

**A NOTICE OF ELY CHAPEL, HOLBORN:  
WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF ELY  
PALACE: TO WHICH ARE ADDED  
SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF  
SOME OF THE BISHOPS OF ELY**

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A Notice of Ely Chapel, Holborn: With Some Account of Ely Palace: to which are added short biographical sketches of some of the bishops of ely by T. B. Murray

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**T. B. MURRAY**

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BISHOPS OF ELY.

BY THE REV. T. B. MURRAY, M.A.

“ — I do love these ancient ruins :  
We never tread upon them, but we set  
Our foot upon some reverend history.”

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JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

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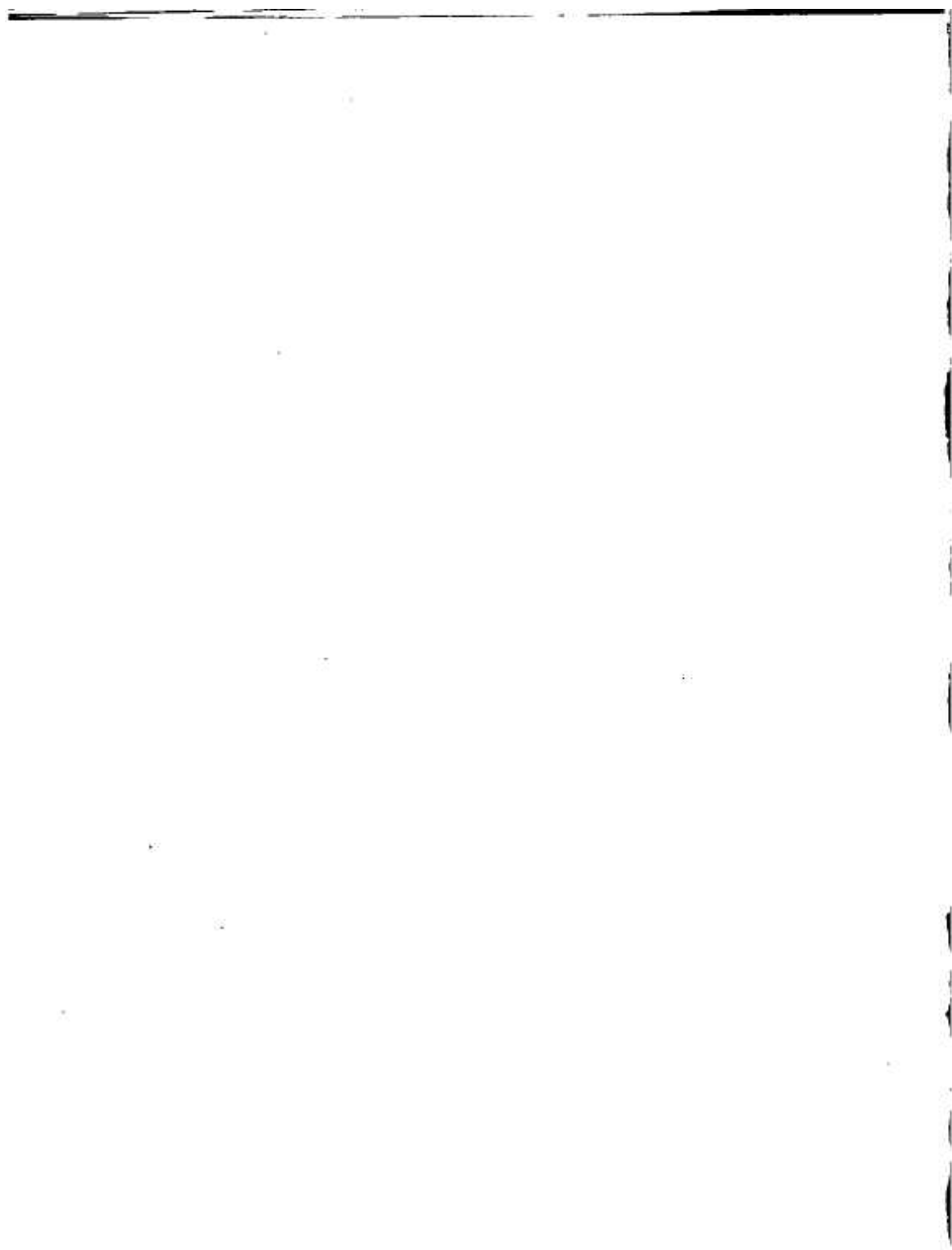
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE writer has felt much pleasure in collecting and arranging the particulars which he now ventures to commit to the press. He hopes that his notice of Ely Chapel and Palace may afford pleasure to some readers, from the mention which it makes of certain exemplary persons and remarkable events; and that it may be the means of calling attention to a venerable fabric, which, though situated in a thickly-peopled neighbourhood, is comparatively little known; which is distinguished for antiquity and religious interest; and in which the worship of God is celebrated at this day in a due and becoming manner.

LONDON, 1840.





## ELY CHAPEL AND PALACE, ELY PLACE, HOLBORN.

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AMONG the thousands of persons who daily pass the iron gates dividing Ely Place from Holborn, one of the principal thoroughfares of London, few, comparatively, are aware of the religious and historical interest attached to the spot mentioned in our title. The name of "Ely Place" has not changed with the lapse of centuries. Full five hundred years have gone by; and it still retains the ancient designation which it received as the once magnificent town residence of the Bishops of Ely. Every stone of the secular portion of the episcopal palace has long since been levelled with the ground; and the only relic of antiquity existing on the original site is a beautiful chapel dedicated to the service of God, and called after St. Etheldreda, queen and virgin, foundress of the abbey of Ely\*.

In former times, most of the bishops had seats, or, as they were commonly called, Places, in or near London, in which they resided during their attendance on parliament: and at the periods of this residence they were accustomed to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction in their town places, just as in their own dioceses in the country. The Bishop of Bangor had anciently a palace in Shoe Lane, Holborn; and the Bishop of Lincoln possessed one in the village of Holborn, or

\* Etheldreda, otherwise Audry, was daughter of Anna, King of the East Angles, and is mentioned by Bede, for her love of purity and sanctity. She died in the year 680. She was succeeded in the government of the abbey at Ely by her sister, Queen Sexburga, whose daughter Ermenilda, also a queen, became the next abbess; so that the three first abbesses of Ely were queens. The father, brother, and three sisters of Etheldreda appear in the list of Romish Saints.

Oldbourne. Winchester Place, Southwark, once a splendid palace of the Bishop of Winchester, was replaced by a house at Chelsea, which has also long ceased to be an episcopal residence.

By far the most extensive "citie habitation" of this kind, placed in the very heart of the metropolis, was that of the Bishops of Ely, from about 1320 to 1772, on the spot which we are describing. Since the year 1772, the Bishops of Ely have successively occupied a house in Dover Street, Piccadilly, which was then annexed to their office, in lieu of the old Ely Place; but there is still a small piece of property belonging to the see, in the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, namely, the Charity School House in Hatton Garden, and a slip of ground running behind the houses in Kirby Street.

The Chapel, though deprived of its original character in reference to the episcopal mansion, and no longer containing within its walls a Bishop's throne, is still a benefit and an ornament to the neighbourhood in which it stands; and within its walls the morning and evening services of our Church are on every Lord's day duly performed. Newcourt, in his *Repertorium Londinense*, written in the year 1700, says of Ely Chapel, "It is to this day a very fair, large, old chapel." This venerable structure may be considered to be of about the date of 1320; though an ecclesiastical building appears to have occupied its site at an earlier period. The rich and highly decorated eastern window, as seen from Ely Place, affords a pleasing specimen of the style of the fourteenth century. It, however, evidently wants a considerable portion of its original length, having been reduced from the lower part. The western window is of four mullions with cinque-foil arches; and above these, a circle filled with three roses and two quatre-foils. It is not less beautiful than that at the east end; but it is choked up with buildings, so as to be inaccessible from without, and is also greatly obscured by the west gallery

within. The floor of the building being raised ten or twelve feet above the level of the ground in Ely Place, the access to the Chapel is by a flight of stone steps, leading to two small doors, for which the wall has been pierced. These steps and doors have been added since the year 1772; the entrance having formerly been from the west, and south-west. The only approach is now from the east, in Ely Place.

The Chapel is in the form of a parallelogram, in length ninety-one feet, and breadth thirty-nine. It contains room for about five hundred and fifty persons. Upwards of half of the sittings are free. Partly, however, in consequence of its position, thrown back, as it is, amidst a row of houses, beyond which is no thoroughfare, this building is less known and appreciated in the neighbourhood than it ought to be; especially when the large population of the district in which it is situated is taken into account.

The galleries on the north and south sides are supported by plain columns of wood. These, with the ceiling and cornices, which were added at the latter part of the last century, might be styled neat in a more modern building, but certainly do not harmonize with the five narrow and elegant windows on each side, and the florid and grotesque ornaments between them, nor with the ancient aspect of the place in general. One window on each side has been filled up. On the south side, as lately as seventy years since, the Bishop of Ely, like his predecessors, sat enthroned in the chapel, as in a cathedral.

Subsequently to that period, this interesting structure has evidently lost some of its ornamental parts. Very shortly after its alienation from the see of Ely, in 1772, of which we shall have to speak presently, the chapel was dismantled of a fine altar-piece and pulpit. These have been replaced by others of a plainer description.

After surveying the interior of the building, the visitor will