

CHETWODE CHURCH.

June 12th, 1868.

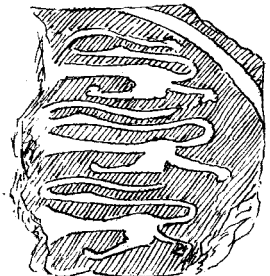
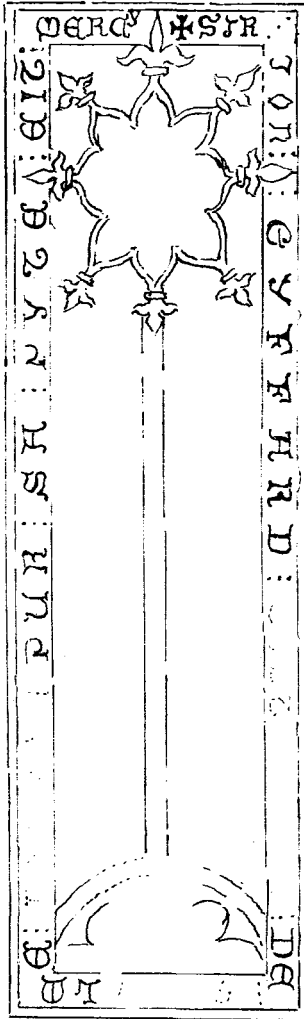
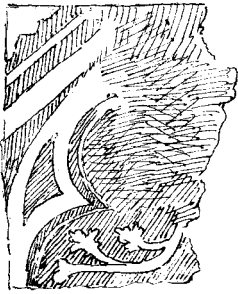
MY DEAR SIR,—I have been prevented, by various avocations, from reducing into proper form the scanty materials which present themselves towards throwing light on the history of the very interesting incised slab, of which I send a sketch.

During some recent repairs and renovations of the conventual church at Chetwode, it became apparent that beneath the brick pavement, long since covered, in its turn, with a wooden floor, there existed the original tile paving; this, indeed, has been the case not only in the chancel, now retained as a parish church, but also in the yard in front, formerly the nave of the conventual edifice. This latter has been much broken into in digging graves, but under the pathway the tiles are nearly perfect. Some specimens of the tiles composing this floor are here drawn—two of them the original size; of these, one presents two grotesque figures, intended, I conceive, to illustrate the bliss of celibacy by an exhibition of the possible inconveniences of conjugal life. The other is a head, forming a man's face one way, and a lion's if reversed. The German double-headed eagle, I cannot account for; the lions of England correspond with those remaining in a side window of the chancel.

The slab was discovered at the middle of the south side of the chancel, close to the wall. The date is that of about 1360. The inscription is, in parts, totally effaced, but as to the rest, as perfect as when first cut, and beautifully executed, as is also the floriated cross. The full inscription, no doubt, ran: "Sir Jon Gyffard gist icye De sa alme Dieu pur sa pitie eit mercy." Next comes the question, "Who was Sir John Gyffard?"

The history of the great baronial house of Giffard is to be gleaned from Browne Willis and White Kennet, as fully as materials exist for deducing it. The story is divisible into two epochs, separated by not many years, but not, apparently, capable of being now reliably connected as to family ties.

Of Walter Giffard, the cousin of William the Conqueror, any notice would be superfluous; but you will see that his male issue was considered to be extinct in two



Slab in Chetwode Church. &c.



Encaustic tiles

generations. The Giffards of Twyford arose shortly afterwards, and in 1350 Sir John Giffard obtained license to establish an oratory at his house there. He had a son, Sir Richard; and Thomas Giffard, who died in 1450, has a well-preserved monument in Twyford Church. Two slabs, defaced, of an earlier date, exist, which Willis concludes to be the tombs of Sir John and his son; but I think the conclusion is inevitable, that Sir John was a benefactor of Chetwode, and was there interred.

Later on in the family history, Thomas Wenman, who was M.P. for Buckingham in 1571, married Ursula, the heiress of these Giffards, and it is then stated without reservation that she was lineally descended from the Conqueror's cousin, any awkward doubts having evidently been got rid of by lapse of time. The arms of both branches of the family were those of England, with the difference of *silver* lions.

I am constrained to refer you to the above-named authorities, with these few suggestions.

I remain, my dear sir, very truly yours,

G. H. S.

Rev. C. Lowndes.

