

After the seat of the diocese was removed to Norwich, the Minster fell into disuse, or was used only as a chapel or cell by the Monks of St. Margaret's.

So lonely is the situation of the Minster, that its very existence is scarcely noted by persons residing on the distant boundary of a not very extensive parish. The path towards its time-worn walls is rarely trodden, save by the labourer, as he goes forth at early dawn to his work, or on his homeward route towards the grey twilight of evening. In the mind of such beholder the hoary edifice excites but little feeling of interest: he pauses not to contemplate the crumbling walls and rifted windows—to reflect that the hands that reared and the head that planned its structure, are mingled with the dust beneath his feet. Its pristine grandeur and subsequent decay are alike indifferent to him; he feels no desire to become acquainted with the names and deeds of the former children of the soil,—to him they are indeed as if they never had been. Their names, their race, have been wiped from the book of memory by the grey wasting finger of time. The Minster, fast falling to decay, is their only monument.

So perishes man's name from among his fellow-men! A few only among the myriads that have existed through the tide of ages, are recorded in the page of history—the rest, where are they? Forgotten by man, but registered on high by Him who called them into being, and assigned to each his part on the great theatre of life:

“Time o'er their dust short record keeps,
Forgotten save by God.”

Such were the reflections that occurred to me, as, forcing my way through the thick underwood and branching alders that obstructed my path, I stood before the ruined Minster, which had been effectually concealed by the interposition of this leafy screen.

The building consisted simply of roofless walls, clothed with ivy, and where the ivy had been torn down by sacrilegious hands it had been replaced by a thick coating of grey and yellow lichens, long waving tufts of grass, and a peculiarly beautiful species of fern.

The arches of the windows had long since been destroyed, and the spaces that they had formerly occupied now presented only deep rifted chasms; through one of these an oak of majestic height stretched one broad spreading arm, forming an embowering covering to the otherwise roofless pile.

From its close contiguity to the building, the tree must have sprung from an acorn, the massive trunk forming a supporting buttress to the crumbling wall; many centuries must have passed over that noble tree since first it reared its slender stem beneath the hoary pile—and there it yet stood in the pride and glory of its strength, like some duteous

child supporting the tottering form of an aged parent, and silently seeming to say:

“Your walls sheltered and protected me from the rude blasts of winter, when you were in your strength, and I a weak and bending sapling. I am still in my meridian pride, and your fabric fast falling to decay. The voice of praise and prayer no longer resounds through your desolate walls. You are become a dwelling for owls, and bats, and other dolorous creatures. Deserted by men, I only am left to protect and shelter you from the wreck of time.”

Such words the silent monitor seemed to speak to my mind, as I gazed upon the solitary tree and the lonely ruin.

The interior of the Minster presented a tangled thicket of rank weeds, tall spiral nettles, docks and spreading brambles. The partition wall that had once divided the building remained almost entire; from a broken niche, which had probably once contained some rude sculptural figure of the patron saint, sprang forth an old ash tree, grey with age, while above it, rooted firmly among the disjointed stones, a younger and more vigorous tree reared its graceful boughs—parent and child, that had taken root amid decay, and revelled in the fallen fortunes of the place.

Seating myself on a heap of mouldering stones—the only remnant of what had once formed the east gable of the building, I was led insensibly to commune with my own heart, and be still.

While pursuing a melancholy but not perhaps unprofitable train of thought, my eye rested on a heap of mossy earth that bore close resemblance to a human grave.

On putting aside the rank herbage that shaded the spot, I perceived the mound had been duly sodded and bound with thorn: a few stones marked the head and foot of the grave.

Some pious hand had placed these mute memorials o'er the unconscious dead—some duteous relative or tender friend, who, in their turn, had also passed away “to the land where all things are forgotten.”

A feeling of new and peculiar interest now attached me to the spot; and it was not till the long dying thrill of the nightingale from the neighbouring bushes sang vespers, and the rising moon threw her bright light through the broken walls, casting dark shadows across the grave, beside which I stood, that I could prevail upon myself to retrace my homeward path through the deep glades of the abbey lands.

To whom could I better apply for information on the subject of the Minster's nameless grave, than to the venerable tenant of the Abbey-farm. In my occasional visits to the Abbey, I had contrived to ingratiate myself with the old man. He loved to tell old tales of former times: he had seen much,