

ON THE MEMORIAL SEPULCHRAL BRASS IN HAYES
CHURCH, NEAR BROMLEY, KENT, OVER THE GRAVE
OF THE REV. JOHN HOARE, RECTOR OF THAT
PARISH.

By Captain EDWARD HOARE.

In Hayes Church, about two miles from the town of Bromley in Kent, there is a curious sepulchral memorial brass over the grave of a member of my own family, the Rev. John Hoare, who was Rector of Hayes in Orpington from 1565 to 1584; Hayes Church then forming a portion and appendage to the parish of Orpington, and being in the gift of the Rector of Orpington, though now separated and in the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The date of the brass is 1584. It is situated in the south-east corner of the chancel, a few feet outside the Communion rails. As the inscription on this brass has never been published, I have thought a little description of it and its curious and quaint terms in rhyme (rhymes being somewhat uncommon on brasses) might not be quite inappropriate to a meeting of our society and the pages of the *Archæological Journal*. Having heard of the existence of such a brass several years ago, I then desired to trace it out, but the person who told me of it informed me that it was in Hayes Church, Middlesex. For a long time I endeavoured to ascertain something regarding it there, but after much fruitless labour, useless journeys, and lost time, I only found out that nothing whatever was known of such a brass in the church of that place. There is, also, a church called Haes in Devonshire, not very far from Exeter. The name is spelt without the letter *y*, *Haes* being the ancient spelling of the name, and, as this John Hoare was descended from the Devonshire branch of the family, I thought the brass might exist in the church there, and a relative of mine was kind enough to make enquiries for me, but no brasses are to be found in the old church of Haes, in Devonshire; I, therefore, concluded that I had been misinformed, or that some mistake had occurred, and that no such brass existed.

However, some time afterwards, I met with the Rev. Herbert Haines's interesting work, "A Manual of all the Monumental Brasses, with a list now of those remaining in the British Isles," and there, at length, in that list, I found mentioned the brass I had been so long seeking after. Mr. Haines gives only a very brief notice of it as existing in Hayes Church, Kent. At page 101, part ii, he thus describes it:—"Number 5, John Hoare, rector 18 years, 1584, ætat 83, 8 Eng. v.v. C." (Eight English verses and in the Chancel.)

I, therefore, went shortly afterwards to Hayes Church, with Mr. Henry

S. Richardson, of Greenwich, who there took for me several excellent rubbings, one of them being in bronze, on stiff thick paper, an invention of his own, which produces a perfect fac-simile of the original brass. There is now only the inscription of the brass over the grave in Hayes Church, but the clergyman of the church—who received us most kindly and gave us every information—told me that from documents belonging to and relating to the church, he had ascertained that there was formerly the figure of a priest in canonicals over the inscription, but that during the latter part of the last century the figure of the priest, together with a small corner piece of the plate containing the inscription, was cut away, and stolen by some workmen, when the church was undergoing repair. The Rev. Daniel Lysons, in his “Environs of London,” vol. iv, p. 496, thus mentions this brass: “John Hoare, rector, a brass plate with a figure of the deceased, 1584,” as existing in the year 1796, the date of the publication of his work, so the mischief must have been done at a later period. There are five other brasses in this neat and retired country church, all of them except one, to priests or former rectors of the parish. Hasted, in his “History of Kent,” vol. i, pp. 105—7, in giving a description of Hayes Place, says of Hayes Church, (in ancient MSS. spelt Hese) that it is dedicated to Saint Mary, and consists of only one aisle and a chancel, and is a small building of flint and stone, with an embattled tower at the west end with a very low spire and containing three bells. He also gives the names of the different rectors, and the dates of their various appointments, but he does not in any way whatever allude to any of the brasses, nor does Boutell, in his excellent work on Monumental Brasses, make any mention of them.

I may here remark *en passant* that Hayes Place was the favourite residence of the great Earl of Chatham, and that his celebrated son the Right Honourable William Pitt was born there May 28th, and baptised in Hayes Church, July 3rd, 1759, as appears by the Baptisms in the Parish Register.

The inscription on the brass of John Hoare is in black letter, and shows its very curious old English spelling. It runs as follows:—

Who faime would lye he must not feare to dye death is the waie
 That leades to lief and glorious Joies that triumphs ober Claie
 Come poore bewaile this want, Come friende lament & saie with me
 This man did dye to lye, and lybes though dead his body be
 full xviij yerres a Rector here he was, and then John Hoare
 Unwedde, deceast, one thousand yerres fyfte hundred eighty foure
 the xi daie of februarye
 when he had lyved lx score & thre.

If we took this inscription literally we should conclude that this unwed old bachelor-rector had lived twelve hundred and three years, viz., sixty score and three, but it is evidently intended for sixty, a score, and three, which makes him to have been eighty-three years of age at his decease, the strange manner of expression being for the sake of the verse or rhyme. From other sources of information I have found this to have been his correct age. As I stated before, the rhyme with its black letter and unusual spelling is very quaint and curious, and the ideas and sentiment, together with the moral, in simple but expressive language, are touching, truthful, and teachful to us. It will therefore be admitted,

I think, that this hitherto almost unknown brass is well worthy of being more permanently preserved and recorded and rescued from oblivion in the pages of the *Journal*.

Through the kindness of Mr. Richardson I have become possessed of rubbings of all the brasses in Hayes Church, and, since this interesting series of memorials has never been published, its insertion may not be considered inappropriate on the present occasion :—

1. Under the demi-figure of a priest in canonicals :

Hic jacet dñs Johes Osteler¹ quodam Rector istis ecclē cujus anis p̄piciet
de^s. Amen.

2. Under the full length figure of a priest in rich canonical robes :

I beseeche you all that passeth here by for the soule of Sir John
Andrewes that here doth lye, say a pater noster and an ave.²

3. Under the figure, in full length, of a priest in canonicals :

Pray for ye Soule of S^r John Heygge late pson of this church
whiche decessid ye xix day of Dec^r. Ao. x^oxcii. whos Soule dñm p̄cr.

4. Hic robant in fossa sub p̄de Roberti Garreti p̄b̄i ossa Rectoris
olim eccelsiarum de Hays, et Cheshylurst, Qui obiit die
An^o dñi M^o cccc^olx. p̄picius sit de^s an^s. R. Ga. Notary publici.³

5. John Hoare, rector, as before given.

6. HERE LYETH BURYED JOHN HANDFORDE THE SONNE OF
HUMFREY HANDFORDE, OF LONDON, MERCHAUNT, BEINGE
EIGHT YEARES OLDE AND DIED THE XVIITH OF APRILL, 1610.

It would appear from the foregoing that priests formerly held the office of notary public, now only belonging to solicitors and attorneys; and that, in the pre-Reformation times, parish priests of the Roman Catholic Church were termed "*parsons*," such designations being given now only to the clergyman of the Reformed Church; clergymen also formerly held diplomas as Doctors of Medicine.

¹ Appointment, as Rector, 1460.

² Successor to John Osteler and appointed 1470.

³ Successor to John Heygge, and ap-

pointed in 1523. This brass appears to have been prepared before the death of Robert Garret, as a blank space was left for the day of its occurrence.