Heraldry on the Tomb of the Nortons in Abbotsleigh Church.

BY FRANCIS WERE.

UNFORTUNATELY I have not been able to find any reference by a previous student to these shields. I should say Sperling was the most likely man, but since Colonel Bramble's death, I have not been able to refer to his works.

The tomb, I believe, has had several sites in Abbot's Leigh Church, but at present occupies the inner southern face of the tower, where the lower part is hemmed in by benches, and therefore is dark and hard to decipher. The tomb is Elizabethan in character, and may have had on its present smooth surface, a full length effigy, or, as it has a middle pilaster, a Prieu Dieu with a kneeling figure on each side. Issuing out of the pediment is a well carved achievement as shown in the photograph, Plate XXIII, taken by Mr. F. Bromhead of Clifton. The achievement is that of one of the Norton families ; the blazon if the shield was tinctured would be, ' Argent on a bend between two lions rampant sable in chief a crescent (cadency mark for second son or branch) three escallops of the field.' On Esquire's helmet the Crest, greyhound's head and neck ' dunyshe ' (? or) collared gules bezantee. The Norton pedigree in Bucks Visitation has the coat and crest as above and with ten quarterings, but the early ones are blank marriages, though the later ones have several Somerset marriages. The Cambridge Visitation has the coat without the crescent, the crest, and the ten quarterings ; and begins with Thomas of Bristowe in Com. Som., followed by Walter, Thomas, Andrew, of Bristow, but all the marriages are blank. It might

possibly be the shield of Thomas Norton, the celebrated alchemist, who was born in the family mansion in St. Peter's churchyard, Bristol, and was unmarried.

Plate XXIV represents the middle shield in the base of the tomb and in my experience is unique, for it is evident that the sculptor had a pattern of the impaling given him, which he rigidly carried out, so that he did not fit the quarterings into the usual space of the scrolled escutcheon ; and then finding a large space vacant he embellished it with a capital M, having nothing to do with heraldry. The blazon on the man's side is Norton as before, only without the crescent, neither is there a helmet or crest, which possibly means he was of the direct line, though Metcalfe in his blazon says he bore the crescent. The lady's the impaling half in a half heater shield, is of eight quarterings and are given in Metcalfe's knights as the Coat of Thomas Grey, Lord Harington. The first and second quarterings are very much corroded, caused I should think by the fire when the roof of the Church was burnt ; another not common charge in heraldry is the label in chief extending over the first three quarterings with a point on each, the idea being that it shows direct line from them.

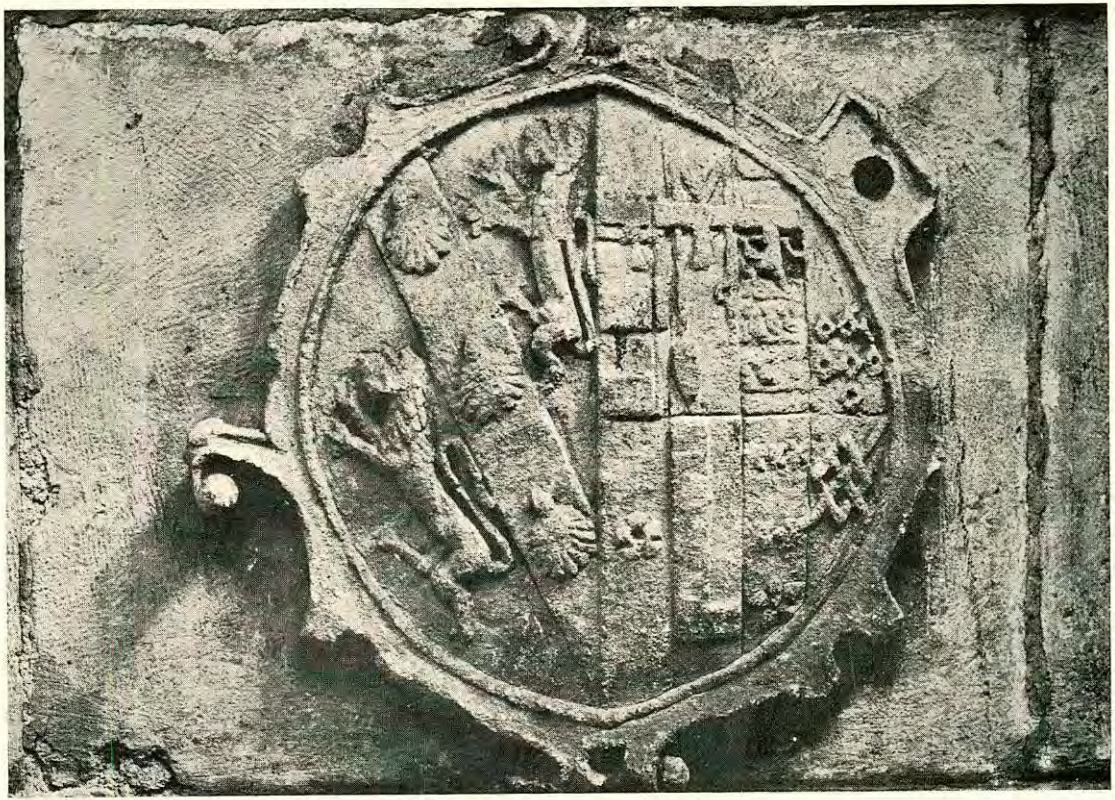
I give the tinctures of the blazons of the quarterings because the shield was most probably painted. The blazon of the First quartering would be, ' Barry of six argent and azure in chief three torteaux, and the label point,' GREY. Sir Thomas, son of Sir John.

Second quartering ; ' Or a maunch gules, and the middle point of the label,' de HASTING. The 2nd Baron Hastings married Isabel daughter of William, and sister and coheir of Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke. There is nothing left of this coat except the large blob at the bottom of the sleeve.

Third quartering ; ' Barry of twelve argent and azure an orle of martlets gules, and in chief the third point of the ermine label,' VALENCE, Earl of Pembroke.

Fourth quartering ; ' Gules seven mascles conjoined 3.3.1. or,' FERRERS. Sir Edward Grey, knt., married as first wife Elizabeth grand-daughter and heir of William, Lord Ferrers of Groby.

Fifth quartering ; ' Azure a cinquefoil ermine,' ASTLEY.



MIDDLE SHIELD IN THE BASE OF THE NORTON TOMB, ABBOT'S LEIGH CHURCH.

From a Photograph by Mr. F. Bromhead, Clifton.

Sir Edward Grey, knt., married as his second wife Joan, daughter and heir of Sir William de Astley.

Sixth quartering; 'Argent a fess and canton gules,' WIDVILLE. Elizabeth daughter of Richard Widville, Earl Rivers, married Sir John Grey, 2nd Baron of Groby, and mother of the first Marquess of Dorset; she married secondly Edward IV. The carving of the fess and canton is exaggerated, the fess being like an L in base.

Seventh quartering, 'Sable six mullets argent pierced of the field 3.2.1.,' may be on each a torteaux, BONVILLE. Elizabeth, only child of Sir William de Harington, married William, Lord Bonville, whose son became Lord Bonville and Lord Harington; he left an only daughter Cecily, heiress of both familes, and therefore bore both their coats.

Eighth quartering; 'Sable a fret argent,' HARINGTON. These two are the last quarterings, because Sir Thomas Grey, in right of his wife Cecily became Earl Harington; and it is related that, as such, he went into dinner one day and came out Marquess of Dorset.

Mr. Hirst's researches and the heraldry prove what Collinson does not appear to have known, that the lady whom Sir George Norton married was Elizabeth the eldest daughter of the second Marquess of Dorset, who bore the same coat as his father; it also shows that the M of the sculptor signifies Marquess. She first married, as second wife, Thomas Baron Audley of Walden in April, 1538; he died April, 1544, when the title became extinct; both Burke and G. E. C. say she married secondly, George Norton, before he was created a Knight of the Bath, Feb. 20th, 1547–7.

There is a carved shield on the southern wall of Barrow Gurney Church, and fragments in the churchyard, of the Norton coat, but the clue to its being there has to be proved.