

COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.

"Oh! for the help of Angels to complete
This Temple—Angels governed by a plan
Thus far pursued (how gloriously!) by
Man,
Studious that He might not disdain the
seat
Who dwells in Heaven! But that in-
spiring heat
Haith failed; and now, ye Powers, whose
gorgeous wings
And splended aspect yon emblazonings
But faintly picture, 'twere an office meet
For you, on these unfinished Shafts to
try
The midnight virtues of your harmony—
This vast Design may tempt you to re-
peat
Strains that call forth upon Empyrean
ground
Immortal Fabrics, rising to the sound
Of penetrating harps and voices sweet!"

COULD WORDSWORTH gaze now upon the majestic pile whose unfinished towers gave rise to this beautiful sonnet, he would no longer have reason to call upon the heavenly powers to supplement the undertaking of man. After a lapse of six centuries since the first stone was laid, Cologne Cathedral stands complete, and this upon the designs included in the original plan. Within the last sixty years it has been given to the world to see the shame of allowing the work so justly styled by Hood a "broken promise to God" to remain such. Public enthusiasm has been excited; royalty has extended a helping hand; the original plan for portions of the building discovered. Forests of scaffolding have arisen, and for threescore years the sound of the builder's hammer has resounded about the old walls. To this generation has been given the honor and glory of placing the finishing touches upon the finest religious edifice ever reared upon earth.

The famous *Dom Kirche* is the third great church which Cologne has known. Tradition reports the first to have been built by St. Maternus, a local saint, and mentions the place where it stood, but nothing more. The second was founded by Hildebold, Bishop and first Archbishop of Cologne. The interior was reported to have been richly adorned, and here was stored up, among other valuables, a wonderful library of manuscripts which this book-loving prelate had gathered together. In 1809 the Cathedral took fire, and destruction seemed inevitable, when the bones of St. Cunibert were hastily brought, and the flames as they subsided. But two centuries later, as certified by a papal bull of the day, it again took fire, on the occasion of some civil tumult, and no saint interfering, the flames made the most of their opportunity, and burned it to the ground. There was now great need of a new Cathedral, not only to replace the old one, but to receive a treasure which has contributed more than any other cause to the glory of Cologne.

This was nothing less than the bones of the "Three Kings," better known to English readers as the wise men, or Magi, who have given their name in Germany to the feast of the Epiphany. The story of their wanderings, and the final transferring of their bones to Cologne, is elaborately told in a curious old *Volkbuch*, originally written in Latin by Johannes von Hildesheim for the edification of that city. The names of the monarchs were Oasper, Melchior, and Balthazar. They were respectively kings of Tharsis, the land of myrrh, of Arabia, where the soil is ruddy with gold, and of Saba, where the frankincense flows from the trees. After their return from Bethlehem they were visited in the old age by St. Thomas, when he came to preach the Gospel in India, and he baptized and ordained them. They died soon afterward, and were buried together, and many miracles were wrought at their tomb. Thither came the devout Empress Helena, and found their bones, which she carried to Constantinople, and laid in the church of St. Sophia; but in later days they were presented to Eust-

orgius, Bishop of Milan, and at the siege of Milan Barbarossa took them thence and presented them to the city of Cologne, where they were housed for the time in the old Cathedral of Hildebold. These wonderful relics naturally demanded the most beautiful shrine that the world could produce.

It seems, however, that the plan of erecting a new Cathedral had already been contemplated. Archbishop Englebert is considered by some to have been the author of the original design, while under his successor, Conrad of Hochsteden, it so far ripened that all the preliminaries were ready for the new building; only a few months after the destruction of the old one. It was during the siege of Aix, on the 14th of August, 1248, that Archbishop Conrad laid the first stone of the present Cathedral, at the depth of over forty-four feet below the surface. This having been accomplished with all the ecclesiastical forms, munificent offerings were collected, and Conrad read aloud a letter from the Pope granting an indulgence of a year to all penitents contributing to the work. The chief funds for the building, however, proceeded from the precious relics for whose sake it was chiefly undertaken. The Three Kings were especially the patron saints of travel—that is, of what was almost the only travel of those days—pilgrimage. Their fame was at its zenith at the time of the Crusades. All pilgrims trusted to a star that should conduct them to the place of Nativity, and the shrine of the Three Kings being placed temporarily in the Church of St. Cecilia, Cologne was visited by crowds, who considered a prayer and offering at this shrine as the first step on their journey to Palestine.

At the same time the influence of the shrine was applied in another way. Encouraged by the indulgence held out in the papal letter, a society was formed, called the Brotherhood of St. Peter (the patron saint of the Cathedral), for the purpose of collecting contributions for the building. The qualification for membership consisted simply in having made a pilgrimage to the shrine, and it was open equally to both sexes, who were regularly divided into bodies, and enrolled under the surveillance of various religious orders. This society was of great service, for with their zeal the Pope increased their privileges, the most important of which consisted in exemption from all the local interdicts which Bishops hurled and people feared in those days; so that an individual collecting so much in a year (the smallest contribution being fixed at a bushel of wheat), if not personally excommunicated, or a notorious bad liver, could hear mass and receive sacraments, himself and all his family, even in such places as were under papal ban. Under these circumstances the Brotherhood of St. Peter grew into high fame and influence; and while the members dispersed themselves eagerly, not only throughout the diocese, but throughout Europe, the beautiful choir rose gradually, and on the 27th of September, 1322, in the reign of Archbishop Henry II., Count of Birnenberg, stood ready for consecration, this being the same day on which the old Cathedral of Charlemagne had received the same rite four hundred and fifty years before.

This was a great occasion, and Cologne overflowed with spiritual and worldly dignitaries. After the usual ceremonies without the building, the Archbishop, attended by his suffragans—the Prince-Bishops of Osnaburg, Munster, and Liege, and the Bishops of Mindon and Utrecht—entered the choir, where, ashes having been strewn upon the pavement, the Archbishop, in sign of that doctrine of which Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, wrote in them with his sceptre all the letters of the alphabet. From the southeast to the northwest he wrote Greek letters; from the northeast to the southwest he wrote Latin letters, thus forming a cross saltier X. Then the bones of the Three Kings were brought in with great pomp, and in imitation of the early Christians, who usually erected their

churches over the tomb of a saint or martyr, the Archbishop laid the first stone of the shrine that was to contain them. In due time a gilt star was placed above it at the tip end of the choir—a type of that which conducted the Wise Man.

The vital portion of the edifice being completed, the offices of the Church were regularly performed, and the decorations of the interior became a further field for the piety of individual contributors. Archbishop Genney especially, who held the see from 1357, appears as a munificent patron. He presented the black marble altar of the Three Kings, still existing; also the high altar itself, with an elaborate ciborium, fourteen statues of silver gilt—of the Apostles, the Saviour, and the Virgin, the last two each two ells high—which were placed round the altar on all solemn occasions, and lastly the tabernacle, or receptacle for the sacrament, an exquisite structure sixty-two feet high.

The fate of this altar was tragic. In the eighteenth century the Chapter of the Cathedral, possessed with a mania for redecoration, destroyed the beautiful work, and replaced it by what has been called, with just sarcasm, "a kind of Grecian summer-house." The canopies and brackets on the pillars around the altar are singularly beautiful, but the statues show a mannerism and affectation now increased tenfold by the hideous painting they have undergone, which must be assigned to a much later period. Also the chronicles mention four brazen angels, seven feet high, of great beauty, placed at each corner of the altar, and a wonderful clock, wound up once a year, representing the course of the sun and moon and the adoration of the Three Kings.

Meanwhile the Brotherhood of St. Peter continued their rounds, and increased so much in number that in 1336, on the occasion of a great meeting in Cologne, the choir and rising aisles were found insufficient to contain them, and the priests were obliged to bring the relics out and bear them round the Cathedral. The end of all this may be easily anticipated. The fraternity was become too good a speculation, both in a worldly and spiritual light, not to be abused. Notoriously bad livers contributed in their last moments sufficient to enrol them in the brotherhood, and thus fraudulently obtained the offices of the Church; others deducted considerably from their collections before making them over to the Cathedral fund, while some of still more independent views, among whom we are assured ladies were not wanting, never made them over to the fund at all. This state of things attracted the attention of Archbishop Genney, who forthwith curtailed the immunities, and pursued the offenders so effectually that he seems to have put an end not only to the abuses, but to the society itself. Its statutes were renewed toward the end of the fifteenth century, when the old popularity had so fallen away that the collectors had to be allowed one-fourth of their gatherings; and in the sixteenth century no further mention is made of the body.

It was well for the Cathedral that there was no falling off among the other sources of its support. The tide of royalty and nobility still flowed toward the shrine, and many a picturesque procession demanded entrance at the guarded gates, and wound through the narrow streets of the city toward the great edifice. Unfortunately, however, it did not profit in due proportion. Its fate depended upon the tastes of the reigning Archbishop. If he were peaceable, it advanced; if pugnacious, it halted. The latter disposition was unhappily the more frequent. Archbishop Theodorich Von Moers, who reigned from 1414, and fought his neighbors' battles as well as his own, is accused not only of mortgaging the church property, but of helping himself to the jewels from the shrine when pressed by need. Considering, therefore, how the building lagged in progress, it is the more wonderful that its harmony should have been preserved.

It advanced so slowly that it was not until 1437, nearly two centuries after the foundation, that the southern tower was completed. In that year the bells were taken from an old wooden tower formerly used as a belfry to the Cathedral of Charlemagne, and raised into the new tower. The great old crane, whose horn-like butting from the forehead of the tower was for two hundred years as familiar a feature as any in the mighty fabric, doubtless assisted at the transfer. But this seems to have been its last work. A picture by John Van Eyck of St. Barbara, dated 1427, has for its background an unfinished tower with a crane at the top, obviously intended for that of Cologne. For fifty years the workmen dawdled over the north side, but a period of religious decline and artistic change had come, not favorable to church building or Gothic architecture. From 1509 the work seems to have come to a stand-still altogether, the north aisle being completed besides the tower. The walls of the south aisles and transepts were but partly built; the nave was not even begun; the southern tower had reached the height of 170 feet, but the northern scarcely showed above the walls.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries nothing was done to the building; but in the eighteenth the Chapter undertook the process of interior redecoration already alluded to. Nearly all that was done in execrable taste, and many objects of ancient beauty were destroyed to make way for ugly and metriculous designs. At the close of the century, however, the Chapter itself, comprising forty-six members, of whom nearly all were dukes, princes, or counts of the Holy Roman Empire, was dissolved, and the last Archbishop, Maximilian, had to retire from his diocese. During the Napoleonic wars soldiers bivouacked in the Cathedral, and broke ornaments and windows, but seem to have done less mischief than Cromwell's men did in the English cathedrals. The great *Dom Kirche* was reduced to a parish church in the French diocese of Aix-la-Chapelle, with three priests attached to it, and Bertholet, the new French Bishop, unconsciously added insult to injury when he gravely advised the people to plant poplar-trees around their fine Gothic ruins in order to make the most effect. Napoleon refused even the scanty pittance asked by the citizens to keep the structure in repair, and it became more dilapidated every year.

Popular interest had been revived, however, and steps were taken to secure the completion of the structure. The condition of the building was officially inquired into and reported. Something of the "inspiring heat" Wordsworth speaks of, had kindled the zeal of the people of Cologne, and in 1824 the work of repair was begun in good earnest. Sixteen years later a *Dombau Verein* for bringing the original design to completion was formed and placed under the patronage of the new King, Frederick William IV., who took the matter up very warmly, and promised an annual contribution of 50,000 thalers towards carrying on the work. On September 4, 1842, nearly six hundred years after the first foundation-stone had been laid, the King himself laid the second, in the presence of a brilliant assemblage of civil and ecclesiastical potentates, and a vast concourse of spectators, amid all the grandest musical and ceremonial splendors of Roman Catholic orship.

As the block was lowered the Archbishop adjusted it into its place with the usual form of words. The King descended from the tribune, addressed the multitude with the facility which distinguished him, took the mallet, and amid roars of applause struck the newly laid stone three times. Then, while the mallet passed in turn to all the royal personages, and to every individual of distinction, the Archbishop, the president of the society, and the *Dombau Meister* spoke in succession. The King's speech had been short, patriotic, German—and quite latitudinarian. The prelate's was long, courteous, and most carefully Ro-