

BRIDEWELL
HOSPITAL
PALACE, PRISON,
SCHOOLS

E. G. O'DONOGHUE

* *

1603 - 1929

CO
(London)
THE BODLEY HEAD
1929

11-4-83

RAPPER
LACE
SECTION

APPENDIX C

THE COMMUNION PLATE OF BRIDEWELL

The Communion plate formerly used in Bridewell chapel—which was demolished in 1873—is now on loan at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. It consists of two silver flagons, two silver chalices, two silver patens, two alms-plates, and one large alms dish, made in 1796–1797. All the pieces, except the last, bear the date-mark of 1678, and the maker's mark (not identified) of L.S. under a crown. One of the silver patens, although it is stamped with the date-mark of 1678, seems to preserve a portion of the original paten of 1605, with the name of the donor (George Spering) and his coat-of-arms, as examined by the College of Heralds. One of the alms-plates is punched on its base with the initials W. H., which I cannot trace definitely in books of reference. Some of the pieces were repaired in 1796–1797. The ninth piece of plate exhibited is a magnificent silver alms-dish, nearly 22 inches from rim to rim. It was presented to the chapel in the November of 1796, with a letter of thanks to the governors for "favours shown to him and his father," by the Rev. Osborne Wight, son of Rev. Moses Wight, the preacher of Bridewell. The court had allowed him to occupy the chaplain's house for several months after the death of his father. The date-mark of the dish is 1796–1797, and the maker's mark is R. G. "probably Robert Gaze."

In 1605 George Spering, of the Goldsmiths' Company, presented Bridewell chapel with some plate for the altar, and in the November of 1666 Hugh Knowling, the only churchwarden of the precinct, seized it as security for money due to him officially. The Fire of London had burnt the dead out of their graves at Bridewell, and the aldermen ordered Knowling (at the cost of £8) to spread earth and sand over the churchyard. The residents were unable to pay the whole of the rate demanded for this service, and in the January of 1668 the churchwarden had in his possession one

silver gilt cup with cover, engraved on the foot "George Spering," and on the cover his coat-of-arms; also one silver flagon, and one silver dish for Communion bread. In the end, the governors had to redeem the plate! In the November of 1678 they were persuaded to exchange the original plate for two silver flagons, two silver cups with covers and two silver plates of "such size and fashion as the Committee advise." To make up the total of the eight pieces of 1678 in the South Kensington Museum the "covers" must be treated as patens laid upon the cups as covers. In the following month Robert Cuthbert, goldsmith, brought to the court the pieces of plate ordered, when he was instructed to transfer the "name of the donor from the old flagon to one of the new cups, and from the old cup to one of the new." On one of the flagons may be read this inscription: "This flagon was provided by order of the court in the year 1678 in the place of one given by a former benefactor." All the words from "1678" to "benefactor" are omitted in the inscription on the second flagon. Similarly one of the chalices records that it takes the place of one given by Mr. George Spering in the year 1605.

Mr. Deputy George Spering, the donor of the original plate, appears in the court-books of 1603-1604, as a governor, who was the renter, or receiver of rents, for the hospital. In the "Visitation of London" (1633-1635) he is described as George Speringe, of London, gentleman, and his wife as Elizabeth, daughter of Wm. Hanbury of London. His second son, according to his pedigree, was also George, and at the Guildhall Museum I found an indenture (MS. 1778, dated 1635) between George Spering and his widowed mother, Elizabeth, of the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate Without, and one Thomas Green of Aldersgate, about some property in Stepney. The arms of the donor on the Bridewell plate correspond with the arms of Spering, as registered in 1635 at the College of Heralds.

ig, one had ere wo nd the he the rs. to to he he ed ra e-n. ne 5, 10 ne ze er is nd ig 5, at ill 5



THE ANCIENT COMMUNION PLATE OF BRIDEWELL
*At present on loan at the Victoria and Albert Museum. By permission of the Director.
(See Appendix C)*