

brydge and there dined, spendyng the rest of the daye in sports and plaies, the freers of Sainte Augustyne doing the play of the knights of Brystow meekyng a great fire at night on the Kynslate-hill."

As we observed above, the appearance of this relic of by-gone days produced no small ferment amongst the book-worn tribe, and multiform were the inquirers at Mr. Farley for a sight of the original manuscript. The honest printer was unable to quench this thirst of curiosity. After making diligent inquisition, however, he discovered that the "copy" was brought to the office by a youth between fifteen and sixteen years of age, answering to the "caption" of Thomas Chatterton.

The stripling having been "hunted up" he was sharply catechised touching the matter, the inquisitive *quid nures* looking upon him as a mere child, and treating him accordingly. Offended at this mode of doing business, Thomas mounted his high horse, returned haughtiness for imperiousness, and point blank refused to give any information on the subject.

A gentler tone having been adopted by the querists, Chatterton professed his willingness to tell all that he knew anent the premises.

His first story was that he had been employed to transcribe certain ancient manuscripts by a gentleman, of whose name and whereabouts, however, he could give no distinct or reliable account.

Constrained to abandon this position, our author declared that he had received the paper in question, together with many other manuscripts from his father, who had found them in a large chest in the upper room over the chapel, on the south side of Redcliffe Church.

That certain antique documents were actually discovered in the above mentioned location, was no unverity. Jacob Bryant in his "Observations on Rawley's Poems" gives us an account of the occurrence.

Over the north porch of St. Mary Redcliffe Church, which was founded, or at least rebuilt, by Mr. W. Canynge, an eminent merchant of Bristol in the reign of Edward the Fourth, there is a kind of muniment

room. In this chamber there were deposited six or seven chests, one of which by excellence, was called "Mr. Canynge's cofre." The aforesaid ark, it is said, was secured by six keys, two of which were entrusted to the minister and "procurator" of the church, two to the Mayor, and one to each of the churchwardens. During the lapsation of time, however, the six keys were lost, and about the 1727, a notion became engendered that some title deed and other writs of value were contained in Mr. Canynge's cofre. The upshot was that an order of vestry was made, that the chest should be opened under the inspection of a "black brigadesman," and those writings which appeared to be of consequence, removed to the south porch of the church. The locks were accordingly forced, and not only the principal chest, but the others, which likewise were conjectured to contain "fructifying evidents," were broken open. A selection being made of the deeds immediately relating to the church, the remainder of the manuscripts were left exposed to the manipulations of all and sundry, as of no moment or value.

Our authors' story now begins to be connected with the muniments of St. Mary Redcliffe.

Considerable depredations had, from time to time, been made upon the neglected documents; but the most voracious of these plunderers was the father of Chatterton. His uncle, as we have seen, being sexton of the church, allowed him free "ish and entry" to the sacred premises, and seldom did he retire empty-handed from these visits. He carried off, from time to time, parcels of the parchments, and on one particular occasion, is known, with the assistance of his disciples—the "singing man," it will be remembered, was likewise a "doup-duster"—to have filled a large basket with the antique spoils.

The ravished relics were devoted to mean and ignoble uses. They were tossed into a cupboard in the school, and employed, from time to time, in covering copy-books. On one occasion, the parson of the parish having presented the boys with a score of Bibles, Dominic Chatterton, in order to conserve the binding of the donated volumes, covered them with some of the abducted parchments.