

to the various Nonconformist denominations in the seventeenth century it is surprising to find how few of their direct descendants alienated from the Church of England. Though this is not surprising when we consider that the original causes for which men took such a serious step as making a schism in the ranks of the Church have been all practically given up. The objections to the use of the surplice, the ring in marriage, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, ornate and beautiful churches, the use of Liturgical forms, observance of festivals, the need of an episcopacy—have been, or are being, abandoned one by one, yet these things were once fiercely denounced as doctrines of devils, and rags of popery. May we not hope that mutual good feeling will in the future accomplish the return of the descendants of all those who formerly felt conscientiously compelled to go out from amongst us. The causes of separation have proved inadequate ; why should the separation continue ?

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## Alfred the Great's Jewel.

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**T**HE Ashmolean Museum at Oxford contains the celebrated Alfred Jewel which is of priceless value as a historic relic, as well as a fine specimen of artistic metal work of the Saxon period. Its chief interest, however, to most Englishmen will be the fact of its having belonged to one of the earliest and greatest makers of England, and that its identity is absolutely authentic.

The following account of the relic is taken from Garham's *History of St. Neot's*, and gives what is known of its history and preservation :—

“ This Jewel was found, 1693, at Newton Park, some distance north of Athelney Abbey, in Somersetshire, near the junction of the Parrot and the Thone . . . it is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

"The form of this Jewel is battledoor shape ; the obverse is faced with an oval plate of rock-crystal  $\frac{4}{10}$  of an inch thick ; through this is seen the miniature, formed of enamelled mosaic, the compartments being let into cells of gold.

"The figure is that of a man holding a fleur-de-lys in each hand. The reverse is a detached plate of gold (lying immediately on the back of the miniature) on which is elegantly traced a fleur-de-lys, branching into three stems. The edge is bevelled towards the front, and contains the legend : ✠ AELFRED MEE HE HT GEWYRCAN [that is AELFRED ME ORDERED TO BE WROUGHT.] The gem terminates in a grotesque figure, representing on the obverse the head of some sea-monster, probably (says Dr. Musgrave) a dolphin ; on the reverse, the lower jaw is wanting, its place being supplied by a scaly flat surface ; the mouth of this animal embraces a small tube, traversed by a gold pin, apparently a rivet, originally passed through some wooden stem to which it has been fixed, and which has perished."

Around such an interesting relic of our early history must necessarily have accumulated many legends, conjectures and suggestions.

The purpose to which the Jewel has been put has been a much debated subject. Its appearance at first sight suggests a pendant to a necklace or collar, but this is out of the question, as in this position the figure would be upside down. It has also been supposed that it was used at the head of a standard and that it was carried before Alfred's army in his successful battles with the Danes. Other and more probable suggestions are that it was the head of a sceptre, or an ornament on the front of a helmet or other head-dress ; both these theories are supported by the presence of the rivet which still passes through the hollow mouth of the dolphin or sea-monster which terminates the Jewel at the narrow end, and which must have been inserted in order to fasten it firmly to a staff or stem of wood or metal.

It has been affirmed by Sir Francis Palgrave that the mosaic enamel figure is of greater antiquity than the casket in which it is set, and that it was probably presented to King Alfred as a valuable relic in his day by Pope Marinus or some other potentate. The work of the mosaic with its inlaid gold lines certainly indicates a very early period and is unlike the Saxon art in execution. The golden setting is undoubtedly Saxon work of a very high order, and indicates much skill in design and execution.

The character of the enamelled figure has been much speculated upon. Some colour has been given to the theory that it represented St. Neot by the fact that St. Neot was known to be Alfred's spiritual adviser and to be much venerated by him, and that he continually looked to him for guidance and protection.

Some have thought that it was intended to represent St. Cuthbert, and others Our Saviour, though there seems no warrant for this latter suggestion in the design or its ornamental surroundings.

Mr. Elliot Stock is about to issue a facsimile of this unique treasure.

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CHIPPING NORTON REGISTERS.—In reply to the query in the last number I may state that extracts from Chipping Norton Registers were privately printed by Sir Thomas Phillipps in folio. Only four pages however were issued.—G.F.T.S.

GIFTS TO THE READING MUSEUM. — A most interesting and valuable collection of coins has been presented to the Museum by Mr. H. B. Blandy which are now being arranged by the Rev. Alan Cheales, the Curator for Late Historic Archæology. Lord Arthur Hill has presented a fine collection of Roman and Greek pottery, containing about 270 specimens. The Trustees of the British Museum has given a copy of an important work "Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Museum, Miniature, Borders and Initials, reproduced in gold and colours."