

**WILLIAM
ANDREWS**

OLD CHURCH
LORE

William Andrews
Old Church Lore

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Preface

The welcome reception from the public and the press accorded to my volume entitled “Curiosities of the Church,” has induced me to issue another work on similar lines. Like that book, this one shows how closely the Church in bygone times was linked with the national and social life of the people.

An attempt has been made to blend instruction and entertainment, and present out-of-the-way facts drawn from unpublished documents and other sources, which do not usually come under the notice of the reader.

WILLIAM ANDREWS.

Hull Literary Club,
August 1st, 1891.

The Right of Sanctuary

A place where criminals and political offenders could find refuge was called a Sanctuary. It is generally agreed that in this country the privilege of sanctuary was instituted on the recognition of Christianity. From an early time down to the days of Henry VIII., fugitives were safe for certain periods in all the churches and churchyards of the land.

The origin of the usage is extremely remote. Most probably it existed among the Israelites before Moses gave directions for the establishment of cities of refuge, when the children of Israel settled in the Promised Land. The Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and American Indians had their places of refuge.

In England the laws respecting this subject are both numerous and curious. A code of laws made in the year 693 by Ina, King of the West Saxons, contains a recognition of the right of sanctuary. It is therein stated that, if any one accused of a capital offence takes refuge in a church, his life shall be spared, but the criminal is directed to make compensation for his crime. If the guilty one deserved stripes, they were not to be inflicted. According to Alfred the Great's laws of the year 887, those guilty of slight offences were allowed to flee to a church, and there remain for three nights. Thus time was given them to compound for their misdemeanours, or to make suitable provision for their safety. Stringent measures were taken to guard against the violation of the sanctuary. The person who violated the sanctuary and inflicted bonds, blows, or wounds upon the refugee, had to pay the price set upon his life, and to the officiating ministers of the church, one hundred and twenty shillings, which was a large sum in those days. "If a criminal," says the Rev. J. R. Boyle, F.S.A., in a carefully prepared paper on this theme, "fled to a church, no one should drag him thence within the space of seven days, if he could live so long without food, and had not attempted to force his way out. If the clergy had occasion to hold service in the church whilst the refugee was there, they might keep him in some house which had no more doors than the church had."

The law of sanctuary was clearly defined in the year 1070 by William the Conqueror. The privilege of sanctuary was only temporary, and during the time of sanctuary, which was within forty days, the refugee might, if able, come to an agreement with his adversaries. If he failed to compound for his crime, he had to appear before the coroner, clothed in sackcloth, confess his crime, and abjure the realm. In an act passed in the year 1529, in the reign of Henry VIII., it is directed that "immediately after his confession, and before his abjuration, he was to be branded by the coroner with a hot iron upon the brawn of the thumb of his right hand with the sign of the letter A, to the intent he might be the better known among the king's subjects to have abjured." If the offender failed to make a confession of his crime to the coroner within forty days, and remained in the sanctuary, any one found furnishing him with food was regarded as guilty of felony.

Sir William Rastall, who was Chief-Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, in his "Collection of Statutes now in force," London, 1594, supplies a copy of the form of confession and abjuration usually employed. It is as follows: —

"This hear thou, Sir Coroner, that I ... of am a and because I have done such evils in this land, I do abjure the land of our lord the King, and shall haste me towards the port of [mentioning a port named by the coroner], and that I shall not go out of the highway, and if I do, I will that I be taken as a robber and a felon of our lord the King, and that at such place I will diligently seek for passage, and that I will tarry there but one flood and ebb, if I can have passage; and unless I can have it in such a place, I will go every day into the seas up to my knees assaying to pass over, and unless I can do this within forty days, I will put myself again into the church as a robber and a felon of our lord the King, so God me help and His holy judgment."

The constables of the parishes through which the culprit passed conducted him over their highways to the port from whence he had to embark. We gather from "England in the Fifteenth

Century,” by the Rev. W. Denton, M.A., that sanctuary men sent from London to Dover “frequently broke their promise to cross the Channel, betook themselves to the forest, and joined the bands of thieves who made the greenwood of the Weald of Kent their home.”

In the reign of Henry VIII. several acts were passed dealing with this subject. The reason why one of the acts was passed was the loss of the strength of the country by persons taking sanctuary and abjuring the realm, teaching foreigners archery, and also of disclosing the secrets of the realm. To prevent such loss, “it was enacted that every person abjuring was to repair to some sanctuary within the realm, which himself should choose, and there remain during his natural life; and to be sworn before the coroner upon his abjuration so to do.” If a sanctuary man left his retreat without being granted his discharge by the King’s pardon, he ran the risk of being tried for his original crime, and was prohibited from the protective power of the sanctuary. It was usual, in bygone times, for men to wear swords, but when any one took sanctuary he had to give up his weapons, and only use a knife at meal times to cut his meat. The governors of the sanctuaries directed the men under protection to wear a badge or cognisance “openly upon their upper garment, of the compass, in length and breadth, of ten inches,” under pain of forfeiting all the privileges of sanctuary. If they left their lodgings between sunset and sunrise it was at the peril of losing all right of protection. In the same reign, it was decreed that persons guilty of high treason, and pirates, should be excluded from the right of sanctuary. The most important measure bearing on this subject, passed in 1540, clearly indicates the adverse attitude assumed by Henry VIII. towards the privilege of sanctuary. He took away the rights from all places except parish churches and their churchyards, cathedrals, hospitals, and the sanctuaries at Wells, Westminster, Manchester, Northampton, Norwich, York, Derby, and Launceston. A year later, Chester was substituted for Manchester. It is stated that the inhabitants of Manchester were much troubled by the influx of dissolute persons seeking sanctuary. They intimated to Parliament that the refugees injured their trade, and further, that as they had “no mayor, sheriff, or bailiff, no walls, and no gaol for the confinement of offenders,” they prayed to have the privilege withdrawn. In the statute of 1540, the privilege of sanctuary was “abolished in cases of wilful murder, rape, burglary, highway robbery, or wilful burning of a house or barn containing corn.” Not more than twenty persons were to be sheltered in a sanctuary at one time.

An act passed in 1624, in the reign of James I., nominally abolished all privileges of sanctuary in England. It did not completely close all sanctuaries, for in them remained lawless characters, who had long been there, and whom it would not be deemed prudent to have at large. It is asserted that the sanctuary regulations were frequently broken, and that refugees committed robberies and other crimes in the immediate neighbourhood of their sanctuaries.

In the case of debtors, sanctuaries in a modified form existed down to the reign of William III., when, in the year 1697, an Act of Parliament abolished them.

English history furnishes many instances of sanctuary laws being disregarded. A familiar example is that of four Lancastrian knights flying from the battlefield of Tewkesbury, in 1471, and taking refuge in a church not far distant from the place. Edward, sword in hand, was about to follow them, and violate the sanctuary, but the priest who was celebrating mass refused to permit him to enter, until he agreed to pardon the knights. He made the promise, whereupon the refugees left the church. Subsequently they were made prisoners and executed.

The first time the sanctuary of Westminster Abbey was violated was in the year 1378. It was not only violated, but murder was committed. The particulars of the case are as follow. In one of the campaigns of the Black Prince, two esquires, named Frank de Hawle and John Shakle, made captive a French or Spanish Count. The prisoner had a friend in John of Gaunt, and he directed the captors to give up their prize, but they refused. John of Gaunt, without delay, imprisoned in the Tower the two men who had disobeyed his injunctions. They made their escape, and fled to Westminster Abbey, but were closely pursued by Sir Allan Boxhull, Constable of the Tower, Sir Ralph de Ferrers, and a band of fifty men in arms. It is believed that the two esquires made their way into the choir of the

Abbey, and at a time when high mass was being celebrated. “The Deacon,” says Dean Stanley, “had just reached the words of the Gospel of the day, ‘If the goodman of the house had known what time the thief would appear – ,’ when the clash of arms was heard, and the pursuers, regardless of time or place, burst upon the service. Shakle escaped, but Hawle was intercepted. Twice he fled round the choir, with his enemies hacking at him as he ran; and, pierced with twelve wounds, he sank dead in front of the Prior’s Stall – that is, at the north side of the entrance of the choir.” It is also recorded that his servant and a monk fell at the same time. Hawle was looked upon as a martyr to the injured rights of the Abbey. His remains were laid to rest within its walls, a most unusual honour at that period. The spot where he fell was marked with an inscription engraved on a stone, and over his grave was a brass effigy and a long epitaph, which remained till within the last century. The desecrated Abbey was closed for four months, and the Members of Parliament suspended their sittings within its precincts for fear of pollution. The two chief assailants were excommunicated.

In 1232, the sanctuary of the church at Brentwood, Essex, was violated by orders of the boy king, Henry III. He had allowed himself to be persuaded that the brave Hubert de Burgh had sold his country for French gold, and armed men were sent to make the stout knight prisoner. Hubert took refuge in Brentwood Church. His enemies broke in, dragged him from the very altar, and a smith was ordered to shackle him. “I will die any death,” said the smith, “before I put iron on the man who freed England from the stranger, and saved Dover from France!” so Hubert’s feet were tied below his horse, and he was carried to the King. A remonstrance from the Bishop of London caused the refugee to be replaced in the sanctuary, but his foes were still determined to have him. The Sheriff put stakes round the churchyard watched day and night, until hunger compelled a surrender, when Hubert was thrown into prison, and there died.

Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV., twice found shelter in the sanctuary of Westminster. Here was born, on April 9th, 1470, Edward V. Skelton, our earliest Poet-Laureate, remained in this stronghold, in safety, writing furious invectives against Cardinal Wolsey. If he had not had the protection of sanctuary, it is believed he would have been doomed to destruction. “It was impregnable,” says Dean Stanley, “even by all the power of the Cardinal at the height of his grandeur.”

A curious example of the violation of a sanctuary occurred at Stafford. In the year 1300, a complaint was laid before the King by the Dean and Chapter of St. Mary’s, Stafford, to the effect that two men imprisoned for felony in Stafford gaol had escaped, and taken refuge in the church. The men were followed into the church, captured, and re-imprisoned. The prison authorities were directed to restore the men to the Dean and Chapter.

It may not be without interest to give some details of two important north country sanctuaries, Durham and Beverley. On the north door of the Cathedral of Durham is a ponderous bronze knocker, of which we give a drawing. It will be noticed that the knocker is in the form of a ring held between the teeth of a monster’s head. The person claiming sanctuary raised the ring of the knocker, and sounded it to obtain admission to the church, where, for a time, he felt safe out of the reach of his avengers. In the sacred building two men were on duty night and day, ever ready to quickly open the door. A bell was next tolled to make known the fact that a man had taken sanctuary. When a refugee sought protection an early intimation was made to the prior, who gave injunctions that he was to keep within the limits of the churchyard, which formed the bounds of the Durham sanctuary. In presence of a witness, a detailed account had to be given of the crime committed, dates, names of persons, places, etc., had to be given, and they were carefully noted. In cases of murder and manslaughter, the weapon employed had to be mentioned. A gown of black cloth, having on its left shoulder a cross, known as “the cross of St. Cuthbert,” was given him to wear. The badge was, we are told, “to the intent that every one might see that there was such a freelige granted by God unto St. Cuthbert’s shrine, for every such offender to flee for succour and safeguard of their lives.” The refugee at Durham was allowed the right of sanctuary for thirty-seven days, and provided with food and drink and bedding at the expense of the convent. If within that time he failed to make peace with his adversaries, he

had to abjure the realm. He lost his property by this proceeding, but saved his life, or evaded some barbarous form of punishment which often resulted in mutilation of a most painful character.

The Surtees Society, on the 7th December, 1836, resolved to print the Records of the Sanctuaries of Durham and Beverley, and shortly afterwards the work was issued. The Durham notices are reproduced from the ordinary Registers of the Cathedral, and extends from 1464 to 1524. The following shows the number of crimes, and the calling of the men taking refuge: —

Murder and Homicide. — Crimes, 195. Persons implicated, 283. Trades of fugitives: — Husbandmen, 8; Labourers, 4; Yeomen, 4; Gentlemen, 4; Ecclesiastics, 3; Merchants, 2; Tailor, 1; Plumber, 1; Carpenter, 1; Tanner, 1; Baxster, 1; Glover, 1; Sailor, 1; Apprentice, 1; Under-Bailiff, 1; Servant, 1; Knight, 1 (an accessory). The occupations of the remainder are not mentioned. Debt, 16. Of these — Shermane, 1; Horslibber, 1; Merchant, 1; Flesher, 1. Horse-stealing, 4. Of these — Yeoman, 1. Cattle-stealing, 9. Escaping from Prison, 4. Of these — Shoemaker, 1. Housebreaking, 4. Rape, 1. Theft, 7. Of these — Yeoman, 1; Ecclesiastic, 1; Goldsmith, 1. Backward in his accounts, 1. For harbouring a thief, 1. For failing to prosecute, 1.

The list of weapons, etc., employed by the murderers is as under: —

Indefinite, 12; Armicudium, 1; Arrow, 5; Baselard 3; Bastard-sword, 1; Bill, 3; Carlisle Axe, 3; Club-staff, 11; Crabtree-staff, 1; Dagger, 56; Dicker, 1; Egelome, 1; Forest-bill, 1; Halbarde, 2; Hanging, 1; Hynger, 3; Iron-fork Shaft, 1; Kendal-club, 2; Lance, 10; Lance-staff, 4; Lang Pike-staff, 1; Long Plane-staff, 1; Pike-staff, 12; Plane-staff, 1; Pychyng-staff, 1; Pugio (a dagger), 1; Scotch Axe, 2; Small-staff, 1; Spear-staff, 2; Staff, 14; Staff, with a pummel, 1; Stone, 2; Sword, 21; Trodden to death, 1; Turf-spade, 1; Welsh-bill, 6; Whynyard (a short dagger), 6; Wood-axe, 3; Wood-knife, 1.

The right of sanctuary was granted to the church of St. John, Beverley, by Athelstan, and near the altar was placed a Fridstol, or chair of peace, denoting that here the refugee might find peace. According to Camden and Leland, the chair once bore a Latin inscription which has been translated thus: “This stone chair is called the Freed Stool, *i. e.*, the Chair of Peace, to which what criminal soever flies hath full protection.” There is not at the present time any trace of an inscription on it. We only know of two sanctuary chairs which are still preserved in England, namely, one at Beverley and the other at Hexham.

The extent of the Beverley sanctuary was a circle round the church having a radius of about a mile, with the church as a centre, marked by stone crosses erected on the four principal roads leading to the town. “If a malefactor,” says Oliver, in his “History of Beverley,” “flying for refuge was taken or apprehended within the crosses, the party that took or had hold of him there, did forfeit two hundred; if he took him within the town, then he forfeited four hundred; if within the walls of the churchyard, then six hundred; if within the church, then twelve hundred; if within the doors of the quire, then eighteen hundred, besides penance, as in case of sacrilege; but if he presumed to take him out of the stone chair near the altar, called Fridstol, or from among the holy relics behind the altar, the offence was not redeemable with any sum, but was then become *sine emendatione, boteles*, and nothing but the utmost severity of the offended church was to be expected, by a dreadful excommunication, besides what secular power would impose for the presumptuous misdemeanor.” There is a foot-note in Oliver’s book, on the authority of Richard Prior, of Hagulstad, saying that “the hundred contained eight pounds; so that the last penalty was most immense, nearly as much as the weregild for killing a crowned head in Wales; and, indeed, every act of violence committed against the right of sanctuary was esteemed a breach of the churches’ peace, a high crime, and a species of sacrilege.”

The particulars of the persons who took sanctuary from about the year 1478 to 1539, published by the Surtees Society, is drawn from a thin folio volume, preserved among the Harleian MSS. This important manuscript contains a copy of the oath taken by those who sought sanctuary at Beverley. The Bailiff of the Archbishop, by whom the oath was administered, had to enquire of the refugee: —

“What man he killed, and wher with, and both ther names, and than gar him lay his hand upon the book, saying on this wyse —

Sir, take hede on your oth – Ye shalbe trew and feythfull to my Lord Archbisshop of York, Lord off this towne, to the Provest of the same, to the Chanons of this Chirch, and all other ministers therof.

Also, ye shall bere gude hert to the Baillie and xij governars of this town, to all burges and comyners of the same.

Also, ye shall bere no poynted wepon, dagger, knyfe, ne non other wapen ayenst the Kyng's pece.

Also, ye shalbe redy at all your power, if ther be any debate or stryf, or order so than case of fyre within the towne, to help to surcess it.

Also, ye shalbe redy at the obite of Kyng Adelstan, at the dirige and the messe, at suche tyme as it is done, at the warnyng of the belman of the towne, and doe your dewte in ryngyng, and for to offer at the messe on the morne. So help you God and thies holy Evangelistes. And than gar hym kysse the book.”

The Bailiff's fee on this occasion appears to have been two shillings and fourpence, that of the Clerk of the Court, for inscribing the name of the refugee in the register, fourpence.

As we have previously stated, the Beverley register, published by the Surtees Society, commences about the year 1478, and extends to 1539. A summary of the crimes and the trades, etc., of refugees is as follows: —

Crimes. – Indefinite, 35. Persons concerned, 35. No trade described, 10; Labourers, 3; Tylers, 2; Tailors, 2; Masons, 2; Dyers, 2; Yeomen, 2; Merchant, 1; Husbandman, 1; Smith, 1; Clerk, 1; Butcher, 1; Chapman, 1; Gentleman, 1; Draper, 1; Skinner, 1; Shoemaker, 1; Haberdasher, 1; Litster, 1. Murder and Homicide. – Crimes, 173. Persons implicated, 186. No trade or occupation described, 52; Tailors, 19; Husbandmen, 17; Yeomen, 16; Labourers, 14; Weavers and Websters, 11; Shoemakers, 8; Butchers, 6; Gentlemen, 6; Mercers, 3; Barbers, 3; Brewers, 3; Servants, 2; Esquires, 2; Surgeons, 2; Millers, 2; Mariners, 2; Smith, 1; Shearman, 1; Spinster, 1; Carpenter, 1; Painter, 1; Chapman, 1; Maltster, 1; Cartwright, 1; Gentlewoman, 1; Chandler, 1; Minstrell, 1; Cooper, 1; Literate, 1; Saddler, 1; Shepherd, 1; Carrier, 1; Tanner, 1; Cook, 1; Hatmaker, 1. Felony. – Crimes, 51. Persons implicated, 54. No trade described, 3; Labourers, 8; Tailors, 6; Husbandmen, 4; Butchers, 4; Glovers, 3; Goldsmiths, 3; Cutlers, 3; Tylers, 2; Plumbers, 2; Yeomen, 2; Merchant, 1; Smith, 1; Clerk, 1; Physician, 1; Spinster, 1; Grocer, 1; Gentleman, 1; Pinner, 1; Mariner, 1; Shoemaker, 1; Fishmonger, 1; Fuller, 1; Brickmaker, 1. Horse stealing, 1, a Labourer. Treason, 1, a Butcher. Receipt of stolen goods, 1, a Haberdasher. Coining. – Cases, 6; persons, 7. No trade described, 1; Yeomen, 2; Fleshers, 2; Tailor, 1; Weaver, 1. Debtors, 208. No trade described, 36; Butchers, 31; Labourers, 12; Merchants, 9; Husbandmen, 9; Gentlemen, 9; Mercers, 8; Tailors, 6; Weavers and Websters, 5; Dyers, 5; Yeomen, 5; Glovers, 4; Drapers, 4; Shearmen, 3; Chapmen, 3; Pewterers, 3; Smiths, 2; Grocers, 2; Fishers, 2; Bakers, 2; Chandlers, 2; Wheelwrights, 2; Coopers, 2; Pouchmakers, 2; Vintners, 2; Fishmongers, 2; Bowyers, 2; Tapper, 1; Alderman and Grocer of London, 1; Carpenter, 1; Wax Chandler, 1; Painter, 1; Goldsmith, 1; Clothier, 1; Waiter, 1; Maltster, 1; Surgeon, 1; Pinner, 1; Skinner, 1; Fustain Shearer, 1; Capper, 1; Mason, 1; Haberdasher, 1; Salter, 1; Carrier, 1; Tanner, 1; Woolman, 1; Purser, 1; Singingman, 1; Woodmonger, 1; Cook, 1; Wooldriver, 1; Hatmaker, 1; Bedmaker, 1; Barber, 1.

The weapons employed in cases of murder are seldom named in the Beverley records.

The right of sanctuary was, perhaps, a blessing in the time it existed. Hallam, in his “State of Europe in the Middle Ages,” says that right of sanctuary might as often be a shield of innocence as an impunity of crime. “We can hardly regret, on reflecting on the desolating violence which prevailed, that there should have been some green spots in the wilderness, where the feeble and the persecuted could find refuge. How must this right have enhanced the veneration for religious institutions! How gladly must the victims of internal warfare have turned their eyes from baronial castle, the dread and

scourge of the neighbourhood, to those venerable walls, within which not even the clamour of arms could be heard to disturb the chaunt of holy men and the sacred service of the altar.”

The Romance of Trial

In past ages, trial by ordeal was customary in this country, and at the present time in several foreign lands, where education has not swept away superstitious beliefs, it is often used as a means of testing the guilt or innocence of accused persons. The origin of ordeal may be traced back to a remote period. In the Anglo-Saxon judicial systems it formed an important feature, and the first record of it in this country appears in the laws of King Ina, who reigned over Wessex from the year 688 to 727. The clergy figured prominently in the trials.

For three days prior to the time appointed for the trial, the accused passed through a course of severe discipline and austere diet. He declared on oath that he was innocent of the crime laid to his charge. Twenty-four of his friends and foes were brought together, and after a religious service, specially prepared for the occasion, had been performed, the ordeal was then tried. The ordeals were of various kinds, the nobles and other great personages being generally tried with the boiling water ordeal.

A ring or piece of metal, blessed by the priest, was cast into the boiling water, and on either side of the vessel were ranged the twelve friends and the twelve foes to witness the due execution of justice. The arm of the accused was bared, he plunged it into the liquid and brought out the article deposited in it by the priest. The degree of the crime regulated the depth of the water; if slight, it only reached to the wrist, but if serious, the arm was dipped up to the elbow, or even higher. The priest quickly bound up the arm, and the bandages were not removed for three days. At the end of that time, if the priest pronounced the arm healed, the sufferer was regarded as guiltless; if not, it was believed that God had interposed and convicted him.

Deputies sometimes performed the ordeals. A notable instance of employing a substitute is that of Theatberge, wife of Lothaire, of France. She confessed to having been guilty of incest, but subsequently recanting, it was decided to try her by the ordeal, and a ring was thrown into boiling water according to custom. The Queen elected a proxy, and it is recorded of him whom she chose that he “produced the ring without injuring his hand, in spite of the fire under the caldron being so intense that the water boiled over.”

It is asserted that the familiar saying of going “through fire and water” for any one is derived from the practice of employing deputies in the performance of ordeals.

In Mr. James Forbes’ “Oriental Memoirs,” published 1813-15, are some details of boiling oil ordeals. One of the cases relates to the coolies of a village in the northern part of Guzerat, who were charged with seizing and imprisoning a Bohra, and extorting a bond from him for 450 rupees. The chief denied the charge, and offered to prove his innocence by trial by ordeal. We are told that “a large copper pot full of oil was put on a fire in the market-place, and a pair of blacksmith’s bellows applied to blow the fire until the oil became very hot.” A rupee was thrown into the boiling oil. The chief next declared his innocence, said his prayers, plunged his hand into the boiling liquid, and brought out the coin. He next exhibited his hand to the spectators, when no traces of scalding could be detected; indeed it appeared as if it had been dipped in cold oil. Himself and his tribe were pronounced not guilty of the charge, and he was dismissed with the gift of a turban.

The cold water ordeal appears to have been usually employed to try the humbler classes. The accused went through fasting and discipline similar to the trial by boiling water. After attending church, the person on trial was conducted to a deep pool, and then bound hand and foot with cords. The priest next adjured the water to receive the accused into its bosom if innocent, but to reject him if he were guilty. He was cast into the water. If he sank he was deemed innocent, and was at once drawn out by a rope which had previously been tied round his waist. We gather from Hallam’s “Middle Ages” that a citizen of London, having failed in the ordeal of cold water, was hanged by the order

of Henry II. The man tried to save his life by offering 500 marks. In cases of murder, if the accused even went through the ordeal of water, he was banished from the realm.

Some attention is paid to this ordeal by Dr. Charles Mackay, in his “Popular Delusions.” “It was,” he says, “a trial of the poor and humble, and whether they sank or swam was thought of very little consequence. Like witches of more modern times, the accused were thrown into a pond or river. If they sank they were drowned, their friends had the consolation that they were innocent; if they swam they were guilty. In either case society was rid of them.” We believe there is little foundation in fact for the foregoing statement by Dr. Mackay. After careful investigation we have not found a record of persons being drowned. The rope fastened to the body of the accused would prevent any such accident.

Towards the close of the twelfth century the use of this ordeal was very general. Lea, in his “Superstition and Force,” says that “The assizes of Clarendon, in 1166, confirmed at Northampton in 1176, direct an inquest to be held in each shire, and all who are indicted for murder, robbery, harbouring of malefactors, are to be at once, without further trial, passed through the water ordeal to determine their guilt or innocence.” Mr. Lea thinks that the basis of this ordeal may be traced back to the primitive Aryans, who believed that the pure element would not receive into its bosom a person stained with the crime of a false oath.

Many strange stories are related respecting the ordeal of red-hot iron; and not a few of a tragical character. There were two ways of performing the red-hot iron ordeal. One was by taking up a piece of red-hot iron, weighing from one to three pounds, or walking barefoot and blindfolded over nine red-hot ploughshares placed lengthwise at irregular distances. If the accused passed through this ordeal without being hurt he was deemed innocent. There is a popular story that Emma, the mother of Edward the Confessor, was charged with undue familiarity with Alwyn, Bishop of Winchester. She proved her innocence by passing unharmed over heated ploughshares.

Among the many instances of persons tried by this ordeal of hot iron may be mentioned Remigius, the Bishop of Dorchester, who was accused of treason against William the Conqueror. One of the bishop’s followers underwent the ordeal, and cleared his lordship of the charge.

It has been suggested by some authorities on this subject that the apparently hot iron was really cold and painted red. In some instances the hands and feet were perhaps rubbed with certain compositions which would enable the persons going through the ordeal to touch the iron without doing injury to themselves. We know that in our own time, to shew the power of resisting fire is not by any means a difficult feat, and it often forms an item on the programmes of popular entertainments.

Shakspeare and other writers refer to the ancient superstition that the wounds of a murdered person would bleed again if touched by the murderer. In *Richard III.*, the dramatist writes as follows respecting Richard, Duke of Gloster: —

“O gentlemen, see, see! dear Henry’s wounds
 Open their congeal’d mouths and bleed afresh!
 Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity;
 For ’tis thy presence that exhales this blood
 From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
 Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
 Provokes this deluge most unnatural.”

Stow, in his “Annals,” records that the king’s body “was brought to St. Paul’s in an open coffin, barefaced, where he bled; thence he was carried to Blackfriars, and there bled.”

King James, in his “Dæmonologie,” thus refers to this superstition: “In a secret murder,” says the King, “if the dead carkasse be at any time thereafter handled by the murderer, it will gush out

of blood, as if the blood were crying out to heaven for the revenge of the murderer.” Dryden adverts to the theme: —

“If the vile actors of the heinous deed
Near the dead body happily be brought,
Oft hath been proved the breathless corpse will bleed.”

This ordeal in bygone times was frequently tried, and it was the means of bringing not a few murderers to justice. In some instances the details of the crimes and their detection read more like romance than a statement of facts.

In the olden days witnessing an execution was a sight not to be missed by old or young folk; even children wended their way to the fatal tree. Sir Symonds D’Ewes, the antiquary, in his boyhood days, attended the execution of a man named Babb, and subsequently wrote an account of the painful circumstances connected with the case. We gather from his notes that Babb had formerly lived near to Wambrook, on the southern border of Somerset. He had sought in vain for the hand in marriage of a widow living near Taunton. She, however, declined his proposal. Babb, although greatly disappointed at his failure, resolved to make one more attempt to win the woman. He hid himself in a brewhouse used by the widow, and when she appeared he once more pressed his suit. She heard him with disdain, and almost before he had finished his speech she said, “Have thee, base rascal? No!” She then struck him on the head with a pewter candlestick. This made his blood boil, and he inflicted upon her sixteen wounds, causing her death. Afterwards, he put the knife in her hand, making it appear as if she had committed suicide, and then quietly stole away from the place.

The unfortunate widow was buried, but tongues and brains were not set at rest, for it was the opinion of not a few that she had met her death at the hands of a murderer. Amongst the active in this matter was a leading local magistrate, named Mr. Ware, Hestercombe House, near Taunton. Like other people of this period, he believed in the ordeal by touch. “This active magistrate,” we find stated, “caused the body to be disinterred, that all the inhabitants living within a circle of three miles might assemble to touch the body, and go through this powerful ordeal. Babb ran away to escape this dreadful mode of testing the inhabitants’ innocence. His racking conscience gave him no repose; he returned and yielded himself up to justice.” At the next county assizes for Somerset, held at Chard, in the year 1613, he was tried, found guilty, and condemned to death. Shortly afterwards he was hanged near Wambrook.

Charles I. presented to Dr. Wren, the father of the famous Sir Christopher Wren, the rectory of Great Haseley, near Oxford. During his incumbency, occurred a sad event, which made a great impression on his mind. He detailed, in Latin, particulars of the matter, and duly attested the truth by signing it. Lucy Phillimore, the author of an ably-written work on “Sir Christopher Wren: his Family and his Times,” supplies an English version of the tragedy. “Among the retainers of Lord Norris,” we are told, “was an old man who had charge of the fish ponds; he had one nephew, who was the heir of all his uncle’s possessions and savings. The nephew enticed the old man out one night, waited till he fell asleep under an oak tree, murdered him by a blow on the head, dragged the body to one of the ponds, tied a great stone to the neck, and threw the corpse in. There it lay five weeks, during which time Lord Norris and all the neighbours wondered what had become of the old man. At length, attracted to the spot by the swarms of flies, the body was found by the men who were about to clean the pond. They raised the corpse with great difficulty, and recognised it. The stone tied to the neck was evidence of foul play, though no one could guess the murderer. Lord Norris, in order to detect the criminal, after the usual manner, commanded that the corpse, preserved by the water from the last extremity of decay, should, on the next Sunday, be exposed in the churchyard, close to the church door, so that every one entering the church should see and touch it. The wicked nephew shrank from the ordeal, feigning to be so overwhelmed with grief as to be unable to bear the

sight of his dearest uncle. Lord Norris, suspecting that the old man had been murdered by the one person whom his death would profit, compelled him to come, and to touch with his finger, as so many had willingly done, the hand of the dead. At his touch, however, 'as if opened by the finger of God, the eyes of the corpse were seen by all to move, and blood to flow from his nostrils.' At this awful witness, the murderer fell on the ground and avowed the crime, which he had secretly committed, and the most just judgment of God had brought to light." The murderer was tried before one of His Majesty's judges, and the circumstances of the crime fully stated. He was condemned to death, and the sentence was duly carried out by the hangman.

Another strange story comes down to us from the days when the first Charles was king. It relates to Herefordshire. Johan Norkeff was found dead, and it was believed that she had laid violent hands upon herself. After she had been buried about a month, circumstances caused it to be suspected that she had met her death by foul play. The case came under the consideration of a coroner and jury, and they finally resolved to have the body exhumed, and cause the four suspected persons to touch it. The result of the ordeal was narrated at the assizes by an old minister as follows: "The body being taken out of the grave and laid on the grass, the accused were required to touch it. On laying on their hands on the brow, which before was of a livid and carrion colour, it began to have a dew or gentle sweat upon it, which increased by degrees until the sweat ran down the face. The brow then turned to a lifelike and flesh colour, and the dead woman opened one of her eyes and shut it again, and this opening of the eye was done three times. She likewise thrust out the ring or marriage finger three times, and the finger dropped blood on the grass." The old minister swore to the correctness of the foregoing, and, says James Grant, in "The Mysteries of all Nations," from whom we draw the evidence, another clergyman corroborated it. Sir Nicholas Hyde, the eminent lawyer, who rose to be Lord Chief Justice, questioned the correctness of the evidence, but the members of the jury did not agree with him, finding three of the prisoners guilty of murder. Two were executed, and the third, a woman, was reprieved.

On much weaker evidence to the preceding cases, Philip Stanfield was condemned, in 1688, for the murder of his father, Sir James Stanfield. An account of the matter will be found in Chambers's "Domestic Annals of Scotland," vol. 2, pages 491-92. The case may be briefly stated as follows: The body of Sir James Stanfield, of New Mills, was found in a stream near Haddington. It appeared that he had met his dead by strangling. James Muirhead, a surgeon, and another person swore that when Philip Stanfield was helping to place the body of his father in a coffin, blood started from the left side of his neck upon his touch, and that he exclaimed, "Lord have mercy upon me!" On this slight evidence he was, 7th February, 1688, pronounced guilty of parricide, and was publicly executed on the 24th of the same month, and his body hung in chains. He protested his innocence to the last. "The whole case," says Dr. Robert Chambers, "seems to be a lively illustration of the effect of superstitious feeling in blinding justice."

On the 14th June, 1641, a commission which sat at Dalkeith, pronounced Christina Wilson guilty of the death, by sorcery, of her brother, Alexander Wilson. She had been, prior to the trial, directed by the minister and others to touch the corpse of her brother. After an earnest prayer, in which she fervently prayed to God, who had made the sun to shine on their home, to bring the murderer to justice, she touched the body. It bled, although it had not done so when touched by others. This was deemed sufficient proof of her guilt, and on this evidence she suffered death.

With directing the attention to the survival of touching the dead, we must draw to a close our study of the romance of trial. In the north of England, and other parts of the country, it is the practice of persons who come to see a corpse to touch it, as a token "that they wished no ill to the departed, and were at peace and amity with them."

A Fight between the Mayor of Hull and the Archbishop of York

The prelates of the past enjoyed not a few peculiar privileges which are not inherited by their successors in modern times. In the mediæval era, the dignitaries of the church led comparatively exciting lives, and were by no means strangers to the use of sword and lance, many gaining fame on the field of battle.

Representatives of the church often possessed rights in respect to the gallows and its victims. A few facts about a case occurring far back, in the days of our first Edward, shew how keenly they maintained their privileges. The Abbot of Peterborough set up a gallows at Collingham, Nottinghamshire, and had hanged thereon a thief. This proceeding came under the notice of the Bishop of Lincoln, and he, with considerable warmth and temper, declared that the Abbot had usurped his rights, since he held from the king's predecessors the liberty of the Wapentake of Collingham, and the right of executing criminals. The Abbot declared that Henry III. had given to him and his successors "Infangthef and Ufangthef in all his hundreds and demesnes." After investigation it was decided that the Abbot was in the wrong, and he was directed to take down the gallows he had erected. One, and perhaps the chief, reason of the prelate being so particular to retain his privileges was on account of it entitling him to the chattels of the condemned criminals.

William the Conqueror invested the Abbot of Battle Abbey with authority to save the life of any malefactor he might find being executed, and whose life he wished to spare.

Amongst the many privileges enjoyed by the Archbishop of York, was that of having a mint. As early as the year 1070, we find a mention of the mint, and particulars of attempts made, without success, to destroy or curtail His Grace's coining. Archbishop Lee, who died in 1544, is said to have been the last to exercise the power of issuing money.

In bygone times, the Archbishops of York appear to have enjoyed almost regal power. The baronies of Beverley, Sherburn, Patrington, Otley, and Wilton belonged to them. They appointed justices for these important towns, had prisons, gallows, pillories, and ducking-stools, and did their utmost to maintain law and order.

It will be gathered from the foregoing that prelates were granted privileges which enabled them to exercise much power amongst the people. Some of the rights enjoyed at Hull by the Archbishop of York were oppressive to the inhabitants of the town, and gave rise to much strife. It was the practice, exercised according to ancient custom, of the Archbishop of York to claim prisage from every vessel of twenty tons burden entering the river Hull. Two casks of wine were demanded, one from before and the other from behind the mast. The casks, however, might be redeemed by paying twenty shillings for each cask. The merchants successfully evaded payment of duty by unloading their ships in the Humber, and bringing their goods into port in small craft. As may be readily expected, the Archbishop was much annoyed at the conduct of the men of Hull, who received the support of the Mayor of the town; indeed, if we read history aright, we find the local authorities had a desire to enjoy the privileges claimed by the prelate. A great difficulty had been experienced for a long time by the officers of the Archbishop in collecting the dues, and Archbishop Neville saw that unless he made a firm stand to maintain his privileges, they would be lost. In the year 1378, he decided to visit Hull, and enforce his rights. The Mayor of Hull, at that time was Sir Thomas de Waltham, a knight of quick temper, and with no particular respect for persons with whom he came in contact.

The Archbishop, with a few attendants, numbering less than a dozen, came to the town. The Mayor, accompanied by two bailiffs, named John Arnold and Thomas Green, and a large company of local supporters, met His Grace. The Archbishop complained bitterly to the Mayor, saying, amongst other serious faults, that he had shown himself wanting in that respect for the Archbishop which

the representative of religion was entitled to receive. His Worship soon waxed warm, declaring that he had only done his duty in maintaining the rights of his fellow-townsmen. The prelate insisted that the Mayor was in the wrong, and that it was his intention to enforce the payment of his dues. The Mayor soon shewed signs of his displeasure, and seeing one His Grace's men mocking him, he, without ceremony, snatched from the Archbishop his crosier, and struck the man. This was the commencement of a free fight, in which the prelate and his people suffered a severe defeat. Blood freely flowed, and the Archbishop, seeing that he could not make, with any degree of success, a stand against so many opponents, beat a hasty retreat, followed a considerable distance out of the town by a large number of excited inhabitants of Hull, eager to avenge the wrongs it was believed His Grace had done to the port by collecting, or attempting to collect, prisage. The Mayor, it must be recorded, fought manfully with the crosier, which was broken into several pieces.

The Archbishop, being a Court favourite, brought the matter under the notice of the King. The Mayor was summoned to appear before His Majesty at Westminster. This proceeding doubtless caused much trouble in Hull, but the Mayor, feeling that he had right on his side, proceeded to London with a brave heart, and at the trial pleaded his cause with considerable eloquence. The case resulted in judgment being left in abeyance, or, in other words, His Grace was non-suited.

We can readily imagine that the Mayor would return home in higher spirits than when he left it to appear in the King's Court, and that he would receive a hearty welcome from his fellow townsmen.

The place where the fight occurred was regarded by the superstitious as sacred, crowds of fanatics repairing to it to shed tears. Not a little inconvenience was caused by their conduct, and their proceedings were stopped by a permanent guard being appointed to keep folk away from the place.

After the death of the Archbishop, it was believed for many years that his spirit haunted the spot where the battle was fought.

In spite of the serious breach between Prelate and Mayor, Hull appears to have been a favourite residence in past times of the Archbishops of York. We know, from the annals of the town, that in the year 1442 the Archbishop had a house in the historic High Street.

Dr. Thomson, the late Archbishop of York, was a frequent and welcome visitor to the town. The last time he was in Hull, His Grace was the guest of Alderman Sherburn, the Mayor. When we saw the two gentlemen in friendly conversation, we could not help contrasting the conditions of 1889 with those of 1378, and noting the great changes which five centuries have brought about, changes better alike for gentle and simple.

Chapels on Bridges

The building of bridges in bygone times was regarded as a religious duty. An order of friars was established on the continent, in the twelfth century, having for its object the erecting and repairing of bridges. Its work extended into several countries. In France, the friars built the celebrated bridge over the Rhone at Avignon, and a bridge, still in use, at Pont St. Esprit, was one of their works. We have not any traces of the operations of the order in England, but there were in the country, prior to the reign of Richard II., lay-brotherhoods performing a similar good work.

Queen Matilda erected and endowed bridges at Stratford and Bow, which she regarded as meritorious. The Church looked upon the work as one deserving of encouragement. Richard de Kellawe, Bishop of Durham, from 1311 to 1316, for example, promised to remit penances for those engaged in bridge-building. The Registry of his Episcopal Chancery contains many entries similar to the following: "Memorandum ... his lordship grants forty days' indulgence to all who will draw from the treasure that God has given them, valuable and charitable aid towards the building and repair of Botyton bridge." We read in another entry: "Forty days' indulgence is allowed to those sincerely contrite and confessed of all their sins, who shall help by their charitable gifts, or by their bodily labour, the building and maintenance of the causeway between Brotherton and Ferrybridge, where many people pass by." On another occasion, a similar indulgence was granted for help towards the highroad and bridge between Billingham and Norton.

The most striking case which has come under our notice, where pious motives have caused the erection of a bridge, is set forth in a contract of the thirteenth century. The particulars are given in Jusserand's "English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages." "Reginald de Rosels," we are told, "allowed Peter, Abbot of Whitby, to build a permanent bridge on the river Esk, between his own and the convent's lands. He pledges himself in that act to permit to all comers free access to the bridge through his own property. 'For which concession the aforesaid Abbot and convent have absolved in chapter all the ancestors of the same Reginald of all fault and transgression they may have committed against the church of Whiteby, and have made them participant of all the good works, alms, and prayers of the church of Whiteby.'" The original contract is in Latin, and was printed by the Surtees Society (1881).

"It was very usual," says Leland, "in greater brydges to build chappells in which they did pray for the soules of their founders." There were other reasons for erecting chapels, one being for a place of residence for priests to solicit alms from all who passed over the bridge, whether walking or riding, to keep it in repair. Some were built for sheltering benighted travellers, having crypts where rest and refreshment might be obtained. In these chapels, the wayfarer could pray for protection on his journey, and return thanks for safety after his undertaking had been completed. Travelling, in mediæval times, was beset with trial and hardship on every side.

The history and romance of London Bridge must ever remain amongst the subjects most popular to the people of England. The first and famous London Bridge was regarded as one of the glories of the Middle Ages. The bridge was commenced by Peter Colechurch, in 1176. He worked for twenty-nine years, then death ended his earthly career, and "he was sepultured" in the chapel on the bridge he had done so much to erect. A clever Frenchman, called Isembert, completed the work, in the year 1209. The undertaking had the hearty support of the people, and large sums of money and extensive endowments of land were given to carry it on. The excitement throughout the land was immense. The nation felt it was one of its great undertakings. It was in length nine hundred and twenty-six feet, in width forty feet, some sixty feet above the water, and stood upon nineteen pointed arches, between massive piers. When first completed, it had only one building upon it, a handsome stone chapel, dedicated to St. Thomas Becket, which stood on the middle pier. Subsequently, two rows of houses were erected on the bridge, one on each side of the road. A drawbridge was put up as a means of protection. A terrible fire, on July 10th, 1212, was the cause of the death of upwards of 3,000

persons. Stow, in his "Survey of London," supplies some important information on this subject. After adverting to a fire commencing on the Southwark side of the bridge, he states that "an exceeding great multitude of people passing the bridge, either to extinguish and quench it, or else to gaze at and behold it, suddenly the north part, by blowing of the south wind, was also set on fire, and the people, which were even now passing the bridge, perceiving the same, would have returned, but were stopped by fire; and it came to pass, that as they stayed or protracted time, the other end of the bridge also, namely, the south end, was fired, so that the people, thronging themselves between the two fires, did nothing else but expect present death; then came there to aid them many ships and vessels, into the which the multitude so unadvisedly rushed that, the ships being drowned, they all perished. It was said, that through the fire and shipwreck, there were destroyed about three thousand persons, whose bodies were found in part, besides those that were wholly burnt to ashes, and could not be found." A frost, in 1282, destroyed five arches of the bridge. In 1305, when Edward I. was king, was commenced the practice of placing the heads of traitors over London Bridge gateway. Paul Hentzner, a German traveller, visited England in 1598, and counted on it no fewer than thirty heads. Several houses on the bridge were destroyed by fires at various times, and all were swept away by the Great Fire, of 1666. A good idea of these buildings may be obtained from the picture we give on page 47.

On the west side of the Ouse Bridge, at York, was St. William's Chapel, an interesting example of early English architecture. Respecting the origin of this chapel, there is a popular story that it was built shortly after the bridge was completed, in 1268, in obedience to royal commands. The tale is to the effect that a Scotch nobleman was visiting the city, shortly after the erection of the bridge, when some of the citizens quarrelled and came to blows with his servants on the bridge. Several of the strangers were slain. The riot was brought under the notice of the kings of England and Scotland for settlement, and it was finally agreed that the citizens of York should pay £300, a large amount in those days, and erect a chapel on or near the spot where the servants met their untimely deaths, and also that they maintain two priests to pray for the souls of the slain men. After the Reformation, the chapel was converted into an Exchange for the Society of Hamburg Merchants at York, and subsequently put to other secular uses. Finally it was taken down, on the erection of a new bridge, in the year 1810.

Under the year 1505, a note appears in Hollinworth's "Mancuniensis," stating that "Care was taken for the reparation of the chappell standing on Salford Bridge, built, as it is sayd, by Thomas del Booth, in Edward III.'s time. He certainly gave £30 towards the building of Salford Bridge; and it was very usual on greater bridges to build chappells, in which they did pray for the soules of their founders. This chappell is now converted to a prison for Manchester and Salford." The building was pulled down in 1778, for the purpose of making the bridge wider.

We have other instances of bridge prisons besides the one at Salford. A familiar example is that at Bedford. It has been asserted by several authors that Bunyan was imprisoned in it, but it has been proved beyond doubt that such was not the fact. The bridge prison belonged absolutely to the borough, and Bunyan was a county prisoner, and spent his time in the county gaol. Much interesting information bearing on this subject will be found in Dr. Brown's book on Bunyan. The records of the town contain some curious particulars respecting the bridge. The following may be given as an example: "Item, yt ye ordered that the great cheyne by every nighte at ten of the clocke to be locked crosse the great bridge, and so kept untyl fyve of the clocke in the morninge, and that he or they that shall dwell in the bridge house, to keep the keye of the said locke, and keep the same soe locked, and not suffer aine horse, horseman, or cattell to passe within that tyme wch he shall not knowe. And of them wch he shall knowe, to take a pennie only for letting doune the cheyne and noe more." The prison was taken down in the year 1765. Here was a chapel or oratory, dedicated to St. Thomas the Martyr, built by a Bedford man, early in the fourteenth century, and endowed with lands for the support of a warden or chaplain, who had to repair the bridge at his own expense.

A small structure on the old bridge at Bradford-on-Avon has also been used as a prison. Its original purpose has provoked some discussion. Some say that it was erected for a chapel, but not

a few question the statement. Aubrey of old, and the Rev. J. Charles Cox, LL.D., and Precentor Venables of our time, are of opinion that it was a chapel. For many years it was used as a lock-up, and later as a powder magazine. It has a dome-like roof, of later date than the building. It bears a model of a gudgeon, the emblem of St. Nicholas. The Bradford-on-Avon folk are familiarly spoken of as Bradford gudgeons. Those who had been imprisoned on the bridge were said to have been “under fish and over water.”

A small bridge-chapel at Derby, dedicated to St. Mary of the Brigg, links the past with the present. It most probably dates back to the fourteenth century. Rev. J. Charles Cox, LL.D., in his “Churches of Derbyshire,” traces with care the history of this old-time building. He says: “St. Mary’s Bridge – by which access was gained from Nottingham and the south into the town of Derby, through whose streets lay one of the most important thoroughfares from London to the north – must, in mediæval days, have been of considerable importance. It is pleasant to think of the busy burgesses or men-at-arms turning aside into the Chapel of Our Lady for a brief silent prayer, before crossing the Derwent, and plunging into the forests that stretched out before them on the other side of the river.” There would, doubtless, be a gatehouse, built for defence and for levying tolls, etc. On the chapel or gatehouse were placed the heads and quarters of the priests who were martyred at Derby, on July 25th, 1588, when the Jesuits were making determined efforts to win England back to Rome. “Two resolute Catholic gentlemen” stole and buried the remains. Here have worshipped the persecuted Presbyterians of Derby. About a century ago it was turned into dwelling-houses, and later was used as a carpenter’s shop. In 1873, a Bishop’s license was obtained, and once more it was used as a house of prayer. We give, by the courtesy of Mr. Richard Keene, a view of the chapel, from an interesting book published by him, in 1881, under the title of “All about Derby,” by Edward Bradbury and Richard Keene. The picture is from the pencil of the late Llewellynn Jewitt, F.S.A., the eminent antiquary.

Prior to the Reformation, the Chamberlains of Derby rendered annually to the monks of the Priory of St. James two pounds of wax, for the privilege of passing over St. James’ Bridge.

On the old bridge at Rotherham, which spans the river Don, is still standing the chapel of “Our Lady.”

“The sacred taper’s light is gone.”

It is an interesting monument of bygone times, but it is no longer used as a house of prayer. Where once the mass was celebrated by devout priests, a trader keeps a small shop. The earliest mention of this chapel which is known, occurs in the will of John Bokying, master of the Grammar School at Rotherham, and is dated August 24th, 1483. He leaves “To the fabric of the chapel to be built on Rotherham bridge, 3s. 4d.” The design of the building was plain, but, on the whole, its effect must be pronounced pleasing. The dimensions of the building in the interior are thirty-two feet nine inches in length, by fifteen feet five inches in width. Leland, the antiquary, visited the town in the middle of the sixteenth century, and says, “I enterid into Rotheram by a fair stone bridge of iiij arches, and on hit is a chapel of stone, wel wrought.” In old records relating to Rotherham, reproduced by John Guest, F.S.A., in his “Historic Notices of Rotherham,” may be read many items of local interest on this chapel. We find statements respecting the bridge and chapel occupying the attention of the Justices of Peace at Pontefract Sessions and Doncaster Sessions, towards the close of the seventeenth century. The Feoffees of Rotherham successfully maintained that the bridge and chapel belonged to them, but that they had to be kept in repair at the expense of the West Riding. It, at this period, was used as an almshouse for poor people. In the Feoffees records it is stated as follows:

“1778. June 6th. Ordered that the greaves do employ a proper person to examine ye state of ye almshouse, and to report what expence will be necessary to make the same into a dwelling-house for ye deputy-constable, and secure goals for the reception of prisoners.”

“1779. February 5th. That the greaves do immediately agree with Mr. Platts for altering the almshouse to a prison, and, according to a plan now in their hands, so that the expense of the alterations do not exceed thirty-six pounds.”

“1779. June 16th. Ordered that John Watson be permitted to inhabit that part of the almshouse designed for the deputy-constable. That the rent of the same shall be five pounds. Only to use the two first rooms and the pantry on the ground floor, and the two chambers over the same. The other parts of the house being designed for other purposes. And that he shall not take out a license to sell ale or spirituous liquors.”

In 1825-6, a new court house was built, and then the bridge-chapel was no longer required as a prison. As we have previously stated, the ancient building is now devoted to business purposes. Let us hope the day is not far distant when it may once more be used as a house of prayer.

Perhaps the most interesting of chapels on bridges, is the one at Wakefield, dedicated to St. Mary. Its history has been carefully compiled by Norrison Scatcherd, in 1843, by John W. Walker, F.S.A., in 1890, and it has received the consideration of other antiquaries. It has long been a popular, but mistaken belief, that the chapel was built by Edward IV. that masses might be said for those slain in the battle of Wakefield, in 1460, and in which his father, the Duke of York, and his brother, the Duke of Rutland were slain. It will be remembered, that in this engagement, the Lancastrians defeated the Yorkists. It is clear, from Mr. Walkers work, that the beautiful chapel was built by the townsmen of Wakefield, and there is not any trace of the King adding anything to the revenues of the chapel. When the first bridge was built over the Calder, is not known, but, in 1342, King Edward III. granted to the bailiffs of the town the right of tollage for three years, on all goods for sale and cattle passing over the bridge, “as a help towards repairing and improving the bridge,” which is stated to be “rent and broken.” In the documents, there is not any mention of a chapel, a bridge only is referred to. Mr. Walker is of opinion that about this time the suggestion was first made for the erection of a chapel in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that it was soon carried into effect. Three townsmen and two priests obtained the first license, in 1356-7. In a decree, bearing date of November 20th, 1444, it says the chapel is “Wholly built of costly stonework by the inhabitants and community of Wakefield.” It has been suggested that, for a time, the black death, which caused such terrible desolation in the country, in 1349-50, may, for a period, have stopped the building of the chapel. It was a noble structure when completed, the carving being especially fine. On the west front, were carvings representing the five glorious mysteries of the Rosary. We give a picture of the central figures, illustrating the Resurrection. It will be seen that Christ is rising from the tomb, and on either side of him are two angels engaged in prayer. In front of the tomb are three soldiers, placed there as guards, and they are clad in complete armour of the time of Edward III. An important feature of the Wakefield bridge-chapel is the crypt. “This,” says Scatcherd, “has undoubtedly been the dwelling of the priests – where they might have lodged strangers, or administered relief.” There was a high turret, reached by a little spiral staircase. On this elevated part of the building was kindled the cresset-light, which would guide the wayfarer, and possibly assist the navigator on the river Calder, when day had given way to night.

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