

XX.—*On a Chalice and Paten belonging to the Parish Church of Nettlecombe, in the county of Somerset, with Remarks on Early English Chalices. By OCTAVIUS MORGAN, Esq. M.P., V.P., Local Secretary for Monmouthshire.*

Read December 2nd, 1869.

THE remarkably beautiful Chalice and Paten which I had the pleasure of being able to obtain for exhibition at one of the Society's meetings^a belong to the church of the parish of Nettlecombe, in Somersetshire. They are objects of very great interest, not only from their beauty but also from their antiquity, and the very perfect condition in which we now see them; and this interest is greatly enhanced by the fact of their being of English manufacture, and some of the very earliest remaining examples of English goldsmith's work. In addition to this we have some curious documentary evidence of the manner in which they were preserved, and so have come down to our time.

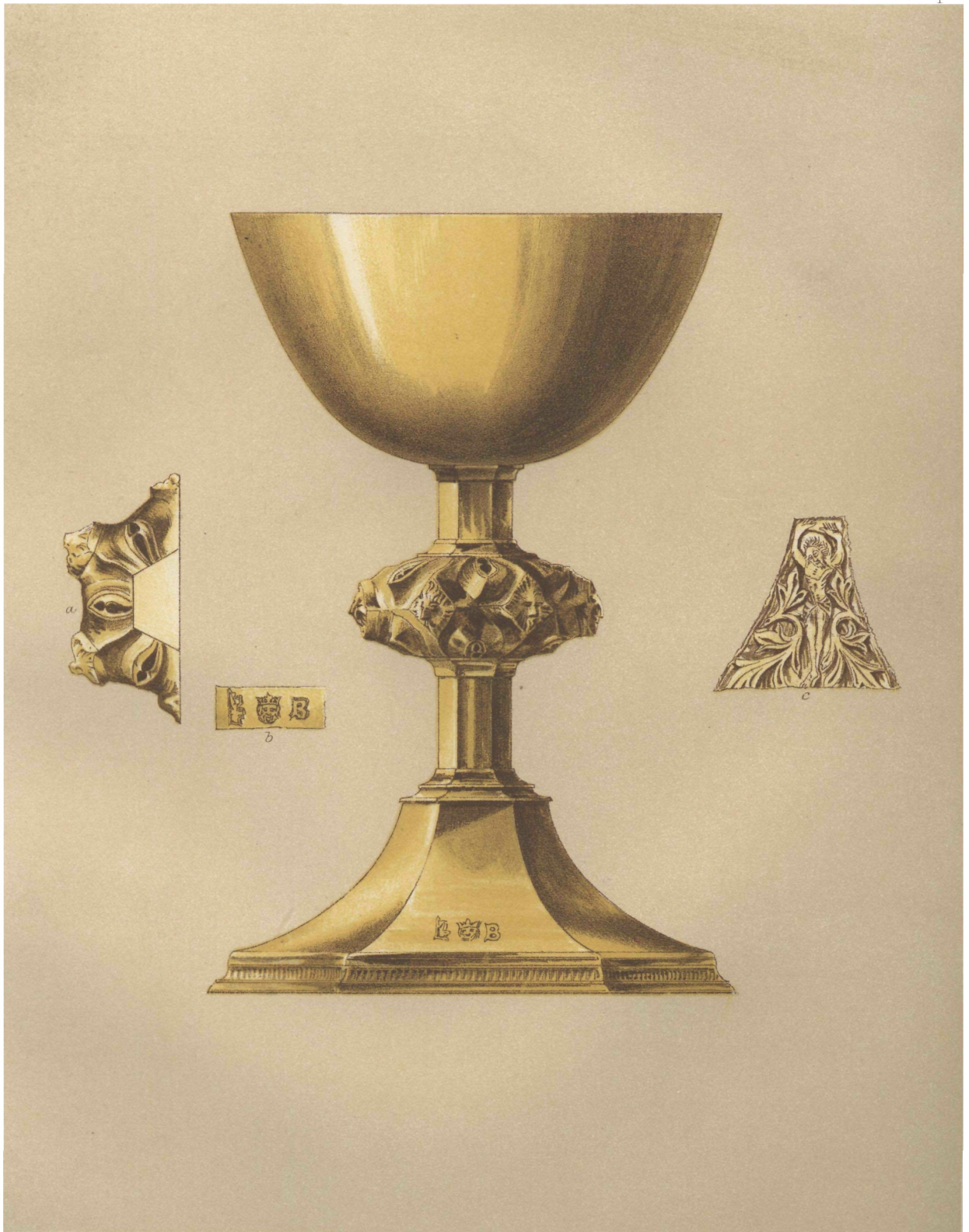
The chalice and paten are of silver gilt. Their forms are elegant; both were originally ornamented with enamels, and, although they have been in use for many centuries, they have sustained but little injury. The chalice (see Plate XXI.) stands very nearly six inches high. The bowl is in form between a cone and a hemisphere, that is, the bottom is broad and round, whilst the sides continue straight and conical, a form which is rather indicative of its date. This bowl is supported on a hexagonal stem, divided into two portions by the knob, which is a beautiful piece of goldsmith's work, formed by the projection from the angles of the stem of six short square arms, each terminating in a lion's mask, or in proper heraldic language "a leopard's head," and having the intermediate spaces filled up with elegant flowing Gothic tracery of pierced open-work (see *a*, Plate XXI.). The lower part of the stem rests on a curved hexagonal foot, being united to it by Gothic mouldings, and the foot terminates in an upright basement moulding, which is enriched with a small vertically reeded band. One of the six compartments of the foot was ornamented, as is usual in ancient chalices,

^a See *Proc. Soc. Antiq.* 2 S. iii. 382.

by a representation of the Crucifixion. The metal of this compartment has been cut out, and a silver plate engraved with the Crucifixion has been rudely riveted in (see *b*, Plate XXII. and *c*, Plate XXI.). This silver plate is, I think, the original work, and it was formerly enamelled—for it would probably have been found easier and more convenient to prepare the enamel on a small separate plate, and then fix it in its place, than to have subjected the whole chalice to the heat of the enameller's furnace, which must have been the case had the enamel been done on the foot itself. The silver plate is deeply engraved, or rather the metal is tooled out to receive transparent enamel in the style of the work of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century, and small traces of the enamel with which it has been filled may still be discovered. Its present condition may perhaps be explained by a tradition which still lingers in the parish, that a certain churchwarden took the enamel for dirt, and carefully picked it out in order to restore the silver to, as he thought, its proper brightness. It will be at once seen that the design was made for the place, from the peculiar attitude of the figure, the arms being drawn up over the head, to adapt it to the form of the compartment.

The paten (see Plate XXII.) is $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches in diameter, with a narrow moulded edge and a brim like an ordinary plate, within which is sunk a six-lobed depression. The centre points from which the workman formed the lobes are still visible, and the spandrels between the lobes are filled with a small radiating ornament as is usual in similar early patens, which are not unfrequently met with. In the centre is a still further depression, in which has been inserted from the back a small silver plate having, in transparent enamel sunk in the metal, a representation of the vernacle or face of our Saviour surrounded by a cruciform nimbus. This has fortunately escaped the manipulations of the churchwarden, and remains perfect. This central depression with an inserted plate of enamel is very unusual, the surface of patens being usually made as smooth as possible. The back of this small plate is gilt, and engraved with the sacred monogram *ihc* in black-letter character of the fifteenth century (see *a*, Plate XXII.).

Both these pieces of plate have the English hall marks very clearly and distinctly stamped upon them, which gives us information as to their age; but, from circumstances which I shall mention, not quite so precise as we could wish. These marks are three—no more being then in use. The first is the leopard's head crowned, indicating that the articles had been assayed by the Goldsmiths at their hall and found of correct standard. The second, being the maker's mark, is a dimidiated fleur-de-lis. Every goldsmith or worker in gold and silver



Kell Bro^s Lith.

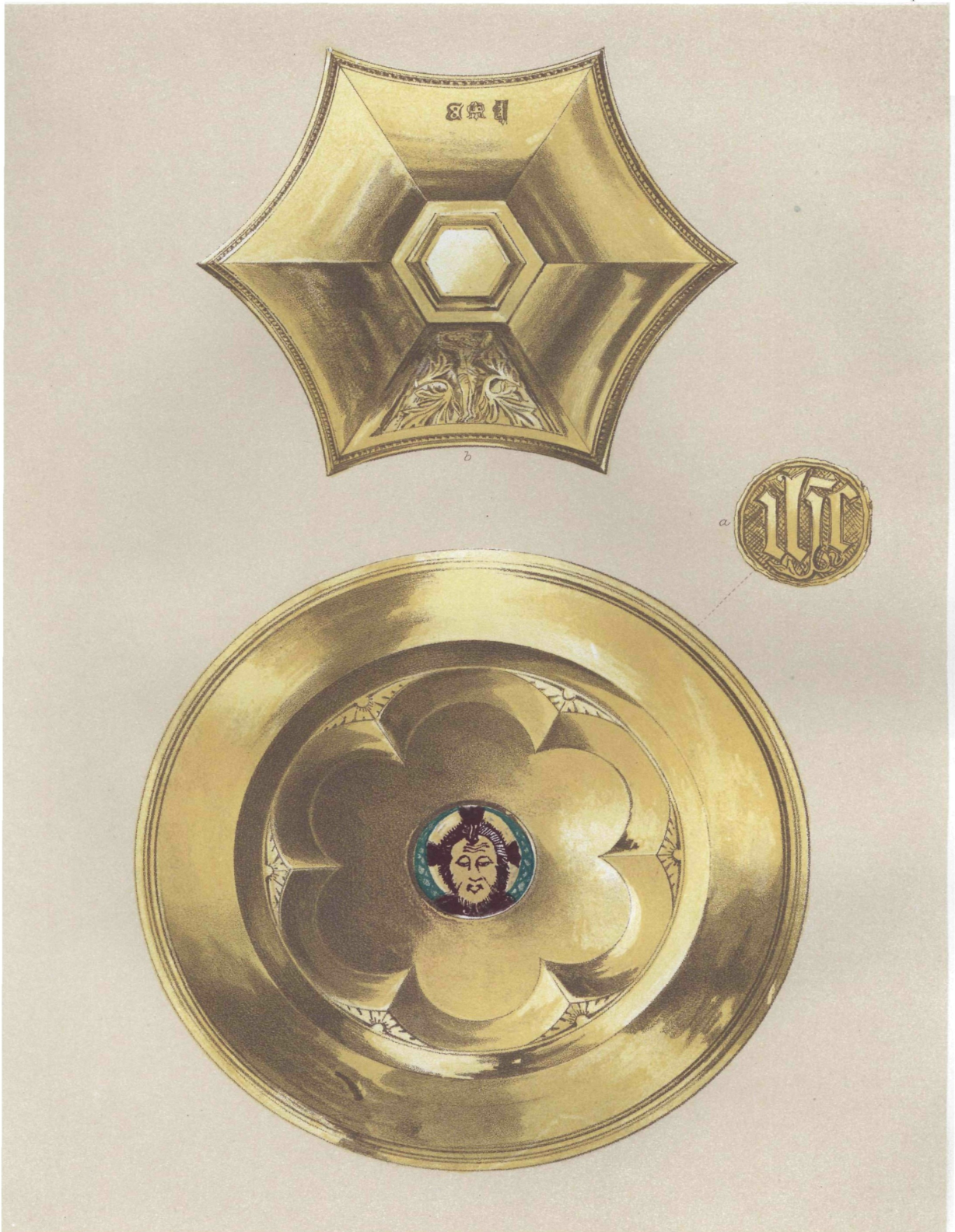
CHALICE BELONGING TO NETTLECOMBE CHURCH.

a Profile of Knop. *b* Hall-mark. *c* Plate inserted in the Foot.

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was required by statute to have a distinct mark or sign of his own by which his work could be identified. The third is the annual letter, by which the year when the piece of plate was made might be ascertained, so that if it should turn out that the silver was below the proper standard, and had passed the assay of the Goldsmiths' Company, it might be known who was warden of the Company that year when a false assay was made; whilst the maker's mark would indicate the goldsmith who had made the fraudulent article. Some years ago I paid much attention to this subject, and, through the kindness of the Goldsmiths' Company, who allowed me to examine their ancient records, and the inspection of very many pieces of ancient plate, I was enabled to construct a set of tables showing the series of annual letters used from the earliest period of their adoption. These tables formed part of a series of papers written by me on the subject, and published in the *Archæological Journal* in 1853. The arrangement was this: A certain alphabet was taken and continued for a period of twenty years, each letter indicating a year; at the expiration of the twenty years another alphabet was adopted, usually of a different character, and so on for each succeeding twenty years, and the practice is continued to the present day—thus, when the character of the alphabet is known, there is usually little difficulty in ascertaining the year in which any piece of plate marked with a letter was made. These alphabets, or cycles of twenty years, commenced in 1438, when the system, which was of foreign origin, seems to have been first introduced. The annual letters, and of course the alphabets, were always changed on the 29th of May, St. Dunstan's Day, when the new warden of the Goldsmiths' Company was elected and delivered the new punches to the Assay Master, so that each letter indicates the period between the 29th May in one year to the same day in the year succeeding, in fact a portion of two civil years, which is sometimes an important fact, as it in many cases causes the date of an inscription to agree exactly with the date of the make.

The earliest known marked piece of English plate is the celebrated spoon of Henry VI., now preserved at Hornby Castle, in Westmoreland, and it bears the Lombardic letter *h*, showing that it must have been made in the period between the 29th of May 1445 and 29th May 1446. The first alphabet, ranging from 1438 to 1458, was, as has been said, Lombardic, for which that spoon is the authority. Of the second alphabet, from 1458 to 1478, I have found no instance, and know not what was the character: from 1478 to 1498 the character was again Lombardic, but with the peculiarity that the letters were cusped both outwards and inwards; and the next alphabet was black letter minuscule. The



PATEN BELONGING TO NETTLECOMBE CHURCH.

a. Monogram from the bottom of the Paten. b. Front View of Foot of the Chalice.

Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London. 1870.

annual letter on the chalice and paten is a Lombardic B, of which the bows or loops rather appear to be cusped outwards, but being minute there is some difficulty in pronouncing with certainty (see *b*, Plate XXI.) This letter can, however, only indicate one of three years—1439, 1459, or 1479. The form of the cup and the enamel work point, I think, to a date earlier than 1479, and I am therefore disposed to fix its date at 1459, though it might possibly be twenty years earlier, viz., 1439. In either case its interest is great, as, if of the later date, it will tend to fix the character of the wanting alphabet, and will be the second earliest piece of known English plate, or if it should be of the previous cycle it will then rank as the earliest extant example of English goldsmith's work.

We now come to the history of these ancient pieces of church plate. The church of Nettlecombe stands close by Nettlecombe Court, the ancient ancestral seat of Sir Walter Calverley Trevelyan, Bart. F.S.A., whose forefathers have for centuries dwelt there. To him and to the Rev. Hugh W. Jermyn, Rector of Nettlecombe, we are indebted for the exhibition of the chalice and paten. The Nettlecombe estates, according to Collinson, originally belonged to a family named de Raleigh, of which the last male heir, named Simon, succeeded his brother John in the possession of them. This Sir Simon Raleigh is stated to have been in Spain with the Duke of Lancaster, 10 Rich. II., 1387, and he must then have been of age. He was at Agincourt in 1415. Having vested some of his estates in trustees on condition that they should raise the sum of £10 a-year for the maintenance of a priest to perform divine service in the Chapel of St. John Baptist on the south side of the parish church at Nettlecombe, (and this service was continued, as we see by the churchwardens' accounts, to the time of the Reformation,) he died 12th March 1440, when he must have been at least seventy-five years old. On his death without issue his estates descended to his nephew Thomas Whalesborough, whose only daughter and heiress, Elizabeth, became the wife of Sir John Trevelyan, Knt., a member of an ancient and eminent Cornish family, whose descendants have ever since held the estates. Sir John Trevelyan probably came into possession about the middle of the fifteenth century, and it is by no means unlikely that he should have presented to the church the chalice and paten the date of whose make will well bear out the supposition. This is, however, simply a conjecture.

Previous to the Reformation the plate and other valuable utensils employed in the celebration of divine service were in no danger; but in the reign of Edward VI. the parishioners of Nettlecombe seem to have had some fears as to the safety of their chalice and other articles of value. The churchwardens' books and

accounts in that parish date back as early as 1507, and they have most fortunately been preserved. They contain many curious particulars; and certain entries—made, as I am told, not in a regular book but on loose sheets of paper—inform us especially of the manner in which they contrived to preserve their chalice and other valuable articles—for among the accounts are found the following documents or memoranda, of which the orthography is somewhat curious as well as uncertain:—

“Be yt knowyng unto all men that we pysners of Nyttylcoñ have delivered unto Master John Trevelyan Esquyer, on the xxvijth day of Januerye yn the yere of the Rayne of Kynge Edwarde the Syxte, the secunde yere of hys Rayne (1549), one challes w^t a paxe of sylver and a Pyxe of sylver gylyde, and a Calopynne, w^t iij bells of sylver gylyde w^{yn} the same pyxe, at all tymes at ther nede to be had of the aforesaid Mast^r John Trevelyan Esquyre.—By me, John Trevelyan.”

In another copy of the same, not signed, the description runs—“One challys w^t a paxe of Sylver gylted, one Callopynne, w^t iij byllys of sylver gylyd w^{yn} the same, at all tymes at ther nede to be had of the aforesayd Mast^r John Trevelyan Esqueare the yelder of Nettelcombe, nowe ther p^{re}sent.”

In another note dated 21st December, 4th year of Edward VI. (1551):—“M^d. That doth remayne yn the handdes of Mast^r John Trevelyan Esqueare, a Coddereng not used of the pysche, but to be delevered unto the pysche at al tymes to ther nedde and callyng for the sayed Codderenge.”

The articles mentioned in this document as delivered to Master John Trevelyan are a chalice, a pax of silver gilt, a pyx of silver gilt, a calopynne of silver gilt with three bells either within it or within the pyx, and a “coddereng.” The chalice is most probably that which we have seen. No mention is, however, made of a paten, but it is possible that the silver-gilt paten belonging to the chalice may have been called by the churchwarden, or other writer of the note in question, a pax; and, having the vernacle represented on it in enamel, may, in a small country place, have been used as a pax. This, however, is contrary to usage; and as no paten is mentioned in the document, though one clearly belonging to the chalice is preserved, and as although a pax has been mentioned none has been preserved, I think we may fairly conclude that the writer of the document has by mistake called the paten a pax.

By a pyx is usually understood a box or covered vessel to contain and keep the wafer-breads for the Holy Sacrament; but the term also means a box or casket, and if, as it here seems to be stated, the chalice, pax, calopynne with the three bells, were all or any of them to be contained within “the same pyx,” this must

have been of large size, and could hardly have been only such a vessel as was used for the purpose of holding the wafer-breads.

The word "calopynne" had long puzzled me, and I have never been so fortunate as to meet with any one who could give me information on the subject, nor do I correctly understand whether the three silver-gilt bells were part of this object. In Dart's "History of Canterbury," however, I find in the list given of the church utensils belonging to the cathedral this phrase, "Item duo calepugni de cupro deaurato," which I take to mean two hand-warmers, from *caleo*, to be warm, and *pugnus*, a fist or closed hand. Such articles were used in the church for the purpose of keeping warm the hands of the celebrant priest, for fear of any awkward accident arising from the coldness of his fingers whilst handling the sacred elements and vessels. They were formed of a hollow ball of metal, to contain a heater of hot metal, glowing charcoal, or, possibly, a small lamp, supported in the middle on double gimbals, like a mariner's compass, so as to preserve it always in the same position, in the centre, whichever way the ball might be turned; the surface of the ball being pierced to let the warmth pass out, and admit air if necessary. Such an utensil is figured in the early editions of the Encyclopædia Britannica, and there called a "rolling lamp." These articles were in France called "pommes chauffrettes," or "pommes à chauffer les mains." Several instances of them are given in M. de Laborde's Glossary, appended to his Catalogue of the Enamels, &c., in the Louvre. One instance, taken from an inventory of the date of 1502, describes the object, and is quite in point—"Pomum (argenteum) forutum in plerisque locis, habens receptaculum etiam argenteum, in quo poni solet ferreum candens, ad calefaciendas manus sacerdotis in tempore Hyemali." I am therefore very much disposed to consider the mysterious word calopynne to be a corruption and mis-spelling of the word *calepugnus*.

The three bells may have been the sacring bell used to give notice of the elevation of the Host. They may have been separate bells or three small ones fixed in a semi-globular frame, such as now used by the acolytes in Roman Catholic places of worship on the continent, and probably also in this country, or it is possible that they may have been small globular bells fixed within the calopynne. This, however, is only a surmise.

In the last entry on the 21st December, 1550, 4th Edward VI. we find mention made of an article in the keeping of Master John Trevelyan, called a "coddereng." I am altogether at a loss to conjecture what this can be. It is doubtless the name of some well-known article intelligible in itself, but utterly disguised by

defective orthography, for the word occurs twice in the same sentence, and is differently spelt each time—indeed, throughout the whole of the churchwardens' accounts, the spelling is so strange and irregular that the same word is rarely written twice alike in the same sentence.

This "coddereng" in 1551 was left in the hands of Master John Trevelyan as "not used of the parish," and was therefore probably some article not necessarily employed in the performance of divine service.

By these entries in the accounts we learn that the chalice and other valuable articles of the church utensils were made over to or placed in the custody of Master John Trevelyan, on condition that they should be forthcoming when wanted for use by the parishioners, in anticipation as it were of the commissions which might and which actually did issue; for we find that in 1552 a commission was issued by King Edward VI. to the Marquis of Northampton and others for a survey of church plate, and the instructions to the Commissioners were, that they should "visit churches, chapels, fraternities, or guilds, and cause due inventories to be made of all goods, plate, jewels, and ornaments, and give good charge and order that the same goods should be at all times forthcoming, leaving nevertheless in every parish church or chapel one, two, or more chalices or cups, according to the multitude of the people in every church or chapel."

Burnet also informs us that shortly before the death of Edward VI. (in 1553), visitors were appointed "to examine what church plate, jewels, and other furniture was in cathedrals and churches; and because the King was resolved to have churches and chapels furnished with that which was comely and convenient for the administration of the Sacraments, they were to give one or more chalices of silver to every church, chapel, or cathedral, as their discretion should direct them, and to distribute comely furniture for the Communion-table, or for surplices, and to sell the rest of the linen and give it to the poor, and to sell copes and altar-cloths, and deliver all the rest of the plate and jewels to the King's treasurer."

When therefore any Commissioners or visitors came down, the church at Nettlecombe had no return to make. "*Nulla bona*" would be the simple reply, the articles in question being no longer their own, nor in their own keeping; and this ingenious arrangement could very easily be made, inasmuch as Master John Trevelyan was patron of the benefice, and the church was close adjoining to his ancient manor house; and to this manœuvre we are indebted for the preservation of these very interesting and beautiful articles.

The ancient chalices and patens which were in use before the Reformation are not of common occurrence, though in small rural parishes it is probable that

more may be found than we are aware of. But the olden chalices are fast disappearing, the clergymen and churchwardens frequently preferring the look of a large new chalice to the original smaller cups of earlier and more simple form; and I have frequently seen many of the earliest Protestant chalices of the time of Elizabeth in the windows of silversmiths' shops, sent up and sold or exchanged for the value of the metal, whereas the silversmiths have resold them to the curious in old plate at very high prices. I possess photographs of another chalice, similar to that described, which still exists, belonging to the parish of Combe-pyne, not far distant from Nettlecombe. It is not, however, in its original state, the stem having been altered by the removal of the knop, and the upper and lower portions of it joined by a modern band. There are small feet attached to each of the angles of the original hexagonal base, but I think from their style they can hardly be original; if they are, they indicate a late date. In February 1867^a a chalice from West Drayton was exhibited to the Society, which seemed to have once had similar feet attached to it, but which had been removed. The bowl had a projecting lip and was bell-mouthed, which shows a very late date, and the hall-mark indicates the beginning of the sixteenth century, but of the precise year I have no note.

Before closing this paper it may be as well to say a few words on ancient chalices: First, as to the material; and, secondly, as to the form. Various substances have been used for the bowls of chalices, such as glass, crystal, agate, or other precious stones, but these substances were at an early period forbidden to be used, as liable to get broken by reason of their brittleness. Horn was forbidden as a material for chalices on account of its being an animal substance and therefore formed by blood, and wood on account of its porous nature as absorbing the wine and not easily cleaned, and only gold and silver were ordered to be employed, though tin and pewter were allowable in very poor places. In cases where the other part of the chalice is of inferior metal the bowl is always of silver. The only chalice which I know of, of which the bowl is not of metal, is the famous chalice in the sacristy of the cathedral of Monza, of which the bowl is formed of a large block of sapphire—or at least said to be so. It is now very many years since I have seen it, but, as far as my recollection goes, it is of much too dark a colour to be a real sapphire, and looks more like a piece of ancient dark-blue glass; and this is more likely, as the true sapphire is never found in such large crystals or masses, and it must have been a prodigious mass to have

^a See *Proc. Soc. Antiq.* 2 S. iii. 447.

made this cup, to say nothing of the extreme difficulty of hollowing out so hard a material, the hardest substance in nature next to the diamond, and I cannot help thinking that a mistake has been made between the words *zaffiro*, the precious stone, and *zaffera*, the zaffir of commerce—a dark blue vitreous substance made of powdered flints and the oxyde of cobalt, which gives it its colour.

Now, as to the form: A chalice consists of three parts—the cup or bowl; the stem, which in its middle swelled into a bulb, called the knop; and the foot. The bowl itself was usually quite plain, in order that it might be more easily kept pure and clean. It was, however, occasionally mounted in an exterior cup or socket adorned with various ornamentations, which came about halfway up its entire height. The stem, knop, and foot were frequently ornamented with enamels, engravings, or chased work representing the emblems of the Passion or other sacred subjects; and on the foot, which was usually made hexagonal, to prevent the chalice from rolling, there was always a cross, which the priest kept towards himself at the time of celebration.

In the early days, when the Holy Sacrament was administered to the congregation in both kinds, the chalices appear to have been large two-handled bowls with a foot only; there was no need of a stem or knop, as the chalice was not to be grasped, but was presented to the mouths of the recipients by the priest, who held it by the two handles. A most remarkable and beautiful instance of such a chalice was found at Ardagh, in the county of Limerick, early in the present year, and exhibited by the Earl of Dunraven, both here in London, and, in the autumn, at the meeting of the Cambrian Archæological Association. The date of the ninth century has been attributed to it. These chalices are very rare, if this is not an unique example. It is most exquisitely ornamented all over, and especially underneath the foot, which part, when the chalice was presented by the priest to the recipient by the two handles, would be exposed to view.

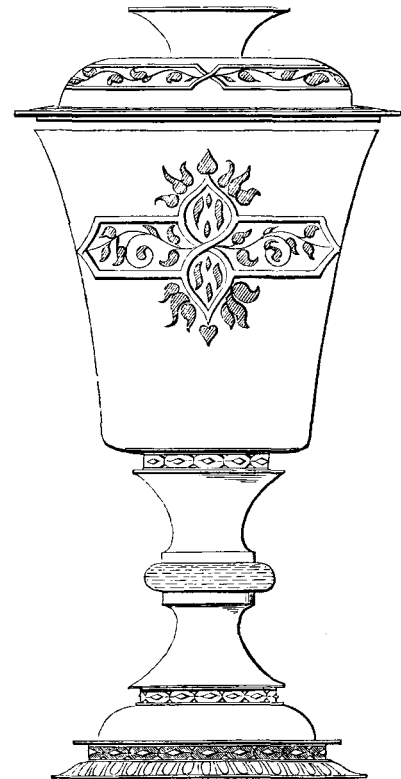
In the thirteenth century the chalices seem to have been short and low and the bowl wide and shallow, as exemplified by the celebrated chalice of St. Rémy, once at Rheims and now in the Bibliothèque Impériale, which is considered to be of the time of St. Louis, as also by the chalices of silver and pewter which have been found in the tombs of priests of that century.

In the fourteenth century they were made taller, the bowls assumed a decidedly conical form, being narrow at the bottom, and having the sides sloping straight outwards. In the fifteenth century they were usually made broader at the bottom with the sides still forming part of a cone, like that at Nettlecombe, till a form altogether hemispherical was assumed, of which the fine chalice of Leominster,

figured in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxxv. p. 489, is a noble specimen. Of this type also is the chalice of Combepyne. This form afterwards changed to a bell-mouthed shape, with a projecting lip, like that of West Drayton, which brings us down to the sixteenth century.

On the establishment of the Protestant religion in England in 1558, by statute 1st Elizabeth, a new form of chalice was introduced for the use of the communicants of the Church of England, who, receiving the Sacrament in both kinds, required a larger cup. I have been unable to discover any authority or direction for the formation of these chalices, but the same form and the same ornamentation were introduced and adopted from one end of the kingdom to the other whenever new chalices were made, and they are to be found in every part of the country. The chalice still consisted of the same parts, bowl, stem, and foot, though I have known two instances in small parishes where the chalices consist of the cup only, without stem or foot. The stem, although altered in form and character, still swells out in the middle into a small knop, or the rudiments of one, and is occasionally ornamented with small bands of a lozenge-shaped ornament, or some other such simple pattern, and the foot is invariably round, instead of indented or angular. The form of the cup, however, is altogether changed, and, instead of being a shallow wide bowl, it is elongated into the form of an inverted truncated cone, slightly bell-shaped. The form of the paten is also much changed; the sunk part of the platter is often considerably deepened, the brim narrowed, and thereon is fixed a rim or edge, by which it is made, when inverted, to fit on the cup as a cover, whilst a foot is added to it, which serves also as a handle to the cover, as though it were intended to place the wine in the chalice and cover it with the paten cover, until the administration of the Sacrament, when the cover would be removed and used as a paten for holding the bread. On the bottom of the foot of the paten was a silver plate which almost always bears the date when it was made, and the name of the parish to which it belongs. The ornaments on all these chalices and paten covers, as they may be called, is invariably the same; it consists simply of an engraved band round the body of the cup and on the top of the cover, formed by two narrow fillets, which interlace or cross each other with a particular curvature, in every instance the same, the space between them being occupied by a scroll of foliage, and this ornament is marked by a total absence of letters, monograms, emblems, or figures of any kind. It is very curious how this exact uniformity of shape and ornament was so universally adopted, unless there had been some regulation or standard pattern to go by, but I have not been able to find any

such to guide the makers. I may mention a few good instances which I know of, amongst many others which I have seen. They are not uncommon in Monmouthshire and Herefordshire, but at Christchurch is one so perfect and in such good condition that it has been engraved in the *Archæological Journal*.^a At both Old and New Alresford, in Hampshire, are very good examples, and at Rodney Stoke, Mark, and Meare, in Somersetshire, there are also very fine chalices and patens of this kind, that at Mark being gilt; the dates of these range between 1560 and 1580, the hall marks agreeing with the engraved dates. This form of chalice was continued in many instances down to the Commonwealth, though the engraved ornaments were omitted. Sometimes they were of very large size, of which the chalices at St. James's church, Dover, are examples, especially the larger one, which will hold more than a quart. The history related of it is that it was given by the Earl of Northampton, Constable of the Castle, to the garrison church of the fortress, and when that fell to ruin it was sent down to St. James's, the parish church. On the bottom of the foot of the paten are engraved his arms, which seemed to confirm the history; but the annual letter indicated that the plate was made in 1632, and the Earl of Northampton died in 1614. Here was a discrepancy in the evidence of the article itself, the evidence of the engraved coat of arms being at variance with the annual letter, which I knew must be right. I put myself in communication with Mr. Albert Way, and on further examination it appeared that on the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham, in 1629, Theophilus Howard of Walden, second Earl of Suffolk, became Constable, and died in



^a *Arch. Journ.* ix. 290, whence the cut in the text is, with permission, reproduced.

1640, and the arms which he bore were the same as those borne by the Earl of Northampton; thus the arms and the date of the make of the plate both coincided, and it was clear that owing to the similarity of the arms a mistake had been made by the narrator of the history, and the liberal gift had been attributed to the wrong person, the Earl of Suffolk being in fact the real donor. The ancient church at the castle has, I think, been rebuilt or refitted of late years, and I hope the ancient chalice has been restored to it. Since the Restoration chalices and church plate, both here and elsewhere, have been made according to the prevailing taste and fashion of the day; and, though there is no peculiar distinctive character, any one experienced in such matters will generally be able to make an approximate guess at the period when any article was made, as well as by the examination of the hall-mark, which is the only certain and exact test.
