

IV.

NOTICE OF A BOX, SUPPOSED TO BE THE "OFFERAND STOK" OF ST ELOI'S ALTAR IN ST JOHN'S CHURCH, PERTH. BY C. A. HUNT, PERTH. COMMUNICATED BY A. G. REID, F.S.A. SCOT.

This box was gifted to its present proprietor by the late Bailie John M'Ewen Gray, brassfounder, Perth. According to tradition the box had at one time belonged to St John's Church there. Bailie Gray and his father were members of the Hammermen Incorporation, both being coppersmiths. In St John's Church there were about forty altars dedicated to various saints. Eight of these altars pertained to the different crafts in Perth. St Eligius or Eloi was the patron of the Hammermen, and the box was probably the offerand stok of his altar.

The box, which is made of boards three-quarters of an inch thick, measures 13 inches in height, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches in breadth, and the same in width. It is strongly bound round the top and bottom, and round the middle with bands of iron, fastened with round-headed nails. The lid is attached to the upper band by three hinges. The bands of the two

side hinges are continued across the whole width of the lid, and from them depend the two hasps carrying staples for the bolts of the two locks, of which the keyholes are placed one above the other in an iron plate, which covers the upper part of the front of the box. In the

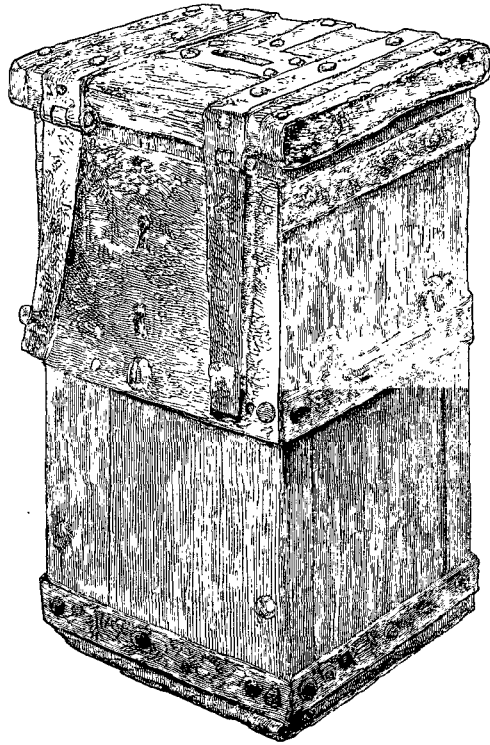


Fig. 1. Wooden Collection Box or Offerand Stok (13 inches in height).

centre of the top there is a slit cut in an iron plate, for dropping in the money offerings. It measures $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length by somewhat more than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in width. About two-thirds of the height from the bottom there are two side-handles of iron, for convenience of lifting the box.

None of the books of the Incorporations of Perth except the Hammermen's are as old as the Reformation. In the Hammermen's Book the following references occur in regard to the altar stok :—

“ xj Julii ” 1518

“ Item ressavit of Sanct Eloyis stok in ye kirk ij^s ix^d.”

In the “ comptis ” from Julii to “ ultimo Januarii ” there is “ Item ressavit furth of Triduanis stok xx^d.”

Among the items of account for the year 1519 are these entries :—

“ Item gottin on gud fryday at ye altar with ye relic, of fre silver xi^s ij^d.”

“ Item takin furth of ye stok at ye alter yat samyn day xij^d.”

“ Item befor takin furth of ye samyn stok xx^d.”

The account of 1519 shows that there was gathered in the kirk that year at the altar, by the officer of the Incorporation ij^{l^{bs}} xij^d.

“ Aucht day of Septber ” 1522,

“ Item deliverit to William Hudsoun for ye mending of ye offerand stok at ye alter and for ane key yairto xvi^d.”

From 25th July 1523 till May 1532 there are no entries of monies paid or received. During that period there are only a few brief minutes on one folio page of the book. The accounts and other business from 1518 to 1523 cover thirteen pages. The fewness of the entries during these ten years may be on account of the unhappy condition of the country in the minority of James V. After 1532, when fuller minutes are again made, the accounts are summarised without the details of the earlier years. There, however, occurs one entry on “ xx Junii xxxiii,” which is this, “ Item tane furth of Sanct Triduanis stok and deliverit to Dioneis Cavers Co-positor xx^d.” And on “ last day of Maii ” 1542, occurs, “ Item xx^d deliverit to the Co-positor out of Sanct Triduanis stok,” and “ Item of offerand v^s ix^d.”

Dr Milne, in his notes on St Eloi's altar in St John's Church, Perth, published in the *Perthshire Constitutional*, says :—“ The stok was pro-

bably a box that was placed somewhere near the altar, and into which offerings could be dropped. An eminent antiquary, whose opinion we have sought in regard to it, writes:—"I am unable to say precisely what a 'stok' was, but it was obviously a receptacle of some sort whose form may in some degree be indicated by its name. We find James IV. making his offerings at Tain in Sanct Duthois Chappell in Sanct Duthois Kirk and at the stok of Sanct Duthois toun."

Whether or not this box is a "stok," there can be no doubt it has been used for collecting money. Such a box was ordered for Trinity College Kirk, Edinburgh, in 1463, by Pope Pius II., for keeping "faithfully" the monies received for plenary indulgence; which box was ordered to be made with two keys—one to be kept by the Provost of that kirk, and the other by the Collector of the Apostolic Chamber in Scotland.

At Edinburgh, 22nd September 1520, the Craft of Walkers and the Craft of Bonnetmakers enter into agreement jointly to support the altar of St Mark in St Giles' Kirk, by each member of these crafts contributing one penny "oukly" for that purpose. The pennies to be ingatherit in a box to which each craft should have a key for "lele and trew compt."