

SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS SPIRES.



LOSTWITHEL.

BEING to some extent a matter of taste, it would perhaps be too much to assert positively of any spire that it is more beautiful than the rest of its compeers. For our present purpose it is sufficient to say the spire of Strasbourg Cathedral is one of the most beautiful as well as most famous in the world. Many of us can remember the anxiety that was felt on its behalf in the late bombardment of Strasbourg, and the gratification that was expressed at its escape from destruction. It is placed on the northernmost of the two west towers, and rises to an altitude that considerably exceeds that of the greatest of the Pyramids. But instead of being the apex of a mass of solid masonry com-

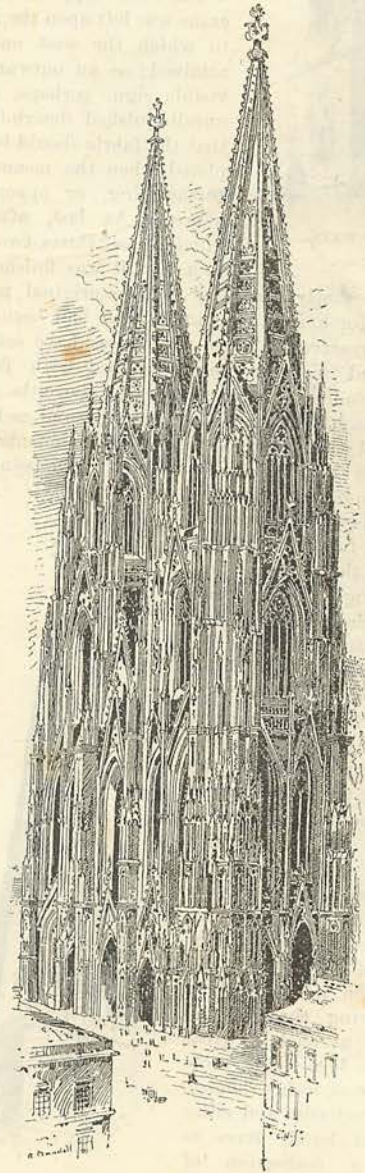
paratively easy to ascend, like the great task of the ancient Egyptians, this marvellous work had to be placed in position by means of a wonderful pile of scaffolding of an intrepidity and intricacy of construction that only our own recent great engineering triumphs can enable us to realise. We have no spire like it in our own country, for it is made of the most ornamental traceried open-work from its base to its summit, and the perforations form a design of exquisite beauty. A very high degree of enrichment pervades the whole of the stone-work of the cathedral, as though intended as an expression of a sense of what was fitting for "the habitation of the Lord." The western façade is extremely rich. The buttresses between its divisions are adorned with canopies and statues; the entrances are crowned with crocketed gables; and the receding sides of the magnificent doorways are lined with rows of niches and statues. And this superb "head-stone of the corner," to use the phrase of the Psalmist, seems richer than all.

There is another German spire of similar open tracery work that looks as lace-like against the sky. This is at Freiburg. The cathedral is built of red sandstone, which gives a sunset tone to the building, and the spire is wrought of the same stone. It looks down from its great height upon palaces, castles, halls, convents, churches, chapels, fountains, and statues, as well as upon all the houses of the inhabitants, with which these are intermingled, and upon the winding of the river, the wide country around, and the sloping hills in the distance. And

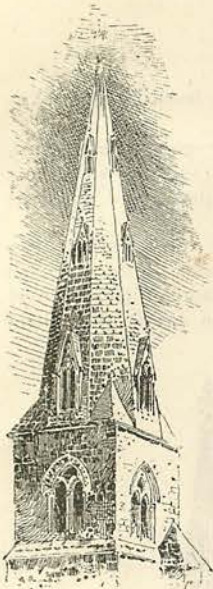
it must be added, it seems to beautify all that it looks down upon.

When Strasburg and Freiburg spires are mentioned, that of the cathedral of Burgos, in Old Castile, must not be passed over without equal praise, for it is also of exceeding beauty.

In the history of spires few incidents are more interesting than the circumstances attending the building of the two noble examples on the west front of Cologne Cathedral. The mediæval architect



COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.



BARNWELL.

finished exactly according to the original particulars set forth in a drawing which had been fortunately preserved. These two spires have octagonal bases, and taper to points, capped with floriated finials, five hundred and fifteen feet above the ground level. Each angle or rib is crocketed, and each plane is pierced with quatrefoils and other ornamental work. There is a third spire to this fabric, at the point of intersection of the transepts, which is three hundred and fifty feet high. After viewing the relics of bygone kings, in the great golden chest studded with precious stones, the rare old cameos and mosaic work in the sacristy, the pictures, sculpture, countless carvings, ironwork, stained glass, the columns, the groining, the chapels, canopies, tombs, and other wealth of architectural interest in the interior—to step out into the upper air upon the parapets or balconies at the base of either of these spires, and view the silvery Rhine meandering through the country at such a great distance below, the roofs of other churches, houses, streets, suburbs, and villas close at hand, gives as vivid a realisation of the magnitude of this

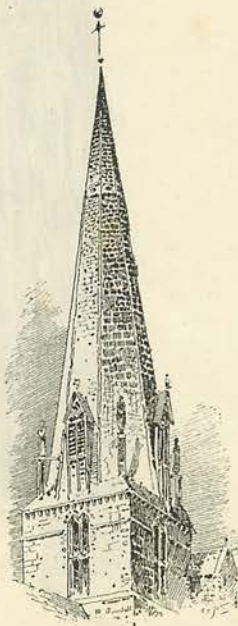
entrusted with the task of replacing the cathedral erected by Charlemagne, which had been destroyed by fire, had the satisfaction of seeing his great work commenced on August 14th, A.D. 1248. Much progress may have been made before the day came that he could look upon it no longer, and we know it was carried on for many years afterwards by others—till, indeed, the east end was perfected; but there came, at last, a time when the works were stopped. A large crane was left upon the height to which the west end had attained: as an outward and visible sign, perhaps, of the unrelinquished determination that the fabric should be completed when the means were forthcoming, or opportunity offered. At last, after six hundred and thirty-two years, to a day, it was finished, and

stupendous effort of centuries of persistent intention and industry as can be desired.

The Cathedral Church of St. Stephen, Vienna, is another superb fabric, with an open-work spire. It has also two lower spires, built of solid masonry, surmounting massive octagonal towers that rise from the roof. These have the rare feature of a corbelled-out balcony on each, with an open-work parapet or balustrade, at about two-thirds of their height. But they have nothing of the majesty of the greater spire, which rises from the ground, and glides up and up, gradually diminishing in bulk without apparent break, but increasing in richness of effect with the closer contact of traceried windows, traceried gables, crocketed canopies, and floriated finials, till the tower ceases, and the spire begins with tier upon tier of ornamental gables up its swiftly sloping outline, till the summit is reached and crowned with a floriated capstone, above which rises a vane and cross.

There are two spires, too, in the quaint old Swabian town on the Danube, Ulm—not so stately, though, as this Viennese example, nor of such great altitude; but, nevertheless, of very handsomely perforated masonry.

Over and above these richly wrought spires on the Continent, there are many others built in solid masonry, of great note. Some, too, as in our own country, have disappeared. There was once a tall slender spire on the tall slender tower of the Cathedral of Laon, overlooking the fertile wine country of the department of Aisne. The town of Laon is full of steep streets, for it is built on an eminence; and there are walls and gates and ramparts around it. The spire no longer remains, but the tower still stands, pierced with long, elegant, lancet-headed lights; and just below the level on which the spire was placed are to be seen several colossal oxen standing out in full relief, and



BAMPTON-IN-THE-BUSH.



THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN, VIENNA.

looking across the country. Viewing them, one is told they were raised there in recognition of their long and faithful labours in conveying the necessary building materials up to the eminence where they were required.

Some spires that are not unworthy of being classed with the most famous are made of carpentry, and covered with lead. One of these is the splendid spire of Notre Dame, of Amiens. Leaving the roofs below, with many pinnacles all capped with graceful statues, it rises first in three tiers of masonry, with elegant openings of different designs on each tier, and bold gargoyles stretching out at each angle, and then, freeing itself from the stone finials and gablets, and all surroundings, shoots up clear of them all, like a mighty lance.

The Cathedral of Dijon, too, has a fine timber spire. The Cathedral of Rouen has an iron one that rises to the height of 496 feet.

Some few French examples are covered with slates. A church in Orbais presents us with a specimen of this mode. At the point of intersection of the roofs, there is a square base or body two stages in height, lightened with dormers, and this is shaped into an octagon by cutting off the four angles. Leaving pinnacles at these corners, the spire tapers lightly up to a coroneted capstone, surmounted by a tall metal cross. The body, the pyramidal portion, the pinnacles, the dormers, and four gablets introduced, are all covered with small slates, with an effect that is always allowed to be charming. In some instances the slates cease midway up a spire, as at a ring of parapet-work, and the covering is continued with lead up to the summit.

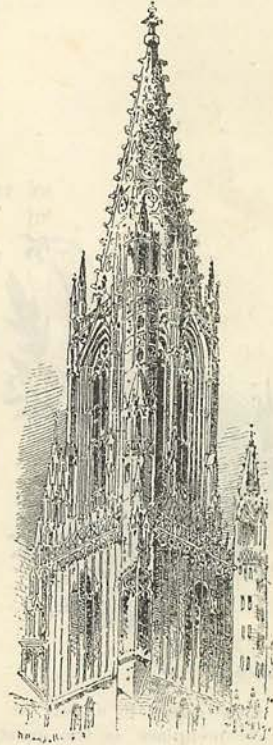
In our own country we have some beautiful spires, though they have not the delicate filigree-work to be seen in those of Southern Europe. Perhaps our climate may have something to do with the adoption of sturdier modes of building; perhaps our traditions, handed down from Stonehenge and similar monolithic works, made us unrecipive of new ideas in the way of expressing adoration in stonework: perhaps our national attention, or, strictly speaking, that of our ancestors, was turned to other matters. Nevertheless, as has been said, we have some tall spires, both in stone and timber. These will come to mind in a moment: Salisbury, Lichfield, Oxford, Norwich, Grantham, Louth, Coventry, Ashbourne, etc.

Besides these, more in the by-ways, isolated in little villages, and then again widespread in numbers in districts nearly corresponding in extent with counties—as in Northamptonshire, to wit—we may find others, if we look for them. The church of St. Mary, at Sutton, in Lincolnshire, for instance, has a tall timber spire covered with lead, rolled, and ribbed herring-bone fashion, that is really of much greater height than the short though elegant and light Early English tower on which it is placed, for the tower is about 73 feet high, while the spire is 84 feet high. There is also a tall spire at Helpringham which may be mentioned, with two rows of spire-lights in the course of its proud progression upwards. In an ancient example at Eostwithiel, in Cornwall, we may see on a small and sturdy scale an approach to the richness we have observed on the Continent.

A hoary, venerable tower, with thick mellow walls, rises from the ground at the west end, strengthened with many mellow buttresses, and pierced with low, narrow lights. It diminishes as it rises stage by stage, till by a recession or canting of the angles it takes an octagonal form for a belfry. On each face of this octagonal belfry, between light columns capped with grotesque heads, are two tall lights coupled together by a gable with a quatrefoil on it, and midway across them is a broad band ornamented with a double row of quatrefoils. Then on the pyramidal part of the spire are four gabled spire-lights, and above the capstone is a weathercock and cross. In some other cases we may notice a still nearer approximation to Continental richness in the addition of flying buttresses, perforation of parapets, statues, and sculptured ornament. Bampton-in-the-Bush, in Oxfordshire, has four statues standing on curiously arranged pedestals, four long spire-lights at its base, with their gables surmounted with ornamental crosses, and near its summit a band like a ring upon it. But it is but plain-looking, with its solid masonry and plain roll-like ribs,

nevertheless. At East Harding, in Norfolk, too, there is a spire (of timber covered with lead) that recalls remembrances of them, but does not compete with the grander examples we have indicated. The Northamptonshire examples have frequently tiers of spire-lights, as at Rounds Church and Barnwell Church.

Our south-eastern counties have many delightful little spires constructed of timber and covered with cleft oak shingles. Pleasant memories of shady lanes, embowered roads with the branches of trees meeting overhead, bridle-paths by the borders of woods, and other avenues of approach to villages of half-timbered cottages, black and white, or cream-coloured and brown, with roofs of thatch, or slates toned with lichens; inviting porches covered with roses, woodbine, clematis, or jasmine; diamond-paned lattices, and trim gardens full of old-fashioned flowers, with rows of beehives in most of them, too, come to mind at the slightest mention of them. As there is no precise rule of proportion as to height, beyond what a perception of the fitness of things in general gives, they are of various altitudes, agreeing, indeed, in this matter with the



ULM CATHEDRAL.

monarchs of the sylvan scenes around. Unlike lead, which occasionally fails, and permits wet to enter and twist the timbers within till the spires become crooked—as at Chesterfield, in Derbyshire—oak shingles answer their purpose extremely well, and they certainly present a homely and rustic appearance that harmonises agreeably with the surrounding scenery. The church of St. John, at Danby, in Essex, is an interesting example. It is very slender and lofty. After

passing the belfry stage it rises about sixty feet; but curiously, the lowermost portion and the summit are covered with lead, and the shingles are used only for the central portion.

Spires are monitors, for they point “in silence heavenward.” May their influence be wider and deeper for this glance at their beauty and variety, and this recognition of the piety and industry of those who erected them!

S. W.

MISS HILARY'S SUITORS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF “A WILFUL YOUNG WOMAN,” ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

It had been arranged that Mr. St. John was to meet his all but son-in-law at Liverpool Street on the Thursday evening, and that the two gentlemen were to make their journey down together.

Both were on the platform punctually; but the moment they met each detected in the other certain signs of nervousness.

“Got through your business all right?” said Mr. St. John, taking

great pains to appear at his ease. But carefully commonplace as the question was, it did not seem to suit his companion.

“My business!” Mr. Bevis retorted, with a start and a rapid side-glance; “got through it all right? Of course I did. What made you ask?”

“Oh, nothing. Only—I should have been sorry, my dear fellow, if you had had any extra bothers, just now—just now.”

“Not I,” said Mr. Bevis, changing his frown for a laugh; “never felt freer from bothers in my life. That’s the right state of mind for a man who’s going to be married in a couple of days, isn’t it?”

“Undoubtedly,” agreed Mr. St. John; “and—er a very enviable condition. But,” dropping his voice, “just tip the guard, Bevis, and get a compartment to ourselves. I’ve something to say to you.”

The bridegroom-elect cast another quick glance on the elder man. Lively uneasiness was the result. Mr. St. John seemed to have expanded in stature since yesterday. His tone had the old free roll of patronage once more. Suspicions, fears, jostled upon each other’s heels. What had happened? Had that man Stafford—? The moments seemed hours till they were safely locked in alone, and the train moved off from the hurly-burly of the station. Then, leaning anxiously forward to his *vis-à-vis*, he said—

“You left all right at home this morning? Your daughter—?”

“A-h!” said Mr. St. John, with a portentous sigh. “I am in the peculiar position, my dear Bevis, of having a disclosure to make at her desire, which— which—”

“Be good enough, sir, to make it quickly,” Mr. Bevis begged; devoured with apprehension of he knew not what. And vastly as he would have enjoyed delivering himself of the eloquent preamble he had compiled for the occasion, Mr. St. John was overborne by his hearer’s tense excitement, and declared his news in one slaughterous sentence.

“My daughter has provided me with means of releasing myself of debt to you, and she seems determined that your marriage shall be broken off.”

One faint gleam of relief passed over Mr. Bevis, then his foxy complexion turned perfectly livid. He could barely stop the rage in his heart from rising to his lips. For a minute he felt suffocated with it. Then he said, huskily—

“This avalanche is rather tremendous. Perhaps you will tell me its—ostensible—why and wherefore.”

Thus requested, Mr. St. John repeated with great precision what Hilary had said, winding up with a few embellishments of his own as to the mixed feelings with which he made this announcement, his regret that his daughter’s affections had not been sufficiently secure to avoid the catastrophe, his counterbalancing satisfaction at being able to clear off his obligations to Mr. Bevis sooner than he had expected.

Here the young man stopped him. If anyone thought he was going to be thus nimbly cheated out of what he had resolutely set his will on getting, they were mistaken. He would fight for Hilary—his prize, his wife—tooth and nail. But time was short. He had to weigh every syllable he had just heard—to get his own rapid line of action fixed.

“Excuse me,” he said abruptly, moving off to the opposite end of the carriage; “I must be allowed to think this over. We can talk it out when we reach Park Villa.” And he hardly spoke another word till they arrived at that half-dismantled domicile, where Mrs. St. John was looking out for them in great trepidation.

