

the height of the shaft, and in the form of the cross upon the apex were suggested. Mr. Johnson also by way of explanation of his drawing contributed the following Paper upon

### TOWN CROSSES,

which was, in his absence, read by Mr. North:—

THE subject of "Town Crosses" is open to much enquiry. Without going very closely into the matter, I have found much to interest any one who takes pleasure in rambling amongst the relics of the past—not, however, so much from the erections themselves, as from the associations which are connected with them. They seem to divide themselves into three distinct heads or classes: Market Crosses, Memorial Crosses, and Town or Village Crosses. Of the antiquity of the first-named we have plenty of proof as far back as the thirteenth century, and I need only quote that in existence at Higham Ferrers, the capitals and mouldings of which are decidedly the work of that period. The form of the Market Cross is generally polygonal, with an open archway niche on two of its sides. The really good specimens to be found are few. More frequently, structures of a debased character, some surmounted by a kind of dome, seem to have replaced the original ones. Evidently, the centre or the principal part of the town was used as the site of these erections, and some of the principal historical events are connected with them. The illustrated descriptions to be met with give but little idea of the style (there were no Le Keux or Jewitts in those early days) but the remains are curious, and from many of the occurrences which are depicted in manuscripts and other ancient works, being found in connection with the Town Crosses, it is clear that they were looked upon with a degree of importance, if not of veneration.

In an engraving of "Cheapside," with the procession of Mary-de-Medicis on her visit to Charles I., the most prominent object is the cross which formerly existed there, and in a curious print in the Pennant collection in the British Museum, is seen the same cross very similar in detail undergoing destruction at the hands of the Puritans. A cross also existed in front of St. Paul's, which in addition to other purposes was used for preaching from. A drawing in the Pepysian Library shows this to have been a heavy low building, which it states was erected in 1450, and *remodelled* in 1595. A Market Cross existed in Edinburgh in Argyle's time, and his execution is shown in a drawing of the period as taking place close to the Cross. One more example near home. The High Cross which formerly existed in Leicester was erected in what must then have been the principal part of the town, for we find that during the Siege of Leicester in 1645, "Gallowtree Gate and several other entrances having been carried, by half-past one

the defenders were driven from every part of the fortifications except the Newarke; but the garrison and townspeople having retired to the Market Place, High Cross Street continued the struggle for nearly an hour longer." I believe a Cross in the pavement still marks the site of the ancient High Cross, one of the reputed pillars of which, in its debased form, is preserved in front of the Crescent in King Street.

Of Memorial Crosses I need say but little,—another member of this Society having formerly read a paper on the subject. I will only quote those beautiful structures built to commemorate the lamented Queen Eleanor at each of the places where her body rested in its journey back to London; the last of which was, I believe, built at the then village of Charing. The finest of them is at Waltham, and an attempt at its renovation rather than restoration caused much discussion,—the plea being that however faithfully the old work might be copied, it does at best but show how well we can imitate the original, and affords very equivocal evidence of the state of the arts in the reign of Edward I., and this argument will bear out in all matters of restoration. In the present day we are too apt to lose sight of the remains of the ancient work, and by the introduction of novelties to entirely destroy the character of the original. There is a charm about the moss-covered stone which is not appreciated by all architects; but the object should be, not to renew them by putting a fresh stone in the place of every old one that is in any degree mutilated, but to preserve them from further dilapidation, and to save every ancient feature that can possibly be preserved; restoring such parts only where it is indispensably necessary to ensure the safety and durability of the structure.

I think we may include the wayside Crosses amongst those intended to memorialise individuals, although time, that leveller of all distinctions, has effaced every trace which will identify them with those whom they were intended to commemorate. On the continent these Crosses are of constant occurrence, more frequently pointing out the place of some dark deed, and the resting place of those who have met a violent death, coupled with the inscription, "Pray for the soul of A.B."

Lastly of Village Crosses, the remains of which are so often to be met with, forming as they do, even in their ruin, pleasing objects. They generally consist of a few steps, by some called a Calvary, and a tall shaft with sometimes a few mouldings to form a base, and no doubt all had originally a Cross on the top. In some instances they had small niches and sculptured foliage. With but very few exceptions they shared the fate of almost everything else in the shape of a Cross during the Puritanic dispensation. In the journal of one U. Dowsing, January 6th, 1643, he writes, "We broke down about an hundred superstitious pictures, and 200 had been broke down before I came, we took away two Popish In-

scriptions with *ora pro nobis*, and we beat down a great stoneing Cross on the top of the Church."

What the Puritans began, time and neglect have in most instances completed, and nothing but a well worn base is now generally to be found. Some have fared rather better, and the tall shaft still rears its head though almost tottering, for the Cross is generally the resort of idlers and children, who day by day reduce the structure piecemeal, threatening the downfall of the shaft, and in time complete annihilation of the Cross. Such is the case with the Cross at Frisby on the Wreake in this county, which has led to these hasty remarks; but thanks to the spirit of restoration which is so strong in our land, the principal inhabitants of the village, determining that it shall not be consigned to oblivion, have commenced a subscription to restore it, and they intend to protect it from further violence by a palisade fence; this last may by some be thought an innovation, but any attempt to restore the Cross and leave it exposed would be useless. It is therefore hoped the innovation will be pardoned for its utility. The base is much decayed and whole stones have been removed, these will be carefully replaced, and as there are no traces of the Cross I have been led to a decision as to the period, from the moulding which is worked up the angles of the shaft.

The matter is a small one to bring before the Society, but as there are several other existing examples in the county fast mouldering away, it may lead to their rescue, by which in addition to forming a pleasing feature in the landscape, they may lead the wanderer and passer-by to bestow a thought on that Holy Faith of which they are the symbol, and perchance prove a stepping stone to God's house and the enhancement of his glory.

MR. NORTH exhibited a design by Mr. Lea, of Lutterworth, for the decoration of the eastern wall of the chancel of S. Martin's Church, Leicester.\*

MR. G. H. NEVINSON produced a small circular carving in ivory, two inches and a half in circumference, representing a combat between armed men and dragons, probably intended to represent a conflict between good and evil spirits. This carving was of an early period, apparently Norman. The same gentleman also exhibited a bronze celt, four inches in length.

MR. NORTH further exhibited a very fine Roman gold coin, recently found near Melton Mowbray, upon which he read the following short memoir:—The very beautiful gold Roman coin I have the pleasure of placing upon the table is entrusted to my care by Mr. Thomas Hickson, of Melton Mowbray, who has long been a member of this Society. It was found a few weeks ago, about two miles and a half to the south-east of that town, and with

\* Since adopted and completed.