

A

HISTORY OF

WESTMINSTER

ABBEY

Illustrating the

Architecture &

Contents

By

R. Bedford Junr.

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**I**T would be difficult to select from among all the beautiful piles, which the zeal and taste of our ancestors have left us, a monument in which the several varieties of Pointed Architecture are more perfectly illustrated than in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, at Westminster. The exquisite and airy grace of the lofty pointed Arch and clustered Shafts of the Early English Style, the beautiful purity of design and enrichment of the Decorated, and the elaborate profusion of ornamental detail which marked the Perpendicular or Tudor work, each and all find here most glorious representatives. To describe the peculiarities which characterised the successive changes in English Architecture is not the object of this Chart; but it may not be amiss to point out briefly, in connection with the examples selected from different portions of the Abbey, those distinctive features of style which they illustrate.

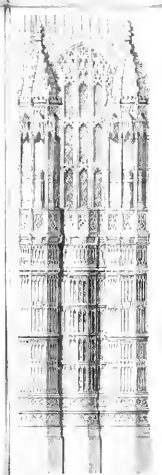
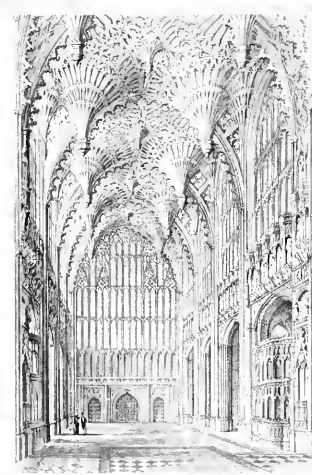
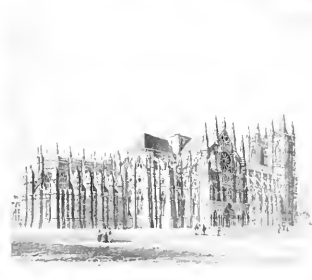
The style which began to prevail at the close of the Twelfth, and continued during the greater part of the Thirteenth, Century, and which is usually known by the name of *Early English*, is exemplified in the Views of the North Transept, the South Aisle of the Nave, and in the Elevation of one compartment of the interior of the Nave. The narrow lancet-shaped Arch; the elegant Windows, with their beautiful and simple tracery; the Piers with slender shafts surrounding them, connected by moulded bands; the diaper-work covering the walls; the bold and deeply cut mouldings, and the light, chaste groining of the ceiling; are all indicative of the best and purest epoch of the Style. The Triforium all round the Church may be instanced as one of the finest in existence for simplicity, beauty, and elegance.

The Decorated Style, which followed, is so similar in its general design, that it is difficult to draw a line between the two. The Western portion of the sides of the Nave (shewn in the interior view) are of this period, and they differ from the eastern part only in detail, the general outline is similar. The Architecture of this period became subsequently however considerably more enriched, whence its name; and the View of Edmund Crouchback's Tomb, and the ornamental details from it given in the Border, afford very fine examples of the matured Decorated work, with its richly crocketed Pinnacles and pedimented Canopies, and niches filled with statues of nicest form and execution.

Of the Style in use during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries, called from the vertical tendency of its lines, Perpendicular, we have a most gorgeous specimen in Henry the Seventh's Chapel, which has been justly termed a miracle of Art. A view is given of the interior of this portion of the Abbey, and an elevation of one compartment of the exterior; both exhibiting to the fullest extent that elaborate richness so common in large buildings of this time. The large windows divided into stories by transoms, and the head filled with tracery formed by the vertical continuation of the mullions; the *canopied* niches, with images of saints and martyrs; and the profusion of panelling, shields, and badges covering the walls; and, above all, the stupendous roof with its magnificent fan tracery and pendants, are all well recognised features of the architecture of this period, and unite to form a sublime monument, without a parallel, of the consummate skill and genius of the architects of old. The Tomb of Edward the Third is also a fine specimen of Perpendicular work of earlier date, and affords a good example of the ancient canopies of wood which covered many of the old tombs. The Western Wall of the Nave is of this period, but has been restored in later times, without very faithful attention to the original work.

The Border surrounding the Chart is arranged with a view to illustrate some of the ornamental details of the Abbey, the different portions being adapted as follows:—The Panelled Base of the Border is from the Tomb of Sir Bernard Brocald; the lower part of the sides as high as the small scrolls, are from the splendid Tomb of Edmund Crouchback, before mentioned: the figures placed in the niches are copied from interesting old oil paintings at the back of King Sebert's Tomb, and are supposed to be those of King Sebert and Henry the Third: the shields beneath bear the Arms of Henry the Third and Henry the Seventh, during whose reigns the principal parts of the Abbey Church were built. The upper portion of the Border is formed of niches from Sir Bernard Brocald's Tomb, containing Statues of St. Peter and St. Paul, from Henry the Seventh's Chapel, and finished at the Top with part of the rich cornice of the Altar Screen.

**A Chart illustrating the Architecture of Westminster Abbey**



THE ARCHITECTURE OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY, AS IT APPEARS IN THE YEAR 1850, IS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS CHART, WHICH IS THE PROPERTY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY, AND IS HEREBY REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE SOCIETY. THE ARCHITECTURE OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY, AS IT APPEARS IN THE YEAR 1850, IS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS CHART, WHICH IS THE PROPERTY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY, AND IS HEREBY REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE SOCIETY.

