XXXVIII. *Mr. Lethieullier's Observations on Sepulchral Monuments in a Letter to James West, Esq;*

Read at the SOCIETY of ANTIQUARIES, Jan. 16, 23, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING many leisure hours during my summer's residence in Gloucestershire, I employed some of them in enquiry after what matters of antiquity the country round me afforded. Among other searches, I visited many of the neighbouring parish churches, and was concerned to find in them numbers of ancient monuments quite buried in oblivion, and the intent for which they were first erected intirely frustrated. I frequently reflected that monuments were designed either to shew the gratitude of surviving friends, or to perpetuate the memory of such as had been eminent or serviceable to their country; ends in themselves laudable, and proper excitements to others to tread in the same steps: but in vain, where the tradition of the tomb is lost almost as soon as its owner's name becomes extinct; and, no inscription remaining, we behold only a dumb and useless piece of stone or marble. Well indeed might Horace boast, *exegi monumentum aere perennius*; since it is evident, his own immortal writings have already lasted beyond any monument of brass or marble which could have been erected for him.

THESE reflections led me into thinking that if, by any means, the true owners of such forgotten monuments could be revived, and the original intent of preserving their memory restored, it were at least an entertaining, not to say a meritorious labour.

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THE most proper method for this I imagine to be, first, by enquiring from records who were the successive lords of the manors, or owners of capital feats and estates in the parishes where such monuments are extant; and secondly, to try if by comparing together several whose dates are known, we can find any style, or peculiar form of design or workmanship, which prevailed in any particular age; and this (by what I have observed) may, I think, not prove a fruitless attempt. As to the first method, it must be plain to every one who will give himself the trouble to pursue it; but to none more than yourself, who are so intimately acquainted with all the ancient records and transactions of former ages in this island.

OF the latter method I shall hereafter venture to give you such hints as from observation have occurred to me.

As for the monuments in our cathedrals, or such of the abbey or conventual churches which remain, either care of the inscriptions, events in our general histories, or regular tradition, has pretty well preserved them; and the late inquisitive temper after our national antiquities has for the most part rescued such as were in danger of total oblivion. But in the rural parishes it is otherwise; and we too often find, that new possessors totally neglect the memory of those who have gone before them.

IN these country parish churches, we usually find the ancient monuments either in the chancel, or in small chapels or side isles, which have been built by the lords of the manors and patrons of the churches (which for the most part went together), and, being designed for burying places for their families, were frequently endowed with chantries, to pray for the souls of their founder and his descendants.

THE tracing out therefore such founders will frequently help us to the knowledge of an ancient tomb which is found placed near
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the altar of such chantries. If there are more than one, they are probably for succeeding lords; and where I have found ancient ones in the church also (besides what are in such chapels or isles) I always imagine them to be in memory of lords prior to the foundation of the said buildings.

DURING the time of our Saxon ancestors, I am apt to think few or no monuments of this sort were erected; at least, being usually placed in the churches belonging to the greater abbeys, they felt the stroke of the general dissolution; and scarce any have fallen within my observation, or are, I believe, extant. Those we meet with for the kings of that race, such as Ina at Wells, Osric at Gloucester, Sebba and Ethelbert, which were in St. Paul's, or wherever else they occur, are undoubtedly coenotaphs, erected in later ages by the several abbeys and convents of which they were founders, in gratitude to so generous benefactors.

THE period immediately after the Conquest was not a time for people to think of such memorials for themselves or friends. Few could then tell how long the lands they enjoyed would remain their own; and most indeed were soon put into the hands of new possessors, who frequently, as we find in *Domesday*, &c. held thirty or forty manors at a time. All *then* above the rank of servants were soldiers; the sword alone made the gentleman; and accordingly, on a strict enquiry, we shall meet with few or no monuments of that age, except for the kings, royal family, or some few of the chief nobility and leaders; among which those for the Veres, Earls of Oxford, at Earls Colne in Essex, are some of the most ancient. And thus I imagine it continued through the troublesome reign of Stephen, and during the confusion which prevailed while the Barons wars subsisted, and until the 9th of King Edward III.

In that year, Magna Charta being confirmed, and every man's security better established, property became more dispersed, manors

were in more divided hands, and the lords of them began to settle on their possessions in the country. In that age many parish churches were built; and it is not improbable the care of a resting-place for their bodies, and monuments to preserve their memories, became more general and diffused.

THE Holy War, and Vows of Pilgrimage in the Holy Land, were then esteemed highly meritorious. Knights Templars were received, cherished, and enriched, throughout Europe; and they being usually buried cross-legged, in token of the banner they fought under, and compleatly armed, in regard to their being soldiers, this sort of monument grew much in fashion: and though all which we met with in that shape are vulgarly called so, yet I am certain many are not; and indeed I have rarely found any which I could be certain were for persons who had been of that Order.

THIS religious order of laymen had its rise but in the year 1118. And in 1134, we find Robert Duke of Normandy, son to William the Conqueror, represented in this fashion on his tomb at Gloucester. Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, was represented thus on his fine tomb, which was in St. Paul's before the fire of London. And in the Temple Church there still remain the cross-legged effigies of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, who died 1219, William his son, who died 1231, and Gilbert, another son, who died 1241; none of whom, I take for granted, were of the order of Templars. If these monuments were designed to denote at least their having been in the Holy Land, yet all who had been there did not follow this fashion; for Edmond Crouch-back, Earl of Lancaster, second son to Henry III, had been there; and yet, as appears by his monument, still in being in Westminster Abbey, is not represented cross-legged. However, it seems to have been a prevailing fashion till the 6th of Edward II, anno 1312; when,
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the Order of Templars coming to destruction and into the highest contempt, their fashions of all kinds seem to have been totally abolished.

By this you see I would fix all those effigies, either of wood or stone, which we find in country churches, whether in niches in the wall, or on table tombs, in compleat armour, with a shield on the left arm, and the right hand grasping the sword, cross-legged, and a lion, talbot, or some animal couchant at the feet, to have been set up between the 9th of Henry III. and the 7th of Edward II. And what farther induces me to this opinion is, that where-ever any such figures are certainly known, either by the arms on the shield, or uninterrupted tradition, I have always found them to fall within that period; and where-ever I have met with such monuments totally forgotten, I have, on searching the owners of the church and manor, found some person or other, of especial note, who lived in that age, and left me little room to doubt but it was his memory which was intended to be preserved.

Not to mention too many instances, I shall trouble you only with a few, which fell immediately within my observation in Gloucestershire. In Down-Amney church I found one of these figures lying on the ground, cut in a hard grey marble, and on his shield a cross charged with five escallops, the arms at this day borne by the family of Villers. On searching, I found that Edmond, Earl of Lancaster, son to Henry III. granted this manor to Nicholas de Villars, anno 1270; so that no doubt remains as to this monument.

At the east end of Cubberley church lies an effigies in the above mentioned attitude. I find that Robert de Waleran, who was high sheriff of Gloucestershire, and eminent in the time of Henry III, died seised of this manor in that reign; from whence I think it probable that this is his monument; and I can hardly imagine he was a Knight Templar, if (as is most probable) he was the same Robert de Waleran, whom John Stowe tells us Henry III. took with him,

him, when, under pretence of seeing his mother's jewels, he plundered the Templars in London of a thousand pounds. On the south side of this church there is an isle built by John de Berkley, lord of this manor anno 1341, who founded a chantry in it; and accordingly at the south end of it, where the altar stood, there lies an effigies in a nich in the wall, not armed, or cross-legged, but in a long gown, and the hair dressed exactly as we see it on the coins of that age; from whence I presume, that this is the monument of the said founder.

IN Whittington church there are two figures in table tombs, armed, cross-legged, &c. with a coat of arms on their shields; which as yet I am a stranger to. Opposite to them is the effigies of a woman, with the same coat, and another in a distinct shield over her; for empaling was not then in use. As I find this manor was held by Richard de Crupe, and Edward his son, in the reigns of Henry III, and Edward I, and from that time was in the House of York till the reign of Henry VII; I make no question but these are the monuments of the said De Crupes, and one of their wives.

BEFORE I leave this sort of monument, I must acknowledge that I cannot affirm none were made in this form after the year 1312, having seen one in the church of Leekhampton, in Gloucestershire, which by tradition is said to be for Sir John Giffard, who died seized of that manor in the third of Edward III.

AND in Hungerford church in Berkshire there is another such effigies, though most scandalously broken and defaced, in memory of Sir Robert de Hungerford, who died 28 Edward III, anno 1355; but this having been set up in his life-time, as is plain from an inscription in old French, which I formerly communicated to you, there is no being certain as to its date; however, I believe many such instances will not be met with.

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To these I think succeeded the table tomb, with figures cumbent on it, with their hands joined in a praying posture, sometimes with a rich canopy of stone over them, sometimes without it, and again, the more plain without any figures. Round the edge of these for the most part were inscriptions on brass plates, which are now too frequently destroyed.

AT the same time came in common use the humble grave-stone laid flat with the pavement, sometimes with an inscription cut round the border of the stone, sometimes enriched with costly plates of brass, as you have, no doubt, frequently observed. But either avarice, or an over-zealous aversion to some words in the inscription, has robbed most of these stones of the brass which adorned them, and left the less room for certainty when this fashion began. Earlier than the 14th century I have seen or read of very few; and towards the beginning of that I am apt to think they were but scarce. One I think was produced at the Society of Antiquaries last year, dated 1300; but of this I should be glad of a farther certainty. Weever mentions one in St. Paul's, for Richard Newport, anno 1317, and gives another at Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, which he by mistake dates 1306, the true date being 1356. Upon the whole, where we have not a positive date, I should hardly guess any brass plate I met with to be older than 1350, and few so old; but from about 1380 they grew in common use, and remained so even to King James the First's time. Only after the reign of Edward the Sixth, we find the old Gothick square letter changed into the Roman round hand, and the phrase *Orate pro anima* universally omitted.

TOWARDS the latter end of the fourteenth century a custom prevailed likewise of putting the inscriptions in French, and not Latin. Of these I have seen and read many; but they are generally from 1350 to 1400, and very rarely afterwards. John Stow

has indeed preserved two, which were in St. Martin's in the Vintry, dated 1310 and 1311; but I have seen no others so early.

THE late editor of the Antiquities of Westminster affirms (from what authority I know not) that stone coffins were never or rarely used after the thirteenth century. If this be true, we have an æra from whence to go upwards in search of any of those monuments, where the stone coffin appears, as it frequently does.

As Grecian architecture had a little dawning in Edward the Sixth's time, and made a farther progress in the three succeeding reigns; we find in the great number of monuments which were then erected, the small column introduced with its base and capital, sometimes supporting an arch, sometimes an architrave; but every where mixed with them you will observe a vast deal of the Gothic ornaments retained; as small spires, ill-carved images, small squares roses, and other foliage painted and gilt; which sufficiently denote the age which made them, though no inscriptions are left.

SOME knowledge in Heraldry is very necessary in searches of this nature. A Coat of Arms, Device, or Rebus, very often remains where not the least word of an inscription appears, and where indeed very probably there never was any; for I am apprehensive, that a vanity in surviving friends, who imagined a person eminent in their time could never be forgotten, induced them frequently not to put any on his monument. And it is not uncommon to find a pious ejaculation, or text of Scripture, by way of Epitaph, without the least mention of the person who lies there interred.

It may be useful likewise to remember the æras when certain customs were introduced in the manner of bearings, &c. Thus, whenever Supporters are found to a Coat of Arms, it must certainly be later than the time of King Richard the Second, that Prince being the first who used any.

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WHEN there are only three Fleur de Lis in the Arms of France, and not Semée, it is later than King Henry the Fifth.

THE number of princes of the blood royal of the Houses of York and Lancaster may easily be distinguished by the labels on their Coats of Arms, which are different for each, and very often their devices are added. Till the time of Edward the Third we find no coronets round the heads of peers. Thus William de Valence, earl of Pembroke, half brother to King John, who died *anno* 1304, and is buried in Westminster Abbey, has only a plain fillet; but John of Eltham, second son to King Edward the Third, who died *anno* 1334, and is buried in the same place, has a coronet with leaves on; and is the most ancient of this sort which is met with.

WHERE the figure of a woman is found with arms both on her kirtle and mantle, those on the kirtle are always her own family's, and those on the mantle her husband's. The first instance of a subject's quartering of arms is John Hastings, earl of Pembroke, following the example of King Edward the Third.

As to monuments for the several degrees of churchmen, as bishops, abbots, priors, monks, &c. or of religious women, they are easily to be distinguished from other persons, but equally difficult to ascertain to their true owners. Among these, as among the forementioned monuments, for the most part the stone effigies are the oldest, with the mitre, crozier, and other proper insignia; and very often wider at the head than feet, having indeed been the very cover to the stone coffins in which the body was deposited.

WHEN brass plates came in fashion, they were likewise very much used by bishops, &c. many of whose grave-stones remain at this day, very richly adorned; and in many the indented marble shews that they have been so. In Salisbury cathedral I found two very ancient stone figures of bishops, which were brought

from Old Sarum, and are consequently older than the time of Henry the Third. In that church likewise the pompous marble which lies over Nicholas Longespe, bishop of that see (and son to the earl of Salisbury) who died *anno* 1297, appears to have been richly plated, though the brass is now quite gone, and is one of the most early of that kind which I have met with. There are in Peterborough church many monuments for abbots of that convent; as likewise at Tewksbury for nine; and in Wells cathedral many, which were brought from Glastonbury; and the like in many other places: but their names are intirely forgotten; and it is now impossible to restore them to their true owners. Frequently, where there are no effigies, croziers or crosses denote an ecclesiastick. I think I have seen the latter with little difference in their make for every order from a bishop to a parish priest.

I SHALL only mention one monument more, which is somewhat peculiar; I mean the representation of a skeleton in a shroud, lying either under or on a table tomb. I have observed one of this make in almost all the cathedral and conventual churches throughout England, and scarcely ever more than one; but what age to attribute the unknown ones to, I can find no date to guess by, since there is one in York cathedral for Robert Claget, Treasurer of that cathedral, as ancient as 1241; and in Bristol cathedral Paul Bush, the first bishop of that see, who died so late as 1558, is represented in the same manner, and I have observed some in every age between.

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

SMART LETHIEULLIER.

XXXIX. *A View*