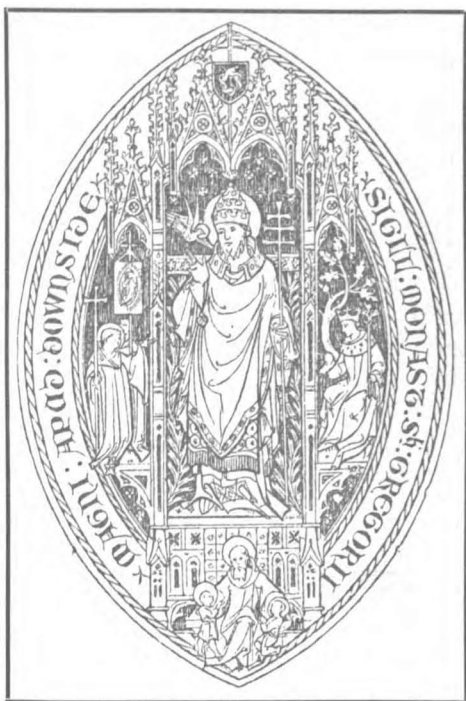


THE SAINT GREGORY'S SOCIETY MEDAL.



WE publish in this number several letters on the subject of the proposed medal of St. Gregory's Society. From time to time we have kept our readers informed of the steps which have been taken in the matter, and have presented them with more than one proposed design.

The subject has been discussed at many meetings both general and of the Council since the project was decided upon, now two years ago, but no decided steps have been taken and we seem as far off agreement on the matter as we have ever been. That the

taste of the Members of the Society should be consulted in the selection of the design is obvious, but that their likes and dislikes vary considerably may be gathered from the opinions expressed at the meetings, and from the letters which we now publish. It is time, however, that "urgency" should be voted, and the question finally disposed of. The medal has already been awarded for the past year, and will again be awarded for the present, but no tangible token is yet ready for presentation to the recipient.

At present, the proposed designs that have been brought forward are the following:—1. Stock dies of classical subjects in the possession of Messrs. Wyon. 2. A Head of St. Gregory (copied from an old Papal medal and already illustrated in our Review), and the College arms or a wreath for the reverse. 3. The ornate Gothic

Medal of St. Gregory's Society.



Reverse.



Obverse.

Full size.

design by Mr. Pippet, submitted to our readers in our last number, and again, as amended in accordance with expressed opinions, in our present issue.

1. Of these proposals, the first has the merit of cheapness, which we think is one that the Society is in a position not to consider too highly. On the other hand, the general feeling is that the design should be original, and bear some relation at least to one or other of its glorious patrons. The idea may therefore be definitely dismissed.

The second proposal is one to which we ourselves are, we confess, still partial. It has been objected to, on the ground that the head itself is not good, but it should be remembered that if a doubt arises, that the Gothic design, to be next referred to, looks better as a drawing, than it might, possibly, when cut in metal, this plain simple head is one that would inevitably gain in the process of cutting. It is reproduced also from an authoritative (and the only) Papal medal of St. Gregory in the British Museum. Our objection to it is that the price asked for cutting it by Messrs. Wyon seems very high. The third proposal, the one designed by Mr. Pippet, to be executed by Messrs. Hardman, is undoubtedly the one which at present finds most favour. The hesitation of many is on the point whether such an elaborate, perspective, undercut design would come out well when cut, and we confess, we somewhat share this apprehension. Still, in this matter, we would be content to rest satisfied with the judgment of its sponsors, its designers and its proposed executants—all authorities on whom we may confidently rely. The design has been found too ornate, too crowded with detail, and in accordance with such opinions it has been amended, and in its amended form we again present it to our readers. For ourselves we are unable to say that the amendment is an improvement. The edge of the medal with the ornamental moulding is a legitimate Gothic treatment, bold and perhaps uncommon, but still highly characteristic and excellent in its effect, at least on paper. We should like to see the hand (on the reverse) pointing downwards, dispensed with, and the upper and lower spaces of the quatrefoil filled in some other manner. Otherwise, we are decidedly of opinion that the first thought of this design is the happiest. To make it plainer still, it has been suggested that the ribbon and inscription in the centre part (of the reverse) might be engraved, instead of being part of the die, but this we think would be tampering which would go far to spoil the effect of an otherwise harmonious whole. That this design is in thorough accordance with the art of Downside

as exemplified in the buildings and decorations, it is impossible to deny. Gothic the medal should be, is we believe now the universal opinion. Is this then a good Gothic design? We think so.

A correspondent, whose letter we are not at liberty to publish as a whole, says in reference to the third proposal "The figure of St. Gregory is certainly very beautiful, but is not the whole field much too crowded? And is it not a medal of St. Gregory rather than of St. Gregory's? In ancient seals the Patron is represented in a Gothic building or porch. I do not think many will like the *reverse*. What is the special fitness of the hand of Providence? There is no allusion anywhere to the Benedictine order or to the English congregation, such as the raven with the broken cup, the Patriarchal Cross, or the Pax in a Crown of Thorns." Our correspondent suggests a shield with three books in the upper part (to represent the three resting places of St. Gregory's), and the Pax within thorns below, the books inscribed with the initials of Douai, Acton Burnell and Downside. Such a design would err, we imagine, on the side of too great simplicity.

J. D. B. kindly forwards us with his letter a copy of the medal struck for the centenary of St. Benedict, and referred to and described by our correspondent J. A. M. This medal will be exhibited at the annual meeting, and there considered. The treatment of the figure on the obverse is, we are inclined to think, almost Archaic, suggestive even of Egyptian. It is a matter of opinion of course. Many people like the style of initial letters on the reverse. We regret to differ from them. Surely, there is, somehow, a suggestion of railway signals about it.

We cannot refrain from recommending to the careful consideration of the society the letter of our correspondent J. A. M. It is full of information and well considered thought, and cannot fail to prove of service.

Whatever may be decided upon at the approaching annual meeting, let us hope that some definite action will at least be taken. A decision one way or another, should now be come to, and we trust that no more committees will be appointed, especially if hampered in their actions by instructions to proceed in any particular manner, as has already been done. The question has now, we think, been sufficiently threshed out, and the time arrived to pronounce *la clôture*.

We beg to suggest, in conclusion, that besides the medal, a record illuminated on parchment should also be presented to the winner. Such an accompaniment might be executed at say, a cost

of a guinea, and would be grateful to the recipient, inasmuch as it might be more conspicuously displayed (and who could grudge him the right to do so ?) than the more solid and valuable token of his achievements.

REVIEWS.

THE BOKE OF ST. ALBANS.¹

MOST people have heard of the Boke of St. Albans, but few, probably, have ever seen it; fewer still, we imagine, have troubled themselves to inquire into its history and authorship. No reprint has appeared since that of Haslewood in 1810, and this has long been scarce and difficult to procure; Mr. Blades therefore has conferred a boon on bibliophilists by the issue of the edition which he has now reproduced in facsimile.

The earliest printed book, though not the earliest English treatise, on the subject with which it deals, it has long been regarded as the production of a certain Dame Juliana Barnes or Berners, said to be a daughter of Sir James Berners, of Berners Roding, in Essex, and Prioress of Sopwell, near St. Albans, where it was printed in 1486. Such is the general received opinion concerning it, and such it would seem is the opinion of Mr. Blades, who in the title which he has supplied (the original being without one), credits Dame Julina Berners with the authorship of the entire volume. We perceive, however, that in his introduction, Mr. Blades casts some doubts upon the biography of the lady, and upon the history of the book as handed down to us. In the expression of these doubts we entirely concur; for, having been at some pains to look into the matter, we are convinced that no materials exist for a biography, notwithstanding all that has been printed on the subject by Bale, Chauncy, Haslewood, and others. The statements put forth by these writers and the biographical notices of the lady which occur in various encyclopædias, must be regarded as purely apocryphal; since no evidence has been adduced in support of them,

¹ "The Boke of St. Albans." By Dame Juliana Berners. Containing Treatises on Hawking, Hunting, and Cote Armour. Printed at St. Albans by the School-master Printer 1486. Reproduced in facsimile, with an introduction by William Blades. London: Elliot Stock. 1881.