

A CITY VICAR OF THE OLDEN TIME AND HIS PARISH.

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WHEN I was Curate of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, in the City of London, now a good many years ago, I became greatly interested in its history and particularly in its registers. These are complete from the year 1538, only eight years later than the enactment of the regulation for keeping them, down to the present day. They throw a great deal of light on the parish and on contemporary events—the periodical plague years, for instance, the Great Fire and its sequels, the Church under the Commonwealth, and the like. There exist also several volumes of parish records, beginning with an inventory of the goods of the parish church in 1461 and the statement of a peculiar arrangement for the appointment of churchwardens which has lasted from that pre-Reformation period down to the present day.

The first volume of the registers is in the original paper, bound in limp parchment. The writing is in what we now call black letter. I became convinced that the entries were in the handwriting of the vicar of the period, known as "Sir" Richard Kettill, for they continue to be in the same hand from the first page until 1561, when a sudden change takes place, and within a few days afterwards occurs the entry of his burial. Here is the inscription at the top of the first page:—

"The boke of Regestre wherein is wryghttyn the daye and yere And also There inserte every parsones name that ys weddyd christened and Buryed within the parisshe of saynt Stephens in Colman streat within The cite of London from the xxvith. daye of Octobre In the xxxth yere Off ower souferaing Lorde King henry the eight here in erth supreme heed under Christe of the Church of England and in the yere off Ower lord god A thousand v. hundreth thretty and eyght Commanded By the kyngs maieste in Jonctiones yeven and exhibited the daye and yere Above written in saynt laurens church in the old Jurye in the Visitacion of the archedecon of london In the tyme of Syr Richard Kettill then beyng vicar ppetuall of the church of saynt Stephens Aforesaid and thomas tyrry bruer and Edmond hurlocke coziar The church Wardyns"

In a smaller and less regular hand Richard Kettill added, perhaps at a much later date, a further piece of information about himself:—

"et octavo Anno Richardi kettill, vicarii ppetui ibid."

This addition goes to confirm the idea that the writing is his own.

"Sir" Richard Kettill must have been a monk from the priory of Augustinian Canons at Butley in Suffolk, which held the patronage of St. Stephens and the great tithes. The income was returned at

£10 a year. Kettill was a "Batchelor of Law," and therefore much above the average of the contemporary clergy in education. When he was appointed to this large city parish he would probably be a man of some standing and experience, for the monastery would be likely to reserve such posts for its senior men, but there is no clue to his exact age. He can hardly have been much less than forty.

In 1530 Henry VIII had not yet broken with Rome, and the dissolution of the monasteries did not begin till six years later. Here then was a priest of the unreformed church in charge of a somewhat prominent parish, not in a remote village where his views and practices might possibly escape the notice of authorities in church and state, but in the heart of London itself. Yet he contrived to retain his living throughout all the changes of Henry VIII's policy till the end of that reign, through the reigns of Edward VI and Mary, and died, still Vicar of St. Stephen's, three years after Elizabeth had ascended the throne. A "Vicar of Bray," many would call him. It is unnecessary to look upon such a man as a mere time-server. What Prof. Pollard said of Cranmer in the April number of *THE CHURCHMAN* surely applies to Richard Kettill as to hundreds of others:—

"The attitude he had taken was that the nation through its authorized organs, Crown, Parliament, and Convocation, can set up what standard of faith, of ritual, and of doctrine it prefers. He had cast in his lot with the supremacy of the nation itself in ecclesiastical matters. . . . He had never accepted the view that the individual conscience was the supreme authority."

The very fact that the disturbance of the clergy was so far from general shows that this must have been a very common type of mind. Kettill no doubt accepted the successive dictates of authority and conformed. The species is by no means extinct even in the present age. It has no taste for martyrdom; it is quite prepared to assume that the reigning powers know best, or at any rate to wash its hands of responsibility; and it will jog along, doing its work in the Church with reasonable practical efficiency.

Kettill did allow his preferences to leak out in a curious way. At the death of Edward VI there is inserted at the side of the page and without any break in the ordinary course of the entries, a brief memorandum in Latin: "In the first year of Queen Jane, on the tenth day of the month of July." Nine days later there is a great flourish of trumpets. In a bolder hand and right across the page comes another Latin inscription:

"On the 19th of July and in the first year of Queen Mary, most legitimate Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and here in Earth Supreme Head under Christ of the English and Irish Church."

Readers will of course remember that Queen Mary was not slow to disown the title of "Supreme Head of the Church" which had been assumed by her father, and it has never since been revived.

In the early years the register gives nothing but the names of the persons concerned, but from 1550 onwards the occupations or

other descriptions are added, from which we get an insight into the character of the parish. The spelling is throughout as free from any bondage to consistency as the inscription with which the register begins.

In marriages, the lady is described as "mayd," "mayden" or "wedow" as the case may be, never as "spinster." In 1553 the bridegroom is called a "bachelar" for the first time. Now and then we read of the burial of "a pore mayd," "a pore old wedow," or "an old mayd." Was "pore" even then the cockney pronunciation of "poor"? We may wonder.

The occupations mentioned are very various, and leave the impression that the parishioners were mostly artisans, for "gentilman" occurs but rarely. About eighty different callings are mentioned. "Mynstrelle," "coryoure" (currier), "pulter" (poulterer), "peuter" (pewterer), "poynte maker" (maker of points or tags for clothing), "laborer" and "plasterer" are perhaps the commonest. Among the more or less familiar words disguised under eccentric spelling are "candellstyckfounder," "bocher," "ledger-seller," "whever," "plumar," "hakneymanne," "yrnmonger," "hossher," "brycklaer" or "breckelaer," "glacer," "cordyner" (cordwainer), "taylowchaundeler," "cobuler" or "coblar," and "potycary." One is curious to know on what sort of instrument the "organ plaere" performed, and what the "shoman" exhibited. The "smithserver" would perhaps now be called a blacksmith's labourer. The "corsewhevar" was distinct from the "rebynwhever." The "barber surjune" could bleed his customers if desired as well as shave them. The "gardyner," "house Bandmanne" and "dicher" remind us that beyond London Wall there was still open country. The "cannelraykar" was no doubt a "channel raker" or scavenger, employed to keep more or less clean the open sewer which ran down the middle of every street. The "bowyer" or "bower," the "bowstryngmaker" or "bowstrynger," and the "fletcher" (who winged the arrows) indicate that bows and arrows were still of importance in sport and war. "Prentyses" are common: even "mynstrelles" had them. Here and there we get the servants of some great person, such as "my lady Grace" or "my lady Alesse." Had those great ladies houses within the parish? Possibly. One man was "the queen's servante." A fraunchman and a "Burgonyan" are mentioned.

Among the less common Christian names are "Harver," "Hercules," "Umfray," "Thobias," "Gryffen," "Chutbart," "Der-ycke," "Rauffe," "Elys," "perys," "Gylbarde," "Benedicte," "Sabah," "Bartelmew," "Myls," "launcelote," and "peture" for men; and "Petronell," "Marcella," "Judyth," "Tomysyn," "mawd," "Josse," "Myllesente," "Chrysteyn," "fayth," "letyse," "Brygyt," "cecile," and "Raab" amongst women.

RICHARD KETTILL'S WILL.

I was able to unearth the old gentleman's will, a document which contains a good deal of self-revelation. It seems to bear the impress

of a pleasant geniality when, after the usual form of opening he declares himself to be "of an whole and perfect mind and of a good memorie thanks be unto almighty god."

His profession of faith follows. It is not at all in a mere common form, but has an individuality of its own and rings sincere. Whatever he may once have been, it is surely a devout Christian who says: "I trusting faithfullie through his mersy to be saved and repenting of all my sinnes and steadfastlie I believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Crosse for me and shedd his most precious bloud for my redemption earnestlie remembering the great benefittes I have theirby and I gave hartilie thanks therefore."

For his burial, he directs "my bodie to be buried within the Chauncell or Queer of the sayd St. Stephen's in Colmanstreete aforsayd in the place before my seate where I have bine accustomed to sitt. Also I will that their shalbe spent at the day of my buriall in bread and ale among the poore people of the sayd parish of St. Stephens the sum of sixe shillings and eightpence Item I will that a sermon be made at my buriall by a well-learned preacher having for his paines fortie pence."

He has no relatives apparently, but leaves his property to his "gossips"—those related in god-parentage. Agnes Redman his god-daughter is to have two shillings if she is alive at his decease. We must suppose that she had been lost sight of or she would have got more. He has a cherished possession, a ring "of crusadoo gold." His "gossip Agnes Sturtell now the wyffe of Richard Long" is to have that, and after that it is to pass to her married daughter, Mary Iswell and then to Margaret Sturtell. The rest of his "goodes chattalls debtes jewells household stufte and redie money after my debtes paid my legacies distributed my bodie honestlie brought to the earth" are divided between Agnes Long and her children, Richard, the old priest's godson, being named as executor. He is to have forty shillings for his pains and his mother ten shillings for acting as "overseer" to him. The will is dated Feb. 25, 1561, and he died shortly afterwards.

So we take leave of Sir Richard. Alas! the Great Fire of London swept away old St. Stephen's and with it any monument which may have existed of this link with the unreformed Church of England.

Advent and Christmas Sermons by Representative Preachers, edited by Frederick J. North (James Clarke & Co., 5s.), is a companion volume to *Harvest Thanksgiving Sermons* issued by the same publishers. There are six Advent Sermons, and seven for Christmas. They are all by men whose preaching power is well known, and are varied in character. Dean Inge deals with Christ's Call to Awake, and Canon Lacey with The Coming of the King. The Bishop of Birmingham contributes A Christmas Sermon. Among the other preachers are Dr. MacLean Watt, Dr. James Black, Dr. R. C. Gillie, Dr. Norman Maclean, and Dr. George H. Morrison. The volume will be found by preachers to provide a supply of suggestive and suitable thoughts for the Seasons.