

THE "KEEPER OF SAINT CHAD'S HEAD" IN LICHFIELD
CATHEDRAL, AND OTHER MATTERS CONCERNING THAT
MINSTER IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

By JOHN HEWITT.

By the kindness of the late Dean Champneys, I was allowed some time ago to examine the manuscripts repositied in Lichfield Cathedral Library. In the "Archaeological Journal," vol. xxix., p. 71, will be found a few notes from one of them, a volume of Medical Recipes of Sir John Floyer, who was physician to King Charles II. I have now the pleasure to offer a few excerpts from a collection of MSS., lettered "Cantaria Sancti Blasii," many of which relate to the Chantry of St. Blaise, founded in the fifteenth century by Dean Heywode; others to gifts made by this dignitary to our cathedral, its altars and officers.

One of the most curious is that which relates to the "Keeper of St. Chad's Head," who was also Capellan of the Chantry of St. Blaise, founded by Dean Heywode. Two silver-gilt monstresances of curious workmanship are given by our good Dean, in presence of his fellow-dignitaries in Chapter assembled, for the safe keeping of certain sacred relics. "Item in festo Sancti Clementis anno dom. M^oCCCC^o octogesimo primo. prefatus magister Thomas Heywode. decanus in loco capitulari. coram suis confratribus. dedit ecclesie cathedralis lichfeldensis duas capsellas, anglicè *monstrance*, argenteas deauratas et curiose fabricatas pro reliquiis in eis conservandis. Et tradite fuerunt Domino Willielmo Hukyns. capellano cantarie sancti Blasii. ac custodi capituli sancti cedde. ad valorem iij.li. et xiiij.s." (folio 31^a).

From a further entry we learn that there was in our Cathedral a special altar called the Altar of St. Chad, and on this the venerated head of the saint was placed. The capellan, William Hukyns named above, was also in charge

of this altar, but whether it was situated in the same Chantry of St. Blaise does not clearly appear. The gift of Dean Heywode here recorded consists of an altar-cloth of twill—"de panno bilicino."

"Mappa data altari ubi restat caput scī cedde.

"Item prefatus Decanus dedit altari scī cedde in capella ubi caput eius mirifice honoratur. unam mappam bonam de panno bilicino. et tradita fuit manibus domini Willielmi Hukyns ejusdem capelle custodis" (fol. 31^b).

What became of this relic at the time of the Reformation has not been ascertained. If decorated with gold and jewels, as we may well believe it to have been, its fate on falling into the hands of the Tudor emissaries may be readily imagined.¹

Learning that certain of the relics of St. Chad were still preserved in the Cathedral of St. Chad at Birmingham, I requested to be supplied with some account of them ; and by the ready acquiescence of Canon Longman and the Rev. Mr. Greaney, I am enabled to offer the following notice, in which their history is traced from the period of the Reformation to the present day. Mr. Greaney writes as follows :—

The Relics of St. Chad.

The Rev. Alban Butler, in his life of St. Chad, tells us that "his relics were translated from the Church of St. Peter in Lichfield into the great church which was built in 1148, under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Chad, which is now the Cathedral ; and they remained there till the change of religion."

What became of a considerable portion of them afterwards will appear from the following Relation, taken from a MS. in the handwriting of the Rev. Alban Butler, now in the archives of Oscott College.²

"Relatio quomodo sex ossa majora reliquiarum S. Ceaddæ

¹ At Lincoln there was a similar officer, the Custodian of Saint Hugh's Head. In Rymer's "Foedera," vol. iii., part 2, p. 720, is a curious notice of the theft of this head, which was adorned with gold and silver ; or, according to Knighton

(Decem Scriptores, ad an. 1364) with gold, silver, and jewels. The official accounts of the Custodian of St. Hugh's head are still preserved among the muniments of Lincoln Cathedral.

² Near Birmingham.

ad manus meas pervenerunt, scripta a P. D. Pietro Turnero et D. Gulielmo Atkins, Sacerd : Miss : S. J.

"A.D. 1615, 8 Sept., ipso B. Virginis natali, Henricus Hoodsheeds de Woodseten propè Segleiam³ in com. Stafford, moribundus, me accersivit. Homine munito præsidiis Eccle : deindè positis genibus Litanias majores recitamus, ad quas æger, cum esset linguæ Latinæ non ignarus, pie admodum respondit. Cum ad eum locum perventum est ubi S.S. Confessores invocantur, sustulit utramque manum e lecto extractam et devote junctam, offerens in has voces prorupit : 'Sanctus Ceadda, ora pro me.' Cum hæc frequenter repeteret, cursum Litaniarum interrumpi ; cumque petii cur toties S. Ceaddam invocaret, respondit : 'Sanctus Ceadda desuper in superiore parte lecti præsens est, quem ego thesaurum majori cupio cum honore asservari ; et proindè illum tibi dono.' His dictis et Litaniis absolutis, sacras reliquias intueri cupio, quas exordio tincto seu velo majori lineo, sed nigro (Anglicè, black buckram) opertas, uxor Henrici mihi in manus dat. Tum Henricus et ego opinabamur hoc velo tectas fuisse dum in thecà aliqua argentea in Lichfeldensi ecclesià recondenterentur. Ego velo prædicto sacra ossa abstuli, et in pixide lignea 19 vel 20 digitos longa, 6 digitos profundâ, 6 digitos latâ, minoribus seris firmatâ, eadem ossa reposui, cum velo separatim complicato.

"Roganti mihi quomodo has reliquias nactus erat, respondit : 'Cum fides catholica everteretur, quidam Prebendarius (Dudley⁴) cognatus Domini Dudley (qui famoso nomine Dominus seu Baro quondam dictus est) has sacras reliquias ab ecclesiâ Lichfeldensi, honoris et reverentiæ causâ, sustulit, quas duabus nobilibus fœminis (ejusdem nominis de Dudley), cognatis suis, habitantibus apud Russel Hall, domum propè villam de Dudley, asservandas dedit. Mortuo prebendario, fœminæ timore legum exterritæ, licet Catholicæ, sese periculo eripere cupiunt ; proindè easdem reliquias mihi fratrique meo Gulielmo (familiares, vicinæ, et amicissimæ nobis erant) libenter concesserunt. Pars altera fratri, pars hæc mihi, divisione factâ, obvenit. Ab illo tempore ad hanc horam fideliter eas conservavi.

"Illo mortuo, ejus uxor mihi reliquias tradidit, quas in pixide cum velo, ut ante dixi, reposueram. Nec mihi dubium est quin verissima sint hæc ossa, cum propè 20

³ Woodcotton, near Sedgley.

⁴ See note below.

annos prudentiam et fidem hominis illius perspectam habuerim. In cujus rei fidem, nomen meum subscribo.

"Octob. 1, 1652.

"PETRUS TURNERUS.

THOMAS WILKINSON.

RICHARD VAVASOUR.

FRANCISCUS COTTON.

GULIELMUS ATKINS.⁵

"Domino Petro Turnero mortuo 27 Maii, 1655, hæ reliquiæ, approbante Domino Eduardo Bedingfield,⁶ depositæ sunt apud Dominum Johannem Levesonum, eò quod hic ad districtum et collegium B. Aloysii⁷ hujus temporis pertineret. Velum, de quo antè dixi eò quod esset vetustum nec satis honestum, a me Gulielmo Atkins combustum est.

"Pixis in quâ reliquiæ hæ repositæ sunt, a militibus et apparitoribus effracta est, et os unum contra pavementum allisum in duas partes dissiluit, in festo S. Andreæ, 1658, in domo Domini Levesoni. Impii illi partem reliquiarum secum asportaverunt.

"GULIELMUS ATKINS.

"Ego Gulielmus Atkins ex pyxide illâ a militibus effractâ sacras reliquias in aliam pyxidem, serico tectam, removi ann. 1661, 2 Martii.⁸

"R. P. Franciscus Fosterus Prov. Anglicanæ Provæ. S. J., anno 1652, 1 Oct., diligenter inspexit reliquias S. Ceaddæ, perque sibi privilegium Notarii Apostolici concessum, reliquias approbavit, dixitque sese effecturum ut relatio Dni. Turneri in acta referretur et in archiviiis reponeretur.

"Ego GULIELMUS ATKINS,

"Præsens interfui."

To this relation is added another of Fr. Richard Strange, Rector of Ghent, dated Dec. 10, 1670, certifying that he brought out of England into Flanders, the year before, some of St. Chad's relics.

Also another of Fr. Anthony Terill, Rector of Liège, dated Sep. 21, 1671, attesting that he had obtained an approbation of the Relics of St. Chad, and leave to expose them

⁵ The four additional names were probably inserted as Witnesses of the deed. Father Atkins died in prison, at the age of 80, a victim of the Oates plot.

⁶ Edward Bedingfield was a Jesuit

priest, of the family of Bedingfield of Oxburgh, Norfolk.

⁷ See note below.

⁸ St. Chad's Day.

to public veneration in the chapel of the college of Liège, from the Most Rev. and Illustrious D. Ernest, Baron of Surlet, Vicar-General in Spirituals to His Serene Highness.

In another loose paper is a third attestation of Father Richard Barton, Rector of St. Omer, dated Jan. 20, 1667, bearing witness that being Visitor of the Residence of St. Chad, he took out of the box of St. Chad's relics "*in domo cujusdam nobilis catholici*" a particle of the same, and gave it to the Father Director of the English Sodality, to be exposed to public veneration, if the Bishop of St. Omer should approve.⁹

These relics were then at Boscobel,¹ a house of Mr. Fitzherbert, not very far from Wolverhampton, where they were in the custody of Father Collingwood, Superior of that District; from whence they were conveyed to Swinnerton, two miles from Stone, after Mr. Collingwood's death; this being the chief residence of Mr. Fitzherbert.

Thus far Alban Butler's narrative [writes the Rev. Mr. Greaney, who now himself continues the history].

The relics remained at Swinnerton under the care of the Jesuits until about 1790, when the family of the Fitzherberts leased their house to a Protestant family and went to reside at Aston Hall, about four miles from Swinnerton. To Fr. Maher, the chaplain, was entrusted the removal of all the altar furniture and appurtenances. He also removed the relics of St. Chad, and placed them in safety, for fear of the Pursuivants. He was the last of the Jesuit chaplains of the family, and in consequence of his sudden death, the place where the relics were concealed was for a time unknown. Father Maher was succeeded by a body of Franciscans, and to these succeeded, in 1837, the Rev. Benjamin Hulme, a secular priest. He, in this same year, whilst thoroughly renovating the chapel, found the box containing St. Chad's (and other) relics fastened up under the altar. The Rev. Dr. Kirk of Lichfield at once recognised

⁹ At this time England was divided by the Jesuit fathers into about twelve districts called Colleges or Residences, all under the supervision of a Visitor or Provincial. Formerly Staffordshire was included in the College of St. Aloysius, in the Lancashire District, but in 1669-70 the College (or Residence) of St. Chad was established. Thus we see that the Rector of St. Omer, being Visitor

of St. Chad's College in England, finds the box of relics in the house of a Catholic nobleman (Fitzherbert?), obtains a portion, and sends it to St. Omer for public veneration.

¹ This is King Charles's Boscobel. The property formerly belonged to the Giffards: from that family it passed by an heiress to the Cottons, and from them, again by an heiress, to the Fitzherberts.

them as the relics of St. Chad.² Dr. Walsh, the Bishop of the district, and Bishop Wiseman, his coadjutor, went to Aston Hall, and having made a careful inquiry into the whole matter, and having fully satisfied themselves, presented a manifesto to Pope Gregory XVI., who, on weighing the evidence, granted permission for them to be publicly venerated.

The other relics, with their authentications, which were in the same box, were sent to Swinnerton, their original location, where the family of the Fitzherberts were again living. Those of St. Chad were brought by Bishop Wiseman to Oscott College. Here they were again examined, and are thus described :—

No. 1. A femur of the left side, nearly entire.

Nos. 2 and 3. The two tibiæ, both broken at the lower ends, one having the head of the fibula adhering.

No. 4. Portion of a humerus.

The relics of St. Chad were wrapped up in the slate-coloured silk which originally enclosed them. The box, covered with velvet and lace, was reclosed, bound with a white silk riband, and sealed by Bishop Walsh and Bishop Wiseman. An attestation of the above examination and description of the relics, dated 20 June, 1841, is in the handwriting of Bishop Wiseman. It is signed by Bishop Walsh, Bishop Wiseman and Bishop Kyle (of Scotland). The box of relics, that same evening, was given to the Rev. James Brown (now Bishop of Shrewsbury) and the Rev. James Moore (late President of Sedgley Park School), to take to Birmingham; where, the next day, being the Consecration-day of the new Cathedral Church, dedicated to St. Chad, they were placed over the High Altar; on the very day that the first Catholic Cathedral was consecrated since the Reformation. They are still kept at St. Chad's, in a reliquary placed under the baldachino and over the tabernacle of the High Altar. They are exposed for veneration on the Feast of St. Chad (March 2nd) and on the anniversary of the Dedication of the church, which is kept on the third Sunday of June, and is looked upon as the Feast of the Finding of the Relics.

² Dr. Kirk died at Lichfield in 1852, aged 92. He might therefore well have seen them when they were at Aston Hall,

at the close of the eighteenth or beginning of the present century.

From the above accounts of the Rev. Alban Butler and the Rev. Mr. Greaney we gather that, at the time of the Reformation, certain of the relics of St. Chad were rescued from the hands of the "Fidei Defensor" by a prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral, of the noble family of Dudley.³ He gave them for safe keeping to two ladies of his family, from whom they passed into the hands of two neighbours of theirs, Henry and William Hoodsheeds; the which Henry (*moribundus*) gave his share, then concealed on the top of his bed, to his priest, Turner by name; the remainder, which fell to the lot of William Hoodsheeds, not being now traceable. Father Turner dying in 1655, the first-named moiety of the relics passed into the keeping of "Dominus Leveson." We next hear of them, c. 1667, at Boscobel, a house of the Fitzherberts; and later, at their seat at Swinnerton, co. Stafford. About 1790, they followed the Fitzherberts to a new residence at Aston Hall near Stone. The priest in charge of the relics having died suddenly, their location was for a time unknown; but in 1837 Father Hulme discovered them in a box carefully concealed beneath the chapel altar. Their authenticity having been tested to the satisfaction of Bishop Walsh and Bishop (afterwards Cardinal) Wiseman, Pope Gregory XVI. granted permission for them to be exhibited for public veneration. They were lodged for a time at Oscott College; till, on the opening of the new Cathedral of St. Chad at Birmingham, in June, 1841, they were transferred to that church, where they still remain, enclosed in a rich reliquary over the High Altar.

To return to the MS. "Cantaria Sancti Blasii," we have

³ Arthur Dudley appears in the list of Prebendaries in Harwood's History of Lichfield under the year 1531. In 1553, we meet with him again, now in the character of a custodian for the king (Edw. VI.) of certain church goods, seized by order of the Privy Council, in what Fuller calls "a gleaning in the stubble."

"Memorandum delivered by the right honorable Water Vicount Hereford, Lorde Ferrers, and of Chartteley, Sir Edward Aston, Knight, and Edward Lytton, Esquier, the Kinges Majesties Comissioners for Church goodes, to John Blythe, Arthur Dudley, and David Pole, Residents of the Cathedrall Church of Lichfield, ij Chalices of Sylver gylte with Patents, xij belles in ij steples, vj

Clothes of dyaper for the table of tholly Communion, xxiiij olde guyssyons and a lecturne of brasse, sawly to be kept untill the Kinges Majesties pleasure be therein further knowen. In witnes whereof as well the saide Comissioners as the foresaide residents have to theis presents indented interchaungeably put their hands, the xxixth daye of Apriell in the Seventhe yeare of the reigne of our Sovereigne Lorde Kinge Edwarde the Syxte.

"Per me JOHAN BLITHE.
ARTHUR DUDLEY.
DAVID POLE."

Indorsed: Minster of Lich.
("Annals of Diocese of Lichfield," 1863, p. 68: from orig. in Pub. Rec. Office.)

already seen that this chantry was founded by Dean Heywode, who was in office from 1457 to 1493. Its situation is but vaguely indicated :—"Unam Cantariam Sancti Blasii martiris quasi ex opposito sedis Episcopalis situatam" (fol. 21^a). The date of the foundation was 1466. Many gifts are bestowed by the Dean on this chapel. One of them consists of a missal, "cum literis capitalibus aureis. et unum calicem deauratum ponderantem xx^{ti} uncias. tria vestimenta sacerdotalia. et alia ornamenta pro altari" &c. (fol. 22^a). Again (fol. 32^a), "Prefatus Decanus fieri fecit tabulam de Alablastur' sculptam cum historia Sancti Blasii episcopi et fecit eam poni in capella Scī Blasii pone altare. ubi perpetuam fundavit cantariam."

Our generous Dean further bestows on his Cathedral two new organs, one at the price of 26*l.*, the other 14*l.* The first is a large one and handsomely constructed, an offering in honour of St. Chad ; and placed "in pulpito"—which, I suppose, is an organ-loft.

"Magna organa in pulpito.

"Item cito post festum nativitatis Scī Johannis Baptiste. anno domini M^oCCCC^o octogesimo secundo. ex providencia et sumptibus magistri Thome Heywode decani antedicti. conferuntur ecclesie cath' lich' organa nova magne quantitat. et forme decentis. ad honorem scī cedde et ornamentum ecclesie. precij xxvi. li. iij.s. iiij.d. totaliter de sumptibus et expensis predicti decani. Sm^a xxvj. li. iij.s. iiij.d.' (fol. 31^a).

The smaller instrument, or "pair of organs," was placed in the "new building," over against the Jesus altar, and appropriated to the service of the Mass of Jesus, to be solemnised every Friday for ever.

"Organa de Ihū.

"Item predictus Decanus dedit unum novum par organorum ecclesie predictae. et stant in nova fabrica ex opposito altari Ihū ad deservendum in missa solempni de Ihu omni die Veneris in sempiternum. precii xij.li." (fol. 31^a).

We have no account of any *nova fabrica* in the fifteenth century : the term, therefore, may apply to the last new building, the Presbytery of the fourteenth century ; for the epithet "new" constantly adheres to old work for a long period. We have New-Halls, New-Roads, New-Bridges of

considerable antiquity: even New-Castles as old as the Norman dynasty.

The Chapter-House appears to have largely shared the Dean's bounties. He filled the windows with painted glass, representing the Apostles, with other pictures above, and upon the walls; the vestibule (*introitus*) being also newly glazed. "*Item idem Decanus ex sumptibus suis propriis omnes fenestras domus capitularis fecit de novo vitriari cum apostolorum ymaginibus. et aliis picturis in summitate et supra muros. cum tabulatu ligneo sub et supra ut decet. cum vitriacione introitus de novo ad eandem. precii xlvj.li.*" (fol. 32^a)

A "Chantry of Jesus and St. Anne" was founded in 1468, "*ex parte boreali ecclesie cath' predicte. cum gloriosa imagine Jhu Xpi. et cum imagine sce Anne ibidem eciam defixa*" (fol. 22^b). Another entry (on folio 23^b) records the gift of vestments and other decorations to this altar; and among the Vicars' Evidences, cited by Shaw (*Hist. of Staffordshire*, i. 304), is an indenture binding "the said vicarige, and each vicar in his course, to sing a mass in nomine Jesu et St. Anne, every Friday, with six sufficient lay vicars, and four quiristers, that are able to sing canticum organicum," in honour of "that worshipfull man, Mr. Dean Hawood," and in consideration of many benefits conferred by him: a "sufficient vicar also to say daily a mass in the name of St. John and St. Anne, the mother of Mary the Virgin, in the said dean's chapel, in the North ayle of the church." Among these benefits we find a grant of four marks, "to be paid to the Vicars at two terms, viz. the Invention of the Holy Crosse and at St. Martin, in the Quier, upon St. Chadd's tomb." Again: "Mr. Dean Haywood did buy from one John Palmer, for a sum of money, two pastures and two acres of arable, which he gave to the subchanter and body of vicars, to find two great waxen tapers, of 8 lb. weight each, to set about the sepulchre; to the Canon that sayeth the Requiem mass, 2*d.*, and to eight quiristers that sing there, 4*d.*" By another indenture the vicars "bind themselves, in liewe of a great sum of gould given them by that good Dean Haywood, to the new erecting of their common houses in the Close, to say and sing placebo, a dirige, and a mass of requiem, for the souls of his father and mother, yearly; and when *he* is dead, to do the

whole service of the day for him. * * * And if these services or exequies be not performed by the vicars at all times as they should, the dean & chapter shall levy of the vicars' goods or livinge any way in liewe of a paine of xiii.s. and iiiid., to be bestowed on the fabricke of the church." Dated 1471. By another deed, a large amount of land is bestowed on the vicars by their generous benefactor, and a "Note of Delivery of Possession of said messuage and ground" tells how "the deane gave to many young children pence a piece, to remember the said delivery" (Shaw, 306).

Among the vicars' deeds of the same period, though not connected with Dean Heywode, we find copies of attachment issued from the Justices of the Peace of Staffordshire to the Prebendary Roger Belleter and his wife, and to William Dediall⁴ and his wife, who withheld by strong head the vicars' land, ordering "by the king's express commandment that they be hanged on the next gallows without any triall" (Shaw, 306). In 1489 Dean Heywode gave forty pounds towards the erection of a library—"ad edificacionem bibliothecae laterice iuxta domum Decani" (Ang. Sac., i. 454). This library was finished in the time of his successor, Dean Yotton. Its situation is shown in Browne Willis's plan of the Cathedral in 1727. It was taken down about 1750.

To return to our manuscript. On the verso of fol. 31 we find an entry showing that Dean Heywode gave to the cathedral a great bell, called the Jesus Bell—"maximam campanam vocatam vulgari Ih's belle." It was cast in London, and consecrated with great ceremony by Bishop Robert,⁵ the suffragan of Bishop Hals, "cum melioribus cantatoribus ecclesie."

"Item antedictus magister Thomas Heywode Decanus dedit ecclesie Cath' Lich'. maximam campanam in campanili australi. londonijs conflata. per dominum Robertum Domini Johannis Hals episcopi suffraganeum consecrata et campanam Ihu per eundem vocata. Ad valorem in toto c.li."

⁴ Or "of Ediall," a small hamlet near Lichfield, where Dr. Johnson kept a school, and from which he and Garrick set out together to seek their fortune in London—"I with half-a crown in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with two-pence ha'penny in thine."

⁵ We learn something more of Bishop

Robert at fol. 28a, where the ceremony of the sanctification of the bell in 1477 is described with some fulness. He is there named "Dñs Rob'tus Achaden' epc. et suffraganeus. dñi. Johis divina gratia Covent' et Lich' ep'i." Achaden' signifies Achadensis, meaning Achonry in Ireland.

Around the bell was this inscription :—

"I am the bell of Jesus, and Edward is our king :
Sir Thomas Heywode first caused me to ring."

"Sir" Thomas also provided for the ringing and care of the bell, at the rate of 13s. 4*d.* per annum.

"Item Sacrista pro pulsacione et tintinacione campane de Ihu ad predict' servicia omni die Veneris per annum percipiet xiiij.s. iiij.d." (fol. 29^a). Of this "tintinnation," see also fol. 26^a,—"Necnon ante predictæ antiphonæ inchoacione bis. per intervallum competens. ipsam campanam tintinnabit seu tintinari faciet."

For many years there has been, and still is, in the central tower of our cathedral, a bell popularly called "the tantony bell." Antiquaries have learnedly speculated on its name. Some have referred it to St. Anthony, who is commonly represented holding a bell. Others derive from *tintinnabulum*. Do not *pulsatio* and *tintinnatio* mean ringing and tanging? In that case, our present tantony bears out the notion of tanging; for, being small, it can only be used in that manner; ringing being restricted, in campanological language, to the somersaults which a large bell is made to perform, in order to bring out its full sound. Of course a large bell can be either rung or tanged.

The "Jesus bell" of Dean Heywode remained in its place in our cathedral till the Civil Wars, when it was destroyed. Shaw, in his "History of Staffordshire," cites "an ancient writer," who notes the mishaps which have befallen those of the roundheads who had taken part in the destruction or injury of the churches. Among them was "one Pickins, a pewterer, who, on July 26, 1653, knoet in pieces the fair bell, called Jesus, at Lichfield, he being the chief officer appointed for demolishing that Cathedral" (p. 243).

We have by no means exhausted the list of benefits conferred by good Dean Heywode on his Cathedral, but enough has been said to show how much he had its welfare at heart, and to serve as an example of beneficence to ages of Deans to come. Our minster still contains a portion of Dean Heywode's tomb. The whole structure is figured in the 25th plate of Shaw's "Staffordshire." The Dean died in 1492, and was buried at the upper end of the south aisle, near the High Altar.