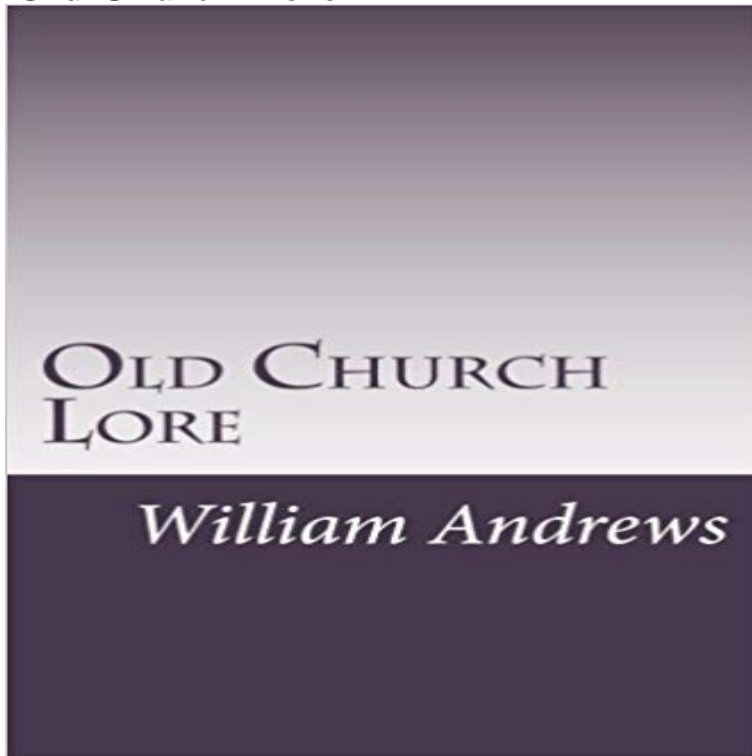


Old Church Lore



A place where criminals and political offenders could find refuge was called a Sanctuary. It is generally agreed that in this country the privilege of sanctuary was instituted on the recognition of Christianity. From an early time down to the days of Henry VIII., fugitives were safe for certain periods in all the churches and churchyards of the land. The origin of the usage is extremely remote. Most probably it existed among the Israelites before Moses gave directions for the establishment of cities of refuge, when the children of Israel settled in the Promised Land. The Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and American Indians had their places of refuge. In England the laws respecting this subject are both numerous and curious. A code of laws made in the year 693 by Ina, King of the West Saxons, contains a recognition of the right of sanctuary. It is therein stated that, if any one accused of a capital offence takes refuge in a church, his life shall be spared, but the criminal is directed to make compensation for his crime. If the guilty one deserved stripes, they were not to be inflicted. According to Alfred the Great's laws of the year 887, those guilty of slight offences were allowed to flee to a church, and there remain for three nights.

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