

The President (the Rev. J. P. Marriott, of Cottesbach), in opening the meeting spoke of the great pleasure it gave him as a looker on, as a resident in the neighbourhood, and as a member of the Society, to preside over its meeting that evening. After making some remarks upon the objects and working of the Society, he remarked, that speaking of its architectural department, he observed from the drawings exhibited that the attention of its members was directed almost exclusively to ecclesiastical architecture, he ventured to hope that domestic architecture would receive more of their attention, more especially cottage architecture: he had himself erected cottages on his own property, the plans for which he would liked to have submitted to the Society, and to have profited by the suggestions and advice he would then have gained. He also alluded to the large and interesting collection of drawings, articles of antiquity, and general interest brought together, and which the present meeting had been the means of bringing out, and to the papers then about to be read. The Chairman then called upon Mr. M. H. BLOXAM, F.S.A., to read his Paper on

LUTTERWORTH CHURCH AND THE WYCLIFFE RELICS,

which he proceeded to do as follows:

IN that trite and well known passage of the Roman philosopher, the *Movemur nescio quo pacto*, &c., where he treats of the indescribable emotions of the mind in those localities, endeared to us by the remembrance of celebrated men, we feel the force of his remarks. We muse in silent contemplation of those of other days, on whom our admiration is fixed. We gaze, not without emotion, on any relic of the past connected with them. The spots where they dwelt, where they laboured, their last resting places, we regard with more than the natural eye. We make pilgrimages to many places simply from the associations attached to them, and in these days of rapid locomotion, we pass hurriedly by, yet within sight of others we cannot stop to examine.

I cannot readily forget the first time I passed by Corbie, a small town near the railway on the road from Amiens to Douai, how I looked out, first on one side, then on the other, for a glimpse of the towers of the church—how at last between the trees and across the glade I caught a momentary glance of the object I was looking for, and then all disappeared from sight.

A few years afterwards I made my pilgrimage thither. No stately buildings drew my attention; for of the once great and celebrated Benedictine Abbey, founded at this place, a small portion only of the Church remains. The Conventual buildings, with

scarcely an exception, had been destroyed: some portion immediately antecedent to my visit. It was then the associations of the place which carried me there. The remembrance of two of old time, Paschasius Radbertus, who raised or originated the great religious controversy of the ninth century, and whose opinions were opposed by Bertramus, perhaps better known to us as Bertram the Priest, both monks at the same time of this once famous and royal Abbey of Corbie.

Would the ruins or site of the ancient Abbey of Cisteaux in France, connected in our minds with S. Bernard, the great reformer of monastic discipline in the twelfth century, and the great religious writer of his age, be by us passed by unheeded and unnoticed?

Does not Salisbury call to our remembrance Jewell, the author of "The Apology" and of "The Defence of the Apology of the Church of England;" Louvain in Belgium of his great opponent Harding, and at a later period, of Jansenius; Bishopsbourne in Kent, of Hooker, whose "animated bust," his "vera effigies," graces the wall of that hallowed church, in which the remains of him, not to be forgotten, are buried? *In memoria eterna erit justus.*

But to go no further than your own county. Do we not connect Thurcaston with Latimer; Ibstock with Laud; Drayton with George Fox; and last, not least, Lutterworth with Wycliffe?

We indeed find in this town no ancient remains of domestic architecture of the fourteenth century, not even of the hospital founded in the reign of King John, to carry us back to the time of Wycliffe, who, born as is said in 1324, was incumbent of this parish during the last ten years of his life, from 1374 to 1384, during the latter part of the reign of Edward III., and early part of that of Richard II. Wycliffe died at this place and was here buried.

The Church of Lutterworth is, then, the only structure now remaining coeval with his time. Whatever may have been the structure of the original church at Lutterworth—one, I think, of not very high antiquity; but architectural fragments of which, in all probability, lie concealed in the foundations of the present walls—it is enough for us to know, from an examination of its present architectural features, that the shell of the present structure, at least of the tower, nave, and aisles, were built in the fourteenth century, during the life, but before the incumbency of Wycliffe, and probably some time between the years 1330 and 1360. The tower, with a belfry staircase projecting at the north-west angle, which has been on the exterior much disfigured by compo, had formerly a lofty spire, destroyed by tempest in 1703. The upper stage of the tower was rebuilt in the tasteless pseudo-Gothic style of the early part of the eighteenth century. The nave

is divided from the aisles on each side by a range of four double-faced pointed arches, with chamfered edges and hood-mouldings over, which latter give great relief. These arches spring from plain octagonal piers, with moulded caps. The south wall of the south aisle contains five windows, three of them of two lights, each with flowery tracery in the head; the other two of two lights each with rich flowery tracery in the head of one, whilst the mullions of the other simply cross in the head. All these windows have hood-mouldings over, without which they would look bare of relief. The south porch is modern. At the south-east corner of this aisle is a diagonal buttress containing a niche for an image. The east window of this aisle is a somewhat rich specimen of a decorated window containing four principal lights, and flowing foiled tracery in the head. The east window of this aisle is of the same period.

The north aisle contains in the north wall three windows of two lights each, with tracery in the head and hood-mouldings, over a plain pointed doorway with a hood-moulding over, of the fourteenth century, a west window of the same period, and a well-designed east window of three lights, with flowing tracery in the head. These are all the architectural features I can confidently pronounce to be anterior to the age of Wycliffe, and in existence during his incumbency. For the age of the chancel is somewhat doubtful, whether it be of, or subsequent to, Wycliffe's time. The little circular trefoiled headed doorway in the south aisle was, I think, in existence during his incumbency. Of the windows I am not sure; from the disposition and angular character of the tracery, differing from the flowing lines of an earlier period, I should assign these features to the early part of the fifteenth century, which would be subsequent to the age of Wycliffe.

The east window has been very injudiciously blocked up. But the five principal vertical lights were subdivided by panel work. This window has a hood moulding over, and above this is a stone escutcheon, or shield bearing the arms of Ferrers, Gules, seven masles voided, or. On either side of the chancel door is a window with three principal lights with angular tracery in the head. In the north wall of the chancel are windows similar to those in the south wall, and in the north wall of the north aisle, near the east end, over a sepulchral recess, the masonry of which projects externally, is a window with tracery similar to that of the windows in the chancel; by which I should imagine that the chancel was built by the person whose recumbent effigy, with that of his lady, lies within this sepulchral recess, on a high tomb in the north aisle.

And now, as to the interior of the church. The original high pitched roof of the nave appears to have been removed in the fifteenth century, the walls on which it rested carried up, and the clerestory windows, five on each side, obtusely arched, of three

lights each, and cinquefoiled in the heads, added. The present roof of the nave, of a more obtuse or depressed pitch than the original roof, is a good specimen of the wooden roof of the fifteenth century, and now constitutes one of the most interesting architectural features in the church.

It is divided into five bays by tie-beams, supported by upright wall pieces, from which spring curved braces, the spandrills between which and the tie-beams are filled with open panel work, whilst a kind of embattled crest runs along the upper edge of the tie-beam. Between the tie-beams each bay is subdivided by moulded purlins and common rafters also moulded.

The chancel arch is of the fifteenth century, and the piers or responds from which the arch springs, as also the soffit of the arch, are panelled—an unusual architectural feature in this part of the country, though common enough in Somersetshire, and some other of the south-western counties.

The chancel roof is plain and depressed, and was probably constructed in the latter part of the fifteenth or early in the sixteenth century. It is divided into three bays with moulded wall-plates, purlins, and rafters.

Of the present internal fittings of the church and their arrangement, it is impossible to speak in any—the slightest—terms of commendation.

The simple yet graceful and ornate architectural features, which the fittings of Wycliffe's and of the succeeding age presented, appear about a century ago to have been ruthlessly swept away, and the present tasteless and miserable arrangement of boxes or pews made, as Fuller quaintly says, "high and easy for folk to sit or sleep in," and "worthy of reformation," was adopted. For "the church was beautified in 1761 with a costly pavement of chequered stone, new pews of oak, and everything else new, both in church and chancel, except the pulpit."

The pulpit was removed from its ancient and appropriate position in the north aisle about a quarter of a century ago, and set up in the centre of the nave, with clerk's desk and reading pew massed together like a huge graduated excrescence. At the same time, I suppose, the galleries were constructed. With these alterations the church has been knocked about, and is now in a state of semi-dilapidation, whilst the west end of the church has been parted off for vestries and receptacles for rubbish, the walls of the chancel panelled round, in 1761, where they should not have been, hiding most probably features of architectural interest, perhaps the very stone seat or *sedile* occupied by Wycliffe. What a slur upon his memory!

The proper restoration of this church is simply a work of time, whether it be effected in the present or next generation. Wycliffe in his age as a Church Reformer led the van. Will you, in this

age of church restoration, be content to follow in the wake? The high pews and galleries will come down, and the pulpit be removed from its present unsightly position. We have but to walk across the fields to Misterton, barely a mile distant, to see the effects of such a change. Compare the two churches together: "Look here upon this picture and on this."

I must now draw your attention to the monument or high tomb, in the recess in the north wall of the north aisle near the east end, with the two recumbent effigies thereon. The tomb itself is hid from sight by one of those unseemly high pews I have described. It is, however, engraved in outline in Nichols' Leicestershire, and, as far as I can judge from the representation there given, is a monument of about the middle of the fifteenth century. It certainly is not the monument of William Feilding and Jane Prudhomme his wife, to whom Nichols assigns it, for he flourished in the reign of Edward III., though I find he was alive in the early part of the reign of Richard II., A. D. 1380. Of whom it is the monument is yet matter of conjecture. There are, however, two families, to one of whom this monument is likely to belong, namely, to one of the Feilding family, Sir John Feilding, Knight, son of William Feilding and Jane Prudhomme, and who married Margaret Purefoy. I know not when they died or where they were buried, but as they were the father and mother of Sir William Feilding, Knight, who was slain at the battle of Tewkesbury, in 1470, and was there buried, they probably died about the middle of the fifteenth century, with which date the monument would agree.

Or it might be a monument of one of the Ferrers' family, anciently lords of this manor, and patrons of the Advowson of the church; and if so, I should assign it to Sir William Ferrers of Groby, who in 1414 obtained a grant of a market and fair to Lutterworth, and who died in 1444, and to his lady. To this worthy knight and benefactor to Lutterworth I would ascribe the rebuilding of the chancel early in the fifteenth century, as the arms of Ferrers over the east window of the chancel would imply, probably at or about the same period as the grant of the market and fair was obtained, and as the window over this monument is an insertion made when the chancel was rebuilt, and in the style of the windows of the chancel, such fact is in favour of the assumption that this was the tomb of a Ferrers. Yet it is in what is called the Feilding aisle, and the claims of both families are in my mind conflicting. Perhaps some one, more interested in, and connected with Lutterworth than I am, may work out this interesting problem.

The effigies on this tomb are of alabaster, and represent an esquire or knight, for there is no distinctive mark of cognizance between them, and his lady. He appears bareheaded, with short-cropped hair, and face close shaven, attired in a long gown or coat, belted round the waist and buckled in front. The sleeves of the

gown are wide and loose, and it appears to be worn over armour, of which the vambraces, coverings for the lower arm, and coudes or elbow plates, and broad or square-toed sollerets, with which the feet are covered, are visible. The hands are bare and conjoined on the breast in attitude of prayer, and the feet rest against some animal, now much mutilated. The head reposes on a double cushion supported by angels, the heads of which have been destroyed. There is a peculiarity about this effigy I have not met with in any other; that is, it appears to have over the defensive armour not a surcoat, or a byclas, or a jupon, or a tabard, but the civilian or layman's gown or coat of the period I suppose it to be, namely, of about the middle of the fifteenth century.

The lady is represented cumbent on the left of her husband, clad in a long loose gown, with a mantle over, fastened across the breast by a cordon with pendant tassels, the cordon being affixed on either side to a lozenge shaped fanail. The sleeves of the gown are full, but drawn up and cuffed at the wrists; the veiled head-dress is worn, and the head reposes on a double cushion supported by angels. The period to which this monument may be fairly assigned is some time in the first half of the fifteenth century. The costume of both effigies may be fairly ascribed to that period.

There have been and are some monumental brasses in the church. Most of them have disappeared, but none of them appear to have been of earlier date than the fifteenth century.

Much painted glass formerly existed in this church, especially in shields, containing the armorial bearings of the Feildings, Ferrers and others. At present not a single fragment of these ancient memorials of benefactors to this church is to be found; all have been ruthlessly swept away.

This church contains a variety of articles, which, for years past, I know not how many, have been regarded as relics of Wycliffe. These are—the pulpit in which he is said to have preached, his arm chair, his table, his altar candlesticks, a portion of his gown, and his portrait—a copy of that in the possession of the Earl of Denbigh, painted by a Mr. Feilding, and presented by him to the parish, in 1786. The original of this portrait is, by the kind permission of that noble earl, with other interesting portraits from his valuable collection, and for which we ought and must all feel deeply indebted to him, now in your local museum.

Now this is a critical age, and we naturally inquire whether these relics are genuine? Is a single one of them of Wycliffe's era? I should have been deeply pleased could I have met with a single article which I could ascribe to his age; but with the exception of the shell of the tower, substructure of the nave, and aisles, I can find no single article of furniture or fittings of his time. To take them seriatim, the chair and table are so palpably articles of furniture of the seventeenth century, that the veriest tyro in archæo-

logical lore would never think of assigning them an earlier period. Not so the pulpit; but is this of Wycliffe's age? Certainly not. When the chancel was rebuilt in the early part of the fifteenth century, or when in that century the clerestory was added to the nave, and the present roof placed thereon, the church was seated with open benches, probably like those in Misterton Church, or in Claybrook Church. The chancel screen, rich and costly, was at that time constructed, as was also the pulpit.

Fragments of the chancel screen, or what I presume to have been such, are worked up at the back of the organ loft, nearly hidden from view. The architectural details of this screen, as well as of the pulpit, are clearly those of the fifteenth century. In fact I do not know a single church in the kingdom which contains an original wooden pulpit of the fourteenth century, as this has been supposed to be, and the few stone pulpits we have of that age, or earlier, exist in the yet remaining or ruined refectories of conventual foundations.

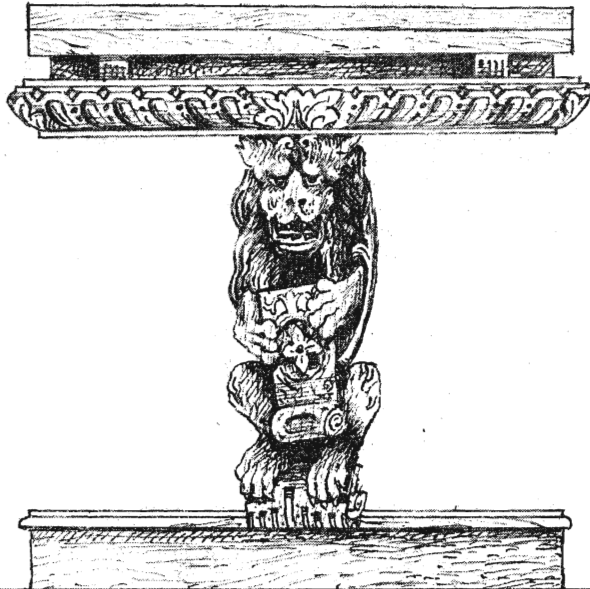
The sounding board to the pulpit, now in the vestry, is an addition of the seventeenth century, about two hundred years old.

Then as to the very curious fluted altar candlesticks of wood and gilt—both rare and curious they are—but not of the age of Wycliffe, for they are a pair of altar candlesticks of the early part of the seventeenth century, or time of Charles the First. At the Reformation, when lights were generally abolished from our churches, the two on the communion table or high altar, as it was called, were retained for the express signification that Christ is the very true light of the world; and these continued till the Puritan Party in the House of Commons, in 1643, passed an ordinance for the removal of altar candlesticks from our churches. In the general destruction these appear to have escaped, and as historical relics I hope they may long continue to be taken care of. If not unique, they are the only pair of wooden candlesticks of that period I have found remaining.

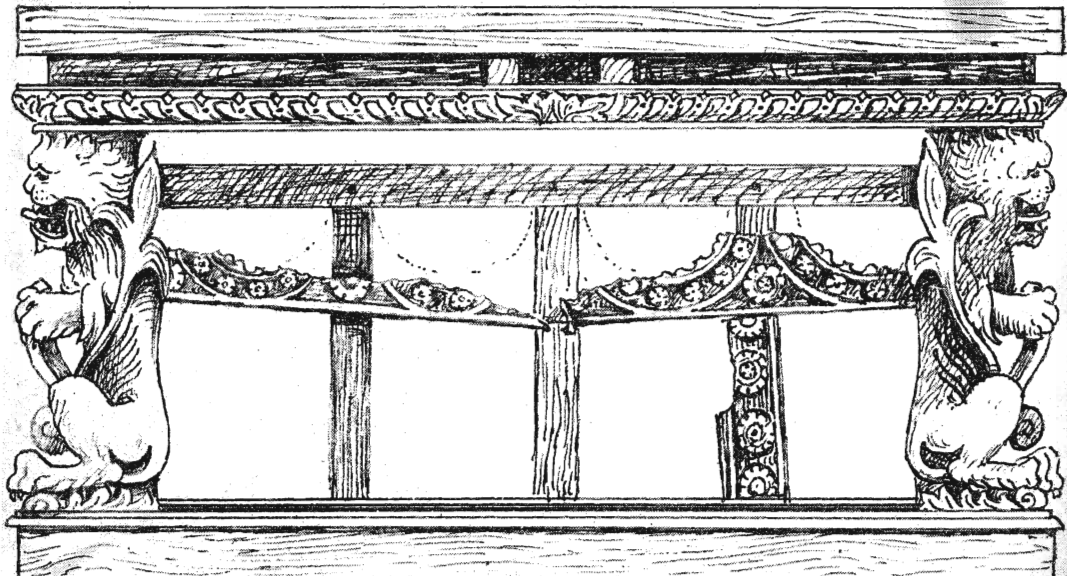
Then there is a portion of a vestment, kept with such great care and reverence in a glass case, never to be opened, and like the blood of S. Januarius, to be looked at but not examined. For we judge of it under great disadvantages from its partial concealment. Now if this fragment is that of a vestment, there were only two vestments, or service habits of the Church of Rome, to which it could belong, viz., the cope and the chasuble. The latter would be the vestment worn by Wycliffe every time he officiated as priest at the celebration of the Eucharistic Office, the former only in choral services and in processions. Now the cope had sometimes orphreys down the sides in front, in which figures of saints were sometimes worked; but not those of angels; and I never knew an instance of a chasuble worked as this fragment is. My own opinion, and I cannot sufficiently examine the fragment to be positive is, that it is



1/2 in to a foot



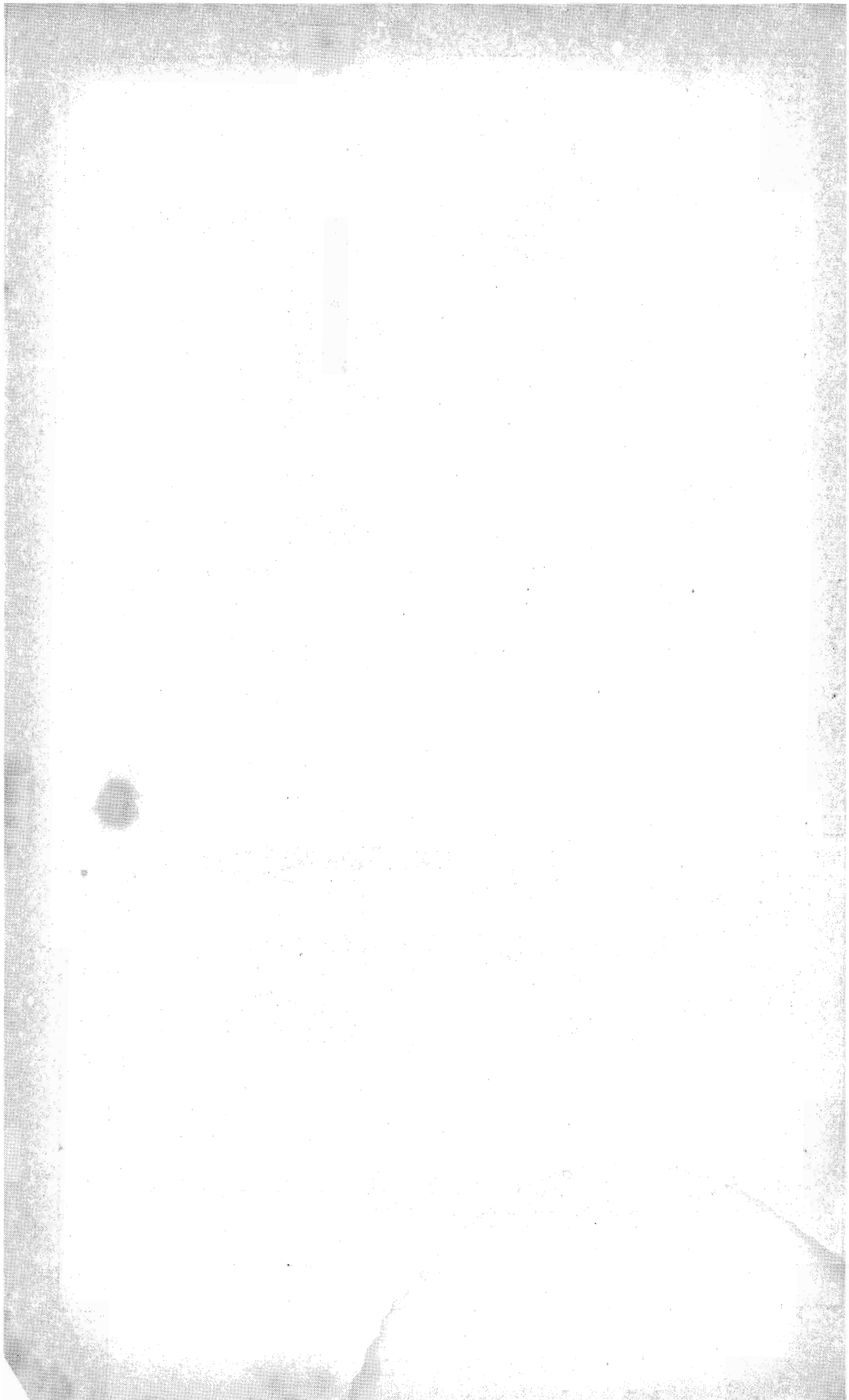
End of Table 1" Scale



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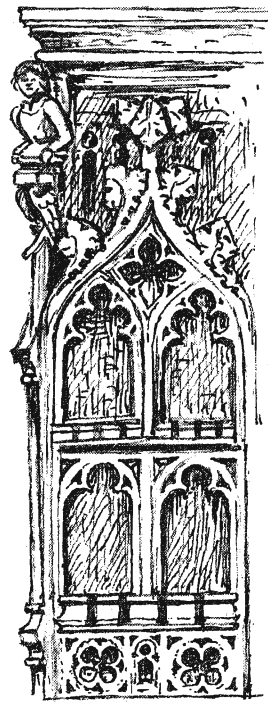
Side of Table 1" Scale

"WYCLIFFE RELICS"
One Candlestick and Table.

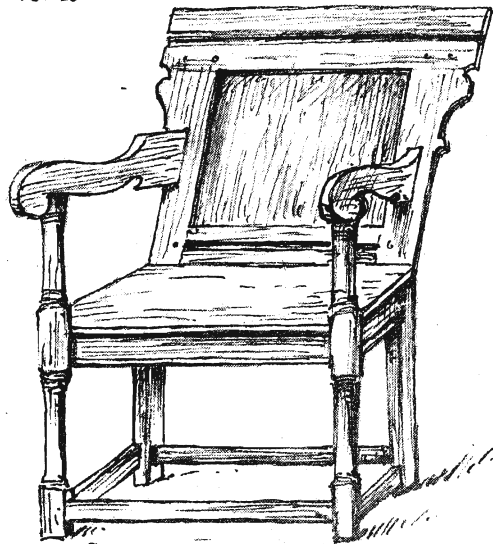




Remaining Fragment
of Cape
1" Scale

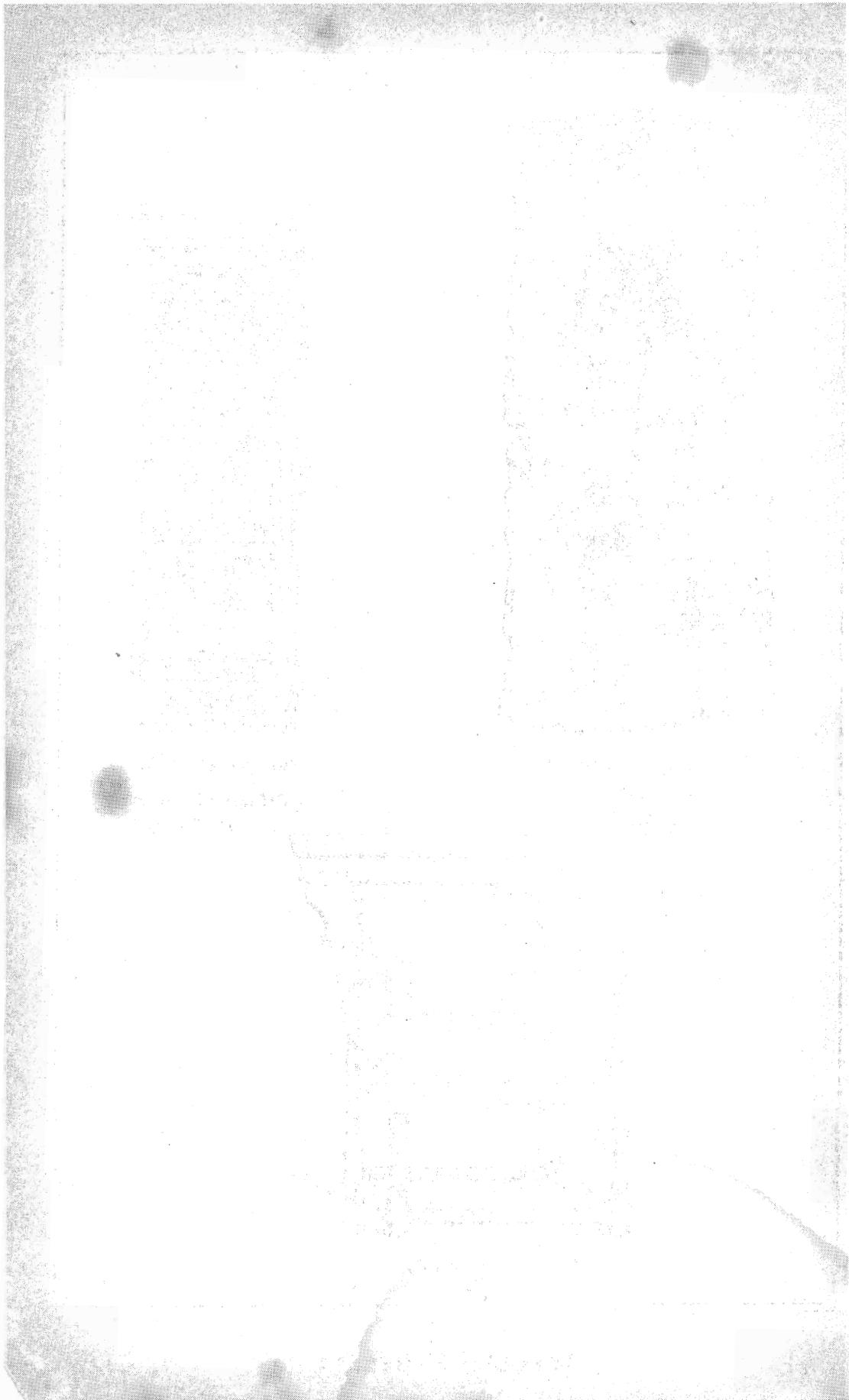


One panel of Pulpit
(Octagonal on plan)
1" Scale



Chair $\frac{3}{4}$ " Scale

"WYCLIFFE RELICS."



the portion of an altar frontal of the fifteenth century, some of which are still preserved in our churches, the angel being represented as it would have been in the preceding century, or time of Wycliffe. Having thus expressed my opinion, formed under a very partial examination, I am content to leave this point for the future criticisms of others.

Lastly, as to the portrait. Is that not of Wycliffe, that venerable bearded old man? Alas! I am afraid I must attempt to dissipate all preconceived and cherished notions which have long prevailed respecting it.

Wycliffe, as a priest of the church before the Reformation, was required by the discipline of the church to be close shaven, both as to his chin and his cheeks, and if you examine the brasses and sculptured monumental effigies of the fourteenth century, of priests in this country, which are numerous, you will not find one represented in the manner portrayed by this portrait. Again, the cap, the costume, the gown, the ruff, encircling the wrist, as represented in this portrait, are, together with the long beard, semblances of the costume and appearance of one of the Reformers of the sixteenth century, when the fashion of letting the beard grow among the reformed clergy crept in. This painting is clearly of that period, and the date of it I should fix as somewhere between 1540 and 1570. As to its being a realistic portrait of Wycliffe, or of his age, it certainly is not. It may be an ideal portrait of him in the costume and appearance prevalent in an age at least a century and a half after his death. There is, or was, forty years ago, a portrait somewhat similar to this in the collection of the then Duke of Dorset, at Knole, in Kent, bearing also the name of Wycliffe. Whether it remains there still I know not.

Now I can show you a much more realistic portrait, as to costume and general appearance, than that this painting represents. It exhibits a priest of Wycliffe's time vested for the service of the church, namely, in the alb, stole, maniple, and chasuble. When not so vested his ordinary clerical habit would have been a long cassock, or coat, the *toga talaris* with a hood, the *caputium*, attached to it, and hanging down behind.

Is there then no relic of Wycliffe's time? Yes, there was one disposed of lately in London, and I could have wished it had been secured for the Church of Lutterworth. Why we reverence the memory of Wycliffe is not so much on account of his theological opinions, on many of which grave differences might arise, but from his translation of the Holy Scriptures, or at least portions of them, into the vernacular, the language of Chaucer and of the author of *Piers Plowman*.

Now in the late sad dispersion, which ought never to have taken place, of the library of Archbishop Tennison, on the first of July last, amongst the MSS. was one of the fourteenth century, con-

taining portions of certain books of the Old Testament translated by John Wycliffe, whether in his monograph, which I think not unlikely, or simply a transcript made in his time, I cannot say. It was a small folio volume, and, though fragmental, was purchased in public competition by a well-known London bookseller, Mr. Lilly, for £150.

I have now trespassed upon your patience more than I ought to have done, and my remarks may not have been so palatable as I could have wished: but it is the province of the antiquary "to search out truth," whether "in academic groves," or amid objects of long cherished interest presented to his notice.

At the conclusion of Mr. Bloxam's paper, the chairman invited discussion upon its contents. There was an apparent reluctance on the part of some of the audience to give up their long-cherished faith in the "Relics" of Wycliffe, yet no champion appeared to take up the glove thrown down by the learned lecturer; one gentleman, however, created much amusement, by enquiring whether, after demolishing all they had for so long connected with Wycliffe, Mr. Bloxam would kindly inform him whether in his opinion the Reformer had ever existed, or had been in Lutterworth?

Mr. BLOXAM replied he believed Wycliffe's name would be found on the episcopal register of the period as priest of Lutterworth.

The PRESIDENT then requested the REV. CANON JAMES to read his paper upon

THE BATTLE OF NASEBY.

A LARGE plan of the ground, and of the position of the troops on both sides, was suspended behind the reverend gentleman to illustrate his paper. He proceeded at length to describe the progress of the battle in a lucid, popular, and interesting address, intermingling what he read with extemporaneous explanations, and was listened to with great and unbroken interest to the conclusion. All the spots identified with the incidents of the battle were mentioned, the associations connected with them detailed, and the lesson to be derived from a contemplation of the causes and the effects of the great struggle then carried on, were pointed out with much force and perspicuity.

The REV. H. K. RICHARDSON proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Bloxam and Canon James for the reading of their papers. The depth of thought and amount of learning required in the production of these papers, he said, was not to be conceived, except by any person who had been engaged in similar labour. He felt reluctance to admit that the relics said to be those of Wycliffe were not genuine, but to use an ancient axiom—the truth must prevail. Mr. Richardson, after further observations, concluded by proposing the resolution.