

against the then vicar, Dr. William Cleiver, and the matter became so serious that the parishioners found themselves obliged to petition the Crown and the Legislature for his removal. It appears that the Doctor turned upon his assailants, and declared his intention to hold on his benefice, if only to spite the townspeople. In the end he resigned on a pension.

From Steinman's "Croydon" we learn that "in 1728 so violent a storm of hail and rain, with thunder and lightning, fell at Croydon, as to strike the hailstones—which were from eight to ten inches round—some inches into the earth. The cattle were forced into the ditches and drowned, windows were shattered, and great damage done. Considerable damage in and near Croydon was also done by a storm of thunder and lightning in 1744."

The parish church is dedicated to St. John the Baptist—a dedication singularly appropriate, for it stood in a wilderness, part of the great Forest of Surrey, which still survives in memory in the name of Norwood.* Half a century ago the church stood on the bank of a rivulet, but this has been almost dried up by the subsequent drainage of the town. It is said that old people are still alive who remember minnows being caught quite close to the west end of the churchyard.

The surface of the ground all round the church and the palace has been gradually raised, the arches springing from a point only two or three feet from the present level.

The "Doomsday Book" informs us that there was a church in Croydon at the time of the Conquest; and looking still further back, we find that a church must have stood here in the Anglo-Saxon era, for to the will of Byrtric and Ælfwy, made in the year 960, a copy of which is printed in Lambard's "Perambulations of Kent," is affixed the name of Æliffe, priest of Croydon, as a witness.

Dr. Garrow, writing in 1818, describes the old church then existing as "a very beautiful and stately Gothic structure, far surpassing every other church in the whole county of Surrey. It has a lofty square tower of flint and stone, supported by well-proportioned buttresses at each angle; upon the top are four beautiful pinnacles, with a vane upon each. . . . This church is also distinguished by one of the finest organs in the kingdom, the exterior of which also corresponds very happily with the style of the architecture of the church. . . . The length of the nave is seventy-six feet, and that of the middle chancel

fifty-four feet; the breadth of the church, with the aisles, is seventy-four feet. The nave is separated from the aisles by light clustered columns and Pointed arches, between which are several grotesque heads and ornaments. . . . The old font is at the west end of the south aisle, and appears, by its date and structure, to be coeval with the church. It is an octagon, with quarterfoils, in one of which is a lion's head in the centre; in two other adjoining ones are roses, the rest are concealed by pews." The tower was repaired, and the buttresses disfigured by being encased in Roman cement in 1807-8.

There were formerly two chantries in this church, one dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, the other to St. Nicholas. The first was founded by Sir Reginald de Cobham, of Starborough Castle, Surrey, about 1402. The incumbent was to pray for the souls of the said Sir Reginald, his wife, Joan, his children, and of all Christian people. The founder vested the presentation to the preferment in the hands of twelve principal citizens of Croydon. The income of the chantry, derived from lands and tenements near Croydon, was £16 1s. 2d. The chantry was dissolved under Edward VI., in 1547, a life pension of £6 13s. 4d. in lieu thereof being granted to John Comporte, the last incumbent.

The other chantry, namely that dedicated to St. Nicholas, was founded "for the repose of the souls" of John Stafford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and of William Oliver, vicar of Croydon. The Weldon family is said to have possessed the patronage of this chantry, of which the total income was £14 14s. 6d. The last holder was Nicholas Sommer, to whom a pension of £6 13s. 4d. was granted at the dissolution of monasteries.

"The mother-church of the parish," writes the author of the local handbook, "dates from the reign of Richard I., but not a stone of the original edifice now remains, except, perhaps, in the foundations, the building having twice been destroyed by fire. The venerable elm beside the gate, opposite the road leading to Waddon, is said to have been planted to mark the grave of a Knight Templar—slain probably in the skirmish of 1264.

The present church was reconstructed some few years ago on the site of the old structure, which was destroyed by fire in 1867. It is a large and beautiful building of stone and flint, consisting of nave, aisles, and chancel, and a goodly proportioned tower at the western end of four stories, surmounted by pinnacles at the angles. It is in the Perpendicular style, and some of the windows are

* See "Old and New London," Vol. VI., p. 314.