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THE

CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—STRONGHOLDS OF THE CHURCH IN BRITAIN.

GLASTONBURY, A VANISHED GLORY.

HAVE you seen Glastonbury Abbey? Glastonbury Abbey —nay, rather the pathetic Ruin, which tells hearts that ache as they contemplate it that "there hath passed a glory from the earth." The broken chapel, making the mind thrill with its loveliness even now—even now. The great arms of the ruined chancel arch, holding up their maimed stumps in mute appeal to the blue heaven against the greed, and bigotry, and crassness, and madness which could destroy with fire, and axe, and bar, a stone inspiration of the Spirit of God;[1] the blackened doorway arches, each a dream of beauty even now; the shattered sheaves of graceful column, the ruined interchange of arch with arch, the desolated glory of this wonder of the world—I scarcely marvel that ruined Glastonbury Abbey sent but last year a man of deeply sensitive mind over to the enchantments of Rome. It was those arms that did it—their piteous and ruinous protest against the ruthless Puritan bigotry that could bring such destruction upon such fane of God.

I have only within a few weeks seen for the first time the Abbey. Seen it? nay, stood riveted, fascinated, indignant, broken-hearted before its reverend, august, and venerable desolation.

> Heated am I? You—you wonder! Well, it scarce becomes my age.
> Patience; let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

[1] Exod. xxxv. 50, etc.

And it might have been a "joy for ever," this thing of sublimity and beauty! How much has this earth lost of beauty and glory even in the last fifty years!—think of the loss in the beauties of Nature! The rose and Parian basins that in New Zealand the volcano buried with mire; even the Seaton cliff, that fell not long ago—the face of it—in ruin; and the willows of Carshalton, and the beauty of the Wandle valley; the Benhill copse at Sutton; and now they would take Dovedale and Windermere away! But also think of the works of *Art* that are gone! The Titians and Tintorets that, in its grasp of great houses, the fire regarded no more than had they been rolls of brown paper; the paintings of Zeuxis and Apelles; the statues of Phidias, of Myron, of Praxiteles—the heart is sore as it recalls our irreparable loss. And the Greek temples: the Acropolis; the pure Parian against the intense blue; rows of stately columns—Ionic, Doric, Corinthian; entablature, with architrave and rich cornice, and between, the frieze rough with—think of it!—the Elgin marbles, *perfect;* the Ilyssus and Theseus in their pristine white magnificence; the Parthenon as Pericles beheld it—the purity, the glory, and the grace!

Then the beauty and magnificence of the Gothic, ere taste vulgarized into the Renaissance—"earthly, sensual, and devilish," as Ruskin condemns it; the stones of Venice, with its Byzantine Gothic; the superb cathedrals and minsters and abbeys on the Continent and in our own land; the tall stone shafts by the wayside and in God's-acre, crowned with the subtly carven cross—these shattered, and only the triple or sevenfold steps and the broken shafts left. And yet, for their use as well as beauty, let Thomas Hood be advocate:

> Say, was it to my spirit's gain or loss,
> One bright and balmy morning, as I went
> From Liege's lovely environs to Ghent,
> If hard by the wayside I found a cross,
> That made me breathe a prayer upon the spot—
> While Nature of herself, as if to trace
> The emblem's use, had trailed around its base
> The blue significant "Forget-me-not"?
> Methought the claims of Charity to urge
> More forcibly, along with Faith and Hope,
> The pious choice had pitched upon the verge
> Of a delicious slope,
> Giving the eye much variated scope;—
> "Look round," it whispered, "on that prospect rare,
> Those vales so verdant, and those hills so blue;
> Enjoy the sunny world, so fresh and fair,
> But" (how the simple legend pierced me thro'!)
> "PRIEZ POUR LES MALHEUREUX."

But the wayside crosses are cast down by grim Puritanic rage; and the Abbeys, and the Cathedrals, and the Minsters—

broken, robbed, despoiled, shattered with axes and hammers —tell, in the loveliness of their decay, what must have been the splendour and the glory of their complete and reverenced perfection. Vanished splendour! departed glory!

Let me recall my entrance upon the Isle of Avalon:

As I left the station—a thing which was not found in Glastonbury in the old days (but that we can condone)—and passed from the steam and puff and hurry of nineteenth-century pressure, I tried to realize the times of long ago. This, then, was the Isle of Avalon. No doubt where is now the railway-station water once flowed, and on a little island the abbey stood, not at first a building in stone, the incarnation of a Divine thought of beauty—No. On the island, then called *Yuiswitrin*, covered with trees and brambles, and surrounded by marshes, the legend says, twelve disciples of St. Philip, then preaching in France (the principal of them being, —be gentle with the old myth!—Joseph of Arimathea), settled, and made their huts of wattled rods, and afterwards their Chapel of the Virgin, raised in like rude architecture. Ah, how these rods of early Saxon days twined and arched into rounded and pointed perfection; and how the foliage of them taught the very stones to foliate and curve and leaf-out into intricacies and surprises of beauty and of grace!

These twelve dying off—one hundred and three years after, in A.D. 166, two missionaries, in the course of their proceeding through Britain, arrived at the island *Avallonia* (or Yuiswitrin), *i.e.*, Apple Island. By degrees the fabric rose. First the Chapel of the Virgin (now called St. Joseph's Chapel) developed its clustered osiers into sheaves of stone shafts, its palmy foliage into boss and capital of petrified flower and leaf. Then the *major Ecclesia*, founded by Ina, the great Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul, arose to the east of the *vetusta Ecclesia*, and with this, appearing as though a chancel out of place at the west end, gave a superb length of over five hundred feet to the whole building. Here, in the old church, were the reputed graves of Joseph of Arimathea and St. Patrick. St. David of Menevia visited it. It is claimed for it also that the remains of the Abbess Hilda, and of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne, of St. Gildas, St. Dunstan, and St. Benignus, were laid in the wicker fane. Here was St. David's sapphire altar; and here, in this Isle of Avalon, angel-borne to rest from his battles and to recover from his wounds, lay "the blameless king": "that pure severity of perfect light," too colourless for earthly passion to understand, appreciate, and approve. In 1184 "the beautiful group of edifices, the church venerable to all, and sheltering

so many saints, were reduced to a heap of ashes."[1] Then King Henry II. directed his camerarius, Radulphus, son of King Stephen, that the church should be rebuilt and magnificently completed. Hereupon (in 1186 *circiter*) was raised the exquisite thing of beauty called now St. Joseph's Chapel and the Great Church, in its superb magnificence, of which the smaller building became probably the Lady Chapel.

And the site of all this stone history and beauty lay before me, as I stood with the railway-station behind me; behind me also the westering sun. And a delicate October haze drew its veil of softening and of mystery over the scenery. There in front was Glastonbury Tor, with, cresting it, the tall, solitary tower of its church of long ago. There was the lesser tower of the Church of St. Benignus (altered now, to its detriment, in common parlance, to Benedict). And tall, between, the stately tower of St. John's Church, about which the doves circle, and along whose string-courses and gables they rest, seeming as though of the intended ornament there, and upon whose square of lawn-close they assemble in conclave, or hover about the parish priest, almost settling on his shoulders when he brings to them their corn. These towers I saw before me, lit up in the golden haze, and in the foreground an apple orchard, of a rich Rembrandt — dark within its recesses. And a blue, soft air toned down the vermillion of the modern roofs, and hushed and quieted the flushed tints of the distant autumn woods.

So, with a glow upon it of glory, I entered the precincts of the Isle of Avalon.

It was in the early morning, next day, that through a court I came upon the Abbey. The book signed, I touched the latch, and there, in the morning light, rose before my eyes the majestic and pathetic Ruin. It is not as Tintern; no, the walls are not standing (save of St. Joseph's Chapel) — only fragments of the walls. I approached through the lush, long grass, drenched with vanished frost, and looked with wonder and sorrow upon the ruins. There, at first regard, was a Norman arch, rich beyond words in exquisite roughness of carved design, circle after circle smitten as by a fairy wand into foliage, and angel, and knight, and saint; the fair supporting columns gone, the whole superb arch blackened with smoke and flame. Imagine the mind (but, happily, you cannot) that could light a fire under this glory in stone! Opposite, the south doorway, almost equally rich. And then the spandrels above them, and the arcade within the walls, Norman arches crossing and interlacing, and thus

[1] The Rev. R. Willis, "Glastonbury Abbey."

creating the pointed Early English arch; and the interstices of these fitted in with bosses and rosettes of petrified foliage and flower. Through the framing of the doorways, stone wall and quiet trees; above, on the top of the ruins, yew and thorn, needing little nurture, and long, trailing streamers of the orange-fruited briar rose; beyond, the majestic remains of the Great Church, with the melancholy loveliness of their carven glory and grandeur. It seems scarcely credible that this great length was really that of only the one church, with this, its mother, at the west end of it. Deep and lush was the grass when first I entered upon its sweet and mournful seclusion, but, the second time, I found the grass eaten down, and about the ruins a flock of lambs. They seemed fitly placed there, and added in a way to the quiet and the beauty. Under the carved, blackened doorway two were lying and one stood, completing the group which my approach spoiled. In the crypt below they were nibbling the scanty turf. Out of buttress and shaft they appeared and moved; along the length of grassy aisle they clustered—a meek congregation, listening to, but heeding not, a silent sermon ever being preached against man's profanity, and bigotry, and stupidity, and greed.

It cannot be restored, this Abbey, nor is there place in Glastonbury for the ministration of such a vast fane. Nor would our practical "Churchmen" of the nineteenth century find a million of pounds for such restoration. There was talk, once, of Rome acquiring it. I dare say our lay English "Churchmen" would suffer this unperturbed! Nor *did* it originally, as Rome pretends, belong to an alien Church. As Rome pretends?—Yes. For example: A burly priest, with a shrivelled-looking brother, who was a pervert from the Church Anglican, was lordlily marching through the stately aisles of St. Mary's, Redcliffe, Bristol. To the verger, who accompanied them, he swaggered:

"All this used to belong to *us*, and we shall have it all back again. See, my friend here, *he* was with you once, but he has left you and come to us."

The verger, stepping back a pace, looked the small Insignificance from head to foot, and replied:

"And we *don't* begrudge you him, sir."

Away, however, with flippancy in sight of these gray ruins! I turn to leave you, O mouldering Abbey! Remain pathetic in your desolation, a Niobe of ruins. The winters pass and crumble you, the rain and the sunshine assist in your decay, yet, at least while I tread this earth—this earth that is the tomb of departed glories—those solemn arms will yet appeal to Heaven, those smoke-blackened majesties deliver

their protest, those linking arches, over-fringed with yew and briar, bid modern architects despair.

For what but imitation, and *poor* imitation, is the Gothic architecture of our modern day?

Why should not the builder of the next cathedral simply take for his plan Glastonbury Abbey, carefully and closely reproduced? Not, perhaps, at once the wonderful carving, but, as funds came in, in the years to come to bid the blank prepared stone to blossom into exact replica of the photographed glory. Where a cathedral is wanted, as in rich Liverpool, let the great abbey reappear.

And let the ruins remain in pensive dignity to rebuke the flippant and to raise the earnest mind. They must crumble away; nor could any new building be at all, for many years, as venerable and soul-subduing as are they. Nor could the associations of Glastonbury be transferred: the legends of King Arthur, the bones of St. Dunstan and St. Patrick, the thorn of Joseph of Arimathea—these cannot be removed from those gray buildings. The thorn—men are apt to be sceptical as to this; the thorn, which was originally the staff, brought from the East, held in St. Joseph's hand, and struck by him into the ground, thereupon, as a miracle to convince the people, putting out leaves at Christmas-time, and budding buds and bearing blossoms. Yet I saw, in Glastonbury, one of those thorns growing; there was, in November, bud upon it, and at Christmas it would, as is its wont, be in flower. Always in the flower-vases in church, on Christmas Day, a spray is placed of the Glastonbury thorn. It is, curiously, said to be an introduction from the *East*, and, to grow, must be grafted on an ordinary thorn.

Nor could we reproduce the Isle of Avalon, with its Arthurian legends that cluster about the ruin, as the doves circle about the tall tower of St. John's. Yes, here was the Isle of Avalon, surrounded by a great water, of which, when the moon was full, Sir Bedivere

> Heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
> And the wild water lapping on the crag.

And, bearing on his back the dying King, saw,

> On a sudden, lo, the level lake,
> And the long glories of the winter moon.
>
> Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
> Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
> Beneath them; and, descending, they were 'ware
> That all the decks were dense with stately forms
> Black-stoled, black-hooded like a dream.

Were these the monks coming to take to sanctuary the sorely-smitten King, and were the queens sisters of mercy,

and "the tallest of them all, and fairest," some stately mother abbess, who should nurse the King, and so

> Laid his head upon her lap
> And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands?

And so he was rowed, with muffled oar, over the level lake that then, it may well be, surrounded the isle of many legends and of mystic beauty—

> The island-valley of Avilion,
> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies
> Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
> And bowery hollows.

And there, in the peace and calm of the great abbey, may he have been laid,

> Where he might heal him of his grievous wound.

But there, the tradition is, the blameless King died, and was buried, with Ginevra his Queen.[1] King Henry II., about to embark at Milford Haven for the conquest of Ireland, while waiting at Menevia (St. David's), was entertained at his feast by a learned bard, who sang the praises of King Arthur, "and how he was conveyed by water to the monastery of Avallonia, and buried near the old church there, in a wooden coffin, deep in the ground." And at the beginning of the reign of Richard I., the place indicated was, by the abbot's order, excavated, and sure enough, a wooden sarcophagus of enormous size was discovered, made out of hollowed oak, sixteen feet below the surface. On being raised and opened, its cavity was found to be divided into two parts. In one were the bones of a gigantic man; in the shorter those of a female (Guinevere) with a tress of golden hair, preserving form and colour; but, touched hastily by a monk, it fell immediately into dust. They also found a leaden cross, inscribed "Here lies buried, in the Island AVALLONIA, the renowned King Arthur."

"In 1276 Edward I. and his Queen visited Glastonbury, and the sarcophagus, transferred to a black marble mausoleum, was opened for their inspection. Leland saw the tomb at the latter end of the fifteenth century."

Be this as it may, there the stately ruins stand, and about them, and about Glastonbury and its Isle of Avalon, will the memories and traditions for ever abide, of Joseph of Arimathea, of Dunstan, of Patrick, and of the great King Arthur. At least the *Americans* know this, and value their share in the departed glory. For the vicar showed me a letter which while I was his guest arrived from America, asking for if but

[1] The Rev. R. Willis.

so much as *a blade of grass* from the sacred spot. And this was but a specimen of many such letters that he was accustomed to receive. The Americans would have purchased Shakespeare's house—they *have* placed a stained window in his church at Stratford. Had we, at home, their reverence, we should have purchased for the English people for ever Coleridge's cottages at Clevedon and Nether Stowey, and the house where Tennyson was born—all which were (and, it may be, are) to be had for a trifling sum. Perhaps they may reproduce Glastonbury Abbey in America. But such flights are not, it would seem, for the stolid, moneyed, Philistine Briton.

Farewell, solemn and piteous gray Ruin! No, pity is not the word; rather deep reverence befits sublimity in low estate. Protest still, and appeal, ye mute uplifted arms! And oh! Glastonbury people, rejoice in your possession; and, people of England, guard jealously the shell of a vanished glory!

I. R. VERNON.

ART. II.—REPLIES TO THE POPE'S BULL.

THE Pope's Bull (Apostolicæ Curæ) has given rise to a great deal of literature. He has condemned the Church of England as having no valid ministry, and the defenders of that Church have naturally risen to repel the charge. This they have done very effectually, showing, in the first place, that the Church of England has retained in her ordination services everything which was deemed essential by the early and undivided Church, and, in the second place, that the continuity of the Church of Rome cannot be assured if something more was necessary for the validity of ordination than was found in the early Church. So far the defenders of the Church of England will seem to most unprejudiced persons to have proved their case against the condemnation of the Papal Bull.

But some of these writers, in repelling the Pope's attack, have used a line of argument which is calculated to give more concern to the friends of the English Church than to her opponents, and which tends to compromise the general position of the Church in reference to the Church of Rome. It is to be regretted that the venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge seems to have lent its authority to an argument of this kind; for the publication which has attracted most attention in its opposition to the Pope's charge is one that has been issued by this Society, under the auspices of