

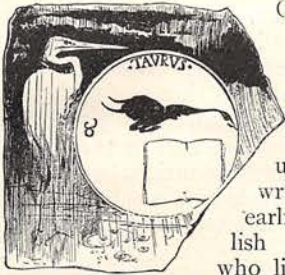
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CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.



CANTERBURY'S cathedral church has known much rebuilding, and to-day it is not one of those which give us our most broadly written lessons in the earlier history of English art. The student who likes to understand as well as see will be wise if he looks at it only after he has looked elsewhere — at Durham, for example, at Ely, Peterborough, Norwich. But the existing fabric of a cathedral which has a history of some dozen centuries is not its only claim upon our retrospective thought; and when we weigh all claims together, it is impossible not to speak first of that cathedral which is the mother church of England by a double title,— by the right of earliest birth and by that of constant rule.

I.

CHAUCER'S merry company, intent "the holy blisful martir for to seeke," made their start in that month of April whose delights their poet never tired of singing. But the modern pilgrim, thinking less than they of winter's mud or summer's dust, is most fortunate upon an August day; for it is always worth while to see the best of anything terrestrial, and a Kentish hop-garden in full growth is the fairest thing in the way of a useful crop that the earth produces.

A London start is made by the Victoria Station and the train "for Chatham and Dover"—prosaic words, suggestive less of Canterbury than of Calais and the Channel's woes. Yet for a long distance the modern path of iron lies practically parallel with the old white high-road. We only make an intermediate

stop at Chatham, and if its name has no ancient savor and its importance is in truth bound up with that of modern naval warfare, yet it soon shows as but a suburb of hoary episcopal Rochester, and the eye embraces almost in a single glance the cathedral founded in the seventh century, the castle built for the men-at-arms of Henry II., and the dockyards where Queen Victoria's iron-clads are at home.

It is always so in this delectably little land. Everywhere the same *mise-en-scène* has served for the playing out of various dramas and is still in use to-day. The soil is everywhere rich with buried history and set thick with the artistic relics of all eras, and the air is never free from puissant memories. Britain among the lands is as Rome among the cities: the story of any one of her districts is as difficult to tell in brief as the story of any Roman site. Rarely indeed can we say: For *this* reason is this spot of interest. There are usually a score of reasons, a dozen interests of successive date. And we often come upon historic repetitions of so happy a sort that they seem to have been planned by some great cosmic playwright in the interests of artistic unity, dramatic point, and concentration. There were, for instance, many spots along the coast where St. Augustine might have landed when he was on his way to Canterbury and the court of Ethelbert. But the spot where he did land chanced to be at the mouth of the Thames, on the Isle of Thanet—coming to convert the heathen English and following by a picturesque coincidence in the steps of their earliest band of settlers.

II.

VERY charming to the outer eye, Canterbury is no less pleasing to the eye of sentiment; for sentiment, as I conceive it (at least where the tourist is in question), means some-

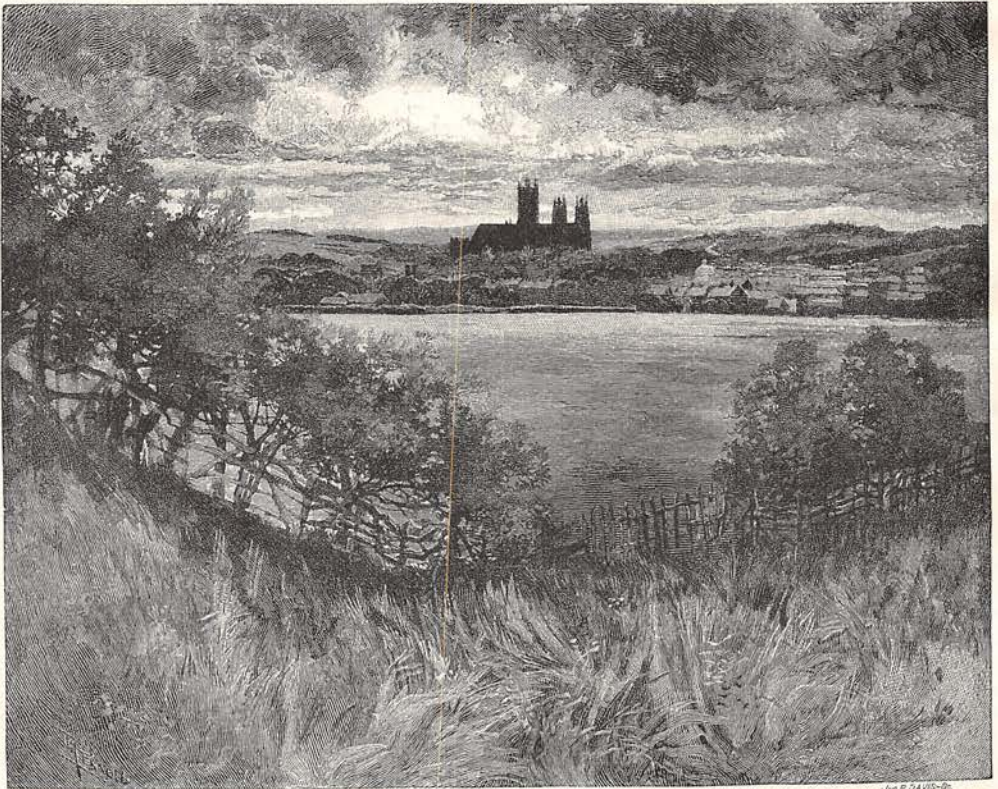
thing close akin to the love of symbolism. What it asks is correspondence between body and spirit—between things tangible and visible and things dictated by memory and imagination. If a town does not look as it looked of old, and if its aspect fails to tally with that special aspect the fancy has been led to lend it, we are sentimentally outraged—alas, how often!—as by the breaking of a tacit promise. But Canterbury keeps all its tacit promises with singular fidelity.

From a distance it seems scarce a town at all—rather a great solitary church standing on a slight elevation and backed by higher hills. And a modest town it is in fact, low-roofed and narrow-bordered, with no touch of municipal dignity and no evidence of private wealth; breathing a breath of almost country air, and basking sleepily in a mood of almost rural quiet, resting meekly at the foot of its mighty church, guarding tenderly the ruins of its great monastic houses.

But all this is no disappointment; for the greatness of Canterbury was not material but spiritual—or, if I were to seek the truest word, I might say *emblematic*. Her fame is the fame of the great men who, taking their title from her, went out of her gates to help or

hinder kings and parliaments in their rule of the land. And the authority delegated to them stood not upon wealth or arms or civic strength but upon ecclesiastical might. So it is fitting she should have been small and modest in street and square—great and beautiful only in the body of that splendid temple which expresses all there ever was of her truest self.

In mediæval days her walls were complete, of course; the Conqueror's castle, now a wreck, was haughtily conspicuous; and sleepiness was certainly not her mood—what with the sumptuous living and parading of bishop and abbot and priest and knight, and the bloody wranglings of each with the others; what with the pulsing of that vast pilgrim-tide which from every English shire and every Christian country brought its motley myriads to the wonder-working (and wonderfully well "exploited") shrine of St. Thomas. But nevertheless the city itself must have been so nearly the same in general effect that we can easily people it anew with its tumultuous shows of faith and superstition, force and fraud, humility and luxury, pride, licentiousness, and greed. Modern growth has not burst its ancient body asunder and re-worked it into an alien shape. Nor has modern life gone wholly from its streets



THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE NORTH-WEST.



THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST, AT SUNSET.

and left them to solitude, neglect, and death. Canterbury is cheerfully alive despite the long cessation of the busy ecclesiastical industries of old; not dead but merely dozing in a peace unbroken by the rushing traffic of today.

III.

I HAVE called the cathedral the mother church of England, but in one sense the term is still better deserved by little St. Martin's on the eastward hill. Look narrowly at these ancient walls and you will see embedded in their substance fragments more ancient still, fragments of Roman bricks, which tell that at the close of the sixth century, when the first missionaries to the English landed, there stood on this same site a tiny British church. Somehow it had weathered the storms of pagan years and now was the private oratory of Ethelbert's queen — that Bertha who was already a Christian when she left her Paris home. Here St. Augustine held his first service beneath an island roof, and here he baptized his first convert, King Ethelbert himself.

The church, though very old, has certainly been rebuilt since the sixth century; and only

the most easy-going of sentimentalists will believe quite all he is bidden to believe about its furniture and tombs. But to one disinherited of gray memorials by the accident of birth across the sea, it is interesting enough merely to stand upon a spot where such tales can be told with such color of likelihood. And then little St. Martin's, which represents the first tiny rootlet of English Christianity, gives him from beneath its low ivied tower and dusky churchyard yews his best first point of outlook toward that greater church which typifies the full-grown tree. Hence he may gaze over the whole beautiful green valley of the Stour to its far-off western hills; may trace the path where from this first tentative station the first missionary passed, as consecrated primate, with banner and silver cross and pomp of singing down to the royal town; and may see this town in the center of the picture, on its outskirts the remains of the great suburban monastery founded by St. Augustine and named for him, and in the midst of the town the cathedral which he called "Christ Church" uplifting its gigantic tower and showing in the mere spread of its transepts a length so great that one is easily cheated into thinking it the



MERCERY LANE.

spread of nave and choir instead. If we could see but a single English landscape we might well choose this; and if we could select but a single hour it might best be from one of those summer afternoons when the witchery of sloping light enhances the charms of color and form, and shines through the perforations of far-off pinnacle and parapet until their stone looks like lace against the sky and their outlines seem to waver in harmony with the lines of cloud above.

IV.

BUT when we come back to earth again, descend to the valley level, and go to take nearer survey of the church itself, then we had best approach it through that narrow Mercery Lane which Mr. Pennell pictures.* It took its title from the arcades of booths

* The house to the left stands on the spot where stood the Chequers Inn of Chaucer's time, and the old vaulted cellars still exist beneath it.

where mementos of pilgrimage were bartered for such pounds or pence as might remain when St. Thomas had secured his tribute, and was always, as to-day, the chief path to the church. Since the early sixteenth century it opens out beneath the beautiful Perpendicular Christ Church Gateway, gives access to a broad green space that is still called the Churchyard and was once the resting-place of pilgrims claimed by death, and shows the western front and long south side of the cathedral in a perspective of lordly picturesqueness.

On this spot too as well as on the eastern hill St Augustine found a surviving British church which could be consecrated, repaired, and used anew. Practically the same as in earliest days,—a basilica imitated from old St. Peter's at Rome, without transepts, but with an apse at either end,—it seems to have done England's archbishops service until the tenth century. And thereafter—largely rebuilt and with heightened walls but still essentially the

same—it housed the whole mighty race of pre-Norman primates. Hither, one chiefly cares to think, came Dunstan to begin his rule of the Church and to persist none the less in his efforts to rule the State. Here he warred alike against the princes and powers of this world and of the other, and with quite peculiar vigor against the secular clergy.

The story of all such ecclesiastical struggles is brilliantly picturesque just by virtue of its departure from what seem to us ecclesiastical modes of warfare. There is a world of sug-

rather than rob his people and live by the gold which he knew would but bribe to further rapine and a more profuse shedding of blood—he too was canonized and wrought marvels with his bones. But the unsaintlier kind of saint seems in those days to have been thought the better advocate on high, and Dunstan ruled supreme in the local storehouse of relics till St. Thomas came to oust him from his rank.

Saint or not, however, Dunstan was a mighty artist before the Lord, working with pen and brush, in gold and silver and brass

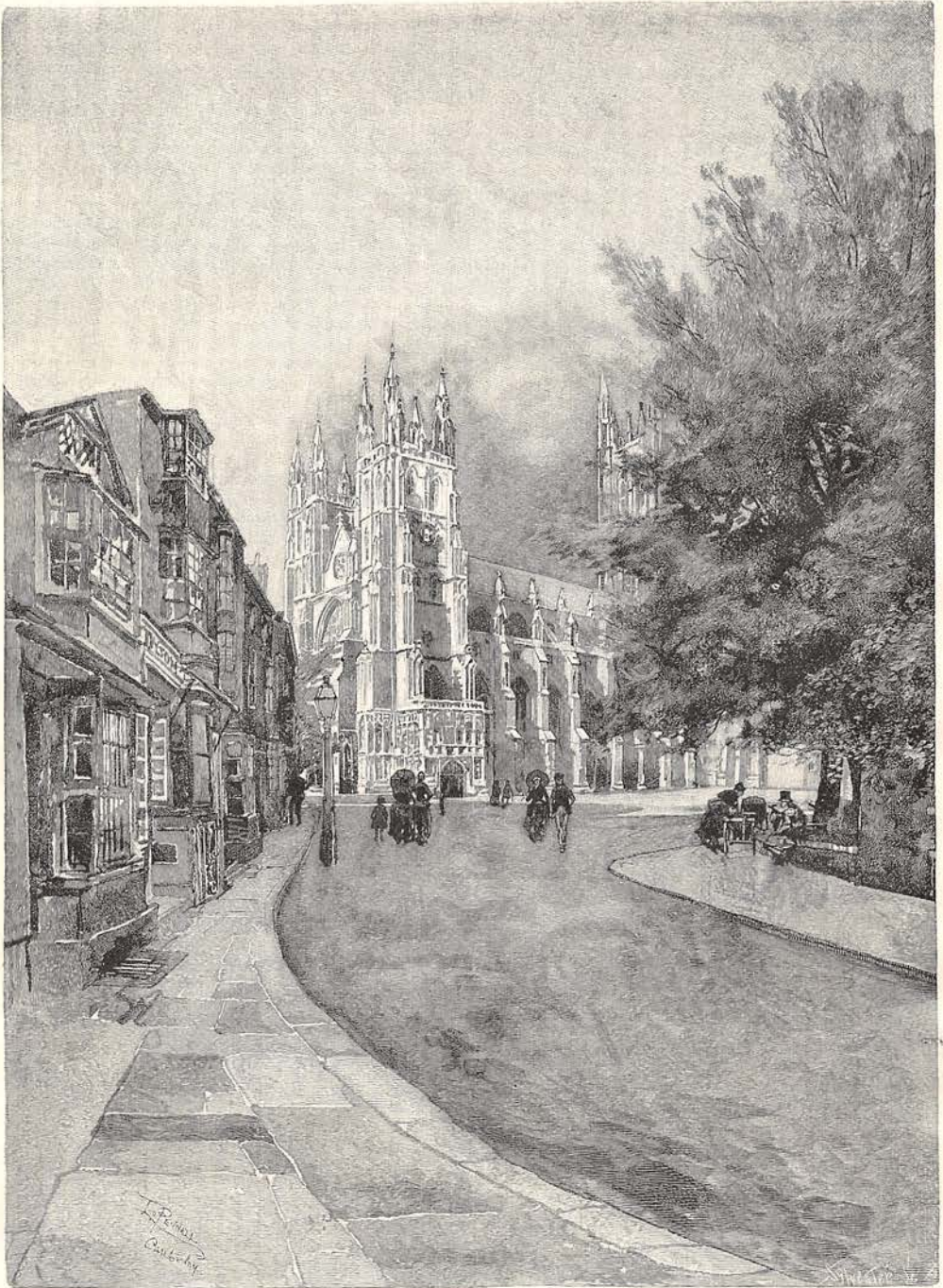


CHRIST CHURCH GATEWAY, FROM MERCERY LANE.

gestiveness in Dean Milman's phrase: "It was not by law but by the armed invasion of cathedral after cathedral that the married clergy were ejected and the Benedictines installed in their places." Yet did not "the dove that erst was seen of John in Jordan" hover over Dunstan in a burst of celestial light at the hour which made him primate? Was he not a visible child of heaven and a miracle-worker while alive, and a saint and a still greater miracle-worker after death? Archbishop Alphege, accepting murder from the Danes

and iron, in the casting of bells, in the making of musical instruments and the making of music thereupon. Richer clay than modern Nature uses must have gone to the substance of these mighty men of old—meddlers in every department of human effort and easily masters in all. Every land seems once to have had its own deposit—was the last handful used when Michael Angelo was molded?

Twenty-three years after Dunstan's death happened the murder of Alphege and the sacking of the cathedral by the Danes. Ca-



THE CATHEDRAL, FROM CHRIST CHURCH GATEWAY.

nute repaired the structure as best he might, and hung up his golden crown as vicarious atonement for his countrymen's sacrilege. But the last archbishop to stand within its shattered, patched-up walls was that Stigand

whose figure shows so vividly on the striking page where Mr. Freeman paints Harold struggling with the Conqueror. When William came to Harold's throne and Archbishop Lanfranc to Stigand's, Norman fires had completed what

Danish torches had begun. Lanfranc was compelled to build an entirely new church, and naturally he built it in the "new Norman manner," closely according to the pattern of St. Stephen's Church at Caen on the Norman mainland.

Only a few years later, during the primacy of Anselm, Lanfranc's choir was itself pulled down and reconstructed upon a larger scale. Ernulph (of whom we shall hear again at Peterborough) and Conrad were priors of the convent in Anselm's day and seemingly the actual architects of his choir, which was dedicated in the year 1130, Henry of England being present with David of Scotland and every bishop of the realm, and "the ceremony the most famous that had ever been heard of on earth since that of the temple of Solomon."

This was the church—Lanfranc's nave and transepts, and Anselm's choir—in which Becket was murdered. But only four years later it was damaged by a great catastrophe described by Gervase the monk in words incomparably graphic. The "glorious choir of Conrad" caught fire in the night, cinders and sparks blowing up from certain burning dwellings near at hand and getting unperceived a fatal headway between "the well-painted ceiling below and the sheet-lead covering above." But the flames at last beginning to show themselves, "a cry arose in the churchyard, '*See, see, the church is burning!*'" Valiantly worked monks and people together to save it. The nave was rescued, but the whole choir perished, and "the house of God, hitherto delightful as a paradise of pleasures, was now made a despicable heap of ashes."

Small wonder that monks and people then addressed themselves to lamentation with true mediæval fervor. They "were astonished that the Almighty should suffer such things, and maddened with excess of grief and perplexity, they tore their hair and beat the walls and pavement of the church with their heads and hands, blaspheming the Lord and his saints, the patrons of the church. Neither can mind conceive or words express or writing teach their grief and anguish. Truly, that they might alleviate their miseries and anguish with a little consolation, they put together as well as they could an altar and station in the nave of the church, where they might wail and howl rather than sing the nocturnal services."

Is not the value men set upon the work of their hands but a reflex of the measure of enthusiasm they put into its making? Should we not know without further witness that an age which could lament like this must have been an age of mighty builders? And truly these Canterbury folk went mightily to work when the first spasm of rage and grief and fear

was over. A French architect, William of Sens, was their first builder, and in the four years ere he was disabled by falling from a scaffold, had completed the walls of choir and presbytery and was preparing to turn their vaults. His successor—also "William by name," though "English by nation, small in body, but in workmanship of many kinds acute and honest"—constructed the retro-choir for Becket's shrine and the apse-like terminal chapel now known as "Becket's Crown."

The goodly work of these two Williams still stands as when they wrought it to the glory, one cannot but confess, rather of St. Thomas than of God. Lanfranc's nave and transepts, grown ruinous, were rebuilt in the fourteenth century in the earliest version of the Perpendicular manner. One of his western towers, that at the southern angle of the façade, was replaced in the middle of the fifteenth century, and some years later was built the great central tower above the crossing. As for the north tower of the west front, it survived as Lanfranc had left it until the second quarter of our own century, when, alas! it was pulled down and made to "match" its brother.

V.

To understand the cathedral as we see it now we must understand St. Thomas's posthumous part therein, and to conceive of this, the rôle that relic-worship played, more or less through many centuries and in every part of Christendom, but with especial architectural emphasis in the twelfth century and on English soil.

It is not too much to say that then and there the fame and frequentation of a church, and consequently a large part of its wealth and power, depended chiefly upon the relics it possessed or could lay plausible claim to owning. From the armed hand to the bribing ducat and the lying mouth and the secret theft, there was no device which the saintliest of ecclesiastics scorned or feared to use in his great task of enriching his church with the blood and bones and heterogeneous remains of departed sainthood. For generations St. Augustine's monastery outranked the cathedral church of Canterbury in every way save name alone, largely because, in deference to an ancient law forbidding intramural interments, the bodies of St. Augustine and his first successors had been placed in its suburban keeping. The ninth archbishop named the cathedral as his own place of sepulture confessedly on this account. His purpose was compassed by a fraud dictated from his death-bed, and was secured by his chapter's vigorous resistance when the disappointed brethren of

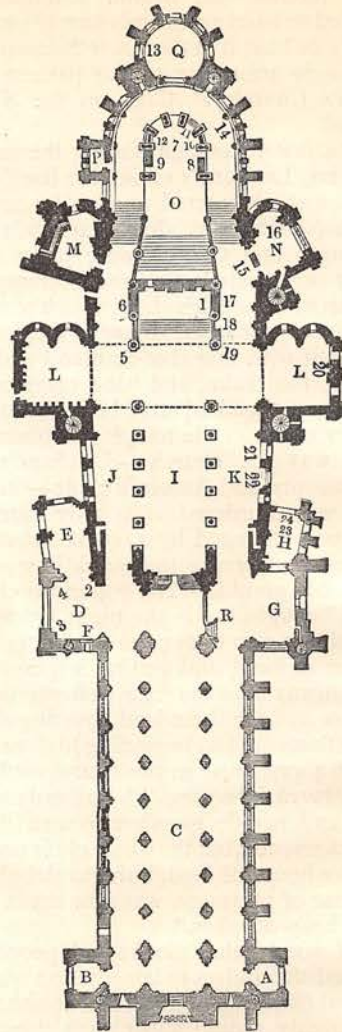
St. Augustine's came in arms to claim the corpse. But the precedent thus established held valid for the future, and with what immense profit was seen clearly when Becket went bleeding to his tomb and straightway became the most famous intercessor in all Europe.

In the earliest ages the crypt beneath the choir had been the usual place of saintly sepulture. But long before Becket's death, relic-worship had so developed that the throngs it drew together and the stately ceremonies it involved demanded statelier housing. Place was made for the saints in the choir itself, behind the high altar to the eastward. When Anselm pulled down Lanfranc's new choir simply that he might build a larger, it was undoubtedly in deference to these growing needs.

Becket himself was first buried in the crypt; but the reason and the manner of his death, and the haste, terror, and intimidation which immediately followed, were the choosers of his grave. When Anselm's choir was burned he was already canonized and world-renowned; and when it came to be rebuilt his due enshrinement was the main concern. Often hereafter we shall see how the choir of a cathedral grew to its enormous size through its ownership of some saint's dust. But nowhere is the saint's dominion so clearly petrified as at Canterbury. Nowhere does a cathedral speak so strongly of his paramount local importance or so distinctly perpetuate the peculiar details of his fate.

Rarely has so honorable a monument been decreed a mortal; and rarely has a mortal who stands so well within the borders of authentic history been so diversely judged as worthy or unworthy honor. Pure and vile he has been called — nay, is still called — with equal sincerity of emphasis; wise and foolhardy, self-immolating and self-seeking. Saint and bigot have been his names, martyr and criminal, hero and traitor, champion of liberty and would-be enslaver of king and people. Unfortunately most of our earliest ideas about him came to us as part of our Puritanical inheritance, dictated in utter oblivion of the unlikeliness of his time to ours. And, still more unfortunately, the most brilliant and accessible biography which appeals to adult eyes is Mr. Froude's — one that is marked not by the somewhat excusable ignorance of the school-book but by the blindness or partisan distortions of a pen that brings to the task of the historian the methods of the prosecuting attorney.

Of course the most obvious thing to say of Becket is that he was warring against the Crown and for the Church and a foreign head of the Church; and Church against State in the England of to-day would of course mean menace to men's liberties. An archbishop who should



PLAN OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

A. South porch. C. Nave. D. Transept of the martyrdom. E. Dean's (formerly Lady) Chapel. I. Choir. L. L. Minor, or eastern, transepts. M. St. Andrew's Tower. N. St. Anselm's Tower. O. Trinity Chapel. Q. The corona. 2. The spot where Becket fell. 7. Position of Becket's shrine (destroyed). 8. Monument of the Black Prince. 9. Monument of Henry IV. 13. Monument of Cardinal Pole. 24. Monument of Archbishop Stephen Langton.

to-day defy the civil executive would indeed be well branded traitor. But the twelfth century was not the nineteenth nor even the sixteenth; and when its own perspective is understood it shows us Becket in a very different light. It shows that he was no saint as we count saints to-day, no churchman, or statesman of the pattern we should ask to-day, and perchance not even consciously a champion of the people while an opponent of the king; but nevertheless a great, almost an heroic, Englishman; in every way a brave man; in many things a wise man, and after current

lights a conscientious one; and, whether designedly or not, a mighty agent toward winning the long fight for English liberty. It is here his name should be enrolled, in the narrative of that long battle which began with the very birth of the English people — before the actual birth of the English nation — and by no means closed upon the scaffold of King Charles. With all its faults the Church of Becket's day was the only possible helper of the people. With all his tyrannous intentions the Bishop of Rome was just then a less dangerous shepherd than Henry the Angevin king. When we read the signature of a later archbishop on the Great Charter of freedom — when we find Stephen Langton heading the list of those who compelled King John to do the nation's will and defying at once the despotism of royalty and of Rome — it is but just to remember that Becket, defying royalty in the name of Rome, combating an adversary far more dangerous than John, had taken the first step which made Langton's step secure. A later Henry saw this truth. "Reforming" the Church less with the wish to purify religion than with the desire to extend the royal power, Henry the Eighth had St. Thomas's shrine destroyed and his body burned and his pictures obliterated and his name stricken from calendar and mass-book, more because he was a "traitor" in his eyes than because he had become a wonder-worker in the eyes of superstition. The blood of a martyr was in Becket's case the seed of power and wealth and honor to the Church, and possibly also of some more or less pious kind of piety, as well as of that frightful dissoluteness which the old poets paint as the outcome of the pilgrimages. But its greatest interest for us is as one of the germs of that splendid stock of English freedom to which Americans as well as Englishmen are the fortunate heirs. The archbishop who gave his life to uphold the standard of the Church against the standard of the king, and the Puritan who beat down king and Church together beneath the flag of liberty, had more in common than either in his day could possibly have understood.

VI.

It may be a surprise to one coming from the continent when he finds but a single little unused doorway in the west façade at Canterbury and sees the main entrance in a great porch projecting from the *southern* side of the south-western tower. In truth, however, this is its most characteristically national, most typically English station — as is proved by very many of those rural churches which, more wholly than their vaster sisters, were the outcome of local tastes and old traditions. In a

great church like Canterbury great western portals are indisputably better from an architectural point of view. Yet for once we are glad to find so English a feature as the southern porch, if only because it is the single voice which speaks of the original cathedral. All that survives of a time anterior to Norman reconstruction, all that suggests the church of the British Christians, of St. Augustine and Dunstan and Alphege and Stigand, is this single witness to its plan, this perpetuator of its great "Suthdure."

Passing through it into the extreme west end, we see the great bare nave as it stood when Chaucer's pilgrims saw it clothed. The difference in effect that has been wrought by the five centuries is very great but merely superficial — a decorative, not an architectural change. I need hardly try to tell how and why all beauty save that of the stones themselves has vanished — the chartered havoc of King Henry's delegates and the lawless and thrice-ruinous destruction of Cromwell's are among the most familiar tales of history; and almost any tourist will be wise enough to take account as well of post-Reformation neglect and whitewash, and of modern "restorations." In the old days an interior like this was covered in every inch of floor and wall and ceiling with color and gold in tints that charmed the eye and figures that touched emotion, and was lighted by windows like colossal gems and tapers like innumerable stars — color and light and incense-smoke mingling together to work a tone of radiant depth and harmony. It was furnished with altars and tombs and chantries and trophies and statues and embroidered hangings, trodden by troops of gaudily clothed ecclesiastics, and filled with a never-lessening crowd of worshipers. To-day it is cold and bare and glaring, scraped to the very bone, stripped of all save the architect's first result, and empty even of facilities for occasional prayer; for at Canterbury, as in many another English church of largest size, the screened-off choir is alone put to use and the nave abandoned to the sight-seer's undevoutness. Protestantism, from an artistic point of view, is not a very successful guardian of cathedrals.

Not that the pure and strict architectural beauty which alone is left amounts to little. Tremendous indeed and exceedingly beautiful is the effect of Christ Church Cathedral when we enter, although we see on the floor level but the nave alone with a dim vista of long upper arcades and reaches of choir-ceiling over high barriers of central screen and iron aislegates. In certain other cathedrals these barriers to foot and eye have recently been swept away. The change is usually considered happy. But it is a question whether the immediate reali-

zation of magnitudes thus afforded is not too dearly bought. There is a mystery, an impressiveness about the old arrangement,—a mystery as of holier holies beyond the first, an impressiveness as of endless spaces extending from this space already so enormous,—a suggestion not of magnitude but of infinitude which has a potent charm. Moreover, it *is* the old arrangement. These great churches were meant to be divided, were built *not* to be seen from end to end, but part by part in slow succession. They were not parish-churches meant first of all for laymen's worship, but special places of worship for the cathedral chapter. The people were given free access to the nave and were admitted within the choir at proper times and in duly ordered streams, to gaze upon its crowning grandeurs and pay reverence to its holy sleepers. But they did not belong there, and the old screens typify the fact.

VII.

THE great peculiarity at Canterbury is not that the choir is thus protected, but that the central screen is raised on a high flight of steps which leads up from the nave and transepts. If from the balustrade of the platform thus created we look down into the north transept, we see the very spot where Becket fell and even some of the very stones that saw his fall. A piece of the pavement where his brains were scattered by the point of Hugh de Horsea's sword remained undisturbed in the fourteenth-century reconstruction, and a fragment of the eastern wall of the transept, close by the entrance to the crypt beneath the choir, against which he braced himself when the fierce hand-to-hand fight was nearly over. Opposite this is the door, also keeping some of its old stones through which he entered from the cloisters. All else of the Norman transept is gone, including the pillar supporting an upper chapel to which he clung for a moment, and the stairs by which he sought to reach the altar. But the exact situation of these last is shown by a corresponding flight that still exists in the south transept, and altogether it needs scarcely an effort to bring the whole tragedy back to mind exactly as it passed in that dim December twilight.

Few tragedies in all history or all story have been so dramatic, thrilling, grandiosely mournful as this which shows us the death if not of a saint, if not of a martyr, yet of a great leader ensnared by overconfidence, pursued by naked swords, a cursing band of royal sleuth-hounds at his throat and all his monkish friends save three in howling flight; retreating step by step and growing prouder and sterner with

each, not for a moment demoralized into flight himself; fighting with voice and hand till fight showed itself in vain, and then accepting the end with noble composure and meek words of prayer, falling beneath the cruel blows so calmly that the very folds of his clothing were undisturbed. At the last it *was* almost the death of a saint and martyr, certainly the death of a brave Englishman who believed he was dying for a great and holy cause. So dramatic is the scene, so impressively and appropriately picturesque the setting, and so full the contemporary accounts which tell of it,—so accurate in description, so minute in detail, and so rich in rhetorical comment,—that while we are at Canterbury its memory almost swallows up the interest of all memories alien to it.

It has not even yet gone quite out of the popular mind, usually filled with such different matters. A shabby, grimy personage—a tramping artisan, by his bag of tools—spoke to me one morning when we found ourselves alone in the deserted nave while service went on in the choir, and after a somewhat confused preamble asked whether I could tell him the spot where Becket died—"the place where they beat him down on his knees and dashed his brains out on the stones." And he shifted his bundle as he spoke and punctuated his phrase with a sweep of the arm as impassioned and expressive if not as graceful or as purposeful as could have been De Tracy's own.

VIII.

IN almost every English cathedral it will cost you a sixpence and the writing of your name in a big book like a hotel register to penetrate within the choir; but nowhere else, save in Westminster Abbey, will your subsequent steps be so hampered as in Canterbury. Nowhere does the verger shepherd his tourist-flock so sternly or so immediately turn it out into the nave again when his poor, parrot-like, peregrinating recitative is finished. Some sort of safe-conduct—preferably a written permit from the Dean—is quite essential if you would see Canterbury's choir with aught of pleasure or of profit.

The first thing that strikes even a slightly practiced eye is the unlikeness of the choir to the usual English type either of its own date or of any other. The second pair of transepts, far to the eastward of the first, is paralleled in three or four large churches elsewhere. But instead of a long level floor, broken only by a few steps before the altar, here is a floor divided into different levels by broad successive flights, giving an unwonted air of majesty and pomp. Then the line of the great arcades and of the



THE WEST FRONT, FROM THE PATH TO HARBLEDDOWN.

aisles-walls is not straight, but takes an inward trend eastward of the second transepts. An almost straight-sided space again succeeds; and then the far-off termination is neither the simple semicircular Norman apse nor the flat east end of later days. It sweeps inward as though to form the typical apse, but in the center of the curve opens out into a slender lofty chapel almost circular in plan. All these peculiarities give an individual accent and a special beauty to the work; and all have a curious historic interest.

The Norman choir so nearly perished in the great conflagration of 1174 that almost the whole interior now shows, as I have said, the work of the two Williams. But the lower portions of its outer walls survived together with two chapels, finished as stunted towers, which had projected from the curvature of the apse on either hand. The preservation of these walls and chapels necessitated that inward trend which, seeming at first a beautiful but willful device, thus really perpetuates the extent and outline of the old "glorious choir of Conrad." Then from the center of the old apse-line had projected a square chapel, dedicated to the Trinity and regarded as the church's holy of holies. On the site of this and above his first tomb in the crypt, it was thought fitting that St. Thomas should be given final sepulture. But a mere small isolated chapel would by no means serve his turn. A wide dignified open space was needed and circumambient aisles to receive a thousand feet at once. And so the church was again extended at full breadth.

VOL. XXXIII.—106.

There is more doubt as to the exact reason which dictated the final circular chapel. Its rightful name is *the corona*; and this name has been popularly translated to mean "Becket's Crown," in the belief that the chapel was built as a separate shrine for the scalp which was severed from his head by De Brut's fierce final blow. One cannot but believe Professor Willis — the church's great expounder — when he says there is no real authority for such an explanation, not even though one knows that the scalp was long exhibited by itself in a jeweled golden box. But it is a picturesque explanation, and if we must reject it there seems no other save that mere desire for an unusual kind of beauty which seldom swayed an architect in the days when ecclesiastical art was logically devoted to the service of definite rituals and the meeting of definite special needs.

Were this corona omitted, the termination would show the common type of post-Norman times — but as France, not England, was developing it. Here, as everywhere in the choir in fact, we see the impress of French fashions, the sign-manual of that William of Sens who must have planned the whole, though, as Gervase says, "the vengeance of God or the spite of the devil" permitted him to complete only the choir proper and the presbytery, and forced him to leave all that lay eastward of the high altar to the hand of English William. The cathedral in his own town of Sens evidently served him as a model. The style is neither Norman nor fully developed Gothic, but intermediate between the two — Transitional. But veritably English Transitional work has a very



CANTERBURY, FROM THE ROAD TO WHITSTABLE.

different accent, especially when so "advanced" as this.

There are many conspicuous points of unlikeness, but the most conspicuous — one which influences the whole effect of the interior far more forcibly than might be thought — lies in the character of the capitals on the great piers and on all the lesser shafts that flank the windows or support the vaulting-ribs. As soon as in truly English work a capital loses its Norman form and feeling, it gets an elongated cup-like shape finished with a *round* abacus above, and is ornamented (if at all) with a peculiar blunt, curly, knotted kind of foliage. But while these Canterbury capitals are as unlike as possible to Norman types, they show no suggestion whatsoever of the new English type. They are low and broad rather than elongated; the abacus is always *rectangular*; and the beautifully rich and varied and delicate ornamentation shows forms that are distinctly continental, often palpably classic in suggestion, sometimes definitely Corinthianesque. In short, these are *French* capitals in the full sense of the word. One seldom sees their like elsewhere in England; never so profusely and consistently used as here. Even English William did not

diverge in this particular from the example of his predecessor, though in certain other ways (especially when he reached the corona) his details were different — lighter and richer and more insular in accent. But the general effect of the work throughout the choir remains distinctly French. It is a work to be set in comparison with Sens and other Gallic churches of the time, and simply in contrast with those that show a similar stage of development in England. And its early date, together with its free and accomplished use of the pointed arch, are decisive proof of French precedence in the working-out of those fashions we call Gothic.

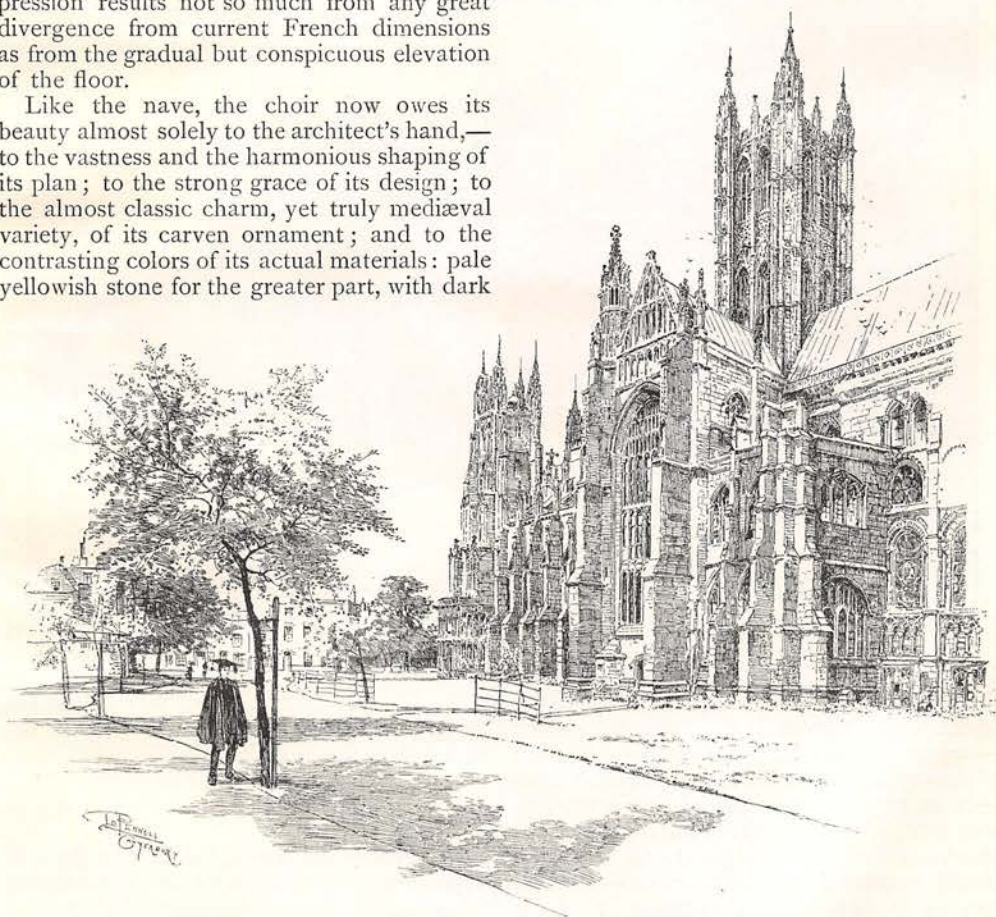
Few better examples can be found in any land of the use of the pointed arch ere it had finally driven its rival from the field. The presence of the old Norman outer walls meant the existence in the aisles of round-headed windows and arcades; and though the scheme of the two Williams relies in general upon the new device, it retains sufficient semicircles to bring the whole into perfect keeping. The great pier-arches are pointed almost throughout their line, but varied (curiously enough, far to the eastward, in the work of the second William) by two round openings on either

hand, one wider and one narrower in span. The lights of the triforium-arcade are pointed also, but grouped in twos beneath comprising semicircles; the clere-story windows are pointed once again; and the vaulting shows a wise and charming mixture of both forms. Nowhere is there any disharmony; nowhere does contrast become conflict. Even the singular break in the great main arcade between central and side alleys contents the eye more wholly than might be thought.

Two things however do strike us as characteristically English in this choir. One is its immense length and the other is the comparative lowness of its roof. But the latter impression results not so much from any great divergence from current French dimensions as from the gradual but conspicuous elevation of the floor.

Like the nave, the choir now owes its beauty almost solely to the architect's hand,—to the vastness and the harmonious shaping of its plan; to the strong grace of its design; to the almost classic charm, yet truly mediæval variety, of its carven ornament; and to the contrasting colors of its actual materials: pale yellowish stone for the greater part, with dark

more nearly than them all, that where lies the effigy and where hangs the armor of Edward the Black Prince. But none the less it is difficult to conceive what must once have been the crowded pictorial glamour, the eloquent story-telling of the place. Nor is the tramping verger with his apathetic Philistine band a very suggestive substitute for that enormous throng which once ascended the aisle-stairways on its knees; paused by the various chapels to pay homage to the arm of St. George, to a piece of the clay from which Adam was molded, to the bloody pocket-handkerchief of Becket, and to four hundred other relics of equal preciousness and au-



THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CATHEDRAL.

marble for the slenderer shafts. A few of its tall windows still keep their gorgeous figured glass, and its endless array of tombs, rivaling once the Westminster of to-day, is still represented by a noble if fragmentary sequence. One may still see the sepulcher of Henry IV., of Cardinal Pole, and many another famous primate; and, touching vague retrospective sentiment

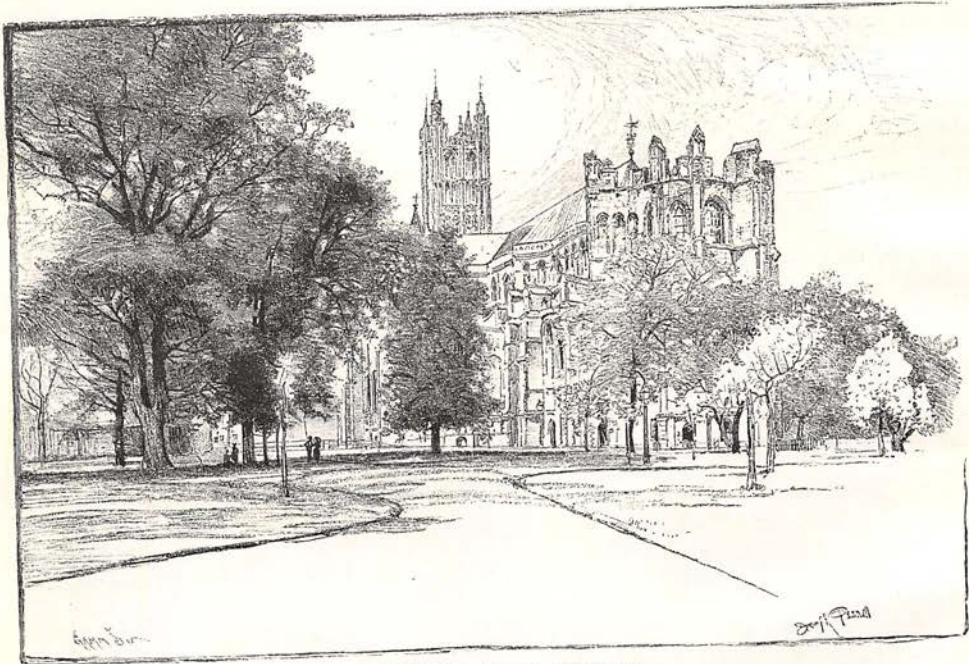
thenticity; and knelt around the lofty shrine of St. Thomas in awed awaiting of the moment when its wooden cover should be raised and all its blaze of gold and jewels shown—scintillating in the midst of them that priceless gem, the “Regale of France,” which had leaped from the ring of the seventh Louis and fixed itself in the sepulcher when he had re-

fused it as a gift. The wealth, the dazzle, the incomparable pomp of such a show and the proud self-complacency of the ecclesiastical showmen may well have impressed the average mortal, even at that late day when Erasmus and Colet made their visit and were disgusted to the point of audible outbreak alike by show and showmen and popular abasement.

IX.

THERE is no pure Early English work in this cathedral; and Decorated work has no

most insensibly into the vaulting ribs above, their capitals being insignificant indeed. The triforium has lost its old height, its old character, almost its existence—is but the continuation over an unpierced wall of the tracery of the great window which fills the whole width of the clere-story space above; and all horizontal accentuation disappears in the preponderance of vertical. But so much work of the wonderfully prolific Perpendicular period will meet us elsewhere, that at Canterbury it may be passed over more quickly than the rest. In the same style, but nearly a century later



THE EAST END OF THE CATHEDRAL.

share in its actual construction, though the screen which surrounds the "singers' choir"—separating the central alley just eastward of the crossing from the aisles on either hand—is an exquisite example of thirteenth-century art. When we pass from the choir out into the nave again, we go at one step from twelfth-century Transitional design—French, too, in its flavor—to Perpendicular of the fourteenth century. The change is great indeed. There we had strong piers, winning grace at times from slender flanking shafts of marble; square capitals, conspicuous and elaborate; a high and open triforium-arcade; a clere-story with tall simple lights; and repeated string-courses to emphasize each division. Here the pier-arches are much loftier and of course the aisles beyond are higher too. The pillars are almost like vast bundles of reeds, and pass al-

in date, is the Lady-Chapel, now called the Dean's, which projects eastward from the Transept of the Martyrdom.

X.

No crypt in the world, I should judge, is so stupendous as Canterbury's or so interesting either structurally or historically. As is usual it begins just eastward of the crossing, leaving the four great piers which support the tower to be assisted by the solid earth; and thence it extends to the east as far as the great choir reaches, following the same outlines with transepts and chapels of its own. All the western part under the choir proper—the "choir of the singers" and the presbytery and high altar—and under the second transepts was built by Ernulph, Anselm's first architect, doubtless



THE TOWER, FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

with the concealed use of portions of the ancient pre-Norman crypt. Norman architecture shows of course at its sternest and heaviest in such subterranean constructions, which allowed of no great height, demanded little ornamenting of their darkness, and were forced to carry so huge a superincumbent weight. Ernulph's work (which shows the exact extent and outline of the choir that he and Conrad built above) has stumpy colossal columns, plain cubical capitals, and broad gigantic semicircular arches. But between and under these the eye looks into what seems an endless labyrinth where they merge into a lighter, loftier space, growing higher and higher with the gradual rise of the choir-floor above, having sharply pointed arches and slenderer columns, the shafts and capitals of which show richly decorative intentions that were never fully executed.

All this newer portion in the Transitional style lies beneath that part of the choir which was built by William the Englishman. Its design is doubtless his, and not his pred-

ecessor's; and its execution is evidently all his own, for it is much more English than what stands above. Here, where he was quite unfettered, he used the national round abacus on all his columns, to the exclusion of that rectangular type which, in the upper structure, French beginnings had imposed on his artistic conscience. From the dark, low, heavy, tomb-like Norman crypt it is a change indeed to pass to this eastern end with its high ceiling, and its many windows open to the light and air—scarce to be called a crypt at all, rather an undercroft or lower church. The rising levels of Canterbury's choir are as fortunate in effect below as above the ground.

The Norman crypt was dedicated to the Virgin, and her chapel still remains, inclosed by rich late-Gothic screens. Not far off is the chantry endowed by the Black Prince on his wedding-day. And just where the Norman work meets English William's, under the former termination of the Norman choir, is the spot where Becket was first interred. Here lay King Henry through his abject night of penance; here he bared his body to the monkish lash; and hither came the early pilgrims until, in the year 1220, the body was "translated" to its new tomb overhead. Stephen Langton was then at home again from exile, and worked with the young son of his adversary John to organize a spectacle of inimitable pomp and uncalculating hospitality. Princes bore the pall, bishops followed by scores, and the Archbishop of Rheims performed the mass at a temporary altar in the



NORMAN STAIRWAY IN THE CLOSE.

nave where the vast concourse could be accommodated best. So magnificent a pageant had never been seen before, even in that age of shows; and the debt with which it saddled the diocese could not be wholly paid off until the time of Langton's fourth successor!

But passing years brought very different scenes. In the sixteenth century Queen Elizabeth gave the whole crypt for the use of Canterbury's colony of French and Flemish refu-

grees; the wide dusky central space was filled up with their silk-loom, and the south aisle screened off to serve their religious needs. That constancy to the by-gone which so singularly co-exists with the marked modernness of the English land seems delightfully illustrated when we find the far descendants of these exiles still worshipping in the same strange subterranean place.

Signs of foreign influence are also to be traced on the outside of the church, though far less conspicuously than within. A west front, we know, was but rarely treated in England with the honor it invariably received abroad. Here it shows little evidence of well-thought-out design. Its flanking towers have not been made to harmonize with the huge



THE CENTRAL ("BELL HARRY") TOWER, FROM THE "DARK ENTRY" IN THE CLOSE.

Perpendicular window that fills the whole space between them, and the poverty which always comes when doorways are unduly small is exceptionally apparent. The east end speaks more decidedly of France, but gets a local accent through the very low pitch of its outer roof. And almost everything else is English,—the tremendous length of the choir, the comparatively modest elevation of the

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THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE GREEN COURT IN THE CLOSE.

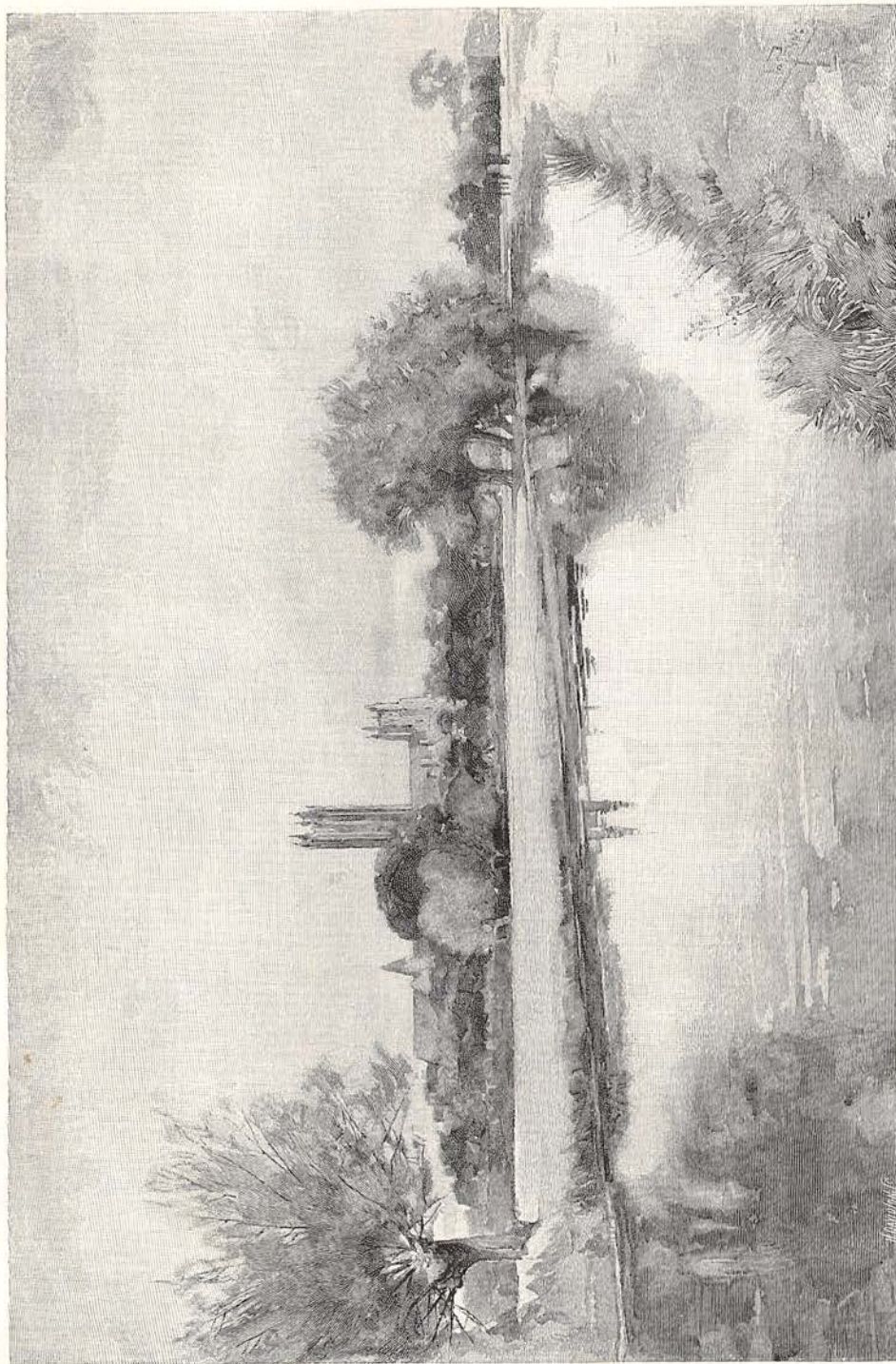
walls throughout, the two pairs of transepts, the size of the central tower, and the design of this and of the western ones as well.

Yet it is only when we have followed along the whole south side (noting on our way that rich Norman work of the eastward transept and of St. Anselm's Chapel which recalls the memory and explains the style of the burned interior), when we have rounded the east end and found the extraordinary picturesque-ness of the northern aspect,—it is only then we realize how truly English Canterbury is.

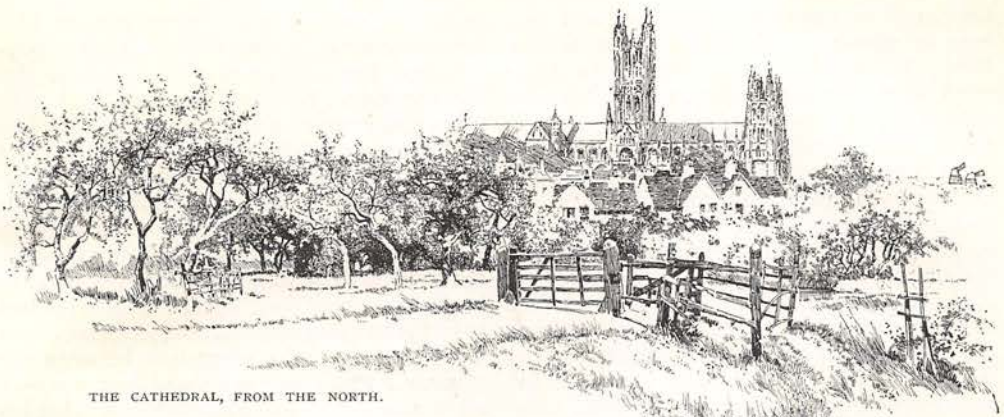
To the south the Close was narrowed by the nearness of the city's streets, and there was no room to give the dependent structures this, their customary station. But on the north the domain of the monastery extended to the far-off city-wall, and here Lanfranc and many a later prior and bishop made a marvelously great and splendid sequence of green quadrangles and conventual buildings. Henry the Eighth suppressed the convent, deposed the prior, scattered the hundred and fifty monks, and replaced them with the Dean and dozen canons whose representatives still bear rule. The buildings were somewhat damaged at

this time, were left for years to neglect and isolation, and then beaten into pieces by Puritan hands.

To-day it needs careful study to trace out what they must all have been,—the two immense dormitories; the great infirmary with its nave and aisles and traceried windows and its chapel to complete the resemblance with an imposing church; the vast guest-houses, here for noble, there for more plebeian, and there again for wandering pauper visitors; the tall water-tower; the library, the treasury, the refectory; the stables, granaries, bake-houses, breweries; and all the minor architectural belongings of so numerous a brotherhood devoted to such comfortable living and such lavish hospitality. To-day the great square of the cloisters still stands contiguous to the church itself, chiefly as rebuilt in Perpendicular days but the same in plan and in occasional stones as when Becket passed along it to his death. The adjoining chapter-house is also preserved, but is also a reconstruction—a rectangular apartment of Decorated and of Perpendicular days; beautiful, but much less individual in its interest than the polygonal rooms we shall find elsewhere. Near by, again, is the old water-



CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL, FROM THE RIVER STOUR.



THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE NORTH.

tower and a great maze of connecting passages and rooms; and then at a distance from all of these, far off to the northward, are a couple of Norman gateways and a most delightful external stair, the only one in the whole of England that remains as built by Norman hands. And scattered everywhere are fragments large and small of many kinds and dates, sometimes rebuilt to meet some alien purpose, sometimes ruins merely.

But ruin in an English spot like this does not mean desolation and abandonment and the lessening of charm. It means a consummate pictorial beauty which to all eyes save the serious student's well replaces architectural perfection. The casual-seeming columns, the isolated tall arcades, the unglazed windows and enigmatical lines of wall—all alike are ivy-covered and flower-beset and embowered in massive foliage and based on broad floors of an emerald turf such as England alone can grow. And above and beyond, as background to the exquisite wide picture, rises the pale-gray mass of the cathedral crowned by its stupendous yet thrice-graceful tower, telling that all is not dead of what was once so living, speaking of the England of our day as in happy harmony again with the England of St. Thomas. If within the church we protest a little against Protestant guardianship, without we are entirely pleased. Ruined or rebuilt though they are, the surroundings of Canterbury seem far more alive as well as far more lovely than do the undisturbed accompaniments of many a continental church where a lingering Catholicism has better kept the interior in its mediæval state. For nature is always young; and whatever his shortcomings in other artistic paths, the Englishman is master in the art of using her materials. Even the modernized dwellings in which Dean and canons dwell—partly formed of very ancient fragments, partly dating from intermediate periods—have a homely, pleasant, "livable" charm one rarely finds elsewhere. And if there is tennis on the

old monks' turf or a tea-party beneath the venerable trees, one is glad as of another item that delights the eye and another link that binds actual life to the life of vanished years.

But, architecturally speaking, we get our best proof of the English character of the church itself from some point of view a little further off. Its vast length and the triumphant domination of its central tower are then first fully comprehended. Nowhere but in England could we see a Gothic central tower in such supremacy; and nowhere one of the same fashion—four-square in outline through all its two hundred and forty-five feet, finished with a parapet and tall angle-pinnacles, and never destined to receive a spire. Such a tower, matched by consonant lower brethren to the westward, overtopping so long and low a church set amidst such great conventual structures and above such leafy masses, apart and distinct enough from the dwellings of laymen for dignity but not for isolation of effect—all these are things one only sees in England, and nowhere in England more perfectly revealed than here.

XII.

A HUNDRED other points might be noted as of peculiar interest in Canterbury's church, and a hundred other facts of curious historic flavor might be quoted from its chronicles. One is especially tempted to dwell upon the proofs of Becket's marvelous renown; to tell how for generations no royal Englishman omitted homage, and how royal strangers came to pay it too—kings and princes many times, more

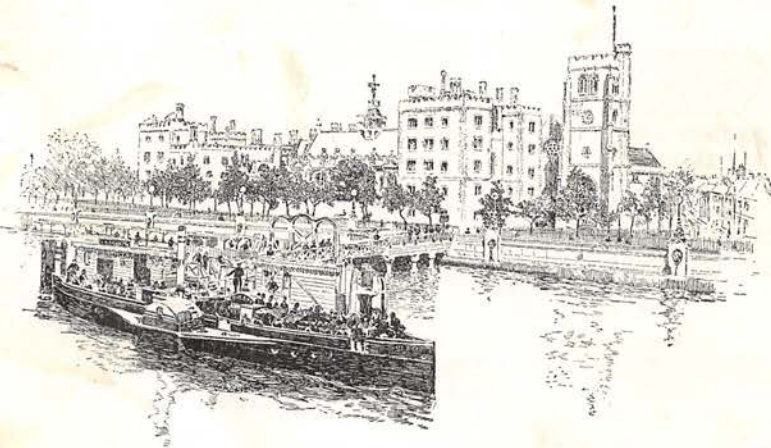
than once an emperor of the West, and once even an emperor of the East; to recite how Henry V. journeyed hither fresh from Agincourt, how Edward I. hung by the shrine the golden crown of Scotland and was married in the Transept of the Martyrdom, or how Charles V. of Germany, going nowhere else on English soil, yet came here with Henry VIII., each in the spring-time of his youth and pride, to pay the king-defier reverence just before the day of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. And as a set-off to such tributes one would like to describe the visit of the skeptical but philosophic Erasmus and the equally skeptical but far franker Colet; and the final spoiling of the shrine ordered in his later years by the same Henry who had made the pilgrimage with Charles, when two great coffers, needing each some eight strong men to bear it, could hardly hold the gold and gems, and when the lesser valuables filled a train of six and twenty wagons.

Then is there not that long list of archbishops whose beginning was with St. Augustine himself and whose end is not even yet? Were not its representatives for many ages not only first in the rule of the Church, but scarcely second to the king in the ruling of the State — treasurers, chancellors, vice-regents, guardians of princely children, or leaders of the people, or cardinals of Rome, or teachers or martyrs of the new anti-Roman faith? It is a relief to the imagination to recollect, however, that in later mediæval and still more in modern days the name of Canterbury, when coupled with the archiepiscopal title, has often little local bearing.

At the beginning the tie between the archbishop and his titular church and town was close indeed. He was not only primate of all England but bishop of the Kentish land and

prior of Christ Church Convent too; and his life was intimately intertwined with local happenings. But as his power grew and his duties expanded, he could not but think ever more and more of England, ever less and less of Canterbury. The affairs of the convent were passed over to another, and even diocesan matters were practically in humbler hands. Lambeth Palace in London became his chief residence, and when not there he was far more apt to be in some splendid country home than in his Canterbury dwelling. So distinct seemed to be the call for centralization, so useless, even harmful, seemed the separation between the spiritual and the civic centers of the realm, — a separation which had already taken place before London's supremacy was achieved, when Winchester was the royal town, — that the seat of the primacy would certainly have been transferred had not a single happening preserved Canterbury in its rank. This happening was the murder of Becket, involving as it did his canonization and wonder-working, and the sudden rise of Canterbury from a humble provincial town to a place of world-wide fame and quite peculiar sanctity. When Henry the Eighth made his new arrangements its title was too well established to be taken from it. Since the Puritans leveled the old palace with the ground there has in truth been no archiepiscopal residence at Canterbury. But this is an unimportant detail. As the Kentish capital was from the first, so it remains, and so very surely it will remain as long as there is an England and a Christian faith — the city of the mother church. Had all other monuments of Becket perished as utterly as Henry meant they should, this greatest monument, carved from the very constitution of the English state, would still bear him its conspicuous witness.

M. G. van Rensselaer.



LAMBETH PALACE, LONDON.