



Brass Tobacco Stopper.

By C. E. B. BOWLES, M.A.



THE above is a drawing, by Mr. George Bailey, of Derby, a member of our Council, of an old tobacco-stopper belonging to Miss Wright, of Eyam Hall. It was found about four years ago in a gravel-pit at the foot of "The Delfe," which is the name of the broken ground belonging to the Wright estate, and is entered by iron gates exactly opposite the Hall.

In this dell, among a group of rocks, which is raised above the surrounding ground, is a curious natural archway. This was used as a pulpit by Mr. Mompesson, Rector of Eyam, during the time of the plague, in the years 1665 and 1666. Here, having thought it wiser to close the church, he held the services, and it was possibly on one of these occasions that the tobacco-stopper was lost. It is of brass; two inches in length, the ring being $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in its widest part; while smoking the owner probably wore it on his finger. When so worn, the stem lies easily in the palm of the hand, and is not uncomfortable.

The part engraved with the cross-keys, above a heart pierced with two arrows, would be used as a seal, but the signification of the emblem is not so apparent. Mr. Dalton, of the British Museum, pronounces it to be "a tobacco-stopper of the seventeenth century," but will make no further suggestion. Might it not have been given as a love token to the landlord of an inn bearing the sign of "The Cross Keys"?