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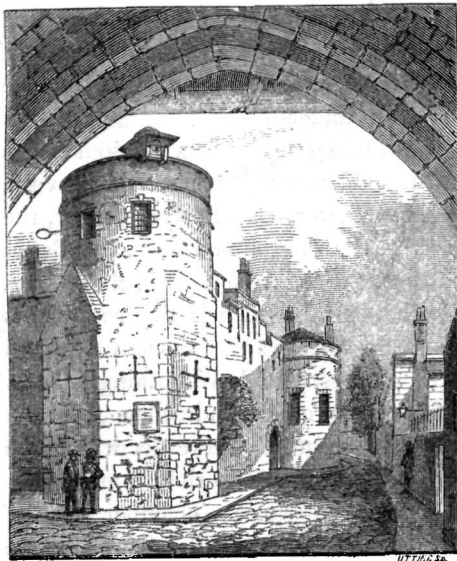
Vol. I.

Part III.

A MEMOIR OF THE BELL TOWER IN THE TOWER
OF LONDON.

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[Read in the Suffolk Street Gallery, Feb. 10, 1858.]



The Bell Tower, 1858.

I HAVE no need to point out to metropolitan, or indeed to any other, readers, the interest which attaches to the subject of the following memoir, and the value of details which have for their object the illustration of an edifice so closely connected with our national history as the Tower of London. There can exist hardly an individual Englishman for whom the Tower has not a special and inalienable charm.

The group of buildings which comprise it consists of a central

keep called the White Tower, originally the entire fortress, and of two wards surrounded by walls and towers. The central edifice comprises a basement and two higher stories, the lower now turned into armouries, the upper containing the grand Council Chamber and the exquisite Chapel of St. John. Apart from the central tower, (and independent also of the line of rampart and of the towers which string it,) there are several structures in the inner ward of considerable interest. There is the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, which, although sadly mutilated by successive restorations, is still noticeable as possessing the remains of some of the most unfortunate personages that figure in the history of this country. And there is also the building adjoining the south-west angle of the wall which surrounds the inner ward, called the Lieutenant's Lodgings, which, although of a considerably later date than the neighbouring fortifications, is interesting as having been the scene of several important events.

Both the outer and the inner wards are much encroached on, and their peculiarities rendered less conspicuous, by modern additions, in the shape of barracks, storehouses, and offices of various kinds. But with a little attention the main plan and disposition of the fortress is easily understood.

The towers of the inner ward, beginning from the south-west angle, are the Bell Tower, the Beauchamp Tower, the Develin or Devereux Tower, the Flint Tower, the Bowyer Tower, the Brick Tower, the Jewel Tower, the Constable Tower, the Broad Arrow Tower, the Salt Tower, the Lantern Tower, the Record Tower, and the Bloody Tower, beneath which is the magnificent entrance from the outer to the inner ward. Several of these are almost lost among later edifices, and have nothing left but their basements, now converted into offices and cellars. Of the Bell Tower I am presently about to furnish the reader with some particulars. The Beauchamp Tower is that so rich in memorials of noble prisoners who only left its gloomy chamber for the block on the Green or the neighbouring Hill. The Bowyer Tower has a fine basement still remaining, as have also the Brick Tower and the Lantern Tower. Of the Flint Tower there is nothing save the foundation. Of the Jewel, Constable, and

Broad Arrow Towers considerable portions are yet visible. And the Devereux Tower, Salt Tower, Record Tower, and Bloody Tower are still entire.

The towers of the outer ward are the Martin Tower, the Byward Tower, and St. Thomas's Tower, beneath which is Traitor's Gate, which still exist in a perfect condition; and the Cradle Tower and Well Tower, the basements of which alone remain.

The fortress was originally built for the Conqueror by no less a person than the celebrated Gundulf, bishop of Rochester, sometime between the years 1080 and 1090. It is probable, however, that no portion besides the great White Tower was then erected. William Rufus added considerably to the buildings; and the tower called the Wakefield Tower, lately employed for the custody of the Records, is attributed to him. Little seems to have been done further until the time of John, who built, as it appears, several additional towers during the latter part of his reign. It was, however, in the reign of the third Henry that the most extensive alterations and additions were made. Many of the towers enumerated above are unquestionably due to him, especially those of the outer ward. Edward the Third also added some magnificent towers to the inner ward, subsequent to whose age very little remains which is not palpably and conspicuously modern.

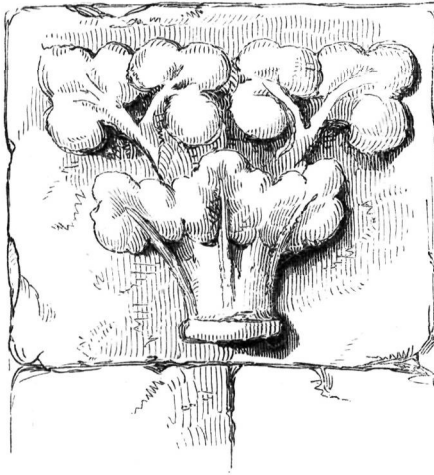
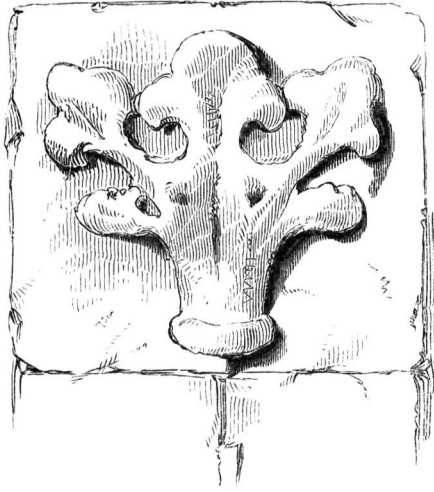
After this hasty sketch of the fortress itself and its history, I have to solicit the reader's attention to the immediate subject of my present communication.

It has been considered by many that all the towers of the inner ward, with the solitary exception of the Wakefield Tower, were the work of Edward the Third. They have had their attention engrossed by three of the most conspicuous of them, the Beauchamp, Bowyer, and Salt Towers; the first and last of which, if not all three, are indubitably the work of the fourteenth century. There are, however, two towers of the inner ward which afford equally indubitable evidence of an earlier date—the Bell and the Devereux Towers. Both of them are structures of mark and excellence, especially the former; but, very unaccountably, little notice seems to have been hitherto taken of their singularly interesting peculiarities.

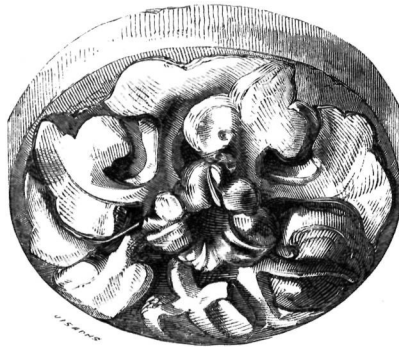
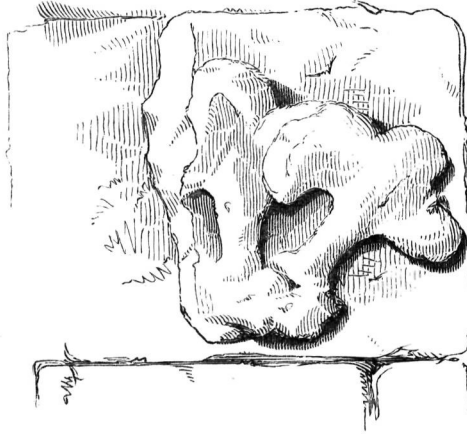
The Bell Tower occupies, it will be remembered, the south-west

angle of the inner ward, and is still crowned by a little wooden turret. (*See the view.*) This formerly contained the alarm-bell of the garrison, lately transferred to the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, but is now devoted to the more quiet and peaceful presence of the gallant and courteous Resident-Governor and his friends on calm evenings in summer, where the charms of lively converse are happily substituted for the clangour and alarm that formerly characterised the place.* The tower itself now forms a part of the Governor's house, and is used for various domestic purposes. It consists of a dark and gloomy basement, and of a chamber above, over which is the conical summit of the tower, surrounded by a modern parapet of brick, and having on its south-western side, and somewhat leaning over the abyss, the wooden erection already noticed. Externally, the tower is octagonal at the base, the portion forming the outside angle of the inner ward consisting of four whole and two half sides; the former unequal, but each about fourteen feet in width. It is thirty-five feet in diameter, sixty feet high, and has been covered with a coating of flints. At the height of about two-thirds from the base the octagonal form merges gradually into a round, which continues to the summit, the ancient work being capped, as I have said, by a modern parapet of brick. The walls of the chamber are eight feet thick, and of the basement considerably more. Three narrow openings, deeply splayed in the interior, admit air rather than light into the basement; as do two of a larger size into the chamber. In this latter the windows appear to have been originally four; but two have been long blocked up. Internally (and here I most heartily offer my grateful acknowledgments to Lieutenant-Colonel Whimper, the kind and courteous Fort-Major and Resident Governor, for his ever ready permission to examine at my will this interesting place, which, as already stated, forms part of his official residence,) the basement, the floor of which is of the same level as the inner, and therefore considerably above that

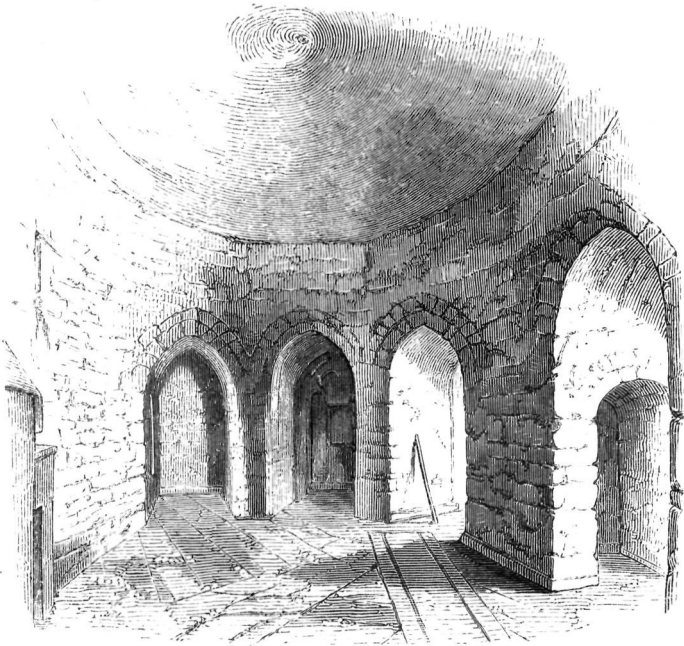
* The bell was also used, as it appears, to regulate the movements of the officials and prisoners. Among the "Articles" of the 18th of July, 1607, it is ordered that, "when the Tower bell dooth ring at nights for the shutting in of the gates, all the prisoners, wth their servants, are to wthdrawe themselves into their chambers, and not to goe forth for that night."



CAPITALS IN THE BELL-TOWER,
TOWER OF LONDON.



CAPITAL AND BOSS IN THE BELL-TOWER,
TOWER OF LONDON.



INTERIOR OF THE BELL TOWER,
TOWER OF LONDON.

of the outer, ward, has four recesses divided by three short piers. On each of the piers is a capital, from which spring strong ribs, perfectly plain, that meet at a boss in the lofty centre, and form high-pointed arches. The shaft, which no doubt originally stood beneath each capital, has departed, and three of the recesses themselves have been altered from their primary form by having been more than half filled up. The special point of interest lies, however, in the capitals themselves and the magnificent boss; and I have had them carefully drawn and engraved of a size sufficient to show their peculiarities. (*See the plate.*) The cell itself is the subject of two characteristic engravings in J. T. Smith's "Ancient Topography of London, 1810," from drawings taken in June, 1802; but the boss and capitals are represented of too small a scale for any scientific purpose. These, however, immediately reveal the age of the structure, and prove the correctness of our attribution of it to the reign either of John or of Henry III. They constitute also, I believe, the only examples now remaining in the fortress of ornamentation of this age and style. We possess here and there, though rarely, sculptured ornaments of the period of the following century, as in the well-known grotesque heads which support the groining in the portal under the Bloody Tower; but I know no example of an earlier date, save, of course, the capitals in the Norman Chapel of St. John, and those of which representations are here given.

The chamber above the basement is nearly circular in form and eighteen feet in diameter.* (*See view and plan.*) It has four recesses not unlike those of the room below, two of which are windows, and two are partly filled up with rubble masonry. The roof is conical, not vaulted with ribs, but formed of overlapping courses of thin stones, and covered on the outside with a leaden roof of similar figure, between the base of which and the brick parapet is a narrow footpath communicating with the wooden turret. The height of the recesses is 10 ft. 3 in.; from thence to the spring of the roof 4 ft.; and then about 8 ft. to the apex of the conical ceiling. This chamber is by no means of so gloomy a character as the dungeon beneath; and, if the recesses just de-

* I am indebted for a very accurate plan of it to Mr. George Arnold, of the Royal Engineers' Office.

scribed as filled up were opened for the admission of light, would be a very cheerful and pleasant apartment. In its present condition it has, nevertheless, an unmistakable air of captivity and its accompanying severities.

Our national records, although not absolutely conclusive of the fact that the Bell Tower was erected in the reign either of John or of Henry III., do not prohibit our attribution of it to that period. The Close Rolls of both these reigns contain numerous entries of additions and repairs to the fortress at large.* There is an entry on the Close Roll of the seventh year of Henry III. which not improbably refers to the very turret whose history I am endeavouring to illustrate:—

“ .f
D' compuť. } Rex Baro'ibus suis de Sc'e'io satt'. Co'putate
Ric'o Renger 7 Thome Lamberd x. libras xij. s.
7 j. deñ quos libav'nt p' pceptũ nřm Pet'o Pictav' 7 sociis suis custodibus opacionis nove turrelle Turris nře Lond', ad opacionẽ ejusdẽ turrelle . T. H. 7c. ut s^{cc}, anno ř. ñ. vij^o, p' eundẽ.” (Rot. Claus. 7 Hen. III. p. 1. m. 24.)

The works of the outer ward appear to have been commenced in the year 1239, the twenty-third of the same monarch, and to have been continued with various interruptions throughout his reign. The year just named is mentioned also by Matthew Paris as one in which the Tower was considerably strengthened. The citizens, he tells us, were apprehensive that the King's operations were undertaken for their detriment, and upon their remonstrance his majesty declared that he intended no injury; but for the future, he said, “I will endeavour in rebuilding castles to imitate my brother, whom fame reports to be wiser than myself.”† The

* Rot. Claus. 14 Joh. m. 2; 15 Joh. p. 2, m. 5, 9; 16 Joh. m. 7; 17 Joh. m. 23.

Rot. Claus. 1 Hen. III. m. 17; 2 Hen. III. m. 11, 14; 3 Hen. III. p. 2. m. 1; 4 Hen. III. m. 1; 5 Hen. III. m. 1, 3, 4, 5, 13; 6 Hen. III. m. 4; 7 Hen. III. p. 1. m. 16, 24; 9 Hen. III. p. 2, m. 6; 10 Hen. III. m. 3, &c.

† “Eodem anno [1239] roborata est Turris Londinensis. Quod timuerunt cives Londinenses sibi fieri in detrimentum. Quibus super hoc querimoniam facientibus, respondit Rex civibus: Hoc non in dedecus eorum vel periculum factum fuisse; sed sicut fratrem meum, quem fama me prudentiorem prædicat, in re-ædificatione castrorum de cætero conabor imitari.” Matt. Paris, ed. Wats, Lond. 1640, p. 486.

remains now under review are sufficient evidence that he not only, as one writer says, "surrounded the Tower with an additional line of fortifications," portions of which may still be seen in several of the beautiful towers of the outer ward, but that one at least of those of the inner ward was the result of his or of his predecessor's care. I incline to the former period, during which this tower may have been at least designed and commenced, even supposing that the entry on the Close Roll just quoted refers to the liquidation of the expenses connected with its completion, as the work both of the Bell and the Devereux Towers appears a little earlier than the remains of the Cradle and the Well Towers, which were undoubtedly erected by the latter monarch.

Of the history of the Bell Tower during many subsequent reigns we have no memorials. But in the twenty-third year of Henry VIII. an order was given for a general repair of the fortress, which seems to have been much neglected, and suffered to fall into a state of considerable dilapidation. The survey which was taken consequent upon this order is still preserved in the Record Office. It is not quite perfect, but is extremely interesting for its varied and minute details.

About the Bell Tower, this Survey presents us, in a mutilated form, with the following particulars:—

"The Bell Tower ng at the weste ende of the Tower. The walls of the same repayrede, and the vyces and the ha . . . s of a dore to be made by the masons, and a new dore therunto of tymber by the carpenters; moreover the same Tower to be roughe-casted; th'amount of the same by estymacion as followith:—

"Cane stone, iij. tons, sm; tymber, d. loode bourds, c; lyme, viij^c. at v^s. the c; sande, xxiiij. lodes, at vjd."

There is also among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, "A Perticular of the names of the Towers and Prison lodgings in his Mat^s Tower of London, taken out of a pap' of Mr. Will'm ffrancklyns, sometyme yeoman-warder, dat. 16th March, 1641." In this enumeration the structure with which we are at present engaged is particularized as,

“Bell Tower. Adjoyning to y^e Lt's house, a prison lodgeing.”
(Harl. MS. 1326, p. 125.)

There is nothing in the subsequent history of the place that claims attention; and I therefore turn in conclusion to a topic connected with it which has hitherto been barely alluded to, but which the last words of the extract just quoted very naturally force upon our notice.

This tower was for many centuries “a prison lodging,” and the walls, if they could speak, would reveal many a tale of long-endured anguish and the pining sickness of hope so far deferred as to have almost if not altogether left the sufferer. Here day after day and year after year were endured the monotony and weariness of captivity, only terminated in many instances by a violent death from the headsman's axe. In some cases, as we may suppose, the spirit so yearned for liberty that the body was unequal to the burden; while in others, when the captive was gifted with a more phlegmatic temperament, the protracted slavery ceased at length to inflict its woe. And yet, even in such instances as these, fearful must have been the ordeal and horrible the torment before such a state of insensibility could have at length been reached.

At the left of the entrance to the upper chamber there is a record which some unhappy prisoner has beguiled his dreary hours by rudely inscribing on the wall. It is a melancholy memorial indeed of suffering patiently endured.

BY . TORTVRE . STRAVNGE .
MY . TROVTH . WAS . TRIED .
YET . OF . MY . LYBERTYE . DENYED .
THER . FOR . RESON . HATH
ME . PERSWADED . THAT .
PASYENS . MVST . BE . YMB
RASYD . THOUGH . HARD .
FORTVN . CHASYTH .
ME . WYTH . SMART .
YET . PASYENS . SHAL . PREVAYL .

No name nor date identifies this pathetic declaration with any individual captive or particular era. It is not improbable that he

was one of the sufferers in the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt, in the reign of Queen Mary; or possibly he was implicated in one of the many conspiracies which endangered that of her successor. The sentiment is identical with that of Thomas Myagh, 1581, in the Beauchamp Tower, and is not unlike that which George Gyfford, "one of Queene Elizabeth's gentlemen pencionaries, that had sworn to kill the Queene," inscribed on his prison wall, also in the Beauchamp Tower, on the 8th of August, 1586, "*DOLOR PATIENTIA VINCITUR.*" We may charitably hope that the poor tortured prisoner, who was so much under the government of reason as to feel that patience was his only remedy, was abundantly blessed with that, to him, most needful grace, and that "in his patience he possessed his soul."

Of course the identification of particular prisoners with particular cells is for the most part legendary, and we can very rarely adduce precise and certain proof of the correctness of such attribution. Where, however, tradition has constantly gone in one direction, and where age after age the same legend has obtained, it appears to savour of perverse incredulity to hesitate to accept what is not plainly and flagrantly opposed to probability. The voice of tradition, for which we can cite positive authority so early at least as the following generation, asserts that the upper chamber was the prison of the venerable Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who suffered death for denying the spiritual supremacy of Henry VIII. In the year 1534 it was declared by Parliament that the King was the supreme head of the national church. This ordinance was opposed by many of the most eminent ecclesiastics and laymen of the period, among the former of whom may be mentioned the Priors of Charterhouse, Bellevale, and Sion, and the Bishop of Rochester; and, among the latter, the famous Sir Thomas More.

John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was one of the foremost men of his age. He had been chosen by the University of Cambridge for Chancellor, and made Bishop of Rochester by Henry VII. For many years he had also been confessor to the King's grandmother, Margaret Countess of Richmond; and it is affirmed that her munificent foundations of St. John's and Christ's Colleges at Cambridge, and of the professorships of divinity in both univer-

sities, were mainly owing to his pious advice and faithful direction. In the troubles between Henry and Queen Katharine he warmly espoused the cause of the latter, and thus drew down upon himself the displeasure of his unscrupulous sovereign. At length, when called before the Lambeth Council, and commanded to acknowledge the King's supremacy, he steadily refused to submit, and was forthwith sent to the Tower as a traitor.

He had now reached his seventy-seventh year, and the cold damp dungeon into which he was thrust was not calculated to prolong his days. Perhaps his enemies desired nothing so much as that privation and hardship should work their natural effect upon his aged frame, and thus remove from them the odium which could not fail to attach to all who should be instrumental in his more direct and manifest destruction. His constitution, however, was proof against the cruelties that were inflicted on him, and for many long months he bore his sufferings as became a good soldier in a cause on which his heart and mind were set. Fuller, who may be safely relied on for faithfully repeating the traditions of his age, speaks of him as "but coarsely used" in his prison "in the Bell Tower," "pitied for his age, honoured for his learning," and "admired for his holy conversations;" whose life was not worth taking, "who was not only *mortalis*, as all men, and *mortificatus*, as all good men, but also *moriturus*, as all old men, being past seventy-six years of age."*

Out of his painful dungeon, in the depth of a bitter winter, he wrote to Mr. Secretary Cromwell the affecting words that follow. A portion of the letter, which I have here given entire, has been already printed, but with very small pretensions to accuracy. The venerable writer says:—

"After my most hwmyl cõmendacions, wher ass ye be content that I shold wryte wn to the Kyngs hyghness, in gude fathe I dread me that I kan not be soo circũspect in my wryteng but that swm wurde shal escape me wher with his grace shal be moved to swm further displeasure aganste me, wherof I wold be veray sorry. ffor ass I wyll answer byfor God, I wold not in eny maner of poynte offend his grace, my dewty saved wn to God, whom I muste in euery thyng prefer. And for this consideracion I am

* Church History, book v. pp. 190, 201, 203, fol. Lond. 1655.

full loth, & full of fear, to wryte wn to his hyghness in this matter. Neuurtherless, sythen I conceyve that itt is yo^r mynde that I shal so doo, I wyl endevo^r me to the best that I kan.

“ But furst hear I mwst byseche yow gode M^r Secretary to call to yo^r remembrance that att my last beyng byfor yow & the other Co^myssionars, for takyng of the othe concernyng the Kyngs most noble succession, I was content to be sworn wnto that parcell cōcernyng the succession. And ther I did rehears this reason, which I sade moved me. I dowted nott but that the prynce of eny realme, with the assent of his nobles & comons, myght appoynte for his succession Royal such an order ass was seen wnto his wysdom most accordyng. And for this reason I sade that I was content to be sworn wnto that parte of the othe ass concernyng the succession. This is a veray trowth ass God help my sowl att my most neede. All be itt I refused to swear to swm other parcels bycause that my conscience wold not serve me so to doo. Forthermo^r I byseche yow to be gode M^r wn to me in my necessite. For I have nather shert, nor shete, nor yett other cloths, that ar necessary for me to wear, but that be ragged & rent to shamefully. Notwithstondyng I myght easily suffer that, if tha wold keep my body warm. Butt my dyet allso, God knowes how scendar itt is att meny tymes. And now in myn age my sthomak may nott awaye but with a few kynd of meats, which if I want, I decaye forthwith, & fall in to coafes & disseasis of my bodye, & kañ not keep myself in health. And, ass o^r Lord knowith, I have no thyng left wn to me for to provyde eny better, but ass my brother of his own part layeth owt for me, to his great hynderance.

“ Wherfor, gode M^r Secretarye, eftsones I byseche yow to have swm pittea wppon me, & latt me have such thyngs ass ar necessary for me in myn age, & specially for my health. And allso that yt may pleas yow by yo^r hygh wysdañ, to move the Kyng's hyghness to take me wn to his graciouss favo^r agane, & to restoor me wn to my liberty, owt of this cold & paynefwill enprysonment; wherby ye shal bynd me to be yo^r pore beadsmañ for ewer wn to allmyghty God, who cuer have yow in his proteccion & custody.

“ Other twayne thyngs I must all so desyer wppon yow. Thatt oon is, that itt may pleas yow that I may take sume preest with in the towr, by the assyġment of m̄ levetenant, to hear my confession aganste this hooly tyme.

“ That other is, that I may borow swm bowks to styr my deuocion mor effectuelly thes hooly dayes, for the comforth of my sowl. This I byseche yow to grānt me of yo^r charitie. And thws o^r Lord send yow a mery Chrystenmass & a comforthable, to yo^r harts desyer. At the Towr the xxij. day of December.

“ Yo^r pore beadsmañ, Jo. Roffs.” *

A late writer is disposed to throw some doubt upon the fact of the privations detailed in the foregoing letter, and prefers to accept the account given by Cromwell himself to the papal legate Cassalis. Nothing, however, can well be more open to suspicion than the testimony of one whose object it so manifestly was to invest his tyrannical master's outrage with a fair and plausible colouring. The writer alluded to admits that the bishop's complaint might have been founded on truth, but adds that, if so, “ it must have been an accident.”

The case may be safely left at this point. All who recollect the varied atrocities which characterized the reign of Henry VIII. and the manifold brutalities of that remorseless tyrant, can too well understand how far the injuries that were perpetrated on the hapless victims of his displeasure were inflicted by “ *accident*.”

There are now preserved in the State Paper Office some volumes of “ Tracts, Theological and Political,” formerly deposited in the Chapter House at Westminster. Some of them are mutilated by the damp, but sufficient remains to afford minute information on a number of most interesting topics. In the seventh volume of these Papers is a series of “ Interrogatories ministered on the King's behalf [unto] John Fisser, Doctour of Divinitie, late Busshop [of Rochester], the 14th daie of June, in

* MS. Cott. Cleop. E. vi. f. 172. *Manu propria* Ep. Roff.

the 27th year of [the reign] of King Henrie theighth, within the Towre [of London], &c.* The interrogatories relate principally to the vexed question of the supremacy, and the prisoner is reported as refusing to answer them “absolutely” or “resolutely.” More occupied another dungeon in the Tower, and was similarly examined the same day, but with no better success on the part of the inquisitors. The bishop was at length tried and condemned on the 17th of June, 1535, and left his prison for the block on the 22nd of the same month. He had been so much reduced by the privations which he had undergone as to be hardly able to descend the stairs. He dressed himself carefully for what he called his marriage morning, so earnestly did he long for his release from his protracted and varied misery.†

Another inmate of this tower is said to have been the princess, afterwards Queen, Elizabeth. This tradition, however, is allowed on all hands to be of so unsubstantial a character as to deserve nothing more than a passing notice.

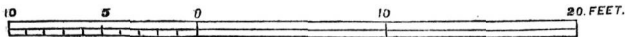
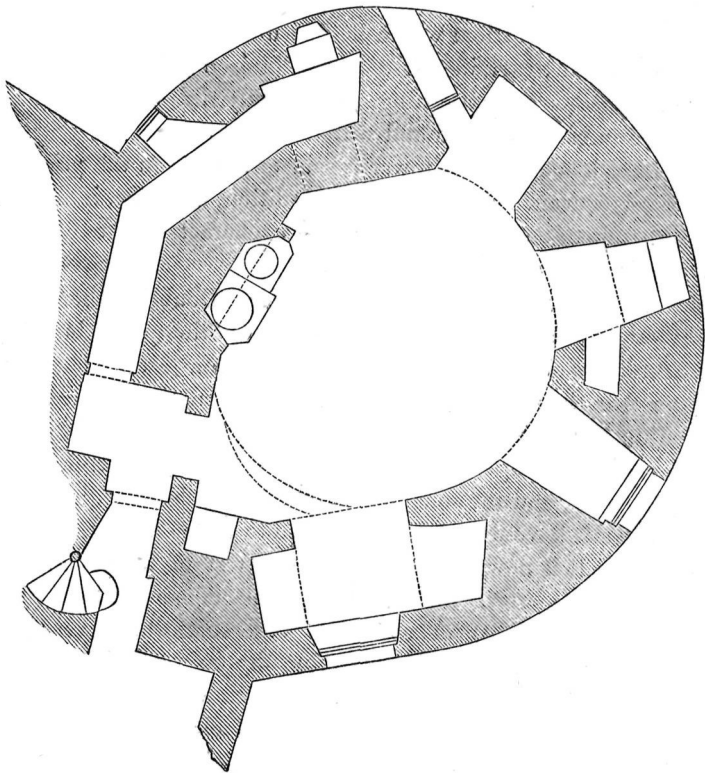
Little remains to be offered to the reader. Doubtless there were many other gloomy histories connected with the place, but they have sunk into oblivion. Change, indeed, and contrast can hardly be greater than the present appearance, both external and internal, of the adjuncts of this ancient turret, and that which it exhibited for many consecutive ages. The evidences of life-long captivity have now departed, and the sounds which once re-echoed within these massive walls have now subsided into others of a very different character. It is now, thanks to the courtesy of its gallant and accomplished master, the pleasant scene of an archæological pilgrimage, the cellar of a homely and comfortable mansion, the place for spending a vacant hour by its owner's favoured friends. And yet it needs but little imagination to picture the scene as it was once, with its hopeless and cheerless atmosphere of slavery; the sickly rays of struggling light that availed but to make its darkness visible; the chains, and bolts, and bars, between it and freedom; and, worst of all, the living victim of

* Tracts, vol. vii. leaf 5. State Papers, Lond. 1830, vol. i. pp. 431, 432. They may be seen also in MS. Cott. Cleop. E. vi. p. 169.

† There is a most interesting account of his last moments in Fuller's Church History, already referred to, book v. pp. 203—205.

this wretchedness and rigour, with despair, or “*passiens*” at best, for his consoler, the knowledge that for him the sun shone and the breeze sighed in vain,—the struggle between rage and apathy,—and the iron that entered not only into the quick of his tortured body, but also into the depths of his agonised and troubled soul.

THOMAS HUGO.



PLAN OF THE BELL-TOWER, 1853.