

A Mediæval Paten at Dronfield.

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WHEN writing on the churches of Derbyshire in the seventies of last century, the communion plate of the large majority of the old churches came under my notice. Amongst those churches whose plate I did not see was that of the highly interesting church of Dronfield. Last year I revisited some thirty churches of the county, and was delighted when at Dronfield to find a mediæval paten in excellent condition and still in use, which had hitherto escaped being recorded. The two other pieces of Derbyshire pre-Reformation plate are the patens of the churches of Hartshorne and Shirley, which have been fully described and illustrated in the earlier volumes of the *Journal* by my friend, Mr. W. H. St. John Hope. The Dronfield example, though later in date, is far superior in execution to the other two just mentioned.

In the last edition of the late Mr. Cripps' *Old English Plate*, issued in 1906, the known pre-Reformation patens are said to be about "ninety"; but at that time the Dronfield paten was not recorded. It is, however, included in *English Church Furniture*, one of the series of "Antiquary's Books" which was published by Messrs. Methuen in September, 1907; in that work eighty-five mediæval patens are catalogued, exclusive of Wales.

The Dronfield instance is a particularly good example of the later Gothic or Tudor period. Unfortunately there is

no hall-mark, but it is undoubtedly *circa* 1530 in date. In the centre of the six-lobed depression is the Sacred Monogram within a plain circle. The spandrels between the lobes are well filled with an effective foliated pattern. The lettering of the inscription round the rim is of exceptionally fine design. The inscription, which consists of the first five words of the Song of Zacharias, ending with an apparently unmeaning suddenness, seems at first sight singularly unsuitable for such a position:—*Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel quia*, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for”—possibly it was intended that the devout mind should supply the hiatus with the continued thought—“He hath instituted the Blessed Sacrament,” or kindred words.

The diameter of the paten is $6\frac{1}{4}$ ins., and that of the inner depression 4 ins.

My thanks are due to the Rev. C. I. Bickerstaff for his courtesy in allowing me to fully examine the Dronfield church plate, and for the trouble he took to procure me a good photograph of the paten.



PRE-REFORMATION PATEN : DRONFIELD CHURCH, DERBYSHIRE.