

OLNEY CHURCH.

BY H. GOUGH, HON. MEM. BUCKS. ARCH. SOC.

THE two accompanying views of the interior of Olney Church are taken from original drawings in water-colours, made in or about the year 1854, by the late Walter Pennington Storer.*

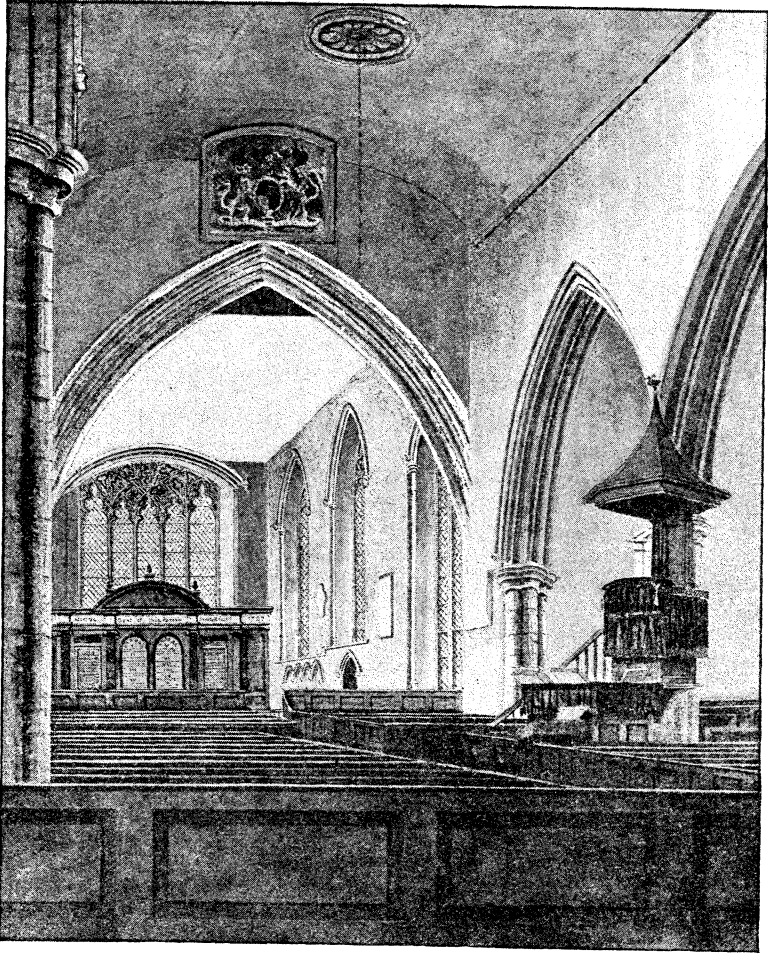
The view looking towards the east, shows the panelled altar-piece or reredos of oak, inscribed,

THOMAS NICOL Gent. of this Parish, Erected this, 1727.

Above it is the old east window, the head of which was the segment of a circle. The mullions and tracery (more or less made up, as it seems, of ancient fragments) were inserted about 1832, together with some bad stained glass in the head.† Over the sedilia is the small tablet to the Rev. Moses Browne, Vicar from 1753 to 1787, and, further west, a larger tablet to Lieut. William Mason, R.N., 1795. The roof of the chancel having been considerably lowered, a flat ceiling of plaster, at one time coloured blue, was put up beneath it, and the chancel was, on week-days, often separated from the nave by a strained red curtain, which, by means of a winch, could be let down to meet the wooden partition

* Born in Islington, 30 Jan., 1812; deceased 15 Dec., 1867; buried in Olney churchyard. In 1860, Mr. Storer contributed to this journal, "Some Notes Concerning Olney," where he was long resident. They are printed in Vol. II., pp. 188—198.

† An external view of the church from the south-east, engraved by James Storer, about 1810, is in *The Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet*. The east window had ere then been reduced in height to suit the lowered roof, and had four mullions, of either wood or stone, crossed by a transom near the top. The heads of the three south-side windows of the chancel were blocked, apparently with plaster. The present east window was designed by Mr. (afterwards Sir) George Gilbert Scott, after examination of the east window at Emberton, the churches being of coeval date, and presenting many points of resemblance to each other,



OLNEY CHURCH—LOOKING EAST.

that had taken the place of the ancient rood-screen. The Royal Arms, over the chancel-arch (but formerly at the west end, above the organ), were those of King George III., dated 1808.

On the south side of the nave, against the uppermost pier, stood the pulpit, which was constructed in the time of the Rev. James Bean, Vicar from 1787 to 1795. In 1854 it was removed to the south side of the chancel-arch, and the sounding-board, crowned by the gilded figure of a dove with an olive branch, dispensed with.*

Behind the pulpit against the east wall of the south aisle, is seen, in part, the remarkable tablet to William Gaines, which has, beneath a skull placed within the opening of a split pediment, the following quaint inscription:—

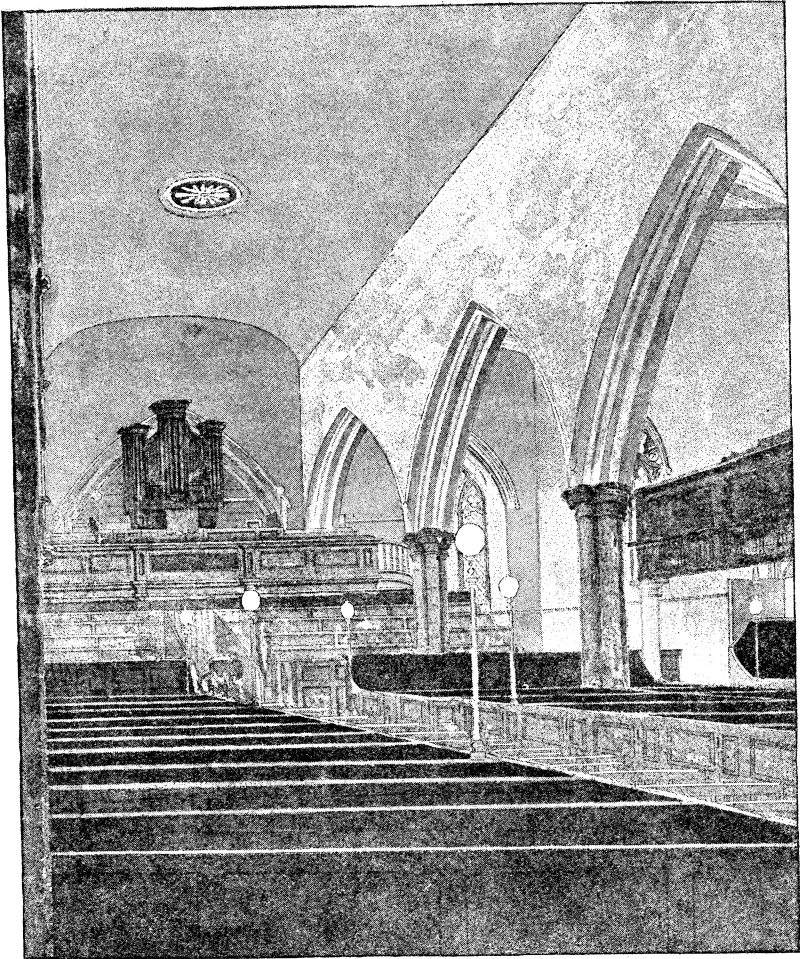
Here : lies : Jnterred : the : Bodie
of : William : Gaines
Late : of : this : Parish : who : Dec
eased the . 4th of : August : 1657
And : in . the . Yeaere : of : his : age 67

Death is noe losse But rather
Gaines For he by Dieing
Life Attaines. The Poore
the world the heauens and y^e
Graue His almes his
praiera his soul & Bodie
haue

This curious memorial was rescued from destruction by the late Rev. Henry Gauntlett, in or about 1832 (when the south aisle was rebuilt), and affixed to the east wall. Beneath the pavement of this aisle lie a great quantity of bones, then disturbed and reburied. *Requiescant in pace!*

The view looking towards the west is of somewhat later date than the other, for it shows the gas-lamps, which

* This pulpit, it should be observed, was not Newton's as is sometimes stated. It was lately removed (without the sounding-board) to the chapel of Northampton gaol, being superseded by a handsome one of open-work in oak, placed on the north or Gospel side of the chancel arch. The pulpit from which Newton preached was movable, and apparently of Jacobean date. It long stood in the chancel. Some portions which probably belonged to it have been worked up in the new stall-work.



OLNEY CHURCH—LOOKING WEST.

were introduced towards the end of 1854,* and the clerk's desk which superseded that represented in the other view. The west gallery was inscribed as follows:—

Matthew Marryot, Clerck and Sexton of this Parish, built this Gallery at his own proper cost and charge, 1723.†

The gallery in the north aisle was erected in 1765. On the 23rd of February in that year, the Rev. John Newton writes in the following terms to his friend Captain Clunie:—

“I think the congregations have been as large within this month past as they were any time last summer. . . . This put me upon planning a large gallery to be erected the whole length of the north side of the church, from the door to the chancel. I communicated my wish to Lord Dartmouth, who was pleased to approve it, and to promise his assistance. A plan has been made, and the estimate is eighty-five pounds—to have four depths of handsome pews and an open seat behind. As I intend to have the best front seat for the accommodation of my friends, and as I think it well to set a good example to the parish, that they may be stirred up to give freely, I have myself promised to subscribe five guineas. You will perhaps think this is more than the poor Curate of Olney can well afford. If you do (and you are not far from the mark), I hereby authorize and empower you to levy the said sum upon yourself, and your and my friends, in the city and eastern quarters, for my reimbursement. . . . I limit your district from Temple Bar eastward as far as you please; only I have a reason for wishing you not to apply, upon this occasion, to any immediately in con-

* The nave had previously been lighted by three large chandeliers (of which a drawing exists amongst the writer's collections); one carrying eighteen candles in two heights, and each of the others nine candles in one height.

† The donor was a man of substance. He was much concerned in the setting up of workhouses in Bucks and other counties. See *An Account of the Workhouses in Great Britain in the year 1732*, the Third Edition, London: 1786, 8vo. His will, made 27 Nov. 1731, was proved in P.C.C., on 26 Jan., following. He is therein described as of the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, Middlesex. But he desired to be buried in the parish church or chancel of Olney, “with one large hard blue stone out of one of the stone-pits of Olney aforesaid, to cover (his) whole grave.” Some memorials of his kindred remain in the churchyard, but this stone has not been found. Matthew Marryott (as he signs his will) had considerable landed and other property in Olney and elsewhere. He gives to his grandson, Thomas Stratton (*inter alia*), “all that gallery by (him) built in the parish church of Olney, and by faculty to (him) granted.”

nection with the Lock. I would keep that quarter entire for any other service that may offer. Perhaps we may want another gallery one of these days."

On the 4th of August following, he writes as follows to the same correspondent:—

"The gallery is finished, but the seats are not yet put up; it was pretty full this afternoon, and the church below stairs as much thronged as before. It seems, if the Lord continues to afford us His blessing, that we shall want another next summer."

No other gallery was, however, built. After his arrival in Olney, September, 1767, and for as long as his attendance at Divine worship was not hindered by mental affliction, the poet Cowper occupied a front seat about the middle of the north gallery.

The organ shown in the second view was erected in 1815, and was played upon for several years by four sons of the Rev. Henry Gauntlett, the eldest of whom was that eminent musician and composer, Henry John Gauntlett.* It was lately taken away, and succeeded by another instrument brought from Kettering. This stands below Gaines' monument in the south aisle.

The nave is still disfigured by the miserable coved plaster ceiling (shown in our two views), and by the deal pews, now cut down and stained.

There was a few years since, and probably is still, in Olney Church, an altar covering of blue cloth, embroidered, in the centre of the front, with the Holy Name, etc., in darker letters:—†

I E S V S

R * P

1626

This is curious, especially as indicating that the Holy Table usually stood altar-wise some years before Archbishop Laud's celebrated injunction on the subject.

* Born at Wellington, Salop, 1805. For several years a solicitor in London. Created Doctor of Music by the Archbishop of Canterbury, 1843. He died at Kensington, 1876.

† The initials R P have a knot between them. Probably they indicate Richard Pierson, of London, who by his will, dated 12 July, 1626, gave £150 to the poor of Olney.

That the chancel was in a ruined condition not long after the Reformation, appears from the following extract from the proceedings in Cardinal Pole's metropolitan visitation of the diocese of Lincoln, in the year 1556, by John White, Bishop of that diocese. They are printed in Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials*.

“Olney. Gardiani presentant cancellum fere collapsum esse, Cancellum. ac vix centum marcas sufficere ad reparationem ejusdem : ac rectoriam esse Dni Cardinalis. Unde Dns. decrevit detectum referend. ad reverendum Dnm. Cardinalem.”

The rectory and chancel then belonged to Cardinal Pole, Archbishop of Canterbury.

A vessel of bell-metal, found some years ago in a house at Olney and supposed to be a holy-water stoup, will be noticed in Mr. A. H. Cock's forthcoming work on *The Church Bells of Buckinghamshire*. It resembles a small bell reversed, and bears a legend coincident in date with the Cardinal's visitation. There is no positive evidence that it belonged to Olney Church, but it seems likely that it did, and that it was provided in consequence of the same visitation. The legend is :

✠ O MATER DEI MEMENTO MEI ANNO DNI M D LVI.