



A MEDIEVAL COFFIN PATEN (†).

## XI.—A MEDIÆVAL COFFIN PATEN.

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The coffin paten illustrated on plate XLVIII is one of a type of which numerous examples have been found in the coffins and graves of bishops and priests in various parts of England, but it is the first that has been found in this district. It was found, during excavations carried out by the north of England excavation committee in its search for the Roman fort of Pons Aelii, lying upon the top course of a mediæval wall, at a depth of about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet, close to the north face of the keep of the castle of Newcastle upon Tyne. It would be originally placed, with its chalice, in the grave of a priest, possibly one who served in the chapel of the adjacent castle, but no remains of a burial were found near it.

It is made of bronze with the face tinned to resemble silver and measures  $5\frac{3}{16}$  inches in diameter. The central part is sunk and upon it the Holy Lamb is rudely engraved, facing, in an unusual manner, to the sinister and bearing diagonally across the left shoulder, a Latin cross with stepped base, in place of the usual banner. Around the raised rim is a very roughly cut inscription beginning with a small cross—

+ AHNVS DIPVITOLISPCATAMVNDIMIS.

The mistakes in the spelling as well as the rough, badly formed letters appear to show that it is the work of an unlettered man done in haste. The legend expanded and corrected reads—AGNUS DEI QUI TOLLIS PECATA MUNDI MISERE [NOBIS]—O Lamb of God: that takest away the sins of the world; have mercy upon us. It is probably of late twelfth or early thirteenth century date.

The custom of burying a chalice and paten in the graves of priests became general during the eleventh

century<sup>1</sup> and a considerable number of both have been found, generally of thirteenth century date. One found at Chichester<sup>2</sup> in the grave of a bishop is dated c. 1088 and is the earliest at present discovered in England; it bears the same device as the one here described, except that the Lamb holds the usual style of banner, and it has also the same legend around it. Others of the early thirteenth century have the Hand of God, the Vernicle, or the Holy Lamb in the centre, with varying legends. They were usually made of pewter, and examples made of that material are fairly common; silver was used occasionally for bishops, whilst tin and lead, though rarer, have also been found. There is an example of one made of latten at St. David's, but so far as the writer can find there is no record of one made of bronze with tinned face as this one is. The *Rites of Durham*<sup>3</sup> tells that at Durham the bishop was buried in full mass vestments "... and so laied in his Coffine w<sup>th</sup> a litle chalice<sup>4</sup> of sylver, other mettell or wax ... which was sett or laide upō his breast in ye coffine w<sup>th</sup> hime." This custom came down from early days, for when the grave of bishop Rānulph Flambard (d. 1128) was opened the "crumbling remains of a pewter chalice" were found lying at the right side of the skeleton, whilst in that of Geoffrey Rufus<sup>5</sup> (d. 1140) "some grey semi-metallic dust, probably the remains of a pewter chalice," was found. Nearly a hundred years later the constitutions of William of Blois, bishop of Worcester (1218-36), ordain that amongst the ornaments of churches there were to be two chalices (includes patens), one of silver for the mass, the other of pewter, not consecrated, to be buried with the priest.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Archæological Journal*, XLIII, pp. 151 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Old English Plate*, by W. J. Cripps, 11th ed., pp. 233, 244.

<sup>3</sup> Surtees Soc. Pub., no. 107, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> The context shows that this included the paten.

<sup>5</sup> *Trans. Dur. and Northd. Architec. and Archæ. Society*, II, pp. 244 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Surtees Soc. Pub., vol. XV, pp. 45, 49. *Alius stanneus non benedictus cum quo sacerdos altaris sepeliatur.*