

## THE ENGLISH CATHEDRALS.

## IV.—A VISIT TO RIPON CATHEDRAL.

I left Carlisle for Durham and took one more view of the great Church of St. Cuthbert on my way to the shrine of St. Wilfrid at Ripon. The remarkable Norman features of Durham had scarcely faded away from my memory as I sped southward across the great Yorkshire plain, when I arrived at the low hills that bordered the upper tributaries of the Ouse, amid which, a conspicuous landmark, the early English gables of the cathedral's western front, towered over the town of Ripon. This western front is partially obscured by the houses in its neighbourhood, but as I approached it from the market-place by the narrow kirkgate, I could plainly discern and examine at leisure this remarkable example of Early English.

It was Archbishop Gray who, in the middle of the thirteenth century, added this western gable, with its flanking towers, to the original structure. The gable is one hundred and three feet high. It is pierced by two tiers of windows, five in each tier. The long, plain lancets, the abundant dog-toothed ornament, the gable pediments of the three doorways, are all strictly characteristic of the Early English style. The two towers are of severe simplicity in design, but are graceful as well as dignified in structure, and impressed me with their air of mingled elegance and stability. Above one of the windows there is a small niche with a figure in it, but the corrosion of years has obliterated the main features of this carving, which once, in all probability, represented St. Wilfrid, who in 664, as Bishop of Northumbria, erected the original basilica at Ripon. Each tower is divided by string-courses into four stories. The ground story is crossed by a blind arcade of six arches. Each of the other stories contained three lancets, but only the middle arch is pierced for the admission of light.

The restoration of the building by Mr. G. G. Scott, in 1862, seems to have been conducted with great skill, and although new stone appears to have been worked into the whole surface of this facade, and the portals are almost altogether new, the harmony of the original composition has not been in the least interfered with.

At the east end of the church we find a change to the other extreme of English architecture. Here I was much struck by the massive decorated buttresses which rise between the choir and the aisles. The windows are richly foliated, and furnish fine examples of the Early Decorated style. The Norman string course, which Archbishop Roger drew as a separating line between the old Norman crypt and the lady-loft, with its square-headed, Decorated windows, is worthy of notice; it marks an interval of at least a hundred years in the erection of St. Wilfrid's.

I entered the church by the western door. The nave did not impress me by its height so much as by the beauty of its pointed arches and its great width of eighty-seven feet. The clerestory windows are fine specimens of Perpendicular tracery. The width of the nave and aisles is greater than that of any other English cathedrals—York, Chichester, Winchester and St. Paul's excepted. In walking along the south aisle, I came upon a singular altar tomb. On the slab of grey marble is carved in low relief a lion, standing amongst the trees of a forest; and a little distance away a man, kneeling in prayer. The inscription is effaced, but tradition says that an Irish prince on his way from Palestine, accompanied by a lion, which followed him like a dog, died and was buried at Ripon.

The Perpendicular font, which stands in the westernmost bay of the southern aisle, is a fine model of thirteenth century stone-work. I was reminded by the monument surmounted by the bust of Hugh

Ripley, that the chief officer of Ripon was called Wakeman, *i.e.*, the man who wakes or watches. The Wakeman was turned into a mayor in the time of James I., whose statue accordingly is set up on the inner side of the north-west tower arch.

I was impressed by the foreign air which the triforium with the clerestory and adjoining archways wears. The triforium has two broad archways in each bay, with a central detached shaft. There are three arches in each bay of the clerestory. The bays are divided by triple vaulting shafts. The arches are lofty and narrow, and the style will remind architectural students of Archbishop Roger's palace at York, and is far more continental than English.

Perhaps the most remarkable monument in the whole cathedral is that which is found in the south

burrows all of which adorn the stalls at Ripon.

Of St. Wilfrid himself, the patron saint of the cathedral, some memorials still remain. It is supposed that his shrine was built in the most eastern bay of the north aisle. The bones of Wilfrid were removed to Canterbury by Odo the Archbishop, in a silver casket, but as the ancient chronicler says: "Lest the place which the blessed Wilfrid, while he lived in the body, loved beyond all others, should be utterly deprived of his relics, a small portion of them were left at Ripon," while the banner of St. Wilfrid was one of those raised at the battle of the Standard.

But the most interesting part of Ripon's historical memorials is the crypt, which I entered by a flight of stairs at the north-east angle of the nave. From the foot of these stairs, I passed along a narrow passage to a little cell about seven by eleven feet, and about nine feet in height. The walls are niched as if for statues. At the north-east angle is a funnel-shaped opening, leading to a passage beyond. This is St. Wilfrid's needle, which Camden says was used for an ordeal. Those who could not pass through it were convicted of the crime of which they had been accused. Some antiquaries have judged, from the Roman character of this structure, that it was anciently a Roman tomb. But there exists at Hexham, in Northumberland, a crypt of the same sort, in a church which was founded by St. Wilfrid. More probably, therefore, the two crypts are of the same date, and afford to the antiquarian the most perfect existing remains of stone churches in the first ages of Christianity in Yorkshire.

In leaving Ripon I took a parting view of the cathedral from the wooden bridge that spans the river. A mass of houses, and the chimney of a factory, lay below the Gothic lines of the ancient structure. The early English towers, although somewhat disfigured by their modern battlements, rose under the sunlight, in clear gray outline against the sky; the broad central tower, dwarfed by the disappearance of its spire, the Pointed and Decorated windows with their varied tracery, all formed a combination of extreme beauty. Somehow the river brawling beneath on its way to join the waters of the Ouse; the strip of common dwellings which lay beyond it; and above all the fretted outline of St. Wilfrid's fane, reminded me of the greater Church of St. Cuthbert. It was indeed as if the inspiration of Durham's princely See had been wafted southward and animated the smaller but scarcely less beautiful shrine of which Wilfrid laid the foundations on the banks of the Ure.

## FORGIVENESS.

Very sweet is the rest of those who taste the forgiving Love of our Divine Lord. They are in His arms. A child lay dying in its little bed, tossing to and fro in strong fever. Bending over it, the mother tries all she can to soothe and assuage the suffering. She speaks of the brightness and splendour of heaven. "But, mother, the light would hurt my eyes—I couldn't bear it." She changes the thought, and speaks of the music of heaven, the golden harps, the rejoicings of the multitude, as the sound of many waters. But a little sob rises, "Mother, I couldn't bear the noise." In despair she lifts the child in her arms, and gently lays the little restless head upon her breast. Presently a whisper reaches her ear, "Mother, if heaven is like this, I should be glad to go." Even so—even so—does the great and gracious Saviour take weary, fevered, restless souls into His bosom—puts His pierced hands around them—and gives a rest the world cannot give and which it taketh not away. May He do this for you and for me—and do it now—and His shall be the everlasting praise.



RIPON CATHEDRAL—EAST WINDOW.

transepts. It is intended as a memorial of William Weddell, of Newby, and is a copy of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates at Athens, a piece of art more appropriate in the place where the original stood than in the transept of a Gothic cathedral.

I entered the choir of the cathedral through the fine Perpendicular screen—a rich mass of tabernacle work. Over the door is a representation of the First Person of the Holy Trinity, surrounded by angels swinging censers. The date of this screen is 1459. The ancient wood-work of the choir is admirable. An elephant with a castle on his back, in which are fighting men, is conspicuous as a finial. The grotesque figure of a monkey faces this from the opposite side. No finer specimen of ancient wood-carving can be found than the "Spies with Grapes," "Samson Carrying off the Gates of Gaza," "A Fox Preaching to Geese," "A Griffin Chasing Rabbits," one of which he seizes, while the rest escape to their