

TEMPLE CHURCH, LONDON, ENGLAND.

Some two years since, during a tarry of several weeks in London, it was our privilege to visit this remarkable old church and the adjacent buildings, so full of historical interest. After Westminster Abbey, there was no other sacred place in the great metropolis that we so much wished to see and worship in; we recall again and again the "white days" when our long-cherished desire in both these respects was gratified, and there came to us a delightful inspiration out of the past, as communion was had with the ancient deeds and glory of which this structure is the holy sign.

The site is not a commanding one, though in the very heart of London, close to Temple Bar, and but just withdrawn from busy Fleet Street. Here we find a motly collection of ancient buildings occupied by barristers' halls and offices. The lawyers now hold and use these buildings, including the church itself, and have been in possession since 1608, when the property was conferred upon the "Benches of the Inner and Middle Temple" by royal grant. But these historic structures have an age far antedating this period. Seven hundred years ago, the Knights of the Temple—that famous body of warrior monks which for centuries wielded so large an influence—chose this situation for their ecclesiastical headquarters. Then, in the fullness of their wealth and power, they erected on this spot an imposing temple of worship, with other buildings, well calculated to make apparent the faith and resources of this great organization. The most interesting part of the church, "The Round," was dedicated in the year 1185, by Heraclius, patriarch of Jerusalem, who was at that time seeking the aid of Henry II. against Saladin. This portion of the main structure has undergone but few changes, and presents substantially the same appearance now as in those early days, when its stone pavements echoed the footsteps of the Knights who gazed admiringly upon the lofty arches, the architectural embellishments, the suggestive emblems wrought in wood and stone, such as the pascal lamb and the cross, moved thereby no doubt to pious devotion and deeds of noble daring.

Here came the members of that renowned order both to worship and to legislate. Some of them dwelt in the buildings of the order adjacent to the Temple, and were subject to the most rigorous, partly ecclesiastical, partly military, discipline. Even now, the winding stone stairway and cell of penance sufficiently attest that offenders were dealt with in no light manner. But the old temple itself was the one sacred place where they all gathered to pray and worship, to enact solemn ceremonies, to consider the grave questions that related to the work of their order and take sweet counsel together. Here the novitiate knelt and made his confessions. Here he kept his lonely night vigils. Here, after due preparation, he received the blessing of the church and the solemn charge of duty—perhaps the consecrated sword that he was to wield against the Moslem in distant Palestine. Here pilgrims and knights were sometimes marshaled to give pious thanks for victories won, and to wave beneath the arches of their cherished Temple those silken banners of the order wrought with such curious devices. Here, too, were brought and laid away the remains of those who had made some proof of their piety or valor, and to whom the ancient Templars gave solemn burial and a fitting resting place. Their effigies in armour are the most striking objects as you enter the sacred vestibule of the Temple. The figures are life-size, the right hand grasping a sword and the legs crossed. It is generally believed that these effigies do not represent Knights who actually fought for the recovery of the City of the Great King and the Holy Sepulchre, but rather associates and patrons of the order, who in some signal way had distinguished them-