

## VI.—THE CITY AND CATHEDRAL OF ELY.\*

Being, while in London, within sixty-seven miles of Ely, the birth-place of an ancestor who emigrated to America nearly one hundred years ago, I felt some curiosity to see the place and, if possible, find out something more of the family origin and ancestry. A pleasant two hours' ride through a level but beautiful country brought us to the old cathedral city of Ely.

Like most cathedral cities it is a sleepy old place. It occupies rising ground in the midst of a vast flat plain, known as the Fens, which before the days of drainage was an almost impenetrable marsh, but which is now, however, a highly cultivated and fruitful district. The city is partially encircled by the little river Ouse, which near Ely receives the waters of the Cam, which latter flows through Cambridge sixteen miles south. Ely, also called from its originally moist inaccessibility the Isle of Ely, was the last place in England to hold out against the Norman invader, William the Conqueror. The place was founded as a religious community by the Saxon queen Etheldreda a little over twelve hundred years ago, the good queen herself retiring from her throne to become the abbess of the new establishment. Soon after the conquest, the Norman ecclesiastics who obtained control of the property, began the erection of the present cathedral, one of the largest in England, and now nearly eight hundred years old. It was originally a pure Norman structure, very massive and imposing. Early in the fourteenth century the central tower which had been overloaded with a tall spire, fell with a crash, and destroyed in its fall the choir or eastern end of the structure. This was then rebuilt in the Decorated Gothic style of the period, of which it is one of the most beautiful specimens to be found. Where the central tower formerly stood a large octagon was constructed, with a wooden vaulted roof surmounted by an immense lantern, the whole forming something entirely unique in Gothic architecture, and, now that it has been fully restored and redecorated, a work of exceeding beauty. At a later period chapels were added to the cathedral in the Perpendicular Gothic style, so that the building to-day illustrates every form of architecture from the earliest Norman to the latest Gothic, which makes it a peculiarly interesting edifice.

Dean Merivale, the eminent historian, is the dean of Ely cathedral. Services are held at ten and four o'clock every day, and the music is very superior.

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\* An extract from the author's work "Five Months Abroad." Detroit: F. B. Dickerson & Co., publishers, 1882.