



An Inventory of Ancient Sacramental Plate in the County of Berks.

By Arthur Irwin Dasent.

BUT few words of introduction will be necessary at the commencement of my self-imposed task,—an exhaustive and critical inventory of the whole of the ancient sacramental plate now remaining in this County. The publication, some years ago, of an admirable book on the same subject dealing with the Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, edited by Mr. R. S. Ferguson, and the encouragement given to me by Mr. Wilfred Cripps (himself the greatest living authority on Old English Plate) and other friends and correspondents, were the primary causes of my being induced to undertake similar researches in the County of Berks; and accordingly in May, 1889, after personally visiting nearly every parish in the Windsor Forest district, I addressed myself to incumbents throughout the County asking for particulars of the various sacred vessels entrusted to their care, and though the replies then received were of unequal value, and in most cases insufficient in detail, they were yet sufficiently numerous to encourage the hope that this hitherto unexplored field of antiquarian labour might ultimately yield excellent results, leading to a more general appreciation of the treasures of ancient art still preserved in this County, and at the same time conducing to a more conservative regard for their safety.

The stimulus given to the undertaking by the Berks Archæological Society, and the sub-division of the entire county into two portions for the purposes of the inventory, the eastern to be undertaken by myself and the western by the Rev. E. R. Gardiner, Vicar of Fawley, has enabled the work to proceed at a more rapid rate during the year just ended (notwithstanding a regrettable delay occasioned by a disastrous fire at my father's residence in this County, in which many of my own notes and the valuable illustrations and fac-similes of hall-marks supplied to me by willing helpers perished); till I now find myself in a position to head the list of some 170 Berkshire parishes with an account of the very interesting collection




The Quarterly Journal

OF THE

Berks Archæological and Architectural Society.

Excursion of the Society to Maidenhead.

N Wednesday, October 28th, 1891, the members of the Berks Archæological and Architectural Society, to the number of about 30, travelled to Maidenhead, where a paper on "The History and Antiquities of Maidenhead and the Neighbourhood" was read in the Town Hall by Mr. J. RUTLAND, F.G.S., Hon. Secretary of the Thames Valley Antiquarian Society. The excursion, the last of the present season, was made at the invitation of the Maidenhead Field Club, who after the lecture kindly entertained the visitors to tea. The chair was taken by Dr. PLAYNE, President of the Maidenhead Field Club, who briefly introduced the lecturer.

Mr. RUTLAND commenced his lecture by remarking that Maidenhead itself could not boast of much archæological interest, but was in that respect the child of Taplow. As regards its geology, it was situated on the Thames Gravel, which extended from above Maidenhead down to the sea; interspersed with deposits of sand, clay, &c. In what was known as the "drift gravel" in those parts, had been found mammoth molars, with molluscan and saurian remains. One of the most interesting "finds" in the neighbourhood had been the fossilised remains of fruits, one specimen of the palm fruit having been discovered at Bray. In the bed of the Thames several bone

formerly used at the Mass were ordered to be melted down, and "decent communion cups" used in their stead.

The then Archbishop of Canterbury, Parker, was a zealous promoter of the Reformation, and it seems more than probable that Jewell, his brother prelate of Salisbury, whom we know to have been possessed of the same strongly Protestant tendencies, enjoined upon the clergy of his diocese, in which Berkshire was then included, the use of a prescribed pattern of sacramental vessel somewhere about this period. However this may be, I have not, as yet, met with a chalice earlier than one of the year 1566, preserved at Barkham, though my colleague in the western division of the County has been fortunate enough to meet with more than one mediæval paten, to be described hereafter.

Only a very few chalices of the time of Edward VI. are known to exist, and none have as yet been found in Berkshire, but large numbers of Elizabethan cups remain after more than three centuries of wear and tear throughout the length and breadth of England, and I shall have occasion to note several in the following pages, their ornamentation being almost invariably confined to an engraved band of foliation (sometimes double), or interlacing strapwork round the bowl. Though no two of them are precisely similar in design, the characteristic features of all are unmistakeable; that is to say, in the case of London hall-marked plate, for that of provincial manufacture (some examples of which I shall have to chronicle in parts of this County) has its own peculiar shape and ornamentation, Exeter differing from Norwich, York from Newcastle, and Dorsetshire from all the rest.

Though, as I have said, communion cups of Elizabethan date are by no means rare, it is much to be deplored that sacrilegious hands are often laid upon them, even in this the nineteenth century, and they are not infrequently to be met with in sale rooms and silver-smiths' shops (two, which I am sorry to say were obtained in Berkshire, were quite recently on sale by a dealer in old silver at Oxford), having been parted with by heedless incumbents (though to do so legally requires a faculty from the Bishop of the Diocese) in order to be replaced by others of "modern mediæval" shape, poor alike in design and execution, turned out by the gross in the workshops of church furnishers like Keith, and Jones and Willis, and through them disseminated broadcast over England, the sacred vessels linked with the history of their parish for perhaps three centuries being discarded for fantastic productions of little value or beauty, some of them encrusted with amethystine quartz or inferior

carbuncles to earn the title "jewelled," or, worse than all, "re-made" to suit the supposed requirements of the present day ! And here I should like to quote once more the eloquent words of the present Bishop of Salisbury, in his first charge to the clergy of the diocese :—"I would venture to urge great care and reverence in preserving those treasures of ancient art, and those historical monuments, whether in wood, stone, metal, glass, or parchment, which have come down to us from our forefathers. . . . Both clergy and churchwardens must remember that they are in reality stewards, not absolute owners, and that they are stewards of the records of a Christian history as noble as that of any nation on the face of the earth."

As a contribution to this conservatism, I have humbly striven in the following pages to imitate the admirable example set by Mr. J. E. Nightingale, in his masterly work on the Church Plate of Dorset, itself an instalment of an inventory embracing the whole Diocese of Salisbury.

The authority for the dates given hereafter is in all cases the Appendix of Tables of date letters in Mr. Cripps' "Old English Plate," without which indispensable guide these pages could lay no claim to accuracy.

ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, WINDSOR CASTLE.

- (1) A plain circular almsdish, with handsome Tudor rose as a centre boss, parcel-gilt, and weighing $25\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

Four marks. 1.—Roman letter capital T, London date letter for 1556.

2.—Leopard's head crowned.

3.—Lion passant.

4.—Maker's mark—the letter M enclosed in an irregular star-shaped shield.

This is the oldest piece of plate in the collection, and in all probability the oldest ecclesiastical alms bason now in use in this country.

- (2 and 3) A pair of plain round-bellied flagons weighing together $98\frac{1}{2}$ oz., silvergilt, one of the year 1583, with Roman letter capital F, London date letter for 1583, Leopard's head crowned, Lion passant, and Maker's mark R (or possibly R.F. linked); the other of the year 1613 with Lombardic Q for date letter, Leopard's head crowned, Lion passant, and Maker's mark I.V. with a mullet beneath.

Mr. Cripps, in the earlier editions of "Old English Plate," had ascribed this pair of flagons to the years 1613 and 1614 on the authority of the late Mr. Octavius Morgan, but the difference in the two maker's marks had escaped his notice, and since my own visit Mr. Cripps has had an opportunity of personally examining them, and confirming my judgment.

Pairs of Elizabethan round-bodied flagons are of rare occurrence, the earliest known are at Cirencester, and are both of the year 1576; in the next century they were succeeded by the tankard-shaped pattern with flat sides so long in vogue, many examples of which I shall have to chronicle in these pages.

- (4 and 5) A pair of chalices and covers, weighing together 62 oz., silvergilt, one with Lombardic P (London date letter for 1612) Leopard's head crowned, Lion passant, and Maker's mark I.V. with a mullet beneath. Marks repeated on the cover. Inscription on cup—

"Et domino et domo Henry Harris" with this coat of arms.

Quarterly 1st and 4th. Ermine on a bend azure three hedgehogs or [Harris.]

2nd and 3rd. Argent on a chevron between three ducks, another duck [?]

The other bears a Lombardic T, being the London date letter for 1616, Leopard's head crowned, Lion passant, and the same Maker's mark, but no inscription or arms. Same marks on the cover, and Lion passant repeated on the base of the cup.

- (6) A silvergilt chalice weighing 33 oz., with Maker's mark only, double M interlaced. Circa 1665. See "Old English Plate," 4th edition, page 361.

The Goldsmith's Company possess a cup by this Maker of the year 1665.

The cover of this chalice forms a paten and bears the same mark (M.M. interlaced), but the foot and stem of the chalice appear to have been re-made in comparatively modern times. A plain cross is engraved on both cup and cover.

This piece of plate was the gift of the Lady Mary Heveningham, wife of the regicide William Heveningham, who was imprisoned in Windsor Castle after the Restoration till his death in 1678. His life was spared by Charles II., owing to the interest of his wife's family (Carey, Earls of Dover).

- (7 and 8) A pair of large flatsided silvergilt flagons, weighing 150 oz., each bearing black letter Capital D, London date letter for 1661, Leopard's head crowned, Lion passant, and Maker's mark [W.M.] with a mullet beneath.
- (9, 10, 11 and 12) A pair of large chalices and patens with ball feet, also silvergilt, weighing together 163 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz., with identical marks to the last mentioned flagons.

Mr. Cripps dated the patens 1671, but this, I think, was owing to a mistake in the description of the date letters furnished to him by Mr. Octavius Morgan. The feet of these patens were added in later times to make them more convenient to hold.

- (13) A plain silvergilt paten, with black letter Capital D, London date-letter for 1661, Leopard's head crowned, Lion passant, and Maker's Mark, A.C. in Italic letters in an ornamental shield; weight 24 oz.

Ashmole, in his "Order of the Garter," mentions this piece of plate as "a plain gilt corporas, the gift of Sir Richard Fanshaw."

In the centre is this coat of Arms—

Quarterly 1st and 4th. Or a chevron between three fleurs de lis sable [Fanshaw]. 2nd and 3rd. Chequy argent and vert a cross or [?]

Crest. A dragon's head erased flaming fire from the mouth.

Sir Richard Fanshaw, the well-known cavalier and diplomatist, was at Windsor with his wife in August, 1662, on his way to take up his appointment as British Ambassador at Lisbon, and the presentation to St. George's was no doubt made at this time. See Lady Fanshaw's Memoirs. Edition 1829, page 147.

- (14 and 15) A pair of very large-bellied silvergilt flagons, weighing 414 oz., having the figure of St. George on horseback on the covers, and the bowls entirely covered with feather work, no mark at all, but probably foreign.

They are stated in an old MS. Inventory to have been bought with the money received by the Dean and Chapter "since his Majesty's happy Restoration."

At this time the knights of Windsor subscribed £20 apiece to restore the fittings of the Chapel, Bruno Ryves being then Dean, Dr. Browne, Chanter, and Dr. Evans, Steward. The Duke of York gave a piece of plate valued at £100, and the Earl of Southampton and "other piously disposed persons" were likewise benefactors.

(16 and 17) A pair of very large pricket candlesticks, silvergilt, and of English make, but the marks much defaced.

They are almost certainly of the end of the 17th century, and possibly of the year 1694 (small black-letter r), the Maker's mark somewhat resembling an M. [Weight not ascertained.]

These and the following pair are, I believe, the only pairs of silver altar candlesticks of any antiquity, existing in the county, they are occasionally found amongst the plate of our great Cathedrals, but are of extreme rarity in parish churches in England.

(18 and 19) A pair of smaller pricket candlesticks with nozzles, also silvergilt, and weighing 264 oz. ; no marks visible but probably of foreign workmanship.

The MS. Inventory already referred to (following Ashmole), states that they were some of the plate designed to be given by H.R.H. the Princess Mary of Orange in November, 1660, but were eventually paid for by the Dean and Canons of Windsor; the charge being £233 odd.

This princess, the eldest daughter of Charles I. and mother of William III., died at Whitehall on Christmas Eve, 1660.

(20) A very large embossed almsdish, also silvergilt, weighing 198 oz., representing the Saviour washing St. Peter's feet.

Ashmole says it is intended to represent Mary Magdalene washing the Saviour's feet, but the former is more probably the subject intended to be represented.

This dish is of very elaborate design and workmanship, it bears no mark, but is certainly foreign.

It also forms a portion of the intended bequest of Princess Mary of Orange.

(21 and 22) A pair of large embossed almsdishes, also silvergilt, weighing together 305 oz., one representing The Last Supper, and the other Our Lord blessing a young child. Maker's mark on both is F.L. with a bird beneath the initials, probably of Dutch manufacture.

Stated in Inventory to have been presented by Anne, Duchess of York, in which case they would be circa 1660—1670.

(23 and 24) A pair of small modern silvergilt chalices, date-letter 1850, inscribed "Ex dono Gulielmi Canning A.D. 1851."

(25 and 26) A modern knife and spoon (1843), given by Dean Hobart, both gilt. In the same case is an old silvergilt-handled knife, marks defaced.

(To be continued.)