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On the Rise of Bristol Trade.

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EVERY reader of history, every one who takes the trouble to compare nation with nation will acknowledge that the things which make a people great and happy are their liberty and their trade; and these have oftener found their home in the Market place, the Exchange and the Guildhall, than in the Court, the Castle or the Camp. Born as I am of a family of Bristol burghers, and indebted to Bristol trade and enterprize, I feel especial pleasure in tracing their rise in this town. The first mention of Bristol with which we meet is in the reign of Cnut, one of his pennies, of which there are several slightly

different varieties, being stamped with the name of this town. It therefore comes before us at once as a place of no small importance, and possibly owing much to the Danish rule. As at that time all the south and east of Ireland was held by the Northmen, or as they were then called Ostmen, Cnut no doubt felt the importance of so good and well situated a port for trade with that country. For the Northmen were not merely savage pirates, they sought for trade as well as plunder and their long seaworthy ships served equally well for either purpose. Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and Limerick, towns still connected closely enough with Bristol were the seats of Danish rule and emporiums of Danish trade. It is in connection with these towns that the port of Bristol is first mentioned, and it was from trade with Ireland and with the Northmen in their own homes that the wealth of the city seems to have sprung. Before, as well as after the conquest, the way to Ireland was from hence, for Wales was of course an unconquered land. In 1051 the port was used for the first time, as far as we know, on an occasion of national importance. In the autumn of that year the hatred between the house of Godwine and the foreign party at the court of Eadward burst into a flame, the King sided with the Frenchmen, and the northern Earls, Leofric and Siward, glad of an opportunity of lessening their rival's almost unbounded power, and overthrowing the West Saxon influence in the council, marched to Gloucester with all the forces of the north. At a full meeting of the Witan at London, the whole family of Godwine were outlawed. Harold and his brother Leofwine fled to Bristol, part of the earldom of Gloucester which Swein held, and went on board a ship which Swein had got ready and victualled; and the King sent Ealdred the Bishop

of London to outride them before they got on board, but he either could not or would not, and they went thence out of Avon mouth and there met with such violent weather that they could scarce get away and were much damaged, and when the weather allowed they sailed away to Ireland, there they stayed with the Danish King at Dublin.

Once again Harold sailed from this port in 1063, when he went thence to make his famous and decisive campaign against the Welsh.

But Bristol ships sailed to Ireland on a far worse errand than to aid the escape of the patriot earl, or to carry him against the old enemies of his nation. Bristol was the market of the English slave trade, and it was from this shameful traffic that the prosperity of our town began. In Domesday Book the number of slaves is rather over 2500, nearly one eleventh of the whole population there reckoned. Of these many no doubt were the descendants of the conquered Welsh; for the strife between the two nations was carried on for centuries, sometimes by regular campaigns like that of 1063, always by a wasting border warfare, so that the slave population was constantly recruited. The nearness of this town to Wales, and its marches made it no doubt a convenient place for a traffic in captives. But the rest of the slaves were English, who had become so either because they or their forefathers had failed to pay the weregild, the fine for murder, or some other compensation for crime; or who had been taken in war; or who had sold themselves for bread in those times of famine which now and again wasted the land; or who had even been kidnapped by their fellow countrymen. All these could be bought and sold inside the island, the price of a slave being about four times as much as that of an ox. But heavy penalties were enacted against those who

sold their brethren to the heathen. The frequency of the laws against this practice would alone prove their powerlessness, and a Danish writer* of the beginning of the 11th century tells us that the poorer English were kidnapped in great numbers by their fellow countrymen, and that even children in their cradles were sent off to foreign slavery. And he sees the vengeance of God carried out by his countrymen on a people guilty of so great a crime; just as at the Council of Armagh an hundred and fifty years later, the Irish Bishops declared that the wrath of Heaven was shown by the just judgement of the conquest because Ireland was full of English slaves. William of Malmesbury tells us that Bristol became the great scene of this national crime because the direct course to Ireland was from thence, that the agents of the city went throughout the whole kingdom buying not only men, but even women, who after they had ministered to the pleasure of their masters, were sold when with child to be sent into foreign slavery. The royal revenue was increased by the sale of these unhappy beings, so that the merchants of Bristol could have found no difficulty in evading the law. At the earnest entreaty of Lanfranc, William interfered with this Irish slave trade, but he does not seem to have entirely stopped it. This good deed was done by Wlstan, the English Bishop of Worcester. For two or three months he preached every Sunday in the town, until at last men came to a better mind and gave up the crime. But one trader went on still in his wickedness, which so offended the new converts that they drove him out of the town and blinded him.

This trade between Bristol and Ireland probably determined the sons of Harold to land at this port in 1069. It

* Lupi Sermo ad Anglos—Langebek, 1014.

was the most natural place for Irish ships to put in at, and for Irish sailors to expect a welcome. But the men of the burgh stood on their defence and beat off the invaders manfully.

The city was yet to have a closer and more remarkable connection with Ireland. Dermot, King of Leinster, being driven from his dominions, went to King Henry to get his help. The King, who was then in Aquitaine, had no leisure to engage in Irish enterprize, but gave Dermot authority to enlist his subjects in his cause. He then came to Bristol, where he lived for some time, being able in this way to keep up communication with his Irish friends; here he published the king's letters patent and stayed until he returned to Ireland early the next year, followed by Richard of Clare, and others. The success of the Earl of Pembroke roused the jealousy of King Henry, and he was forced in 1171 to return to England to appease him. There he engaged to give up Dublin and some other lands to the king. Thus the Irish capital became part of the king's demesne land, which he could grant to any one he chose. In 1172 he took possession of this new demesne, and at the close of that year, or the beginning of the next, he published a charter "granting the city to the men of Bristol to inhabit with the same liberties and free customs which the men of Bristol have at Bristol and throughout my whole land." This extraordinary charter is dated at Dublin and is still in the archives of that city. The effect of it was that several Bristol merchants settled there under the protection of Hugh de Lacy, and brought with them English municipal liberty and trade. A curious parallel to this grant is that given by James to the citizens of London, of vast possessions in the city and county of Derry, after the rebellion of O'Dogherty. In the reign of

John we find a petition from the burghers of Dublin, by whom is meant probably the Bristol men there settled, asking for the liberties granted to Bristol by King Henry and confirmed by John. The answer* is given in an almost literal copy of the great charter granted to this city by John, while Earl of Gloucester, and in one clause especial reference is made to it. Thus we find a second Bristol on the other side of the channel, an Irish city with every sign of mercantile life, an oasis in that desert of rapine and misery. Nothing could have shown a more enlightened policy than this grant. When Edward III. established a colony in Calais he in like manner gave to his emigrated burghers their old municipal rights; and making allowance for the growth of these, the colonists of Calais were in much the same position as the Bristol colonists of Dublin. Henry V. in his scheme for colonizing Harfleur neglected this policy, and failed because he did so, the mistake was seen by his unfortunate son but it was too late to remedy it. The prosperity and happiness of an English burgher especially in such a town as Bristol depended on the liberty of trade, and he would have risked his all and often did so for the sake of it.

I have thus traced the connection between this city and Ireland for a century and an half from the first authentic mention of it in the reign of the Danish King, when possibly many Danes carried on trade here which may account for the fabled parentage of the celebrated Harding, to the time when it received its great charter from John, and sent out a colony to take possession of the capital of Ireland, or perhaps speaking more correctly enlarged itself by taking Dublin within its own limits. After this time there are

* Published in the Report of the Commissioners of the Public Records of Ireland.

plenty of well-known instances of Bristol being used as the port for crossing over to Ireland, and though I have not been able to find many records of its trade with that country still we have enough to show that it certainly was carried on. The closeness of the connection is proved by an incident quoted by Mr. Seyer from two calendars in which under the year 1445 certain Irishmen are spoken of as having been made burghers of this city.

Meanwhile we find other signs of the growth of the city's wealth. The rent paid to the king according to the assessment of Domesday Book is unfortunately joined with that of the manor of Barton Regis, but that of the latter was probably not large. Both together they amounted to 110 marks of silver, which is equal to £73 6*s.* 8*d.*; to this must be added £28 paid to Gosfrith, Bishop of Coutance, Warden of the Castle, making altogether £101 6*s.* 8*d.* This was larger than the rent paid by any other town there mentioned, but from it must be deducted the annual value of the manor of Barton, and this we cannot settle on account of the great difference between the recorded values of lands even in the same district.

The trade of the city was not confined to Ireland. William of Malmesbury says that "the port of Bristol was full of ships not only from Ireland but from Norway and every part of Europe which brought thither much foreign wealth." The mention of Norway is noteworthy, for if my idea of an early Scandinavian connection is correct we have here a proof of its continuance. It reached its highest point in the 15th century under Canynges. The author of the Gesta Stephani gives a remarkable account of the commercial importance of the city, in his time the great stronghold of the empress. "Now Bristol is almost the richest of the cities of the land, and receives

by sailing vessels the wealth of neighbouring and far off countries. It stands in the most fruitful part of England, and is by nature the most defensible of all the cities of England." And he goes on to liken it to Brundusium, in that two rivers wash its sides which meet together where the land is defective and form a great quantity of water. This was the case at one of the old mouths of the Frome which formed the Marsh, on part of which Queen's Square now stands. And he further tells us that the strength of the tide caused the rivers to form an harbour which could hold a thousand ships in perfect safety. A town with so large a foreign trade could not have been without manufactures, and we have a curious notice of one of these in the time of Richard I.* It comes in the old story of the sacrifice of a boy at the Jewish feast. In this case a Jew is represented as forwarding a French youth to his countrymen at Winchester, under pretence of mending his fortune but really to supply them with a victim. He warns him against the other cities of the kingdom, giving a special reason against each lest the boy should be tempted to go to any of them and so escape his fate, and he goes on to say "at Bristol there is no one who is not or has not been a soap maker," adding that that useful employment was much despised by the French, a curious forestalling of the never ending joke against that nation. A tradition of an early soap manufacture and trade with London in that article preserved in a MS. calendar, and quoted by Mr. Seyer is thus confirmed.

Before we go on to later times it would be well to say something of the way in which this trade was protected; how a trading city such as we have seen Bristol to have been could ever have risen up; how it could

* Richard of Devizes.

have gone on with ever increasing wealth in spite of foreign conquest and of civil war. The secret lay in union for trade. In the times of which I am speaking the energy of single men could have done but little towards the defence of their trade or the liberty of their city. Each craft, trade, or mystery, was protected by its own union or "guild." All the members of a guild contributed towards the common fund, they all had a share in the common interest. Each guild was in fact a body corporate, capable of holding lands and other goods in common and having its own government and officers. At its head was the alderman or eldest guild brother, chosen by all the members alike. And there is I think no doubt but that some of the wards and aldermen of our cities point to the lands held by the old trade guilds, under the jurisdiction or "soc" of the head of the guild or alderman. But besides these, in every place of commercial importance the traders united together and formed a guild merchant. This existed along side of the guilds of the various trades, but was different from them in that it embraced them all. The members were joined by oath and by common interest, they formed a self governing body with their alderman at their head, chosen no doubt from the aldermen of the several guilds included in it. In this corporate body all municipal administration was vested, they were the burghers, the good men of the town. It was by this body that charter after charter was won or bought from the overlord, and it is to its existence that we owe our well defined municipal rights, and all those things which have ever made our English towns the homes of civil and religious liberty. The guild merchant of each town could make separate laws for itself, and as it included all the other guilds, it really made laws for the whole trading

town, and thus the Guildhall was then, as it is now, the centre of municipal life. I have found no mention of the merchant guild of Bristol, for I have not been able to make the search which I had hoped for among the records of the city. But we have the Guildhall here, as elsewhere, and in the charter of John it is granted that the burghers may have all their reasonable guilds, as well as, or better than they had in the time of Earl Robert, son of Henry I. Both these however, may point only to the existence of separate trade guilds. And it is I think just possible that as Bristol rose into importance within a comparatively shorter time before the conquest than many other of our towns, (for I put no faith in stories of earlier times resting on far more modern authority), that the reality of a guild merchant may have existed without the name. It is evident from the history of the town that the reality at least did exist, that is to say that the burghers were a corporate body in whom the government of the town and of its trade was vested. All merchant guilds endeavoured as far as possible to monopolize trade, and the stranger trader was for a long time as much an object of jealousy as stranger wheat has been till our own day. And this was not confined to foreigners but to every one who was foreign to the town and its merchant guild. For example, in this town* no stranger was allowed to buy of a stranger, leather, corn, or wool, nor to stay in the town for the purpose of selling his goods for more than forty days; he was not allowed to sell wine save on board his ship, nor cloth save at the fair. This spirit of exclusion was carried still further, for no person dwelling within the town was allowed to trade unless he were a member of the merchant guild. Each man on entering the society had to swear that he

* See the Charter of John.

would obey its rules, and its alderman, the forerunner of the mayor, who was at its head. These rules of course varied in different cases but probably they sometimes pressed heavily on some of the members, just as some of the rules of our modern trade unions still do. For in the Laws* of the Four Burghs of Scotland, of which the customs of the English boroughs† were the patterns. "No shoemaker, butcher, or dyer was allowed to belong to the guild if he worked with his own hands." But in equality of position and closeness of union all inside the guild were "brethren." The alderman or mayor of the guild differed in nothing from the youngest guild-brother, save that his age, his character, or his wealth had caused all his brethren to choose him for their head. The way in which this gradually became changed, the way in which an oligarchy arose and arrogated to itself the common right, the struggle against this abuse in our own town of Bristol and the final triumph of the few in the establishment of a Common Council, I had hoped would have been told by Mr. Green, of Stepney, a man far more versed in such matters than I am.

Beside this standing court of the alderman and his guild-brethren for the management of municipal affairs the burghers of Bristol like the men of London had their own Husting or Hundred Court for civil and criminal cases from time immemorial, a right confirmed to them by King John, and also their own Court Leet for the management of the police of the borough. They were thus entirely independent of the family of the Berkeleys, who unsuccessfully disputed these rights both by violence and law, in the reign of Edward III.

* See Leges Quatuor Burgorum in the Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland.—Lex xciv "de Gilda Mercatoria."

† Owing to the long residence of King David in England.

One of the greatest hindrances to trade in early times was the right of the lord to levy tolls on merchandise coming into, or passing through his demesne. No goods could be carried anywhere without some vexatious demand under the name of passage, pontage, lastage, or kaiage, made even when they were but taken from one part of the lordship to another. From these dues the men of Bristol were exempted by a charter of Henry II., as far as the king's own demesne lands were concerned, for he could not of course interfere with the rights of other lords ; this charter was no doubt granted to reward the city for its steady adherence to the cause of the empress, his mother. This important right was confirmed to them by John, indeed his reign forms a great era in the welfare of our city. From that time onwards the king became its immediate lord, and as the rights of the crown became defined in the great struggles of the 13th and 14th centuries, Bristol took a share in the noble strife and reaped its fitting reward in the enlargement of its liberty and trade. The most important question between the king and his towns, was of course the right of levying custom on merchandise by his own authority without the consent of Parliament. For a long time the king did this to the great damage of trade. It was declared illegal by the Confirmation of Charters in the 25th year of Edward I. but was still carried on whenever the king was strong enough to enforce it. The Tolsey Court presided over by a steward appointed by the crown, heard and determined all matters connected with the king's dues. Besides the ordinary and legal customs which belonged to the crown, there were many which were levied as occasion offered. We hear of two which seem to have been especially annoying to this city. The first was an illegal exaction of fresh fish for the use of the

Constable of the Castle from every boat which came into this port; this was enforced by Edward I. who is said on most doubtful authority to have seized for a time the charter of the city on account of its obstinate resistance. The second was a toll called the cocket* paid I think on the registration of wool before it was shipped. This afterwards became a legal demand, but was not so I think in the reign of Edward II., it was withheld† during the great insurrection in his reign, and was especially retained as part of the jurisdiction of the Tolsey Court by the charter of Edward III., which made this city a county by itself.‡ Besides these two Bristol, as well as the other towns of England, suffered from the taxes on wool, well named the evil toll, and the forced levies of Edward III's reign. But these evils could not outweigh the good which came to a king's town for *they* were illegal and ought to have been, and often were, withstood, while the good came more naturally, for instead of having to fight a long and uphill battle against the undefined exactions of abbot or baron, the king's towns had to pay a fixed rent (firma burgi) either to the crown or to those to whom it was given or farmed, all other payments unless voted by parliament being illegal and such as could only be enforced by the strong hand. The charter of King John therefore stands out in a striking manner in the history of the city, because as we have seen it confirmed several liberties granted to its trade; it secured to the townsmen their own courts, and because it marks the time when the town became part of the king's demesne,§ a royal borough. From

* Vid. 27 Edw. III. 2. 1. † Rolls of Parl. 9 Edw. II.

‡ August 8th, 1373. 47 Edw. III.—Printed in Mr. Seyer's valuable collection.

§ By the marriage of John with Hawisa heiress of Earl Robert of Gloucester.

this time its foreign trade began to grow rapidly and its liberties became more and more settled and important in almost every reign. The immediate effect of this enlargement of its trading liberties was the making of the new dock by digging a new bed for the Frome. As this is told at some length by the learned and laborious Mr. Seyer, I will pass somewhat quickly over it. It was an undertaking which marks in the highest degree the wealth, the skill, and the large-mindedness of the burghers. The old course of the Frome seems to have crossed the end of Small Street and Corn Street, and to have flowed along the northern side of Baldwin Street, joining the Avon close by St. Nicholas Church. Here was the only quay of the town, along Bridge Street by St. Mary's Church, hence called St. Mary-le-port. Beside this main stream of the Frome, a branch flowed into the Avon through the Marsh, now Queen's Square. The burghers cut a new channel of great size, right through the Marsh, on the eastern side they made the new and present quay, having bought the land from the Church of St. Augustine, a fact preserved in the names St. Augustine's Parade, and St. Augustine's Back, while the rest was kept by the Church, and is still called Canons Marsh.

This enormous work is the best proof of the commercial prosperity of Bristol in the 13th century, it was one which no other town probably, except London, could have done. Beside this the bridge was built at the same time. Deeply interesting as the consequences were of thus joining Bristol and Redclive, the borough and the manor, leading probably to the creation of our county, they do not fall within my limits.

Let us turn to some of the particular trades carried on in this city. Of these the wine trade seems to have been

an important element in its prosperity. By the charter of John "no stranger was allowed to sell wine save on board his ship," a privilege also granted to London. This shows that importation had begun here, and that the burghers had the exclusive right of buying at the dock to sell again. In a talliage* levied 2nd Henry III., ten tuns of wine are required from this city, and as there is no mention of wine in the talliage of 7 Richard I., or in any before as far as I know, I am inclined to date the rise of the trade from the reign of John. It was of course a consequence of the union of England and Aquitaine by the marriage of Henry II. During the reigns of the Edwards, we find several notices of this trade in the Rolls of the Exchequer and elsewhere, London,† Southampton, Boston, and Kingston upon Hull, shared the trade of Bordeaux with this city, and the ships of both sides were employed in it. The Gascon merchants were especially protected by a charter of Edward I., confirmed by his son and grandson, but nevertheless they had to meet the jealousy of our English traders, especially here and in London. This became so serious that‡ in 1338 they had to petition that an officer might be sent to these two cities to protect them, and that a royal proclamation might be made that these outrages should cease on pain of punishment, which was accordingly done. But foreign trade in wine and indeed of all kinds was subject to even worse interruptions than native jealousy. The long war of the 14th century, and the practice of piracy, must have more than outweighed any number of royal charters of protection. In the 11th and 12th years§ of Edward III., we find writs commanding

* Madox Exchequer.

† Excheq. Rolls, 17 Edw. I. 18, and Rolls of Parl. 36 Edw. III., and Patent Rolls, 10 Edw. III., 2nd.

‡ Rolls of Parl. 8 Edw. III. § Excheq. Rolls.

that all the goods and persons of the French settled in or round Bristol should be seized. Although this probably did not extend to the merchants of Aquitaine, yet there is no reason for supposing that the carrying trade of wine was confined to them, and the very chance of such disasters, which happened pretty often, must have discouraged foreign merchants from settling here. Besides this the seas were made unsafe by privateers and pirates. In the year 1415* a ship of Bristol belonging to one John Fisher, was seized by the Bretons, and plundered. The Bristol men immediately applied for leave to make reprisals but the matter fortunately seems to have been made up quietly. Nor were the men of our own city quite blameless in this matter. Mr. Seyer records three instances from the Rolls of Parliament of acts of Bristol piracy, one in the reign of Edward I, of the seizure of a Dutch ship; the second which was one of great audacity, was the seizure of a ship lying inside the harbour of Dublin, while the master was out of her engaged in paying the dock fees; the third lies at the door of Lord Thomas Berkeley, and was perhaps rather a manifestation of native jealousy than a private act of plunder. Henry IV. had granted to the Genoese the right of importing wine from Bordeaux into England, and of exporting wool. One of the ships belonging to Lord Thomas sailing to Bordeaux, fell in with a large Genoese carrack laden with wine and plundered her, restitution was ordered but the foreigner came worse off in the end. I have also found that in Edward II's. reign,† Bristol men set on an Italian ship carrying wine to Holland, and robbed her of £40. The matter was handed over to the Admiral of the Aquitaine fleet

* Rolls. of Parl.—Seyer's Bristol c. xviii.
† Ab. Exchcq. Pleas, 18 Ed. II., rot. 18.

and the offenders were punished. But in spite of these hindrances the trade of the city rapidly increased. The reign of Edward III was a period of general commercial progress, and in this our city had its full share. In the* third and ninth years of this reign the right to work in and sell tin, one of the most jealously guarded privileges was extended to it by the Crown. But this was only a forerunner of a still more important privilege, viz:—the establishment here of the Staple. The chief articles of English produce were wool, woolfels, leather, and lead, they were the chief source of our wealth and the staple of our commerce. The laws† which were passed to further their sale form one of the most important steps in the great change which delivered England from the dominion of feudalism and aristocracy and made it the stronghold of liberty and trade. For trading debts were the first which were allowed to be charged upon real estate, and gave therefore the earliest and most decisive blow to the feudal restraint on alienation.

The English wool was held to be the finest in the world, and as late as the middle of the 15th century it was forbidden to adulterate it even in Spain. It was exported to Flanders, the great market of the West, there it was spun by the countless looms of Bruges and Ghent, and thence was carried by the ships of the Baltic and the Rhine, to clothe every nation‡ of the world. The first mention§ which I have found of Bristol being engaged in this trade is in the 2nd year of Henry III. During the two next reigns the wool trade of Bristol is occasionally

* Cal. of Patent Rolls, 3 & 9 Ed. III.

† 27 Ed. III., c. 9, Stat. Staple. 13 Ed. I. de Mercatoribus, vid. Stephens' Blackstone, Bk. II, c. 6.

‡ Mat. Westminster.

§ Cal. of Patent Rolls, 2 Henry III, pt. 1.

mentioned, but it seems to have followed the varied fortunes of that of the rest of England. But in the reign of Edward III it received an important though artificial encouragement. As wool was the chief source of the country's wealth, it was also of course made the chief subject of taxation, and for this reason its sale was regulated by Edward III. In his 27th year he fixed the market for the staple commodities at ten English towns of which Bristol was one, at Caermarthen for Wales, and at Dublin, Cork, Waterford, and Drogheda, for Ireland, at these towns only the staple commodities might be sold from one merchant to another, there they were weighed and registered, and the custom paid on them to the crown. They were then shipped by alien merchants for such of the privileged towns as were on the sea and from certain ports appointed for the others. No native was allowed to export them in order I think to make sure that all the money which they sold for should be brought into England, for the idea that money is in itself the wealth of a country has lasted almost to the present day. At the head of the staple in each town was an officer called the mayor of the staple, assisted by two constables, to enforce the customs and regulations of sale, and to determine all offences connected with the staple. These officers were chosen by the whole body of merchants trading at the staple, foreigners as well as natives, they were independent of the king's justice, and the mayor, sheriffs, and bailiffs were bound "to attend upon them to carry out the execution of their commandments on pain of grievous forfeiture." Thus then, we find a trading community independent of, and almost overshadowing, the community of the borough, as we saw before the borough community existing only in the merchant guild. Indeed the old guild merchant seemed almost

likely to have lived again in the commonalty of the merchants of the staple. As in older times the mayor or alderman of the guild was chosen by every member, so the mayor of the staple was chosen by the vote of all the members under his jurisdiction, to him and to his officers as to the alderman of the guild was entrusted the cognizance of civil suits, and lastly, both bodies had a common fund raised by the payment of every member of the brotherhood, and after the common expenses were paid out of it, the rest remained the property of each and all. But the borough government was fortunately too well established to be shaken.

The wealth gained by the export of wool did not prevent home manufacture. Cloth was made in England as early as the reign of Henry II* but it was not a general article of manufacture, and was for the most part confined to the coarser yarn. It was not till the reign of Edward III that this craft became really important. This king, well called the father of English commerce, to whom our city owes so much, invited over Flemish workmen who settled in the country and taught the manufacture of the finer woollen cloth. The narrow spirit of trade corporations was of course a great hindrance to this plan. In the eleventh† year of his reign he put forth a repeated grant of protection to the new comers, and in the same year to ensure the prosperity of their adventure the importation of foreign made cloth and the exportation of wool was forbidden by Act of Parliament. Encouraged by this artificial stimulus, Thomas Blanket and other burghers of Bristol set up cloth machines in their own houses and hired workmen to help them. The mayor and bailiffs of the city

* Hallam's Middle Ages, c. ix., pt. 2.
† Cal. of Patent Rolls.

exacted money from them and troubled them in other ways. The aggrieved parties appealed to the king, who issued an ordinance* for their protection. These new manufacturers were unpopular probably because they were carrying on a handicraft without belonging to any guild, and were therefore exempted from guild restrictions and payments. But in spite of such opposition the manufacture of cloth seems to have flourished here, for before the end of the same reign the city of Bath complained that the men of Bristol had set up a cloth market at the same time as their own which much damaged them. At the same time the spinning of coarse woollen yarn was still kept up by the poor, and a complaint was made in the last year of Edward III from Bristol and other western counties that labourers could not be had at hay-time and harvest on account of their being thus employed. As the manufacture of cloth became general in the city, the dyers rose with importance, and accordingly their guild here received a charter† in the reign of Henry IV which was confirmed to them by his son and grandson. Such was the growth of Bristol trade in the reign of Edward III, and thus we can easily see the reason of the bold and haughty bearing of the burghers, breaking out now and then into open tumult, once assuming something very like sovereign state, and of their manful resistance to the Berkeley family, which was finally settled by the creation of our city into a county by itself independent of all jurisdiction from without.

A privilege of the like kind was afterwards granted to this city by sea. Mr. Seyer says that there is a copy of a charter of Henry IV exempting Bristol from the jurisdiction of the Admiralty Court, I have not as yet been able

* Rymer's Fœdera, 1339, De instrumentis, &c.
† Cal. of Patent Rolls, 13 Henry IV. 2.

to find it. But be this as it may, there is a charter of Edward IV which grants this privilege to the city. All admiralty cases which included contracts made on voyages were for the future to be tried by persons named in a special royal commission, which was to include the mayor and recorder of the city. The immense benefit which this was to trade can easily be imagined. We may indeed consider this as the third great era in the commercial history of our city, if we take the reigns of John and Edward III as the two first. For at this time lived William Canynges, "the richest and wisest of merchants," the princely benefactor of the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and five times mayor of the city. His chief trade was in the Baltic, and he carried it on with ships of unusual size, the most famous of which were* the St. Mary and St. John, of 900, and the St. Mary Redclyffe, of 500 tons. His great wealth was no doubt partly inherited, but he had beside regular success in trade a monoply of great value. In 1450† an agreement was made between Henry VI and Christian, King of Denmark, that no Englishman should trade to Iceland, Friesland, and Heligoland, but soon after we find that in consideration of good service done by William Canynges, while mayor, and of debts due to him by many, the king granted him leave to trade with those lands for fish, in ships of any burden, and with any merchandise, save that which belonged to the staple.

The family of the Canynges is one of which a great commercial city may well be proud, and the great Baltic trader was not the least worthy of the name. He lived and traded here as an honest and adventurous man in his generation, at the evening of his life he sought the quiet

* Macpherson, p. 667.
† Rymer's Fœdera, XI. 1450.

enjoyment of communion with his God whom he had served so well, and now rests in peace within the lovely Church of St. Mary, the fitting monument of his stintless devotion.

In his time there was born in this city of alien parents the great explorer Sebastian Cabot, discoverer of Newfoundland and Florida, who in 1497 sailed from this port with ships fitted out by Bristol merchants to land for the first time on the mainland of a new world. And here on the dawning of a new day in the world's history, with so many old things passed away for ever, and so many new sources of wealth and adventure lying ready for our city, I end my sketch. We have traced through, but very imperfectly, the rise of the trade of the city, from its small beginnings in the eleventh century as the slave port for Ireland, through the great epochs of the reigns of John and Edward III on to the close of the 15th century, when possessed of every privilege which an English city could have, Bristol is stretching forth her hands after a new world and new fields for trade. And looking back on the history of such a town, one may well feel thankful to the great ruler of events that our English trading cities, unlike the cities of the Empire, never obtained sovereign rank, but have ever remained parts of one great whole, that their wealth has been the wealth of all, that their liberty of trade and restlessness of action have not been confined within themselves, but have ever been the lively centres of political and commercial welfare throughout the land.