

The Palace and Grounds

were inspected, under the guidance of Mr. EDMUND BUCKLE, whose explanations of many difficult architectural problems and history of the buildings is printed in the second part of this volume.

From the Palace the party made their way through the rain to

The Deanery,

and were received in the hall by the DEAN. After the party was seated, the Dean, who spoke from a dais at the end of the room, gave a historical sketch of the Deans and the Deanery. At the close of his address he led the party through the various apartments, giving short explanations by the way. After the inspection it was arranged that

The Vicar's Close

should be visited, but the rain still descended in torrents, and the majority of the party sought the shelter of their hotels. A few archæologists, however, under the guidance of Bishop HOBHOUSE, went to the Close.

Evening Meeting.

A meeting was held in the Town Hall in the evening, the BISHOP again presiding.

On the invitation of the BISHOP,

The Rev. Canon CHURCH read a paper on "The Documentary Evidence Relating to the Early Architecture of the Cathedral," which is printed in the second part.

Professor BOYD DAWKINS then read a paper by Professor FREEMAN, who was not well enough to be present, which is also printed in the second part.

The Architecture of the Cathedral.

The DEAN OF WELLS said: It will perhaps be expected that I should say a few words in answer to some of the remarks which we heard in Mr. Freeman's paper. First,¹ as to the word "sham," which he applies to our west-front. I confess

(1). It will be seen that I took no notice, at the meeting, of the sentences in which Mr. Freeman spoke of my two articles on "Wells Cathedral and its Deans," which appeared in the *Contemporary Review* of this year, and have since been published separately. The omission was deliberate. I felt grave doubts whether Mr. Freeman had chosen the right time or place for utterances that seemed to have strayed from the waste-paper basket of the *Saturday*

to entering on the question with a certain bias, though it does not, I hope, amount to a *præjudicium*. I own that I should be glad to rescue the fair fame of our Jocelyn of Wells, to say nothing of the many bishops and architects who followed him in England and elsewhere, from the opprobrium of architectural dishonesty. (1). I venture to think that there is an antecedent improbability in the charge. The mediæval architects were, as Mr. Freeman asserts emphatically in the paper we have just heard, specially characterised by their *veracity*. They stand out in this respect, in contrast with our modern church builders. They seldom, if ever, gave way, as the latter do, to the love of "incongruous ornament." I asked myself whether these were the kind of men who were likely, at Wells or elsewhere, to perpetuate 'shams.'¹ (2). In answer to Mr. Freeman's statement that those who do not accept his epithet for our west front "can never have looked on both sides of it: that is all," I say that it is that very glance round the corner at the other side, which furnishes me with my defence. The stones say, as clearly as stones can speak, "We are not the regular termination of the nave. We are a west front, perhaps" (as Mr. Irvine conjectures) "built before the nave, perhaps supervening on it, erected for a special purpose. We are here as a screen for the exhibition of sculpture, and do

Review. I felt quite sure that it was not the right time or place for me to say a word in reply. And now that I can reply without that sense of unfitness, I have really very little to say. I fully endorse all that Mr. Freeman has said as to the relative merits of my work and Canon Church's. He does but echo what I wrote to the Canon ten months before. As to the rest, I have made it the rule of my life never to answer critics who only criticise, and I do not see that Mr. Freeman has done more. After all, I am, perhaps, better off than others. Mr. Freeman, though, like Balaam, he came to curse, has been constrained to do the reverse of cursing, and, like the man in the *Ancient Mariner*, has "blest me unawares." He sums up his condemnation of my papers in one scathing phrase. They are "as the light bread which the soul loatheth." He gives his opinion of my modest little *brochure* in the very words in which the stubborn and stiff-necked Israelites gave their opinion of the manna in the wilderness.

(1). I may strengthen my position by Ruskin's dictum that "the root of all that is greatest in Christian art is struck in the thirteenth century." (*Stones of Venice*, ii, 263.) Would that be true if the tares of 'shams' had been so largely mingled with the 'good seed' of honest work, if it had been an age that "above all others indulged in building west fronts which had no kind of relation to the nave?"

not pretend to be anything else." We may think such a structure wrong and incongruous, but I contend that it is not a 'sham.' That is my *Apologia* on this head.¹

I pass to the question of the proposed reredos. The facts of the case are briefly that, the Dean and Chapter have received the offer of a reredos from a lady, with a design by Mr. P. Garner, of the firm of Bodley and Garner. To this they have given a general acceptance and approval, reserving to themselves the right of suggesting modifications in detail. Mr. Freeman objects to this on the ground that anything done in this way by the present Dean and Chapter is certain to be wrong, because it will be done on what he calls the "peep-show" principle; *i.e.*, because it will not entirely shut out the view of the Lady Chapel from the Choir. Mr. Freeman condemns a design which he has not seen, simply because it comes under the general anathema, *Pereant decanus et canonici!* I can only say on this head, that, while we cannot delegate to another the responsibilities that attach to our office, we will give all due weight to the opinion of so high an authority as Mr. Freeman, and to that of others who may agree with him.² But on one point I venture to demur to Mr. Freeman's language. He has invented the epithet "peep-show" (*Lecture on Wells*, p. 158) as he has invented that of "sham" for our West Front, and he harps on it, in 1888 as in 1870. with all the

(1). I confine myself in the text to what I said at the Meeting. One who seeks for right guidance, however, in matters in which he is still a learner, naturally attaches much weight to the authority of experts. And what I find is this, (1) that Mr. Freeman stands alone, or all but alone, in his judgment on this matter. Mr. Ferrey, the late architect of the Cathedral, who had certainly seen 'both sides' of the west front, speaks of Mr. Freeman's language as "scarcely justifiable." Mr. Irvine, whose knowledge of the Cathedral is, I suppose, as full as that of any man living, differs *toto celo* from Mr. Freeman. I do not find any writer of authority on the principles or history of architecture, who agrees with him. I have consulted experts whose reputations stand as high as his, and they regret his language. He seems to me, as at present advised, to stand apart from others, denouncing, like Carlyle's grammarian, all who will not accept his "theory of irregular verbs."

(2). Since the meeting the Dean and Chapter, with the approval of their architect, Mr. J. D. Sedding, have accepted Mr. Garner's design for our Reredos, and have also decided on paving the whole of the Sanctuary with marble.

iteration of the love of an inventor. I will not, on this point, appeal to the authority of experts. It seems to me that on the question of what is or is not a 'thing of beauty,' giving joy and delight to the eye and mind of the spectator, there is a higher authority in the *consensus* of the thousands of men and women, of all sorts and conditions, learned or unlearned, wise or unwise in matters architectural, who visit our Cathedral, than in the *dictum* of any 'superior person.' In matters of this kind one may safely use the words with which we are familiar in their application to higher things, "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*"

In regard to the Organ Screen which at present divides the Choir and the Nave, my sympathies are mainly with Mr. Freeman. I prefer a light open screen, with an uninterrupted view from west to east. On the other hand, the screen is old, and has the claim of prescription. The work of removing and replacing it would be costly. We have no corporate funds for the purpose, and in the present state of things it is not desirable to appeal to the Diocese for this object, when there are others with much more urgent claims. It is not, I must remind Mr. Freeman, as though we had to choose between a reredos and the removal of the Screen. The former was offered to us: the latter was not. We must be content, in this as in other things, to wait for better times, and meanwhile to bear with patience

That eternal want of pence
Which vexes public men,

and from which Deans and Chapters are not exempt.

The BISHOP, alluding to the remarks of Mr. Freeman with reference to the Tithe Barn, said it would be unreasonable to expect the trustees of the recreation ground to be at the expense of keeping in repair an absolutely useless building, and that it would be more reasonable to make use of the barn, while preserving all its architectural features as in the plan he had seen for its adaption.

Mr. W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE said he had read with very great pleasure the excellent paper by Canon Church on the newly discovered documentary history of the cathedral church of Wells, and he had been endeavouring to ascertain from a study of the fabric how far Canon Church's documents could be reconciled with the evidence of the building itself. He had also read what Professor Willis, Mr. Parker, Mr. Irvine, and Mr. Freeman had written on the history of the fabric, with the result that he had got into a very hopeless state of muddle, out of which he had been to a great extent helped by the new documentary evidence that had been brought forward by Canon Church.

Mr. Hope continued: I suppose it is agreed upon on all hands that the first building of any note here was the Norman cathedral church which was built and dedicated by bishop Robert. The question is, how much, if any, of that church is left to us. Mr. Irvine in his paper speaks of but one stone. Now people going into a church invariably omit to look at the very thing which forms the building, namely, the masonry; but the masonry of the different periods of architecture varies as much as the architecture itself, and the masonry of all others which is easy to recognise is that of the Norman period throughout. If you enter a Norman building and examine the masonry where its original surface has not been scraped or otherwise destroyed, you will find it characterised by a peculiar diagonal tooling. Moreover, the lines of this tooling are not quite straight, but if you lay a two-foot rule along them, you will find they are very slightly curved, showing the stones were dressed with a tool having a broad curved blade, in fact, with an axe. Now in the cathedral church of Wells there are numerous places where you will find stones cut in this peculiar manner. They may be seen in the transepts, in the choir and its aisles, and as far east as the eastern transept. This does not necessarily mean that all this work is Norman, but it proves that there are more remains of bishop Robert's

church in the building than is generally believed. People are apt to suppose that the medieval builders, when they took down a building erected by their predecessors, swept it quite away and began with something quite fresh; but they did nothing of the sort. They used up every stone they could, and where the stones were already cut they adapted them to their needs as far as possible. This accounts for our finding in various parts which are later worked stones of bishop Robert's time, his successors having used up the material in the rebuilding.

With regard to the order in which the cathedral church of Wells was built, Mr. Irvine in his paper maintains that the earliest part of the existing church is the west front, and when that was completed (of course excepting the upper parts of the towers) he supposes the work was begun at the other end of the church, and that the three western arches of the presbytery, the transepts and crossing, and the first three bays of the nave, were built by Joscelin; the west front being attributed to Reginald.

Now the order indicated by Mr. Irvine is directly opposed to the manner of the medieval builders. When they began to rebuild a church on an enlarged scale, or according to their ideas of superior magnificence, they always began at the east end, because that was the most important part of the building in their eyes, and it was also the part wanted for their services. So whenever such a reconstruction has taken place, the earliest work may almost always be looked for in the eastern portions. I have only once before been in Wells previously to this week, and I had not then an opportunity of examining the building closely; but this afternoon I had the pleasure of going round it with Canon Church, and certainly the oldest work, so far as I could see, is in the three western arches of the choir, with the corresponding portions of the aisles. The early masonry, however, in the aisles extends one bay further east than in the choir. According to the documentary evidence brought

forward by Canon Church, these early eastern portions should be attributed, not to Joscelin, but to Reginald. You have to look not only to what Joscelin did, but to contemporary work that was going on in other parts of the country; you will then find that the coincidence is far greater between the work contemporary with Reginald then going on in the country and the work you have at Wells in the transepts and western half of the choir, than that which was contemporary with Joscelin. In fact, if the early work at Wells is to be ascribed to Joscelin, it is much earlier in character than we should expect. In the transepts the east side appears to be of a plainer character than the west, especially in the south transept.

The early work which should be assigned to Reginald is carried for three bays down the nave, where there is a distinct break, and there are other breaks further west which are well known, but how they are to fit into the documentary history is another matter. There is, however, a considerable interval between Reginald's death and Joscelin's succession, during which we can hardly assume nothing was done to the fabric, and the work may have gone on slowly, and only two or three bays undertaken at a time; the nave being finally completed and brought to its present form by Joscelin.

One question of great interest is, what were the original ritual arrangements of the church. In the Norman times the choir proper certainly extended under the central tower and one or more bays down the nave, the eastern arm forming the presbytery. It would be interesting to know, though I am afraid we never shall, what was the real disposition of the Norman east end rebuilt by Reginald. After the rebuilding the arrangements continued the same until the final lengthening of the presbytery, when the choir was moved eastward of the tower, where it still remains. An interesting proof of the earlier arrangement may be seen in the eastern tower arch, the shafts of which are corbelled off at some height up to

allow the stalls to run straight through, as they still do at Norwich and Winchester.

Mr. Freeman has expressed the hope that the day is not far distant when the present screen at the west end of the choir shall be removed and the whole church thrown open from end to end. As cases in point where this has been done, Mr. Freeman cites Hereford and Lichfield. Now there is one point which the members of an archæological society should strongly insist upon, and that is the preservation of all old work. The screens at Lichfield and Hereford which were removed to make way for the present very ugly iron grilles that now disfigure those churches were not ancient at all, but the screen at Wells is the original fourteenth century *pulpitum* or organ loft, where stood an eagle desk from which the gospel was sung on festivals. It is true that the Wells screen was somewhat pulled about by Mr. Salvin, who brought forward the middle portion to carry the organ, but he destroyed nothing, and the screen could be easily put back as it was originally. In conventual churches such as Westminster, Durham, and Gloucester, there was an arrangement which has been very strangely lost sight of, viz., in addition to the *pulpitum* or screen at the west end of the choir against which the stalls were returned, there was a *second* screen a bay further west, against which stood the nave or rood altar. The arrangements at Durham, where one screen stood beneath the eastern and the other under the western arch of the central tower, are most minutely described in that most interesting work, *The Rites of Durham*, published by the Surtees Society. The wants of the cathedral church at Wells indicated by Mr. Freeman would be most satisfactorily met by such an arrangement as I have indicated. Leave the present screen alone and erect a second under the western arch of the tower, with an altar against it and with seats for the choir on either side, and the nave will then form a complete church in itself, big

enough to hold a large congregation, while the choir would continue as it is, and of sufficient size for all the ordinary services of the church. There is evidence that there was a second screen at Wells, but if anyone can state what was the actual arrangement of the screens in a *secular* church, he will have solved a point which is at present shrouded in some obscurity.

The Rev. H. M. SCARTH read a full description of a hoard of coins found at East Harptree. Printed in Part II.

The meeting then closed.