

KIRKSTALL ABBEY.

VISITORS to the picturesque remains of Kirkstall—a fragment of the monastic splendour of the twelfth century—will be surprised at the change which has recently been effected in its outward appearance. The Corporation of Leeds, to which the ruins of the abbey now belong, decided to have them repaired. For this purpose the ivy has been pulled from the walls, and the walls are being pointed with new mortar. How far the restoration is to be carried does not appear; at all events, the commencement of the same has provoked much and not altogether favourable comment.

The abbey was founded in 1157 by Henry de Lacy for the Cistercian order, and is situated in a beautiful vale, watered

granted by Henry VIII. and Edward VI. in exchange to Archbishop Crammer and his heirs. They were by this prelate settled on his younger son, but how the whole so soon afterwards passed out of his family is not recorded. That this did happen, however, is certain, for in the twenty-sixth year of Elizabeth we find the property granted by the Queen to Edward Downynge and Peter Asheton, and their heirs, forever.

At a later period the site and demesnes of Kirkstall, together with the adjoining manor of Bramley, were purchased by the Savilles of Howley, and since then they have passed, by marriage, with the other estates of the family, through the



KIRKSTALL ABBEY, AS IT WAS BEFORE THE PRESENT RESTORATION.

by the river Aire. The strict rules of the Cistercians, enjoining simplicity of life and dress, extended also to their architecture, and their abbeys were for the most part large and well built but not richly ornamented. Kirkstall, however, was erected when the order was already beginning to construe their rules more liberally, and the abbey was of a richer type than was usual in the earlier Cistercian houses. Enclosed by a loop of the Aire, and well sheltered by hills and woods, the situation of Kirkstall conformed with another rule of the Cistercians, which bade them choose for their house a secluded spot separated from the busy haunts of men.

The dissolution of the monastery in 1539 made an end to the active and useful influence of the monks in the neighborhood. The site, with some of the circumjacent estates, were

Duke of Montague, to the Earls of Cardigan, and the ruins, with part of the grounds, have lately come into the possession of the Corporation of Leeds. The abbey has been for a long time in a state of sad decay. The gateway has been walled up, and converted into a farmhouse, the roof of the aisle is entirely gone; the tower, built in the time of Henry VIII. remained entire till Jan. 27, 1779, when three sides of it were blown down, and only the fourth remains with part of an arched chamber, leading to the cemetery, and part of the dormitory. There is a staircase to one of the turrets, from which the monks of Kirkstall feasted their eyes with the charming scenery around. The former gardens of the monastery have been converted into pleasure grounds, and are connected with Leeds by tramway and railway.