

ST. ANDREW UNDERSHAFT.

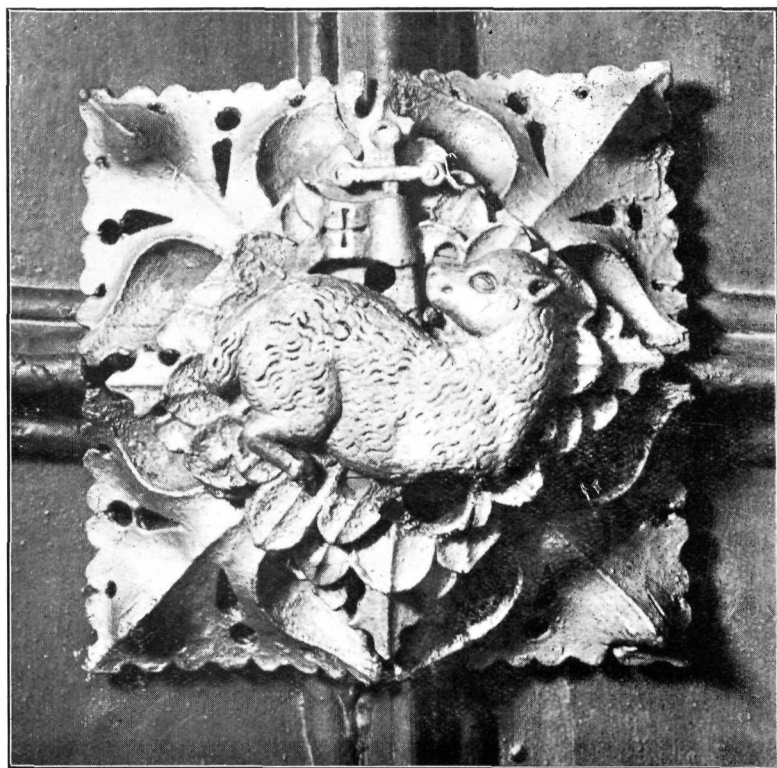
BY

P. MAINWARING JOHNSTON, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

THE Church of St. Andrew Undershaft, in the city of London, is a well-known landmark and place of pilgrimage: first, because of its being one of those that escaped the Great Fire of London in 1666; and, secondly, as having been re-built as we see it to-day, with the exception of an older tower, in that momentous 12 years that preceded the Royal Divorce and the Reformation, and as having coming down to us, roofs, walls and arcades, as it was built in 1520 to 1532. Among its numerous interesting monuments one stands supreme—that of honest John Stow, the historian and antiquary, whose *Survey of London* is an imperishable monument in itself. Born in 1525, while the church was rebuilding, he published his *Survey* in 1598, and died in his 80th year five years later. It is to him that we owe the record of these worthy citizens who joined together in the pious work of rebuilding their parish church—“Steven Gennings, Marchant Taylor, some time Mayor of London,” “John Kerkbie,” also a “Marchant Taylor” and some time one of the Sheriffs, “John Garlande, Nicholas Levison, William FitzWilliams and many others. These merchant’s marks and coats of arms are still there to be seen, carved in stone and in the wonderful 16th century glass that still remains in the windows of the aisles; and some in the 125 carved and gilt oak bosses that adorn the wooden ceiling, and which also include the Rose of Henry VIII and the Pomegranate of his first ill-fated Queen, the Shields of St. George and St. Andrew, the Arms of St. Paul’s and the Paschal Lamb. Opportunity of the scaffolding has been taken to photograph them at close range. We read of repairs and beautifyings, pewings and pavings, in 1627 and 1704,



WEST WINDOW.



BOSS OF THE SACRED LAMB.

and in 1726 Mr. Henry Tombes caused the spandrels of the arcades to be painted with the Miracles of Christ. There are said to have been figures of the Apostles and the Heavenly Choir on the Clerestory and over the Sanctuary, but these have been destroyed in a bad restoration of the 1870's, when the Church was Gothicised and its fine Norway oak wall-panelling and other fittings swept away. Happily the beautiful font and its cover, by Nicholas Stone, and the Grinling Gibbons pulpit were suffered to remain.

In the works of repair and re-decoration that have just been brought to completion by Messrs. Castle Bros., of Southwark, under my direction, many ancient and half-forgotten treasures have been brought to light, including one of those spandrel paintings—"Christ opening the eyes of the blind," which was completely hidden under many coats of dark paint and varnish. This sample of the 1726 work is painted in *grisaille*, to imitate sculpture in bas-relief, and has been ably resuscitated by the expert picture-restorer, Mr. Power, of Victoria Street. It is hoped that the others may be taken in hand shortly.

Other treasure trove include the magnificent wrought and hammered iron communion rails, discarded in 1876, which were rescued from the heating chamber, and which have now been re-placed in their old position. They probably date from 1704, and are, perhaps, the work of that master craftsman Jean Tijou, who has left us the great gates in St. Paul's Cathedral, or at any rate of his School. From among the old grave stones in the churchyard, which have been carefully laid in the part nearest to St. Mary-Axe, have been rescued a handsome ledger of black slate or marble, with gilt heraldic panel and lettering, to Sir John Vansittart, whose mural monument is on the south wall of the south aisle. This now stands at the west end of the north aisle, and eastward of it is another that has a special interest for all good Pepysians. It is the gravestone that covered the remains of Mr.

William Wight, Samuel's naughty "Uncle Wight," who, the Diarist records, made improper overtures to Mrs. Pepys. Even more interesting to the antiquary are the portions of a richly traceried wall-tomb in Liege marble of the early part of the fifteenth century, with indents of some of the brasses on the upright slab at the back. This is evidently one of the lost monuments mentioned by Stow, which would appear to have stood in the eastern part of the church, to Sir Robert Dennie, Knight, and his son Thomas Dennie, 1421.

The oak doors of the tower entrance, which are of late fifteenth century date, have been stripped of a quarter of an inch of paint, and now appear as the oldest external church doors in the City of London. The opposite doors to the north entrance, which are of c. 1520, have also been cleaned of many coats of paint, and the fine Northway oak door to the vestry has been similarly treated. The vestry is panelled in pine wood of early eighteenth century date; and one of the wide panels has been put on hinges to show the sixteenth century ashlar wall-face behind. Two other finds were made in clearing out a century's deposit of pigeon guano from the belfry—viz. an oak chest of c. 1500, with good key-escutcheons and square-shaped lifting handles; and another bearing date 1714, with the initials S.U.A., enclosed in an oval.

The whole church has been cleaned and re-decorated in cream-white, and the ancient arcades freed from heavy coats of drab paint—the most difficult and anxious item in the whole of this work of recovery, but one that amply justifies the risk and expenditure. They now stand out in their pristine state, beautiful specimens of master craft in pearly white Reigate stone. A new electric light installation has been made.

The Rector, the Right Reverend Bishop Perrin, and his enthusiastic churchwardens, Mr. Chapman and Mr. Brown, are deserving of warm congratulations on the completion of their task. The church was re-opened for worship on Sunday, November 2nd, 1930.