

## THE ENGLISH CATHEDRALS.

III.—A VISIT TO YORK MINSTER.

No one can enter the city of York without a feeling that he is treading on historic ground. This is the ancient Roman capital of Britain, half city, half armed camp, whose prætorian gate faced the north where hordes of Scottish raiders always hovered. Here Constantine was born, the Christian emperor who quenched the fires of persecution, and, wedding the cross to a new symbol, made it the ensign of his conquering armies. There must have been a church at York even in the early centuries of Roman sway; but when Paulinus was sent by Pope Gregory at the beginning of the seventh century he raised of wood the first place of Christian worship of which we have historic record. Here King Edwin was baptized on Easter Day, 627. The church, like the present minster, was dedicated to St. Peter. Edwin began on the same site a basilica of stone, enclosing the chapel of Paulinus; but before the walls were completed the king was slain at the battle of Heathfield, his head being afterwards deposited in St. Gregory's porch. Archbishop Wilfrid in 669 repaired the early building, which had fallen into decay; but it was burnt to the ground in 741, and in 767 Archbishop Albert built another one in its place. When William the Conqueror devastated Yorkshire in the third year of his reign, the cathedral was razed and fired like the rest of the city. The wall of the crypt underneath the choir of the existing church is the only relic of the Saxon minster which survives to this day.

The history of York minster from the beginning of the Norman period is a history of peace and improvement, and leads up to the completion of the great northern cathedral as we see it at present. The first Norman archbishop, Thomas of Bayeux, was consecrated to the see in 1070. He built the church anew from its ruins. Archbishop Rogers (1154-1181) rebuilt on a larger scale the choir and crypts of Thomas; while Archbishop Gray (1215-1255) rebuilt and left in its present form the south transept. The north transept and a central bell tower were added by Romanus, sub-dean and treasurer of York; and his son, archbishop of the See, pulled down the old Norman nave and built that which still stands in its place. Archbishop Roger's Norman choir, although its size and simplicity did not agree with the increasing splendour of the more recent building, stood till the end of the fourteenth century, when it gave place to the present structure; before the church was reconsecrated on July 3rd, 1492, the central tower had been rebuilt and the two western towers completed.

A singular and interesting fact with regard to the chapter of York minster illustrates the continuity of the Church history in England and the original independence of Rome possessed by British Christians. The minster was anciently served by a body of canons who retained the names of Culdees until the end of the eleventh century. Now Culdee, Gille De, means child of God, a title given by St. Columba to his Scottish converts. It was from Scotland that Aidan came to evangelize Northumbria, after the expulsion of Paulinus, and the term Culdee lingered on during the Norman period, the reminiscence of a period in the history of Christian Britain when Gregory had not had his heart touched with compassion at the sight of the yellow-haired slaves in the Roman market-place.

The history of York minster even now may be traced in its architecture. The inner wall of the crypt belongs to the time of Saxon Edwin, the western and eastern walls of the crypt are of Norman masonry. I traced the plain signature of

Early English in the features of both transepts, in the southern one of which are the famous Five Sisters, five lancets filled with remarkable old stained glass. The nave and chapter house are decorated of the fourteenth century; the lady chapel and presbytery, choir and three towers are in the Perpendicular style, and exhibit its three phases from 1373 to 1470.

The western front, as seen from the paved square on which it looks, impressed me as one of the most gorgeous cathedral facades in England. The smallness of the portals in comparison with the size of the vast floriated window above them is characteristic of English Gothic, and contrasts with proportions of such continental Gothic churches as Chartres. Probably the English architects were influenced by

est domus ista domorum," might well apply to the whole fane, and the Church of St. Peter, so long the mother Church of all Northumbria, be reckoned among cathedrals in its neighbourhood as the rose is reckoned among flowers, a queen paramount.

I entered the cathedral through the minster yard, which opens upon Petergate, and passed through the portal of the south transept, the usual entrance. Two flights of steps lead to this portal, above which are three lofty pointed windows, the actual gable being filled with a very elaborate rose window of considerable beauty. I was much impressed, on passing the inner folding doors, by the view which presented itself as I came upon the minster floor. Above me towered the great transept to a height of ninety-nine feet; soaring lancets faced me from the

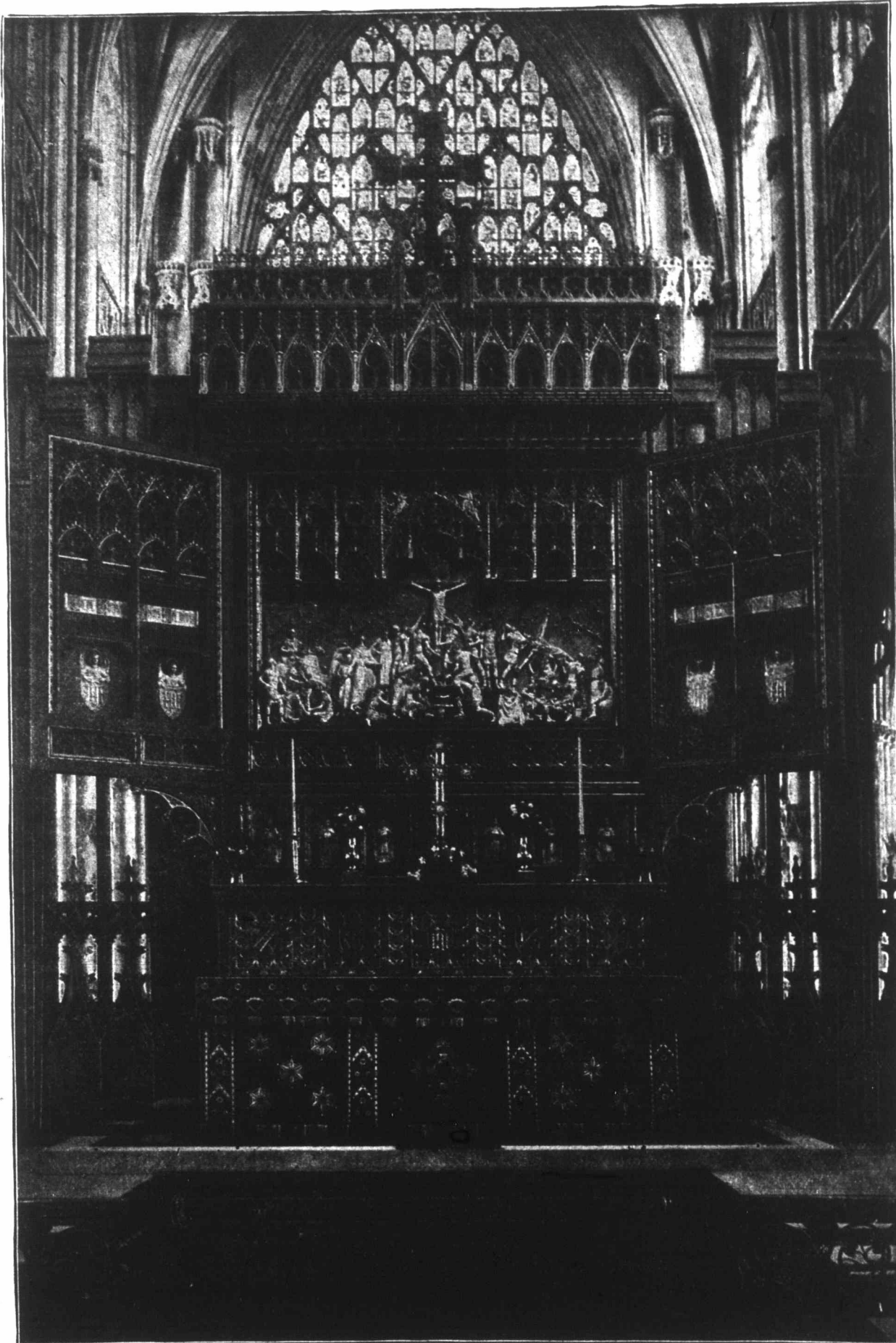
north gable, through whose jewelled glass a dim religious light was drifting; midway was the open space of the vast central tower shedding light from its incomparable lantern, on tall clustered pillars, and arcades surmounted by their fretted tabernacles.

There are four bays in each of the transepts; the pillars are of local stone and Purbeck marble alternately. The capitals are expressed in foliage. There we find a conventional carving of the *Herba Benedicta*, *Herb Bennett*, whose trefoiled leaf symbolizes the Trinity. As we pass along the eastern aisle of this transept, we come upon the tomb, with effigy and canopy, of Archbishop Gray, who built this part of the minster. The figure of the archbishop wears the cope, tunic, dalmatic and alb. One hand is raised in blessing, the other carries the pastoral staff, the end of which pierces the dragon, which is stretched under the feet of the effigy.

Passing into the north transept, which resembles the south one in its main features, I paused for a moment before the "Five Sisters," lancets which are filled with delicate stained glass of the fourteenth century. The pattern has for its body a faint emerald green and is varied in each window. One of the earliest extant brasses of English ecclesiastics attracts attention in the eastern aisle. It appears in the tomb of Archbishop Greenfield, the great ecclesiastic and statesman of the fourteenth century, who was one of the guardians of the kingdom during the campaigns of Edward I. Greenfield championed the cause of the Templars in England, and was present at the Great Council at Vienne in 1312, when Pope Clement V. finally dissolved the order. The brass of the archbishop is full vested and wears the Pontifical pall.

Passing from the transepts to the nave, and looking west, the grandeur of the vaulted roof illuminated by large clerestory windows, burst upon the view. The western window is a striking object; the stained-glass figures of myriad saints and archbishops shine through the foliage of the decorated wreathings of stone, whose

tracery is only second in beauty to the great window of Carlisle. Turning back from this window, I reached the choir over whose east end, with its modern reredos, rose the great window, blazing with colour, which almost disproportionately fills the eastern gable and has been well styled "a wall of glass." The wood-work of the choir as well as the roof was destroyed by fire on the night of February 2nd, by Jonathan Martin, a brother of the well-known painter, who had hidden himself behind Archbishop Greenfield's tomb at the conclusion of evening service. In the restoration a close copy of the original work was attempted. Nothing more majestic than the choir of York Minster is to be seen in English cathedrals. The choir screen consists of fifteen compartments, divided by buttresses. In each of these compartments stands a life sized statue of English kings, beginning with William the Conqueror and ending with Henry VI



REREDOS OF YORK CATHEDRAL.

ideas of defence, or of protection against the weather in their construction of their northern churches. But in spite of this peculiarity, the niches and arcades, the deep buttresses, and airy battlements give room for a play of light and shade to this western front which delights the eye. The outline of the towers is well defined, and their proportions convey the idea of stability. The constructive lines are well emphasized, and strength is not subordinated to beauty in the whole conception. The extreme height of the roof does indeed, to some extent, dwarf all the three towers, while it adds immensely to the impressiveness of the interior. But whether we view the exterior of York minster from old walls of the city, or see it from a distance, dark under a cloudy, or bright with frettings of shadow under a clear blue sky, we can understand the pride which Yorkshire men take in their minster. The inscription in the chapter house, "Ut Rosa flos florum sic