

RECOLLECTIONS OF WESTMINSTER.

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[Read at the Third General Meeting, held in the French Gallery, 121, Pall Mall,
February 26, 1856.]

THE few remarks which I now propose to make have reference chiefly to reminiscences of my early days—a period in which archaeology, as a pursuit or as a science, was scarcely known by its own proper designation.

In the Abbey and Hall of Westminster we possess two of the noblest architectural monuments in Europe, each of them unsurpassed by any other structure of similar character, and both replete with associations of the utmost interest and importance. My remembrance of that grandest and most spacious of Gothic halls, Westminster Hall, dates prior to its repair and the partial restoration of the northern façade. At that period I perfectly remember that four of the lower range of niches on the western tower facing New Palace Yard were filled with statues. These, having been removed, have never been replaced, and, from the length of time which has elapsed since their removal, it is much to be feared that they have been destroyed: certainly no traces of them have been discovered. Had they been too much dilapidated to admit of reparation, they would at least have served as models from which to create others to replace them. Although by no means an advocate for modern additions to early works, yet as the new Palace of Parliament exhibits all the numerous niches which are scattered over its surface, filled with statues, it would be in harmony with the entire mass of the buildings if this completeness were carried out in the great front entrance to Westminster Hall; and this appears to be the more desirable since now we have artists able to design, and carvers in stone fully competent to execute, statues in such a style of art as would be consistent with the architecture of the building.

At the foot of the steps within the hall there recently stood two cylindrical stone pedestals of considerable dimensions. One had sculptured upon it the armorial ensigns of John Stafford, Lord Treasure. from 1422 to 1424, with his name, titles, and

date in Gothic characters: the corresponding pedestal, similarly inscribed, bore the arms of Ralph, Lord Boteler of Surrey, Treasurer of the Exchequer in 1433. I have taken these inscriptions from Pennant's London, not having copied them myself. These pedestals, with the original steps, have been removed, and in their place, at the base of the new grand flight of steps, two plain pedestals have been erected, surmounted with wooden lamp posts, each bearing a cluster of gas-jets. As these lamp-posts can only be temporary, it would be gratifying to learn that the early pedestals will resume their former position in the hall, when the internal arrangements and decorations of this magnificent apartment shall be completed. The removal of them has been so recent that doubtless they are preserved, and under the direction of Sir Charles Barry we may certainly hope for their future preservation in the right place.

Pennant, in his account of London, speaking of the passage leading from the hall up these steps to the corridor of the House of Commons, says, "In the passage stood the famous bust of Charles I. by Bernini, made by him from a painting by Vandyke done for the purpose." This painting is now in the Vandyke room at Windsor Castle, and it represents the king in profile, three quarters, and full face. Before the removal of the courts of Chancery and of the King's Bench (which were on either side of this flight of steps), and before the construction of the new law courts by Sir John Soane, there certainly stood in my remembrance a bust of King Charles I. apparently of bronze, over the doorway at the head of the ascent. Whether or not this was the original bust by Bernini there appears to be but little means for ascertaining. Pennant must have believed it to have been the original, since he has given an engraving of it at page 126 of his book. It probably passed surreptitiously, like many other neglected objects of historical interest and value, into private hands, where such objects were better appreciated in those days.

Much as we have to regret the losses occasioned by the great fire in 1833, which destroyed the Houses of Parliament, we may congratulate ourselves on its having spared the glorious old hall, the crypt of St. Stephen's chapel, and the beautiful cloisters. A proposal has recently been made to raise the roof of Westminster

Hall: I do hope, however, that the public voice will second the efforts of all true antiquaries, and all admirers of mediæval architecture, to denounce and also to frustrate any such violation of the original design, and to preserve intact and perfect, as the great fire spared it, this grand monument of our forefathers.

The portion of the Palace of Westminster destroyed by the fire had undergone so much mutilation that little more than the mere walls existed on this occurrence. In the year 1800, when, on the Union, it became necessary to provide accommodation for the Irish members of the House of Commons, I remember seeing Smith, the author of the "Antiquities of Westminster," making drawings of the fine paintings then discovered in the midst of the dust and confusion occasioned by their ruthless destruction. In the work which he published on this subject, Smith cites a number of extracts from the public records relating to the building of St. Stephen's Chapel by Edward III., and regrets that he did not discover among them the name of the architect of this unique and splendid edifice. There has been recently found among the Exchequer Records an indenture, dated in the tenth year of the reign of Edward III., between the governor of Carisbrook Castle and the King's architect, who is here named WILLIAM DE MALTON.* This William may have been the architect of St. Stephen's Chapel, and not William of Wykeham as Smith supposes. There has also been found among these records a letter addressed by William of Wykeham to the Sheriff of Shrewsbury, which explains in what manner workmen were obtained for building purposes. The writer thanks the Sheriff for having sent by a messenger ten good and sufficient masons, and, discharging him from this duty, adds that if the Sheriff of Shrewsbury continues as he has begun he will greatly please the King.†

* "Ilec Indent'a fact' int' Joh'em de Langeford Constabular' Cast' de Caresbrouk et Will'm de Malton Archiatorem d'ni R' ex p'te una et Will'm de Kekenwych sup'visorem op'ris in d'c'o Castro assignat' ex p'te alt'a testat' de d'vis' expens' fact' a Sp'ngal Arblast' et alia d'visa Ingenia facie—in d'c'o Castro, virtute Prar' d'ni R' de Sigillo secreto de Griffone, vid'. a festo S'e'i Mich'is anno regni Reg' E. t'eij post conquestu' x^{mo} finiente: usq' f'm S'e'e Margarete p'x' sequens."

† "Tresch' amy veullez savoir q' jay resu du portour de icestes x masons

The Exchequer Records are documents of the highest historical interest: yet they seem to have been so little cared for that, when the re-construction of the Court of Exchequer took place, a considerable number of the parchment rolls are supposed to have been purloined by the labourers, and by them sold to be converted into size. These Records were first placed in a wooden shed, built inside Westminster Hall; thence they were removed to the King's Mews; and, finally, they were stowed away at Carlton Ride, the documents of all dates and various kinds being thrust, in the utmost confusion, into about 600 large sacks, which they completely filled.

Unfortunately, when any of the changes exacted by circumstances occurred in the Houses of Parliament, not the slightest care seems to have been taken of any object, however interesting, which it might be necessary to displace from its position. Thus, a portion of the tapestry, that could not be adapted to the House of Lords, was *lost*: and so, again, when the Painted Chamber was adapted for the sittings of the Peers, the carved panels which formed its roof were thrown into a cellar. The workmen were permitted to distribute to casual visitors, for small sums of money, portions of various remains which had been in this manner left at their disposal.

The old Exchequer buildings, fronting New Palace Yard, were necessarily removed previous to the rebuilding the Houses of Parliament. A very beautiful and characteristic Elizabethan chimney-piece, in the principal apartment, was at this time sold by public auction; it was saved by being purchased by Lord Sudeley, who, I believe, also bought at this sale the timber tracery of the ceiling, which was ornamented with the Tudor devices, the portcullis, rose, &c. This principal room bore the traditional appellation of the "Star Chamber," for the origin of which title many ingenious surmises have been given by the learned in legal history. I cannot refrain from expressing a wish

bones et suffisants p' quei le dit portor este descharge issuit q^d si vous patez come vous avez comensetz vous auera g'unt gre de n're s^r le Roi. Tsch' amy, le tout puissaunt vous octroit bone vie et longe. Escrit a Wydesore en t's g'unt hast le xx^{me} jour de Juyn. P' W. DE WYKEHAM.

"A mon t's ch' amy Johan de Whittan, Viscount de Shrosbury."

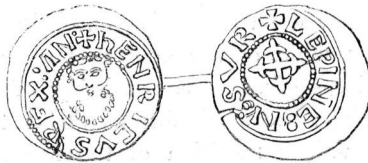
that these architectural relics had been retained as national property, and had been appropriated to some apartment in the new edifice. The elaborate cloisters on the eastern side of Westminster Hall were condemned to destruction at the same time, and were only preserved from the workman's pick-axe by the active personal interference and the energy of Mr. Sidney Taylor, then the chief editor of the Morning Herald newspaper.

Concerning Westminster Abbey, I have only to express the gratification we all must feel, that its preservation is confided to hands in which it is for the future in perfect safety; and to add a wish that whatever early relics may have been preserved will, like the iron screen-work to one of the royal tombs, in due course reappear and resume their proper positions. In my boyhood Henry the Seventh's Chapel was protected externally by only a few wooden upright posts and cross rails of the same material: and, at this period, so little attention was bestowed upon this remarkable structure from without, and such was the neglect which it experienced internally from the officials, that my school-fellows used occasionally to climb up on the outside by the water-pipes and pick pieces of stained glass from the windows. Upon the north side of this chapel a row of mean brick habitations existed, leaving a narrow opening by the side of the transept. Here is the low window of a small chapel. At the period I speak of, this window was completely denuded of all glazing between the mullions, while on the floor of the chapel itself were strewed various pieces of armour, consisting of helmets, breast-pieces, gauntlets, &c.; the whole formed about twelve complete suits which, by a vulgar tradition of the locality, were named "Oliver Cromwell's ragged regiment." If these pieces of armour have been preserved, it would be of great interest to have them suitably placed either within the Abbey itself or in the Chapter House, when the latter building shall have been cleared by the removal of the records to the New Record Office. Great facilities remain for the complete restoration of this most interesting and beautiful edifice to its original condition, as has been so ably shewn in detail by Mr. G. G. Scott; the central shaft, which once supported the vaulted ceiling, still remains; the pavement of encaustic tiles has happily been preserved in safety, beneath

the flooring of timber which has covered it; and the wooden depositories of the records have saved, while they shut out from view, many highly important works of early pictorial art and other accessories of this remarkable chamber.

Among the relics of an early period which yet remain in Westminster but are comparatively but little known, is a range of chambers, with groined roofings of stone, at the Pells Office in Whitehall Gardens, which probably form a portion of the ancient palace of Whitehall. Part of the external wall of these remains is still visible opposite the statue of James II. to the rear of the Banqueting House.

I conclude by noticing the sad neglect and mutilation into which the statue of Queen Anne, in Queen Square, has been permitted to fall; it claims attention for its future preservation, since it appears to be coeval with the erection of the adjacent houses, which exhibit in their door-frames some bold and excellent carving of their age.



Penny of Henry I. struck at Sunbury, Middlesex; in the possession of R. Whitbourn, jun. Esq.