



Charles Spence
A walk through Rochester Cathedral
London
1840

<frontispiece>

1

A WALK
THROUGH
ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

We walk these solemn aisles along,
The relics of the past among:
'Tis here the monks their beads have told;
Here saints have pray'd, and warriors bold
Bent the mail'd knee to heaven.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. LIMBIRD, 143, STRAND.

TO BE HAD ONLY OF MR. KINGHAM, THE VERGER,
AT ROCHESTER.

1840.

2

<blank>

3

A WALK
THROUGH
ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

From those who really love the study of antiquity, and experience pleasure in examining the remains of ancient art, there are not many ecclesiastical edifices possessing greater claims on attention, than the Cathedral at Rochester. But as it is not the purpose, nor indeed within the limits, of this little sketch, to give a regular history of the Church and its foundation, the curious reader is referred to the works of Thorpe and Hasted, and to that very useful and excellent little tome, intituled the "History of Rochester,"/* together with many other entertaining essays on the subject, for information how Ethelbert first founded a bishopric and college for secular priests here, in the time of St. Augustine, A.D. 600; how the kings, Sigere, Offa, Ethelwolf, and Egbert, and a host of Anglo-Saxon benefactors, vied with each other in bestowing

on it many a fair manor, in honour of St. Andrew, and for the good of their own souls. There, also, must they seek for an account of the various revolutions and catastrophes which the building underwent, up to the time of Bishop Gundulph, who is generally considered to have been the architect of the earliest portions of the present edifice. Ours are the ruminations only of a rambler, and our ambition is merely to be by the side of the stranger, when he takes his first glance at the exterior of this venerable edifice. Modern improvements, tasteless insertions, and brick facings, will somewhat tend to discourage his critical examination of it; yet, if he be an architectural antiquary, he will neither be slow nor at much pains to discover many beautiful relics which they have almost obscured. The west front is universally allowed to be a very fine specimen of Norman enrichment, and is considered by Dallaway to be one of the most perfect specimens of that style now left in England. It consists, mainly, of tiers of arches or arcades; the pillars supporting them are of high design, and the heads of the arches are filled with the

/* Published by Wildash, High street, Rochester.

4

curious hatched ornament mentioned by Chaucer, as "hacking in masonries." This front also contained four towers; two at the western terminations of the nave, and two at those of the side aisles: they appear to have run up nearly even with the walls, but on reaching the roof of the building, to have assumed an octangular shape, and terminated in pinnacles most curiously capped. The great door consists of several concentric arches, all elaborately carved, and resting on pillars, two of which take the form of statues, and represent the figures of King Henry the First, and his Queen, Matilda. Various figures of animals, flowers, &c., pervade the whole of this beautiful relic, and the architrave is peculiarly curious, the stones being locked together by semi-circular fastenings. In the area is a bas relief, probably intended for our Saviour. He is represented sitting, with a book in his left hand, which book also rests upon his knee; and the tympan or recess in which he is seated is supported on either side by an angel, whilst around are the symbols of the four Evangelists. The plinth from which the pillars rise is evidently of more recent date, the ancient base having, in all probability, been decayed. In the front of the tower, on the north side of the west door, is a very ancient statue, which is supposed to represent Gundulph; it formerly stood in another portion of this tower, which was taken down in 1763.

After passing through the great western doorway of the Cathedral, the spectator descends by several steps into the

NAVE

or body of the church, which, with the side aisles, is about sixty-three feet in breadth; and here it is probable he sees all, or nearly all, that remains of the architectural genius of Gundulph, as displayed in the erection of this church. Six massive Norman pillars, and two others, which have been adapted to the early English style, of varied form, support a very elegant and singular triforium or gallery, containing an ambulatory which runs between its pillars. This portion of the building presents a fine specimen of what is generally denominated Norman. The bases of the pillars show various species of ornament. The fine sweep of the arches they support is bordered by zigzag mouldings; while the bold proportion of their shafts, and the beauty of the capitals, particularly that of the last Norman pier on the south side, which is composed of oak leaves, claim minute study and attention. The arcades of the triforium are elaborately ornamented with fret-work, wreaths, &c.; and the curious hatched lozenge, so peculiar to the style in which it was erected:

5

these are surmounted by the clerestory, or upper range of three light windows, remarkable only for the contrast it affords when compared with the portions of the building by which it is supported. This clerestory, and the windows of the side aisles of the nave, which are evidently insertions, are very indifferent specimens of perpendicular work: the first was probably erected about the time of Henry VII.; but it is likely that the last, together with the great west window, which is a very fine specimen of that style, were inserted as early as the reign of Henry VI., if not previously to that time. The interior of the western end of the nave presents, on each side of the grand entrance which has a very fine cable moulding round it, two tiers, of three arches in each tier; these afford curious instances of the nail-head, round billet, and escallop mouldings. In the south aisle, and at the first department at the west end, is a string course, running partly along the wall, about twelve feet from the ground, and composed of the escallop moulding; another ancient string course is also to be perceived in the north aisle, near the fifth pillar from the west end, which consists of a quatre-foil in a lozenge: these would lead us to infer, that when the perpendicular windows of the side aisles were first put up, they were only insertions in the original walls, and that the lower portions of the ancient Norman work were not disturbed.

In the last three arches of the north aisle, near the transept, are remains of early English ribbing, with corbel heads, &c.; and the space next the pier which supports the tower is filled up with the remnants of some former building, among which the basket moulding may very plainly be perceived. The interior of the west end of the south aisle, when viewed from the great south transept, affords a fine specimen of the ancient character of the building; the bold Norman window, supported by three arches, adorned with circular billet mouldings and corbel heads, throws a fine flood of light into this portion of the edifice, and shows to perfection the doorway to the western turrets, which is surmounted by the embattled fret.

There are, among many other mortuary relics, two fine monuments erected on the south aisle, in memory of the Henniker family; the first, which is the work of the younger Bacon, was put up in honour of Lord Henniker, who died 18th April, 1803, at the age of 79; it exhibits a sarcophagus, by the sides of which stand two beautiful figures in high relief. They represent Honour crowning Benevolence, who is distinguished by having a pelican in her hand; at the side of the latter is a medallion of his Lordship, with a coronet and unfolded patent of peerage. The other monument commemorates Lady Hen-

6

niker, and is composed of terra cotta; it corresponds generally to the last described, and represents a sarcophagus between two figures of Time and Eternity, standing on a base of grey marble. From beneath the sepulchre a cherub is seen rising, probably emblematical of the happy state of the purified spirit. Her Ladyship died 18th July, 1792, aged 65.

The brasses in this church have been exceedingly numerous; and when we take into consideration that the whole of the choir and chancel have been repaved during the last century, we may perhaps be allowed to suppose that few ecclesiastical edifices possessed a greater number of those memorials of the dead. Now, however, they are all gone -- not one remains! The south aisle still retains the broken sockets of three; at the foot of the steps leading from the great west door has been a very fine one, having the figure of a bishop, standing under a canopy, richly adorned with pinnacles, crockets, and finials. There are five others in the nave, one of them very ancient, having represented the figure of a knight, with a conical basinet, and collar of mail; there is also another, near the centre of the nave, commonly supposed to have been placed there to the memory of Bishop Fisher, who was "done to death" on Tower Hill, in 1535,

by order of Henry VIII.; and it is thought by some that the socket on the gravestone was formerly filled by a brass representing an axe. Close examination, however, will not bear out such an hypothesis, as the hollow presumed to have been filled with the blade of the weapon has evidently been caused by the decay of the Sussex marble, of which the whole is composed. In the north aisle is another and very elaborate socket for a brass; and the curious will observe, that the mitre on the figure was originally represented as showing both its peaks; it must have been a gorgeous monument.

From the consideration of the nave, the visitor generally turns to the

NORTH TRANSEPT;

and if, in doing so, he should pass from under the north aisle of the nave, he will observe a very elegant cross fleury, carved in relief, on a grave-stone of Sussex marble; which, in all probability, covers the remains of some ecclesiastic who has long been insensible to matin prayer or even-song. This portion of the cathedral, although not the most ancient, is, perhaps, the most beautiful part of the building. Neither Salisbury nor Westminster, magnificent though they be, can totally eclipse this splendid specimen of ancient art. Elongated and acutely-pointed arches, windows, some of which,

7

alas the while! have been filled up, tall and slender pillars of Sussex marble, supporting a species of screen work between us and the upper lights, and forming a valuable example of a clerestory elaborately adorned with the tooth ornament, that ever-to-be-found companion of the early English style, numerous corbel heads and bosses of exquisite workmanship, pendent from the roof, give intense interest to the fairy work before us; of which, although nearly six hundred years have elapsed since its erection, yet none of its apparently fragile and slender portions have swerved one inch from their original positions. It would be no easy task to determine by whom this and the southern transept were built, though there can be little question of their having been begun immediately after the fire in 1177, by which, according to Edmund de Hadenham, this church and monastery, together with the whole of the city, both within and without the walls, were consumed; his words are: -- "*Roffensis ecclesia cum omnibus officinis et tota urbe infra et extra muros combusta est,*" for we find that in the following year, viz. 1178, Prior Sylvester built the refectory, dormitory, and the three eastern windows of the chapter house, and, ten years after, mention is made of Osbern de Shepey, prior of this church, having built a win-

dow near the altar of St. Peter. Prior Radulph de Ros, about 1199, and his successor Helias, are also recorded as having covered the great church, and placed a leaden roof on it and part of the cloisters. "Radulf de Ros, fecit magnam ecclesiam tegere et plurimam partem plumbare;" and again, "Helias Prior fecit plumbare magnam ecclesiam et lavatorium et ostium refectorii fieri fecit," from which we may infer, that not only was the "magna ecclesia," or great church, in a state of progressive restoration, but the domestic buildings, likewise, under re-erection, or most extensive repair. On the eastern side of this transept is a large and beautiful arch, within the recess of which has evidently been an altar, the piscina and credence are yet remaining. Here, according to tradition, and the best accounts which can be obtained, formerly stood the altar of St. Nicholas, and it was in this place that the inhabitants of the adjoining parish came to worship prior to the erection of the church which now stands on the north side of the cathedral, and is dedicated to that saint. There are some modern monuments worthy attention, and on the pavement are the sockets of nine brasses; the tenth, which, no doubt, was highly curious, may yet be traced on the north wall of this transept, and on the north side of the steps leading to the choir, is a stone which is, probably, the lid, reversed, of a stone coffin.

8

THE TOWER;

which rests on four noble obtuse arches, supported by clustered columns in the early English style, is chiefly remarkable for its elegant and appropriate roof, an original design by Mr. Cottingham, the highly-talented architect of the Cathedral. It consists of a series of parallelogrammic gothic panelings, richly and highly relieved by numerous pendent bosses; the four largest of which, small though they may appear to the spectator beneath, are three feet three inches in diameter. The beam mouldings are six feet three inches in girth, and those of the wall five feet seven inches and a half. The whole of this beautiful work is painted, and affords an admirable specimen of the ancient Early English horizontal oaken roof, as known at the latter part of the reign of King Henry the Third, or commencement of Edward the First., but of which it is supposed that not more than two or three are to be met with in England. The bosses which ornament it, although original in themselves, are in strict accordance with those in various parts of the transepts, choir, &c., a sure proof of real and pure taste, which, far from attempting to display any modern rivalry of the inimitable productions of the ancients, rather chooses to assist in hand-

ing on to posterity the beautiful character of those models which they alone originally invented. From beneath the tower we pass into the

SOUTH TRANSEPT:

the architecture of which very closely resembles that of the northern, both having been probably built about the same time, and by the same architects. There are several beautiful bosses to be seen in the roof, and the great arch on the eastern side terminates in two curiously carved corbel heads; that on the south represents the head of a king, while on the other is that of a female; both are crowned, and have been formerly painted; the colours yet remain tolerably fresh on them. On the pavement are five sockets for brasses; one of them, which has been extremely elegant, is upwards of eleven feet in length, and is the longest slab in the cathedral; it covers the remains of a bishop who has been portrayed as resting on his pastoral staff, and holding up his right hand while in the act of addressing or blessing the people. The general character of this brass closely resembles that in the north aisle of the nave, and both, together with the one at the foot of the great west door, may safely be referred to the end of the fourteenth, or early part of the fifteenth centuries; whose

9

bodies they cover would only be matter of useless speculation in these sheets, neither indeed could such points be ascertained unless they were submitted to the process of disinterment. Although it is not contemplated in this essay to notice any of those modern monstrosities which "beautify" many of our ancient cathedrals and churches, in direct opposition to all rules of judgment, art, or taste, yet it would be unpardonable in us to leave this spot without pointing out for observation the finely sculptured bust, by S. Joseph, of Dr. Franklin, who died A. D. 1833, at the age of seventy years. There is also a gravestone here, in memory of the good Dr. John Law, late archdeacon of this diocese; a medallion of Sir Richard Head, who died, 3d September 1689, aged eighty, and another of Dr. Forbes, who departed this life in 1837. Among other monuments on the south wall is a very curiously-painted bust representing an elderly man in a black gown and long grey beard; it commemorates Mr. Richard Watts, a great benefactor to this city; he formerly resided at "Satis," a mansion situated on Boley Hill, where he is stated to have entertained Queen Elizabeth. His foundation of a lodging house in the High-street of this city, for six poor travellers, passing through it, and the curious conditions imposed on them, that they should be neither rogues nor proctors is too

well known to need any description here. On the south wall of this transept may still be traced, in spite of whitewash, several figures painted in fresco, with which, prior to the reformation, the whole of this church was elaborately adorned. From this transept a noble arch in the west wall opens to the Consistorial Court, which was formerly the Chapel of the Infirmary of the monastic institution, and we are told by Edmund de Hadenham, that it was dedicated to the blessed Virgin: -- "A. D. 1240, Dedicatum est altare in capella infirmariae Roffensis in honore Beatae Virginis Mariae, 2 Calend. Martii." The architecture of this chapel varies from that of any other portion of the building, being in what is termed the perpendicular style, to which it was probably altered about the time of Henry VII. The broken columns which are now seen may be presumed to have spread out into those beautiful ramifications called fan tracery, and formed an elegantly groined roof, supported either by two slender pillars in the centre of the chapel, or else ending in as many richly adorned pendants. Some screen work has lately been discovered here at the foot of the lights looking into the nave. The windows are lofty, and have four centred arches, they are divided by mullions, and have curious angular tracery in their upper compartments. The remains of three prelates are said to be deposited beneath the pavement in this place, viz.,

10

Thomas Trilleck, 1372, Thomas Brinton, 1389, and Richard Young, 1419, but no brass or monument of any kind points out the spot where rest their mitred heads, and they who in ancient times never entered this cathedral without being hailed by solemn processions of bending and obsequious monks, now sleep within one of its neglected recesses almost forgotten, and comparatively unknown. From this chapel, which, if restored, would made an admirable chapter room, we shall ascend the steps immediately beneath the organ, and enter the

CHOIR.

Whatever uncertainty there may be respecting the actual architects of the great western transepts, none can exist with regard to the builders of the choir and its aisles; for we find it recorded, that William de Hoo, during his office as Sacristan, built, with the oblations at the shrine of St. William, the whole of the choir, exclusive of the aisles -- "Willelmus de Hoo sacrista fecit totum chorum a praedictis alis de oblationibus Sancti Willelmi;" and the annals of Hadenham inform us of the exact year in which divine service was first performed therein, which some writers have stated to have taken place on

the consecration of Henry de Sanford, bishop of this diocese. "A. M. 1227. Introitus in Novum chorum Roffensem. Eodem anno electus est et consecratus M. Henricus de Sanford in Episcopum Roffensem." -- The architecture of this, together with all the other portions of the church, eastward of the great western transepts, (with a few exceptions, which will be alluded to in their place,) is of early English character, but possessing a remarkable feature, viz. that its arches and windows are not only adorned with the toothed ornament, but also in many parts profusely decorated with the small round billet moulding, which is of Norman origin. It is not unlikely that the walls of this choir, as far as the bishop's throne and pulpit, are only altered and adapted portions of the ancient Norman work, said to have been destroyed by the fire in 1179; for it is well known to the readers of monkish chronicles, that the terms, "igne combusta," "totaliter igne consumpta," and similar phrases, were almost invariably applied, however trifling the mischief caused by the fiery element. Now the curious observer will remark, that these walls, as far as above mentioned, are at least six feet thick, and that the massive Saxon or Norman arches in the crypt beneath, by which they are supported, go no further than the extension of the walls in question, but are succeeded by the lighter columns of the early English style, cal-

11

culated only for the support of the extended choir of William de Hoo, which was evidently never divided by aisles, but formed two eastern transepts and a chancel, enclosed by the outer walls, and having nothing but the flooring for such delicate pillars to uphold. This hypothesis is yet further borne out by the existence of a Norman circular doorway in the west wall of St. William's Chapel, which is in a direct line with the presumed termination of the ancient choir, and is the last remnant of that style to be met with in an eastern direction. The roof presents a good specimen of plain early English groining. The organ-case, screen, and prebendal stalls, were designed in the last century, by the Rev. Mr. Olive; and although not strictly in accordance with the rules of gothic architecture, as ascertained by modern study and research, they reflect credit on his taste, in wishing to maintain a general keeping with the style of a building which it was then the custom to vilify and condemn. There are several very fine brackets, or corbels, carved in Petworth marble; one represents a cowed head, two others the heads of females. One group, which an intelligent gentleman suggested to the compiler of this sketch might illustrate the martyrdom of St. Ignatius, who was torn to pieces by wild beasts

at Rome, by command of the Emperor Trajan, A. D. 107, consists of an ecclesiastical figure struggling with two ferocious animals. There are also some grouped corbels at the terminations of the intermediate walls of the choir which demand minute attention; that on the south side was discovered on the removal of the late episcopal throne to have been dreadfully mutilated, for the reception of that wooden absurdity. It has, however, been so completely restored under the superintendence of Mr. Cottingham, as to defy the power of discriminating between the old work and that which has been renewed. Some fine old paneling, of the time of Henry VIII., yet remains on both sides of the choir; and immediately behind, and under it, may be seen some of its ancient woodwork, consisting of a massive balustrade of oak or chestnut, supported by trefoil arches, which is most probably as old as the time of King John. In a pew next the wall, and adjoining to the bishop's throne, there is, in a small book closet, the representation of a crucifix, cut with a knife in the before-mentioned balustrade, which forms the bottom of the cupboard; this, no doubt, was the work of some lazy monk who wished to beguile a portion of those hours which his church had directed should be very differently employed. The throne of the bishop stands on the south side of the choir, and directly opposite to it is the pulpit; these beautiful imitations of ancient art are from designs by

12

Mr. Cottingham, and afford a specimen of Ecclesiastical Furniture during the transition from the Early English to the Decorated Styles, between 1280 and 1300. In taking down the old pulpit, in May 1840, the workmen laid open to view the ancient fresco painting, of which an outline accompanies these pages. This curious relic is generally considered to have been painted about 1300; and that it formed one of a series of designs depicted along the walls, is evident from the fact of the corbels in the choir having remains of various colours about them, which have not been wholly eradicated. The subject of the painting has given rise to many conjectures; some have imagined it to represent the martyrdom of Saint Catherine; others, that it is symbolical of Dame Fortune;/* and a third, that it might have allusion to the rise of Gundulph. Where there is so wide a field for conjecture, it is not easy to come to any general determination; but a likely solution of it is, that it was intended to illustrate the rise of some person under the patronage of royal favour; but that such an individual could not have been an ecclesiastic, may be inferred from the garb of the figure on the top of the wheel, which is rather judicial than otherwise. The colours

are very vivid; the background is a field of vermillion, studded with stars. The wheel and the crowned female are yellow, and the dress of the other figures of a reddish hue, with black shoes, laced inside the feet, and green hose. There is a manifest difference in the costume; that of the lowest figure being the plainest, while the person seated on a kind of stool is the most richly habited of the three. As a work of ancient art, it presents some fine bold drawing, but a total want of knowledge in perspective is manifest throughout.

From this interesting relic we pass on to the beautiful tomb of John de Shepey, Bishop of Rochester, and Lord High Treasurer of England. This splendid relic, which is one of the finest painted effigies in England, owes its discovery and revival to Mr. Cottingham, who, while repairing the Cathedral in 1825, pulled down the mass of wall which had been built over and about it, and the mutilated canopy under which it lay. The figure of the bishop is tolerably perfect, but a portion of the mitre has been broken off, and the nose, upper lip and chin have been injured by blows with some sharp instrument. The head rests upon two richly-embroidered cushions, with gold knots or tassels at their corners; the face, hair, eyes, &c., are depicted as in life, the hands are

/* See Gentleman's Magazine for August, and Mirror for May 23, 1840.

13

joined in the act of prayer, and the feet rest upon two couchant dogs, apparently of the Danish breed; the latter are decorated with scarlet collars and bells. The ecclesiastical costume of this prelate demands minute description. He is habited in an alb, the middle section of which, between the feet, is beautifully adorned with purple embroidery, picked out with gold, and having a gold border. Immediately above this is the tunic, which has a light red ground, studded with black flowers and lined with green, it is bordered with gold: next comes the chesible, or outer garment, which covers the middle of the figure; its colour is a beautiful pink and the whole of it is covered by a number of octangular stars, formed by the insertion of a diamond within a square, of exquisite design: this, also, is edged with gold, and has a lining of green. The collar of the chesible is very elegant, its ground purple, and filled with lozenge-shaped ornaments, thickly intermixed with precious stones and gold: the mitre is adorned with imitations of jewels, its colour is a yellowish white, and it appears to be lined with pink. The gloves on the hands are yellow, and figured at

the ends; and on the middle finger of the right hand are placed the signet and episcopal rings. The head of the pastoral staff has been elaborately carved, painted, and gilt, but the crook is entirely gone; round it is a napkin, and over the left arm hangs the manipulus, a mystical representation of the rope with which Jesus was bound by the Jews, when taken before Pontius Pilate; this was very thickly inlaid with chrystals, many of which still remain. According to Walsingham, this Prelate was Lord High Treasurer of England from 1356 to 1358; he died at his house, "La Place," at Lambeth, 19th October, 1360, and lies buried in the sarcophagus beneath his effigy; on each side of which is this inscription: --

"Hic jacet Dn's Johe'ns de Schepheie: ep's istius eccl'ie."

Immediately opposite, and in the centre of the choir, is another socket, once filled with a noble brass, representing a bishop, with his pastoral staff, and right hand erected, as giving the benediction.

We now pass into the chancel. Here the beautiful proportions of the windows strike the beholder with pleasing surprise; and although their mullions, tracery, &c., have been inserted posterior to the date of their erection, there is a harmony about this part of the church which is exquisitely pleasing. The three lower eastern windows are glazed, after the design of some mosaic pavement in the chapel of Saint

14

William, and are surmounted by a beautiful parapet, pierced with quatre-foils. The first monument to be noticed in this part of the Cathedral, is a very ancient one on the north side, erected to the memory of Gilbert de Glanville, Bishop of this See, who died A. D. 1214. The upper portion of the tomb, which is of a coved form, is partly modern; but that which remains of the antique consists of quatre-foils, having their interstices filled up with mitred heads; the lower portion forms an arcade, enriched with foliage, tracery, &c. This prelate incurred the lasting hatred of the monks by insisting on the restitution of considerable portions of the ecclesiastical revenue, which had been unjustly bestowed on them by his predecessor, Gundulph, who, however he might have alienated the same for the time of his session in the episcopal chair, could have no right whatever to do so in perpetuity, to the detriment of his successors. De Glanville, however, who appears to have been a man of firm mind, insisted upon, and obtained for the bishopric that which belonged to it, to the great discomfiture and scandal of those pious personages the monks; who, to use the words of the venerable Lam-

barde, "were driven, for maintenance of their expenses, to coin the silver of Paulinus' shrine into ready money." This prelate, although a benefactor to the priory, as may be seen on reference to the sketch of his life, was, when dead, committed to the earth, "without ringing of bell, celebration of service, or dooing of any other funerall obsequies." He is called by De Hadenham, "primus ecclesiae Roffensis perturbator;" and his place of burial is thus pointed out by the same chronicler -- "sepultus a parte boreali praedictae basilicae." A few steps farther on the same side, and we reach the tomb of Bishop Lawrence de St. Martin, which is formed out of Sussex marble, most elegantly and elaborately carved, having had a truly magnificent canopy, adorned with pinnacles, crockets, finials, &c. His pastoral staff has evidently been in his left hand, while his right, as common with monuments of this date, is raised in the act of benediction. From his neck hangs a species of square bag, somewhat similar to the Urim and Thummim of the Jewish priesthood; this has been supposed to relate to the canonization of St. William of Perth, which this prelate obtained from the Pope, having made a voyage to Rome on that account. He died in 1274, and, according to De Hadenham, was magnificently interred in this place. -- "A. D. 1274, obiit Laurentius Roffensis episcopus et sepultus est honorifice in Basilica sedis suae, juxta magnum altare a parte boreali." The next objects worthy observation, are a spacious lavatory for the reception of the water left at the celebration of the mass, and

15

a small closet beneath it, appropriated most probably for the custody of the consecrated bread or wafer. Immediately before the communion table is a slab, which bears traces of having been once filled with a very elegant brass; the sockets for two figures may still be discerned: a knight and lady, with joined hands, are represented in the costume of the times, (about 1400), the feet of the warrior rest upon a lion, his head has been covered with a conical basinet; the dagger of mercy hangs on his right side, while from the left depends the "belted brand." Enclosed in a stone chest on the south side of the communion table, repose the ashes of Gundulph, who died A. D. 1107, a man whose architectural genius will be revered as long as any portion of the buildings he erected shall remain upon the surface of the earth. Westward of Bishop Gundulph is the monument of Thomas de Inglethorp, Bishop of Rochester, who died A. D. 1291. His effigy in a recumbent posture, and habited in episcopal robes, lies under a canopy of early English character. This prelate, according to De Hadenham, was affable, courteous, and hospitable.

"Hujus corpus 16 calend. Junii traditum fuit sepulturae cum solennitate debita in eadem ecclesia, juxta magnum altare ex parte australi. Hic vir laudabilis, mitis, etc., locetur cum beatis." On the south side of the choir, and near to the communion rails, are three sedilia, formerly used by the priests officiating at the celebration of mass. They form an interesting specimen of perpendicular work, and are, in places, very richly gilt. The arms of the see of Rochester, the priories of Christchurch, Canterbury, and St. Andrews, Rochester, are still to be seen uninjured over this beautiful relic; it would seem as though the gentle science of heraldry had procured for it the same protection that an emblazoned tabard would have afforded to Toisson d'Or or Garter King at Arms. Beneath the shields were formerly three episcopal figures painted in fresco, and this inscription: --

O altitudo divinaq: sapiencie et scientie
Dei quam incomprehensibilia aunt
Judicia ejus et investigales vie ejus.

Returning to the western transepts, and passing under a very elegant early English arch, we enter the

NORTH AISLE OF THE CHOIR;

which was begun by Richard de Eastgate, a monk and sacristan of this church, and completed by Thomas de Mepham. The Registrum Roffense informs us that, "Ricardus de Eastgate monachus et sacrista Roffensis incepit alam bore-

16

alem novi operis versus portam beati Willelmi, quam frater Thomas de Mepham fere consummavit." Here, on the right hand side, and let into the wall, are the remains of an ancient tomb, generally supposed to be the resting-place of Hamo de Hythe, who was consecrated bishop of this see at Avignon, A. D. 1319, and, immediately opposite, is a monument erected to the memory of William Streaton, nine times Mayor of Rochester who died, 1609: it was deplorably mutilated during the civil wars. Ascending a flight of steps which have been almost worn away by the pilgrims to his shrine, we reach the chapel dedicated to St. William, who, according to monkish legends, was a baker of Perth, in Scotland, and while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was robbed and murdered by his servant, in the vicinity of this city. This took place, A. D. 1201. His body having been interred in this cathedral by the monks, miracles were wrought at his tomb; which, causing much astonishment among the people, Bishop Laurence de St. Martin was not slow in seizing the opportunity of enriching his church, impoverished as it had been by the dispute with Glanville, and the wars of King John. He

accordingly went to Rome, and succeeded in enrolling another saint in the ranks of Popish idolatry. The offerings at the tomb were more plentiful than at any other altar in the church, and we are informed by Lambarde, "that madde folkes offered to him liberally," even until his time. The stone on which the shrine stood is in the middle of the chapel marked with six crosses of various shapes, and in a recess in the north wall, filled with fresco paintings of birds and flowers, stands the stone coffin which contained the saint's remains. It is curiously ornamented, and has more of the classic Roman character about it than is generally to be met with in relics of the kind. In a tomb adjoining, and under a canopied recess yet possessing some fragments of ancient art, but wretchedly intermixed with the Gothic of the seventeenth century, lies Walter de Merton, founder of the college at Oxford, called by his name. He succeeded Laurence de St. Martin as bishop of this diocese in 1274, and thrice filled the office of Chancellor of England; the last time was at the special request of King Edward I. It was generally supposed that this tomb had been erected against the windows given to this Chapel by Hubert de Burgh, while Justiciary of England in the reign of Henry the Third; but the indefatigable researches of Mr. Cottingham have proved that they must have given place to others of a more beautiful design than any they could possibly have possessed; for, in the month of July, 1840, while taking down some of the before-mentioned absurdities, the complete design of the ancient

17

tomb was exposed to view; the elegant stone frames of the two windows behind the sarcophagus being in the transition style of the early part of the reign of Edward the First, and evidently not only a part of the monument, but possessing such characteristics as would not admit of the supposition that they had been erected so early as 1232, the date of De Burgh's disgrace. The effigy is represented with a mitre on the head, and the robe of a chancellor covering the body, an absurdity which it were well to remove. This prelate was drowned while crossing the Medway in October, 1277. Directly opposite is the altar tomb of Bishop Lowe, who died in 1467, the side head and foot of which are filled with square departments, each bearing a shield in a quatre-foil, the whole being inscribed with the following:

"I. H. C. est. amor. meus. Deo. gras."

there are also shields of his own armorial bearings, and the see of Rochester, and on the verge of the tomb this imprecatory inscription, "Miserere. Deus. anime. Fs. Johannis. Lowe.

episcopi -- credo videre. bona. Domini. in terra. viventium. -- Sancte. Andrea. et. Angustine. orate. pro. nobis," these are all in the ancient black letter, and on the base of the tomb is this sentence. "Quam. breve. spatium. hec. mundi. gloria. ut. umbra. nominis. sunt. ejus. gaudia." The pavement of this chapel is curiously tessellated in several places, particularly towards the east, where are some monuments of the Lee Warner family, in the heavy stone-quarry style of the seventeenth century. The model of the spire erected in 1743 is also kept here, and the verger generally shows the visitor a curious buff coat, bandolier, musket and bayonet, which possibly belonged to some covenanting roundhead in Cromwell's time. We must not quit this chapel without noticing the beautiful figure of Moses standing under a crocketed canopy, holding the tables of the law in one hand, and his rod in the other, which, with the fragments lying near, were taken from above the figure of John de Shepy in 1825. They were once elaborately painted and gilt, and, it is probable, formed part of the ancient tomb of Walter de Merton, that prelate having, according to Dr. Ingram, "united the legal with the clerical profession." We shall now pass into the

SOUTH AISLE OF THE CHOIR;

which in its original state was the work of Richard de Walden, as expressly pointed out in the Registrum Roffense, "Ricardus de Waldune monachus et sacrista alam austra-

18

lem versus curiam fecit." This portion of the building was dedicated to St. Edmund, and is entered from the great western transept under an arch similar to that of the north aisle. The roof is of later date, and curiously studded with corbel heads, bosses, etc., and is supposed to be not only an almost unique original specimen of the horizontal oaken roof of the time of Edward the First, but to be, possibly, the most valuable instance of the kind in England. There are also two very fine early English doorways, one leading to the garden of Dr. Irvine, and another which communicated with the great transept. In a niche on the north wall lies a mutilated figure which represented John de Bradfield, bishop of this see, who died A. D. 1283, and, according to Edmund de Hadenham "sepultus est in ecclesia eadem a parte australi juxta ostium excubitorium." On the front of a buttress at the foot of his tomb was lately discovered a gigantic painting in fresco, of the virgin and child, 12 feet 4 inches in height. It is much perished, and although the greatest care was taken in abstracting the coats of whitewash with which it was covered, an ope-

ration entirely and carefully performed with a penknife, it was not possible to preserve it entire. Proceeding eastward, we see in the south wall an archway having steps descending from it, now blocked up, this led to the Purgatorium, or cell in the crypt appropriated to the custody of such as performed extreme ecclesiastical penance. The stone coffin of a monk next meets our view, and just beyond it is another archway with steps ascending internally, also blocked up, this was the way to the indulgence room, where penitents or invalids, not wholly worthy or fit to be admitted among the congregation, were yet permitted to be auditors of the sacred service. This curious apartment may still be seen above the present chapter room. There are in this portion of the building two extremely beautiful windows in the Decorated Style; that in the east wall is perhaps the finest, being very similar to the Flamboyant style of the continental cathedrals, but the great attraction here is the magnificent doorway to the chapter room, a work not exceeded by any thing of the kind in England. This curious specimen of enrichment in the perpendicular style was probably executed by Hamo de Hythe, some of its ornaments exactly corresponding with portions of his tomb. Two statues in the lower compartments are supposed to typify the rise of the Christian and the fall of the Jewish church; one being a female blindfolded, a crown has fallen from her head, the flag-staff is broken in her left hand, and the law of Moses is reversed in her right. The other is a bishop, holding his crozier in his right and a church in his left hand; immediately above are four of the primitive fathers

19

at their studies, surmounting which are two angels on each side, praying for the release of a soul in purgatory, which is seen amid clouds in the apex of the arch. Returning to the chapel of St. Edmund, and descending a flight of steps, we enter

THE CRYPT;

which is very spacious, and divided into seven aisles, probably in memorial of the seven early Christian churches. The portion immediately under the choir consists of heavy round arches, supported by massive piers, wholly destitute of ornament, and it is possible that they are really Saxon architecture. The rest is formed of pointed arches of early English work. Under the chapel of St. William may yet be traced a hole in the ceiling, through which the monks worked the machinery of the miracles performed at the shrine of that saint; there is, also, an ancient grave-stone of the shape called "dos d'ane," with a cross fleury on it, and a circular

groove at the end, as though it had once lain against a round pillar; remains of fresco painting are visible in many places, as are the iron cranks which upheld the lamps, and chapels and shrines may still be traced here by the existence of piscinas, etc. Returning to upper air, we see on the south side of the chapter room the ruins of the ancient cloisters and chapter house, a beautiful specimen of Norman work, erected by Ernulphus; while on the north side of the cathedral is a tower, generally attributed to Gundulph, but presenting nothing in any of its architectural details to warrant such supposition. Brown Willis wished to prove it a thesaurarium or place of security for the property of the priory, but the more probable hypothesis is, that it was originally a bell-tower, such erections, similarly situated, being common in the olden time, as may be proved from their existence at Chichester, Salisbury, and many other cathedrals.

The dimensions of this building are, according to Dallaway, 306 by 122 feet. Its internal appearance has been greatly improved, during the last fifteen years, by the present Dean and Chapter, who have omitted no opportunity of restoring the Cathedral to its pristine form and beauty. In this they have been fortunate in obtaining the services of an architect, under whose tasteful and scientific superintendence the edifice has been strengthened, and many gross anomalies within it entirely removed. By their judicious arrangements, the spectator is enabled to view several beautiful and striking portions of the building, which a few barrow loads of stone and rubbish completely concealed from the vision of our fore-

20

fathers. That this is fact, is fully proved by the opening of the north and south-western arches of the triforium in the nave, the prospect into the western portion of the church from St. Edmund's chapel, the restoration of the beautiful lights, &c. in the chapel of St. Mary, to say nothing of the development of the ancient tomb of Walter de Merton, the restoration of the door of the chapter-room, and many other alterations, which will readily present themselves to the notice of the visitor to this Cathedral.

And now, gentle reader, our walk has drawn to its close, we have considered the architecture of this time honoured pile, and meditated on the existence of the many who sleep within its damp cold vaults. The hour we have passed together, like the years and events which have rolled away and occurred since this ancient building was erected, can return again no more for ever. The present and the future only are with and before us. May thy paths through each be happy! We

wish thee courteous farewell.

FINIS.

Printed by J. Limbird, 143, Strand.

<This is the earliest guidebook to the cathedral written by someone who combined some knowledge of medieval architecture with some close knowledge of the building itself. The author's name is not given, but there was never any mystery about it: the book was written by Charles Spence, an Admiralty official who was based at the time in Rochester. (By 1844 he had been transferred to Devonport; by 1854 he had moved to the Admiralty's head office in Somerset House. He died on 4 Oct. 1871, aged 68 (Portsmouth Times and Naval Gazette, 21 Oct. 1871).) The printer, John Limbird, was also the publisher of a weekly magazine, "The Mirror of literature, amusement, and instruction" (usually called just "The Mirror"), to which Spence was a frequent contributor. Two of these articles are attached below, together with a review of his book (unsigned but known to be by John Gough Nichols) which appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine.>

The Mirror, 23 May 1840, p. 340 (vol 35, no 1006)

REMAINS OF FRESCO PAINTING,
DISCOVERED IN ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

During the repairs which are now in progress in the choir of the Cathedral Church of Rochester, the workmen, while removing the back of the pulpit, discovered the remains of an ancient painting, a correct delineation of which is presented to our readers. The colours are in very fair condition, and the outline itself as strong as though it were only the work of yesterday, though many centuries have probably elapsed since its execution. The subject may be presumed to be the martyrdom of St. Catherine,/* but the want of expression in the figures, and the fact of the painting being incomplete, one half having been covered with a strong coat of oil paint, may possibly throw a doubt thereon. It is a curious relic, and stands alone in an edifice which once was pre-eminently distinguished for the gorgeous decorations of its walls, as may yet be seen in the nave, transepts, and some of the side chapels. This peculiarity, however, it will not long possess, as it is more than probable that before this notice can have appeared in print, that which once may have raised the piety of a devotee, and been considered as a master-piece of art, will have been for ever obliterated by the merciless touches of a mason's chisel. <signed> C. S .

/* With all deference to the surmise of our much valued friend, the subject seems to have a greater latitude than at first sight is apparent. -- The representation appears to be that of the rise of some individual, the servant or menial of the king, to the highest seat of pre-eminence to which he was capable of attaining. The monarch, crowned individual in the centre, by the grasp, is evidently depicted as the stay or support of the wheel; or, in other words, the progress in life of the person who, in token of his servitude, is placed immediately beneath the feet of the king. The first bar of the wheel obtained, the representation shows him to be advancing step by step, from the bar to the outer circle, and in the next evolution seated beyond danger upon the summit of the circle. Mark the costume also; the feet, in the lower part, are not ornamented, in the next

course the feet are decorated. and an addition of robe is perceptible; in the third, or that of eminence. the robing is more ample. Is this an allegorical history of the rise and fortunes of Gundulph, the founder and builder of Rochester Cathedral? pressure of time for publication, precludes our pursuing this inquiry. but possibly the hint may serve as an impetus to the researches of some of our respected friends in that venerable city. -- Ed. M.

<The outline drawing (p. 341) is the same that was used as a frontispiece for Spence's book. There is an independent account of this discovery, with a better illustration, in Gentleman's Magazine, Aug. 1840, pp. 137–8 (unsigned but known to be by John Gough Nichols).>

The Mirror, 11 Jul. 1840, p. 21 (vol 36, no 1014)

A WALK THROUGH ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

We walk these solemn aisles along,
The relics of the past among:
'Tis here the monks their beads have told,
Here saints have pray'd, and warriors bold
Bent their mail'd knees to heaven.

From those who really love the study of antiquity, and experience pleasure in examining the remains of ancient art, there are not many ecclesiastical edifices possessing greater claims on attention, than the cathedral at Rochester. But as it is not the purpose, nor, indeed, within the limits, of this little sketch, to give a regular history of the church and its foundation, the curious reader is referred to the works of Thorpe and Hasted, and to that very useful and excellent little tome, intitled the "History of Rochester,"/* together with many other entertaining essays on the subject, for information how Ethelbert first founded a bishopric and college for secular priests here, in the time of St. Augustine, A. D. 600; how the Kings Sigere, Offa, Ethelwulf, and Egbert, and a host of Anglo-Saxon benefactors, vied with each other in bestowing on it many a fair manor, in honour of St. An-

/* Published by Wildach, High-street, Rochester.

drew, and for the good of their own souls. There also must they seek for an account of the various revolutions and catastrophes which the building underwent, up to the time of Bishop Gundulph, who is generally considered to have been the architect of the earliest portions of the present edifice. Ours are the ruminations only of a rambler, and our ambition is merely to be by the side of the stranger, when he takes his final glance at the exterior of this venerable edifice. Modern improvements, tasteless insertions and brick facing will somewhat tend to discourage his critical examination of it, yet, if he be an architectural antiquary, he will neither be slow nor at much pains to discover many beautiful relics

which they have almost obscured. The west front is universally allowed to be a very fine specimen of Norman enrichment, and is considered by Dallaway to be one of the most perfect specimens of that style now left in England. It consists, mainly, of tiers of arches or arcades; the pillars supporting them are of high design, and the heads of the arches are filled with the curious hatched ornament mentioned by Chaucer, as "hacking in masonries." This front also contained four towers, two at the western terminations of the nave, and two at those of the side aisles; they appear to have run up nearly even with the walls, but on reaching the roof of the building, to have assumed an octangular shape, and terminated in pinnacles most curiously capped. The great door consists of several concentric arches, all elaborately carved, and resting on pillars, two of which take the form of statues, and represent the figures of King Henry the First, and his Queen Matilda. Various figures of animals, flowers, etc., pervade the whole of this beautiful relic, and the architrave is peculiarly curious, the stones being locked together by semicircular fastenings. In the area is a bas relief, probably intended for our Saviour. He is represented sitting with a book in his left hand, which book also rests upon his knee; and the tympan or recess in which he is seated is supported on either side by an angel, whilst around are the symbols of the four Evangelists. The plinth from which the pillars rise is evidently of more recent date, the ancient base having, in all probability, been decayed. In the front of the tower, on the north side of the west door, is a very ancient statue, which is supposed to represent Gundulph; it formerly stood in another portion of this tower, which was taken down in 1763. <signed> C. S.

Gentleman's Magazine, Nov. 1840, pp. 514–15

A Walk through Rochester Cathedral.
12mo. (Sold only by the Verger.)

This is a guide prepared for the information of visitors to one of those national structures which are full of interest and instruction, as well to the historical inquirer as to the lover of the arts; and it is evidently the production of a gentleman [we understand Mr. C. Spence of Rochester,] who knew what he undertook. It is so little derived from former descriptions of the kind, that we think we may correctly state that the greater part of it is the result of personal survey and examination; whilst even in the historical portions, the author has read for himself, and not been contented to follow implicitly in the track of previous writers. We allude especially to the use he has made of the monkish chronicles of the church.

The repairs which were commenced in Rochester Cathedral about twenty years ago, under the superintendence of Mr. L. N. Cottingham, have been recently continued, and were slightly noticed in our Magazine for August last, when we gave a representation and description of the fresco painting of the Wheel of Fortune discovered upon the wall behind the old pulpit. The present writer gives the following additional information on the subject of these repairs:

"The present Dean and Chapter have omitted no opportunity of restoring the Cathedral to its pristine form and beauty. In this they have been fortunate in obtaining the services of an architect, under whose tasteful and scientific superintendence the edifice has been strengthened, and many gross anomalies within it entirely removed. By their judicious arrangements, the spectator is enabled to view several beautiful and striking portions of the building, which a few barrow-

loads of stone and rubbish completely concealed from the vision of our forefathers. This is fully proved by the opening of the north and south-western arches of the triforium in the nave, the prospect into the western portion of the church from St. Edmund's chapel, the restoration of the beautiful lights, &c. in the chapel of St. Mary, to say nothing of the development of the ancient tomb of Walter de Merton, the restoration of the door of the Chapter-room, and many other alterations, which will readily present themselves to the notice of the visitor."

The restoration of the door of the Chapter-room (not the original Chapter-house) was executed many years ago, and is exceedingly well known, having been widely published in many prints (including the engraved cover of a religious periodical); but the development of Merton's tomb is quite a recent occurrence; of which we find in another page the following account:

"In a tomb adjoining (to the shrine of St. William, in the north aisle of the choir), under a canopied recess yet possessing some fragments of ancient art, but wretchedly intermixed with the Gothic of the seventeenth century,/* lies Walter de Merton, founder of the College at Oxford called by his name. He succeeded Laurence de St. Martin as bishop of this diocese in 1274, and thrice filled the office of Chancellor of England. It was generally supposed that this tomb had been erected against the windows /† given to this chapel

/* Perhaps some of the seventeenth; but chiefly of the sixteenth, for the table monument and effigy were evidently made when the monument was renewed in 1598. Rev.

/† "Windows" is a misprint; the Registrum Roffense mentions only one window, the words being "fenestram mediam ad sanctum Willielmum:" this Thorpe (*Antiquities in the Diocese of Rochester*, p. 171), more ingeniously than judiciously, supposed to be the window behind Merton's tomb, of which he saw the framework from the exterior. But we should say that the words import the principal window (usually in the middle) of the chapel. Rev.

by Hubert de Burgh, while justiciary of England in the reign of Henry the Third; but the indefatigable researches of Mr. Cottingham have proved that they must have given place to others of a more beautiful design than any they could possibly have possessed; for, in the month of July 1840, while taking down some of the before mentioned absurdities, the complete design of the ancient tomb was exposed to view; the elegant stone frames of the two windows behind the sarcophagus being in the transition style of the early part of the reign of Edward the First, and evidently not only a part of the monument, but possessing characteristics such as would not admit of the supposition that they had been erected so early as 1232, the date of De Burgh's disgrace. The effigy is represented with a mitre on the head, and the robe of a chancellor covering the body, an absurdity which it were well to remove. This prelate was drowned while crossing the Medway in October 1277."

Perhaps our author has been a little too severe upon the effigy, and he should have explained to his less learned readers why the Chancellor's robe (if such it be) is an absurdity. He might certainly have correctly stated that many other Bishops, who in like manner filled the office of Chancellor, are represented on their tombs, not in any legal costume, but in their ecclesiastical habits; and there are other features about the effigy which palpably betoken the age of its execution, as the roses on the mitre, and the pattern upon the cushion. It was evidently formed, together with the altar-tomb on which it rests, at the time when the monument was renewed by Merton College during the wardenship of Sir Henry Saville, in the year 1598, as recorded in the inscrip-

tion in front; but we still think the statue has some claim to the praise bestowed upon it by Gough (i. 59) as being "a beautiful alabaster monument," and that it is therefore worthy of preservation, either on a lower level, after removing the table tomb, or distinct from the monument, which should be restored to its ancient appearance, with some appropriate stained glass placed in the newly opened windows. The monument would then become one of the most interesting in the cathedral. It appears from a bill of expenses still preserved (see Thorpe, p. 193) that the gravestone was originally inlaid with Limoges plate /* (probably enamelled); and we found, on examining the back part of the stone now lying beneath the tomb, a grooving, which seems to show that the original slab still remains. The course of the present works will probably ascertain this, and we look to the result with curiosity. In whatever may be done, we hope that the society of Merton will emulate the liberality of their Elizabethan predecessors, accompanied by a truer taste, in correspondence with the present age of revived English architecture. Before we close this subject, we must notice that the beautiful monument of Bishop Shepey, first discovered in 1825, is now receiving a renewed canopy; that a new pulpit and throne of carved oak have just been erected, from very tasteful designs by Mr. Cottingham, in the transition style of from 1280 to 1300; and that a perfectly new ceiling to the tower is also nearly completed, which is thus described in the agreeable little manual to which we must now bid farewell:

"It consists of a series of parallelogrammic Gothic panellings, richly and highly relieved by numerous pendant bosses, the four largest of which, small though they appear to the spectator beneath, are 3 ft.

3 inc. in diameter. The beam moldings are 6 ft. 3 inc. in girth, and those of the wall 5 ft. 7½ inc. The whole of this beautiful work is painted, and affords an admirable specimen of the ancient early English horizontal oaken roof, as known at the latter part of the reign of King Henry the Third, or commencement of Edward the First, but of which it is supposed that not more than two or three are to be met with in England."

/* The tomb and its carriage from Limoges to Rochester cost 40l. 5s. 6d.; other materials at Rochester (probably for the canopy and windows) 22l.; the glasing of the windows 11s. Total expenses, including some minor items, 67l. 14s. 6d.