

## Notes on an Ancient Censer.

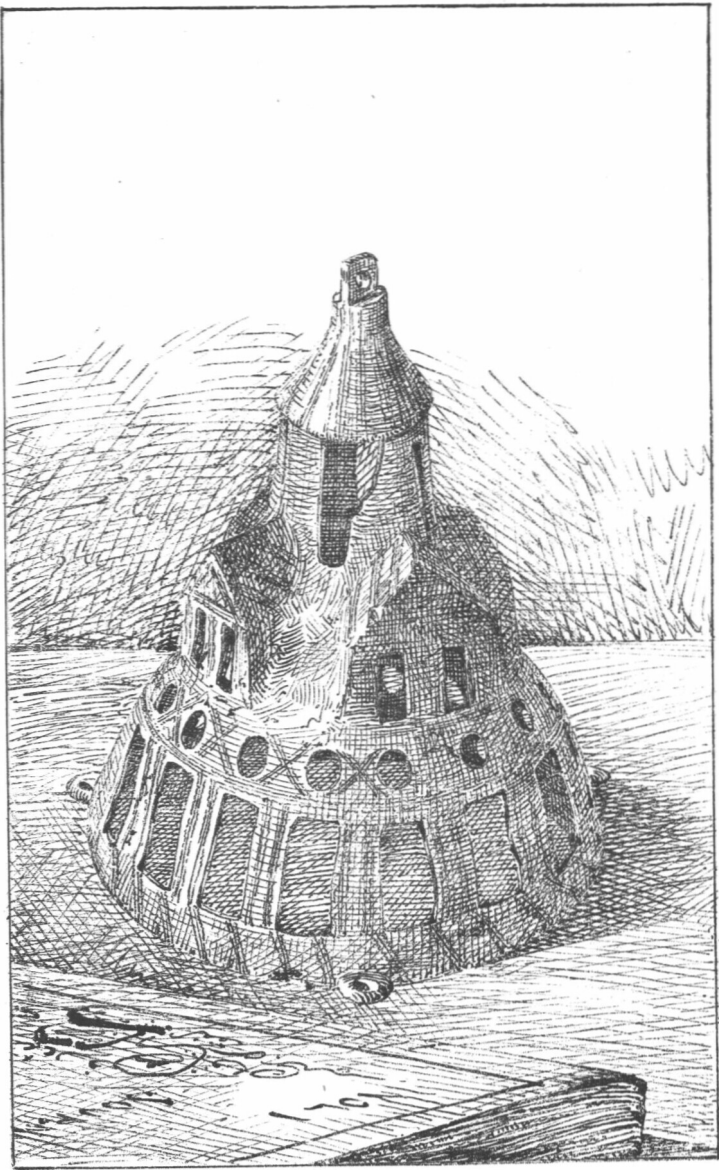
DRAWN BY F. J. ROBINSON.



THE upper part of the ancient censer, figured on the opposite page, was found embedded in the east wall of the chancel of the old Church of Upper Langwith, or Langwith Bassett, in the Hundred of Scarsdale. It was dislodged by the masons engaged in taking down part of the walls, in December, 1877, from a kind of rude recess to the south side of the place where the altar had stood. The remainder, unfortunately, crumbled to pieces on being removed. Probably the censer had been here concealed in order to escape the vigilance of the greedy Commissioners of Edward VI. The Inventories of Church Goods of that reign, preserved at the Public Record Office, are very full for the greater part of Derbyshire, but the roll pertaining to the Hundred of Scarsdale is unfortunately missing.

Censers were an invariable part of the furniture of the old Church of England. They are frequently enumerated in the Derbyshire inventories, and were usually in pairs:—*e.g.* “j payre of censors of laten,” Kirk Hallam—“j payre of sensors of brasse,” Gresley—“ij censars of sylv,” Derby, All Saints’—“a per of scensures,” Ilkeston. Sometimes single ones are mentioned, as j “senser of Maslen,” Findern—“j senser of brasse,” Ravenstone. Maslen was a metal, the chief compound in which was tin; latten was a metal composed chiefly of copper and tin, the former predominating, and did not much differ from brass. The Langwith censer is of latten. The height of this upper portion is  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches, and the diameter  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

Up to the close of the fourteenth century, censers were usually



ANCIENT CENSER COVER. LATHEWICH CHURCH, DERBYSHIRE.

of a globular shape ; but about that time they began to assume a pyramidal form, usually of architectural design. The Langwith censer is of fifteenth century date, probably about 1450.

Incense has been used in the pure worship of God from the earliest time, chiefly as an emblem of the ascent of prayer. The Psalmist says :—" Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense." It formed an important part of the ritual of the temple ; and the Apocalypse speaks of it as used before the Throne of God.

It is a popular mistake to suppose that incense became illegal at the time of the Reformation. It has never been condemned or abolished by the Church of England. Censers and ships (*i.e.* vessels of a boat shape), for incense, occur in inventories of Elizabeth's reign. Bishop Andrewes, Archbishop Laud, and George Herbert used incense, which was a common article of purchase in Churchwardens' accounts of the period. Bishop Cosen also used it when Master of Peterhouse. Less than one hundred years ago, incense was burnt before the altar at Ely Cathedral. Its use in the Church of England is now generally spreading.

This censer is now in the possession of the Rev. A. T. Blythe, rector of Langwith, who obligingly lent it for illustration in this journal.