ARCHBISHOP ROGER'S CATHEDRAL AT YORK AND ITS STAINED GLASS.

By W. R. LETHABY, F.S.A

Four or five years ago I made some notes on the remarkable fragments of twelfth-century stained glass in York minster. Unfortunately I did not write them out at once, and these remarks must suffer in consequence. My main purpose is to call attention once more to these wonderful remnants, to show that they must represent the glazing of the windows of Roger's work, a quire more advanced but as glorious as ever was Conrad's at Canterbury; to suggest that we have some evidence of what the general scheme of design must have been; and to prove, if I can, that these windows are examples of glass-painting done at a school established at Angers in the reign of the great Henry II of England.

I also want to obtain as clear a view of Roger's structural work as may be possible without special and exhaustive examination of what actually remains. According to the York chronicler Stubbs, Roger, the archbishop from 1154 to 1181, 'constructed anew the quire of the cathedral church at York, together with its crypts and the archiepiscopal palace, and he was buried in the middle of the quire of the church.'[1] Browne, who in 1844 published the standard modern description of the church, says that it was traditionally held that this rebuilding was done from 1170 to 1178. Bishop Roger's 'work' at York was a noble eastern extension of seven bays beyond the crossing with an additional bay of one story forming a cross aisle, or retro-quire, beyond the eastern gable. Near the eastern end were flanking towers. The church 'being square-ended there were only altar-places in the eastern part, and the flanking towers were made to perform the part also of eastern transepts.'

[1] R. Willis, *The Architectural History of York Cathedral* (1848), p. 6. The original passage will be found in *Historians of the Church of York* (Rolls ser.) ii, 398–400.

This new quire was raised high above a crypt like Conrad's quire at Canterbury. From the great size of the pillars in the York crypt, and from the advanced form of its vaulting, we may reasonably suppose that the upper church was entirely vaulted, as still earlier had been the cathedral churches of Durham and Lincoln and the quire of the abbey church at Kirkstall. The tower chapels on either side of the east end would have formed useful abutments to a vaulted interior; while the vaults of the crypt show how great a mastery over the principles of vaulting Roger's mason had. In the quire aisles at Ripon, another work of Roger's, even a wall-rib is present, and I have an impression that there is some evidence of its existence in the York crypt.

'The cathedral,' says Willis, 'in the year 1200 was a Norman building, although the eastern end was of a more enriched style.' This assertion as to the Norman character of Roger's work is misleading. Willis himself tells us that some base-mouldings in the vestibule to the crypt 'are also employed in an arcade on the north side of the cathedral close which appertains to the palace that Roger is recorded to have built, and probably, therefore, was a part of his work.' This arcade is of a very refined and advanced Transitional character. Further, Browne, on his plates xxx and xxxi, gives several details of pillars and capitals from Roger's building. Some of the capitals were of elegant water-leaf form, and others had a plain bell, and several were wrought to fit semi-vesica-shaped shafts. One pier was composed of a group of eight such shafts. The external walls had a fine moulded plinth, and the buttresses had shafts on either side close to the walls.

Now the plan of the eastern termination of Roger's work, as recorded by Browne and elucidated by Willis, was exactly like that of Byland abbey in having a transverse aisle for chapels extending beyond the gable wall. And at Byland as at York this aisle was wider than the lateral aisles. This correspondence between the plans of York and Byland, which is not referred to by Willis, is a strong confirmation of the accuracy of his restoration of the former. At Byland, again, we find the buttresses projecting in two flat breaks, exactly as at York, except that at the latter the treatment was elaborated in having the inner breaks shafted. These shafts evidently passed upwards

to stop under the corbel-table. The windows of both York and Byland had nook-shafts, but again York had an additional member in a hollow chamfer adjoining the shafts. The external design of the lateral elevation at York can thus be fairly well restored by comparison with Byland.

The 'water-leaf' capitals found at York are similar to others at Byland, Ripon, Roche, and at Fountains in the range of buildings built from 1170 to 1179. These leaves curled upwards in what Sharpe called the Transitional volute. Other capitals found at York are of the curious Cistercian type, having a square abacus and a deep square member with a graceful hollowed bell beneath. Similar capitals are found at Ripon and at Roche. One group of them at York belonged to the clustered pier of eight shafts mentioned above, and the same form of capital is associated with exactly the same form of shafts at Roche, where also the rolls of the bases have a flattened form like some bases at York. At Ripon, again, the piers were in groups of eight shafts, but the shafts were not of pointed form. The abbey churches at Roche and Byland seem to have been built about 1170. Roger's work at Ripon was in course of erection in 1181 when he died.

Mr. J. Bilson has said 'Roche must have been begun somewhere about the same time that Kirkstall was finished, and at Roche the expression is just as truly Gothic as that of Kirkstall is Romanesque. And this is true of the slightly later Byland.'[1] It must be nearly as true of Roger's quire at York. It would probably be worth while to search over all the fragments at York and to collect particulars of even the least details of Roger's work; a morsel of carving or of abacus moulding proves much.

From a comparison with the other Yorkshire works built in the latter half of the twelfth century we may obtain a fairly accurate idea of the form and sizes of the windows which would have been used at York. Of course they were round-headed, and would have been three or four times as high as they were wide. At Kirkstall the windows were about 3 feet 6 inches wide. At Byland they were very tall and nearly 4 feet 6 inches wide. Of Ripon I have the note: 'South quire aisle, Roger's work, has very perfect

[1] *Archaeol. Journ.* lxvi, 277.

windows. Fine, big, circular-headed lancets about 3 feet 6 inches wide with deep sloping sills. The bays are vaulted on shafted corbels having water-leaf capitals. The vaulting ribs, including a wall-rib, are moulded.'

At York the fourteenth-century windows of the existing nave clerestory, which are for the most part filled with contemporary glazing of white pattern work charged with large shields of arms, contain also many fragments of earlier, richly-coloured glazing. There is also a panel of twelfth-century glazing patched into the central light of the Five Sisters window, and I have a note of 'fragments of early glass in the heads of the windows of the vestibule of the chapter-house.' Many of the more important pieces were carefully illustrated in colour by Browne, who first brought them into notice. Mr. Westlake saw that this glass was of high quality and the earliest in date of any surviving in England. The most remarkable piece is a panel from a Jesse-tree window, which must have been closely akin to the famous Jesse windows at Saint-Denis and Chartres.

When the clerestory windows were last repaired I was fortunate enough to see this panel while it was in the hands of the glaziers. It was about 2 feet 4 inches square; the colour was deep and splendid; the ground blue, the foliage red, yellow and green, and the strong scrolling stalks of the 'tree' white. The king who occupied this section was largely vested in green and brown-purple, and his shoes were red. Westlake, who had a scaffold raised so that he might inspect the panel, thought that it was either copied or designed by an artist educated in the same school which produced the Jesse trees of Saint-Denis and Chartres. The borders, however, he thought, might be more national. But I agree with M. E. Mâle as to their resemblance to the fine Saint-Denis borders.

Fragments of a dozen or more different varieties of borders exist, most of which have been illustrated by Browne. These borders must represent a very important series of windows, and one or two medallions and other pieces give some suggestions as to what their general character must have been (fig. 1). Mr. Westlake thought this glass was put in place during the episcopate of Roger, not later than about 1170.

The twelfth-century panel, which is crudely inserted in the lower part of the middle light of the Five Sisters window, is more than three feet square. It is made up of a medallion with its surrounding circular frame and spandrels, and some handsome ornamental borders. The medallion is 2 feet in diameter, and its frame, 3 inches wide, is made up of a plain ruby band edged with two narrow rows of pearling.

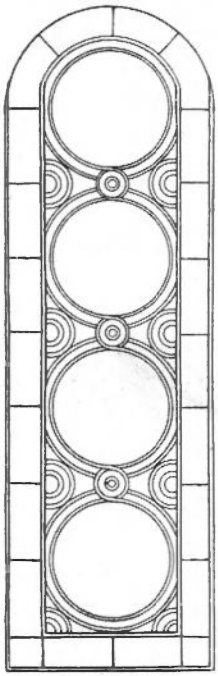

FIG. I. YORK CATHEDRAL CHURCH :
RESTORATION OF TWELFTH-CENTURY WINDOWS.

The red glass is extremely streaky, showing much of the white ground. At the top and bottom this circular frame turns round, guilloche fashion, forming a smaller circle $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, linking it with other medallions above and below. In the large spandrels left between pairs of the medallions are semicircles largely made up of blue and red, while the remaining parts of the spandrels

are filled with plain green glass of fair emerald colour. Within the circular frame is a subject which is somewhat injured. It was described by Browne, when it may have been more perfect, as a representation of Daniel in the lions' den in Babylon, which is represented by towers and embattled walls. Within the walls is laid a lion, apparently asleep, with his head toward Daniel. The latter is standing and holding his hands toward Habakkuk whom an angel is bringing by the hair of his head, with a cake in his right hand and a bowl in the other. The angel, who dips down from the upper part of the medallion, is of an early type; the nimbus is ruby, and the doorway of the 'castle' is also a blazing red. The background is the most beautiful smoky blue. The ornamental borders now associated with this fragment are only $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, while the others before mentioned are 10 and 11 inches, but they are of similar fine style. Fig. 1 is a restoration of the general scheme of the windows, to which this panel must have belonged.

It is impossible to think that a subject relating to Daniel should appear in twelfth-century stained glass, unless it had significance as an Old Testament type of a Gospel fulfilment. If we refer to the old account of the glass at Canterbury, we shall find the subject of Daniel and the Dragon from the same apocryphal book, *Bel and the Dragon*, used as a type; and in the existing east window there is still among the types Daniel in Babylon. According to M. Mâle the arch of a doorway of the cathedral of Laon, which is carved with scenes in the life of the Virgin, and with Old Testament types, has for a type of the Annunciation Daniel receiving the food brought by Habakkuk to the lions' den.

Another twelfth-century example is given by M. Mâle from the church at Ydes, where the Annunciation and the visit of Habakkuk to Daniel again appear as type and ante-type. The source for this particular type seems to have been discovered in a sermon by Honorius of Autun, who was a contemporary of abbot Suger, and the type may have been used at Saint-Denis itself.

The York medallion is therefore evidence for a series illustrating the life of the Virgin or of Christ. And this, of course, would have been perfectly appropriate, and indeed almost necessary in association with the important

Jesse-tree window of York. Such was the case at Saint-Denis, Chartres, and doubtless at Canterbury. This system of illustrating scenes from the Gospels by Old Testament types seems first to have been worked out in stained glass at abbot Suger's wonderful new church of Saint-Denis, where the windows were put in place about 1144–1148.

How quickly the reputation of this church spread over the west, and how great its immediate influence must have been, is suggested by a letter from Jocelin, bishop of Salisbury, written to Suger in the very year 1148, when his new abbey church was completed. As I have never seen it in English, it may be here quoted from Suger's correspondence :

> Your reputation spread abroad in all parts has determined us to cross the sea with the single desire of knowing you. And we are come from so far only to be the witnesses of the things which are told of you as the Solomon of your century. Our curiosity has been satisfied at all points ; we have had the pleasure to hear words full of wisdom issuing from your mouth ; we have seen and pondered upon the magnificent temple which you have had built, and the ornaments with which you do not cease to embellish it. . . . The half of these things had not been told, and the truth surpasses the telling of the renown.

Browne, in his admirably accurate account of the glass at York, speaks of the fragments as consisting of (a) 'quarters of central compartments about 21 inches in diameter.' Some of these were plainer, and others had some addition of simple stiff foliage ; (b) 'portraitures of single figures, as saints,' and (c) 'groups.' 'Sometimes the figure is seated beneath a canopy, or the group is placed in large circular, quatrefoil, or octofoil compartments, having the spandrels adorned with circles of various colours.'

He illustrates a single figure of a bishop seated under a canopy, the whole about 3 feet high, as well as the Jesse-tree panel, many borders, and several 'quarter compartments.' On his plate cxxviii he gives part of a foiled 'compartment,' that is, a medallion, associated with one of the fine, wide, outer borders, and a spandrel filling of stiff foliage (fig. 2). This foiled medallion has a frame exactly similar to that which surrounds the Daniel medallion.

Taking the two together we obtain sufficient evidence for reconstructing these windows. They must have had a single vertical row of circular or foiled medallions enclosed between fine borders 10 or 11 inches wide. The lights which contained the circular medallions would have been about 4 feet wide (fig. 1). If Browne's illustration is accurate the light which contained the foiled medallion would have been wider. In this case it may have been one of the windows in the east gable. Browne evidently supposed that what he called 'quarter compartments' were quadrants of ornamental medallions forming a plainer type of window. This seems to have been quite possible, as there are ornamental medallions at Saint-Denis, but

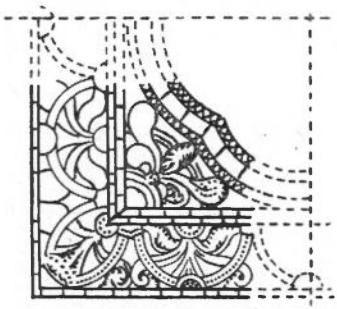

FIG. 2. YORK CATHEDRAL CHURCH: DETAIL OF TWELFTH-CENTURY GLAZING.

I am not satisfied without an examination of the actual fragments that they were not set as fillings in the spandrels left between the figure medallions. The portion which Browne illustrates as part of an octofoil medallion would seem rather to suit a quatrefoil (fig. 2).

We may now venture to imagine Roger's church with some colour in our reconstruction. His new quire must have had some forty windows in its two stories; the Jesse window was probably in the central eastern chapel which, doubtless, as at Saint-Denis, was dedicated in honour of the Virgin. This window, judging from the size of the existing section of the glass, could not have

been less than five feet wide. On either side of this centre would have been a window having medallions of the life of Christ. Such subjects at an early time were always associated with the Jesse tree. One window would probably have contained scenes from the Infancy, and the other from the Passion. The types which accompanied these scenes must have been arranged alternately with them. The one which still exists, as we have seen, would have been a companion of the Annunciation. Other windows may have been purely ornamental. These may be represented by the larger quadrants of pattern-work illustrated by Browne. Above in the clerestory would have been figures of larger scale, one, or more one above the other, being in each light. Doubtless the single figure of a bishop seated under a canopy which was illustrated by Browne was one of these. It seems small, being only about 3 feet high by 1 foot wide, but it was usual to increase the size of such figure panels by a field of plainer glazing round about, and by wide borders. We may suppose that two or three were disposed one above the other, a customary arrangement; and that they should be bishops is also in accord with tradition for the clerestories of quires.

The glass at York belonged to the most perfect period for this craft. The series of wide borders yet preserved are unrivalled, and Mr. Westlake says of the Jesse panel: 'I was immediately attracted by the refinement of the drawing of the head, which is greater than in any other glass of the period that I have seen.' Roger's glass must have been comparable with the noble western windows at Chartres.

No one will doubt Mr. Westlake's opinion that the early stained glass at York was put in place by archbishop Roger, although the date, not later than 1170, which he gives, is probably a little early. I would myself substitute 1180. Westlake, following Browne, supposed that these splendid windows had been placed by Roger in the old Norman nave; this was entirely gratuitous, for it is evidently far more probable that such a fine series of windows, not less than twelve, and probably many more, were obtained for his own new quire. That this was indeed so is proved by the fact that the east end of a church, especially if a lady-chapel occupied the situation, was the proper

traditional position for windows of the life of Christ associated with the Jesse tree.

The fact that such windows occur in the west front at Chartres is quite exceptional. They were doubtless inserted there because that fine west front, with its important windows, was completed soon after Suger's windows at the east end of Saint-Denis had become famous. Not only at Saint-Denis, but at Canterbury, Le Mans and many other places, the Jesse-tree window was in the lady-chapel, for which, of course, it is the obviously suitable subject. Again, the facts as to the history of the building of York minster and the present position of the fragments, call for this solution. Westlake supposes that the Jesse fragment was taken from the old west window of the Norman church, and set where it is in the clerestory of the fourteenth-century nave. Willis, however, has shown that a period of about fifty years intervened between the pulling down of the Norman nave and the completion of the stone-work of the now existing nave. Roger's quire, however, remained in existence until about 1380, and we could easily understand how likely it would be that portions of old glass taken from its windows when they were destroyed were put into the already existing windows of the nave and the entry to the chapter-house.[1]

One of the reasons given in 1361 for beginning the new eastern work which was to take the place of Roger's quire, was that there was no place where the mass of the Virgin could be performed with suitable decency. This suggests the view that the altar in the retro-quire may have been dedicated in honour of the Virgin, but that it was inadequate.

The glass at York clearly belongs to the school formed at Saint-Denis from 1140. This has already been pointed out by Westlake and Mâle. The latter says: 'We have found examples of the school of glass-painting issuing from Saint-Denis at Chartres, Le Mans, Vendôme, York, Angers and Poitiers.'[2] The Jesse panel and the borders at York are remarkably like those at Saint-Denis, where also are found subjects in medallions within frames made

[1] According to Willis, this was completed in 1340.

[2] Of the elements which helped to make up the school of Saint-Denis I have written in the *Burlington Magazine*, July, 1914.

up of a ruby band edged on each side with 'pearling.' In the Saint-Denis glass we already find a small characteristic which persisted long: feet or other details of the subject were allowed to pass on to the margins of the medallions and even beyond them.

In the superb window at Chartres representing the life of Christ, which is supposed to be from the Saint-Denis workshops about 1150, the medallion frames are made up of a ruby band with pearled edgings, the spandrels are green with semi-rosettes against the great outer border. At Le Mans variants of the same treatment are found. A medallion window at Poitiers figured by Merston has the guilloche linking of the medallion frames, and the smaller medallions in the spandrels; some of those latter, as at York, were quatrefoils. There are also windows at Angers, in which the details resemble very closely those of the York glass. Here we have the plain red and pearled margins to medallions which fill the whole width of the light, half discs being set in the spandrels against the great outer borders. Here, too, and here alone, so far as I know, we find some of the principal subject-medallions of a quatrefoil form, as was the case also at York. As de Farcy has shown from documents, the glass at Angers was given to the cathedral about 1182, and this was practically the same date as, on the evidence, we have given to the windows at York. Many considerations, which cannot now be gone into, suggest that the glass in all the places which have been mentioned in these notes, with the exception of the earliest, that at Saint-Denis and Chartres, belong to a local school at Angers, a city which must in the reign of Henry II have been in a higher degree than London or Rouen the culture-capital of his dominions.

The clearest examples of correspondence with the glass at Angers will be found in some windows once at Chenu in Maine, and now at Rivenhall in Essex. In these remarkable fragments of twelfth-century glass we find on the one hand replicas of subjects at Angers, and on the other close resemblances to the glass at York. I hope another time to discuss the Chenu-Rivenhall fragments more fully.

From the Durham chronicle we find that bishop Pudsey glazed the quire of his cathedral church with

stained glass windows. These were doubtless comparable with those of York. Winston illustrates one twelfth-century fragment from Saint Cross. Again it cannot be doubted that the Guthlac roll at the British Museum contains a set of designs for stained glass medallions not much later than A.D. 1200. Stained glass must have been far from uncommon in England in the latter half of the twelfth century. The early glass at York would certainly repay full and minute study.