

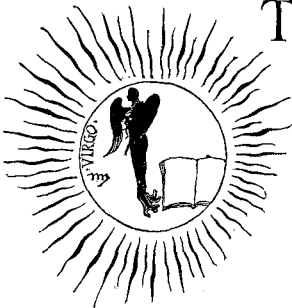
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ELY CATHEDRAL.



THE little town of Ely and its enormous cathedral church stand on what I hardly dare to call a hill, so certain is the word to convey too large an image. Nowhere but in this vast, low, and monotonous fen-country would so gradual a rise in the ground to so gentle an elevation, be fitted with the term. Only the sea is broader, flatter, more uniform than the fen-lands,—only the sea from whose inroads and saturations they were themselves so slowly and so painfully reclaimed. In elder days the ships of the Northman or the Norman could come up nearly to the base of the church; and the River Ouse was but the largest of the many waxing and waning streams that wound their sluggish way through bogs and pools and marshes. Now the Ouse itself is shrunk almost to a rivulet, and the wide quagmires are cultivated fields. But “the fen-country” and the “Isle of Ely” are still names in current use, and without effort imagination can reconstruct conditions which made them literally appropriate.

I.

If the railway brings us northward from Cambridge we follow almost the line of that old Roman Akeman Street which for long after it was built must have been a causeway rather than a road through a great part of its course. This approach to Ely is too direct for the cathedral to be seen until we have nearly reached it. But if we come westward from Norwich, it looms up on the horizon as a

great solitary ship looms up at sea. As we draw nearer, it preserves its isolated distinctness of outline, lifted visibly above the plain, yet so little lifted that its bulk seems all the greater, being very near the eye. As we leave the outlying station and drive into the town, still the church appears to grow in size. It is one of the very largest and most imposing, one of the most individual, and distinctly the most varied, in England, while the town is quite the smallest that is dignified by the name of a “cathedral city.” The census gives Ely seven thousand inhabitants, but it seems a mystery where they house themselves, for the casual eye would not guess a third as many. A short and narrow main street with three or four others opening out of it; a little market-place; one medieval church in addition to the cathedral; the ecclesiastical dwellings with an adjacent grammar-school; a pretty, ancient-looking group of almshouses; a few mills, and then the limitless low plain with sparsely scattered modest suburban homes,—that is all there is of Ely. All the houses, though of stone, are low and simple, and few have any touch of that quaint picturesqueness for which we always hope in England.

But though it is so little and so simple, Ely is a neat, bright, cheerful place, with the most spotless inn that ever went by the spotless name of “The Lamb”. And we would not have it bigger or braver, lest the church’s look of entire supremacy should have a less splendid accent. It is big enough to surround the church with an atmosphere of happy human companionship, and this atmosphere is increased by the unusually intimate way in which church and town are grouped together. Unlike the west porch of Peterborough, the west porch of Ely is not set back behind gates and greensward, but opens directly on the main street, which cuts through the Close. The chief

portions of the Close lie immediately around the building, to south and east and north. But on the other side of the street stretches a triangular lawn, bordered by great trees and on one side by the bishop's palace. So the close association of the cathedral with the town does not deprive even its western front of a typically English foreground of green.

Though the town of Ely has always been thus insignificant in itself, its name, as the name of its powerful bishopric and of the powerful men who ruled it, has had a mighty sound in English history. No English see save Durham only had greater temporal power than Ely; and its bishops almost without exception were through all the Catholic centuries among the foremost priests and statesmen of their times.

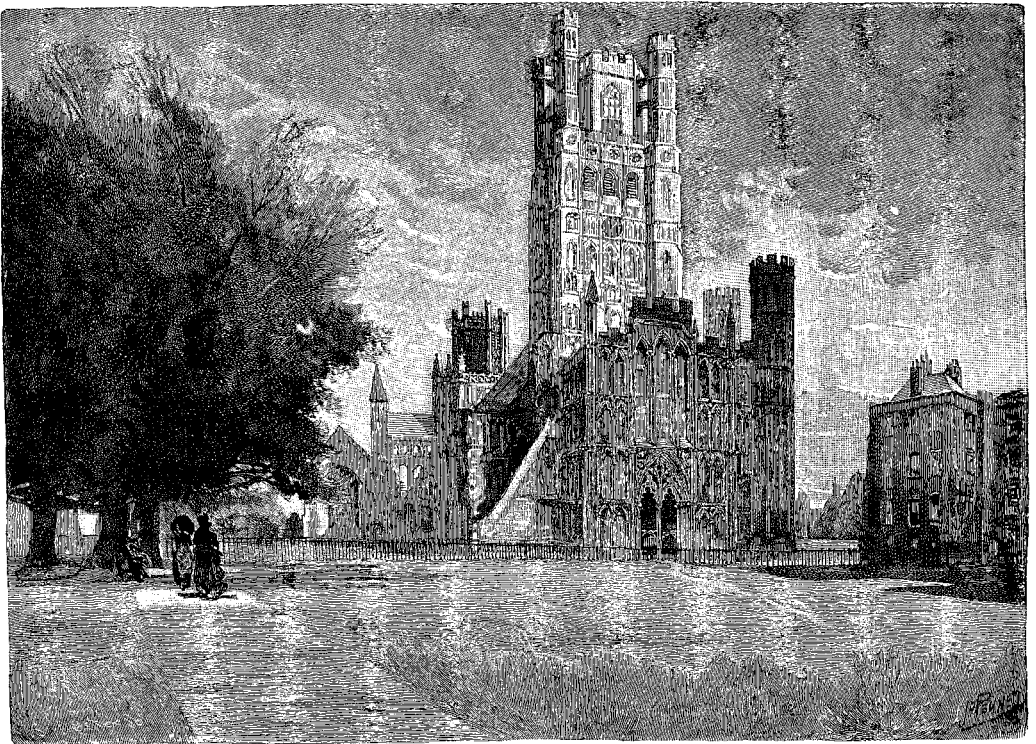
II.

SUCH a district as the fen-country offered peculiar attractions to the founders of monasteries. Long before the coming of the Danes it rivaled, both in the number and in the sanctity of its "houses," even that far south-western district where Glastonbury's house was chief among so many. Thorney, Ramsey, Peterborough, Crowland, and Ely were but the wealthiest and most populous of the eastern monaste-

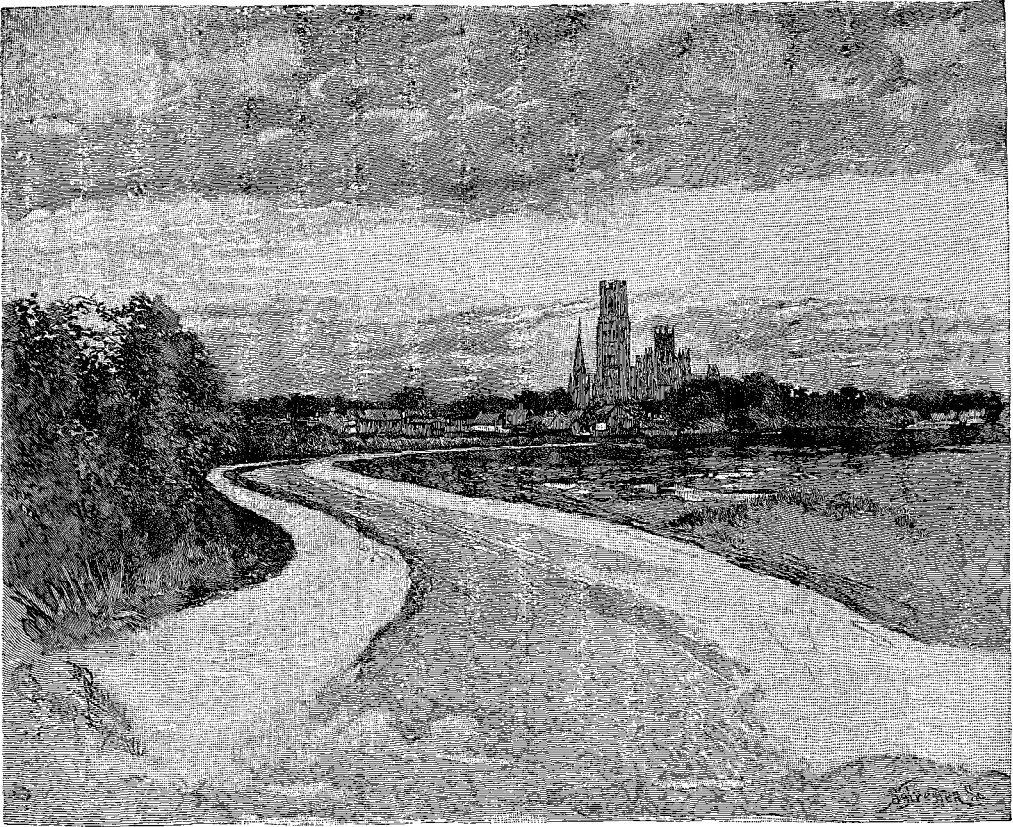
ries. Ely was one of the first of them to be established and one of the earliest to grow to greatness, its founder being a saint of wide renown. Ethelberta, a princess of the East Anglian house, had had from her childhood a leaning towards the religious life. Her domestic experience with two successive husbands was therefore somewhat stormy. The first gave her the Isle of Ely by way of dower. Hither, aided by many miracles, she finally succeeded in escaping from the second — King Egfrid of Northumbria — and here, in the year 673, she founded a home for ecclesiastics of both sexes, and was herself installed as abbess.

When, two centuries later, the Danish rovers came, the holy women who dwelt beneath St. Ethelberta's roof were scattered and slain like the "merry monks of Croyland" and of Peterborough. A small body of secular clergy was soon installed in their stead, but the place was unimportant for a hundred years. Then it was restored to greatness by the same hands that at the same time were restoring Peterborough. Here also a large body of Benedictines were settled, and here also King Edgar's piety was lavishly expressed.

Ely now rapidly grew again in wealth and power until its abbots were thought worthy to alternate with those of Glastonbury and of St. Augustine's at Canterbury in holding the high



WEST FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL AND THE BISHOP'S PALACE.



THE CATHEDRAL AND THE SPIRE OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

office of Chancellors of the court. Canute seems to have taken it under his special protection, and modern children still learn the verse he improvised when he heard the monkish chanting from his boat upon the Ouse.* Most of the tales which profess to explain the tragic fate of his step-son Alfred point to Ely as the place of the boy's confinement, blinding, death, and burial. On the altar of Ely Edward the Confessor was presented as an infant, and within its walls he spent some of his childish years.

When the land was torn by insurrections against the Conqueror's new-gained power, Ely became conspicuous in a military way. From 1066 to 1071 the Isle was the best stronghold of the English, being so easy to defend, so difficult to approach, through its treacherous watery surroundings. Here, was that famous "Camp of Refuge" which, under the rule of Hereward and of Abbot

Thurstan, made a last long desperate resistance to the Norman. Only William's advent in person brought about its capture in 1071, and only when it was captured was his hold upon his new realm so far secured that he could venture upon a visit to his old realm across the straits. Most of the defenders of the camp were taken and executed. But Thurstan made his peace with William, and Hereward seems to have escaped. There are numerous vague and contradictory tales about his after career; but he vanished out of even half-authentic history at the taking of the Isle of Ely.

The monastery itself was not disturbed by William, and ten years later Simeon, its Norman abbot, began the construction of a new and larger abbey-church.

III.

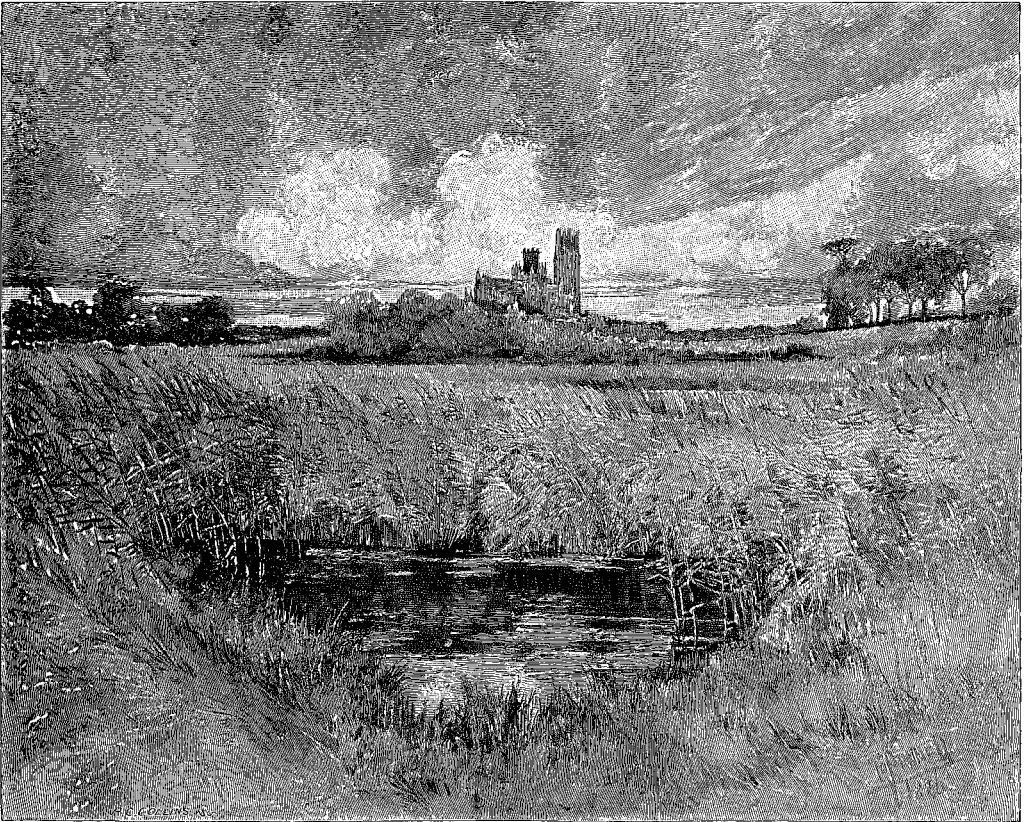
THE site of this new church — which gradually grew into the building of to-day — was chosen a little to the eastward of the old English structure. How much actual work was done by Simeon we do not know. But choir and transepts and central tower were complete

* This, I believe, is the earliest extant version of Canute's words, written down some two centuries later than his day:

"Merie sungen the Muneches binnan Ely
Tha Cnut ching rew ther by,
Rowe ye cnites noer the lant,
And here we thes Muneches sæng."

in the time of his successor Richard, who, in 1106, removed the bodies of St. Ethelberta and of three other canonized abbesses, her

corresponding end of the opposite aisle in 1550. These, of course, are in the Perpendicular style and the last named in its very latest phase.



ACROSS THE FENS.

relatives, from the old church to the new. At about the same time, in the reign of Henry I., the bishopric of Ely was created and the abbey-church became a cathedral.

In later Norman days the nave was built. As the Norman style was passing into the Early English, the western end was constructed with its single great tower in the center of the façade and its spreading transept-wings and turrets. When the Early English style was in its fullest development a porch or "Galilee" was built out in front of the west door, and the whole east limb was pulled down and greatly enlarged. About a hundred years later — in 1332 — the central tower fell, carrying with it the four adjacent bays of this new choir. Reconstruction was begun in the same year (the Decorated style being now in use) and was finished soon after the middle of the century, by which time a wholly new Lady Chapel had also been completed. A large chantry or sepulchral chapel was built into the east end of one choir-aisle in 1500, and another into the

Thus we see there is no medieval fashion whatsoever that we may not study in some important part of Ely's mighty frame.

IV.

THE Galilee or western porch is 43 feet in depth. With its rich outer and inner portals, its capitals carved with delicate curling leafage, its side arcades in double rows of trefoiled arches, and the profuse but exquisitely refined "dog-tooth" enrichment of its moldings, it is one of the loveliest things that man ever built and one of the most individually English in its loveliness. Yet less than a century ago an Englishman who was pleased to call himself an architect and a "restorer" advised its destruction, together with that of the western transept, saying that they were things "neither useful nor ornamental and not worth preserving!"

When we have passed the inner doorway of this porch, we find ourselves in another ves-

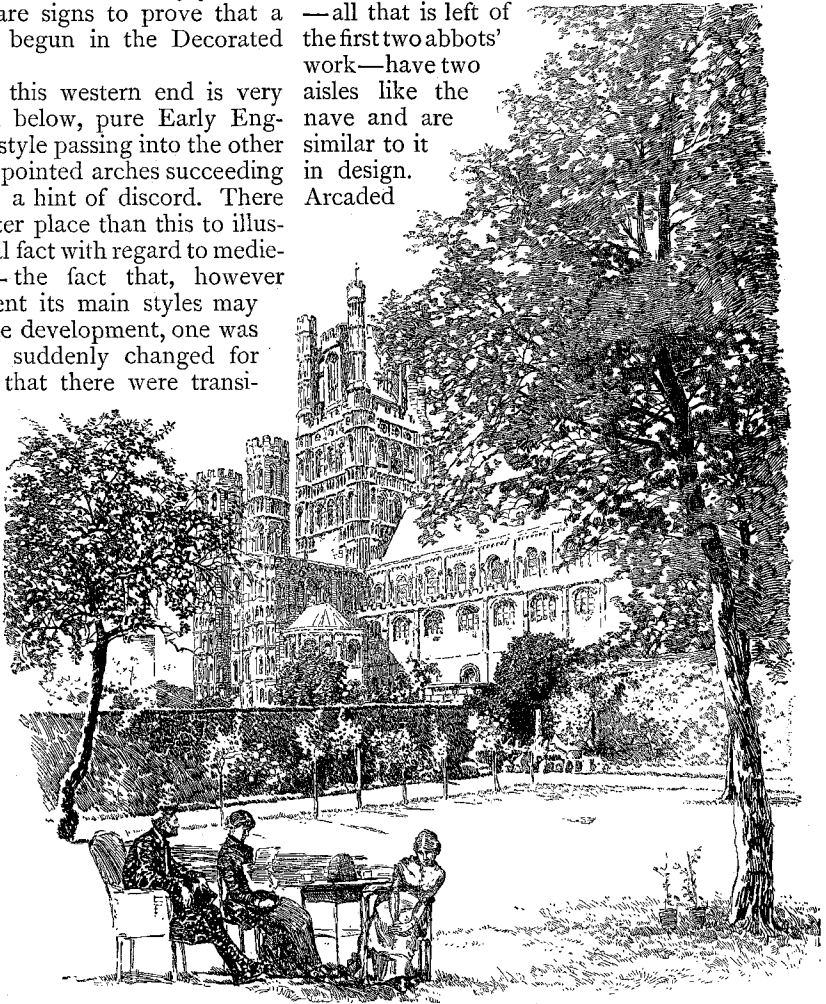
tibule, beneath the western tower. Double tiers of richly arcaded galleries run around it, and to the south the transept stretches out, with a chapel in its eastern face. The northern arm of the transept is gone, as our view of the west front shows. There is no record to tell when or why it perished; but it cannot have stood more than a hundred and fifty years at longest, for there are signs to prove that a reconstruction was begun in the Decorated period.

All the work in this western end is very rich—Transitional below, pure Early English above, the one style passing into the other very naturally, and pointed arches succeeding semicircles without a hint of discord. There could not be a better place than this to illustrate a great general fact with regard to medieval architecture—the fact that, however distinct and different its main styles may be in their complete development, one was never deliberately, suddenly changed for another; the fact that there were transitional times between them when each grew out of the foregoing by a slow process of natural development.

Through the great inner arch of this vestibule—lowered and widened by Perpendicular alterations—we see the long perspective of the Norman nave most effectively emphasized. Again, as at Peterborough, the contrast with the luxuriant Transitional work we are leaving behind us is very great. Here, indeed, it is an even greater contrast; for the nave is still simpler in design—the great triforium openings not being subdivided by coupled lower arches—and is even less embellished by the chisel. Here, there are not even zigzags on the moldings; nothing but fluted cushion capitals and a single line of hatched decoration on the lower string-course. It is not quite so fine a nave as Peterborough's, for the vastness of the triforium openings, showing so plainly the roughly boarded aisles-roofs behind them, gives it a somewhat emptier air. But it has the same

general effect of grandeur and supreme solemnity, and the same almost tunnel-like length and narrowness. If we are used to continental planning, a narrow Anglo-Norman nave has more the look of a superb approach to some huge sanctuary than the look of an integral part of the sanctuary itself.

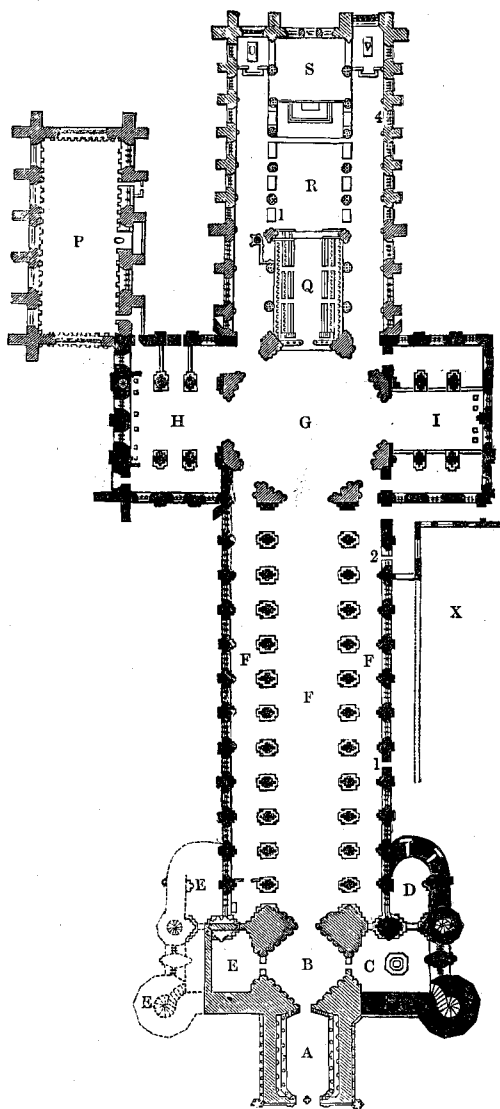
The main transepts—
—all that is left of
the first two abbots'
work—have two
aisles like the
nave and are
similar to it
in design.
Arcaded



WESTERN PART OF THE CATHEDRAL, FROM A GARDEN IN THE CLOSE.

galleries along their ends, however, give these portions a much richer accent.

The eastern parts of the choir—the presbytery and retro-choir, the parts that were uninjured by the falling of the tower—form as admirable a specimen of Early English (Lancet-Pointed) work as the island has to show. Each of the great stone piers between central alley and side aisles is set about with eight slender isolated dark-marble shafts, the capitals of the whole group uniting in a wreath of lovely knotted foliage. The arches are molded with an infinite intricacy of hollows and ridges,



PLAN OF ELY CATHEDRAL.

A. Galilee. B. Vestibule under western tower. C. South-west transept. D. Chapel. E, E. North-west transept and chapel (destroyed). F, F, F. Nave and aisles. G, G. Main transepts. H, H. Choir. I. Choir. Q. "Choir of the singers." R. Presbytery. S. Retro-choir. U. Bishop Alcock's chantry. V. Bishop West's chantry. X. Remains of Cloisters, with monks' and priors' doors at 1 and 2. 4. Bishop de Luda's tomb.

infinitely effective yet delicate in their contrast of dark and brilliant lines. None of the openings in the outer walls are traceried;* but the inner triforium-arcade, over the main arches, has each of its great openings filled by two smaller trefoiled lights resting on marble shafts; and between the heads of these are bold open quatrefoils. The clere-story windows are in tall lancet groups of three. The ribs of the vaulted stone roof are continued in great clusters down the wall between the triforium-

* I speak of the original scheme; — all through the church very many of the outer windows, both in the

arches till they rest upon long corbels, carved as masses of rich foliage, which insert themselves between the arch-heads of the main arcade. Such corbels as these are purely English features. In France we find instead true vaulting-shafts which spring from the great capitals. The French device is certainly the more "constructional." But when the English is as beautifully used as it is at Ely, it has infinite richness and a sufficient expression of stability as well.

But it is the east end which is most thoroughly English and most beautiful — a great flat wall filled with tall lancet groups. Below are three immense and richly molded lights of equal height; and above are five smaller lights, diminishing in height from the center out. These five are set in the outer face of the thick wall, and its inner face is worked into a corresponding open arcade. As the curve of the vault impinges somewhat upon the side lights of this arcade, their heads are curiously flattened into an irregular shape. How naïve, how frankly bold were these medieval artists, even at a day when their art had grown so elaborate, so refined, so subtle! A modern architect would scarcely dare to tamper with his forms in such a way — and yet it is a way which, despite the awkward curves that it produces, does not really distress the eye. Its reasons are too immediately apparent and too valid.

V.

Now, having seen what are the four arms of the cross, let us see what is the place where all four meet. Beautiful as is all the rest of its fabric, individual as are many parts of it, the crossing is Ely's great feature — at once its most unique and its most triumphantly successful. Peterborough's great feature, as I have said, is undated, and the name of its builder is unknown. But at Ely we are more fortunately instructed.

When the old tower fell John Hotham was bishop of the see, and under him as sub-prior and sacrist of the convent was one Alan of Walsingham. Hotham is entitled to the credit of securing funds to begin the reconstruction and of bequeathing great sums to complete it. But the sacrist was his executive; and the credit of conceiving the freshest and grandest idea that ever took concrete shape on English soil is Alan of Walsingham's.

A glance at the ground-plan will show what this conception was.

Walsingham did not rebuild in their original place the four great angle-piers which had sustained the tower and connect them again by four arches parallel with the walls of the church

upper and in the lower stages, were filled with traceries at a time long after they were built.

and of equal width with its four central alleys only; he swept away the remains of the old piers and made eight angle-piers instead of four, strengthening for this purpose the final piers of those arcades which mark off the side aisles in each of the limbs. The central space thus became an octagon, and, taking in the whole breadth of the church instead of the breadth of the central alleys only, its area became three times as extensive as before. Eight arches surrounded it, four opening into the main alleys on either hand and four opening slantwise into the aisles. The former are, of course, immensely wide; and they are proportionately tall, rising as high as the main roofs and having their heads filled in with open tracery. The intermediate ones are much narrower and are low. But above each of them rises a solid space of wall, ornamented with a rich arcade for statuary; and above this again, free over the aisles-roofs, an immense traceried window whose top corresponds in height and shape with the top of the four larger arches. Between the heads of these windows and large arches rise great clusters of vaulting shafts converging inward for a space and then bearing aloft a tall central lantern, also octagonal and also pierced with wide traceried windows.

Thus Alan of Walsingham, as Ferguson says,* "alone of all the architects of Northern Europe, seems to have conceived the idea of getting rid of what in fact was the bathos of the style,—the tall narrow opening of the central tower, which, though possessing exaggerated height, gave neither space nor dignity to the principal feature." Thus, he adds, he formed "the only Gothic dome in existence, though Italian architects had done the same thing and the method was in common use with the Byzantines."

Certainly Walsingham's scheme is a splendid improvement upon the usual English interior scheme, whether we consider it for pure beauty of effect, for practical convenience, or for expressional potency. Certainly it forms the only Gothic dome in existence, if we mean by a dome a circular or polygonal roof which upholds a central lantern pierced for light. Other Gothic domes there are which form a simple unbroken, unpierced sweep above our heads. They are very few, but there is one in Portugal, and there is a splendid one at Prague with a clear reach from wall to wall of 75 feet, somewhat more than the floor measure of the octagon at Ely. There is also one about two-thirds as large in England itself, in the chapter-house at York. But this last is built of wood, while the continental examples are of stone.

I must hasten to confess, that Alan of Wal-

* "History of Architecture."

ingham's dome is also of wood—the clusters of vaulting-shafts, the vault, the upper octagon with its traceried lights; everything, in fact, above the crown of the great arches. Of course the contrast between wood and stone was hidden by the painter's brush; but the impressiveness, if not the charm, of the construction is lessened when we know its substance.

Apart from this, the execution of Alan's work is as beautiful as its conception is fresh and strong. Nowhere in all the vast treasury of mediæval art do we find features more graceful in themselves, more harmonious with each other, better fitted in size and shape and relative richness for the service they must render. Nowhere is there more variety or a more complete unity. Nowhere is there a more organic air of growth from foundations to summit, a more complete yet unexaggerated expression of verticality. As in all perfect Gothic work, the roof "governs everything"—has dictated every line and form below. The vaulting shafts are not borne by corbels as in the less "constructional," more typically English way, but start from the floor in groups of three great rolls which, at the level of the minor arches, are subdivided into many smaller moldings that rise to the capitals of the greater arches and there bear similar capitals, which in their turn support the incurving clusters of the ribs that form the vault itself. The breaking-up of the three lower rolls into many is beautifully masked by great projecting canopied niches for statues, which compose most effectively with the arcaded niches on the plain walls below the windows.

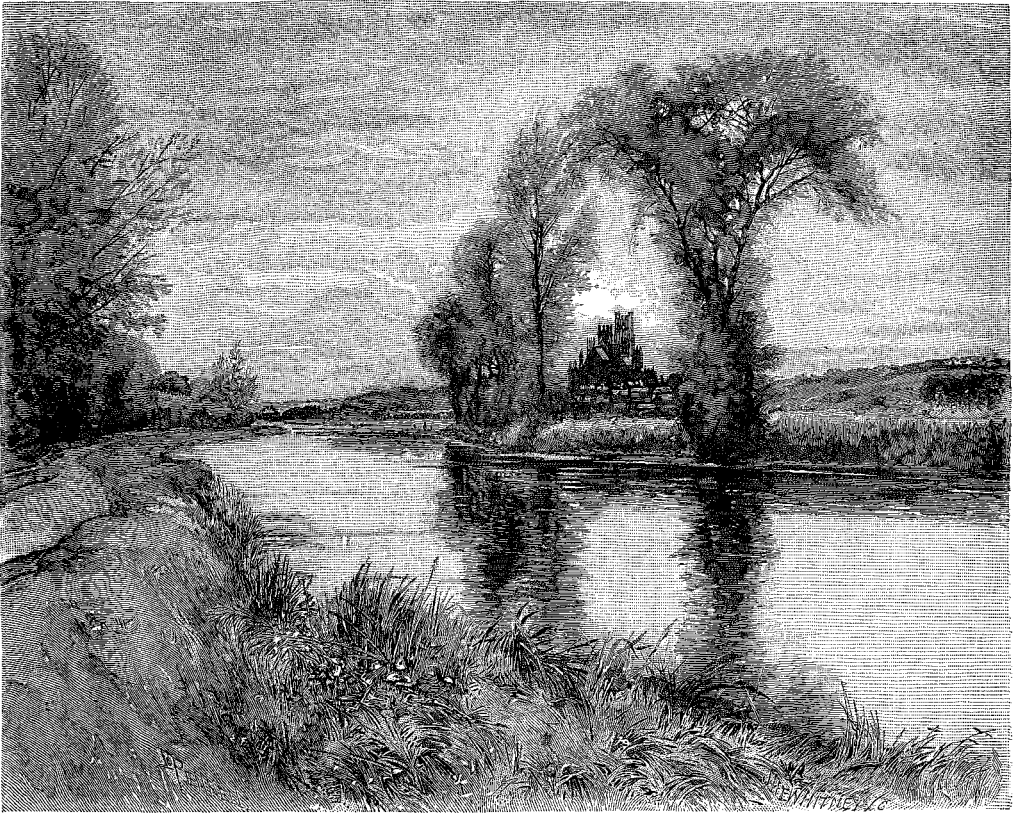
Puritan hands worked havoc with this wonderful piece of art, and modern hands have not been very skillful in restoring it. The new statues which fill the old niches are fairly good; but the glass in the windows is not good, and the vault is painted in a gaudy pattern where magenta "swears at" vivid green. But even so, the main conception is uninjured, and enough details remain to tell what must once have been the effect. There is no spot where an architect may better study what was meant, in the very greatest days of Pointed architecture, by a fine idea, perfectly carried out and exquisitely adorned.

VI.

THE three choir bays next to the octagon (those ruined by the fall of the old tower) were rebuilt as soon as the octagon itself was finished. They are also in the Decorated style; but their unlikeness to the earlier work is so apparent that one can hardly think Walsingham designed them, though one knows he was still alive and still high in honor in the convent.

The later work is often cited as the most perfect and splendid example of Decorated Gothic in all England. It is indeed very splendid, and is very perfect as regards its execution and details. But in its general scheme it

of view. Then each successive generation of builders showed so wise a regard for the original scheme that the string-courses come everywhere at the same level, and the height of the arcades is everywhere alike; and this fact pre-



THE OUSE.

is not really so fine, so *good*, as the work in the octagon. Grace and richness are conspicuous in both; but in the octagon they are subordinated to strength and simplicity, while in the choir they show plainly as the first things that were considered. The arches are a little weak in outline, and the gorgeous traceries that fill the upper tiers are so elaborate and fragile-looking that they seem more like frost-work than like carven stone. The result has almost a cloying richness, almost a pretty loveliness. There is a certain kind of painting which studio slang calls "sweet"; and I think there is just a touch too much of "sweetness" in this very beautiful part of Ely.

Diverse in style as are the several parts of this interior, its general effect is far more harmonious than is usually the case under similar conditions. The octagon distinctly separates, yet vitally connects, the newer portions with the older, and forms a dominant center towards which the eye returns from every point

vents any look of inorganic patching, greatly as forms and details have been made to differ.

The choir and the aisles are vaulted, in some parts very elaborately; but the nave is covered by a wooden ceiling. Once it was flat; but it had to be raised in the middle to accommodate Walsingham's tall arch, and now shows steeply canted sides with a flat central portion. It was decorated some twenty-five years ago by a non-professional artist whose soft pale tints are exceptionally harmonious.

The Lady Chapel is another work of Walsingham's. Such a chapel was commonly given the most honorable place in the church — eastward of the presbytery, where it formed a retro-choir often of enormous size. But when there was a local saint of especial sanctity the Virgin was sometimes displaced. Thus it was at Canterbury where St. Thomas claimed the retro-choir, and thus it was at Ely where it was given to St. Ethelberta. In both these cases the

Lady Chapel was built out eastward from the north arm of the transept.

At Ely it is what we might call a beautiful great room rather than a chapel,—a rectangle 170 feet in length with five windows on each side and a single huge window at each end. The west window was inserted in 1374; but even the east window, which was contemporaneous with the walls (1321-1349), shows in its tracery the near approach of Perpendicular fashions. All the other details, however, are pure Decorated and are incomparably rich. Or, to speak more truly, they were incomparably rich before the Protestants laid hands upon them. The ceiling is a delicate net-work of small ribs, intertwined in complicated patterns. All along the walls beneath the windows run elaborate arcades with little canopied niches, and between the windows are similar niches of the most intricate loveliness. Traces remain to show that the reredos which stretches across beneath the east window was once connected with it by a wide raised platform; and on this platform, relieved against the translucent splendor of the glass, doubtless stood that great figure of the Virgin which is often mentioned in the monastery records. A myriad of smaller figures once filled all the niches, but the Puritans left not one remaining and grievously shattered the dainty foliage and moldings which supported and enshrined them. The stone from which all the carvings were wrought is pure white and very soft—almost like chalk in texture. Naturally it yielded but too easily to axe and hammer; and only a few fragments remain of the beautifully intermingled tints of soft red and blue and green which once set off or wholly sheathed its whiteness.

VII.

GREAT names begin very early to appear on the list of Ely's bishops. The second holder of the title, Nigel,—appointed in 1133,—had been Treasurer to Henry I., and like his uncle Roger, the famous Bishop of Salisbury, was a prominent actor in the wars of King Stephen's reign. Personally extravagant and politically ambitious, he robbed his see with the boldest hand, and even stripped the shrine of St. Ethelberta of its silver covering. At first for Stephen and then for Matilda, he was besieged at Devizes, and would again have stood a siege in Ely itself had not Stephen surprised the Isle before its defenses were complete. But when the troubles were over he made his peace with Stephen, and after the accession of Henry II. became one of the Barons of the Exchequer. The castle he built at Ely has wholly disappeared.

Next to him came Geoffrey Ridel, who was

also a Baron of the Exchequer, also a prominent statesman, and so strong a supporter of the king against the archbishop that after Becket's murder he was forced to clear himself under oath from charges of complicity. At Ely one forgets his worldly deeds, remembering him as the constructor of the west façade.

Then came William Longchamp, Chancellor and Grand Justiciary of Richard I. During his life the temporal power of the bishops of Ely rose to its highest point, for when the king went a-crusading the bishops of Ely and of Durham were severally intrusted with the rule of the kingdom north and south of the Trent. But even half a loaf of supreme authority was not enough for Longchamp, who arrested his colleague and, "assuming the utmost pomp and state, treated the kingdom as if it were his own, bestowing all places in Church and State on his relations and dependants." Prince John resisting him, he shut himself up in the Tower of London, but was forced to flee, was captured at Dover, and exiled to Normandy. Forgiven by Richard on his return, he was Chancellor until his death.

The next bishop of Ely, Eustace, was the next Chancellor too. His chief merit was the stand he took for national freedom, opposing King John and being one of the three bishops who published the interdict of the Pope. Yet the merit of building the Galilee at Ely adds a further luster to his name.

Three bishops followed Eustace who were not quite so prominent, and then in 1229 came Hugh of Northwold, who went as ambassador on various royal missions, and sumptuously entertained royal guests when he had brought the Early English choir of his cathedral to completion and was once more "translating" the bodies of the sainted abbesses; as a reward for all of which, one supposes, he was buried at St. Ethelberta's feet.

William of Kilkenny followed—another Chancellor—and then Hugh of Balsham, who in 1280 founded the first college at Cambridge and dedicated it to St. Peter. Then came John of Kirkby, treasurer of the realm, and so little of an ecclesiastic that he stepped from deacon's to priest's orders only after his appointment to the see and only the day before his consecration.

The next bishop was William de Luda, "a lordly man and eminent in the sciences," one of the commissioners who settled peace with France for Edward I., and the chief mediator between the clergy and this king. The tomb in which he was buried is one of the most magnificent in Ely.

In 1316 came that Bishop Hotham whose name I have already cited. Even his great architectural labors must have seemed unim-



DISTANT VIEW OF THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE SOUTH.

portant to his contemporaries compared with the greater public labors which filled his life. He was first Treasurer and then Lord Chancellor. He took the field against Robert Bruce and narrowly escaped capture at Mytton-upon-Swale. He arranged the subsequent truce with Scotland and then was sent to settle the affairs of Gascony. The Great Seal was again confided to him after the abdication of Edward II. This, one might think, was work enough for any man. Yet Ely never had a more devoted incumbent than Hotham. He not only caused the rebuilding of the crossing and the construction of the Lady Chapel, but left much money in his will for the restoration of the choir; and he also secured legislation which vastly profited the revenues of the church, and purchased for it great tracts of land adjoining that manor of Holborn, which one of his predecessors had given to the see — great tracts that are now in the very heart of London. He too was buried in a splendid tomb that still stands in the cathedral.

One of the richest and most powerful of English sees, Ely was naturally one of those with whose affairs the popes were most constantly interfering. Often we read of some

papal *protégé* made bishop in opposition to local wishes; and though as a rule no issues seem deadlier to-day than these (except, of course, as illustrating that great conflict with Rome upon which so much of England's history hinges), one such act of papal interference still excites a living interest, a poignant, if sentimental, regret. This was the act which excluded from Ely's *cathedra* Alan of Walsingham, whom the monks had previously elected prior and whom they now desired for bishop.

Bishop De Lisle sat in his stead, and we reap sentimental consolation from the fact that he proved "a haughty and magnificent prelate, little in favor either with his convent or with the king," had a vexed career, and died at Avignon, whither he had fled to the shelter of the papal wing.

After him came Simon Langham and John Barnet, each successively Treasurer of England. During Barnet's time the king restored and restocked certain manors belonging to the see which had been denuded by De Lisle and the king himself. The wealth possessed by such establishments is shown by the list of these manors which, too, were only the chief among others: the palace at Ely; Ely House

in Holborn; Bishop's Hatfield and Hadham in Hertfordshire; Balsham and Ditton in Cambridgeshire; Somersham in Huntingdonshire; Downham, Wisbech Castle, and Doddington in the Isle of Ely. The nature of the average incumbent of the time is as clearly illustrated by the fact that every subsequent bishop on the day of his enthronization was obliged to take oath beneath the west door of Ely that

Yet so much stronger is the voice of art than the voices of history and topography combined, that most of us know Morton only as "My Lord of Ely" whom Richard asks for "good strawberries" from his Holborn garden.

This man of science was succeeded by a man of art,—John Alcock. Very often the ecclesiastic who was the reputed builder of great works



THE LANTERN, FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

he would transmit unimpaired to his successors the wealth now given him in charge.

Bishop Arundel was Lord Chancellor and rebuilt the palace in Holborn. Bishop Fordham was Lord Treasurer under Richard II., and is the *Ely* who sings second to the *Archbishop of Canterbury* in the opening scenes of Shakspeare's "Henry V." Then came Bishop Morgan, still another statesman, and then Louis de Luxembourg who had been Archbishop of Rouen and a faithful friend of the English in France. Next to him in the line stands Thomas Bouchier, and next but one to Bouchier stands John Morton. Both of these are actors in the scenes of "Richard III."—Morton as actual bishop of Ely, Bouchier as then promoted to be Primate of all England.

Morton was a very skillful engineer and one of the first systematically to attempt the draining of the great north fens. He cut a canal forty miles from near Peterborough to the sea, and built a big brick tower on top of which he often sat to superintend the work. The canal is still called "Morton's Seam."

really deserved no higher title than their architect's paymaster or employer. But Alcock seems to have been himself an architect. He was Controller of the Royal Works and Buildings under Henry VII., and we shall see on another page how much he built at Ely.

It is hard to omit any name from this long list of bishops, so incessantly do the great names follow one another. In 1515, for example, was appointed Nicholas West, who had been a famous lawyer and a frequent ambassador; who had gone with Henry VIII. to the Camp of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and who afterwards braved his master and took a bold stand for Catherine of Aragon; who, although a baker's son, was the most sumptuous prelate of his day, having more than one hundred servants, and the most charitable, feeding two hundred paupers daily at his gates; and who is appropriately sepulchered in that very lovely chapel which speaks the last word of English Gothic art.

Then there was Bishop Goodrich, who was also a great legal authority and had sided with Henry against his queen; who supported



THE CATHEDRAL AND THE LADY CHAPEL, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

the Reformation and destroyed the shrines of those holy Ely women whom so many of his predecessors had delighted to honor; who helped to revise the translation of the Bible and helped to rule the kingdom as Chancellor for the young king Edward.

There was Bishop Thirlby, who was appointed by Queen Mary and went as her ambassador to Rome to swear anew England's allegiance to the Pope. He performed the ceremony of degradation over Archbishop Cranmer, but was man enough to weep as he did it. He was man enough, too, to submit to ten years' confinement at Lambeth rather than take the oath of ecclesiastical submission to Elizabeth.

Next to him came Richard Cox, who helped to draw up the Thirty-nine Articles and who long and valiantly resisted the queen's encroachments upon the Church — especially as they threatened his own rich manor of Holborn. It was to Cox and with reference to this manor that the queen wrote the famous letter:

"PROUD PRELATE,—You know what you were before I made you what you are; if you do not immediately comply with my request, by God I will unfrock you.— ELIZABETH."

Eighty years later than Cox—in 1638—Matthew Wren was installed at Ely, "an excellent hater of Puritans," a loyal supporter of Laud, a "man of sour, severe nature," a stern ecclesiastical disciplinarian, and an occu-

pant for eighteen years of the Tower of London,—chiefly individualized to us as that uncle of Sir Christopher Wren whose merits and woes are sympathetically referred to in the *Parentalia*.

While Wren sat in the Tower—between the two terms when he sat at Ely—the power of Cromwell rose and fell. At Ely it did not work quite the havoc it worked elsewhere—but this is not to say that it worked little. Ely was the scene of that incident which Carlyle relates with such infinite gusto. It was the Rev. Mr. Hitch of Ely to whom Cromwell had unavailingly written that he should "forbear altogether the choir-service, so unedifying and offensive, lest the soldiers should in any tumultuary or disorderly way attempt the reformation of the cathedral church." It was under the octagon of Ely that Cromwell therefore appeared in person, "with a rabble at his heels, and his hat on," to shout "'leave off your fooling and come down, Sir,' . . . in a voice . . . which Mr. Hitch did now instantaneously give ear to."

Since the Reformation there have been many good men and true in the chair of Ely—scholars, theologians, preachers, and patrons of learning; men doubtless much better as regards the heart, which no man seeth, than most of their mighty forerunners. But those deeds of theirs which man can see have

had no such significance, either political or architectural, that their names need be cited here. The great days of prelatial influence and the great days of constructive art saw their suns set together.

by still further illuminating her name and extending her influence, and by constantly bequeathing her the riches they had gained in the outer world.

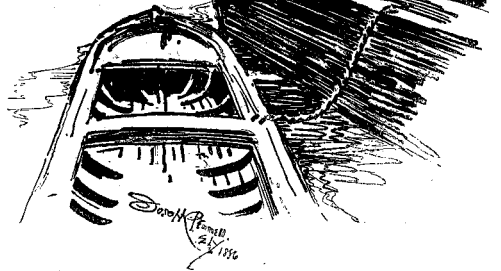
Let us go back now to the cathedral for a



ELY, FROM UNDER THE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

On the other hand, the mighty men whose names we have just read have not had a tithe of their varied distinctions told. The duties they had performed, the honors they had reaped, before they became bishops of Ely, have barely been referred to; and their after careers have scarcely in a single case been suggested. Many of them were bishops of other sees before or after their appointment to Ely. Several of them were cardinals of Rome. Some of them were distinguished in literature as well as in worldly affairs, in science, and in art. Death hardly removed more of them than promotion; there was no more prolific nursery of archbishops than the Isle of Ely.

The power of a see, in medieval times, vastly assisted but did not make the power and fame of the men who bore its title. Even a bishop of Ely, if a weak man or a dull man, was not loaded with secular dignities and bidden to control the destinies of England. Yet the power of Ely is illustrated none the less by the frequency with which the names of leading statesmen are associated with her own. If her chair was not the sole source of her prelates' fame, it was one of England's chief rewards for fame, and one of the surest stepping-stones to still higher eminence. The assistance given was mutual, of course. Ely helped her bishops on in life, and they helped her on



moment and see what there remains to speak of some among them.

VIII.

THE great architectural labors of the earlier bishops have already been mentioned. By the middle of the fourteenth century there was nothing left to do for the cathedral save to add minor features and to make minor alterations. The alterations mostly took the form of changes made in the windows for the insertion of more splendid glass; and the minor features usually took the shape of tombs destined to receive their builders or constructed to do honor to their immediate predecessors.

The most conspicuous tombs are those square chapels or chantries which finish the choir aisles to the eastward. The one to the north was built by John Alcock—the bishop-architect—for his own use. Completed by 1500, it is in a late version of the Perpendicular manner, though it contains the early-Deco-

rated windows which had stood in the aisle-end before the chapel was formed. The walls are covered all over with complicated tabernacle-work, and the roof has elaborate fan-vaulting. The sculptured details show a wealth of curious fancies, and here and there occurs the bishop's device, a cock standing on a globe,—a punning representation of the syllables of the name such as one often finds in medieval art of every age.

Nothing could be intrinsically lovelier than this little chapel; and it gains additional interest from the character of its design. It dates from the middle of the sixteenth century, and shows Renaissance mingled with the Gothic details. Work of this sort is not very common in English churches, for most of it was put into monuments and accessory features which fell a prey either to the Reformation or to that modern devastator, "restoration," which in Eng-



THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE SOUTH.

The south chapel is that of Bishop West, the baker's magnificent son. It too is paneled throughout with tabernacle-work, which still shows rich leafage designed on the smallest scale yet with infinite vigor and spirit, and which once had each tiny niche filled with a figure that was not more than a few inches high. Two or three heads are all that remain, thanks, of course, to the Reformers. But these are quite enough to show that the figures, too, were instinct with life and force and character, despite their minuscule scale. The whole is carved of the same soft white stone which was used in the Lady Chapel, and seems to have been colored in a way which left the figures white against tinted backgrounds and encircling ornaments.

land has had so stupid and cruel a hatred for everything that it does not think "pure" in art,—that is, for everything which is not medieval. Even when such work is found it is seldom attractive, for English hands rarely used early-Renaissance motives well. The great loveliness of this chapel, therefore, its infinite grace and delicacy, its supreme refinement, the extraordinary skill with which medieval and classical elements are blended into a coherent and harmonious design,—all these qualities give color to the tradition that it was carved by Italian hands and perhaps by the hands of Torrigiano, who lived long in England and whose most famous work is the tomb of Henry VII. at Westminster.

In each of these chapels is the tomb of its founder, ruined by the Puritans.

In the choir is a splendid series of other episcopal tombs, whose rich canopies were fortunately respected even when the bodies and the effigies of those who lay beneath them were disturbed and the accessory saints' figures were annihilated. One is the sepulcher of the "lordly" De Luda — an elaborate canopy with trefoiled arches and great groups of pinnacles at each end. It has been atrociously colored in modern times and, the tomb itself being gone, the central space is used as a door-way by which one passes from the aisle into the choir!

This is a thirteenth-century tomb, and near it is a fine one of the fourteenth century, — Bishop Barnet's. Bishop Hotham's still more splendid fourteenth-century sepulcher — a tomb proper surmounted by a lofty shrine — stood practically intact till a hundred years ago, when the same vandal who counseled the destruction of the Galilee-porch broke it in two. The tomb now stands on one side of the choir, and on the other stands the vacant shrine with its open lower and its closed upper story, the latter having once been richly carved and arranged to support a seven-branched candlestick. Bishop Redman's Perpendicular monument, on the contrary, is almost perfect. A paneled tomb supports his recumbent figure beneath a canopy with three lance-like arches and complicated open paneling above. Bishop Northwold's and Bishop Kilkenney's Early English and Louis of Luxembourg's Perpendicular sepulchers also stand, the last-named with a mutilated headless figure of its tenant.

But I cannot go through the whole list of the tombs and brasses, episcopal and lay, which fill the choir of Ely so full of architectural and historic charm. I can only note the superb range of choir-stalls designed by Alan of Walsingham, and then make place for an epigrammatic epitaph, cut on a small brass plate, which has now disappeared but was legible not many years ago. It dated, I believe, from the seventeenth century:

Ursula	{	Tyndall by birth,
		Coxee by choice,
		Uppcher in age and for comfort.

IX.

It is time now that we should glance at the exterior of the cathedral.

There are more beautiful west fronts in the world than this, but there is none in England so imposing; and in all England there is none the least like it among cathedral fronts and none quite like it in any church of lesser rank. Parish churches often have a single western tower, but no other cathedral church has; and

I think no parish church shows such a tower supported by these wide spreading wings and these angle turrets. The upper lantern of the tower, added in the Decorated period, had originally a tall slender wooden spire; but this was removed in the course of the last century's "restorations."

The north side of the church is as varied as it is beautiful. Its long Norman nave has had rich later traceries inserted in many of its windows. Then come the transepts, Norman again, and the Decorated Lady Chapel; and then the lovely Decorated and Lancet-Pointed reaches of the choir, each buttress crowned by a lofty fretted pinnacle. Here we get a good view of the octagon.

Marking how well its low broad rich bulk contrasts with the tall sturdiness of the western tower, we feel the reasons for two facts. We see why other architects were not likely to reproduce Walsingham's design, and we see why he himself could be content with it. His scheme is incomparably beautiful inside the church, but no tall and massive tower could have been borne by such a substructure. A long low English church absolutely needed such a tower. Only here at Ely — only here where there was a single great western tower — was a broad, light lantern preferable. Here it would have been hard to build a central tower which should rival the western one. Even had this been accomplished, the effect of two such features, set in the same line and striving for preëminence, would have been far from happy. Fine though it is, the outline of Ely suffers by comparison with such outlines as Canterbury's, as Salisbury's, as Lichfield's, or Lincoln's. But it is the finest that could have been secured by a builder working under Walsingham's conditions. He was exceptional indeed among English builders in having such a chance to think most of his interior effect — to think most of this and yet do the best that could be done for exterior effect as well. His octagon with its lantern was the best possible feature for Ely — but of no other English church would the same words be true.

The east end of the church is even more beautiful without than within. For outside the two ranges of lights which showed from within are topped by a higher range, still differently grouped, which illumines the space between ceiling and outer roof, and by a group of quatrefoils in the gable-point. All the ranges are completed by the arcades which adorn the tall turret-like buttresses. The Decorated window of Bishop Alcock's chapel and the Perpendicular window of Bishop West's add variety to, but scarcely hurt the unity of, this beautiful composition.

x.

ALL about the church the greensward comes close up to the foundations and stretches away in broad level lawns. To the south lie the main portions of the Close, like a thickly wooded park, and the many fragments of the old conventual buildings.

Of the cloisters which formed a square contiguous to the nave only a piece or two remain. But we still have the Monk's and Prior's Doors, which gave access to the south aisle of the nave. Both are Norman, and the latter is extremely rich and lovely, with elaborate jambs the carving of which seems to show a lingering Celtic influence, and with a figure of Christ supported by angels in the tympanum that has an almost Byzantine air.

The Chapter House has wholly perished, but parts of the late-Norman Infirmary remain, ingeniously built in, like similar parts at Peterborough, to form the modern canons' houses.

The plan of an old conventual hospital was like the plan of a church. A nave formed the main hall; two aisles were subdivided into chambers for the sick, and a chapel was thrown out like a chancel at one end. The Infirmary nave at Ely now forms a roofless passage-way between the modern houses, spanned still by the chancel-arch; and the piers and arches which marked off the aisles form part and parcel of their walls on either hand. One house has been made with but little alteration from a separate hall that was designed by Walsingham for the use of convalescents.

The Deanery has been constructed out of the old thirteenth-century *Guesten Hall*. Near it was the Prior's house of which certain parts remain, together with a lovely little chapel. This bears Prior Crawdon's name, but in all likelihood was another work of Walsingham's. It is now the chapel of the grammar-school or college which was founded by Henry VIII. and which still flourishes under ecclesiastical control. The school itself and its masters are housed in a long range of buildings, forming the western boundary of the south Close, into which are built multitudinous fragments of the ancient convent. Off to the southward is "Ely Porta," once the main entrance to the

monastery. In its present form, a wide archway with a large room above, it dates from about 1400.

The bishop's palace, facing on the isolated lawn which lies west of the cathedral, dates chiefly from the time of Henry VII.—that is, from the time of Bishop Alcock. The turreted wings which still stand are his, but the huge hall and galleries he built have disappeared. I believe it was one of his galleries which bridged the street and united the palace with the church at the corner of the south-western transept.

It is a beautiful, quaint, and stately pile, this palace; and Prior Crawdon's chapel and all the adjacent school-buildings are infinitely picturesque,—not imposing like the palace, but low and vine-clad, gray and lovely, wholly and peculiarly English in their charm. Even a hurrying school-boy whom we met one sunny afternoon could see the pleasure in our eyes. It seemed only natural that he should exclaim, amid many pretty blushes, "You are quite welcome to sketch the houses if you want to—almost everybody does!"

One of the best views of the cathedral is from the railroad station whence we look north-westward and, seeing it in the near middle-distance, realize its enormous length and the stern majesty of the tall tower that rises like a great cliff in a land where man might well build cliffs since nature had built none. Another is from a mound called Cherry Hill in the south Close, whence we see it stretching over massy sweeps of foliage. Still another is from an elevation where the water-works of the town have been erected, some two miles towards the west.

But one need hardly seek for best points of view at Ely. There is no spot whence the great queen of the fen-lands may not be well seen, until we get so far away that it drops behind the horizon's rim. Wherever, however we see it, it is always imposing, always superb, always tremendous,—from far or near, from north, south, east, or west. Nowhere is there a more magnificent piece of human handiwork, and nowhere does nature seem more wholly to efface herself that human handiwork may profit.

M. G. van Rensselaer.

INTERPRETATION.

A SORROWER went his way along,
And I heard him sing and say:
The noon is bright, but soon the night
Will come, the grave of the day.

Then I smiled to hear his woful song
And sent this word for nay:
The noon is bright, but the blackest night
Cradles another day.

Richard E. Burton.