

THE CHURCHES OF BRIDGWATER — ST MARY'S — HOLY TRINITY — ST. JOHN'S, EASTOVER.

VARIOUS matters in connection with the Churches of the town have been dealt with in our General History, but a further reference to and a brief description of each is necessary.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

The Parish Church of Bridgwater is dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin. It is a large, effective, and handsome structure, and one of its most noticeable exterior features is a tall, slender spire, springing from a substantial quadrangular tower of red sandstone. The latter is 60 feet and the spire 114 feet — said by one authority to be the highest in the county.

The fabric is principally in the Perpendicular style, which came in about the reign of Henry VII., but there are several evidences of earlier work, dating back as far as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In support of this it is shown that the tracery of the windows on the south side of the nave, west of the porch, consists of quatrefoils and segments of circles — a style which belongs to the time of Edward III. or Richard II., 1327 to 1377 [*sic Edward III reigned 1312 to 1377 and Richard II reigned 1377 to 1401. TW*] — and there are also indications of earlier work. On the north side there are windows evidently, belonging to the same period, the one over the north door being particularly noticeable for its intersecting triangles within a circle, the angles being fitted with trefoils.

The interior of the sacred edifice presents a noble appearance, and is universally a source of interest to visitors. In form the Church is oblong, and it comprises nave, north, south, and centre aisles, and chancel, the nave being divided from the aisles by two rows of five slender moulded piers, with ornamental bases and capitals, supporting six pointed arches on either side. These pillars are undoubtedly thirteenth or early fourteenth century work.

The north porch archway is of early work, and is in a fair state of preservation. The best sculpture is seen outside, and at the bottom of each side of the arch is a head, representing Moses and Aaron respectively. In a corner of the porch is an old stoup, removed there from the interior of the Church at some forgotten period. In this porch at the time of the battle of Sedgmoor, the story goes that some of the horses of the Army of the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth were stabled.

There are evidences that the Church has been restored or the altar removed on two or three occasions. The original altar would appear to have stood at the commencement of the chancel, for on the right-hand side is a holy-water stoup and a piscina, and close by was a small doorway (probably a priest's), the jamb of which may still be seen outside. A side altar is believed to have existed in what is now the Corporation Chapel, as the *Lady Chapel*; a window faces east and a piscina still remains on the right hand. Some of the best ceiling of the whole Church is here, spreading out as far as the centre of the building; like the rest, the wood is rich black oak, but here are massive ridges, carved at each joint, dividing the whole into 24 squares. By the entrance to the second part of the chancel are the remains of an aumbry and piscina in the right-hand wall, and signs of another small doorway.

The principal restoration was between 1849 to 1853, when the old-fashioned seats were removed, and new benches substituted, in order to accommodate more persons. The work was defrayed by subscription, aided by a parish rate amounting to £360. One great error was committed — that of closing the western end, the disadvantage of which was afterwards seen. There were also destroyed three *squints* or hagiscopes, which are thus referred to in Parker's "*Glossary of Architecture*" — *In Bridgwater Church there is a series of three openings through three successive walls, in the same oblique line, to enable a person standing in the porch to see the high altar. It seems to have been for the use of the attendant who had to ring the sanctus bell at the time of the elevation of the host.* It is, however, far more reasonable to suppose that these openings were meant for excommunicants and leprous people to witness the elevation of the host without entering the actual precincts of the holy place. It is supposed that the leprosy was introduced into the town at the time of the Crusades, when Somersetshire sent the flower of her chivalry to accompany the King to Palestine. In the western part of the town there was formerly a hospital for lepers dedicated to St. Giles, but endowed with little or no land.

In addition to this restoration, which cost between £4,000 and £5,000, a number of important alterations and improvements were effected in the six months between February and July, 1878, at a cost of about £2,000. A better system of lighting the Church with brass standards was introduced; the

blue-lias paving of the Church was replaced by tiles, and in several windows of the Church the square plain glass was replaced by diamond pattern cathedral glass ; the roof of the parvise was restored ; the north entrance doors improved, and some of the plain bosses of the Church were carved. A water-pipe heating apparatus was also fixed at a cost of £250, by which means the Church has since been comfortably warmed. The pillars and arches and stone-work generally in the Church were scraped, cleaned and thoroughly restored, and the whole work materially added to the attractive appearance of the interior. The re-opening of the Church, after it had remained closed for six months, took place on Tuesday, July 29th, 1878, and was attended by the Mayor and Corporation of Bridgwater, " *in state*," the Bishop of the Diocese, Archdeacon Denison, and a great number of the clergy and inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood.

The principal monument in the Church, and a source of much interest to visitors, is the one erected to the Kingsniill family, in the chancel. It represents Sir Francis Kingsmill, who died in 1620, reclining on his left side, his head supported by his left hand, and dressed in the armour of the period. Above him, in niches, kneel the effigies of his two sons, in civilian dress—Henrico Kingsmill, Armiger, who died April 22, 1621, and Francisca Kingsmill, " *Generosa*," died August 20, 1640. Entries of the three deaths will be found in the register, the former reading " *Francisca Kingsmille, Milt., July 25, 1620.*" The family of Kingsmill was for centuries settled at Sidmanton, Hants, and Francis, the principal subject of the monument, was knighted by the Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1605. What link of property or otherwise connected the family with Bridgwater is not known, though they lived in the town (possibly at the Castle), for some years. The following motto appears on the monument: *Per Fidem effecti sunt valide Bello* (*Holy people [saints] perfected by faith are powerful in war*). Also the following lines from Hebrews xii., 34— *Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fright the armies of the aliens*. There are some interesting devices on the marble, one of which is composed of a drum, trumpets, and banners, and another of a battle axe, arrows, spears, &c.

The rood-screen is a beautiful piece of Perpendicular work of the fourteenth or early

fifteenth century, and the pulpit, of oak, splendidly carved in ecclesiastical designs, is of the same massive pattern and age. A more beautiful pulpit it would be difficult to find. There are several initials and monograms on the screen, which stood at the entrance to the chancel, but being halved, the portions were placed on either side of the choir-stalls. A second screen, in the Tudor style, stood inside, and this was also removed, and placed in front of the Corporation Chapel. This latter screen is beautifully and elaborately figured and carved, and it is evident the best work of the period was put into it. It is not so old by a century as the other, but the carving is of a more elaborate character. It is formed of open work, the pillars especially being noticeable for their elegant designs, and the uprights and panels are also exquisitely cut in various fantastic designs, which have been frequently copied by, and for London artists. On a board in the front are the words, in old Roman letters,

FEARE GOD : HONOUR THE KING.

The extreme beauty of the screen, is somewhat hidden owing to the indifferent light in which it is placed.

One of the principal features of the Church is the magnificent and renowned painting (measuring 13ft. by 8ft.), which now serves as an altar-piece. It represents " *The Descent from the Cross*," with John, the beloved disciple, leaning mournfully over the body of Christ, in the anguish of silent grief. Near the feet of Jesus the Virgin Mary has fainted in the arms of Mary Magdalene, who hangs over her with a mingled expression of grief, dismay, and tender affection ; and near the head is perhaps the most striking figure of the group, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, kneeling, her arm extended, a tear falling from her cheek, and the whole attitude finely expressive of her breathing a prayer to heaven. The subject is not treated with that fervid, vivid imagination which a modern artist might have called to his aid, but there is a great amount of quiet, eloquent beauty about the picture. The choice of colours, the tone, the manipulation, are all faultless. Unfortunately the name of the gifted painter is shrouded in obscurity, and very little is known of even the circumstances under which it was placed in the Church. It is believed to have been taken out of a French or Spanish privateer during the last war with France, and sold as a prize at Plymouth by public auction, where it was purchased by the Hon. Lord Anne Poulett (named after Queen Anne, who was his

godmother), who represented the town in Parliament for many years, and who presented the picture to the town, thus honouring him. There are diverse opinions as to whether it is of the Spanish or Italian school, but the consensus is in favour of its being of the latter, probably a Guido. Be that as it may, the picture is an interesting and very valuable one, and has attracted more than one good offer. The inhabitants, however, have very naturally declined to part with their prize, although an effort was once made to purchase it with a view to its being placed in the National Gallery, the highest bid reaching £10,000. Mr. A. Squibbs, of Bridgwater, supplies an admirable photograph of this picture.

Over the south porch is a small chapel corresponding with the parvise on the opposite side, and like the latter, having a carved freestone front. It was formerly a faculty seat belonging to the Harvey family, of Bridgwater Castle, and afterwards, through the same family, becoming appurtenant to the Old Globe Hotel property. It contains a very brilliant coloured window, presented by Mr. Henry Salmon (*Henricus Salmon : Bono Dedit*). There is a handsome stained window in the Corporation Chapel, given by the late Mr. Thomas Ford, Mayor of Bridgwater, in 1852. An inscription to that effect will be found inserted in some devices across the top of the sections, where there is a representation of the borough arms, and also those of the donor himself—Azure, three lions rampant, argent. There is another stained glass window in the chancel, erected "*To the memory of Benjamin Good, who died November 19th, 1768, aged 69.*" It represents the patriarch Jacob, with his younger sons Joseph and Benjamin. Mr Benjamin Good was Mayor of Bridgwater on three occasions—in 1752, 1758, and 1763. The east chapel also contains three handsome stained glass windows—two erected by Miss Sealey, of the Priory, to members of her family, and one (the largest) given by Miss Plowman.

The organ is a three-manual instrument, containing thirty-six draw-stops, six composition pedals, and about 2,000 pipes, and was erected in 1871 at a cost of nearly £1,000. Mr. G. Lavington has been the organist for over twenty years. The singing is led by an efficient surpliced choir of about sixty voices.

There are forty-six free seats in the Church, each representing six, seven, or nine sittings. The church will seat about 1,500. The

sums received as pew rents provide for the payment of £60 yearly toward the salary of a curate, the salary of the organist, lighting the Church, attendants, &c.

The Church possesses a very valuable quantity of silver Communion plate, the total weight of which is over 200 ounces. The most ancient bears date 1574 and consists of two patens and one chalice, very thin, and now never used.

It is an interesting fact that the registers of the Church are, with a few notable exceptions, extant from the commencement of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in 1558. In 1645, between July and September, blanks are left in the records of births and deaths, and marriages, that being the period of the siege of Bridgwater. One of the books contains a record of the baptism of Admiral Robert Blake.

The tower and spire date from the fourteenth century, and judging from the character of the details of the masonry the work seems to have been continuous throughout, from base to summit. The buttresses are of fourteenth century origin, and have fourteenth century weatherings, and the belfry stage (which has fourteenth century windows) is arched over at the angles to receive the spire, so that the latter was in contemplation from the base upwards. The bell chamber contains eight bells, all of exceedingly good tone, one of them being what is termed a "*maiden*" bell (*i.e.*, cast to the right tone, and requiring no chipping). The following are the inscriptions on the bells:—

First (or treble) : "*Glory to God in the highest. Cast by T. Bayley, 1745.*"

Second: "*On earth peace, good-will towards men. T.B., 1745.*"

Third: "*1650, N.C.*"

Fourth : "*W.P., G.P., H.A. Anno Domini 1617.*"

Fifth : "*Sanctae Mariae. Anno 1634.*" (The canons or portions fixing this bell to the framework are missing, having been at some time broken off).

Sixth : "*From lightning and tempest, good Lord deliver us. A.R., 1721.*"

Seventh : "*William Brethwen, William Bryant, churchwardens. A R., 1721.*"

Eight (big bell): "*Recast by subscriptions obtained 1867. Taylor and Co., Founders, Loughborough, 1868. John B. Hammill, Mayor.*"

*" I call the living : mourn the dead ;
I tell how days and years are fled ;
For joy, for grief, for prayer and praise,
My tuneful voice to heaven I raise."*

(Also a representation of the Borough Arms.)

When the latter bell was being hoisted to its place, the rope to which it was attached broke, and the bell fell, but was fortunately caught in one of the huge beams of the flooring in the clock chamber, which it broke nearly short off, as may still be seen from the west porch. Without any appendage, it weighs 1 ton 7 cwt. 3 qrs. 41bs., and the clapper 60 lbs. All the bells were re-fitted and re-hung in 1879 at a cost of £80. The ringing is performed from the ground floor, in the west porch. Behind the wooden louvres in the four belfry windows there remains some of the original window tracery, of the same character as the west window. There is a clock of first-rate manufacture, erected by Messrs. G. and W. Cope, of Nottingham, in 1869. In the front is a plate with the following inscription: "*Erected by voluntary contributions obtained by John B. Hammill, Esq., Mayor, 1867.*" The dial is illuminated by night.

The principal monument of any consequence in the Church-yard is that under which members of the Oldmixon family rest, including the somewhat celebrated John Oldmixon, who was descended from an ancient Somerset family. He is described as having been a violent party writer, and malevolent critic, who would scarcely have been remembered beyond his native town had not Pope, in resentment of his abuse, condemned him to immortality in his *Dunciad*.* His party writings procured him a place in the Revenue at Liverpool, where he died at an advanced age in 1745, when his body was brought to his native place and interred in St. Mary's Church-yard. He was the author of a *History of the Stuarts, a Critical History of England* (two vols.), a volume of Poems, some Dramatic Pieces, &c., "*none of them,*" one authority remarks, "*worthy of notice, his principal talent being that of falsifying history.*" The inscriptions on this tomb are for the most part obliterated.

The first reference to any Church in Bridgwater is about 1220. On the foundation of St. John's Hospital by William Briwere, in the early part of the reign of Henry III., the tithes of the parish were appropriated to that institution, and the master and brethren had the advowson of the vicarage, which, in 1292, was valued at eight marks. The Church had before been given by Fulke Paganel to the foreign abbey of St. Martin Marmonstier, the possessions of which in England were seized into the King's hands during a war with France. The living is a vicarage in the gift of

the Lord Chancellor (in reality, the Crown). The tithes, value about £300 a year, are held by the Corporation of Bridgwater, subject to one or two payments as first charges, including a readership or lectureship of £33 6s. 8d. per year, and £10 in lieu of tithes at Horsey, to the vicar of St. Mary's, who, were it not for the living of Chilton Church accompanying it, would be poor indeed. The Rev. W. G. Fitzgerald is vicar, having succeeded the Rev. Preb. Sadler in 1864.

HOLY TRINITY.

For some few years previous to 1830, the need had been felt for increased Church accommodation in Bridgwater, the Parish Church not being considered sufficient for a town of the size of Bridgwater. In September, 1830, a complaint was made to the Venerable Diocesan respecting the allotment of seats in the Church, and his lordship came and held a public meeting in the church. He said he had received a memorial (which he did not read) principally complaining of the system of leasing seats, and of there being many families in the town who could not obtain sittings, while other persons were amply provided for. One of the churchwardens thereupon informed his lordship that although there were 2,000 families in the town there were only 200 seats in the Church. It was suggested by Mr. Joseph Ruscombe Poole and Mr. Toogood that another Church was loudly called for as the only rational cure for the evil, and that his lordship would be essentially serving the community by recommending and patronising such an undertaking. To this his lordship promptly replied that he would readily contribute £100 to such an object, and would otherwise advance it by all the means in his power. An alternate scheme was afterwards suggested—the provision of galleries in the Parish Church, but public opinion was greatly in favour of a new Church. In 1833 the funds had reached £1,300, but it was three or four years before the building of the Church was commenced, owing to sufficient subscriptions not being forthcoming. Mr. Ruscombe Poole was a liberal subscriber, and his daughter laid the foundation stone. The new edifice was first used for public worship in 1839, the first incumbent being the Rev. James Wollen, son of the then Vicar of St. Mary's, Dr. Wollen. He was soon afterwards succeeded by the Rev. James De la Hook, whose pastorate extended over a great many years. Taken out of the old parish of Bridgwater it formed at first a district Church; but in the

year 1856 it was made, by an act of the Legislature, a separate parish for ecclesiastical purposes. So completely did it become a *separate parish* that in the vestry minute book we find a record of a vestry meeting held the 12th June, 1857, at which a Church rate of 2d in the £ was made for the repairs of Holy Trinity Church. There was also a right in former years of burying in the present Church-yard ; but this ceased when an order was received from the Home Secretary by the Rev. James De la Hook to close the yard for burials. Since then the Vicar of Trinity has received no burial fees, and has not even the right to read the burial service at the Wembdon Cemetery without first obtaining permission from the Vicar of St. Mary's.

After the death of Mr. De la Hook there were several changes, and the Church gradually fell away into a very low state, until it often happened that there were only a dozen worshippers. The living only amounted to about £100 a year; pew rents were almost nil; and affairs culminated in the gas being cut off for debt, and the evening services were discontinued. In 1870, the Rev. Eldred Green having taken charge of the parish, he made an effort, assisted by several parishioners, to carry out several repairs and alterations, and the Church was at last freed from the heavy debt which had been hanging over it.

It was, however, in the year 1874, soon after the appointment of the Rev. J. A. Lawrence as Vicar, that an endeavour was made to carry out a more complete renovation and reparation. A committee was formed, and subscriptions invited, and with additional funds raised at a large bazaar held at the Town Hall in June, 1875, the committee felt justified in employing Mr. C. Knowles as architect, and the work of renovation was entrusted to Messrs. Willis, contractors. The restoration consisted chiefly in the Church being re-seated with open benches in place of the old unsightly pews ; and a new organ, by Sparks, of Wellington, was provided, and erected where it now stands by the chancel, the old one having occupied a position in the west end gallery. An apparatus was also provided for heating the Church; but other contemplated alterations had to be abandoned for want of funds.

In July, 1876, the Rev. J. A. Lawrence was preferred to the Rectory of Closworth, and the Rev. George Trevor, a native of Bridgwater (the present Vicar) succeeded

him. Mr. Trevor's first endeavours were to discharge a heavy debt which remained on the Church, and his earnest efforts were seconded by numerous friends and crowned with success. He then set himself to work to procure funds for supplying a much needed want, namely, the building of a vicarage house near the Church. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners were communicated with and they offered a substantial contribution. The Bishop also preached at Trinity Church on behalf of this most desirable object, and at the invitation of the late Alderman Collins, who was then Mayor, and who took a warm interest in the movement, the Corporation attended.. The collections during the day amounted to the large sum of £52 13s. A committee was shortly afterwards formed to solicit subscriptions, and Messrs. Down and Sons, architects, were employed, and the contract given to Mr. Richard Escott, builder. The foundation stone of the new vicarage house was laid on the 24th April, 1879, by the Vicar's eldest daughter, Miss Constance Trevor; and in the course of the following year the house was completed. During the incumbency of the present Vicar, several important additions and repairs have been effected in the Church, the chief of which have been the taking down and re-building of the present organ by Mr. W. Vowles, of Bristol; a new and improved system of lighting throughout the Church ; and the substitution of a beautiful encaustic pavement in the chancel, in place of a carpet; the colouring of the east window; and the provision of a lectern.

It would be difficult to describe the architecture of Holy Trinity Church — nondescript is perhaps the most correct term that can be applied to it. No architect appears to have been engaged, but the builder (Mr. Carver) designed it in a manner to meet the views of some of the patrons. The Church is a spacious and comfortably-seated building, and its acoustic properties are good. In outward appearance it is plain and unpretending.

ST. JOHN'S, EASTOVER.

The Church of St. John the Baptist, Eastover, is of modern construction, having been consecrated for public worship on August 17th, 1846, by the then Bishop of Bath and Wells (Bishop Bagot). The Rev. J. M. Capes, M. A., of Balliol College, Oxford, was the gentleman to whom the parishioners are indebted for the Church. Hearing that the district of Eastover contained some 3,000

souls spiritually unprovided for, he offered to build a Church at his own expense provided a small endowment could be raised by subscription or otherwise for the support of a minister. A public meeting was almost immediately called, held at the Assize-hall (now the Town Hall), convened by the Mayor, the question being considered a very important one. There was a large attendance, and the occasion was honoured by the presence of the Bishop. His lordship introduced Mr. Capes, who addressed the meeting, setting forth his views upon the matter, inviting discussion, and concluding by reiterating the offer he had made. He stated that he had been for some time looking for a suitable parish in which to build a church, and had been recommended to Eastover by the Rev. J. H. Pinder, of Wells. After a brief discussion, the following resolution, proposed by Sir Peregrine Acland, and seconded by Mr. Ruscombe Poole, was carried — *“That this meeting returns its grateful thanks to the Rev. J. M. Capes for his munificent and disinterested offer to build a new church in Eastover provided an adequate endowment can be raised by subscription for the minister without the aid of pew rents, and pledges itself to use its best exertions to comply with the conditions annexed to the offer.”*

Amongst those who took an active part in the proceedings at this meeting, and spoke on the occasion, were the Rev. H. Parsons, Mr. Axford, and Mr. Sealy. The last-named gentleman (who took a leading part in matters connected with the town at that time, and was one of the proprietors of the brick and tile business now carried on by Messrs. H. J. and O. Major, Limited), in the course of his speech, said : *“ A part of a field belonging to me having been selected for the site of the Church, it has been a gratifying thing to me to have an opportunity of giving it for that purpose. Being also deeply impressed with the advantage of the clergyman’s residence being near the Church, I hope that part of the fund to be raised for the endowment will be employed in building a parsonage house, and if such is the case, I beg to offer a further portion of the same field for that purpose. I am glad to have it in my power to consecrate my land to so glorious a work.”* This generous offer was accepted, and a subscription-list being at once started, no less than £1,590 was promised in the hall. The Incorporated Church Building Society also gave £400, and the Church was afterwards endowed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the value of the living being about £300 per annum. Subsequently, however,

another site was chosen for the Church and parsonage; this was purchased, not given. It is not known why the original intention was abandoned.

The building was at once proceeded with, the architect being Mr. Brown, of Norwich. As already stated the Church was consecrated on August 17th, 1846. and the following brief description of the first service appeared in the *Ecclesiastical Gazette* for September for that year: — *“The Worshipful the Mayor of Bridgwater J. Sealy, Esq., and the Corporation in their robes, accompanied by John Boy Allen, Esq., Recorder for the borough, and also many of the neighbouring clergy and gentry, attended on the occasion, with the principal inhabitants of the town. The morning service was read by the Rev. J. C. Collins, the incumbent, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. J. H. Pinder, Professor of Theology, from Psalm xxvii., 4. The collections amounted to £59 0s 6d.”*

Mr. Capes had ministered in the Church a short time, but in a letter to the Congregation of St. John’s Church, dated 23rd June, 1845, he announced his withdrawal from the ministry of the Church of England and his determination to join the Roman Church. He had then spent between £5,000 and £6,000 on the erection of the Church. He returned again to the Anglican Communion, justifying his change of views in a work he published under the title of *“ To Rome and Back,”* which is now forgotten. He was at one time a frequent contributor to periodical literature, but of late years he lived almost entirely in retirement, suffering from blindness; his sight had possibly been affected by the great attention he paid to the most minute details of the building, assisting even in much of the stained glass work. Shortly before his death (which occurred in January, 1889, at Christ Church, Hampstead), it seems he became again a convert [to turn someone aside from a right religious belief to a false or erroneous one TW] and was a second time admitted into the Roman Church.

The first Vicar was the Rev. J. C. Collins, M.A., and he remained so for 22 years, and the affection and esteem with which he was regarded is evidenced by a tablet in the chancel. He was succeeded by his son, the Rev. W. Collins, who remained until the beginning of 1876, when he removed to Clare, in Suffolk. The Rev. E. S. P. Seale commenced a successful ministry in March, 1876 ; and in 1885, accepting the living of Pitminster, near Taunton, his place was taken by the Rev. G. Eden Peake. The latter

gentleman in 1887 removed to Holford, having resigned the charge of St. John's owing to continued ill health, and was succeeded by the Rev. Bazell, M.A., A.K.C., from Twerton-on-Avon, Bath.

In architecture the style is Early English, the lancet windows being fine specimens of the style, and it is supposed, with some reason, that the architect took the windows of Salisbury Cathedral as his model. The Church is built of Bath stone; the roof is of open carved oak, richly ornamented in the chancel, where the corbels support half-length figures of winged angels, two bearing the cross, and two the crown. The altar, font, pulpit and screens of the organ are of Painswick stone. The vestry is a model of the Abbot's Kitchen at Glastonbury Abbey. The windows of the Church are filled with stained glass. The east light, over 20 feet high, represents the annunciation, birth, agony in the garden, crucifixion, and other scenes in the life and death of Christ. The window near the font contains a patchwork of glass collected by the Rev. J. M. Capes containing colours said to be now lost, and exhibiting a curious miscellany of designs, such as a knight in armour, a hand, a quill, &c. The ancient glass is disposed as an irregular mosaic, with groundwork of medallions, circles and quatrefoils. The upper light in the south side of the nave is a copy of one at Amiens.

Since its erection the alterations to the building have been few. The chancel was improved in the time of the Rev. W. Collins, and a tile flooring took the place of the old flags during the ministry of the Rev. F. S. P. Seale. The system of lighting has also, been greatly improved the present handsome pendants having been substituted for the former insignificant wall brackets.

It was the original intention of Mr. Capes to have a spire to the Church, and such was provided for in the architect's drawings, but owing to a settlement in the foundations the idea was not carried out. The pinnacles added at the expense of the Rev. N. H. O. Ruddock in 1887 have, however, greatly improved the appearance of the tower.

The parsonage house was built at the same time as the Church, and the schools opposite, which are conveyed to the Vicar of St. John's, were erected partly at the expense of Mr. Capes, and partly by the Poole family in memory of their grandfather. It may be remarked in passing that St. John's schools are among the most successful in the county.

The Church stands in the centre of its own

God's acre, and some of the tombstones contain interesting inscriptions. On a monument marking the family vault of the Bowens, we are informed that *Edward Nicholson Bowen*, the first child christened in St. John's Church, is buried there, and also that he was a grandson, of Peter Nicholson, the great mathematician. A stone also marks the spot where 88 persons, who died of cholera in 1849, were buried. In August, 1878, St. John's Burial Board was formed, and a cemetery made on the Bristol-road, 3a. lr. 4p. in extent, and containing two mortuary chapels.

The services are very attractive, and the attendance is generally good, all the sittings being also free. There is a fine toned organ, and the singing is led by a well-trained surpliced choir, the musical portion of the service being exceptionally pleasing.

At the time the Church was opened the parish contained about 3,000 inhabitants, but that number has now grown to more than 7,000. About 1880 a movement was projected to build a Mission Chapel in connection with it, and the idea was accorded much support, resulting in the erection of the commodious All Saints' Mission Chapel, near the railway-station, where hearty services are held every Sunday. It was opened on St. Mark's Day, 1882 it has seating accommodation for 300, and is free and unappropriated.



** In naked majesty Oldmixon stands,
And, Milo-like, surveys his arms and hands ;
Then sighing, thus, ' And am I now three-score ?
Ah, why, ye gods! should two and two make four? '
He said, and climbed a stranded lighter's height,
Shot to the black abyss, and plunged downright.
The senior's judgment all the crowd admire,
Who but to sink the deeper rose the higher.
—The Dunciad, Book ii. 283.*