

## A Book of the Week.

### WESTMINSTER ABBEY.\*

THIS book is a veritable "Edition de Luxe," and nothing is wanting in the magnificence of its "get-up." The various artists who have contributed the numerous pictures have thrown themselves into the spirit of the times which they illustrated, and there is an especial charm about Mr. Paget's drawing of "The Funeral of Edward the Confessor."

It is strange now to imagine the spot on which Westminster Abbey stands, the quiet and secluded Isle of Thorney, fitted by its distance from the city for a monastic dwelling. Here long ago a church was built which was to be dedicated to St. Peter, but, the legend runs, the night before the dedication was to take place a fisherman saw lights burning in the church, and it was believed that St. Peter himself came to dedicate it.

Years afterwards Edward the Confessor raised on this site the first church of any size built in England in the Gothic style, which he had much admired in France, and here he was buried.

In this church soon afterwards William the Conqueror was crowned, and when the nobles were demanded if they would have him as their sovereign they shouted so lustily that the Normans outside, fearing danger to their Duke, rushed in, and then ensued such a *mêlée* and confusion that William was left alone at the altar with the Bishops, and the service was cut short.

The book gives an interesting description of how William the Conqueror acquired Windsor as a Royal residence from the Abbots of Westminster, giving in exchange lands in Surrey and Essex, in recognition of which two bucks were yearly sent to the Abbey from the Royal larder.

Henry III. rebuilt the Abbey, showing all the enthusiasm in the work that Edward the Confessor had done. He had resource to strange methods for raising the necessary funds, and at last, finding his treasury empty, he proclaimed a fifteen days' fair in Westminster during "St. Edward's-tide," during which time no one should sell or buy in any part of London but in Westminster, and thus when a large company were assembled (to the great discomfort of all) many would visit the shrine of the Confessor and give gifts to the new Church.

Loyalty has ever been a distinguishing mark of Westminster and its school from the days when Lady Editha took an interest in the monk's scholars and catechised them when she met them in their knowledge in Greek and Latin, "not forgetting to feed their bodies as well as to improve their minds."

Perhaps the modern Westminster boy would resent the first part of this programme when he was asked out!

Dr. Busby, who has lately been before the public mind, never hid his feelings towards the King through the days of the Protectorate, and in the school the King was publicly prayed for "not two hours before his Royal head was struck off. For," adds South, then a boy, "we were king's scholars in reality, and not only in name."

\* "Annals of Westminster Abbey." By E. T. Brakey (Mrs. A. Murray Smith). Illustrated, £3 3s. Cassell & Co., London.

Westminster has witnessed strange scenes. Sir Walter Raleigh, once the Court favourite, was led out of the Gatehouse—the Bishop of London's prison for heretics—to die.

Every year, less and less of old London remains, and the links with the past are ruthlessly swept away for modern improvements; but Westminster is safe from the destroying hand, and still the Abbey is the School-chapel, and in Dean's Yard the boys play football, surrounded on all sides with objects of historical interest of long ago. This is the keynote of the book, and this is the charm of Westminster—a charm which must insensibly affect the character of those who visit it, or live within its precincts.

"The favour of Royalty," says an old chronicle, "has been transferred from Westminster to the new chapel at Windsor;" but Westminster has always been the scene of royal coronations and funerals, and must ever be connected with the constitution of the country.

Mrs. Murray Smith has done her work well, and many lovers of the Abbey will learn more about it than they ever knew before. Few of the hundreds who daily visit the Abbey go out of the beaten track; some never discover the Chapter House, and fewer still, even of Londoners, know the Little Cloisters, perhaps the oldest, certainly the most fascinating, spot in London.

A. M. G.

## Reviews.

"UNSOLVED MYSTERIES," by Violet Chambers Tweedale.—This clever book is not of "the new Scotch literature," although it is the work of a daughter of the Scots, who inherits, through generations of writers, a strong capacity for literature. The title of "Unsolved Mysteries" applies to the ghost-stories which make up the volume—ghost-stories which are weird and mystic and true. "A True Incident in the Life of Father Lucas" presents a very interesting but most "unsolved problem." The story turns on the return to earth of the spirit of a dead Romish mother, who revisits the earth, under a strong impulse, to save the soul of a son who is wavering between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. Though this story is not quite so interesting, from a psychological point of view, as "The Unsolved Mystery of Grimston Hall," it is crisp and strong, and the picturesque struggles and loneliness of Father Lucas are most artistically drawn. Grimston Hall mystery is the most interesting and original ghost-story the reviewer has ever read. It offers a completely new development of ghost-land and its possibilities. It would not be fair to explain where the originality of this ghostly story lies; the reader must find that out for himself. But the compelling power of the ghost appears to have been an irresistible magnetic attraction towards the man she was to love and marry. "A ghost to love and marry? Whoever heard of a ghost marrying?"

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