

ART. X.—*The Monastic Comperta, so far as they regard the Religious Houses of Cumberland and Westmorland.* By the REV. R. W. DIXON, Vicar of Hayton, Hon. Canon of Carlisle.

Communicated at Cockermouth, Aug. 22nd, 1878.

THE Comperta, it may be explained, have been supposed to be some fragments of the discoveries which have been believed to have been made by Crumwel's Visitors in the year 1536, and which have been alleged by historians to have led to the downfall of the monasteries of England.

The usual story is, that the nation having been scandalised long time by the horrible depravity of the religious houses, royal commissioners were appointed to make a through inspection of all of them: that this was done, that in the beginning of the year above-named these commissioners, or visitors, laid upon the table of the House of Commons a full report of the condition of the monasteries: and that this was so abominable that the Parliament, in a transport of indignation, instantly passed an Act for the suppression of all those houses that were under the revenue of two hundred pounds a year, and maintained less than twelve religious persons apiece. It is added, that the report of the visitors received the title, not of a Blue Book, but of "The Black Book," because of the manifold abominations which it revealed; and, since this record of horrors mysteriously disappeared, and seems never to have been seen by anybody from the day on which it is said to have been read before Parliament, it is explained that it was destroyed by Bonner, in the reign of Queen Mary, who issued a commission for that purpose,—the Catholic party not being able to endure the shame of the exposure. However, it is added, some fragments of this
great

great indictment against the monasteries still survive. They were discovered by Bishop Burnet in the Cotton Library. They bear the title of "Comperta," and very shocking they are.

For the greater part of this pretty story, (which may be seen in most of the popular histories of the reign of Henry VIII.,) there is unfortunately no foundation whatever. There is no proof that all the monasteries had been visited before the Act was passed to suppress the smaller among them, nor does the Act itself pretend that they had all been visited. There is no proof that Crumwel's visitors ever presented a report to Parliament; there is no proof that Bonner and Mary, or anyone else, destroyed the alleged Black Book, nor any trace of designed destruction among the Public Records; and there is no probability that the various fragments called Comperta ever formed part of a report or statement made before Parliament, nor indeed that they were in existence until two years after the session of 1536. On the contrary it is not known for certain that there were more than twenty religious houses visited before the Act for suppressing all the little houses was passed. It is not known that there were more than half-a-dozen visitors appointed before the meeting of Parliament in which that Act was passed, while it is certain that these were appointed only four months before that meeting, and it seems impossible, on the face of it, that so few men in so short a time should have traversed the whole kingdom, and been able to ascertain the condition of six hundred religious houses and more. It would have been more than a hundred and fifty a month among them. As to the commission which Mary is said to have given Bonner to destroy the Black Book, it turns out on examination to be a commission to collect and publish, not to destroy, the alleged evidence against the monasteries; and, since Bonner published none, it may perhaps be concluded that he was able to find none, and that the Black Book was as mysteriously

mysteriously invisible to his eyes as it has remained to the eyes of subsequent inquirers.

I do not mean to say that nothing whatever was said or read to Parliament before they passed their destructive measure. They affirm in their Act itself that the King made to them "a plain declaration" concerning the monasteries, and that the king knew his declaration to be true "as well by the accompts of his late visitations, as by sundry credible informations." These meagre words contain all that we know for certain of the matter; that the king caused a plain declaration to be made to Parliament, which he knew to be true from the accompts of his late visitations, and from sundry credible informations. This was sufficient for Tudor legislators; and, just as upon this slight indication of the wishes of the king, his Parliament proceeded to order the destruction of half the religious houses in the kingdom, so, upon the slight foundation afforded by the words which I have quoted from the Act, historians have raised the wonderful structure of the story of the universal visitation of the monasteries, of the Black Book or universal gazetteer of infamy, and of the artful destruction and fragmentary survival of the same.

The Comperta, or supposed fragments of the Black Book, now demand our attention. From what has been said it will be seen that it is in the highest degree improbable that these curious documents were ever read before Parliament, or formed part of the Black Book, if the Black Book ever existed. There was plenty of visitation afterwards during the three years which elapsed between the Parliament of 1536 and the next Parliament of 1539—an interval in which not only the lesser monasteries fell by authority of Parliament, but the greater part of the greater monasteries was also destroyed without any legislative authority whatever. This visitation was necessary, not to ascertain the condition of monasteries, but either to induce them to surrender, or to take their surrenders in
form

form when they were willing ; and I believe the Comperta to be records of these subsequent proceedings.* The manuscript in which they are contained was first found by Bishop Burnet in the Cotton Library. It consists of one complete set of Comperta, referring to one hundred and twenty monasteries, and of another set which seems incomplete, referring to twenty-four more. To this manuscript must be added another, hitherto uncollated, which is in the Record Office, the knowledge of which I owe to Mr. Gairdner and to Mr. A. Sturgeon. This also consists of two sets, the first being identical with the first in the Cottonian manuscript, the other referring to ten other monasteries. To these unprinted manuscripts is to be added lastly a printed document, first printed by Bale, which seems to be a fragment of another set of Comperta. The date of this is fixed by Burton, in the Anatomy of Melancholy, in the year 1538, that is, two years later than the Parliament which passed the act against the lesser monasteries. This is probably the date of the unprinted Comperta also.

It will then be seen that there are two manuscripts and one printed document ; that the two manuscripts contain one complete set of Comperta, which is the same in both ; and two incomplete sets ; and that the printed document, which we may call Bale's fragment, contains another incomplete set. In all there are four sets, one complete, and preserved in two transcripts, the other three incomplete.

The Cottonian manuscript (Cleopatra, E. iv., p. 147) bears the simple title of "Comperta." The Record Office manuscript is entitled on the cover "Compendium Compertorum per Doctorem Layton et Doctorem Legh in Visitatione Regia Provinciæ Eboracensis ac Episcopatus

* I cannot enter fully into the question of the Comperta, but may venture to refer to my lately published History of the Church of England from the abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction, (Smith, Elder, & Co., London) in which the whole subject is discussed.

Coven.

Coven. et Lichfielden." The body of the document begins with the simple word "Comperta." It bears on the cover the remark in a modern hand, "The filthy book of calumnies invented by the commissioners for the purpose of justifying the suppression of the religious houses, and the robbery of the Church." Bale's printed fragment purports to have been taken out of a "book," *i.e.*, a manuscript, which was called "The Breviary of things found out in abbeys, colleges, &c.": this seems to be a translation of the title of the Record manuscript, "Compendium Compertorum." It seems probable that there was once a Collection of Comperta, called a Compendium, and that all our remains come from that. At any rate, both our unprinted manuscripts are copies of some older original.

They all follow the same method, and are very damaging to the religious houses; but their value as evidence is nothing. Indeed, the discovery of turpitude seems not to have been the first thing aimed at in these strange documents, but the discovery of money. They always give the income of a house, but in about thirty cases they put down nothing about morality. It will be sufficient to observe, on the point of morality, that their method is very summary and rigid. The name of a house is first put down, and under it follows a list of the religious persons belonging to it, ranged under almost invariable classifications. Some are enrolled as guilty of unnatural crimes, others as incontinent, others as thieves, others as superstitious. Thus many were involved in one accusation, and the same stroke levelled a whole rank. There was no difference made between one house and another, except in the number of offenders whom they harboured. It is easy to see that defamations of this kind might be multiplied to any amount with ease.

Both of the manuscripts which we have been inspecting contain the entries with which we are concerned. The
complete

complete set of Comperta, which is identical in the two, consists of houses of the Northern Province, and relates to ten of the houses of Cumberland and Westmorland. They are as follows : —

SHAPPE.

Thomas Evenwood	}	petunt exuere vestem religionis.
Thomas Castell		
Thomas Gatefield		

Fundator Comes Cumbriæ.

Redditus annuus clxvi li.

MON. DE CARLILE.

Sodom.	{	Richardus Hathwayte	}	per voluntar. pollut.
		Johannes Birkebeke		
		Richardus Brandlinge		
		Thomas Boredalle		
		Launcelotus Salkeld		
		Cristopherus Craue		
		Johannes Hayton		

Incontin.	{	Christopherus Slye, prior; cum conjugata.
		Johannes Berkebecke, cum soluta.
		Wm. Florence, cum conjugata.

Superst. Hic habent particulam Sanctæ Crucis, gladium quoque quo martyrizatus fuit Thomas Cantuariensis, et zona (m) Brigittæ Virginis.

Fundator Dns. Rex.

Redditus annuus cccclxxxii li.

ARMATHWAYTE MONIALIUM.

Fundator Dns. Rex.

Redditus annuus xiiii li.

COLL. KIRKOSWALD.

Fundator Dns. Dakres.

Redditus annuus lxxi li.

WETHERALL

WETHERALL.

Sodom. { Nicolaus Barneston } per voluntar.
 { Robertus Goodon } pollut.

Fundator Dns Rex.

Redditus annuus cxxx li.

Hic, ut putatur, partem habent Sancti (sic) Crucis, et
 lactis Beatæ Mariæ.

LANARCOSTE.

Sodom. { Edwardus Elwald } ex voluntar.
 { Thomas Ridley } pollut.

Hic habent zonam Beatæ Mariæ Magdalenæ.

Fundator Dns Dacres.

Redditus annuus c mark.

HOLME COLTROUM.

Sodom. { William Marshall } ex voluntar.
 { Thomas Grayme } pollut.
 { Thomas Browne }
 { Johannes Allamby }
 { Richardus Robinson }

Incont. { Willielm^{us} Watson, cum duabus solutis et
 una conjugata.
 Robertus Langton, cum una femina.
 Thomas Carter, Abbas, cum tribus feminis.
 Christopherus Newinson, cum soluta.
 Robertus Clement, cum soluta.
 Richardus Whitley, cum duabus solutis.
 Johannes Alamby, cum soluta.
 Johannes Penrose, cum soluta.

Superstit. Habent monile quoddam vocatum an
 Agnus Dei, quod parturientibus mulieribus
 plurimum, (ut putatur,) conducit.

Fundator, Dominus Rex.

Redditus annuus dcc markes.

Debet domus c li.

SANCTÆ BEGE ALIAS SAYNT BEES.

Sodom. { Johannes Cliston } per voluntar.
 { Johannes Fullstroft } pollut.
 Fundator D^{ns} Rex.
 Redditus annuus cxliiii li.

SETOUN MONIALIUM.

Incontinen. { Johanna Copeland, Priorissa, cum sacerdote.
 { Susanna Ribton, peperit.
 Fundator Henricus Kirkeby.
 Redditus annuus xx markes.
 Debet Domus vi li. et ult (ultra).

CALDERE.

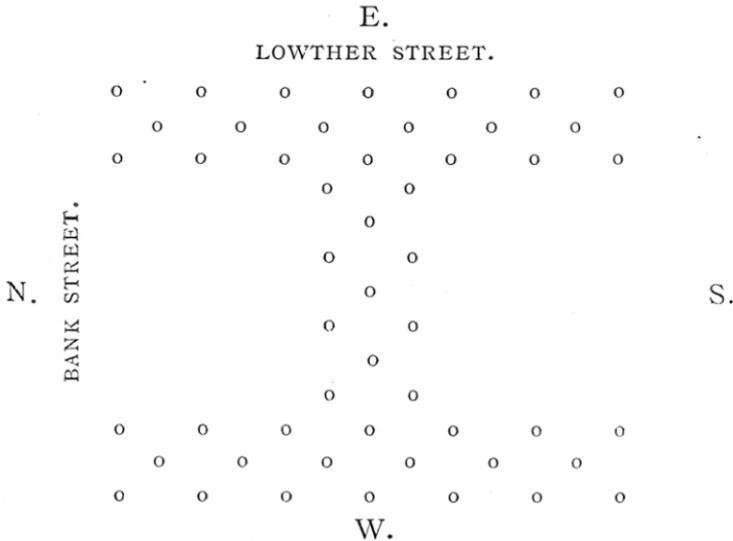
Sodom. { Robertus Maneste } per voluntar.
 { Willelmus Car } pollut.
 { Johannes Gisborne }
 { Matthew Ponsonby }
 { Richardus Preston }
 Incontinen. { William Thornton, cum soluta
 { Richardus Preston, cum una conjugata et
 pluribus solutis.
 Johannes Gisborne } petunt dissolut.
 Richardus Preston } a Religione.
 Superstitio. Et hic habent cingulum (ut putatur) Bte
 Marie parturientibus salubre.
 Fundatores Domini de Copland.
 Redditus annuus lxiiii li.
 Debet domus xx li.

ART. XI.—*On the Remains of a Roman Stockade recently found in Carlisle, continued.* By R. S. FERGUSON, F.S.A., and CROSBY HETHERINGTON, ESQ.

Read at Cockermouth, August 22nd, 1878.

IN a short paper,* read at Gilsland in 1877, I gave an account of the remains of a stockade of early Roman date, which was disclosed by building operations, simultaneously in two different parts of Carlisle, namely, on the Bush Brow, and at the east end of Bank Street.

I now wish to make a few supplementary remarks on the stockade found in Bank Street,† and on recent discoveries made towards the west end of that street.



* Transactions, Vol. III., p. 134. See also Proceedings, Society of Antiquaries, Vol. 7, p. 217, and Journal, British Archæological Association, Vol. 33, p. 525.

† Bank Street runs east and west, connecting the two parallel streets, Lowther Street and English Street. Lowther Street is at the east end of Bank Street, and occupies the site of the east Curtain Wall of mediæval Carlisle. English Street is the main and ancient thoroughfare of Carlisle.

I stated, with reference to the Bank Street stockade, that "There was a long strip of stockade disclosed, running north and south, and apparently continuing each way under the unexcavated soil north and south. From the centre of this a cross piece ran at right angles to the east."* Futher excavation after I wrote showed the stockade to be double, about thirty feet apart, and connected by a cross piece. See sketch p. 91.

North and south the double stockade ran into masses of unexcavated earth. Mr. Fairless Barber, F.S.A., the Secretary of the Yorkshire Archæological Society, saw the stockade in company with me, and strongly supported my views at a meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute, in London, last April. This double stockade ran north and south through the two shops at the east end of south side of Bank Street.

During June of this year the building of the Clydesdale Bank necessitated excavation towards the west end of Bank Street, still on its south side, which I watched closely.

Mr. Crosby Hetherington has most kindly acceded to my request that he should describe what was found in these excavations, and I have received the following from him:—

"The accompanying plan shows the site of the new Clydesdale Bank, the premises of Messrs. Harrison Bros., and part of the site of the Carlisle and Cumberland Bank, which form the western end of the south side of Bank Street; on it are indicated the positions of the various remains found during the excavations for the new buildings to which I am about to refer.

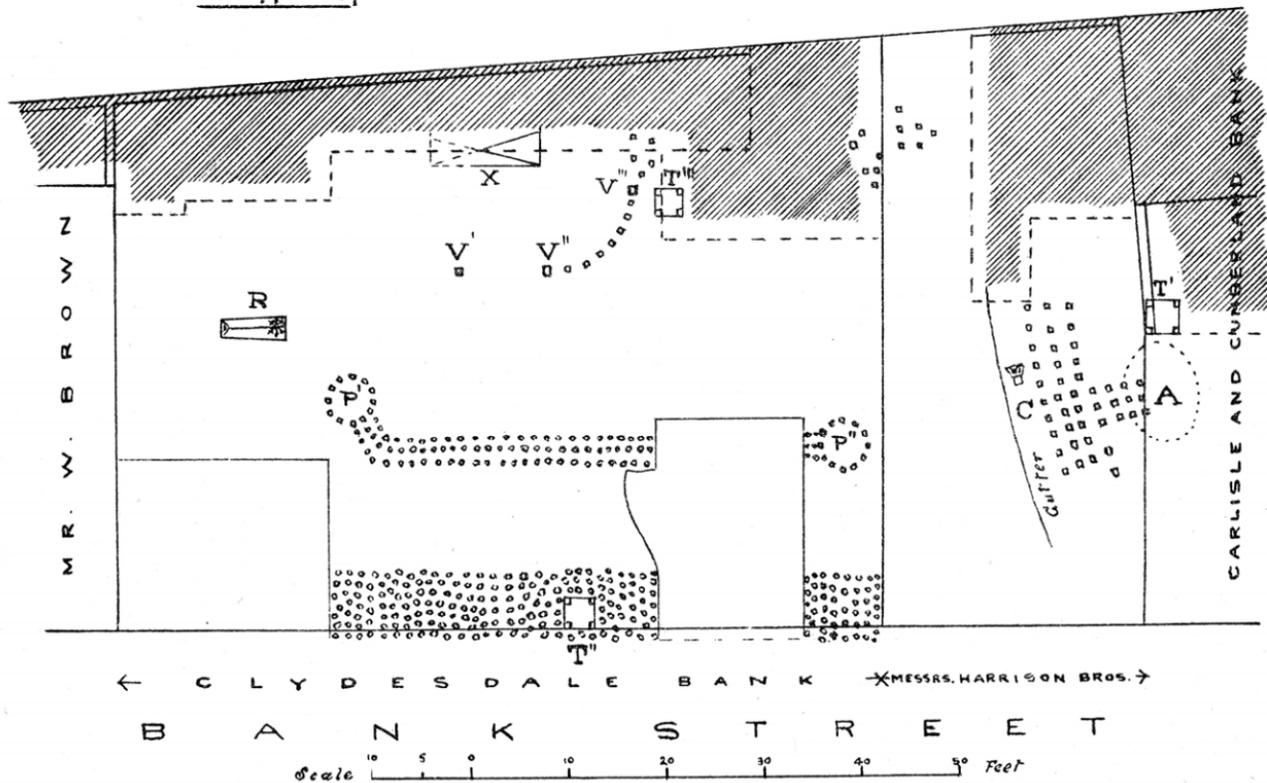
The portion shaded has not been excavated.

Over the whole of the three sites there existed, first a layer of building rubbish of from one to two feet in thickness, second, a layer of black graveyard soil, thickly interspersed with bones or skeletons more or less perfect, [the teeth of all the skulls found were very much ground down, but with scarcely an exception quite sound] and with

* Transactions, Vol. III., p. 137. See the sketch on p. 91, which is not laid down to scale, or to show the number of the stakes,

a few

PLAN
part of
 Showing position of an Ancient Stockade
 found in Bank Street, Carlisle.
 in 1877 & 1878



a few fragments of stone crosses and monumental slabs, and nearer the surface a stone cannon ball. In one place, marked R, at about four feet below the surface, was found a sepulchral slab of red sandstone with a cross upon it in relief, but no inscription—probably of late 13th century date. Third, a layer of black mould containing fragments of Roman pottery, lamps, etc., of very varied character, and below this came the subsoil of clay, which varied in depth from eight to eleven feet below the present level of Bank Street. Driven into this clay to the depth of from two to three feet, were a great quantity of stakes, all of oak, and varying from three to six inches square; they projected upwards some two to three and a half feet into the black soil by which they were covered, their lower extremities were finely pointed, (evidently with good tools,) and the upper part of them seemed to have been burnt off.

At the points marked T' T'' T''' were found oak troughs or pits, formed of four oak posts, with cross rails tenoned into them, forming a square frame; to the sides and bottom of this frame were nailed, with wooden pins, riven boards of oak about one and half inches thick. The bottom of these troughs was about six feet below the surface of the clay, and their tops from two to three feet above it, ceasing (like the stakes in the layer in which the pottery was found) beneath that containing the graveyard remains. The troughs were filled with black sludge containing nothing of any distinguishable character. At X was found the western half of a stone arch, apparently when complete of some ten to twelve feet span; the face towards the north was roughly dressed, its width we could not ascertain (beyond some three feet) as the excavations did not require its removal. The springing stone was laid upon the clay, and projected as though to carry the centreing on which the arch had been constructed: the height under the arch, including a gutter or hollow in the clay, did not reach five feet in the highest part, and the arch altogether could only have been of the character of a culvert. Facing it were two oak posts some eight inches square, and some seven feet apart, marked V' and V," from the more westerly of these two posts extended a single row of stakes in a semicircle, ending in another large post V.'" P' and P'' are two sets of stakes, circular in form, and about six feet in diameter, set closely together and slanting inwards; between them (except where interrupted by former excavations), ran a treble row of stakes with a sharp angle in them as shown on the plan. Along the whole of the front of the site of the Clydesdale Bank ran a stockade of some five to seven rows of stakes, interrupted in two places by excavations for former cellars; in the more eastern of these we found the foundations of cellar walls laid on the oak stakes which had been taken out. On the site occupied

cupied by Messrs. Harrisons' premises there was found, at C, a portion of stockade of T shape, the arm towards the west probably extended further, as I learn that posts were found at A during the excavations of the Carlisle and Cumberland Bank, but their character was not understood, or position noticed. The other arms of the T extended no further than shown; in front of them was a gutter in the clay of some eighteen inches in depth, full of black sludge, and in it, at C, was found a rudely carved capital of a column of very nondescript character, and I should say not of very early date. Though I have noticed and jotted down carefully the position of the stakes we found, I could make out nothing as to their original plan."

The excavations for the Clydesdale Bank make one thing clear—that we have on it, omitting the surface layer of building material, three distinct layers of remains: the uppermost and most modern is the graveyard layer of the thirteenth century, as proved by the sepulchral slab found four feet below the surface. Then come the tanks, which are later than the piling, for the tank T cuts into the piling, and must be of a date when the piling was disused and earthed up. These tanks are exactly similar to those found at the Bush and elsewhere in Carlisle*, and were filled with exactly similar sludge, interspersed with stones and rubbish. The position of the tank T, cutting into the piles, would assign them to a late date during the Roman occupation. To this date too, I would assign the arch and the piles in front of it, though I do not understand what the arch has been.*

The stockades parallel the south side of Bank Street, and at A and C are of the same date as that described by me in my former paper and in the beginning of this, early Roman. Their exact relation to it is difficult to make

* Transactions, Vol. 3., pp. 135, 136, 140.

* I should not be surprised if these tanks turned out to be post Roman. I have seen the pitcher mentioned by Mr. C. Hodgson, Transactions, Vol. III., p. 136. It is in the possession of Mr. Ferguson, M.P., and is undoubtedly mediæval, but was found below and with Roman remains. The pit may have remained long open after Roman days. But the Bank Street pits had their mouths below the level of the mediæval interments, and in the layer of black mould containing fragments of Roman pottery.

out,

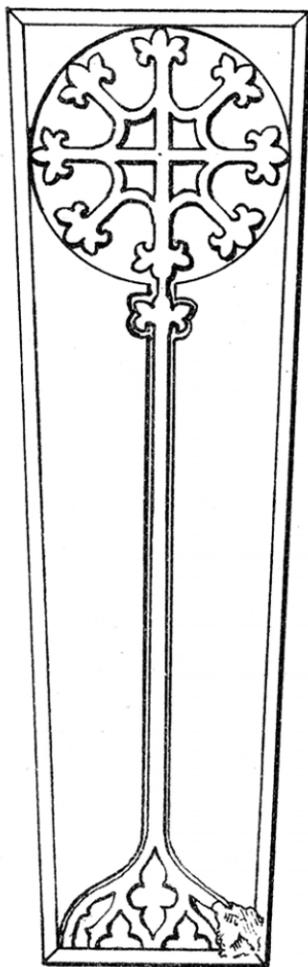
SKETCH

of Remains found in Excavations
in Bank Street. Carlisle.

1877 & 1878.



SKETCH OF CAP
found in Cutter at C.
on plan.



SKETCH OF ANCIENT
SEPULCHRAL SLAB found
at R. on plan. $\frac{3}{4}$ scale.

out, only having detached bits to judge from — guard houses probably, within the stockaded *oppidum*. There is a very marked difference in point of regularity between the stockades at the east end of Bank Street and the west end.