



BULLA OF CALIXTUS III, A.D. 1455-58.

Found at Glastonbury Abbey.

Photograph, W. Tully, Glastonbury.

Glastonbury Abbey.

SEVENTH REPORT ON THE DISCOVERIES MADE DURING THE EXCAVATIONS.

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THE past year's work has been given to the excavation of the area immediately adjoining the Refectory sub-vault on the east. A good deal of foundation work has been exposed, and data recovered of which a short summary appears in the Excavation Committee's report for 1914 (Part i, pp. 76-80). But as nothing in the nature of an exhaustive survey, or conclusive results, can be attained without fuller research (which it is hoped the next season will allow of), further mention of this work is held over. This seems therefore a fitting opportunity to bring to the notice of members some details concerning a relic found by the writer in 1911, to which no public reference has yet been made.

It was during the removal of earth which had accumulated over the surface of the area of the monks' graveyard—that space of ground which lies immediately to the west of the cloister garth—that the subject of the present paper was discovered.

It is, as the illustration shows, a leaden disc about the size of a five-shilling piece, impressed on both sides with a die. This is a *Bulla*, or seal, originally attached to a papal bull.

The obverse gives us the design which, from almost the earliest days of the church, characterised such seals.¹ Within a circle, here composed of dots, are seen the heads of the two apostles, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, each again surrounded by a ring of dots, and with their respective names overhead, in the abbreviated form **SPA-SPE**. On the reverse is seen the name of the pope who issued the bull, viz., **CALISTVS PP. III** (Calixtus III, Pope). This side shows the rift formed by the rude severance of the seal from the tape to which it was attached. In other respects the seal is wonderfully well preserved and the metal is practically free from any mark of corrosion. It may be supposed that at the plundering of the Abbey and the dispersal of the great library after the dissolution of the monastery, this document was carried off, the thief ridding himself of the inconvenient tags as soon as he got it outside the walls.

Four popes have borne the title of Calixtus—three of the regular line, and one of the opposition, or line of “antipopes.”

Calixtus I, who was elected A.D. 219, was martyred in 223. He is celebrated as the constructor of the Catacombs on the Appian Way.

Calixtus II was elected A.D. 1119. Under this pope, the emperor Henry V abandoned the spiritual investiture by ring and crozier which, by the Concordat of Worms, became the papal prerogative.

Calixtus III was the title borne by two men, the first being one of the antipopes, elected in 1168 in opposition to Alexander III; the second, one of the regular line, namely Alphonso de Borgia, elected A.D. 1455. This pope only survived his election three years, but during that time he made himself famous by an appeal to the whole of Christendom against the conquering Turks. By means of his effort probably every monastery in Western Europe was warned and stimulated to

1. “*Cabrol. Dict. Antiq.*,” *sub. Bulla*.

fight the invader who menaced the faith, and so successful was his work that the onrush of the foe was stayed and Christendom was saved.

At first sight, the curiously archaic type of the heads—which have almost a Byzantine appearance—suggested an earlier date for this seal than that of the Borgian pope, and both the writer and the late Rev. C. L. Marson, to whom he showed it, were inclined to think that the XII Century anti-pope might have issued the bull from which it was taken. But further enquiry made it clear that this idea was untenable, and on Sept. 8th, 1911, Mr. Marson wrote as follows: "I reluctantly give up John de Struma, and admit that I am convinced the bulla is of Calixtus III, A.D., 1455-8.

"(1). After Paschal II, the design of SS. Peter and Paul is constant in all bullæ, and the archaic Byzantine caste also common.

"(2). In the Rolls record, *Patent and Close Rolls* (which I consulted in the Taunton Castle Library), there is no tittle of evidence that the first had anything to do with England. I have also referred to *Archæologia*, etc.

"(3). Alphonso de Borgia, on the other hand, was the one man in Europe who saw the meaning of 1453, and lashed Europe to the Holy War. 'All that bulls, exhortations, and indulgences could do, Calixtus did' (Creighton, III, 200)."

The Catholic Bishop of Clifton wrote about the same time, "Though I have not the *bullarium* (an incomplete collection), there can be but little doubt that the leaden bulla belonged to one of the very numerous bulls issued by Calixtus III, when preaching the crusade against the Turks, who under his predecessor captured Constantinople in 1453, and were threatening Christendom. One of these bulls would naturally be sent to the great Abbey of Glastonbury. For an interesting account of Calixtus' efforts against the Turks, see Pastor, Vol. iv."

In a later communication, Mr. Marson says :—

“Calixtus III put in the midday Angelus for prayer against the Turks. He composed the office for Transfiguration. He canonised St. Edmund of Canterbury,¹ and generally is a far more interesting man than the schismatic. I am glad to be convinced that you have his bulla.”

The Keeper of Coins of the British Museum concurred in the view that this was a bulla of the XV Century pope.

We now come to a matter of great interest in the pattern of the bulla itself. The illustration shows a circle of points or dots. Within this, and surrounding each of the saints' heads, is a minor circle or part circle ; and finally, the head of St. Peter is furnished with hair and beard entirely composed of points.

It is these that chiefly contribute to give the impression of greater antiquity to the seal. There is a reason for this quaint arrangement, and it is the same reason which apparently decreed the perpetuation of an old type throughout the centuries.

The following extract from a paper published within the last few years in the *British Academy*, by Reginald L. Poole, gives the clue. He says :—

“Innocent III once declared a document professed to be his to be a forgery, because ‘it lacked one point.’ This was noted by Mabillon as an example of over-refinement, but it was really a mark of scrupulous care.

“The bulla, as we all know, contained on one side the heads of the Apostles Peter and Paul. There were dots all around the circumference, and dots framing each of the heads. Moreover, the hair and beard of St. Peter were composed entirely of dots.

“Now, these dots on the bullæ of a particular pope were of a definite number, and were counted. There were on Innocent's bullæ 73 around the circumference, 25 round St. Paul, 26 round St. Peter, 25 made up St. Peter's hair, and 28 his beard.

1. He also annulled the sentence against Joan of Arc.

“ Later in the XIII Century, the number of dots around the heads was one less—but the genuine bulla of Innocent III must show the exact number mentioned.

“ Evidently, therefore, the deficiency of a single dot was as good evidence that the impression was taken from a false matrix, as if the entire design was different. It only shows what elaborate precaution was taken in the papal chancery for the protection of the documents which issued from it, that not only the design of the bulla was known, but even the exact number of dots on each part of it was carefully recorded.”

In the specimen before us of the bulla of Calixtus III, the circle of dots in the outer margin is deficient. But the regularity of their interspacing makes it possible to reconstruct with a fair degree of certainty their proper number. This works out at 63. In St. Peter's circle are 22, in St. Paul's 21, whilst in his hair are 25, and in his beard 32 dots—total 163, as against a total of 177 for the bulla of Pope Innocent.

Four leaden bullæ belonging to the Somersetshire Archæological Society are exhibited in Taunton Castle Museum. They are as follows :—

(1). HONORIUS IV, A.D. 1285. Found near the site of Taunton Priory, August 1885. Presented by Mr. Wm. Hockin, 1885.

(2). URBANUS VI, A.D. 1378-1389. Found at Wembdon, near Bridgwater. Presented by the Rev. A. H. Scott-White, 1911.

(3). BONIFACE IX, A.D. 1389-1404. Found in the old tower of St. Mary's Church, Taunton, when pulled down in 1858. Presented by Mr. C. K. Bult, 1892.

(4). EUGENIUS IV, A.D. 1431-1447. Found in the Vicarage Garden, Evercreech, before 1825. Presented by Lord Talbot de Malahide, 1862.

(5). SIXTUS IV, A.D. 1471-1484. This bulla (not in the Museum) was found in the River Tone, near Taunton Priory, and is figured in *Proceedings*, IX, ii, 80.—(EDIT).