



FIREPLACE IN THE DINING HALL OF COBHAM COLLEGE, KENT,
ERECTED DURING THE REIGN OF RICHARD II.

CHIMNEY-PIECE IN COBHAM COLLEGE HALL.

BY CANON SCOTT ROBERTSON.

FEW examples now remain in Kent of early stone chimney-pieces. At Rochester Castle, perhaps the earliest is to be found. In Tunbridge Castle, in the Mote-house at Ightham, in Old Sore Manor-house, and in a cottage at the top of Detling-street, on the hill, Edwardian examples may still be seen. In Cobham College Hall, and in Horton Priory,* there are stone chimney-pieces of the period immediately subsequent. The latter has already been illustrated in our tenth volume; the former is shewn on the opposite plate, from a drawing by Mr. Herbert Baker, of Owletts, Cobham. The width of the mantel is 8 feet $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches; in the right-hand spandrel is carved the crest of Sir John Cobham, the Founder, a Saracen's head, from which a flower with foliage extends towards the centre. In the left-hand spandrel an armorial shield bears an escallop shell, with a saltire in chief; a flower and foliage extend from that shield towards the centre. On the right-hand shoulder of the mantelpiece a flower is carved; on the left-hand shoulder is a shield, upon which are carved in high relief the letters of a man's name, arranged in three lines so as to fill the shield. Being in black-letter characters, the name is difficult to read. Lord Darnley kindly caused a plaster cast to be made, for me, from this shield; and I had an

* Engraved in *Archæologia Cantiana*, X., 87.

electrotype taken which was submitted to Mr. De Gray Birch. He says that the two first lines are clear enough, but the third line, cramped within the pointed base of the shield, is not clear. The name seems to be *M. T | rymd | yn |*; probably the name of the mason or builder.

The founder of the College was Sir John Cobham, who began it in 1362, and increased its endowment in 1389. The name on the shield clearly is not his. It has been suggested that the name of the first Master might be placed in such a position, but I have ascertained that the first Master was the Vicar of Cobham, Walter Shulham, or Chudham, or Shuldham,* and certainly the shield does not bear that name. I have examined the names of the six original "Fellows"† of the College; and not one of them agrees with that upon the shield. Consequently we are driven to the conclusion that the mason or architect signed the mantelpiece with his own name. Little is known of the history of the College. The monumental brasses in Cobham Church‡ shew that of the Masters who succeeded Walter Shuldham, William Tanner was buried in June 1418; John Byrkhede§

* *Registrum Roffense*, p. 238. Hasted erroneously states that WILLIAM TANNER was the first Master of this College (*History of Kent*, iii., 435). He was misled by a misconstruction of Tanner's epitaph, which says that he was the first Master who died in that office: "Hic jacet Willielmus Tanner qui prinus obiit Magister istius collegii xxij^o die mensis Junii anno domini m^occcc^o xviii^o" (*Reg. Roff.*, p. 776). The fact is that in April 1389, William Tanner was one of the Fellows of the College. His epitaph makes it clear that Walter Shuldham, the first Master, was promoted to a higher office, and did not die while holding the position of Master of Cobham College.

† In April 1389 the Collegiate body consisted of Walter Shuldham (Master), 2. John Moys (Sub-Master); 3. John Thurston; 4. William Tanner; 5. John Mercote or Morcote; 6. Richard Yonge (probably Bishop of Bangor 1400 to 1407, and of Rochester from 1407 to 1419); 7. Ralphe Lister (*Registrum Roffense*, p. 238).

‡ A Fellow of the College, named John Gery, who died in July 1447, is likewise commemorated by a monumental brass in the Church.

§ Jno. Byrkhede was instituted to a Prebend in Cobham College, by Archbishop Chichele, on the 28th of July 1419, during a vacancy of the see of Rochester.

became Master not long after ; John Gladwyn died in 1450 ; William Hobson was interred in August 1473 ; and John Sprotte died Oct. 25, 1498. John Alan, his successor, was Master from 1499 until 1501.* Other Masters were John Whoot, Hoot, or Hett (Rector of Nursted 1448) ; Edward Underdown ; William Bourchier ; Robert Fyswick ; and Thomas Stone. We know that George Crowmer, Archbishop of Armagh from 1521 to 1543, and Lord Chancellor of Ireland 1532-4, had been Master of Cobham College for nine years from May 21, 1512, until 1521. Subsequent Masters were, Robert Johnson† (1532, August 3, until 1533), John Wildbore‡ (1533 to 1534), and John Bayley.

The last Master, John Bayley, with four Fellows (Thomas Webster, William Wharfe, John Norman, and Stephen Tennard), renounced the Papal Supremacy on the 27th of October 1535, and, soon afterward, subscribed their submission to the King's Supremacy. Three years later they sold the College and its possessions to George, Lord Cobham. His son, William, Lord Cobham, refounded the College, as an almshouse for twenty poor persons in 1598, in which year he died. The quadrangle round which the alms-people's rooms stand measures $60\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 51 feet. The ancient hall occupies the south side of it. The new buildings were finished in 1598. An inscription stating these facts appears over the south gate of the College, and above the inscription is the armorial shield of

* JOHN ALAN, or ALLAN, was Commissary to the Bishop of Rochester 10th February 1499, O.S. (1500 N.S.). He was Vicar of St. Nicholas, Deptford, in 1500, and died in 1508, being then Vicar of St. Werburgh, Hoo.

† Rob^t Johnson was Vicar of Yalding July 1524 ; Rector of Stone-by-Dartford (1525-58) ; third Prebendary of Rochester Cathedral (1542-4), and a Canon of Worcester (1544-58).

‡ John Wildbore was Vicar of Lamberhurst 1515 ; Master of Strood Hospital 1517-40 ; Vicar of St. Nicholas, Rochester, 1519-22 ; Rector of Chislehurst 1523-52 ; and second Prebendary of Rochester Cathedral 1542-52.

William, Lord Cobham, with its 12 quarterings. Close to this gateway an Elizabethan chimney-piece of stone remains in good condition, probably it was in the kitchen of the New College.

Probably the most remarkable ceremony ever witnessed, in the Hall of Cobham College, near the fireplace which is represented on our plate, was that of "swearing-in" Dr. George Crowmer, who was Master in 1521, on his appointment to the Archbishopric of Armagh. Special Commissioners, appointed for the purpose, attended at Cobham College, and before them Dr. Crowmer took the Oaths of Allegiance and Fealty. Of this ceremony the Commissioners executed a formal certificate, which was transmitted to Pope Leo the Xth, in due course.

Dr. Crowmer had always been in favour with King Henry VIII., who presented him to the Mastership of Cobham College on the 21st of May 1512. The patronage then fell to the King, through the recent death of John Brooke, Lord Cobham. Henry VIII., in 1518, selected Dr. Crowmer to bear to Canterbury the King's Christmas offering to the Shrine of St. Thomas. On his journey thither George Crowmer passed through the parish of Murston, of which he had been Rector until 1513, and very near to his native parish of Tunstall, of which his father Sir James Crowmer was the wealthy squire. Dr. Crowmer had held the rectory of Stanford le Hope, in Essex, from July 19, 1511, until 1514 (February); he was instituted October 27, 1513, to the vicarage of Benenden, Kent, which he retained when he became Primate of Ireland, and held until 1542.