

priory and hospital for the maintenance of 100 blind men by William Elsing who was its first Prior. Elsing, Spital surrendered at the time of the dissolution of the religious houses and was dissolved. What became of the blind men no one knows.

When the fine priory church was taken, the north aisle was pulled down, and houses built upon the site and the rest of the church became the parish church of St. Alphege, which had previously stood in Cripplegate. The site of the old church became a carpenter's yard. The porch of St. Alphege's still remains.

These hospitals were all religious Foundations governed by priests and brethren of some Order. Religion ruled all. From the birth of the child, through life, to death, religion and obedience due to religion, held everyone in chains. All learning, all the arts, all the professions were ruled by the Church. We may congratulate ourselves upon the release from these chains, but they were a very necessary part of human development.

Love of law and order, respect for human life, education in the power of self-government—all these things had to be taught. No one could teach them or enforce them but the priest, and on the whole he did his best.

The Church was always a little in advance of the people ; the Church at its lowest aimed at a certain standard of morals and conduct, even if the standard was low it was higher than that of the laity.

We now see the Franciscans preaching to the people, the Carthusians in silent and gloomy solitude, the Dominicans insisting on the régime of their Order, enjoining silence, poverty and fasting, and Kings and Queens and all highly placed persons eager to get buried in holy soil of a monastery church. We recognise that out of this discipline came the Londoner of Tudor times, eager for adventure and progress ; the Londoner who stood so staunch for freedom and liberty that he drove out one monarch after another for the sacred cause ; the Londoner also of our own time who is in no way inferior to his forefathers.

The religious society known as the Fraternity must also be mentioned. There were Fraternities attached to every church. Members of the same trade in a parish and in many parishes were united together in a Fraternity—of the Blessed Virgin, of the Holy Trinity, of the Corpus Christi, or of various Saints. All the Danes joined together in a Fraternity and all the Dutch. All the Fishmongers, all the Pepperers, they formed Fraternities which had masses sung for the souls of their brethren ; they met in the churches on their Saint's Day, had solemn service, a procession and a feast. From such a bond as this any trade or calling derives dignity, self-respect and independence.

The Fraternities were mostly founded before the Companies which could never have come into being but for the impetus given by the Fraternities. Common action—the most powerful weapon ever discovered for the common welfare—was made possible by the Fraternities.

The Prioress, the Superior of an Order whose orders are not too strict. The Limitoser, the man who is everybody's friend so long as he gets paid. The Oxford clerk who has no benefice because he has no interest and who has to travel to foreign universities to converse with scholars. The Monk, a very fine man wearing a fur-trimmed robe ; he wore a gold tie pin. Obedience to the Rules of his Order could not seemingly be expected of such a man. The Town Parson, of lowly birth, a learned man, who was content with poverty ; loved his people and gave all he had to the poor. This picture of a good clergyman we have to-day. The Summoner, an officer of the Ecclesiastical courts ; his portrait is just farce. Last comes the Pardoner. He is a hypocrite and carried sham relics about with him and sold pigs' bones as precious and holy remains.

The free circulation of portraits such as these formed the initial step towards the Reformation. The eyes of the people

began to discern the truth which lay behind the gorgeous vestments and splendid structure of authority.

Every street had its Parish Church with charities, fraternities and endowments. Colleges, houses for priests, almonies, hospitals, were scattered all over the City ; within and without its wall there were fifteen great houses, whose splendour can best be explained by the ruins of Tintern, Glastonbury, Fountains or Whitby. Every house possessed rich manes and broad acres of land ; its treasury filled with title deeds and heaps of gold and silver plate ; every house had its church adorned with rich shrines and blazing altars and painted glass, such as we can no longer make.

Outside, the warnings of Death and Judgment, the certainty of Heaven and Hell were depicted on the walls of the humblest parish Church ; and they all thought, priest and people alike, that it would last for ever.

Such and so great was the power and wealth of the church from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. A. R. B.

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