

ON A DIMINUTIVE EFFIGY OF A BISHOP AT ABBEY DORE,
HEREFORDSHIRE.

ON the western bank of the Dore, Herefordshire, about three miles from its confluence with the Monow, a few miles above Monmouth, stands the church of Abbey Dore. The abbey, which was of the Cistercian order, was founded in the twelfth century by Robert Ewyas, who derived his surname from the adjoining parish or lordship so called, where he had a castle, of which no other traces than some mounds now remain. The church was a spacious Early English building, and several distinguished people of the neighbourhood were buried there. It has long ago lost its nave, and now the transepts and chancel form the parish church of Dore or Abbey Dore. A brief notice of it was published in 1727, in a small quarto, intitled "A View of the ancient and present state of the Churches of Door, Home-Lacy, and Hempsted, . . . by Matthew Gibson, M.A., Rector of Door." The other monastic buildings have all disappeared. In a recess in the north wall of the north aisle of the chancel of this church lies a small effigy of a bishop, in stone, $15\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, by $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the head, and $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the feet, as the slab slightly tapers. It is evidently out of its proper place, the recess being large enough for an effigy of the ordinary size. Of this effigy a woodcut is given from a drawing by the faithful pencil of Mr. Blore. Some years ago the late Dean of Hereford, Dr. Merewether, presented a cast of it to the Institute. The figure is very much defaced. It appears, however, to have represented a bishop in eucharistic vestments with his mitre on his head; his crosier lay on his left side, apparently under the arm and over the shoulder. The hands are gone, and it is not clear what was their position. They may have held a heart; and most probably there was some animal at the feet. An inscription on the upper surface of the slab, at the sides of the effigy, is defective. The



Diminutive effigy of a Bishop at Abbey Dore, Herefordshire.

author of the work above mentioned, after quoting from Leland's Itinerary ¹ that John Bruton, Knight, and his wife, father to John Bruton, Bishop of Hereford, were buried at Dore, adds "and that the heart of this John Bruton, or Breton, or Briton, the famous English lawyer, was buried here, I conjecture from a little hewn stone a foot long and nine inches broad, with the defaced figure of a bishop in his robes ; and only this inscription remaining legible upon it, viz. :—

. PONTIFICIS COR
 XPISTE IOHANNIS." ²

These words, in what are called Lombardic characters, still remain entire, except that the R in COR has been broken off, and also the s and part of the latter I of IOHIS, the contracted form of the last word. Before PONTIFICIS may also be read, the letters DA, as if they were the last syllable of the preceding word. The portions of the inscription quoted by Gibson might be the terminations of two hexameters ; but the space on the slab shows there could never have been more than one hexameter. Though the stone may have been shortened a trifle at the feet, there is no reason to think there were ever any words at the head or feet of the effigy. The word XPISTE makes it evident that the line was a prayer or invocation, and could hardly have been, as Gibson and others have supposed, a record of the interment of the bishop's heart. Some years ago, after I had seen the cast, I suggested that the missing words were probably *Munda*, and *Breton* in some one of its various spellings ; which words would exactly fill the respective spaces, and make the entire line read as follows :—

Munda Pontificis cor Breton, Christe, Johannis.

After a careful re-examination of the cast I am a little doubtful as to *Breton*. The space that word is supposed to have occupied would admit six full-sized letters of the kind used in the inscription ; and about the middle of this space are faint traces of parts of two, probably the third and fourth letters, which are only visible in a very favorable light. Of these the former may have been an E, and the latter may have been a T, though it has also some resemblance to the upper part of a Lombardic U or C. The name Breton was accustomed to be spelt in so many different ways that it is not

¹ Vol. viii. fo. 84 b.

² Pp. 22, 23.

easy to conjecture which of them may have been there used. Assuming, as I think we safely may, that the missing word was a surname, it is remarkable that the interment indicated by this inscription is not in any way noticed by Leland. The word, however, may have been Breton, but illegible in his day ; in which case it is most likely he would have passed over an inscription commemorative of an unknown bishop. The names of John Breton's father and his wife Leland probably learned from some inscription that was then existing in Dore church ; for many of his notices of interments read as if they were taken from monuments.

A prayer on a sepulchral monument, to the effect of the line when completed as I have suggested, was not unknown in medieval usage, though such language seems more appropriate for the living than the dead. On a brass representing a monk, in St. Alban's Abbey Church, a list issues from the mouth, upon which are the words *Cor mundum crea in me Deus*.

Though the inscription does not record an interment of a heart, it is not improbable that the stone may have covered the heart of a bishop of Hereford, and that he may have been John Breton, who died in 1275. The size of the stone makes it hardly credible that it was ever designed to be placed over an entire body.² Even the supposition of a boy-bishop would not account for so small an effigy as this. It is more likely to have covered a small portion only of a body ; and though the bowels were sometimes buried separately, this more frequently fell to the lot of hearts. In the neighbourhood of Abbey Dore heart interments should seem not to have been rare about the period to which this effigy may be referred. Margaret, widow of Walter de Clifford, by a deed dated in 1260, directed her heart to be buried in the priory church of Aconbury.³ Her husband's family had been benefactors to that priory and also to Abbey Dore. A very remarkable instance of such an interment was lately discovered in the church of Ewyas Harold, an adjoining parish to Dore ; where there is an effigy of a lady, nearly life size, holding between the hands, which rest on the breast, such a vessel as might be supposed to contain

² The subject of Diminutive Effigies was noticed in vol. iii. of this Journal, p. 234.

³ Mon. Ang. vi. p. 490.

a heart. Its date appears to be about 1300 or a little later. On opening this tomb in October, 1861, in the presence of the vicar, the Rev. W. C. Fowle, and others, there was found, under the hands and only a few inches below the effigy, a flat stone covered by an intervening flat stone of larger size, on which lay some rubble and then the effigy ; and in the lower of these two stones was a hemispherical cavity, about 5 inches in diameter, in which were fragments of a metal vessel, that seemed to have been lined with a woven fabric and probably had contained a heart. Immediately over this cavity, on the under side of the stone that covered it, was painted in white the form of a vessel suitable for inclosing a heart, and such as might have been, and probably was, deposited in the cavity.⁴ No trace was discovered of the body : that most likely was interred elsewhere. It is not known who the lady was, but there is some reason to suppose she was Clarice, the elder daughter of John de Tregoz, who held by barony the castle at Ewyas Harold, and died about 1300. She died a short time before or after him, having married Roger de la Warr, by whom she left a son, who became one of her father's co-heirs, her sister Sibyl, wife of William de Grandison, having been the other.⁵ This Sibyl and her husband were, according to Leland,⁶ buried at Abbey Dore ; but the place of Clarice's interment is, I believe, unknown. The De la Warr family was of Sussex and Gloucestershire. The son of Clarice, John de la Warr, succeeded his grandfather at Ewyas Harold, and it would have been in accordance with the usage of the age, if her heart were there buried and he erected that monument to her memory. At Abergavenny, only a few miles distant, is an effigy of a lady holding a heart between her hands. It may be referred to the time of Edward I. Who this lady was is not quite clear, but, judging by a shield of arms (3 fleurs de lis) represented as lying on the body, she was either by birth or by marriage a Cantilupe, and not improbably Eva, one of the co-heiresses of Braose, that married William de Cantilupe, who became in her right Lord of Abergavenny. There are two effigies of John Breton's immediate predecessor, Peter de Aigueblanche (or Aiguebelle), who died

⁴ I am indebted for this information to the Rev. W. C. Fowle. A particular account of the discovery will be pub-

lished by the Society of Antiquaries.

⁵ See Dugd. Bar. i. p. 616, ii. p. 15.

⁶ Itinerary, viii. fo. 84 b.

bishop of Hereford in 1268 ; one at Hereford, the other in a collegiate church founded by him at Aiguebelle, in Savoy, where he was born ; these are both of life size. In Godwin⁷ it is stated, on the authority of the inscription upon the latter monument, that his heart was buried there ; which seemed not improbable, as he died in England. But the late Mr. Kerrich published in the *Archæologia*⁸ a description of that effigy, and also a copy of the inscription, which, so far from showing that the bishop's heart was buried there, commences thus :—" Hic jacet venerabilis Pater Dominus Petrus Herefordensis quondam Episcopus, Fundator, Structor, et Dotator hujus Ecclesiæ," &c., as if his body was interred beneath the effigy. If this monument, which is of bronze and was cast by Henry of Cologne (de Colonia), were prepared in the bishop's lifetime with the intention of his body being taken to Aiguebelle, the inscription was completed after his death ; for the day of his decease is stated. Though the small effigy which covered a heart sometimes holds a heart in the hands, as at Cuberley, Gloucestershire, the absence of such an indication of the design of the monument is not conclusive that a heart was not deposited under a diminutive effigy.

If the small effigy at Abbey Dore commemorated any Bishop of Hereford, it was most likely John Breton ; for he was the only John that died bishop of that see till the death of John Trilleck in 1360 ; to whose memory there remains a fine brass in the Cathedral. We have seen that, according to Leland, who probably obtained his information from some monument in the church, John Breton's father, if not his mother also, was buried at Abbey Dore. This might account for his heart having been deposited there, though his body was buried in his cathedral. Of his family very little is known. He is generally believed to have been a judge of the Court of Common Pleas before he was a bishop. According to Mr. Foss, he was the son of William le Breton or Brito, a justice in eyre ;⁹ but the record he quotes as his authority for this does not state, or give us any sufficient reason to believe, that the John Breton there mentioned was either a judge or a bishop. The name of Breton was not uncommon

⁷ De Præsulibus, Richardson's edition, p. 486.

⁸ Vol. xviii. p. 189.

⁹ Foss, Judges ii. p. 259.

in the thirteenth century, and there were at that time several with the christian name of John. One of this name was sheriff of Herefordshire, and also *custos* of the manor of Abergavenny and the three castles,¹ meaning doubtless White Castle, Scenfreth, and Grosmont. He appears to have witnessed a grant to Abbey Dore by Roger de Clifford who died in 48 Henry III. (1264).² Leland assumes this to have been the bishop; but he is more likely to have been the father. The bishop does not appear to have been a judge before 1266; and until he was appointed to the see of Hereford, which was in December, 1268, he was not of any importance in the county. There was a John le Breton who, in August, 1268 (52 Henry III.), was associated with several bishops and barons as envoys of the king to treat of a peace between him and Llewellyn Prince of Wales.³ This may have been the John Breton in question while he was one of the judges. Whether the bishop was the author of the well-known law treatise that goes by the name of "Britton," has been much discussed, but by no means satisfactorily settled. That he was a common lawyer and one of the judges, has been more readily admitted; and it seems highly probable, since John Breton, the judge, disappears from the records when the bishop of that name was consecrated. That the bishop was the author of the treatise, is stated in *Flores Historiarum*, under the year 1275, the writer of which was most likely living in 1307, when that chronicle terminates. This statement was generally credited till Selden⁴ called it in question. His objection is that two statutes are quoted in the work, which were not passed till after the supposed author's death. The statutes are the 6th Edw. I., and the 13th Edw. I. In order to give validity to this objection we must assume that they were referred to in the MS. as he left it: whereas I believe we have no copy of the work earlier than the fourteenth century. It is not improbable that some additions were made to the original after his decease, and that it is only with those additions any copies have come down to us. The treatise commences with the style of King Edward, like a charter or letters patent, and runs in the name of the king throughout; and Prisot, a judge under

¹ Leland's Itin. viii. fo. 87 b.

² Mon. Ang. v. p. 555; Dugd. Bar. i. pp. 336, 337.

³ Rymer, i. p. 477.

⁴ Notes to Hengham; Ad Fletam disertatio, c. 2.

Henry VI., speaks of a book that was written by the order of Edward I. (most probably this treatise), and published in the fifth year of his reign ;⁵ which was two years after John Breton's death. In the sixth and thirteenth years of that king some very important statutes were enacted, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that in the subsequent copies of the treatise reference was made to these amendments of the law. Selden⁶ adduces a record in 51 Henry III., to show that John Breton was then one of the judges. Doubtless he was ; but this was in 1267, more than twelve months before the bishop was appointed to his see. Mr. Foss⁷ has noticed this question of authorship in his memoir of the judge, and has adopted the objection of Selden, and also an opinion which is mentioned by him and by Reeve,⁸ that the treatise is little more than an abridgment of Bracton (another law treatise of the thirteenth century), with the addition of the subsequent alterations of the law ; the probability of which Mr. Foss says "acquires greater weight when it is remembered that Bracton's name was sometimes written Britton or Bretton." The legal reader will remember that Henry Bracton and John Breton were contemporaries. That these surnames should have been occasionally confounded is not surprising ; since, though the similarity in sound is not great, by misreading, as so frequently happens, *t* for *c* or *c* for *t*, Bracton becomes Bratton, or Bretton becomes Breton. But it appears strange that any one at all conversant with the contents of the two books should have taken Britton for an abridgment of Bracton's work. For though, as both are general treatises on the laws of England, they of necessity have much in common, they differ not only in language, one being in Latin and the other in French, but also materially in their arrangement and in the mode of treating the subject. No mere abridgment of Bracton would be like Britton ; for, besides the diversities just mentioned, Bracton is not written in the king's name, but like works of the kind in general, without any royal sanction appearing.

It is quite consistent with what we know of the life of John Breton the bishop, that the work in question may have been written by him at the request or by the order of the

⁵ Year Book, 35 Hen. vi. fo. 42.

⁶ Notes to Hengham.

⁷ Vol. ii. p. 260.

⁸ Notes to Hengham ; Reeve's History of English Law, ii., p. 280.

king after his retirement to his see of Hereford. Though that was remote from the court, he was most likely occasionally in attendance on the king, especially as he appears to have held the office of Keeper of the Wardrobe ; which fact Leland mentions⁹ when speaking of his interment, as if that office had been held by him while bishop, if not at his death.

It may be well to add, that there was another bishop named John, whose parents were buried at Abbey Dore, viz., John de Grandison, Bishop of Exeter from 1327 to 1369, who was the son of the above-mentioned William de Grandison and Sibyl de Tregoz ; but, besides that his will¹ gives no reason to suppose his body or any portion of it was there interred, the space in the inscription, which I suggest was occupied by the word Breton, would not admit the word Grandison ; and its shorter form, Granson, would not accord with the existing remains of letters ; to say nothing of the probable date of the effigy.²

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⁹ Itinerary, viii. fo. 86 b.

¹ Printed in Appendix to Oliver's Lives of the Bishops of Exeter, p. 444.

² A woodcut of this effigy, and a few

words descriptive of it were published in the Journal of the Brit. Arch. Association, vol ii. p. 361.