



TOMB OF BISHOP PENNY, OF CARLISLE, AT LEICESTER.

ART. V.—*Notes on John Penny, Bishop of Carlisle, 1505-20.*

Part I.—By the REV. JAMES WILSON, M.A.

Part II.—By J. HOLME NICHOLSON, M.A.

PART I.

SOME time ago, I was making, for my own amusement, certain inquiries into the vagaries of ecclesiastical tonsure as far as it could be ascertained from monumental evidence in the diocese of Carlisle, and in due time my attention was directed to the singularly well-preserved effigy of Bishop Penny in St. Margaret's Church, Leicester. In consultation with some of my friends, I was informed that this monument of one of our mediæval bishops was not generally known and that it might be perhaps of some local interest if a print of it could be put within reach of all the members. The Editor, concurred, and for me there was no door of escape.

In the first place, how do I know that this is the monument of Bishop Penny of Carlisle, having never seen it, and having no inscription to identify it. There does not seem to be any room for doubt. Nicolson and Burn,\* on the authority of Dr. Todd,† say that he was buried "in St. Margaret's Church, Leicester, where is his effigies in alabaster curiously wrought, though without any inscription," a piece of information, by the way, of which Anthony à Wood‡ was not cognisant. On reference to the present vicar of that church, the Rev. Arthur M. Rendall, he informed me that the Bishop's monument was in St. Margaret's, and very courteously sent me "as good a photograph of it as it could be possible to get

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\* "History of Westmorland and Cumberland" vol. II., p. 277.

† I have not been able to find the place where Todd makes this statement.

‡ *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. I., p. 562.

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under the circumstances." But the question arises whether St. Margaret's is the original site of the monument and whether Todd is right when he says the Bishop was buried there. The most reliable account within my reach is as follows :—

John Penny is said to have been of Lincoln College, Oxford, but to have taken the degree of LL.D. in this University (Cambridge). He was a canon of the abbey of S. Mary-de-Pratis at Leicester, 1477, and was admitted abbot of that house 25 June 1496, obtaining in Sept. 1503 the small priory of Bradley in the same county *in commendam*. He was consecrated Bishop of Bangor 1504, and translated to Carlisle 1508, obtaining a general pardon just before his translation when he resigned his abbey and priory. He died at Leicester at the end of 1519 or beginning of 1520 and was buried in the abbey there, under a tomb which was subsequently removed to and is now in the church of S. Margaret, and on which is his recumbent figure in a pontifical habit. He made great additions to the buildings of Leicester abbey and gave lands for maintaining a free school in the parish of S. Margaret in that town.\*

But when the tomb was removed from the abbey to the church I have not been able to ascertain. It would appear from the statement of Dr. Todd that it has been in St. Margaret's Church for at least two centuries. But the pedestal is surely modern: at least it looks of different date to the effigy. In 1848 "the restoration of this old church" was commenced "under the superintendence of Mr. Carpenter" and the work was done with such thoroughness and orthodoxy as to warrant the admiration of the *Ecclesiologist*.† It is a bold conjecture, but I should not be surprised to learn that the pedestal is from that architect's design, specially as the work of restoration was "not confined to the care of the external fabric alone,"

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\* *Athenæ Cantabrigienses*, vol. I., p. 22. The Messrs. Cooper fortify themselves by giving these references:—Richardson's *Godwin*, Le Neve's *Fasti*, Wood's *Athenæ*, vol. I., p. 562, Nicholl's *Leicestershire*, vol. I., pp. 268, 275, 394, 511, 558, 562; vol. II., 510, and Rymer.

† *The Ecclesiologist*, vol. IX., p. 141 (No. LXVIII, October, 1848: new series, No. XXXII.).

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but was so far-reaching as to include "the zealous incumbent and his curates who are showing forth a notable example of living a collegiate life." But it is better to let the monument speak for itself. I say this in deference to the opinion of Mr. M. H. Bloxam, who, according to a Leicester correspondent, has stated that "there is no special interest about the tomb or the vestments." In many ways it is interesting and certainly in this that it shows a bishop of Carlisle in pontifical robes at a very critical time in the ritualistic history of the English Church.

## PART II.

By J. HOLME NICHOLSON, M.A.

My attention was first drawn to the subject of Bishop Penny by seeing in the "Graphic" of the 27th May, 1882, an engraving of a fine altar tomb with a recumbent figure of an ecclesiastic in pontifical robes, with a mitre on his head, and a pastoral staff by his side. It was stated that this was the tomb of Bishop Penny in St. Margaret's Church, Leicester, and the following paragraph with reference to it was appended:—

Not very many years since this beautiful monument lay neglected in a dusty recess under a children's gallery. Penny was Bishop of Bangor and Carlisle in the first decade of the 16th century, and died about 1519, at Leicester Abbey, where he was staying on a visit. He was buried by his own direction in St. Margaret's Church. Bishop Penny was first Abbot of Leicester, and according to Leland "made the new bricke workes of Leicester Abbey, and much of the bricke walles." The monument represents the Bishop dressed in the albe, chasuble, and mitre, and holding the pastoral staff, the maniple being over the left arm.

John Leland, the Antiquary, died in 1552, and his visit to Leicester must therefore have been made within twenty or thirty years of the Bishop's death. The burial place of Bishop Penny may have been in the Abbey church of St. Mary

Mary de Pré, or de Prates, at Leicester, of which he had been abbot, the monastery where the great Cardinal Wolsey died in November, 1530, and this tomb erected there in the first instance, but if so it must have been removed to St. Margaret's at the dissolution, for, as the following quotation shows, it was there when Leland visited Leicester.

*S. Margarete's* is thereby the fairest Paroche Chirch of *Leircester*, wher ons was Cathedrale Chirch and thereby the Bishop of *Lincoln* had a Palace wherof a litle yet standith. *John Peny* first Abbate of *Leircester* then Bishop of *Bangor* and *Cairluel* [is here buried in] an Alabaster Tumbe. [This *Penny* made the new Bricke workes of *Leicester* Abby and much of the brick walles].

"Itinerary of John Leland the Antiquary," Oxford, MDCCX., vol. I., p. 14.

Anthony à Wood's reference to Bishop Penny is as follows:—

John Penny whose native place is as yet to me unknown, was educated\* in Lincoln College, but whether in the condition of a fellow I cannot tell. Afterwards he being doctor of the laws and noted for an eminent canonist was made bishop of Bangor in 1504 (having before been abbot of Leicester, as John Leland saith) where sitting till 1508 was by the Pope's bull dated at Rome *cal. Oct.* in the same year translated to Carlisle, and on the 23d. January following paid his obedience to the Archb. of York. He gave way to fate about ffteen hundred and twenty, but where buried, unless in his Church of Carlisle, I know not. His predecessor in that see was Rog. Laybourne of Cambridge who by his Will† dated 17th July 1507 desired to be buried in the parish church of St. James's near to Charing Cross by London, but whether he died in that or the year following I cannot tell, because there was no probat made of his Will. Walter Redman, D.D., and Master of the College at Greystock in Cumberland was one of his executors.

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\* Fr. Godwin in Com. de Praesul Angl. int. ep. Carlisle.

† In Tom. I. Collect, p. 472.

‡ In offic. prærog. Cant. in Reg. Adeane, qu 16."

"Athenæ Oxoniensis," edited by Philip Bliss, Lond. 1815: vol. II., col. 716. The note is by Bishop Kennet.

Penny was buried at St. Margaret's Church in Leicester under a fine alabaster tomb at the end of the North isle, having his effigies curiously carved lying upon it in his episcopal habit. I presume his burial here was occasioned by his having been the chief instrument in rebuilding this Church.—Willis *Cathedrals*, Carlisle, p. 296.

The notices of Bishop Penny in the Histories of Nicolson and Burn, and Hutchinson, add nothing to our knowledge of him, and are evidently derived from the foregoing authorities.

Several families bearing the name of Penny were located in the district of Low Furness, chiefly in the valley of the Crake, early in the 16th century, and probably long before. One branch was possessed of considerable landed property, and settled in the lower part of that valley, where they built a bridge over the river Crake, and where a village afterwards sprung up which is still known as Penny Bridge. The present representative of this family, and the possessor of their estates, is Miss Machell of Penny Bridge, who, in reply to my enquiries, courteously informs me that as far as she knows there is no reference to the Bishop in any of the family records or any tradition of his having belonged to that family.

The tomb whereon the effigy of Bishop Penny rests has all the appearance in the photograph of being modern work, and it bears, I believe, neither inscription nor arms, otherwise we might have been able to trace the family from which he sprung. Possibly there was an older pedestal which may have been destroyed. The arms of Penny of Furness are "azure five fleurs-de-lis or." Should any fragments bearing these arms be discovered about St. Margaret's Church, or among the ruins of the Abbey, it would settle the question of his connection with the Furness family.

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