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## LECTURE.

### "THE SWORD AND THE ROBE IN THE TEMPLE."

Sir Alfred Rice-Oxley took the Chair on Saturday, March 19th, when Colonel Blackham, C.B., D.S.O., gave a lecture on "The Sword and the Robe in the Temple," which transported us from the atmosphere of the twentieth century into one of the romance of a bygone time; he led us, in imagination, first through the beautiful gateway and by the griffin which marks the site of Temple Bar to the old church dedicated in 1185 by a patriarch of Jerusalem, with cloisters erected later by Christopher Wren on the site of an ancient monastery. There, to use the words of the lecturer, "a person has little imagination who cannot hear, echoing down the centuries, the frenzied eloquence of Peter the Hermit." Peter led his unarmed rabble in a great cause to the shores of Asia Minor, where they perished for their cause, but in the same year a fighting force under Godfrey de Bouillon, Duke of Loraine, captured the Holy City with great heroism, and thus the Crusaders founded a Christian monarchy in the Holy Land.

Colonel Blackham described the "Brotherhood of the Temple"—nine men who distinguished themselves for zeal and courage in the defence of the roads of Jerusalem where pilgrims were much subject to predatory attacks by robbers. The chief of these "Brothers" must have been poor enough, as he and another knight rode together on the same horse. But the poor knights soon became rich and so powerful that, as a special honour, they were lodged on the site of the famous Hebrew Temple, and the fame of the "Knighthood of the Temple of Solomon" spread throughout the world; one Knight with four Brothers came to the Court of England, where he was received with the greatest respect by Henry I, and took back with him three hundred of the best and bravest of European chivalry. The society was reconstituted by Pope and Patriarch, and they were given a distinctive habit of white, symbolical of purity and innocence; later there was added the Red Cross—seal and badge of dedication to the defence of the Holy Land against infidels. The Grand Master ruled over these soldier monks at Jerusalem and delegated his authority to the heads of nine provinces of which England was one.

Stephen, and his great Queen Matilda, continued the favours shown by Henry I, and Richard Cœur de Lion was proud to wear the habit of the Order and risked his crown in its service. The English Templars first settled in what is now known as Chancery Lane, and later they migrated to the banks of the Thames. In those days this neighbourhood, now Fleet Street, was a mere swamp by the river; in seventy years it was drained and developed by Religious Orders and became the seat of numerous monastic houses. In their riverside home, the Templars were monks merely in name, and their halls re-echoed more to the clash

of swords than to the singing of psalms; their tilting ground was on the site of the present Law Courts and their forges, for shoeing horses and repairing weapons of war, lay on each side of St. Dunstan's Church. They formed a very important part of English national life because of their ecclesiastical and armed authority.

For a hundred years all went well, but their wealth and power excited the envy of the King of France and Pope Clement V, and, through the instrumentality of these two, the Order was dissolved and its wealth given to the Knights of St. John, or the Knights Hospitallers as they are sometimes called. These had sufficient accommodation at St. John's Gate in Clerkenwell, but they took over the consecrated parts of the Temple, and later, probably before 1326, made it over to a body of lawyers. This part corresponds to what is known as Inner Temple, and the unconsecrated part of the monastery was that where now stands the Middle Temple; this was let to the lawyers at a still earlier period. What was known as the Outer Temple also existed, and was purchased by the Earl of Essex who built on it a stately mansion. The colonies of lawyers, who constitute the league of colleges now known as the Inns of Court, are descended from law schools of the twelfth century or earlier.

The lecturer proceeded to give a very fascinating account of the later developments of this interesting part of London quoting from Spenser, Ben Jonson, Goldsmith, Dickens and others. There were references to the glorious screens of the Great Hall where Queen Elizabeth danced and which has been honoured, since her death, by the presence of every English Sovereign and many a noble company. Here gentlemen of the Temple have dined for upwards of five hundred years.

To the lawyers the Temple is interesting as having been the abode of brilliant Lord Chancellors and Chief Justices, but it has a stronger claim to reverence because its walls have harboured so many illustrious men of letters who have been Members of its ancient halls. Frenzied eloquence may delight a client but fine writing survives, and so it happens that the fame of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith and Charles Lamb have conferred more glory of romance on the Temple than forty generations of Lord Chancellors; Colonel Blackham devoted a few minutes to these and other great men in English literature who had connections with the Temple. Heirs of mighty soldier monks have ever mingled with men of the sword, and Drake and Raleigh are claimed by the Temple too. Actual practice of arms at the Temple was recommended by King James I, and, if wearers of the long robe had been as keen as their descendants, we might have had a Corps of Gentlemen of the Temple similar to that wonderful body—the Gentlemen of the Artillery Gardens, now the Honourable Artillery Company. In recent times this omission has been made good, and the Inns of Court Volunteers have nobly preserved the connection between the Sword and the Robe in the Temple.

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