

THE AMPTON SEALED BOOK.

BY THE REV. W. A. WICKHAM, AMPTON RECTORY,
BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

In the Parish Chest of Ampton is a real Suffolk treasure, of which few Suffolk people have ever heard. Of the fifty-two counties of England and Wales only seventeen, besides Suffolk, possess a similar treasure. The British Museum does not possess one, neither does the Bodleian.

The Savoy Conference revised the Prayer Book, and in due course the result of its labours was contained in a printed folio of 1636, corrected in manuscript, and signed by Convocation on 20 Dec., 1661. This is the Standard Prayer Book, and is called the "CONVOCATION PRAYER BOOK."

An exact copy of it was made upon Parchment, and attached to the Caroline Act of Uniformity, of which it formed part. This was called the "BOOK ANNEXED." To make legal reference to this book easier a Commission appointed by the King corrected with the pen certain folio printed Prayer Books, and brought them into exact conformity with the "Book Annexed." A certificate to that effect was attached to each of these Books, and also Letters Patent and the Great Seal of England. These Books were called the "SEALED BOOKS," and were of equal authority as legal records with the "Book Annexed." Four of them were sent to the Law Courts, and one to the Tower, and every Cathedral and Collegiate Church was also ordered to procure one "at their own proper costs and charges." Each Cathedral must have done

so. The Oxford book cost the Chapter £9 2s. I cannot find any trace or tradition of any "Sealed Books" in the Collegiate Churches.

Probably there were no "spare copies," and not more than thirty-one came into existence. Twenty-three are still in their original places, or in the Public Record office; eight seem to have strayed, and one of them is at Ampton. I have lately been making some researches amongst the Cathedral authorities and elsewhere, and I find that the Law Courts and Tower copies are in the Record Office. The following Cathedrals have their copies, and, in the case of those to which I have attached an asterisk, more or less of the Great Seal remains: *Canterbury, *York, *London, Winchester, *Durham, *Oxford, *Lichfield, Hereford, *Lincoln, *Carlisle, Salisbury, *Exeter, St. Asaph, *Gloucester, Chichester, *Rochester, *Norwich, and *Ely.

In the case of Worcester, Bath and Wells, Peterborough, Chester, Bristol, St. David's, Llandaff, and Bangor, the books have vanished. Eight strayed copies of this precious book have thus to be accounted for. I think I can speak about four. The other four baffle me altogether.

1. One is in the Cambridge University Library. It used to stand amongst the Moore books, i.e., the books belonging to the library of Bishop Moore (d. 1715) of Norwich, and subsequently of Ely, purchased by George I., and presented to the University. So, probably, it originally belonged to Bishop Moore. If so, then within 50 years of the Act of Uniformity some Cathedral had either lost or sold its copy, and a book-collecting Bishop had obtained it. The attesting certificate is intact, but the Great Seal is gone.

2. Another copy is, probably, in the Library of St. John's College, Auckland, N.Z. The certificate is missing, but Archdeacon Williams has kindly sent me a careful description of the book and all the corrections in it, and I have little, if any, doubt that it is a "Sealed Book." It is said to have been taken to Auckland by Bishop George Selwyn in 1841, and he left it behind him when he was translated to Lichfield. How he obtained it no one knows. This book had strayed from its Cathedral not later than 1753, when it belonged to Anne Leicester. In 1794 it was given by William Rose, of Mount Coffey, Banffshire, to Bishop Andrew Macfarlane, of Moray, Ross, and Argyle, who died in 1819.

3. Another copy was sold by auction by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, 47, Leicester Square, London, on Aug. 11th, 1885, for £30. The certificate was intact, but the Great Seal gone. Its purchaser was a Mr. Bolsover, but who he was, whether a dealer or collector, neither the Auctioneers, nor the British Museum are able to tell me; neither can I trace the present whereabouts of the book.

4. So we come to the Ampton Book. It is a folio, measuring $15\frac{1}{2}$ -in. by $10\frac{1}{4}$ -in. and $2\frac{1}{4}$ -in. thick. It was rebound in 1846 at the expense of Mr. Augustine Page, the then Master of the Ampton Endowed School, well known in Suffolk as an antiquary, and the author of the *Supplement to the Suffolk Traveller*. (1844). He spared no money on the re-binding, which was done by F. Lankester, of Bury St. Edmunds. It is in white vellum with an abundance of gold tooling on the back and on both covers. On the front cover are the words "Ampton Parish" in gold. The edges are red. Perhaps this re-binding, though at first one naturally regrets it, may prove the salvation of the book. It is now such a beautiful book that it would appeal to

men who might have had little affection for it in its old worn brown binding, and dilapidated condition. The greater part of the letterpress is in a perfect state of preservation, and the pages are as smooth and clean as when first printed. It is in black letter, with many interesting woodcut initial letters and head and tail pieces. Unfortunately about ten pages are wanting near the beginning of the book, and one of them is the title page, which was probably a rococo altarpiece, with a large open book in the pediment, engraved by D. Loggan. There is no rubrication, and no hand-ruled marginal lines, such as occur in the Durham book and elsewhere. The pen alterations, made by the Commissioners to bring the book into conformity with the "Book Annexed," occur through the greater part of the book. Fortunately, the certificate, dated 13th Dec., 1662, is still safe and sound at the end of the book. It is signed and sealed by six Commissioners, John Croftes, D.D., Dean of Norwich (also Rector of West Stow and the Barnhams, and son of Sir John Croftes); Joseph Henshawe, D.D., Dean of Chichester; William Bradbourne, D.D.; Richard Chaworth, Doctor of Laws; Marke Franck, D.D., Archdeacon of St. Albans; and George Stradling, D.D.

I need hardly add that the Letters Patent and Great Seal are now wanting, and the rebinding would naturally do away with all trace of the plaited silk cord by which they were formerly attached to the book. It would also destroy any clue, which the old cover might have given, as to the Cathedral to which the book originally belonged. Fortunately we have not to lament any great cutting down of the margins. From comparison with the Sarum book (through the kind offices of Chancellor Wordsworth), I find that we have lost only $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. in the side margin, $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. at the top, and $\frac{5}{16}$ -in. at the bottom. So that the binder, failing the grace of knowing that his cutting tool should

never come near the precious pages, was very fairly conservative in his work. Probably, when the book was handed to him, its under cover was still attached to it, for that end of the book is perfect. But, probably, the other cover had come off years before, and first one early page, and then another had worked loose, and been lost. That seems to tell of a period of neglect, but where the book was, when it was neglected, it is impossible to say. For we do not know how or when it first came to Ampton. There is no certain clue earlier than a Terrier, made by Rector Stuart, and dated 1846, which mentions this book, and speaks of it as "Lately bound in vellum, the Title-page lost." In the beginning of the book there is a paper in Rector Stuart's handwriting, "The Binding of this Prayer Book was presented to the Parish of Ampton by Mr. Augustine Page, the Master of the Boys' Hospital, Ampton, in the year 1849." But "1849" is evidently a mistake, because the Terrier of 1846 speaks of it as "lately bound." It will be noticed that Mr. Page's present to the Parish was only the cost of re-binding. He therefore was not the Donor of the book, which must have been here before his time.

I have been in communication with three persons, who, I thought, might be able to throw some light upon the matter, the Provost of Eton, a well-known Suffolk antiquary, whose father was Rector of Livermere; the Rev. Canon Lukyn Williams, D.D., who was Rector of Ampton, 1886-1892; and Miss Stuart, daughter of the Rev. J. H. Stuart, Rector of Ampton, 1841-1886. He succeeded the Rev. H. Alford, sen., Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, Rector of Ampton, 1826-1841, whose son, Henry Alford, Jun., then Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and afterwards the well-known Commentator, and Dean of Canterbury, was Curate-in-Charge of Ampton from Nov., 1833, to July, 1835. Rector Alford was preceded by

the Rev. Joseph Cotterill, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. He was here 1811-1826. He became Rector of Blakeney, Norfolk, in 1824, and died and was buried there in 1858. Immediately before him Rector Gough held both Ampton and Blakeney. He was second son of Sir Henry Gough, Bart., of Edgbaston, and brother of the first Baron Calthorpe.

Miss Stuart's memory is the longest. She writes: "the Sealed Book was lost . . . and we heard that Mr. Cotterill . . . had taken it away to Blakeney. . . . We none of us saw the book until it was rebound at . . . Mr. Page's expense."* She adds that her father never lent the Book or lost possession of it. This surmise does not help us much, but I think her letter (with which the other letters agree) makes it clear that the book had, at some time or other, vanished from the Parish, and was lost sight of for a longer or a shorter time. I very much suspect that the old rumour, which she mentions, as to its disappearance is the true one, unless Rector Gough had earlier taken it to Blakeney.

Cotterill did not mention it in his Ampton Terrier of 1820, any more than did Alford in his Terrier of 1827. It might have been at Blakeney at that time. But, if he did take it away with his own books when he moved to Blakeney, he must have returned it to Ampton before 1846, for it was rebound in that year. It might have been returned (as the Provost suggests) at Dean Alford's instance, for he left here in 1835, and

* Sir Henry Gough had married Barbara Calthorpe, and so obtained (c. 1788) the Norfolk and Suffolk Calthorpe properties. Edgbaston was then in the Diocese of Worcester. Worcester Cathedral has lost its Sealed Book. The Gough-Calthorpes *may* in some way have obtained possession of it, and have brought it to Ampton. This is a pure guess.

Mr. Stuart was here as Curate in 1839. Miss Stuart was then a little child, and might very well not have seen the returned book in its unbound condition. Mr. Page exhibited it (after its rebinding) to the Suffolk Institute of Archæology on 15th March, 1849 (*Proceedings*, Vol. I., p. 59), and in a memorandum in the Ampton Parish Chest in Mr. Page's writing I find that he informed the Institute that it was supposed that not more than six such books were known in the Kingdom ! * He might well think it worth rebinding !

We are thus without any real knowledge as to how this Sealed Book came to Ampton. But I think we may be sure it has been here for at least a century. I hope that the publicity which this paper will give to it will ensure its continued safety.

W. A. WICKHAM.

* But even as lately as 1880 Dean Goulburn, of Norwich, was "curious to know how many of the Cathedrals have preserved their Sealed Book," and was *sure* of only eight.