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not have been anxious to oppose him with any more vigour than was necessary to divert any suspicion from himself. In the matter of an insurrection, neutrality would certainly not be permitted to a person of Lord Cobham's position. Undoubtedly he found himself in a very delicate and embarrassing situation, from which he seems to have tried to extricate himself by the well-known plan of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

Though, therefore, one may be sceptical of accepting Lord Cobham's letter as a true record of his actions, one can have every sympathy towards him in the unenviable position in which he found himself; when, hampered by strong ties of family. With his own sons in opposite camps, he would be an object of suspicion, probably from that very fact; forced to oppose a cause he may have conscientiously believed in, though he may have been adverse to furthering it *vi et armis*, and forced into the limelight by being compelled to defend his own home against the rebels, he may have reverted to the expediency of trying to serve both sides, by trying to defend his post sufficiently to satisfy this Queen, while surrendering it in time not to cause any great hazard to his family. He may have judged—and rightly—that the fall of his castle would in no wise affect the issue of the campaign. Cobham's imprisonment was of short duration, for, on the intercession of the Count d'Egmont, the Queen ordered his release on the 24th March, extending also her clemency to his eldest son, William Brooke.

THE ENGRAVED PLATE AT COOLING CASTLE.

The authenticity of the engraved copper inscription-plate at Cooling having been called in question, it has been thought well to summarise the facts concerning it, so far as they can be ascertained.

The plate, it will be remembered, is attached to the southern face of the easternmost one of the pair of drum-towers which flank the entrance of the outer gatehouse. To

the plate is appended the representation of a seal with the family arms of Cobham.

Members of the Archæological Institute visited Cooling in 1863, and, as a sequel to their visit, Messrs. John Green Waller and C. Roach Smith, in the autumn of 1864, made a special visit of inspection to Cooling, and were enabled by means of ladders, to examine the plate minutely at close quarters. The result of their inspection was communicated to the Institute, and a detailed account of it, from the pen of Mr. Waller, published in 1866 in the *Archæological Journal*, Volume XXIII, pp. 233-4. Mr. Waller's paper comprises the following observations: "The only part lost is one of the tassels of the cordon, and that was gone at the time that Gough published his *Sepulchral Monuments*, as his engraving is without it. When we consider the vicissitudes of time and circumstances, it is rather a matter of wonder that so interesting a relic should have escaped with so little injury to the present time. Some of the plates of the inscription" (it was found to consist of twelve separate plates) "however, were lost a few years ago, and afterwards discovered in cleaning out the moat; these were laudably refixed in their places. Unfortunately, owing to the ignorance of those who refixed them, the mode employed is now working more mischief than the past five centuries, and insures the certain destruction of the work at no very distant date. The loose plates were fixed with iron nails, and the consequence is that owing to a well-known law, a galvanic action is set up, by which both metals are being gradually destroyed, one rapidly, the other slowly. The effect of this is very visible, not only around the orifices through which the nails are placed, but it is evident from the green stains of the stone immediately beneath the plate, that corrosion is going on rapidly behind. The plate has at some time or other received injuries that appear to have been done out of mere wantonness. . . . It is to be hoped . . . that a relic of so much interest will not be allowed to fall into any further decay."

In 1876 the Castle was visited by members of the Kent Archæological Society, and described by the Rev. Canon

Scott-Robertson, whose account was subsequently published in 1877 in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Volume XI., accompanied by a lithograph illustration of the engraved plate. Concerning the latter Canon Scott-Robertson writes: "The whole work is an exquisite example of enamel, which, after 500 years' exposure to the weather, remains nearly as good as when it was put up." So far, then, there is no hint nor suspicion of the plate's being otherwise than absolutely authentic.

Now for the disquieting circumstances. In 1926, Mr. Henry Smetham, author of *History of Strood* and of *Rambles Round Churches in the Land of Dickens*, in his chapter on Cooling, contained in the second volume of the last-named work, p. 184, asserts that the existing engraved "Charter-plate" at Cooling "is not the original plate, that was lost or had perished. This faithful copy was made by F. W. Fairholt."¹

Application was accordingly made direct to Mr. Smetham, who replied as follows: "On this matter I am as positive as one can humanly be, viz., that Mr. Roach Smith told me that the plate had become so injured (parts lost, I believe) that it was taken down and Mr. Fairholt restored it. Some of these plates *had* to be renewed."

This astounding statement suggests a number of painful reflections. Was Canon Scott-Robertson deceived? For the terms in which he refers to the Cooling plate leave no doubt that he, at any rate, believed it to be genuine. And yet if Mr. Smetham's account be taken without qualification, the plate as a whole was scarcely more than ten years old in 1876. If such was the case, and if Canon Scott-Robertson was mistaken when, both orally in 1876 and in print in 1877, he referred to the plate as original, why did not Roach Smith, who of all persons then living was conversant with the facts and best qualified to speak—why did he not take steps to correct the error publicly and openly, as surely he was bound to do in the interests of scientific accuracy? Opportunity was by no means lacking to him, since he

¹ Mr. Fairholt died in April, 1866.

lived on until August, 1890. Yet the fact remains that he kept silence and allowed the false impression to pass, without protest or correction. He did, indeed, tell his young friend, Smetham, but only orally, in private conversation. And an informal statement made in this way cannot be held to carry the same weight as a published authoritative declaration of the truth, such as circumstances undoubtedly demanded, after the widespread currency given to Canon Scott-Robertson's erroneous view.

There are certain data by which the genuineness of the several parts of the plate might be tested. Thus, the marks of nail-corrosion, mentioned in the account of 1866, would not only be existing now in the case of the original plates, but would have become much more aggravated by this time. Again, there is the detail of the missing tassel, referred to in 1866. The lithograph, published in 1877, shows a tassel wanting on one side below the seal. Now, this proves one of two things:—either that the plate which Scott-Robertson saw and described, was the plate before it had been tampered with, the plate identical with the original plate existing in 1863-6; or else that the new work was so meticulous a copy of the old as to reproduce even its defects—defects which could quite well have been remedied at the time of renewal. How, then, is such slavish literalness to be interpreted? Was it a deliberate design to deceive? Or was it simply the outcome of pedantry?

Being pressed further for circumstantial details, Mr. Smetham now admits that, in describing the engraved inscription as "new," he applied the epithet "too loosely and unguardedly." He asseverates however, that the entire plate was taken down for repair, and that, when set up again, the greater part of the enamelling had been renovated and some of the component plates themselves had been replaced by work of modern execution; Messrs. Roach Smith and Fairholt, who bore the cost between them, vouching for the absolute accuracy of the reproduction in every portion which they substituted for the genuine old work. All this is bad enough, but yet not quite so bad as if the ancient

inscription had been got rid of bodily and a modern imitation exchanged for the original.

Inconceivable as it is that any antiquaries of the standing and reputation of Messrs. Roach Smith and Fairholt could do at the present day as these two gentlemen did, it must nevertheless be remembered that they were acting in perfect accordance with the received standard of their times, and that doubtless they believed themselves to be doing a good and meritorious service to archæology. In conclusion, then, if the engraved plate at Cooling in its present state may no longer claim to be the authentic document it once was; neither, in the other hand, is it altogether modern, such parts of it only as were adjudged by Roach Smith and Fairholt to be worn out, having been renewed by them; though the exact extent of their manipulation it is, at this distance of time, impossible to tell.

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