



Ickfield Cathedral as it appeared in 1643 after the battery by the Roundheads.
 (from a drawing by Sir William Dugdale in the Bodleian Library.) *Astmore MS. No 1521.*

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CLOSE AND ITS SIEGES.

By JOHN HEWITT.

THOSE who are familiar with the history of the Parliamentary wars will remember that the Royalists, having garrisoned the Cathedral Close of Lichfield, sustained a siege there by Lord Brooke, and that the minster was sorely battered, the central spire being beaten down to its base. A view taken at the time by Sir William Dugdale has long slept among the manuscripts of the Ashmolean Collection, now repositied in the Bodleian Library. The drawing has been constantly named by the local historians, but never engraved. We are therefore very glad to be able, by the kind permission of the custodians of the Bodleian, to present a copy of this sketch (drawn line for line) in the *Archaeological Journal*. We could indeed have wished that the sketch had been more artistic, but let us be thankful for what we have. The chief point to note is the great central spire completely demolished. Much further demolition took place in other parts, which our view is too small to define.

In front of the Close walls, on the south side, was (and is) a pool ; but vaguely indicated in Dugdale's sketch ; though well laid down in Snape's Plan of Lichfield in 1781. In this plan it will be seen that the Close precincts do not extend to the pool bank, so that it may be doubted if the pool ever formed a moat to the fortress. By a moat we understand a water-barrier actually impinging on the curtain-wall : an interspace of dry land seems to involve danger rather than promote security. It is not in evidence where the battery was placed which effected the demolition of the central spire, but the spot where it fell is well authenticated, for to this day the building shattered by its ruin remains in a state sufficiently indicating the effects of the disaster. This building adjoins the Library ; and is now used as a practice-room for the Choir. Here may be seen broken vaulting, shattered

arches, damaged windows, battered walls: a few balks of timber and a little rough masonry are all that have been supplied as restoration, and the ruined room thus becomes a valuable historic memorial of a perilous time. That central spire is said to have been restored by Sir Christopher Wren, but I know no good authority for this belief. Whoever rebuilt it, it is of most beautiful proportion, and though less ornate than the western spires, composes very satisfactorily with them in every aspect.

A curious notice of the Cathedral in 1634 (nine years before Lord Brooke sat down before it) is contained in a Lansdowne MS., No. 213, cited in Brayley's "Graphic and Historical Illustrator." It is called "A Relation of a Short Survey of 26 Counties, by a Captaine, a Lieutenant and an Ancient (Ensign) of the Military Company in Norwich." The tourists approached Lichfield from the north:—

"Thither were we quickly brought to the lilly white Swan,¹ in that sweet little City, and no sooner were we lighted but the Cathedrall knell call'd us away to prayers: there we entred a stately neat Fabricke, the Organs and voyces were deep and sweet, their Anthems we were much delighted with, and of the voyces, 2 Trebles, 2 Counter-tenors, and 2 Bases, that equally on each side of the Quire most melodiously acted and performed their parts. . . . This ancient structure of 1000 yeares standing, hath, att the entrance into it, 2 stately, strong and neat, curiously-built spir'd Pyramids, and upon that ffrontispice there is about 100 fayre Statues, curiously graven and carv'd in free-stone, of Kings, Patriarchs, Prophets, Fathers and Apostles, that grace it much, especially in time past, when (as they say) they were all gilt. . . . The Quire is beautify'd with 6 fayre gilt Statues, 3 on either side."²

The Roundheads do not appear to have been very successful in their first efforts against the Close. From the "Account of an eye-witness" (Harl. MSS. 2043, quoted by Shaw in his Hist. of Staffordshire) we learn that they "sent to Coventree for a terrifying gunn, called a Morter piece, to shoot granadoes into the Close; saying, If there be no way to regaine it, wee will fire the Papish-cavaliers out with fire-balls. . . . The gunner made several shoots with his

⁶ The lily-white Swan, one of our most ancient Inns is still one of the best of our city.

⁷ These statues were demolished in the civil wars, but have been replaced in the recent restorations by Sir Gilbert Scott.

granadoes, but little execution. Either they were to wyd of the place or to short, and some fell into the poole that was betwixt them and the Close, which put a stop at present to their brazen-faced rashness in boasting." Several of these unexploded shells have been fished up from the pool, and one of them is now in the City Museum.³ Among the notable expedients adopted by the Parliamentarians to defeat the "Malignants," we learn that "they drew out from their homes in the City all such townsmen that had any sons, apprentices, or other servants within the Close, and likewise all citizens' wives that had their husbands there. Soe soon as these persons were gathered all together (they not knowing the reason, neither being guilty of any known offence), command was given that they should forthwith put them in front of the souldiers, against the Close, for their husbands and friends to shoot at. But this did not hit right to their fanatick policy, for the besieged, being churlish, roughly prevented their policy with bold courage, although they shoot against their second selfe and one relations." This demoniacal device was repeated at a later date, the "Parliament counsell of warr" resolving "once more to turne the poore towns-women a greasing towards their husbands and children; but all to small purpose." (Shaw's Staffordshire, p. 239.)

Lord Brooke, it is well known, was slain while the siege was in progress. It was by the batteries commanded by Sir William Brereton that the Close was reduced in 1643. Thus Dugdale (*Short View of the Late Troubles*, p. 202):—"The City of Chester was yielded upon Articles to Sir William Brereton, who commanded in chief as Major general in those parts. Whence he went to Litchfield-close, which also soon after rendred upon the like Articles." So also Lord Northampton's letter of 2nd March, '42-3:—"I have just now received intelligence that my lord Chesterfield is besieged in the Close at Lichfield, by an express messenger from his lady, and that Sir William Brereton's forces and Sir John Gille's (Gell's) lie so between his lordship and Colonel Hastings that he cannot possibly come to his aid." (*Warburton's Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*, ii., 132.) "Blind Hastings," however, did make an attack on "the leaguer,"

³ It is curious to compare the gunnery of this period with that of the present day. Some of the Roundhead missiles,

we see, were unequal to the transit of a small fish-pond: we now send our projectiles three miles.

but with so little success that he speedily withdrew to his garrison at Rushall Castle.

Eventually, the king's cause becoming desperate, the Royalists in the Close yielded the fortress: this was on the 10th July, '46; and on the 19th the House of Commons ordered that "the Castles of Eccleshall, Tutbury and Dudley should be made untenable, and the walls about Lichfield Close dismantled." Of these walls little now remains on three sides but part of a tower at the S.E. corner: on the north, however, in the Palace garden, a considerable portion may yet be seen.

Hitherto we have written as of one siege only, but in fact there were several. The local historians tell us of three, which may be thus tabulated:—

First siege begins	Early in 1643	Lord Brooke and Sir John Gell
ends	March "	v. Earl of Chesterfield.
Second siege begins	April "	Prince Rupert v. Col. Russell.
ends	21 April "	
Third siege begins	March 1646	Gen. Louthian (Parliamentarian)
ends	10 July "	v. Sir Thos. Tyldesley.

We have here a great gap, from April '43 to March '46, which to fill up is no easy task. Some are of opinion that the Royalists held the Close unmolested all the time: others maintain that there was constant warfare in the interim. Dr. Harwood (*Hist. of Lichfield*, p. 30) believes "that the Close was frequently in a state of siege at this period." Whether there was anything rising to the dignity of a siege may be doubted, but that frequent assaults and skirmishings took place seems clear from contemporary accounts on both sides. One or two chronological memoranda may be useful in considering this question.

1643.

22 April.—"Either the day before or the day after this action (the taking of the Close) Prince Rupert received a positive order from the king to make all possible hast, with all the strength he had, and all he could draw together from those parts, to the relief of Reading." (*Clarendon, Hist. of Rebellion*, ii., 182.) This letter from the king is printed in *Warburton's Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, vol. ii., p. 174. The prince set out accordingly, leaving Colonel Hervey Bagot governor of the Close.

26 April.—Secretary Nicholas to Prince Rupert: "It

were much better the County of Stafford than the town of Reading were lost, as things now stand." (Warburton, ii., 177.)

Between 27 April and — May.—From the King's Pamphlets in Brit. Museum :—"There is intelligence come that my Lord Grey and Sir John Gell's forces have regained the Close at Lichfield, and taken persons of divers quality prisoners, as the Lord Digby and Captain Legge, that made an escape out of the Gatehouse formerly." We give this extract only to show the manner of concocting false news in these times.

25 June.—This day Tamworth was taken by the Roundheads ; and soon after, Lord Denbigh writes to the Parliament "in behalf of the governor of Tamworth," remarking that "none of our friends can safely passe, for the Lichfield garrison." (Palmer's History of Tamworth, p. 132.) Frequent passages of arms now take place between these two garrisons, the distance from one to the other being only seven miles.

24 Nov.—From the Accompts of the Constable of Mavesyn Ridware, a small village near Lichfield :—"Contribucion weekly paid for the garrison at Lichfield, from Nov. 24, 1643, to October 25 following, inclusive—109*l.* 18*s.*" (Shaw's Hist. of Staffordshire, i., 198.)

1644.

18 March.—Willington, the governor of Tamworth, writes to the Parliamentary Committee, notifying that he had "a speciall frend that lay in Lichfeild last night, who brings us certen intelligence that this day we shalbe fiercely assaulted by fiftene hundred foote and five hundred horse and fowre peeces of ordinance on their carriages," &c. (Palmer's Hist. of Tamworth, 133.)

28 Nov.—Dr. Harwood (Hist. of Lichfield, p. 47) gives us Accompts of contributions "for defence of his Majesties garrison at the Close, Lichfield." And in the same month, complaints are made by the Roundheads of "the daylie inroads and oppression of Ashby, Tutbury and Lichfeild garisons." (Shaw's Staff., Gen. Hist., p. 71, and under Burton, p. 18.)

Dec.—Colonel Bagot, governor of Lichfield, in reply to an insolent challenge from one Hunt of the Tamworth party,

meets him and flogs him back to his garrison. (Mercurius Aulicus, p. 1347 ; Harwood, 27, &c.)

1645.

15 June.—Battle of Naseby. “Col. Bagot, governor of Lichfield, present with two hundred men.” (Mem. of Prince Rupert, 104.)

16 June.—The King at Lichfield, and sleeping in the Close. An Address presented to him by the City.

June 30 and July 1 and 2.—“Twelve teams and thirteen workmen to the raisinge of the bulworks at Lichfield, 2*l.* 17*s.* 8*d.*” And again :—

Sept. 4.—“To thirty-five workmen that went to Lichfield towards the raisinge of the bullworks, 1*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.*” (Constable’s Accompts for Mavesyn Ridware, in Shaw’s Staff, i. 198.)

Oct. to Dec.—The Accompts of the Treasurer of the King’s garrison in the Close, Lichfield, contain many curious entries ; *inter alia* : “To a carpenter, for falling ten ashes, to make pikes, 6*s.*—iron for the new draw-bridge—for labourers and carts that worked at the fortifications this week, 18*l.* 18*s.*—carpenters, for hewing timber for pikes and bills—to the founder, his weeks pay, 7*s.*—to a woman which brought intelligence from Newark, 5*s.*” In December :—“Paid for breaking the ice upon the pool several times, by my Lords order, 10*s.*” And again :—“Paid to the men that broke the ice⁴ upon the pool for a fortnight past, 1*l.* 1*s.*” (Harwood’s Hist. of Lichfield, p. 40 *et seq.*)

Oct. 2.—The King again at Lichfield. “Supper in the Close.” (Warburton, iii., 192.)

1646.

21 March.—From the Parish Register of Tamworth :—“21 Mar. Buried the body of Rich^d Vaughan of Comberford : he was slain by the enemie at Lichfield in fighting in y^e worre.” “Buried the body of Henry, son of Thos. Piccard of Comberford, an infant : his father Thomas was slaine by

⁹ This ice-breaking furnished the means of an ingenious *ruse de guerre*. Dugdale, in his Short View of the late Troubles, tells us that “the City of Hereford was surprised by Colonel Birch and Colonel

Morgan, by a Stratagem of a counterfeit Constable coming with Countrymen to break the ice in the trenches, having an Ambuscado near at hand” (p. 202, ed. 1681).

the enemy in Lichfield Close about March last." (Hist. of Tamworth, 309.)

29 April.—"Paid to George Carter with 60 strike of Oats to the leaguer at Lichfield, 16s." (Shaw, p. 241, from Constable's Accompts of Marchington.)

This was the beginning of the "Third siege" named above. The extracts do not seem to require any special comment. It is scarcely needful to state that we have purposely abstained from repeating the well-known incidents of the warfare—how Lord Brooke was slain on Saint Chad's day by a shot from Saint Chad's Cathedral, how the Round-heads stabled their horses in the nave and hunted cats through the aisles and chapels, &c.—these matters being fully told in every local history and guide-book.

Reverting to the Ashmolean Collection, we find in the same codex from which our view of the cathedral is taken, a number of papers relating to Lichfield:⁵ among them is a second view of the minster by Dugdale, showing the west front, but altogether unreliable for the architectural detail; and an autograph memorandum of Ashmole:—"No. 1521, xix., Ashmole's Account of his Interview with Charles II. about the ruinous state of Lichfield Cathedral." The memorandum is as follows:—"16th June 1660. This Morning Mr. Rawlins of Lichfeild tould me that the Clarke Viccars of the Cathedrall Church had entred the Chapterhouse, and there said Service; and this when the Vestry was the only place in the Church y^t had a Rooofe to shelter them.

"This very Afternoone, I, having an opptunity to waite on the K^e, and being in his closet, tould him that the afores^d remaining number of poore Clearks Viccars had assembled in the afores^d place, and there kept their Canonically houres and prayd for his Ma^{ty}, which he was pleased to heare.

"Upon further discourse I acquainted him wth the desolacōn of the place, w^{ch} he much lamented, and said he had been informed that Winchester Cathedrall had exceedingly suffred in these late tymes, and that they had turnd it into Brewhouses, Malthouses," &c.

The king's contribution towards the repair of Lichfield

⁵ It will be remembered that Elias Ashmole was a native of Lichfield, where, as he tells us in his Diary, "I was taught

Latin at the Grammar-school and became a Chorister in the Cathedral Church."

Minster heads the list of donations furnished by the son of Bishop Hacket :—" His Gracious Majesty King Charles 2^d, one hundred fair timber trees out of Needwood Forest."

Of the architectural history and features of the Cathedral, we already possess an excellent sketch in the paper by Professor Willis in No. 69 of our Journal (Vol. 18, p. 1). The plan there given will be further useful to illustrate the few additional remarks we have to make. These remarks are, of course, not offered to supply any lapsus in the learned Professor's history : they merely relate to matters outside of his theme. Every one who has read of, or visited Lichfield Cathedral, has of necessity heard much of the delinquencies of a certain James Wyatt. Not a crack in a pinnacle nor a settling in a buttress but Wyatt had been the cause of the mischief. Without undertaking to prove this gentleman innocent of every charge brought against him, let us at least withhold our reproaches for faults which were not his own. When Wyatt undertook the alterations of the Cathedral in 1788, he engaged Mr. Potter to carry out the works, himself very rarely appearing on the spot. Mr. Potter remained the Architect of the Cathedral till his death. His son, the eminent architect now living (aged 73), inherited his father's drawings and plans, and all the history of the church buildings from that day to this ; so that we have an unbroken chain of evidence from 1788 to 1874, a period not far short of a century. Wyatt's original plan now lies before me, and by the kindness of Mr. Potter I am enabled to point out one or two facts which will not be without interest for those who have studied the architecture of our Minster. The plan given in our Vol. 18 will show that the choir, up to the Lady Chapel, consists of eight bays ; four to the west, of Early-English work, the others Decorated. Wyatt has always borne the reproach of blanking these eight bays ; but Mr. Potter tells us : " The whole of these arches were not blanked by Mr. Wyatt, but the four only, north and south, contiguous to the Lady Chapel ; the remaining four, to the westward of the choir, having previously been closed by Sir Christopher Wren, in order to receive the stalls (believed to have been his work) some three-quarters of a century before. . . . So completely did Wren perform his work of blocking up, that he took care to conceal every vestige of moulding, both of the piers and archivolt, leaving only in view the clustered

shafts from which the vaulting of the roof sprang." By reference to the plan in Britton's *Cathedrals*, it will be seen that the walling of the western arches is of great thickness, while that of Wyatt to the east is very slender. And it must be borne in mind that this walling-up of the choir was no architectural blunder of Wyatt's—nor indeed of anyone—it was not a question of architecture at all : it was a question of warmth and convenience ; for, up to that day, the congregation at sermon-time had to remove from the choir into the nave ; where they were met by the citizens, who came, after "Prayers" in their parish church, to listen to the preacher in the Cathedral. The choir being enlarged (not by any vagary of Wyatt, but by the positive order of the Dean and Chapter) the two congregations could be accommodated, the clatter of removal avoided, and a moderate degree of warmth attained. This enlargement involved the displacement of the altar-screen, a work of wood "in the Corinthian order," said to have been designed by Sir Christopher Wren.⁶ Removing this, behind it was found the old stone reredos, rich in design, but sadly mutilated by the Puritans. Mr. Wyatt, says Mr. Potter, "was most ardent for its restoration,"⁷ but the orders of the Dean and Chapter were peremptory for its removal. A portion was employed in the construction of the new organ-loft,⁸ and a part in forming a new altar-piece. The stall-work in the choir was wrought on the same model, but not till after Wyatt's death. The stalls had previously been of wood, and of the assumed school of Wren. I say "assumed," because I am not aware of any authentic evidence to show that Wren ever worked for our Cathedral. Some of this wooden stall-work is still preserved in the Consistory Court, notably the canopied seat, which I take to be the Bishop's throne shown in Browne Willis's plan of 1727.

Wyatt has been also blamed for replacing some stone vaulting in the nave by plaster. The sole cause of his doing this was that the side walls were giving way, and it became necessary to reduce the weight they had to bear.

The Roman-cement work of the west front has even been attributed to Wyatt. It was not done, however, till eight

⁶ A painting of the Crucifixion which formed part of this Corinthian work was afterwards used for the altar-piece of St. Chad's Church, and is now in the vestry of that church.

⁷ Letter in *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 5 Dec. 1861.

⁸ The part facing the nave. See Plate 8 of Britton's *Lichfield Cathedral*.

years after his death, namely, from 1820 to 1822, in the time of Dean Wodehouse. The architectural portion was by Westmore, the statues in the central doorway by Armstrong. The row of figures across the front, for the credit of whose demolition the weather and the Parliamentary troops are joint candidates, were in so bad a plight that they were scarcely distinguishable from mere lumps of stone. One of the lumps had a something which passed for a harp. The old writers therefore made this their datum line for the whole, and we are informed accordingly that the series represents "the Monarchs of Israel and Juda," the figure with the harp being King David. But Dean Wodehouse was opposed to this attribution. Accepting, however, the harp, he replaced King David by King Alfred, proclaiming the whole group to be the representatives of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman kings of our land; with the exception of the central figure, which he appropriated to St. Chad.⁹ For the restoration of these images, other cathedrals were, by the order of the Dean, examined; notably Wells, where the younger Potter was employed several days in making drawings from the statues of the west front.

I trust it may not be thought that more space has been occupied by these remarks than the subject required. Fair-play seemed to demand that something should be said, while yet a living witness of the facts could be found to substantiate them. Wyatt may have been guilty of errors of judgment, or his taste may not have had the true Gothic ring; but let us not continue to abuse him for the deeds of others. "De mortuis nil nisi verum."

⁹ See the Short Account of Lichfield Cathedral, by Dean Wodehouse, published by Lomax, Lichfield, in 1823.