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TYPICAL CHURCH TOWERS OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

PART IX. LINCOLNSHIRE.

IN our two former papers we pointed out the richness and beauty of the Norfolk and Suffolk churches, and the value of those two counties as a field for the study of mediæval architecture.

Lincolnshire, which we are about to consider, is in a somewhat different way quite as celebrated for its splendid churches. Nowhere in England are grander parish churches to be found than Louth, Boston, Grantham, Heckington, and Holbeach. But there is one great peculiarity about the Lincolnshire churches. The county is divided into two parts by the River Witham, which are called respectively the Northern and the Southern Division. The Witham flows through the city of Lincoln and finds its way to the sea near Boston. Now, nearly all the fine churches are in the Southern Division, the principal exceptions being Louth and Tattershall, and what is still more remarkable is that while the Northern and larger division possesses only three or four stone spires, they are extremely numerous in the Southern Division. It is also not a little remarkable that the churches in the episcopal city and its immediate neighbourhood should be small and quite unimportant except, perhaps, for their remarkable antiquity, several of them dating from times previous to the Norman Conquest; so the glorious minster which looks down from its lofty hill in solitary grandeur, without a single rival to detract from its majestic proportions, forms an object which, externally at least, impresses the mind more deeply than any other church in Europe. Were the interior equally striking, it would perhaps have no rival anywhere; but the want of height in proportion to its width and vast length, is fatal to its claim to be considered "the most beautiful church in England."

The most remarkable churches in the county will be found in the neighbourhoods of Sleaford, Holbeach, and close to the Northamptonshire border. Amongst the Sleaford group are Ewerby, Heckington, Helpringham, Silk-Willoughby, Aswarby, Ranceby Braughton, Anwick, Swineshead and Sleaford—all of which possess graceful stone spires. The Holbeach group include Moulton, Long Sutton, Sutton St. Nicholas, Gedney, Gosberton, Fleet, and the noble church of Holbeach—all possessing spires. Three of the grandest, however, Louth, Boston, and Grantham, are somewhat isolated in position.

Louth is a very grand example of a parish church of a Perpendicular period with a tower and a spire nearly 300 feet high. It has, however, one remarkable peculiarity: the tower, as high as the battlements, is almost identical with that of Boston, and there is a tradition that they are works of the same architect; now Louth tower was commenced in 1501 by an architect of the name of Cole, but he either died or ceased to direct the works before the spire was built, and it is a curious fact that both of these beautiful works should exhibit their solitary defect at the same point, that is, at the junction of the tower with its superstructure. At Boston, instead of a spire or lantern starting from this point, an extra storey is added, which breaks up the continuity of the composition; above this, it is true, there is an open lantern of very beautiful form, but had the lantern been placed over the belfry storey the design would have been perfect. At Louth the spire does grow out of the tower over the belfry storey; but there is one defect, the pinnacles at the base of the spire are so lofty as to make the spire appear too small for so grand a

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LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE.