The Pictorial History Of

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

BY CANON ADAM FOX, D.D.,
Archdeacon of Westminster

THIS IS A PITKIN "PRIDE OF BRITAIN" SOUVENIR

Westminster Abbey and the old Houses of Parliament from the River Thames. This painting by David Roberts depicts the Lord Mayor of London for 1838–39, Mr. Samuel Wilson, about to land at Parliament Steps. Until 1857 the Lord Mayor's procession was water-borne. Every year from near Guildhall the fleet of decorated barges passed up-stream to Westminster where the High Constable of Westminster received the Lord Mayor. From the landing stage, the party proceeded in procession to the Court of Exchequer in Westminster Hall where the Lord Mayor was sworn in.

William the Conqueror who was crowned in the Abbey in 1066.

THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SAINT PETER IN WESTMINSTER

Such is the full title of Westminster Abbey. It has been so named since Elizabeth I replaced the Abbot and Monastery by a Dean and Canons; five centuries earlier, Edward the Confessor had dedicated the Church he had built to St. Peter in reparation for not making a promised pilgrimage to Rome.

Westminster Abbey is not a cathedral for it does not contain a Bishop's throne, nor is it a parish church. In ecclesiastical terms it is a "Royal Peculiar," a distinction shared only with St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The Dean and Canons are subject only to the jurisdiction of the Sovereign as Visitor; neither the Archbishop of Canterbury nor the Bishop of London have any authority over the affairs of the Abbey.

Westminster Abbey is essentially a Royal Church. It was founded by a king and, apart from the Dissolution, has 900 years of unbroken connection with the Crown.

Henry V, the victor of Agincourt, a great benefactor of the Abbey.

St. Edward The Confessor

King Henry The Third

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THERE are many Abbeys in Britain, but of them all, one has become known throughout the civilised world simply as THE ABBEY. Westminster has this pre-eminence, partly because of the quality of its architecture, partly because it is a very large church actively ministering to the people in a very large city and partly because of its age-long connection with the government of England. It is a very solemn place. It is made so by the solemnity of successive Coronations and the solemn pomp of funeral monuments. It is famed for the solemn ceremonial of its Services, which large congregations gather to attend. It is solemn always for the great height of the Gothic piers and vaults with their patches of sunlight of every shape and size; and the shadows they cast at dusk or on a misty day are beautiful to behold.

The recorded history of Westminster Abbey begins in Edward the Confessor's time, but there are glimpses of its existence before that. The name occurs in a 10th-century document where it is described as a terrible place, that is, an awesome place. This evidence points to the previous foundation of a monastery or at least of a church, and legend attributes this foundation to Sebert, King of the East Saxons (died 616), under the influence of Mellitus, first Bishop of London. Earlier still, Romance, as shaped by Mallory in his *Morte d'Arthur*, tells of King Arthur holding a tournament in a field near by; of Queen Guinevere going a-maying into fields and woods aside, and of the corpse of Elaine the fair maiden being rowed in a barget up and down the Thames at Westminster and then being richly interred. No one has ventured to point to Elaine's grave in the Abbey, but they do show the tomb of King Sebert erected by the monks in 1308.

All this is dim and misty. But the creation of Edward the Confessor is with us still. By a supreme but probably quite unconscious act of statesmanship, he has made Westminster the centre of a mighty empire. On an island in the River Thames, already called Westminster Eyot, (earlier known as Thorney or Thorneye Island), he set about to build a great monastery to promote the glory of God and the prosperity of his kingdom of England. Close by he took up his residence in order that he might watch the progress of the building. Thus he separated the seat of government from the City of London which lay across the fields a couple of miles away. This he may have done intentionally. Further, by placing the Abbey and the Royal palace side by side he strengthened for some centuries the bond between Church and State. This may also have been intentional in part, but he could not have foreseen the ultimate effect.

For the first five centuries of its existence, that is from the 11th century to the 16th, the palace at Westminster was the reigning king's place of residence. For the last two of these five centuries, actually from about 1376 to 1547, the House of Commons normally met in the Chapter House or the Refectory of the Abbey. During this period too, eight of the kings and queens of England were buried in the Abbey, where previously the only Royal burial was that of the Confessor himself. Thus Church and State forged bonds between themselves. But after

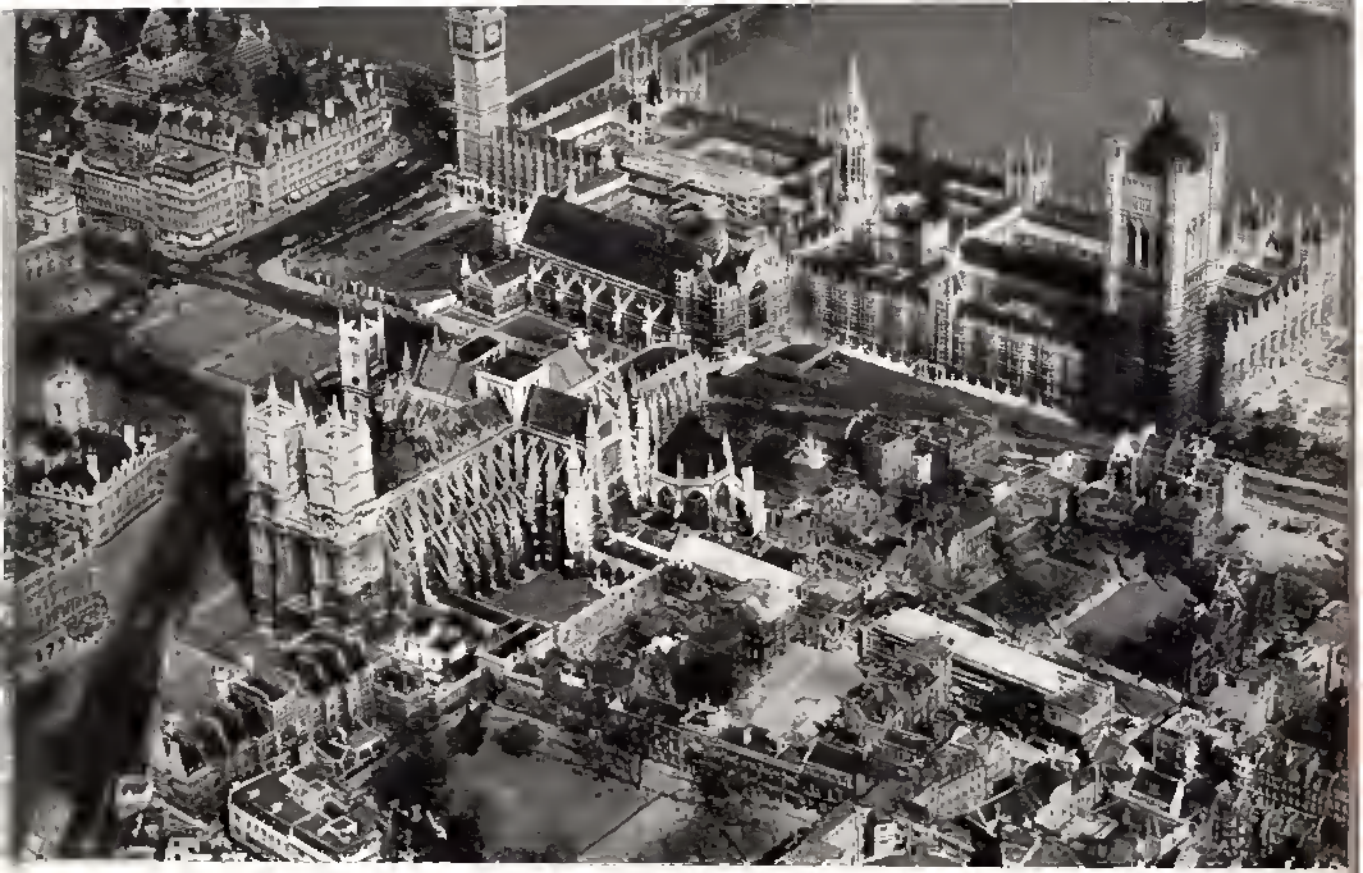
Westminster Eyor (earlier called Thorney Island) as it appeared about 1532. This reconstructed illustration of the Abbey, the adjacent monastery buildings and the Royal Palace of Westminster was prepared after exhaustive research by Mr. A. E. Henderson, F.S.A., by whose kind permission it is reproduced. THE ABBEY BUILDINGS: (1) The Nave, Westminster Abbey; (2) St. Margaret's Church; (3) Henry VII Chapel; (4) Cemetery; (5) Abbot's Lodging; (6) Cloisters; (7) Vestry; (8) Chapter House; (9) Monks' Dormitory; (10) Infirmary; (11) Infirmary Garden; (12) Fish Ponds; (13) Prior's Lodging; (14) Frater; (15) Misericorde; (16) Grammar School; (17) Entrance to Bayliffs; (18) Hospice; (19) Stables; (20) South Gateway; (21) Broad Sanctuary; (22) Bell Tower; (23) Great Sanctuary; (24) Abbey Wall; (25) Abbey Gatehouse; (26) Jail; (27) Bishop of London's prison; (28) The Elms (now Dean's Yard); (29) King's Alms Houses; (30) Poor men's Lodging; (31) River Tyburn; (32) Long Ditch; (33) Abbey Farm; (34) Abbey Mill; (35) Abbot's Garden. THE ROYAL BUILDINGS: A Palace Court; AA High Tower, West Gateway leading to City of London; B Clock Tower; C Westminster Stairs; D Duchy of Lancaster; E South Gate; F Westminster Hall; G Star Chamber; H. St. Stephen's Chapel; I The Whitehall; J Painted Chamber; K Westminster Palace Boathouse and Stairs; L Jewel Tower.

THE INFLUENCE OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

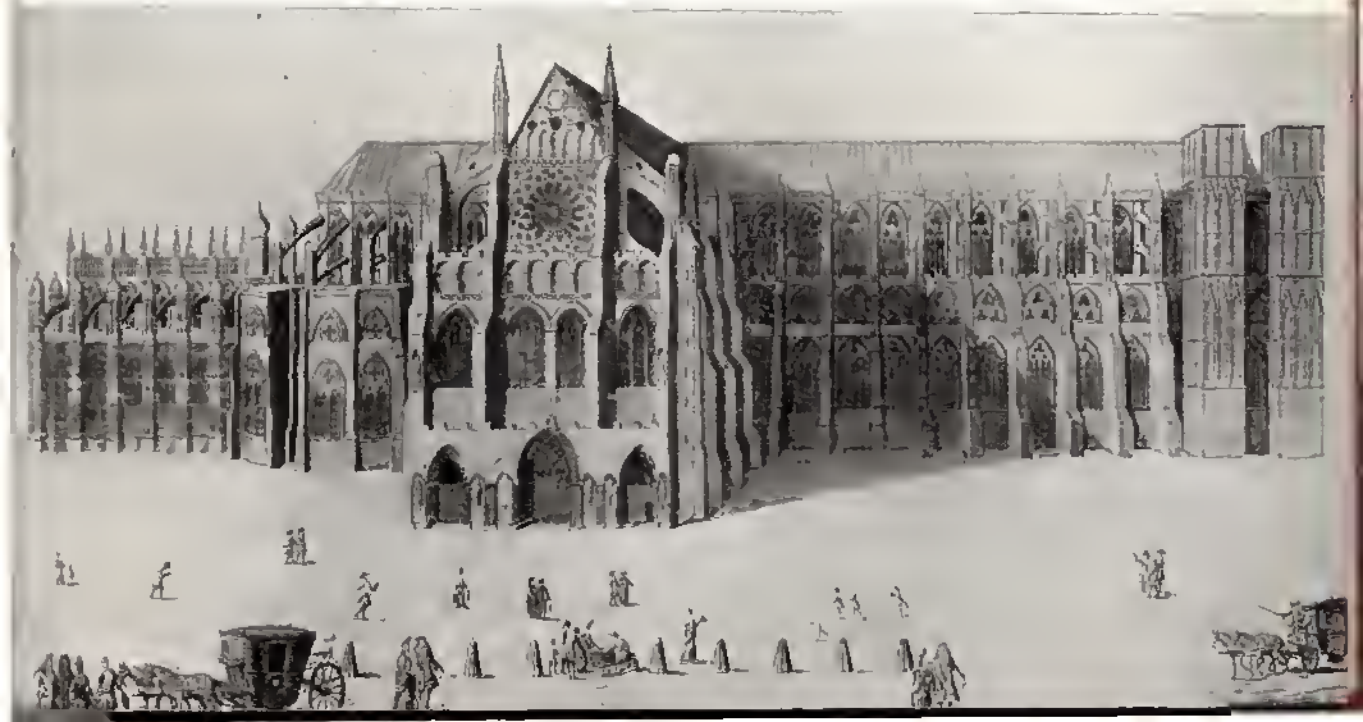
the middle of the 16th century the king ceased to live at Westminster, and this led on to great and new events. His palace became the Houses of Parliament, and side by side with the legislative power the executive, or, as we should call it now, the Civil Service, grew up and established itself in Whitehall where it still remains. By a parallel development, the business of the Church of England has come to be transacted in another area that adjoins the Abbey precincts. Here are the Church House, the Convocations, the Church Commissioners and the offices of most of the Church Societies, instead of being, as might have been expected, in the vicinity of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Palace at Lambeth.

Edward the Confessor is, therefore, no mere figure of fabled sanctity. His work still strongly influences the national life. Of his buildings almost nothing is left. He completed the Church which was later on entirely demolished, but the rest of the monastery was hardly begun in his lifetime. Some kind of temporary accommodation there must have been for the Abbot and monks to eat and sleep and work in, but it took the best part of a hundred years to erect the permanent buildings. Of these there are very

Continued on page 4



In comparing this recent aerial photograph of the Westminster area with the drawing on the facing page it will be seen that several of the original buildings, notably the main Abbey building, Westminster Hall, St. Margaret's Church, St. Stephen's Chapel and the Jewel Tower still remain. But the River Tyburn has long since been filled in, and two Houses of Parliament have occupied the site of the Palace of Westminster. BELOW: Westminster Abbey as it appeared about 1689 before the Western Towers designed by Sir Christopher Wren were added. These were completed by Hawksmoor in 1740.



ABOVE: One of Sir Christopher Wren's designs for the additions to Westminster Abbey included a central spire. This proposal, however, never progressed beyond the drawing-board stage. BELOW: The entrance to the Chantry Chapel of Henry V where the hero of Agincourt is buried. In his will he directed that a high chantry chapel should be erected over his body. Above Henry V's tomb are his saddle, shield and helmet.

Part of the beautiful stone reredos of the Henry V Chantry Chapel with the statues of Our Lady, St. Edmund and St. Denis.

* * *

considerable remains. You may still see the undercroft of the monks' dormitory almost exactly as it was, and it is possible that the Confessor himself saw it too. You can see one wall of the Refectory with its Norman arcading, and the Dark Cloister by which the monks moved from one part of the monastery to another. Three rounded arches of St. Catherine's Chapel are still standing, a part of the original Infirmary and a relic of somewhat later Norman work.

But of course it was round the Church that the whole life of the community revolved, and Edward the Confessor was perhaps content to have completed that. It stood on the north side of the monastic buildings, a very large Church in the style then prevalent in France, and for that reason termed the Norman style, but abroad the Romanesque. The ground plan was very little different from that of the present Church, except that the Transepts were narrower. It was in the form of a cross and probably had a central tower, and is so represented in the Bayeux tapestry. No doubt the Confessor's Church had the grim but reassuring look of the early Norman churches. East of the crossing made by the Transepts was the Sanctuary which occupied a considerable area with the High Altar in the centre. To the east of the Altar there was presently to be the tomb of the Confessor himself.

Continued on page 6

THE CONFESSOR'S SHRINE

The Chapel of St. Edward The Confessor is the most sacred spot in the Abbey since it contains not only the body of the founder, but the tombs of five other kings and three queens. The bones of the Confessor have been much disturbed since he was first buried before the High Altar of his church. William the Conqueror erected an imposing stone tomb over the grave, but in 1163 the Saint's remains were transferred to a new shrine raised by Henry II. When Henry III began to pull down the Norman church, this shrine was removed whilst a new and more magnificent one was prepared. Only the lower part (*seen above*) of this costly 13th-century monument now remains. On the Dissolution of the Abbey in 1540 it was stripped of its huge jewels, beautiful cameos and the golden statues which adorned it. RIGHT: A section of the carved stone Screen in St. Edward's Chapel. The scene depicts the Confessor's vision of the drowning of the King of Denmark who was shipwrecked on his way to invade England.

LEFT: An 18th-century engraving of the South Ambulatory. ABOVE: The tomb of Henry III. Although Edward the Confessor founded Westminster Abbey, Henry III commenced the rebuilding of the Norman fabric, and can thus be said to be the father of the present church. More devout than wise, outrageously extravagant, Henry III beggared himself to re-build the Abbey until he was eventually forced to pawn the jewels with which he had beautified St. Edward's Shrine.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR IS CROWNED

The Consecration of the Church had been fixed for Christmas Day 1065, but the King was so ill that it was postponed, then hurried on and solemnised on the Holy Innocents Day, 28th December, and on 5th January the King died. Harold's accession was confirmed by his Coronation (some historians say in the Abbey, but there is no definite evidence of this), and by a strange revolution in this fateful year of 1066 there was another Coronation within twelve months, that of William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy. He chose the Abbey for his crowning, no doubt partly for its size, partly because it was attached to the Royal palace and partly because it was near London. He was crowned on Christmas Day.

Not a stone of the Confessor's Church remains above ground. Less than 200 years after its completion Henry III resolved to demolish it and build a more beautiful one, again after the style then prevailing in France. The new Church would be much taller, much lighter and more spacious; and it was to be of the very best material. The masons set to work from the east end, and before the king died in 1272 they had completed the Sanctuary, the Transepts, the Choir and two bays west of the Choir Screen. The rest of the Norman Nave was still standing, producing a complete disharmony of shape and style, and so it continued for more than a century. Henry III had spared no expense, but when he died the coffers were empty and the work was stopped.

The main piers of the Church are of solid Purbeck marble, the floor is paved with a lighter variety of the same; the stone came partly from Caen, but mainly from quarries near Reigate. Structurally, the Church to-day is as Henry III planned it, though it is doubtful if there is any part of the outside which has not been re-faced. There is carving and statuary in every part of the building. This was all due to Henry's inspiration and appreciation of the beautiful. He has been called "the greatest builder and the greatest patron of the arts who has ever occupied the throne of England."

Continued on page 8

A view from the Choir looking towards the High Altar. In this photograph the Sanctuary screen has the hangings which are put up for Lent. The East Window contains a collection of ancient and modern painted glass, beautiful fragments of 13th-, 14th- and 15th-century work which withstood the despoilations of the Dissolution and the Commonwealth being mingled with later glass. This, and the photograph of Henry VII's Chapel on page 13 are by A. F. Kersting.

ABOVE: Edward III's tomb. "A perfect example of this world's vanity," Edward III died in 1377, overcome with grief for the loss of his eldest son, the Black Prince. The king was deserted by his followers; only one poor priest who was unable to prevent the servants stripping the rings from Edward's fingers attended the death bed. BELOW: The white marble tomb of Queen Elizabeth I erected by James I in 1603. Inserted in the tomb is a gold ring traditionally said to be the ring which Elizabeth gave her favourite, Essex.

THE ANCIENT RELICS OF THE ABBEY LOST

Henry III seems to have had three ideas when he resolved to rebuild the Abbey. First he sought to promote the glory of God, for Whom only the very best was appropriate, by gathering into its fabric all that was precious and beautiful. Secondly, he desired to provide a place fit for the great occasion and spectacle of a Coronation. Thirdly, he thought to provide a burying place for himself and his successors near the tomb of St. Edward, around whose body so much national sentiment had already gathered.

He contributed to all these purposes at once by rebuilding the Church and piling up a great mound of earth in its eastern part. This entailed removing the Confessor's remains to a temporary resting place, and it was not until 1268 that they were replaced and the existing monument was erected. This monument, which came from Italy and was richly adorned with mosaic and surmounted with a golden feretory or hearse, was, and perhaps still is, the great wonder of the Abbey. Westward of this tomb was the High Altar, and westward of the High Altar the great mound formed a platform on which Coronations take place.

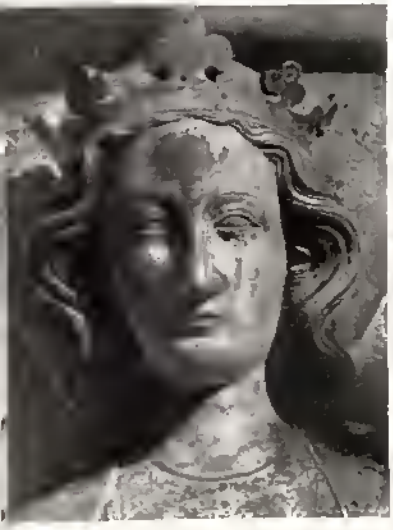
On the border of the mound, by way of enclosing the Confessor's shrine, there were later erected one by one the tombs of Henry III, Queen Eleanor, Edward I, Queen Philippa, Edward III and Richard II. All these tombs except that of Edward I are surmounted by effigies which preserve some tradition of what these kings and queens looked like. Alongside of Richard II's effigy is that of his wife, Anne of Bohemia. The tomb of Edward I is perfectly unadorned and may still be regarded as temporary.

At the east end of this Shrine there was a small Lady Chapel, and here King Henry VI caused an upper Chapel to be built supported on arches and bountifully enriched with statuary. Underneath was the tomb of his father, Henry V, a great lover of the Abbey; and the whole was a memorial of the French wars in which the warrior king was for so much of his life engaged. In the Chapel above, the chief relics of the Abbey were exhibited until the Reformation. Amongst them was the head of St. Benedict and, less authentic, a tooth of St. Athanasius, some vestments of St. Peter and a girdle of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The whole design is original and forms a noble monument to the men of Agincourt and the king who led them. To the west of this great group of Royal tombs the High Altar stood where it still stands, but there was no Screen behind. From the body of the Church the Shrine was visible beyond the Altar. Only after the erection of Henry V's Chapel did the monks erect the lovely carved stone Screen to exact something more from the pilgrims who passed through it.

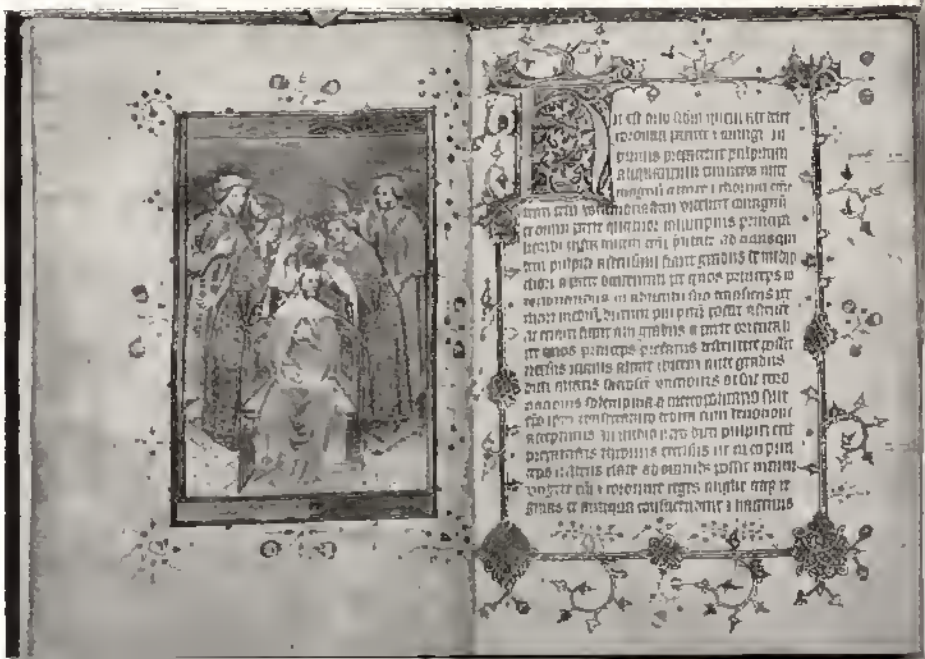
And they were justified in doing so, for they had to scrape and save to complete their long Nave, and at

Continued on page 10

ABOVE: The gilt bronze effigy of Elizabeth of York (died 1503), Queen of Henry VII, and first person to be buried in her husband's chapel, and (*below*) that of Eleanor of Castile (died 1290), the wife of Edward I. These likenesses adorn the Queens' tombs. The latter effigy was executed by William Torel "goldsmith and citizen of London" in 1291.



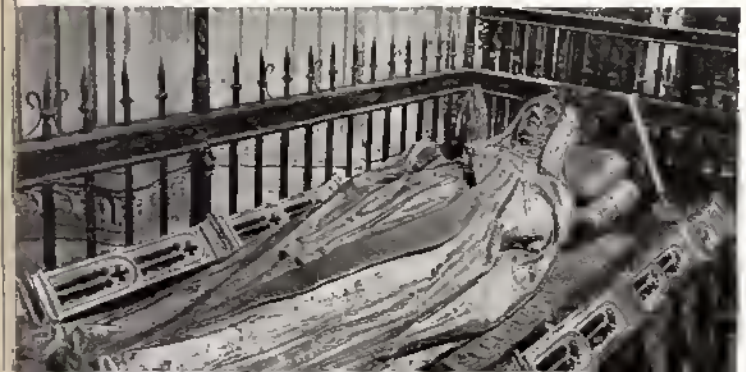
ABOVE: The carved stone Screen which separates St. Edward's Chapel from the Sanctuary. It was erected by the Abbey monks during the reign of Edward IV (1461–1483) in order, it is said, to exact a toll from the pilgrims entering the Chapel to worship at the Shrine of the Confessor. The money so collected helped to maintain the unfinished fabric of the building then in poor repair. At this period the coffers of the Abbey were empty. St. Edward's Chair is in the position it normally occupies, to the left of it are the shield and great sword of Edward III (1327–1377). On the frieze at the top of the Screen are carved scenes from the life of St. Edward. BELOW: *The Liber Regalis*, the Coronation Ritual Service Book used by all English sovereigns from Henry IV to Elizabeth I. It was written and illuminated during the reign of Richard II, probably for the Coronation of his Queen Consort, Anne of Bohemia, in 1382. *The Liber Regalis* is now in the Abbey Library. This photograph is reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster rendered valuable assistance in the production of this book, as did Mr. R. Howgrave-Graham, F.S.A., the Ass. Keeper of the Muniments, by taking special photographs. Pitkins most gratefully acknowledge these services and also the help of Mr. B. Freeman in the selection of prints from the British Museum.

In its 900 years of history many Royal weddings have been celebrated in Westminster, but none have given greater joy to the people than that of The Princess Elizabeth (now Queen Elizabeth II) to the Duke of Edinburgh on 20th November, 1947. Above is the scene before the High Altar: the full story of the wonderful occasion is told, by Collie Knox, in *Princess Elizabeth's Wedding Day*, a pictorial souvenir published by Pitkins at 2/6—one of the most popular Royal Family books ever produced. BELOW: The monument to Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby (died 1509), mother of Henry VII. A noble and charitable woman, to whom her son owed much, she was patroness of Caxton whose printing press was set up in the Abbey Almonry, and foundress of St. John's College and Christ's College, Cambridge.



THE MONKS PERSEVERE

last they did it. The Nave is now of twelve bays, and of these, five were completed in the reign of Henry III or at latest in that of Edward I. In the middle of the 14th century, Abbot Simon Langham, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, provided for further progress out of his great fortune. But it was not till the latter part of the 15th century that the westernmost bay, including the lower part of the Western Towers, was finished. The style of the older work was by this time obsolete, but to build a great extension in the current Perpendicular style would have looked almost as odd as the original Norman portion did on Henry III's new Church. The monks persevered with their building and in the end they added their seven bays and, what is more, reproduced the elevation as it had been designed for Henry III.

As originally conceived the great Church was now finished, but there were two important additions to be made. At the east end, Henry VII pulled down the Lady Chapel and erected the Chapel named after him. It belongs to the first 20 years of the 16th

Continued on page 14

The gates at the entrance to the Henry VII Chapel are superbly fashioned of bronze, and are adorned with badges of families from whom Henry was descended: the Portcullis of Beaufort, the Fleurs-de-lis, the Lions of England and the Dragon of Cadwaladr.

CROWNING PLACE OF KINGS

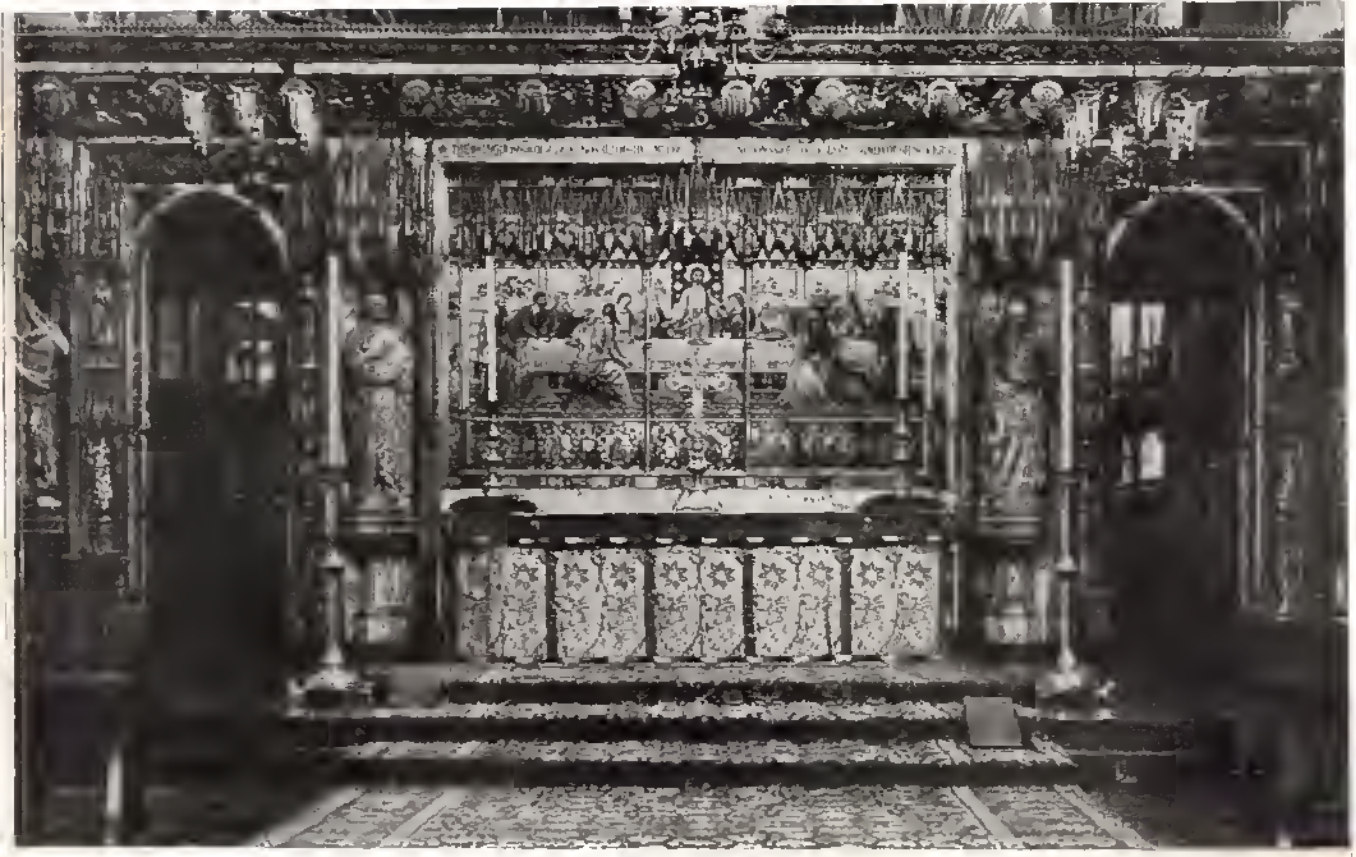
For 900 years the Kings and Queens of England have been crowned in the Abbey. Above is St. Edward's Crown with which the Sovereign is crowned. Its weight of over five pounds prevents it being worn for long, and, immediately after the act of crowning has been performed, St. Edward's Crown is exchanged for the Imperial State Crown, which was made for Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1838. St. Edward's Crown is never again worn by the King or Queen Regnant. BELOW: The Ampulla. The neck of the golden eagle unscrews to receive the holy oil, and during the Coronation ceremony the unguent with which the Sovereign is anointed is poured from the beak. The Ampulla was used at the Coronation of Henry IV in 1399, but it is probably much older. With the Anointing Spoon and Queen Elizabeth I's Salt Cellar it escaped destruction during the Cromwellian period.

ABOVE: The scene in the Theatre shortly after King George VI was crowned. His Late Majesty wears St. Edward's Crown, he is seated in St. Edward's chair. His Queen Consort, (now Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother) is seated *bottom, left*, the assembled clergy are *right*. The Choir Stalls are occupied by distinguished guests, the Kings of Arms, the Heralds and the Pursuivants of the College of Arms are grouped around the pillars. Behind the line of pages are the Thrones Their Majesties will occupy later in the ceremony.

THE SETTING FOR THE CORONATION CEREMONY

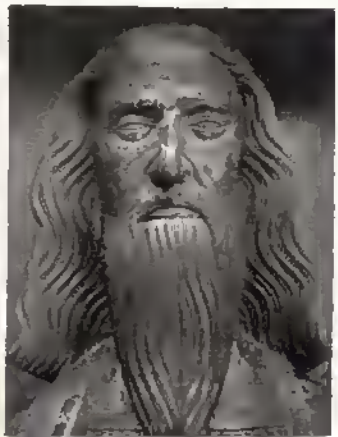
When Henry III rebuilt Edward the Confessor's Norman church he placed the Choir west of the central crossing, which is unusual in English cathedrals. His intention was to provide a noble stage before the Sanctuary and High Altar on which future Kings of England would be crowned. At the time of a Coronation this central space is built up to the level of the Sanctuary and is then termed the "Theatre." Such is the setting of the greatest pageant the Church and State of Britain can offer. The Coronation, of course, is more than a pageant; it has the deepest spiritual significance both for the Sovereign and the people. This spiritual significance is explained by the Dean of Westminster in an Introduction to *The Historic Story of The Coronation Ceremony and Ritual* published by Pitkins at 2/6d. Lawrence E. Tanner, M.V.O., F.S.A., The Keeper of the Muniments, Westminster Abbey, tells the history of the 1,000-year-old ceremony and describes the ritual.
BELOW: The Coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn on Whit Sunday, 1533. Henry VIII arranged a great and glittering pageant, but the people were cold. "The city was well enough," Anne said, "but I saw few heads bared."

ABOVE: King George VI faces his people during the Recognition—the first act of the Coronation Service. The Archbishop of Canterbury has just presented him "as the rightful inheritor of the Crown of this realm" and calls for homage, service and bounden duty to the King. The King's Scholars of Westminster School lead the congregation in a great shout of acclamation thereby testifying that George VI has been accepted by the people. The Sovereign of England reigns not merely by right of succession; he must also be the choice of his subjects.



ABOVE: The High Altar stands against a superbly carved stone screen erected by the Abbey monks in the 15th century to divide St. Edward's Chapel from the rest of the Sanctuary. Above the High Altar is a modern mosaic depicting "The Last Supper." LEFT: A fragment of 13th-century art, probably the most cherished treasure in the Abbey. Above Henry III's High Altar once hung a painted and bejewelled Retable (a frame enclosing decorated panels) but at some time unknown this beautiful example of medieval craftsmanship was removed and lost. In 1827 it was found, terribly damaged in use as the top of a waxwork case. BELOW: The pulpit.

ABOVE: The Choir Stalls and Screen. BELOW: Gilt-bronze effigies of Henry VII (*left*) and Edward III (*right*) on their tombs. It is traditionally believed that the latter was modelled from a cast of the king's face taken shortly after his death.



A corner of the Battle of Britain Chapel in Henry VII's Chapel dedicated to "The Few." The ornate pillar seen on the left is part of the gilt-bronze grille surrounding the tomb of the founder of the Chapel.

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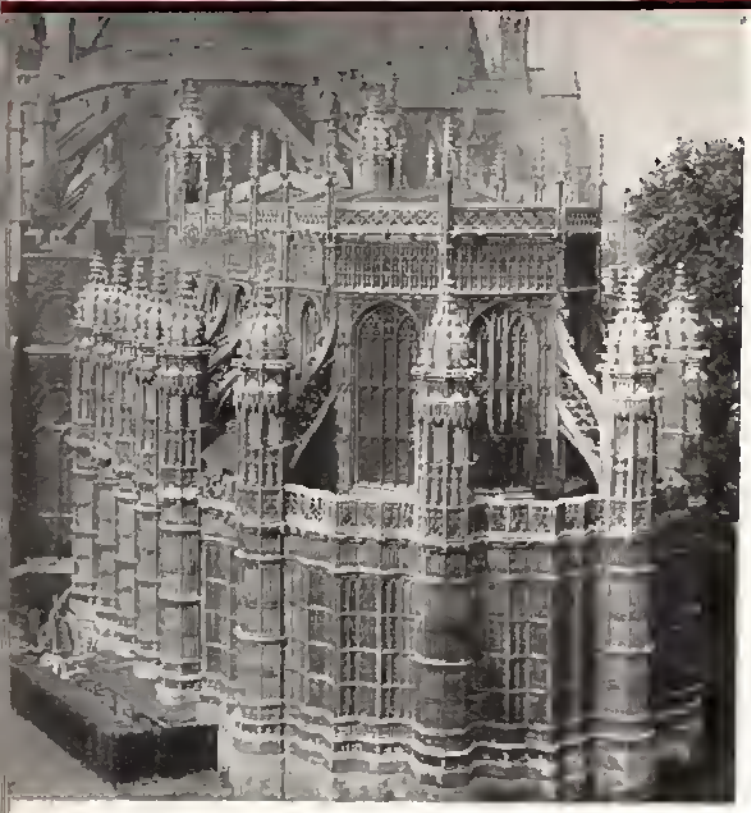
century, and is a building of extraordinary beauty and very remarkable design. The vaulting of the ceiling is marvellous, the statuary various and the tomb of the founder and his Queen, which occupies most of the eastern half of the Chapel, is a great work of art by the Italian, Torrigiani. The Altar erected against the west end of this monument is largely a reproduction of the original, but some few remaining fragments of the 16th-century Altar have been incorporated in it. The exceptionally high Stalls are contemporary with the building and are allotted to the Knights of the Bath, whose Chapel this is. The crests and banners of the living Grand Cross Knights hang over the Stalls and are delivered to their next of kin on their decease. Behind the Stalls on either side are graceful Aisles, one of which contains the tomb of Queen Elizabeth I, and the other those of Mary, Queen of Scots, and of the Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. The east end of the Chapel forms a small enclosure which until recently was empty, but is now the Royal Air Force Memorial Chapel. The window by Hugh Easton commemorates the 63 squadrons that fought in the Battle of Britain, and embodies all their badges.

Continued on page 16

In Poets' Corner are many memorials to illustrious English men and women whose arts have enriched the literature and theatre of their native land. ABOVE: The bust of John Milton (1608–74). BELOW: The memorial to Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400), earliest of the immortal English poets. Son of a London vintner, he was a page to Lionel, third son of Edward III, and later served the King in several capacities. His best known work "The Canterbury Tales," written about 1387 was printed by Caxton at Westminster in 1475. Chaucer died in poverty in the precincts of the Abbey, and his grave at the entrance to St. Benedict's Chapel was first marked by a leaden slab hung on a nearby pillar. In 1556 the poet Nicholas Brigham, at his own expense, erected the fine tomb now seen.

ABOVE: The corner of the South Transept known as Poets' Corner. Above is the Rose or Wheel Window, the largest of its type. The painted glass is modern. BELOW: The Canada Club Chairs and Faldstools which were used by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) when they attended official services or functions in the Abbey. The gift of the Canada Club of London, these examples of 20th-century craftsmanship are made of Canadian wood finished in ebony and gold, and are the work of Mr. Sebastian Comper.



ABOVE: The exterior of the Henry VII Chapel. BELOW: The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, just inside the Western Doors, is the most simple but yet the most impressive of all the memorials in the Abbey. It commemorates the fallen of World War One, and is marked by a plain slab of black Belgian marble bearing an epitaph in gold letters. On Armistice Day, 11th November, 1920, the body of an unknown soldier selected at random from the multitudes of British dead in France was reburied in the presence of King George V and "a vast concourse of the nation." Red Flanders poppies—emblems of sacrifice—always decorate the tomb.

THE LIFE OF THE BENEDICTINE MONKS

At this point only the width of a street separates Westminster Abbey from Old Palace Yard upon which now stands the House of Lords.

For a long time the other end of the Abbey had a very incomplete appearance. The West Front was flanked by the lower half of what were evidently meant to be two great towers, but it was not until 1734 that Hawksmoor completed them from designs by Sir Christopher Wren. This was done by the efforts of an excellent Dean, Joseph Wilcocks, Bishop of Rochester, whose monument in the Nave bears, suitably enough, a fine representation of the Abbey from the north-west. The gaily coloured West Window gives its own date, 1735, in large figures.

There has been no more building of any consequence since, but the war effected one great improvement. An incendiary bomb set fire to the roof of the Crossing where, beneath a very stumpy centre tower, there was a temporary ceiling only some 130 years old. This fell into the Church without doing much damage and has now been replaced with a permanent roof which is slightly steeper than the old roof, and this decidedly improves the appearance of the Abbey from outside.

Since 1065 the buildings at Westminster Abbey have been occupied by churchmen, but the life of the occupants has been of two differing kinds. From 1065 until 1540, when the Abbey was Dissolved, the precincts housed a monastery; from 1560 until the present they have housed a Collegiate Church. The Abbots of the earlier period have given place to the Deans whose unbroken line continues to our own day. The monks have been succeeded by the Canons of Westminster. The place is now called an Abbey only by tradition.

The life of the monks is not difficult to picture. They were Benedictines, living in a regular but not too severe a way based on the directions which St. Benedict had given for the community he founded at Monte Cassino abour 530. They spent their time at Services in the Church both by day and by night, in reading and writing, in gardening and in going abroad (that is outside the precincts) on the business of the Abbey or of the king. They had to look after their many estates, and they visited their daughter houses. The Abbey owned a great deal of property in many parts of England, and although the monks as individuals were officially without possessions they actually had money to spend. The young ones were often sent to Oxford to study. Later on they sometimes found occasion or excuse for a change from their own familiar Cloister. The old ones would probably have spent their last years in the Infirmary where the Little Cloister was and still is.

The Abbot was a very important person. He entertained a great deal and went about on affairs of

In the Nave hangs this mediaeval portrait, believed to be a likeness of Richard II. Son of the Black Prince, Richard was crowned in 1377 when he was ten.

* * *

State. He had numerous servants and a great house and household. Many of the other monks were officers, or Obedientiaries as they were called. They lived, and frequently they slept, in their offices. Such were the Priot (the second in command), the Cellarer, the Almoner, the Sacrist, the Infirmarer. Those who were not officers slept in the dormitory, as in theory everyone did. The dormitory which adjoined the end of the South Transept is now the Library of the Dean and Chapter and the great school room of Westminster School. It was over 170 feet long, and as there were never more than 60 monks, and usually much fewer, they generally contrived to have some sort of cubicle to themselves. Part of the stairs by which they came down into the Church by night is still to be seen.

The organisation of the Collegiate Church in accordance with the Charter Queen Elizabeth I granted in 1560 was rather different. The corporate body or College which stood possessed of the building and such property as she chose to confer upon them consisted of a Dean and twelve Prebendaries. Each

Continued on page 20

ABOVE: The Coronation Chair. Every monarch of Britain* has been crowned in this ancient Chair since Edward I ordered it to be made to enclose the Stone of Scone which he brought from Scotland in 1297. The Chair is made from English oak and was originally richly painted and decorated with patterns of birds, animals and foliage on a gold background. The Coronation Chair is now but a battered remnant of the beautiful object conceived by Edward I, but it nevertheless is one of the Nation's most cherished relics. In this photograph the Chair is arranged for the Coronation of King George VI. BELOW: The Stone of Scone, also known as the Stone of Destiny. This rough piece of sandstone is the source of many legends, but it is historic fact that the ancient Scottish kings were crowned upon it. Fergus II is said to have seized it from the Irish in the 5th century, where on the hill at Tara it was used at the coronations of Irish Kings.

**Except Edward V who was murdered and Edward VIII who abdicated.*

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CHAPEL IN ALL CHRISTENDOM"

THIS description of the Henry VII Chapel is hardly exaggerated, for the elaborate and delicate tracery of the fan-vaulted ceiling, the magnificent carved stalls, the coloured banners of the Knights of the Bath and the superb Altar combine to present a picture of incredible beauty. When in 1519 the Chapel was completed and dedicated to the Virgin (in order, it is said, to assuage the founder's troubled conscience), the place was of even greater splendour. Most of the original painted glass has been destroyed and the rich bejewelled ornaments have long since been plundered.

Henry was buried in his chapel, and his tomb was erected by his only surviving son, Henry VIII. The bronze grille which surrounds it (*left of photo, on facing page*) was originally gilded all over, and when first erected was a source of wonderment, for nothing approaching it in magnificence and elaboration had been seen in England before.

Members of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath are installed in the Henry VII Chapel, a custom originated by George I in 1725. Above is an impressive scene from the 1951 ceremony. King George VI as Sovereign of the Order stands before the Dean of Westminster who is at the Altar. LEFT: The charming memorial to Princess Sophia, daughter of James I, who died three days after her birth in 1606.

ABOVE: The North Cloister. BELOW: Off the East Cloister is the Pyx Chapel, a vaulted chamber built about 1060, which was part of the monastic buildings. The word "pyx" means a box, a box containing the standard pieces of gold and silver currency of the country being kept there. Once a year, the trial of the pyx—the testing of the coinage—took place in the chamber. In this photograph, an ancient treasure chest is seen; on the platform in the top foreground armed guards were once stationed. There is also a 13th-century stone altar in the Chapel.

A VALHALLA FOR THE GREAT AND NOBLE

Prebendary had a house and probably a wife, and he was usually the holder of some other benefice or of several, and was only bound to reside in the Precincts for a limited period each year. He might be a high-ranking ecclesiastic or a nobleman. For about 140 years (1666–1802) the Deanery was held with the Bishopric of Rochester. The Dean, although not entitled to the absolute obedience demanded by the Abbot, had many rights, but he also had (and still has) great responsibilities. The decision as to who shall be buried in the Abbey rests entirely with him for example. In one way the Collegiate Church is more strict than the monastery. The Dean and Canons must be in Holy Orders, the monks usually were so but need not have been.

The general effect of the changeover from Monastery to Collegiate Church has been that vastly more people come into the Abbey, and it has become the place where the history of the nation is exhibited in pageantry and has been made permanent in stone. But these effects have been brought about gradually. Until about 1820, the Church was like a college chapel, visited mostly by archaeologists and architects, but very sparsely attended at Service time. Even to this day the public have no right to be admitted; legally they come with the Dean's permission. Dean Ireland (1816–1842) threw open the Nave to the public, and in modern times great numbers of people visit the Church daily.

In the monastic days only Royal personages and high ecclesiastics were buried in the Abbey, but in the reign of Elizabeth, and thereafter, the nobility began to acquire vaults, and several very large monuments were erected. Some of these are of considerable beauty and interest. In the 17th century, as is fitting, the English poets joined the English nobility, and Spenser, Dryden, Tennyson and many others have followed Chaucer into Poets' Corner. In the 18th-century the burial of people of distinction in other spheres added new lustre: Dr. Johnson represents literature, for example, and beside him is his friend Garrick the actor, nearby Camden the historian and, in the Nave, Tompion the clock-maker. The musicians found a quarter to themselves behind the North Choir Stalls, close to the old organ. Purcell is there, and Croft, and Blow and, more recently, Charles Villiers Stanford.

In the 18th century, too, monuments began to be erected to those who were buried elsewhere. Shakespeare is buried in the Chancel of Trinity Church at Stratford-on-Avon, where he was a prominent citizen. Perhaps the people there thought London would ask to inter him, for he is buried in a grave 17 feet deep, and the short verse on his monument lays a curse on the man who moves his bones. But in 1740 a large statue of him was put up in Poets'

The Chapter House has a 13th-century tiled pavement in almost perfect condition. The tiles (see above) are as brilliant in colour as when they were first laid.

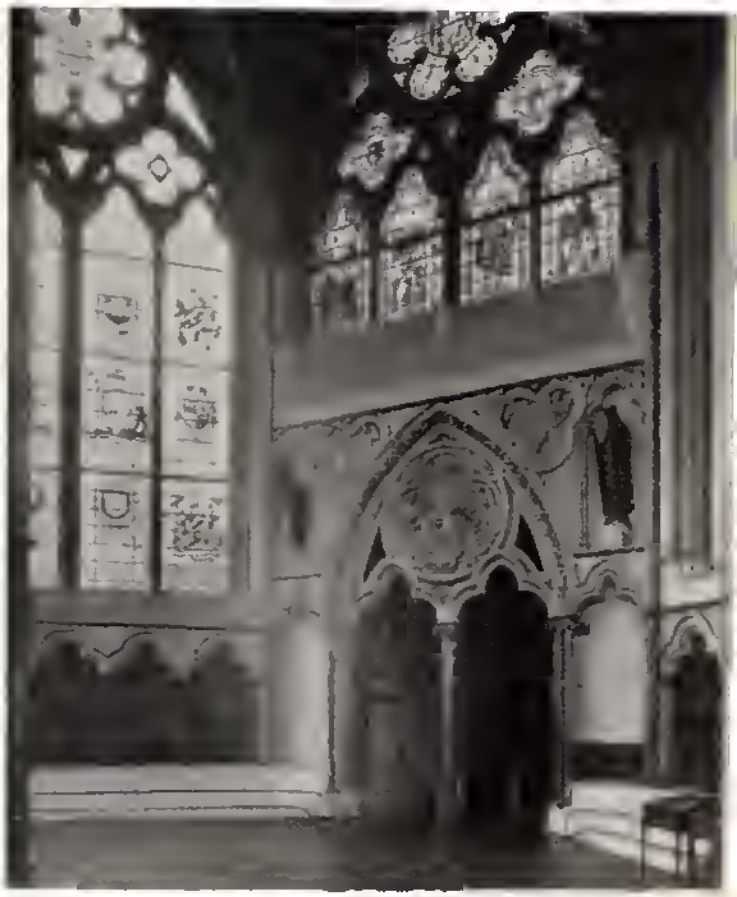
* * *

Corner as a testimony of public affection, so the inscription above his head tells you. Milton's bust is there, though he was buried in St. Giles', Cripplegate; and there is a medallion of Gray, who lies in the country churchyard of Stoke Poges. There is also a full-size statue of Wordsworth, whose remains rest in the Lake country where he lived.

The ashes and the likenesses of many scientists have accumulated in modern times round the monument and grave of Sir Isaac Newton. Soldiers and sailors, however, look now for lasting remembrance to St. Paul's, since Nelson and Wellington were buried there. Nevertheless, there are several fine monuments of former days to fighting men who died young or famous, and some of these are mingled with the statues of great statesmen. Many of the latter exhibit the taste of the Victorian age and somewhat spoil the proportions of the North Transept.

The present-day practice of cremation has led to monuments being superseded by small flat slabs in the floor. Recent Prime Ministers, authors, architects and Deans are so commemorated. This is not a new thing; through want of space it has become very necessary. But Edward VI, Mary I (underneath her sister Elizabeth), James I, Charles II, William and Mary, and Queen Anne are all buried in the Abbey without a monument, and this is true of George II also. His family vault beneath the floor of Henry VII's Chapel is spacious with its twelve coffins in orderly array, though it can now only be entered by taking up the pavement.

It must be confessed that the monuments have made sad havoc with the architecture. The beautiful arcade which runs all round the Abbey at the lowest stage is very largely obliterated, the windows are sometimes blocked up and in some places the fine effect that was intended has been greatly diminished. But the building taken as a whole remains



ABOVE: The Chapter House. This beautiful octagonal-shaped building was completed in 1253, and from the reign of Edward I (1272–1307) it was used as a Parliament House. Here the House of Commons sat until the end of Henry VIII's reign: in 1547 Edward VI granted the Commons the use of St. Stephen's Chapel in the old Palace of Westminster. On the dissolution of the monastery in 1540 the Chapter House passed to the Crown, and to this day the Dean and Chapter of Westminster have no rights over it. BELOW: The Undercroft. This great, vaulted chamber is part of the 11th-century Norman buildings; above it is the Abbey Library, which was once the monks' dormitory. The Undercroft is now used as a museum.

ABOVE: A Festival Procession at a High Service: The Station at the Nave Altar. BELOW: The Canons of Westminster are presented to Queen Elizabeth II when Her Majesty attended the ancient Royal Maundy ceremony, April, 1952. It was the first public engagement of her reign. The custom of Royal Maundy dates from the earliest Christian days in Britain when monks washed the feet of the poor on Maundy Thursday in obedience to Christ's command (*Mandatum*) to love one another. Up to 1689 the King in person performed the menial task before distributing purses of money to poor people. Since James II's day this part of the Service has been discontinued, but for many hundreds of years the reigning Sovereign has provided money, food and clothing for as many poor persons as there were years in his or her age. On the occasion of the 1952 ceremony, Her Majesty presented 26 old men and women with purses of specially minted silver Maundy pence. Canon Adam Fox, D.D., the author of this book, is third from the left in the photograph. A further scene from the Royal Maundy ceremony is seen on the back cover. The traditional nosegays, the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and others are carrying, are a custom of medieval days when a posy of sweet smelling herbs and flowers was believed to ward off the plague.

THE GREATEST PAGEANT OF CHURCH AND STATE

one of the greatest examples of Gothic architecture, and it contains many works of art not only in the way of monuments, but in the way of pictures, plate and fabrics. In Service time, too, the Abbey pays tribute to the great achievement of English music and the English Church musicians. In hardly any other place in the world has more been gathered together to please the senses and elevate the mind and soul.

There is of course one association with the Abbey which gives it a peculiar interest. It is the place of the Coronation of our kings and queens. The Coronation takes place in front of the High Altar, but the actual crowning is only the culmination of a whole series of ceremonies. Two essential features are the Recognition of the king or queen regnant by the people and the Anointing of his or her body. A platform is erected under the central space between the Choir and the Sanctuary. The representatives of the State and People are in the Choir and in tiered stands erected temporarily in the Transepts. A great concourse in the Nave has already witnessed the progress of the Sovereign up the Church accompanied and supported by the great Officers of State, and now he or she is presented to the people by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and acclaimed by them with loud cries of God save the King (or Queen)! This means that the monarch is the popular choice as well as the lawful successor to the throne.

The Anointing with consecrated oil has quite another significance. It gives a peculiar sanctity to the person of the sovereign who is anointed on the hands, the head and the breast. In old days the new king hastened to be crowned, because an anointed king would be less likely to be assassinated. Thus Harold was crowned the very day after Edward the Confessor died, and Henry III, who became king

Continued on page 24

Some of the specially minted 1d., 2d., 3d. *and* 4d. *silver coins distributed by Queen Elizabeth II during the* 1952 *Royal Maundy ceremony.*

This photograph is of unusual interest because it offers an authentic impression of one English king and three queens of ancient days. When it was taken, Mr. R. Howgrave-Graham, F.S.A., the Ass. Keeper of the Muniments, had completed a restoration of the Abbey funeral effigies, some of which date from the 14th century, after war-time storage had damaged them. From left to right, the effigies represent: Anne of Bohemia, first Queen of Richard II, died 1394; Henry VII, died 1509; Anne of Denmark, Queen of James I, died 1619 and Elizabeth of York, Queen of Henry VII, died 1503. In medieval times it was the custom for a richly dressed, life-sized effigy of a dead king or queen to be carried in the funeral procession.

The wax effigies, now kept in the Undercroft Museum, are almost as interesting as the medieval funeral effigies. The oldest is that of Charles II (*below, left*). He is dressed in the blue and red velvet robes of the Garter; his face was modelled at the time of his death. For 200 years this effigy stood above his grave in Henry VII's Chapel. Other waxworks in the collection include Queen Anne (*bottom, centre*) and Admiral Lord Nelson (*bottom, right*). The burial of the victor of Trafalgar drew vast crowds to St. Paul's, and, in order to provide a counter attraction, the Abbey authorities had the effigy of Nelson set up.

ABOVE: Mr. James Higgs, one of the vergers, gives the final polish to the superb gold-plate salvers and chalices which adorn the High Altar during Services. The collection has been amassed since the days of Charles II who, on his Restoration, found the Abbey stripped of most of its treasures. Many cherished Abbey relics joined the Crown Jewels in the Commonwealth melting pot. The gold plate is kept in a stronghold under one of the Chapels. BELOW: In the Crypt under the Chapter House are kept the vestments, copes and ornaments of the altars. Miss M. Groves, an expert ecclesiastical needlewoman is here seen repairing a cope which was worn at Charles II's Coronation.

The Annexe which is built on to the western end of the Abbey for the Coronation. In this temporary structure the procession is formed before passing into the Nave through the West Door, which can be seen.

* * *

at the age of nine, was hurried off to Gloucester Cathedral by the Papal Legate and crowned there a very few days after his accession. He was crowned again at Westminster when he was twelve, perhaps to satisfy the citizens of London and secure their loyalty.

At the Coronation the sovereign is equipped symbolically with the power and authority which is needed for the fulfilment of the great office. Sitting on the Chair, he or she is clothed with garments which have something of a priestly shape and sanctity. The Officers of State invest the sovereign with girdle and sword and ring, and in his or her hands are carried the orb and sceptres. As the Archbishop performs the act of crowning, all those who are entitled to wear coronets put them on, the trumpets sound, the bells peal, and London East and West is informed of the great event by the firing of guns at the Tower and in Hyde Park.

The Coronation of Queen Victoria was the occasion of great confusion and uncertainty, but her three successors have seen to it by their insistence on every detail that these august rites and ceremonies should be of peculiar solemnity, and the nation has recognised them as such.

Westminster Abbey is a great triumph of our western civilisation. All who speak English as their native tongue or owe anything to English law or British administration should visit it if they can, because it enshrines memories of almost all that the Anglo-Saxon races have achieved, and contains the memorials of so many of our legislators, judges and statesmen. But the Abbey was built above all for a House of Prayer, and no visitor who enters its historic portals should leave without a prayer for peace upon earth.

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