

NOTICE OF A REMARKABLE SEPULCHRAL BRASS OF FLEMISH DESIGN, IN THE CHURCH OF WENSLEY, YORKSHIRE.

BY THE REV. JAMES RAINE, JUN., PRINCIPAL OF NEVILLE HALL,
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

IN the choir of the church of Wensley in the North Riding of the County of York there is a splendid brass, which has long attracted the admiration of archaeologists. It represents an ecclesiastic with a chalice and the host laid upon his breast. The priestly vestments are most beautifully executed, and the whole figure is so carefully designed and admirably wrought as to deserve a high place among our clerical brasses.¹ It is probably the production of some Flemish artist, and it has been supposed to commemorate a rector of the church during the XIVth century. The name of the ecclesiastic who is thus represented has been long forgotten, as the fillet of brass which ran round the edge of the stone, and which contained the inscription, has been removed or destroyed. At the head of the figure there has been let into the marble stone a small square tablet of brass, bearing the following inscription :—

“Oswaldus Dykes jaceo hic ; Rector hujus ecclesiæ xx annos, reddidi animam 5 Decemb. 1607.

“Non moriar sed vivam et narrabo opera Domini.”

This tablet detracts somewhat from the effect of the stately figure which lies beneath it, but we have to thank Oswald Dykes for the name of his predecessor, into whose resting-place he so unceremoniously intruded. In his will, dated on the seventh of November 1607, and proved at York on the 2nd of February following, he desires “to be buried in the quier of Wenslow, *under the stone where Sir Symond Wenslow was buried*, yf yt please God soe to provide the same, havinge this superscription, *Non moriar sed utinam*

¹ There is a large engraving of this brass, in Dr. Whitaker's History of Richmondshire, and a more accurate repre-

sentation in Waller's Sepulchral Brasses. It occurs also in Mr. Boutell's Monumental Brasses and Slabs, p. 20.

ut narrabo opera Domini." This inscription differs slightly from that which occurs upon the tablet. The clerk evidently made a mistake when he was transcribing the will. This document gives us the name of the rector whom the brass commemorates—Sir Simon de Wenslegh. Before however I turn to him, a few brief notices of Oswald Dykes may be appropriately introduced.

Oswald Dykes, Rector of Wensley, was, I believe, a younger son of Thomas Dykes, Esq., of the parish of Burgh-on-Sands, in Cumberland, by Anne, daughter of John Layton, Esq., of Dalemain. His will contains some interesting bequests, and I give some extracts from it.

"To the parishe of Plumland in Cumberland, where I was borne, 5*l.*, at the discretion of the parson and of William Orfeur, Esq., my cozen. To Sir John Dalston my weightiest ringe of gould, and to my Ladye his wife an unyon.² To every poore house in Laborn, Wenslowe and Preston, 12*d.* To my brother Robert Dykes my best satten doublet. I give my librarie of bookes unto my brother Edward Dykes parson of Distington. To my Ladie Bellingham a booke called Grenehams second tombe. My wife, Mrs. Emme Dykes, executrix. To my neece, Mr. Leonard Dyke's his wife, of Wardall, my bell salt gilted over with gold.³ To my countreman Edward Gibson a booke called Mallarette upon Sainte Mathewe. To my sonne Daniell Hodgson that is now at Stoad in Germany my goodly foale with the starne in the head. To Rachell Hodgson my virginalls." Dykes was presented to the rectory of Wensley by lord Scrope, June 5, 1587.

It was by no means unusual to appropriate earlier grave-stones and to disturb the remains which they covered. The great number that sought interment in the churches rendered this appropriation necessary. Altar tombs and stone coffins appear to have been used again without the slightest scruple, and in many cases we may still observe two or three inscrip-

* ² Probably a fine pearl, *unio*; the term is so used by Shakspeare, *Hamlet*, V., 2. See Nares. It has been suggested, however, that it may signify a betrothal ring, a *gimmel*; Fr. *alliance*, sometimes formed of a thread or wire of gold interlined with one of silver.

³ A double salt of remarkable form,

resembling a bell, and terminating in a perforated ball, was exhibited by the Rev. F. Raines, in the Museum of the Institute, at the York Meeting, 1846. (*Museum Catalogue*, York volume, p. 16.) A similar salt is described, *Gent. Mag.* vol. xxiii. N.S., p. 136.

tions of different dates upon the same stone. The incumbent might, of course, select the place for his own interment, and he occasionally made a curious selection. In 1585, Thomas Taylor, Rector of Langton upon Swaile, desired "to be buried in oonder an owld tombe or monymment within the chaunsell of Lanketon," bequeathing "to Thos. Rychmounde, or to eanye other in his absence for openynge and enclosynge of my tombe, of there owne proper costes and charges, xs." The tomb, here referred to, is probably that of an ecclesiastic in the north wall of the church, of which Dr. Whitaker gives an engraving. I may here mention the burial place of another Richmondshire, incumbent, as recorded in his parish register,

"Thomas Tothall, rector of Romalldkirke, departed this life the 26th of December, 1664, about half an houre past nine of the clock att night and was interred the 28 day of December, in the chancell under the marble stone which adjoines to the north side of Parson Livelie his tombe." This rector was the son of Christopher Tothall, notary public, who was buried in the same church, as he desired, "in linnen, without chiste or cophin," on the 31st of March, 1628, "sub marmore juxta marmor vel tumulum Domini Johannis Lewelyne defuncti." I now turn to Sir Simon de Wenslagh.

Sir Simon de Wenslagh was a man of eminence in character and position. He was probably a member of the ancient family of Wenslagh,⁴ which was of some influence and consideration in Yorkshire. The Wenslaghs were connected with the great Baronial House of Scrope, and it was probably to that illustrious family that the Rector of Wensley was indebted for his christian name, Simon. The first notice we have of Sir Simon de Wenslagh is in the year 1352. On the 14th of September in that year, Henry de Bellerby puts Simon de Wenslawe, clerk, together with John de Huthwate, clerk, and Philip de Fulford, chaplain, in trust for the whole of his manor of Walburn,⁵ This manor the trustees release to Bellerby and his wife fifteen days afterwards. Soon after this, Sir Simon was preferred by Richard Lord Scrope of

⁴ The family of Wenslagh bore for their arms, *Vert*, four escallops in cross, *arg.*; the top of each being turned towards the centre. Peter, son of John de Wenslagh, witnesses a charter at Walburn in 1351. Peter de Wenslaw witnesses another at

the same place in 1395. A Simon de Wenslagh was incumbent of Cowlam-upon-the-Wold, and died, circa, 1415. He was probably nephew, or some kinsman of the rector of Wensley.

⁵ See note A.

Bolton to the valuable and important rectory of Wensley.⁶ Bolton, the residence of the Scropes, was in the immediate vicinity of Wensley, and I am inclined to think that Sir Simon became now very closely connected with that distinguished family. Almost all the available legal knowledge of those times was centred in the ecclesiastics, and the lords of Bolton would gladly enrol among their clients one who, in addition to his own local influence, was so well qualified by his ability to advance their interests. We soon find Sir Simon again undertaking the trusteeship of the Walburn estates. On the 8th of June, 1361, Henry de Bellerby and Alice his wife put Simon parson of Wenslaw, John de Wawton, and others, in trust for the lordship of Walburn, and their estates in Bolton-on-Swale, Leeming, Scurveton (*hodie* Scruton) and Crakehall. The subsequent release is missing. Eight years afterwards, for the third time, we find the Rector of Wensley put in trust for the same estates. On the 21st of September, 1368, Henry de Bellerby grants all his lands in Walburn, Bellerby, Bolton-on-Swale, Great Langton, Leeming and Exilby, together with the lordship of Walburn, to Simon, parson of Wenslaw, John de Huthwat, parson of Danby Wiske, and Philip de Fulford, chaplain. This trust was released by Wenslaw and his co-trustees to Bellerby shortly afterwards. We now lose sight of Sir Simon for a considerable period. The next and the last time that he occurs is in the year 1386, when he appears at York as a witness on behalf of his patron lord Scrope, in the celebrated controversy with Sir Richard Grosvenor, who had usurped the ancient bearing of the Scropes, azure, a bend or. Sir Simon had now an excellent opportunity for repaying the kindness of his patron, and his statements are so singularly curious and important, that I shall give them at length. His testimony was evidently considered extremely valuable, and it occupies a prominent position among the depositions⁷ which were then received. It runs as follows :—

“ Sir Simon, parson of the church of Wynsselowe, of the age of sixty years and upwards, said, certainly that the arms azure, a bend or, appertained to Sir Richard Scrope, for that

⁶ Dr. Whitaker says, that Sir Simon was presented to this living on the 29th of September, 1361. This date is incorrect, but I am unable to give the exact time of his appointment.

⁷ I must refer my readers to the Scrope and Grosvenor Roll, edited by Sir Harris Nicolas, to which I am greatly indebted.

they were in his church of Wynsselowe,⁸ in certain glass windows of that church, of which Sir Richard was patron ; and on the west gable window of the said church were the entire arms of Sir Richard Scrope in a glass window, the setting up of which arms was beyond the memory of man. The said arms were also in divers other parts of the said church, and in his chancel in a glass window, and in the east gable also were the said arms placed amongst the arms of great lords, such as the King, the Earl of Northumberland, the Lord of Neville, the Earl of Warren. He also said that there was a tomb in his cemetery of Simon⁹ Scrope, as might be seen by the inscription on the tomb, who was buried in the ancient fashion in a stone chest, with the inscription, *Cy gist Simond le Scrope*, without date. And after Simon Scrope lieth one Henry Scrope, son of the said Simon, in the same manner as his father, next the side of his father, in the same cemetery. And after him lieth William, son of the said Henry Scrope, who lieth in the manner aforesaid beneath the stone, and there is graven thereon, *Ycy gist William le Scrope*, without date, for the bad weather, wind, and snow, and rain, had so defaced it, that no man could make out the remainder of the writing, so old and defaced was it. Several others of his lineage and name were buried there, one after the other, under large square stones, which being so massive were sunk into the earth, so that no more of the stone than the summit of it could be seen ; and many other of their sons and daughters were buried under great stones. From William came Henry Scrope,¹ knight, who lieth in the Abbey of St. Agatha, armed in the arms, azure, a bend or, which Sir Henry was founder of the said abbey ; and Sir William² Scrope, elder brother of Sir Richard that now is, lieth in the same abbey,³ with the arms depicted, but not painted. The said Sir Simon placed before the Commissioners an alb with flaps, upon which were embroidered the arms of the Scropes entire, the making of which arms and the name of the donor were beyond the

⁸ The church of Wensley contains some interesting memorials of the Scropes and some fine wood-work. The only arms which were in the windows in Dr. Whitaker's time, were those of Scrope and Dacre. The church was considerably altered in the reign of Henry VII. None

of the monuments in the cemetery which Sir Simon mentions are now observable.

⁹ See note B.

¹ See note C.

² See note D.

³ See note E.

memory of man. He added that the patronage of his church of Wynsselowe had always been vested in Sir Richard Scrope and his ancestors bearing the name of Scrope, beyond the memory of man; and that the arms azure, a bend or, had always been reputed to belong to him and his ancestors, and he never heard to the contrary; he had never heard that the arms had been challenged, or of Sir Richard Grosvenor, or any of his ancestors."

After this deposition, we hear no more of Sir Simon. He was above sixty years of age in 1386, when he gave his evidence, and he probably died before the new century began. He is not mentioned in the will of his patron, lord Scrope,⁴ which was made in the year 1400. That illustrious nobleman was a great benefactor to Wensley, and we can hardly suppose that he would have omitted the name of the aged rector, if he had been then alive.

JAMES RAINE, JUN.

NOTES.

A. Walburn Hall, near Richmond in Yorkshire, was the ancient estate of the family of Bellerby. Margaret, daughter and heir of Henry de Bellerby, married Peter Greathead, whose daughter and heir carried the estate into the family of Sedgwick. The heiress of the Sedgwicks married into the house of Lascelles of Brackenbergh. The estate afterwards came by purchase into the family of Hutton, and it is at present in the possession of Timothy Hutton, Esq., of Marske Hall, who has carefully restored the building. The present hall was built during the reign of Elizabeth, but some of the walls and other traces of the ancient mansion of the Bellerbys are still remaining. There used to be some fine old panelling and stained glass in the hall, but it is no longer to be found. Walburn Hall was garrisoned for Charles I. during the great rebellion by some companies of the Richmondshire train-bands, who were supplied with provisions by Matthew Hutton, Esq., of Marske. The little parish church of Downholme contains no memorials of the owners of Walburn save a rude shield bearing the arms of Bellerby, *or*, a chevron *gules*, between 3 bells *argent*.

B. Simon le Scrope of Flotmanby was of full age in 1205. He was living in 1225, and, on his death, was buried at Wensley. By Ingolian, his wife, he had Henry le Scrope, his son and heir, who was of full age in 1205. He married Julian, daughter of Roger Brune of Thornton, by whom he had a son, William le Scrope, who was interred at Wensley, near his father.

C. Henry Scrope, Knight Banneret, Lord of Croft, co. Ebor, 27 Edw. I. Judge of the Common Pleas, 1308. Chief Justice of the King's Bench, 1317. Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, 1327. Chief Justice of the

⁴ See note F.

King's Bench, 1330. Chief Baron of the Exchequer, 1333. He died, Sept. 7, 1336, and was buried in the abbey of St. Agatha, where, as the Abbot tells us, in his evidence in the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy, "Under the choir and higher up in a part of their church above the choir under raised stones, and upon the stone, is the representation of a knight painted with the arms *azure, a bend or*, who was called in his life-time Sir Henry Scrope, one of the founders of the said abbey."

D. Sir William Scrope was born in 1320. He served in the wars of Scotland and Brittany, and died, November 17, 1344, of a wound received at Morlaix. He was buried at Easby, "sculptured on a high tomb, armed, and the arms engraven on a shield represented upon him without colours."

E. The beautiful abbey of St. Agatha, near Richmond, was supported, to a great extent, by the piety and munificence of the Scropes. The abbot, who appears as a witness in the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy, after describing the tombs of the founder and his family, tells us, that there were many others of the family buried there, "under flat stones with their effigies sculptured thereon, and their shields represented with their arms, and on one side of the shield a naked sword; and their arms were throughout the church of St. Agatha in glass windows, on tablets before altars, on vestments, chambers, glass windows of chambers, in their refectory, and on a corporax case of silk, the making of which and the donor of it were beyond memory. He refers to the Chronicle of Bridlington as his authority for the Scropes using the arms, and says that the family was so ancient as to surpass the memory of man." A weather-beaten shield, with their well-known bearing, on the porch of the parish church, is now the only memorial of the Scropes at Easby. It is extremely probable that the chapel of the family within the monastery will ere long be opened out by the owner of the estate.

F. Richard, first Lord Scrope of Bolton, a most distinguished soldier and statesman, and one of the greatest men of his day. A full account of his exploits and services will be found in the Scrope and Grosvenor Roll; to which must be appended his interesting will, which has been given in the Testamenta Eboracensia, Vol. I. p. cc., published by the Surtees Society. In that document the testator leaves 40*l.* to repair the bridge at Wensley, and he bequeaths the remainder of his vast estate to his Alms-houses and College at Wensley.