comyssion as in lyke case hath ben or shalbe mette to be  
used.*

Item for ther better and more certen procydying the said commys-  
sioners shall in suche cases where none of the comyssioners be Custos  
Rotulorum of that countie ne hath not ben sens the begynnyng of oure  
rayne comande the said Custos Rotulorm or the deputie or the clarke  
of the peax of these partyes to bryng or send unto tham suche bokes  
registers and invytories as hath heretofore [sic]any wyse come to ther  
handes by indenture twechting the sommes numbers and valewes of any  
goodes plate jewelles vestmentes belles or ornamenteſ of any churches  
chapelles and suche leke and lekewyſe the said comyſſioners ſhall ſend  
to the buſhop of every dyocesse wherin the ſaid countie ys ſituate or  
unto ther channcellor comyſſaries or other ecclesiastycall officers in  
whos handes or custodye the leke of the forſaid invitoryes and regestours  
have combe and of them and every of them they ſhall receve and take  
the ſaid bokes regesters and invitoryes And that done the ſaid comyſſioners ſhall compayer boyth the ſame invitoryes that ys to ſay as  
well ſuche as they ſhall receve of the Custos Rotulorum or hys deputie  
or the clarke of the peaxe as of the byſhoppe or there under officers  
and accordyng to the best recheſt and grettyst invitorie the ſayed  
comyſſioners ſhall procyde to make ther ſurvey and inquirye. And by  
the ſame make the ſearches of the defauſtes and wantes that ſhalbe  
ffounde. And generally the ſame comyſſioners ſhall not only by the  
viewe of the ſaid regesters and invitoryes but also by any other meaneſ  
they can better devyſe procyde to the due ſarche and inquifition of the  
wantes and defauſtes of any parte of the ſaid goodes plate jewleſ veſta-  
mentes belles or ornamenteſ.

Item for the more ſpedy obtaynyng of the ſaid regesters and invi-  
tories the ſaid comyſſioners ſhall receve ſpeciall letters of the com-  
maundement of our privie counſell for the delyverie therof whiche letters  
the ſaid comyſſioners ſhall delyver as they ſee occaſion.

Item the ſaid comyſſioners ſhall appon their viewe and ſurvey  
taken cauſe due invitoryes to be made by bylles or bokes indented of

almaner of goodes plate jewles belles and ornamente as yet be remaynyng or any wyse ffourthcommynge and belongyn to any churches chapelles ffraternyties or gylde and thone parte of the same invitories to send and retorne to our privye counsell and the other to delyver to them in whos handes the said goodes plate jewles belles and ornamente shall remayne to be kepte and preserved. And they shall also give good charge and order that the same goodes and every parte therof be at altymes ffourthcommynge to be aunswere, levynge never the leasse in everye parishe churche or chapell of commen resorte one too or more chalyces or cuppys accordyng to the multitude of the people in every suche churche and chapell and also suche other ornamente as by their dyscressyon may seme requysette for the devyne service in every suche place for the tyme.

And by cause we be infformed that in many places grete quantities of the said plate jewles belles and ornamente be imbesiled by certyn private men contrarye to oure expresse comaundementes in that behalfe the said comyssioners shall substancialy and justly enquere and attayne the knowlege thereof by whos faulfe the same ys and hath ben and in whos handes any parte of the same ys come and in that poynte the said comyssioners shall have good regarde that they attayne the certayne names and dwellynges places of every person or parties that hath sold alyenated imbesiled taken or caryed away. And of suche also as have consiled advised and comaunded any parte of the said goodes plate jewles belles vestments and ornamente to be taken away or otherwyse imbesiled. And these thynges they shall as certenly and duly as they can cause to be searched and understoude.

Apon a ffull sarche and inquyrie whereof the said commyssioners iij<sup>or</sup> or iiij. of them shall cause to be called before them all suche persons by whome any of the said goodes plate jewles belles ornamente or any other the premyses have been alienated imbesiled or taken away or by whos meanes or procurement the same or any parte therof hath ben attempted or to whos handes or use any of the same or any profet ffor the same hath growen and by suche goode meanes as to their dyscressyon shall seme best cause them to bryng into their [sic] said commyssioners handes to our use the said plate jewles belles and other the premyssez so alienated or the true and juste valewe therof sertifyng unto oure privie counsell the names of all suche as refuse to stond to or obbey their order tweechyng the redyleverye and restytucion of the same or the juste valor therof to thentente that as cause and reason shall requyre every man may aunswere to hys doyngs in thys behalfe.

Ffynally oure pleasure ys that the said comyssioners in all their doyngs shall use suche sober and dyscrete maner of prossidynge as thefecte of thys commyssion may go fforward with as myche quyet and as lytell occasion of troble or dysquyet of the multytude as maybe usyng to that ende suche wyse perswadyng in all places of their sessions as in respecte of the place and dysposicion of the people maye seme to their wysdome more expedyent, gevynge also good and substanciall order for the staye of thenordynate and gredye covytuossnese of suche dysordered people as [sic] have or shall goo aboute the allenatyng of any of the premyses

so as accordyng to reason and order suche as have or shall contemp-  
tuysly offend in thys behalffe may receve reformacion as for the qualytie  
of their doynges shalbe requysette.

The salutary caution in the last article is not without its significance. It would seem that the intended alterations in the method of conducting the services of the Church, were not popular with the churchmen of the time, and therefore the Commissioners were enjoined to be careful not to wound or arouse the susceptibilities of the people while the work of appropriation was being carried on.

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