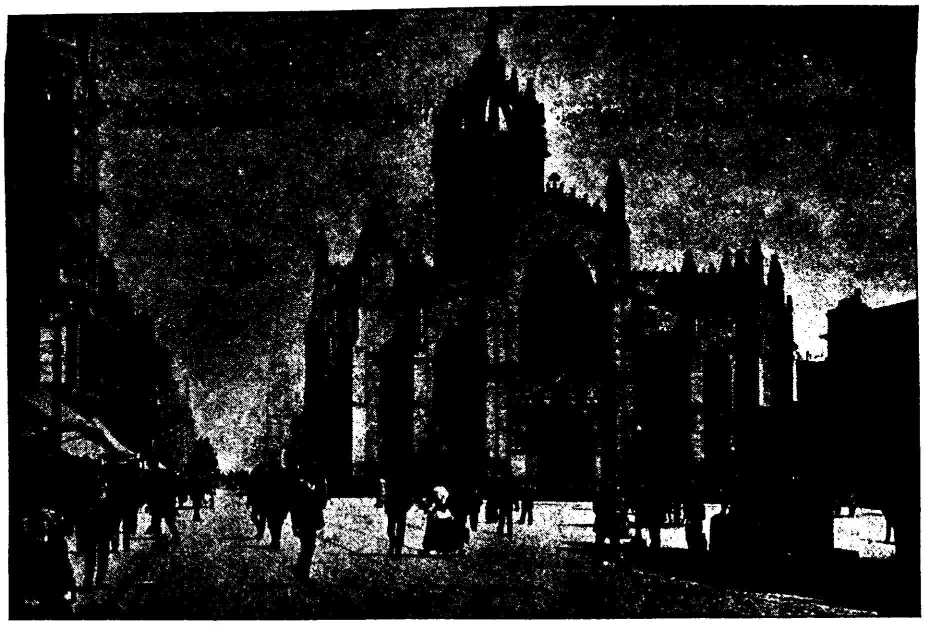


ST. GILES CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH.

A REVERENT PILGRIMAGE.

> "They dreamed not of a perishable house
> Who thus could build."
> —*Wordsworth.*

PART I.—SCOTLAND.

The Cathedral Church of St. Giles.

In the ages we are pleased to call the dark—when half the world fought and the other half prayed—piety, however corrupted by superstition, had this redeeming feature: it delighted to give to God of its best. For God the architect planned and the workman builded; for God the artist painted and the poet and the musician sang; for God burned the lamp of philosophy as well as that of religion.

It was in those days that Gothic architecture was perfected. It was an expression not only of the feeling that when God condescends to dwell in temples made with hands, these, so far as our poor means and conceptions will allow, should symbolize His Majesty, but of another not less important—that "each minute and unseen part" is, equally with the greatest, to His honor and glory. Hence in the cathedrals and abbeys that arose from Iona to Rome, foundations were laid and columns raised, and finials carved, with equal care. If, as was once said, the Grecian portico is worthy to be the model of temples in Elysium, the Gothic cathedral is surely, as far as anything built with hands can be, worthy to be the temple of the living God.

That Scotland, poor and semi-barbarous as she was, was in such matters not behind her more prosperous neighbors,—he who has wandered in that romantic land can need no telling. From St. Magnus in the north down to beautiful Sweetheart Abbey in the south, churches and religious foundations abounded. That so many of these have been wilfully laid waste, has long been brought as a reproach against Scotland. England has still her perfectly preserved cathedrals and abbeys; Scotland, for the most part, has but the ruins of hers. The reason is obvious; in Scotland, of all countries, the church had become most corrupt, and when the tide turned, a universal law fulfilled itself; action was equal to reaction and in a contrary direction. Not without excuse was the stern iconoclast whose eloquence caused the work of destruction.

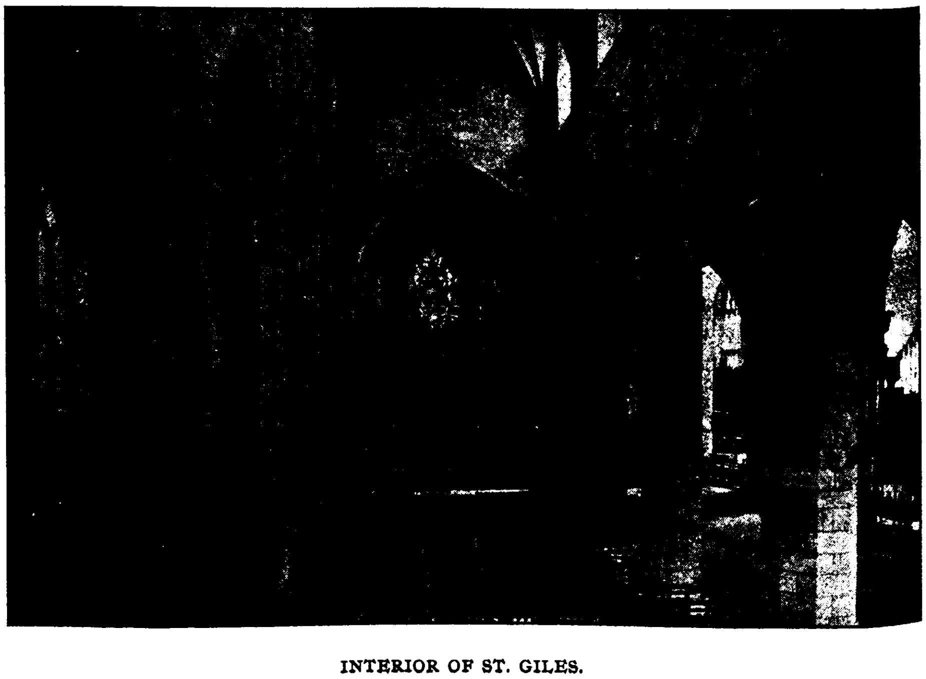
In our times the tide has turned again; not thank God! in favor of the old tyranny, but of the old reverence for sacred places and the old love of making them beautiful. Nor is that all. Whatever the faults of our day, it is on the whole one of tolerance and charity; and of these, founded not in weakness but on a strong sense of justice. In the life-time of every earnest people, as in that of every earnest individual, there comes an hour when inherited or hastily-embraced opinions are conscientiously reviewed. —sometimes to be held more strongly, sometimes to be modified, sometimes to be discarded for ever. To us, as a nation, that hour seems to have come now; and it is not too much to say that we have greatly modified our inherited opinions, and that in studying history, we no longer expect nineteenth century life amid fifteenth and sixteenth century surroundings. With this new tolerance has come a greater reverence for what is old, and a greater pride in and tenderness for the holy and beautiful houses where our fathers worshipped. Where we can we restore; where we cannot we sacredly guard. Like the Jews with their Zion, we take pleasure in the stones and the very dust is dear to us.

Let him who in such spirit would visit these ancient places, take up his pilgrim-staff and come with me.

And first, as in duty bound, we will wander to Edinburgh, and once there, seek the "Cathedral Church of St. Giles,"—as, notwithstanding its Presbyterian ownership and mode of worship, it is still officially designated. There are, as everybody knows, restorations and restorations. Connected with St. Giles they are in modern times notably two: that of 1829-33 when Goth meeting Gothic, a beautiful and picturesque exterior was transferred into a bald casing; and that begun in 1872, when principally owing to the munificence of the late Dr. William Chambers, the interior of the grand old structure was made worthy not only of its name and of its history, but as far as might be, of its end.

The traveller who on his approach to Edinburgh sees the graceful decorated lantern or crown which, surmounting the spire of St. Giles, towers over the Old Town and is visible many miles distant,—is apt to be disappointed when, on reaching the church, he finds it outwardly so little imposing. For what is lacking in this respect, however, its situation may atone. Standing in the middle of the High street, that venerable thoroughfare which has the castle at one end and Holyrood at the other; which, "has borne upon i's pavements the burden of all that was beautiful, all that was gallant, all that has become historically interesting in Scotland for the last six or seven hundred years;"—old associations gather thickly about it, and tragic memories seem to fill the air. Close beside it stood the old toll-booth—the "Heart of Midlothian," and the ancient City Cross, on whose destroyer, Scott uttered his "minstrel's malison." Near it still stands the Parliament House, with its Great Hall, fortunately unchanged, where James, Duke of York, sat to try the friends of the Covenant, and Sir George Mackenzie—that "noble wit of Scotland," as Dryden calls him—won, as King's advocate, his more lasting title of "Bluidy Mackenzie." Near it too is the spot where the assembled nobles and citizens laid the remains of Knox, and where the fierce Morton pronounced the memorable eulogium: "There lies he who never feared the face of man." Further on is the house where Knox wrote his history, where he marvellously escaped the bullet of an assassin, and where at length he died—"not so much oppressed with years, as worn out and exhausted by his extraordinary labor of body and anxiety of mind." On yonder gallery of Moray House stood Lord Lorne, afterwards known as the "unfortunate Argyll," to see his hated rival, the great Montrose pass to the scaffold, where, before many years, he was himself to suffer. From that grim pile went the Duke of Queensberry to ratify the Treaty of Union; and in it, while England and Scotland were made one, occurred a frightful tragedy*. These dark "wynds" and "closes" have their romances too. In this was signed the Covenant; down that clattered Claverhouse with thirty of his troopers, on their way to raise the clans for King James, while the town was beating to arms to pursue him. Through this passed Mary on her return from her last visit to Darnley; through that went Bothwell and his band to murder him. And so, until recent changes, we might have sauntered from the Castle where Mary's son was born to the palace where Rizzio was murdered, and found never a stone without a history.

The individual story of St. Giles is soon told. The original church is said to have been founded early in the ninth century, and to have belonged to the Bishopric of Lindisfarne or Holy Isle—Lothian being at that time a part of the Kingdom of Northumbria. When it was placed under the patronage of St. Giles, we have no means



INTERIOR OF ST. GILES.

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*The noble house of Queensberry had its skeleton in the form of a monster of horrible appearance and immense size and strength. The Duke was so unpopular on account of his part in the treaty, that on the day of its ratification, it was deemed prudent to increase his usual retinue by the entire domestic force, and Queensberry House was left in charge of a boy whose office was to turn the spit. In the absence of his keeper, the monster escaped from his place of confinement, removed the meat from the spit, and substituted the boy, and by the time the household returned, had roasted and partially devoured his victim.