Church of Temple or the Holy Cross, Bristol.

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IN Pryces' *Popular History of Bristol* there appear the following remarks concerning this church:—"The Church of Temple or Holy Cross derived its name from the military Order of Knights Templars, by whom it is believed to have been founded, about the year 1145. This, however, is questionable, as churches known to have been erected by them were circular." The author of the statement just cited could have made but shallow inquiry into the earlier history of the church he speaks of to have the doubt he expresses as to the original founders of the edifice. Though, certainly, no portion of the present fabric dates back to the days of the Templars, there is enough documentary evidence to show that they had a settlement in this district, which for seven centuries has retained the name derived from their Order.

About fifteen years ago the existing church was restored, and in the process some interesting remains of what were interpreted by Mr. J. F. Nicholls to be an earlier fabric on the same site were discovered. Mr. Nicholls, in a communication to *The Bristol Times and Mirror*, July 30th, 1872, thus records the discovery in question:—"Within the present church are the foundations of a far earlier one, of apparently circular, or, rather, oval form, measuring nearly 43 feet by 23 feet. This site is in the very centre of the nave of the existing building, and extends a few feet beyond the pillars into the side aisles."

That such a structure had existed might have been inferred

from an inventory of the time of Edward III, of the estates of the Knights Hospitallers in England, to which body the manors of the Templars were granted upon confiscation. In that document, which details the extent of the lands and other properties of this rival Order to the Templars, and is the report made to the Grand Master by Philip de Thame, Prior of the English section of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, we find comprehended within the manor of Temple Combe, under the head "Bristol," that the successors to the Temple estates had here appropriated, besides certain rentals, a small church *(parva ecclesia)*, of the value of four marks per annum.[1]

Robert, Earl of Gloucester *(ob.* 1147), granted to the Knights Templars the portion of land south-east of the Avon, afterwards known as the Temple Fee; and the connected district to the west, then and still called Redcliff, he sold to Robert Fitzharding, the progenitor of the Berkeleys.

A remarkable instance of collateral and independent local jurisdiction was afforded by the contemporary self-government of Bristol, Redcliff, and Temple, now one municipality. While Bristol was governed by an elective Mayor, who was so far the King's justiciary, that he took oath of office of the Constable of the Royal Castle, the knights tried their own causes in Temple Street, where they enjoyed the usual privileges of their Order, including the right of sanctuary and exemption from the tallage of the townsmen within the walls. Redcliffe was a feudatory of the Berkeley lords; who there, in like manner, held their own Courts, established a prison and gallows, and claimed the right of hue and cry, assize of bread and ale, and mulct for bloodshedding. A charter granted by Edward III (A.D. 1373), whereby the town and suburbs of Bristol were constituted a

(1). "Est ibidem una parva ecclesia appropriata, que valet per annum iiij marcas.
Et de redditu assiso per annum ij marce et dimidia.
Et placita et persiquisita curiarium valent j marcam."
(Hospitallers in England, p. 184; Camden Soc.)

separate county, with its proper Courts and officers, practically annulled the Berkeley prerogatives, which had stretched to domination over Bristol itself, and its Mayor; but the extraordinary privileges of the Templars were preserved here under the authority of their successors, the Lords Prior of St. John, to the confusion of the Bristol Magistracy, until the 25th year of Henry VIII, when Temple and town were fused into one borough.[1]

The year 1145 is given as the date when the knights began here the erection of their church. This was the epoch of the second Crusade, which was preached by St. Bernard, whose exhortations to the warriors of the Temple to stain their white raiment—already crimsoned with a "bloody cross"—all one red with Paynim blood, was enthusiastically obeyed under mount Sion. The issue of the Crusade was disastrous. At least 30,000 lives were sacrificed, without one glorious deed achieved.

The Order of Templars was established in 1118. The provincial priories were cells to the Temple in London, and the soldier-monks who occupied them were usually decayed knights, who, having performed their vows and fought a good fight against the turbaned race in Palestine, had returned to finish their career in vigils, penances, and fastings; hereafter perchance to lie

> "In cross-legged effigy,
> Devoutly stretched upon their chancel floors."

There are no mailed effigies in the Church of the Holy Cross or Temple, Bristol, which is singularly bare of tombs;

(1). The following is Dugdale's account of the donations here and elsewhere of lands and houses by Earl Robert, Earl Baldwin, and other benefactors :—

"Apud Bristol, ex dono comitis Roberti, quædam terra cujus pars ædificata est ab ipsis fratibus, et alia pars per hos homines, Radulphus de Kent, pro uno masuagio xx$^{d.}$," etc.

"Hae sunt pertinentiæ de Bristol; apud Crukes, ex dono Baldwini comitis, una marca, quam Hugo de Tulecumbe reddit. Apud Merieth, ex dono Henrici de Merieth, una Virgata quam Walterus de Merieth tenet pro III$^{s.}$ Apud Clothaugre, ex dono Huberti de Peripont, quam tenet Galfridus de Sancto Mauro pro LXV$^{s.}$ Apud Pulesdune, ex dono Savari de Palesdune, una virgata quæ reddit III$^{s.}$ Apud Piritonam, ex dono Philippi de Columbariis, dimidia virgata, quam una domina tenet pro IV$^{s.}$"—(Dug. *Mon.*, vi., 824.)

and no memorials of the Templars remain, except some historic records, a few manuscript deeds, and the name of the locality.

One of these deeds is of the 12th year of Edward II, in which Richard Amery, Knight (probably a former Templar), grants to the prior and fraternity of St. Augustine an acre of land adjacent to their own close, and contiguous to land which he himself held, that formerly belonged to the Templars *(quæ quondam fuit terra Templariorum)*. The Augustinian hermits had their abode against Temple Gate *(juxta portam vocatam Temple Gate)*, which stood near the entrance to the Central Railway Station, at the south end of Temple Street. The date of this document (which is preserved in the church vestry), being only seven years after the dissolution of the Order of the Temple, clearly identifies the present district with that formerly held by this fraternity. If further evidence were wanted, it would be found in the continuation to the Knights of St. John of privileges and immunities that had belonged to the ill-fated soldier-monks. By special grant from the Kings of England, these were empowered to hold Courts, to judge their villeins and vassals, and to try thieves and malefactors; they were relieved from toll in all markets and fairs, and at all bridges, and upon all highways throughout the kingdom. The privilege of sanctuary was thrown around their dwellings, and by various Papal bulls it was solemnly enjoined that no person should lay violent hands either upon the persons or the property of those flying for refuge to the Temple houses.

Not only on behalf of the master and brethren outside the southern wall of Bristol were these large prerogatives in actual force, but it appears that even the tenants of lands and houses on the Temple estates made claim to the same privileges. These borrowed rights were, however, too much for the patience of the civic dignitaries and honest burghers. Accordingly, in the 33rd year of Edward I, on a petition of the Mayor and Burgesses of Bristol, that the tenants in that town of the

master and brethren of the Temple might be required to make contribution to the King's tallage, with the other townsmen, for that they used all the liberties and franchises of the town, it was decided by a writ of Chancery that the subjects of the Templars should be distrained for taxes, and made amenable to the same Courts as the other townsmen.[1]

In 1534 there was a controversy between the Lord Prior of St. John of Jerusalem in England, on behalf of his Order (the heirs of the Templars), and the Mayor and townsmen of Bristol, relating to the continued right of sanctuary in Temple Street, and of having a law day to hold Court,[2] with the usual privilege. These articles were denied by the Mayor, and therefore the matter was referred to the Chief Justice and Chief Baron, who ordered that the liberty of sanctuary in Temple Street should become void, and that writs should be henceforth served therein without hindrance from the Lord Prior.

On the lapse of the church from the Templars, it appears to have been made parochial, and was probably immediately re-erected on an enlarged scale. At all events, there is a charter, dated 1st February, 1339, proceeding from Prior Thame and the brethren of his Order, which names the church as being at that time parochial, and as having formerly *(dudum)* belonged to the master and fraternity of the military Order of the Temple, on whose suppression it was, by apostolic authority, annexed to the Hospital of St. John in England. No provision having been hitherto made for the payment of a vicar, they—the Prior and his fraternity—by their own free

(1). "Ad petitionem Majoris et Burgensium Bristol petentium quod Homines qui tenent Terras et Redditus Magistri et fratrum Templi, in Villa Bristol Tallientur et contributionem faciunt ad Tallagium Regis ejusdem villae cum Burgensibus ejusdem, sicut ipsi Mercantur et omnibus aliis Libertatibus et Asiamentis usi sunt quæ ad dictam Villain pertinent," etc. "Ita responsum est. Distringantur pro Contributionibus et Tallagiis faciendis, et fiat justitia Conquerentibus et super hoc habeatur Breve Cancellariæ Majori et Ballivis Bristol."—(Brady on *Boroughs*, p. 106.)

(2). In Prior Thame's report the value of places perquisited of their Court is ten marks.—*(Hospitallers in England*, p. 184, Camden Society.)

will and as matter of justice, assign ten marks sterling for the sustenance of a vicar, to be paid out of the proceeds of the church. The vicars are to find bread, wine, and lights for the celebration of the Divine mysteries in the chancel; and they are to have a convenient abode (*mansum competentem*)—that is to say, a small house (*parva domus*) near the gate of their own (the knights') mansion in the same place.[1]

What has been stated will be sufficient to prove a religious establishment of the Temple Knights to have existed on the present site.

The oldest portion of the present church is the chapel of St. Katherine, or the Weavers' Chapel, to the south of the chancel. This is the late Decorated period. License was given for the chantry of St. Katherine by Richard II, 1392,[2] but, architecturally, the chapel is of somewhat earlier period. A modern inscription attached (or lately attached) to the south wall denotes that the "chappell and a piece of ground thereunto belonging [were] granted in the reign of Edward I to the company of weavers for their own use for ever, 1299." This would have been the period of the Templars, but we have not been able to find historical authority for the inscription. In the east wall is a four-light, trefoiled window, of bold and good character, with Decorated tracery. The other windows of the same chapel are square-headed, also Decorated. The east window of the chancel is of five cinquefoil-headed lights, with a drop arch. The north and south walls of the chancel contain each a square-headed, traceried window, similar to those in the Weavers' Chapel, and likewise of the 14th century. The remainder of the church, including the pillars of the nave, which diverge outward from the vertical line, probably through the sinking of the ground, are of the 15th century. The "west window is a good specimen

(1). In folio 256—"Libri dni Radulphi de Salopi Bathon. et Wellens. Episcopi."

(2). "Pro cantaria in capella S. Katherinæ Ecclesiæ Sanctæ Crucis de Templo in suburbio villæ Bristoll."—Calend. Rot. Pat. 224B.

of five lights, with well moulded jambs." The roof of the nave is vaulted, and divided into squares by oak ribs, with carved bosses at the intersections. The tower is of three stories, with buttresses at three of the angles, and at the south-east is an octagonal staircase, with buttresses. Above the west window, on each side of a two-light window, now blocked up, is a canopied niche. According to William Wyrcestre the tower was built anew in 1460. By a recent measurement it was ascertained that the top overhangs the base to the extent of five feet.[1] The inclination is far from uniform, the foundation having gradually yielded as the work proceeded—"making the outline more of an arc than a straight line." An inspection of the interior of the tower shows that an attempt was made to prevent an increase of inclination by a species of columnar buttress, relieved on the north side by a corbel.

It was enjoined by an ordinance of the time of Edward IV, contained in the Mayor's calendar, that "on Seynt Kateryn's even, the Maire and Shiref and their brethern [were] to walk to Seynt Kateryn's Chapell within Temple Church, there to hire theire evensong; and from evensong to walke unto the Kateryn halle, theire to be worshipfully received of the wardeyns and brethren of the same; and in the halle there to have theire fires, and their drynkyngs, with spysid cakebrede, and sondry wynes; the cuppes merelly [merrily] filled about the hous. And then to depart, every man home; the maire, shiref, and the worshipfull men redy to receyve at theire dores Seynt Kateryn's players, making them to drynk at their dores, and rewardyng theym for theire playes. And on the morowe, Seynt Kateryn's day, the Maire, Shiref, and their brethern, to be at the Temple Churche, and fro thens to walke with the procession about the towne, and retorne to the seide Temple Churche, there to hire masse, and offie. And then every man retray home."[1]

(1). Godwin and Hine, *Antique Bristol*, p. 11.
(2). Ricart's *Calendar*, p. 80.

Preserved in the vestry is the original Royal license for the foundation of a chantry in this church, by John Fraunceys, the younger. This deed is attested by Edward III, at Hereford, 28th January, 1331. Another deed, four years later, confirms the rental of thirteen shops in Temple Street, as endowment, to secure a chaplain of honest and blameless life, to celebrate all the offices of the Church every day, for ever —that is, to say masses every day at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, together with other services with the priests and clerkes in the choir of the church. Of these shops four were *new*, which seems to point to the time when Temple Street was being built.

There are two brasses in the floor, one of which is of a priest. He is habited in a cope, with an embroidered orphrey down the front, and fastened at the neck by a branch adorned with a cross. On the reverse side of this brass is engraved the figure of a lady. The date is considered to be about the middle of the 15th century.

The dimensions of the church are as follows: length, 159 feet; width, 59 feet; height of middle aisle, 50 feet; of tower, 114 feet.

Redcliffe Hermitage.

On Redcliffe Hill, opposite the west entrance to the church, is a narrow defile, known as Jones' Lane,—a corruption of John's, or St. John's, Lane,—which commemorates the site of St. John's Hospital, of which no trace now remains. At the end of this avenue is the burial ground of the old Bristol Quakers, which was enclosed in 1663. This cemetery is bounded on the northern side by a mass of the Red Sandstone cliff, which gives name to the locality. In the base of this cliff is a pointed doorway of the 14th century, which forms the entrance to a hermit's cell, excavated in the rock. William Wyrcestre speaks in his *Itinerariâ* of this hermitage as follows:—"*Heremetagium est scitum in occidentale parte*

ecclesiæ Sancti Johannis super aquam Avenæ in rubeo clivo super aquam Avonae—Anglice. Aven."

The red cliff against the river here referred to is almost as untouched as when Wyrcestre wrote, four centuries ago. In Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeleys* (vol. i, p. 337), it is stated that in the 21st year of Edward III (A.D. 1347), the third Thomas, Lord Berkeley "erected an heremitage in Bedminster, and therein placed one John Sparkes, an heremite, to pray for him and his during his life." Redcliff stands within the old Berkeley manor of Bedminster, and as no other hermitage is named in the *Lives of the Berkeleys* to have been founded in this district by that historical family, the cell mentioned by Wyrcestre, and referred to by Fosbroke in his *History of British Monarchism,* may be assumed to be identical with that in the red cliff.

Of the biography of Lord Berkeley's bedesman we know nothing. His oratory was provided with an extra seat, cut out of the solid rock, for the accommodation, perhaps, of an occasional visitor—a brother, it may be, from the adjacent hospital. The chamber is of the rudest formation, but is almost uninjured, except that it is frayed and worn by effects of time.