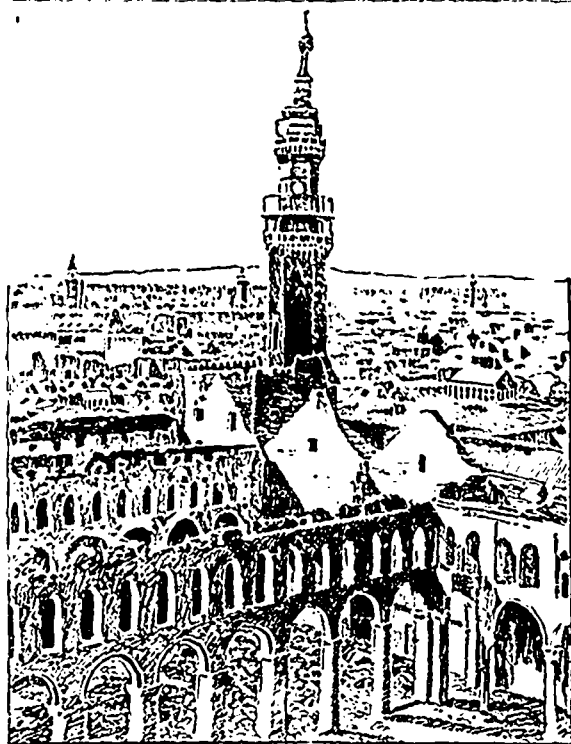




RUINS OF MOSQUE AT DAMASCUS.

Burned October, 1893.

Hubert again took office as High Chancellor of England, and lived in princely magnificence. Indeed, his magnificence extended to everything within his reach. He had a high taste for architecture, and improved many of the church buildings in Canterbury. Towards the end of his life he bent his energies upon the completion of Canterbury Cathedral. When in Canterbury overseeing the workmen in the early summer of 1205, he began to feel within himself that the day of his death was drawing near. Taking an affectionate farewell of the clergy at Canterbury, he set out for Rochester, which he never reached. Resting at a place called Tenham, he made his will, received the sacrament and quietly passed away. He was a man peculiar to his times, yet great in every way. He ruled for the king and fought for him as a soldier. He ruled for the Church and as a soldier also fought for her. Such a man, as archbishop, could not be in our own day; but in the times in which he lived he probably did the best he could in controlling wayward kings, directing a dissatisfied people, curbing the violence of turbulent barons, and restraining the evil practices of worldly-minded clergy. He lived two lives. As a statesman, he sometimes forgot he was an archbishop; as an archbishop, he remembered only the Church. The hard, cruel days of the crusades could alone produce such a man. His tomb, we are told, is still visible on the south wall of Canterbury Cathedral.

THE GREAT MOSQUE OF DAMASCUS.

THE history of Damascus carries us back to the days of Abraham. There is a tradition there that in his time an idolatrous temple occupied a conspicuous site in the city. This is probably the "house of Rimmon," spoken of in the fourth chapter of the second book of Kings, as the place where Naaman, the Syrian, felt that at least he must bow his head. It is also, very likely, the temple where the wicked king Ahaz saw the beautiful altar which was to serve as a pattern for one in the house of God at Jerusalem, as told in the sixteenth chapter of the same book.

It is thought that this was the very temple which was found standing in Damascus in the days when Arcadius was Emperor of Rome, seventy years after the conversion of Constantine to Christianity. It was a huge heathen temple, larger in dimensions than the great Temple of the Sun at Palmyra, or the Jewish Temple of Jerusalem. Arcadius transformed this temple into a splendid Christian church, and dedicated it to St. John the Baptist, whose head it was said to contain. How the head of our Lord's forerunner came to be conveyed to Damascus is not clear, but tradition has it so, and states, further, that his heart is at Aleppo, and one of his fingers at Beyrout.

This grand building remained a Christian church for nearly three hundred years, but, in common with the most of eastern Christianity, false doctrines and practices unknown to the primitive Church crept in, and caused her "candlestick to be removed."

About the year 636 the Moslems laid siege to Damascus. It was taken partly by treaty and partly by force, and the great basilica was divided between Christians and Mohammedans. But in time the Christians were driven out entirely, and the building converted into a Mohammedan mosque. Every trace of Christianity was removed from it, with one exception, for deeply engraven over one of the doors were cut in Greek letters the words, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages." This was left, and even the name of the building was never entirely removed, for it was known as "The Mosque of Lord John."

Last October this building, once a heathen temple, then a Christian church, and then a Mohammedan mosque—and always the prominent feature of Damascus—was destroyed by fire. Its ruins alone remain, but a vigorous effort is being made to rebuild it.

Events like this revive the feeling of loss that accrued to Christianity through the fierce conquests of the false prophet of Mecca. When can men go forth again with true apostolic fire, and win back the temples and the people to the Lord Almighty and His Christ?