

**YORK MINSTER**

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York Minster by A. P. Purey-Cust

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**A. P. PUREY-CUST**

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By

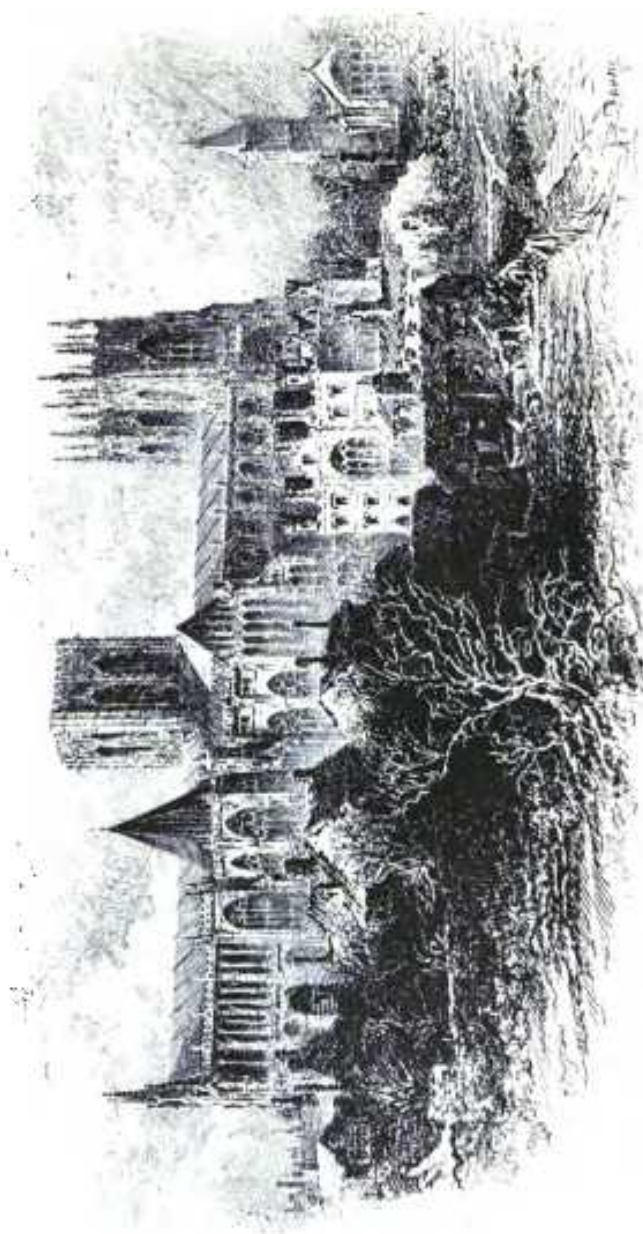
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*Dean of York*

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“**U**T rosa flos florum sic est domus ista domorum” are the words which some unknown hand has inscribed upon the walls of our Minster; and we who love the habitation of His house and the place where God’s honour dwelleth venture to think that these are “words of truth and soberness” even now, though we remember that when they were written there were many features of art and taste adorning the great fabric which have long since passed away. Still York Minster is “a thing of beauty” in spite of ruthless improvements and fanatical zeal and Puritan Philistinism

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and indiscriminating utilitarianism and ignorant restorations.

In spite of these, and in consequence of these perhaps, York Minster is what it is ; and if we cannot recall all that tradition tells us once adorned its courts and enriched its sanctuaries, we can admire and appreciate what has come into our hands, and thank God that it is our privilege to worship in a house so worthy of His holy name. Yes, and it is a pleasure and interest to recall the gradual development thereof through so many generations of men ; how it has come up like a flower, from a very small and insignificant beginning, putting forth gradually, as time went on, larger developments, like the seed, first the blade then the ear ; extending like the vine of old her branches unto the sea and her boughs unto the river—each with some fresh and characteristic novelty, as affected by the different schools of architectural taste, which, like the different seasons of the year, have shed their influence over it.



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And we love to idealise the scenes which have taken place therein, and the persons, many not unknown to history, who have had their share in the good work or whose lives and actions are associated therewith, or to recall how, sometimes in accordance with, sometimes in opposition to, what they most earnestly desired, it, at length, far eclipsed the most sanguine anticipations of its founders, and in its sober dignity and chastened ornamentation acquired a reputation second to none of "the Houses of God in the land."

It is, of course, a mere speculation, but fancy will sometimes be busy with vain surmises as to whether the present Minster is a development of the original British church, a mere grain of mustard seed, no doubt, as compared with its aftergrowth. But some primitive building did exist, for, as far back as the year 180, Beda tells us, missionaries were sent from Rome by Eleutherius at the request of the British chieftain

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Lucius, not for the conversion of the people, but to settle controverted points of differences as to Eastern and Western ceremonials which were disturbing the Church, and tradition speaks of twenty-eight British bishops, one for each of the greater British cities, over whom presided the Archbishops of London, York and Caerleon-on-Usk. So that the Romans probably found a Christian Church already established when Agricola took possession of Eburacum, towards the close of the first century after Christ's birth, and probably tolerated it with proud indifference for many generations until the great persecution of Diocletian in 294, when Constantius Chlorus, one of his associates in the empire, was in command, who, Eusebius says, was nevertheless most liberal and tolerant ; though Beda tells us of numbers of martyrs and confessors, and how churches were thrown down, while trembling believers fled for refuge to the wilderness and the mountains. But certainly Constantius



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