

**THE HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF THE
COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF S. SAVIOUR
(S. MARIE OVERIE),
SOUTHWARK. 2. EARLY ENGLISH
ARCADING OF THE OLD NAVE (1207),
PRESERVED IN SITU, IN THE NEW NAVE**

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2. Early English arcading of the Old Nave (1207), preserved in situ, in the New Nave by W. Thompson

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W. THOMPSON

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*To the Librarian, Harvard University, U. S. A.
With the Author's Compliments.*

THE *old page 37*
HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES
OF THE
COLLEGIATE CHURCH
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S. SAVIOUR
(S. Marie Overie),
SOUTHWARK.

(ILLUSTRATED.)



2. Early English Arcading of the Old Nave (1207), preserved *in situ*,
in the New Nave.

BY THE
William
REV. W. THOMPSON, D.D., Rector.

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1892.

ARMS OF



THE PRIORY

Argent, a cross dancette: in the first quarter a cinquefoil, gules.

Past and Present.



CHIS CHURCH is considered to be the finest mediæval building in London after Westminster Abbey. It has a record of more than a thousand years, interwoven with much that is interesting in history, literature, and legend. Stowe* relates, on the authority of Linstede, the last prior, that, "East from the Bishop of Winchester's house standeth a fair church called St. Mary-over-the-Rie (Overy)—that is, over the water (*rie* meaning river). This Church, or some other in place thereof, was (of old time—long before the Conquest) a House of Sisters, founded by a maiden named Mary, unto the which House of Sisters she left the oversight and profits of a cross-ferry over the Thames, there kept before that any bridge was builded." This House of Sisters was afterwards converted by S. Swithun, who was Bishop of Winchester from 862 to 872, into a College of Priests. Hence the Church is still styled "Collegiate." And from that time onwards the Church has owed almost everything to successive Bishops of Winchester. Bishop Giffard,

* John Stowe, b. 1525, d. 1605. Under the patronage of the Earl of Leycester and other noblemen, he published "Surrey" and "Chronicles," which are consulted to this day. He is buried in S. Andrew Undershaft, City.

assisted by two Norman Knights, William Pont de l'Arche and William Dauncey, built the original Norman Nave in 1106, and Canons Regular of the Order of S. Augustine were established, the Collegiate Church becoming a monastery. Bishop Peter de Rupibus (*alias* de la Roche) built the Choir and Ladye Chapel in 1207, and altered the Norman character of the Nave, which had suffered from fire, into Early English. The Nave once more suffered from fire in the time of Richard II., and in his reign and in that of Henry IV., perpendicular work was introduced into it. Gower, the poet, and Cardinal Beaufort were liberal benefactors to the Church at this period, the former founding the Chantry of St. John, and the latter restoring the South Transept at his own cost. The roof of the Nave, which was of stone, fell in 1469, and an oak roof, groined, was substituted, some of the quaint bosses of which may be still seen piled in the Ladye Chapel. The magnificent Altar Screen is due to Bishop Fox (1520). The old Nave again fell into decay, and was allowed to remain a roofless ruin for many years, until in 1838 it was taken down, when many remains of ancient Norman work were shamelessly broken up and scattered. The foundation stone of a debased and flimsy Nave was laid by Dr. Sumner, Bishop of Winchester, in 1839. A memorial stone of greater promise was laid on the same site July 24th, 1890, by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, accompanied by T.R.H. the Princess of Wales, and the young Princesses Victoria and Maud, at four p.m.

The Church is cruciform, and, including the walls and buttresses is nearly 300 feet long and about 130 feet broad, and consists of Ladye Chapel* and Choir (Early English), Transepts (Decorated), Nave (which will be Early English), and a noble Tower (the upper stages Perpendicular, the lowest Decorated) 35 feet square, and, with pinnacles, 163 feet high, and contains a fine peal of twelve bells, the total weight being over 215 cwt., the tenor being over 51 cwt. In 1424, in the time of Prior Werkeworth, the original peal consisted of seven, which were re-cast of greater weight in the same year. Each bell had a name, such as Augustine, Maria, &c.

In 1540 the Priory Church and Rectory were leased from the Crown to the parishioners at an annual rental of about

* Mr. Francis T. Dollman (*The Priory of St. Mary Overie, Southwark*) contends that the Ladye Chapel should be styled the Retro-Choir.

fifty pounds, and S. Marie Overie became S. Saviour. This lease was renewed from time to time, until in 1614 the Church was purchased by them from the King in the name of nineteen "bargainers," or trustees, for eight hundred pounds. The parishioners continued to be patrons of the living until 1885, when, by an Act of Parliament, the right of presentation was vested in the Bishop of the Diocese, and the Chaplain was made Rector. Dr. Davidson, the present Bishop, takes an enthusiastic interest in the restoration, which, with Sir Arthur Blomfield as architect, is sure to be thorough and complete, and worthy of the future cathedral of London south of the Thames. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Church was used for cathedral purposes from an early date. A Bishop of London, Henry de Wingham, was consecrated here in 1260 by Boniface, Archbishop of Canterbury. A Bishop of Rochester held two ordinations here more than five hundred years ago—the first in 1356, and the second in 1357. John de Shepey was the Bishop, and it was here that he was consecrated in 1353.

It should also be mentioned that Gower, the father of English poetry, and Massinger, and Fletcher, and Edmond Shakespeare (brother of the great dramatist), and Bishops Sandall, Robert Horne, William Wickham (1595), and the saintly Lancelot Andrewes are buried here. It was here, in 1406, the Earl of Kent, grandson of the "Fair Maid of Kent," was united in wedlock to Lucia, eldest daughter of the Lord of Milan, Henry IV. giving the bride away at the Church door;* it was here, in 1423 (Henry VI.), that James I. of Scotland the Royal poet, was married to Jane, niece of Cardinal Beaufort; it was here that Bishop Gardiner condemned the Anglican Martyrs to death in 1555; it was here that John Harvard, the founder of the great American University which bears his name, was baptised, November 29th, 1607; and it was here that the famous Dr. Henry Sacheverell was elected Chaplain in 1705.

* Anciently the Marriage Ceremony commenced at the Porch (*ante ostium ecclesie*), or in some portion of the Nave, and was concluded at the Altar; a custom which still prevails in some Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Somersetshire Churches, and elsewhere. Chaucer, in his *Canterbury Tales*, says of the Wife of Bath:—

"Housebondes at the Chirche dore had she had five."

Tour of the Interior.

THE first monument, immediately on the right as we enter by the South Transept door, is one of the most interesting in this or any church. S. Saviour's can boast the unique treasure of the resting-place of the first English



3. Tomb of the First English Poet, Gower.
Arms of Cardinal Beaufort.

poet, John Gower. Seven cities claimed the honour of the birthplace of the great blind Homer; and similarly more than one spot has coveted a like distinction in respect of our own bard, who also was blind during the eight closing years of his life. Caxton, in his edition of the *Confessio Amantis*, first published by him in 1483, calls him "a squyer borne in Walys;" Leland and others contend for Yorkshire; while Sir Harris Nicholas,* an eminent antiquary, tracing his name in the *Close Rolls*, in connection with his estates, believes him to have been near kindred to one Sir Robert Gower, who lies interred in Brabourne, a small village in Kent, where there was at one time an effigy of him in brass, holding a shield with the same bearings as those which may be still seen on the tomb of our poet: *Argent on a chevron azure, three leopards' faces, or; the crest, on a chapeau, a gower (i.e., a wolf-dog or talbot) passant.* The arms of the Yorkshire family, of which the Duke of Sutherland is head, are different: *Barry, argent, and gules, a cross patee flosse, and sable; the crest, a wolf passant, argent, collared, and chained, or.* Moreover, in this latter family, the name is made to rhyme with *power*, while the former rhyme it with *power*, thus pronouncing it as our poet's name is pronounced to the present day. John Gower, it can be easily proved, possessed property and had relatives of his name in Kent; and we believe he was a Kentish man.

He is said to have been a Student of the Inner Temple, of which there is no proof; and that he was educated at Oxford, where, however, as I am informed by the present Curator of the Bodleian, no record or tradition of him can be found.

He was Poet Laureate to Richard II. and Henry IV., the latter conferring upon him the S. S. Collar, with the Lancastrian Badge of the Swan.†

The three large volumes, representing his three principal poetical works, and supporting the head whose brain inspired them, are named *Vox Clamantis*, the "Voice of one

* *Retrospective Review*, 1828, N.S., Vol. II., pp. 103-117.

† Observe this Collar. There are various interpretations of the "S. S." The simplest is that the links of the chain are in the form of the letter S. I incline to think "S. S." are the initials of "Silver Swan," an Order instituted in the reign of Richard II.

crying," in allusion to the Rebellion of 1381, headed by Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, written in Latin, of which there are several copies extant; *Speculum Meditantis*, the "Mirror of one meditating," in French, and which has altogether disappeared; and the *Confessio Amantis*, the "Confession of a Lover," in English, and now published in a cheap form. The whole tendency of these great works was to improve the morals and manners of his age, and hence he is styled "Moral Gower" by his fellow poet, friend, and pupil, Chaucer.

He entered the state of matrimony when he was more than seventy years old, the ceremony taking place, not in the Priory Church, nor in the Church of S. Mary Magdalene, which was the parish Church, built in the 13th century, on the south side of the choir, and removed in 1822, but in his own private oratory, situated under his own quarters in the precincts, by licence* from the celebrated William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, who lived in Winchester House, which was situated a few yards beyond the west end of the Nave, and the last remnants of which were swept away only about a dozen years ago. He then retired for the rest of his days, with Agnes Groundolf, his wife, within the Precincts of the Priory, and contributed largely from his ample means to the repairs of the fabric, founded a chantry in the Chapel of S. John the Baptist, which stood in the fifth bay from the west of the North Aisle of the Nave, in which shrine at last he was buried, and where over his remains the Priors erected this fine monument. It is decided to restore it to its original position; but shall we not have the Chapel also given back to us?

The tomb is in the Perpendicular, or Third-Pointed order of architecture, the style of the period, and consists of a canopy of three arches embellished with cinquefoil tracery, &c., and supported on either side by angular buttresses surmounted with carved pinnacles. Between these three arches are two columns terminating in similar carved pinnacles, and further back and above is a screen composed of two rows of trefoil niches. Against the wall, in the spaces

* " . . . Extra ecclesiam parochialem, in oratorio ipsius Joannis Gower infra hospitium cum in prioratu B. Mariæ de Overee in Suthwerk prædicta situatum, solemnizare valeas . . . "—Extract from the Registry preserved at Winchester, dated Jan. 25th, 1397.