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ST. MARGARET'S MINSTER.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "THE BACKWOODS OF CANADA."

"The organ has pealed thro' those roofless aisles,
And priests have knelt to pray,
At the altar where now the daisy smiles
O'er their silent beds of clay."

Mrs. Moodie.

SURELY there is something beyond mere association of ideas in the feelings with which, for the first time, we look on the ivy-mantled crumbling relics of by-gone days—something that is independent of historical recollections, for the interest springs up simultaneously with the sight of the object, before the mind has had time to compare the former splendour with the present decay, or to ask of itself, who reared this stately pile—in whose days did it flourish?

The very form of an arch presents a harmony to the eye; the pillared aisle and vaulted roof are objects that raise and elevate the mind. The Phrenologist would tell you of our innate perceptions of form, colour, size, ideality, comparison, being excited and acted upon by the outward objects; and though not a direct disciple of this new school of metaphysics, I must own I am tempted to think their theory right in this respect, for the natural reason, it coincides with my own opinion. But to my tale.

In an obscure parish, in a picturesque part of Suffolk, there stands an ancient ruin, commonly known by the name of St. Margaret's Minster, or, for brevity, simply called The Minster—apparently from its situation a chapel to the adjacent abbey, that looks down in melancholy grandeur on the low rich vale of intervening pasture-land.

Topographers, who have dwelt largely on objects of less importance in the antiquities of the country, have yet passed by in silence the venerable abbey, with its massy towers, its buttressed walls, and moated grounds—neither has the less attractive ruin, the "Minster lone and gray," claimed their attention. Local tradition, however, has not been silent, and affixes a date of great antiquity to the latter building, and an importance that claims the interest of the lover of antiquarian research.

"St. Margaret's Minster," saith a venerable but living chronicler, (mine ancient friend,) "was once

a Saxon temple—but was consecrated to the service of the true God by Sigebert, King of the East Angles, after his conversion from the blind darkness of paganism to the light of Christianity, by Felix, that solid follower of his Lord."

For some years, probably a century, the Minster had the honour of being dignified as the Cathedral Church; a portion of the Abbey is yet called the Bishop's Palace. I have stood within its massive walls, the thickness of which seem to bid defiance to that too sure destroyer—Time.

The city of Norwich soon after became the See of the East Anglian Bishops, and Herbert, after endowing several ecclesiastical buildings in the immediate vicinity of St. Margaret's, consigned its walls to a holy abbot and his monks. For many centuries it used to be a rendezvous for pilgrims, when journeying to the famous shrine of our "Lady of Walsingham." Not many years ago, on removing some stones and rubbish at the entrance porch, an iron box was discovered, containing—neither silver nor gold—but a vast number of brass and copper coins of the smallest value, known by antiquarians by the name of "pilgrims' tokens." These humble alms were deposited in the almoner's box, on departing, with a prayer and blessing on the good monks. Among these relics was one small coin of silver, through a hole in which was passed a silver braid—perhaps a love token, or, as my old friend gravely observed, the gift of some holy hermit or saint to the pilgrim, who had deposited it as a gift of gratitude or charity. Gladly would I have craved the relic, but I forbore—for it seemed sacred in the eyes of its venerable possessor, himself a man of four score years and ten, and meet to have been the Bishop of St. Margaret's. The very sight of Gerrard Norman carried you insensibly back to former ages. I never looked upon his like before; I shall never look upon it again—he is of a race gone by.