

THE MARKET PLACE, WELLS.



Vol. XVII.—No. 854.]

MAY 9, 1896.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE "CITY OF WELLS"

AND ITS ROMANTIC SURROUNDINGS.

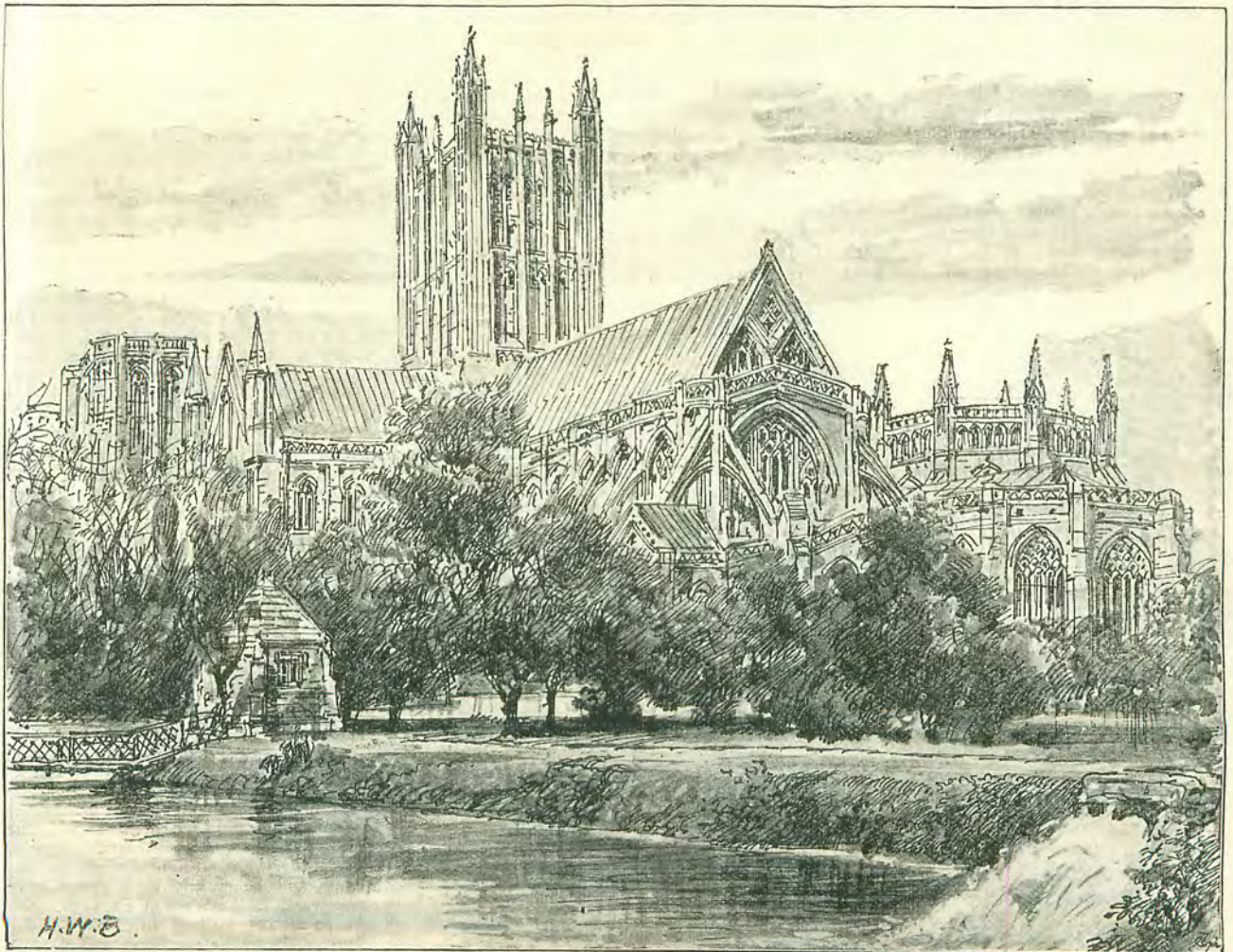
PART I.

WELLS, in Somersetshire, takes its name from three springs of water, which rise in the garden of the Bishop's Palace, and from this fact in old times, and even occasionally at the present day, it was and is called the "city of wells."

In all probability it is the very smallest city

in all England, as its population is little over 4600; it would, however, be difficult to find a more beautiful city, whether as to situation or architecture. It is an ancient place, though it can lay no claim to the vast antiquity of many of our towns. The first mention that we have of it dates from the foundation of its cathedral by King Ina in the year 704, so that in com-

parison with Glastonbury it may almost be described as modern! It has absolutely no history attached to it, except of course that which is connected with its exquisite cathedral. It was, in fact, always a purely ecclesiastical city, and may be described as a cathedral with a town attached to it. It appears never to have been fortified, and its



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THE WELLS WHICH GIVE THE CITY ITS NAME.

peaceful, uneventful history brings to our mind the lines of Wordsworth—

. . . "Around these churches gathered towns,

Far from the feudal castles' haughty frowns,
Peaceful abodes where justice might uphold
Her scales."

It is said "the man is happy who has no history," and how enviable, in turbulent times, was the lot of the inhabitants of a place which has no annals save those which relate to the carving around some cathedral-doorway, the erection of the monument to some good and pious bishop, or the painting of stained-glass windows, and such is the history of Wells.

None of our cathedral cities, except possibly Ely, is so thoroughly ecclesiastical in appearance. The great church, with its appendages, occupies a larger space than the town itself. The three "wells" or springs still continue to supply a clear limpid stream of intensely-cold water; they may be seen bubbling up from the ground, and forming a lake in one of the most exquisite gardens in all Europe. Good Bishop Beckington, to whom Wells owes so much, had the water conveyed to the town by a series of pipes and machinery still in use; they supply a conduit in the market-place, from which streams run out into the gutters of the public street. So delightfully clear are these that we should rather call them watercourses. The inhabitants dip their pails into these streams and use the water for domestic purposes. A friend of ours had a very intelligent poodle, who, like most dogs of this breed, was extremely fond of water. When he first saw these deep gutters with their clear running water, he looked at it with some suspicion, evidently imagining it was a delusion. A plunge into it, however, convinced him that it was the genuine article, and it was difficult to keep him from swimming instead of walking through this delightful town. The supply can be increased or diminished by the machinery at the conduit, so much so that the streets can be completely washed over, and this renders Wells probably the cleanest town in England. There are three streets in the town, which unite in the market-place; for the most

part they are lined with old houses, some of which date from the time of Bishop Beckington, though they have suffered much from the want of taste of succeeding ages, but here and there a Gothic doorway, a bow-window, or a buttress remains to proclaim their Mediæval origin.

The market-place, overlooked by the towers of the cathedral, and two beautiful gates, one leading to the precinct of the palace, and the other to that of the cathedral, with the quaint old Jacobean houses to the left, and the conduit to the centre, form one of the most picturesque town-views in this country. It is true that the conduit itself is not very ancient, though, as it is weather-stained and not unpicturesque in aspect, it is well suited to its position. Its details must not be studied too critically, as they are a singular jumble of the Classic and Gothic of George I.'s time. The two gates, however, are genuine old works and of great beauty. One of these, which is in a corner of the market-place, goes by the name of "Penniless Porch;" it is adorned on the outer side with Gothic niches retaining their statues, and on the inner side by a carving of a beacon stuck in a ton or barrel, the well-known rebus of Bishop Beckington.

The name "Penniless Porch" suggests the idea that it may have been connected with the "Elemosinarium" or place for giving alms attached to the cathedral. The other gate, that leading to the palace precinct, is a still more beautiful structure, and is adorned on both sides with a good deal of Gothic carving and sculpture.

If we pass through Penniless Porch we find ourselves in a great enclosed space called the Close, which is completely surrounded by Mediæval buildings. The Close has four ancient gates, one, that in the North-West angle is called Brown's Gate and leads out into the town. For some reason or other this is also called "Kill Canon Corner;" whether the place ever has been fatal to a canon of the cathedral we are unable to say. On the north side of the Close is the Deanery, a very fine Mediæval building though somewhat modernised in parts. In the south side is Penniless Porch already described, but by far the most beautiful of all the gates is one

called the "Chain Gate" at the extreme east of the Close; it consists of a beautiful Gothic gallery which crosses the street upon arches and connects the cathedral with the Vicar's Close. At right angles to the Chain Gate, and forming almost a portion of it, is another gate leading into what is called the Vicar's Close. This place is one of the most interesting collections of Mediæval buildings in England. It is a kind of wide street with perfect old Gothic houses on either side, an exquisite chapel at one end and an almost equally beautiful hall and staircase at the other. We must now, however, describe what is the greatest glory of Wells, the magnificent west front of the cathedral; this grand work rises up at the east end of the Close. When considered in detail, no work in England can be compared with this, and to find anything that presents an equally valuable study of sculpture we should have to go to the great French cathedrals of Amiens or Rheims. How this work has escaped destruction from fanaticism, mischief, and that love of change which has ruined so many old buildings it is impossible to say. The general appearance of this noble front will be gathered from our view, but it is of course impossible in a single drawing to give any adequate notion of the beautiful carving and sculpture with which every portion of it is covered. Even the greatest admirers of Classical art, Flaxman and Cockerell, have been as enthusiastic over the statues as Welby Pugin, in fact, Flaxman made drawings of several of the little groups of statues in the quatrefoils. For the most part they are works of the thirteenth century though the uppermost range is at least two centuries later. Unfortunately we neither know the date at which this noble front was erected nor the name of the bishop who ordered it to be carried out, nor that of the architect who designed it, nor of the sculptors who adorned it with such magnificent figures and carving. Neither can we explain the meaning of the scheme which was evidently intended to be read. Many of the subjects are evidently Biblical, and here and there we can understand them, but, as we don't know who are the persons represented in the large statues, it is impossible to guess what is the connection between them. Undoubtedly in an age when few people could read, this was like some great open book which taught some series of lessons partly taken from Scripture and partly, no doubt, from other sources. We want, in fact, to find something like the Rosetta stone which gave the key to the Egyptian hieroglyphics. All the lowest range of figures except three, have disappeared.

On the lower part of this front is a portion of a thirteenth-century inscription in old French which seems hitherto to have escaped attention. It is in ancient French, and we venture to suggest that it means as follows: "Pray for the soul of William of Poutnie who directed three hundred days." After this is a fragment of a word beginning with the letters D E. Now, who was this William of Poutney and why should his name be recorded upon the west front of the cathedral? We are inclined to venture the suggestion that he was master of the works or architect who died during his tenure of office. A careful search amongst the cathedral archives might throw light on this matter.

It is somewhat singular that the architecture of this front is very different in character to all the other Early-English work in the cathedral, and bears very little resemblance to other works in the West of England. We should be almost inclined to think that the architect, whoever he was, was a Yorkshire man.

It has been thought by most writers that



GATEWAY, BISHOP'S PALACE, WELLS.

this front was erected during the episcopate of Bishop Joceline, 1206-1242, but although this worthy bishop rebuilt the greater part of the cathedral, we should doubt whether any part of the front dates before the middle of the thirteenth century.

One great charm about the exterior of Wells Cathedral is that the old stone work has never been scraped or replaced by new, thus, we have the walls grey with age, and covered with charming mosses and lichen.

Next to the view of the front of the Cathedral, perhaps that obtained from the gardens of the Bishop's Palace, showing the Lady Chapel, choir and towers, and the springs in the foreground, is the most interesting.

The interior of the Cathedral does not at first sight impress one so much as the exterior. It is no doubt a most beautiful architectural design, but unfortunately, about half a century back, it underwent that dreadful operation called scraping, although, it is but right to say that it was more carefully done than in many of our cathedrals, yet it is incredible the damage effected everywhere by this operation. It is better far to leave the old whitewash of the last century, if it cannot be removed by brushing alone. Fortunately there is a considerable quantity of fine old stained-glass, which is magnificent in colour.

In this respect few windows in Europe surpass that at the east end of the choir. There are a considerable number of very beautiful monuments recording the long line of bishops who have ruled this church; first, as bishops of Wells, and later on, as of Bath and of Wells. We have here, however, another puzzle. It is this: that all the earlier effigies are evidently works of the thirteenth century, and look very much as if they were works by the same hands! The Chapter House, with a magnificent staircase leading up to it, is a noble example of fourteenth-century Gothic, and a curious old crypt beneath, formerly the treasury, is full of interesting old fragments of carving and church furniture. This great apartment has very massive double doors, the inner one completely covered by the metal scroll work of its hinges. The cloisters are on the opposite side to the Chapter House, an arrangement which we believe to be quite peculiar to this church.

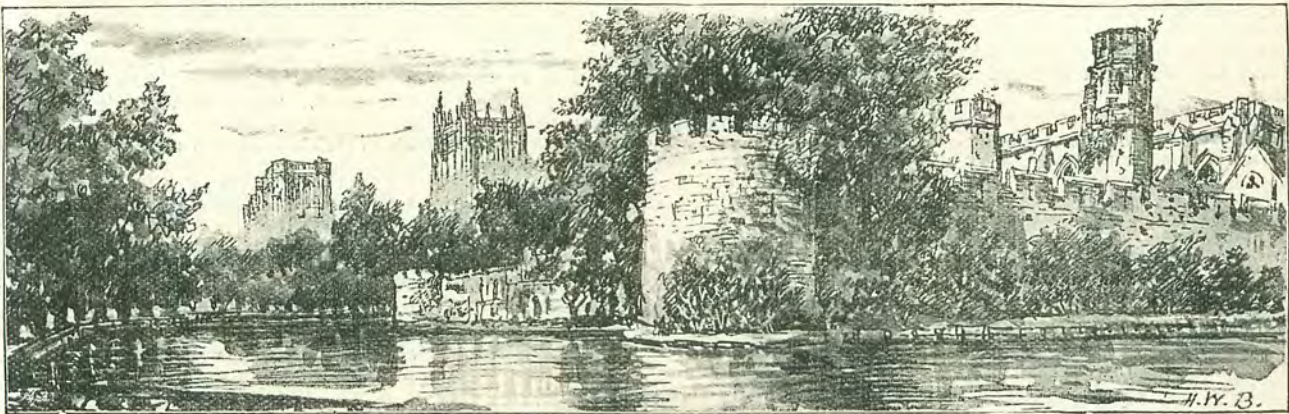
A doorway from the cloisters leads to the enclosure round the Bishop's Palace, where there is a most charming walk along the banks of the moat, overshadowed by gigantic elms. On the opposite side of the water rise the picturesque ivy-clad walls and ramparts. A genuine drawbridge leads to a machicolated gateway still defended by its ancient portcullis. Upon knocking at the massive

oak door, one is admitted during certain hours of the day into the palace. The buildings stand in the midst of a most exquisite garden which fills in the whole space between the ramparts. There is a fine fourteenth-century chapel still in use, and the ruins of an extremely noble hall of vast size which appears to have been used for the purposes of a Court of Justice, as it was here that the outrageous farce of the trial and condemnation of the last Abbot of Glastonbury was perpetrated.

All the buildings of the palace are interesting, but there are two little structures in the garden which are more than ordinarily so; the one is a curious kind of summer-house or grotto said to have been built by Bishop Kenn, and there is a tradition that here he composed his well-known morning hymn. There is however a doubt about the matter, as that distinction is also ascribed to Longleat, where Bishop Kenn took refuge after he was deprived of his bishopric. Another curiosity is the little Gothic building containing the waterworks constructed by Bishop Beckington.

In addition to its cathedral and palace, Wells contains another ecclesiastical structure of very great beauty in the parish church of St. Cuthbert, with its singularly noble tower and most interesting old reredoses.

(To be concluded.)



THE MOAT, BISHOP'S PALACE, WELLS.

OTHER PEOPLE'S STAIRS.

By ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO, Author of "Her Object in Life," "A King's Daughter," "By Still Waters," etc.

CHAPTER VII.

ROBINA MACTAVISH.

MORAG had gone to her favourite haunt in the precinct of the ruined cathedral, and had applied herself to the completion of a little sketch over which she had taken great pains. Regretfully she noted, by the fast advancing twilight, that it would be useless for her to return to her work next week. She was just folding up her paper and pencils, when she was startled by a shrill, gay voice coming over a tombstone behind her and addressing her thus—

"Good-evening, miss, you're the young lady at old Mother Cay's, if I'm not mistaken?"

The speaker came round into Morag's view. She was a tall, slight girl, not

bad-looking, and wore a large hat with a showy plume.

"Good-evening," Morag responded. "Yes, I am the servant at Mrs. Cay's."

The other laughed lightly and loudly.

"I reckon the old girl thinks she's got a treasure at last. And yet I don't know, you've got a look about ye! Bless me, I almost wonder I plucked up heart of grace to speak to you."

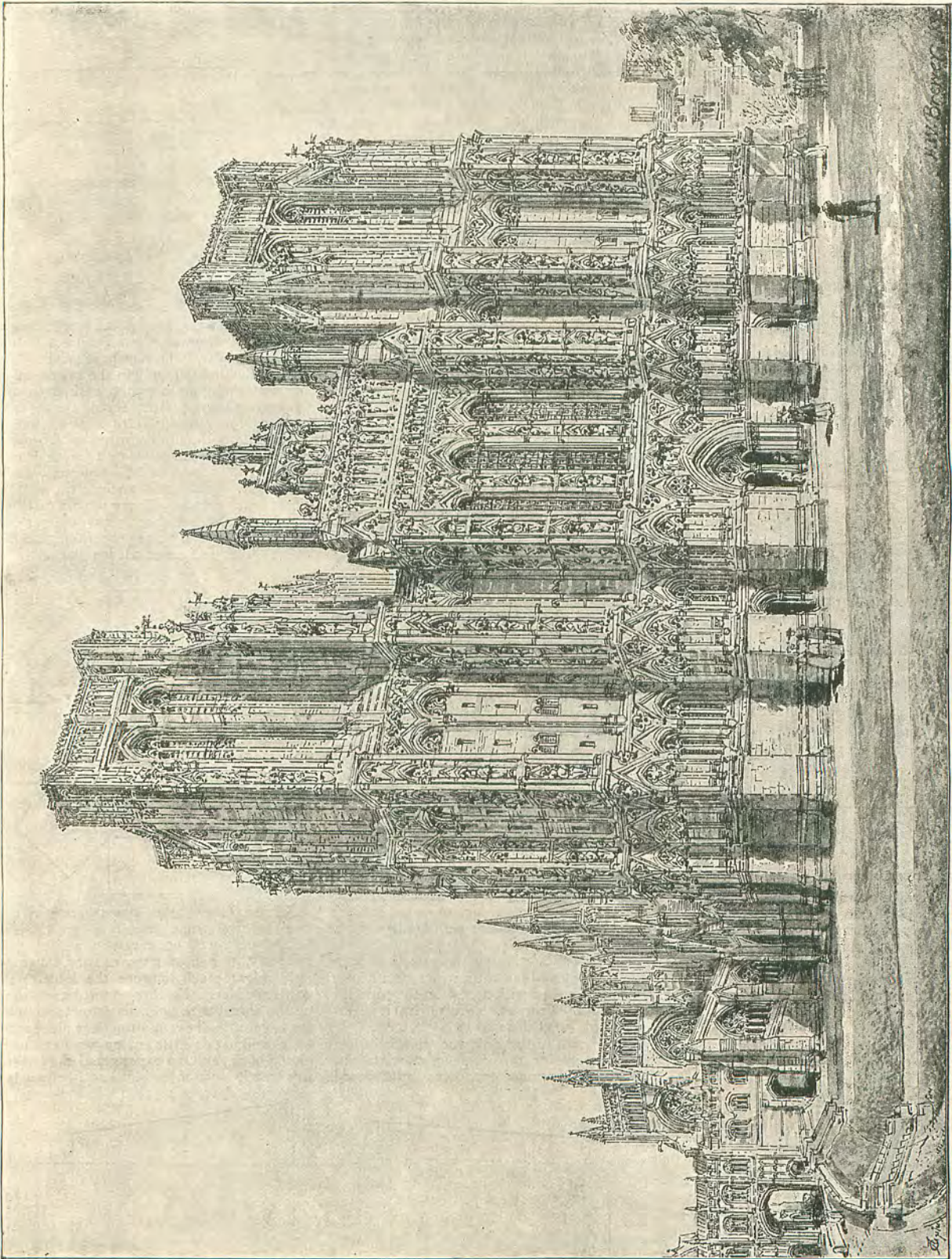
Morag smiled. "You have an advantage over me," she said, "for you see you know who I am, but I don't know who you are."

"No more you don't," replied the other cheerfully, "but it's easy told. I was the young lady at Mrs. Cay's, not the one afore you, but the one afore her. And now I'm the barmaid at the Badenoch Inn. This is my night off, an' to

tell you the plain truth I expected to meet my young man, but I don't believe he is a-going to turn up. I'd have got tired of waiting for him, but that I've been a-watching of you, and what you are a-doing of, it beats me to make out."

Morag good-naturedly unfolded her parcel, and displayed her little drawing. She had to explain it somewhat to her companion, who exclaimed with delight at "the neat way in which she was a-filling up the outline," but was almost incredulous to hear that the outline itself was also Morag's own work.

"An' to think that anybody as can do the like of that will go an' slave in solitary confinement on short commons at Mother Cay's," she cried, with a deprecating shake of her head.



THE WEST FRONT, WELLS CATHEDRAL.



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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE "CITY OF WELLS" AND ITS ROMANTIC SURROUNDINGS.

PART II.

THE surroundings of Wells are truly delightful. The town stands in a bowery valley, and the views as one ascends the hills, looking back upon the town, especially from the east and north, present a combination of landscape and architecture such as is certainly not to be surpassed by any town in England.

A drive from Wells to Cheddar, through Priddy, gives one an excellent idea of the extraordinary variety of scenery to be met with in this part of Somersetshire. It commences through the richly-wooded vale of Wells, and then ascends the hills, the road becoming like one of the beautiful drives in Devonshire. Further on and still ascending we find ourselves at the top of a vast amphitheatre of hills, some conical in form and others having rocky precipices and escarped sides. At last we reach the Downs, where one might imagine oneself in the bleakest part of Cumberland. The air, which hitherto has been mild and genial, becomes suddenly a mighty wind blowing like a tornado, but immensely invigorating. Priddy, it must be acknowledged, has a somewhat gloomy appearance. Agriculture is certainly carried on under exceptional difficulties owing to its bleak and exposed site, and the lead-mines do not



WOOKEY HOLE.

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THE CHEDDAR CLIFFS.

seem so prosperous as they were formerly, if we may judge from the number of cottages which are ruined and roofless.

Passing on further the whole surface of the land looks covered with stone and small boulders, when suddenly, without any preparation, the road descends rapidly into one of the most magnificent rocky defiles in Europe. So strange, so unexpected, is the sight which opens to view, that one can at first scarcely imagine it to be reality. Vast rocky cliffs, four hundred feet high, rear their jagged and weather-worn crags on every side, while from the centre of the valley, vast, isolated, rocky pinnacles rise like spires. The road winds in and out in a serpentine way so as to avoid these gigantic obstructions. The glen extends for about a mile and a half, and in places appears so enclosed as to present no outlet. This most marvellous freak of nature terminates as abruptly as it commences, for, when

one gets to the Cheddar end of the ravine, the rocks disappear and we are in a pretty village with a clear river overshadowed by orchards and rich verdant hills and glades like some pretty district in Suffolk. A more remarkable transition we never remember to have seen anywhere, and, even if their intrinsic beauty were not so wonderful, the strange contrast would alone make the Cheddar cliffs worthy of a visit. We have attempted feebly to describe the grandeur of nature and her extraordinary variety, but we must now say a few words about the strange curiosities which have been discovered in this gorge. Until half a century back, it was not suspected that these rocks contained perhaps the most remarkable series of caverns in England abounding in stalactites, stalagmites and other strange and fantastic objects. Perhaps it is a little unfortunate for romance that these caves have become regular show places, with the usual accompaniments of gas, showmen, touts, etc. However, it would certainly have been difficult to exhibit them without the gas, etc.

The formations are most remarkable, in some places looking exactly like poached eggs, joints of beef, turkeys, curtains, and other wild and eccentric feats of nature. There is a very remarkable fact about the stalactites and stalagmites, many of them meeting except for a gap of one inch or so. Now, although careful notice and measurement have been taken from time to time in the earliest discovered cavern, not one fragment of an inch has been diminished in the distance between them, though the water still continues to drip. To the mind of the writer this would seem to prove that these strange objects were not formed very gradually, but were the result of some sudden and fearful eruption, and the vitrified surface which covers nearly every object would certainly point to the presence of intense heat.

Another very interesting district, only some three miles from Wells, is called Wookey Hole. This is a valley with a river running along it, upon following up which, one leaves the high road and passes a huge paper mill, when we are met by one of those strange surprises which have so singular an effect upon the mind in this part of Somersetshire. Suddenly, and with scarcely any preparation, the valley is abruptly closed by a vast rock some two hundred feet high, through a cavernous arch in the centre of which rushes the river. Of course all further progress is stopped,

without one has procured the services of a guide, with candles, etc., from a cottage near the mill. If this precaution has been taken, the guide will open a small door in the face of the rock, and, lighting candles, will conduct one down a rough staircase cut in the rock. This leads to a low-browed passage, which opens out into one of the most striking-looking caverns to be found anywhere. It consists of a series of vast rocky chambers, united together by passages, the largest and most important of which is weird in the extreme. A huge shelving rock forms the ceiling of one portion, but beyond this is a vast domical roof, rising so high as in some places to disappear altogether from view. The river runs through this cavern, and from its bed rise some of the strangest-looking objects conceivable. One of these is a great black rock, in form like the head and shoulders of some hideous woman—another one bears an equally strange resemblance to a sleeping dog.

It is customary for the guide to pour some naphtha over the large rock and set fire to it, when the ghastly resemblance and the singularly uncanny effect is still more remarkable. One is not surprised to hear the title of the "Witch's Head" applied to this rock, and it scarcely needs to be told that all sorts of stories and traditions are associated with this gruesome spot.

In Bishop Percy's Ballads is a poem entitled "The Wicked Witch of Wookey Hole," in which some of these are given, and we quote the following lines:—

"In aunciente days tradition shoves
A base and wicked elfe arose,
The Witch of Wokey hight.

. . . Her haggard face was foul to see;
Her mouth unmeet a mouth to bee;
Her eyne of deadly leer,
She nought devis'd but neighbours ill,
She wreaked on all her wayward will,
And marr'd all goodly chear.

* * * * *
From Glaston came a lerned wight,
Full bent to marr her fell despight,
And well he did I ween:
Sich mischief never had been known
And, since his mickle lerninge shown,
Sich mischief ne'er has been.

He chauntede out his godlie booke,
He crost the water, blest the brooke,
Then—pater noster done—
The ghastly hag he sprinkled o'er;
When lo! where stood a hag before,
Now stood a ghastly stone."

The Wookey caverns are of a totally different character to those at Cheddar. There are only a very few stalactites, and what strikes one is their vast size and noble proportions. Unlike Cheddar caves, they seem to have been known all through the middle ages, and William of Malmesbury declares that the principal one is of the same dimensions as Westminster Hall!

About half a mile beyond Wookey Hole are Ebber Rocks. They are difficult to find without a guide, and the walking, or rather climbing, is pretty rough when one gets to them. A path over the hills above Wookey, though much longer than the ordinary road, is worth while taking on account of the superb views obtained over the surrounding country. One crosses a vast breezy down on the top of the Mendips, and looking in the north-east direction, a dazzling streak of silver is seen in the distance. This is the Bristol Channel. The bold and lofty Mendip Hills rise all around, intersected by rocky gorges and broken by crags. Great sweepy downs spread away in another direction until they gradually merge into the wooded hills surrounding the plain, in the centre of which, from a great belt of trees, rise the towers of Wells. The great Glastonbury Tor stands boldly out from the plain, a conical mass crowned by the tower of its ruined pilgrimage church, and beyond, range after range of hills are seen, one rising over the other until they are lost in the extreme distance.

The Ebber Rocks form a Y-shaped valley which, when seen from above, has the effect of a vast rent in the landscape. In some places the gorge is so narrow as to look as though one could leap across it, but in others, it widens out to about a quarter of a mile. It has been described as Cheddar in miniature, but it is very different in character. The rocks do not rise in separate pinnacles as at Cheddar, and are generally square at the top, so that it has more the character of a rocky trench and, unlike Cheddar, views of the distant country are to be seen from the valley. Then there is no road at Ebber, and the whole valley is covered by vast boulders of rock, between which grow up gnarled and knotted oaks and ashes; so that the rocks are seen to rise over the trees and not from the base of the valley as at Cheddar. All this gives the place a charm peculiarly its own though, of course, it does not possess the extraordinary grandeur of Cheddar.

From an historical and archaeological point of view, of course Glastonbury is by far the most interesting place in the neighbourhood of Wells. It is a walk or drive of about eight miles, pretty though without grandeur or anything especially striking. The land is quite flat, as it has been reclaimed from a sea or mere, a portion of which is still undrained and gives the name of Mere to an old place where there is an interesting Grange which belonged to Glastonbury Abbey. The name of Avalon is still met with, though there is little, apart from its apple-trees, to recall to the mind the days of King Arthur. The town of Glastonbury stands at the foot of the conical hill called the Tor. The church tower crowning it belonged to a pilgrimage chapel dedicated to St. Michael, and in front of it the last Abbot of Glastonbury and two of his monks were executed for high treason in Henry VIII.'s days. The kind of justice meted out to these men may be judged from a note still preserved in Thomas Cromwell's own handwriting, item: "The Abbot of Glaston to be apprehended for (high treason) tried, and executed!"

When one thinks what a marvellous history Glastonbury has, how it links us with the past, how it can be traced through Norman



EBBER ROCKS, NEAR WELLS.

and Saxon times, even to the Roman occupation of our isle, and, if tradition speaks truly to the first establishment of Christianity in this country: when one contemplates all its former glories, it must be acknowledged that what one finds is somewhat disappointing.

Of the vast and magnificent abbey church, or rather churches, for they were really two distinct buildings, though they were united together in later times by a kind of gallery or porch, the remains are scanty. Of the greater church the piers of the chancel arch, a portion of the transepts, some fragments of the aisles of the nave and choir are all that is to be seen.

Of the smaller church, now called St. Joseph's Chapel, more remains. Three of the walls are fairly complete, except for the cruel mutilation caused by carrying away all the marble columns of its arcades to patch up Salisbury Cathedral, about a century back. The doorways are singularly beautiful, and, perhaps, amongst the finest examples of twelfth-century work to be met with in the country.

It is certainly a disappointment to find nothing at Glastonbury Abbey which carries us back to an earlier date than the twelfth century. Could the fire, which at that period consumed St. Mary's Church, a very ancient wooden structure covered with lead, have destroyed more than is generally supposed? Be it as it may, one looks in vain at Glastonbury for the least trace of Saxon architecture.

Of the great monastic buildings only two are in such a condition as to give us any idea of the magnificence of this great institution, they are the kitchen and the great barn. The kitchen is a strikingly handsome building, entirely constructed of stone; there are four huge ranges in the corners. The steam from the cooking is carried off by a great stone lantern of elegant form, which is the crowning object of this very remarkable building. The barn is probably the most elaborate structure of its kind in Europe; it is cruciform in plan, and at a little distance looks like a large important church. The threshing-doors are at the end of the transept, and small but exceedingly graceful traceried windows admit light at the east and

the west ends. All the four fronts are adorned with niches, evangelistic symbols and gable crosses. The interior is as striking as the exterior. The roof is supported upon oak principles, chamfered and moulded, and there is many a manufacturing-town in England that might envy such a building for its church.

The little town of Glastonbury contains two fine old churches, that of St. John, possessing perhaps the most sumptuous church-tower in England, and St. Benedict, which has also a beautiful tower, with a most strange kind of ornamentation round its parapet: in the middle of each quatrefoil is the representation of a large jug of beer very much frothed up. The reason for this strange example of "ecclesiastical" decoration is that the church was rebuilt at the expense of an abbot whose name was Beer. He must, by the way, have been a generous man, for we find these jugs of

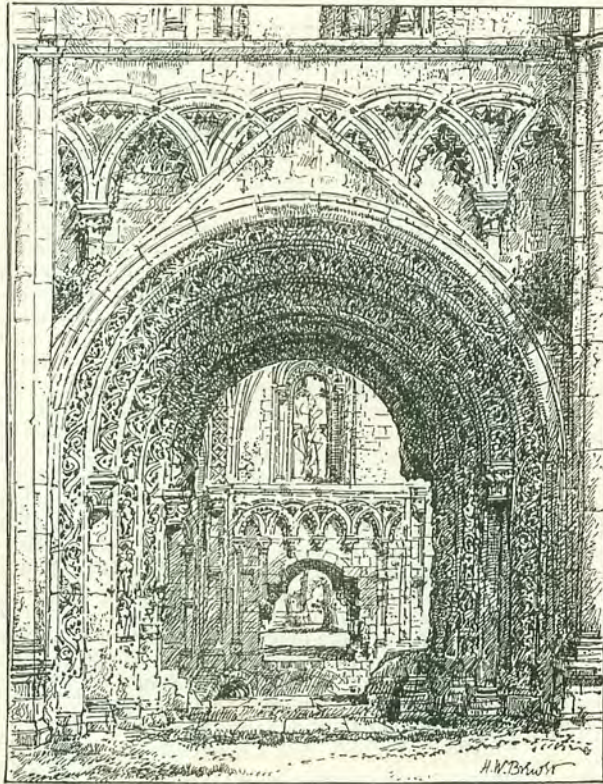
beer represented over almshouses and several portions of the abbey.

There are also two fine old inns in Glastonbury, one was formed in post-Reformation times out of the ruins of the abbey gate, but the other, called The George, has been an old hostelry for pilgrims time out of mind. The existing building dates from the reign of Richard II., and is one of the noblest examples of domestic architecture in England.

The old market cross, which Glastonbury possesses in common with so many Somersetshire towns, was rebuilt with very good intention some fifty years ago, but instead of reconstructing it as a market cross they attempted an imitation of the Eleanor crosses, with the result that one's historical ideas get confused. Restoring architects ought to be very careful never to do this kind of thing, because the object which they create is not only deceiving in itself, but makes one doubt the genuineness of surroundings, which may be in reality of the highest possible historical value.

There are many pretty walks, enlivened with sweet villages and noble churches, round about Glastonbury, but the country is not to be compared with that immediately around Wells; in fact for variety, interest, and contrasted charm of every description, we know of no place in this country which offers so much to our admiration as Wells and its surroundings. The landscape may be regarded as the very epitome of English scenery, for here, close together, we find rocky landscape gorges, smiling sylvan scenery, bleak moorland, wooded valleys, and bold rugged hills.

Another great charm is the fact that amidst all this beautiful and interesting scenery, we find the most picturesque and elegant architectural remains; nowhere do we see such village churches, such exquisite towers, such quaint old houses, such market crosses, such noble old mansions, and certainly Wells Cathedral and its surroundings, its Bishop's Palace, its Vicar's Close, and its noble gateways, has no counterpart in this country, and we know of no place where those who take an interest in the varied beauties of scenery or architectural works can spend a more pleasant holiday, than in "the city of Wells" and its romantic surroundings. H. W. BREWER.



GLASTONBURY ABBEY.

OTHER PEOPLE'S STAIRS.

By ISABELLA FVIE MAYO, Author of "Her Object in Life," "A King's Daughter," "By Still Waters," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACCEPTED CROSS.

THE infant-schoolmistress herself answered Morag's modest ring. She was an active, bright little body, who invited Morag into her parlour while she got the prospectus. Evidently she was very true to her office of secretary, for she asked Morag whether she wanted the paper for herself, expressed a hope that she would not fail to join them, adding that they would be delighted to welcome her as "a guest" until she had made up her mind.

The sight of the pretty, refined little

interior, with its book-shelves, its photographs and its pussy curled up on a cushion, cheered Morag for the moment, only to make her heart sink the lower, when she found herself again in the darkness, hurrying back to the bare cleanliness of utter desolation. Once at home, she pored eagerly over the paper. There was really a very enticing programme of matters both of intellectual refreshment and domestic interest, to say nothing of all the cheerful possibilities involved in meeting a crowd of friendly faces gathered in a well-lit snug room. The fee for the session was only half-a-crown, necessary, as was naively

explained, to defray "incidentals" and the outlay required for the public nights.

But oh, how low poor Morag's heart sank when she found that the weekly meeting was held not on Wednesdays but on Thursdays.

Yet she tried to argue with herself that this was but a needless depression. Mrs. Cay could never object to changing the "evening out" from Wednesday to Thursday. It was not as though Morag was in any way more needed at home on Thursday than on Wednesday. Nay, it seemed to her, when she thought it over, that if there was one evening on which