

"BREAD IRON"

Turning over the "Connoisseur, of April, 1903, Page 283, Vol. VI, I came across an illustration of a "Bread Iron" found near Shrewsbury. It is an Intaglio, measuring $4\frac{3}{8}$ in. in length, and $2\frac{3}{16}$ in. in width.

Bread iron was used in pre-Reformation days to stamp the Eucharistic wafers. The obverse has designs of scriptural character, "Bard playing on the harp and St. Michael slaying the Dragon." The reverse a simple geometrical figure. Bread irons are rare in this country."

Possessing a leaden object of similar size—I sent it up to the British Museum. This specimen had been preserved by my Father, but I do not remember that he ever referred to it.

The Museum described it as "The triumph of the Church, showing a car drawn by two unicorns, and figures of Faith, Charity and Obedience; at the back sits a female figure with the Keys of St. Peter, surmounted by the Dove representing the Holy Ghost. It is German, second half of the 16th century. I am almost certain that we have it in the Museum, but our collection and records are stored for safety and I cannot verify this, (B.M., March 19th, 1940)."

Hart's Ecclesiastical Records calls the iron stamp "ferrum oblatarium, and the plate of lead, covered with silk, to put on the bread to flatten them when unconsecrated."

Fosbroke (Antiquities ii 690), citing Du Cange, refers to "(a) the stamped iron on which the Host was baked and (b) the iron mould used in making oblatæ, i.e., the bread not consecrated, which was given to monks before their meal when they had not communicated." It might therefore have also been used for the Holy Bread.

This "Iron" may have been in use in Buxhall Church—as also an old spoon, with fleur-de-lys stamp, of 1565 date—or thereabouts which may have been an "annointing" spoon. It was found very near the Church.

H. COPINGER HILL,

Buxhall Rectory.



Model for a "Bread Iron," c.1550. *German Work.*