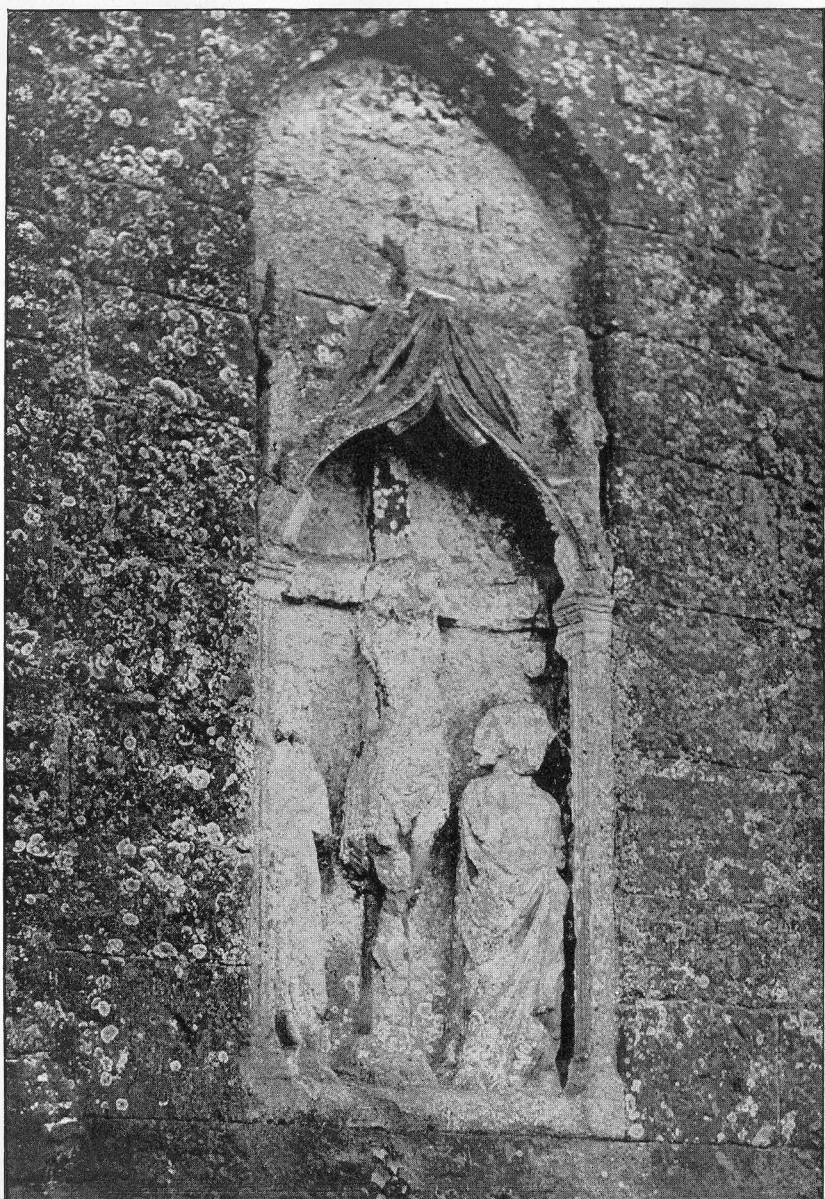


of the lay brothers' staircase. On the demolition of an old cottage and by subsequent excavations the workmen found a doorway leading from the lay brothers' quarters to the staircase, and thence by the door named after them into the Abbey.

Somerton Church, Oxon.

OUR Illustrations show two interesting features of the Old Church of St. James, Somerton. This ancient Village, about 14 miles north of Oxford, has much historical interest. Near it is the old British boundary called Wattlebank or Avesditch. Odo Bishop of Bayeux, half-brother of William the Conqueror, who absorbed so many English Manors, became possessed of the Manor. Then the ancient family of the Greys held it, but when the Battle of Bosworth sealed the fate of the Yorkists, they were deprived of the Manor which was granted to Jasper, Duke of Bedford. Then Henry VIII. granted it to William Fermor, Clerk of the Crown, whose family adhered to the Roman Catholic faith for many generations; the renowned Arabella Fermor, famous for her beauty, married Francis Perkins of Upton in 1715.

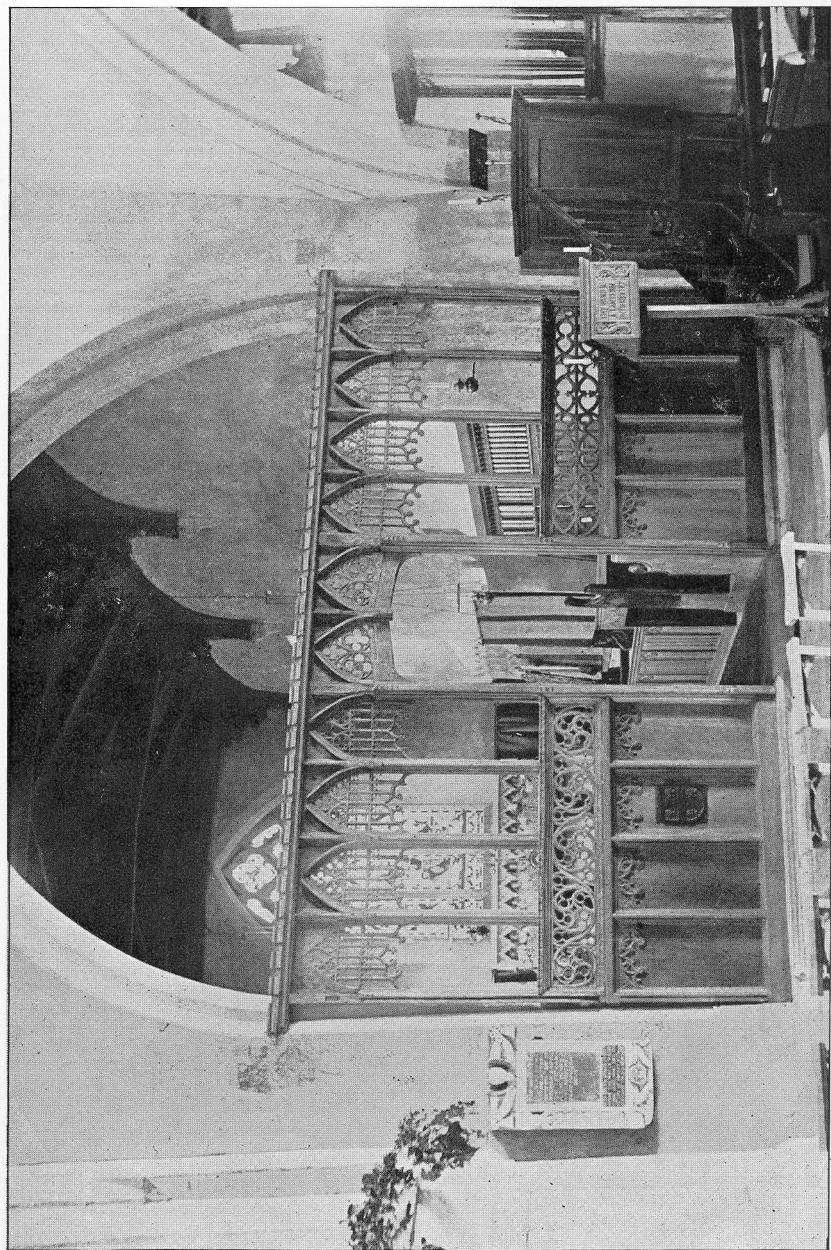
This William Fermor built Tusmore, a fine Elizabethan Manor-house, which gave place to a more modern Mansion in 1770. He like many a noble Lord had a Jester, the renowned Will Somers, who afterwards became the favourite of his royal Master; and when Fermor fell out of Court favour and was oppressed by Henry VIII., Will Somers pleaded his cause and obtained justice for the jester's former benefactor. The Church at Somerton contains many tombs and brasses of the Fermors. This Church was first built in late Norman times. The Chancel-arch is transitional Norman: but the Chancel, Nave and Tower were re-built in the 14th Century in the decorated style. A Chantry was added late in the 15th Century. One of the most interesting features of the Church is the Stone Sculpture of the Rood or Typanum inserted in the north side of the Tower. The Tower was built at the end of the 14th Century. The sculpture belongs to the early part of the reign of Edward III.; and it is probable that the architect, when the tower was built, not



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Rood or Tympanum, Somerton Church, Oxon.



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Rood Screen, Somerton Church, Oxon.

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wishing to lose so good a piece of work, made a niche in the tower in the second stage to receive it. The figures on each side of the Crucifix are doubtless those of St. John and the Virgin Mary. It is a pity that the architect did not place the beautiful work in a position more sheltered from the attacks of the weather.

In the interior of the Church there is a fine Rood Screen which has been much restored. In the lower part are seen the Arms of William Juxon, Bishop of London, a former Rector of Somerton, who held the living 18 years (1615-1633). The Arms were placed there by the parishioners in memory of their former Rector, who bequeathed to them the sum of £50 for the benefit of the poor. The Bishop's Arms also appear in the East window of the Chancel and are as follows:—"Or. a crosse. Gu. between four negroes heads coupéd wreathed about, Or." The Arms of Thomas Juxon, brother of Archbishop Juxon, appear in the Hall window of the Rectory. William Juxon resigned Somerton in 1633 when he became Bishop of Hereford. During the Commonwealth he retired to his estate, the Manor of Little Compton, Gloucestershire, where he kept a pack of hounds. On one occasion his lordship's hounds rebelliously running through Chipping Norton Churchyard during the time the Puritans were engaged in public worship, grievously offended them. A member of this pious assembly was sent to complain of the affair to Oliver Cromwell. "Pray," said the Protector, "do you think the Bishop prevailed on the hare to run through the Churchyard at that time?" "No, and please your Highness I did not directly say he did, but through the holy ground the hare did go at that time." "Get you gone," replied Cromwell, "and let me hear no such frivolous complaints: whilst the Bishop continues not to give my government any offence, let him enjoy his diversion of hunting unmolested." The Protector was always partial to a little hunting himself and failed not to sympathise with sportsmen.

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