



A Section of
"the Flodden
Window."

Assheton and Anna his wife 1524." In the year 1438, the manor of Middleton had been conveyed to Ralph, "the black knight of Ashton," on his marriage with the heiress Margery Barton. It was his grandson Richard who, on September 8th, 1513, at the age of thirty-two, led his archers at Flodden, and so distinguished himself that he was knighted upon the field of battle. He dedicated his banner and armour to St. Leonard, and in the manorial Chapel, a flag, helmet, sword and spurs, supposed to be the same, may still be seen. The fragments of a window, placed in the Church at that time by subscription, form a more valuable memorial of our local connection with the battle so decisive in the history of this realm. Sir Richard and his lady, and other leaders, the archers in jerkins blue, and their chaplain "Henry Taylyer," are represented kneeling in Church before going forth to the war. Each archer has a sheaf of arrows at his back, and a long bow over his shoulder, and above the bow his name clearly inscribed. Our registers date from 1541, and the first name is that of the family of one of the Flodden heroes. Several of them have descendants in Middleton to-day.

On the south side of the Church is another ancient chapel belonging to the Hopwood family, of Hopwood Hall. At present it is boxed in by a high panelled railing, but we hope some day to see it restored to its original condition. Behind the panelling in the south wall is the only piscina in a perfect condition now remaining in the Church.

Within the sacristy are preserved the best series of monumental brasses to be found in Lancashire and Cheshire, all commemorating members of the Assheton family. Before the Altar lies the effigy of Master Edmund Assheton, Rector, who died in 1522. He wears Eucharistic vestments of a very simple character,

and holds in his hand a chalice, and the sacramental wafer bearing the monogram I.H.S. The earliest brass lying on his right has no inscription, but probably represents his grandparents the "Black Knight" and Margery the heiress of Middleton. To the left of the priest lies his sister, Alice, whose three husbands were originally represented with her; but one was stolen some years ago. The latest brass is of remarkable merit for its date, and celebrates another of Middleton's greatest sons, Ralph, commander of the Parliamentary forces in Lancashire during the Civil War, and a member of the Long Parliament. He and his yeomen took part in the defence of Manchester, the siege of Lathom House, and every other fight of the period which fell within their reach.

A beautiful oak screen once stretched across the whole width of the Church, separating the chantries and chancel from the nave. It was subjected to ruthless damage from time to time, but considerable portions still remain. The centre part, adorned with the arms of the Assheton alliances, is probably of the early sixteenth century, while Langley's chapel is enclosed by beautiful work of his period.

It is proposed to restore these screens in memory of Dr. Durnford, late Bishop of Chichester, who for thirty-five years (1835 to 1870) was rector of this parish. He found the Church with its western arch bricked up, the walls covered with plaster, and blocked up with huge galleries and unsightly pews. He left it in its present condition, and built schools and churches with such wise forethought, that "the village," now grown to a borough of twenty-five thousand inhabitants, includes six parishes and a majority of Churchpeople. He loved Middleton to his last hour, and proved himself a worthy successor of Langley as a benefactor to this ancient parish. Under the guidance of Messrs. Bodley and Garner we hope to be able to complete the restoration work so well begun. The curious wooden erection which surmounts Langley's tower dates from 1709, when the old bells were hung a storey higher. These were removed by Sir Ralph Assheton and replaced by six bells cast by Rudhall, of Gloucester, in 1714. It is suggested that wood was used because the sandy foundations of the tower would not bear additional weight, or that its object was to give sweetness to the tone of the bells. In any case those who live within sight of its queer gables, quaint in their ugliness, would not willingly exchange them for a stone structure. They are not ashamed of their sobriquet:—

"A stubborn people
With a wooden-steeple."

At the beginning of this century the Rector ordered a bell to be rung at ten minutes before ten, as a signal for the closing of shops, and that all who were abroad might hasten home and get to bed. In time this bell