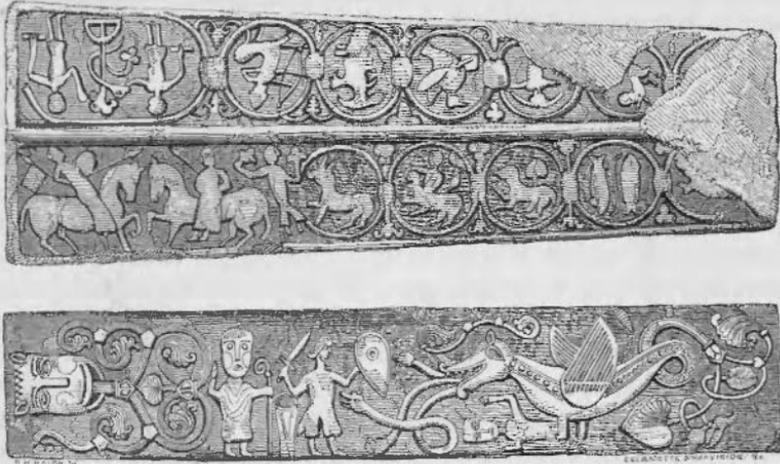


NORMAN TOMBSTONE AT CONINGSBOROUGH.

READ AT CANTERBURY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1844.



Norman Tombstone.

VERY few sepulchral monuments of undoubtedly Norman date are known to exist, and for this reason I hope that the accompanying drawing, a faithful representation of one which is preserved in the church of Coningsborough, will be regarded with some degree of interest by those members of our Association, whose attention has been directed to this class of our national antiquities.

This tomb is of grit, slightly ridged, and tapering from head to foot: it is 5 feet 9 inches long, 2 feet broad at the head, and 1 foot 7 inches at the foot, 15 inches high in the centre, and 13 inches at the sides. It must originally have been placed close to the north wall of the church, either in the nave or chancel, its northern side as well as its ends being destitute of ornament, whilst its top and its southern side are decorated with a profusion of rude sculpture. The temptation of our first parents in Paradise on one side, and a combat between two mounted knights on the other, are represented on the top at the head, and below them are several other devices, contained in roundels, generally too much defaced to

be intelligible. From the sagittary in the first roundel on one side, and the fishes in the fourth on the other, we might be led to suppose that the signs of the zodiac were intended to be represented, but the number is only eleven, and the other devices do not correspond. The front, or southern side of the tomb, presents a scroll issuing from the mouth of a monstrous head,—a bishop, with his crosier, standing by a font, and raising his right hand in benediction,—and a knight on foot, armed with sword and kite-shaped shield, attempting to rescue from a winged monster a human being, whom it holds in its claws. The scroll-work on the front, and the medallion carvings of the top, are in the taste which decorated the doorways, the capitals of piers, and the chancel-arches of many of our Norman churches; and the armour of the knights, their conical helmets, and the kite-shaped shield, clearly point to the beginning of the twelfth century as the date of this monument.

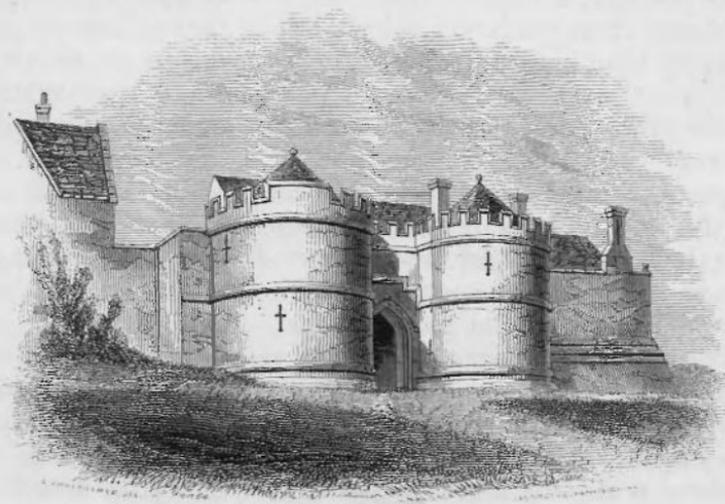
In the church-yard are some ancient tombstones, of great thickness, quite plain, not ridged, but slightly chamfered, and tapering from head to foot. The church itself contains much to interest the ecclesiologist. The south door, the piers and arches of the nave, and the chancel-arch, are of Norman architecture. There is a Norman piscina in the chancel, and one of peculiar form in a chapel at the east end of the north aisle of the nave. It is detached, square, decorated with foliage like the capital of a pier, and supported on an octagonal shaft. Above it is a hagioscope, commanding the chancel door, and the piscina near it, but not the Altar.

Nearly all the ancient open seats remain on the north side of the nave: they are quite plain, of massy oak, and well adapted to the solid simplicity of a Norman church. Modern pews of thin deal have been built over some of them, and the contrast is striking indeed. At the west end of the nave is an elegant Perpendicular font: it is of octagonal form, supported on a clustered shaft, 3 feet 5 inches high, and 2 feet 2 inches wide at the top. The figure of our Saviour, rising from the tomb, between two sleeping soldiers, and holding the banner of the cross, is carved on one side; and on the opposite one is a seated figure not easily to be identified, apparently holding two palm-branches. The remaining six sides of the font have blank heater-shields in quatrefoils. One of the staples remains, the other has been broken out. The bowl, 1 foot 8 inches in diameter, is leaded, and has a drain.

The Rev. Joseph Hunter, in his History of the Deanery of Doncaster, vol. i. p. 287, states that "the lid of a Saxon cistus," with ornaments not unlike those on the tomb at Coningsborough, exists in the church-yard of St. John's, Laughton-en-le-Morthen. I am satisfied that the date of this monument, which is of great beauty, and of which I purpose forwarding a sketch and description ere long, is at least two centuries later than that of the Norman tomb described above.

DANIEL H. HAIGH.

ROCKINGHAM CASTLE.



Entrance Gateway, Rockingham Castle.

ON the verge of one of those ancient Forests which originally covered a great portion of the northern parts of Northamptonshire, and on a lofty eminence overlooking the green vale of the Welland, stands the formerly Royal Castle of Rockingham. Its position was equally well chosen as a place of retirement and defence, being sheltered on the south-eastern side by deep and nearly impenetrable woods, and in the contrary direction protected by the natural acclivity of the tongue of