

THE

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THE antiquities of the county of Cornwall have been investigated and described by several writers, who have bestowed especial notice upon the numerous traces of primeval times still existing in the west ; one interesting class, however, of ancient remains has not received the careful notice which it appears to deserve. I allude to the ancient oratories of Cornwall, formerly very numerous, as shewn by the Domesday Book and various Ecclesiastical records ; even within the last century many of these primitive chapels existed, which are not to be found at the present time, but evidences may still be adduced to shew their interesting character. By diligent search I have been enabled to discover a few of these simple places of worship, and to trace the existence of others ; few, indeed, when compared with the number which once appear to have been scattered throughout Cornwall, especially in the more remote western parts of the county. Until the discovery, in 1835, of the oratory of St. Piran, after it had for centuries been buried in the sands, scarcely was any thing known concerning these venerable structures ; that discovery has thrown a new light upon the Ecclesiastical antiquities of the west, and exposed to view, as those who have visited St. Piran can scarcely hesitate to believe, a relic of the British Church founded at the earliest period of its establishment. The oratories to which I have alluded, long neglected and desecrated, are of course now found in a most dilapidated condition ; but by careful observation peculiarities of construction and arrangement may still be traced, sufficing, with the information supplied by the chapel of St. Piran, which in so remarkable a manner had been preserved from desecration and ruin, to give a clear notion of their original character. To those who are accustomed to admire the beautiful structures erected during the Norman or subsequent periods, the con-

struction of these buildings may appear very rude, and their dimensions insignificantly small; but still it is impossible to look upon them without interest on account of their antiquity, and the simple piety of those who reared these humble walls, and they are further worthy of study as supplying evidences of the customary arrangement of churches in very early times.

It should be remembered that Cornwall, according to its early history, was not exposed to the same vicissitudes as other counties of England. After the departure of the Romans, the Cornish Christians were deprived of that temporal support and protection, which had fostered the early church in the west and other parts of Britain; but, although the Cornish were free from Saxon oppression, they were not without their trial, for Druidism began to regain influence, and to overpower the true faith. At this time a deliverance was provided for them through the Irish missionaries, who came over in great numbers, and were the means of planting the Church firmly in Cornwall. For the space of three centuries, beginning from the fifth, their pious exertions on behalf of Cornwall were continued zealously; but after that time, during the eighth century, the Danes ravaged the coast of Ireland, and in a manner conquered that country. By this reverse the means and opportunities of dispersing the blessing of Gospel truth, previously employed by the Irish Christians, were curtailed, and by degrees their efforts were eventually crushed.

So effectually, however, had they laboured in Cornwall during three centuries, as above stated, that there is scarcely a parish in Cornwall which does not contain some memorial of the Irish missionaries who visited the country during that period, and almost all the Cornish churches are dedicated in honour of Irish saints. The oratories of Cornwall are precisely similar to the little "stone churches," as they are called, of Ireland, the foundation of which is attributed to the same period, and often to the same persons who erected oratories in Cornwall. These oratories, it will be found, fully confirm the early history of that county, both in their dissimilarity to any Saxon or Norman remains, and also in the similarity which, as might be expected, is found to exist between them and the earlier Christian structures in Ireland.

I will begin the description of these interesting buildings with a brief account of the oratory of St. Piran, which is the

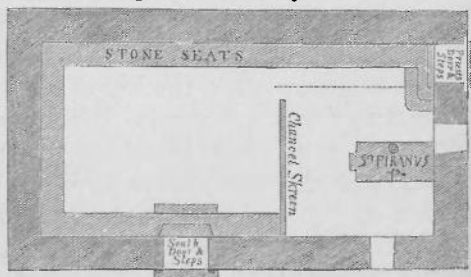
most perfect of all these ruins, having been preserved in a remarkable manner from the spoliation and desecration which has fallen on all the rest. The history and description of this ancient oratory will serve as an introduction to the whole subject.

St. Piran, or Kyeran, as he is called in Ireland, was dwelling in his native province of Ossory, at a place now named in honour of him Seir Kyeran, in King's County, where he had erected a little "ceall," or church, beside a spring, near his own dwelling. From this retired spot, although far advanced in years, he was induced to go forth as a missionary bishop to Cornwall. Early in the fifth century, he landed on the western shores, at one of the ancient Cornish harbours, now known by the name of St. Ives, from Ia, one of the Irish Christians who came over with him. St. Ia, having some influence with the governor, settled in that place, and built her church or oratory there; St. Piran travelled eastward, "an viij myles," and fixed his abode on the same northern coast, at a spot described as situated twenty miles from Pathrickstone, where St. Patrick had founded a monastery not long before, and twenty-five from Mousehole, another harbour to the south-west near Penzance. In this locality, as we learn from the legend of St. Piran, he built his cell, and near it a little oratory beside a spring, as he had previously done in his own country of Ireland. Here he lived till the infirmities of advanced age crept upon him; he died, and was buried here, and the spot has ever since that period borne his name. In the earliest records which have reached our times, this place is called Lan-piran, that is, the church of Piran. The Domesday Book preserved at Exeter informs us that, so early as the time of Edward the Confessor, about the year 1000, there was a collegiate establishment at this place, consisting of a dean and nine canons. But we must believe, that before that date the little oratory of St. Piran had been overwhelmed in the sand. Tradition had ever pointed out the exact spot where this relic of ancient days was interred, and, for centuries after, the hill of sand which covered the little sanctuary was a favourite burial-place. The many bones which were continually bleaching in the sun, exposed by the shifting of sands, must always have marked the place, of which Camden in the sixteenth century observed, "There is a little chapel here buried in the sand, dedicated to St. Piran of Ireland, who lies interred within it." The sands in this neighbourhood

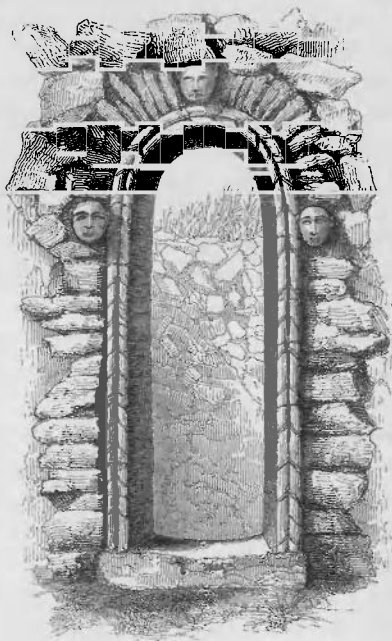
are continually moving, hills become valleys, and valleys rise and swell into lofty hills. The hill of sand which covered the lost church, and wherein the bodies of so many were buried at various times, began to shift in the last century, and after a few years the oratory which it had so long concealed became disclosed to view.

In the year 1835 the sand was removed from the ancient edifice, and once more the oratory of St. Piran stood forth in its original condition, after a lapse of many centuries. It was then in as perfect a state as when it was forsaken and left to be overwhelmed. The doorways, and the apertures in the walls, had been closed up with stone, and the roof removed, but in other respects the building appeared to have been left in its original condition. To those who had the privilege of beholding this ancient sanctuary when first rescued from the sand, it must have been striking in its general character and appearance, although differing so materially from Saxon and Norman remains in construction and proportions. Its diminutive dimensions, its rude masonry and simple ornaments, should have excited an interest which nobler specimens of art could scarcely inspire. But it has nevertheless been wantonly injured; even within three days after the discovery was announced the doorway was destroyed, and the only cut stones of the building were carried away, excepting one broken stone of the ornamental moulding of the doorway, which I found in 1840 in clearing away the sand for the purpose of rebuilding the tomb of St. Piran, and measuring and examining the remains of the structure. Its present state is ruinous, the wall on each side of the doorway with a great portion of the eastern wall have fallen down, and the sand seems again to be gathering around the despoiled relic which it had so long preserved from desecration and ruin.

Its dimensions are 29ft. in length externally, and 16½ft. in breadth; and the western gable, which is still standing, measures in height 19ft.; the side walls were about 14ft. in height. The ground-plan will shew the proportions and simple internal arrangements



of this ancient edifice, the division of its chancel, the stone benches which extend along the walls, and the stone altar peculiar in its form and position. The altar, benches and walls within the church, were plastered with a white substance now commonly known as china clay, and the floor is composed of the same material mixed with coarse sand. From the two doorways it will be observed that three steps lead down into the church; it seems to have been a feature of British structures to have the floor lower than the ground outside the walls, a peculiarity which is also found in the domestic buildings of early times which have been discovered. Of the doorway itself, destroyed soon after the first discovery, some notion may be formed from the representation here given, copied from a sketch which was taken at that time. The carved heads and a portion of the moulding are preserved in the museum at Truro; it may deserve notice that their position presents a feature of analogy between this building and the ancient chapel at Clonmacnoise, near Seir Kieran in King's County, supposed to have been founded by St. Piran, the doorway of which was ornamented in a similar manner. The rude character of the masonry is shewn in the accompanying wood-cut,

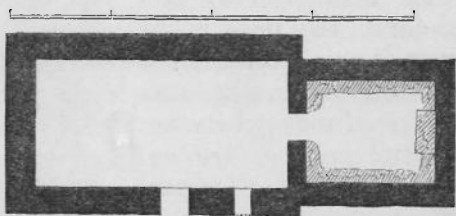


which represents the window at the east end. Rudeness of construction, indeed, is not by itself any sufficient evidence of antiquity, but viewed in connection with other circumstances, detailed fully in an account of this oratory, already published<sup>a</sup>, it may suffice to justify the supposition which I am inclined to adopt, that this building was founded by St. Piran in the fifth century.

From St. Piran's let us pass on to the oratory of St. Gwythian, situated in a parish named after that saint, about sixteen miles west of Perran-zabuloe, on the northern coast: this likewise was preserved under the same circumstances, namely, buried in the sands. Of the patron saint it is only known that he landed in the neighbourhood from Ireland in the middle of the fifth century, and was martyred by Tewdor, sovereign or chief of that district. The present, doubtless also the original name of this parish, is not mentioned in Domesday; a manor only is there entered, that of Conorton, from which I would infer that the church had been lost at the period when that record was compiled. The ruin is not in such good preservation as St. Piran's, because it was not so effectually buried in the sand as to be out of the reach of spoliation, and the influence of weather. The remains of the walls of this oratory are about eight feet in height in the nave, and three in the chancel. There are traces in the south wall of a loop-hole or window, a doorway in the nave, and another doorway in the north-east corner of the chancel, as at St. Piran's, and the

floor is also sunken below the level of the external soil. In general character this oratory corresponds with St. Piran's, and the rude masonry is precisely similar; the ground-plan will shew the points of difference between them. It will be observed that the chancel and nave are more distinct, a narrow opening about 3 ft. 7 in. in width communicating between them. This ground-plan is not uncommon in Ireland.

Scale of 20 feet.



<sup>a</sup> See Perran-zabuloe, an account of the past and present state of the oratory of

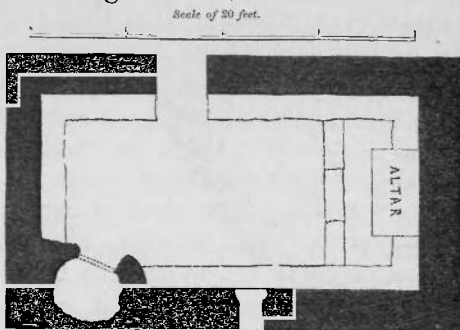
St. Piran in the sands; by the Rev. W. Haslam. London, 1844.

The nave, measured internally, is 31 ft. 6 in. in length, and 15 ft. 5 in. in breadth. The chancel measures 14 ft. 4 in. by 12 ft. 8 in. in breadth. The thickness of the walls of the nave is 3 ft. 4 in., and that of the chancel walls 2 ft. 6 in. There are no stone benches in the nave, probably the seats were of wood, but in the chancel there is a stone bench continued all around from the entrance, along the wall, meeting the altar at each side; this bench measures about 1 ft. 6 in. in height, and the same in width. The altar is constructed of stone, and lies north and south; it measures about 4 ft. 10 in. in length, and it was probably not more than 2 ft. 6 in. or 3 ft. in width; in its present ruinous condition it is impossible to ascertain with precision the original dimensions. At present it is little more than 3 ft. in height. The walls of this structure were constructed in the same rude way as those of St. Piran's, with rough stones of all shapes and sizes put together without any lime in the mortar. This interesting ruin is situated beside a spring, near a river, and adjacent to the sea shore. It had been overwhelmed in the same light calcareous sand as Perranzabuloe. It is little known, and unfrequented; the dead rest in undisturbed security beneath the rich green turf which now covers the cemetery. It was first discovered by a farmer in the neighbourhood, who employed his men to dig a pond in the vicinity of the spring, or holy well. In the course of excavation they came to many skeletons, and soon after to a portion of the eastern wall. Beneath this and under the altar, there were found eight skeletons ranged side by side, at a depth of three feet below the foundation. Below these skeletons they struck upon the ruins of another wall of rude construction, about three feet in height; beneath this again they found other skeletons, still buried in sand, at a depth of fifteen feet from the surface, here water prevented any further research.

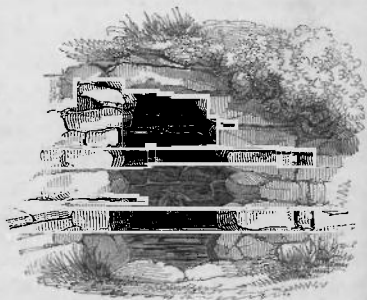
From this let us pass on further west to the parish of Madron or Maddern, in which the town of Penzance is situated. In this and the adjoining parishes there are traditions, records, and traces of several oratories and wells. Nothing is known of St. Maddern, whose oratory or chapel, as it is commonly called, and well, we will consider next. The chapel is internally 20 ft. in length, by 10 ft. in width, and the wall measures 2 ft. in thickness, and at present about 8 or 9 ft. in height. The floor of this oratory, as well as that of



St. Piran's, is sunk below the level of the surrounding cemetery, and it has a division running across it, to mark the limits of the nave and chancel, the former of which measures 15 ft. in length, and the latter only 5 ft. The altar is of stone, and a bench of stone is built along the walls all around the interior. There is a small window in the south wall, measuring about 1 ft.



3 in. in width, the arch of which is destroyed; and opposite to this window is the doorway, in this instance placed on the north side; it measures 2 ft. 10 in. in width, and the head of this is also gone. This oratory was built near a little stream which flows under its south-western angle; here a well had been excavated which is continually fed by the clear stream as it passes onward. The well is enclosed by rude masonry, having an aperture into the nave, about 4 ft. in height, and 2½ in. in width: a moor-stone lintel is placed across the top to support the little roof of this well. This is the only instance I have found of a well placed within a chapel. Norden, who wrote early in the seventeenth century, says of this well that "its fame in former ages was greater for the supposed virtue of healing which St. Madderne had thereinto infused, and manie votaries made annale pylgrymages unto it, as they doe even at this day, unto the well of St. Winnifrede beyonde Chester, in Denbighshire, whereunto thow-



sands doe yearelye make resorte: but of late St. Madderne hath denied his (or her I knowe not whether) pristine ayde; and as he is coye of his cures, so now are men coye of comynge to his conjured well, yet soom a daye resorte." Though this writer seems to despise the efficacy of these waters, the tradition of their virtues still remained amongst the Cornish: only a century ago, a writer describing the gene-



ral opinion regarding this well, says<sup>b</sup>, "To this fountain the impatient, the jealous, the fearful and the superstitious resort to learn their future destiny from the unconscious water. By dropping pins or pebbles into this fountain, by shaking the ground round the fountain, or by contriving to raise bubbles from the bottom on certain days, when the moon is at a particular stage of increase or decrease, the secrets of this well are thus extorted." This superstition continued to prevail up to the beginning of the present century, and is still spoken of with respect by some, particularly the aged<sup>c</sup>. Of all writers, Bishop Hall, sometime bishop of the diocese of these western parts, bears the most honourable testimony to the efficacy of this well. In his *Mystery of Godliness*, when speaking of the good office which angels do to God's servants, the bishop says, "Of whiche kind was that noe less then miraculous cure which at St. Madderne's well in Cornwall was wrought on a poor cripple, whereof beside the attestation of many hundreds of the neighbours, I tooke striete and impartial examination in my last triennial visitation. I found neither art nor collusion, the cure done, the author an invisible God." The well of St. Maddern is still frequented at the parish feast, which takes place, as I believe, in the month of July.

The chapel was dismantled, in the days of Cromwell, by a Major Ceely of St. Ives, and has since that period been gradually going to ruin. It has now a picturesque appearance, overgrown as it is with ivy and moss. In the eastern wall there is an old thorn-tree, the branches of which are scarcely less gnarled and tortuous than the roots, which may be seen twisting and winding amongst the rough stones of this rude specimen of masonry. It overhangs the ancient Altar, and with long rank grass, and wild brambles, completes the picture of desertion and ruin in this little sanctuary. The Altar, like that at St. Gwythian's, was placed lengthwise north and south, and consists of a large slab of granite, about 9 in. thick, 5 ft. long, and 2 ft. 6 in. wide: it is raised upon rude masonry to

<sup>b</sup> Borlase, *Antiquities of Cornwall*.

<sup>c</sup> The custom of dropping pins appears to have been very prevalent in Cornwall during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Beside a path leading to the oratory of St. Piran in the sands, there is a spot where thousands of pins may be found. It was the custom, I am told, to drop one or

two pins at this place, when a child was baptized, and this custom was even retained within the recollection of some of the older inhabitants of the parish. There are other places in this country where pins may be collected by the handful, particularly at the ancient holy wells.

the height of about 3 ft. from the original floor. On the surface of this slab, nearly in the centre, there is a cavity about a foot square, and one inch deep: there appear no crosses upon this altar-slab, nor any moulding whatever. The walls are built of pieces of granite, which is the common material of the neighbourhood, put together much in the same rude style as St. Piran's. The doorway is on the north side fronting the well, it is 2 ft. 9 in. in width, the arched head is gone, as is also that of the little window, which is immediately opposite in the south wall. This window measures about 1 ft. 3 in. in width.



In the next parish to Maddern, eastward, called Gulval, there is another holy well, to which it is customary to resort at the feast time. This well is also, or formerly was, famous for its prophetic properties. It is situated like Maddern well in a moor, called Fossis moor, in the manor of Lanesely. This name implies the existence of a British church upon the manor, and probably it stood near this well: there are a great quantity of stones lying in the immediate neighbourhood, which may once have formed a similar oratory to that at Maddern. In the inquisition of the benefices of Cornwall in the year 1294, this parish is called "Lanesely."

On the manor of Landithy, near the present church of St. Maddern, "a chapel" or oratory once stood, as also at Lanyon; both of them are now destroyed, they were in existence at the time the Domesday Book was compiled.

There are also in the Domesday register records of two other oratories in the parish of Zennor, north of St. Maddern: one of these, by the kind assistance of the Rev. I. Buller, of St. Just, I was enabled to find. It is situated on the brink of the cliff overhanging the sea, near the village of Trereen; the other seems to have stood near a village of the name of Kerrow, but I have not been able to find the precise site. The former of these chapels resembles St. Maddern's, it is about 16 ft. in length by 9 ft.: the walls are 2 ft. in thickness, and are at present about 6 or 7 ft. in height. The floor is buried in earth to the depth of 4 or 5 ft. The altar-stone is like that at Maddern, but is smaller in dimensions, being 4 ft. 6 in. in length, 2 ft.

8 in. in width, and 7 in. in thickness ; it lay at the west end of the little ruin, against the south wall, and had evidently been removed thither from its original proper place against the east wall, where traces of recent excavation were visible. There is a spring near the north-east angle of the edifice. Nothing is known of the history of these buildings, or of the saints in honour of whom they were dedicated.

There was also a "church" at a place called Tregominion, in the parish of Morvah, westward from Zennor, in ancient times, but no trace of it remains to the present time.

At St. Just, the adjacent parish, near Cape Cornwall, there is a small chapel at a spot called Parkan-chapel, that is, chapel field ; a small water-course runs near it, and the remains of a small dwelling-house appear at the west end. This chapel has evidently been rebuilt ; over the Altar is a pointed window, the tracery and mullions of which are lost, probably they were of the Decorated style. This chapel was doubtless rebuilt on the site of an ancient oratory which was there in the time of the Conqueror. The dimensions are about the same as those of the ancient structure we have been considering. A small stone cross was found in the water-course near the chapel, and it is now preserved in the parish church.

The original name of this parish was Lafrouda ; it seems probable that an early church once stood on the site now occupied by the parish church ; a vestige of some ancient fabric may be seen in a garden wall near the church ; it is a head and face rudely carved in a soft stone, corresponding precisely with the heads which once ornamented the doorway at St. Piran's. In taking down the chancel wall in order to rebuild it in the year 1838, a monumental stone was found built into the ancient masonry, bearing the following inscription—*SILVS HIC IACET*, and on the adjoining side a cross, with one of its limbs formed like a crook. This stone must be of great antiquity, and is possibly a monument of the church of Roman times.

At Sennen, the next parish, there was a church in Norman times ; the present parish church probably occupies its site ; there is a well in the church-yard. St. Sennen, or Sennanus, came over from Ireland, where he had built several churches, and where his name is still revered.

At St. Levan, the adjoining parish, which lies between the Land's End and the famous Logan Rock, there is a well and

baptistery, rudely but strongly built, which however has been destroyed, and now is overgrown with brambles. Although the building is only 9 ft. in length, and 7 ft. in width, the walls are not less than 2 ft. 9 in. thick, and are constructed of unusually large and heavy stones. The remains measure about 3 ft. in height. I could not examine the internal arrangement of this little building, which is now full of large stones, and overgrown with thorny brambles; it is literally buried in its own ruins, but there are other wells of this kind in the county which will enable us to form some opinion of the original state of St. Levan's. Like all the wells of Cornwall, their primary use was clearly for sacramental purposes, but these larger ones were doubtless resorted to with other intentions, as we have noticed in Madron and Gulval. This one was probably about 9 or 10 ft. high, with a rude arched entrance; in the interior was the usual stone bench at each of the side walls, and opposite to the entrance the little arch and basin for the water. In an ancient well, not long since discovered in the parish of Eglos Mertyn, near Truro, the basin, now broken, resembled the bowl of a font. It had a few rude circular ornaments on the outside, similar to those which appear on the oldest Cornish fonts, and which bear much resemblance in character to some existing in Anglesea, as I believe, in Wales, and Ireland. The comparison of these with specimens of Norman art, which in some cases are to be found in the same church, seems to indicate that they are of an age more remote than Norman times. St. Levan's baptistery stands in a valley opening to the sea shore; it is, as usual, beside a little stream, and higher up the valley, somewhat further from the sea, are, as I was informed, the remains of the little oratory of St. Levan. They are about 20 ft. in length, and 8 or 9 in breadth, the foundation walls alone being visible, which were described as of great thickness. Probably these ruins shewed the thickness both of the walls and the stone benches formed at their base, which together would be about 3 ft. 6 in. or 4 ft. One of the purposes of these stone benches may have been to strengthen the foundations of these little structures. The parish church of St. Levan is situated close beside the ruin in the same valley; it contains a simple Norman font, which is at present thickly coated with white-wash, and stands not in its original place but within the rails of the Altar. The church is of the Perpendicular style, as are most of the parish churches in the county; there are

remains of the rood-screen elaborately painted and gilt, as also are the bosses and other parts of the roof. The font, however, indicates the existence here of a Norman church, which in all probability was erected after the Conquest, in the place of the ancient oratory of earlier times. This, I imagine, is the history of many parish churches in Cornwall, but usually the later structure appears to have been built upon the site of the ancient one, excepting when it was desirable to make choice of a better foundation. At St. Piran, and St. Gwythian, the sand rendered it necessary to seek another spot; at Madron and Gulval, the waters of the moor, and probably the same inconvenience in this valley, occasioned the original site to be deserted; the church of St. Levan's is built on the side of a rising hill near the spot where the ancient oratory stood. The patron saint is supposed to be St. Levine, who was martyred by the Saxons whilst visiting the interior of the country. She came to Cornwall from Ireland with St. Buryan, St. Breaca, and other Christians, who founded churches in this neighbourhood. A mile eastward from this church, at the next coombe or valley opening to the sea, near Porth Kernou, may be seen the remains of another oratory, adjoining to a tenement called Trereen. It is about 18 ft. by 9 ft., situated beside a little stream, and built in the same manner as the oratories already noticed. It is now used as a pig-stye, and in the partitions I noticed a cut stone, the only fragment of the kind which I saw in these oratories; it measured about 3 ft. 6 in. square, was chamfered at one angle, and had probably been one of the jambs of the door.

From this place I passed on to the parish of St. Buryan, where, by the assistance of the good host of Boskennal, I visited the oratory of St. Dellyn, which is situated close upon the sea. This building is somewhat larger than the other oratories, measuring about 37 ft. by 16; it is built beside a stream, and lies, as do all the ruins I have visited, east and west.

It was impossible to examine this oratory, encumbered as it is with rubbish and brambles, and converted into a cow-house. The present occupier of the tenement, however, informed me, that his father used to say there was a stone table at the "higher end," on which some people had told him the minister in ancient times used to stand to preach, and also

that there was a stone step along the wall "inside the house." These appear to have been remains of the Altar and benches. The land around this oratory is now the garden of the tenement: no bodies were reported to have been found, but graves, formed with stones set up on their edges, according to the British manner of burial, had frequently been discovered. Immediately around the walls had been found slates two inches thick, which doubtless had served as the covering of the roof, similar to the stones with which the Irish churches are roofed.

It is probable that ere long no trace of St. Dellyn's chapel may remain, for being no longer serviceable to the tenant, he informed me that the proprietor had given him permission to "put the old stones over the cliff."

Near this spot formerly stood another "Chapel," called St. Loye, probably of the saint of that name mentioned by Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*<sup>d</sup>. The site on which it stood is very stony, and large trees now grow upon it, so that it appears to have been long since destroyed; a little arched wall may still be seen close to the site. Nothing is known of St. Dellyn or St. Loye, or their connexion with this neighbourhood. St. Buriana, now called Buryan, who gave her name to the parish in which these remains are situated, came over in the seventh century from Ireland, and "built a chirch near by where she sumtyme lyved." She was buried in her church, which was still standing in the year 939, when Athelstan came to these parts. He had conquered his way thus far, even to the Land's End, and vowed to rebuild this little church, if he were permitted to return in safety from the conquest of the Scilly Islands, which are visible from the church-yard. Having returned in safety he built and endowed a church here, and it is a royal peculiar to this day. No traces, however, remain of the Saxon times. The present building is in the Perpendicular style of architecture, and is one of the best proportioned churches in the county.

The foregoing remarks may serve to call attention to the neglected ancient oratories and vestiges of the early Christians

<sup>d</sup> Hire grettest othe was but by Seint Eloy, l. 120. On which Tyrwhitt remarks, "St. Eloy] In Latin, *Sanctus Eligius*. I have no authority but that of Ed. Urr for printing this saint's name at length. In all the MSS. which I have seen it is abbreviated

St. Loy, both in this place and in ver. 7146. The metre will be safe if othe be pronounced as a dissyllable." For the life of this saint see Zedler, *Grosses Universal Lexicon*, *S. Eligius*.

of Cornwall; they may, it is hoped, induce other enquirers to communicate notices of similar traces either in the west, or other remote parts of the British Isles, and especially in Ireland. The zealous efforts of the missionaries of that country, at a period when the light of Christianity was almost extinguished by the barbarous invaders who overran other parts of England, appear to have been instrumental in preserving the more secluded and tranquil regions of the west from paganism and infidelity. This consideration may cause the simple and rude remains, which have been enumerated, to be regarded with interest and veneration.

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### OBSERVATIONS ON THE CRYPT OF HEXHAM CHURCH, NORTHUMBERLAND.

THE ancient crypt on the west side of the abbey church of Hexham, beneath the ground once occupied by the nave, was discovered in the year 1726, in digging the foundation for a buttress to support the west end of the church; and since that period it has been appropriated as a burial-place for the successive Lecturers of Hexham. At the period of its discovery it was examined by Stukely and Gale, who made known two Roman inscriptions contained in it: one built into the wall, and another into the roof of the north passage leading to the body of the crypt. It was, subsequently, explored by Horsley, who detected the fragment of a third inscribed stone in the arch of one of the doorways. These inscriptions are engraved in the "*Britannia Romana*," plates 35, 36, figs. cviii., cix., cx.

In the year 1775 this crypt was again examined by the eccentric Hutchinson, who gave a meagre description of it in his "*View of Northumberland*<sup>a</sup>;" he recopied the inscriptions, and fancied he had detected some errors in Horsley's transcripts of them; but it is needless to enter into this part of the subject, further than to observe that a recent copy of one of these stones proves that Horsley was correct in his reading.

<sup>a</sup> Vol. i. p. 102.