

ART. V.—*Kirkby Lonsdale Church. A Suggestion.* By  
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THE original Anglian Church of Kirkby Lonsdale was probably built and endowed by the Anglian Lord of the manor who was also ordained as the priest. His descendants appear to have continued both as priests of the church and as Lords of the Manor (*see Transactions, N.S. xxvi, p. 299*).

The destruction of this Anglian Church was probably accomplished during the invasion of William the Lion, King of Scotland, in 1173-1174 as Jordan Fantosme in his metrical chronicle records this invasion to have been of a most cruel and barbarous kind, in which neither man, woman nor child was spared.

Now the monks of St. Mary's Abbey, York, had cast covetous eyes on the rich parsonage of Kirkby Lonsdale from the time of Ivo de Tailbois, baron of Kendal, who died *circa* 1098, to that of his successors the de Lancasters and had persuaded both Ivo de Tailbois and Chetel son of Eltred and his son William to give this church to them by charter; yet the squire-parsons of Kirkby Lonsdale remained still in possession of the church for we have Adam parson of Kirkby Lonsdale attending a chapter of the Lonsdale Deanery, at Lancaster, in 1180-1199.\*. And in 1227, when John de Kirkby parson of the church obtained a grant from King Henry III of a fair and market.

For these men to have been able to resist the grants of their feudal superiors, they must have had a powerful patron and the question is: Who was that patron?

In answer it is submitted that the existing Norman west door of the church gives the clue to the riddle.

\* Farrer, Lancs. Pipe Rolls, p. 361.

This west door, the principal entry into the church, has suffered much from churchwarden's repairs; but is fairly complete in the main. Originally, there was a hood-mould over the arch; but that has been removed and been replaced by a semi-circle of flat stones which, at any rate serve to show what had been there.

The doorway consists of four receding arches which may be described in order from the outer one.

1. In the outer arch only two of the original stones are left, viz.: the two bottom ones on the left hand side when facing the door. These stones are very large and bear on their slanting soffits dragons cut in relief. The lower stone is of a soft nature and has weathered so that the dragon can only be made out in outline; but the second stone is of a hard texture and shows the dragon perfectly. This beast is represented with the head of a crocodile, somewhat short in the snout, and the tail curled. The remainder of this arch has been repaired with much smaller blocks of stone.

2. The second arch is fairly complete and is made of smaller stones. Each stone bears an ornament of a very thin saltire, out of the four corners of which a very stiff kind of flower protrudes consisting of a stem which ends with a curl on each side.

3. The third arch shows on its face and soffit the coat-of-arms called *chequé* viz.: alternate squares raised and sunk.

4. The fourth arch, containing the door, is carved with the chevron moulding and is complete.

It is suggested that the powerful patrons before alluded to and rebuilders of the church were the Earls of Richmond who bore the coat *chequé* and who were also Counts of Brittany and were nearly related to the Kings of England, by which relationship they would have power to protect the de Kirkby parsons from the encroachment of the monks of St. Mary, York, and they alone appear to have

been wealthy enough to be able to afford the expense of such a work.

Of John de Kirkby we hear nothing after the year 1231 when John, parson of the church of Kirkby Lonsdale concords with Richard de Coupland by Fine at York,\* and by 1240 the abbey of St. Mary had attained its aim in the appropriation of this parsonage with its valuable tithes.

The invasion of Robert Bruce, in 1314, would probably be the cause of the second ruin of this church and as at that period it was in the hands of the monks at York they appear to have repaired it, in the mixed manner in which it now appears, by adding some pointed arches to what was left of the Norman church.

It will be noticed that Adam and his son John de Kirkby are styled *parsons* of the church in the official documents which precludes the possibility of the Abbey of St. Mary having acquired the parsonage before 1231; whilst the grant of the Pope in 1240 gives them the right to put in a chaplain and appropriate the parsonage or great-tithes to their own use.

\* B.M. Harl. MS. 236.