

Old Door-way at Frome.

BY MR. C. E. GILES.

THIS highly picturesque doorway, represented in the accompanying plate, until last year stood in that portion of the town of Frome, called Lower Keyford. It formed a portion of the remains of some buildings which evidently had once been extensive, but whose history seems to be involved in much obscurity. Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne and kinsman to Ina, king of the West Saxons, founded a monastery at Frome about A.D. 705, to the honour of St. John the Baptist; and common tradition points to these ruins as the remains. But in the absence of any clear testimony, this appears to me very doubtful; for a monastery situated so far from the town, could hardly have been said to have been founded in Frome; Keyford being spoken of much later as a separate village, and even at this day lying on the outskirts. Having been but imperfectly acquainted with the ruins, I am unable to speak very decidedly, but am inclined to believe that they possessed none of the features characteristic of a religious house. The



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date of this doorway is pretty evident from its architectural details, which are late third-pointed or perpendicular, and cannot be earlier than the close of the 15th century. It bears all the characters of the principal entrance to a manor house of that period.

Now the manor of "Cayford" is repeatedly alluded to in various records, and among the Parliamentary Rolls of Edward IV is a curious petition from the family of a lady of distinction, "Ankerette, late the wife of William Twynyho, of Cayford, in the county of Somerset," addressed to the "Communes in the present parliament assembled," praying them to repeal and annul a certain indictment and judgment, whereby the said lady Ankerette had been condemned and executed at Warwick, having been previously dragged from her manor house at "Cayford," at mid-day, by certain followers of the Duke of Clarence, and conveyed to Warwick, where she was charged with having administered poison to Isabel, Duchess of Clarence, while being in attendance on the Duchess at Warwick.

The petition is set forth at length in Collinson's History of Somerset, and is very interesting. This attack on the manor house at "Cayford," took place in the 17th Edward IV, A.D. 1478:—and I cannot help thinking, in the absence of all testimony, that there could not have been two houses of great size, in the village of Kayford at that time; and if, as I believe, it was not a religious house at all, the in-

ference would be that this was the house of the "Lady Ankerette," and that in all probability the gateway was built by her. It is with much regret I must add, that these ruins have been lately destroyed, for what cause I know not; but surely some plan might have been devised for preserving a relic of ancient art, interesting alike for its intrinsic merit, and for the obscurity of its history.

Since writing the above I have looked for mention of any religious house here, in "Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum," and find the following note quoted from Tanner's Somerset, xxi. It will be seen that it confirms my own suspicions.

"Mr. Strachey mentions a priory and cell of nuns on St. Catharine's hill, and a nunnery belonging to Cirencester, at Cayford, in Frome; but I have met with no charters or records relating to them, and therefore suspect them to be traditionary stories only."
