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No. 17.—LINCOLN

Portfolio OF English Cathedrals



With Historical and
Architectural Notes
By ARNOLD FAIRBAIRNS



LINCOLN



LINCOLN CATHEDRAL



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INTRODUCTION



AT Lincoln, as at York, the earliest records we have of the Church are the presence of a bishop of Lincoln at the Council of Arles and the preaching of the great Paulinus, who came from the south with Queen Ethelburga, in 625. In the seventh century Lincoln formed part of the vast Mercian diocese of Lichfield, over which St. Chad was called to rule, but in 678 a separate see of Lindsey was formed, the bishop's seat being at Sidnacester. For two centuries in spite of Danish marauders the church continued her work, but on the settlement of the Northmen in the "Danelagh" there was no possibility of continuing it. In 958, however, Leofwin, who had been appointed bishop of Lindsey, uniting the see with that of Leicester moved his seat to Dorchester-on-Thames, at the southern extremity of his diocese, which in those days included ten counties. Cambridgeshire was given to the new see of Ely in 1109, and Henry VIII further reduced the unwieldy area by the creation of bishops of Oxford and Peterborough; but it was not till 1884 that the county and diocese of Lincoln were made coterminous.

With the Norman Conquest the northern counties were once more opened to the further development of the Church, and Remigius in 1072 moved his seat to Lincoln, and there founded the present cathedral. The importance of the diocese all through the Middle Ages was naturally immense, and the bishops who ruled it held for the most part important positions in the State. Two, however, stand above all others, not only as embodying the finest spirit of the medieval Church, but as the champions of the rights of the subject against the oppression of the king. Hugh of Avalon (1186—1200), the Burgundian monk, alone dared to resist the demands of Henry II, and by his life set an example of simple devotion to his calling which was all too rare in his day. Popular opinion canonized him at his death, and Papal confirmation followed twenty years later. Robert Grosseteste (1235—53), the personal friend of Simon de Montfort and an ardent supporter of the Friars, denounced the interference and corruption of the Pope with a vehemence that made Rome herself tremble and hesitate to oppose so fierce a foe. His administration of the diocese, though perhaps not tempered with the gentle spirit of St. Hugh, was fearlessly just, and anticipated in many particulars the work of the later reformers.

Oxford being within the jurisdiction of the bishops, their connexion with the University was naturally intimate. Many held the office of Chancellor, and Richard Fleming (1420—31) drew the tie still closer by the foundation in 1427 of Lincoln College to combat the growing Lollard heresy. Thomas Rotheram (1472—80) refounded the college, and William Smith (1495—1514) is remembered as a benefactor of Oriel and Lincoln, and joint-founder of Brasenose College.

In modern times the great work of Christopher Wordsworth (1869—85), done at a time when the quickened life of the people was making demands that it needed all the resources of the Church to meet, worthily maintained the noble traditions of his famous predecessors.

FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

CENTURIES before Remigius chose the steep hill of Lincoln for the site of his new cathedral the strategic value of the place had been realized, and the Roman Newport gate remains a silent witness of the importance of Lindum Colonia. Where once this flourishing city stood are now the cathedral and castle of the Norman builders, the former in its original condition probably very like its martial neighbour, for Stephen twice garrisoned it during his attempts to wrest the castle from Matilda.

The Minster Yard, as the Close is called, is entered through the Exchequer Gate, the finest remaining part of the defences erected by the canons during the fourteenth century. Architectural criticism, though it has pointed out its many faults with ceaseless iteration, is forced to acknowledge the impressive grandeur of the west front. In the middle are the five simple arches built by Remigius, three of them enriched with Transitional Norman doorways: on either side and above is the great arcaded screen, once probably filled with statues, which was added when the nave was rebuilt in the thirteenth century. Across the Norman work stretches a band of sculpture which by some has been attributed to the Saxon period, and was possibly part of the church that stood upon this site.

Behind the front rise the twin towers, Norman up to the roof gable, early Perpendicular above. Both were originally crowned with spires, as was the noble central tower (271 feet). The upper portion of the latter was built during the episcopacy of John de Dalberby (1300—20): its magnificent proportions and exquisite detail are unsurpassed by any other Gothic tower in the country.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL



Lincoln Cathedral
From the South-West.

FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

THE NAVE

FINISHED about the middle of the thirteenth century the nave is an example of Early English work that, despite its obvious failings, has few rivals. The proportions though clever from an engineer's point of view are not satisfactory, but the vigour and boldness of the whole work are characteristic of the best period. There are unmistakeable signs that the builders were unable to carry out their original design of a new front, for the axis of the western bays turns to meet the Norman work, and the vault drops two feet.

The font, like that at Winchester, is early Norman, of black basalt, and ornamented with grotesques. Western transepts, the northern of great beauty with its slender central column, add greatly to the spaciousness of the building. In the north aisle is a broken slab of considerable interest, the supposed grave cover from the tomb of Remigius.

The great transept, which is earlier than the nave, is not so fine, the lowness of the vault being more noticeable; but the magnificent windows, the Dean's Eye on the north, filled with contemporary glass, the Bishop's Eye on the south, a glowing mass of colour, are unique examples of Early English and Decorated work. Contemporary with the latter are the richly carved doorways to the choir aisles and the choir screen.



THE NAVE

THE CHAPTER HOUSE

LINCOLN has the earliest remaining example of a polygonal chapter house, and one of the most beautiful. It was probably finished at the same time as the great transept, c. 1210, and though lacking the grace of Westminster and the daring of Southwell, is distinguished by its simple yet effective design and its well balanced proportions. The vault is specially notable: its immense weight necessitated the addition of flying buttresses soon after it was built. Hither both Edward I and Edward II summoned parliaments, and here, on the suppression of their order by the Pope, the Knights Templars were tried by Bishop Dalderby in 1309.

Though the cathedral was served by canons and not monks, cloisters were built by Oliver Sutton (1280—99), and three sides of his work remain. The fourth side, which supports the Library, was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in the classical style in 1674.

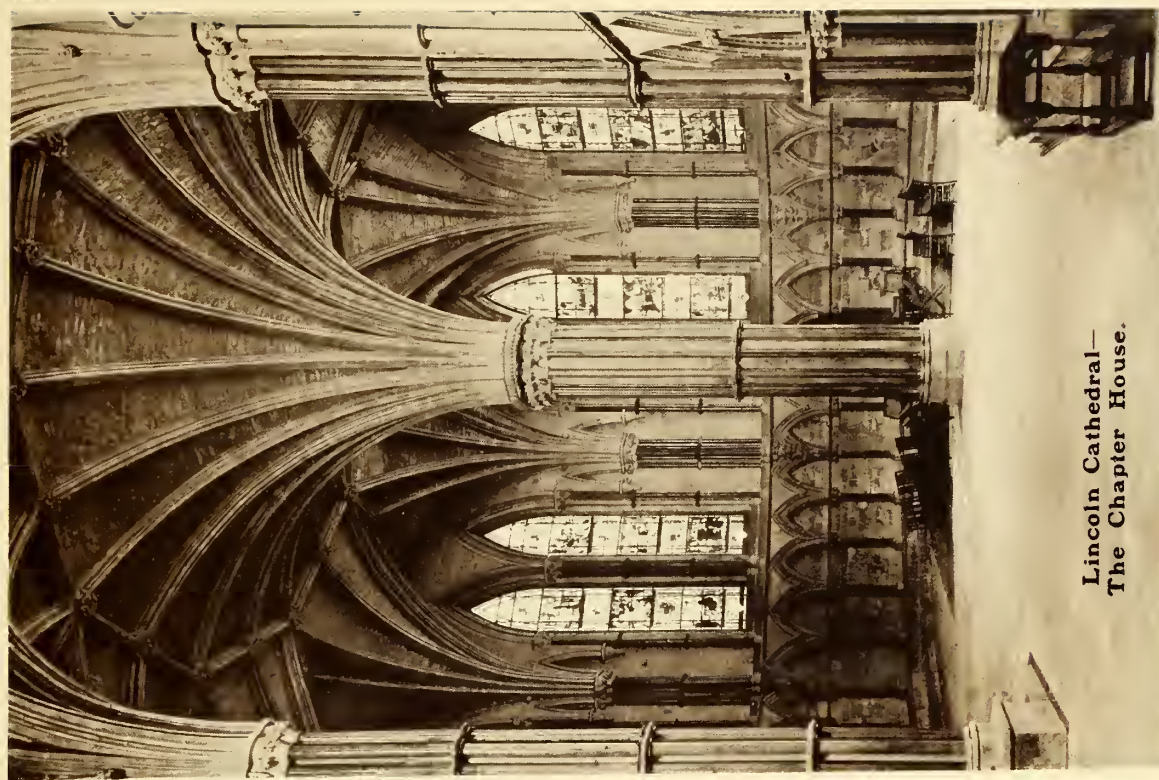
In the cloisters is a unique gravestone bearing an incised representation of Richard of Gainsborough, the builder of the Angel Choir. Notice also various Roman remains and the original statue of Swineherd of Stow, the humble benefactor who won a prominent place on the west front by his gift of a peck of silver pennies for the building of the church.

THE SOUTH-EAST PORCH

EXTERNAL effect seems to have been always present in the minds of the Lincoln builders, and may account in some degree for the unusual beauty and importance of the doors and porches. The late Norman doorways of the west front, characteristic of their builder, Alexander the Magnificent, are the first of the series. During the episcopate of Robert Grosseteste a further addition was made, the Galilee Porch, a state entrance for the bishop from his palace into the south transept. Here again it would be difficult to find any other work of the period of equal richness. But it was in the south-east porch, the grand entrance to the Angel Choir, that the builders won their greatest triumph: here alone in England is to be found the peer of the famous doorways of the French architects, and the attempt is worthy to rank with their best efforts. Restoration seems to have been inevitable; but the inimitable drapery of the four great statues and of the figure of Christ, in the Judgment which fills the tympanum, remains, and conveys some impression of the original beauty of the whole.

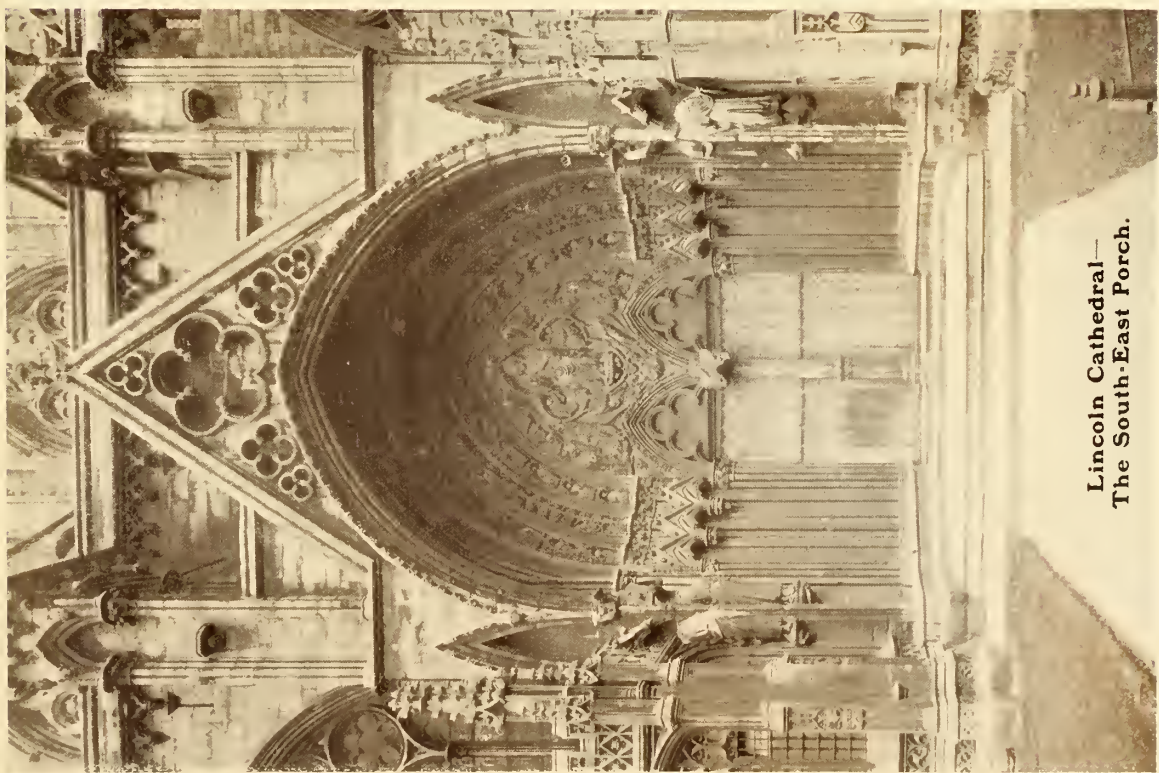
On either side of the porch are chantry chapels, on the east that of Bishop Russell (1480—94), on the west that of Bishop Longland (1521—47), which though a copy in its main features of the earlier work shows signs of the coming renaissance in art.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL



Lincoln Cathedral—
The Chapter House.

THE CHAPTER HOUSE



Lincoln Cathedral—
The South-East Porch.

THE SOUTH-EAST PORCH

THE CHOIR, LOOKING WEST

THE claim of St. Hugh's choir to be of purely English origin has been more firmly established than ever in recent years : its parallel claim to be the earliest example of Gothic building in England has not been quite so fully justified, for the early work at Wells and other western churches seems to be at any rate contemporary. Hugh began building in 1190, and at the time of his death ten years later, the walls of the eastern transepts, the choir, and part of the great transept were finished. The most interesting parts of his work are the transepts with their internal towers, apsidal chapels, and crocketed piers, the wall arcade, and the bold naturalistic carving of the capitals. The curious vault of the choir, and the necessary buttresses were added soon after his death, while some think that the front part of the double wall arcade is not his work.

John de Welburne, the treasurer, gave the magnificent choir stalls, the misereres of which are exceptionally fine, about 1370. On each stall are inscribed the opening words of the psalms which the occupant is enjoined to recite daily. Thus the Chapter repeat the whole psalter every day : the origin of the custom is very ancient. In the south aisle are some fragments of the tomb of Little St. Hugh, said to have been martyred by the Jews in 1255.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL



Lincoln Cathedral
The Choir,
looking West.

THE CHOIR, LOOKING WEST

THE CHOIR, LOOKING EAST

ST. HUGH was at his own request buried in one of the little apsidal chapels which he had built in the eastern transept, but his repute as a saint spread rapidly, and being confirmed by Rome in 1220 made the provision of more accommodation for pilgrims absolutely necessary. The chapel in which the tomb stood was first lengthened, but this proving quite inadequate a greater scheme was projected. The apse built by Hugh, one of the most remarkable in Europe, was pulled down and a square-ended presbytery of five bays added to the choir. The work was begun in 1256 and finished in 1282. This was the famous Angel Choir. Gothic art was just beginning to develop the richer forms that give their name to the Decorated period: it yet retained all the vigour and purity of the Early English. Thus the presbytery marks the summit of pure Gothic architecture, and is a shrine truly worthy of the man who combined all the noblest qualities of the medieval churchman.

There are many features of great beauty apart from the actual building, the Easter Sepulchre, the iron gates of thirteenth-century workmanship, the glass in the east windows of the aisles, the greatly restored altar screen, the handsome lectern and candelabra of the seventeenth century. There are few tombs, the most important being those of Catherine Swinford, wife of John of Gaunt, and of her daughter, Joan Beaufort.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL



Lincoln Cathedral—
The Choir, looking East.

THE CHOIR, LOOKING EAST

THE TRIFORIUM OF THE ANGEL CHOIR

THE series of reliefs that has given its name to the eastern limb of the cathedral is among the finest productions of the Gothic sculptors. It is thought they are the work of three, perhaps of more sculptors, and their varying merits have been most carefully examined and discussed by Mr. Prior. From the level of the floor, however, there is not much apparent difference, and the effect of the figures is uniformly good. The carving of all the decorations of the presbytery is very fine, the corbels, the bosses, and the mouldings being wonderfully rich. The curious little figure known as the Lincoln Imp will be found at the base of the most easterly corbel on the north side.

The retro-choir is used as a Lady Chapel and contains some fine tombs: in the north aisle three of the Burghersh family near the chantry of Bishop Fleming, under the east window a replica of the tomb of Queen Eleanor, and in the south aisle a monument to the painter Peter de Wint. The elaborate canopied monument to Bishop Wordsworth is a remarkable example of nineteenth-century Gothic. East of the High Altar the shrine of St. Hugh stood originally: his body is supposed to rest there still. Near by are table tombs to Bishop Fuller (1667—75) and Dean Butler (d. 1894).

FROM THE NORTH-EAST

VIEWED from some distant point far across the flat valley of the Witham, or from the castle walls, or from under the very shadow of its noble towers, the grouping of the vast masses, the unusual elevation of the roofs, and the broken yet harmonious outline of the whole church produce an impression no other cathedral, save perhaps Ely and Canterbury, can rival. Durham may from certain points appear more grand, Lichfield more graceful, but a nearer approach reveals in both the destructive hand of restoration. Salisbury, excelling in its peaceful beauty, lacks the distinction which the steep gives here: the glorious crown of Ely's lantern, the picturesque grouping of Canterbury's many towers and chapels, these alone can appeal in the same way as Lincoln's noble minster. But when to its intrinsic beauties is added the extrinsic charm of its old-world surroundings and dominating site, Lincoln seems to claim a combination of æsthetic qualities that places it above all other achievements of the builders of our Gothic cathedrals. But the black smoke from the busy city in the valley threatens to mar the fair face of the ancient walls, and the far-heard hum of the shops accords strangely with the boom of Great Tom telling the slowly passing hours from the soaring tower. Future generations will judge severely our civilization if it allows this unique monument of our race to fall a victim to thoughtless commercial methods.



Lincoln Cathedral
The Triforium of the Angel Choir

THE TRIFORIUM OF THE ANGEL CHOIR



Lincoln Cathedral
From the North-East.

FROM THE NORTH-EAST



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