Old Cleeve Abbey.

BY THE REV. F. WARRE.

WHENEVER we see ancient works, we naturally wish to know something of their history, and of those by whom they were raised. Earth-works, the marks of primæval occupation—castles, bearing witness to the power and military habits of the mediæval nobility —ruins, proving by their importance and beauty the wealth and civilization of the clergy of former days—mines, shewing how early commerce led to maritime adventure; and sepulchres of all dates, shewing that in all ages man has longed for posthumous fame, are to be found around us, and cannot fail to interest every thinking mind in the habits, manners, and history of those who have preceded us as inhabitants of this country.

But of all these objects of interest, none, perhaps, are more interesting than the remains of monastic establishments, such as Cleeve Abbey, evincing as they do, by the beauty of their details, a state of civilization far in advance of what might be expected in the dark ages; and by their costliness and extent bearing witness to a zeal for

the honour of God far greater, I fear, than can generally be found in these more enlightened and practical, but less loving and devoted days. And yet, though deservedly interesting, monastic remains are, perhaps, of all ancient relics, those whose history is most completely forgotten in their own neighbourhood. Every castle has its own traditions of war, splendour, and suffering—every earth-work, even those of the earliest date, has its own tale of bloodshed or superstition. But the same peasant who will tell you that the Romans constructed this camp, and that the Danes were defeated at another, and knows the names and relates the deeds of valour or oppression of the warlike barons who built and inhabited each castle, will probably, when questioned as to the monastic ruins, however beautiful or extensive, only answer that he has heard that the monks lived there formerly, and, if pressed more closely, will speak of a dark figure, or more commonly of a white lady, who is said to haunt the ruins. It is not among the uneducated classes alone that this ignorance with regard to monastic institutions prevails. We have, generally speaking, very vague notions of what they really were. According to the bias of our minds, we look upon them either as the seats of piety and devotion, or as the habitation of laziness, luxury, and profligacy; as the abodes of learning and religion, or as the strongholds of ignorance and superstition; as the residences of men devoted to the service of God, or as dens polluted by monsters of hypocrisy, cruelty, and sensuality. Now, it needs but little thought to convince us that no one of these views is correct. Men have always been men, and good and bad have always been mixed together in human institutions—there have been good and bad monks and nuns, as there have been good and bad members of every other profession. Nor are we

competent judges of the good or evil of monastic institutions, unless we take into consideration the circumstances of the times in which they existed ; for it may frequently be, as I believe it to have been in this case, that what would have been worse than useless in modern days was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances and wants of an earlier period. Nor should we forget that "the evil that men do lives after them, and the good is oft interred with their bones," especially when the witnesses on whose authority we form our opinions of them were, in most cases, personally interested in encouraging a hostile feeling towards them.

We learn then, from *Doomsday-Book*, that in the time of King Edward—that is, before the Norman Conquest—Earl Harold held Old Cleave, and shortly after the Conquest it was the property of the family of Romare, or De Romara, of whom William de Romara was created Earl of Lincoln, by King Stephen, in the year 1141. The total defeat of the Saxons at Hastings, together with the death of Harold and his brothers, inflicted so fatal a stroke on the power of England, that we are in the habit of supposing that the conquest was then finally completed, and that the Normans from that hour became undisputed masters of the island ; but this was certainly not the case. The Saxons, though worsted on all sides, were not conquered. At Hastings, in the Isle of Ely, in Northumberland, and elsewhere, they maintained a desperate, though unavailing, resistance. The sons of Harold invaded this very coast of Somerset, in the reign of William Rufus ; and a modern historian holds that the bands of outlaws who infested the forests in all parts of England were not robbers, but desperate men, who carried on a national warfare against the invaders, even as late as the beginning

of the reign of Henry III. Under these circumstances, the life of a great Norman Baron, like William Moion, or De Mohun, at Dunster, settled soon after the Conquest in a remote and wild district, and one in which the family of Godwin had held great possessions, must have been one of constant warfare. Every act of power on his part would be resented as an usurpation, and desperately resisted. Such a state of things could produce but one effect; the ruling party became tyrants of the worst description—the ruled, sullen and obstinate, and ready, when occasion offered, to retaliate on their oppressors the sufferings they had undergone.

That this was the case with the English in the reign of Stephen, the *Saxon Chronicle* informs us, in the following words, as translated by Ingram :—

"They (that is, the Norman nobles) cruelly oppressed the wretched men of the land with castle works, and when the castles were made they filled them with devils and evil men; then took they those whom they supposed to have any goods, both by night and day, men and women, and threw them into prison for their gold and silver, and inflicted on them unutterable tortures, for never were any martyrs so tortured as they were; some they hanged up by the feet, and smoked them with foul smoke, and some by the thumbs or by the head, and hung coats of mail on their feet. They tyed knotted strings about their heads, and twisted them till the pain went to the brains; they put them into dungeons, wherein were snakes and toads, and so destroyed them; some they placed in a crucet-house, that is in a chest that is short and narrow and not deep, wherein they put sharp stones, and so thrust the man therein, that they broke all his limbs. In many of the castles were things loathsome and grim called 'Sachenteges,' of

which two or three men had enough to bear one. It was thus made: that is, fastened to a beam, and they placed a sharp iron collar about the man's throat and neck, so that he could in no direction either sit, or lie, or sleep, but bear all that iron. Many thousands they wore out with hunger. I neither can, nor may I, tell all the wounds and all the pains they inflicted on wretched men in this land. This lasted the 19 winters, while Stephen was King; and it grew continually worse and worse. They constantly laid guilds on the towns, and called it 'tenserie'; and when the wretched men had no more to give, they plundered and burnt all the towns, that well thou mightest go a whole day's journey and never shouldest thou find a man sitting in a town, nor the land tilled. Then was corn dear, and flesh and cheese, and butter, for none there was in the land; wretched men starved for hunger; some had recourse to alms who were once rich men, and some fled out of the land; never yet was there more wretchedness in the land, nor ever did heathen men worse than they did, for after a time they spared neither church nor churchyard, but took all the goods that were therein, and then burned the church and all together. Neither did they spare a bishop's land, nor an abbot's, nor a priest's, but plundered both monk's and clerk's, and every man robbed another who could. If two or three men came riding to a town all the township fled, for they concluded them to be robbers. The bishops and learned men cursed them continually, but the effect thereof was nothing to them, for they were all accursed and forsworn and abandoned; to till the ground was to plough the sea; the earth bore no corn, for the land was all laid waste by such deeds; and they said openly that Christ slept and his Saints."

Such was the miserable oppression from which the Saxons,

both lay and clerical, suffered at the hands of these Norman tyrants in the reign of Stephen; nor does their state appear to have materially improved till the troublous times of Henry III. rendered it necessary for the leaders of both parties, more or less, to court popular favour. It was towards the close of this miserable period, about the year 1188, that William de Romare, youngest son, or, perhaps, nephew of the Earl of Lincoln, being religiously inclined, "for the health of the soul of King Richard, Henry his father, their ancestors and successors, as well as for the health of his own soul and the soul of Phillipa his wife, and for the souls of all their progenitors and posterity, founded in this, his manor of Cleeve, to the honour of the blessed Virgin Mary, a Monastery of Cistercian Monks, and bestowed thereon all his lands in Cleeve in pure and perpetuable alms, with all liberties, immunities, customs, and other appurtenances."

These Cistercian Monks, a branch of the great Benedictine order, who took their name from Cisteaux, or Cistercium, in the Bishopric of Chalons, in Burgundy, did not take up their abode in England till the year 1128, only 60 years before the foundation of Cleeve, and therefore probably had a larger proportion of foreigners among them than those orders which had taken root in this island at an earlier period. Hence they were more likely to exert a beneficial influence upon the Norman nobility than the parochial clergy, who had neither wealth nor power to give them weight with their military neighbours, or than a body of monks of Saxon descent, whose origin would have been enough to expose them to oppression and plunder from the hands of their foreign conquerors. Indeed when we find the name of Richard de Bret, no doubt a member of the neighbouring baronial house of Breto (notorious as having

produced one of the murderers of Thomas à Becket), early in the list of the Abbots of Cleeve, we may fairly conclude that this Abbey, founded by a great Norman noble, occupied by an order of monks in which the proportion of Normans was possibly greater than in most others, was one in which men of Norman blood and Norman connections formed the majority. And as the monks of the middle ages were the almost exclusive possessors of all the science and literature existing in those times, and also were far better and kinder landlords and masters than the feudal barons around them, nothing could have been better adapted to the wants of the times or more likely to alleviate the miseries of the lower classes, and at the same time induce a more just and lenient spirit into their conquerors, than such an establishment as that founded by Romara at Cleeve.

I have been able to discover but little of interest recorded of this Abbey, but that does not in any degree show that the good work of civilisation and conciliation did not prosper in their hands; indeed, it is rather a proof that it did, for it can hardly be that a body of men superior in learning and intelligence to their neighbours, possessed of great wealth, performing the duties of their profession with even ordinary propriety, in peace and quietness, through a long series of years, should fail of ameliorating the condition, both mental and bodily, of the wretched serfs and brutal soldiers by whom they were surrounded. The chief benefactors of the Abbey were William de Romara, the founder; Hubert de Burgh; Richard, Earl of Cornwall; Reginald de Mohun; and King Henry III.; all, it may be observed, Normans of the highest rank. According to the taxation of Pope Nicholas, the temporalities of this Abbey were in the diocese of Exeter, lands at Branton, the Manor

of Pochewell, the Manor of Treglaston, and that of Bruham in the diocese of Bath. We learn from *Tanner*, that shortly before the Reformation there were here 17 monks, who were endowed with £155 10s. 5¼d. per annum, an income which, though it sounds but little to our ears, was in the reign of Henry VIII. a very considerable sum. The names of the Abbots of Cleeve, as given in *Dugdale*, are Henry, who occurs in 1297; Richard de Bret, elected in 1315; Robert de Clyve, elected 1321; John occurs in 1407; Leonard in 1416; William Seylake, confirmed 28th of September, 1419; John Stone professed obedience as Abbot 1st October, 1421; David Joiner, who occurs 1435, and again in 1463; John Paynter occurs in 1509; and William Dovell, who succeeded in 1510, and after the Dissolution had a pension of £26 13s. 4d. On the 30th of January in the 29th year of Henry VIII, the King granted to Robert Earl of Sussex the reversion of the house and site of Cleeve Abbey, with all the messuages belonging to it, in the parishes of Old Cleeve, London, Bylbrook, Washford, Hungerford, Golsinggate, Roadwater, Leigh, and Brynham, in the county of Somerset, except the rectory of Old Cleeve, to be held by him and his heirs male.

Although the ruins of Cleeve Abbey at the present day present far more that is interesting both to the Archæologist and Artist than can be found on the sites of the great majority of monastic establishments, time, that ceaseless destroyer, and the far more rapidly destructive hand of tasteless and ignorant utilitarianism, have committed such extensive ravages upon this once magnificent fabric, that, I fear, I can do little more than give a description of its remains as they now exist, offering to your consideration such conjectures as to their

original use and general plan as appear to me to be founded on the strongest probabilities.

On the left side of the road leading from Watchet to Wiveliscombe, a few hundred yards beyond the Washford turnpike-gate, an ancient bridge crosses the rapid stream which on that side divides the road from a line of rich meadow land occupying the space between it and the rising ground on the east. This bridge leads to a gate apparently and probably modern, though the remains of an ancient jamb on the left side would seem to indicate the contrary ; the wall, however, in which it stands is hardly thick enough for an outer boundary. It is more likely that this is an ancient fragment worked into a modern wall, than that a gate should have been originally placed so far without the porter's lodge. There is, however, an ancient pitched causeway on the right side of the way, leading to the great gate-house. From the north-eastern corner of this gate-house a wall of excellent masonry and considerable height and thickness extends for some distance until it reaches the extremity of a deep moat ; at this point there was a gate leading into the meadow, part of the left jamb of which, formed of good ashler work and ornamented on the outside with a trefoiled chamfer stop, still remains. From this gate the moat, which is of considerable breadth and depth, extends on the eastern and southern sides of the ruins, to within a short distance of the brook, enclosing an irregularly-shaped area of several acres. From the point where the moat ceases to the brook, the boundary appears to have been continued by a wall which may also be traced along the side of the brook to the north-west corner of the gate-house. This moat, with the brook and the walls connecting it with the gate, constituted the outer boundary of the home farm of the Abbey, and contained, besides the

Abbey itself, an ancient mill, two fish-ponds, and, without doubt, the farm and other offices necessarily attached to so large an establishment; and at the same time afforded a defence against any sudden attack of robbers—a precaution which the state of society at the end of the 12th century must have rendered very useful to a body of foreign ecclesiastics. Near the middle of the south-eastern side of the moat is a ford which is now, and probably was anciently, used for farming purposes; and from the number of building stones lying near, it seems to have been flanked by walls, and, perhaps, closed by a gate, though I have not been able as yet to discover any well-defined foundations there. The gate-house itself is a very curious and beautiful structure; and from its architectural peculiarities requires a minute and accurate description. It stands nearly north-east and south-west, and is entered at the north end by a very fine and lofty equilateral archway, flanked on the east side by a buttress of two stages, the mouldings of which prove it to be a work of the latter part of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century. Upon close investigation, it does not seem that this buttress is part of the original building, which is probably as early as the 13th century; for it is simply built against the wall, with very little, if any, bonding, and was clearly meant to strengthen the original walls, when the additions, which I shall point out, were made to the gate-house by William Dovell, the last abbot. The west side of the gate is entirely occupied by a massive plain buttress of modern construction, the necessity of which to the preservation of the building is unfortunate, as it not only diminishes the beauty of the gate, but by blocking up a doorway, traces of which may be seen on that side, destroys what might otherwise have probably afforded

a clue to the somewhat puzzling arrangement of the building attached to the western side of the gate. Over the arch is an inscription in characters in use in the 15th and 16th centuries, "Porta patens esto nulli claudaris honesto," the hospitable import of which gives, in my opinion, a clue to the purpose for which the gate-house was used. Above this is a square-headed window of late Perpendicular character, divided by stone mullions into three lights, and above this the gable is ornamented with niches which however are too much hidden by ivy to admit of accurate description. The passage which leads from the external to the internal archway is 46ft. long by 13ft. in breadth, and was arched through its whole length; this arch, which has now disappeared, seems to have been of plain barrel form, with plain ashler ribs, the spring of one of which may still be seen on the left side of the passage; over the whole length of this passage was a hall, lighted at each end by a square-headed window of three lights, having an open timber roof, which still remains; a large fire-place on the west side, and a door communicating with a passage, and chambers much larger and more numerous than could have been required for a mere porter's lodge. On the right side of the arched passage are two large segmental arches, now in great measure built up, having smaller doors in them, but which, from the care with which the ashler stones composing them are dressed on the underside, were no doubt originally open. This would reduce the right wall of the passage to a mere arcade, and the ground-floor rooms would have been a sort of aisle to it. These I imagine to have been stables; an arrangement not uncommon in the 13th and 14th centuries, when the hall, as in this case, occupied the upper story. This conjecture seems to be in some degree corroborated by the fact that

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THE INTERIOR FRONT OF THE GATEHOUSE, OLD CLEEVE ABBEY.

there is no fire-place in these rooms, the flue of the hall chimney rising from a bracket at some height above the ground. The staircase leading to the hall above seems to have been placed in the right-hand corner of this stable, but owing to the modern buttress, I have not been able quite to satisfy myself as to its construction. A similar buttress on the east side of the building fills up the space, upon which an arch, such as I have described, opens on that side of the passage; but there is every reason to suppose that it led into another stable, though I doubt whether on this side there were any rooms above the ground floor. About half-way up the passage was a door, the jambs of which may still be seen, and immediately beyond it, on the left-hand, is a niche, which, from a slight colouring of smoke on the stones, I conjecture to have been used for a lamp; then again is a small doorway, having a segmental arch with plain chamfer mouldings, which may be of any date, and now serves as a side entrance to the abbey yard, but probably led into the original porter's lodge; for the two buttresses on that side are not original, but built against the wall in the manner I have already described, while the decorative lines still remaining on the plaster give ample reason for supposing that the wall was not originally an external one. We now come to the very beautiful internal front of the gate-house, which consists of a very fine arch, corresponding to that at the other end, flanked by perpendicular buttresses, between which is a bold and well-cut string supporting a square medallion containing the name of the last abbot Dovell, combined with an elegant ornament of vine foliage; over this is a square-headed window of three lights, and above this window in the gable are three niches of exquisite tabernacle work, the centre one containing a very fine crucifix in par-

ticularly good preservation, while the other two, which no doubt contained statues of the Blessed Virgin and the beloved disciple St. John, are unfortunately vacant. At first sight I hastily concluded that this front was similar in construction to the other—that is to say, that it was an early building, probably of the 13th century, modernized and adorned in a later style. But my friend Mr. Giles, who has kindly assisted me in my investigation, and to whose professional acumen I am indebted for many valuable suggestions, pointed out that this arch, though apparently equilateral, was, in fact, four-centered; and also that the flanking buttresses were not, as in the cases before mentioned, built against the wall, but were actually parts of it; and that the whole front was really what it professes to be—a work of the latter part of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century, beautifully adapted to the general effect of the gate-house modernized as I have described.

The inferences which I draw from these facts are, that the gate-house is a fabric of the 13th or 14th century, and was from the first used as the hostelry and guest-hall of the Abbey. That Abbot Dovell enlarged and raised the hall, built the internal front and the buttresses, filled up the arches leading to the stables on the ground floor (an arrangement which had in his days become antiquated,) added to the west side a porter's lodge, the foundation of which may still be traced, pulled down the original lodge on the east side, and left the door by which it had originally been entered as a side way to the gate for the use of foot passengers.

Having passed the gate-house, we find ourselves in a scene of peculiar beauty—we are now within the enclosure of the Abbey, the boundary wall of which extends along the hedge on the left hand, in which there still re-

mains an ancient door, having a curious shallow porch, the covering of which, with traces of its side walls, still remains, though in a very dilapidated condition. The ancient mill-stream runs across this enclosure, finding an exit to the brook on the left side of the gate-house. Beyond this again stand the modern farm-house and the venerable Abbey itself, almost hidden by the foliage of walnut and sycamore trees of gigantic size, under whose shade the monks may probably have sat, so venerable do they appear—so truly monastic is the effect of the gloom they cast on the grey walls of the cloister near which they stand. Entering by a door near the farm-house, we find ourselves in a cloister of considerable size, surrounded by monastic buildings in a state of preservation far superior to almost any I have met with. The cloister, a structure of the 15th century, still exists on the western side of the quadrangle ; it is now divided into sheds for cattle ; on the other three sides it has disappeared, and a modern shed has been erected against the northern wall, where, however, may still be seen a recess of Early English character, probably marking the situation of one of those seats which are occasionally found in cloister walls. The Perpendicular cloister apparently was not vaulted, though the strong ribs of ashler work which supported the floor of an upper story still exist, as well as the sills of some of the windows which gave light to the upper rooms. This building probably contained the library, museum, lecture-room, singing school, and other rooms which were usually attached to monastic establishments, and extended to the chapel, which (now destroyed) stood at the north end of the eastern side of the quadrangle. There is some difficulty in the plan of the chapel, but though it has almost entirely disappeared, some vestiges remain, which may in some degree enable us

to trace its position. In the jamb of the gate leading to the farm yard may be seen a square recess of ashler work ; this, though much mutilated, is undoubtedly a piscina, with a quatrefoiled water-drain. It is evidently in situ, and was of course placed at the side of the altar. Against the wall of the present granary, where tradition says the tower stood, there may be seen the remains of a strong pier, and opposite to it are the foundations of one answering to it ; above in the wall is a door entering into what was the turret stair, and at the other corner, a larger door which seems to have entered into the dormitory and probably led into the gallery intended for the accommodation of the sick monks. The spring of an arch is distinctly visible at the tower pier, and it seems probable that the choir extended from a little to the east of the gate just mentioned, to the western wall of the tower, occupying the breadth of the present road, and the area of the tower itself, which, though, small might have been large enough for the accommodation of the monks themselves. So far the plan is easily made out, but just to the west of the solid wall of the tower are the remains of what must have been the entrance to the chapel. That the gate opened outwards from the quadrangle is evident from the fastenings which remain, and there is still to be seen the spring of a higher arch on the north side of the wall, an almost universal arrangement in church-doors, in which the inner arch is almost invariably higher than the outer. Now this door, I think, must have led into an ante-chapel, through which there was probably a passage to the burying-ground, which lay on the north side of the chapel, and it seems probable that there was a north aisle, and though I have not been able to trace its foundations, there have certainly been buildings of some kind on the north side ; nor can I find any marks of the cross wall,

which, if my conjecture be right, must have touched the northern wall of the cloister somewhere to the west of the chapel door. I am, however, inclined to believe the chapel was a small edifice, having a central tower, probably of no great height, with a short north aisle, or rather transept, thus giving the rudimentary plan of a cruciform building, commonly to be traced in Early English churches in this part of England, which transept, being extended westward beyond the tower would have afforded space for the ante-chapel, as I suppose it to have existed.* Under the north end of the dormitory, which occupied the whole length of the upper story of the eastern side of the quadrangle, is a small room with an arched ceiling, to which there was no access except from the chapel, the present entrance from the quadrangle being merely an aumbry, the wall under which has been broken through down to the ground, while the door into the chapel has been converted into a fire-place. This small room is surrounded by aumbries, and was no doubt the vestry; but, besides these aumbries, it contains a very curious and almost unaccountable feature. The window which looks to the east appears to have been originally a narrow Early English window, with splay and rear arch similar to the others in this part of the building; but some time after, probably early in the 14th century,

* Since writing the above, I have found cause for doubting the correctness of my views on the structure of the church. It seems probable that it was a cruciform building of considerable dimensions, the south transept of which was occupied by the tower; and that the piscina above mentioned was that attached to an altar situated at the east end of the south transept; that the high altar stood somewhere to the north-east of this, perhaps within the present rick-yard; and that the nave extended some distance to the west of the entrance mentioned as having probably opened upon an ante-chapel, but which, it is more likely, entered into the nave itself. I have not, however, been able satisfactorily to ascertain the extent of the building towards the west.

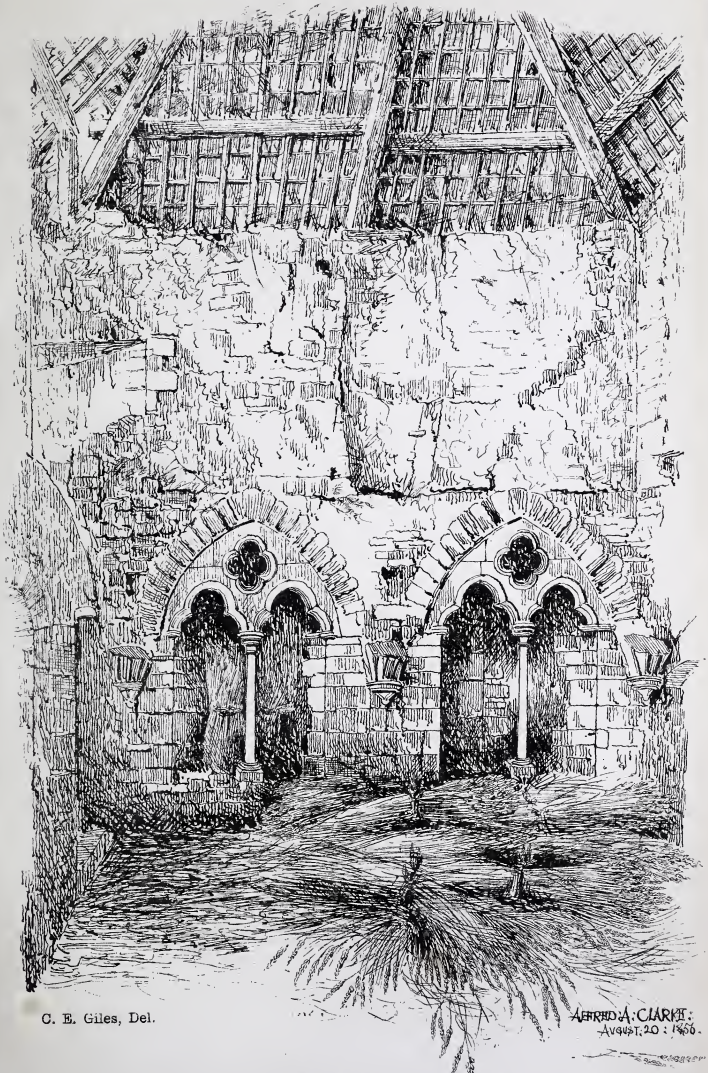
a round window ornamented with the scroll moulding has been substituted for the narrow Early English window. This round window, which appears never to have been glazed, is seven feet in diameter, and at its base, only a few inches from the ground. It opened into an ancient building, formerly used as a malt-house. Though an after-thought, it is evidently in situ, and was originally open to its whole circumference ; the wall work with which it is now in part blocked up is evidently a Post-Reformation work. This is a feature which I have never observed anywhere else; and the only solution of the mystery which I can venture to suggest is this: from the arrangement of the room above, and particularly from the door opening from it into the chapel which I mentioned just now, it seems probable that the infirmary was immediately over this room : when a monk died, his body was removed from the infirmary to a room adjoining the chapel, where it was prepared for interment. Now, might not this vestry have been also used for this purpose, and might not this large circular aperture have been constructed for the purpose of admitting the corpse to this apartment instead of carrying it through the chapel, which, before it was prepared for burial, might have been considered improper and indecent ? The ground-floor of the building at the eastern side of the quadrangle, as far as the passage at the south-eastern corner, is occupied by small vaulted rooms, with one window at the end, apparently of the 13th century, except in the centre of the building, which is occupied by the splendid entrance to the chapter-house, the foundations of which may be traced extending to the east of the present buildings. This entrance communicated with the quadrangle by a beautiful Early English doorway, having plain chamfer mouldings placed between two double windows with chamfer mould-

ings and blue lias shafts; those at the sides rising from worked brackets, each having a quatrefoil light above the central shaft. It occupies the whole depth of the building, and it exhibits in its roof a very beautiful arrangement of Early English vaulting, the shafts springing from very elegant brackets, and being composed of blue lias. The remains of an ornament in fresco may still be seen on this roof. The chapter-house itself extended to the east of this entrance, and appears to have been in form a parallelogram, higher than the entrance, and vaulted in a similar style. Beyond the passage, in the south-eastern corner of the quadrangle, extends a very remarkable apartment; this is a hall 59ft. in length by 20ft. in breadth; at the south end are two very beautiful double Early English windows, now blocked up, divided in the centre of the rear arch by a shaft of blue lias, with others at the sides springing from very well-moulded brackets, the space above the centre shafts being occupied by quatrefoil openings. This hall has three doors—one from the passage before mentioned, another from the farm-yard, and another leading into the garden. It has been a low, heavily-vaulted room, the vaults springing from very massive brackets at the walls, and supported by a row of pillars up the centre of the hall. There was a large fire-place on the east side, and on the west a recess answering to it; altogether it is very similar in character, as it is nearly of the same date, as the hall in the Bishop's palace at Wells. The most remarkable feature in this hall, and one I am utterly unable to explain, consists of two low arched apertures opposite each other at the south end of the side walls. These were certainly not windows, and they are too low for doors. They both passed quite through the wall: only one is now open, and it was evidently closed by a door. That there were pas-

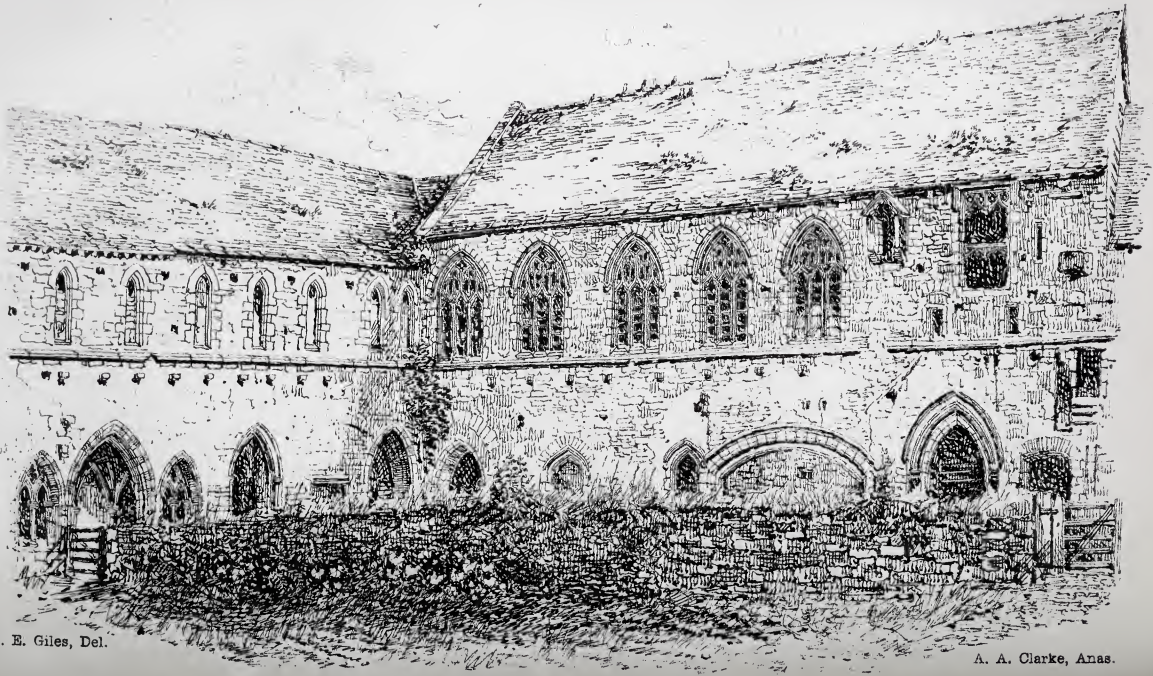
sages into which these opened seems certain; but the purpose they were intended to answer is a point which I must leave to the decision of more learned archæologists. On the whole, I am inclined to believe that this was originally the refectory of the Abbey, and might have been altered to the Abbot's lodging, when the present glorious refectory was built in the 15th century; or it might have been the common room which we know existed in all monasteries of any importance. My idea that it was the original refectory seems to receive some corroboration from there being in the passage which leads to the offices, and near the door of the hall, some curious shelves, which do not appear to have had doors, and which would certainly have been very convenient to the attendants.

The dormitory, to which we ascend by a staircase from a fine Early English doorway with blue lias side shafts, in the eastern side of the quadrangle, appears to have extended the whole length of the building, the present partition, though old, being evidently an insertion. At the corners of the north end are two doors, before mentioned, one leading into the turret staircase, the other into the chapel, at some height from the ground, while the third seems to have led by a flight of steps into a room over the chapter-house. The mouldings of the staircase door are worthy of notice, as they appear to be of much later date than the rest of the arch; but on minutely examining the top of the capital of the shafts, I think I detected the marks of the original moulding, which seems to have been cut away in after days.

We now come to what is, perhaps, the most interesting part of the Abbey, as it is certainly the most striking part of the building now in existence—the south side of the quadrangle. On entering the cloisters by the door near



THE REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT REFECTORY, OLD CLEEVE ABBEY.



C. E. Giles, Del.

A. A. Clarke, Anas.

THE REFECTORY, OLD CLEEVE ABBEY.

the farm-house, we are at once struck with the beauty of five large Perpendicular windows, which occupy the greater part of the upper story of this side, and give light to the great hall or refectory ; immediately to the right of these is a bell-cot, and the windows of the buttery. In the south-west corner may be seen the ruins of a newel staircase leading from the cellar to the buttery, and to the left of this a very fine Early English arch opening upon the staircase of the refectory ; on the wall may easily be traced the marks of the roofs of a porch and low building, which are represented in Collinson's plate as occupying the south-western corner of the quadrangle, but which have now disappeared. To the left of this doorway is a recess in the thickness of the wall, surmounted by a low segmental arch of considerable span. This was the lavatory, and the situation of the cistern used by the monks for their ablutions is still marked by the broaches from which the moulding rises ; beyond this again are doors leading to the kitchen and other offices ; and in the corner a passage runs through the whole depth of the building, and leads to what I suppose to have been the garden, to which it gives access by a low arched door. On the left side of this door is an Early English loop, which enabled the porter to see who demanded admittance before he unlocked the door. The whole of this lower story is of Early English date, though the mouldings of the doors leading to the kitchen, as well as the fire-places, have been modernized in the 15th century—probably at the time when the refectory was built. A passage of communication appears to have extended through the whole of these offices as far as the passage from which the vaulted hall was entered—an arrangement which would certainly have been required if, as I suppose, that room was the original refectory of the Abbey. That

there existed an apartment of importance over these offices in the 13th century can hardly be doubted, from the size and beauty of the arch leading to the refectory staircase; yet, whatever it was, it must have been a much lower building than the present one, the end of which blocks up some of the windows of the dormitory, against which it has been built, while marks on the outside of one of the walls to the south seem to indicate that the buildings which once stood there were considerably lower than those at present remaining. From the doorway we ascend by a broad flight of stone steps to a landing-place, lighted by a Perpendicular window, divided by a transom, on the left side of which is a stone bench, while the other side is occupied by the door of the buttery; on the left side of this landing a door (having its arch, which is low, and its jambs ornamented with rather poor mouldings of late Perpendicular character), admits us to the great refectory, which is certainly a most beautiful hall, and remains in a more perfect state than almost any room of equal antiquity that I have ever seen. This magnificent room, which is 51ft. in length by 22ft. in breadth, and still retains its exquisite carved roof, supported by angel corbels, is lighted on the north side by five large Perpendicular windows of three lights, and on the south by four, the space of the second being occupied by the fire-place and reader's pulpit, the situation of which may still be traced on the wall on the east side of the fire-place. These four windows differ from those on the north side, being divided by transoms, but as those on the north have evidently been repaired and otherwise tampered with, it is probable that the difference did not originally exist. In the left corner of the western end of the hall is a small arched doorway, connected with the buttery and staircase leading to the cellar, by an oak pas-

sage, apparently original. On the wall at the other end may still be traced a fresco painting, representing the crucifixion, the side figures being those of the Blessed Virgin and St. John, an ornament which, it is said, was invariably used in the refectory halls of Cistercian monasteries. To describe this hall with the minuteness its beauty deserves, would tax the patience of my audience far more than I am inclined to do. It is indeed a magnificent and beautiful room both in proportion and in detail, and would certainly lead us to suppose that in the 15th century the Cistercians had relaxed their rule of simple and coarse food, in which point they are said to have been more austere than the monks of most other denominations. Besides what I have now described there are among the farm buildings a few other ancient fragments, but in so mutilated a condition and of such small extent as to render any attempt at detailed description not only very difficult, but unsatisfactory and uninteresting.

I have thus given you a very brief description of the existing ruins of Cleeve Abbey, and I feel that I ought to apologise for offering to your notice so meagre and unsatisfactory an account of the ecclesiastical gem of this neighbourhood—a gem which, though small in comparison, vies in interest with its gigantic neighbour, Glastonbury. There the domestic offices and buildings have disappeared; here they are particularly perfect. But in truth the Vallis Florida has proved to me not altogether free from thorns. The ruins are full of difficulties. The construction of the gate-house; the use of the Early-English hall, with its mysterious low side apertures; the niche on the north side of the cloister; and, above all, the Decorated round in what I have ventured to call the vestry, not to mention

the plan of the chapel, are all most perplexing features in this beautiful fabric. But for the help of my friend Mr. Giles, whose practised eye at once detected many things which I might never have discovered, my account of these ruins would have been far less satisfactory to myself than it is at present. I have, however, done my best in the time I could give to this investigation to record what remains of the splendid Abbey of Old Cleeve, the nursing mother, as I believe, of civilisation in this district. It was a wild and remote country ; the Norman invaders had taken up a strong position in it; the native population were oppressed and desperately hostile ; a body of foreign ecclesiastics, related by birth and country to the ruling party, and by the ties of Christian charity with the conquered and oppressed, settled themselves upon this spot ; here they lived, and here, in charity let us believe, they did good in their generation. Time passed on—the conquering Norman and the conquered Saxon were gradually amalgamated into one body ; those institutions which were peculiarly adapted to one state of society by degrees lost their value as another state arose. Corruption, here, as in all other human establishments, no doubt sprung up from the growing unfitness of the institutions to the wants of the time, but let us not suppose that all the tales of corruption we read of are true. Let this be as it may, the fatal hour of monastic institutions, the 16th century, approached ; then, as elsewhere, the monks reading the signs of the times, and conscientiously thinking, as I believe, that they should by that means place the property of the church in a more secure position, laid out large sums in adorning and enlarging their fabric. How vain this attempt was, the state of the ruins proves. These have been preserved simply because they are useful for agricultural purposes. After

the lapse of a few short months a railroad will probably pass through the ancient moat. The Vallis Florida, the wild retreat chosen by the pioneers of civilisation for the scene of their religious meditations, will be desecrated and disturbed by the rattle of locomotives, and the solemn harmony of the choir be superseded by the discordant screams of the steam-whistle. But lamentable as this may appear to the lover of the picturesque, harshly as this change may jar upon the feelings to those who look beyond mere pounds, shillings, and pence, trust me (and it is a strong recommendation to the study of antiquities), that no one knows so well as the archæologist that the present is better than the past—that no one has such sure grounds as the archæologist for hoping that the future will be better than the present.