

FISHLAKE CHURCH, YORKSHIRE.

At the October meeting of the York and Lincoln Architectural Societies, a paper on Fishlake Church and Parish was read by the Rev. George Ornsby, Vicar of that place, of which the following, omitting various merely local allusions, is the substance :—

The church is dedicated to St. Cuthbert, and I thought for a long time that this arose naturally out of the connection existing between this church and the prior and convent of Durham. But there was a church here long before Durham had anything to do with it. It may be said, indeed and with truth, that that implies no reason why the name of so distinguished a saint should not be attached to it, apart from any immediate connection with that splendid foundation where the shrine of Cuthbert was for centuries an object of loving veneration. The name of Cuthbert was familiar as a household word all over Northumbria. His seven years' wanderings, or rather the wanderings of those who carried his bones over the wide district between the Humber and the Tweed, to escape the ruthless attacks of the Danish pagans, were vividly stamped on the memory of the inhabitants of that region, and for that reason alone many a church throughout the land was afterwards dedicated in his honour. I would almost venture, however, to claim for Fishlake a closer connection with the great saint of the north: it has been handed down in the traditions of the monastery of Durham as one of the resting-places of the body of the saint. A list of these places was compiled by Prior Wessington, A.D. 1416, and placed over the choir-door of the church of Durham. The original compilation, in the handwriting of the prior, is still preserved in the Durham Treasury, and under the shire of "Yorke" he gives the names of "Pesholme, Fyshlake," and "Acworth." Whether or no the body of St. Cuthbert really rested at every place named by Wessington may be a matter of doubt, but that Eardulf and his companions did wander with that body over the dense forests and the healthy hills, the cultivated plains and the wild morasses of ancient Northumbria, is matter of historic certainty; and it happens curiously enough, as far as Fishlake is concerned, that a document in the registry of the Dean and Chapter of Durham appears to point to some more definite connection with the saint than the mere dedication of the church would imply. In an agreement dated 22nd September, 1438, between the prior and convent of Durham and "Ried. Wryghte, of Fysshlake, yeoman," the latter becomes tenant under that body of a piece of ground forming a portion of the garden of the Rectory of Fishlake—"Quæ quidem parcella jacet inter residuam partem predicti gardini Rectoriæ de Fishlake ex parte orientali, et quendam locum vulgariter vocatum *Cuthbertehaven*, ex parti occidentali, et inter pratum Rectoriæ Ecclesiæ predictæ ex parte australi, et cimiterium ejusdem ecclesiæ ex parte boreali." The mention of the "Rector's meadow," (which at this day forms a portion of the glebe attached to the living,) and especially the churchyard, enables me to identify this plot of ground almost to a yard, and to mark the site of what was once known as Cuthbert's Haven. This name carries us back to a time when the river spread itself at this point into the broad expanse of mere, from which the place derived its name, and there was no doubt a small creek or natural harbour in the lake a little to the south-west of the church, but both lake and haven have long disappeared. The drainage of Hatfield Chase under Ver-

muyden, in the seventeenth century, effected a complete change in the face of the country. Instead of flowing in three channels, one only now conveys the waters of the Don on its downward course, and corn now waves over more than one spot where the fisherman once let down his nets into the waters of the mere or the pool. Local tradition has failed to preserve the memory of Cuthbert's Haven, although a small landing-place for discharging the cargoes of the small craft which ply on the river still exists, almost on the very spot where it must have been. We may perhaps assume, without being very fanciful, that at the time when it assumed the name some dim tradition existed of the monks having landed there with their holy burden. And the two crosses, the bases and a portion of the shafts of which still remain in the village, may have something to do with it: it is quite possible that they have taken the place of earlier ones, which, according to the practice of the Anglo-Saxons, would mark the spot where the body rested.

The tract now known as the parish of Fishlake was originally a portion of the extensive parish of Hatfield, the lords of which were the great Earls of Warren. To the munificence of those powerful nobles is doubtless owing the original foundation of the subsequently large and splendid churches which at this day form the chief attraction of the once wild region where their stately towers rear their heads. Fishlake soon became a separate parish. The history of its successive fortunes,—its possession by the monastery of Lewes under a grant by the third Earl of Warren, in the twelfth century,—its coming into the hands of the Crown in 1372,—its appropriation, in 1387, to Durham College, Oxford, which was an educational establishment belonging to the prior and convent of Durham, and its eventual possession by the Dean and Chapter of Durham, are succinctly detailed by Hunter.

The external features of the church are for the most part fifteenth-century work, its tower and the clerestories of its nave and chancel belonging to that period. The tower, of three stages, is of beautiful masonry, with a noble Perpendicular window of five lights, divided by a transom, surmounted by a canopied niche, in which stands the figure of St. Cuthbert, represented, as usual, with the head of Oswald in his hand. The figure of the saint, wonderful to relate, has escaped all iconoclastic injury. On the south side of the exterior are carved two badges in bold relief, a falcon and fetterlock—the badge of Edward IV., and a rose surmounted by a royal crown, on which is a lion *sejant affronté*. The east window is a peculiarly fine specimen, the head filled with rich tracery of flamboyant-like character. The roof of the chancel had originally a high pitch, of which the indication is sufficiently obvious, both externally and internally. When, however, the nave received its clerestory, I have no doubt it was felt that the contrast was not pleasing between the flat roof of the nave, with its battlemented parapet, and the high-pitched roof and comparative low side-walls of the chancel: these walls were therefore heightened, and a clerestory added to the chancel, the result of which was unfortunate, as I shall hereafter shew. The nave-clerestory is of the best Perpendicular character, and I know few parochial churches which possess clerestory windows in that style of better character or proportions. The terminations of the hood-mouldings of the central window in the south clerestory are formed by the heads of a king and a bishop, carved with great spirit and boldness. The former probably represents Edward IV., as his badge occurs on the tower, which must have been built about the same time. A floriated cross of excellent character terminates its eastern gable. The

lower side-windows of the chancel are late Decorated, verging on Perpendicular. The chancel clerestory was evidently a copy of that belonging to the nave, but by far less skilful hands,—the rude workmanship of country masons, who tried to emulate the design of an accomplished architect, which had been carried out by the hands of craftsmen superior to themselves. Before the repairs and restoration which took place in the chancel three years ago, this difference was very marked and obvious. The masonry of the exterior is ashlar-work, with the exception of a small portion of the wall of the north aisle, and some rubble-work of boulder-stones in the south chancel wall, which, with its round-headed priest's door, betokens the existence of an earlier church, and bears witness to that religious feeling which almost always preserved some portion of the ancient edifice, even when it must have contrasted, as we should think, in no very seemly manner with the newer and more splendid fabric which was superseding it. The chief external feature, however, of the earlier fabric is the very curious and interesting south doorway, which is still regarded as the pride of the church. Its date I should give as about the middle of the twelfth century. It is of yellow limestone, recessed, having four shafts with sculptured capitals on each side, supporting concentric arches, each richly adorned with sculpture, some of it symbolical. The outermost member is undoubtedly so, consisting of a series of medallions. Our Lord is represented in one at the crown of the arch; in the one on His right hand, St. Peter is readily recognisable by his well-known symbol of the keys. Each of the other medallions contains two sitting figures, with books or rolls in their hands; and beneath the whole, on each side, two figures in long garments, probably angels, are represented in the act of destroying a dragon—symbolizing altogether, I believe, the victory over sin, and our Lord's session in glory. Whether the sculptures on the other members of the arch, human and animal, are symbolical, or simply arbitrary or grotesque, I cannot venture to say. Some of the capitals are worthy of note. On one is the sagittarius, or mounted archer, which is generally considered to identify the portion of a building where it occurs as belonging to the reign of Stephen. On another is a struggle between a demon and a good angel for a soul, the latter represented, as was usual, by the figure of a naked child. A third has a boat or ship, with two hooded figures in it; and a fourth presents two mounted combatants in the act of collision. The rest are adorned with the interlacing floriated ornament which is so common a decoration in the illuminated MSS. of the period.

Internally the church consists of nave, north and south aisles, and chancel. There is also a chantry-chapel, of late Decorated work verging on Perpendicular, at the end of each aisle, opening into the chancel on both sides by a very flat-headed arch. The aisles extend westward to the extreme angles of the tower; the bays thus formed are shut off from the tower and the rest of the church by walls of coeval date. The body of the church, exclusive of the tower, is 56 feet in length, by 52 in width; the chancel is 42 feet long by 19 wide. The piers and arches of the nave are Early English, the former being low and round, with bell-shaped capitals. The two westernmost ones are each composed of three disengaged shafts, with capitals of similar form under one abacus. The easternmost pier on the south side has originally corresponded with these, but the inward thrust which evidently took place when the wall beyond was cut away preparatory to the erection of the existing chancel-arch and the work beyond, occasioned the builders to replace the centre disengaged shaft by a strong semi-octagonal

pier, with a view, doubtless, to its greater security. The nave-arches are obtuse pointed, recessed, with plain chamfered edges.

The south aisle has three side-windows,—the two to the west of Perpendicular work, the other a three-light window with Decorated tracery. That at the western extremity is composed of three lancet-shaped windows, with a dripstone externally continued over each.

Three of the windows on the north side are square-headed, of three lights, one with Decorated tracery, the others Perpendicular.

The chantry-chapels at the east end of the north and south aisles have both been added at the same time; the windows, which are large and wide, of five lights each, flat-headed, with tracery verging on the Perpendicular period, are precisely the same in each. The exceedingly flat-headed arches, of very wide span, which open from them into the chancel on each side, also correspond, as do likewise the arches which communicate with the aisles. These are of the width of the aisles, four-centred,—the one on the south springing from piers, the other from corbels.

The roofs both of nave and aisles and of the chancel also remain for the most part in their original state, as far at least as the main timbers are concerned. They are nearly flat, and belong to the fifteenth century, but possess no peculiar features. The easternmost bay of that in the nave has had coloured decoration, of which traces remain. The main timbers have a pattern running along them chevronwise, alternating in red, black, and white. There are also marks of panelling having existed, and a large carved and gilded boss shews that the part of the roof which overhung the great rood received a more than ordinary share of honour. A horizontal beam runs across the wall about midway between the roof and the apex of the chancel-arch, for the use of which I am unable to account, unless it may have had to do with the fastenings of the great rood.

The chancel-arch is an equilateral pointed one, of lofty and magnificent proportion, reared at the time when the late Decorated chancel superseded the Norman one, of which traces remain in the priest's door, a portion of wall, and an internal stringcourse.

When the whitewash was removed from the nave a few years ago, traces of colour were found in several parts, but especially on the chancel-arch, where sufficient indications remained to enable me to trace out the pattern without difficulty. The arch of the easternmost bay on the south side of the nave has also had similar decoration. The rood-screen, dating about 1500, remains in its original position, and has recently been thoroughly repaired by the Dean and Chapter of Durham, a new cresting added, carefully copied from a fragment of the old which remained perfect; and it has also been cleansed from a thick coating of red mahogany paint, with which the taste of a past generation thought fit to cover genuine old English oak-work.

Before entering the chancel, we must notice the singularly beautiful font which stands at the western extremity of the nave. It stands on an elevation of two steps, the lowest of which is nearly hidden by the raising of the floor of the church from its original level. On some of the flags being taken up lately for the purpose of repair, I found two or three square tiles near the step of the font, which were evidently part of the original flooring. On the west side, the font has a platform of three steps for the convenience of the officiating priest. The font is of large proportions, being fully five feet from its basement-step to the top of the bowl. It is octagonal in form, with rich sculptured decoration of about the middle of the fourteenth century. Each face of the octagon presents a figure standing under an ogee-canopied

niche, the crockets and detail of all having wonderfully escaped injury. The arrangement of the figures is as follows:—In the niche facing the east is a figure vested in a chasuble, with the archiepiscopal pallium, bearing a church in his right hand and a cross in his left. So far there could be no difficulty in settling that he was an archbishop; but his mitre is of peculiar form: his brow is encircled with a coronet of leaves of the ordinary conventional form, and rising from within it is a high-peaked cap different from, and more pyramidal in its shape than, the mitres of the episcopal figures which fill the remaining niches. I apprehend it must be intended to represent a Pope. In the niche on his right is a bishop standing over a font, in which is an infant. In that on his left is St. Cuthbert, always easily identified by the head of King Oswald in his hand, and at his feet a kneeling figure holding a scroll. The niche immediately facing the west is filled by an archbishop holding a cross, as is also the one looking north. The rest are occupied by episcopal figures. All are in the attitude of benediction, and have held croziers in the other hand. The bosses underneath the bowl of the font, with a symbolism as beautiful as appropriate, each represent an angel bearing an infant in his arms^a.

The removal of a heavy and lumbering west gallery has displayed the full proportions of a very lofty arch, by which the nave opens into the tower, shewing also the fine Perpendicular five-light western window to which I have already alluded.

Fragments of bench-ends and other wood-work of the fifteenth and sixteenth century work exist, and have been used up in the modern pewing of the aisles and other parts. Amongst these is a somewhat curious and perhaps unique fragment. It is a piece of oak plank with the royal mark of King Henry V., shewing that it has formed part of some timber from a royal forest, which had no doubt been given for the wood-work in the church. I may mention *en passant* that timber was given for such purposes with some formality: it required a regular warrant to the constable of Conisbro' from Thomas Earl of Lancaster to enable the friars of Tickhill to receive his gift to them of two oak-trees from his domain; this warrant bears date the 11th of Edward II., and is given at length by Mr. Hunter. Each side of the nave was uniformly seated with oak in 1616. This still remains, with some arabesque carving enclosing the date on a portion of its framework. It was unfortunately deprived of its ancient character about twenty-five years ago, by the addition of deal doors, and the heightening of the backs of the benches with the same material.

^a Since the reading of this paper I have been favoured with a communication from the Very Rev. Dr. Rock on the subject of the decorations of the font in my church, in reply to a letter I took the liberty of addressing to him, in the hope that his great ritual learning and profound acquaintance with all that appertained to the services of the Church in olden time, might elucidate the meaning of the sculptured figures which adorn its sides. His prolonged absence from home prevented my receiving his answer, as I had hoped, before the meeting; but as his explanation may not be unacceptable to those who take an interest in the subject, I will ask you to afford me a place for it. Dr. Rock considers the decorations of the font very interesting and unusual. The figure looking east, pontifically vested, with a single crowned tiara, represents, he says, without doubt, Pope St. Gregory the Great, the apostle of the English, and as such, he holds a church in his right hand. The bishop with the font and child is St. Nicholas, the patron of children as well as seamen, and a favourite saint among our forefathers. The two archbishops he considers to represent St. Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, and St. William of York. St. Cuthbert, of course, speaks for himself. The other bishops are, in all probability, St. Benedict Biscop, St. John of Beverley, and St. Hugh of Lincoln.

One of the ancient altar-stones, on which the five crosses may still be dimly and partially traced, has been used as a gravestone, and lays in the centre of the nave.

The chantry-chapels retain their screen-work on the western sides, of the same date as that of the chancel. The north chantry was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the south to the Holy Trinity. The latter is identified by a flat stone, inscribed with the name of Thomas Fairbarn, who died vicar in 1496. His will, proved at York on the 6th of October in that year, has some rather curious items. He desires burial in the chapel of the Holy Trinity, within the parish church of Fishlake. Eight pounds of wax are to be burnt around his corpse on the day of his burial and its octave. He leaves ijs. to the repair of the high altar. Sixpence each is left to the light of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the light of the Cross (no doubt the great rood), and a similar sum to the lights of St. Antony and St. Cuthbert, and 2d. to every other light throughout the church. To his church of Fishlake he bequeaths two books, *Pupill' et Catholicon*, to remain there for ever. But, alas for the vanity of human wishes and testamentary bequests! the ancient chest of oak, with its iron bands, which doubtless received them, still exists, but the volumes have long disappeared.

Let me say a few words about these books. *Pupill'* is undoubtedly the *Pupilla oculi*, once a very famous book, but now exceedingly rare, and but little known. Its full title will give an idea of its contents:—"¶ *Pupilla oculi*, omnibus, presbyteris præcipue Anglicanis summè necessaria: per sapientissimum divini cultus moderatorem Johannem de Burgo, quondam almæ universitatis Cantabrigiæ: cancellarium: et sacræ paginæ professorem, necnon Ecclesiæ de Colingam rectorem: [Collingham in Notts., near Newark:] compilata anno à natali Dominico M.CCC.LXXXV. In qua tractatur de septem sacramentorum administratione, de decem præceptis decalogi, et de reliquis Ecclesiasticorum officiis, quæ oportet sacerdotem ritè institutum non ignorare." Cave quotes editions at Paris in 1510, at Strasburgh in 1514, and Rouen in 1516. The first, and apparently the last, are in the Bodleian, as also a Paris edition of 1518. There are MSS. of it in the libraries of Balliol, Exeter, Brasenose, Corpus, and Magdalen, at Oxford, and in those of Trinity, Caius, Corpus, and Peterhouse, at Cambridge. *Catholicon* is included among the *Libri Grammaticæ* in the ancient catalogue of the monastic library of Durham. It is there described as *Catholicon, seu Summa Januensis*. This was Joannes Januensis de Balbis, to whom later authorities—such as Oudin and Fabricius—ascribe the authorship of this work; but the earlier bibliographers give it to Jacobus de Voragine, who was also the author of the *Aurea Legenda*. He was a Dominican, provincial of the Order for Lombardy, then General of the whole Order, and Archbishop of Genoa. He died in 1298. It was printed with a date as early as 1470; and there is also an edition, without year or place, which is possibly ten years earlier. Both are in the Bodleian. The library of this country vicar, of nearly four centuries back, appears to have comprised only one book more—but that the best of all. To John Adam, chaplain, who officiated, in all probability, in the chantry in which the testator lies, he bequeaths "unum librum vocatum *lee Bible*." To each of his god-daughters, "filiabus meis," he leaves 4d.; for, in justice to the fair fame of a predecessor who was vowed to celibacy, I must explain that *filiabus* conveys that meaning in documents like that before us. The parish clerk's legacy consisted of a murray-coloured gown lined with black frieze. He also mentions several of his kindred, who receive bequests of various kinds:

sheep and lambs, a horse, a mare with her foal, a chest with the "naprewane" it contained, pewter dishes, and a few yards of cloth and blankets. To his nephew, Nicholas, he leaves seven marks, 6s. 8d., to help him on with his education—"ad exhibendum eum ad scholas Oxoniæ"—doubtless at Durham College, to the maintenance of which, as I have already stated, the great tithes of Fishlake were appropriated. His will, altogether, brings vividly before one the status of a country priest at the time. It is witnessed by two chaplains, Richard Skynner and John Adam; by Thomas Croft, the parish clerk; and by John Ricarde and John Parkyn, surnames which, more than two centuries after, occur in connection with this parish.

Besides these chantries, there was at least one other altar in the church, but no trace remains of its position. I am rather disposed, however, to assign it a place within one of the enclosures formed by the walls of pre-Reformation date, which shut off the western ends of the north and south aisles from the nave and tower. A testamentary document again—one of the most valuable of all illustrations and authorities—enables me to speak, at any rate, with certainty of its existence. In 1510, Will. Hoton, of "Sikhhouse," in the parish of Fishlake, after leaving 1 lb. of wax to be burnt before the images in Fishlake Church, bequeaths 18s. for the purchase of a vestment, "cum pertinentiis," for the use of the celebrant at the altar of St. John the Evangelist, in that church. A few years before this, in 1504, we find that John Perkyng—no doubt the same who witnessed Fairbarn's will—mentions in his own the light of St. John Baptist. This may mean only a light burning before an image, but in all probability implies another altar, for it occurs immediately after naming the lights of Blessed Mary and the Holy Trinity, to whom altars, as we know, were dedicated. Perkyng also leaves 5s. for a set of vestments, "uni vestimento vocato a *sewte*." The *vestmentum*, as you may see, was not a single robe only; the word always includes the stole, maniple, and chasuble, which formed the special apparel of a priest at the administration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice: occasionally, an alb and a cope also constituted part of the "*sewte*."

We might almost have expected to find such things as vestments bequeathed by the gentler sex, for we know that the embroidery which adorned them was often the work of their hands; but the only will relating to Fishlake which has come under my notice containing a lady's bequest, presents the pleasing feature of greater care for the substantial comfort of our Lady's chantry than for his outward garniture. Dame Alice Shirwood, relict of Richard Shirwood, citizen and alderman of York, leaves a sum of money to increase his 'stipend':—"Item, lego ad incrementum salarii capellani dicti *Lady Prest* celebrantis in Ecclesiæ Fissshelake vjs. viij*d*." The name of her father, whom she mentions, Thomas Balnecroft, shews that she sprang from this neighbourhood. Her will bears date August 25, 1451.

The chancel has been most carefully and liberally restored within the last three years by the Dean and Chapter of Durham, the patrons and impropriators of the living, to whose munificence and ready attention to the representation I felt it my duty to make to them of the need of such restoration I take this opportunity of bearing most willing and grateful testimony. The buttresses of its eastern angles and the south wall had seriously given way from failure in the foundations, partly caused by centuries of inattention to the proper carrying off of the water from the roof, and partly by the weight of the Perpendicular clerestory, an addition which the walls were not calculated to bear. The most serious result was the way in which

the beautiful tracery of the east window was affected: the outward thrust of the walls had so completely loosened the keystone of the window-arch, that the whole of the east gable was pressing on the mullions and tracery, and they were so thoroughly shattered that a very small portion only could be re-used. New tracery and mullions were therefore absolutely necessary; but a most careful and elaborate drawing having been previously made under the direction of Mr. Kyle, the gentleman employed by the Chapter in the cathedral works at Durham, to whose care the work was entrusted, the window is a perfect reproduction, as I can testify, of the old one. Its proportions, too, are now fully displayed, the lower part having been partly built up to accommodate some bad panelling mixed with fragments of old screen-work which did duty as a reredos, all of which are now removed. The clerestory windows also required new tracery, in which the pattern of those in the nave was followed, of which, as I have said, they were originally a poor imitation. The chancel had originally an aisle to the north, indications of which are still obvious, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century a re-vestry was thrown out on this side corresponding in size with the eastern bay of this aisle. In 1523 we find Edmund Jenkinson, of Fishlake, leaving 12*d.* "to the coveringe of the revestry." This addition has long disappeared, but traces are still observable on the exterior of the place where its roof joined the main building. The piscina was simply a square recess in the usual place. The sedilia had been of wood; the marks of their division may yet be seen on the sill of a square-headed Decorated window, which was brought down to a convenient level for the seat. A sepulchral arched recess exists on the south side near the priest's door. When the foundation of this side was under-set in the course of the restoration, the remains which it covered were perforce disturbed, and a chalice of the usual kind was found, shewing that it was the resting-place of an ecclesiastic. There were also found two bronze letters, an E and an R, and a curious fragment of an ancient chasse or reliquary case, with an evangelistic symbol. Two rectors we know were buried in the chancel—Mauleverer, who died in 1368, and his successor, William of York. The latter desires burial "in ecclesia mea ex parte australi magni altaris coram ymagine S. Cuthberti." The curious altar-tomb on the north side covers the remains of Richard Marshall, who died vicar in 1505.

The window above it is of three lights, with late Decorated tracery. It contains the only portion of old stained glass now existing in the church: the arms bear a semblance to the well-known bearing of Warren, and probably have belonged to some illegitimate branch of that powerful family, who were once the lords of Hatfield and its surrounding space. The name yet survives in the designation of a farmstead in Sykehouse, which is known as Warren-hall.

The church is not rich in old sepulchral memorials. A fragment of an early incised cross, and two large flat stones with inscriptions, half effaced, in the Lombardic character, are all that remain, except those of Fairbarn and Marshall already mentioned. Enough is legible on one to shew that it covers the remains of William Nowell and Avice his wife. The date is 1504. The name of Nowell occurs perpetually about that period in connection with Balne, which was an ancient subdivision of the West Riding, comprising the low-lying lands between the Aire and the Don, and, like Morthing, was constantly used in former times as a descriptive adjunct to the names of places in the neighbourhood. We meet with Fishlake-in-Balne, Pollington-in-Balne, Sykehouse-in-Balne, &c. Fragments of early

gravestones were found when the south wall of the chancel was underset, which had been used in making the foundation of the building which superseded the original Early English one. Fragments of lancet-headed windows appeared to have been unscrupulously applied to the same purpose. Portions of these I have preserved, together with a corbel or two of late Norman character which were turned up at the same time. When the pavement of the chancel was taken up for the purpose of being repaired and relaid, I observed many fragments of a former floor of plaster, a material constantly used for that purpose in the older houses and cottages in this and many other places, though I am not aware of any instance of its use in a church. What rendered it more curious was, that on several of the fragments were portions of letters painted on the plaster, evidently shewing that memorials of the departed or legends of some kind had appeared on its surface. It was in too fragmentary a state to make out anything approaching to an inscription, having manifestly been disturbed at some previous time, probably when chancels were levelled in the days of Puritan misrule. A tablet of stone with a rudely carved border of late fifteenth-century work, on the lower part of which are the words,

“*Letamur in misericordia,*”

which appears formerly to have contained a brass, and the capital of a pillar presenting devices of which I am unable to make out the meaning, are let into the south wall close to Marshall's tomb.

The ancient stall-work of the chancel must have perished, at all events, before the Restoration, for the decayed and broken fittings which until very recently it contained could lay claim to no higher antiquity. It is now very handsomely furnished with new oak seats on each side, with stalls at the returns, and a parclose of excellent design and workmanship dividing it from the south chantry-chapel. The organ is placed in the one on the north side. The standard-ends of the desks in front of the seats terminate in carved poppy-heads of good character. I have again to mention the Dean and Chapter of Durham, to whose munificence we owe these fittings, and Mr. Kyle, to whom they intrusted the design. The substantial repair of the chancel, internally and externally, has thus been worthily completed, setting an example which more than one impropiator would do well to follow.

The church possesses no ancient plate. An ancient alms-dish of brass, bearing a representation of the Annunciation, belongs to it. This I have brought for exhibition at the Guildhall, where doubtless many of those present have seen it.

The tower contains six bells, two of which are of ancient date; one, the great bell, has inscribed on it, in Lombardic character, “*Sancte Nicolae ora pro nobis.*” We may fairly conclude that this great bell was hung about 1506, for in that year we find “*Robert Cook, senr.,*” desiring burial in the Church of St. Cuthbert at Fishlake, and bequeathing 3*s. 4d.* for the great bell, “*magnæ campanæ.*” The other has a legend in the ordinary black letter, “*Dne. Jesu Christe placeat Tibi sonus iste.*”

The others were put up about a century and a half ago.

I must now briefly notice another ecclesiastical foundation within the boundaries of the parish of Fishlake, the chapel of the Holy Trinity at Sykehouse, or “*Sykehouses,*” as it is usually designated in early documents. One of these documents, from which I have already quoted, the will of Dame Alice Shirwood, affords us an incidental glimpse of the aspect

presented four centuries ago by the country which lays between Fishlake and this chapel. After bequeathing xls. to be distributed among the poor parishioners who dwelt in Fishlake itself, "inter pauperes parochianos ejusdem villæ," she leaves vjs. viijd. amongst the poor men and women dwelling in Fishlake, "*beyonde ye wodd ubi capella situatur.*" Fishlake was within the limits of the lordship of Hatfield, and we may infer from this expression that patches of forest-land, portions of the royal chace, with red deer for the denizens of its coverts, then formed a characteristic and peculiar feature of the country, even on the northern side of the river Don. And to say nothing of the existence almost within living memory, as I have been told, of oaks of more than ordinary magnitude midway between Fishlake and Sykehouse, the last survivors, in all likelihood, of the "wodd" which Dame Alice mentions, there are local names which carry us back in thought to the days of "vert and venison." Part of the village of Fishlake is known as the "Hay Green," and a portion of the old enclosure to the north of the village is called the "Hays." The *haia*, or "hay," as is well known, was a piece of ground enclosed from the forest for purposes of pasturage or cultivation.

Beyond all this, and about three miles north of the mother church, stands the little chapel of Sykehouse. It is a humble edifice, at no time distinguished by any pretension to architectural beauty, and having fallen into disuse for a length of time after the Reformation, it would appear to have gone completely to decay, for very little of the masonry appears to be coeval with its foundation. The base of a churchyard cross, and a fragment of painted glass in the east window representing the crucifixion, are the only prominent features of antiquity which it can boast.

Let me rather, therefore, draw your attention to the document relating to its foundation, with which Mr. Hunter was unacquainted, and which I think is curious, inasmuch as it may throw a light upon the origin of those subsidiary chapels which arose in the outlying hamlets of our larger parishes; for many, no doubt, throughout the country originated under similar circumstances.

Mr. Hunter mentions a licence, Dec. 20, 1425, to Edmd. Fitzwilliam, Esq., an inhabitant of "Sikehouses in Balne, in the parish of Fishlake," for the celebration of divine offices in the chapel in the vill of Sikehowse, "in villula de Sikehowse." But I am disposed to think that this was merely a domestic oratory or chapel, to which, in all probability, his neighbours were permitted to resort. And I have little doubt but that the advantage of having a chapel in such near proximity was found so great a boon, that it led the Sykehouse people to take measures for the erection of one for their own use. At all events, a very few years after, on October 14, 1433, we find an agreement entered into between the prior and convent of Durham and Robert Sykes, of Sykehowses, Thomas Fayerbarne, John Draper, and Robert de la Lane, of Dowesthorpe, Roger Cruste, of the West-end, John Howson, of Toghwhan, John Blakewod, of Stertebrig, John Wryghte, of Eskeholme, John Aelsee, of the Ricardehowses, Richard Howeson, of Tyddeworthehagh, William Howeson, of Howesonend, John Clarke, of Astynthorpe, and John Thompson, of the Whitehowses, described as inhabiting that part of the parish of Fishlake which lies between the river of Went and the Mykilledyke. This dyke, now called Claydyke, forms at this day the line of demarcation between the townships of Fishlake and Sykehouse.

In this document the prior and convent grant a licence to the dwellers

within these limits to erect at their own costs and charges a chapel or oratory in Sykehouse — “in quodam loco sive fundo vocato Sykehoves, in Dowesthorp, unam capellam sive oratorium de novo erigere et in honore Sanctæ Trinitatis consecrari facere.” The chaplain who shall minister therein is to be maintained at the cost of the inhabitants, but before entering upon his duties he is to promise submission to the vicar of Fishlake, and swear to do nothing which may affect the rights and privileges of the mother church. He is to minister no sacrament or sacramental to any one, except holy water and holy bread, “nullum sacramentum vel sacramentæ præter aquam benedictam et panem benedictum,” without the special licence of the vicar, unless in case of urgent necessity or danger of death. The chapel and its appurtenances are to be maintained and kept in repair at the charge of the inhabitants. But a stringent provision is inserted, whereby every right and privilege of old belonging to the mother church is reserved, and they are still to be subject to all payments, ordinary and extraordinary, in respect thereof, to which they had heretofore been liable. They are still to resort to the mother church on Sundays and high festivals, unless hindered by floods, bad roads, or other lawful cause — “nisi propter habundanciam aquarum, viarum discrimina, vel causas alias, legitime impediantur.” When I tell you that within living memory it was frequently necessary for a Sykehouse farmer to send six horses with his waggon overnight to Stainford, when he wanted to have a load of corn at Doncaster market on the following day, you will agree with me that if “viarum discrimina” was held to constitute a lawful hindrance to their attendance at the mother church, it is an excuse which would seldom be wanting to the parishioners of four centuries ago.

The chapel, as I have said, appears to have fallen into decay after the Reformation. William Waller, the last chaplain under the old system, was buried at Fishlake in 1578.

I may add to Mr. Hunter's account a note respecting the revival of service in this chapel, of which he possessed no information. In 1617, Nicholas Waller, Esq., of Balne-hall, made over to certain trustees the chapel and certain lands in the township for the maintenance of a reader of divine service there — “for the easement of the inhabitants,” as it is expressed. An incumbent has been regularly appointed since that time by the vicars of Fishlake, but the inhabitants of Sykehouse still regard Fishlake as the mother church. All baptisms solemnized in the chapel are registered at Fishlake: no marriage or burial can take place at the chapel, and the inhabitants of the township in which it stands have always paid their accustomed proportion of the rates which have been levied for the maintenance and repair of that ancient fabric in and around which their forefathers repose.

There are also some interesting documents connected with the foundation of the Grammar-school of Fishlake, in 1641, and with its local charities.

G. O.