

partially to that at Winchester, and entirely to that in the refectory at Dover. The ancient roof was probably semicircular, like that existing still in the bishop's palace at Hereford. The oldest portions of the present one are two red beams put up by Villiers duke of Buckingham, who also built the gateway. This, the most perfect specimen of domestic architecture of the twelfth century which probably exists in any country, is also one of those monuments whose interest can never become evanescent. It is one which tells the early history not merely of the little county of Rutland, but it carries us back to the habits and usages of our forefathers, to a remote period, when there are but scanty materials from which a knowledge of them may be gathered, and thence handed down for the instruction of posterity.

CHARLES HENRY HARTSHORNE.

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### THE ROOD-SCREEN, PRIORY CHURCH, CHRIST- CHURCH, HANTS.

THIS screen, of which an elevation was given in the last part of the *Archæological Journal*, is a very interesting example of one of the few which are to be met with in our collegiate or priory churches. Its design, though simple, is exceedingly effective, owing to the bold and excellent manner in which the parts are executed.

The work is probably of the period of Edward III., and though in past times it has been grievously mutilated, there is sufficient left to shew how good the effect of the whole must have been when perfect; indeed it could have been scarcely inferior to any of those which are still preserved to us in some of our cathedrals. This excellent specimen of medieval art is 33 ft. in width and 16 ft. 6 in. in height. In its design it exhibits a plain base, surmounted by a row of panelled quatrefoils charged with shields. There are thirteen on each side of the choir entrance, and over them is a string-course, from which rose a double tier of canopied niches; five of the lower range on each side of the doorway still remain, and above the latter are remains of two richly gilt heads of canopies, having shields of arms, now defaced, embedded in foliage.

The niches are separated by graduated buttresses, flanked on the lower stage by little shafts, which merge into pyramidal heads, and are thence carried up as angular pinnacles.

There is peculiar beauty in the arrangement of the lower tier of niches; the pedestal of each consists of four short columns and bases, having boldly carved foliated capitals, the foliage of each capital being different, its tendrils or stems running into bosses and forming small groinings between the columns, three of which are insulated and the fourth attached to the back of the niche, producing a most agreeable effect of light and shadow.

The screen, which is 9 ft. in thickness, and breaks forward 6 ft. west of the piers of the centre lantern, each return having a double tier of niches of like character to those of the front, is remarkably wide, and unlike those at Canterbury, York, Exeter, Wells, St. Alban's, and Southwell, which extend no further than the centre of the tower piers, this spreads so far laterally as to cut off from view the whole lower part of the massive Norman pillars intended to carry the centre lantern. Such an arrangement under ordinary circumstances might have produced a bad appearance, but in this instance it is eminently successful, as tending to conceal an unusual and objectionable contraction of the entrance to the chancel, which is produced in consequence of the choir (erected in the time of Henry VI.) being 7 ft. narrower than the Norman nave. The difference in width between these two portions is filled up by piers ornamented with shallow stone panelling inserted under the easternmost arch of the tower; but the bad effect of this diminished width of the choir is greatly obviated by the wide-spreading screen, which also hides the rude corbelling projecting 2 ft. 6 in. on each side, supporting the piers. This contraction in the dimensions of the choir was manifestly in order to reconstruct it upon the old foundations, as the Norman crypt under the easternmost bay of the choir coincides with the width of the superstructure, and hence it became necessary to corbel the piers in the manner described, to obtain height and space for the coved canopy work of the stalls, as without this expedient the requisite number of stalls could not have been formed. To have taken down this screen, therefore, (as at one time meditated,) would have laid bare many peculiarities of construction most skilfully masked, besides destroying the completeness of the building.

The position which the rood-screen now occupies does not appear to have been its original site. The first pier of the nave arcade west of the centre lantern is deficient of its projecting semicircular shafts; there are also some additional ornaments in this compartment of the triforium, which would seem to indicate that the choir at a former period had included the first bay of the nave. This was the arrangement of St. Mary's abbey, Tewkesbury, and in early churches the choir always occupied the central tower, and sometimes extended even several compartments to the west of the tower, as at Westminster abbey.

It is not intended by these remarks to assert that the actual screen here spoken of was removed, but that under some previous state of the building, when perhaps the old choir was standing, a rood-screen of earlier date divided the choir and nave in a more westward position. To revert, however, to the description of the screen itself, the least successful part of its composition is the doorway of communication to the choir and staircase; its square-headed form does not harmonize with the general design, and rather conveys the idea of its being an after-thought, although the flat soffit is pleasingly panelled.

Traces still remain where the gates or doors which enclosed the choir once hung, but all the ancient wood-work has been destroyed.

On the north side of this passage through the screen is a narrow stone staircase ascending to the rood-loft; of the manner in which the east side of this gallery (above the canopies of the stalls) terminated, we are left to conjecture, as the whole of the upper portion was swept away many years since to make room for an organ; but it was most probably finished with a pierced parapet in the manner of the screen at Wells cathedral erected about the same period.

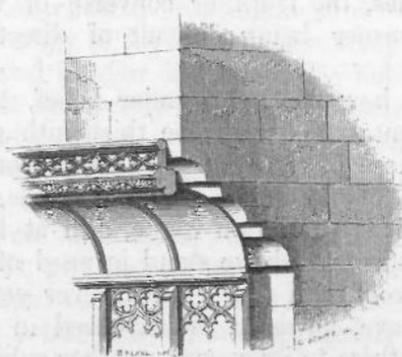
The screen has some slight traces of ancient colouring still left, and when in former times the niches were filled with statues its whole effect must have been gorgeous; indeed the priory church at Christchurch could boast of screens equal to those of any other church in the country; its high altar-screen containing a representation of the genealogy of Jesse is quite unique, and the reredos in the lady-chapel well worthy of admiration.

The massiveness of these stone screens forms a great contrast to the extremely light and elegant character of the

numerous oak rood-screens which still remain in many churches in the counties of Somerset, Devon, and Norfolk : these are so largely pierced by open tracery-work as to form mere slight divisions between the two portions of the church, while the solidity of the comparatively few stone-screens makes a complete barrier between the laity and clergy ; on the religious peculiarities involved in these arrangements it is not necessary here to enlarge.

The architectural designs of the stone rood-screens generally consisted of a series of niches ; those, however, at Exeter cathedral, and the church of Compton Bassett in Wiltshire, differ from others : the former has a loft over a stone vaulting constructed upon pillars and arches, and the latter in addition to these features has its eastern front perforated so as not to present an impenetrable screen. Perhaps these last examples may be quoted as the most pleasing designs, but whatever may be the artistic merits belonging to any of them, it is to be hoped that a consideration for the interesting link which they afford in the chain of archæological investigation, will induce all those who are the guardians of our churches in which they remain to preserve them from wanton destruction.

B. F.



CORBELING: CHRISTCHURCH, HANTS