

**THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF
BRISTOL: A DESCRIPTION OF ITS
FABRIC AND A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE EPISCOPAL SEE**

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The Cathedral Church of Bristol: A Description of Its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See by H. J. L. J. Massé

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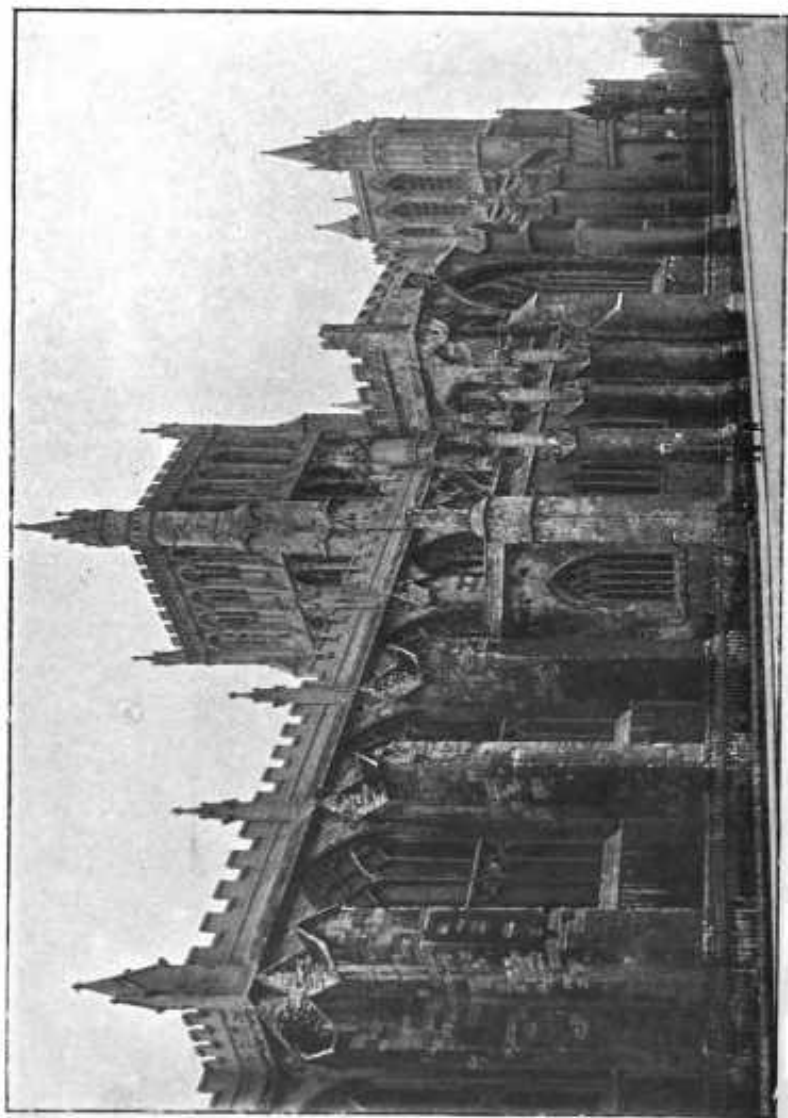
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S. B. Solar & Co., Photo.]

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GENERAL PREFACE

THIS series of monographs has been planned to supply visitors to the great English Cathedrals with accurate and well illustrated guide-books at a popular price. The aim of each writer has been to produce a work compiled with sufficient knowledge and scholarship to be of value to the student of Archæology and History, and yet not too technical in language for the use of an ordinary visitor or tourist.

To specify all the authorities which have been made use of in each case would be difficult and tedious in this place. But amongst the general sources of information which have been almost invariably found useful are:—(1) the great county histories, the value of which, especially in questions of genealogy and local records, is generally recognised; (2) the numerous papers by experts which appear from time to time in the Transactions of the Antiquarian and Archæological Societies; (3) the important documents made accessible in the series issued by the Master of the Rolls; (4) the well-known works of Britton and Willis on the English Cathedrals; and (5) the very excellent series of Handbooks to the Cathedrals, originated by the late Mr. John Murray, to which the reader may in most cases be referred for fuller detail, especially in reference to the histories of the respective sees.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

My special thanks are due to Mr. Robert Hall Warren, F.S.A., of Clifton, who knew the Cathedral well more than fifty years ago, and remembers what it has gone through during that lapse of time; to the Clifton Antiquarian Club for permission to reproduce three illustrations from the Club Proceedings; and to the never-failing courtesy of Mr. W. Hayward, the Sub-Sacrist of the Cathedral.

H. J. L. J. M.



St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, Italy

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

FOR a period of four hundred years previous to the creation of the See of Bristol there had been a church and monastery of Augustine canons, founded by Robert Fitzharding, or Fitzhardinge, as the name is spelled by the present owners of Berkeley Castle. This Robert seems to have been the son of the Harding employed by Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances, a præpositus or reeve of the town of Bristol, as his father had been before him.

The origin of this elder Harding is not very clear. A MS. in Berkeley Castle describes the father of Robert Fitzharding as "ex regia prosapia regum Daciæ." This is not definite enough to be of any real value, and we must perforce begin with Robert Fitzharding himself. Of the date of his birth, which is not material, nothing is known. What is certainly known about him is that during Stephen's reign he gave much assistance to the cause of Henry and Matilda, and that he became richer in consequence. It seems, too, as certainly a fact that in the year 1142 he began to build the "abbeye at Bristowe, that of Saint Austin is," *in honorem Dei, et pro salute animæ suæ*. This date is fixed by the mention of the fact (in Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeleys*) that King Henry II. was nine years old at the time, having been born in 1133.

The site chosen was near the spot where St. Jordan's Chapel was erected; as Leland writes: "ibique in magna area (probably College Green) sacellum in quo sepultus est S. Jordanus, unus ex discipulis Augustini Anglorum Apostoli."

Another tradition, seeking, no doubt, to account for the dedication to St. Augustine, says that the building was on the site of St. Augustine's oak.

This site was bought from Robert, Earl of Gloucester, who, in right of his wife, was lord of the Castle of Bristol, and it was part of the manor of Bedminster, a manor including the vill of Redcliffe, and also that of Billeswick. From its position on the rising ground it will be seen that the site was well chosen, almost the best that could have been selected at that time.

From a document at Berkeley Castle we learn that "upon Easter day, the 11th of April, in the 13th year of the reign of King Stephen, in the year of our Lord 1148, the four Bishops of Worcester, Exeter, Llandaff, and S. Asaph consecrated the church and buildings, which the said Robert (Fitzharding) had built near to the town of Bristol, dedicating them to God and to St. Augustine, the English Apostle, then newly, by the said Robert, built upon the manor of Billeswick, at the place once called St. Augustine's Green; and then, inducting the Abbot and Canons, amongst other possessions, then endowed that church and monastery by his deed which he laid down upon the altar there, with the manor of Almondsbury, the manor of Horfield, the manor of Ashleworth, the manor of Cromhall, since called Cromhall Abbots; and with divers lands and tenements in Aslingham, with half of his fishings there, to hold in frankalmoign, and willed in the same deed that the same, upon his blessing, should quietly be enjoyed."

These dates are not to be accepted as quite certain, though the facts seem sufficiently ascertained. The convent, no doubt, was begun in 1142, but either the consecration in 1148 is too early, or the Christian names of the bishops are wrongly given. The prelates who took part were, in all accounts, the Bishops of Worcester, assisted by the Bishops of Exeter, Llandaff, and St. Asaph, but their Christian names belong to those of bishops some years later. Then, again, if the first canons came from Wigmore, their introduction must have been later than the ordinarily received date, as they could not have come from thence before the year 1179.

The first canons are said to have been brought from Wigmore, and one of them was Richard, the first Abbot. Fitzharding himself, during the last few years of his life,