

The Council House.

After the meeting, the Society proceeded to the Council House, where the civic plate and records were laid out in the Council Chamber for inspection. These were regarded by the visitors with deep interest.

MR. JOHN TAYLOR (City Librarian) explained some of the manuscripts and the different objects displayed in the Council Chamber. The "Little Red Book" is the oldest in the Corporation archives, the paper water-mark showing its date to be not later than 1344. Portions of it are written in Latin, others in Norman-French, and others in English. Its contents are the ordinances for the government of the town; oaths of the electors to the Council; rentals of the town, lists of the Mayors, and of the 48 Councillors (electors). It contains the first copy of maritime law that was issued, and it is one of the

oldest—if not the oldest—in existence. It also contains a list of the towns within the jurisdiction of the Admiralty of Bristol, copies of Bristol charters for 1177, oaths of officers, proclamations to be made periodically in Bristol. Some of its contents bear date 1177, although it was not written until about 1422. The last entry bears date 1574; so that, altogether it contains about 250 years of the city's history, independently of 150 years of its earlier charter history—altogether about 400 years. The "White Book" of records, for 1496 to 1698, began with the quarrels between the Abbot and the Monastery, and almost ended with them. The "Mayor's Calendar" was begun about 1479, by Robert Ricart, who was for 27 or 29 years Town Clerk of Bristol, and who, previously to that, had been Vestry Clerk of All Saints'. He was a lay Kalendar. The book contains 332 leaves, and each quire of paper is enclosed in a leaf of parchment before binding. These vellum leaves are illuminated, many of them with ideal sketches of the early Kings, also of the first High Sheriff, with his headsman and mace bearers. It also represents the induction of the Mayor. On a paper page is what purports to be a pen-and-ink sketch of the town. The third part of the book began with the first Mayor and the Coronation of Henry III, in 1206. The fifth part contains the charter, making Bristol a county, and a table of contents of John's charter, 1184. The "Great Book of Wills" dates from 1282 to 1382. There are two Register Books of Wills; the one dating from 1594 to 1633, the other from 1633 to 1674. The "Great Red Book" was begun, probably, about 1422, although some of its contents date from about 1177. Its contents are chiefly of the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV. They consist of sums payable as landgable for tenements in the town.

Coming to the city charters, the earliest granted to Bristol, of which there is any record, is in 1162, by Henry II. The

most remarkable is that of John. It was granted by John, as Lord of Bristol, about 1184, and during the life of his father, and no reference whatever is made to the King. It was some fourteen years before John came to the throne, and the charter is an unique specimen of a feudal lord's concessions to, and confirmation of, privileges granted to his burgesses. There is a charter of Edward III, which confers upon the city the right to build a gaol, a place of imprisonment for night walkers, and also for punishing unjust and fraudulent bakers. The last charter is that of Queen Anne, in 1710.

The first seal was granted by Henry III, in 1216; most probably when the town was first incorporated, and the title of *Maior* commenced to be used. The second seal was evidently given by Edward I, about 1299. The seal itself is not now in existence. The third seal was given by Edward I, about 1299 or 1307; the fourth by Edward III, about 1331, which was for use by the Mayor and Sheriff only. The next was the seal of the staple, 1350-4; and the last was that of Henry V, date 1413. There was also the Chamberlain's seal of Henry VII, date 1500; and the Treasurer's seal of lead, one of great antiquity, and probably the oldest of all. As to the coat of arms of the city, the first was granted by Edward III, A.D. 1330; the second in 1400, the next in 1485, and the fourth, the present coat of arms, in 1558.

The city swords are interesting. The first is the "Pearl" sword, dated 1431, and which contains the inscription:—

John Willis, grocer and Mayor,
To Bristol gave this sworde faire.

The scabbard used to be covered with pearls. The next sword is the "Lent" sword; so named, because it was borne before the Judges when the assizes fell in that season. It is dated 1483, and around the pommel is inscribed:—

This sword we did repaier,
Thomas Aldworth being *Maior*.

The third sword, like the last, is also a two-edged one. On the reverse side is the inscription:—"John Knight, Esq., Maior, Anno Dom., 1670." The last of the swords is the largest. The blade is 3 ft. 5 in. in length, and 4 in. in width, slightly tapering. The hilt is 17 in. long. It bears the date 1752. In 1722, eight maces, of silver, were purchased by the Corporation for the use of the officers in civic processions. These were in the usual 17th century style of art, and weighed 208 oz. The insignia of the city Exchange keeper and the city bell-man were of wood, silver-mounted, the weight of the metal being about 48 oz. Their date is 1715. There are also two silver trumpets, of the same date, weighing 54 oz. 12 dwt. The gold chain of office worn by the Mayor is elaborate in ornament and peculiarly handsome. It weighs 26 oz. 4½dwt., and was purchased by the Corporation, in 1828, at a cost of £285.

When the party had taken a survey of the civic treasures, they were conducted to the office of Messrs. Burges and Lawrence, solicitors, Stephen Street, and here they were shown some vaults under the old walls of city.

They next paid a visit to the

Merchant Venturers' Hall,

where Mr. G. H. POPE (Treasurer) showed them over the building, and pointed out the original charter of the Society, granted by Edward VI, and the later charters of Charles I and Charles II.

Thence they walked to the Parish-room of St. Mary Redcliffe, in Guinea Street, where, at the invitation of the MAYOR, about 100 Members sat down to a capital luncheon. This over, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to his Worship for his hospitality, on the motion of Mr. E. D. BOURDILLON, seconded by Mr. BULLEID.

In the afternoon a visit was paid to

The Church of St. Mary Redcliffe,

a description of which was given by Mr. W. E. JONES, Assistant City Architect. He regretted the absence of the Venerable Archdeacon Norris, who had done so much to unravel the mystery in which the history of the earliest Church at Redcliffe was enveloped, and by continuing his researches had brought to light much valuable information from William of Worcester's *Itinerary* concerning the 15th century Church, as seen and noted by him. Documents were in existence bearing dates of the first half of the 13th century, proving the existence of a Church which needed repair. Ricart's *Kalendar* stated that Simon Burton began to build Redcliffe Church in 1294. From the same source they were informed that William Canynge built the body of Redcliffe Church, from the cross aisle downwards, under the date 1376. Then they had Worcester's *Itinerary*, containing detailed notes and measurements of the Church as he saw it in 1480, then newly completed by the munificence of William Canynge, the younger, and the skill of Norton, the Master of the Masons. This William Canynge, one of Bristol's wealthiest and most powerful merchants, took holy orders, became Dean of Westbury-upon-Trym, and died about 1474.

A careful examination was made of the building. The earliest work is found in the inner north porch and the lowest stage of the tower; both of the 13th century—the purest and best age of English architecture. The upper or belfry stage, showing later or more ornate work, is crowded with beautiful carvings and crocketed canopies, but still retains that appearance of strength and solidity necessary to satisfy the eye when the composition as a whole is examined. The architectural progress from this point might be traced to the south transept, where the grace and refinement of the later Decorated work were to be seen in the marked contrast to the attenuated and

ill-proportioned work at the extreme east of the building, where the lack of artistic merit and poverty of design were painfully evident.

Passing through the undercroft to the north-east corner of the enclosure, the finest view of the whole composition was here to be obtained, all the minor discrepancies of detail being absorbed by the beautiful proportions of the different parts. The north porch, about which they had little information, was acknowledged by all to be the finest and most beautiful specimen of architecture of its time in the kingdom; full of the finest work, both from the artistic and technical point of view. The Archdeacon dated this work at or about the year 1300. He himself was inclined to assign a later date. Its purpose had also been questioned, whether Chapel or reliquary. From its construction it certainly bore evidence of being used for the latter purpose. Certain it was that, by whom built or for what purpose, none but the most skilled and cunning craftsmen were employed to fashion and carve those grinning monsters, clothed in chaste and classic folds of drapery, seemingly growing out of the stones on which they couched. The beautiful proportions of the interior of the Church, and the manner in which the restorers and rebuilders of the 15th century altered and adapted the work of their predecessors to the prevailing style or fashion, were worthy of careful note; they seemed to possess little reverence for the work they were repairing or enlarging.

After a few observations on the fall of the spire, mentioned by William of Worcestre, and commented on by the Archdeacon, a tour of inspection was made, and both inside and out the Church was most carefully and critically examined, including the different monuments, brasses, incised sepulchral slabs, stained glass windows, and other treasures, with the beautiful wrought iron gates.

Mr. W. GEORGE was called upon for some remarks upon
New Series, Vol. XIII, 1887, Part I.

the north porch, where Chatterton was supposed to have discovered the Rowley manuscripts.

The Rev. C. E. CORNISH (Vicar) followed with some particulars of the Church. He said that in 1160 there was mention made of a Church in that parish. When the bishopric of Bristol was founded part of the parish was in the diocese of Bath and Wells and part in Bristol, and remained so divided till the union of the sees of Bristol and Gloucester in 1836, when Bedminster was added to that diocese. The Registers of Redcliffe went back to 1559.

Mr. JOHN REYNOLDS thought there was a Church earlier than the Early English structure. He agreed with Mr. Godwin that there was evidence of a Transitional Norman Church, and with Mr. Jones, that the tower in falling destroyed the north transept.

The Members of the Society next visited the Hermitage in the Rock, Redcliffe Street (where Mr. TAYLOR read a short paper); Canynge's House (Messrs. Jeffries, Redcliffe Street); and the

Temple Church.

At this Church the party were received by the VICAR, the Rev. W. Hazledine, who described the building and gave some account of its history. He remarked that Wesley had preached in the Church occasionally, and had pronounced it to be then even finer than St. Mary Redcliffe. The deeds and charters were very complete, dating from the year 1239, and numbering 44 in all.

Mr. TAYLOR, Mr. W. V. GOUGH, and Mr. GEORGE, also made a few remarks relative to the Church, Mr. George referring more particularly to the association of the name of Chatterton with the Church.

The company then inspected the building and the deeds, seals, and plate. A pair of candlesticks, of Flemish work (it was suggested), the choice MSS., a curious embossed leather

box (dating back to the 13th century probably, and a use for which no one seemed able to guess), and the exquisite candelabrum, were all inspected.

A paper upon the Temple Church will be found in the Second Part of this volume.

The crypt under St. Nicholas's Church was the next spot of interest visited, and here Mr. TAYLOR again acted as guide.

Lastly, the 17th century House, Welsh Back, belonging to Messrs. Franklyn, Morgan, and Davey, was inspected; the fine oak-panelled room, with richly-carved mantel pieces and a door inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and the remarkably beautiful staircase being objects of great admiration.

The Evening Meeting

was held in the University College, the Mayor presiding. Owing probably to the heavy fall of rain, there was but a small attendance.

The MAYOR read a letter from the Secretary of the Bristol Museum and Library, offering free admission to the Members of the Society during the session.

The Rev. J. A. BENNETT wished to say, with reference to the book published by the Record Society, that he was very willing to receive applications for Membership for 1886, and in this way gentlemen could become possessed of the volume.

Stanton Drew Stones.

Professor LLOYD MORGAN then read a paper on "The Stones at Stanton Drew," printed in the Second Part.

Prebendary SCARTH then read a paper "On recent Discoveries in Bath," illustrating his remarks by means of a large diagram of the baths as they have been worked out at different periods, beginning with 1725. He said that what had been recently discovered brought to light a system so complete that such did not exist anywhere else in Europe west of the Alps.

The baths were of the best age of Roman workmanship, and the size and joining of the stones pointed to a time not later than Hadrian, probably earlier. It was greatly to be regretted that the central portion of the baths, within the town, and the exigencies of space for providing further bathing accommodation, had caused a portion to be built over. Though the old Roman work was protected, yet it was not possible to obtain without much labour a clear idea of the whole arrangement. He proceeded to touch upon the remains that had been found, though they were, he said, not so much as they might have obtained. Still, a great deal in the way of sculpture, some coins, plates of metal, and pottery, had been discovered. He had made a list of coins, but had not himself verified them. They went back to Augustus, and continued down as late as Claudius Gothicus.

The thanks of the Meeting were tendered to the readers of papers, and the proceedings then terminated.