

ART. XIV.—*Crosby Ravensworth Church.* By the REV.
C. J. GORDON, M.A.

Read at Crosby Ravensworth, July 11th, 1907.

IT is proposed in this paper to offer an account of the architectural and ecclesiastical history of one of the finest churches in the Diocese of Carlisle; supposed to have been founded towards the close of the eleventh century, and dedicated to St. Lawrence. For convenience of arrangement, the matter is grouped in sections corresponding to five successive stages of building and reconstruction, and the persons connected with them, during a period of eight or nine hundred years.

I.

The parish of Crosby Ravensworth comprises a mountain tract of 18,000 acres in the centre of North Westmorland, at an average height of nearly 1,000 feet above the level of the sea. In the very centre is the remote and beautiful valley where the large churchyard of about two acres is found by the side of the straggling village, in a grassy place, or *thwaite*, enclosed by wooded hills, along the upper reaches of the Lyvennet, a sparkling beck, one of the tributaries of the Eden. Here, a few feet from the south wall of the church, may be seen still standing the plain stone shaft of an ancient cross. The name "Crosseby-ravensthwaite" (corrupted later into its modern form) appears to indicate a Danish or Scandinavian Christian town or village, situated in the grassy level where one named Raven had been able to fix his settlement, after Britons or Angles had been dispossessed. The stately proportions of the restored church agreeably surprise the visitor as he comes

suddenly upon the scene after five or six miles of hilly road from Appleby on the east, or over the higher ground from Shap or Tebay on the west or south, or through a gradual ascent of twice the distance from Penrith through Cliburn and Morland on the north.

From the first authentic records* it appears that the manor of Crosby Ravensworth was one of the fiefs of the barony of Westmorland, and part of the possessions of the great Yorkshire earl Gospatric, who fled to Scotland after the battle of Hastings, his estates being confiscated, but afterwards partially restored by the Conqueror. Uchtred, son of Gospatric, lived at Alverstain (Allerton) on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, and through his son Torphin the manor passed to the Hastings family, with whom it remained till the middle of the fifteenth century.

Torphin de Alverstain, in the year 1140, gave the church with two carucates and 140 acres of land in the parish,† to the abbey of Whitby, near 100 miles due east on the coast of Yorkshire. The grant was confirmed by his son Alan about thirty years later, and again by Thomas de Hastings, grandson of Alan; also by Athelwulf (or Athelwald) first Bishop of Carlisle; by Elias and Robert, first Archdeacons of the same see; and by Roger, Archbishop of York. There is a tradition of a friary having adjoined the eastern end of the churchyard, and there appears to be remembrance of it in the names, Monks-garth, Monks-barn, and Monks-bridge. The hospital of St. Leonard at York also had lands here; and at Reagill and Maulds Meaburn, two other townships in the parish, there was connection, either then or later, in the one case with Shap Abbey, and in the other with several religious foundations at a distance. The Diocese of Carlisle was founded in 1133. Soon after his consecration the bishop, by charters still in existence, confirmed the neighbouring

* See Nicolson & Burn, *Westmorland*, pp. 495, 497.

† See Nicolson & Burn, *Westmorland*, p. 495.

Westmorland churches of Kirkby Stephen, Ormshead (Ormside), Morland and Clibburn, with others in Cumberland, to the monks of St. Mary's Abbey of York. Such notices show how fully the parochial system was already developed here, and at the same time what use was made of the discipline of the monastic orders in connection with diocesan jurisdiction. But the bishops of Glasgow on the one side, and of Durham on the other, exercised concurrent authority over parts of the new diocese for many generations, both before and afterwards; and the see is said to have been vacant for more than thirty years, owing to the political troubles of the time.

Taking the place, no doubt, of some ruder edifice previously existing, of which there is no record, the Norman church was built in the form of a cross, and consisted of a nave with north aisle, chancel, and north and south transepts, surmounted by a low tower at the crossing. Of this ancient structure, the only remains are the clustered piers of great bulk at the intersection of the nave and transepts, with square projecting capitals, and octagonal bases now hidden beneath the floor. The massive character of this work corresponds with that prevailing in England in the middle of the twelfth century, when the Norman style was at its best and richest. The walls would be of great thickness, but not perhaps of very solid construction. Whether from defective masonry, or (what is much more likely) from the destructive violence to which, just after that time, the greater number of our churches were exposed, the noble building appears to have been almost entirely thrown down. When it is remembered that the whole country was given up to marauding and plunder, during the civil war in the time of Stephen, it is not likely that so considerable a church as this should have escaped attack. The old chronicler * writes :—

* *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, A.D. 1137.

Never was there more misery, and never acted heathens worse than these: at length they spared neither church nor churchyard, but they took all that was valuable therein, and burned the church and all together: neither did they spare the lands of bishops, nor of abbots, nor of priests; but they robbed the monks and the clergy, and every man plundered his neighbour as much as he would: the land was all ruined by such deeds, and it was said openly that "Christ and the saints slept.

Whitby Abbey itself was destroyed by Norwegian pirates in 1160, and in 1174 Appleby was surrendered to the Scots. At Crosby Ravensworth, during the last rebuilding, some indications were met with of the church having been burned down, melted lead being found in the interstices of the stones, some of which were discoloured as if by the action of fire.

II.

Upon the death of the abbot in 1211, during the interdict of Innocent III., King John seized on the revenues of Whitby, not suffering the chapter to elect a head. The church of Crosby Ravensworth also falling vacant about this time, the king presented Ernald of Amlind. He died in 1221, and immediately afterwards the bishop of Carlisle "solemnly appointed Lord John the Abbot to be parson of the said church, yet so as he may depute a substitute under him as vicar to celebrate therein, who shall have a convenient support allowed him out of the revenues, namely a hundred shillings yearly."* In the next year, by appeal to the pope, a dispute was settled which had arisen between the monks of Whitby and those of Shap respecting some tithes belonging to the latter at Renegill (Reagill). Walter, the fourth bishop, constituted a perpetual vicar for Crosby Ravensworth, allotting a more sufficient stipend for his maintenance, "the abbot and convent spontaneously

* Charlton's *History of Whitby*.

and absolutely committing to his ordering the taxation of their Vicarage Church." He was to have the altarage and twenty acres of land with two tofts, paying to the monks of Whitby twenty shillings per annum; while they were to have the tithe of wool and lamb of the whole parish, with two parts of the tithe hay of the lordship of Meaburn; the vicar to bear all ordinary burdens, synodals, and archidiaconal procurations, and the abbey the extraordinary. At the same time Thomas son of Thomas de Hastings freed the monks and their tenants from suit to his mill there, and gave them leave to grind their corn where they thought best.

With the return of quieter times, a natural impulse towards rebuilding quickly showed itself here as elsewhere. Shap Abbey had been commenced about the year 1200. The restoration of Whitby is placed between 1220 and 1260. Within the same dates a border truce was cemented by the cession of manors at Penrith, Great Salkeld, and other places in the district to the Scottish king; and the choir of Carlisle Cathedral was taken down and enlarged. With these limits of time there is a close correspondence in the style of architecture adopted in the reconstruction at Crosby Ravensworth, which may therefore be placed about the middle of the thirteenth century. The raising of the floor by as much as two feet was probably rendered necessary through accumulation of soil in the graveyard, and interments in the church itself. The capitals on the west and north faces of the north-west central pier were left untouched, while all the others were raised to a higher level to correspond to the columns of the new nave, and pointed arches were substituted for the previously existing Norman ones. The central tower had either fallen in or was now taken down. A south aisle was added to the nave, and the walls of that portion of the fabric replaced by the tall and slender Early English clustered piers, in the form of four attached shafts and

single fillet on face, with circular capitals; the pointed arches recessed and chamfered, having plain hood mouldings. This fine arcade has fortunately ever since remained unaltered in perfect preservation, the dominant feature of the whole. The open crossing and the three bays of the nave were surmounted by a high pitched roof, apparently without clerestory. A remarkably fine pointed doorway, with shafts and deeply moulded arches having dog-tooth ornament, opening into the new aisle under an ample porch, may be seen with the remains of many coatings of whitewash still adhering to its surface. The transepts and chancel were probably restored in a form more closely resembling what they had been before.

Unfortunately, there is no information at our disposal to show who it was to whom this complete and beautiful restoration should be attributed; but that it had added to the consideration of the parish would appear from the fact that during the episcopate of Robert de Chauncey, seventh bishop of Carlisle (1256 to 1278) much litigation took place about the church with the abbot and convent of Whitby. In his history of the diocese, the late Chancellor Ferguson noted that an account of the proceedings is in the chartulary of Whitby, published by the Surtees Society. The result, he says, is not known, but these proceedings, and the charters of Crosby Ravensworth, introduce several officials of the diocese not otherwise mentioned in the local chartularies, such as the official of the archdeacon of Carlisle and the "magister stolarum" there.

With the fourteenth century the list is resumed of vicars recorded by name to have regularly resided in the parish; one William de Insula, in the year 1303, being bound to the bishop in the sum of £10 to reside upon his benefice, and to live soberly and continently. Either the name of the next incumbent is lost, or the succession was irregular. In common with most of the

diocese, this parish again suffered from the effect of the Scottish raids which brought such poverty on the country that in 1337 the bishop complained that he could not get his tenths because the clergy had all fled. A gap in the Episcopal Registers of seven years, commencing with 1346, probably points to the ravages of the Black Death and consequent universal disorganisation. We find, however, that in 1304 Henry Threlkeld had a grant of free warren here as well as at Yanwath, which was repeated in 1320; and in 1336 William de Threlkeld had licence to impark his woods at Crosby Ravensworth,* from which it is evident that the interests of the manor were being steadily developed. It is probable that the fortified hall was established by this time within a few yards of the west end of the church, in a defensive position with a wet moat surrounding the courtyard, of which the circuit is still visible. It had a pele tower, of which nothing remains; and the substantial building with square-headed mullioned windows, now occupied as a farm house, was mostly the work of the Pickerings in the sixteenth century. No one can say how the lords of Threlkeld in Cumberland became landowners at Yanwath and Crosby Ravensworth; but they seem to have come here through association with the family of Hastings, and Threlkeld was a mesne manor of the barony of Greystoke, under which the lands at Crosby Ravensworth were also held. That they identified themselves with the ecclesiastical fortunes of the place is evident from the fact that in 1361 Robert de Threlkeld was presented to the vicarage by the abbot and convent of Whitby. He only held the post for a few months before his death. For the next hundred years there is a blank in our story, only the name of Roger Crofte occurring in 1446 as "vicar of Crosseby ravenswath."

* "*The Threlkelds*," by W. Jackson, F.S.A.



THE MOAT, CROSBY RAVENSWORTH HALL.

Photo. by Mrs. T. H. Hodgson.

TO FACE P. 212.

III.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century extensive alterations were again effected in the fabric of the church in accordance with the architectural tendency of the period, as may easily be inferred from the date suggested by the character of the existing western tower. This time there is little difficulty in associating the work with the name of the lord of the manor, Sir Lancelot Threlkeld, with whose experience commences all that is known of the personal and domestic history of this knightly family. The chantry chapel, on the north side of the chancel, has been identified as belonging to him by the shield in the hood over the arch impaling the arms of Threlkeld with the bend fleury of the Bromfletes and the cross of the Vescys, thus commemorating his marriage with Margaret, the widow of John Lord Clifford, slain at the battle of Towton Moor in 1461, she being daughter and heiress of Henry Bromflete Lord Vescy. In the vault beneath the massive tomb he was doubtless buried, dying before 1492. In his time, it is thought, the transepts were taken down, the materials being used up in the construction of the tower; the aisle walls were continued across the transept spaces to the east; the chancel was widened, fresh windows of the period being inserted in its walls; the priest's door of the Norman or Early English period (as an old drawing shows) being the only fragment of the former work retained in this portion of the building; and the nave and chancel were covered with flat leaded roofs.

Such was the condition in which the remodelled church remained without further alteration for more than three hundred years; shorn, indeed, of the ancient dignity of its transepts and the striking symbolism of a cruciform plan, and as yet without a clerestory; but still a handsome and well-proportioned structure, suggesting reverent thoughts. It was large enough to serve all purposes of parochial worship for a scattered population varying in number from eight hundred to a thousand souls, and

maintained unbroken connection of ecclesiastical order with other parish churches within the now thoroughly settled diocese of Carlisle. The parish register dates from 1560. The average number of christenings and burials appears to have been something over 20 in a year, but in 1623 and the following year as many as 159 persons were buried in the churchyard.

Sir Lancelot Threlkeld, sheriff of Cumberland in 1493, son of the first Sir Lancelot, was accustomed to boast that he had three noble houses; one for pleasure, Crosby in Westmorland, where he had a park full of deer; one for profit and warmth wherein to reside in winter, Yanwath nigh Penrith; and the third, Threlkeld, well stocked with tenants to go with him to the wars. He was created a Knight of the Bath at the marriage of Arthur Prince of Wales in 1501. He had three daughters, but no son, and the manor of Crosby became the portion of his daughter Elizabeth on her marriage, in 1513, with James, a younger son of Sir James Pickering, of Killington in the county of Westmorland. One of the daughters of the first Sir Lancelot married Sir Hugh Lowther. From the last of the Pickerings, a hundred years later, the manor was purchased by Sir John Lowther of Lowther, father of the first baronet. Sir John gave it as a marriage portion to his daughter Frances, wife of John Dodsworth, known to have repaired the tower and to have been in residence here in 1682.* After several transfers, it was bought by Robert Lowther, whose son, on failure of the main stem, became the head of the family and the sole Earl of Lonsdale of the first creation, and it has since formed a portion of their accumulated estates. In 1745 the remains of "the Worshipful Robert Lowther" were laid in the vault in the Threlkeld chapel at Crosby Ravensworth. In the year 1615 Sir John Lowther and Eleanor

* Nicolson and Burn, *Westmorland*, pp. 302, 499.

his wife came into possession also of Meaburn Hall, which became the residence of the junior branch of that family, and continued so to the fourth generation, when Sir James Lowther of Meaburn succeeded to the estates of Viscount Lonsdale in 1750.

It is related of Robert Thwaites, presented by the community of Whitby in 1572, that, for refusing to subscribe the Thirty Nine Articles, he was superseded by another vicar collated by the bishop by lapse, but soon afterwards reinstated. His successor was presented four years later by Richard Bacon of London, baker, by virtue of an assignment from the abbot and convent the year before the dissolution. The living was valued in the king's books at £7 13s. 4d. As bearing upon the provision made in those days for the furtherance of popular education in connection with the church, it may be noted here that Philip and Mary queen of England gave the annual rent of £5 10s. 8d., charged upon the rectory of Crosby Ravensworth, to increase the revenues of the Free Grammar School at Appleby; and that in 1630 the Rev. William Willain (allowed by dispensation to succeed his father in the vicarage) founded the village grammar school by a gift of £100. His successor, William Curwen, M.A., was ejected by Cromwell's commissioners, but reinstated at the Restoration in 1660.

The following extract from *Bishop Nicolson's Miscellany Accounts of the State of the Churches, &c., in the Diocese of Carlisle** presents a description of the church as it appeared in the course of his View of them in 1703, and shows it to have been then in much better condition than most of the others in the neighbourhood:—

CROSBY RAVENSWORTH. Aug. 20. The Fabrick of the Church looks well on y^e outside; being built of good Freestone, well leaded & beautify'd with a fair Tower, wherein are three good Bells. In the Quire (w^{ch} belongs to Col. *Graham*, y^e present Impropriator) the

* Edited by Chancellor Ferguson. See p. 76.

North-Wall looks nasty and black; and indeed the whole wants whitening. Here are no Rails. The Body of the Church is well seated; and is mostly in good Order. Here's a large North Isle, which belongs to *R. Lowther of Meaburn Esq^r* who has lately purchased the Demesne and Tenants. It stands almost as much need of whitening as the Quire. Upon some painted Glass here is y^e name of *S. KATARINA*. One M^{rs} *Wharton* lyes bury'd in y^e Quire, with an insignificant Epitaph.

The Bishop copied two rhymed inscriptions from the churchyard recording the deaths of William Thwaites in 1690, and Christopher Jaques in 1699; and, after a mention of "B. Oley's Books in the hand of the vicar, Mr. Wilkinson; who promises to keep 'em, as hitherto he has done, in good plight," he concluded his notes as follows:—

Tho. Pattinson the present Schoolmaster has a Standing Salary of about £10 yearly, the product of Money at Interest; some of which is in suspected hands, and ought to be better secured.

At Whitsuntide, 1705, "two young men (Cragg and Wilkinson) were examined and licensed by the Bishop to the Schools of Crosby-Ravensworth and Reegill." *

Mr. John Knotts, in 1734, left an estate at Maulds Meaburn for the use of the poor of the township, from which five shillings yearly had to be paid for keeping dogs out of the parish church during time of service. The legality of the will was disputed on a technicality, and the heir-at-law paid a sum of money to be invested instead, but how long this portion of the bequest was paid is not known.†

Of more than temporary or local interest are the words of an inscription on a stone pillar erected within half a mile of the church, in a field on the way to Meaburn:—

* "Bishop Nicolson's Diaries," edited by the Bishop of Barrow-in-Furness. *These Transactions*, N.S. iii., p. 11.

† See Nicolson and Burn, *Westmorland*, p. 497; also *Bygone Cumberland and Westmorland*, by Daniel Scott, Penrith, 1899.

On this spot dwelt the paternal ancestors of the celebrated JOSEPH ADDISON. His father, Lancelot Addison, Dean of Lichfield, was born here, 1632.

After the dissolution of the monasteries, the rectory and advowson were purchased by the Bellinghams of Levens and Gathorne. Together with the estate they were sold by Alan Bellingham to Col. James Graham, whose daughter and heiress, Catherine, brought them in marriage to Henry Bowes Howard, Earl of Berkshire. He sold the rectory to the Lowther family, but the advowson continued with the Howards till it passed with the lands of Gathorne, and the lordship of Bank and Row, to Colonel Josceline Fitz Roy Bagot of Levens, towards the end of the nineteenth century. The annual value of the vicarage, as certified to the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty, was £35 13s. 7d. Colonel Graham, in 1721, gave £200, which, with £200 from the Bounty, was laid out in lands at Lazonby for the augmentation of the living.

IV.

A crisis in the history of this church, very different in character from anything else that has to be recorded of it, was reached after the close of the eighteenth century, when, for the third or fourth time, a complete renewal was considered necessary, and a strange transformation took place as regards the external appearance of the building. Having stood for three hundred years since the previous restoration, and very likely without any repair or attention since the time of Bishop Nicolson's survey, the walls had been allowed to fall a good deal out of the perpendicular, and the tower had a great rent in one of its sides near the top, with a sycamore tree growing out of it. Under such conditions it cannot be deemed unreasonable if an impression prevailed that the whole edifice had become insecure. In the absence of special knowledge or taste in church architecture, at least



CROSBY RAVENSWORTH CHURCH, 1798.

of the Gothic styles, the work of reconstruction was zealously taken in hand by a representative of one of the respected yeoman families in the parish, Mr. George Gibson of Oddendale, one of the founders of the present family of Metcalfe-Gibson. With the assistance of Mr. Smirke, the architect then engaged in rebuilding Lowther Castle, a plan was drawn out for the pulling down of the whole of the ancient walls and windows and replacing them by others in the plainest possible style. "Encouraged by the influence and aided by the bounty of William Dent, Esquire"—so a tablet under the tower relates—"and assisted by many and worthy friends whose names and contributions are recorded in the parish register"; especially four former parishioners then resident in London, John Dent, Thomas Wilkinson, William Thwaites and Robert Burra; the farmers carting the materials, and Mr. Gibson "religiously superintending the reconstruction and aiding with his own skilful hands so excellent a work"; the rebuilding was commenced in 1809, and carried to completion in 1816. The demolition of the tower being fortunately found not only unnecessary but actually impossible, owing to the enduring nature of most of the fifteenth century work, the injured courses were made good, and the upper stage surmounted by a new battlement, a poor imitation of that at Magdalen College, Oxford, which Mr. Gibson had admired when on a visit to his nephews, then Fellows of Queen's, and afterwards vicars respectively of Thedworth and Newbold Pacey. The Earl of Lonsdale, being impropiator of the rectorial tithes, gave the oak timber and rebuilt the chancel and the chantry chapel, the original windows of the latter being happily spared from the wholesale destruction meted out to the rest. During the removal of the chancel walls a copper coin of King Henry I. was found, and handed to Lord Lonsdale. The south-west porch was replaced by a massive structure of neatly hewn stones ornamented with the date and geo-

metrical symbols and scripture reference (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2). A shallow hood of more elaborate design was placed over the priest's door in the south wall of the chancel, with the sentence "ECCE SPONSUS VENIT" for superscription, and eucharistic emblems carved in bold relief below. These porches have been permitted to remain as witnesses to the well-intended and ingenious nature of the entire conception. The same may be said of the narrow circular font with painted canopy of fret-work, the bowl of stone, but also thickly painted. This was placed as close as possible to the reading desk at the north-eastern angle of the nave. Around it is an incised palindrome which may be rendered "*Wash my sins, not my face only*":— "NIΨONANOMHMATAMHMONANOΨIN." A small altar table and wooden pulpit were provided. The whole of the interior of the church was fitted with the customary pews, designed for the comfort of those attending the services. Finally, the lofty open-timbered roofs were replaced by others of low pitch, and underdrawn with flat, plastered ceilings; the whole of the inside was whitewashed over, and the walls illuminated with texts.

Though inexpressibly deplorable from the point of view of art or archæology, there can be no doubt that such a complete reversal of ancient ideals was in agreement with the ecclesiastical notions of the period, and generally acceptable to the parishioners in those easily satisfied times of agricultural prosperity, when the population reached its highest recorded numbers. George Gibson died at the æge of eighty, in 1835. His nephew, Thomas, lived in the village for many years near the church, being thoroughly devoted to its interests according to the accepted view, and was held in the highest regard for his extreme benevolence and the charming sweetness and humility of his disposition. He became a munificent donor to the endowments of the schools in the parish, increased by that time to four in number through the establishment of one for girls at Crosby Ravensworth in



CROSBY RAVENSWORTH CHURCH, 1848.

1830 (which has, however, since become unnecessary, owing to the decrease of the numbers in attendance) and of a mixed school at Maulds Meaburn in 1834. The school near the church had been rebuilt by William Dent, and endowed by him and others with an additional sum of £500. The various members of the Gibson family are fully commemorated in an inscription running the whole length of the north wall of the restored transept, and their burial place from 1799 is marked by a square stone pillar, six feet high, with crocketed cap, towards the eastern side of the churchyard. Their last representative evidently did much to assist the clergy to live up to a rising standard of pastoral efficiency, at a time when the greater part of the country was being opened up by new methods of traffic. Here, however, the road from Shap, even after arrival of the railway there, was little better than a mountain track, and the only mode of access to the vicarage was to drive through the waters of the beck, or to cross by stepping-stones. The stable and farm buildings attached to the little house have since been thrown together to form the roomy and picturesque residence, surrounded by garden and shrubbery, at the foot of which the Oddendale beck unites its waters to those of the Lyvennet before flowing under the ancient bridge behind the school. A terrier of 1828 estimates the annual income of the vicar at £133. In 1845 the vicarial tithes were commuted for £44, and the rectorial for £98. Thirty years later, the value of the living was over £200 a year, but was again soon afterwards seriously reduced on account of agricultural depression.

The last two incumbents during the period just described were Salisbury Everard and Edward Carus Wilson. The former, after two years' experience, finding efficient oversight of the whole parish physically impossible, endeavoured to promote a plan for erecting a chapel in the extensive mountainous township of Birkbeck Fells under a curate who should take charge also of

Greenholme, Rounthwaite and Bretherdale in the parish of Orton, with a total estimated population of about 430, besides the visitors at Shap Wells. But the scheme came to nothing, Mr. Everard leaving to become rector of Burgate, and afterwards official of the archdeacon of Norfolk. Ten years later his successor removed in search of health, but never recovered, leaving a widow who survived to the year 1904 and died at the age of a hundred.

V.

George Frederick Weston, after serving two years as curate at Kendal, was instituted in 1848 to the vicarage of Crosby Ravensworth on the presentation of the Hon. Mrs. Howard of Levens, and held the appointment up to his death in 1887. This is not the place for dwelling upon private relationships, or the remarkable qualities which won him the confidence of so many friends and parishioners. But the human interest of this narrative would be ill-sustained without a reference to the personal ability which rendered the modern parish priest worthy of comparison with those devoted ecclesiastics and notable laymen who did such great things for the House of God in former ages, and into whose labours he entered with full discernment and the most untiring zeal. In the long line of incumbents who preceded him there is not one whose name is associated in any way with the fabric of the noble church in which they ministered, and in other respects it was an unparalleled achievement for a young clergyman to undertake on his own responsibility the rebuilding of so large a church in the middle of the nineteenth century, and within thirty years of its complete transformation in an entirely different style. This Mr. Weston did, conscientiously feeling himself called to the work of restoring the once lovely structure to its ancient size and beauty. Struck from the first with the erroneous treatment of the outside walls, and

their contrast with the charming Early English interior, he at once resolved upon a course of gradual retransformation, the nave arcade being the key to the plan which ought to be followed. The services were obtained of a competent architect, the late J. S. Crowther of Manchester, to whose letters, with the report* made afterwards to Mrs. Weston, we are indebted for many of the following particulars, as well as for much useful light upon the course of events on occasions of rebuilding in the past. He made a thorough examination, and prepared a full set of plans for the whole, in accord with what could be traced of the ancient design, omitting the transepts, of which absolutely no trace remained. The existing walls were found to be thin and unsubstantial, so that the weather had already penetrated through them, and they, and the floor also, were green with damp in many parts. The chancel, especially, presented a spectacle of damp and neglect, with furniture of mean appearance.

It is characteristic of the spirit in which the new enterprise was taken in hand, that the first consideration was to provide the necessary fittings for rendering the services in a suitable and reverent manner. A carved oak altar of befitting dignity, a kneeling rail, choristers' seats, lectern, and stone pulpit, were provided in 1850. A chamber organ of excellent workmanship, said to have been built for his own use by Mr. George Gibson, was "presented to the parish as an offering to the church" by his son-in-law, Mr. John Sewell, and erected at the east end of the south aisle, before the re-opening services in 1852. It has since been enlarged and brought up to date on three separate occasions within fifty years, and is still in use. A faculty was obtained from the diocesan authorities to authorise the alterations after the parishioners had been consulted and resolutions

* See notes by Mrs. Weston, printed at Kendal, 1888; p. 33.



Photo. by McDonald, Penrith.

CROSBY RAVENSHOE CHURCH.

TO FACE P. 225.

of approval passed at vestry meetings; and other faculties after similar meetings at succeeding stages of the undertaking. In 1853, on the introduction of a surpliced choir, a new vestry was added to the north of the chancel, and a crypt constructed underneath to accommodate a furnace and appliances for efficiently warming the church with hot-water pipes, in place of the unsightly stoves and open braziers in use up to that time. It was only after another three years, during which much preparatory work was done in scraping off coatings of lime from the pillars and other parts of the ancient masonry, that the actual restoration was commenced with the rebuilding of the west end gable of the north aisle, the angle buttresses, and the two light window, in memory of Mr. Weston's first wife. In the next year, the Early English chancel arch was successfully restored (the slender piers with angle shafts detached and the usual band in centre) completing the four arches of the intersection on its eastern side; and a plainer arch of suitable design erected between the north aisle or transept and the Threlkeld chapel, the massive altar tomb being raised to its proper height above the floor. Again, after a still longer interval of ten years, a beautiful lancet window was placed in the west end of the south aisle, in memory of the vicar's second wife, and the adjoining walls rebuilt with solid angle buttresses upon foundations securely laid several feet below the surface.

The principal mason, in this and in all succeeding sections, was Robert Hogarth Parkin, who had removed from Orton to Crosby Ravensworth at the invitation of the vicar, and entered fully into the spirit of his design, bringing up his sons also to carry on the work, with the help of others connected with the parish. Throughout the many years of restoration, the character of the workmanship was consistently maintained at the highest level, and the materials of every sort were of the very best, freestone of good quality being obtained in abundance from

two quarries in the parish at a distance of several miles apart, and some grey limestone from the rocky summit of the fells being used for polished dressings in the interior. Working drawings for many of the details were supplied by Mr. Weston himself. We have also from his own hand a number of faithful sketches of the church and its surroundings at the commencement of his incumbency; and the members of his family have preserved a series of beautiful water-colour drawings, valued alike for their high artistic merit and for the accurate pictures presented in them of the church and churchyard, as well as of the vicarage house and garden, and of scenes of interest in the neighbourhood. It has been remarked, with perfect truth, "that few painters have equalled him in the delicacy of his touch and the exactness of his representation."

The fourteenth year of the work of restoration had now arrived. It must next be noted how, in the course of operations, the belfry stage of the tower was found to be in a dangerous condition, from the action of the bells and the flimsy nature of the construction. Imperfectly bonded with the aid of iron rods which had perished, the battlement gave way under the fury of a gale in the early part of 1866, and large pieces were blown down on to the roof. This was not the first time that such a dangerous fall had occurred, a stone on one occasion crashing through the roof on to the floor beneath. The upper portion of the tower was taken down, and increased in height by about 20 feet in the rebuilding, to provide for an intended heightening of the nave roof. The present belfry stage, with its handsome windows, was then surmounted by a plain, solid battlement, with a spirelet at the north-east corner roofing in the angle stair. The weight of the bells is $9\frac{1}{2}$, 8, and 7 cwts., respectively.

In 1868, the restoration of the north chantry was undertaken, and in the following year plans were prepared for constructing a new high-pitched roof with open timbers, at a greater elevation than the original, and for

a low clerestory with six plain quatrefoils on either side above the nave arcade; as also for the restoration of the masonry and windows of the south aisle. Whilst excavating for the foundation of the eastern extremity of the aisle, the workmen laid bare a portion of the wall of the ancient south transept; this was traced to the southern end, and the exact size of the transept was ascertained. Mr. Wilkinson Dent, of Flass, then the leading parishioner, and a most generous supporter at every stage of the work, was much interested in the discovery, and undertook at his sole expense the rebuilding of this transept, to be reserved for the use of his family and their descendents. He also provided the coloured windows and the carved oak screens at the openings to north and west, and met the cost of restoring the south aisle and the north chapel. He died in his eighty-sixth year in 1886, when a fine mural painting (of the Blessing of the Children) was placed in the transept to his memory by one of his nephews. The white marble bust is in memory of Thomas Wilkinson* who died in 1840 at the age of eighty-one. Flass House, a commodious mansion in the Italian style, was built in 1851 about a mile from the church near Mauld's Meaburn, of white limestone from the high ground near Orton Scar, and is now the property of Mr. Robert Wilkinson Dent, whose estate includes the lands of Crosby Lodge where the Threlkelds had their deer park in the fifteenth century.

The end of 1871 saw the completion of the Dent chapel, a lofty and beautiful feature of the church. The north aisle was next rebuilt, with a new doorway opposite the main entrance. This doorway, and the adjoining window of two lights were due to a gift in memory of George Sewell, a grandson of George Gibson. Three similar windows in line with it were also filled with good stained glass in memory of Sir Thomas Wilkinson, K.C.S.I., Thomas

* See p. 220; also *Transactions*, N.S., vol. iv., p. 129.

Gibson, and Robert Wilkinson. It was next decided to proceed with the raising of the north transept, the original foundations of which had been discovered, the extent of its length northward and its width being also ascertained exactly. Many friends united to subscribe for this as a memorial to Thomas Gibson, "the good man of Oddendale," who had died in 1869 in his ninety-first year. Like the south transept it was lighted by a fine wheel window and Early English lancets of large size, deeply splayed and adorned with limestone shafts and moulded arches; but left unscreened and without the coloured glass, tiled pavement, and pretty interlacing wall arcade, which are such an embellishment to the other. It was finished in 1873 together with the continuation of the clerestory and roof of the nave to the eastern extremity of the intersection, Mr. Arthur Gibson contributing to the cost. The treatment here resulted in the production of the very admirable lantern, lighted by a well-proportioned opening of three lights towards the nave (provided by a first donation, very welcome to the vicar, from his son) and four elegant dormer windows in the roof, and forming a most effective element in the restoration of the cruciform design.

Long before this time a corresponding change for the better had been commenced in the care of the churchyard and its accessories. Owing to the influence of the vicar the gravestones assumed a more religious character, the local limestone being carved to good effect under his guiding hand. The approaches also were improved, and the boundary walls in great part rebuilt at considerable outlay so as to accord with the architecture of the church; and a hearse house, which was greatly needed, was built at the north-east corner to accommodate the hearse provided by subscription soon after he came. In 1870 a drawing was made for restoring the upper part of the interesting churchyard cross, but this work has been left for someone else to undertake. Outside the precincts a part of Monks-garth had been secured from the lord of the

manor by exchange of vicarage land for use as a school playing field ; while in other directions both by exchange and purchase the glebe had been improved. A little later the income of the benefice was augmented by more than £50 a year through assignment of rectorial tithes at Soulby and Waitby by Queen Anne's Bounty aided by Mr. Weston's gifts. At various times he enlarged and beautified parts of the vicarage house at his own expense, and with great taste laid out the garden ; provided a water supply by gravitation from the fell for the use of his own family and those of the neighbouring villagers ; led the way in archæological researches into the numerous British and Roman antiquities of the district ; carried through new schemes for the better government of the schools and charities ; planted trees for 'use and ornament in well-chosen spots by hedgerows and roadsides ; and (last but not least) he designed some of the graceful bridges and excellent roads by which convenient access can now be had to Crosby Ravensworth, and from the centre to the more distant parts of the widely scattered parish. To all these topics the merest allusion is made, as to facts which cannot justly be omitted in connection with the restoration of a parish church ; yet such mention will not exhaust even the bare catalogue of all that was attempted and carried through. It should be noted that the regular course of Sunday services in church was never suspended during the thirty years of the rebuilding under the pastoral superintendence of four successive bishops of the diocese ; that Mr. Weston made use of the help of an assistant curate during the latter half of his time ; that for many years he presided over his brother clergy in the Rural Deanery of Lowther ; and was collated by Dr. Harvey Goodwin in 1879 to an Honorary Canonry in Carlisle Cathedral. The facts may help to place in their true light the character and aims of the man who was thus content to expend the energies of a life-time in serving the interests of this one parish, patiently investigating and interpreting its ancient

treasures, and restoring to even more than its original beauty the precious memorial of the generosity and devotion of the past.

The rebuilding of the chancel was commenced in 1875 after much anxious consultation between the architect and the vicar, the last decade of whose life and ministry saw this crowning portion of his great labour of love slowly and perseveringly accomplished. The style of architecture adopted was of somewhat later date than that of the nave. It has been remarked to the writer by a friendly critic, to whom he is indebted for other notes bearing on structural detail, that the restoring architect would appear to have treated his building as developing from west to east, with work of earlier character towards the west; whereas the choice of the mediævalist is generally the reverse, the chancel being first, and progress in later development proceeding westward. But in this case the recent demolition of the ancient chancel left room for a freedom of preference which may be thought to have been wisely used for variety of enrichment. The large windows of two or three lights, of an early Geometrical Decorated type, with quatrefoil heads and deeply recessed and pillared mouldings, have succeeded in giving to this important part of the church a distinguishing dignity and brightness. The very fine east window was provided by several members of the Dent family, and filled with stained glass (depicting scenes in the Passion and Resurrection) in memory of Thomas Dent, who died in 1871. The blank north wall has well designed openings into the Threlkeld chapel and into a recess where the small organ was once accommodated adjoining the vestry passage. The spacious floor, like that of the rest of the church, is particularly well laid with solid flagstones, only the spaces within the rails being tiled. The wrought iron rails are the handiwork of the blacksmith who is also parish clerk. There are two steps upward under the chancel arch, another further east, and two more at the

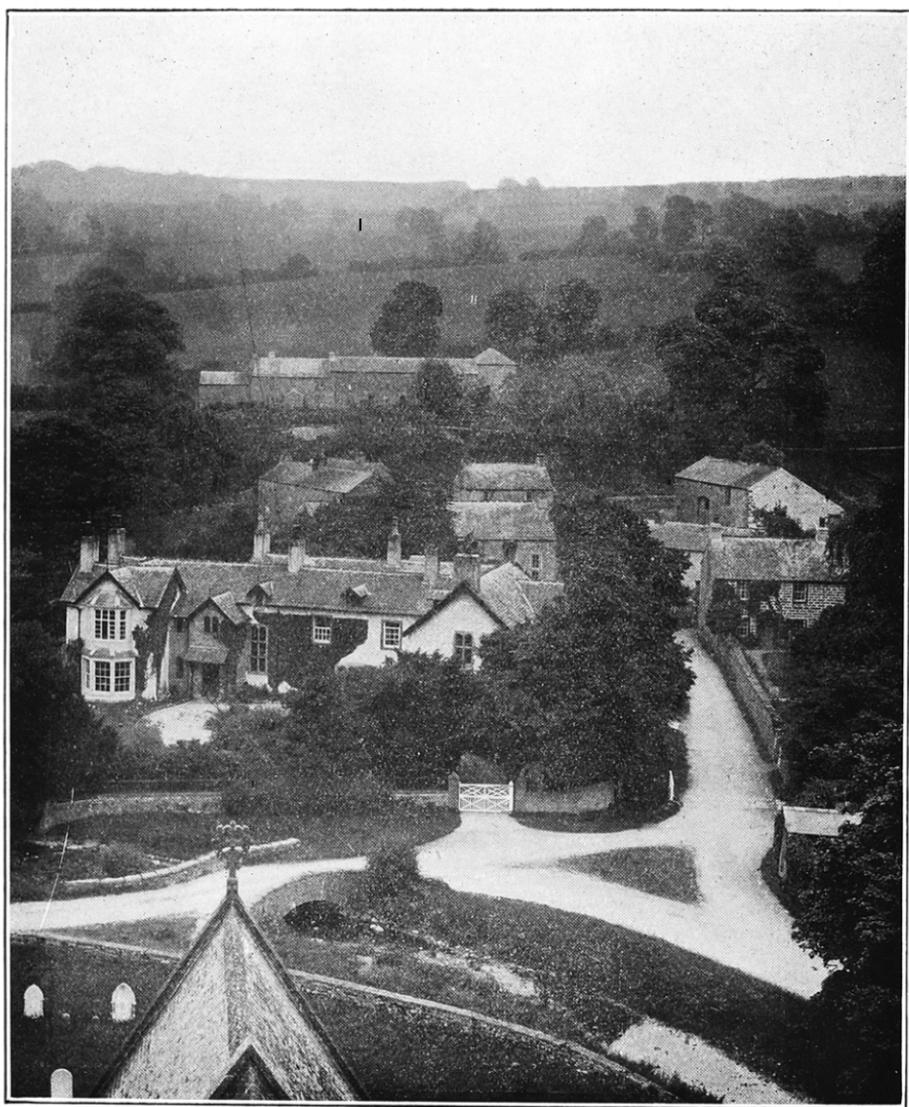


CROSBY RAVENSWORTH CHURCH.

Photo. by McDonald, Penrith.

tcwaas_002_1908_vol8_0017

TO FACE P. 230.



CROSBY RAVENSWORTH VICARAGE.

Photo. by McDonald, Penrith.

TO FACE P. 231.

sedilia, the triple arched canopy over which, with deep mouldings and shafts, harmonizes well with the windows. A piscina of similar style, south of the altar, is matched by a recessed credence let into the wall on the north. The high pitched roofs are covered throughout with thick green Westmorland slates, the gable ends of nave and chancel surmounted with carved stone crosses of ample size and elegant design; and sculptured heads (many of them portraits of persons connected with the work) and other adornments are introduced as finishings to the labels of door and window arches round the church.

The cost of the eastern portion of the building was of course considerable, and altogether the labour of collecting subscriptions must have been very great; but funds never failed to come in when actually required. From first to last as much as £8000 was expended on the work. In 1884 a donation from an old and valued servant of the vicar led to a resolve to complete the only piece then remaining to be done—the south wall of the chancel. A final appeal was cordially responded to, and the whole was finished by Michaelmas, 1886, when re-opening services were held, amid much rejoicing, by the fifty-eighth bishop of Carlisle. A little more than a year afterwards, after a short illness, the vicar was called to his rest. He lies buried outside the chancel wall in the angle of the south transept, “in peace and hope awaiting the resurrection near the church he beautified and the people he loved.”

Since it was finished more than twenty years ago little has been required, beyond careful and thankful use, to keep the church in the perfect condition in which it was left by Canon Weston. The three-light window in the chancel, filled with stained glass in his memory, suitably presents the Adoration of the Lamb, with groups of worshipping angels, and a portrait kneeling figure vested in surplice below. In 1897 a handsome reredos of oak was presented by Mrs. Webster, Mr. John Wakefield

Weston, and others, with some excellent panelling and a clever carving after Da Vinci's picture of "The Last Supper." During the present century a further portion of the churchyard wall has been rebuilt; the parishioners have judiciously expended a hundred pounds in improving the heating and lighting of the church, and a like sum upon rebuilding the organ, now removed for greater convenience to the Gibson transept; a tablet of alabaster and mosaic work has been placed in the other transept to the memory of the late Thomas Wilkinson John Dent of Flass; and three memorial brasses of excellent workmanship have been let into other parts of the walls by two grandsons of the venerable mason, buried at Christmas 1903, whose work is felicitously recorded upon the one placed under the lantern. One vicar has had the glebe house improved by internal rearrangement and repair, and another has added to the endowment (now producing £190 a year) with the help of donations from the patron and others, the local contribution of £100 being doubled by the Laymen's Committee of the diocese, and the total again doubled by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The late Mrs. Thwaites of Holesfoot Lodge left a legacy of £200 to the vicar and churchwardens to apply the interest in keeping the church in order, an object which those who worship in it and all who visit it may be expected very heartily to promote.

The foregoing description will serve a good purpose if it should be the means of inducing some who have not seen it to make a personal inspection of this noble village church and its very interesting surroundings. The facts brought under review are such as to suggest many a useful lesson of faith, of courage, or of perseverance; and may be held to illustrate two further considerations of some importance, the permanence of the principles of Religious Art, and the continuity of the Church of England.

VICARS OF CROSBY RAVENSWORTH.

1211.	Ernard de Amlind.
1303.	William de Insula.
1361.	John de Linton.
1361.	Robert de Threlkeld.
1362.	John de Regill.
1446.	Roger Crofte.
1572.	Roland Thwaits. Christopher Witton.
1576.	Edward Smyth.
1597.	William Willain.
1617.	Matthias Braddel.
1617.	William Willain.
1650. (?)	William Curwen.
1685.	William Wilkinson.
1708.	James Watson.
1747.	George Williamson.
1783.	Samuel Revely.
1811.	Joseph Briscoe.
1834.	Salisbury Everard.
1837.	Edward Carus Wilson.
1848.	George Frederick Weston.
1888.	Robert Webster.
1901.	Charles James Gordon.
1905.	Sidney Swann.

NOTES.

Page 206—"Crosby Ravensworth":—For a different account of the name, see these *Transactions*, o.s., vol. ii., p. 205—Article by Canon Weston.

The illustrations to this article are from photographs taken after the Restoration of the Church, or from sketches by the late Canon Weston, copied by Miss G. Gordon.