

ART. XXV.—*An Attempt to Trace the Missing Episcopal Registers of the See of Carlisle.* By R. S. FERGUSON.

Communicated at Caldbeck, August 22, 1883.

CANON RAINE (*Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, published in 1873 under direction of the Master of the Rolls, p. ix.) writes :—

The episcopal registers at Carlisle prior to the Reformation consist of only two volumes, which contain the acts of five consecutive bishops, extending from the year 1292 to the close almost of the fourteenth century. The series commences with John de Halton, who, from his position on the Borders, was necessarily a politician and almost a soldier. During the latter part of the reign of Edward I., Carlisle was a great rendezvous for the English army in the Scottish war, and we find, therefore, in Bishop Halton's register many public documents of considerable interest in connexion with Scotland. The greater part of them are already in print, and on that account they are unnoticed here. It is much to be regretted that in a city like Carlisle, which is one of the chief gateways into Scotland, so few documentary memorials should have been preserved. Their destruction, however, was probably due to that restless people, whose dangerous proximity has invested with such interest the past history of the capital of the Borders.

Bishop Nicolson (*The English Historical Library*, published 1696, p. 106 of the edition of 1777,) tells exactly the same story. He says :—

CARLISLE.—This remote and small diocese has been heretofore so much exposed to the continual excursions of the Scots (before the kingdoms were happily united to King James the First), that there are not many of its ancient records anywhere now to be had. The only pieces of antiquity in the bishop's possession, are two register books of four [*sic*] successive prelates; and these will furnish us with little more than the history of one century.

Bishop Nicolson has overlooked in some way that the two register books include acts of Bishop Appleby. Messrs.
Nicolson

Nicolson and Burn, in their History of Westmorland and Cumberland, published in 1777, vol. i., p. v., say, in enumerating the sources from which they compiled their ponderous tomes :

As also the Registers of the several bishops of Carlisle at Rose from the year 1293 to the present time, but with several intromissions, especially during the long and dreadful contest between the two houses of York and Lancaster.

So the matter long stood ; to no one that I know did it occur to doubt the destruction of these volumes, or to attribute their destruction, if destroyed they be, to any other than the Scots, or possibly to Oliver Cromwell. Mr. Sheppard, in his report on the Historical MSS. of the See of Carlisle, refrained from even one or other of these conjectures, merely observing :

To what evil influence is to be attributed the loss of other volumes extending from 1400 to 1561 we cannot say ; even tradition is silent on the subject.

In December last I received from my friend, Mr. Stuart H. Moore, F.S.A., a letter, asking me if I could enlighten him as to the contents of a register described in the following extract :—

Duchy of Lancaster, Class xxv B^e 7 A roll of Miscellaneous Documents of the time of James I.

Inter alia.

Order that the Clerk of the Duchy shall deliver the Register Book of Carlisle to my Lord William Howard *to be by him conveyed to the Mayor of Carlisle* ; with a receipt by Lord Howard.

To this I promptly replied that the book was the "Register, Governor or Dormont Book," which I described in the last volume of this Society's Transactions, p. 297, but my correspondent amazed me by writing as follows :—

The lost book is a Register of Bishop Strickland about 1412. Can it be among the Bishop's Registers or among the other Town Books ?

It was easy to reply with certainty that no such book was
among

among the Bishop's Registers, or among the Town Books ; but I asked for proof of its being Bishop Strickland's register, and I received from Mr. Stuart Moore the following :—

Among the papers of Lord William Howard there is a copy of a charter certified by Lord William in 1606 as being a true copy from the Register of Bishop Strickland, which he must have seen. Then the Duchy order refers to a Register Book of [the see of] Carlisle and commands it to be delivered to Lord William Howard, who was to consign it to the Mayor of Carlisle, and it seems very probable that Lord William would have taken the opportunity of having the book in his possession to make extracts from it.

As the Duchy Order is dated 1600, and as Lord William made the extract in 1606, it seems likely that Lord William, antiquary as he was, did after the manner of antiquaries, and detained the volume. The missing register is thus clearly traced to Lord William Howard. Nor can I ascertain that it has ever been seen since.

It has recently been suggested that Dr. Todd had seen Bishop Strickland's register, and therefore that it was in existence in his time ; he was Canon of Carlisle, 1685 to 1728. In his "*Notitia Ecclesiæ Cathedralis Carliolensis*" he says :—

WILLIELMVS de Strickland Episcopus Carliol. A.D MCCCC. Turrem Ecclesiæ Conventualis a medio ad apicem extruxit ; et Pyramide lignea decoravit quam plumbo obduci fecit : Campanile quatuor campanis instruxit quibus Parochiani ad sacra convocarentur.

In the margin Dr. Todd, as usual, gives his authority, "*Reg Ep̄i.*" Spite of this, I think Dr. Todd had not seen the missing register. On going carefully through his manuscript, and noting the statements to the margin of which he puts "*Reg Ep̄i,*" I find they all, with this exception, come from the registers now in the Bishop's Registry at Carlisle. He cites the two existing præ-Reformation volumes very frequently. He ceases to cite from them where they cease. He resumes his citations after the registers

registers recommence in 1561. Either the "Reg Ep̄i" put to the passage I have cited is a clerical error, or Dr. Todd got his information second-hand from Leland, who says (I cite from Brown-Willis) that Strickland

fecit magnum campanile a medietate ad summum, una cum 4 magnis campanis in eodem.

Leland, no doubt, saw the Strickland register. Had Dr. Todd known and seen the missing Strickland register, his contemporary, Bishop Nicolson, would have known of it also, and we have already shown that he knew nothing about it.

There yet remains another piece of evidence, to which Mr. Mounsey has recently drawn my attention. It is a memorandum contained in one of the books in his custody as Registrar of the Diocese, and is headed

A copy of

A schedule of the Books Papers Etc remaining in the Lord Bishop of Carlisle's Registry at Rose Castle as given by M^r Jos Nicolson June 20th 1748 and July 11th 1749 when he left the Office.

The schedule gives a very accurate description of the existing volumes of Bishops' Registers, enumerating their pages and the bishops to whom each volume belongs, though it makes the same error that Bishop Nicolson does, of making the two præ-Reformation volumes contain the acts of only four bishops. Then comes this item :

A Fragment of Bishop Scroop Register 1436 4 Pages.

The date 1436 must be a clerical error, for Richard Scrope was bishop 1463 to 1468. Between 1400 and 1561, the period for which the registers are missing, more than one, probably three, volumes must have been required to contain the acts of the various bishops. These books would be kept at Rose, where, up to and in 1748 and 1749, was the Bishop's Registry. Now, considering the ruin worked at

Rose

Rose Castle between 1643 and 1660,* the wonder is, not that any registers are missing, but that any exist at all.

Clearly Bishop Strickland's register was in existence in 1606. We may assume Lord William Howard handed it to the Mayor (one is tempted to hope he did not, and that it still lurks in some hole at Castle Howard), and that the Mayor passed it on to Rose. Who, between 1643 and 1660, lighted their fires, or covered their jam-pots with the leaves of the episcopal registers for the period between 1400 and 1561, we, probably, shall never know.

Where now are the four pages of Bishop Scrope's register is unknown, but most likely they are still in existence in the Bishop's Registry.

* There is a gap in the registers from 1643 until the Restoration; none were kept.