

AN OUTLINE OF THE ANCIENT CATHEDRALS OF SCOTLAND.

IN the last two issues of the American "Catholic Quarterly Review," under the heading "The Ancient Cathedrals of Scotland," the Rev. Michael Barrett, O.S.B., of Fort Augustus, Scotland, has published a most instructive account of the principal Catholic Cathedrals of that old land. As a rule, unless we have made a special study of the history of the Catholic Church in Scotland, we are apt to associate the "land o' cakes," with Presbyterianism exclusively, and to conjure up visions of Balfours of Burley, Black Bothwells, and Mucklewraiths, while in more practical days we see a Knox thundering from every window on every street of every city in the land. But Catholicity has had a glorious history in Scotland, and the remains of its shattered power and sway speak eloquent sermons in carved stones and fallen columns.

Passing over his introductory chapter, I will take the liberty of referring to five of the existing evidences in the form of Ancient Cathedrals, of the once religious greatness of old Scotia. I will leave aside all the matter that Father Barrett so appropriately brings in, but which pertains in a special manner to the domain of religious controversy, or to that of ecclesiastical history, and merely dwell upon the actual descriptions of the five Cathedrals that I have selected for comment. In their stories have we got the very best evidence of all that the Church did, in past ages, for the civilization of peoples and the fostering of arts, sciences and religion. I will leave the plain descriptive part to the elegant pen of Father Barrett.

"LANTERN OF THE NORTH."—This, the Cathedral of Elgin, being one of the most ancient and most important in all Scotland, I will have to trespass considerably on space, in order to give a sufficiently full account of its origin and its varied history—because, save in dimensions and in minor details, the stories of all the other cathedrals depend upon the same series of facts and of events. It is thus Father Barrett tells of this grand old work of art:—

"Beautiful as were many of the buildings belonging to the old Scottish Cathedrals, none surpassed in dignity and grace the glorious Church of the Holy Trinity at Elgin, which merited the poetic title of 'The Lantern of the North.' The seat of the Bishop of Moray was transferred from Spynie to Elgin, two miles distant, by Bishop Andrew, in the thirteenth century. A church of considerable size already existed, but many additions were necessary to fit it for its more exalted rank. Whatever may have been done by Bishop Andrew was rendered of no avail by a fire which broke out fifty years after and consumed at least a portion of the edifice. Fresh efforts were made by successive bishops to restore the Cathedral to its former splendor between 1270, the date of the fire, and 1390. During that period a Chapter House, porch, choir aisles and probably other additions were made. But in 1390 occurred a serious disaster. Alexander, Earl of Buchan, fourth son of King Robert II. by his first wife, Elizabeth Mure, had been angered by the Bishop of Moray's adverse decision in a suit brought against the Earl by his outraged wife Eupheme, Countess of Ross, and in revenge seized on some of that prelate's lands. The bishop excommunicated him and the infuriated noble, who from his fierce temper and cruel disposition had earned the title of 'Wolf of Badenoch,' swooped down on Elgin with a lawless horde and gave the whole city to the flames, including the beautiful Cathedral with all its books and ornaments.

This wanton outrage nearly broke the heart of the aged bishop Robert Barr, who made a piteous appeal to the King for help. But again, in 1402, a fresh attack was made on the Church by Alexander, son of Donald Lord of the Isles. After burning the town and spoiling the goods of the canons, he was met by the bishop, William of Spynie, at the gate of the Cathedral and was so touched by the prelate's bold rebuke that he confessed his fault and beg-

ged for forgiveness and eventually received solemn pardon for his offense. Henceforward the beautifying and improving of their Cathedral was the chief object of each succeeding bishop and met with no further rebuff. The buildings were receiving continual additions till 1538, little more than twenty years before the southern churches of Scotland were wrecked, and after Henry VIII. had forced England into schism and was robbing monasteries and churches wholesale. The fact is only one more proof of the staunch nature of Scottish Catholicity.

The completed building was one of much magnificence, as its very ruins testify. Its ground-plan was cruciform and its style of architecture early English and Flamboyant. The western entrance, approached by a flight of broad steps, was a great doorway deeply recessed and having a double portal. It was surmounted by a noble window 27 feet high, filled with rich tracery and flanked on either side by lofty massive towers, at present nearly 90 feet in height, and probably surmounted formerly by wooden spires. The nave was 100 feet in length and consisted of six bays of pointed arches, supported on clustered pillars richly carved. Beyond the aisles, on either side, were six chapels, something like those in Chichester Cathedral. There was a "marriage porch" to the southwest. The short transepts had each one altar towards the east, that of St. Peter and Paul to the north and that of St. Thomas to the south. At the point of junction rose a fine central tower. The choir of four bays had aisles terminating in chapels with altars, and beyond it was a Lady Chapel lighted by eastern windows of unusual beauty, consisting of two rows of five tall lancets surmounted by a wheel window. To the northeast stood a very fine octagonal Chapter House, its vaulted ceiling supported on a central pillar; this latter was most elaborately carved with shields and various emblems of the Passion, and on one side was formed a stone book rest. The legend runs that this pillar was the work of an apprentice whose master became so jealous that in his fury he murdered his talented pupil; for this reason the Chapter House is often called the "Prentice Aisle." The same story is told of a famous pillar in Roslin Chapel near Edinburgh. The stone carving at Elgin Cathedral was more than usually ornate."

CATHEDRAL AND COLLEGE.—"The canons and prebendaries resided in the buildings known as the 'College.' These formed a spacious oblong about 900 yards in circuit, enclosed in a lofty wall containing four gates. Portions of the Bishop's Palace, Deanery and Manse of the canons still remain, as well as many other ancient buildings and fragments of the bygone greatness of this now quiet little town. It is to one of the bishops of this see, David (1299), that the Scots College in Paris owes its foundation. His successor continued and completed the work. Several other of the prelates of Moray figure in history as men of note. Bishop Winchester (1437-1458) was chaplain to King James II. and was sent as envoy to England. Bishop James Stewart (1459-1461) was Lord Treasurer; Bishop Tulloch (1477-82) was Keeper of the Privy Seal; Bishop Hepburn (1516-24) was Lord Treasurer."

"Besides the slab of blue marble marking the burial place of Bishop Andrew, the original founder of the Church, many other interesting monuments are to be seen. One is that of Bishop Innes (1414), another that of the Duke of Albany, beheaded in 1425 for rebellion against James I.; the first Earl of Huntly (1470), and Bishop Winchester (1458) have also tombs here; the latter is under an arch which still bears traces of frescoed angels in red outlines. It was here that Duncan, immortalized by Shakespeare in 'Macbeth,' was laid to rest; by the generosity of King Alexander II., one of Duncan's descendants, a chaplaincy was founded in Elgin Cathedral to provide Masses in perpetuity for the repose of his soul."

HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL.—The next Church mentioned is one of great antiquity and equal importance. The author says:—

"The Cathedral of the Holy Trinity at Brechin, in Forfarshire, was probably commenced when the see was founded by King David I., in 1150, and was added to at various periods of its history. At the time of its greatest glory, just before the Reformation, it consisted of a cruciform building measuring nearly 200 feet in entire length. Its nave of five bays was in later pointed style of architecture, the arches being upheld on octagonal and clustered columns. The choir was about 84 feet long and had no aisles. This portion, together with the transepts, was in pure early English style of pointed architecture. The choir contains stalls for the twelve canons who comprised the chapter and for the assistant clergy. The high altar was at the eastern end of the choir. In other parts of the church were altars to St. Thomas the Martyr, St. Ninian, St. Christopher, St. Catherine and others besides those, found in every mediæval church of importance, to the Holy Cross and Our Blessed Lady."

IRISH BUILDERS.—Speaking of one particular tower, it is thus the story runs, and thus we learn how the Irish people had even a hand in laying the foundations of Scotland's Catholic architectural glory:—

"This tower was built by Bishop Patrick (1351-73); it has narrow windows at the front and sides up to the height of the church, and above these, under the battlemented gallery at the top, are large windows—one in each face—with early English tracery. An octagonal spire rises from the tower; the entire height is 128 feet. Attached to the southwest angle of the church, though originally built entirely apart from any other building, is the famous 'round tower' of Brechin, whose meaning and use have puzzled many antiquarians. It is 85 feet high and about 20 feet in diameter and tapers somewhat towards the top, which is surmounted by a short octagonal cap having dormer windows on four of its sides. The tower is built of a reddish gray sandstone; it contains two square window-openings at different heights, one facing south and the other east, and under the cap are four more of such small windows facing the cardinal points; besides these it has no other lights. A doorway, whose sill is now six feet above the level, is in a semi-circular arch, surmounted by a defaced crucifix; a small statue stands on either side, about half-way up the arch. This round tower is thought to have been built by Irish masons in the eleventh century. In Catholic times two bells hung in it; they were transferred in the last century to the square tower on the other side of the church."

DUNBLANE CATHEDRAL.—The account of this great Cathedral, a relic of ancient days, when Scotland was truly a land of Faith, needs no amplification at my hands:—

"The See of Dunblane, Perthshire, was founded by King David I. about the year 1140 by reviving the ancient bishopric of Strathern. A Columban monastery had been formerly established there by St. Blane, a saint of Bute, who had preached the Gospel in that part of Perthshire—hence the title. The records of the see have been lost, and some portions of its early history are buried in obscurity. The first bishop to whom we owe the beginnings of the fine Cathedral whose remains are still to be seen was Bishop Clement, who ruled the see in 1238. He was a Dominican friar, of foreign origin, renowned for his learning, and is said to have received the habit of his order from St. Dominic himself. At the time of his appointment to Dunblane the diocese was in so wretched a plight that he made a journey to Rome to lay the case before the Holy See. The revenues were in the hands of seculars; for the see, until restored by King David, had been vacant for more than a century, and no bishop had as yet succeeded in regaining his full rights."

The church was ruined and desolate; its revenues were barely sufficient to support the bishop for half a year; there were no canons—merely a simple priest to say Mass thrice a week in the roofless Church. Pope Gregory IX., in answer to Bishop Clement's appeal, directed the bishops of Glasgow and Dunkeld to raise funds from the various parishes of the diocese to place matters on a proper footing. So energetic was Clement in the work of building his Cathedral and reconstructing his bishopric, that during his twenty-five years of rule he was able to give a Dunblane 'a stately sanctuary, enriched with lands and possessions, served by canons and prebendaries.' The church, when completed, consisted of an aisleless choir measuring 80 feet in length and 30 in width, and a nave 130 feet long. There were no transepts; a square tower, rising to the height of 128 feet, stood on the south side of the church in the place which a south transept would have occupied. This tower, as is evident at the present day, was anterior to Bishop Clement; its lower stories are Norman in style and its upper stages of later work. It is probably the only remaining portion of King David's early church."

A WONDERFUL WINDOW.—The following extract, especially the quotation from Ruskin therein, to my mind is one of the most noteworthy in all the article:—

"The vest gable had three very long and narrow windows placed close together, and these also had double tracery with a passage between. Over them was a small 'vesica' shaped window surrounded on the outside by a carved fringed bay-leaf ornaments arranged in zig-zag fashion, their points touching. This window, which may still be seen, has received high praise, as a feature of singular beauty, from no less an authority than the late Mr. Ruskin. In a lecture delivered at Edinburgh he thus alluded to it: 'Do you recollect the west window of your own Dunblane Abbey?' It is acknowledged to be beautiful by the most careless observer. And why beautiful? Simply because in its great contours it has the form of a forest leaf, and because in its decoration it has used nothing but forest leaves. He was no common man who designed that Cathedral of Dunblane. I know nothing so perfect in its simplicity, and so beautiful, so far as it reaches, in all the Gothic with which I am acquainted. And just in proportion to his power of mind, that man was content to work under Nature's teaching; and instead of putting a merely formal dog-tooth, as everybody else did at the time, he went down to the woody bank of the sweet river beneath the rocks on which he was building, and he took up a few of the fallen leaves that lay by it, and set them in his arch, side by side forever."

"The Cathedral possessed at least eight altars. These bore the dedications of Holy Trinity, Our Lady, St. Michael, St. Blaise, St. Nicholas, St. Stephen and St. Blane, and in addition there was the High Altar. Several of these altars had annual revenues for services and sustentation. Thus the High Altar was endowed by Archdeacon Newton, early in the sixteenth century, to secure a daily Mass there. Our Lady's Altar, also, as well as St. Stephen's and St. Blane's, had fixed revenues. That of St. Nicholas was endowed in 1509 by Dean Walter Drummond, 'for the support of one chaplain to pray daily for the safety of the souls of the King, the Queen, Prince Arthur, John, Lord Drummond (brother of the donor) and Elizabeth, the wife of the said John, and the late John Drummond, Dean of Dunblane.' There seems to have been also an altar and chaplain of St. Fillan in the Cathedral."

THE SEE OF ROSS.—I grieve not to be able to reproduce all the deeply interesting historical details regarding those temples of the olden Faith, but space would absolutely forbid. Turn we now to a fourth one, of which Father Barrett says:—

"The See of Ross was one of those founded by King David I.; its exist-

ence dates from about the year 1128. The first Cathedral was built at Rosemarkie on the western shore of the Moray Firth. It stood on the site of an ancient church raised by the Irish St. Boniface or Kiritinus, who evangelized the district in the eighth century. A new Cathedral was erected about the beginning of the fourteenth century at a spot then known as Chanonry, situated about a mile from Rosemarkie on the other side of the promontory called Chanonry Point. The two little burghs were united by James II. in 1444 into one town under the name of Fortrose. The latter Cathedral, dedicated to St. Peter and St. Boniface, was a small building of rich red sandstone and is considered to have been of remarkable beauty. "The style," says a competent authority, "is the purest and most elaborate Middle Pointed; and the whole church, though probably not 120 feet long, must have been an architectural gem of the very first description. The exquisite beauty of the mouldings shows that in whatever other respect these remote parts of Scotland were barbarous, in ecclesiology, at least, they were on a par with any other branch of the mediæval church." The building consisted of a nave 30 feet wide, of four bays, with aisles 14 feet wide, a choir with aisles, an eastern Lady Chapel, a vaulted Chapter House to the northeast and a western tower. There were small transepts and a turret over the roof-loft. The great east window was a particularly fine one of five lights."

RENOUNED BISHOPS.—Note how the institutions and buildings that have ever been the pride of Scotland were the handiwork of great Catholic bishops. The article thus continues:—

"Some of the bishops are renowned in the history of the country. Bishop Elphinstone, founder of Aberdeen University, for example, was occupant of the See of Ross before he was translated to Aberdeen in 1484. Bishop John Fraser had been Abbot of the Cistercian house of Melrose. He was made a Privy Counsellor in 1506. Bishop Robert Cairncross, formerly Abbot of the famous house of Austin Canons at Holyrood, Edinburgh, was made Bishop of Ross in 1534. He was a chaplain of James V. and became in 1528 Lord Treasurer of the kingdom. On the death of the King he was made one of the Lords of the Council to the Governor, the Earl of Arran. Bishop Henry Sinclair had been in early life a great favorite with James V. He was a learned Canonist and became vice-president of the College of Justice. But the most celebrated of all the bishops of this see was, undoubtedly, John Leslie. He had been educated at Aberdeen and Paris; in the latter university he took his doctorate. In 1560, when official of Aberdeen, he was chosen by the Lords of the Congregation to discuss points of faith with John Knox at Edinburgh; nothing was settled by the discussion, but as Leslie was detained in Edinburgh and prohibited from preaching it would seem that the Protestant party were in fear of his powers. When Queen Mary was invited to return home from France, Leslie was sent by the Catholic party to place their loyal services at the Queen's disposal. He accompanied Mary to Scotland and this was the commencement of a life-long attachment to his sovereign which was to make him famous in the history of his time. He was made Bishop of Ross in 1565, and continued to be the Queen's confidential agent till her untimely end. Imprisoned in 1572 by Elizabeth of England for his share in striving to bring about a marriage between the Queen of the Scots and the Duke of Norfolk, he was banished the realm and visited the courts of France, Spain and Germany to ask help for his royal mistress, but without success. He went to Rome in 1575 and afterwards was named coadjutor to the Archbishop of Rouen, though he never enjoyed the dignity. The news of his Queen's tragic end caused him such grief that he gave up the world and retired to a monastery of Austin

Canons at Brussels, where he died in 1596. He left behind him many valuable writings."

ORKNEY CATHEDRAL.—We have to go for the last of these Cathedrals to the Orkneys:

The Cathedral of the diocese of Orkney, which at least one mediæval historian places next to that of Ross in the sequence of sees, was the Church of St. Magnus, Kirkwall. It enjoys the distinction of being the only Scottish Cathedral which exists whole and entire in the present day and that, probably, by reason of its isolated situation on the distant island of Orkneys known as Pomona or Mainland. It is worthy of note that Kirkwall Cathedral, like that of Glasgow—the only other in Scotland which can claim anything like architectural completeness dating from Catholic times—rose over the body of a popular saint. St. Magnus was the son of Erlin, the Norwegian Earl of Orkney."

KIRK WALL CATHEDRAL.—We cannot here tell the story of the great St. Magnus, nor repeat all the legends that still cling to his name, and in a way perpetuate his fame in Scotland; but here is something about his work:—

"Kirkwall Cathedral cannot be considered as belonging to the Scottish Church until the fifteenth century; for previous to 1472 the bishops of Orkney were subject to the Archbishop of Drontheim, since the Cathedrals belonged to Norway. When James III. espoused Margaret, daughter of Christian, King of Denmark and Norway, in 1469, the Orkney Islands were pledged to Scotland until the completion of the payment of the dowry bestowed upon the Princess by the marriage contract; as full payment was never made, the Islands passed permanently under the dominion of the Scottish monarch and Orkney became a suffragan bishopric of St. Andrews. Little is known of the history of the see, the earlier records having perished. Bishop Andrew, in 1486, procured the erection of Kirkwall into a royal burgh with the right of holding courts and having fairs and markets. Bishop Robert Maxwell, in the following century, provided the three fine-toned bells which still hang in the tower, and fitted the choir with stalls. During his bishopric, in 1540, James V. visited in person all the remoter portions of his dominion, including the Orkney Islands, twelve vessels having been prepared and furnished for the voyage. The King 'was gratified on reaching the Orkneys by finding these islands in a state of greater improvement and civilization than he had ventured to expect.' The bishop, as Leslie informs us, entertained the royal party nobly. "Robert Maxwell," says the quaint translation of Fr. Dalrymple, "than Bishop in their partes, received and taknes (tokens) of benevolence, Honestie and Humantie." Bishop Maxwell died in that year, or early in the next, as his successor, Bishop Reid, was recommended to the Pope by James V. in a letter dated April 5, 1541."

THE MARTYR OF ORKNEY.—It'll close with these two extracts, a most fascinating subject:—

"Since this last 'restoration' no further alterations have taken place; the choir, with its unsuitable furniture, still serves the purpose of a parish church, and though the people of Kirkwall are proud of their ancient Cathedral they are inclined to lament the cost necessarily incurred for even the decent preservation of so large a structure.

"It is a subject for grateful recognition that through all the centuries the body of the martyr saint of Orkney has reposed undisturbed under the shelter of the glorious building raised to his honor by the devotion of the peoples of Europe. It matters little that the exact spot wherein the sacred treasure was deposited can no longer be identified, it has certainly never been molested. May we not hope that like the treasure it contains and on account of it, the shrine also has been divinely guarded—and that with distinct purpose—from the spoiler's hand