

same importance to church-plate. And yet the latter is a subject of at least equal interest with the others that have been mentioned; whilst what remains to us of Pre-Reformation church plate is of greater interest still, alike from its beauty, its variety, and its historical associations. And besides this, it forms a very definite portion of the general subject, and one that may be dealt with, even if somewhat briefly, in the compass of an article.

Most of us realize that a great change took place in matters of ritual about the middle of the sixteenth century, and are aware that a great destruction of church-plate occurred at that time; but they do not know how distinctly Pre-Reformation plate is distinguished from ecclesiastical vessels of Elizabethan and later date; they do not know what remains to represent the piety and art of the earlier period, nor how what does remain connects itself with the plate of later times, and what place it holds in the general history of the subject. And first let us say that by Pre-Reformation plate we must be taken to mean, for the purposes of this article, the plate of the times between the eleventh or early in the twelfth, and the sixteenth century.

The Chalices which have been found in the stone-coffins of the great ecclesiastical personages of what we may call Anglo-Norman times are amongst the most ancient specimens of work in the precious metals that remain to the present day. It is often very difficult to identify the remains with which they are found; perhaps one of the most successful identifications is that which has been recently made of the tomb of Archbishop Hubert Walter of Canterbury, who died in 1205. But a sufficient number of these Chalices have been discovered under circumstances which have enabled the date of their interment to be more or less certainly determined, to say that the Chalices of the two centuries which elapsed between A.D. 1150 and A.D. 1340 form a distinct group with Romanesque features, which we may conveniently call Chalices of Norman type. Let us give our description of them this heading, and distinguish them as—

A.—CHALICES OF NORMAN TYPE, WITH CIRCULAR FEET.

If we included the pewter and other base metal Chalices which have been found of this period, they would form a large class; but



CHALICE IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM (13TH CENTURY).

the specimens which are fashioned of silver are naturally fewer, and there is only one massing Chalice of this type and time known. It is the ancient vessel now preserved in the British Museum, but which was formerly at the little village of Berwick St. James, in Wiltshire, and it affords us an excellent illustration of the vessels with which it is thus classed. We should note its plain, wide and somewhat shallow, though rounded, bowl, the slight lip which is not very

convenient in use, and which disappeared before the other characteristic features of the class, which are the simple stem and circular foot—the stem having a plain round projecting knob or boss for the more secure holding of the vessel at mass. The cross lightly scratched on one side of the foot must also be noticed, indicating, perhaps, that the Chalice itself was made before the practice of holding the vessel at the time of consecrating with a particular side usually indicated as we shall see in later vessels by an engraved or raised crucifix, towards himself by the officiating priest, had become settled. When it became so, and the fashion of indicating that side became usual, this scratched cross was added, and it certainly shows that the vessel has been used for massing purposes, although so simple in design and finish as to closely resemble the coffin-Chalices of its period, which we may put at the early part of the thirteenth or late in the preceding century.

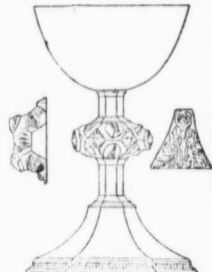
Other notable Chalices of this class are those found in tombs at Chichester Cathedral, thought to be the burial place of Seffride and Hilary, successively occupants of the See of Leicester in the twelfth century; a Chalice discovered in the grave of Bishop Grossetete at Lincoln Cathedral, who died in 1253, and another in that of Bishop Gravesend, buried in the same cathedral in 1279. Without the slight lip we have mentioned, are either Chalices dated from 1297 to 1316 at Salisbury, Lincoln, Exeter, and Hereford, the last belonging to the tomb of Bishop Swinfield, of Hereford, who died in the last of these years.

As in architecture, so in the kindred arts we shall expect to find examples of transitional character interposing between one great group of vessels and another; and in the present case we have such example in the Chalice of Archbishop William de Melton of York, found in York Minster in the tomb believed to be that of the arch-

bishop, who died in 1340. This has the appearance of the other vessels we have mentioned, except as regards the bowl, which is now more conical, and of a shape which leads us by a definite step to the second group, which we will call—

B.—CHALICES OF GOTHIC TYPE, WITH HEXAGONAL FEET.

Here we have come to the period which affords us the greatest number of the Pre-Reformation Chalices now remaining. It is the period from 1350 till about 1510, or, let us say, for the sake of better marking the period historically, till the end of the reign of Henry VII. in 1508; and the sacred vessels with which it furnishes us form a very distinct and interesting group, showing features of great beauty, and in as good agreement with the Perpendicular style in Gothic architecture as the first group was with the architectural period we recognize as Romanesque or Norman.



CHALICE (1479) AT NETTLECOMBE SOMERSET.

Let us take for our example the well known Chalice, found many years ago at the village of Nettlecombe, in Somersetshire, by that well-skilled antiquary, the late Mr. Octavius Morgan. This writer was the first to notice in detail the contrast between such vessels and the Chalices of earlier type, observing that in the thirteenth century Chalices were short and low, with the bowl wide and shallow, where in the fourteenth they were taller, the bowls assuming a decidedly conical form, being narrow at the bottom and having the sides sloping straight outwards, until in the fifteenth century the bowls became broader at the bottom, with the sides still forming part of a cone, as here at Nettlecombe, and at length, at the end of the Gothic period, nearly or quite hemispherical. Let Mr. Morgan describe the Nettlecombe Chalice, as follows, in his own words:—

"The Chalice 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 and having the intermediate spaces filled up with elegant flowing Gothic tracery of pierced open work. 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, by a representation of the Crucifixion. It will be seen at once that the design of this 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 only other feature we need mention about the Gothic group of Chalices is that some of them have a small projecting ornament or toe at each angle of the foot. A notice of these in 1525 calls them "half-mones, otherwise called knappes," but the usual design of these projecting toes is that of an ornamental Lombardic letter M, often so decidedly the case, that it must be intended to indicate the name of the Virgin. Of the fifteen specimens so ornamented originally, several have lost some or all of their toes; and when a Chalice lost one or more of them, it was, perhaps, the easiest way of restoring the symmetry of its appearance to lop off the rest. Mr. W. St. John Hope has suggested that their liability to catch in the altar linen or the vestments of the priest led to the change in the form of foot to a six-lobed shape, the rounded edges of which obviated any such danger. This change seems to have taken full force by about the year 1500.

The date of the Nettlecombe Chalice is 1479, the year being decided beyond question by the goldsmith's hall-marks, which still appear plainly upon it. The class includes in all twenty-one beautiful specimens, of which four are actually dated by their marks as of the period between the years 1479 and 1496 inclusive; and of these three are in Yorkshire, two in Lancashire, five in the southwest of England, the remainder being found singly and very wide apart.

Following upon the Norman Gothic period of Pre-Reformation Chalices, we come to a transitional period, which is marked by two well-known Chalices, one of them the splendid gold Chalice of Bishop Fox at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, of 1507, and the other, the fine Chalice preserved at Leominster, the date of which must be nearly the same. In the Corpus Christi Chalice we have still the conical bowl of the middle type with the non-angular os-