

## Canon Richard Hall 1851-1942

Canon Abraham Richard Hall, M.A., was the Vicar of Wreay from 1893 until his retirement in 1940 at the age of eighty nine years. 'During his ministry,' he wrote, 'the Church has been re-roofed, re-decorated internally, and heated with hot-water, the Cemetery has been re-drained, the chapel re-roofed, and the Schools have been much enlarged, and new outbuildings erected.'

Canon Hall wrote a short description of the village in which he included his interpretation of the symbolism of St Mary's.

'At either side of the archway leading into the apse is a head, that of a man to the north and a woman to the south - the only human forms introduced into the structure of the Church, given here a place of honour, are belonging to the highest development of life upon earth. But up above, over the chancel arch, are seven angels, separated by palm trees, and an archangel at each side, one with a dragon carved on the bracket beneath his feet and the other with a bat pursuing a butterfly in the same position. The thought, no doubt is that of the triumph of good over evil, the winged things of light trampling on the winged things of darkness, and their position there is to remind us that at every Eucharist of ours we join "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, to laud and magnify God's glorious name".

The altar is a green marble slab supported by two bronze eagles. The eagle, here as in the bell turret and elsewhere, is an emblem of aspiration, and the Holy Table, borne on eagles' wings, is an invitation - "Sursum corda," "Lift up your hearts." On the stone pediment below are carved ears of corn and bunches of grapes, referring both to the elements of Holy Communion and to our Lord as the Bread of Life and true Vine. The altar candlesticks are of alabaster carved in the shape of lotus flowers. The lotus was a sacred emblem both in Egypt and India, its petals representing the rays of the sun, and its meaning, enlightenment; so here it is used to hold the two candles, which are types of our Lord as the Light of the World, in his two-fold nature of God and man.

. . . In the seven central niches the wall is pierced to receive lamps of different tints of orange colour. . . in the Wreay lamps the light comes from one and the same source, just as the One Spirit may exhibit itself in the form of different graces, as it passes through different personalities. Above the sedilia is a semi-circular drum . . . pierced by a row of small, deeply-set windows, twenty-nine in all, of plain glass except the thirteen in the centre, which are filled with tracery. Thin sheets of alabaster have been carved to represent fossil forms, usually of ferns or other vegetation, but an insect in one case. . .

The two tall lampstands at either side of the sanctuary are made of metal, copied from those found at Pompeii, and the lamps upon them are of the Roman shape. To attach the lamps to the stands, Miss Losh gave the gold necklace chains of herself and her sister, but these are now kept in the safe of the Church.

The grouping of the windows is of interest. The symbolical numbers are three (for God), four (for creation), and seven (for completion or perfection). So at the west end of the Church there are three times three small windows at each side, climbing up to the apex of the roof, and three large windows below, making in all seven times three windows in that wall. At each side of the nave there are four windows, with a group of three above. All the windows in the Church, including the two small ones near the pulpit and the reading-desk, and those round the apse, number eighty-four, i.e., three, four, and seven multiplied together. All the windows, with the exception of those round the apse and the two by the pulpit and lectern, are filled with fragments of stained glass, leaded together without any regular pattern in most cases, though in some cases crosses or geometrical forms are introduced, and in each of the smaller ones a flower appears - a different one in each. These are shown in circles at the head of those windows in which the rest is filled with fragments; but in the case of the centre of each three in the nave walls, and each alternate window of those on the west gable, a thin sheet of stone has been carved in the shape of a flowering plant, and the interstices of the stone filled in with coloured glass. The only old glass is that used to form the "Deadly Nightshade" in the centre of the north-east group of three. This was formed of old French glass, picked up by Miss Losh's cousin, Mr. William Losh, from among the ruins of the chapel of the palace of the Archbishop of Paris, when it had been wrecked by a mob. I suppose the special flower was chosen to typify the fatal effects of the revolutionary spirit when it is allowed to run riot.'

Canon Hall was remembered as a man of charming manner, great knowledge, and untiring in every cause he espoused. Besides serving as Vicar of Wreay and, for thirty-seven years, as an Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral, Canon Hall was Rural Dean of Carlisle South (1904 - 25), Secretary of the Diocesan Education Society (1905 - 23), and one of the founders of the Carlisle Clergy Society from 1889 to 1896.