

Poyntington.

BY THE REV. J. HEALE.

I SOLICIT your indulgence while I read what I beg to call my Parish Paper, No. II. I shall be as brief, I hope, as on a former occasion; and without venturing to draw your attention to the peculiar features of the Manor House and of the other, older, specimen of domestic architecture which you will presently visit with interest, my few remarks will resolve themselves into more private details of our past, our present, and our future.

I will merely, in passing, remind you that the ancient and proper name of this parish is POYNTINGTON,—with a *y*—not POINTINGTON, a mode of spelling which is indeed occasionally seen, but used chiefly by illiterate men, or those who are ignorant of archæology.

In my former paper I mentioned (Vol. XVI., at page 66, where there are unfortunately some typographical errors¹) three discoveries which I had made, one of which was of an old parish register. To-day I have the pleasure of announcing one more discovery, almost as interesting as that of the parish register. The circumstance is some-

(1). At page 69, line 11, for "these discoveries" read "three discoveries;" line 17, for "for more" read "it was more;" line 33, for "pier" read "piers."

what singular, and, therefore, I may be permitted to tell it.

Within a mile of where your President sat in 1870, and at the bottom of a trunk, belonging to, I believe, one of my hearers, there were mouldering away, whilst I was reading Paper No. 1., two fragments of parish books which had been removed, but a few years before, from this parish in entire ignorance of their real antiquarian interest, and of their rightful and true ownership. After some little difficulty they are before you to-day; and I trust they will never again be allowed to pass out of the proper custody of the rector and churchwardens of the parish to which they belong.

I had mentioned that my old parish register, so strangely recovered from the dirt of ages, contained many interesting entries. So do the fragments of the churchwardens' and of the overseers' books. I cannot but hope that if I occupy five minutes of your time, and it shall not be longer, in reading to you some few of those extracts (which might be multiplied) I shall not weary you, but rather give you a deeper interest in our little village, which now has nothing of interest in it but what is ancient.

The fragments I now hold in my hand are those of two books, sadly defaced, and, alas! even wilfully mutilated by the use of scissors.

The "Churchwardings'" book begins with the year 1666, and continues for seventy-six years, with the entire loss of twelve pages.

The fragment of the overseers' book begins at 1716, and shows, out of 37 years, only 29 years' accounts up to 1752 and part of '53.

The first entry of the churchwardens is as follows, indicating what I have already alluded to, how much more populous our village formerly was :—

"Imprimis at Whitsuntide for bread and wine .. 1 9
 It laid out for hospetall money at Medsomer .. 5 7ob.,"

and in the same year, and throughout many succeeding years, we find entries for bread and wine for four celebrations in the year, and the charge for the elements varies from 2s. 1d. at Whitsuntide to 3s. 2d. at Christmas, a somewhat large sum for those days. I find also frequent entries, at least twice a year, for expenses at Visitation "att Camell," and for Sessions "att Brewton," and "att Carie," and "att Marson," and "Privie Sessions" at Milborne Port and elsewhere. The first mention of a Visitation at Yeovil is in the year 1682. The churchwardens' receipt for the sum spent by them I find sometimes takes this form:—"Recd of the parish for this yeare abovementioned foer Chorch Rates after the rate of A Grote to A nobell, which som is in the hole £4 1s. 6d.

By us Thomas Norman } Church
 William Hanham } Wardings."

We were evidently bad spellers then, according to our present mode of Johnson and Walker; but though "shoues" was written for shoes, and "kott" meant a coat for "John harve," we always spelled Poyntington with a y, except in some few years where the name is spelled "Pointington"; but in these instances the writing and the spelling both show that the office was held by very illiterate and uneducated wardens. Some of the entries cannot be deciphered. The following "a Count of" a fee to the Bishop's officer is better than many such:—"To ye parritter for a prockley Massion."

I find that in 1675 is the first entry for payment for polecats, and for "heggogs," for "duzzens of sparrows," and for foxes' heads, all at the same rate of 2d. The standard of our charities was, I am glad to say, a little

higher. We gave "to a maimed soldier 4d."; "to a pore traveler with his wife and children, £0 0s. 4d."; to "11 mores cast away coming in several companys, £0 01s. 06d."; to "2 seamen that were taken by the Turks, 06d."; "five soldiers exchanged out of France, 6d."; (1688) to "one seaman with a petition for his Brother that is A Slave in Turkey, £00 00s. 06d."; whilst in some years the entries of donations to "pore travellers," or to seamen with a pass, or to a "pore man burnt by fier," are nearly half of all the entries in the year.

I will conclude with one or two of these taken at random:—In 1686, "Laid out when ye farmer and I was at Brewton when the Commissioners sate concerning who was out in monmouth's army, £0 4s. 2d." In 1716, "for bureing A mad dog, £00 00s. 06d. 0q." In 1689, after giving "to a poor blind woman £00 00s. 02d.," we "pd. ye Mountibanks for cureing of William King's scruffhead, £0 10s. 0d."

But such entries as these are of the "past." I would rather pass on to our "present." I have not yet made any extracts from the oldest parish register. I may do so, perhaps, when speaking of the future. For our "present" I can only repeat my assertion that we have now but little of interest amongst us but what is ancient. And you will perhaps better understand our present state if, passing over all allusion to the domestic buildings, I confine myself to what may be noticed in our church. Besides the Norman doorway I formerly referred to, you will notice our Norman font, with its cable moulding and its shaft of solid masonry. It is manifestly not in its original site, but was probably removed to its present position when the aisle was built. The recumbent figure is believed to be that of a Cheney, who built the aisle, in

which you will notice particularly the singularly beautiful and uncommon square-headed window over the niche, in which the knight's figure ought to be replaced.

On the south wall is monument to George Tilly, "erected" by one of the ancient family of Parham.² I have failed in attempting to find any representative of the Parhams, but within the last month I have been glad to learn that the "George Tilly, Esqvier," of the tablet, is now represented by the gentleman who holds the high and responsible position as Secretary to the Post Office.

You will notice within the interior of the yet unfinished chancel, in the vestry, a mural tablet with black letter legend to the memory of KATHARINE ST . . CCLI (?) "dñā de pontyngton."³ The date of 1402 is almost entirely obliterated. I removed it in 1868, when I built my chancel, from the porch, where it formed part of the pavement, to its present position, in order that the interesting memorial might be less liable to obliteration. The lady (from whom I believe this manor passed four centuries ago into the possession of the present noble owner, the Right Honourable the Lord Willoughby de Broke) is said to have been the wife of "the noble and potent" Lord Fitzwarren; but the date of her death does not accord with that of the tablet itself; and there are other difficulties about the question which have yet to be reconciled.

The other tablet, to the Colier family, formed part of the pavement of the space between the altar rails. On the

(2). "Heere GEORGE TILLY Esqvier Lieth & MARY His Wife, This Beinge Erected By Sr Edward PARHAM Knight, Whoe Married ys Daughter & Heire Elizabeth."

(3). "Hic. jacet. domina. KATHINA. ST . . CCLI. dñā. de. pontyngton que obiit. iiii. die anno cccc. ii.

floor is the memorial of my predecessor in this living, and of the relict of R. Hesketh Fleetwood Williams, collaterally descended from the family of Colonel Fleetwood, who married Oliver Cromwell's daughter.

On the outside of the chancel walls there are three insertions of inscriptions. That on the north wall was found amidst the rubbish of the old chancel walls.

The large slab inserted into the face of the north-east wall of the chancel, to the memory of "Water Blobole Person of This Parish,"⁴ originally, and up to 1868, formed part of an altar tomb which stood within the rails on the north side of the altar. It was his successor in the living, George Alford, clerk, who began the old parish register in 1618.

The tablet to the Pagets on the south-west side of the vestry wall originally stood upright on the south side of "the table." It is the only monument we have of any of the Paget family. The following memorandum in the aforesaid old register is interesting :—"Memorandum—That John Paget, clerke, was inducted into ye Parsonage of Poyntington, Aprill 25, 1691, by Mr. Caleb Cooke, Vicar of Milborne Port ; and read ye 39 Articles ye day following being Sunday." From that day—the first, I believe, on which a Paget came to live in Somersetshire—the name has been an honoured one in this county, and now the county has honoured it by having one of that family as one of its representatives in Parliament.

Nothing else of special interest demands our notice, though I may state, on the authority of the king of bellmen, the Rev. H. T. Ellacombe, that the oldest and the most musical of the good bells in my old church tower, which bears the black-lettered legend of "Maria" is of the

(4). "Here. Lyeth. The. Body. Of. WATER. BLOBOLE. Person. Of. This Parish. Bvried The. 19 Day. Of. January 1617."

14th century; but the founder is unknown; his mark will be engraved in the forthcoming book, now in the press, on the ancient bells of Somerset.

In the belfry portion of the tower you will find the remains of a fine old clock, of the date, I believe, of Elizabeth's reign. From the very earliest record we possess, the churchwardens were wont to pay "For kiping the clock one hole year, £0 12s. 0d." It was allowed to get out of repair about the year 1830.

One more sentence, including the present and the past. In my churchyard is a flourishing and vigorous young yew tree, which too much hides, on the north side, the beautiful proportions of my fine old tower. It seems to have been planted in 1694, in which year I find an entry, "Pd. for a yew tree, £0 1s. 6d."

I think I may well sum up our "present" by saying we are very proud of the past, and a little hopeful for the future. That future is mercifully hid from us, but we do indulge a hope, which I am sure will be fulfilled, that in the contemplated improvements in the parish, which are not unlikely, I understand, soon to be begun, every possible respect will be paid to all that is ancient, and that special consideration will be shown to all that most shows the infirmities of age; and we have a very strong hope that, whatever else may be done, it will certainly happen that, either in the present Rector's time or his immediate successor's, our dear village church will be restored to something like its former beauty. We trust that, with due conservative care, a new north wall, and a new porch will be builded. The gallery removed will throw open the fine west window: and the splendid records, which you will notice directly, to the good and devoted Sir Thomas Malet and his brave son Baldwin, will find a place suited

for them ; and there will be over all a new roof, raised to its original pitch, indicated by the weather moulding on the old tower. Funds will, I am sure, be forthcoming. I have the pleasure of announcing that a lady, a native of Sherborne, now resident in Devonshire, has offered me, if I will begin, a donation of £5, *as a beginning* ; and that in November last a Doctor of Divinity from the United States, who came here claiming a cousinship, besides that which is National, with the Rector, because a common ancestor of theirs had been one of the *Pilgrim Fathers*, promised that as soon as the restoration of the north wall was begun, at least one stone, together with the wherewithal for its embedment, should be sent, with all cousinly good wishes, from South Carolina ! Some of the most remarkable entries in the parish register relate to help we formerly sent to other parishes. Almost the very first entry we meet with is, "July 31, 1653—Collected in our Church of Poyntington, toward the losse of Marlborough by fire, the sum of six shillings and halfpenny." And similar entries relate to more than a dozen counties. To some places we sent as little as a few pence. "The breife for the fire hapning in the sugar-house situate in Coleharbur, in the parish of Alhaallows, in London, was read in our Parish Church of Poyntington, August 18, 1672. Collected to it three shillings and sixpence." But we gave more to that sugar-house than to some churches. In 1685 we gave, "For rebuilding the Church of Portsmouth, to Joh. Savage, Collr., ye sum of two shillings one penny." However, we gave twice that year, "for the Church of St. Bridgett's, in ye City of Chester, ye sum of one shilling two pence."

We were very abhorrent, seemingly, of play-houses, for under date 1673, after "The brife for the fire happening in

the Theatre Royal in Medelsex," there is no entry of any donation, and probably none was given.

The record of what we did for others in the olden time of our wealth and prosperity is but an earnest of what we are willing and desirous to do, according to our ability, for the restoration of our own dear old church. We think and feel that in the parish where lie the ashes of a Cheney, and a Stuckley, of a Malet, of a Tilly, of a Fox, and of a Paget—where a William Draper Best, who rose to become a Wynford, passed his childhood and his boyhood—there should be, and we will do our best that there shall be, a temple more worthy than it is of our great and good Lord and Master.
