

ERRATUM.

The EDITOR regrets that, through a transposition of the Press at pp. 376-9, the chronological sequence of Mr. EWEN's Paper on ST. PETER'S Church has not been fully maintained. For this, however, the Editor desires that he, and not Mr. Ewen, may be held responsible.

Gleanings from an Old City Church,

BEING A SHORT HISTORY OF THE

PARISH OF ST. PETER'S, CHESTER,

ITS CHARITIES, OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS, & CHURCH MONUMENTS.

BY

ISAAC ENGLAND EWEN.

HENRY BRADSHAW, a monk of Chester, writing the LIFE OF ST. WERBURGH, says that "about 140 years after the sufferings of our Saviour CHRIST, the Christian faith and baptism were promulgated in CHESTER; and that then a Church was here built, and at that time called by the name of STS. PETER AND PAUL. It was the Mother Church and the burial place to all CHESTER, and seven miles beyond, and continued so for the space of 300 years and more." He further related that religion flourished in CHESTER above all cities and towns in the region. The commandments of God were observed aright, charity was fervent, increasing day and night; and that in the mother church of ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL all Holy Sacraments were daily ministered.

About the end of the sixth century, Ethelbert, King of Kent, was baptized by St. Augustine, and it is recorded that in gratitude to Almighty God for the royal Christian convert, a special thanksgiving service was held in all the churches of the land dedicated to the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. Therefore, within the walls of our Chester Church, thanksgiving and praise were offered to God for a circumstance, that history showed was productive of the most beneficial results to the country at large.

Other characters now took their part in this historical drama. The Lady ELFLEDA had a saintly friend whose history, life, and character, are familiar to most Cestrians. She loved this friend, and she loved the cause of religion. The expression of her love to ST. WERBURGH was shown in the enlargement of ST. PETER'S Church. Some years later, the Lady Elfleda was moved to persuade her royal husband and other Saxon nobles to found and endow a Minster to the honour of this loved Christian friend; and to this end, in a general council of the clergy, and by the consent and assistance of the temporal power, it was resolved to remove into the middle of the city the old church of ST. PETER and ST. PAUL. By this decision we gather that this first of British churches once stood upon the site now occupied by the present Cathedral Church of Chester.

A once eminent Member of this SOCIETY (the late REV. W. H. MASSIE), in a Paper which he read before the members, said that the present Church of ST. PETER was supposed to stand on the site of the Roman *Prætorium* (the part of the camp occupied by the Roman general); for it not only filled the situation of that part of the old camp arrangement, but accounts for the non-continuation of the Bridge-street, which ceased exactly opposite the Church. MR. MASSIE gave further reasons why this should be so, and concluded the argument by stating that, "if any person should chance to be walking in the EATON-ROAD towards CHESTER after dark, he will see right before him the lights on each side of the higher end of Bridge-street, with the illuminated clock of ST. PETER'S in the centre. This then was the straight Roman road in all its integrity," and there did not appear any sufficient reason for doubting that, when CHESTER was a Roman encampment, the *Prætorium* occupied the site upon which the church of ST. PETER at present stood.

At the Norman Conquest the Church bore its present name, for it is recorded in the greater Domesday Book that in the time of Robert de Rodelent, HUGH LUPUS, A.D. 1070, claimed for teinland (the land of athane or nobleman) the ground upon which the Parish Church of ST. PETER stood. This claim was resisted, and the county proved at the trial that it was the property of the burgesses. In the year 1072 the Church received an ecclesiastical gift from Simon, son of Osborn, a bishop of Exeter.

From 1300 to 1538 the Abbots of the Church of **ST. WERBURGH** and the Bishops of Coventry and Lichfield were alternately the patrons of the living; and upon examining the admirable Reports of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records, I find information respecting three of these early Vicars: thus in 1335 Robert de Coddington, Philip le Procurator of Farndon, with others, enter into a recognizance for 24 marks with **JERDAN**, Parson of the Church of **ST. PETER'S, CHESTER**.

In 1350 there is another gentlemen officiating in our Parish Church, for the record says that **ROBERT DE BREDON**, Parson of the Church of **ST. PETER'S**, is one of the Executors under the will of Bartholomew de Northworthyn, and he, with others, enters into recognizances for £6 7s. 6d. This cleric is again mentioned in 1351, together with Ralph, Abbot of Basingwerk, and again in 1354, with Richard de Coton: and in 1367 Elizabeth, who was the wife of William de Mainwaring, enters into a recognizance with this Parson of **ST. PETER'S** and others for £21 6s. 8d. Not only did this gentleman perform the duty of a Parson, but he appears by a record in 1393 to have been actually engaged during his lifetime in money-making occupations; for we are told that John Aston, son of Richard de Aston, kinsman and heir of **ROBERT DE BREDON**, late Parson of the Church of **ST. PETER'S, CHESTER**, and farmer of the mills and fisheries of the Dee, gives to the King a recognizance for £13 11s. 8d., part of the arrears of the same John Aston.

In 1385 **JOHN DE HALGHTON**, Parson of the Church of **ST. PETER'S**, with the Dean of the Church of **St. John**, receives recognizances from three other gentlemen for the tithes of the sheaves of Guilden Sutton. In 1464 there was among the names of the appointed Vicars of the Church **JACOBUS STANLEY**, rector of **St. Mary's-on-the-Hill**. I specially notice this appointment, for the reason that the name of the cleric is so well known; to show, too, that, four centuries ago, these two city churches were closely connected; and that as in the fifteenth, so in the nineteenth, century the same clergyman had alternately preached the Gospel in the two ancient churches.

In 1538 the last appointment was made by the **ABBOTS** of **ST. WERBURGH**: but now a stronger than they appeared in the land, and took away their possessions. History records that in their stead,

in 1541, DR. RANDULPH COTGREAVE was made Rector of St. PETER'S, receiving his appointment from Roger Brereton, Esq., William Cotgreave, Jun., of Christleton, and Nicholas Newbold, of Dodleston, yeoman, *pro hac vice*; evidently a temporary arrangement until the new Dean and Chapter were fully installed in their allotted estates, advowsons, and revenues. In 1569 the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral were in full possession of the appointment, and they retained it until 1593; when it became the gift of Royalty, Queen Elizabeth presenting the living to William Piccocke, *alias* HICCOCK.

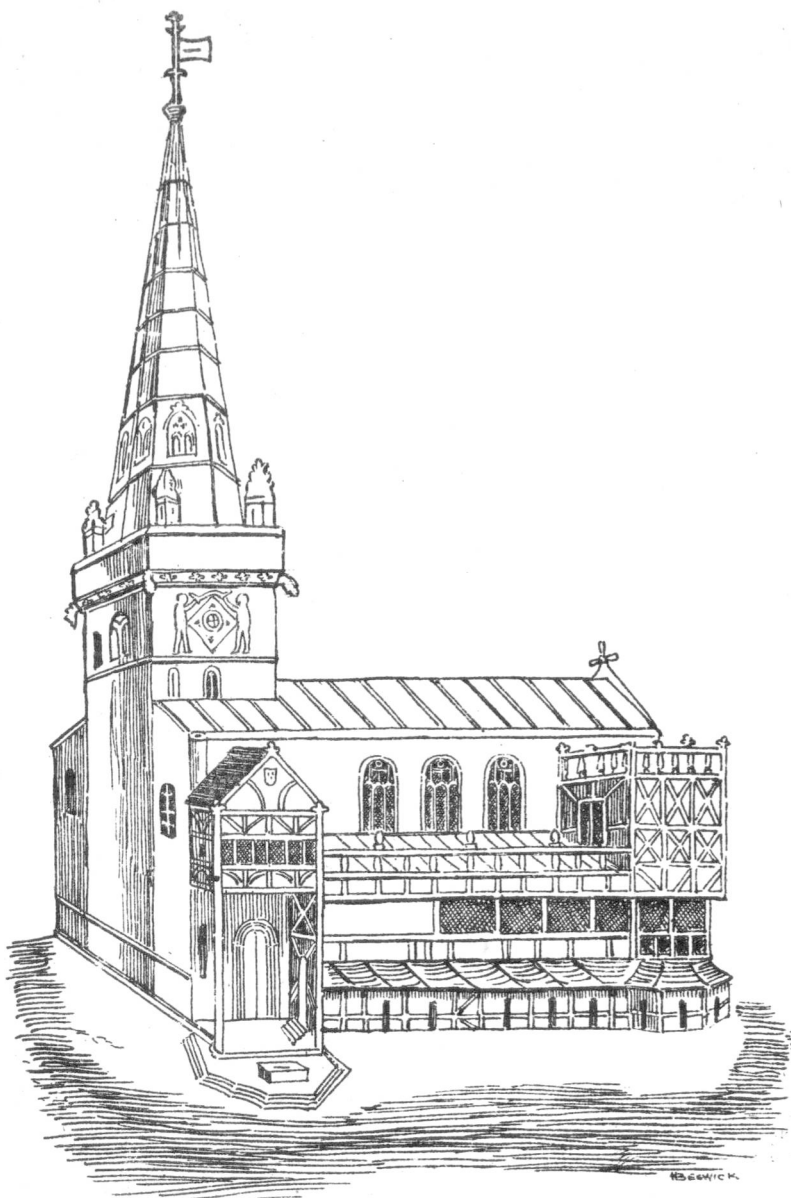
In 1624 it was in the gift of King James, and WILLIAM CASE, M.A., was the rector. *Ormerod* records that in 1627, JAMES RUTHERFORD, M.A., was presented April 12th: but from some cause or other the parishioners, upon the first day of the same year, in Vestry assembled, chose their own Minister, and paid him for the discharge of his ministerial duties. The agreement is as follows:—

“ It is this day agreed betwixt me, John Glendole (Clerk) and the Parishioners of this Parish of St. Peter's, in Chester, that Mr. Glendole shall be Minister of the said Parish, to supply the place for reading of Service as formerly it hath been accustomed. In consideration whereof, the Churchwardens of the said Parish for the time being shall pay him the sum of twenty nobles, and by equal payments (that is) thirty-three shillings and fourpence every payment, the first quarter to be due the 25th day of March next. The Minister also to receive the ordinary payment due for Weddings, Churchings, Christenings and Burials. It is further agreed that if the said Mr. Glendole do preach in our Parish Church of St. Peter aforesaid, on every Sabbath day, except sickness or other occasion do hinder him, that the said Churchwardens for the time being shall pay him for his weekly preaching the sum of Twenty Pounds, to be paid likewise quarterly in equal payments, that is Five Pounds every payment, and this agreement to continue and stand good so long as Mr. Glendole doth stay with us and perform accordingly; as witness our hands.

Signed, JOHN GLENDOLE.

JOHN WILDING, }
SAMUEL ROBINSON, } Churchwardens.”

This stipend was regularly paid for sixteen years. The first entry in the accounts for 1643 records that Mr. GLENDOLE received £13 6s. 8d., balance due to him; and in the accounts of the following year these entries appear:—



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ST PETER'S CHURCH, CHESTER

South Front, shewing the Pentice, and the base of the Cross,
from Randle Holme's Drawing in the 17th Century.

"Paid Mr. SMITH, our Minister, to make up his wages, Twenty Pounds 6s.;" and again in the same year: "Paid Mr. JOHNSON, Minister, to make up twenty shillings as agreed, 2s. 10d,"—plainly showing that, owing to the siege of the city then in progress, or from some other cause, Mr. GLENDOLE had ceased to be Minister of St. PETER's.

In 1612, through the generosity of a Parishioner (Mr. ROBERT AMERY), ST. PETER's Clock was made to strike every quarter of an hour. This gentleman also gave three costly silver cups as prizes for successful races on the Roodeye on St. George's Day. At the beginning of the sports a drum was beaten and a banner displayed on ST. PETER's steeple, by his desire; and at the conclusion of the races a sumptuous banquet was given by him in the Pentice Court, which then adjoined the Church. In January, 1627, the Mayor of the City, RICHARD DUTTON, and the Churchwardens, amicably arranged a dispute that had arisen in reference to a pew occupied by the Mayor's sister-in-law, the wife of a previous mayor: the Mayor agreeing to the terms that he as such, and his wife, should occupy a seat upon the north side of the Church upon payment of 8s. per annum, by equal payments of 4s. at Midsummer and Christmas. This arrangement, it is stated, was by general consent of the Parishioners, and for the purpose of preventing future controversy.

In February, 1627, an assessment of the Parish was made; and among the names of the parochial officers appointed, at that time, were those of men who played a conspicuous part in the parish and in the city generally. Among them we may instance Owen Jones, Christopher Blease, Thomas Cowper, and Ralph Burrowes. A memorandum in the parish books about this time shows that pew rents were in force at an early date in our English churches. For in the balance sheet of the Churchwardens setting forth all monies received by them for the use of the parish, a large proportion of income is derived respectively from *Pew Rents*, *Ley Stalls*, placing the Wief (wife), and rent of three shops under the Pentice.

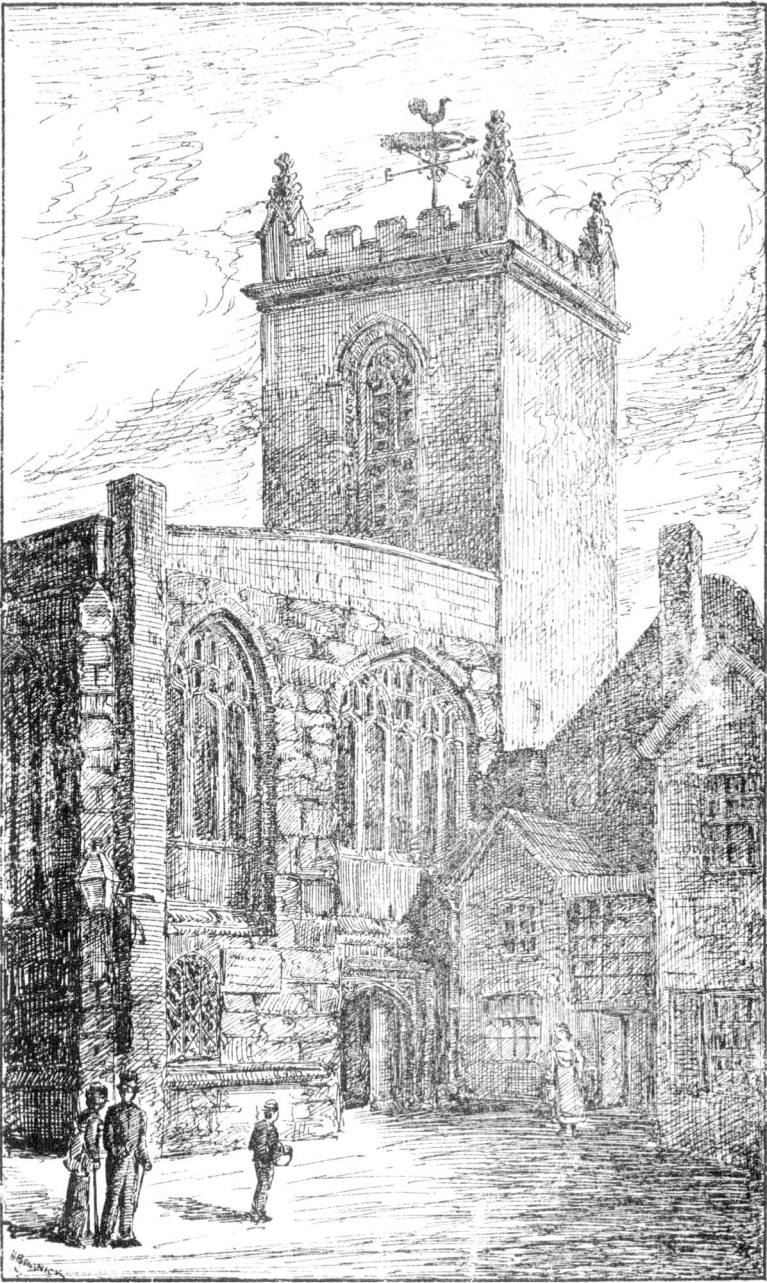
An important Vestry meeting was held in April, 1630; when the parishioners unanimously resolved that the doors opening into the Churchyard (which by courtesy had been allowed to be opened) should for the future be closed, and the Churchwardens were

requested to see that the resolution of the Vestry was fully carried out. It appears, however, that for six years the Churchwardens and their successors were unable to enforce the resolution of the Vestry,—the doors remaining open this way continuing to be a source of annoyance and discomfort to the majority of the parishioners. A special Vestry meeting was accordingly held on November 6th, 1636, and the following resolution was agreed to:—

“That by reason of three private doors (all of them belonging to tippling houses), great abuse and annoyance is done to the Church and Churchyard; which latter is so abused as to become loathsome, so that no person will allow a friend to be buried there, which is to be deplored, as formerly the yard was grown over with grass and was decent and fit for burial. This churchyard in the parish is greatly needed, for the church itself is not large enough for a place of burial for all the parishioners. Not only so, but the way is used through the church and churchyard to the said three houses, to drink wine, beer, and ale on Sundays, holy days, and holidays, and divers persons go through these sacred places to drink at these tap houses. And whereas upon a former occasion these doors were made up by the Churchwardens, and have been violently opened by owners and the tenants of the tippling houses, it is agreed that this vestry empower the Churchwardens to insist upon their resolution.”

This entry in the parish book is signed by thirty-seven of the most influential parishioners, amongst them being the name of THOMAS COWPER, Alderman. This gentleman a few years later stood upon the Phoenix Tower with the unfortunate King Charles while the Battle of Rowton Moor was raging to the eastward of the City Walls. Another signature is that of WILLIAM EDWARDS, who was upon the side of the Parliament, and became a Captain in Cromwell's Army; it was he who seized the Sword and Mace of the City for the Commonwealth (but which after some years' absence were restored). He was also sent down by the Protector to be the first Mayor of the City after its capture by the Parliament.

The year in which Mr. GLENDOLE relinquished his ministry in ST. PETER'S Church proved an eventful year to the city. Many of her notable citizens perished. The Siege of CHESTER inflicted dreadful hardships upon the inhabitants, heavy taxes upon the clergy, nobility, and the citizens generally. The ancient city plate was melted and converted into coin; and a battle, locally known as “Rowton Moor,” was fought near Christleton, where 100 men, mostly citizens of Chester, were slain.



ST PETER'S CHURCH, CHESTER
View from Churchyard

Notwithstanding these troubles, the bells of St. Peter's were joyfully and merrily ringing upon several days, by the Mayor's appointment, in honour of the King's victories, probably the defeat of Fairfax on Atherton Moor. But the rejoicings were of short duration, and at this period of our history we prefer that the curtain of time should cover the wrongdoings of the actors upon each side, and make us forgetful of their sad and tragical end.

From a Tablet in the Vestry, we learn that "Raphe Davies, and Ellis Lewys, were churchwardens from y^e 16th day of Aprell an^o 1637 to y^e 12th day Aprell an^o 1640. in which tyme; the East End of this Church and y^e South Side therof, from y^e window stooles was re-edified, the Roof allmost all new leaded, most of y^e pews were made new, all the rest amended and all y^e iles flagged."

The stormy days of the Commonwealth having passed away, the parishioners again rejoiced and made merry; and in the church accounts for 1660, were charges for ringing the bells upon the King's triumphal entry into London, upon his proclamation, his coronation, and then upon the day of thanksgiving for his Restoration to the throne of England. In the year 1662 GEORGE HALL was consecrated Bishop of Chester, and the parish church bells rang out a merry peal in commemoration of the event. The ringers were paid for their share in the transaction one shilling and sixpence. As a contrast to this expense, we may mention that at a recent occasion for rejoicing in the city, the ringers then employed received the sum of four pounds ten shillings, a curious illustration of the value of money at these distant periods.

About this time a new Font appears to have been erected. The carriage, the loading, and the getting of it into the church, cost the parish 17s. 11d., and a cover was made for it at an expense of 6s. It is probable that this very Font is now stowed away upon the north side of the Church, having been removed from its original position to make way for the present elegant Font, placed in the vestibule of the church by the generosity of a parishioner now living.

The Congregation of ST. PETER's are historically generous. A curious illustration of their quality in this respect is on record. Two centuries ago, after the "Great Fire of London," "*an additional*

collection" was made for the relief of the distress occasioned by it; which collection, it is stated, was "*not called for*," and the money was therefore placed by the Churchwardens, in their annual account, to the credit of the parishioners.

The old Church of St. PETER had once a stately Spire, a copy of a drawing of which, by Randal Holme, preserved amongst the Harl. MSS., has already been published in the Society's *Journal*, vol. i., page 302, showing the Rector's house, the Pentice Court, and the position of the HIGH CROSS. (There is an illustration of this famous CROSS, by Randal Holme, in the Harl. MSS., 2073. The upper portion of it is still preserved at Netherleigh, and the shaft is in the grounds of General Yorke at Llangollen.) This spire being in a dangerous and dilapidated condition in 1669, was taken down; and was subsequently rebuilt, the Vestry having agreed to an assessment upon the parishioners to the extent of £110 for that purpose. Mr. Richard Francis, innkeeper, was churchwarden at this time; and during his year of office the income was insufficient to cover the expenditure of the church officers. This was for the most part accounted for by the extra liabilities in connection with the removal of the old Spire. The receipts of this year for general expenses amounted to £39 7s. 5d., and the payments £60 6s. 6d.

There are several entries amongst the items of expenditure, which illustrate very strikingly the change for the better which has taken place in the habits of society. Amongst these are—"Wine and beer for the parishioners after the meeting, when consulting about the steeple"; "wine and beer at divers times with the parson"; "wine and beer with the builder"; "beer at the discharge of a workman"; "beer and ale when the collectors met to consult when 'to goe'"; "drink allowed to workmen"; "beer and wine with Alderman Florriman of Coventry"; "beer at the auditing of accounts"; "wine to drink with Mr. Wright after sermon"; "paid for three quarts of canary, two ounces of almonds, and 'biskitts,' and for two bottles of claret to drink with the Lord Bishop when he preached at our church." Paid for horse hire and *other charges* in going to My Lord Cholmondeleys, for the mason to take down the steeple. And again, paid for *wine and beer at Mr. Francis'*, upon the Ascension Day after procession.

These Ascension Processions and "May Pageants," as they were called, were very popular with our ancestors, and were entered upon with great spirit and enjoyment; all the more serious cares of life were for the time being thrown aside, and conviviality and hilarity reigned supreme. The following anecdote, related by Bishop Latimer in one of his sermons, illustrates this statement. "Coming," says he, "to a certain town upon a holiday to preach, I found the Church door fast locked. I tarried there half-an-hour or more, and at last the key was found, and one of the parish comes to me and says, 'Sir! this is a very busy day with us, *we cannot hear you*. It is "*Robin Hood's*" day!!! and the Parish has gone abroad to gather for *Robin Hood*; I pray you hinder them not!' I was fain therefore to give place to *Robin Hood*. I thought *my rochet* would have been regarded, but not so; it had to yield to *Robin Hood* and his merry men!" This quotation is alluded to by Mr. HICKLIN in a paper entitled "May-day Sports and National Recreations," vol i., page 335 of the *Journal* of this SOCIETY.

Upon the completion of the rebuilding of the Spire of the Church in 1676, and the final payment of all liabilities thereupon, the ecclesiastical affairs of the parish appear to have excited very little attention. There are, notwithstanding, interesting and curious entries made in the Parish Book of Record.

In July, 1672, an inventory was made of goods belonging to the Church. The flagons, the cups, and the plates for the Communion Service are described to be of *pewter*; the carpet is said to be of "Turkey work;" the reading-desk and the pulpit had a cloth and a cushion of a green colour. A *book* in a frame is in the the chancel, and a long white pole for the use of the verger.

Just two centuries ago, the Churchwardens were required to pay the sum of eightpence for the purpose of issuing a proclamation, requiring the strict observance of the day of the Martyrdom of King Charles I. It surely is a matter of congratulation that in our day this fertile means of keeping alive an unhappy circumstance has been abolished by general consent!

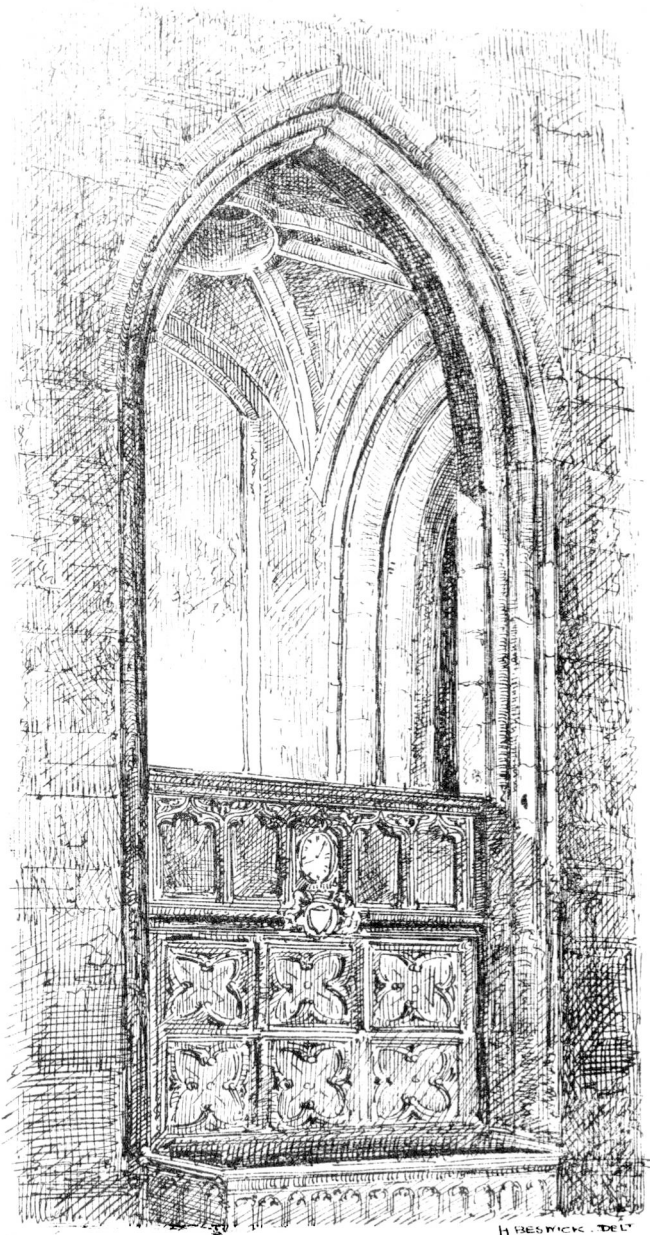
About this time the numerous extra fees for ringing the bells appear at length to have become burdensome to the parish, and at a Vestry-meeting it was unanimously ordered "That the Church-

wardens, for the future, shall not suffer the bells to be rung for any new-made freemen or freeman; unless he or they that would have them rung first pay unto the Churchwardens for the time being, for the use of the Parish, the sum of One Shilling." But, directly after this resolution was passed, the old Church bells are merrily ringing, and the ringers receiving an extra fee upon the occasion of the return of the Lord Bishop from London, and his entrance into the city. This Lord Bishop was none other than Doctor JOHN PEARSON, one of the Commissioners at the Savoy Conference appointed for the revision of the Liturgy, and to whose memory a handsome monument has recently been erected in the Cathedral Church of our city.

In the year 1682, during the churchwardenship of Messrs. Peter Bennet and William Darwell, there is in the Parish accounts a credit entry of six shillings and eightpence, for a "Ley Stall" in the body of the church for Mrs. Phillips. We specially notice this memorandum, because the deceased lady was the mother of Mrs. SIBEL PHILLIPS, "Spinster," who at her death bequeathed the sum of £40 for the use of the poor of the parish of ST. PETER'S, and who also, during her lifetime, gave to our Parish Church a portion of the Silver Communion Plate now in constant use with us.

In 1688 the parish record of church officers mentioned that Mr. Benjamin Critchley and Mr. Thomas Chapman were elected churchwardens, and Mr. Richard Adams and Mr. Ralph Hocknell were appointed collectors or sidesmen. This is the first time that "sidesmen" were mentioned in the church register, these officers being called collectors only. It appears to have been their duty to collect the monies assessed for the relief of the poor, and to pay it over to the churchwardens, who in their turn became the distributors of it to any who were in need. Various entries occurred about this date for monies received as fines for profane swearing. The largest fine mentioned was 35s., which was distributed by the churchwardens among the poor of the parish.

In 1689 we have a curious record of a memorial to the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, praying him to appoint a minister as a successor to the Rev. WILLIAM THOMPSON; and also recommending to him a fit and proper person for the sacred office. This memorial



Seymour & Co. Photographs London

ST PETER'S CHURCH, CHESTER
Tower Arch

is influentially and numerously signed. It will be in the remembrance of many of the Parishioners that a very similar memorial was presented by deputation to the late Bishop GRAHAM, some twenty years ago; and that the Bishop inquired of the leader of the deputation if he, and the Parishioners acting with him, were aware that the selection of the new Rector was placed in his (the Bishop's) hands? "Certainly we are! your Lordship," was the reply; "but we feel that by coming to you with this request we have performed our duty." The Bishop replied "He was not quite sure but that the deputation had exceeded their duty!" and they withdrew.

A Society was next formed in the city for "the reformation of manners," and a monthly Friday Lecture was set up at St. PETER's to promote this good design. The celebrated Nonconformist, MATTHEW HENRY, appeared to have been a constant attendant upon these Lectures, and many entries in his diary regarding them were very interesting. The Bishop of the Diocese was the first preacher. Then followed Dr. FOGG, the Dean; and Mr. HENRY notes respecting this service:

"I bless God for this sermon; and as I have in my heart forgiven, so will I endeavour to forget, all that he (the Dean) has said against Dissenters, and against me in particular. Such preaching against sin, and such endeavours to suppress it, will contribute as much as anything to heal differences among those who fear God."

The plain speaking and denunciation of all immorality stirred up strife, and many began openly to deride and oppose, and formed parties to act in opposition. The enemies of the movement at last prevailed, and upon the 5th September, 1701, the Dean preached the concluding sermon.

On the 29th November, 1708, it was agreed that the five Bells then in the steeple of the Church should be new cast, and a new bell added to them. About fifty-three years afterwards the Spire of the Church was again repaired, and in 1718 an altar-piece of wood, which cost £34, was placed in the church. It was removed in 1849, when the present altar screen was erected.

At a Vestry Meeting in 1803 it was unanimously agreed, as the Corporation was discussing the necessity of the removal of the old Pentice Court; that it would be a great improvement, in case the Pentice Court was taken down, to remove the old building over the

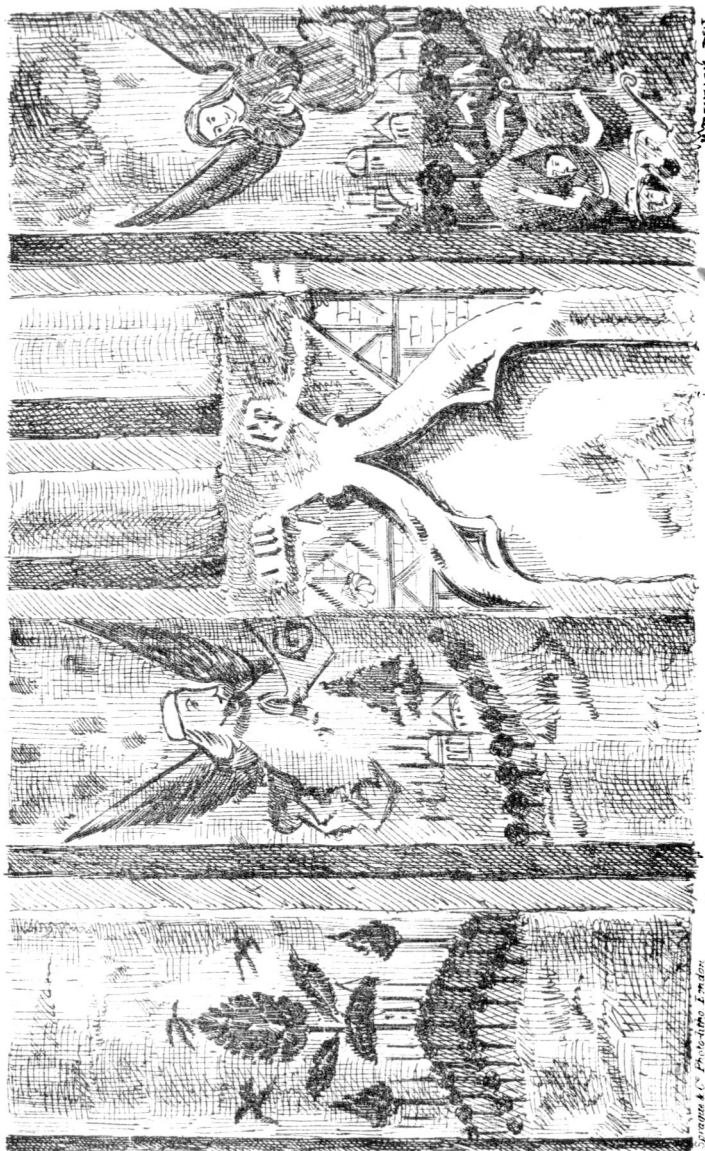
church steps, known as the Rectory House, belonging to the parish of ST. PETER'S. A subscription list, amounting to £158 6s. 6d., was set on foot, while a double church rate produced £71 5s. 9d.: the materials of the old building realized £20 5s., and the Rectory House of ST. PETER'S became a thing of the past. In 1811 the steeple of the Church was again in a dilapidated and dangerous condition, and was once more repaired.

In 1819 the walls of the church were whitewashed, the Vestry was altered, and a proper place made to keep the wine for the use of the Sacrament. In 1820 the loyal parishioners put on mourning for George III.: the Churchwardens were authorized to have the pulpit covered with black cloth as a token of respect to his memory, 10s. being allowed for the tolling of the bell.

Another extra expense was also incurred by the payment of the ringers at the proclamation of George IV.; while, just a year later, the ringers received another gratuity because the Catholic Emancipation Bill was rejected in the House of Commons. Again, at the coronation of the King, laurels, colours, and ringing cost the parish £2 3s. 0d.

In this year, 1820, the CATHEDRAL was undergoing restoration, and a collection was made in ST. PETER'S, on its behalf. The amount stood the third upon the list of collections received from the various parishes.

For several years past there had been complaints respecting the Churchyard and the burials in the Church; and in 1826 the parishioners were in earnest to provide a suitable cemetery for the parish, and desired, at the suggestion of the Bishop, to unite with the parishes of St. Olave and St. Michael conjointly to attain their object. A committee was formed, and presently recommended the purchase of the premises lately occupied by Mr. Orred, situate in the parish of St. John the Baptist, offered for sale; then it was also proposed that the money requisite for purchasing, preparing, consecrating, and rendering the same fit for a Cemetery, be borrowed under the direction of the Lord Bishop from such society in London as he might think most proper. This recommendation to purchase land for a Cemetery appeared to have been disregarded and abandoned. In 1833, the necessity of a new burial ground was



ST PETER'S CHURCH . CHESTER
Mural Painting in North
Angels appearing to the Shepherds &c

W. H. W. 1851

again discussed, and a letter was read from the Rev. HENRY RAIKES, the Chancellor of the Diocese, in which he directed attention to the subject without loss of time. The question was not finally settled till the formation of a private company in 1850.

In 1849 a new gallery was erected on the south side of the church; the pews were lowered, and a new altar screen placed at the east end. During the process of cleaning, an ancient "FRESCO" was discovered upon one of the pillars opposite the Font in the vestibule of the church.

The following description of it, which has been corroborated by high authority, is from the friendly pen of Mr. HARRY BESWICK, of this city, who has supplied the drawings and details in illustration of the Paper :—

"This Fresco is painted upon the south-east pier of the Tower, and faces the principal entrance door of the Church. In this pier there is a niche, with ogee and cusped head originally having crocketed hood mold; but no trace of the carving now remains. A carved stone figure of the Virgin and Child evidently stood in the niche, the general outline of which is at present distinguishable, the stone at the back of the niche having been slightly hollowed out to receive the figure.

"It is around this niche that the mediæval artist has painted the Fresco, and in it he has indicated some of the events that took place at the Birth of our SAVIOUR.

"Over the niche is a Scroll, supported by an Angel, on which the words "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" were once to be clearly deciphered, but which are now almost obliterated; and in the spandrels formed by the head of the niche are painted the timbers of a roof, through which the "Star" may be seen shining—the design thus being to represent the Stable at Bethlehem, in which the Virgin is presenting the CHILD for the Adoration of the Shepherds.

"Upon the right hand we have a picture, showing the Angel of the Lord appearing in the heavens, and announcing to the Shepherds the 'glad tidings of great joy;' and while their flocks are feeding upon the hill sides, the Shepherds are shown wending their way to the lowly stable, one of them evidently being struck with amazement at the glorious sight that suddenly bursts upon him.

"The painting immediately on the left of the niche is partly obliterated; but we may safely conjecture that it has represented the visit of the Magi, coming from Jerusalem to Bethlehem after their interview with Herod; as an important city is pictured in the background, with a hill covered with trees in the mid-distance, but the figures in the foreground are unfortunately indistinguishable.

"Another scene remains for description; but this foreshadows the Crucifixion of our SAVIOUR. On the extreme left of the Fresco a view of Calvary is shown."

upon which are three trees, representing the three Crosses, the centre one being much larger and more important than the others ; and over these trees are shown three birds flying away, which evidently represent the departing spirits of our SAVIOUR and the crucified thieves. Note the direction taken by the birds : two fly in one direction, while the remaining one—the impenitent thief—takes the opposite course !

“This interesting Fresco measures 5 feet by 3 feet, and is well worthy of careful preservation.”

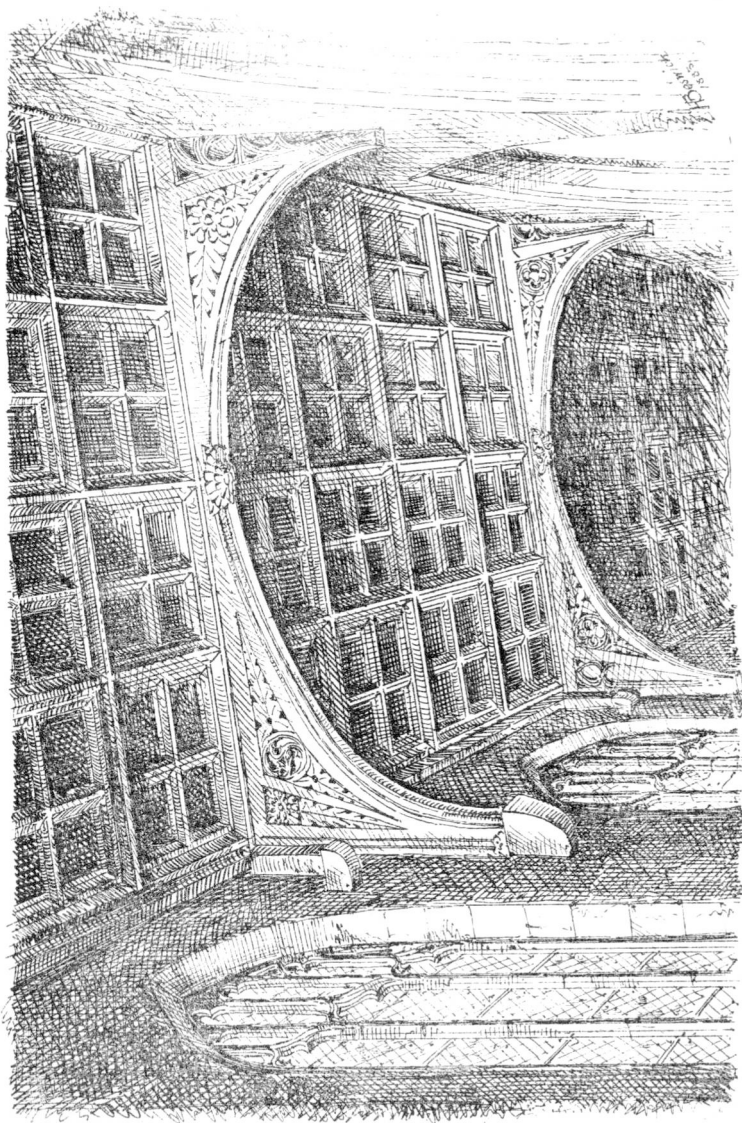
With reference to the interior of the Roof of the North Aisle, Mr. BESWICK says :—

“That portion of the Roof over the West End of the North Aisle is well worthy of attention, and is a good specimen of an open timber roof of the Perpendicular period.

“The Roof is formed of strong framed and moulded beams, with smaller beams framed in between to form panels, and the whole covered with boarding to receive lead. The Roof is supported at intervals by framed principals having arched soffits, the spandrels being filled in with tracery and carved panels, and the centre of the arch ornamented with a carved boss. These principals at one time appear to have been longer, as one end has been cut off to make them fit the span of the roof, thus showing that they were originally intended to be fixed in some other position ; but where, remains a matter for conjecture.”

In 1817 Sunday Evening Lectures were instituted, and were favourably regarded by all classes of Cestrians. The Vestry decided that the church rate should not be in any respect chargeable with the expenses incurred on account of these Lectures, but that they should be conducted by a committee to be chosen on the first Monday in every year.

CHESTER was one of the first provincial cities that discarded the old-fashioned oil lamps, and adopted the newly-introduced gas lights ; and after the evening services at St. PETER's had been held nine months, a Vestry Meeting was held on the 14th September, 1818, when it was unanimously agreed that the Church should be at once lighted with gas for the Evening Lectures. On Sunday evening, October 25th, the church was lighted with gas for the first time, and the Dean preached to a congregation which crowded the building to inconvenience. The Lord Bishop of the Diocese and several of the clergy of the Cathedral were present, and also Lord Kenyon. All the aisles and the approaches to the church were crowded, and great numbers attempted in vain to gain admittance. A collection was made in aid of defraying the expense of lighting the church with gas, and a sum of £76 was received.



ST. PETERS CHURCH, CHESTER
Roof of North Aisle

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The Church was re-opened on Friday, August 31st, 1849, with two full choral services, at which Mr. Gunton and the Cathedral Choir very kindly gave their efficient aid.

Ten years after this the Rev. F. FORDE resigned his living, and he was, after the lapse of some months, succeeded in 1856 by the Rev. JOHN WATSON. He in his turn ceased to be Rector of ST. PETER'S. In 1861, by a very singular coincidence, the Rev. F. FORDE was again instituted as the Rector of ST. PETER'S. In 1874, he again resigned the living to become the Chaplain of St. John's Hospital, and was succeeded by the present Rector, the Rev. J. H. ACHESON.

It remains now to record a few facts about the CHARITIES of the church. The LEGACIES at present belonging to the parish are as follows:—

“Two-thirds of the pew rents of the north gallery; Crompton's legacy of £29, accruing from rent of land in Kinnerton. The parish of Dodleston is entitled to half of this legacy, so that the poor residents of St Peter's parish receive annually in coal, clothing, and provisions, the sum of £14 10s.

Brereton's legacy of £2 3s. 4d., received from the City Treasurer upon the 23rd April in each year. The rector is entitled to £1 13s. 4d., and the poor receive 10s.

Cowper's legacy, paid by the Duke of Westminster, being a rent charge upon the Talbot Inn, now forming part of the Grosvenor Hotel. The gift provides one loaf each to twelve poor persons who have regularly attended Divine Service in St. Peter's Church on the Lord's Day.

Offley's legacy, payable at Easter, is an annual gift of £1 5s. to the rector, and £3 15s. equally divided between the poor of the parishes of St. Peter, St. Oswald, St. John, and St. Michael.

Bennett's legacy of £1 12s., annually received at Christmas for the benefit of the poor of the parish. It is a rent charge upon land belonging to the Duke of Westminster at Whitby.

Witter's legacy of £1 per annum is also a rent charge upon property in Bridge Street Row West, and is paid by Mr. Wakefield.

Mrs. Sibel Phillips, spinster, left £20 for a flagon and cup for the Communion Service; these are still the property of the parishioners, and are in the care of the churchwardens.”

There is a well-founded supposition, that the north gallery was erected and paid for by monies left for charitable uses; and there has always been in force, since its erection, a charge of two-thirds on the income derived from the letting of the pews,—and the money

obtained by this charge is appropriated to the relief of the poor of the parish. From the records of the Church it has been ascertained that in October, 1730, the minister, churchwardens, and parishioners unanimously agreed to pay four per cent interest for the several charitable legacies left to the poor of the parish since 1672 (and which legacies had been appropriated as before-mentioned). The payments were to be made quarterly, and distributed by the churchwardens and their successors for ever. The following is a list of the Charities thus appropriated:—

William Darwell, of the city of Chester, glover, left to the poor of St. Peter's parish £40, the interest of the sum to be given to them yearly for ever, being poor housekeepers.

Mr. Francis Finchett, late of the city of Chester, apothecary, by his last will gave to the poor of this Parish the sum of £5 to be put forth at interest, and the interest to be yearly paid for ever to the poor upon every Good Friday.

Mrs. Helena Salmon, of this city, by her last will left £10, the use of it to be paid to the poorest of this Parish, at the direction of the Churchwardens for the time being, upon every 10th day of April annually for ever.

Mr. Peter Cotton, attorney, left £10, the interest thereof to be distributed by the Minister and Churchwardens upon every Christmas Day, amongst twenty poor house keepers of this Parish. Joseph Massey, Jno. Wrench, Churchwardens.

Mr. Isaac Hollins, late of Wolverhampton, by his last will left the sum of £10, the interest to be paid to the poor of this Parish annually for ever.

Mr. Timothy Dean, by his last will left the sum of £25, the interest to be paid to the poor of this Parish annually for ever.

Mr. John Cowles, of the city of Chester, innholder, by his last will and testament left to this Parish of St. Peter's the sum of £20, to be set forth to poor and indigent widows, the interest to be distributed amongst such at the direction of the Churchwardens, and to none other poor.

Mrs. Margaret Cowles, relict of the said John Cowles, did bequeath the sum of £10 to be set forth; the interest to be distributed yearly on St. Thomas's Day, amongst the poor widows in this Parish of St. Peter's, such as do not actually go abroad to beg relief.

Mrs. Ann Burroughs, widow, of the city of Chester, left to the poor of St. Peter's Parish £5, the interest of the said sum to be paid them yearly at Christmas for ever.

Mr. Nathaniel Bradburn, of the city of Chester, gent., gave, on January 27th, 1698, to the poor of Saint Peter's Parish the sum of £5, to be put out by the Minister and Churchwardens, the interest to be paid every Ascension Day, for ever.

Mrs. Sidney Whitley of this city, spinster, left £20, the interest thereof to twelve poor women housekeepers of this Parish, to be distributed by the Minister and Churchwardens every half year, viz., at Lady Day and Michaelmas Day, for ever.

Mrs. Sibel Phillips, spinster, left £40 to the poor, the interest thereof to be every year distributed by the Minister and Churchwardens.

These last twelve Legacies, given by charitable people for the relief of the poor, exactly correspond in amount, viz., £200, to the sum mentioned as being appropriated to the erection of the North Gallery.

Unfortunately there are other Bequests which are irrecoverably lost. The statements regarding them, as recorded in the Vestry Books, are as follows:—

Matthew Anderton, of this city, gentleman, who died the 7th of November, 1693, left 30s. per annum for ever to six poor persons, to be given the first Sunday in every month, after the manner as twelve others have by Mr. Offley's last will and testament; the clerk and sexton 6d. monthly. Matthew Anderton was the Sheriff of Chester in 1650, and Mayor of the city in 1680.

John Vernon, Esq., merchant of the Staple, citizen of London, born in this city, left to the Minister of St. Peter's, for preaching on Sunday in the afternoon, £1 13s. 4d. yearly for ever, payable by the Treasurers of the city

Mr. Partington left £10, the interest to be paid by the Churchwardens of St. Peter's to their poor yearly for ever.

Thomas Hallwood, of this city, yeoman, by his last will and testament on August 8th, 1672, left to the poor of St. Peter's Parish £30, the interest, 30 shillings, payable every Candlemas Day for ever. The Churchwardens and Overseers to take account of it.

Samuel Bucke, Doctor of Physic, born in this Parish, by his last will and testament bearing date November 14th, 1674, left to the poor of St. Peter's Parish £60, the interest thereof to be received by the Churchwardens, and by them to be paid yearly to the poor of the said Parish for ever.

There are also in the possession of the Churchwardens several interesting documents written upon parchment, relating to some of these aforesaid legacies given to the parish of St. Peter. One is dated 1574, Cowper's is dated 1695; a lease of the property at Kinnerton to Mr. Arthur Walley, signed by himself, Henry Crompton, and Valentine Shorte. This lease is dated June 2nd, 1658, There is also another legacy given by William Wright and Daniel Greatbache, attested to on behalf of Daniel Greatbache by Valentine Gamul, Charles Ravenscroft, George Bulkeley; on behalf of William Wright, by George Bulkeley, Charles Ravenscroft, Randle Bennett. There is, too, a joint legacy signed by Thos. Cowper and John Aldersey. It is ordered that it may be distributed upon St. Michael's Day and the day of Annunciation. Witnessed by Ralph Burroughs, Sampson Shelley, Thomas Halliwell.

In an inventory of the "things now found belonging to the Church," which is dated July 22nd, 1672, there is enumerated—"a bond for Mr Partington's legacy—a copy of Thomas Hallwood's legacy to ye poore of St. Peter's Parish, being ye interest of £30, which is 30s. per annum. Ye said copy is kept in ye black box. A copy of Mr. Samuel Bucke's will, wherein is given to ye poore of St. Peter's Parish ye interest of £60, which is £3 12s 0d per annum. Ye said will is kept in ye black box."

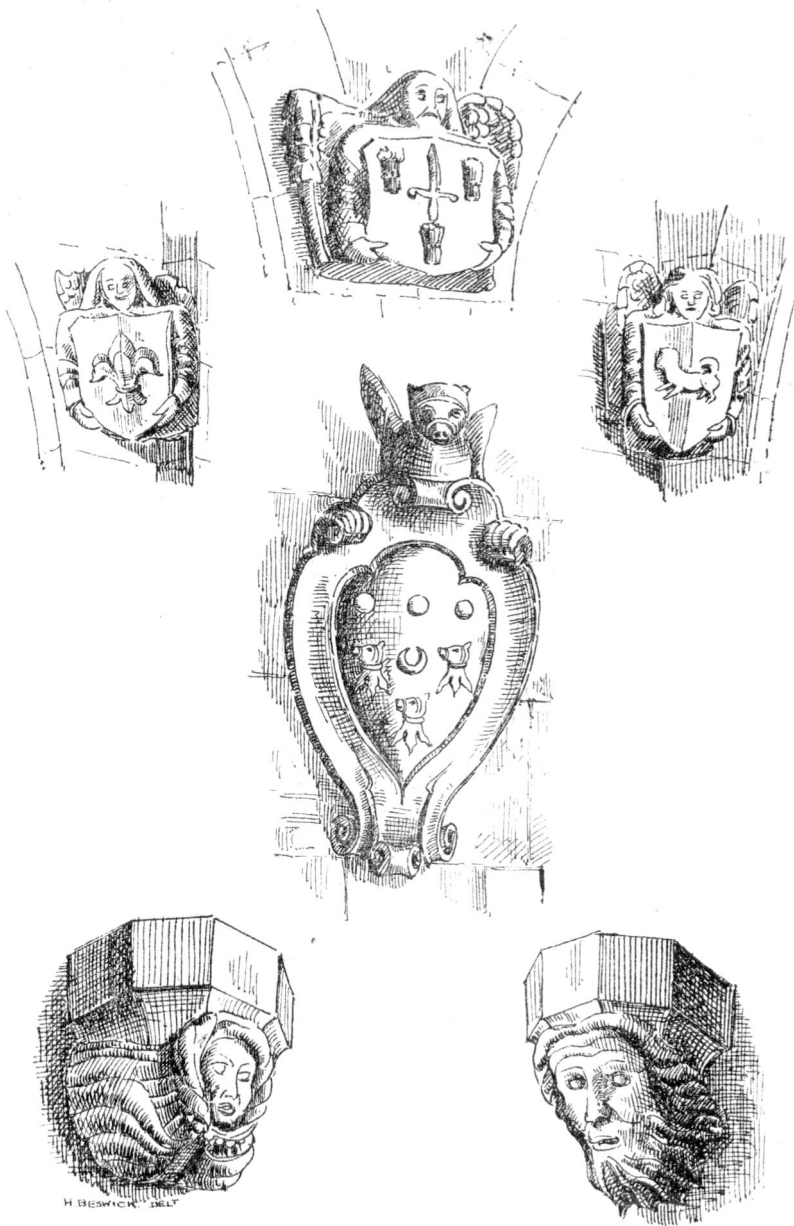
These Charitable bequests remind us that all true benevolence is a part of our common humanity and also of our Christianity. Benevolence often arises from sympathy, just as "iron sharpens iron." So is a man made sympathetic by contact with suffering and want. Our forefathers (under a less favoured system of Poor Law relief), were daily brought face to face with the ills their poorer brethren suffered: and hence, as it appears, they were prompted when old, or ill, or dying, to bequeath a task to their executors and friends, which, if with their own hands they had performed when living, would have been to them a source of comfort and of joy. It oftentimes too partook of the nature of a free-will offering of love to Christ, performed whilst the donor of the gift was yet alive. It would be well for all to remember that although this almsgiving is by the Gospel enforced upon all Christian people, it is no new law, but a repetition and developement of the old.

The following extract from page 375 and 376 of the Report of the Commissioners sent to CHESTER to enquire into the Charities of the City, and some of which Charities are connected with ST. PETER'S Church are very interesting, and will not be out of place here.

BRERETON'S LEGACY.

John Brereton, by his will bearing date the eighth day of August, 1631, gave and devised his Close by Flookersbrook, called 'Flookersbrook Field,' to his loving wife for her natural life; she paying yearly, out of the rents, issues, and profits thereof, the sum of £5, which he willed and devised to be paid, and distributed, in manner and form following, that is to say, to

20 poor persons of St John's Parish	...	...	...	...	20s.
20 poor persons of the Parish of Barrow	...	...	...	...	20s.
10 poor persons of St. Werburgh's Parish	...	...	...	...	10s.
10 poor persons of Trinity Parish	...	...	...	...	10s.
10 poor persons of St. PETER's Parish	...	...	...	...	10s.
10 poor persons of St. Mary's Parish	...	...	...	...	10s.
5 poor persons of St. Michael's Parish	...	...	...	...	5s.
5 poor persons of St. Bridget's Parish	..	...	...	...	5s.
10 poor persons of the Parish of Tarvin	...	...	...	...	10s.



ST PETER'S CHURCH, CHESTER
Details of Corbels &c

which said sums were to be paid yearly to the several Churchwardens of the said Parishes, who at such times and days as they with the advice of the several Parsons or Curates of the said parishes should yearly and every year for ever, distribute and pay upon every Friday next after St. George's Day, the said several sums to the said poor people, according to his intent and meaning therein. And, after the decease of his said wife, he further gave and devised his Close aforesaid, called the 'Flookersbrook Field,' unto the Mayor and Citizens of Chester and their successors for ever; upon *trust and confidence* that they should yearly well and truly pay and satisfy the said sum of £5, in such manner and form as he devised the same to be paid by his wife. He also further willed and devised that all the rest and residue of the rents and profits of the said Close, over and besides the sum of £5 formerly devised, should yearly and every year be duly paid and satisfied by the said Mayor and Citizens, for and toward the Maintenance and Exhibition of the 'Friday Lecture' at *St. Peter's Church* within the same City; the same to be yearly paid to the Lecturer there for the *time being*, at and upon every Friday next following St. George's Day.

Unfortunately for the Lecturer of ST. PETER'S Church, "*the trust and confidence*" were misplaced!

There is no Evidence to shew the quantity of the Close, nor could the Commissioners in their endeavours to trace it, find any document which set forth the field and its abutments. The field has been alienated by the Corporation; and it is presumed that the fee farm rent, reserved by the following instrument, was the value of the Close at that period.

By Indenture dated March 26th, 1712, the Mayor and Citizens of Chester, —in consideration of the surrender of a former lease of the Field or Parcel of Land thereafter mentioned, for three lives and 21 years after, as of the sum of £8 fine; and in consideration of the yearly rent hereafter mentioned,—granted, bargained, sold, refoffed and to perpetual fee-farm betook unto John Clayton of Hoole, in the County of Chester, Gardener,—all that field, pasture, or parcel of land with its appurtenances, situate lying and being near Hoole Rake, in the County of Chester, commonly called and known by the name of 'Flookersbrook Field,' late in the tenure or holding of Catherine Oulton, widow, and then in the possession or occupation of the said John Clayton; together with all ways, &c., to hold unto the said John Clayton, his heirs and assigns, to the use and behoof of the said John Clayton, his heirs and assigns for ever, under the clear yearly rent of £6 13s. 4d. payable at Midsummer, or quarterly by equal portions.

At an Assembly holden on the 20th day of June, in the 6th year of William and Mary, it was ordered that Mr. PETER NEWTON, Rector of ST. PETER'S parish within this city, should have and receive yearly during the pleasure of the House, the sum of 5 nobles (which sum was formerly given by this House to Mr. WILLIAM THOMPSON, late Parson of the said Parish) yearly out of Mr. BREBETON'S Legacy, the first payment whereof to begin and be made upon St. George's Day then next.

The following is an extract from what is stated to be the evidence of the Town Clerk:—

“John Brereton's legacy was a sum of £6 13s. 4d., made payable annually to charitable objects, out of a Close at Flookersbrook, which was devised in 1681 to the Mayor and Citizens of Chester for that purpose. The only trace of the Corporate property in this Close during living memory has been (what is here termed) a chief rent issuing out of it, of the precise amount of £6 13s. 4d. This was sold a few years since by the Corporation, with several other chief rents, upon the usual terms of 20 years' purchase, in order to raise money to build the new markets (the present Shambles, about 1828). This sum of £6 13s. 4d. is distributed yearly by the person appointed for this purpose by the Corporation from their funds. £1 13s. 4d. is given to the rector of St. Peter's, instead of what ought to have now been a much larger residue from the increased value of the lands near this city,—that is to say, if the Lecturer of former times and the Rector of the present day are identical. The remaining £5 is given according to the directions contained in the Will, viz., to the several churchwardens, about St. George's Day. This is why the money is received in some of the parishes by the name of “St. George's Money.” This “Flookersbrook Field” is now called “BISHOP'S FIELDS,” and was recently owned by the late Mr. Faulkner; and when any portion of it is sold it is described in the title deeds as ‘Flookersbrook Field.’”

Again, upon page 389 of the same record, occurs the following, in reference to another Legacy given to the Parish of St. PETER's:

Alderman Henry Bennett, by will bearing date February 17th, 1708, left the sum of £25, the interest thereof to be paid by his executors to twelve poor widows of St. Peter's Parish every Christmas. There is a sum of £1 12s. per annum, issuing from lands at Whitby, in the county of Chester, the property of the Marquess of Westminster. It is paid to the Churchwardens and distributed on Christmas Day, in sums of 2s. 8d. each to twelve poor widows. It is conjectured that Alderman Bennett's Legacy was never paid over to the Parish of St. Peter, but remained as a charge upon the real estate of the family, paying more than the usual interest. The estate at Whitby, now the property of the Marquess of Westminster, formerly belonged to Alderman Bennett, and there is no question that the annual payment above-mentioned originated in the bequest of £25, as recorded in the Parish Church Books.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS.

The BURIAL REGISTERS of this Parish Church date back to 1559, and they appear to have been kept with regularity and neatness. Within the walls of the Church lie buried those who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and are now forgotten in the city, where they individually acted their little part in the drama of life; and the slight knowledge we have of

them is gathered from the Inscriptions kind and loving friends have placed upon their monumental tablets. Reflecting upon these records, we are constrained to quote the words of the Preacher, and to forcibly realise their applicability and truthfulness, viz. :—“That the dead which are already dead, are more *praised*, than the *living* which are *yet alive*.”

THE MONUMENTS in ST. PETER'S Church are not numerous, but are of great interest; many of them are mentioned, and some given in full, in the 2nd Vol. of HEMINGWAY'S *History of Chester*, pp. 89-90.

There is upon the North-east wall a marble shield, without inscription, bearing the charge of “three muzzled bears' heads erased *gules*, and a crescent.” This monument, I conjecture, belongs to the Breretons, an old Cheshire family, who were connected with the Parish of St. Peter's, and whose crest is a muzzled bear out of a ducal coronet, but this latter emblem is wanting in the shield. It has also been suggested that it might possibly belong to Christopher Barker, Garter King of Arms in the 16th century. *

Adjoining this shield is a marble monument decorated with a bust of GULIELMUS WALL. This gentleman was Sheriff of the City in 1571, and Mayor in 1586. The inscription is in Latin, which, roughly translated, says “he died in the year of the Incarnate Word 1588. He was a magistrate; was of honest parentage, from Helsby, Frodsham; a member of the Common Council; a grave man, of polite manners; a companion of the best; a friend of all, he was himself frugal; but he was liberal in public matters,—prodigal to the poor. An admirer placed this monument in memory of his many virtues.”

Upon the same East wall is also placed a monument to a native and physician of Chester (Dr. Jonathan Cotgreave), a great benefactor to the Chester Charities. He lies buried in the Eastern aisle.

Upon the South side of the Church a marble monument is erected to the memory of Alderman Humphrey Page. He was Sheriff in 1700, filled the civic chair in 1707, and died April 21st, 1711, aged 54.

* The Editor thinks this so-called Brereton shield really belongs to the adjoining monument to WILLIAM WALL, whose arms were, heraldically described, “*argent*, three bears' heads erased *gules*, muzzled *or*; in chief as many pellets, a crescent *azure* in the fess-point for difference.”

Upon the same side is a brass tablet to the memory of four children of Roger Massey, which tells us as to the whereabouts of the vault. A versified inscription to one of them runs as follows:—

“Beneath a sleeping infant lies,
To earth whose ashes lent,
More glorious shall hereafter rise,
Though not more innocent.
When the Archangel's trump shall blow,
And souls and bodies join,
What crowds will wish their lives below
Had been as short as thine!”

Alongside of this tablet is a Monument of alabaster erected “to the memory of EDWARD BRADSHAW, Esq., who by his first wife Susannah, daughter and heir of Christopher Blease, of this City, Alderman, had twelve children; and by his second wife Mary, relict of the celebrated Mr. Christopher Love, had seven children. He was exemplary for his piety and charity when living; and departed this life the 31st October, 1671, in the 67th year of his age, having five of his children yet alive. To continue whose memory, his son and heir, Sir James Bradshaw, of Risby, in the East rideing of the county of York, has erected this monument.”

Edward Bradshaw was Sheriff in 1636, and Mayor of the City in 1647, and again in 1653. It is embellished at the top with the figures of three sleeping angels, and at the foot with the emblem of our mortality, “a skull.”

Upon the West wall is a marble Monument (which was originally placed upon a pillar in the middle aisle) to the memory of “Mrs. Ursula Bradshaw, youngest daughter of Sir James Bradshaw, Kt., and of his lady, who was sole daughter and heir of Edward Ellerker, of Risby, in the County of York, Esquire, who died at Chester, 18th September, 1731, *ætat.* 43; and desiring to be buried near her grandfather, her affectionate brother, Ellerker Bradshaw,” in memory of her many virtues, erected this monument.

In the Gallery, fixed upon the North wall, is a monument in memory of Henry Bennett, Esquire, of this City. It is related that he was

“A Magistrate who ruled with dignity and justice; a Merchant who improved and extended its commerce; a lover of his country and a friend of mankind; a servant of God, zealous, with knowledge. He died Nov. 26, 1747.”

During the alterations of the Church in 1847 some of the monuments were removed from their original position; and in the Vestry there is a wooden tablet to the memory of THOMAS COWPER. This is, historically, and from a local point of view, one of the most interesting relics remaining in the Church. It is inscribed as follows:—

“Here lyeth the bodyes of THOMAS COWPER, of y’s citty, esquier, alderman and justice of peace, maior 1641. He died 19th day of July, 1671, aged 76 yeares; and alsoe of CATHERINE, his wife, daughter of Thomas Throppe, of the saide citty of Chester, alderman and justice of peace. She died 29th of May, 1672, aged 72 yeares. They had issue five son’es and two daughters, of which three sons and one daughter survived them.”

The good Citizen and Mayor thus modestly commemorated was none other than he “who put down the drum, and beat the drummer,” on that day when the first public mark of disaffection showed itself in the streets of Chester; and it was he, too, who stood with King Charles on the top of the Phoenix Tower, to witness the disastrous fight upon Rowton Moor, on September 27th, 1645.

Upon the North wall there is a monument of white and grey marble to the memory of a Shrewsbury School-boy. The inscription is written in Latin by the late Dr. Butler, Head-Master of the School. Alongside is a monument to the memory of Thomas Cowper. The inscription, which is in Latin, says:—

Whosoever thou art
who readest this, know that this is

THOMAS COWPER,

a citizen of CHESTER, who, while he lived, lived a good
citizen, a careful father of his family,

Useful to his friends, kind to his kinsfolk, at the same time temperate,
just, pious, merciful.

And (what I would that thou shouldst also know) for the two sons
whom he left,—both while he lived, & at his death,—

He made the best provision: the eldest of whom, therefore, caused this
marble which thou see’st to be set up, as a monument of his filial love.

He died on the 27th day of November, in the year 1695,

Aged 71 years.

In the South Aisle is an elegant monumental brass. The tablet which could give any information regarding it has been removed. It had been my earnest wish to substantiate a theory that this

effigy represented Mr. Robert Townshend, a Sheriff of the City 200 years ago, who died during his year of office, and was buried in the vault over which the brass is now placed. I regret, however, for many reasons, that I am compelled to abandon this theory; as several gentlemen who are authorities on brasses and all antiquarian research, and amongst them Augustus W. Franks, Esq., Director of the Society of Antiquaries, and Keeper of the Mediæval Collection of the British Museum, have pronounced the brass to represent a lawyer of the time of Henry V. of a very rare type.

Upon a brass tablet at the East end of the Church is the following inscription:—

“Here lyeth the body of MARTHA, wife of PETER BENNETT, Alderman, of this City;—

Reader, if thou hast a tear,
Thou cans't not choose but shed it here;
Here lyes modesty, meekness, and zeal,
Goodness, piety, and to tell
Her worth at once, she that had shewn
All virtues that her sex could own.
Nor would my praise too lavish be,
Lest her dust blush, for so would she.

Obit. xi. January, Anno Domini 1688.” *

There are two marble monuments at the West end of the Church in memory of the Grandson, and of three of the Great-grandchildren of the celebrated Nonconformist Divine, PHILIP HENRY. These tablets testify to the true nobility and worth of those descendants of the Puritan preacher:—

“In memory of Dr. THOMAS TYLSTON, a learned and able physician of this town. He was born on Lady Day, 1688, and died January 9th, 1746. Also ABIGAIL, his wife, January 14th, 1741.

Also, Dr. JOHN TYLSTON, their son, who, whether as a physician or a man, had no superior. His skill in medicine was not exceeded but by his benevolence, which had no bounds. He willingly attests this, who had full experience of both. He was born August 22nd, 1725, and died universally lamented June 22nd, 1764.

CATHERINE, daughter of Dr. THOMAS TYLSTON, whose many amiable qualities are attested to by the sincere sorrow of many surviving friends. She died February 6th, 1769.

* The aforesaid Peter Bennett was Churchwarden in 1682.



ST PETER'S CHURCH, CHESTER.
Brass in floor of South Aisle.

Few examples can better instruct us how low a value is put in the eye of Providence on a continuance in mortal life, and that the reward of virtue is immortality."

The second tablet records :—

"Here lies MARY TILSTON, the last surviving daughter of THOMAS TILSTON, M.D. She died May 4th, 1797, aged 80, having sustained through life the respectable character which distinguished her family."

The following is an Epitaph in praise of one JACKSON, Clerk of ST. PETER'S, who died on Saturday, the 29th of March, 1823, aged 85 years. The author of this epitaph was Mr. John Venables, son of a former master of the Chester Blue Coat School:

"Freed from his length'n'd service upon earth,
Beyond the reach of loose, irreverent mirth,
Old Jackson's spirit joyful sings above
His Maker's praise, His mercy and His love.
The body here reclines in mouldering state,
Nor 'scapes the certain universal *fate*.
I knew him well—a Parish Clerk was he,
A better ne'er received a burial fee;
And for a long and sonorous "Amen,"
We ne'er shall look upon his like again.
He read so well that it was oftimes said
The parson's laurels trembled on his head.
The critics say, indeed, he read too loud,
For of his reading he was justly proud;
And this inclined rash judges to conclude
He meant a competition that was rude.
But no, Clerk Jackson's knowledge of his place
Such flimsy charges would at once outface.
At chiming in or giving out a Psalm
From Parish Clerks he bore away the palm;
And when he died, 'tis said the evening bell
Was tongue-tied, and refused to ring his knell!
His lip was scornful, and his look full stern,
Which puzzled some his character to learn;
But skilful Physiognomists would say
That much benevolence within him lay.
But what avails this unrequested praise
Of one whose virtues parallel'd his days,
Unless to warn the juvenile and gay
That even he was subject to decay;
For tho' 'mong graves so many years he pass'd,
Old Death, grown testy, thrust him in at last!"

In the year 1862 the Prince Consort Memorial Window (North-East), representing the Last Supper, was placed by public subscription in our Parish Church at a cost of £264. The same year, the window in the centre of the East end was erected to the memory of the Rev. William Pulford, D.D., and Helen, his wife, at the sole cost of Mary Pulford, their daughter. The three compartments represent, in the centre, the Crucifixion of Our Lord; on the right hand, the Denial of the Apostle St. Peter, and on the left his Release (by the Angel) from Prison. The South-East window representing the Ascension of Our Lord is, we believe, the gift of a generous parishioner.

The late Mr. Thomas Helps presented the window beneath the Gallery on the South-West side (in memory of one of his children). The subject is the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, and Christ Blessing Little Children.

It still remains to be said that the Alderseys, Stringers, Bingleys, Hallwoods, Carringtons, with many others of ancient days, all sleep within the walls of our Old Parish Church; and one cannot help feeling glad that in the present day burials, for the most part, in the interior of our churches are strictly forbidden.

And now, in conclusion, I may be permitted to say that I have tried, and none knows so well as myself how imperfectly, to gather together the history of an ancient Parish Church. My chief difficulty has been in deciding upon the selection of the incidents most suitable for introduction to the Members of this SOCIETY. Of course, there is much yet remaining which would be as interesting as the fragments I have already garnered. While occupied with these historic memorials, the words of Lord Bacon have been frequently in my mind:—

“Teach us, O Lord, to number well our daies,
Thereby our hearts to wisdom to apply;
For that which guides man best in all his waies,
Is meditation of mortality!”

