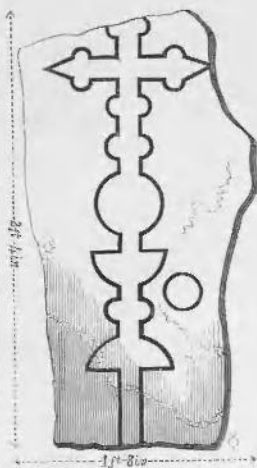


SEPULCHRAL SLABS IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

1.



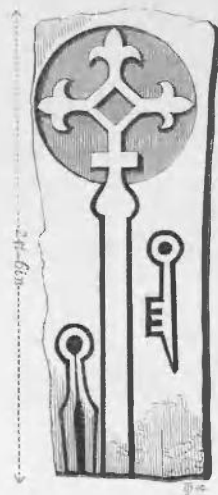
St Mary's, Newcastle.

2.



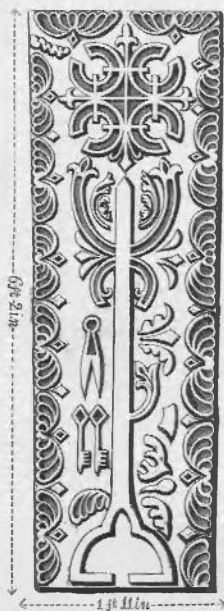
St. Andrew's, Newcastle

3.



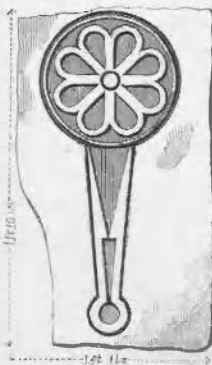
Bamburgh, Northumberland

4.



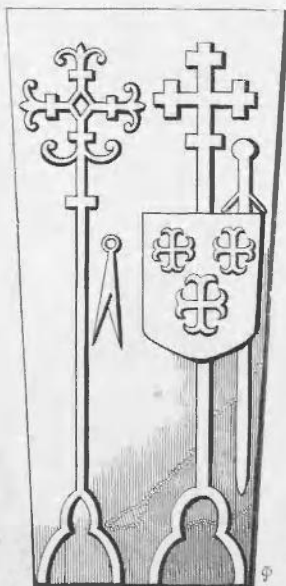
Newbigging, Northumberland.

5.



Horton, Northumberland.

6.



East Shaftoe, Northumberland.

THE
Archaeological Journal.

DECEMBER, 1848.

ON THE SEPULCHRAL SLABS EXISTING IN THE
COUNTIES OF NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM.

THE numerous grave-stones and monumental slabs of early date, scattered over the remote parishes of Northumberland and Durham, have as yet attracted but very little notice, though many are deserving of attention from the beauty of the designs cut upon them, or from the remarkable symbols that they present. From the abundance of freestone in both of the above counties, such slabs were no doubt preferred to the more perishable material of wood. We believe that the same has been observed in all the English parishes situated in mountainous districts.

Every year, during the repairing of some one or other of the old churches in this district, a few of these ancient grave-stones are brought to light, but too frequently, from ignorance or neglect, they are lost, or are used in the reconstruction of the walls. They are frequent in the walls of churches of Decorated and Perpendicular date, being often placed above the windows, or as window sills, or again they lie as steps in the porches, or are built up, as at Lanchester, in the belfry tower.

For some years it has been my practice to make rubbings of these slabs wherever I chanced to meet with them, as every year some are destroyed or lost, or are becoming rapidly obliterated. There cannot, I think, be less than a hundred or a hundred and twenty of these slabs, mutilated and entire, in Northumberland alone, while Durham will supply at least fifty, and Cumberland perhaps an equal, if not a greater number. The rubbings already made amount to nearly ninety, and I have drawings of many others, but experience has taught me that many sketches may resemble the originals, without being accurate and faithful copies. Many of these slabs present interesting symbols, besides the beauty of the form of the cross

they almost all bear. The emblems which accompany the cross, are generally regarded as indicating only the trade or profession of the deceased, but a careful study of numerous examples has induced me to differ somewhat from the generally received explanation of at least one of the symbols.

The grave-stones of ecclesiastics are easily recognised by the chalice sculptured thereon. Sometimes there is only the chalice, or again, the paten is also to be seen, and sometimes both the host and the paten. Not unfrequently the chalice is incorporated in the stem of the cross, with the paten above it, as in the annexed cut of a slab from St. Mary's Hospital, Newcastle. No doubt this refers to the well-known custom of burying a leaden? chalice and paten in the coffin of a priest, when these insignia of his sacerdotal office were generally laid upon the breast of the deceased. I have found the chalice thus forming part of the stem of the cross in four instances out of twenty-four grave-stones of ecclesiastics of which I possess rubbings. In two instances only have we seen the hand extended in benediction over the chalice. One of these slabs occurs at Barnard Castle in Durham, and is figured by Surtees, in his History of Durham; the other was found four years ago in taking down the south transept of St. Andrew's church, Newcastle. We have rarely found the chalice and book together. The latter has been supposed by some to indicate a deacon, but I have often found the book combined with other emblems certainly not of an ecclesiastical character.

It has long appeared to me somewhat singular, that while the emblems of the trade or profession of the deceased were pretty frequently discovered upon these grave-stones, no symbol had yet been determined upon, as the distinctive emblem of the female sex. When we remember how jealously the sexes were separated in churches during service, and how frequently altar-tombs have been raised to females of high rank, it seems strange that the wives and daughters of the tradesman or of the knight should not be distinguished by any sign whatsoever. Before this time I had been well aware of the general opinion of the common people in the north, that the *shears* on a grave-stone indicated that the deceased was a female. Such was also the opinion held by the late historian of Northumberland, the Rev. John Hodgson. By most of the writers in the *Archæological Journal*, the

shears have been considered to indicate the profession of a clothier. This trade must have indeed been a flourishing one in olden times, for I find the emblem of the shears on thirty-five grave-stones out of a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty of which I have rubbings or drawings. In fact, clothiers must have been as numerous as soldiers, even in those days when the profession of arms was so universally followed.

I was thus led to examine the emblems with which the shears were generally found to be associated. It is not often that any other symbols occur upon the same stone, the shears appear *generally* but *not always* on the right hand of the cross. The emblem most frequently found with the shears is undoubtedly the key, and in two instances double keys are placed below the shears. Now I do not know how far I shall be justified in assuming the key or keys to be likewise an emblem of the female. One of the grave-stones at Bakewell church, figured in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. iv. p. 49, is an example of the shears and key combined. Supposing these were merely symbols of trade, we must in this instance, as in the one figured above from Bamburgh, believe the deceased to have followed the two not very congruous employments of a locksmith and a woolstapler.

The next point was to ascertain if the shears were ever associated with any emblem unsuited to the female character, as with the sword, or with the bugle horn, or with any undoubted emblems of a trade.

I have, however, *never in a single instance found the sword and shears on the same stone where there was but a single cross*^a, nor have I seen the shears associated with the other symbols here alluded to. In one instance I found the shears forming the sole shaft of a cross or rather rosette engraved on what had evidently been a tomb-stone.

Further researches elicited still more convincing proof. In different localities in Northumberland and Durham I have met with large monumental slabs bearing two crosses, and even more. It would naturally occur to all that these double

^a In the fourth volume of Surtees' History of Durham, p. 47 of Memoir of Robert Surtees, is a rude engraving of a small cross or headstone, on which are sculptured both the sword and the shears. The sword occupies the intersection of the

arms of the cross, the shears are placed below. On the reverse, opposite to the sword, are two letters probably the initials of the husband's name, and opposite to the shears two other letters for the initials of the female.

crosses represented a husband and wife. And this is still further borne out by the symbols attached to each cross.

At Newbigging on the Sea in Northumberland there is a ridged slab five feet long by twenty inches broad at the head, and tapering to twelve inches at the foot. The left hand cross is slightly crocketed in the stem, but is otherwise of poor design, and has no symbols attached to it. The right hand cross is of still meaner design, and has associated with it the symbol of the shears. The fine slab at East Shaftoe, figured first in the Transactions of the Antiquarian Society of Newcastle, is another of these double grave-stones. Here we find the shears accompanying the left hand cross, and the sword and shield, with three crosses moline, associated with the plainer cross on the right hand. I do not see what other explanation can be given of these emblems, than that they denote a knight and his lady.

In the chancel of Aycliffe church in the county of Durham, there lies a large slab of blue limestone, bearing on the right hand a cross, with the sword, and a hammer and pincers, and on the left a cross, with shears and the key. The husband here had probably been an armourer and smith, and the hammer and pincers are the symbols of his trade. The theory that the key also is an emblem of the female sex is confirmed I think by this stone.

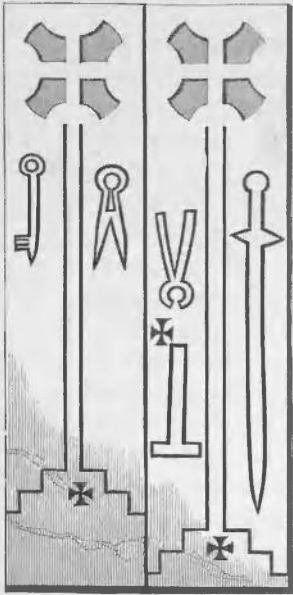
Lastly, I have in my collection a rubbing from a stone recently in a church in the neighbourhood of Darlington, but now in private hands. Upon this mutilated grave-stone are two finely worked crosses, the right exhibiting the sword, the left the shears and two keys, or at least a portion of two keys, while between these is a smaller and a plainer cross, near to which is a shield now defaced.

All these four slabs seem to me to speak strongly for the truth of the supposition I have advanced, that the shears are the appropriate emblem of the female, and that the key in all probability is a symbol of the same import.

Few of the grave-stones of Northumberland or Durham exhibit any inscriptions or letters. I have found but two relating to females, and on both of these the shears are inscribed. One is a narrow slab at Horton church, near Blyth, in Northumberland. Here we find the words *Orate pro Anima Anne Barboyl*, the shears being placed in the middle of the sentence.

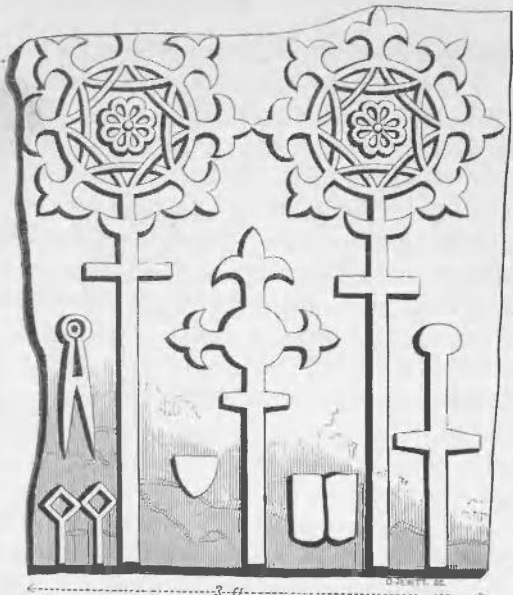
SEPULCHRAL SLABS IN NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM.

7.



Aycliffe Durham

8.



Church near Darlington, Durham.

9.



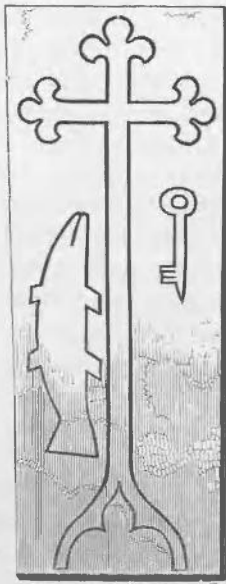
Horton, Northumberland.

10.



Heslun.

11.



St. Mary's, Gateshead.

12.



Woodborn, Northumberland.

The only other inscription I have to refer to is on a very elegant stone slab recently disinterred at Hexham. This grave-stone had evidently been buried in the earth very soon after it had been placed in the church-yard, for the letters and mouldings are as fresh as though only cut within the past year. The inscription is plainly as follows: *Hic jacet Matilda uxor (P)hilippi mercerarii.* "Here lieth Matilda wife of Philip the merchant." Does mercerarius here mean a mercer, clothier, or woolstapler? If so, this stone would rather tend to support the notion of the shears being the woolstapler's mark, but, on the other hand, if they denote a female, the wife of the mercer would be as much entitled to them as any other woman.

I shall not here enter into any disquisition regarding the forms of the crosses on these sepulchral memorials. Out of the great number that I have examined I have hardly met with two perfectly similar. I have remarked however that certain forms of the cross prevail in certain districts and parishes; for instance, that the designs of the cross are much richer and more ornamented along the banks of the Tees, than in the remoter church-yards of Northumberland.

I have also met with two emblems, the meaning of which I am unable to explain. One is the outline of a fish (qu. salmon?) on a cross of Early English date, in St. Mary's church, Gateshead. The key is associated with this figure, and some would therefore refer the two symbols to St. Peter, while others, who explain the emblems as denoting the trade, must suppose that the individual here commemorated carried on the two rather dissimilar trades of a locksmith and of a fishmonger.

The other symbol I have met with in three instances, at Woodhorn, Northumberland, where it accompanies the cross; in the belfry of Lanchester church, where it is similarly associated; and lastly, in a drawing sent to me, I believe from the county of Durham, but I have been unable to ascertain the exact locality. What the instrument of trade here figured may be, I cannot determine; in the last instance mentioned, there is a sword on the other side of the cross.

The suggestion I have made in reference to the meaning of the shears and key, will, I hope, engage the attention of those who have more leisure than myself to investigate the subject, so that we may, even in these minor particulars, add something to archæological science.

I may add, too, that the whole of the illustrations accompanying this memoir have been reduced by the camera lucida from the original rubbings.

EDWARD CHARLTON.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF MEDIEVAL MANNERS, CHIVALRY,
AND COSTUME, FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS.

CEREMONIAL OF CREATION OF KNIGHTS. ORDER OF THE BATH.

AMONGST the interesting contents of the volume of collections, from which, by the liberal permission of the Lord Hastings, we have already derived some curious illustrations of ancient manners, the following document is preserved. It is needless to repeat the description of the highly valuable MS. offered to our readers in a previous volume^a. The ordinance, now selected from the Astley Book, appears to have been written at the same time as those already given, namely, about the time of Henry VI. A ceremonial of creation of Knights of the Bath, from early times of the institution of the order, has been repeatedly printed; both the original French text and the English version are to be found in various works on Chivalry. The copy of this curious formulary, however, which has been preserved in the MS. at Melton Constable, supplies a text of that version, apparently of earlier date than the transcript already published, from which it varies in many material particulars. The two versions, indeed, although substantially similar, are by no means identical; and we hope, in giving publicity to the following ancient text of so remarkable an evidence connected with the history of Chivalry, that our readers will not deem excuse required for an apparent repetition, which at first sight might be considered superfluous.

HOW KNYGHTIS OF THE BATHE SHULDE BE MADE.

“First, the kyng eoure sovereyne lorde writith oute lettris un to certeyne squyers of his rewme, and desiryngge them for to

^a See the Notice on Jousts and Tournaments, from documents in the Astley MS Archæol. Journal, vol. iv. p. 226.