

CARTMEL PRIORY CHURCH, LANCASHIRE.



1.—Cartmel Priory Church, Lancashire, North-East View. From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Petit, F.S.A.

## The Archaeological Journal.

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### CARTMEL PRIORY CHURCH, LANCASHIRE.

By the late Rev. J. L. PETIT, M.A., F.S.A.

THE foundation of Cartmel or Kertmele Priory belongs to a period when the Norman style, which flourished in its purity half a century previously, was not yet extinct, but the rudiments of the succeeding Early English, or Early Pointed style, showed themselves very clearly. The priory, for canons regular of S. Augustin, was, according to Dugdale, founded by William Marshall the elder, Earl of Pembroke, in the year of our Lord 1188. I do not know if we can ascertain anything connected with the building beyond this fact, from records of the period. Its history is contained in its architectural character, which, throughout a great part of the structure, corresponds with the above date. Nearly the whole, however, of the nave and several important insertions belong to a later period of the Gothic style. The church has undergone an admirable restoration by Mr. Paley, which, unlike many restorations, assists instead of confusing or misleading the antiquary, bringing, as it does, to light features which had been hidden, with the help of no more additional work than was demanded by necessary repair. There is a very short account of the church at the end of Whitaker's History of the original Parish of Whalley; and a more detailed architectural notice by Mr. F. A. Paley, in the Guide to Grange; which latter, indeed, renders my present task almost unnecessary.

The structure, in its present condition, consists of a choir with aisles, transepts of a considerable length, a low central tower surmounted by a square lantern set upon it diagonally, and a nave with aisles, of a length not much exceeding the

choir ; indeed the whole plan does not differ much from the Greek cross. The whole length internally is about 157 feet ; that of the transepts, with the intersection, also internally, is about 107 feet. Whether the church was ever intended to follow the type of Benedictine and Cistercian abbeys of the period may be questioned ; in that case the nave would have been considerably longer, as at Tewkesbury, Buildwas, Romsey, and in most of the larger abbeys in Ireland. The eastern part, including the tower and transepts, presents in some degree the character of these. The first bay of the nave, or at least a part of it, must have been completed, as we infer from the doors which open into the aisles immediately adjoining the transepts, as also from the completion of the tower piers ; but it is not impossible that the work may have stopped here, enough having been built for monastic purposes, and not resumed till a larger parochial church was required.

It may be observed, that the choir has a large south aisle of the period when the flowing Decorated or curvilinear Gothic prevailed ; consequently much later than the choir and transepts, and much earlier than the nave. This was called the town choir, and was used as the parish church for a considerable time. It would, I think, hardly have been built for such a purpose, had a nave of sufficient size been in existence, which might have been so used, as in Sherborn Minster, Wymondham in Norfolk, and many other conventual or collegiate churches. I need not, however, remark, that this is a mere conjecture, which would be overthrown at once by the discovery of 12th century work westward of the part in question. Part of the north wall is slightly thickened, though not to its whole height. Such a structure as the choir and transepts must have been the work of several years ; enough to have witnessed, at that particular time, much change of style. And we know that styles are not generally changed as it were in a moment, but, at the time of their transition, present many perplexing alternations. Sometimes we see the old style lingering on beyond the time at which we should have expected its utter disappearance ; while, in the same building, characteristics of the new style develop themselves very early, and in a manner precede their own recognized date. The tower piers of Cartmel Church might be pronounced almost pure,

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II.—The Choir and Nave, view from the East end.

From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Petit, F.S.A.

though late, Norman ; the arches which spring from them are pointed, and by no means obtusely ; and, though simple in their moulding, have the character of rather advanced work. There seems, however, no reason to suppose they are later, by a greater interval than that necessary for the settlement of the substructure. In these piers, the square abacus is used in the capital, and also in the triforium of the choir, which consists of a pointed arcade on shafts. I do not know to what extent it has been necessary to reconstruct this arcade, which before its restoration was built up in the wall ; but I have no doubt that its important features have been carefully retained. The arches between the choir and its aisles are round, and might be called either late Norman, or transitional. It is likely that they are among the earliest parts of the structure. The aisles, as they appear at present, are of the full length of the choir, extending to the east end, but originally they were shorter by a bay, the south aisle having been reconstructed in the 14th century and enlarged in both directions, so as to form a sufficient parish church, as we have already observed, and the north aisle being lengthened by the addition of a vestry of much later date.

The eastern compartment of the choir, therefore, stood clear of any aisle, as we often see in later parish churches, where the chancel has an aisle or chapel on each side, not extending in length to the east end. I do not think that this arrangement is quite so common in large conventual buildings as the simple choir connected with the eastern aisle of the transept, or divided from its recessed chapels by an unpierced wall ; or else an aisle carried the full length of the choir, or even round the east end, as at Sherborne Minster, Romsey, and Abbey Dore, in Herefordshire. It would not, however, be difficult to find examples of the arrangement which existed at Cartmel. Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford, is an instance, and, if I remember, Lanercost Abbey church has something of the same plan.

The side windows in what was the clear part of the choir still remain, though blocked up and mutilated. They are simple lancets, with a string or torus carried continuously round the edge of the jamb. Such would, I think, be seen in continental windows up to a late period ; and there is no reason why such windows should not be called good Early

English. The sedilia, now mutilated to give room to a fine decorated monument, must have been inserted. They appear to belong to some part of the 13th century, nearer its end than its beginning. I was shown the remains of a niche, perhaps a piscina, which has very recently been uncovered ; it is clearly of a transitional or very Early English character, having a sort of nail-head ornament, which appears in the adjacent pier arches.

I have said that it is likely the piers and arches of the choir are among the earliest parts of the structure ; but I believe this is more to be inferred from the general usage of church builders, who naturally began with the choir, as the most essential part of the church, than from their architectural character. The use of the round arch says positively nothing. Many good early English buildings in the north of England have occasional round arches. They occur in parts of Beverley Minster, which has nothing approaching to Norman or transitional about it. During the transitional period the round and pointed arches were evidently used indiscriminately, and very often, as if from a spirit of contradiction ; the details of the pointed arch are more purely Norman, while those of the round arch have mouldings and ornaments much resembling those of an advanced Gothic. In the pointed arch between the north transept and the choir aisle we find the chevron or zigzag, not exactly used in the same manner as in pure Norman work, but still with an evident intention of retaining the old forms. The choir arches have an elaborate series of mouldings and enrichments in those orders which face towards the choir itself, though the orders towards the aisle are very plain. The capitals exhibit some of those peculiar volutes that Mr. Sharpe pointed out to us at Selby, during the meeting at Hull, as sure marks of transitional work ; and there is a bold but somewhat fragile ornament which seems to have succeeded the chevron, and is not found at either an earlier or a later period than the transitional. It consists of two slender cylinders joined at a very acute angle, and standing free. We see it in Lichfield Cathedral in a pointed arch between the north transept and the choir aisle. Other ornaments in these round arches indicate rather an advance than a falling back on the old style. The abacus, instead of being square, is chamfered off at the angles. The bases are nearly pure Early English, though resting on a rect-



IV. — Pier, East end of North Choir Aisle.

From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Petit, F.S.A.



angular plinth. The claw or leaf resting upon the angles of the square plinth, which is almost universal in early transitional pier bases, does not appear, and the Early English water-moulding, namely, that peculiar hollow which is noticed by Rickman as the only Gothic moulding that does not throw off the water, is perfectly worked out in the tower piers as well as those of the choir.

The rule laid down by Mr. Sharpe that the pointed form was used for arches of construction, while the semicircular form was retained in arches of decoration, applies, I should say, to the earlier and severer, rather than the later stages of the transition. In Buildwas Abbey, perhaps one of the earliest as well as purest specimens, the rule, so far as we can judge from the present remains, seems to have been observed most strictly. The same may be said of Kirkstall, where the constructive arches are still more decidedly pointed than at Buildwas; but, if I remember, the original work contains no pointed doors or windows, and their Norman characteristics are well preserved. The round constructive arches at Selby are, as Mr. Sharpe has observed, accounted for by the expediency of adaptation; but there the style was sufficiently advanced to show itself in a rich display of shafted lancet windows. Here, above the round constructive arches of the choir, we have a Decorated pointed arcade, namely, the triforium, laid open in the late excellent restoration. In this the capitals of the shafts retain the square abacus, as does the external clerestory arcade of Romsey church.

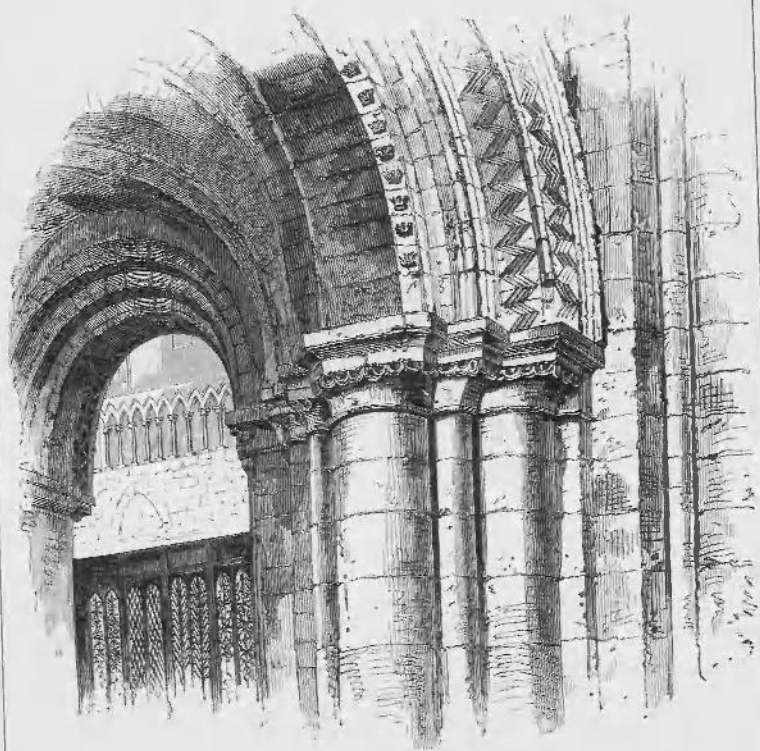
The insertions of a later period make it difficult to ascertain to what extent the round arch was used in windows. There are some remains of round arches in the south transept, but apparently the pointed work in the transepts is quite as early, perhaps earlier, than the round. In the front of the north transept are two very well proportioned lancet windows (now blocked up), with shafts having the square abacus. But one of these windows is broken up by the insertion of a round-headed opening of manifestly later date, which it is not easy to explain or account for. Its mouldings are numerous and elaborate, and the abacus from which they spring, instead of being square, is adapted to their arrangement. The south aisle of the nave, close to the transept, has a fine enriched round-headed door, but with a decidedly early English arrangement of shafts.



The elevation of the transepts is so completely Norman in its character, that I am inclined to think it is almost wholly unaltered, in its general outline, except by the embattled parapet. This will be seen, if we compare it with Romsey Church, whose transepts are purely Norman. I cannot perceive much difference between the masonry above and below the string on which the upper stage rests, looking at the building externally, but internally the stones resting on the string are rather larger than those immediately below; but this is perhaps no more than might be expected where a new level is obtained by a bonding course. The windows in the upper story are perfectly plain, with square heads. The first time I ever saw this church, which is now a great many years ago, it struck me that these same square-headed windows had a decided air of originality. I may have been deceived, but I have seen nothing as yet to convince me that I was. Those in the north transept are of arched construction, and very slightly segmental. One at least of those in the south transept has a regular lintel, and is perfectly fiat. The north transept is divided by a vertical buttress, as at Romsey. It probably had lancet windows above those now remaining. The south transept has not the central buttress. The introduction of Perpendicular work makes it difficult to trace the probable design. In the east side of the north transept is a very depressed arch, with banded shafts and square abacus. It now contains a perpendicular window. I think there must formerly have been a couplet.

The lower part of the central tower probably belongs to the twelfth century, or a sufficiently early part of the thirteenth to be considered as appertaining to the first design. It is very low and massive, and without ornament, but evidently of very strong construction, with thick walls. Its embattled parapet is a late addition. The windows are small square-headed openings. This tower may have formed a lantern to the interior, but there is no enrichment to make us sure that it ever did so. It is indeed almost impossible to pronounce, in the earlier portions of this church, what belongs to the original design, where that design has been altered or modified in the course of erection, where work has been destroyed and replaced at a very early period for the sake of conformity with the style as it gradually deve-

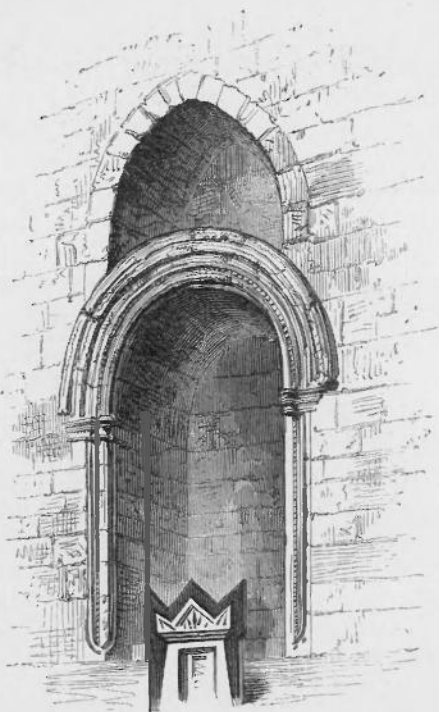
CARTMEL PRIORY CHURCH, LANCASHIRE.



V.—Arch between the Transept and the Choir Aisle.

From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Pettit, F.S.A.

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VIII.—Circular arched recess and pointed Arch in the North Transept.

From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Petit, F.S.A.

loped, and even where alterations have been made of a much later date.

The capricious employment of the round and pointed arch is one of the remarkable features of this church. If we stand in the area of the tower and look westward so as to obtain an elevation of the west wall, internally, of the north and south transepts, we see near the southern extremity a round-headed window, which corresponds in position with a pointed window in the north transept. Again, over the arch into the south aisle of the nave is a pointed arch, which is answered by a round arch over the arch into the north aisle. A round arch in the eastern side of the north transept corresponds with a pointed arch in a similar position in the south transept. All these must be of much the same date; on any other supposition it would be impossible to trace the progress of the building. The engaged pier, from which the easternmost choir arch springs, presents a peculiarity, namely, a small shaft connected with the pier by a concave moulding, the section of which is a flowing curve having a point of contrary flexure. I was not aware that such were found in work of a date much earlier than that of the Decorated style, the mouldings of piers up to that time being curves of one continuous curvature, any of an opposite being separated by a break instead of falling in with a contrary flexure. I take it that the exceptions to this rule are rare, but this must be one, as the capital is very decidedly transitional. Mr. Sharpe informs me that he is acquainted with several instances, but where they occur I cannot help thinking that they show an advancement of style. It is a feature that might easily escape notice from a cursory observer, as within the hollow of the moulding we should not detect at first whether the line was one having a contrary flexure, or one consisting of two continuous curves separated by a break.

There is another peculiarity to which I would more especially direct attention, as it appears to raise a doubt whether a fully developed nave ever existed or was even ever designed. You are well aware that when ornament was sparingly used it was generally so arranged as to be seen in the greatest quantity by the spectator entering by the west door and looking eastward, that is, the faces looking to the westward were generally more enriched than the

eastern ones ; and the transept arches, and all running longitudinally from east to west, were more enriched on the faces presented to the central area, whether of nave, tower area, or choir, than of those turned away from them, so as to be seen in perspective by the spectator looking towards the east end of the church. Now, in the present case, the ornament is so arranged as to be in sight of the spectator standing within the tower area and looking either east or west. The ornaments on the arches between the transepts and the choir aisles are on the western faces, the eastern ones having only three plain chamfered orders, without any label or hood-mould. The choir arches are also enriched on the faces looking towards the choir, those facing the aisles having three plain chamfered orders without label. The north and south tower arches are also enriched with mouldings in the direction of the central area, but in the other direction have the three plain chamfered orders. Thus much is in accordance with the usual rule ; but when we look to the western sides of the tower and transepts, we find the arrangement reversed. The arches into the nave aisles have their eastern faces enriched, while the western ones have only the three simple chamfered orders, and the great tower arch, though it has mouldings on its west face, is rather richer on its eastern face, so that this arch also shows a greater amount of ornament to the spectator in the tower area looking westward, than to any one looking eastward from the nave. The proof is, I think, presumptive, though not altogether conclusive against the existence or even the intention of a nave extending beyond a single bay. The next portion, in point of date, is the south aisle of the choir ; and this is a beautiful specimen of the late Decorated style, when the geometrical tracery, which in England lasted a very short time, had given way to the flowing or curvilinear. The windows are of good composition, and exhibit much variety ; and the Harrington monument, which occupies an opening made for the purpose in the wall between the choir and the easternmost bay of the aisle, is a work of great richness and beauty. It has two recumbent figures surrounded by a range of smaller figures, now mutilated ; and it occupies a rich shrine or chapel divided into two compartments by a shaft and arches in each face of the wall.

The Perpendicular or rectilinear work that appears in the

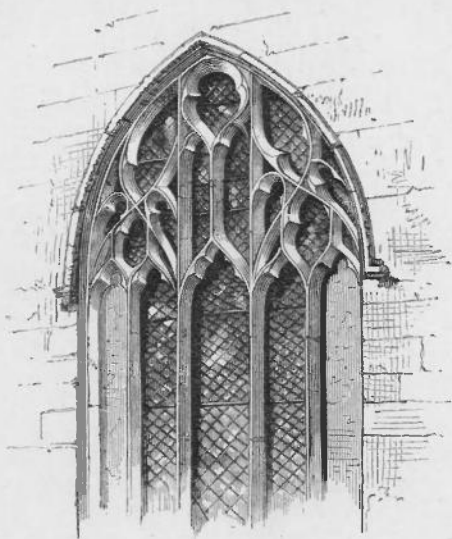
CARTMEL PRIORY CHURCH, LANCASHIRE.



VI.—Arch in the North Transept, looking East.

From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Petit, F.S.A.

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VII.—Window in the South Aisle of the Choir.

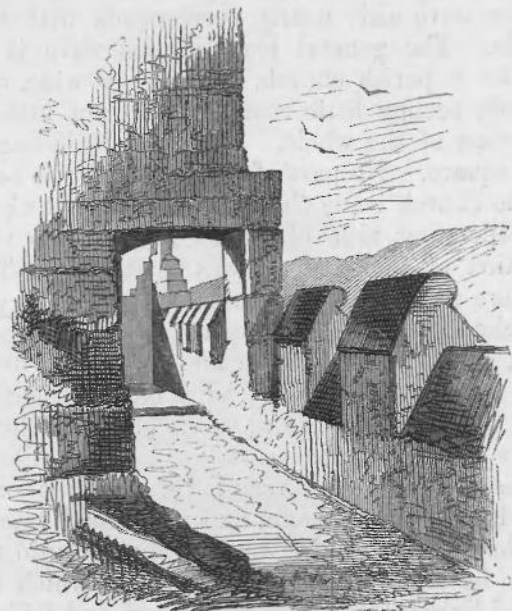
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building is mostly of a late character, belonging, I should say, to the latter half of the fifteenth century, or even to the sixteenth. The whole of the nave is of this style. As we have observed, it is rather problematical whether any Norman or transitional nave preceded it; but both the line of the piers and that of the outer walls correspond with those which the original building would have presented, if we are to judge from the portions adjoining the transepts. The north wall of the nave aisle nearly corresponds with that of the choir aisle. The general plan of this nave is admirably adapted for a parish church, being very wide, and having piers which occupy little room and do not interfere much with the view of the whole. The plan, including the aisles, is nearly square. No part of it is vaulted, the only vaulted part of the church being the north aisle of the choir, though the corresponding aisle of the choir, and also the aisles of such portion of the nave as was built in the Transitional period, were vaulted. The timber roofs are very plain, the only enriched part being the square of the intersection. The west end, though very simple and devoid of ornament, is rather a fine composition, perhaps on that account. The depth of the buttresses, and a small bell-niche over the gable, give it much character.

The east window is a very large and fine one of nine lights, divided by a transom, and with good tracery in the head. The breadth of the whole is divided into three compartments by mullions of the first order, which branch off into curved lines intersecting each other, and falling into the archivolt. I think that these branches are of the full depth of the principal mullions, but not equally thick. It is not always easy to detect these variations. These compartments are again subdivided into three lights by mullions of an inferior order; while those in the head are still slighter than the last. Though there may be no particular merit in the composition or details of this window, still its great size, its excellent proportions, and its richness, resulting from the great number of its subdivisions, give it a grandeur and beauty which we may not recognize at first sight in windows of a much more artistic design. There are remains of good painted glass in the east window, which are preserved *in situ*. I should have remarked, that there are also remains of Decorated glass in the south aisle of the choir. Both the

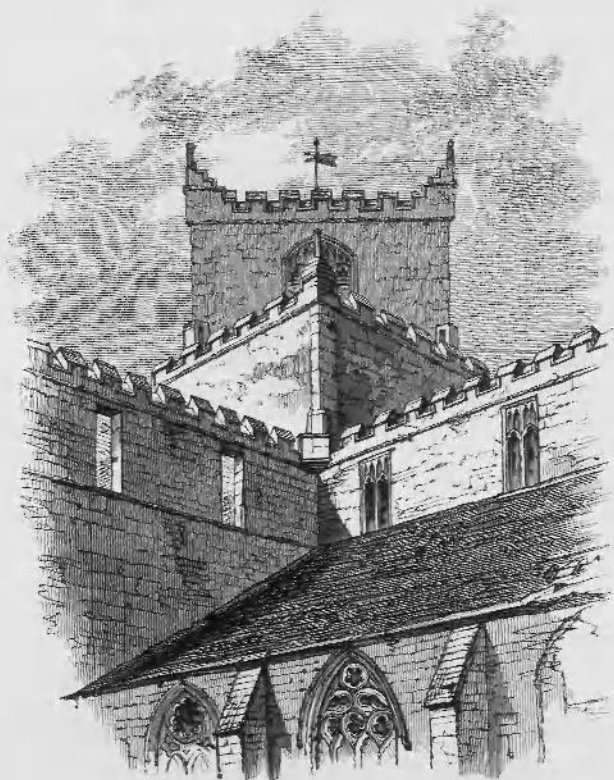
transept fronts have good Perpendicular windows, though with no very peculiar features; the same may be said of those inserted in the north aisle of the choir, which are of a more vigorous character. The clerestory windows have square heads, and have mostly two foliated lights, in some cases subdivided into tracery at the top. There is some excellent late wood work in the choir.



IX.—Embattled Parapet; tower of Cartmel Priory Church.

But the principal Perpendicular feature—one which distinguishes this church, I suppose, from every other in the kingdom, is the upper stage of the tower. This is a low square tower, set diagonally upon its more massive substructure; its angles resting upon the central point of each side. To give a free passage round, within the parapet of the lower tower, the angle of the upper tower is supported by a shaft or pier, apparently insufficient for the weight above, leaving a square-headed door, or opening. I suppose that the angles of this tower are supported more by their cohesion with the mass than by these very slight pillars; still the construction appears somewhat audacious. The effect of this structure being so

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III.—The Central Tower.

From a drawing by the late Rev. John L. Petit, F.S.A.

uncommon, it will be judged differently, according to the taste of the spectator. For my own part, I think it extremely pleasing and satisfactory, and cannot see how the proportions could have been improved. I am not acquainted with any similar specimen in England. I have seen one in France, namely, at Rheims, but its effect is not nearly so fine. I did not examine its construction. On the whole, the church that we have been considering deserves very careful attention, as being a good and somewhat perplexing example of Gothic architecture in its most interesting phase, as exhibiting much grandeur in its composition, and as presenting an outline that is altogether unique. And every lover of mediæval art ought to feel thankful to the architect to whom we are indebted for so careful and successful a restoration.

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The Central Committee desire to record the special tribute of grateful remembrance of the constant generosity evinced by the deeply regretted Author of the foregoing memoir. By his kindness, during the last quarter of a century, the Journal of the Institute has, on many occasions, been enriched. The Members of the Society will not fail to recall with gratification the numerous illustrations presented from time to time by Mr. Petit,—reproductions of the tasteful works of his spirited pencil. These artistic embellishments, it may be remembered, commenced in the first volume of this Journal; they have been continued without intermission in that work, and also in the Annual Transactions of the Institute.

The Committee gladly avail themselves also of the occasion to express their high sense of the kindly consideration of his sisters and executors, who have now given effect to the liberal intentions of their lamented Friend, in regard to this, the latest mark of his cordial encouragement of the Institute.