

[THE ROYAL ARCHÆOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND held its Annual Congress for 1870 at Leicester, during the week commencing Tuesday, 26th July, and terminating on Tuesday, 2nd August. During the Congress several Papers were read of great local, as well as of general, interest. Some of these have since been placed at the disposal of this Society, and are here printed.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF LEICESTER ABBEY, by Joseph Burt, Esq., F.S.A., Assistant Keeper of the Records, London.

In bringing to the notice of the Meeting the following documents, I wish to allow them chiefly to tell their own story. I had hoped to find that, on my arrival in Leicester, I could have placed them in the hands of some one who might be about to favour the Meeting with a Memoir upon the subject to which they relate, and of which they might form a part. That subject is of so great interest to us all assembled on this occasion, and especially to the inhabitants of this county, that it seemed advisable to give them the fullest possible prominence before our visit to the remains of the important and interesting Abbey of St. Mary des Prés.

Those remains are (I believe) in a very unsatisfactory condition to the antiquary. Without going into the question of the "why" or "wherefore" of the great change in the sixteenth century which ruthlessly swept from the surface of the land the establishments which the piety and the religious feeling of our ancestors had planted on so many a fertile spot and among such picturesque scenery, the intelligent inquirer into the earlier condition of our country loves to be able to trace the true outlines of such establishments when wandering among their ruins—to know the exact site of the sacred edifice in which the brethren or sisterhood united in their public prayers and praises to their Creator—to be tolerably certain of the appropriation of the locality to the domestic needs and social requirements of the institution. Several of the religious orders followed precise rules in these matters, modified of course at intervals and by circumstances. So, one such establishment found fairly complete, is a key to all others of the same rule. But the buildings devoted to the uses of the canons regular of the Order of St. Austin, to which Leicester Abbey belonged, followed no such regular plan.

Taking up the story of the present condition of the Abbey from the account of your distinguished townsman who has laboured so long and so successfully in the illustration of the antiquities of this his native place, we shall find that all is in the greatest uncertainty as to the arrangements of the Abbey site. "Even in a century after the date of the Dissolution of the Abbey, the very site of the church

had become conjectural," says Mr. Thompson, in his Memoir upon the Abbey, read in Leicester, in May, 1854. Further on he says, "It is necessary to be premised that no vestige of the Abbey church, cloisters, or domestic offices, remains at the present day above the surface of the ground." The result of the excavations then described by Mr. Thompson seems to have gone but a very small step towards removing the existing state of uncertainty, and a conjectural appropriation of the locality is then given in this last attempt to elucidate it.

Under these circumstances the first document to which I have to direct your attention, will not, I think, be unwelcome, and its application to the present ruins will doubtless be a labour of love. It is a complete survey of the "situation," as it is called, of the "late Monastery of Leicester." It comes from that collection of our Public Records which is so rich in documents illustrative of our local and general history and the marvel is, how it has so long escaped attention. It is without a date, but it is certainly late in the reign of Henry VIII., and, from many of its passages, it was undoubtedly made at a time when the church and the domestic abbatial buildings were in good condition, and had not felt the touch of the destroyer's hand.

I will now proceed to read the document, leaving its application to the present remains of the Abbey to other hands.

"The viewe of the  
scytuation of the late  
Monasterye of Leycester." } "The scyet conteynyth xv akers and  
inclosyd all about with a wall of  
stone parte bryke standyng halfe  
myell from Leycester towardys the  
Northe, all invieorned on the South parte with a freshe water  
ryver current by the same wherin ys ffysche of all kyndes, with  
medowes and large opyn comen feldes of arrable land yerly sawen  
with corne, and of the Northe with good battyll and fruytfull  
pastures and wodes there with the parke wherin ys deer parcell of  
the demeanes within xl perches of the scyet, parte hygh and cham-  
pyon ground vere comodyouse and parkely, nygh adjoyning to the  
grett woodes and pastures called the Fryth and Beoamond Leeys  
the new parke the forrest of Leycester and two othyr parkys per-  
teyning to the Duche.

"The Churche the mansyon houses and other buyldynges  
standyth in the myddyst of the scyet. And a halt waycast out of  
the North parte thereof inclosyd with hyghe walles of stone and  
inbattelyd leydyng into the seyde scyet, and to a basse court of  
barnys stableys and other housses of husbondrye and to a small  
gate house withe one turret opeynyng into an other bascourt, and  
with a square lodgyng of ayther syde the gatehouse wherin be v  
chaumbers with chymneys and large wyndowes glasyd, the walles  
of stone and coveryd with leyde, and foure turrets of stone at the  
foure cornerres of the same. In the South Est parte of the seyde

court standyth the backhouse brewhouse and ij stables all of stone coveryd with tyell. On the West parte standyth the Church con- teynnyng in leyngh cxi fote and in bredyth xxx fote with a large crose yell in the mydyst of the same conteyning in leyngh c fote and xxx fote in bredyth and nygh to the hyght of Westminster church with a hyghe squayr Tower stepyll standyng at the West end of the same wherin ys a great dorre and a large wyndowe glasyd openyng at the entre in to the seyde scyet. And a great square house leydyng from the West end of the seyde church to the West end of the frater wherin be iij great chaumbers with chymneys and large wyndowes parte glasyd with stayres of tumber leydyng upp to the same, the walles parte stone and coveryd with leyde which wolde be muche more comodyouse yf yt werr performed after an uniforme all with stone to the prospecte and view of the same. The Frater is a great large house and well proporcyoned withe a large wyndowe glasyd openyng into the Courte the dorter standyng at the Est end therof of lyke proporcyon with stayres leydyng on hygh to the same and valtyd under and belowe wherin be great large sellers. The church with the they foreseyd housses chapter house and librarye be all of stone and coveryd with leyde, and buyldyd squayr about the cloyester yerde and a entre leydyng furth of the cloyester in to the hall and chaumbers, and other houses of offyce buylded square about a yarde adjoynyng to the seyde cloyester parte stone and parte tumber parte coveryd with leyde and parte with tyell with gallerees leydyng above and belawe to the same hall and chaumberes kychn and other housses of offyce. And at the entree out of the bascourt to the same standyth a tower the forefrunte all bryke with a turret well proporcyoned called the Kynges lodgyng, wherin ys two fayr chaumberes with wyndowes glasyd, with chymneys and two inner chaumbers with chymneys and belawe a parler with two inner chaumbers of lyke proporcyon, and a gallere leydyng from the seyde tower belawe to iij chaumberes with chymneys and to the hall all of stone and covered with tyell, and to serten chaumberes above and belawe for offycers, and a hygh galere above leydyng from the foreseyde tower at the gate to iij chaumberes above with chymneys. And to the gret dynyng chaumber standyth on hyghe at the upper end of the hall well sealyd above with the out caste of large bey wyndowes and within the same one fayre lodgyng chaumber with an inner chaumber with chymneys and wyndowes glaysed the walls stone and coveryd with leyde, and an lawe galere leydyng from the hall to the kychn and housses of offyce and to vj chaumberes for offycers. And an entree ledyng owt of the same to the fermore housses wherof parte is newly and lately buylded wherin be vj chaumberes with chymneys. And there be in the utter court dyvers chaumbers for servantes in severall placys and all the foresayd houses with the church be in good repayr.

“There ys within the scyet a pondyerd wherin is x pondys parte large and gret with a fayr orcherd.”

Connected with some of the last years of the Abbey is a letter of the last Abbot, John Bourchier, to which I would next beg leave to draw your attention. Ralph Pexall is said to have been Abbot in 1533. He was succeeded by the writer of the present letter, who details his own harsh dealing with the brethren in the matter of a lease desired by Cromwell, expostulates against his paying his predecessor's share of the subsidy, and contrasts the position he was in by the bargain he had evidently made for the retirement of his predecessor, in terms which are a remarkable example of the times.

"Most wurschippfull and mie most assured good maister mie deutye most humblye remembred. Pleasithe it your good maisterschip to undrestand that I according to mie promisse have labored for the good wills of mie brotherne to sealing of Ynguordslye ferme for Mr. Richard thei continuallie with stubborne and wilfulle opinions boldlie denyethe it. Now I pereyvving noo remedie noo hope at their handes but that thei wille stille dwelle in their wilfulle opinions nothing regarding your Maisterschipes pleasure therein have takyn from them all theyr keys to the common seale soo that now if it be your pleasur that I schalle seale it and send it upe to your good Maisterschip withought their consentes and that you will bear me harmeles agaynst their complayntes I will send it God willyng: for y wille never goo from mie promisse during this mie lief. Wher as your Maisterschip hathe writin to me of late marveling that I woold agaynst equite and conscience compelle mye predecessour to pai his portion to the Kyng at the collection, I never went about it, for it is not in me to make him to pai it; nother to ease him yn it; I have nothing to doo in it: it is a mater of the bischopes doing: the bischope mai ease him if he will but I cannot: except it be your maisterschipes pleasur that I schoold pai for him: which I am not able to doo. I am bye my house a thousand pound in debt: I must pai thes debtes: I must yearlye pai to the King his Highnes for my restitution a hundreth poundes thes iij yeares: I must pai yearlye a hundreth poundes to my predecessour: and xliij<sup>s</sup> to collectours yearlye for the kyng: I must pay wages to ee parsons in my house and fynd them meat and drynke. Alas sir what a great thing is this for me to doo and to pai my predecessoures dewes also: he is but oon man and kepithe but on man and on boye about him, and is ought of debt: it hathe a hundreth pound yearlye: besides that I find him wode and cole: all implementes to his house: I fynd him horse with all thyngs apperteyning to them. I have loved him cherished hym and made of him as never did man in Leycester of a nother: I never had good dish but he had part: I never had a thing to his pleasure but that I gave it him: everye dai I went to his logyng to comfort him: that thing that I coold devyse to his comfort I all ways dyd: and it unnaturallye and that pryvylye I making much of him according to mye old usage, hathe complayned to your Maisterschip apon me for

that whiche lyythe not in me to helpe. Your Maisterschips letter willyth me to seale his yndenture. I sealyd it the third dai after myen enstallation : which endentur his own counceill had newlye dyvysid befor my commyng. Therfor I humblye desyr your good Maisterschip to be mie good Maister as you have tofore tyme ben and to consider myen extreame and intolerable charges. Christus Jesu have your god Maisterschip in his tuition with mucche encrease of helthe and honour.

“bye your prest

(Addressed)

“JOHN Abbot of Leycester.”

“To the most wurschippfull and  
mie singular good Maister Maister  
Crumwell deliver this.”

The above is of the year 1533 or 4. R. Pexall is said in *Dugdale* to have been Abbot in 1533, and the writer of the above, John Bouchier, gave the deed of surrender to the King 11th August, 1534. He was living in 1584.

ON A RECENT FIND OF ROMAN COINS IN LEICESTERSHIRE, by the Rev. Assheton Pownall, F.S.A., Rector of South Kilworth, and Member of the London Numismatic Society.

A QUANTITY of old coins like those before us, which are remarkable neither for intrinsic value nor beauty of workmanship, must derive interest for our minds, if at all, from another source than beautiful work or intrinsic value. A quantity of fossil shells might interest us more, if we had it not in our power to connect the coins with man, to regard them as man's handiwork in a certain period of the world, and also to draw out from them something which illustrates man's history. This, in my opinion, is that which gives the great charm to coin-collecting. Coin-collecting may become mere “magpie-ism,” or, it may rise to importance as a study of the past; but as an intellectual employment it takes rank highest when it leads us to consider what different countries have been, as places for men to dwell in, when occupied by those who had to climb the ladder of life before ourselves. The numismatist who shuts himself out from this view of his coins may be a successful collector, he may possess indescribable rarities, but the richest gratification arising from his coins will be for others, and not for himself. If

“The proper study of mankind, is man,”

and coins can help us to understand him, how great must be their use! It is with thoughts of this kind, I would have you look at the hoard of Roman coins recently found at Lutterworth, in this county, which are exhibited in our temporary Museum. I should like to impart to the minds of those who listen to this paper the