

NOTES ON BRASSES IN MORLEY CHURCH, NEAR DERBY.

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MORLEY is about four miles from Derby, on the north-east : the church and rectory stand on very high ground, and command a very wide prospect.

Leaving the road through the village, you enter at the corner of the grounds of the rectory, and just on the right hand the pillar of an ancient cross stands on the top of some stone steps. It is not supposed that this cross was ever in the churchyard. The grounds are studded with fine ornamental trees, and there is no visible boundary between them and the churchyard. The church and parsonage are hidden from each other by a belt of trees and shrubs. A prettier place altogether could hardly be found.

The church itself is a very handsome building, and, on entering it, an abundance of objects of antiquarian interest strike the eye. There are monuments of almost every kind, from the fourteenth century to the present time ; beautiful painted windows ; encaustic tiles adorned with arms and other emblems, and the brasses from which the rubbings here exhibited were taken. The memorials are in a very perfect condition, considering the long periods during which some of them have endured. This may be owing to the fact that Morley has belonged to the same family from before the date of the earliest monument. A family, who took their name from the place, owned it in the fourteenth century, and it has been carried from them successively by heiresses into the families of Stathum, Sacheverell, Pole, Sitwell, Wilmot, Osborne, and Bateman.

Some of the painted windows came from Dale Abbey on its dissolution in 1539, and had become in a defective state in 1847, when they were restored at the expense of Mr. T. O. Bateman. In one window there is the representation of the legendary history of Sir Robert and the deer, which rests on a tradition that on a dispute between the Canons of Dale Abbey and the keepers of the forest, the king granted to the Canons as much land as, between two suns, could be encircled with a plough drawn by stags, which had been caught in the forest, *Lys. Derb. ccxxii.* The subject of another window is the history of the Cross, beginning with its construction, and ending with its exaltation.

The earliest brass is dated in 1403, and invokes prayers for the souls of Godithe de Stathum and Richard her son. As Godithe did not die till 1418, it is remarkable that the prayers should be asked for the souls of both ; for the ordinary custom when a person was living was to ask for prayers for his health (*salute*), or his good state, prosperity, or the like. This distinction is fully confirmed by the inscription on the monu-

ment to Sir Gervase Clifton which relates to his second wife, who survived him : *pro cuius Agnetis prosperitate dum vixerit, et pro cuius anima cum ab hac luce migraverit, speciales ordinantur orationes.* 1 Coll. Baronet. 89.

The brass states that the mother and son caused the belfry and church to be built ; but the next brass attributes the building of both to the mother only, and says it was a rebuilding (*de novo construxit*).

The first brass is imperfect, and what remains runs thus :

*Orate pro animabus Godithe de Stathum, domine de Morley,
Ricardi filii sui, qui campanile istud et ecclesiam fieri fecerunt,
quibus tenentur. Anno Domini Millesimo CCCC tercio.*

A part of the left end of the brass is broken off, and a word lost at the beginning of both the second and third lines. It is plain that *et* is the word lost at the beginning of the second line, but it is doubtful what is the word missing at the beginning of the third line. However, I am disposed to think that it is *pro* ; and that the meaning is that the mother and son were bound to the repair of the church. Morley was held in 1253 by the Abbot of Chester, under Hugh, Earl of Chester ; and it may well have been granted by the abbot to the Morleys upon condition that they should repair the church. It may well be that the original liability of a rector to repair the chancel is founded on his tenure of the glebe lands. Lands have been granted to abbeys on condition of their repairing bridges. This was the case of Burton Bridge, and it has been repaired by the grantees of the lands of Burton Abbey till the present day. Again, I have the copy of a record of a Court Baron, which states that the jury "*dicunt quod Rectores ecclesie parochialis de Derley non mundaverunt nec fecerunt altam viam regiam, &c.*"; which shows that those who held church lands might be liable to repair highways. And I can see no reason why land might not be granted on condition that the grantee and his heirs should repair a church ; and it is highly probable that an abbot or religious house should grant land on such a condition.¹

Three of the brasses deserve particular attention. The brass of John Stathum, who died in 1454, has the figure of St. Christopher above his and his wife's effigy, with the words *Sancte Christofore, ora pro nobis*, proceeding from both. The brass of Thomas Stathum, who died in 1470, has the figure of St. Ann over the head of his first wife, with the words *Sancta Anna, ora pro nobis* ; the figure of the Virgin and Child over the head of the second wife, with the words *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis* ; and the figure of St. Christopher over himself, with the words *Sancte Christofore, ora pro nobis*. Lastly, the brass of John Sacheverell, who was slain at Bosworth in 1485, has the figure of St. Christopher over himself and his wife, with the words *Sancte Christofore, ora pro nobis*. In each case St. Christopher is represented as wading through water, and holding a rude staff, by which he supports himself, and he carries a child on his shoulders, and the child holds a globe with a cross in his left hand, whilst his right is pointing towards heaven. Whether such a person as St. Christopher ever lived is a matter of doubt, but

¹ A terrier of Bradley, Derbyshire, in 1698, states that the Lord of the Manor is bound to repair one part of the church-

yard wall, the rector another, and the inhabitants the rest.

there are several legends of him varying in particulars. The best we have seen is that given by Mrs. Jameson. Possessed of more than ordinary strength and stature, in his youth he determined that he would serve no one but the most powerful. Accordingly, he first entered into the service of the monarch, who was then most celebrated for power. Soon, however, he perceived that whenever the name of Satan was mentioned the monarch crossed himself. His suspicions being aroused, he questioned the monarch, and learned that he feared Satan ; whereon he quitted his service, and sought for Satan and entered his service. One day, as they were journeying along a road, he saw a cross, and thereupon Satan turned out of the way and avoided it, and being questioned by St. Christopher he admitted that he was afraid, because it was the emblem of Christ, who had conquered him ; and thereon St. Christopher went in search of Christ and found a hermit, who dwelt by a river which was very difficult to ford, and the hermit persuaded him that he would best serve Christ by carrying pilgrims over the stream. This he did for some time, and one night a child sought to be carried over, and St. Christopher assented ; but he found that as he waded through the stream the child grew so much heavier that he barely reached the opposite bank, when he told the child that the pressure would not have been greater if he had carried the whole world ; on which the child told him that he himself carried the sins of the whole world, and therefore it was no marvel that he was so heavy to carry. St. Christopher then became the faithful servant of the Saviour, and assumed that name from his having borne Christ across the river. Hence it is that St. Christopher is represented in the manner apparent on these brasses. His figure has frequently been placed on the walls of churches opposite to the entrance door, as there was a prevalent opinion that whoever looked upon it would meet with no ill fortune on that day. Here we have the figure on these brasses all belonging to the same family, and this raises the question whether he may not have been considered as the patron saint of this family. Only one other instance has been found of the same figure on a brass. This is in the little church of St. Mary, at Wick, about a mile from Winchester, and is exactly similar ; it is over an inscription, but with no reference to it ; the cross is to William Complyn and his wife. He died in 1487, and gave to the dedication of the church, 40s. ; to make new bells, £10 ; to the hallowing of the greatest bell, 6s. 8d., and for the testimonials of the dedication, 6s. 8d.²

At our June meeting, Mr. Baily exhibited a drawing of a window, in which the figure of St. Edward the Confessor was represented with his feet resting on the top of an altar, and an ecclesiastic on his knees before the altar, with the words "Pray for the soul of the Abbot of Bury," in Latin. The brass of John Stathum, who died in 1454, represents him and his wife kneeling face to face with their hands raised towards the figure of St. Christopher, which is above them ; and the brass of John Sacheverell, who was slain at Bosworth, has a similar representation on it. But the brass of Thomas Stathum, who died in 1470, represents him and his two wives at full length, with their hands joined on their breasts. The former representations seem to be the more appropriate.

Henry Stathum, who died in 1481, married three wives—Anne, daughter

² An engraving of this figure of St. Christopher is given in Haines' "Manual of Monumental Brasses."

of Thomas Bothe ; Elizabeth, daughter of Giles St. Low ; and Margaret, daughter of John Stanhop. The words are clearly Egidii Seyntlow, though hitherto they seem to have been misread by several authors. In 3 Collins' Peer, 301, it is stated that John de Stanhope had "a daughter, Margaret, wife of Giles St. Low ; also the third wife of Henry Stathum, of Morley." At first sight, it seems remarkable that Henry Stathum should have married the widow of his father-in-law ; but it may be that Margaret was the daughter of St. Low's first wife. A similar case is given in Ley's Cheshire, p. 253, and accounted for in the same manner.