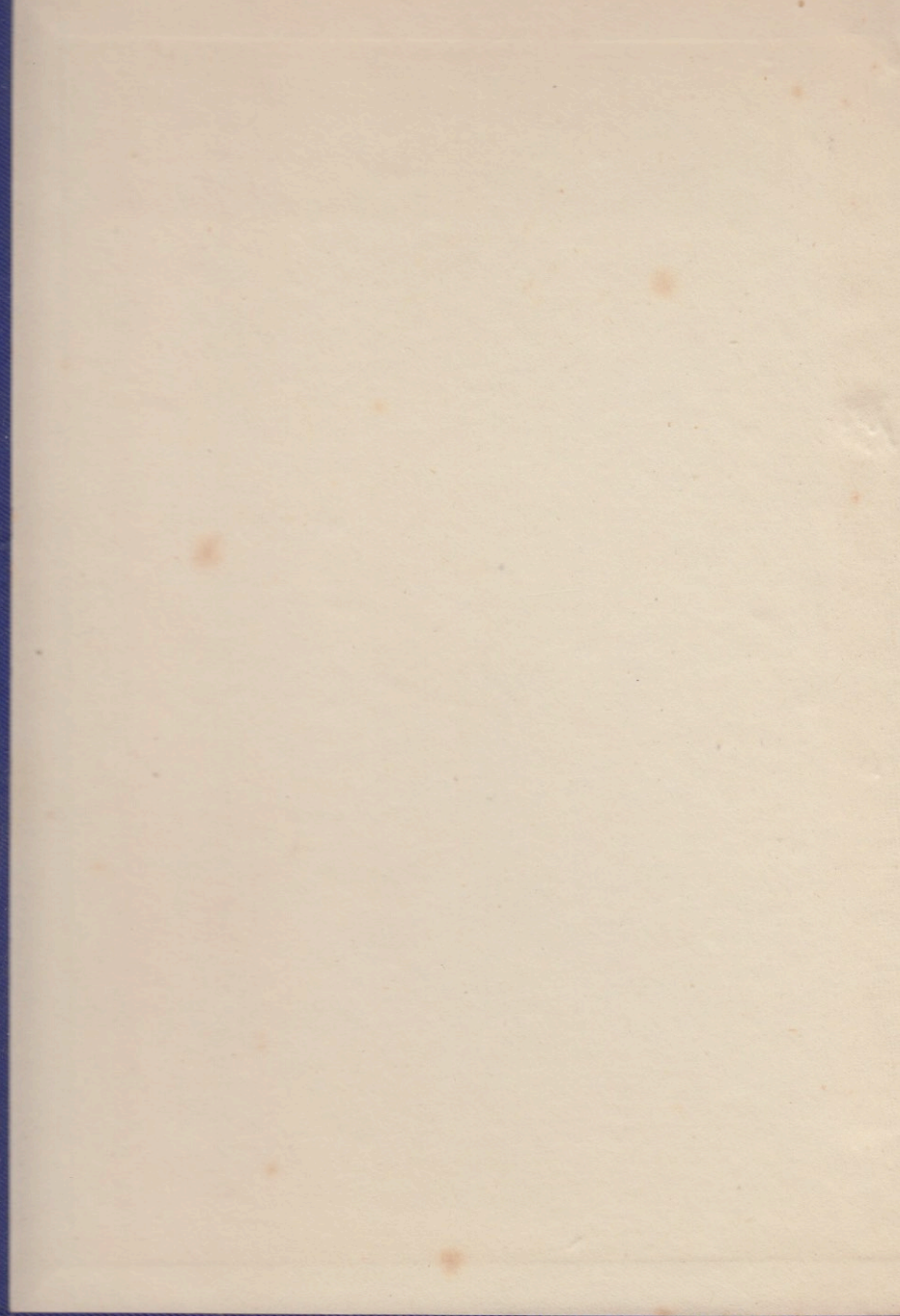


The Story  
of  
Bristol Cathedral



BY MAURICE H. FITZGERALD  
CANON RESIDENTIARY OF BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.



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Mr Baldern  
with love from Elsie  
Xmas 1942

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131. Stapleton Road



THE STORY  
OF  
BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

BY  
MAURICE H. FITZGERALD

CANON RESIDENTIARY OF  
BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

WITH A PREFACE BY  
THE DEAN OF BRISTOL



RAPHAEL TUCK & SONS, L<sup>TD</sup>

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DEDICATED  
TO THE  
FRIENDS OF BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

## PREFACE

THE visitor to Bristol Cathedral is apt to be disappointed from lack of the needful explanation of what he sees. He notices as he approaches the building from the north that the exterior is somewhat gaunt and severe, with no striking grace or distinction. As he stands in the Nave, he says to himself "this is modern"; and if he proceeds to inspect the eastern portion, he may probably do so in a spirit which, expecting little, misses much that is of the highest beauty and interest.

In few other Cathedrals is it possible so easily to trace the development of the main styles of architecture. The Norman Chapter House is of its kind almost without a rival; the Elder Lady Chapel leading out of the North Transept is a beautiful specimen of the style known as Early English; the choir belongs to the Decorated period of Gothic Architecture, the transepts in their present form, and the Central Tower are fine examples of the Perpendicular period; and the bosses on the roofs of this part of the Cathedral are a wonderful achievement of fifteenth century craftsmanship. Here Dr. E. W. Tristram, whose knowledge in this field is unequalled, has been restoring the original colouring, and we hope that he will be able to continue this work in other parts of the Cathedral. When the scaffolding for Dr. Tristram was erected, the stone vaulting was found to be in a dangerous condition; this has now been repaired, under the careful supervision of Sir George Oatley. Canon FitzGerald has done a great service in providing us with this book, all the profits of which will be given to the funds of the Friends of Bristol Cathedral. Space was limited, and therefore his account had to be strictly curtailed; but he has, in his

own delightful way, given us a picture of the growth of the building and its varied fortunes that is full of life and interest.

We hope that this book will find many readers in Bristol and elsewhere, and so draw to Bristol Cathedral the attention that it deserves. When the new municipal buildings are completed, the Cathedral will be brought into still closer touch with the life of this ancient city, and we hope that its services may ever be an inspiration and a help to all who come within its walls.

HARRY W. BLACKBURNE,  
*Dean.*

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

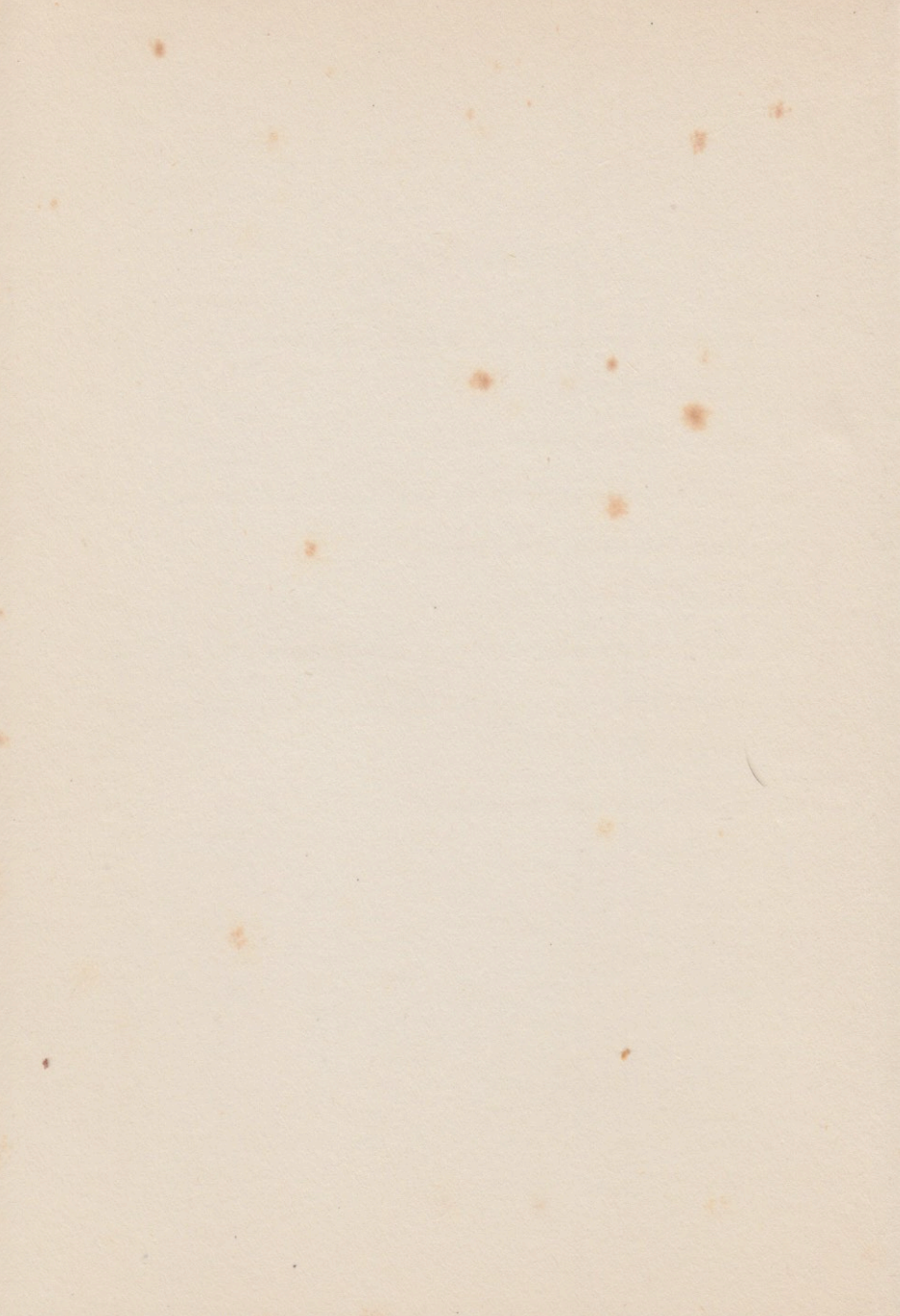
I MUST express my special thanks for help given to me in the preparation of this book by Sir George Oatley, F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. A. Sabin. The former has spared neither time nor trouble in answering my questions on a number of architectural problems, while the latter has not only allowed me to draw freely upon his knowledge of mediæval history, but has also assisted in reading and correcting the proofs.

M. H. FG.



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# THE STORY OF BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

## CHAPTER I

### THE NORMAN ABBEY

“**W**HILE the Deans of Gloucester, Norwich, and Peterborough, to their honour, were improving and adorning and beautifying their churches, poor Bristol lay utterly neglected, like a disconsolate widow, crying, ‘My lovers and my friends have forsaken me.’” So wrote Bishop Newton towards the end of the eighteenth century. And indeed even now Bristol remains something of a Cinderella among our English Cathedrals. Comparatively few visitors realize the unique features of its architecture or the history of well-nigh eight hundred years enshrined within its walls. The Cathedral has not yet recovered from the long period, from 1542 to 1877, during which it remained a truncated building without a nave. For some three centuries the See of Bristol was almost, if not quite, the poorest of all English Bishoprics, and it must be confessed that the Dean and Chapter, ill paid themselves, often grievously neglected the adornment, and even the maintenance of the fabric, of the Church. Even within the last century only about £200 per annum was spent on the building during the fourteen years before the Cathedral Commissioners made their report in 1854. The result has been that a building apparently neglected and despoiled was felt to be

of little interest, beauty, or importance. It is the object of this book to help visitors to realize how false is any such impression, and to enable them to see in Bristol Cathedral a noble heritage from our country's past.

The foundation of the Church takes us back to a dark and stormy period of English history, to the long Civil War between Stephen and the Empress Maud. Stephen was brought a captive to Bristol after the battle of Lincoln in 1141. In the following year the future Henry II, then a boy of nine, was received at Bristol by his uncle Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and stayed there four years. Henry must thus have been brought into contact with the building of the Abbey Church almost from its foundation. For in 1140<sup>1</sup> Robert Fitz Harding, the Reeve or Provost of Bristol, and a supporter of Earl Robert, had founded a monastery of Austin or "Black" Canons, on "a fair knoll" a short distance beyond the boundary of the town. Legend has it that the Church was built on the very spot on which Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, preached to the heathen English; and that it was therefore dedicated to his name. However that may be, it is certain that the boy Henry of Anjou must have watched its rising walls, have entered with enthusiasm into the plans of the Founder, and have encouraged him in his design. For there is still in the possession of the Dean and Chapter a charter, which cannot be later than 1153, in which Henry, then Duke of Normandy, makes a grant of lands at Almondsbury to "the Church of the blessed Augustine of Bristol, of the Canons Regular, which in my early youth I began to help and favour with benefits and protection."

The original foundation was on a modest scale. Not till 1148, it would seem, were the buildings fit for occupation; and on Easter Day in that year, April 11th, six Canons<sup>2</sup> were inducted from the monastery of Wigmore in Herefordshire. The actual Dedication of the completed work was postponed

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

till some date which we cannot now fix with certainty between the years 1164 and 1179, but probably not later than 1164 or 1165. By that time Fitz Harding was in a position to enlarge the scope of his original design. For in 1154 the King had bestowed upon him the forfeited estates of Roger de Berkeley. Thus enriched, Fitz Harding completed the original Church and built the noble Chapter House, one of the glories of Norman architecture, together with the entrance gateway to the monastic buildings.<sup>1</sup> Even so, Fitz Harding's Church remained a comparatively modest structure. The nave was some twelve feet shorter than the present nave, and thirteen feet less wide. The side aisles were narrower by six feet than they are now. The Chancel was much shorter than at present, and had a square end just east of the third pier of the present choir, reckoning from the tower. Of the Norman Church little still remains visible, save portions of the walls of the transepts and the lower part of the tower piers. In that Church Fitz Harding was laid to rest. He had become a Canon of the Order and died within the Abbey walls on February 5th, 1171, and was buried "between the Abbot's and Prior's stalls and next to the Abbot's stall at the entry into the choir." Three years later Eva his wife was laid by his side, and somewhere beneath the central tower their bones remain unto this day. Their memory was kept in perpetual honour in the Abbey. Abbot Newland tells us that "besides the general prayers continually done in divine service by day and night," they "are prayed for daily by name openly in our Chapter House. Also they have their Placebo and Dirige solemnly sung with Ringing in the Eve of their Anniversary. And on the morrow commendations and Mass, the Abbot for the founder and the Prior for the foundress executing the service. And on the day of our said founder his Anniversary there shall be 100 poor men refreshed in a dole. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> The existing gateway is "a Perpendicular restoration of the old work." (E. W. Godwin)

The Chapter House is the main relic of the Norman Abbey. It is a parallelogram of two bays, vaulted in one span. The measurements given by William Worcestre, who wrote about 1480, would lead us to suppose that there was once an apse, or a third bay, extending twenty-nine feet further to the east. But expert opinion is divided as to whether this was so, and excavations carried out on the spot have done nothing to confirm Worcestre's statement. The room is grand in its proportions and in the richness and variety of its Norman decoration. Both in it and in the vestibule outside the combination of rounded with pointed arches marks the transitional style of the architecture. It is not unlikely that the Chapter House was the scene of a Council held at Bristol at the beginning of the reign of Henry III, at which Gualo, the Papal Legate, received on behalf of the boy-king the fealty of the attendant prelates and nobles, and pronounced sentence of excommunication upon all who should oppose him.

But we are anticipating. Events had been taking place between the Founder's death and the Council of 1216, rumours of which must have penetrated within the peaceful walls of the Abbey and have fluttered the minds of its inmates. There had been quarrels between Henry II and his sons; repeated war with France; the exactions, the glories, and the miseries which marked the Third Crusade. Then had followed the gross misgovernment of John, and all Bristol had rung with the story of how the tyrant had tortured a wealthy Jew of the town, finally causing eight of his teeth to be struck out upon successive days, until the poor wretch agreed to pay the sum of 10,000 marks, equivalent to at least £200,000 of our money. The year 1215 had seen the rising of the barons and the signing of Magna Carta. In May, 1216, Louis the Dauphin landed in England, and John spent a few days in Bristol in his flight to the borders of Wales. On October 19th in that year the worst king who ever sat upon the English

throne went to his account, to be succeeded by a boy of nine. It was at such a time that Abbot David was elected the third (or fourth) Abbot to preside over the monastery. Years were to follow which would add meaning to the warning of Scripture, "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child."

## CHAPTER II

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NORMAN CHURCH

**A** WORN stone lying beside the entrance to the Elder Lady Chapel is the lid of the coffin of Abbot David, who was buried hard by. He was Abbot from 1216 to 1234,<sup>1</sup> and it was under his rule that the first addition was made to the Norman Church. That addition took the form of a Lady Chapel, opening by an archway into the north transept, but separate from the choir of the Abbey. This Elder Lady Chapel (so called because a century later another Chapel dedicated to Our Lady was added eastward of the choir) is a gem of Early English architecture. The trefoil arches with their shafts of Purbeck marble recall similar work of the same period in Salisbury Cathedral. The east wall and Early Decorated window of five lights are of later date, and are assigned to Abbot de Marina (1275-1280) or Hugh de Dadinton (1280-1293). In the carvings on the spandrels of the arches the mediæval craftsman has allowed his imagination to run riot. Here we may see on the south wall an ape playing the pipes, accompanied by a ram on an instrument resembling a violin: a shepherd sleeping while a wolf devours his flock; a fox carrying off a goose; and a goat carrying a hare slung on a pole over his back, and blowing a horn. In such grotesque images monks found expression for their humour and for

<sup>1</sup> The dates assigned to the Abbots in this book (varying in one or two instances from those hitherto generally accepted) are drawn from the Patent Rolls. The years are reckoned according to the New Style.

their natural sympathy with the lusty life that was denied them within the monastic walls. For nearly a hundred years the Elder Lady Chapel remained without connexion with the choir of the Church. Then its southern wall was pierced, and openings were made into the north choir aisle, in the great work of rebuilding and transformation which was begun by Abbot Knowle.

Abbot Knowle (1307-1332) may not have been a strong ruler; indeed at an episcopal visitation held while he was Abbot, in 1320, certain irregularities were noted in the life of the monastery. And he appears to have been a litigious and somewhat quarrelsome person. But he was a great builder, and to him, broadly speaking, we owe the eastern portion of the Church as it is to-day. The rebuilding of the choir was forced upon him. The White Book of Worcester (1311) tells us that "the greater part of the building from age and weakness was a complete ruin, and that there was a risk of serious collapse in the remaining portion."<sup>1</sup> In his work of reparation Knowle began to rebuild the whole Church from east to west. His new choir is an unique example of what is now known as Decorated Gothic. Knowle remodelled the choir aisles, together with the choir, replaced the open timbered roof of the Norman Church with stone vaulting and added an eastern Lady Chapel. He appears also to have made considerable additions to the domestic buildings, and in general to have laid out a design which was followed by his successors. The new choir was built on a larger scale than that which it replaced; indeed, the eastern arm of the Church was extended to more than twice its original length. When repairs were being carried out in 1895 the foundations of the fourteenth

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesia eiusdem monasterii a piis ipsius fundatoribus antiquis temporibus ad cultum divinum opere sumptuoso constructa, dudum propter ipsius antiquitatem et debilitatem pro maiori parte funditus diruta, in parte residua gravem minatur ruinam.* E. W. Godwin in his Report of 1864 took the phrase "pro maiori parte" to mean "as regards the eastern portion of the Church." But it may be questioned whether the words can bear this meaning.



century reredos were exposed at the east end of the fourth pier from the tower, i.e. in the position occupied by the present reredos. Space was left for a processional path round the back of the High Altar, and beyond this again rose the beautiful Eastern Lady Chapel, glorious with colour, and marked by the curious star-shaped recesses so characteristic of Knowle's work. The great east window of this Chapel is a noble specimen of curvilinear tracery, hardly to be surpassed in its kind in England save by the west window of York Minster and the magnificent east window of Carlisle Cathedral. It is interesting to note that the Abbey at Carlisle was also a house of Augustinian Canons; and it is thus not impossible that the east windows of the Cathedrals of Bristol and Carlisle may have been designed by one and the same man. The dates at least admit of such a theory, for the window of Carlisle was erected shortly after 1292. The original glass survives in the upper part of Knowle's window, and the figures of the Virgin and Child in the centre are also original. In 1847 the lower lights, which were in a deplorable condition, were repaired by Messrs. Bell with modern glass. The design is that of a Jesse window. The date would appear to be earlier than 1322, for the shield of De Bohun appears in it, while, in the year named, Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, was slain in open rebellion against the King. The absence of the arms of the royal favourite, Peter Gaveston, suggests, on the other hand, that the glass was placed in the window after his murder in 1312. Even in its restored condition this window is a glory to behold. The upper lights at least in the side windows are of the same date. Glass of the same or even a slightly earlier period may also be seen in the sacristy and in the east window of the north transept; but there, except for the upper lights of the transept window, all is fragmentary, the poor and shattered relics of a beauty of which once the Church was full.

Abbot Knowle introduced two, if not three, distinctive features into his design. He decided to dispense with both triforium and clerestory, and yet to ensure that the choir should be full of light. For this purpose he carried the arches right up to the roof. They are loftier, indeed, than the main arcade of any other English Cathedral, the apex of the arch being about fifty-one feet from the floor. In comparison, the arcades of Westminster Abbey and York Minster are less than fifty feet in height; and in general the height of the arcades of our Cathedrals seldom exceeds twenty-five or thirty feet. Further, the roof of the aisles is at the same level as the roof of the choir. This necessitated special measures to counteract the lateral thrust of the central vault; and Knowle and his masons evolved an unique design to meet the need. Stone transoms were carried across the side aisles to the external buttresses, which are of unusual dimensions. These transoms perform the function of flying buttresses, only they are below instead of being above the roofs of the side aisles. In themselves they are perhaps scarcely beautiful. Yet they have proved most effective for their purpose. With his lofty arches and aisles, Knowle secured that all the light from the side aisle windows should stream into the choir. And the result has been described by a competent judge as "one of the most sunny and cheerful buildings in the whole range of Gothic art."

Exactly how far Knowle himself carried the work of rebuilding it is impossible to say; but his successors plainly continued to follow out his design. The work had been begun, according to Abbot Newland, "the sixth day after the Assumption of Our Lady (21st August) at the hour of nine, the year of Our Lord 1298"; that is, more than eight years before Knowle was elected Abbot. It was carried on by his successor, Abbot Snow (1332-1341). To him E. W. Godwin<sup>1</sup> would attribute the double

<sup>1</sup> In a paper on Bristol Cathedral, published in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. XX, 1863.

Berkeley Chapel and the Newton Chapel, which open off the south choir aisle, as well as the Decorated work of the transepts and the western bay of the south choir aisle. For many years after Abbot Snow's death comparatively little seems to have been done to the building. The monastery fell on evil days and Church restoration is by no means a purely modern problem. For in 1363 Maurice, Lord Berkeley, the fourth of that name, obtained a Bull from Pope Urban II for forty days pardon and release of penance enjoined to every one that should in the Church and monastery of St. Austin (being then ruinous and to be repaired) upon the festival days in the year hear Mass, or say kneeling three Ave Marias, or should give any vestment, ornament, gold, silver, books, chalices, or any aids of charity to the repair of the said Church. No great work of reparation seems to have been undertaken until the time of Abbot Hunt (1473-1481), unless Street should be right in his opinion that the tower was rebuilt in the Perpendicular style between 1450 and 1470. Godwin assigns this work to Abbot Newland (1481-1515): but all such nice differentiation must remain largely conjectural. Abbot Hunt recast the lead on the roofs eastward of the tower and carried out other considerable repairs. Abbot Newland, or Nailheart (1481-1515)—“the good Abbot”, as he was known—and his successor, Abbot Elyot (1515-1525) carried on the work of reparation in the transepts and elsewhere: and to their time we must assign the building of the Perpendicular cloister. Newland was possibly responsible for the beautiful carved bosses on the roofs of the transepts and under the central tower: and he rebuilt the dormitory and refectory. To Elyot we owe the Miserere seats of the choir, upon many of which his initials may still be seen. They are of vigorous and grotesque designs. Eight or nine out of the total number of thirty-three illustrate episodes in the History of Reynard the Fox. Two only represent scenes from the Bible—the Temptation, and Samson slaying the lion.

Others are purely fantastic or grotesque. Thus we see a man mounted on a pig and a woman on a bird resembling a turkey cock, tilting with brooms; a man and woman quarrelling over a cauldron on the fire, a quarrel in which the lady appears to be gaining the upper hand; a mermaid being deprived of her scales by monsters; dancing bears; men and women flying from a double-headed dragon—and the like. So the riotous fancies of the Middle Ages found fresh expression in our Cathedral on the very eve of the Reformation.

One important question in the history of the Cathedral remains unsolved. When and in what circumstances was the Norman nave destroyed? It would seem that Abbot Knowle had planned to rebuild the nave as well as the choir, and that at the south-west angle he cut away part of a Norman wall to make room for the new work. Archdeacon Norris tells us that in 1866 there was standing in that angle "a fragment of the Prior's lodging, with a door opening into the north cloister alley below, and above a small oratory with a pretty Early English window over the door. The north wall of this oratory was of Norman masonry and very thick. This ancient wall had been cut away, and built into it there was some fourteenth century work in exact alignment with the south wall of Knowle's Church, and corresponding in design. It was, in fact, a returned and re-entering angle of a triforium passage, with portions of a vaulting shaft and window jamb, the very counterpart of the south aisle adjoining the Berkeley Chapel. Mr. Street's resolve to widen the west front of his new nave necessitated the destruction of this most interesting oratory of the Prior's Lodging, but it served to satisfy Mr. Street that Knowle intended to make his nave one bay longer than the Norman nave, and to give it side aisles of like character to those of his choir."<sup>1</sup> Thus Knowle was apparently preparing to rebuild the nave from the west end. But, if so, his

<sup>1</sup> *Early History and Architecture of Bristol Cathedral* (1888), pp. 34, 35.

successors carried his design no further till the work was taken up again by Abbot Newland at the close of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century. There is still preserved at Berkeley Castle a Chronicle Roll, the original of which was drawn up by Abbot Newland himself. That the existing roll is a copy is proved by the fact that it records Newland's own achievements, death and burial, as well as the election of his successor, in the same handwriting as the body of the roll. The continuator of the Chronicle states that Newland laid "the foundation of the body (i.e. the nave) of the Church as high as the sills of the windows of the north side and the west end of the Church." Presumably Newland was building on Knowle's plan outside the Norman nave, so that the latter could be used as required while the work was in progress. Archdeacon Norris tells us that when the road in front of the Cathedral and the ground to the west of it, (which used to have the same level as College Green), were lowered in 1866 to a depth of four feet, discovery was made of "this commencement of a new nave of precisely the same width as Knowle's choir, and with buttresses of the same grand projection."<sup>2</sup> The measurements given by William Worcestre prove that Fitz Harding's nave was still standing, though grievously dilapidated, in 1480. Whether it had disappeared before the dissolution of the monastery, or whether it was destroyed soon afterwards, as being in a hopelessly ruinous condition, must remain uncertain. The fact that when the foundations of the Norman nave were laid bare in 1866 few, if any, worked stones of Fitz Harding's period were discovered, led Archdeacon Norris to infer that "when Henry VIIIth's Commissioners reported that . . . the nave was dangerous, orders were given to take it down carefully, and to sell the stone for what it would fetch."

<sup>2</sup> Norris, *Architectural History of Bristol Cathedral*, p. 20. (Reprinted from the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, vol. xv).

Here, as in so many other problems connected with the Abbey buildings, we cannot escape from the realm of conjecture. What remains certain is that at latest within a few years of the dissolution of the monastery Fitz Harding's nave had ceased to exist.

It has been convenient to throw into a continuous narrative a sketch of the development of the great Church up to the eve of the Reformation. We must now turn aside to consider the manner of life and the fortunes of the men who served in it in those early days.

### CHAPTER III

#### MONASTIC LIFE AND MANNERS

LIFE in the Abbey of S. Augustine at Bristol must in its general outline have resembled closely the life in other mediæval monasteries, though the Austin Canons were one of the least ascetic of the religious Orders. The Norman Abbey doubtless included the usual monastic buildings around the Church. It had its Great and Little Cloisters, its Chapter House, Refectory, Infirmary, Abbot's Lodgings, and other subsidiary structures, forming the home of a self-contained community. The Abbey had adopted, in whole or in part, the Observances or Customs in accordance with the Rule (*observantiae regulares*) by which the original Rule of S. Augustine had been modified at the great Augustinian Abbey of S. Victor at Paris. There were only some ten of these Victorine houses of the Order in England, and of these S. Augustine's at Bristol was perhaps the most important. The Canons of the Order wore a long black cassock with a white rochet over it, and over all a black cope and hood. A Canon abandoned his property upon entering the Order and nothing could be resumed if he left it. Two persons were always to be sent together on convent

business, and no one was allowed to eat or drink out of the house. No idle talk was allowed, but silence was to be kept at work. Food and raiment were to be distributed by the Superior, and everything was to be held in common. Pride on account of difference of birth was to be checked. When singing psalms the Canons were to revolve the words in their hearts, and to sing only what was enjoined to be sung. Rules were laid down for fasting and abstinence. The provision of better food for the sick was not to make the others discontented. The Canons were not to fix their eyes on women, but mutually to preserve one another's modesty, when two went together, in a church where women were. The receipt of letters or presents was to be punished, unless voluntarily confessed. The Rule was to be read in the presence of all the brethren once a week. The original number of Canons, as we have seen, was no more than six. But from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards the average number was about eighteen. Not all of these would have been in priest's Orders. The life led by the Canons, so long as they were faithful to their ideal, was full enough. In the intervals between the Services some would be mainly occupied in study, in writing or illuminating manuscripts. Others must have found plenty to do in office work and the keeping of accounts. For others, again, there was work in connexion with the maintenance of the buildings, or the management of the estates. The Canons had their servants, who performed the more menial duties. It is impossible to give a general time-table of a monastic day—partly because there were differences of detail between the practices of different religious Orders, or even of different Houses of the same Order; partly since, the day being reckoned from sunrise to sunset and divided into twelve hours, those hours would vary in length according to the season of the year.<sup>1</sup> The following sketch, however, will give a rough idea

<sup>1</sup> cf. J. W. Clark, *Customs of Augustinian Canons*, pp. lxxxiii sqq.

of the way in which Austin Canons passed their time. The day began early, for about midnight the bell summoned the brethren to leave their beds and to come down to the Church, bitterly cold in winter, for the services of Matins and Lauds. We may imagine them gathering by the flickering light of ineffective lamps in the still-existing dorter passage, and moving together down that stairway leading into the south transept, which we may still see deep-worn by their feet to-day. From these Services they would retire again to bed for one or two more precious hours of rest. But Prime followed before day-break, to be succeeded by Morning, or Chapter, Mass, the great daily act of family worship. The Canons then assembled in the Chapter House. Certain psalms and collects were read, followed by the appointed portion of the Rule; orders for the day were given, and a sermon was preached; the services for the next twenty-four hours were rehearsed; confessions were made and accusations brought, and, if necessary, punishment was inflicted; finally the temporal business of the House was considered. The Services of Terce, about 9.0 a.m., High Mass, to which the citizens were admitted, and Sext would follow, and then dinner. This was the first meal of the day. The afternoon Services were Nones and Vespers; and the interval between these must have been the main period for study and general work. Supper followed Vespers, but was not served on fast days. The brethren then went to the Chapter House for Collation, at which one of their number read aloud for a short space. Compline succeeded; after which all retired to bed, not later, even in summer, than 9.0 or 9.30 p.m. Such a life may well seem to most people to-day to be both austere and monotonous. But in the Middle Ages life was beset with peril, hardship and uncertainty. The opportunity for quiet study was hardly to be enjoyed outside the walls of a monastery. Within, the inmates found at least food and clothing, shelter and security. To some souls the life of regular and ordered



devotion will always make its appeal. And so we cannot be surprised that for several centuries the religious houses scattered so profusely over the land found a steady number of recruits.

A letter written by Richard, first Abbot of S. Augustine's at Bristol, to Ernisius, Abbot of S. Victor at Paris from 1162 to 1172, draws an idyllic picture of the state of our monastery in its early days. After the usual preliminary compliments and an expression of thanks for a letter received from Ernisius and for kindness shown to one Brother Robert by the brethren at Paris, Richard concludes as follows: "We and our brethren, the devoted servants of your Paternity, are enjoying tranquillity and the blessings of peace, studying to advance in the house of the Lord according to the measure of our powers. Farewell." Unhappily there is abundant evidence that not infrequently the monastery presented a different aspect. It was founded at a period in which the world was beginning to be critical of the monastic system. Throughout the Middle Ages the cardinal weakness of that system was the difficulty of enforcing discipline by any effective form of visitation. In 1215 Innocent III decreed that all Benedictines and Austin Canons should hold triennial provincial chapters, and that there should be regular visitations of each monastery in the province. This produced some real improvement. But, generally speaking, from the thirteenth century onwards we find the rank and file of the monks opposing a passive resistance to the strict enforcement of their Rule, and the Bishops powerless to compel any lasting reform. So it was in the Abbey of S. Augustine at Bristol. As early as 1242 Walter de Cantilupe, Bishop of Worcester, visited the Abbey and found discipline there woefully relaxed. He held it necessary to remove the Prior and some other officers, and the Abbot, William de Bradestan, resigned, probably under pressure, at the same time. By 1278 matters had gone from bad to worse. In that year, John de Marina being then Abbot,

Godfrey Giffard, Bishop of Worcester, discovered at his visitation that the Abbey was *damnabiliter prolapsa*, as well in temporal as in spiritual matters. He ordered that "in future (the Canons) do not as bees fly out of the choir as soon as service is ended but devoutly wait, as becometh holy and settled persons, not as vagrants and vagabonds; and returning to God due thanks for their benefactors, and so receiving at last the fruits of their religion, to which they have specially devoted themselves." And as the present Abbot was not sufficiently instructed to propound the word of God in common, others were appointed to do so in his stead. And that silence might be better observed than usual, no one was to go out without urgent necessity, and not then, but when two were in company, one the elder, the other the younger, licensed by the Abbot, or the Prior in his absence. Further detailed injunctions followed. For example, it was forbidden under a curse that any should feign himself sick when he was not so, to live a dissolute life and fraudulently despise God's worship. At their meals all were to abstain from detraction and obscene speech, and to use words of honesty and good tendency to edify the soul. Rules were laid down for the better ordering of the business of the Abbey. Regular and careful accounts were to be kept. The Abbot's personal establishment was to be cut down, and he was not to keep splendid entertainments out of his house, as he used, unless necessity and evident use should require, and that with the consent of the convent. Henry of the granary, Hugh the seller of corn, and Roger the porter, were to be removed from their offices and others more faithful to be appointed in their room. Alas for episcopal hopes and efforts! In 1280 the Bishop found himself compelled once more to threaten the Canons with ecclesiastical censure for despising their Rule. In 1282, it is true, when he stayed for three days in the Abbey, he saw little with which to find fault, except that the Abbot was non-resident and that the house

was burdened with a debt of £300, because Sir Bogo de Clare had disseized them of a church worth £150 yearly, "against all justice." But financial mismanagement continued, and in 1285 a mandate from Edward I to the Constable of Bristol Castle declared that "the debts of the Abbot and convent are so great that, unless the expenses of the house are curtailed, they cannot be paid." Things were no better in 1311 when the Abbot and Convent informed Bishop Walter Reynolds that the church was ruinous, part fallen, the rest ready to fall. They had spent as much as possible on repairs, but the burden of hospitality in such a town as Bristol was heavy, and almost a third part of the substance of the monastery had been occupied by powerful persecutors for eighteen years or more. The Bishop, on inquiry, found these statements true. "They are in such want that it has often happened in the last few years that when the hour of dinner came the Canons, having neither food nor drink, were compelled to send to the burgesses of Bristol<sup>1</sup> asking for necessary victuals as a loan or gift." This woeful condition was partly due to the expenses of litigation, for in 1307 Abbot Knowle had refused to admit the right of the Prior of Worcester to visit the Abbey while the See was vacant; and the case had been referred to the courts of Rome and Canterbury. But the Canons hardly seem to have "curtailed their expenses", for in 1320 the Bishop of Worcester at his visitation recommended that the hounds which they kept should be removed. He further suggested that the almoner should be dismissed from his office, either permanently or for a season, and that inquiry should be made concerning one Canon accused of incontinence, and another, William Barry, charged with sowing discord among the brethren. William Barry, however, who was under sentence of excommunication for apostasy, was to be absolved, and his penance of drinking water only, which he had done constantly on a Wednesday,

<sup>1</sup> *ad municipium Bristollie.*

was to be dispensed with; he was permitted to drink beer and eat pulse, but must abstain from eating fish. In 1339 Bishop Wulstan de Bransford found, "God be praised", that the state of the Church was far more worthy of commendation than of correction. Yet it was unseemly that the Church should be ruinous, and the Sacrist was bidden to see that a roof was put on it. As reading without understanding profits nothing, the Canons must speak to one another either in Latin or in French. Thirty-two years later Henry Shellingford, or Blebury, then Abbot, had so wasted the monastic revenues that on the report of a Commission the King ordered the Bishop of Worcester to take immediate action. The Bishop presumably visited the Abbey, and in 1374 the Prior of Worcester, during a vacancy in the See, issued regulations for its better governance. During the last century or so of its existence the Abbey seems to have borne a better name and we hear no more of financial straits. No gross disorders among its inmates in general are recorded; indeed it received high honour, when in 1398 Boniface IX granted the right of wearing a mitre to Abbot Daubeney and his successors. But that all was not always well we may judge from the facts that in 1451 the brethren procured the resignation of their excellent Abbot, Walter Newbury, though they restored him in 1456 after discovering the incompetence of the intruder whom they had appointed in his stead; and that in 1540 Nicholas Corbet, priest of S. Philip's, Bristol, testified before the Court of Chancery, "that when they were Canons dwelling in the monastery of S. Augustine's, Bristol, now dissolved, he knew John Rastle to be a great dicer and carder, and had heard that he had got at dice and cards of divers men in his chamber at the late monastery £10, £5 and 5 marks, especially the year before the dissolution of the monastery"; while the personal reputation of William Morgan, the last Abbot, was not free from grave suspicions.

Two illustrations may serve to show the difference between the manners and ways of thought of the men of the Middle Ages and our own. We should scarcely regard as seemly the ceremony used at the election of William Coke as Abbot in 1353, when, as the chronicler records, "lifting up the said elected brother William Coke with our hands amongst us and singing solemnly *Te Deum Laudamus*, we carried him to the altar of the said monastery, and reclined him upon the said altar according to custom, and saying the usual prayer over him, we commanded the said election to be published in the English tongue to the clergy and laity then in the said monastery in great multitude assisting." And the high importance attached by our forefathers to eating and drinking may be judged from the following extract from J. Latimer's *Sixteenth Century Bristol*: "By an ordinance of the Common Council in 1472, the Mayor's Christmas drinking was fixed to take place on St. Stephen's Day (December 26), the Sheriff's drinking on St. John's Day (December 27), the senior Bailiff's drinking on Innocents Day (December 28), and that of the junior Bailiff on New Year's Day. And on Twelfth Day to go to the Christmas drinking of the Abbot of St. Augustine's as of old custom, if it be prayed by the Abbot and convent." The standards of one age seem strange to the men of another.

It is impossible to defend the irregularities, and worse, of which we have proof among the Canons of the Abbey of S. Augustine at Bristol. Yet it would be a mistake to lay too great stress upon them. We have evidence of serious evils brought to light there on six or seven separate occasions in the course of nearly four hundred years. No doubt that evidence witnesses to considerable periods in the history of the monastery during which the Rule was most imperfectly observed and there was gross financial mismanagement. But evil always attracts the attention of the chronicler more readily

than good. It would be as unfair to judge the general life of the monastery from unsavoury details drawn from the records of episcopal visitations as it would be to estimate the honesty of the merchants and burgesses of Bristol from the not infrequent traces of bribery and other forms of corruption to be found in the municipal annals. We cannot doubt that the Abbey sheltered many pious and faithful souls; that there youth was trained "in the studies of godliness and sound learning"; that the great Church was often the home of deep and pure devotion; that the spirit of worship offered there in ancient days still lingers within its walls. Let a man stand in Abbot Knowle's Eastern Lady Chapel; let him mark the glory of its windows, the lavish beauty of the whole design, the silent witness of the figures of those three Abbots laid there in grave repose; and he will not question that he is in a House which has been both built and used for the worship and the service of God.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHANGE AND DECAY

FOR the early history of the monastery we are indebted to two main sources of information, Abbot Newland's Roll, already referred to, and the Lives of the Berkeleys, written in the earlier part of the seventeenth century by John Smyth, who was for many years Steward of Berkeley Castle. Smyth had Newland's Roll before him, and is moved at one point of his own narrative to quaint remonstrance. The Abbot had been guilty of a genealogical inaccuracy, not to be overlooked. "And however I reverence that Abbot's memory," writes the historian of the Berkeleys, "yet truth bids me tell his dust, this is the tenth error, at the least, which I have refelled in his collections, and shall almost as many more." Smyth's own

record is valuable as describing the varied and repeated benefactions made to the Abbey by the descendants of Robert Fitz Harding, benefactions, it is to be regretted, which did not always win the gratitude that they deserved. Maurice (the first of that name), son of the Founder, gave various lands to the Abbey, but was scurvily rewarded by Abbot Richard and his Canons. "Notwithstanding which and many other ritche and liberall almes given to that Monastery . . . when this lord Maurice had shortly after somewhat enlarged his Castle of Berkeley, and had for the better fortification thereof, by making of a ditche on the North side, cut a little of the ground of the Church yard, belonging to the Church of Berkeley, (which on that part adjoyneth; the Abbot and Covent soe pursued him by ecclesiasticall censures (as though the offence had bene inexpiable); the merits of his Father, himselfe, and bretheren towards them quite forgotten), that they make himself to cast durt upon his owne face, and like a schoolboy by his Deed to saye, That . . . for redemption and pardoning of my offence comitted by mee upon the Church yard of Berkeley in making the ditch about my Castle, I doe give unto the Church of Berkeley five shillings rent for ever issuing out of my mill under my Castle. And I give also to the said Abbot and Monastery for ever (being patrons of the said Church) the Tythes of the pawnage<sup>1</sup> of my Chace of Michaelwood and of Appleridge, and of Okely, and of Wotton parkes, and pasture for as many of their oxen as till one plowe land, to feed with such of myne as doe till my demesne lands, in pure and perpetuall Almes for ever. Which ingratefull returne, this lord soe deeply tooke to hart, that hee never after looked fairely upon the said Abbot and Covent, nor conferred any benefits upon them, neither would bee buried within their Monastery, nor have any Aniversary there celebrated, or other devotions for his soule done amongst them." This Lord Maurice died in 1189,

<sup>1</sup> Pawnage—Pannagium, i.e., food for swine, such as beechnut and acorns.

and his son Robert, who succeeded him, did not continue the quarrel. On the contrary, he not only conferred lands upon the Abbey "for the soule's health of King Henry II, and of King Richard and King John his lordes", but was buried in 1220 in the Abbey Church "over against the high altar in a monk's cowl". Abbot Newland records that "for this good Lord Sir Robert de Berkeley is yearly done a special memorial at the Vigil of his Obit, placebo et dirige, solemnly, and on the morrow commendations; the Prior saying the Mass, and a Dole then after disposed under this form. The Abbot hath a Cake of two pence price and two casts of bread of three to a penny, and four pence for wine. And every Canon a cake, price one penny, but the Prior, Subprior, and Almoner have two penny Cakes, and every Canon a Cast of bread and two pence for wine, and every Friar of the four Orders in Bristol a loaf, and every Prisoner there in Newgate likewise, and the remanet is doled at the Monastery gate to the poor people". It is sad to record that, following the bad precedent set by Abbot Richard, the Abbot and Convent returned evil for good to Lord Robert's brother and successor, Thomas, the first of that name. For after Thomas had not only confirmed all previous grants made to the Abbey by his grandfather, father and brother, but had added further benefactions of his own, the Abbot and Canons impleaded him before both the Pope's delegates and the King's Justices for various alleged infringements of their rights. This dispute, however, was settled by mutual consent in May 1236, and the agreement was ratified by a solemn oath on either part. Notwithstanding these differences, the Berkeley family continued to be the Abbey's generous supporters. Maurice the second, son of Thomas the first, bestowed upon the Monastery further lands and other gifts; while Thomas (the third of that name) founded a Chantry there, with endowment for a Chaplain to sing for the soul of Margaret, his late wife, and for himself when he should die. This Thomas was a man of



great wealth and power, for it is recorded that he fed at least 300 people daily. He was Lord of Berkeley when the unhappy King Edward II was brutally murdered there in 1327, though there is no proof that he was actually privy to the crime. It is commonly said that the Canons of S. Augustine's at Bristol, the Cistercians of S. Mary's at Kingswood, and the Benedictines of S. Aldhelm's at Malmesbury, all declined to receive the body of the murdered King within their monasteries, for fear of the consequences; and that the Abbot of S. Peter's at Gloucester won great prosperity for his Abbey by boldly sending his "chariot" for the corpse and interring it in his Church with all honour. Professor T. F. Tout, however, has shown<sup>1</sup> that the royal ministers took all responsibility and that Gloucester was deliberately chosen by the government as the place of interment. The funeral was carried out with great splendour. Indeed, the official policy seems to have been to murder the King in secret and to bury him with the utmost pomp and publicity. Thus it is urged by Professor Tout that the Abbots of S. Augustine's, Kingswood and Malmesbury had no cause to fear the wrath of Mortimer and Queen Isabella. But this argument is not conclusive. The whole administration was then in the North, and news of the murder must have reached the neighbouring monasteries some days before it was conveyed to the Court. The Abbots must have guessed that the Queen was privy to the deed of blood, and they may well have felt that to receive the body of the King would be to accept a dangerous honour: while for Abbot Knowle and his brethren the problem was complicated by their relation to their patron, the Lord of Berkeley. Abbot Frocester (if he be, as is generally supposed, the historian of the Abbey at Gloucester) is demonstrably inexact in many of his statements with regard to the burial of Edward II, and it may be that in telling the story he has tried by

<sup>1</sup> In a paper on "The Captivity and Death of Edward of Carnarvon." Reprinted in 1920 from *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. vi, No. 1, 1920.

the exercise of a little invention to lower the reputation of other Abbeys, in order to exalt his own. We cannot say. What is certain is that if the shrine of Edward II had been set up in the Abbey of S. Augustine at Bristol, the Cathedral would be a far more splendid building than it is to-day.

But this is somewhat to anticipate the course of events. Under the patronage of the Berkeleys the Abbey prospered, though at no time could it rival in importance the greater Abbeys, such as those of Glastonbury or St. Albans. In 1235 the Canons, who were unwilling to allow the growing numbers of their tenants to use the Abbey Church, were rich enough to provide them with another place of worship. The city was developing, and, the only harbour being in the Avon, great hindrance was caused to commerce by the rapid ebbing of the tide. Accordingly the townsmen bought from the Canons the eastern part of the marsh and drove through it a new channel for the Frome. They filled up the old channel, and so provided themselves with a good harbour and quay. These alterations cut off the Abbey precincts from the town more completely than before, and the Canons built the Church of S. Augustine the Less to accommodate their tenants. Nor were they without experience of royal favour. In 1284 Edward I spent Christmas at Bristol and, we are told, gave valuable gifts to the Abbey. But the constant warfare in which he was engaged led him rather to impoverish than to enrich the Church. In 1297 he exacted a third of all clerical revenues to meet the expenses of the war with France. In 1300 Abbot Barry was summoned to appear at Carlisle "with horse and arms" to do military service against the Scots. In 1313 Abbot Knowle was faced with a demand for £100 in aid of the war against the Scots; two years later he was asked to contribute a further 100 marks. Similar exactions continued after the death of the great king. In 1322 Knowle was commanded to raise as many

men-at-arms and foot-soldiers as he could, and to march against the rebels assembled under the banner of the Earl of Lancaster. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were an age of turmoil and of violence, the waves of which often penetrated within the walls of the cloister. Great, for example, must have been the excitement and suspense in S. Augustine's monastery during what is known as the Great Insurrection of the years 1312 to 1316. The burgesses of Bristol refused to pay a toll upon the cargoes of fish brought into the port; and for a time Bristol virtually remained an independent state within the kingdom, under the Mayor, John Taverner. Not till 1316 was the city besieged by the Earl of Pembroke with a regular army, and compelled to surrender. Then for a season the minds of the Canons were assailed by other cares and anxieties, the harbingers of great changes to come in Church and State. In 1349 the Black Death spread northward from Weymouth and Southampton. Bristol was the first great town on which it seized. Its ravages there were frightful. "The whole strength of the town perished," we are told. In High Street and Broad Street the grass grew inches high. The conditions of monastic life favoured the spread of the disease, and the ranks of the Canons of S. Augustine's were so thinned that not enough priests were left to serve its altars. In 1363 Abbot Coke obtained from the Pope permission for the Ordination of members of the monastery, as a temporary measure, at the age of twenty-two. The Black Death struck a blow to the monasteries from which they never really recovered. By the middle of the fourteenth century men had begun to feel, though as yet almost unconsciously, that their day was really past. It is noteworthy that such a man as William of Wykeham should have founded colleges for the encouragement of study rather than monastic houses. The religious Orders found it less easy than of old to recruit their numbers. And the social and economic changes brought about by the pestilence cut at the roots of their prosperity.

Their rents shrank, they could tap no fresh springs of revenue, and they found it increasingly difficult to cultivate their lands. It is for these reasons, doubtless, that the work of rebuilding the Abbey was abandoned for so long after the death of Abbot Snow in 1341.

But religious as well as social changes were impending. Anti-clerical feeling was gathering strength. In 1371 the clergy who held great offices of state were replaced by laymen. Within the next ten years John Wiclif and his followers, the Lollards, opened an attack upon the worldliness and upon some of the most cherished doctrines of the Church. In order to secure that his teaching should be heard in every part of England, Wiclif founded his company of "poor preachers". These were educated men sent out from Oxford as missionaries, "all clad in a common uniform of long russet gowns". One of the chief of their number, John Purvey, an intimate friend of Wiclif, preached at Bristol with considerable success; and Bristol became the main stronghold of Lollardy outside London. There was much that was crude and anarchical in Wiclif's teaching, still more in some of the versions of it published abroad by his disciples. But that teaching marked a real advance towards the freedom of the human spirit. Lollardy was driven underground by persecution. But Lollard thought and opinions smouldered on until at last at the Reformation they burst once more into an open flame.

The fifteenth century proved as full of violence and oppression as its predecessor. In the desolating struggle of the Wars of the Roses the sympathies of the people of Bristol were predominantly Yorkist. The town took no active part in the conflict, yet could not escape being affected by it, apart from any question of trade. And when the struggle was over, the pockets of the citizens still had to satisfy unwelcome demands. In 1474 Edward IV appeared at Bristol, and exacted a large sum by way of "benevolence". Not long afterwards another

royal visit may have put the monastery to considerable expense. In 1486 Henry VII came to Bristol, and, according to some authorities, "lodged at S. Augustine's Abbey". He certainly was seen in the Abbey Church, for we read that "Then the King proceded towarde the Abbey of Seint Austeyn's, and by the way ther was a baker's wiff cast oute of a wyndow a great quantite of whete, crying 'Welcome, and good look'; &c. Within Seint Austein's Chirche th' Abbot and his Convent receyved the King with Procession, as accustomed. And on the Thursday nexte folowing, whiche was Corpus Christi day, the King went in procession aboute the great Grene, ther callede *the Sanctuary*, whither cam al the processions of the Towne also; and the Bishop of Worcestre prechide in the pulpit in the midds of the forsaide Grene, in a great audience of the Meyre, and the substance of all the Burgesse of the Towne, and their wiffs, with much other people of the countrey." Those can have been no good days, one would think, for the Abbey. Yet the Canons were able in the last quarter of the century to embark upon schemes of building more ambitious than any that had been attempted since the days of Abbot Knowle. In those years, as we have seen, the tower was probably rebuilt, the Church was re-roofed and a beginning was made of the rebuilding of the transepts and the cloisters. When peaceful conditions had been restored, the Canons found leisure and opportunity for disputes of various kinds. For a number of years from 1496 onwards a grievous quarrel raged between Abbot and Mayor, ranging over a variety of issues. Trouble arose, in 1515, in connexion with an election, probably that of Abbot Newland's successor. For some reason Fox, then Bishop of Winchester and Lord Privy Seal, was brought into the quarrel, and we find him writing to Wolsey, recommending that some of the Canons be brought to court, "when Wolsey can order them after his wisdom". Alternatively, Fox suggests, a commission may be sent to Bristol, and "three young fools which

sue for voices in the election, tho' they be not *in sacris*, be expelled." Some ten years later the prolonged contention between the Abbey and the civic authorities was inflamed or renewed. Britton tells the story as follows in his *History and Antiquities of Bristol Cathedral*, pp. 21, 22. Two refractory singing-men "having refused to pay 'the King's silver', distresses were levied upon them by the collectors, who took from one a 'pottinger' and from the other 'a brasse panne or ketell'. The Abbot, espousing the cause of his dependents, arrested the municipal officers for exercising their functions within his jurisdiction. The Mayor and Commonalty retaliated, and imprisoned the retainers of the Convent. The Abbot, 'with a ryotous company', then attempted to force the prison wherein his men were confined, but was repulsed. After upwards of £1,000 had been spent in legal proceedings, the dispute was referred to arbitrators; who decided that the choristers should pay their taxes, that each party should release their prisoners, that the Mayor and Council should attend divine service in the College as usual, that the Abbot and his successors, 'in token of submission for their contempt,' should thenceforth, upon every Easter Day in the afternoon, and Easter Monday in the forenoon, meet or wait for them at the door of the Grammar School at Froom gate, and accompany them to the College. The dispute had lasted apparently several years."

Among the scanty remnants of the archives of the Dean and Chapter of Bristol which escaped destruction in the great riot of 1831 is a *Comptus Roll* giving the accounts of the Abbey for the year 1491-1492. This affords us considerable insight into the condition of the Abbey little more than a generation before its dissolution. The whole establishment, exclusive of servants, and of the Abbot, who was also Treasurer and Cellarer, then consisted of seventeen persons. The Abbot and seven Canons divided fifteen offices between them; the remaining eight were Novices. The total amount of the

monastic revenues was £794; the expenditure £766, made up as follows: <sup>1</sup>

Arrears of Rent	£32
Salaries of Servants	£43
Repairs to Property	£38
Running Expenses	£233
Convent "Pocket Money"	£10
Treasurer's Special Expenses	£358
Minor Items	£12

The Treasurer's special expenses included £41 for legal expenses, £112 15s. 9d. for taxation (Tenths and a Benevolence), £160 paid to the Abbot, £10 fees to prominent local men acting as Seneschal, etc.

Henry Brugges, as Anniversarer, accounted for 33s. which had been expended in bread and wine for the use of the Abbot and Canons, on the anniversary of Robert Harding, including a distribution made to the poor at that time; and 23s. for similar expenses incurred on the anniversary of Robert, Lord of Berkeley. As Almoner, he charges in his account £7 18s. 8d. for bread, ale, flesh and other victuals for the diet of William Thorne, singing-man, Richard Haukyns, under-singing-man, three boys belonging to the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and one servant of the Almoner, supported at his table by the charity of the Abbot and Convent. Abbot Newland, as Cellarer of the Abbey, acknowledged to have received for 460 quarters of malt, the property of the Convent, £96 15s. The total sum expended by Robert Elyot, the Purveyor of the Kitchen, for beef, veal, pork, salt and fresh fish, and for other provisions, represents an allowance of about 15s. per week in our money for each individual. Brugges' account as the Collector of the Rents enumerates payments made for the purchase of red wine for the Abbot and seventeen Canons for the twenty-nine principal

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted for these figures (which, while correcting some errors of Britton, must themselves be regarded as no more than approximately accurate) to Mr. A. Sabin, who has transcribed the Roll and is editing it for publication.

and double festivals ; (specified) one pottle for the Abbot, and one quart for each Canon ; and for similar wine bought for the use of the Abbot and his Convent, on the Eves of the Nativity, Easter and Pentecost, two gallons for each Eve, " according to laudable and ancient custom ". The same officer states that, by reason of the introduction of the *new* Festival of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, it had been agreed by the Abbot and Convent that each Canon should receive yearly, for the celebration of the same, one pottle of wine, worth *4d.* He also charges *16s.* for 1,017 herrings, distributed to the poor on the anniversaries of Robert Harding, the Founder, and of the Lady Eva, his wife, and at other seasons ; and for John Griffiths, Vicar of the Church of Saint Augustine the Less, *13s. 4d.* for his diet for half a year, as payment for his teaching the junior Canons and other boys in the Grammar School within the Abbey.<sup>1</sup> From accounts of the sums given in offerings in the pyxes or boxes before certain images in the Abbey we may judge of the estimation in which various saints were held. The image of S. Augustine near the High Altar had been honoured to the amount of *8d.* ; that of the Virgin Mary by the north door with *4d.* ; that of the Holy Cross with *7s. 4d.* But no offerings of money had been made before the images of Saints Apollonia, Sitha the virgin, Anthony, and Erasmus. Twopence halfpenny, however, had been extracted from the pyx of S. Clement within the Chapel of S. Jordan, in " the green place ", *i.e.* College Green. During the year twelve persons had claimed sanctuary, each of whom paid *4d.* for the insertion of his name in the Sacrist's book. The Canons, however, had apparently not met all their liabilities ; for in the following year, 1493, the Bishop of Worcester directed the sequestration of the revenues which they derived from the Church of All Saints, on the ground that they had omitted to keep the chancel of that church in proper repair.

At this time the sands were fast running out. By the sixteenth

<sup>1</sup> Britton has here misread the Roll.



century many men saw in the monasteries nothing better than a buttress supporting a discredited ecclesiastical system which had for centuries defied all effort at reform. The trend of feeling may be judged from the fact that only about eight religious houses were founded in England between 1399 and 1509. The invention of printing was doing much to liberate men's minds. Caxton had set up the first printing press in England in 1470. Men could now read for themselves, and were quick to discover that by no means all of what they had been taught on the authority of the Church was true. It began to be widely recognized that grave abuses had crept into the doctrine as well as into the administration of the Church. The monasteries were part and parcel of the mediaeval system. Beyond all question they had done great things for the world in the past. To them we owe the preservation of literature, science and art through the Dark Ages. They fostered many saintly characters, and were for centuries a living witness to a spiritual ideal, while they had rendered most valuable social service in the furnishing of hospitality to travellers, in the provision of employment, and in the care of the poor. But it could not be denied that they were deeply tainted with corruption. We must not suppose that they were filled only by those who thought they had a true vocation. "The cloister was constantly abused as a dumping-ground for portionless children of good families."<sup>1</sup> Men and women frequently entered monastic life, not because they had any real call to a life of study and devotion, but because it offered a secure and often a comfortable refuge from the dangers of a rough and brutal world. We need not believe all, or nearly all, the stories of monastic scandals retailed by the opponents of the Church of Rome. But it is plain that in gross and violent ages such scandals were bound to be all too frequent among communities of men and women leading lives of unnatural segregation. The evidence of this throughout the

<sup>1</sup> Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, II, 61.

centuries is overwhelming. And the monasteries had to suffer from the tendency of human nature to believe evil of other people more readily than good. Further, the number of religious houses was on any reasonable reckoning altogether excessive. For example, not fewer than fifty such foundations lay between Oxford and London. The monasteries, men felt, enjoyed vast wealth and privilege for which they rendered small return to the community. It became increasingly difficult to justify their existence in an age in which new discoveries and new knowledge challenged men on every hand to test and to readjust their old beliefs.

Thus it is plain that a reformation of the Church in England would have taken place, quite apart from the lust and policy of Henry VIII; though no doubt it would have taken a rather different form. But events moved fast from the year 1527, when Henry first began to think of securing a divorce from his Queen, Catherine of Aragon. This is no place for a discussion of the steps by which the great change was brought about. We must be content to note the premonitory symptoms of the catastrophe at Bristol. In 1531 Hugh Latimer, who had recently been instituted to the living of West Kington, in north Wilts, was reported to have said in a sermon preached in the neighbouring church of Marshfield that "almost all the clergy, Bishops included, instead of being shepherds entering by the door, were thieves, whom there was not hemp enough in England to hang". A year later he was compelled by Convocation to make an insincere confession of errors in doctrine. Smarting under this treatment, he came to Bristol in March, 1533, and preached a sermon which caused no small stir. The Mayor invited him to preach again at Easter; but the Bristol clergy, little relishing Latimer's opinion of their order, procured an inhibition from the Bishop to prevent anyone from preaching without his licence. The state of feeling in Bristol was thought to be sufficiently serious to justify the appointment of a Commission

to inquire into the effect produced by Latimer's preaching upon the minds of the citizens; and Abbot Burton was chosen as one of the Commissioners. In 1534 Archbishop Cranmer himself visited Bristol and stayed there nineteen days, "reforming of many things that were amisse, and preached at St. Augustine's Abbey and other places". A year later Thomas Cromwell's visitation of the monasteries began, and in August of that year his agent, the notorious Dr. Richard Layton, was at Bristol. In 1536 the smaller monasteries were dissolved; in 1539 the remaining religious houses shared their fate. The Abbey of S. Augustine at Bristol was surrendered to the King on December 9th of the latter year. William Morgan, the last Abbot, was granted a pension of £80, with the Mansion Place of Lee (i.e. Abbot's Leigh) with the garden, orchard and dove-house adjoining, together with twenty loads of firewood to be annually received from the surrounding woodland. The Prior received a pension of £8, and ten other Canons were pensioned, the total sum payable, including the Abbot's pension, amounting to £151 6s. 8d. Money was then worth perhaps some ten or twelve times what it is worth to-day.

One wonders what the Canons were thinking during those last years of the existence of their Abbey. Had they any clear anticipation of impending ruin? To all appearance they led their lives as if their easy world were secure from change. Abbot Newland rebuilt the transepts of the Church, and began to rebuild the nave. If his successors did not continue the work on the nave from lack of funds, Abbot Elyot (1515-1525) renewed the stalls and woodwork of the choir, and possibly rebuilt the cloisters; and to Abbot Burton we owe the row of panels with shields of benefactors above the reredos in the Eastern Lady Chapel. The beautiful recumbent figures of Abbots Newbury, Hunt and Newland must have been placed in that Chapel when the days of the monastery were almost numbered. Of its inhabitants, as of certain other generations

of mankind, it might almost be written that "they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; till the flood came and destroyed them all".

## CHAPTER V

### THE EARLIER YEARS OF THE CATHEDRAL

**H**ENRY VIII received from the dissolution of the monasteries about £15,000,000 in our money, and professed at first the intention of making a worthy use of the wealth thus placed in his hands. Twenty or thirty new Bishoprics were to be founded, each with its Cathedral and Chapter, and provided with ample endowments. But thanks to the rapacity of the King, the nobility and gentry, and the great merchants, the scheme came to very little. Only six new Sees were actually founded. Of these Bristol was one. The new diocese consisted of the city of Bristol and the county of Dorset, and by a writ dated June 4, 1540, the Abbey Church of S. Augustine of Canterbury became the Cathedral, and was re-dedicated in the name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. The Cathedral was endowed in the main from the spoils of the following nine monasteries:—S. Augustine's at Bristol; Muchelney, Bruton, Bath and Taunton in Somerset; Shaftesbury in Dorset; S. Oswald's near Gloucester; Frithelstoke in Devonshire; and Bradenstoke in Wilts. In clear value the endowment amounted to an annual sum of £679 4s.; whereas in 1539 the clear annual value of the property of the Abbey of S. Augustine had been £692 2s. 7d. The Abbot's lodging was assigned to the Bishop as his palace; the rest of the monastic buildings were handed over to the Dean and Chapter. The place of the Abbot was to be taken by the Dean. Under him the establishment was to consist of six Prebendaries or Canons and six Minor-Canons to assist them in the services; six lay-clerks, or singing men,

one master of choristers, six choristers, two masters to instruct the children in grammar, four poor people, eligible from having been maimed in the wars, two under-sacrists, two door keepers, one butler, one cook, and one under-cook. The Dean and the six Canons were to live with their families in the Cathedral precincts, and residences were provided for all the other members of the corporate body, some thirty in number. A daily dinner was to be prepared in the old refectory in the cloisters for all members of the body who chose to partake of it; those who had families might draw their allowance and dine at home. "The praises of God were to be daily sung with perpetual jubilation." The Statutes lay repeated stress upon the religious purpose of the foundation. "Because the word of God is a lanthorn unto our feet, we ordain and will that the Dean and our Canons, yea, we beseech them by the mercies of God, that they be instant in season and out of season in sowing the word of God, as elsewhere, so especially in this our Cathedral." The Grammar School in the precincts was to be opened to other boys besides the Choristers, and the Cathedral was to be a nursing plot for candidates for the Ministry. There were to be readers or lecturers in theology, Greek, and Hebrew. In all this we may trace the noble ideal of Thomas Cranmer. The Cathedral was to be a centre of disciplined life, of constant worship, and of sound learning. It is strange that the degradation of this ideal should have been initiated by one of the most pious of Cranmer's successors, Archbishop Laud. Laud encouraged the Canons to hold benefices at a distance from the Cathedral, and compelled them after their two months turn of duty there to return to their several parishes. Thus the office of Canon became little better than a sinecure, to the general weakening of the life and influence of the Church.

But the Abbey Church was handed over to its new possessors in a miserably despoiled condition. An undated answer of the Dean and Chapter in certain Chancery proceedings

in the reign of Edward VI declares that "forasmuch as the said Cathedrall Church . . . was greatly spoyled and decayed and also diverse other charges were expedient to be done about the said Cathedrall Church, it was agreed among the said Deane and canons or prebendaries by mutuall consent That as well all the porcions and pensions of every of the said Deane and Canons as also all other pensions of other mynisters of the said Church, for the first yere after the said establysshment should be bestowed in and aboute the buyldings reparacions and furnytures of the said Cathedrall Church, which was don accordingly." The Church was also stripped of its treasures. We can hardly suppose that it had been more fortunate in retaining such possessions than the majority of the wealthier religious houses in the first spoliation carried out under the orders of Thomas Cromwell. But in 1553 the Government nominated another Commission to confiscate the plate of all the churches in the kingdom; and the Commissioners left the Cathedral with no more than two small chalices, weighing together 23½ ounces, and robbed it also of five great bells.

As we have seen, the Cathedral was possibly from the first a truncated building. The Norman nave may have been pulled down before the dissolution of the monastery. If it survived the dissolution, it can only have been for a very short time. The demolition of the nave necessitated architectural changes in the remaining portion of the Church. The nave had been separated from the choir by a solid Norman screen—the Pulpitum—standing between the western piers of the tower. The doorway giving entrance to the choir was in the centre of this screen; and just within it the Founder, Robert Fitz Harding, had been buried, as Newland tells us, "betwixt the Abbot's and the Prior's stalls, next to the Abbot's stall, in the entering into the choir"—that is, between the two piers that support the western arch of the tower, not quite at the middle point,

but a few feet to the south of it. In the Norman Church the Rood Screen must presumably have stood between the two western piers of the easternmost bay of the nave, with the Rood Altar before it on the side of the nave, flanked by two doorways in the Screen. Abbot Knowle was buried "under a broad marble stone, straight afore the Rood Altar"; approximately, that is, in the centre of the second bay from the east end of the nave. After the building of Knowle's choir, when the Church had been so far extended eastward, the original Pulpitum must have been removed from between the western piers of the tower, and a new Pulpitum, or Choir Screen, must have been erected between the eastern piers. Whether at the same time the Rood Screen was removed from the nave to the position occupied by the original Pulpitum between the western piers of the tower, must remain doubtful, though in all probability this change was effected, either then or later. In the choir, as Knowle left it, there was a Screen or Reredos behind the High Altar, in the same position as the present Reredos, with doors in it, as at Westminster, communicating with the Processional Path between it and the new Lady Chapel beyond. It would appear that yet another Screen, with a central doorway, stood across the entrance to the Lady Chapel, on the eastern side of the Processional Path, and that Abbot Coke was buried immediately before it; for Newland tells us that Abbot Coke was buried "in the space afore the door entering into our Lady Chapel above the High Altar."<sup>1</sup> At the Reformation all these Screens, including the Reredos, were apparently swept away. A new and massive Screen of stone was placed

<sup>1</sup> The above description of the position of the various Screens is based upon an article published in *Archæologia*, vol. lxiii, by R. W. Paul, F.S.A. It may be noted that if the position of the Rood Screen had been changed in the lifetime of Abbot Knowle, his resting-place would be in the centre of the easternmost bay of the nave, not, as Paul's plan shows it, in the second bay. A different view of the Screens and their positions may be found in a paper by R. Hall Warren, F.S.A., reprinted from the proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club, vol. iv. On such a question some points must always remain more or less conjectural.

two bays east of the tower, with an organ gallery above, and the High Altar was pushed back to the east end of the Eastern Lady Chapel, which thus became the choir of the Cathedral. A wall was built across the western piers of the tower, and the space between this wall and the second bay east of the tower thus served as a kind of ante-chapel, or mutilated nave. A pulpit was placed against the first pier of the northern arcade. The new Screen has been identified with a Choir Screen which once belonged to the Chapel of the White Friars, and was bought by Thomas White, a Bristol merchant. White, in his will dated September 10, 1542, directed that "the said Quere (screen) be sett upp at my coste and charge" in "my Cathedral Church." If this identification be correct, the Screen can have been but a short time in the Chapel of the White Friars, for it was a fine piece of Tudor work. The initials and arms of Edward Prince of Wales, indeed, still to be seen on the fragment now separating the south choir aisle from the choir, show, unless they formed no part of the original screen, that it must have been made between 1542 and 1547; and the identification with White's screen is thus rendered very precarious. The screen remained in its original position in the Cathedral till 1860, when it was removed and left in fragments in the cloisters during the work of "restoration" carried out by Dean Elliot. These fragments were collected and built in at the back of the sedilia of the choir in 1899. The initials T.W. to be found on the portion preserved in the south choir aisle have been variously interpreted as representing the names of Thomas White, or of Thomas Wright, who was Receiver General for the Chapter when the See was founded.

The first Bishop of Bristol was one Paul Bush, a learned man, Provost of a small house of Bonhommes at Edington, near Westbury, in Wiltshire, and Canon Residentiary of Salisbury. He had been Chaplain to Henry VIII, and was consecrated Bishop on June 25, 1542. His replies to certain inquiries relative



to the "abuses of the mass", proposed in 1548, show that in matters of doctrine he was conservative. In practice he was less rigid, for he married after he had become a Bishop. His wife died, not inopportunately, three months after the accession of Queen Mary. But her death was not held to have regularized his position. A Commission, of which Bishops Gardiner and Bonner were members, passed sentence of deprivation upon him, and he resigned in June, 1554. He retired to his rectory of Winterbourne, near Bristol, died there four years later, and was buried in the Cathedral at the north entrance to the Eastern Lady Chapel, near the grave of his wife. His monument is one of the latest specimens of the grisly "corpse" effigies which were once not uncommon.

His successor, John Holyman, was a man to be held in honour. He had been a Fellow of New College, Oxford, then Rector of Colerne, and finally a monk in S. Mary's Abbey, Reading. Justly respected for his learning and the sanctity of his life, he had shown his courage in openly opposing the royal divorce, both by preaching against it, and in a published tract. He represented, of course, the old order and obedience to Rome. But, to his credit, he refused to have any part in the burning of four Protestants who suffered martyrdom at Bristol upon S. Michael's Hill in 1555. It was during his episcopate that the Cathedral received from Philip and Mary gifts described as follows in one of the capitular registers: "Received the first of Maye 1555, by Cloude, the carier of the gifte of the Kinge and Quenes most excellent maties to the Cath. Church of Bristoll, the copes, vestments, &c followinge:—Imprimis III copes, one of Rredd satten, with streaks of gold p<sup>st</sup> decon and sub-decon; another of yellow velvet p<sup>st</sup> decon and sub-decon; another of blewe velvet p<sup>st</sup> decon and sub-decon. Item. III aulter ffronts; an of yellow velvet; an red satten, w<sup>th</sup> streaks of gold; Another of blewe velvet and yellow satten; Another of violet velvet and grene satten." These splendours cannot

long have been in use at the Cathedral. Soon after the accession of Elizabeth, when orders were issued for the general demolition of roods, images, and other ornaments of Popish worship, the Commissioners gave directions from London that the tabernacles "in the fronture of the roodeloft of the Cath<sup>l</sup> Church of Bristol, as also in the frontures, back and ends of the walls wheare the comn table standeth" should be "defaced and hewen down". The Ten Commandments were to be painted in large characters on the east wall of the choir. The tabernacle work on the screen was replaced by paintings of the Minor Prophets. These were plastered up during the Civil War, but were restored to view in 1804, to disappear finally on the breaking-up of the screen in 1860. In the general destruction of things of beauty provoked by the reaction against Romish abuses broidered copes and altar frontals had small chance of survival.

From early days the dignity of the See of Bristol was ill maintained. Three years were allowed to pass before a successor was appointed to Holyman; and then for nearly thirty years the See was held *in commendam* with the See of Gloucester. Not till the appointment of Richard Fletcher, the father of the dramatist, in 1589, did Bristol have its own Bishop; and for the ten years from 1593 to 1603 the diocese was left forlorn as before. With Bishop Thornborough (1603-1616) we meet with a return of troubles such as had vexed at times the relations between the Abbey and the municipal authorities. In 1606 the Common Council ordered that a convenient structure should be erected in the Cathedral, where the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors, with their wives, might sit and hear sermons on "Sabbaths" and festival days. The Dean and Chapter gave their consent, and agreed that the pulpit should be moved to a spot fronting the proposed seats; and the fabric was duly erected. The Bishop, who was also Dean of York, had not visited his diocese during the years 1606 and

1607; but on his return to Bristol in 1608 he was highly displeased with the appearance of the new gallery, reported to the Archbishop that it made the Church look like a playhouse, and secured his sanction for its removal. To a request from the Council that he should await the result of its appeal to the Primate he returned a contemptuous refusal, and he proceeded summarily to abolish the offending structure. Nor did he yield with any grace when the King, to whom the citizens had appealed, commanded him to restore it; for he re-erected it at a height of no more than three feet from the ground, and removed the pulpit to such a distance that the occupants of the gallery could not hear the preacher. In consequence the Corporation forsook the Cathedral and for some years went to hear sermons at S. Mary Redcliff. In 1623 Bishop Wright contrived to heal the breach and was rewarded by the civic authorities with a "good" butt of sack, and two hogshheads of claret; while a few weeks later he received the freedom of the city. In the following year seats were erected for the Corporation on both sides of the choir at a cost of £45. Bishop Wright has left a complacent record of the improvements which his bounty effected in the Cathedral. "I caused," he writes, "to be sett as goodly a pair of organs and as richly gilded as any be in this Kingdom and made a goodly window in the west end of the Church where before was a plaine stone wall and noe light. I richly beautified the east end of the quire and entrance thereto. I set up one of the fairest stone pulpits in this Kingdom. Whereas the clock stood upon pillars of wood in the face of the Church, I made a new clock-house of stone in the interior of the Church with the fairest and most artificial horologe in these parts." We seem to catch the accents of Nehemiah describing the restoration of the Temple at Jerusalem.

It would appear that there was some improvement in the standard of duty observed at the Cathedral between the years

1612 and 1634. In the former year Archbishop Abbot held a Visitation, and his Articles of Inquiry include some significant questions. For example: "VII. Whether be not all the residentiaries in the Church many times absent at one time, so that none is to be seen in the church there for divers weeks together, to do the service due in the church, or to keep hospitality there? IX. Whether there be not a general neglect among the said canons of coming to evening prayer Sundays, Holydays, and other weekdays? XIII. How it cometh to pass, that when as the mayor and aldermen of this city were wont, to the credit of this place, to resort to your cathedral church, and there to hear divine service, now they forbear the same? and who gave the cause of their forbearing thereof? and whether there have been any means made for the reconciliation of either corporation to the other again?" When Archbishop Laud held his Visitation in 1634 the quarrel between the Dean and Chapter and the Corporation had been composed, and the Archbishop found less cause for serious criticism. But it had become customary abruptly to break off the service, if the Mayor came before the end of Morning Prayer, and to proceed with the sermon; while if the service were ended before the Mayor's arrival, the sermon was not begun until he came. "I like neyther of these two," comments Laud, "and require yt both be remedied."

Laud had his way for the time in his measures for enforcing an outward conformity in religion throughout the country. But his work was destroyed in the flames of the Great Rebellion. At Bristol the majority of the citizens favoured the Parliament. But party feeling ran high. Twice the city was taken by siege. In July, 1643, Prince Rupert captured it, and we read of the royalist forces occupying College Green, the Cathedral, S. Augustine's and S. Mark's Chapel before the rest of the city was securely in their hands. This was a great triumph for the King, and on August 3rd he arrived in Bristol with his youthful sons, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. On the following

Sunday he went to the Cathedral, to hear the sermon, "the Mayor carrying the golden mace before him, bareheaded, and in his scarlet robes." Two years later the clergy who took part in that service, with the rest of the royalist clergy in the city, were summarily deprived of their preferments; for on September 11, 1645, Rupert was compelled to surrender Bristol to Fairfax. The Bishop, Thomas Howell, who had been consecrated only a year earlier—the last Bishop to be consecrated in England for sixteen years—was shamefully treated. His wife lay in child-bed; yet the Parliamentarians sold the palace, stripped the lead from its roof, and exposed its inmates to the inclemency of a season of heavy rain. The poor lady died in consequence, and the Bishop and his eight children were turned into the street. He himself died a year later, and the citizens of Bristol, moved to compassion, undertook the education of his children "in grateful memory of their most worthy father". Bishop Howell was buried in the Eastern Lady Chapel. On a slab of black marble let into the stone that covered his remains was carved the one word *Expergiscar*.<sup>1</sup> It is sad that no trace of this stone can now be found.

Nothing survives in the Chapter records to tell us of what happened at the Cathedral between 1642 and 1660. There is no trustworthy evidence that the Parliamentary troops desecrated the building. In November, 1645, two Parliamentarians, Pyndar and Leighton, wrote to the Speaker complaining that "for want of able ministers, Directories, and orders for the use of the same, the people here sitt in darkness and the Collegiate men still chaunt out the Common Prayer Book to the wonted height". But this state of things cannot have lasted long. In 1648 Deans and Chapters were abolished; in 1649 their lands were sold. Only two members of the Chapter survived to return to their stalls in 1660. We learn from MSS. in the Lambeth Palace Library that in January, 1651, it was ordered that "the yearly

<sup>1</sup> I shall awake.

sum of £150 be continued unto such godly and able minister as shall be approved to officiate in the Cathedral Church of Bristol and the several Churches of Augustine and Gaunts in the said city"; and that in February, 1653, the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers ordered the said £150 per annum to be paid to Mr. John Knowles, "a godly and painful preacher this day settled minister of the said Cathedral". John Knowles must have given satisfaction to his congregation, for in 1658 he was granted an annual augmentation of £19 4s. 4d. Another MS. at Lambeth Palace, dated November 19, 1657, shows that the Dean and Chapter had not suffered alone; for it states that whereas Jas. Read, Wm. Crane, Hen. Symonds, Th. Dean, and Hen. Hosier "members of Bristol Cathedral" are certified by the Corporation of Bristol as being in want, one of the Trustees is to be ordered to make inquiry and report to the Trustees. Of the men named, Read and Crane were Minor Canons, and Symonds a Lay Clerk. Two prebendal houses, we learn from a State Paper of 1661, had been pulled down by "the late usurpers". It is also said that, under the Protectorate, the Mayor, Walter Deyos, had the lead stripped from the roofs of the Cathedral and the cloisters, but that further destruction was prevented by other members of the Corporation. In 1655 orders were given that the lead should be sold and the proceeds applied to the repair of the building. And in 1663 it was reported of the Cathedral that it was "new mended and flourished".

If the fabric of the Cathedral "flourished", the same can hardly be said of the work of the Dean and Chapter in the ensuing years. Some of their number, such as Samuel Crossman, were good and devout men; but right up to the nineteenth century the surviving records do not suggest the existence of any strong spiritual life in the body as a whole. The Dean appointed at the Restoration, Henry Glemham, is described by Pepys as "a drunken swearing rascal and a scandal to the Church". None the less, thanks to the influence of his niece,

the notorious Lady Castlemaine, he was promoted to the Bishopric of S. Asaph in 1667. He was succeeded by Richard Towgood, a staunch royalist, who had been deprived of the Vicarage of S. Nicholas under the Commonwealth, had been imprisoned, and condemned to death. In his time a miserable squabble broke out between the Corporation and the Dean and Chapter, first of all with regard to the Bidding Prayer, and then as to whether the State Sword might be carried erect into the Cathedral before the Mayor and Corporation. This quarrel lasted for some four years, fomented in its origin by Bishop Guy Carleton. That hardy campaigner—he had hastened to fight in the royal army, though he had already held two livings—fell foul of the Chapter for what he considered its lack of spirit, and publicly abused Prebendary Crossman, the leader of the opposition, as “a perjured and saucy fellow who ought to have his gown pulled off his back”. In Dean Thomson’s time, a few years later, trouble arose of a still less creditable kind. Bishop Lake, a man of high courage and principle, found himself so persistently thwarted in his efforts to improve the state of things at the Cathedral, more particularly by introducing a weekly Communion service, that he besought Archbishop Sancroft to secure his translation to Chichester, in order that he might be removed from “the impertinence and insolence of the Dean”. The general slackness extended beyond the Chapter. In 1682 Paul Heath, the organist, was “removed, expelled, and dismissed”. It appeared that, in spite of “several admonitions for keeping a disorderly alehouse, debauching the choir men, and other disorders there, and neglecting the service of the church”, he was still “keeping ill order in his house, had suffered one Rouch, a barber, to trim in his house on the Lord’s Day, . . . and according to report had allowed several town-dwellers to sit tipping in his house till they were drunk or very much overgone with liquor, one of them being found there dead”. He had also “often suffered illegal games there”.

Altogether, in the latter half of the seventeenth century we find settling down over Bristol Cathedral a fog of spiritual torpor, hardly to be dissipated till, more than a hundred years later, fresh life was brought to the Church by the purer airs of the Oxford Movement.

## CHAPTER VI

### SLUMBER

NO age is without its redeeming features, nor does any society remain throughout a century at the same level. Thus there were far more signs of life at Bristol Cathedral during the first quarter of the eighteenth century than later, under the numbing ascendancy of Walpole and the Whigs. So Browne Willis could write of it in 1727, "It is truly no elegant structure, being reputed one of the meanest Cathedrals in the kingdom; however, by the generosity and zeal of the present members it is so well adorned that it wants for no Cost or Art to render it beautiful, and is daily improving, and may be said to be kept in as good repair as any church whatsoever. . . . The whole structure is kept so decent that the example of this Chapter is worthy to be recommended to the imitation of our richest and most ancient Cathedrals." The famous storm of November, 1703, which blew in the great window in the north transept and seriously damaged the cloisters, had necessitated an expensive work of restoration. On that occasion the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital were removed to the Chapter House, presumably for the sake of safety; and there, trembling, they sang psalms all night, like the choristers in Southey's ballad of *The Old Woman of Berkeley*. From 1709 onwards further sums were laid out on improvements to the Cathedral and its surroundings. In 1714 the Dean and Chapter, with a zeal not according to knowledge, replaced original Norman windows in the Chapter House by inserting two large sash-windows



in the south wall and one in the east wall; and they commemorated their feat in a complacent Latin inscription. In the same year John Romsey, a former Town Clerk, presented to the Cathedral at a cost of £114 the beautiful silver candlesticks now on the altar of the Eastern Lady Chapel, as a thank-offering for his share in the profits of a privateering expedition to the Spanish Main. Money was also spent on improving the organ. And one strange scene witnessed in the Cathedral about this time reveals at least the existence of a sense of religious discipline. On March 22nd, 1712, Ann Roberts, convicted of incest, by sentence of the Chancellor stood in the choir, at the hour of Morning Prayer, before the minister and congregation, clad in a white sheet and bearing a white wand, during the whole of the service, and further, after the second lesson, made public confession of, and professed penitence for, her crime. A certificate that the sentence had been carried out was signed by a Minor Canon.

There are names, too, among the Bishops of Bristol during the eighteenth century not to be mentioned without honour, notably Thomas Secker, subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury, Joseph Butler, and his successor John Conybeare. Bishop Butler, whose *Sermons* and *Analogy* make him one of the glories of the English Church, was Bishop of Bristol for twelve years, and is said to have spent nearly £5,000 on the improvement of the Palace. It was while walking in the Palace garden one wild and gusty night that he turned to his Chaplain and asked him the question whether he thought that bodies of men, like individuals, could go mad. Nothing else, he believed, could explain certain events in history. If he were alive to-day, Bishop Butler would surely be confirmed in that opinion. It was in the Palace, presumably, that, in 1739, he had his memorable interview with John Wesley. "Well, sir," said the Bishop at the close of their talk, "since you ask my advice, I will give it you very freely. You have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this Diocese. Therefore I advise

you to go hence." "My Lord," replied Wesley, "my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here; therefore here I stay." We rightly deplore the failure of the Bishops to retain the forces of Methodism in the service of the Church of England. But in truth no one responsible for the administration of a Diocese could well have come to terms with such a spirit as John Wesley, so conscious of a direct mission from God, so masterful and self-willed, so impatient of any human direction or control.

But from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards the story of Bristol Cathedral presents a picture in which the shadows are deepened. We find the old squabbles renewed. A violent dispute raged from 1749 to 1752 between Dean Chamberlayne and the Chapter because the Dean claimed the sole right to appoint the Minor Canons. The question was finally referred to the Bishops of London, St. David's and St. Asaph, who decided against the Dean. Once more the Dean and Chapter were at variance with the Corporation, and *Felix Farley's Journal* congratulated the city on "the pleasing prospect of future peace", when in 1759 the Corporation, after an interval of many years, attended service again at the Cathedral on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot. Pluralism—itself a legacy from the mediæval Church—fostered in ecclesiastical dignitaries a spirit of sloth and self-seeking. The fact that there have been fifty Bishops of Bristol since 1542, while there have been only fifty Bishops of Winchester since 1250 and only fifty-four Bishops of Bath and Wells since 1135, shows with what eagerness and success the occupants of the See of Bristol sought translation to some richer post. In this they had some real excuse, for Bishop Newton (1761-1782) states that in his time the Bishopric of Bristol was not worth much more than £300 per annum. It was in consequence invariably held in conjunction with other preferments, such as the Deanery of Windsor or the Deanery

of S. Paul's. Between 1689 and 1808 fourteen Bishops were translated within five years or less of their appointment to the See of Bristol; and only two, Bishops Butler and Newton, retained the See for so long as ten years. Newton himself was an earnest but unsuccessful place-hunter. But the palm for efforts in this sphere must be given to Bishop Pelham, who in February, 1805, addressed the following letter to William Pitt:

“Sir,—I have heard from so many quarters that you have been kind enough to think of recommending me to His Majesty to succeed to the See of Norwich that I can no longer refrain [from] expressing my gratitude to you, if such is your intention; and of assuring you that by so doing you will be conferring a lasting obligation upon me, which I shall ever have a pride in acknowledging.

“I am, sir, &c. G. Bristol.”

Pitt replied on the same day.

“My Lord,—In answer to the letter which I have just had the honour of receiving from your lordship, I am sorry to be under the necessity of acquainting your lordship that the report which has reached you respecting the See of Norwich has arisen without my knowledge, and that I cannot have the satisfaction of promoting your wishes.

“I have the honour, &c.

“W. Pitt.”

But Pelham, undaunted, returned to the charge, and in 1807, after Pitt's death, he was promoted to the See of Exeter.

This worldliness among Bishops was reflected in the Chapter. Here, too, there was once the excuse of comparative poverty. Early in the eighteenth century the Dean received no more than £100 a year and each Prebendary £20, though every member of the Chapter had in addition an official house and a share in the fines for the renewal of leases, which sometimes amounted to a substantial sum. In consequence pluralism was rampant, and it lasted far into the nineteenth century. Dean Lamb, for

example, who did not die till 1850, was Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Olveston, whence he used to drive in for the Cathedral services. Lord William Somerset, Canon from 1822 to 1851, held no fewer than six livings, three of which he never visited, in addition to his Canonry, and derived from his ecclesiastical benefices an income of over £3,000 a year. Every Canon enjoyed other preferment besides his Canonry, and none of them resided at Bristol for more than a few months in the year. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the financial position of the Dean and Chapter had improved, and Bishop Newton reckoned the Deanery to be worth at least £500 per annum and each Prebend (or Canonry) about half that sum. Presumably this calculation makes allowance for fines for leases. But the Bishop has to deplore a scandalous failure in duty on the part of the Dean and Canons. "Never," he writes in 1781, "was Church more shamefully neglected. The Bishop has several times been there for months together without seeing the face of Dean or Prebendary or anything better than a Minor Canon. . . . His example having no kind of effect, he remonstrated several times, that their preferments deserved a little better attendance, as they could well bear the expense of it . . . that their want of residence was the general complaint not only of the city, but of the whole country; that great numbers resorted every year to the Wells, and generally came, at least on a Sunday, to see the Cathedral; that they were astonished at finding only one Minor Canon both to read and to preach and perhaps to administer the sacrament . . . that there were those who contended for the uselessness of Deans and Chapters, and that they could not point out a more flagrant instance of good pay received and little duty done than in the church of Bristol." But the Bishop's rebukes fell on deaf ears. The bad tradition died hard. In a paper read on November 1st, 1899, the late Mr. R. Hall Warren declared that he well remembered "on a Christmas Day that the whole

of the service and the sermon were taken by one of the Minor Canons, the only official present”.

The “old Chapter”, of which Canon Bankes, who died in 1867, was the last survivor, contained some curious figures. There was Canon Randolph, who, disappointed in his hopes of preferment, vented his spleen by preaching on the Sunday after the coronation of George IV from the text Daniel v, 1 and 2, “Belshazzar the King made a great feast”—with its final reference to the king’s wives and concubines—and was known as “Belshazzar Randolph” ever after. Three members of the Chapter about that time were connected by marriage with Lord Chancellor Eldon, who made rich provision for them. Canon Bankes, indeed, who married the Lord Chancellor’s daughter, held simultaneously a Canonry at Bristol, another at Gloucester, and a good living in Dorset. On coming to Bristol he had resigned a Canonry at Norwich. But for neglect of clerical duties two Canons were conspicuous beyond the rest, John Surtees, another of Lord Eldon’s relatives, appointed in 1821, and Lord William Somerset. The latter, a younger brother of the Duke of Beaufort, had been a cavalry officer, and was heard to declare that he would “rather lead his men to the cannon’s mouth than go into the pulpit”. It has been stated that during his twenty-nine years as Canon he never preached in the Cathedral; but this is an exaggeration. There is evidence that he delivered a sermon at least twice, though almost certainly he never wrote one. “He was a grand man,” writes one who often saw him, “handsome, like all his house; but anything more unlike a successor of the apostles . . . you could not imagine than he was, when you saw him, service over on week-days, mount the box of his four in hand, which awaited him at the north porch, and drive out of the Green, the greatest of whips and the least of theologians.” Canon Surtees, who enjoyed in addition to his Canonry the income of two livings in Norfolk, appears to have preached on the

rarest occasions, in earlier days paying the Precentor to provide him with a sermon, but later repairing to some cheaper manufactory. These two worthies provoked a vigorous outburst in 1849 from an anonymous pamphleteer: "An exceedingly additional benefit THE CHURCH would derive if the intrepid hardworking conscientious and pious minor canon, Eccles James Carter, and the Precentor could immediately supply the stalls of two useless *Great Guns*—those wealthy mute pieces of heavy ordnance, who have not fired a shot from their battery at his Satanic Majesty for many a year."

It is easy to exaggerate the moribund condition of the Church of England on the eve of the Oxford Movement. There is abundant evidence that throughout the eighteenth century in many a parish, both in town and country, the clergy were doing good and faithful work. But it cannot be denied that the Church as a whole was in need of a quickening influence, or that at the Cathedrals, in particular, spiritual life had fallen to a deplorably low ebb. "When you see a clergyman of my age," said Sydney Smith with characteristic extravagance, "you may know that he is a bad man." It is not surprising that a century ago the Church was widely unpopular, and that the Bishops and other dignitaries were often the objects of contempt and violent denunciation. They drew upon themselves special odium by their opposition to Parliamentary Reform. So it was that in the great Bristol Riots of 1831 the Cathedral encountered the worst peril in its history. The riots began on Saturday, October 29th, on the entry into Bristol of Sir Charles Wetherall, the Recorder, a notorious opponent of the Reform Bill, to open the Assizes. Unhappily neither the magistrates nor Lt.-Col. Brereton, who was in command of the troops who had been drafted into the city, took any continuous and resolute action to disperse the mob, and on the Sunday the rioters, after breaking into the cellars of the Mansion House, in Queen Square, indulged in an orgy of pillage and arson. It

was not till about 7.0 p.m. on that day that danger first threatened the Cathedral, when a comparatively small body of not more than forty rioters made their way to the Bishop's Palace. Bishop Gray, who had both spoken and voted against the Reform Bill in the House of Lords, had preached that morning in the Cathedral, but was persuaded to leave the Palace in the clothes of one of his menservants during the afternoon. The first invasion of the Palace was routed by the arrival of troops sent from the Mansion House. But almost at once news reached the soldiers that in their absence the Mansion House had been set on fire, and they returned thither, leaving the Palace to its fate. The mob then burst into the Palace a second time, in larger force, shouting "The King" and "No Bishops", fired the house, demolished the furniture with iron bars and bludgeons, and ransacked the cellars. Numbers were soon lying drunk and senseless on the ground, or the damage might have been far more extensive. Those who could stand next broke into the Chapter House, where the Cathedral Library was then kept, and hurled books and manuscripts through the windows into the blazing ruins of the Palace, or fed with them a bonfire which was started in the cloisters. An attempt to force a way into the Cathedral was foiled by William Phillips, the Sub-Sacrist, who, though sixty-one years of age, boldly faced the assailants, an iron bar in his hand, and contrived to close the door leading into the cloisters. But he could have secured no more than a temporary respite for the building, had not assistance been forthcoming from outside. W. H. Somerton, the Editor of the *Bristol Mercury*, tells us in a contemporary "Narrative of the Bristol Riots" that Mr. James Norton "about 12.0 o'clock at night, on going to the Bishop's Palace, saw about thirty or forty boys hallooing around the fire, and a man with a pole and flag surrounded by a crowd about to fire the Chapter House and the Cathedral, the floor of the former at this time being entirely covered with leaves torn from books. Several gentlemen then

resolved to try to save the Cathedral, and Mr. B. Ralph caught hold of the leader of the rioters and insisted that he could stop the firing and save the Cathedral. The building, he said, was public property, and no Reformer or friend of the King would destroy it. After a momentary pause the man called out 'Reform, and *not* burn the College,' going round the Palace to his associates, who all repeated the cry. The fire in the Chapter Room was then extinguished, and the floor cleared of the paper and firebrands. Still, however, a few boys from thirteen to eighteen years of age, kept throwing lighted pieces of paper for nearly an hour, which were as often put out [by two or three gentlemen present], though they were at times assailed with sticks, stones, and brickbats. About 1.30 a.m. the crowd wholly dispersed."

Meanwhile the mob, largely composed of mere boys, had continued to sack and burn houses and public buildings in Queen Square and elsewhere. Many of the rioters perished miserably in the flames which they had themselves helped to kindle. It was estimated in the *Bristol Mercury* for November 1st, 1831, that forty-two dwelling houses and warehouses were destroyed, exclusive of the Mansion House, Excise Office, Custom House, the four Toll Houses, the three Prisons, and the Bishop's Palace. The damage, it was reckoned, amounted to not less than £300,000. When at last, early on the Monday morning, the military were allowed to act with vigour, order was restored within a few hours. It was none too soon. The scum of the population in the city was eager for further plunder, and from all quarters of the countryside evil characters were flocking to Bristol in the hope of sharing in the spoils.

One benefit was brought to the Cathedral by the Riots, in that they necessitated a restoration of the Chapter House. In that restoration the sash-windows inserted in 1714 were removed and the floor was restored to its former level. In the course of the work twelve stone coffins were discovered beneath



the floor. The sculptured lid of one of these, representing the Harrowing of Hell—probably a piece of Saxon work, and therefore the oldest possession of the Cathedral—now stands near the entrance to the south choir aisle.

The Riots of 1831 mark the close of an epoch in the history of the Cathedral. From that time onwards the sluggish waters were roused to life by a fresher tide. In 1833 John Keble preached his famous Assize Sermon at Oxford, which Newman regarded—whether rightly or wrongly—as the beginning of the Oxford Movement. Other influences were at work to destroy the old bad order. The Evangelical Movement, with its emphasis on personal religion, had for many years past quickened the public conscience. The agitation for political reform, so dreaded by Newman and his friends, was intolerant of recognized abuses in Church and State. The Oxford Movement reinforced these tendencies with a fresh sense of the seriousness of life and of man's duty to God; with a reverence for the continuity of faith and order and devotion which links us to antiquity and to other branches of the Church; with a truer recognition of what is seemly and beautiful in worship. Amid all this stir of thought and aspiration the old stagnation in a Cathedral Close could not endure. Signs of the former state of things naturally lingered. A visitor to our Cathedral in 1845 describes how he was ignored by the vergers and given no seat at Morning Prayer on a Sunday till he had copied the example of other would-be worshippers, and was thereupon admitted to a pew and “composed himself to take the full benefit of twelve-pennyworth of prayers”. In 1848 Dean Lamb persuaded the Chapter to abolish the chanting of the Service, in order to foist into the post of Minor Canon Sir C. Macgregor, who was unable to intone. This attempt was frustrated by the Precentor, who appealed with success to the Visitor, Bishop Monk. But the Cathedrals Act of 1840 laid the foundation of a better state of things. As the result of its provisions the number of Canons was reduced

from six to four, that of the Minor Canons from six to three, the Bishop was authorised to appoint Honorary Canons, the Dean was required to reside at the Cathedral for eight months in the year, and Canons for at least three. The custom whereby the Dean had undertaken residential duties for three months in the year had been dropped in 1839, and in 1853 the lapsing of vested interests left four Canons each responsible for three months' annual residence. Before many more years had passed it became plain to all that the dry bones had begun to live.

## CHAPTER VII

### AWAKENING

**I**N 1850 Gilbert Elliot became Dean of Bristol, and he held that office till his death in 1891. He is now principally remembered because for a number of years before he died he was seldom or never seen in the Cathedral. But this was due to age and infirmity, and it should not be forgotten that the Cathedral owes much to his energetic and masterful rule. He was not long in getting to work. In 1852 the side windows of the choir were restored and over £6,000 was spent on internal decoration. The next enterprise was less fortunate. In 1860 the Dean and Chapter were led on the advice of Sir Gilbert Scott into a sad waste of money, to the amount, indeed, of some £20,000. With the object of providing accommodation for a congregation of 800 persons, they destroyed the Tudor screen on which the organ stood, across the second bay eastward from the tower, moved the stalls and organ to the eastern Lady Chapel, and erected a new screen of poor design across the eastern arch of the tower. At that time no one seriously thought of attempting to rebuild the nave. It was left for John Pilkington Norris, appointed Canon in 1865, to fire others with his own enthusiasm, and to secure at last the completion of the long-mutilated

Church. He was only just in time. It was then that the old Deanery was sold and destroyed for the purpose of making a new road along the north side of the Cathedral to the Hotwells ; and it is said that the Chapter was preparing to sell the ground on which the nave now stands for the erection of shops. The scheme for erecting a new nave met with warm support. G. E. Street was chosen as architect, and the foundation stone was laid on April 17th, 1868. The only instructions given to Street were that he should design "such a nave as Knowle would have built, had he lived." In the main Street carried out these directions with notable success. He built upon the foundations previously sketched out by Abbot Knowle, or possibly by Abbot Newland, preserving the marked bend of the choir to the north of east, in relation to the nave, by which mediæval architects were wont, it is said, to symbolize the bending of Christ's head upon the Cross. But he was careful so to build that there might be no mistaking new work for old. Thus the transoms across the vaulting of the nave-aisles are devoid of ornament ; the pillars in the nave, unlike those in the choir, are built of Corsham stone and are ribbed with shafts of blue lias ; the design of the external parapet of the roof differs in nave and choir, and the nave buttresses are of a new—and, it must be confessed, an altogether feebler—design. The view of the interior from the west doors eastward is one of great dignity and beauty. Bristol Cathedral now possesses a continuous stone vault as long as that of Exeter, and the fact that throughout the side aisles are of equal height with the central vault—though that height is no more than fifty-two feet—gives a sense of spaciousness to the building. In criticism it may be said, firstly that the west end is woefully dark, an evil which has only partially been remedied by the provision in 1935 of plate glass doors : though it might be urged that Street could not have foreseen that a later generation would wantonly obscure the light by the insertion of the darkest of stained glass in the south windows. Secondly,

many will feel that the Cathedral would be a nobler building if it extended westward for another bay, and were rid of its uninspiring western towers. Street insisted on including these towers in his design, on the ground that without them the Cathedral would hardly be distinguished from a parish church,—a curious argument, in view of the Cathedrals of Winchester, Gloucester, and Worcester, to mention only three examples. The nave was opened on October 23rd, 1877, £48,000 up to that point having been spent upon it. The western towers were completed in 1888. The north-west tower is dedicated to the memory of Bishop Butler, the south-west tower to that of Edward Colston (1636–1721) the Bristol philanthropist.

The process of restoration continued with little interruption for ten years or more after the opening of the western towers. The Abbey Gateway was restored between 1888 and 1893; the North Transept in 1890, when the great north window was given in memory of Edward Colston by the Dolphin Society; the Elder Lady Chapel, described by Archdeacon Norris in 1888 as “becoming ruinous”, between 1892 and 1894. From 1893 onwards the central tower was repaired. In 1895 the choir was reopened after a rearrangement which undid most of the alterations effected by Dean Elliot. The stalls were remodelled and placed in the two western bays of the choir, a new marble pavement was laid down, and a new altar was erected on the site of the mediæval high altar. In 1899 a stone reredos was added from the designs of J. L. Pearson, in memory of the episcopate of Bishop Ellicott, and in 1903 fragments of the Tudor screen broken up in 1860 were used to form a parclose screen on either side at the back of new sedilia. In the same year the stone pulpit in the nave was presented by Mrs. Coleman, while in 1905 the present choir screen, designed by J. L. Pearson, was given in memory of Mr. W. Killigrew Wait. Two years later, when the organ was rebuilt, fragments of ancient glass belonging to the Abbey,

which had been rescued from Messrs. Bell's, in College Green, were transferred from the first window of the north choir aisle to the eastern windows of the Chapter House. In 1923-4, through the generosity of Sir George Wills, Bt., new vestries were built on the site of the ancient dortor (or dormitory) and the vault beneath it. The Berkeley Chapel, which had been used at different times as a vestry and as a music room for choristers, was restored and refurnished in 1924-25 by Captain E. G. Mardon, R.N.V.R., as a memorial to his wife, Mrs. Nan Mardon, and in 1931 a like renovation was carried out in the Newton Chapel in memory of the late Canon E. P. Cole and his wife. Meanwhile restoration on a more serious scale was found necessary in 1930, owing to the corroding effect of the atmosphere on the external fabric. An appeal was made for £35,000. Of this sum only £21,000 was received, sufficient for the execution of the repairs which were absolutely necessary at the moment, but for no more. It should be remembered that when the estates of the Dean and Chapter were transferred to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1862 it was agreed that in return the former body should receive an annual sum of £6,796. This is quite insufficient to pay the living agents and to maintain the Cathedral in a proper state of repair. There is sore need of a well-endowed fabric fund to meet the annual expenses of the upkeep of a great building, as well as to provide against the heavy cost of those extensive works of reparation which must inevitably be undertaken from time to time. A fresh source of help was opened in 1933 on the initiative of Dean de Candole, by the formation of the Society of Friends of Bristol Cathedral. The Friends have already presented a new porch to the doorway in the centre of the east walk of the cloister, and are paying for the recolouring, under the supervision of Dr. E. W. Tristram, of the exceedingly interesting and beautiful fifteenth-century bosses in the roof of the transepts and under the central tower.

It is to be hoped that it may be possible to continue steadily with this work of restoring the ancient colouring, traces of which are abundant in all the mediæval parts of the Church.

The renovation and beautifying of the fabric have been accompanied by a great increase in the number of the services and in their seemliness and beauty. Early Celebrations of Holy Communion were introduced in 1869. A few years later Dean Elliot insisted that there should be a Celebration every Sunday, either early or at midday. Previously there had been but one Celebration a month, and that following Morning Prayer on a Sunday. A daily Celebration was instituted in 1935. In 1888 an additional service was introduced on Sunday evenings in Advent and Lent.<sup>1</sup> These services were the precursors of the Nave Services, established by Dean Pigou during the winter months, and extended by Dean Burroughs to every Sunday evening throughout the year. The change in the life of the Cathedral since 1850 may be judged from the further fact that about that time no more than two collections were taken there during the whole year. In the words of the late Canon R. J. Fletcher, we see to-day in Bristol Cathedral "a Church in which reverence for antiquity has gone hand in hand with the desire for beauty as an aid to devotion, with nave, chapels, and vestries full of the loving gifts of many givers; . . . a Cathedral body, free of the offence of pluralism and full of zeal for Cathedral work, with congregations which, even in a non-church-going age, do not flag; [we see] a worthy system of worship and teaching in a carefully tended fabric. . . . The blessing of God has in these latter days brought resurrection where even those who most desired it could not have dared to hope that it would happen."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first Nave Services were held a few years earlier, at the instance of Canon J. Percival, subsequently Bishop of Hereford; but, to his disappointment, they were only held during his months of residence.

<sup>2</sup> *A History of Bristol Cathedral* (1932), p. 72.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MEN AND THEIR MEMORIALS

IT remains briefly to gather together the names of a few of the more prominent personages whose memory is, in one way or another, connected with the Cathedral. Among the Bishops, apart from Joseph Butler, the most notable have been John Lake and Sir Jonathan Trelawny, both in the number of the Seven Bishops who resisted James II in his attempt to assume unconstitutional powers in 1688; John Robinson, who was a prominent diplomatist, and took a leading part in negotiating the Treaty of Utrecht in 1712-13; Thomas Secker, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1758; William Thomson, Archbishop of York, 1863-1890; C. J. Ellicott and George Forrest Browne, distinguished, the one for Biblical scholarship, the other as an historian. Of the Deans, only one can be said to have attained more than episcopal eminence, William Warburton, (Dean from 1757-1760), subsequently Bishop of Gloucester, the friend of Pope and editor of his Works, author of *The Divine Legation of Moses*, and famous as a learned, arrogant, and quarrelsome controversialist. Samuel Crossman, Canon 1667-1683, and Dean 1683-84, is well-known as the author of "Jerusalem on high" and other hymns; and Henry Beeke, Dean from 1814-1837, has been credited with having suggested to Pitt the scheme of an income-tax. Among the Canons almost the only conspicuous names before the nineteenth century, apart from Crossman, are those of Richard Hakluyt, (1552?—1616) author of the celebrated *Voyages*; Nathaniel Forster (1718-1757), eminent as a classical and Biblical scholar; and Josiah Tucker (1712-1799), at one time Domestic Chaplain to Bishop Butler and subsequently Dean of Gloucester, who won considerable fame as an economist. From 1828 onwards we find on the roll such

distinguished men as Sydney Smith, Samuel Lee, famous as an Oriental scholar, John Jackson, successively Bishop of Lincoln and of London, John Percival, subsequently Bishop of Hereford, John Pilkington Norris, who deserves to be honoured as almost a second Founder of the Cathedral, Alfred Ainger, Master of the Temple and notable both as a preacher and as a man of letters, and Samuel Barnett, the founder of Toynbee Hall. A tablet in memory of the last named is to be found on the south wall of the nave. The west window in the south transept was erected in Canon Ainger's memory; and Sydney Smith is commemorated by a tablet in the north transept. Sydney Smith has left a grotesque description of Dean Beeke and Bishop Gray, under whom he served. "The little Dean," he wrote, "I have not seen; he is as small as the Bishop, they say. It is supposed that the one of these ecclesiastics elevated upon the shoulders of the other would fall short of the Archbishop's wig. The Archbishop of York is forced to go down on his knees to converse with the Bishop of Bristol, just as an Elephant kneels to receive its rider." Sydney Smith's main claim to be remembered in connexion with Bristol is the noble sermon which he delivered in the Cathedral on November 5, 1828, in favour of religious toleration. This gave such offence to certain bigoted members of the Corporation that they looked, so the preacher wrote soon after to a friend, "as though they could not keep turtle on their stomachs"; and for some years the Corporation gave up the practice of attending service at the Cathedral in state on the day in question. Another tablet in the north transept connects the names of two great men, Bishop Butler and Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate. Southey, who was himself born in Bristol, was asked in 1834 to write an English inscription in memory of Butler, and produced a masterpiece in its kind. Memories of Butler attach also to the pulpit in the choir, from which he frequently preached. The Laureate's bust is to be



seen in the north choir aisle opposite the bust of Forrest Browne, the first Bishop of the revived See of Bristol. In 1836 the county of Dorset had been transferred to the Diocese of Salisbury, and Bristol had been incorporated in a joint Diocese of Gloucester and Bristol. This arrangement lasted till 1897, when a separate Diocese of Bristol once more came into being, consisting of the city and four Deaneries of Bristol together with two Deaneries in Gloucestershire and three in north Wilts. Other tombs or memorials worthy of note are the fine Renaissance monuments of Sir John Young and Sir Charles Vaughan at the west end of the nave; the mural tablet at the entrance to the north choir aisle erected by Mason, the poet, in memory of his young wife, with its touching inscription, of which the three last—and best—lines were written by Gray; the stone in the floor hard by which marks the burial place of Sterne's Eliza, the philandering Mrs. Draper; at the east end of the same aisle the tomb-stone of Bishop Westfield, who died, as his epitaph composed by himself declares, in 1644 "worn out with grief and age", "the least of Bishops, the chief of sinners"; the three striking figures of Abbots Newbury, Hunt and Newland in the Eastern Lady Chapel, and the tombs of Bishop Butler on the south side of that Chapel, and Bishop Conybeare at the entrance into it from the south choir aisle. In the south choir aisle may be noted the diamond-shaped stone covering the remains of Sir John Stuart, who defeated the French at the battle of Maida, in south Italy, in 1806, the first victory gained by British troops over the French in the war with Napoleon. The Newton Chapel contains further fine Renaissance tombs. Nor must we omit to mention the tablet on the south wall of the south transept commemorating William Phillips, the sub-Sacrist, whose courage saved the Cathedral from the rioters in 1831. In the cloister may be seen tablets in memory of Sterne's Eliza, and of Cowper's "dearest Coz.", the bright and tenderhearted Lady Hesketh.

The Berkeley tombs demand a paragraph to themselves. In the Elder Lady Chapel is the monument of Maurice—the fourth of that name—Lord of Berkeley (ob. 1368), and of the Lady Margaret his mother. This Lord Maurice was captured at the battle of Poitiers by a French squire, who took him to his castle in Picardy and treated him kindly there, till he was ransomed a year later for 6,000 nobles, about £2,000 of our money. The easternmost of the two knightly monuments in the south choir aisle represents Maurice, Lord Berkeley, the second of his name, who fought in the wars with the French and died in 1281. The western monument is that of Lord Thomas, father of the aforesaid Maurice, who died in 1243. An altar tomb in the Berkeley Chapel commemorates Thomas Lord Berkeley, the second of that name, and his wife. This Thomas fought in the Scottish and Welsh wars and was captured with his son at Bannockburn. He died in 1321.

A tantalizing problem is presented by the windows of enamelled glass of the seventeenth century at the east end of the two choir aisles. Horace Walpole, when he visited the Cathedral in 1766, was told that they had been presented by Nell Gwynn, the favourite of Charles II—tradition adds, as a thank-offering for her recovery from an illness. The only confirmation of this story appears to be the following statement quoted by Nicholls and Taylor, *Bristol Past and Present*, vol. iii, p. 87, with inexcusable vagueness, as from “a contemporary MS.”: “1683 December 13th.—The king and Mistress Glwyn (Gwynn) came privily to Bristoll, and drove up to the Colledge to see the colored window Mistress Glwyn had set up, and the king did chide Mistres Glwyn for being soe wastefull.” Against the truth of this story it is urged that on the glass are the arms of Dean Glemham, and that therefore the windows were probably given by him. It might be replied that Nell Gwynn was at one time, as Pepys tells us, very friendly with Lady Castlemaine, the niece of Dean Glemham,

and that she might thus have procured Glemham's permission to make use of his arms. Against this must be set the facts that Glemham became Bishop of S. Asaph in 1667, when Nell Gwynn's connexion with the King had hardly begun, and that he died in 1670. Amid all this uncertainty we may say with some confidence that the windows are such as Nell Gwynn would herself have admired.

A word should be added about the organ. Renuus Harris, a man famous in his craft, built it in 1685, receiving £550 in payment. It has been enlarged or reconstructed at various times—in 1821, 1838, 1860, and 1906-7—but still retains the old timber cases, with a number of the original pipes and some of the bellows. The two carved oak fronts, though seriously mutilated in 1860, are admirable specimens of seventeenth century woodwork.

Our brief survey of the life of the Abbey and the Cathedral has reached its close. It has been a chequered tale, with less in it that is noble and inspiring than could be found in the history of many another famous church. It is doubtless for that very reason that in the past, speaking generally, neither Abbey nor Cathedral exercised its proper influence upon social and municipal life. Yet they never ceased to bear their witness for the worship and the service of God. The men who created the Abbey Church strove to express in soaring arch and radiant window their sense of spiritual realities. The building of the nave proved in the last century that the fire of the Christian faith still glowed in the hearts of the men and women of Bristol. The efforts whereby, not long since, the external fabric has once more been made secure testified to the presence of the same spirit; and owing to those efforts that spirit can now find fresh outlet in the anxious care which is restoring to the interior of the building something of its former glories of beauty and colour. But we have surer signs than these. For long years the Cathedral lay as a sick man fighting his way

back to life. Now life has been regained. Thanks mainly to the prayers and labours of many who did not live to see the full fruit of what they wrought, the Cathedral is recognized, as never before, as the Mother Church of the Diocese. To an almost embarrassing degree it is made use of for special services of the most varied kinds: in the single month of October, 1935, for example, no fewer than sixteen such services were held. And—a still more certain token of life renewed—the regular worship offered there week by week shows what a power for good the great Church is, and may yet become, for the service of God and man. Truly, as we think of what has been and what is, we may thank God and take courage. If only those who come to see or to worship in such a church will learn what it has to teach of reverence, humility and self-devotion, there can be no fear of the Christian faith failing to win fresh triumphs in the years to be.

## APPENDIX<sup>1</sup>

### ON THE DATES OF THE FOUNDATION AND DEDICATION OF THE ABBEY

THE reasons for dating the foundation of the Abbey in 1140—instead of, as is usually stated, in 1142—may be summarized as follows. Our authorities on the matter are these:

- (1) *The Red Book of St. Augustine's*, i.e., the Cartulary of the Abbey, still preserved at Berkeley Castle. This has a note of the dates, though in a later hand than that of the original, which must have been begun about 1200, or little later;

<sup>1</sup> This appendix is based upon a memorandum drawn up by Mr. A. Sabin, Assistant Master of Bristol Cathedral School and Deputy Keeper of the Cathedral Archives.

- (2) Abbot Newland, who wrote at the end of the fifteenth century ;
- (3) Ricart, compiler of the "Mayor's Kalendar", who probably depended upon his contemporary Newland, but may have had access to independent sources ;
- (4) John Smyth, author of the *Lives of the Berkeleys*, who wrote early in the seventeenth century.

Now all these authorities agree that :

- (a) Robert Fitz Harding founded the Abbey in 1140: the Red Book adds "in festo Paschali".
- (b) The Abbey was dedicated in 1146 by the four Bishops of Worcester, Exeter, Llandaff and St. Asaph.<sup>1</sup>
- (c) In 1148 six Canons from the monastery of Wigmore were inducted by Alured, Bishop of Worcester. Newland and Smyth specify the date as Easter Day, April 11th: the Red Book simply says anno 1148.

Now since all our authorities agree that the Abbey was founded in 1140, there can be no good reason for assigning the foundation to another date. The date 1142 seems to have crept into modern guide-books from a mistaken inference drawn by Britton from Smyth's statement that the Abbey was begun when Henry II was "not nine years of age". "That Prince," says Britton, "was born in 1133; assuming, therefore, that Mr. Smyth's sources of information were authentic, the correct date would be . . . 1142." But Smyth himself had given the date as 1140; and his statement as to the age of Henry II when the Abbey was founded is quite consistent with this. Britton (p. 5) misquotes Smyth as saying that Henry "was only nine years old".

A difficulty, however, arises in connexion with the names of the Bishops who dedicated the buildings. The Red Book gives their initials, to which Newland fits the following names,—

<sup>1</sup> So Smyth, I. 42, agreeing with our other authorities. On pp. 35, 36, he assigns the dedication to 1148, apparently by an oversight, combining it with the induction of the Abbot and Canons.

Robert, Boniface, Nicholas, and Gregory. But Newland here was plainly guessing; for in the period 1140-1180 only two of the four names occur at all among the Bishops of the four Sees in question, and only one in the correct See. But the initials furnish a clue. A corresponding set can be found in the period under consideration, and fortunately the R, B, and N. are not repeated during that time in their respective Sees. From a comparison of the initials with the dates of the various episcopates it becomes clear that the Dedication must almost certainly have taken place when Roger was Bishop of Worcester, i.e. between 1164 and 1179: and this probability is made a certainty by a document now in the Bristol Museum. This is a certificate wherein Bartholomew, Bishop of Exeter 1161 or 1162 to 1184, establishes a date by the phrase "on the day whereon our venerable brother Roger, Bishop of Worcester, and ourselves dedicated the Church of St. Augustine of Bristol". The Dedication must, therefore, have taken place considerably later than 1146. Is it possible that the date 1146 crept into our authorities either through a trick of memory or through an error in transcription on the part of an earlier scribe, whereby MCXLVI was substituted for MCLXIV?

The statement that Alured, Bishop of Worcester, inducted the Canons on Easter Day, 1148, presents a further difficulty. Alured could not have performed the ceremony in his capacity as Bishop, for he did not become Bishop of Worcester till ten years later. Yet Easter Sunday fell on April 11th in 1148, but not again until 1221. The charter of Henry II quoted on p. 12 proves that the Abbey had been in existence for some years as early as 1153. And a charter in Dugdale gives as witnesses the Abbot of St. Augustine's, Bristol, and Robert Fitz Harding before March 20th, 1149-50. Thus we seem compelled to date the induction of the Canons considerably before the Dedication of the Abbey. Possibly Alured may have acted in the induction as Commissary for Simon, who was Bishop of Worcester in 1148.

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