

The Accounts of the Churchwardens of New Windsor *tempo* Henry viii. and Elizabeth.

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AMONG the many details of Berkshire history collected but uncollated by Elias Ashmole, and now housed in the Bodleian Library, are brief but discontinuous excerpts from an account book of the Churchwardens of New Windsor, now calendared *Ashmole MSS.* 1126 F. 28, 29. For the most part they schedule church goods inherited by incoming wardens from their predecessors, and are informative of ornaments and plate possessed; of the sale and value of certain articles; of the mode in which the money obtained for them was expended; of old furnishings displaced by new, consequent to the Reformation. In short a picture is presented of a final collapse of the ancient forms, and in the reproduction the reader must bear in mind that what follows is a transcription of a transcription from a volume no longer extant.

Ashmole rings up the curtain with the 22nd year of Henry VIII, when on a day and month not transmitted, and as the custom then was at eight o'clock in the forenoon, the burgesses of New Windsor assembled in their church to receive the "reckoning" or audit of the parish accounts from the retiring officers. From the minutes of what transpired at the meeting, the antiquary quotes:—

"Thomas Avelyn, Richard Orchard, Robert Ladock being Churchwardens about Candlemas in thys yere bought a pair of organs and they cost 10*li* & the old organs, & for paimente of the same then was solde 2 Chalyces & a pax of sylver & gilt, two crewets of sylver & a bell of Sylver in all 54 ounces & $\frac{1}{2}$ at 3*s.* 9*d.* the ounce. Sum totall 10*li.* 4*s.* 4*d.* & the residue was p*d* out of the Church Box. Item, was solde at the tyme a p(ai)r of coral besydes, price 13*s.* 4*d.* the giuft of Edward Wakefield's wyfe."

The expression "a pair of organs" was the common mediæval designation of one instrument, probably having two stops, and from contemporary inventories ten pounds appears to have been the market price prevailing. It was by no means unusual to defray the cost of a new instrument by a sale of other superfluous goods. The Pax, Pax-Board, Tabula Pacis, Osculatorium, or Portepaix, was a small tablet having thereon a representation of the Crucifixion offered to a congregation in the Western Church to be kissed at celebrations (see "*The Journal of the Archæological Institute*," vol. IV, 144). Crewets, vessels variously made of pewter, tin, lead or silver, for wine and water. The Bell of Silver, probably the Saunce-Bell, Sancte-Bell, Sanctus-Bell, a small handbell used at the Tersanctus and at the Elevation of the Host. The Injunctions of 1547 subsequently forbade the ringing of bells during service except before the sermon. A handbell was also used in crying an obit, or when beating the bounds at Rogationtide, and one called a corse or lychbell was rung in front of a funeral procession on the way to church (see "*Church Bells*" by H. B. Walters, p. 160). "Coral," probably an adornment of an image in the church. A parallel instance of sale is mentioned in the accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Andrew, Norwich, in 1492, who "did sell oyn nappyn of velvet fo Vs. & oyn peyre of beds of corall for iijs. iiijd. ye wych velvet & beds we sellyd for ye bybell" (*Norfolk Arch. Society*, VII, 48).

Under the same date Ashmole adds—"There were in the p'sh church these Lyghts (altars) following: each of which had 2 Keepers (wardens) yerely chosen & who made their accompts by yere:—The Rode Lyght, The St. Clement Lyght, St. Antony, St. Catherine, St. Ambrose, St. James, St. George & Our Ladye of Pyte. The Keepers of St. Antony awlter have 5 awlter cloths & 2 towells. The Keepers of St. Catherine's awlter have 6 cloths, 2 towells, frontlets & 2 silken curteyns. The Keepers of the Ladie awlter hold in money 9s. 8d. & ringe of Sylver gilt, whereof 6s. vd. & and the ringe was gyft of Nicholas Goodi." Under the title 'awlter cloths' would be included what are now usually

called frontals and dorsals. The term frontlets is here applied to the narrow strip of stuff sewn as an apparel on the front edge of one of the linen altar cloths. The curtains were probably ridels or costers for the altar.

1538

"The Churchwardens brought in an accompt for broken Sylver of the Rode & the image of St. John the Baptist. 3*li.* 16*s.* 0*d.* Item, deliver'd to the p'sh Clarke 5 Cottys of the Rode, 2 of cloth of golde, 1 of black velvet : 1 of blew wyght Satyn & 1 of wyght Satyn of Bryges" (*i.e.* Bruges).

Concerning the devastations inflicted upon parish churches under the Edwardian regime, Ashmole is not informative, and of the reaction in the reign of Mary Tudor, a woman "born under a one-eyed moon" (Spanish proverb), he only quotes, "Philip & Mary, 2-3, 2nd July, the Churchwardens opened the Church Box out of which was p^d to Mr. Maior 13*s.* 4*d.* web he disburst for the Rode." With the accession, however, of Elizabeth Tudor, the transcriber compensates for the short shrift shewn to her predecessors.

" I. ELIZABETH.

Richard Wolward, Richard Canon, Xtopher Bartlet, Churchwardens newlie elect.

To whom was delivered,

A Chalice with a paten duple gylt.

A pall of purple velvett with a cross of golde.

A white damaske Cope bordered with golde.

A Vestment of blew damaske with Cross & breast of golde & parours.

A Vestment of Blew Satten & Bryges with paroura.

2 New towells of 3 ells apeece.

1 ould one of Master Lewis' guift.

Two awlter cloths. A dish of Brass. A Missal : 2 Antiphonies :

2 Candlesticks. A crismatory.

The Inventory is of value in its disclosure of the furnishings of a parish church effected by the restorations prescribed by the late Queen. Of these appointments an explanatory note may be offered. The Pall (pallium) appears to have been at first, a

splendid vestment worn by the hierarchy, but afterwards used as a covering for a corpse on conveyance to burial. The Livery Companies of the City of London provided palls of rich workmanship for funerals of deceased members of the fraternity. The poor were buried with one from the church furniture, for a fee that varied in different parishes. Parours, *i.e.* apparel which connoted provision of vesture, dalmatic and tunicle for the deacon and sub-deacon at celebrations, *e.g.* "Item. I will myne executors by for me a hole sute . . . that is to say one cope, one vestment, deacon and sub-deacon with all things pertaining to the same" (*Will of Elizabeth Hollys*, 1527. *Norwich Register*, F.e. 3). Of the three towels, two would be laid upon the altar and the third used for wiping the hands of the celebrant. Towels were also used for a purpose indicated by the following bequest. "Item. I bequeth to the church of seint Dunstan a diapre towel of XV yardis in length to serue at houselynge tyme of the parishioners ther" (*Milles*, 1534, *P.C.C.* 18 Hogan) *i.e.* the houseling cloth held in front of communicants when receiving the sacrament. The dish or basin. A quotation from a will dated 1456 will interpret the purpose served by this utensil:—"I begueth ij basins with ij ewres of Sylver and parcel gylt . . . not onlie to serue upn th' highe aulter in high principal festys and oder festyval daies, but alsoe to wash in the handes of godfaders and godmoders at christening of children" (*P.C.C.* Stockton, 60 b.). Canterbury Provincial Constitutions *c.* 1367 required each Church to provide three bottles for oils consecrated on Holy Thursday, and usually conserved in a box (crismatory) with crested lid like the roof of a house (*Hart. Eccl. Records* 238). The oils were used in baptism, confirmation and extreme unction respectively, and a slice or spoon was furnished for taking out small quantities of the different oils as needed.

4. ELIZABETH.

Stuff belonging to the Church sould this yere.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Wainscot | 5s. 0d. |
| Alter Stone | 2s. 4d. |
| Banners | 5s. 0d. |
| Copes sould to Mr. Whitley | 46s. 8d. |
| | —————2li. 19s. 0d. |

P^a to the Churchwardens this yere for Smock farthings¹ 3s. *od.*
ffor the Homilies Book 1s. *od.*

Stuff of the Church delivered to the Churchwardens at the

Accompt made 30 November, 4 Elizabeth.

A Chalyce with a paten duple gylt & and chalyce cloth.

A Chrismatory of Tynn—made a standish.

A Church box² of iron with a key.

A pall of velvett with a Crosse of Golde.

Two stooles of Velvet—solde 4*d.*

A cushion³ of Cloth of golde.

A holy water pot & couver—soulde 2s. 6*d.*

4 Towells. A cou(ver) of the Communion Table of Blew damaske & one other made of red worsted.

A pulpit⁴ cloth of red worsted with Garters, & another of purple damaske.

A cross of Latyn⁵ with Mary & John—soulde 3s. 4*d.*

A communion table & the cloth of lynen.

A desk of Latyn with an angell upon him.

A bason for an offering.

A Lenten cloth⁶ for the Rood—soulde 1s.

¹ Smoke-farthings or Pentecostals—an offering paid at Whitsuntide by householders of a diocese.

² Kedington church near Clare, co. Suffolk, retains *in situ* one of these mediæval alms boxes. It is constructed out of a piece of solid oak, fixed in the floor, the money receptacle is scooped out of the top and covered with a slitted iron lid, secured by a lock.

³ Service books for the celebrant rested sometimes upon a cushion, and sometimes on a small desk of wood or metal.

⁴ *Pulpitum, Tribunal Ecclesie ad quod gradibus ascenditur* (DUCANGE). The Injunctions of 1547 ordered provision of a pulpit where one was not already provided, an order re-enacted by the Elizabethan Injunctions of 1559 (Wilkins, iv). There seems to have been no fixed position for them at first; perhaps they were movable like the sixteenth century pulpit which still remains at Westminster.

⁵ Latyn is repeatedly mentioned as a metal of bright and golden colour. The term is still employed in the trade for rolled or sheet brass.

⁶ Every church had special curtains or veils for Lent, when images and pictures were covered generally with white or blue cloths, marked with crosses or emblems of the Passion (*Archæological Journal*, XXXV). "Paid to the bellman for covering images, for hanging up the Lenten cloths, for a line for the veil before the high altar" (*Account Book, St. Nicholas, Yarmouth, 1511*).

2 sirplices of lynen cloth ; 2 new Psalters⁷ ; 2 Homilies, a new & olde ; 2 Communion Books. A Bible & a Paraphrase.⁸

Recd. of Mr. Gayor for the Rode loft *zli. os. od.*

Recd. of John Woodward for the Pall *2s. od.*

Sexton's wages p. ann. *1s. od.*

From the disposal of a holy water stoup, made of brass or laten ; of the rood-loft with its statues and Lenten Veil ; of banners bearing figures of saints or other ecclesiastical devices used in mediæval processions and available at the humblest wedding or funeral ; of a crismatory converted into a standish, *i.e.* a stand containing ink, pens, and other writing materials ; of the high altar slab marked with consecration crosses, standing on pillars or a mass of masonry (*"Church Furniture,"* Peacock) and its replacement by a communion table constructed of wood, it becomes evident the Churchwardens were satisfied that the reaction under Mary Tudor had spent itself and that the Reformation changes had come to stay. They forgot, however, or perhaps were unaware, that the heir to Elizabeth's throne was Mary, Queen of Scots, an adherent to the old ecclesiastical order. A retention of the eucharistic Vestment (Chasuble) is noticeable and was in harmony with the Elizabethan rubric inserted in the second of the Edwardian Book of Common Prayer. On the other hand the sale and consequent disuse of copes, a much less distinctive vesture, was curious. On the whole it may be claimed from the inventory that amid the ecclesiastical bewilderment of the Tudor despotism, the parochial machinery of the Church went on, rippling like a gentle brook, even though a mountain had fallen into it.

22 ELIZABETH.

Rec'd in money gathered by the wives upon Hop
Monday (Hocktide)

12s. 19d.

Given to Mr. Vican out of the Pascal money, a benev-
olence towards his better living . . . "

13s. 4d.

⁷ " Pd for vij ynglishe salters at ijs. iiij*d.* apeece. Pd. for ye booke of common praire vjs." (*Account Book, Bungay, 1549*).

⁸ An Injunction of 1547 required the setting up of a copy of Erasmus' Paraphrases of the Gospels in churches (Wilkins, IV). Somewhere in the nave must have been a desk on which was laid the " Bible of the largest volume." and the Paraphrase, not for use during service but for the reading of the people.

24 ELIZABETH, and last of Ashmole's excerpts.

| | |
|--|--|
| Rec'd for the organ pypes | 1 <i>li.</i> 14 <i>s.</i> 7 <i>d.</i> |
| The Churchwardens charge themselves as gained clere by their pastime at Whitsuntide, all things dis- charged | 17 <i>li.</i> 4 <i>s.</i> 7 <i>d.</i> |
| ffor reparc'on of Steeple, Bells, etc., this yere | 21 <i>li.</i> 11 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> |
| Pd for smock farthings | 5 <i>s.</i> 0 <i>d.</i> |
| Given to the Vicar for a benevolence | 1 <i>li.</i> 8 <i>s.</i> 4 <i>d.</i> |

Money for church feasts and games was collected by married women appointed for the purpose, each of whom was supplied by the churchwardens with a purse to receive her gatherings. There seems no doubt that these functions of our ancestors—sometimes called Whitsun-Ales because the most important took place at Whitsuntide—were one of the forms in which the love-feast of the primitive Church was handed down. They were organised, like our modern bazaars, principally as a means of defraying church repairs, or renewals, but also sometimes for the benefit of the poor of a parish. To judge by accounts in different parishes the Hocktide jubilation appears to have been more a feast than a drinking. Bequests for these gatherings were not unknown in the middle ages, *e.g.*—

1509. "I bequeth to the pour town of Letheringham towards a Church Ale, to the use of the Church there, a comb of wheat." *Spiltimbre*, 259.

1509. "lego ad usum unius potationis Ecclaesiatice pro inhabitantibus infra villam." *Spilt*, 198. (*Norwich will. Tanner MSS.* Bodleian Library).

Besides the festivities at the greater festivals there were others at Hallowmass, a Christmas lord drinking, and a wrestling and a shooting which all in turn brought occasional profit to church funds.

To sum up. In the accounts of the Elizabethan wardens there has been pictured as in a mirror, the wane of religious awe in the minds of the custodians of church goods. By virtue of its own achievements the mediæval church nurtured the forces which wrecked it. The age of mystical christianity had passed.