



Cookham Church.

Relic of a long lost Monument.

By Stephen Darby.

The fate of the Tomb of the "Pylgrym of Jerusalem," the existence of which is recorded by Ashmole, and of which all traces seem to be lost, has excited some little interest. Ashmole, in his *History and Antiquities of Berkshire*, in his *Record of the Monuments in Cookham Church*, taken prior to the year 1723, gives the following: "On another Brass Plate fixed in a Gravestone placed near the Entrance into the Chancel is this Inscription: 'Of your Charite pray for the Soule of Sir Edmund Stockton, Vicar of this Church and Pylgrym of Jerusalem, Chanon professed of the House of our Lady of Gysburne in Yorkshire, Whose Soule Jhesu pardon.'"

This gravestone has disappeared, and all traces of it appeared to be lost, and probably would have been irrecoverable, but for the evidence for which we are indebted to Sir George Young, Bart., of Formosa Place, Cookham. In his very interesting pamphlet, entitled "Cookham Church, a Village Lecture," Sir George tells us "the great stone slab of the altar, with its four crosses at the corners, was broken and turned upside down, and placed as a threshold, at the north door, so that people might tread on it. There it was found, with two of the metal crosses still remaining, in 1860, and it was suitably worked into the pavement north of the Communion Table."

In the summer of the year 1901 Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, M.A., and Mr. C. R. Pears, M.A., F.S.A., made an inspection of Cookham Church, and on viewing this stone at once declared that it had nothing to do with an altar, as evidenced by the shield and its cross crosslets, which showed it to have been "a portion of a tomb-stone."

Later on, Mr. Challoner Smith, F.S.A., when engaged in taking rubbings of Brasses in the Church, took note of the shield with its bearings, and making research at the Herald's College, found the cross crosslets to be the arms of Stockton.

It so happens that in the year 1718 a Survey of the Monuments in Cookham Church was made by Steele and Delafield and the

manuscript copy, which has never been printed, exists at Oxford in the Bodleian Library. Steele and Delafield's descriptions agree with Ashmole's, so far as he goes, almost word for word, but many monuments are noticed by them which are omitted by Ashmole, and their descriptions are more complete than his. Of Stockton's tomb they say:—"In the Chancel as you enter from the Nave or body of the Church, lies a grey stone, with four shields thereon, each bearing a cross crosslet; with an inscription of y^o charite pray for the Soule of Sir Edmund Stockton, Vicare of this Church and Pylgrym of Jerusalem Canō professed of the howce of our Lady of Gisbōrg in Yorkshire. Whous soule Jhu pardon." Thus affording a positive confirmation of the opinion of Mr. Hope and Mr. Pears, and shewing also that the Canon's tombstone had been returned to a resting place very near to its original position. When and why the removal and destruction of this tomb had come about there was nothing to show, nor any record, nor even any tradition of alterations or repairs in the Church which would account for them. Quite recently, however, in looking over a transcript of an old account book of the Churchwardens of Cookham, my eye lighted on the following. At a Vestry Meeting held on September 22nd, 1735, it was "ordered that Mr. Langton, the present Churchwarden, pay to Mr. Elias Corker the sum of £10 10s. towards adorning and beautifying the middle Chancel in this Church on or before Easter Day next, and if not beautified the money to be by him returned for the use of the Parish." Now as to the proposed "beautifying and adorning." Among my very early recollections of Cookham Church is that the east window in the Chancel was embellished with a representation of Curtains, painted in dark crimson, drawn back on either side of the window, and shewing very deep folds, to my childish eyes, very gorgeous. In connection with this painting, I have heard a relative of mine tell a history to the following effect, viz., that they originated in the stranding at Cookham of a very able painter, who, to relieve his impecuniosity, offered to make a suitable painting at a very moderate cost. The offer met with some considerable opposition and the ability of the painter was called in question to perform what he proposed to do, but some little proof work was so satisfactory that the opposition was withdrawn, to the benefit of the artist, and an acquisition by the parish of which it was somewhat proud. My relative was born in 1775, and therefore could not have had personal knowledge of the transaction, but he no doubt acquired his information from those who not only knew of, but had taken a part in it. I

cannot but suppose that these curtains represented the adornment—the circumstances would account for the strange proviso as to returning the money—and I think that the opportunity was taken of beautifying the Church by the removal of Stockton's tomb so as to make room for either pew or passage.

Sir George Young, in his story of the Church, mentions that "In the churchyard there is but one monument of great antiquity. It is that of an ecclesiastic, as indicated by the floriated cross carved on it, and possibly of a Vicar of Cookham, but no inscription is decipherable. It was found in fragments in 1860, about eighteen inches below the sod, north of the Lady Chapel, and was restored by Mr. Brown and re-erected at his expense, on the same spot, out of respect for the memory of a possible predecessor. This monument may possibly have stood once within the Church and have been broken open, destroyed, and thrown out in the days of Edward the Sixth."

Here again we are indebted to Steele and Delafield. Speaking of the North Aisle, they tell us: "In this Isle lies also a Stone with the Pourtraits of a Woman between two men ingrained on brass, but the inscription is obscured a Pew standing thereon. By the last is an *ancient Stone with a carved Cross Flory extended over the whole Top part thereof*, yet without any Inscription. Here, probably, lies one of the former Vicars of the Church."

If my supposition be correct, that through the agency of Mr. Elias Corker, the Stockton monument and that with the Cross Flory were turned out of the Church—his own tomb seems to have been similarly dealt with, for according to the inscription on the tombstone of his daughter, Mrs. Lovegrove, in the Churchyard—"the remains of Mr. Elias Corker and those of his family lie within the Church in the Chancel." All evidence of this, however, is now wanting, either on gravestone or otherwise; so that he seems to have been paid back in his own coin.

