EXTERIOR OF LADY CHAPEL – CHESTER CATHEDRAL

ON THE

Lady Chapel in Chester Cathedral.

BY THE REV. CANON BLOMFIELD.*

THE Lady Chapel of the Cathedral of Chester has long been known to antiquarian architects as an interesting and valuable specimen of the Early English style, but it has scarcely ever been examined in detail by them, and to the general observer has presented no features of special interest. The keen and accurate judgment of Rickman discovered the general beauty of its proportions; but the destruction of all the original windows, and other disfigurements of the building, which took place when the side aisles were added in the 15th century, have served so far to obscure its beauties, that it has been supposed to possess little or nothing worthy of observation.

It is now undergoing restoration, as far as circumstances admit of it; and the chromatic decoration of the interior has been entrusted to the care of Mr. Octavius Hudson, whose works at Salisbury and elsewhere have established him as an artist of the first rank in this special department. The beauty and high finish of his work have attracted general admiration, and awakened a new interest in the structure and composition of the Lady Chapel itself. On this account I am induced to think that some remarks upon the history of Lady Chapels in general, and of our own in particular, will not be inappropriate to the purposes of the Chester Archæological Society.

I think it fair to state in my own defence, if the information which I am able to give shall appear to be meagre and imperfect, that, when I entered upon the subject I had hoped to meet with some materials elucidating the origin, uses, and characteristics of Lady Chapels, which I have failed to discover. I have not been able to find that the subject has been specially investigated, or that the history of Lady Chapels, as separate from that of Cathedrals, has ever been traced up to its

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source. I believe it to be a yet unexplored mine of antiquarian lore, and one well worthy of the labour of the ecclesiastical archæologist. But, for myself, having neither leisure nor opportunity to explore it thoroughly, I must be content to give such few and simple elements of the history as I have been able to glean out of the few books within reach.

It is well known that all the European nations, from the earliest introduction of Christianity among them, have directed their most solemn worship towards the East,—a custom which we may clearly trace to the course which the progress of the Gospel took in its advance through Europe, arising from the East, and going on still towards the West, and thus realizing to each nation the Scriptural promise of the "rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing on his wings." The hope, also, of the re-appearing of the Saviour has always been directed towards the East; and as that hope was of a very vivid and energetic character in the earlier times of the Church, it gave further strength to the habit of addressing their devoutest aspirations in that direction. As soon as the acknowledgment of Christianity by the Empire admitted of the erection of public buildings for the celebration of divine worship, the system of Orientation was introduced into them The altar was placed in or near the eastern extremity of every church: all the higher ceremonies of religion, and especially the administration of the Lord's Supper, were celebrated there; and thither the eyes and thoughts of the congregation were directed as to the place of sacredness and honour. For a long period the eastern part of the churches was especially held sacred to the name and honour of Jesus Christ. But when the worship of the Virgin Mary began to assume the prominence which it has ever since held in the Romish Church, and to eclipse that of our Lord himself, it was usually celebrated in the eastern portion of the church; and, as if to give to it more special honour, the recess or chapel at the eastern extremity, adopted from the holy place of the Temple at Jerusalem, was appropriated to it. And a still further eastern end was frequently thrown out from the original structure, where the worship of the Virgin might be specially celebrated; where her statues, and shrines, and offerings might be placed; and to which not only the gaze of the people in the choir, but of the officiating priest himself as he stood before the high altar, might be constantly directed. Thus, according to the quaint remark of Fuller, a gradation of reverence was established —"The porch said to the church-yard, and the church said to the porch, and the chancel said to the church, and the Lady Chapel said to them all: 'Stand further off, I am holier than thou.'"

It sometimes, indeed, happened in particular Cathedrals or churches that there was a Saint connected with the place who was locally held

in higher honour, on account of the miraculous powers attributed to his or her relics, than even the Virgin Mary, and in such cases the eastern chapel was devoted to the honour of that Saint: as that of Becket, at Canterbury; St. Cuthbert, at Durham; St. Ethelreda, at Ely; St. Alban, at St. Albans; and St. Edward, at Westminster Abbey. In such cases we find the Lady Chapel placed elsewhere, as at Canterbury in the north aisle of the nave; at Durham, at the west end, where it is called the Galilee; at Rochester, in the south transept; at Oxford and Bristol, on the north side of the choir. In all the other Cathedrals the Lady Chapel is at the eastern extremity.

In the Cathedral of Chester it is most probable that the eastern extremity of the *Norman* choir was occupied by the chapel and shrine* of St. Werburgh, reaching as far as the eastern arch of the present choir; and, if so, the chapel of the Virgin would be at the extremity of the south aisle of the choir. Although the present building is far more extensive than that of Norman times, we shall probably find the same principles of structure and arrangement still adhered to. We have a niche still remaining, indicating the existence of an image of the Virgin, and a piscina, implying an altar, at the eastern termination of this aisle; and these are probably the vestiges of an earlier arrangement which had appropriated that part of the building to the worship of the Virgin, and they were merely repeated on the new and enlarged choir, though the altar of the Virgin was then removed to a more honourable place.

At the date of the erection of the present Lady Chapel, which I shall endeavour to fix about A.D. 1280, St. Werburgh had begun to decline somewhat in popular estimation; no miracles were ever performed at her shrine, and the taste of the age was for some demonstration of the power of the saints. There happened also to be a burst of devotion at that period towards the Virgin Mary. And therefore, when the Norman Chapel of St. Werburgh was pulled down, and the choir extended, it was natural that a new and more sumptuous chapel should be given to the honour of the Virgin, occupying the same relative position, at the eastern extremity of the choir. The original position of the shrine of St. Werburgh was probably preserved under this new arrangement; but instead of being in a separate chapel to the east of the Choir, it now

* Hanshall, in his *History of Cheshire*, 4to, 1817, page 221, states that the Shrine of St. Werburgh, and the pedestal on which it rested, "formerly stood in the Chapel of the Virgin at the east end of the Choir; and that the pedestal was removed to its present position soon after the Reformation, and converted into the Episcopal Throne." History is silent as to the fate of the Shrine itself; but being of great intrinsic value, it no doubt vanished at the Dissolution, along with other precious relics belonging to the Abbey.

fell within the Choir, which was lengthened so as to include it. In this position it is believed to have remained until the period of the Reformation, when the stone structure containing the shrine was removed and converted into a throne for the Bishop. Thus, without doing disrespect to the patron saint of the Church, the Virgin Mary was honoured with a new Chapel, to which special care and large expenditure of means were devoted.

The history of Lady Chapels, as they are found appended to all the larger Churches of Europe, and forming a part of the interior arrangement of the smaller ones, can hardly be investigated without some reference to the rise and progress of the Mariolatry of the Church of Rome. Such reference would hardly fall within the range of subjects usually treated of by this Society, and would lead us off into questions of theology and ecclesiastical history far too extensive to be dealt with in a brief and popular lecture. I shall therefore content myself with observing that the exaltation of the Virgin Mary as an object of worship took its rise in the fifth century, and advanced by gradual stages of growth until we find in the eleventh century, about the date of the Conquest, that a daily office was instituted in her honour, divine titles began to be ascribed to her, and every imaginable epithet, expressive of adoration and extravagant superstition, was lavished upon her in the writings of the time. It was at this period, just when the first Norman Earl re-founded the Monastery of St. Werburgh, and erected the building of which so many portions still remain, that Lady Chapels began to be added to churches in this kingdom. The worship of the Virgin, which had then assumed a very prominent and elaborate character, required a separate place for the celebration of it. And it is not uninteresting to remember that Anselm, Abbot of Bec and Archbishop of Canterbury, whom Hugh Lupus brought to Chester in order that he might re-model the conventual establishment, was a devoted worshipper of the Virgin Mary, and introduced into England a festival in honour of the Immaculate Conception. He would take care, therefore, that all honour was done to her, and all due provision made for the celebration of her worship in the new conventual church. We have no exact plan of that Norman structure, but from the vestiges of it which were discovered in 1841, it was apparent that there was an eastern apse or chapel, extending beyond the choir itself, which was intended probably as the chapel of the Virgin, though, as we have suggested, used as a site for the shrine of St. Werburgh. All this structure disappeared at the end of the 13th century, to make way for the present buildings, and just at this period the enthusiasm on the subject of the honour due to the Blessed Virgin was at its height.

We will endeavour now to fix, as nearly as we can, the date of the present Lady Chapel. Upon comparing it with the Chapter House, the earliest of our buildings of the Early English period, a marked difference appears in the composition of the mouldings, the form of the window jambs, the size and character of the bosses, bespeaking for the Lady Chapel a more advanced period of the style. We find here, externally, ponderous upright buttresses, chamfered at the angles, and with indications of clustered columns on those of the eastern part of the building. A rich and deep hollow cornice, with very large and massive single dog-tooth ornaments, placed above a foot apart, over-hangs the outer wall, but it is now concealed under the roof of the side aisles. We have, internally, multiplied round-and-hollow mouldings around the windows, interspersed with the dog-tooth mouldings; bold and massive ribs in the groined roof, with very rich and highly-wrought bosses of great size at the intersections of the main ribs. These indications of an advanced style lead us to fix the date of erection at the period of transition from the Early English to the Decorated Order, or about the close of the 13th century. This would bring us to the time when Simon de Albo Monasterio was Abbot of St. Werburgh. He was the most able of the Abbots of Chester, and the most magnificent in his architectural restorations. His accession to the Abbacy is dated as A.D. 1265, and he lived until 1289, in the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I. In the 12th year of Edward I. we have a record of a precept being granted to allow venison from the King's forests of Delamere and Wirral, for the support of the Monks of St Werburgh who were engaged in the building of their church. It is clear that the first building on which they were then engaged was the present Lady Chapel, which bears evidence of the desire of the Abbot to make it worthy of her to whom it was dedicated, and of his own character for munificence. It is not improbable that this Chapel was all that was finished during the life-time of this Abbot, for there is an evident decline of architectural effort and means in the eastern portion of the choir, which was erected immediately after the Chapel. The great arch which unites the choir with the Chapel is remarked upon by Rickman, for the richness of its multiplied rounds and hollows, but this richness is not carried on to the westward. I may here remark, by the way, that this arch seems to have been formed out of the old Norman east window of the original Lady Chapel, as there are plain indications of Norman structure in the wall on each side of it. We venture then to fix the date of the erection at about 1280.

The Lady Chapel, as built by Simon de Albo Monasterio, was without aisles; the outer walls being buttressed and corniced as before described, and with a parapet, of which no portion now remains. There

were three triplet windows on each side, of which the jamb mouldings only remain. The tracery of four of them was entirely removed when the side aisles were built, and that of the other two replaced at the same period by coarse perpendicular tracery. The eastern window was probably of five lights. Traces of its mullions yet remain, running down on the external face of the eastern end. Sufficient vestiges of the composition of the exterior of the Chapel yet remain to admit of its being restored externally, as well as internally, to its original form.

It does not appear that there was any entrance to the Chapel, as it was first built, except through the eastern arch from the choir. We enter it now through the side aisles, one of the windows having been cut away on each side, down to the base of the wall, in order to open this passage. This was probably done at the same time that the high altar was erected in the choir and elevated upon a platform so lofty as wholly to obstruct the passage under the eastern arch. This platform, which buried the columns up to four feet above the base mouldings, was considerably lowered in 1841.

When we enter the Chapel, the first thing perhaps that strikes us is the lowness of the ceiling, being only 32 feet from the floor to the central rib, for it is one characteristic of the buildings of this date that they rise far above the height of the Norman vaulting, and give a great impression of loftiness and lightness. The causes of this defect, if it be one, in this building, seem to have been two:—In the first place, it was necessary to keep the roof at such an elevation as would not interfere with the light of the upper east window of the choir. In the second place, the floor of the Chapel has been raised above its original level, as will be apparent from the line of the stone bench which runs round the exterior; and from the position of the Sedilia at the east end. Of the eastern window, as well of the two which are near it, on the north and south, it is obvious to remark that the tracery is of a late Perpendicular character, while the jamb mouldings are of late Decorated. Thence arises one of the chief defects of the interior of the Chapel,—the want of harmony in its architectural details, striking the eye most forcibly in the east window, the plain perpendicular tracery of which is so manifestly incongruous with the pointed English character of the surrounding features of the building. The liberality of the citizens of Chester has indeed in some measure diminished the unpleasing effect of this contrast, by the introduction of a fine east window of painted glass, designed by Pugin, and executed by Wailes in his best manner. But it is impossible not to regret that the tracery itself was not restored to its proper character before the painted glass was introduced; nor is it unreasonable to hope that this may yet be done, and that the fine window of five lights may yet be reconstructed,

No 1.

BOSS FROM LADY CHAPEL

CHESTER CATHEDRAL

CORRESPONDING SUBJECT

FROM SEAL OF HOLY TRINITY PRIORY

YORK

in order to complete the restoration of the interior of this beautiful Chapel.

The next observable feature of the Chapel is the groined roof, marked especially by its singular and beautiful bosses at the three principal points of intersection of the ribs. These bosses are of unusually large size for so low a building, being of three feet diameter, and descending below the ceiling more than 18 inches. The weight of each boss is nearly two tons. They exhibit great care and skill in design and execution, and are finished with that attention to details which marks the works of that age, though it appears to be almost a waste of labour when employed on objects so far above the eye of the spectator.

The central boss bears a figure of the Virgin and Child,—the eastern one, a symbol of the Trinity,—and the western one a representation of the murder of Thomas a Becket.

It is not improbable that these three subjects, placed in this order from east to west, were designed to embody the three great features of the Christian Church of that age. We have in the first a figure of the Father, seated on His throne, holding between His knees a small crucifix, and the dove rests on the cross, in the attitude of whispering into the Saviour's ear. This was not an uncommon form of representing the Trinity in early times, and forcibly, though rudely, shadows out the elements of Christian truth,—the Father, who is in heaven, holding forth the Son, crucified for us; and the Holy Spirit concurring in the scheme of redemption, and ministering comfort to the Saviour to support Him in His last agony.*

We have in the second boss the representation of the worship of the Virgin Mary,—the prominent characteristic of the Romish Church. The Virgin is represented, according to invariable custom, as seated, and with the infant Saviour in her arms; *she*, and not the Saviour, being the main subject of the work. The Saviour was always thus

* Several examples of this Trinitarian device occur to us; but it will suffice to instance the beautiful contemporary seal of the Holy Trinity Priory at York, the general design of which very much resembles that upon the Lady Chapel boss, except in the position of the dove, which in the York seal appears to be in the act of descending from the Father upon the head of the crucified Saviour. Another and a later example, of the 16th century, is given in the *Journal of the British Archæological Institute*, Vol. VIII., p. 317, from a silver medallion, the work of Heinrich Reitz, of Leipsic, who flourished from A.D. 1553—1586. It ought perhaps to be mentioned, that this curious boss was for more than two centuries hidden from view by an immense block of plaster moulded into the form of a Tudor rose; and that its real character was only discovered by mere accident, while preparing the groined ceiling for chromatic treatment, at the hands of Mr. Octavius Hudson.

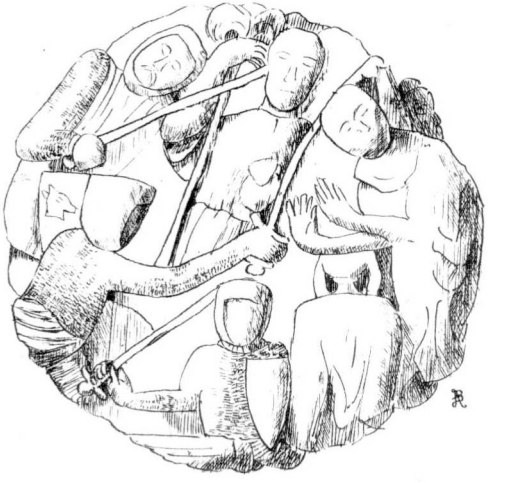
represented, as an infant in His mother's arms, not only to mark her identity, but to embody the idea of her influence and authority over Him and His Church.

We then have in the third boss an indication both of the worship of the Saints and of the supremacy of the Pope, in the martyrdom of Thomas a Becket. And thus we have a complete series of symbolic representations of the doctrine of the Church of Rome.

This third boss deserves some special attention. It had long perplexed the judgment of curious observers, and defied the skill of archæological critics. Being beyond the reach of minute examination, and the arrangement of the figures being somewhat involved, it was not easy to interpret it. It passed with some for the Assumption of the Virgin; with others for the Resurrection of our Lord, because the figures of armed men were apparent in it; but no one guessed at the true subject, until a cast was taken of it and it could be examined upon the ground. There is no question now as to what it represents,—the murder of Thomas a Becket,—and that it gives a somewhat unusual version of that event. There are many representations of the murder —some almost contemporary with it—both in painted glass and in sculptured stone, especially in France and Italy. Not only was Becket himself one of the most distinguished and courageous defenders of the rights and authority of the Romish Church against regal aggression, but his death formed a great crisis in the history of the Papal power, and opened the way to a vast extension of it throughout Europe. On this account the memory of his martyrdom was perpetuated in every possible form. But singularly enough, for an event so notorious, and of which the details were recorded by nearly thirty contemporary writers, the actual representations of it differ very much from one another, and from the real facts of the story. In Mr. Stanley's *Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral*, a careful comparison of all the narratives of the martyrdom is instituted, and an accurate analysis given of the facts which may be deemed authentic. With these facts our boss agrees more closely than most other delineations of the same subject. We have in it, of course, the figures of the four memorable Knights who were the perpetrators of the deed: Reginald Fitzurse, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, and Richard de Brez. These are all represented as wearing chain armour, with the usual steel caps of the Crusaders, and bearing swords and shields. The figures are curiously interwoven, and turned backwards upon the stone, in order to bring them all into the limited space. The shields which they carry have all their several heraldic devices. This is exactly according to fact. The figure of Becket is represented, as usual, kneeling at an altar, with his head bent forward. Beside him stands the monk Grim, bearing

No 2.

No 3.



BOSSES RECENTLY DISCOVERED IN THE LADY CHAPEL,

CHESTER CATHEDRAL.

the crozier or cross. Fitzurse, whose identity is marked by the bears on his shield, holds his sword with both hands, prepared to strike; but it seems to be Richard de Brez, who bears a boar's head on his shield, who strikes the blow, and the blow is represented as falling on the crown of Becket's head, so as to cut off the scalp. This is precisely in accordance with the best authenticated narratives. For though the first blow which was struck was from Tracy, the fatal one was given by Brez or Breton. "The stroke was aimed with such violence," says the narrative of the monk Grim, "that the scalp or crown of the head—which it was remarked was of unusual size—was severed from the skull, and the sword snapped in two on the marble pavement." This is the final act which is represented upon the boss,—the act which completed the martyrdom and set free the soul of Becket, as it was said, from its earthly prison, that it might go to receive its glory in heaven, as one of the chiefest Saints of Christ's Catholic Church.

It is not uninteresting to trace out a reason for the accurate delineation of the facts of this murder upon this boss. In the celebrated translation of the body of the canonized Saint from the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, where it had been at first buried, to the newly-erected Shrine at the east end of the choir of the same church,—which translation was made by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the presence of King Henry III. and all the Prelates of the realm, and cost, in pomp and ceremony, more than a coronation,—the Bishop of Chester of that day* was a principal actor. He was joined with Langton in the Royal Commission, which bears date A.D. 1220. The Bishop would most likely bring back with him from Canterbury to Chester a vivid impression of the solemnity of the scenes, and of the virtues of the martyr. He *did* bring back with him a very precious relic of the Saint, no less than the girdle which he wore at the time of his martyrdom. And this girdle he presented to the Abbey of St. Werburgh, where it was preserved with religious care until the time when all such relics acquired perhaps something less than their intrinsic value, and were destroyed at the Dissolution. With the relic, the Bishop would be likely to bring with him an accurate version of the details of the murder, and this version would be embodied on the sculptured stone of this boss.

I will venture, on taking leave of this subject, to add to my remarks the more valuable commentary of Mr. Stanley,† which will point the moral of my tale:—"We must all remember, that the wretched super-

* William de Cornhill, Bishop of Chester, Lichfield, and Coventry, from 1216 to 1223.

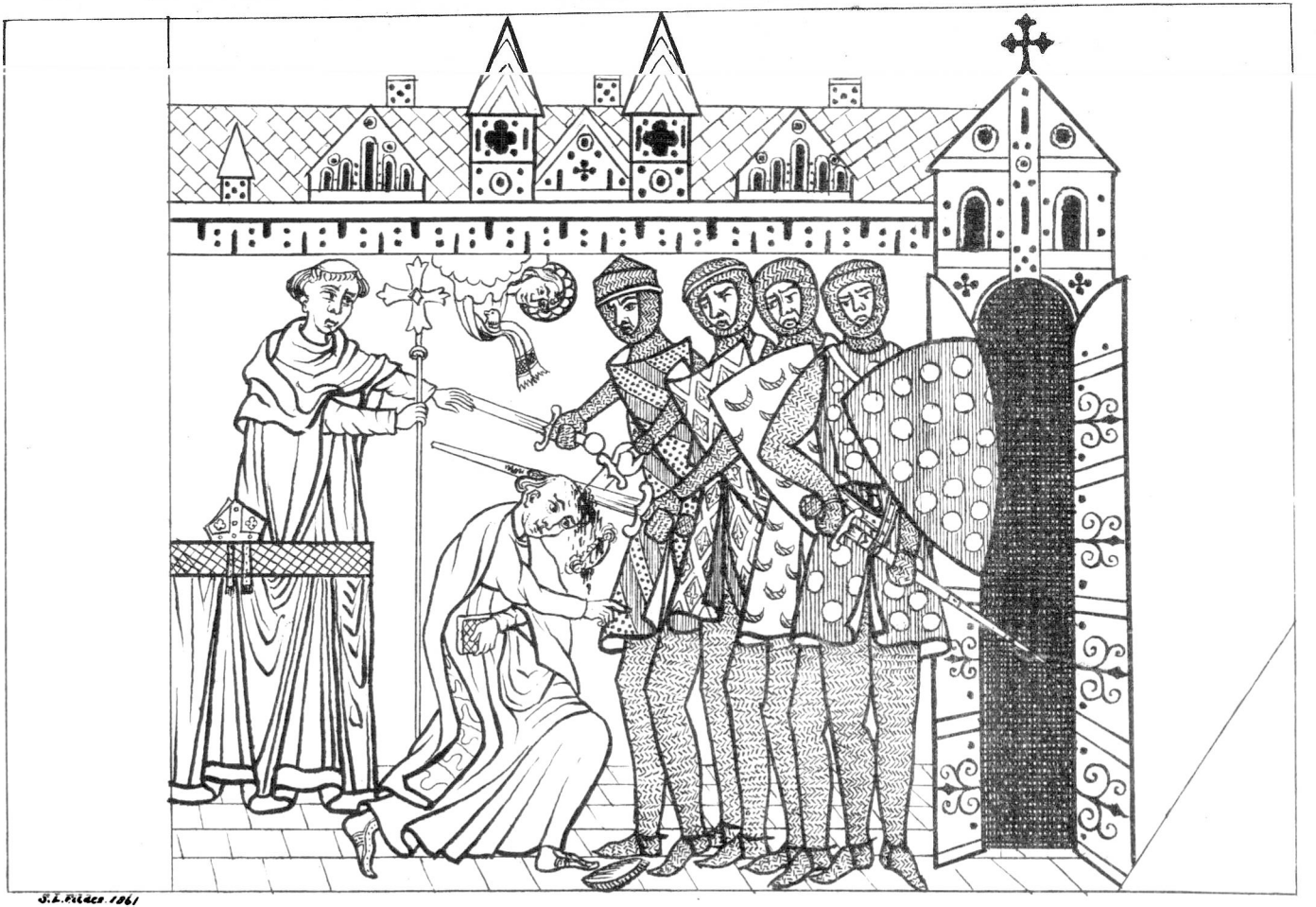
† *Memorials of Canterbury*, p. 110.

stitions which gathered round the Shrine (and name) of Thomas of Canterbury, ended by completely alienating the affections of thinking men from his memory, and rendering the name of Becket a bye-word of reproach, as little proportioned to his real deserts as had been the reckless veneration paid to it by his worshippers in the middle ages."

I pass now from the architectural character of this Lady Chapel to its history. Would that I could say that any materials exist from which I might construct a narrative of the events which have occurred within its walls during the six centuries of its existence. If we were able to look back into the dark period of its early history, and discover the secrets of monastic life which have been transacted here, we might tell some tales which would interest and astonish hearers of these more enlightened times. But it is as well, perhaps, that curiosity cannot be satisfied with the discovery of facts which we should be very likely to misunderstand and misjudge. And we must be content to pass the whole period from the building of the Chapel in or about 1280 to the dissolution of the Monastery, in 1541, as a blank on which no light of history or of records, or even of tradition, has been thrown. The only fact of that period which bears the slightest interest, is the burial of John de Salghall, one of the later Abbots, who died in the year 1452, temp. Henry VI. His burial place is described as being "between two pillars on the south side of the Chapel, under an alabaster stone;" on which we may observe that, as the spot so marked out is in the opening made by the cutting away the wall under the south window to gain an opening into the south aisle, that aisle must have been built previously; and yet it is commonly *said* to have been built in the reign of Henry VII.*

The stone under which the Abbot was buried still remains,—not of alabaster, but Purbeck marble,—and bears the traces of a very rich brass, which must have nearly covered the whole stone. About thirty years ago this stone was removed, and the Abbot's coffin was found under it, in a tolerably perfect state. His body was enveloped in folds of cerecloth; and an illegible writing on parchment lay upon his breast. His gold ring of office, containing a large sapphire, was on the forefinger of his right hand. This was not interred again with the rest of the contents of the coffin, but is now preserved amongst the treasures of the Chapter.

* This southern aisle of the Lady Chapel is said to have been anciently called the *Chapel of St. Erasmus.* Close to the spot above indicated, if not indeed in the same grave, were deposited, according to Webb (*Vale Royal,* Vol. II. p. 26,) the remains of the good Bishop Bridgman, about the year 1656, Other accounts give Kinnersley Church, Shropshire, as the place of his burial.



S.L. Fildes 1861

MARTYRDOM OF ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY, A PAINTING DISCOVERED AT ST JOHN'S CH. WINCHESTER. AUG. 4th 1853.

From the Archaeological Association's Journal. Vol. X.

I may observe that, at the period of the Reformation, when the worship of the Virgin was repudiated by the Church of England, it seems to have been an object with the Reformers to desecrate all the Lady Chapels, with a view to extinguish the yet lingering prejudice in favour of the places where the interest and intercession of the Blessed Virgin had been sought for during so many centuries. They were, for the most part, converted to some secular uses, and employed as schools, or vestries, or consistorial courts. To this latter use the Lady Chapel of our Cathedral was appropriated; and there it was that Bishop Cotes, in the reign of Queen Mary, (A.D. 1555) held the trial of George Marsh for heresy, and condemned him to be burned at the stake,—a sentence which was shortly afterwards carried into execution at Boughton on April 24, 1555.*

We know not how soon after this the Consistory Court was removed from the Lady Chapel to its present position in the south-western tower, but probably at the period of the Restoration. From that date the Chapel has been restored to more befitting uses, and the early Morning Prayers, or Matins, have been always read there.

In Webb's *Itinerary*,† speaking of the Lady Chapel as it appeared in his day (A.D. 1640), he says that it was "adorned with a fair window to the east, of very curious workmanship in glass, where hath been the story of the Blessed Virgin, her descent from the loins of Jesse, in the line of David; though now, through injury of time and weather, the same story is much blemished."

Forty years after that, the mischief which had been commenced "by time and weather," was completed by a tumultuous mob of the citizens of Chester, instigated, as it was supposed, by James Duke of Monmouth, who was at that time in Chester, courting popularity. They broke into the Cathedral, and amongst other outrages committed upon the contents of the sacred building, wholly destroyed the painted glass of the east window of the Lady Chapel. It has been the work of the citizens in a later age, and under a better feeling, to repair the injury done by their forefathers, and once more adorn the east window with "very curious workmanship in glass,"—an example which has been followed by many private individuals, so that we have now all the windows of the Chapel so decorated, at a cost of not less than £1,500.

Permit me to say a few words in conclusion, as to the purpose and character of the works which are now going on in this Chapel. I shall not venture to name the person by whose suggestion they were entered

* A full account of the trial and execution of George Marsh will be found in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Vol. I. p. 1481.

† *Vale Royal of England*, Vol. II. p 33.

upon, and at whose cost the decorative part is to be executed, as it is her desire to be kept in the back ground, and to let all be done to the glory of God. But I may state that the object is to restore the interior of the Chapel to the same state in which we may believe it to have been left by its first builders. From a close and careful examination of the bosses, ribs, window mouldings, and capitals, it is apparent that they had received the decorative colouring usual in buildings of that date; and the remains of it, found under accumulated coats of white-wash, were sufficient to indicate precisely the several tones of colour, so as to enable the artist who examined them to restore exactly the original design. Mr. Octavius Hudson, who has made this branch of ancient art his special study, and has shewn his skill and knowledge of the subject in his admirable chromatic works at Salisbury, has had the restoration of this Chapel entrusted to his care.

I believe that there are some persons who look with no little suspicion upon these attempts to revive the mediæval character of our sacred buildings; thinking it to be symptomatic of Romanizing tendencies; or, at least, likely to foster them; and apprehending that, if we begin by introducing mediæval ornament, we may perhaps end by bringing in mediæval ceremonies.

It is quite true that whitewash has long been the symbol of true Protestantism. Successive coats of it have been laid over the ancient mural decorations of our Churches, in order, as it were, to perpetuate the abhorrence of Popish superstition by washing out the stain of it from the very walls. Everything that would serve to please the eye, and indulge the sentiment; everything that even tended to express a desire to glorify the House of God, and to impress the worshippers in it with reverential feelings, has been excluded, as if it were idolatrous. We have all been educated in an atmosphere of ecclesiastical whitewash. People's eyes have been so habituated to it, as the one established Church pigment, that they are with difficulty brought to think anything else orthodox or appropriate.

But, as to the *principle* of colouring, as a means of giving a pleasing and reverent character to the interior of our Churches, surely we need not confound the idea of simplicity in *the worship* of God, with that of plainness in *the building*. To the former we are happily restricted, as well by our established Ritual, as by our common sense of what is true and edifying. To the latter we are not limited by any rule, legal or Scriptural. Admitting that when we introduce fanciful varieties of costume, and gesture, and embellishment into the offices of Divine worship, we are lowering the spirit and the meaning of it, it by no means follows that the same objection applies to the rich and chromatic ornamentation of the edifice itself. In that we are obviously doing

honour to Him whose name it bears, and shewing a desire to give Him the best we have. "The King's daughter is all glorious within," may be no less applicable, though in a secondary sense, to the *material* than to the *spiritual* Church of Christ. All natural products are to be employed "to beautify the place of my sanctuary," under the Christian dispensation no less than under the Jewish; "and I will make the place of my feet glorious," (Isaiah lx. 13). We do not in these days question the propriety of reviving the highly elaborate ecclesiastical architecture of the middle ages, in order to give a rich and grand effect to our Houses of God. I do not see the difference between doing that, and enriching them with appropriate colouring, to relieve the monotony of effect. One is as much calculated as the other to give a richer and more impressive tone to what presents itself to the senses of the worshipper. There is no more symbolism in one than in the other; no more symptom of a return to mediæval superstition.

Viewing the question simply in an artistic or archæological point of view, it may be very well doubted whether we can form a correct estimate of the real beauty and effect of mediæval architecture without restoring the colouring which originally formed a part of it. *We* do not see it as they who built the Churches saw it. If we trust to them for a correct taste in structural arrangement, why not trust them also in the point of colour? What would those mediæval artists feel, if brought back to see the now colourless walls and ceilings of their richly ornamented structures? What would Simon de Albo Monasterio say to the state of our Lady Chapel? What would Michael Angelo, or any person of taste, say if he could see the interior of St. Peter's all covered with whitewash?

Whatever caution may be required in the revival of this ancient style of decoration,—and, beyond all question, great judgment and skill are needed to revive the ancient tone of colouring, so that it may serve to please the eye without offending the sense of propriety,—yet I think the advancing intelligence and taste of the age will be found to sanction the attempt. The few experiments which have lately been made in this art in Ely Cathedral and Salisbury Chapter House, have been eminently successful, and have brought out effects in the building unobserved before. It is probable that this will be also the effect here. And I will venture to add the expression of a hope that the day will come when the same style of decoration may be extended, in some measure, to the groined roof of the Choir. That monotonous mass of wood and plaster would be awakened into some life and beauty by a few touches of gold and colour, and it would be relieved from the reproach, now sometimes cast upon it, of being but a very poor attempt to represent stone.

To revert for a moment to the Lady Chapel. I have already complained of the incongruous character of the tracery of the east window, as disturbing the harmonious effect of the interior. A project is now on foot for replacing it by a five-light Early English window, from a design by Mr. Scott. It were much to be wished that the benevolence of individuals, interested in Church restoration, could be applied to assist the Dean and Chapter in restoring the *exterior* of this Chapel. It is now in a dilapidated, if not a dangerous condition; and as it is the first part of the building which presents itself to the eye of an observer on the City Walls, it might be made as rich and pleasing in architectural effect, as it is now poor and offensive. The spirit of the citizens and of the county has been once called forth to aid the work of restoration. May it be again awakened to promote the honour of Almighty God, by beautifying this place of His sanctuary! *

* While these pages are passing through the press (November, 1859,) the alterations and improvements suggested in the above concluding paragraph are being actually carried out, under the auspices of the Dean and Chapter. The late east window of stained glass has, with the tracery, been carefully removed, and will be placed in one of the north windows of the Lady Chapel, while a new east window of five lights has been erected in its stead, and will in due time be adorned with another subject in stained glass.