

## The Lord Mayor's Chapel at Bristol.

THE ancient city of Bristol possesses many old world buildings telling of mighty barons who founded churches and monasteries, and wealthy merchants who gave liberally of their riches for the glory of God and the service of their fellow men ; but amongst them all, the Lord Mayor's Chapel, otherwise called the Church of St. Mark, stands by itself, in many respects absolutely unique. Not only is it an ecclesiastical gem, but also one of the most interesting links which the city still holds with the picturesque and historic past. It is also by no means well known to those visiting Bristol, or even to many residents in its suburbs, so that a short description will not be out of place. It is indeed a shrine of faith, of loving service, of history and of memories linked to the great city by countless ties ; it is impossible to pass into its cloistered calm and not be touched by its message to succeeding generations, its personal appeal.

One might easily walk by the chapel unawares, for it is built about by houses facing the College Green, though above their roofs and chimneys rises the tower with its flag waving nearly as high as the bare branches of the leafless trees. It is only on view Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from eleven to three o'clock, and entering through a species of vestibule guarded on either side by the tombs of Lord Richard Berkeley, who died in 1604, and a sixteenth century Mayor, we find immediately below us a flight of steps leading down into the nave of the chapel, the history of which is partly told by the effigies and memorials it contains. Dim and mysterious with the soft colours streaming through painted windows, fraught with the atmosphere of centuries ago, calm and still in its screened seclusion, stands the Gaunts' Chantry Chapel at the south of the nave, and in the centre lie two Crusaders.

Sir Maurice Berkeley de Gaunt, member of the Berkeley family who lavished their wealth upon the Church with such a passion of devotion that they took an abbot's mitre for their crest—garbed in mail with his legs crossed at the knee, sleeps in the midst of such utter peace that it seems impossible to imagine the stir and bustle of the crowded city's busy life is passing to and fro within a few yards of the building. Almost a century after Robert Fitzharding,

first Lord of Berkeley, had founded the monastery church of St. Augustine, Maurice, who took his mother's surname of Gaunt, founded the hospital of St. Mark for benevolent rather than monastic purposes, a refuge for wayfarers, and to relieve the needy. Maurice died but two years afterwards and was naturally buried in the chapel of his foundation, where also lies the second Crusader, the son of his half-sister Eva, and his heir. Robert de Gournay carried on the benefactions to the Gaunts' hospital as it was called, for he confirmed and supplemented the Charter and dedicated it to "God, the Blessed Mary and the Blessed Mark." Maurice had, of course, provided a chaplain, but de Gournay enlarged the scheme, ordering a master and three chaplains "to offer perpetually for the faithful and the refecton of 100 poor every day for ever." A manor was granted for the support of the Master-Almoner—a younger brother of Maurice, Henry de Gaunt, was the first to hold the post, and his effigy also rests within the chapel—twelve brethren, five lay, and twenty-seven poor people, of whom twelve were to be scholars and serve in the choir wearing "black caps and surplices." Such destitute choir boys received their education free, and the chapel probably became more or less the collegiate church of the hospital, for much work was done amongst the surrounding sick and poor who also had food distributed to them. It was the kind of establishment common to that age which did so much good, and which must have been so sadly missed when ecclesiastical foundations were suppressed by grasping King Henry VIII.

Before that time, however, the chapel had been much enriched by the addition of the Poyntz Chantry Chapel which we should never see without being specially instructed by the verger, for the organ blocks the narrow way by which it is reached. It is small but very beautiful, with a fan roof which is curiously like that of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster, and it has a Holy Table, though I do not think it is used nowadays. Here, too, have been brought sundry relics, including some sculptured slabs, one of which portrays Christ rising from the tomb. But it is very different from the time when Sir Robert Poyntz of Iron Acton—who was connected by marriage with Bristol's great benefactors, the Berkeleys—founded his chantry chapel between 1510 and 1520 when he died.

Did he not provide, as the custom was, a chantry priest to say

masses for his soul at the "altar," the said priest to have a salary of £6 and to be "tabled and lodged within same house of the Gaunts" ? The richly canopied niches were not empty then, and the encaustic tiles we see were brought from Spain by the founder's son to add to the wealth of colour and carving lavished on the chapel. The tiny ante-chapel by which it is approached is now occupied by the organ, but close by is an outer door leading into a little paved side alley, quaint and fascinating.

There were others who also enriched the foundation, to wit, Bishop Miles-Salley of Llandaff, who lies in state within the sanctuary with his episcopal ring and staff. He rebuilt the chancel about 1,500 and bequeathed for use at the "High Altar" his best chalice and missal.

A picture representing the "Descent from the Cross" hangs above the Holy Table, the stone reredos has some exquisite filigree work, while the sedilia show a bolder pattern. Very richly canopied above, adorned with small figures and armorial bearings, is the tomb of Sir Thomas Berkeley who lies with his feet on a hound and attired in armour. His wife Catherine wears a long robe and a necklace round her throat. From the north transept, which must have been originally another chapel, runs a narrow little cloister, straight and gloomy, used no doubt to give access to the hospital buildings.

When all monasteries, chantries, free colleges, hospitals and similar foundations had an end at the Dissolution, the chapel and adjoining lands were given to the Bristol Corporation, a gift for which payment of twenty pounds sterling or "the service of one knight's fee" was exacted from the King. It is said that there was some difficulty in raising the money. However, many uses were made of the establishment. The Huguenots were allowed to worship in the chapel until about 1720, when the Corporation commenced to use it as their official church, and it is more frequently called the Lord Mayor's Chapel than any other name. There is, I believe, only one other Corporation besides Bristol which thus possesses a church of its own. John Carr, who lies in the chapel, founded Queen Elizabeth's Hospital which subsequently became Bristol Grammar School, and the scholars attended service in the chapel. Now the Merchant Venturers' Technical College occupies the site. Thus it is that amongst the effigies of knights in armour in the Church of St. Mark, one finds memorials to Lord Mayors

and Aldermen of Bristol, and traces of that civic life which has always been so prominent in this city by the Avon so noted for its princely merchants, its shipping and foreign trade, not to speak of the profitable practice of slave-trading.

There is another rather strange link in the cycle of conflicting histories. Over the arch giving access to the Gaunts' Chapel is a painted window portraying St. Thomas à Becket with all the glory of coming martyrdom in his eyes.

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