

his name, Gothic Architecture having worked itself free from the trammels of the Norman, and the somewhat stiff though still elegant characteristics of the Early English, attained a degree of beauty and splendour unrivalled either before or since.

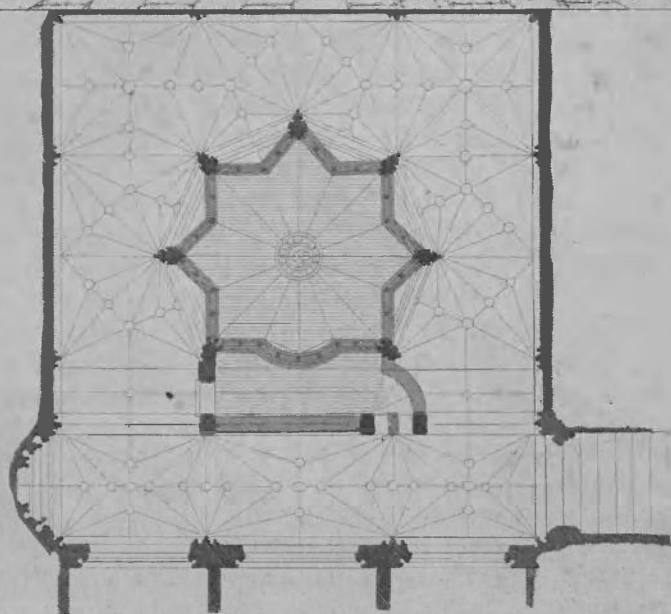
After existing for rather more than two hundred years, the Friery, in common with the possessions of the monks of this place, fell in the general wreck of this kind of property under Henry VIII., to whom, according to the deed of surrender, bearing the date of September 13th, 1539, the friers gave up the house with all its advantages, and finally relinquished their order.

ST. WINEFREDE'S WELL AT HOLYWELL, FLINTSHIRE.

ST. WINEFREDE was a noble British virgin, who suffered martyrdom in the seventh century. Her head was smitten off by a Welsh Tarquin, named Caradoc, who instantly met with his reward in being swallowed up by the earth. The lady's head bounded down the hill on which the catastrophe occurred, and, stopping near the church, a copious spring of water burst from the place where it rested. Her blood sprinkled the stones ineffaceably, and a fragrant odour was imparted to the moss growing on the spot. All these, however, are but the more trifling circumstances of the miracle. A holy man, one St. Benno, took up the head and fitted it so cleverly on the body, that the parts re-united, and St. Winefrede survived this remarkable adventure fifteen years.

This veracious history—for the hill, the fountain, the blood and the moss, remain as triumphant evidences of its truth—has been commemorated by a most elegant Gothic structure in the Perpendicular style, the date of which may be placed on heraldic evidence ante 1495.

The building inclosing the well is erected against the side of the hill from which the water issues, and forms a crypt under a small chapel contiguous to the parish church, and on a level with it, the entrance to the well being by a descent of about



PLAN OF ST WENEYFRID'S WELL. N. WALES.

twenty steps from the street. The well itself is a star-shaped basin, ten feet in diameter, canopied by a most graceful *stellar* vault, and originally inclosed by stone traceried screens, filling up the spaces between the supports. Round the basin is an ambulatory, similarly vaulted. These arrangements, and the form and decoration of the building, are better explained by the engravings.

The water rises from a bed of shingle with great impetuosity. From the main basin it flows over into a smaller one in front, to which access is obtained by steps on both sides, for the purpose of dipping out the water, and from thence into a large reservoir outside the building. From the latter the water passes by a sluice into the service of a paper mill, and, after putting in motion the machinery of several manufactories, falls into the Dee at a distance of about nine furlongs from its source.

The neglected state of this beautiful edifice having forced itself upon the notice of the inhabitants of Holywell, a subscription was entered into, and the proceeds, about £400, have been expended in disengaging the chapel from some unsightly erections built against it, in restoring the windows, and in some general repairs necessary to maintain it for the purpose of a school-room, to which it is now put; but nothing has been expended on the crypt, which is, nevertheless, independently of the mutilation of the screens and decorations, in a state to excite the apprehension of all lovers of antiquity. Nor are the gentlemen to whom the expenditure of the fund has been entrusted open to blame on this account. The difficulties of effecting any substantial repair, when it is most likely to be wanted, are great and peculiar, so much so, that it is not easy even to speak with certainty on the actual condition of the substructure.

The water, as already stated, rises with great force from a bed of shingle, on which the inclosure of the basin and the supports of the vaulting have been founded without any excavation; and in order to prevent the effects of the shingle washing away, the overflow of the basin is raised about four feet (the depth is unequal) from the bottom, and the sluices of the mill raise the surface of the water about two feet higher. This depth of water, in violent agitation, even when the sluices are opened, and the water above the overflow let off, effectually prevents the possibility of *seeing* the bottom of

the basin, but by sending workmen into the water, it was ascertained that the shingle has disappeared from under the foundations of the walls of the basin, in some places nearly as far as the men could thrust in their arms, and in one instance at least, a squared stone has given way. This disappearance of the foundation, notwithstanding the judicious precaution originally taken to secure it, might appear a mystery, but that the well, in the days of ignorance, was frequented by bathers, who, it is believed, pulled out the pebbles, and carried them away as memorials of the miraculous properties of the water. In the original state of the building, the main basin was protected by the screens, but these have been broken down long enough to allow for the gradual abstraction of the bottom in this manner and to this extent.

Whatever may be the cause, such is the effect, and under such circumstances this beautiful building cannot but be considered in a state of peril, which calls at least for further examination, although as yet the arches do not exhibit any marks of settlement. It is possible that the contingency of the shingle becoming loosened, or washing from under the wall, may have been provided for. There is evidently a great mass of masonry in the substructions, and it is quite consistent with what is known of the constructive skill of the architects of the thirteenth century, when they thought it worth while to exert it, to suppose that stones of such large size may have been laid down, that they may continue to support the superstructure in the manner of corbels, but it is not easy either to ascertain the fact, or to apply the operation of *underpinning*, should it prove to be requisite. To obtain access to the foundations, it would be necessary to empty the basin, and discharge the water as it rises; and in order to effect this, the front of the basin must be taken down, and a channel as deep as the bottom of the basin cut through the outer reservoir, depriving the mill of its moving power as long as the repairs might be in hand. With so formidable an undertaking to contend with, it is cause less of surprise than of regret that the late repairs should have been restricted to the more accessible portions of the building, and that there should be no measures in prospect for its permanent security.