



ST. MARY REDCLIFF, BRISTOL, IN PROCESS OF RESTORATION UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. G. GODWIN, ARCHITECT.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY REDCLIFF, BRISTOL.

On Whit Sunday the screen which for some time past has shut out from view the Lady Chapel of Redcliff Church was taken down, and the parishioners were enabled to see the restored interior and three new stained-glass windows which have been set up as memorials. The eastern window of the Lady Chapel, seen in the View which we give in our present Number, is in memory of the late Alderman Thomas Lucas, of Bristol, and is one of the best works of Mr. Wailes of Newcastle. That of the north side, by the same artist, commemorates a lady of the same family, having for subject the raising of Jairus's daughter. The south window, illustrating the command, "Suffer little children to come unto me" (by Messrs. O'Connor of London), is in memory of the late Mr. W. Hall, for forty-five years the devoted superintendent of the Sunday-school. The cost of the stonework of this part of the church has been defrayed partly by a committee of ladies and partly by the Freemasons of Bristol and its neighbourhood.

The effect of the interior of this noble church, as may be judged of from our View, is now becoming superb. For many years past our readers are aware the work of restoration has been going on here gradually under the direction of Mr. George Godwin, architect. Funds came in but slowly, and the work has been done bit by bit, mainly on the outside, where actual danger threatened. Recently, however, donations have been made specially for the interior, where a greater show could be made with smaller expenditure. The fine clustered columns of the nave and transept, seen in the View, have been restored, and their bases and capitals perfected; elaborately-carved oak bench-ends, a pulpit, reading-desk, and font, have been set up; the latter, of Caen stone and alabaster, was carved by Mr. Rice, by whom all the stone carving has been beautifully executed. We should especially point to that about the exterior of the north porch, which portion of the church has been restored under peculiar circumstances, not generally known beyond the locality. This porch, which is one of the finest examples of the Decorated style in the kingdom, has long been connected with poetry and mystery. It was in the upper chamber of it that the ill-fated Chatterton, according to his own assertion, found the Rowley poems. This character the porch was not to lose.

A few years ago a benefactor, known as "Nil Desperandum," the signature he assumed, placed himself in communication with the chairman of the Restoration Committee, Mr. Alderman Proctor, stating that he was desirous of contributing to the restoration of the north porch, and asking whether the committee, with a view to that object, would procure drawings and specifications from Mr. Godwin, and estimate from three different masons of well-known talent, and forward them for inspection. In making this request the writer imposed the following conditions—viz., that no endeavour should be made to break through his incognito until he thought fit to communicate his name to the committee; and that, in order to maintain the desired secrecy on this point, the chairman should pledge himself not to allow the letters received from his unknown correspondent to be seen or read by any one but himself. As a guarantee of good faith the halves of certain bank notes were inclosed to meet expenses. A reply to the proposition was requested to be inserted in one of the Bristol papers. In answer to this communication it was at once resolved by the committee that the chairman should be authorised to insert in the Bristol papers a letter giving the required pledge regarding the conditions of secrecy which the writer imposed, and promising that plans, specifications, and estimates for the renovation of the north porch should forthwith be obtained.

Without going into a long story, suffice it to say the funds were regularly forwarded, to the extent of £2120, by the generous donor, who, though his secret provoked frequent comment, and was the theme of some clever "conjectures" in one of the local papers, continued to preserve his incognito; nor at the present time are we able to designate the unobtrusive restorer of the north porch by any other name than the vague appellation by which alone he has chosen to be known.

The iron hinges here are a very elaborate piece of work, and were executed by Messrs. Hart, of London. The cost of the restoration of the south porch was afterwards undertaken by the Commercial Society, mainly through the exertions of Mr. George Hatherly. The south transept and the greater part of the south side of nave and chancel have been restored by the Restoration Committee, aided by the Canynge Society. Much of the exterior, however, remains in a ruinous, and some of it in a dangerous, condition; but this, it may be hoped, will

now soon be remedied. The present churchwardens, Mr. W. Powell and Mr. W. Proctor, are earnest in their desire to carry on the good work, and the prospects of aid are encouraging. They may be justified in looking beyond their own city for subscriptions; for, using the words of the architect on the occasion of laying the first stone, "St. Mary Redcliff, belongs not simply to Bristol, but to Europe."

MASONIC CEREMONY AT ST. MARY REDCLIFF CHURCH.

On Wednesday week there was a Masonic ceremony in connection with the restoration of this time-honoured structure. The Masonic body have, it is stated, contributed a sum of £800 towards the restoration, and it was resolved to celebrate the work by an appropriate ceremonial, in which the brethren in the adjacent provinces were invited to co-operate. A grand lodge was opened at the Masonic Hall, Bridge-street, and a procession of the various lodges was organised at the Exchange, the Mayor and Corporation being also present. The procession on leaving the Exchange proceeded to St. Mary Redcliff Church, attended by a vast concourse of spectators. The scene in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliff was, perhaps, among the most striking and characteristic observed on the whole line of march. The band of the rifles, on reaching the door of the venerable structure, halted and commenced playing the National Anthem. Simultaneously the brethren fell back bareheaded and formed a passage, up which the Grand Lodge, in their purple and gold collars, stars, diamonds and glittering insignia, jewels, and tokens of their high and sublime branch of the mysterious order. Divine service was impressively performed in the sacred edifice, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Watson, Curate of St. Andrew's Undershaft, in the city of London, and Chaplain to the Grand Lodge. After the service the ceremony of placing a stone at the north-east corner of the Lady Chapel took place with all the imposing Masonic accompaniments incident to such special occasions. The Rev. Chaplain offered up another prayer and the Grand Master pronounced the benediction. The procession then returned to the Exchange, where some appropriate speeches were made by members of the order, the Mayor and the High Sheriff, after which the members dined together at the White Lion Hotel, when Mr. Godwin, the architect, congratulated them on the success of their endeavours as



RESTORATION OF ST. MARY REDCLIFF CHURCH, BRISTOL: PLACING THE LAST STONE AT THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE LADY CHAPEL WITH MASONIC RITES.



MASONIC DEMONSTRATION AT BRISTOL IN CONNECTION WITH THE RESTORATION OF ST. MARY REDCLIFF CHURCH: ARRIVAL OF THE PROCESSION AT THE CHURCH.