

# The Black Friars of Chester

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## I. PREFATORY NOTE.

The history of the houses and churches of the Mendicant Brothers who settled in Chester has been enveloped in more obscurity and uncertainty than that of almost any other religious establishment in the city (Hemingway i, 359n). Relics and records of the friaries are exceedingly scanty, and the actual sites have been the subject of vague and frequently incorrect conjecture. In two instances out of the three, although an approximately correct deduction of friary situations had been reached, the names of the Orders had been transposed.

Considerable effort has been devoted to reconciling the conflicting statements and compiling as complete accounts of the friaries as possible. Two monographs have already been published in the Journal of this Society, one on the Grey Friars (n.s., xxiv; and xxviii for the years 1924 and 1929 respectively), the other on the White Friars (n.s., xxxi for the year 1935).

As to the Black Friars, as far back as 1882-3 an account entitled *The Friars Preachers of Chester*, written by the Rev. C. F. R. Palmer, was printed in *The Reliquary* for those years (vol. xxiii). Admirable as this was in many respects a great amount of information has subsequently become accessible, and it was decided to rewrite the treatise, incorporate the additional facts, and endeavour to trace the history of the site. In the main these notes were made some thirty years ago, and it may well be that still further information is available in London and Provincial repositories.

## 2. THE ORDER OF FRIARS PREACHERS.

The various orders of friars were founded with the object of reforming the shortcomings of the monks who, by the wealth of their communities, the luxury in which many lived, their thirst for aggrandisement, and withdrawal from the life and interests of the laity, not to mention still less praiseworthy conduct, had rendered them in many instances a class apart that did little to promote the spiritual welfare of the people.

The friars originally sought, by living simple and austere lives and mingling freely with the common people and ministering to their spiritual and material needs, to make good the defects of the regular monks. It is sad to reflect that in a short time there was a decline from these high ideals, due in a large measure to the moral dangers of a life lived in close contact with the common people among whom they exercised an influence unchecked by episcopal control. Nevertheless, as Professor A. H. Thompson states in his "English Monasteries" p. 27, "the great learning of their leading members earned them distinction and no little weight in the universities of Europe" and "their achievement during the first century of their existence" is "one of the most remarkable episodes in religious history."

The Dominicans or Friars Preachers were also known in this country as the Black Friars from their garb of a black mantle worn over a white habit. They were founded by Dominic de Guzman, a Spanish priest who was born in Old Castille in 1170. He aimed at the establishment of a body of devoted disciples who would travel about the country on foot and barefooted. They were to live in extreme poverty and austerity, and unceasingly preach, instruct, and discuss the truths of Christianity with all with whom they came in contact.

Many heresies arose in the thirteenth century, and in 1208 Dominic was appointed the first inquisitor-general, and Pope Innocent III employed Dominic in an effort to convert the Albigenses. Dominic failed in this mission but his name is remembered for the part he took in a terrible campaign against them. In recognition of his zeal Dominic was canonized and, later in the century, the inquisitorial missions of the Holy Office were specially committed to the Order of Dominicans.

By the year 1214 the nucleus of the Order was formed and it was then known as "the Holy Preaching." In the next year the Bishop of Toulouse, a great friend of Dominic, established the brethren in a church and house in that city. Dominic then proceeded to Rome to petition Pope Innocent III for permission to found his regular order of preachers. The scheme received the approval of the Pope, but it was left for his successor, Honorius III, to formally constitute the Order in 1216.

Dominic's death took place in 1221, and the brotherhood then numbered 500 friars and possessed 60 friaries divided into eight provinces and extending over the whole of western Europe. Matthew Paris (ii, 384) states that the power and influence of the Dominicans became almost universal and that as early as 1235 they and the Minorites began to prosper so considerably that they became noted for their build-ings, the number of the brothers and their many men of letters, apart from their learning and preaching and monasteries of renown.

The Friars Preachers were established in Oxford in 1221, and by the end of the century there were 50 friaries of the order in England, generally in towns, as well as several in Scotland and Ireland. In London their first house was on the site of Lincoln's Inn, but in 1275 they migrated to one on the site of Printing House Square: the name Black Friars surviving as that of the adjacent district. In Queen Mary's reign some of the scattered friars were brought together and established at Smithfield and elsewhere, but in 1559 these houses were suppressed and the friars and nuns expatriated.

### 3. FOUNDATION IN CHESTER.

It is stated by Speed (Morris, 146) and generally believed that the Black Friars or Friars Preachers were introduced into Chester by a "bishop of Chester," really of Lichfield, to give the see the title it usually bore. The actual date of establishment has not been discovered, but the available evidence points to Alexander de Stavensby as the bishop indicated. He occupied the see of Coventry and Lichfield from 1224 to 1238. Palmer states that there is direct evidence that Henry III was the founder of the Chester Black Friary, and that it was under royal patronage. In any case the Bishop may have been the actual promoter of the good work; and this suggestion

would go far to explain the prelate's irritation when the Friars Minor proposed to establish a house in Chester, since he might regard their settlement here as an act of rivalry affecting his cherished intentions in favour of another Order.

The Black Friars were clearly established in Chester before a letter was written by Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln about the year 1236, addressed to De Stavensby in which Grosseteste gently remonstrated with the latter for having spoken disparagingly of the Minorites. Grosseteste stressed the merits of the Franciscans and mentioned the insults to which they and their Order had been subjected in the presence of the citizens of Chester and certain dignatories because they had expressed a wish to settle in Chester notwithstanding the fact that the Friars Preachers were already there. Grosseteste supposed that the words in question had been uttered without deliberation and on a sudden impulse. He, however, assured Stavensby that the presence of the Minorites would be useful to the people generally, and that their preaching, holy and heavenly conversation, example, and continual prayer would supply in great part the shortcomings of the prelates. Grosseteste continued—It is not to be feared that there would not be sufficient alms to support both Orders since experience had shewn that in places where the two Orders were already represented there was no lack of abundance for all, as alms-giving was a living spring which poured forth waters all the more abundantly the more they are drawn (Robert Grosseteste, *Epistolæ*, Rolls Series, p. 120). A full copy of this letter in Latin and a translation are printed in the *Journal of the Society* (n.s., xxiv, 12 *et seq.*).

The Minorites were formally established in Chester by authority of the King in 1240, but such a beginning was not likely to lead to very friendly relations between the two houses. The attitude of the Black Friars was no doubt accentuated when it is remembered that the Grey Friars house was to be established in Watergate Street immediately opposite to that of the Black Friars, and that both were adjacent to the Water Gate. The Black Friars doubtless feared that the settlement of the Grey Friars at this spot would lead to a considerable reduction of the alms they had hitherto received from the stream of merchants, seamen, and passengers on their way to and from the Port.

The continually expanding area of the city that passed into the possession of the religious establishments nearly reached its maximum with the arrival of the friars, and the preferential terms on which they held property must have created some anxiety in the minds of those who were responsible for the prosperity and defence of Chester. Canon Morris (384) remarks that the expenses connected with the safe keeping of an important frontier city and trading centre would bear heavily on the citizens owing to the number of inhabitants who would not be contributors, as being tenants of individual sokes, such as the Abbey, etc. In later times the friaries obtained similar though not such extensive exemptions for their clients, etc. Similar sources of anxiety prevailed throughout the realm and in some measure inspired the passing of the Mortmain Act of 1279 by which it was made illegal to bestow estates on the church without permission of the king. By a later act of 1391 the prohibition was made to apply to all lay fraternities or corporations.

#### 4. THE SITE.

As was the case with the Grey Friary there has been considerable controversy respecting the site of the Black Friary. Some writers considered that it and its lands were situated on the north side of Watergate Street and adjacent to the Water Gate, but this location was undoubtedly that of the Grey Friary as shewn in the Journal (n.s., xxiv). Other writers maintained that the Black Friary stood on the south side of the street and opposite to the Grey Friary, and this is correct. There can be no doubt that the Black Friary and its lands occupied the parallelogram bounded by the ancient burgages in Watergate Street on the north, Nicholas Street on the east, Arderne Lane or Walls' Lane (misleadingly renamed Black Friars in 1856) on the south, and the City walls on the west. Some old writers have stated that the friary was in the parish of St. Martin and, so far as the church and domestic buildings were concerned, this is correct, but the lands, etc. attached to the friary certainly extended considerably into the parish of the Holy Trinity.

There was a church or chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas at the north end of the street now bearing that name about the time of the advent of the Black Friars to Chester, and it is possible that this building was secured by the Friars and was their first place of worship. This, however, is not certain. The Friars certainly shortly after coming to Chester established themselves in a convent more to the south-west which became their permanent home. The chapel at the end of Nicholas Street is the subject of notes in the Sheaf for 1951 (Nos. 9409, 9422, and 9428).

In an undated charter of a grant to the Abbey of St. Werburgh, Master Augustus the illuminator of Chester gave to the abbey his land in Cupping's Lane and also his land opposite the church of St. Martin on the west, near the street leading to the church of St. Nicholas (Chet. Soc., n.s., lxxix, 210). The editor remarks: "Canon Morris quotes from Harl. MS. 2125 a statement that the long vanished church of St. Nicholas was "by the Black Friars at the end of Nicholas Street," and in the Addenda, (ib. xix) the editor further remarks—In view of the passage quoted by Canon Morris, it is interesting to find that in a document which will appear in the second part of the chartulary (No. 526) the Black Friars are called the Friars Preachers of St. Nicholas. The name of Black Friars now given to the street which runs westward to the walls, opposite St. Martin's church, must be due to a misunderstanding. Black Friars Lane is said to have been an old name for at least a part of Nicholas Street (cf. the map given by Morris, p. 227).

Apart from a few old walls that *may* have marked the boundaries of the Black Friary no traces of the establishment remain above ground, and, apart from two gateways, this appears to have held good for some centuries. Certain excavations made in connection with drainage, etc. in more or less recent years have revealed evidences of bodies that were interred in the burial ground. These were all found in the south-west angle of the rectangle and, as the cemetery of the friary would be in close proximity to the church, and as some ecclesiastical tiles were also found on the spot, these afford strong evidence that the church stood here. Further comments on the subject will be made later.

At the present date this territory sometime owned by the Black Friars contains numerous detached and ranges of houses of more or less dimensions, stables, garages, large and small gardens and yards, and a croft, and it is intersected by two lanes or streets, namely Grey Friars (formerly Smith's Walk) and Nicholas Street Mews (once Brooke's Street).

Hemingway (i, 342 and 359) writing about the prospect of this neighbourhood to be seen from the City Walls after passing over the Water Gate, and quoting from a manuscript written about 1700, says:—"Had we lived a brace of centuries ago (that is about 1500), we should have met with one of the finest prospects in or about the city: for on the left hand, almost adjoining to the walls, you would have seen the Black Friars, Grey Friars, Nunnery, and the Castle; all of which, except the last are so altered, or altogether in ruins, that we could scarce imagine there were any such places." It should be noted however that the view of the Grey Friars would be secured *before* arrival at the Water Gate, but no doubt the writer of the old itinerary shared the general misapprehension concerning the various sites.

Hemingway (i, 359) then remarks "At the time this description was written, the whole ground lying between the Walls and the west side of Nicholas Street, from the Watergate to Smith's Walk, appears to have been void and open, and within the memory of persons now living, was used as a croft. Hemingway proceeds to write of the appearance of the spot in his time, that is about 1831. "At the present day, this part of the city presents a very different appearance. An elegant range of buildings is erected, forming the west side of Nicholas Street, occupied by some of the most respectable gentry in the city; in the intermediate space between thence and the walls, is a parallel line of stabling and coach houses; and still nearer to the latter, are the delightfully situated dwellings and premises of Mr. Wright, Mr. Posnet, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Palin, and others, to most of which are attached excellent gardens."

Hemingway (i, 363) continuing to describe the district between the Water Gate and the Castle, writes—"Pursuing the Walls in a southerly direction, on the left there is a commodious opening to the city [walls], called Smith's Walk, at the bottom of which stands a mansion, more remarkable for the largeness of its bulk than its elegance, the northern part of which is occupied by E. O. Wrench, Esq., its proprietor and the other by the Misses Foulkes. The site of this mansion was anciently occupied by the priory of the White Friars, or Carmelites (*sic*). A narrow avenue, but of very early date, descending from Martin's Ash to the Walls, called Wall's lane, divides this building from a large space of ground, named the Nun's Garden, where formerly stood the nunnery of St. Mary" etc. etc. Hemingway was, of course incorrect in stating that the Wrench and Foulkes mansions occupied the site of the *White* Friars as that establishment stood between Nicholas Street and Bridge Street, and the spot to which he refers was the site of the *Black* Friary.

Some assistance in identifying the area and gathering an idea of its development after the ejection of the Black Friars may be obtained from a scrutiny of old maps and plans and statements in manuscripts and print, and this is summarized below

1. Between 1572 and 1618. Braun's Bird's-eye view of Chester (*Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, vol. iii, pl. 3., reproduced by Morris, juxta 528). The Black Friars' parallelogram is divided into eastern and western sections. In the western half there is a large house abutting on the centre of the western boundary wall with walled enclosures on the north, east and south, and with two other walled enclosures or crofts occupying the rest of the section. The eastern half indicates a succession of houses with gardens in rear on the north and east sides, and with a church and two houses on the south abutting on the present Black Friars Street. The church is named St. Martin's and, no doubt, is intended for that building, but is incorrectly sited, as St. Martin's stood and still stands on the east side of Nicholas Street.

2. 1580 by William Smith, Rouge Dragon, (reproduced by Morris, juxta 256). The execution is rough, but the details agree generally with those shewn by Braun. The same divisions and the large house are shewn, as is also the church of St. Martin, which in this case possesses a spire, but is again incorrectly depicted as abutting on Black Friars Street.

3. 1580. Birds-eye view of Chester, by the same William Smith (reproduced by Morris, juxta 512). This is another roughly executed work, and depicts Chester from the neighbourhood of Brewers' Hall. The details again agree generally with those of Nos. 1 and 2. The large house and its grounds abutting on the City Walls is prominent, but script inserted alongside appears to read ". . . ye Nunnery." This description is clearly erroneous as the Nunnery stood on the south side of the present Black Friars Street, and is indicated on this view as another house of dimensions but not named. No church is shewn as abutting on Black Friars Street, and the church of St. Martin is shewn as approximately occupying its present and correct site.

4. 1610. *Map of Chester*, by John Speed assisted by William Smyth (reproduced by Morris, 227, etc.). The whole of the Watergate Street frontage is shewn as lined with houses, and half of the houses on the Nicholas Street frontage have been replaced by a wall. Most of the Black Friars Street is only marked by a wall. The City Walls frontage has two detached small houses and a group of houses towards the south, that is between Grey Friars and Black Friars Street. The enclosed area is divided into a number of sections: the southerly one between Grey Friars and Black Friars Street being shut off from the rest of the area by a lofty wall broken by two tower-like structures.

5. Circa 1621. Itinerary of William Webb (Ormerod, 2 ed., i, 187). Webb writes as follows:— St. Nicholas-street being an ancient neighbour of those friars, black, white, grey, nuns, and other societies, which had none of the least resort to their dwellings, seems to have been in those days of greater request than now is, though it be yet a seemly passage from the Water-gate-street, near to Trinity church, and goes directly along by St. Martin's church, and by the nun's wall to the street, which abuts upon the west end of the Castle-lane.

6. Circa 17th century. *Prospect of Chester, the south-west side*. Not dated but probably early 17th century, (reproduced in Hemingway, ii, frontispiece). The large house mentioned in Nos. 1, 2 and 3 is again shewn, and St. Martin's church in its correct position.

7. Circa 1650. *Ground-plott of Chester* "etched by Wm. Batenham from an original by W. Hollar" (Hemingway, ii, frontispiece). Hollar lived from 1617 to 1677 and Batenham, of course, much later. The map is very similar to that of Speed, and may have been based on it.

8. In 1661 or 1666 an abridged edition of Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* was published. There is a copy of it in the Birkenhead Public Library. It contains this statement:—"In the suburbs (of Chester) are the White Fryers, Black Fryers and Nunnery, now suppressed." The Grey Friars are not mentioned.

9. 1673. *Leycester*. Does not mention the Black Friars in his Antiquities.

10. Circa 1690. *Plan of Chester*. (Chester Public Library, Print No. C.308). This is very similar to Nos. 4 and 7 and shews the two tower-like structures on the main division.

11. Circa 1700. *South-west Prospect of Chester* by Pieter Tillemans. An oil painting in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, reproduced in the *Journal of the Society*, n.s., xxv, frontispiece. Tillemans lived 1684-1734. The details are somewhat indistinct, but the large house in which Sir Thomas Smythe of Hough lived and which was on the site of the Black Friary is clearly shewn.

12. 1728. *South-west Prospect of Chester* by . . . Buck (Chester Public Library Print A.B.; B.M. Print K.9.3.) Details rather confused.

13. Ante 1735. Dr. Thomas Tanner, bishop of St. Asaph, who died in 1735, in his *Notitia Monastica* (Nasmyth edition) states that the Chester Black Friary was situated in the south-west part of the city, and the editor remarks that Mr. Speed seems to have been mistaken in locating it as in a suburb of Chester. James Nasmyth, D.D. died in 1808.

14. Circa 1745. *Plan of Chester* by De Lavaux. This yields some interesting information. Only two houses are definitely marked in the rectangle: namely "Sir Richard Brooke's" on the Watergate Street frontage, (subsequently re-built by Henry Potts) and an L-shaped house at the south western angle of the plot marked "Mr. Smiths," doubtless the man from whom the name Smith's Walk was derived. There is no indication of Smith's Walk. The centre of the rectangle is occupied by extensive gardens. Sir Richard Brooke of Norton Priory who resided at the first named house succeeded his grandfather Sir Thomas in 1737 and died in 1781 (Ormerod, 2 ed., i, 635).

It is possible that the Mr. Smith on De Lavaux's plan may indicate William Smith, D.D., and that he resided in the house while rector of Holy Trinity, that is from 1735 to 1780. He was dean of Chester from 1758 to 1787 and in 1782 he was residing at the Deanery in Abbey Street.

This plan shows a lane from Nicholas Street to the central gardens midway between Watergate Street and Black Friars which may be intended to represent Smith's Walk now incorrectly named Grey Friars although that way or its present successor is considerably more to the south than shewn by Lavaux. The fact that it was never intended as a thoroughfare between Nicholas Street and the Walls is illustrated at the present day by the row of posts which prevent the Walk being used by vehicles. Hemingway (ii, 11) states that Smith's Walk was of modern date when he wrote about 1831, and adds that it seems to have been intended chiefly as a way to the large house at the west end, belonging to Captain Wrench.

15. 1789. *Plan of Chester* engraved by James Hunter and surveyed by Thomas Weston. The rectangle is shewn as including Smith's Walk in its correct position leading to a gateway in the front garden of the house and across the garden to a gateway giving access to the space within the city walls. This in turn appears to have been fenced across with a gate adjoining the later Grey Friars Court. The Mews, then known as Brooke's Street, is shewn on the east side of Brooke's house but not named. Houses indicated on the Watergate Street frontage and along Nicholas Street, two-thirds of the way to Smith's Walk. Two buildings appear on the west side of the Mews, one known to be two houses adjoining Smith's Walk and there are some smaller structures in rear. A terrace with small gardens in rear is shewn on the street frontage between Smith's Walk and Walls Lane, both named. The two large houses and gardens are shewn in considerable detail.

16. 1791. *Plan of Chester* by Murray & Stuart, shewing identical development, with a second fence and a gate across the Walls space in line with the northern facade of Smith's house and the additional street reference "Brook St." The two fences appear on Stockdales' plan of 1795 and identical building development is shewn on this plan and those of G. Cole, 1805, Cadell & Davies, 1809, Lackington & Co., 1817 and Hanshall, 1823 although additional houses had been built in Nicholas Street. Oddly enough Hanshall's plan, on which Walls Lane is not named, describes Smith's Walk as Black Friars. It was generally known as Smith's Walk down to 1791, if not later, the name assigned to it in the 1789 Directory and the 1809 and 1817 plans which, however, were copied from Hunter's, but it is called Grey Friars in the 1782 Directory.

17. 1810. *Lysons* (634) says:— that St. Chad's church is stated to have stood in the croft over against the Black-friars, on the north side of Water-gate-street (Harl. MS. 2125, f. 267) St. Nicholas church stood near the Black-friars, at the end of St. Nicholas-street.

18. 1817. *Hanshall* (256) states:— The Black Friars were situated on the west side of the north end of Nicholas-street. The precise site of the building is not known; it is likely, however, that it was near the old house, on the west side of Nicholas-street, adjoining Watergate-street, which bears the date 1591, and which was subsequently the town residence of the Stanleys of Alderley, to whom it passed from the Warburtons of Grafton. The Black Friars had a large piece of ground attached to their convent, extending from Nicholas-street to the Watergate, and in a southerly direction to Smith's Walk [now improperly called Grey Friars]. Large traces of the boundary wall are to be seen on the south side of Watergate-street, on the left side of the road from the Watergate to Smith's Walk, on the premises of Colonel Wrench, and in the wall of the garden on the south side of the

house occupied by S. Humphryes, Esq. in Nicholas-street. The fraternity was settled here at a very early period, and had, temp. Edw. I a licence to bring water "a fonte prope furcas," and were exempted in the 19th of Richard II from Toll at Dee Mills.

19. 1819. *Ormerod* (2 ed., i, 349), writes: The Black or Preaching Friars had a house in St. Martin's parish . . . The exact site of their house is unknown. It was probably near an ancient timber building, bearing the date 1591, now or lately standing west of the north end of Nicholas Street, which was formerly called Black Friars Lane. This mansion belonged to the family of Warburton of Grafton, and passed from them to the Stanleys of Alderley; and it is observable that Peter Warburton of Arley, and Thomas Wilbraham, by the grant before mentioned (of the Grey Friars, 1579) had also other permises parcel of the convent of Black Friars, including a house of Fulk Aldersey, alderman, then in possession of P. Warburton, Esq.

20. Circa 1820. *Plan of Chester* by James Stuart, published by Poole & Harding, Eastgate St. Row, the plate from which the 1791 plan was printed, with certain alterations and additions. This shews the newly erected Watgate House superimposed upon Brooke's house of which an outbuilding has been deleted. It also shews the cottages in Grey Friars Court (not named) and a house to the north, all copied on Hanshall's plan, otherwise the development and street references in this area remain as in 1791. The plan is found printed on paper bearing 1819 and 1823 watermarks, bound with Dr. Pigot's *Chester* which was first published in 1816. Hemingway's plan (i, frontispiece) is but a poor copy of Cole's 1805 plan with alterations to 1829 but no variation as far as this area is concerned.

21. 1833. *Plan of Chester* by John Wood, Edinburgh, engr. by W. Murphy, Edin. Brooke's Street with additional stabling has become the "Mews" and Nicholas Street, actually complete by that date, is shewn almost fully developed. Grey Friars is so designated right round towards the Watgate as to-day and Grey Friars Court is named. Walls Lane also named, became Black Friars about 1856, although called Walls Street in the 1860 Directory.

22. 1866-9. (*Journal* o.s., iii, 149). In a paper read by W. Beamont about these dates it is stated that the foundations of the Carmelite Priory and those of the Friars Preachers which stood near have lately been discovered. The discovery on the supposed site of the Friars Preachers appears to refer to the medieval tiles found in Stanley Street in 1850. This was on or near the site of the Grey Friary and not of that of the Black Friars as had been frequently supposed. The tiles are illustrated in the *Journal* (o.s., i, juxta 54).

The premises of the Black Friars, the boundaries of which are defined in the first paragraph of this section, covered an area of about five and a half acres. Close on two acres comprising the precincts of the church and conventual buildings mainly at the south end in St. Martin's parish were leased by the Crown in 1543 to Thomas Smythe of Chester and continued in the holding of his nephews descendants the Smythes of Chester and Hough for many years. Two gardens, an orchard and one acre of land in the north eastern sector, granted by Elizabeth in 1579 to Peter Warburton of Arley and his son-in-law Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey, passed to their kinsman Peter Warburton of Chester, serjeant-at-law, later of Grafton, knight, justice of the Common Pleas and devolved upon the Stanleys of Alderley. The remaining portion appears to have been broken up in severalties. But the Fines and Recoveries recited in an abstract of title in the Society's Collections reveal that the Stanleys were in possession of the greater part of the Friary lands in the parish of the Holy and Undivided Trinity and that of St Martin from at least as early as 1682 until 1763 or later.

##### 5. THE CHURCH AND CONVENT.

As already indicated there has been complete ignorance or, at best, universal



uncertainty in the past as to the actual site of the Church, the conventual buildings and burial ground of the Friars Preachers of Chester, apart from one or two statements that it was somewhere in the south-west part of the city.

1. Dugdale, [1605-1686] in his *Monasticon Anglicanum*, states that the house was in the south-part of the city and in the parish of St. Martin. This is roughly speaking correct.

2. Dr. Thomas Tanner, bishop of St. Asaph, who died in 1735, in his *Notitia Monastica*, agrees with Dugdale.

3. Pennant, [1726-1798], in his *Tours in Wales* (1883 ed., i, 236) states that part of the house with fine vaults was, in his time, occupied by Henry Hesketh, esquire, and remarks that Hesketh's house was in the parish of Holy Trinity and not in that of St. Martin. The house he refers to was evidently the old building now known as the Stanley Palace which was certainly not the site of the friary.

4. Ormerod (2ed., i, 349) was of the same opinion as Pennant that the building bearing the date 1591, that is the Stanley Palace, was the site of the friary.

5. Hemingway (ii, 147) agrees that the friary stood on the Stanley Palace site and points out that this was in Holy Trinity parish.

6. Morris (145) accepts the same location, ignoring the fact that it was not in the parish of St. Martin.

7. The Rev. W. H. Massie unsuccessfully tried to solve the problem but rather confused the whole matter in a paper read before the Society in 1851 (*Journal*, o.s., i, 331 and 474). Mr. Massie is said to have pointed out on a map the sites of the three Chester friaries, and traced their enclosures, churches, etc. He remarked that the highest authorities placed the Black Friary as about the Linen-hall and the Grey Friary as south of Nicholas street with an entrance from Smith's Walk. On a later occasion (*ib.*, i, 474) Mr. Massie touched upon the great difference of opinion among local antiquaries respecting the sites: some contending that the Black Friary was on the south side of Watergate Street and the Grey Friary on the North, which was really the case. Massie, however, took the opposite view, namely that the house of the Grey Friars stood on or near the road still called by that name, and that the "brethren of the sable cowl" were located somewhere about the Linen-hall; possibly being influenced by the misnamed road "Grey Friars." In a paper read before the Society about 1850 (*Journal* o.s., i, 303) he mentions tiles found near the church of St. Michael, and on the site of the Black Friars and the Nunnery, etc. with designs representing a stag, an eagle and various floriated devices.

It was however conclusively shewn in *Journal*, n.s., xxiv, that Mr. Massie's contention was incorrect, that the Linen-hall (now the Racing Stables), marked the site of the Grey Friary, and that the name Grey Friars given to Smith's Walk was a misnomer of late eighteenth century origin.

The evidence that there once existed a religious establishment with an extensive burial ground in the south-west section of the rectangle assumed to have enclosed the Black Friary territory and in that portion of it within St. Martin's parish is confirmed by various relics discovered or reported to have existed there. They consisted of the following:—

1. The present Grey Friars' House and the adjoining one to the south formed one mansion in the early nineteenth century. A note supplied by a lady whose family lived in the part of the house facing the Walls is included in a paper read before the Chester Archaeological Society in 1906 (*Journal n.s.*, xiii, 90). The lady, Miss Fluitt, wrote:—

“My grandmother, Mrs Fluitt, née Wrench, born in 1790, told me that when she was a child at Greyfriars, her father, Edward Mainwaring [should be Ommaney] Wrench, was having some alterations made in the garden and the workmen came across an old coffin containing the body of a Nun. They thought she was an abbess as she was in her habit and holding something in her hand: no doubt shewing her Order. My grandmother saw it herself, and, as they stood by, it, of course, crumbled to dust. I am under the impression she said it was found near the front door, but may be mistaken; any way it was near the house. The garden in those days was much larger than at present (and the house all one), extending some way across Grey friars Road. There was an old archway in the garden; I have an idea I was told it went over the road. When my great grandfather first lived there (the property had formerly belonged to the Gamuls) the kitchens were flagged with tombstones, which we had removed. Human bones could at any time be found in the garden.”

Simpson in his “Walls of Chester” p. 46 states that when excavating in 1895 for the foundations of a house at the north-west angle of Grey Friars—formerly known as Smith’s Walk—the workmen came across human skeletons and a great number of bones, to clear which they had to excavate to such a depth that it was decided to make a room in the basement. Skeletons were also found during alterations to the house which stands at the south-west corner of the same thoroughfare.

2. An old stone coffin (said to be of 14th century date) and two ecclesiastical tiles, one with a lion rampant and the other with a cross formed of four leaves, were found in close proximity during excavations in the stable yard on the north side of Grey Friars Road on 26 Jan., 1914. All three are now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

3. A considerable number of human skulls and bones were unearthed during excavations at the south end of Nicholas Street Mews about 1885, noticed by me while staying with my grandmother at No. 5 Grey Friars.

4. A manuscript note inserted in a copy of P. Broster’s *Chester Guide* in the Chester Public Library refers to “the jolly Nun and Friar carved in wood over the door of Mr. Ball’s house near the walls at Smith’s Walk.” Peter Broster issued the first edition of this work in 1780 but as already stated Smith’s Walk was commonly known by that name much later. The carving may have been over the doorway of the house of Thomas Ball, Esq., buried at Holy Trinity in 1798.

The number of human remains found on the spot must have been noticed but does not appear to have led observers to the conclusion that they indicated the forgotten existence there of the Black Friary. They evidently inclined to the belief that the burial ground was associated with the Benedictine Nunnery of St. Mary. That establishment was nearby but on the south side of Black Friars Lane and their

burial ground was considerably further south. The female body found on the spot doubtless strengthened the mistaken theory of connection with the Nunnery, but in all probability the remains were not those of a nun but rather of some devotee of the Black Friars who desired a resting place for her mortal remains in ground which she considered was of special sanctity.

In view of all the available evidence there can be no doubt that the house of the Friars Preachers occupied this site which is still in St. Martin's parish.

Access to the friary was gained by two gateways at the respective ends of the "Alley" subsequently named Smith's Walk and now Grey Friars. Hemingway (ii, 11) states that this was within thirty years (that is after 1800) a private road, and entered from Nicholas Street by a gate thrown across the path, over which was a large arch. The western gateway is probably the one mentioned in Miss Fluitt's communication as in the garden of Greyfriars' House and presumably, formerly extending over the road. The lease from the king to Thomas Smythe, dated 8 July, 1543, mentions the Alley from the east gate to the west gate.

In a manuscript written by a 16th or 17th century scribe (Sheaf, ls., i, 49 and 70) it is stated that the "Churche of St. Vincent<sup>1</sup> and the Blak Fryars in the citie of Chester were founded by . . . Bishop of Chester."

No other reference to a church of this dedication is known, and it must be concluded that Vincent should read Nicholas. In Harl. MS. 7568, f.123 it is stated:—"St. Nicholas Church. It stood in St. Nicholas Street and belonged to the Black Friars, and the great gate is yet remaining in the wall on the west side about the middle of the street." In a list of "Ould Churches in Chester now ruined" there is this entry—"St. Nicholas Church now ruined was by the black freeres at the end (?south end) of St. Nicholas street"(Harl. MS. 2125, f. 267, etc; and Sheaf, 3s., xviii, 98). There are said to be further references to the Church called St. Nicholas in Harl. MSS. 1998 and 2071.

The church was dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron of children and sailors. It is said to have been a fine one, and it was chosen in preference to St. John's for ordinations by the suffragans of Lichfield, the Bishop of Sodor in 1452, and the Bishop of Aghadoe in 1481 (Morris, 146).

As has been stated earlier there exists no trace of the Church of St. Nicholas and the other buildings that composed the Black Friary. Further, no assistance in identifying the sites can be derived from the 16th century and later plans, apart from a few indications of the locality associated with the Friary that can be assumed from the names of adjacent streets and lanes, and discoveries of bones, a stone coffin and a few tiles yield a somewhat vague clue to the general situation of the Friary.

Documents of the Dissolution period are helpful, especially those which contain an inventory of the articles in the various buildings at the time, and the information is summarised below.

1. "The church and site" is mentioned in more than one document, but the body of the church is not included in the list and this tends to shew that the nave

<sup>1</sup> There was an early Dominican saint of the name of Vincent.

was then in a ruinous condition and was disused. Little lead was recovered by the King's Commissioners but there was a small amount "over oon Ile of the Church" (Exch. T.R., vol. A3/11, f. 7 and 8). An endorsement by the Bishop of Dover states "Led halfe ye Quire" (S.P. Hy. viii para. 133, pp. 255-60). This does not contradict the assumption that the nave generally was ruinous.

2. The Choir or "Quyere" was however in existence and may have been found sufficient for the needs of the Friars at that time. It contained:—

ij aul' (tar) clothes  
 ij grett candylstycks off brasse  
 ij lytyll candell stycks  
 iiij pyllowes on the hye ault'(ar)  
 A prynt masses boke of o'r vse  
 A cannape ou' the hye ault'  
 A crosse staffe  
 A holy war' stooke (?stoup) of brasse  
 All bokes necessary for the quyere  
 A peyre of organs  
 viij hereclothes for the ault's  
 A peyre of yron boltes before seynt Peter  
 iiij ladders  
 A long forme  
 A herse

The iron bolts associated with the image of St. Peter were emblematic of the delivery of that apostle from prison as set forth in Acts xii. There must have been many other images of saints, including St. Nicholas, but records are silent on the subject with one exception. That is an image of St. Mary. In or about 1264 Fulk de Orreby granted half a mark towards the maintenance of the lights before her image (Moore MSS., Rec. Soc., lxvii, 146).

3. The Old Hall. The contents of this structure are accorded the first place in the inventory, but it is not apparent to what use it was devoted. The articles in it were:—

A bord & two trestells  
 A olde cobbord  
 Diu'se olde troghes wtin the house

4. The Sextry (or Vestry).

xj coppes  
 iij skarlet coppes  
 A crymsyn cope  
 A blew cope wt maydens heds  
 A cope of Popynjay colours  
 A cope of cheker works  
 A black cope of requiem  
 A white cope of o'r lady  
 ij yelow coppes for Chyldren  
 ij grene vestements wt tenaculls<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A tunicle was a vestment similar to the dalmatic in shape but shorter and with sleeves reaching only a little below the shoulders. It was normally the vestment of the sub-deacon but even before the Reformation its difference from the dalmatic had almost disappeared. It may be remarked that the full episcopal habit includes a dalmatic worn over a tunicle to signify the authority of a bishop over the lesser orders of the ministry.

ij whyte vestments wt ij tenaculls wt garters

A vestment wt a tenacull off the same

A Redde vestment of Jesu

A vestment of requiem wt ij tenaculls

A sengull vestment of requiem

A vestment wt barells in the myddes

A vestment wt dornecke colloure

A vestment wt egulls fette (eagles' feet)

A blew vestment wt a yelow crosse

A donne (?dun) vestment

A blew vestment of sylke (erased)

xij Amyces (amices)

xiiij Amyces

iiij Surplicis

ij Aul' (tar) Clothes

xiiij stoles

x fanells (a fanon or maniple was a very small stole).

A sensar of latten (latten is a fine brass, but the term has been applied to various mixtures of metal).

A peynted clothe to hang before the Roode

iiij corporas as they be (?corporales or Communion cloths are square pieces of linen on which the chalice and Host are placed by the priest officiating at Mass).

A grette chest wt ij lockes

A grette cobbord wt dyv(er)s lockes

5. Chapter House. No contents noted.

6. Two Cloisters. An endorsement on the inventory by the Bishop of Dover states that "panyes of ye Cloister" were leaded (S.P., Hen. VIII, para. 133, pp. 255-60).

At the Dissolution there were only "two Cloisters" presumably indicating two of the four usual lengths. No contents are mentioned in the inventory. Lead covering "two panes" or sections of the cloisters was recovered by the commissioners (Excheq. T.R., vol. A3/11, fos. 7 and 8).

7. Frater (or Refectory). No contents noted.

8. Dorter (or Dormitory). No contents noted.

9. P'oris (Prior's) Chamber. This was in the Dorter and contained:—

A fether bedde & a Cou(eryng and a Bolst'

10. Suppyoris chambyr (also in Dorter):—

A peyre of beddestocks (and) a bedd of feders

A coobbord & a olde large Cou'ying

A syttells

11. Chamber ou' the church dore:—

A peyre of beddestocks & two trestells

12. New Chamber:—

A peyre of bedde Stocks & two trestells

13. Kechyng (Kitchen):—

ij small potts & a lytell panne

2 Broche & ij cobbarts

ij platts

A sawser

A pattynger

ij crocks & a tornell

iiij trene chargers  
viiij trene dusschys

## 14. Buttrye:—

iiij broken tabull clothes  
A towell  
iiij syffs

## 15. Old Buttrye:—

A feyre chest  
Two greete cofers  
A saltyng tobbe

The record respecting plate and documents (S.P., Hen. VIII, v. 133, f. 257 (xiii, part 1, 1141-1305) reads:—

“The Vysytor hath a chalys (to) ye Kyngs vse delyu’d wt thys inventory—10 pets of evydens wt scales

iiij pets wtout scales

ij other wrytyngs in paper & ij pattens & v lesys

A byll of detts as the pryor sayeth to ye som off xvli. xvjs. iiijd. for diu’sse of these detts by pleggs as in ye bull dothe apere

Signed by Fowke Dutton, Robert Aldersey, Wyllyam Bexwyke.

The inventory is preceded by the following statement:

”This indentur make mencyon of all the stuffe off the black fryers in Chester recevyd by my lord vysytor vnder the lord privay scale for the kyngs grace and delivyd to Mr Fowke Dutton meyre there & to Mr. Robart Aldersey and Master Wyllyam Bexwycke aldermen to se the order of the sayd stuffe and all the howse wt the pertinences to the kynges vse tyll the kyngs plesure be further knowen.”

In *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain—A List of Surviving Books*, by N. R. Ker (Royal Hist. Soc. Handbook, No. 3, 1941) the following works are shewn to have belonged to the Dominican Convent at Chester.

Cambridge, Univ. Lib., Gg. 5. 34. *Anselmo*, S.xii xiii (vii<sup>o</sup> loco)

Dublin Trin. Coll., 46. *Exodus et Deut. glos.* S.xii Ex. (iii<sup>o</sup> loco).

London:

Brit. Mus., Royal 4 E.viii. *Epp. Pauli. glos.* S.xii (v<sup>o</sup> loco)

8 F. ix. *Nominum hebraisorum expos.* etc.

S.xiii/xiv (primo loco).

11 B. xiii. *Ivo Carnotensis, etc.* S.xiii (xii<sup>o</sup> loco)

Grays’ Inn 3. *Passionale.* S.xi/xii (xi<sup>o</sup> loco)

Oxford, Bodleian Lib., 373. *Petrus Cantor.* S.xiii Ex. (vii<sup>o</sup> loco).

Shrewsbury School. i. *E Sapientia. glo.* S.xiii. Ex.

vii. *Gregorius, etc.* S.xiii (viii<sup>o</sup> loco)

xxiv. E. P. *Comestor.* S.xiii.

xxxv. E. *Lucas, glo.* S.xiii

E.—Ex Libris inscription of the house, but no press mark.

S.—Evidence from script or illumination.

The pressmark is usually written on a flyleaf, immediately after and in the same hand as a note of contents. It is, however, not quite certainly the mark of the Chester Dominicans.

No example of the seal of the Convent is known (C.A.J., os., i, 180).

## 6. CHRONICLE OF THE FRIARY.

Palmer states that Henry III (1216-72) contributed as alms 40d. a week, that is equal to 13 marks or £8 13s. 4d. a year, towards the support of the house of the Friars Preachers of Chester, and he adds that this was probably bestowed from their first foundation in Chester. It is set forth, however, in a warrant dated 10 Feb. 1500/1 and issued on an "inspeximus" and confirmation that an allowance of £8 13s. 4d. a year to the Friars Preachers of Chester had been formerly granted by Randle Earl of Chester (1181-1232) (Dep. Keeper of Public Records, 26th Rep., pp. 16 etc.). Whoever made the grant this is confirmation that it was made at the foundation of the friary or within a few years of that event.

It may be assumed from the following records of the payment that it was regularly paid.

1270-4. 33 (?13) marks for the sustentation of the Friars Preachers of Chester, a gift by the king. (Pipe Roll. Account of Reginald de Grey. Rec. Soc., xcii, 109).

1274-5. £8 13s. 4d. to the Friars Preachers of Chester as alms. (ib., 113 and 115. Account of Guncelin de Badelesmere justiciar of Chester). The king's writ of 28 Dec., 1274, ordered the justiciar to continue the allowance of 40d. per week of the king's special grace, as in the times of former justices, and to account for it to the king in the Exchequer (Close Roll, 3 Edw. I, m.24).

1275-6. £8 13s. 4d. as alms. (Pipe Roll, account of Guncelin de Badelesmere. Rec. Soc., xcii, 118).

1276-7. £8 13s. 4d. as alms (ib., 123, account of Guncelin de Badelesmere). It appears that only 43s. 4d. of the sum was then actually paid as a part payment of the full amount due (ib., 123 and 129).

1277-8. 10 marks for the 6th year of Edw. I of the arrears of 40d. per week due as alms. Also 26 marks for the 7th and 8th year of Edw. I (Pipe Roll, account of Leo son of Leo. Rec. Soc., xcii, 136). This transaction is mentioned in the *Ledger Book of Vale Royal Abbey* (Rec. Soc., lxxviii, 230). Payment of the full amount was ordered to be made on 12 April, 1277, and 26 May, 1281, and a part payment of 43s. 4d. on 7 June, 1281 (Liberat Roll, 5 Edw. I., m. 5, and 9 Edw. I, m. 5 and 6)

1283. 4½ marks. As part of 8 and 1 mark given by the king as alms at Easter and the feast of St. Michael (Pipe Roll, account of Reginald de Grey, Rec. Soc., xcii, 148)

1300-1. £4 6s. 8d. received by the friars Preachers of Chester from Sir Richard de Mascy, justice of Chester, on account of the ancient alms of 13 marks out of the Exchequer of Chester due to the friars at the term of Easter and St. Michael in equal portions, namely for the present 29th year, namely for the term of St. Michael. (Chamberlain's Account. Rec. Soc., xcii, 206) as for that of Easter.

1300. June 7. 13 marks. Order to the justiciar of Chester to pay this annual ancient alms (Chancery and Fine Rolls, Rec. Soc., xcii, 184).

1301-2. (30 Edw. I). £8 13s. 4d. To be taken yearly from the Exchequer of Chester of ancient alms constituted to them for the present year (Chamberlain's Accounts, Rec. Soc., lix, 5).

1302-3. (31 Edw. I). £8 13s. 4d. ancient and fixed alms (ibid., 23).

1307. Oct. 1. 13 marks. Order to pay this ancient established alms (Cal Chancery Rolls, ii, 6, and Cal. Fine Rolls, i, 6).

1326-7 (20 Edw. II). £8 13s. 4d. Ancient alms. (Chamberlain's Accounts, Rec. Soc., lix, 103).

1328. Nov. 29. 13 marks of ancient and established alms (Cal. Fine Rolls, i, 114)

1334-6. £8 13s. 4d. (Chamberlain's Accounts, Rec. Soc., lix, 110).

1350-1. £8 13s. 4d. of ancient alms (ibid., 165).

1350-1, Feb. 11 to 24 Nov. 1365. Amount not stated "Pur les freres prescheours de Cestre (Black Prince's Register, f. 229, Rec. Soc., vii, 163).

1353-4. £6 (*sic*) 13s. 4d. (Chamberlain's Accounts, Rec. Soc., lix, 216).

1358, Sept. 8. 13s. 4d. (?£8 13s. 4d.) The Prince from Vale Royal Abbey, ordered John de Brunham to deliver out of his treasury this sum (Black Prince's Register, iii, 308).

1409 or 1432, Oct. 5. In 11 Henry IV or 11 Henry VI an inspeximus of the letters patent of 1299-1300 was issued re the 13 marks pension (Harl. MS., 2131, f. 113).

1415-6. To the Friars Preachers of Chester on account of a certain grant of ancient alms of £8 1s. 4d. (*sic*) granted to them annually. On 20 July by the hands of Wetenhale (?John de Wetenhale of Cholmondeston, Ormerod, 2 ed., iii, 366) delivered to Prior Richard Runcorn, prior of those friars 46s. 8d. and to Henry le Barbor of Chester by the direction of the said prior 40s. (Ormerod, 2 ed., i, 349; Pal. Ledger in the possession of P. B. Davies-Cooke, esq.).

This pension appears to have been continued down to the last as in the time of Henry VII the payment of £8 13s. 4d. "ab antiquo" at Easter and Michaelmas was still being paid out of the revenues of the county palatine (Ministers' Accounts, H. vii, m.3).

At an uncertain date after 1221 the monks of St. Werburgh's and the canons of St. John's agreed with the Friars Preachers of St. Nicholas that in the event of anyone dying in Chester or in the adjacent vills who ought in accordance with ancient custom to be interred in the cemetery of St. Werburgh's or in that of St. John's, but who should desire to be buried within the precincts of the said friars, the said friars should be allowed to bury such person or persons there, provided that two parts of all revenue, as well in wax as in oblations should be divided between the monks and canons. A third part, however, should be reserved to the said friars "integraliter legato principali," saving also to the churches of St. Werburgh and St. John customary dues of legacies. Others, strangers and those who were not citizens, who chose to be buried at the friary might be freely interred there and the friars were to be entitled to all their oblations (Chart. of Chester Abbey, Chet Soc., n.s., lxxxii, 301 and 302, and Ormerod, 2 ed., i, 180).

One of the earliest legacies to the Friars Preachers is mentioned in the will of Joan sometime wife of G(eoffrey) de Dutton, of "one mark from my share of the corn" (Dodsworth MSS., and Sheaf, 3s., ix, 117 and xxxiv, 73). The will is not dated and the identity of the testator is uncertain, but from the fact that she left legacies to the Black and Grey Friars and to the Friars of the Sack (the last only came to this country in 1257 and their intention of establishing a house in Chester was never fulfilled); and also to the fact that the testator does not mention the White Friars, whose house in Chester was not founded until 1289 or 1290, it may be inferred that the will was made between 1257 and 1289.

Canon Morris (282) remarks that the Friars generally appear to have had a special aptitude for water engineering as Dugdale in his "Monasticon" mentions aqueducts built by them in London in 1300, and in Southampton, Lichfield and Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1342. The association of William Wall, the last warden of the Chester Grey Friars, with the building of the conduit at the High Cross, may be added to the list.

Towards the close of the thirteenth century the Friars Preachers of Chester sought to improve their water supply, and in response to their representations to the king, Guncelin de Badesmere, justiciar of Chester, was instructed to investigate the matter and report. This he did in 1276 when he informed the king that the



scheme to construct a conduit from a spring hard by the Gallows outside the city, through the royal lands by the River Dee to the house of the Friars would not be detrimental to the king's or other interests, but it would necessitate the Friars opening up and closing the land again as well as the wall and certain streets. Consequently, on the 5th November in that year a mandate was despatched to the justiciar from Westminster giving permission to the Friars to construct "a fonte prope furcas," and to entrench the highways and land where necessary and to pierce the city wall, on condition that they afterwards refilled the trenches and gave reasonable satisfaction to any man through whose property it was necessary to pass (Pat. Roll 4 Edw. I, and Morris, 141). Hemingway (i, 431) was of opinion that certain writers were under a misapprehension in stating that water was obtained from Boughton and that they had confused the well there with the one at Christleton which supplied the Abbey, but the description "a fonte prope furcas" clearly indicates that the friars' water supply was obtained from Boughton. It was doubtless on or near the spot where in the 18th century there was a cold bath credited with possessing certain healthful properties (Sheaf, 3s., xxxv, 2).

Edward I, while proceeding with his expedition into North Wales in connection with the suppression of the rebellion of Prince Llewelyn ap Griffith in 1277, sent despatches from, at least, three towns of special gifts to the Chester Friars preachers for food. They were as under:—

- July 12. From Eccleshall, co. Staff.,—13s. 1d.
- August 8. From Flint—24s. 3d.
- August 21. From Rhyddlan—25s. 8d. For 4 days past.

These are recorded in Rot. Gard. De Oblat. et Elemos (Reg. 5 Edw. I) and were doubtless in acknowledgement of material assistance and the spiritual aid of prayers afforded by the Friars while on his journey.

In 10 Edw. I (1281-2) Thomas son of Thomas Chamberlain of Chester granted to Richard son of Robert Noble of Chester all grantor's land in Fleshmonger's Lane which John Noble sometime citizen of Chester purchased from David de Malpas and gave to grantor. Subject to the condition that the said Richard and his heirs render yearly for ever half a mark to the support of 30 paupers every one of whom shall have meat and three halfpence, and the residue shall be given to the Friars Preachers and Minors (Harl. MS. 2063, f. 127).

On Friday, 17 April 1282 Urian de St. Pierre acknowledged in the full exchequer of Chester that he was bound for Sir Richard son of John to Peter de Arderne in £50 13s. 4d. payable at the church of the Friars Preachers of Chester (Chet. Soc., n.s., lxxxiv, 44).

John de Arneway or Sir John Arneway, a notable mayor who held office from 1268 to 1278, died in the last mentioned year and was buried in the abbey of which he was a considerable benefactor. He also left legacies to the Black and Grey Friars which the abbot undertook to pay to the Friars Preachers and Minors of Chester in accordance with his will, namely ten marks during the Feast of the Purification of Mary in the 21st year of King Edward (I, 2 Feb. 1292-3) and ten marks in the Feast of St. Martin following (4 July 1293) and in the said Feast of St. Martin recurring until the said sum shall have been expended (Harl. MS. 2072, f. 42b, and 7568, 185a).

Shortly before Michaelmas 1291 the executors of Queen Eleanor of Castile gave 100s. to the Friars Preachers of Chester by the hands of William de Hothem, provincial and of Robert de Middleton (Rot. Gard. Liberat. pro Regina, 19 to 20 Edw. I).

On 30 June, 1294, Ralph Peppard, by deed dated at Rotherford-Peppard, granted to John Peppard his son for life all his castles, manors, etc. in Ireland, at the rent of 500 marks a year, at Michaelmas and Easter, to be deposited with the Friars Preachers of Chester (Rot. Memorand. (Q.R.) Pasch. 31 Edw. I. m. 33).

On 27 April, 1295, Henry de Bernham was buried at the Black Friary, and a cloth of gold taken from the Friars' store, was laid over him, and, by royal command, another cloth of gold was delivered out of the royal wardrobe to Friar Walter de Winterbourne in lieu of one then used (*Treas. of Rec. of Exchequer*, vol. A4/7. Lib. Gard. 23 Edw. I.).

Thomas de Macclesfield by his will dated 20 Dec., 1301, proved in 1303, bequeathed legacies to the three Chester friaries, that to the Black Friars being 40s. He further willed that when the letters which "I have" of those brotherhoods are exhibited in the chapter-general of England and masses and prayers for my soul are offered, the said Friars Preachers and Minors shall have 20s. for a pittance, that is for food above the ordinary. (*Rec. Soc.*, xxx, 1).

Some time after Michaelmas 1305 the Friars Preachers of Chester received 20s. out of the revenues of the Duchy of Lancaster by order of the Earl (*Rot. Misc. Ducat. Lanc.*, 32 to 33 Edw. I.).

Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, died in 1311, having made "a gift to the Black Friars of Chester" as well as "alms in the shape of a cloth" (*Sheaf*, 1s., iii, 264).

The Provincial Chapter of the Order was celebrated in the Chester Friary at the Festival of the Assumption in 1312. Towards the expenses of the Assembly during three of the days Edward II gave, on 15th July, through Friar John de Lenham, his confessor, the usual £15, being 100s. for himself, 100s. for the Queen, and 100s. for the soul of Piers Gaveston late Earl of Cornwall. On July 31 the king added 100s. for a fourth day as a special act of grace, the same being paid to Friar Henry de Strongil of the convent of Warwick (*Exit, Scac.*, pasch., 5 Edward II, m. 5, 6., Lib. Cotidian. *Thesaur. Garda Reg.* 6 Edw. II).

In 1316 or 1317 Gilian servant of Robert Derby was indicted because she was (? in the habit of stealing) property of the Chester Friars Preachers of the value of 16d. yearly (*Harl. MSS.* 2162, f. 364, and 7568, f. 185a).

After the deposition of Edward II, Chester became the headquarters of Friar Thomas de Dunkeved, a Friar Preacher of London, and his associates, who were plotting for the restoration of the unfortunate monarch. On 8 June, 1327, a royal mandate was issued to the justiciary of Chester for the arrest of Stephen Dunkeved, William Beaumard, John Sabant and others who were holding illegal confederations and meetings in and about the city and committing many homicides, depredations and breaches of the peace. Having gathered a small company of soldiers, both horse and foot, who refused to serve against the Scots, they marched to Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire where they supposed the ex-king was kept in captivity, but they were soon routed and, under a writ of 1 August, twenty of the leaders were captured. Shortly after, Friar Thomas de Dunkeved perished in a rash attempt to escape out of the castle of Pontefract (*Pat.*, 1 Edw. III p. 2., m. 14d. 3d. *Carte*).

1347. To John le Reve, of Boughton, William atte Yate, Peter de Merlond, and Roger Carter, carters of the Friars Preachers, for the carriage of 12 tuns, from the port to Chester Castle by their carts; for each tun 3d.—3s. These 12 tuns were part of 14 tuns of wine received for 7 ships in the ports of Neston and Gayton Park (*Rec. Soc.*, lix, 123).

1356, June 9. Westminster. Commission by the king to his serjeants at arms, Robert de Baildon and John de Stafford, to receive from the king's confessor, John Woderove, prior of the house of Friars Preachers of Langelys, Hugh de Beauchamp, John Lyperyng, John Pygaz, and Nicholas Denys, friars of the Order, disturbers of the Peace contrary to the rule of their order, delinquents in secular dress, and, so apprehended and delivered to the said confessor, to be chastised according to the said rule, to take Hugh to Derby, John Lyperyng to Lincoln, John Pygaz to Chester, and Nicholas to Oxford, to be delivered by indenture to the priors of the respective houses of the order in those places, to be chastised according to their rule and letters of the confessor directed to the said priors, and to bring one part of each indenture sealed with the common seals of the convents of the said places before the council in the Chancery (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, Edw. III, vol. x (k354-8)*, p. 447).

Between 1360 and 1385, on the xv Kalends of March, Friar Edmund de Standish, of the order of Preachers of Chester Convent, was appointed penitentiary for the parish of Standish until the following Easter (*Wm. Salt Soc.*, n.s., viii, 48, *Register of Bishop Robert de Stretton*, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 1360 to 1385).

1361 between 3 July and 21 August. On this date a writ *ad quod damnum* was despatched to Alan de Wheteley, mayor and escheator of Chester, respecting a messuage and a plot of land adjoining the garden of the Friars Preachers of that city which the Friars wished to acquire in frank-almoign from John de Olton. The Prince had been acquainted with the matter by the hands of Wengefeld and Walshman (Black Prince's Register). 1361, Sept 7. The enquiries were evidently satisfactory as on this date the Prince personally commanded John de Brunham, clerk and chamberlain of Chester, to make out the necessary charters in execution of licences granted by the Prince, permitting the Friars Preachers to acquire the property which was in the Prince's fee. The Prince stated that the grant was a work of charity and healthful for his soul, and was to endure for ever (*ibid*).

1361. The will of Randle Whytlof, apparently of Macclesfield, is dated on the Thursday after the Feast of St. Edward the Bishop. This saint does not appear in the lists furnished by Nicholas and Fry. The testator bequeathed to the Friars Preachers of Chester 2s. and to the Friars Preachers of the Castell the same amount. He also left gifts to the Carmelites and Minorites of Chester (*Rec. Soc.*, xxx, 7).

1369, Sep. 15. Sir Thomas de Lathum bequeathed to the Friars Preachers of Chester 40s. (*Rec. Soc.*, xxx, 203).

1383/4, Feb. 25. By letters patent of this date Richard II of his special grace and charity granted to his well-beloved in Christ, the prior and brethren of the house of Preachers in Chester, which existed by the favour of the king's progenitors, permission to grind all the corn and grain needed for their sustenance at the king's mills at Chester, free from all tolls, hopper dues and customs payable at the said mills, for ten years next to come. Dated from Westminster. (*Rep. of Deputy Keeper of Public Records*, 36th appx. 2, p. 94; *Patent Rolls, and Recog. Rolls*).

1386, Jan. . . . Henry de Beeston, aged 44 years and more, was a witness in the Scrope and Grosvenor case, and stated that he had seen the arms in dispute, that is of the Grosvenors, in the church of the Friars Preachers of Chester.

1391, July 7. Nicholas D'Audeley, lord of Rouge Castell (Red Castle, co. Salop) and Helegh (co. Staff.), left bequests to a number of friaries, including those at Chester (*Calendar of Wills, Court of Hustings, London*, pp. 294-5).

1392-3, Jan. 27. Sir Lawrence Dutton, by his will of this date, proved 10 Feb following, bequeathed 20s. to each of the four orders of friars of Chester and Warrington (*Ormerod*, 2 ed., i, 648; and *Hemingway*, ii, 147).

Morris (145) pays a tribute to the Friars Minors of Chester who are not presented in the records of the city and elsewhere as taking part in the riotous and disorderly proceedings that disgraced the Carmelites and Dominicans. He remarks that the names of the prior and brethren of the Dominicans occur more than once in the Chester records, and gives four instances as sufficing. The earliest of these is dated 1394-5 when Richard Runcorn the prior was imprisoned in the Northgate prison for unlawfully detaining a chest containing charters and other documents belonging to William Bagot, knight.

1395, July 11. The privilege of grinding their corn toll, etc., free at the Dee Mills which had been granted by the king for ten years in 1383/4, was extended to them and their successors in perpetuity by letters patent (*Pat. Rolls and Recog Roll 18-19 Ric. II, m. 1d. (6) m. 6 (1)*). 1395, July 14. Three days later the king gave orders to his chamberlain Robert de Parys that the Black Friars were not to be disturbed in enjoyment of the grant. (*Pat. Roll and Recog Roll 18-19 Ric. II m.6 (1, 2)*).

1397, June 20. Friar John Herines was removed by the Master General of the Order from London to Chester.

1413 . . . . John Coly, citizen of Chester, left one cerium (or cereum), that is a wax light, to the Friars Preachers of Chester and also 6s. 8d. for the purpose of celebrating two trentalls and one mass "cum nota cum exequiis mortuorum" for the soul of the testator (*Morris*, 351).

1419. Edmund Holes of (?Watford) by his will executed in this year and proved on 16 April, 1420, bequeathed 3s. to each order of friars in Chester (P.C.C. 47 Marche, and Sheaf, 3s., xix, 55).

1420/1. Feb. 22. John Butler bequeathed alms for the repose of his soul to the four friaries . . . in Chester, Warrington. Preston and Lancaster (*History of Warrington Friary*, by Wm. Beamont, Chet. Soc., o.s., lxxxiii).

1436/7. Feb. 20. Richard Fyton, by his will of this date, proved 2 May, 1438, left to each order of Friars in Chester 6s. 8d. (P.C.C., 21 Luffenham, and Sheaf, 3s., xviii, 24).

1438/9. Jan. 25. John Hope, citizen of Chester, left, by his will of this date, proved 19 May, 1439, 6s. 8d. to the Friars Preachers of Chester (P.C.C., 25 Luffenham, and Sheaf, 3s., xvii, 105).

1452. In this year the fine Church of the Friars Preachers was chosen in preference to St. John's for ordinations by the Bishop of Sodor, the suffragan of the Bishop of Lichfield (Morris, 146).

1453 and 1454. In these years riotous assemblies of armed men occurred. They were accompanied by the burning of houses and murderous attacks in various parts of the county. At Chester, the commonalty arose, but were suppressed, and the offenders were firstly committed to the Northgate Gaol and later transferred to the Castle. Morris (55) suggests that this was a sequel to the visit paid to Chester by Margaret of Anjou in the previous year. The Black and White Friars appear to have been particularly prominent in these riotous proceedings, and, at least, two indictments against them are recorded in the Mayors' Books for the years 1454 and 5.

1454. John Browne, prior of the Friars Preachers of Chester, with William Lampshagh, Robert Holt, and several other brethren of the order, assaulted, on Sunday night after St. Wolfran's Feast, John Coke, late servant of Abbot Richard de Oldham, Bishop of Man. Some years later, in 1462 John Brown was bound over to keep the peace to the Abbot of Chester (Morris, 146).

In 1459, when John Holland was head of the house, the Friars Preachers issued letters of confraternity to such as were willing to purchase them. The demand for these letters must have been considerable, since they were prepared in blank so as to allow of the purchaser's names being inserted on delivery to them. One of these letters with no name inserted was in the possession of John Ireland Blackburne, esquire, of Hale when William Beamont read a paper before the Society about the year 1869 (Journal o.s., iii, 149).

In 2 Edw. II (1463-3) the prior of the Preaching Friars and Ralph Frodsham were bound over to keep the peace to the Abbot of St. Werburgh, Richard Oldham (Morris, 130).

1463-4. One Robert White was indicted for robbing the orchard of Jo. Brown, prior of the Chester Black Friars and taking apples to the value of 20d. White was subsequently indicted for coining money (Harl. MS., 2057, f. 114a).

1464. March 27. Thomas Cok, baker, was killed at the gate of the house of the Friars Preachers on the Tuesday after Palm Sunday in 4 Edw. IV. John White, clerk, a friar of the Order and William Balfront of Chester, yeoman, were accused of killing the baker, and John Browne, prior of the house, "bachelor," was accused of abetting. The prior was acquitted (Chester Plea Roll, 169, m. 25).

1466/7. March 7. Be it noted, that that devout woman Dame Cecily de Torbock, widow of Sir William de Torbock, knight, made her will. Her husband had bestowed considerable alms on the Friars Preachers of Chester. As the Friars were in need of certain necessary buildings Dame Cecily bequeathed £10 to cover fully the expense of the work. In gratitude for this gift and in accordance with the lady's desire, Friar John Holland, then prior, together with all the senior and junior friars of the community, decreed for themselves and their successors under holy obedience and on pain of excommunication, that a member of their house should celebrate mass daily for the good estate and soul and good memory of Lady Cecily, and for the souls of her father and mother and husband. It was ordained that the friar who thus celebrated should say, after the "offertorium" (and prayer of oblation) of every mass, and before the "lavatorium" (or washing of the hands of the priest), the psalm "De Profundis" and the Lord's Prayer, with other suitable suffrages and prayers, especially for the aforesaid souls. The said prior and convent undertook to perform the service each year for ever on the day of the death of Cecily, and further to say exequies and offices of the dead for their souls on the next day in the choir of the church; the bier being decently enfolded and covered with a pall, with candles burning as always when High Mass is celebrated. And further every prior

within eight days after entering into office, shall appoint a friar to celebrate thus, and appoint another friar to celebrate likewise should any change be made. All which promises the reverend Mr. William Edmundson, prior of the whole order of Friars Preachers in England and doctor of sacred theology with the will and assent of Friar John Holland, then prior, and the convent of the said house, confirmed in the provincial chapter held at Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1471 under his own seal and that of the prior and convent of Chester (Harl. MS., 2176, f. 27. The date is inserted in a later hand on the transcript). In her will Cecily bequeathed a further 6s. 8d. to the Black Friars of Chester.

1470. May 3. Ithel ap Jollo, ringilder of Kilken, Thomas ap Ithel ap Madoc, and Res ap Jevan Lloit gave recognizance in £4 to John Holland, prior of the Friars Preachers of the City of Chester (37th Rep. of Deputy Keeper of Public Records, p. 140. 9 & 10 Edw. IV, m 4 (3)). This recognizance was given in the presence of Sir William Stanley, chamberlain of Chester and the amount was promised to be paid at the Festival of the Holy Trinity.

1476. May 10. Friar Thomas Roberts of the convent was assigned to Glasgow where he was born. He was empowered to preach throughout all Scotland, and to teach the liberal arts in the convent to which he was transferred as a native, if the majority of the brothers consented (Reg. Mag. Gen. ord.).

1481. The church of the Black Friars was again chosen in preference to that of St. John in this case by the Bishop of Aghadoc, another suffragan of the Bishop of Lichfield (Morris, 146).

1485. In this year a letter of confraternity was issued by Friar Thomas Watterton, prior of the order of Preachers of Chester. Like so many similar documents it was evidently prepared beforehand and probably never issued as the name of the grantee is blank.

1488-9. Richard Cholmondeley the younger bequeathed to all the orders of friars in Chester 15d. (Chetham Soc., o.s., liv., 41).

1489. Sept. 29. By will proved on this date Nicholas Southworth, a wealthy man, who desired to be buried beside his old master King Edward in the college of Windsor, bequeathed £20 to be expended in prayers for his soul in various local foundations including the Friars in Chester where his brethren and sisters lay. Testator does not name which friary. (PCC., 19 Milles. Sheaf, 3s., xix, 4).

1494. May 16. John Hankey of Churton, left to each order of friars at Chester 20d. Proved 20 April, 1497 (PCC. 13 Horne, Sheaf, 3s., xvii, 23).

1496/7. Feb. 22. Matthew Johnson alias Hewster, citizen of Chester bequeathed to the three orders of friars of the city 3s. between them equally. (Proved 22 Jan. 1498/9. PCC. 35 Horne).

1497. March 31. Thomas Dedwood of Chester, gentleman, by his will, left a small legacy to the three houses of friars in Chester. The total amount was half a mark (Harl. MS., 2131, f. 205; Sheaf, 3s., xxii, 77; and Earwaker's "St. Mary's," Chester, 30).

1498-9. Thomas Haydon, a brother of the order, was charged with assaulting George Palmer, prior of the Carmelites with a dagger (armicudium) called a hanger (Morris, 146).

1500-1. 16 Henry VII. Appendix to 16th Report of Deputy Keeper of Public Records, p. 20, contains a reference to the Friars Preachers.

1505. May 14. Henry Rayneforde, priest, by his will of this date willed that "every fryers house of Chester shall have one of my six torches if my executors can so accorde with them that have right and title to the same or redeme them with other recompenses." Testator also willed that "every house of the fryers of the said citie have 3s. 4d. and every fryer being a preest that be at my dirige and masse have to his proper vse 4d. I will that the convent of the Blak Fryers have my boke of summa confessorum and all their decretalls and all their other boks that I have. I will that my crymsyn gowne and hoode and furre be yeven to the prior of the blak fryers in Chestre to make a cope thereof for my sowle if he will so doo, and ells to be sold for the preeste. I will that Fryer Thomas Haydon fryer preacher have my grate spone." Proved 14 Nov. 1506 (PCC. 14 Adeane; Sheaf, 3s., xviii, 93).

1505. July 23. Ralph Davenport, citizen and alderman of Chester. "I will that two candles be given to each order of friars within the city. To each order of friars within the city 10s. in order that each may celebrate one tringintale for the safety of my soul immediately after my decease" (proved 11 Nov. 1506, 16 Adeane. Sheaf, 3s., xxiii, 37).

1508. Sep. 20. Will of William Egerton of Hampton, gentleman, bequeathed "to the three orders of freeres of Chester to pray for my wif and me and ychoon of theym to say a trentall 30s. amongst thym." Proved 12 Sept., 1511 (PCC. 3 Fetiplace; Sheaf, 3s., xvii, 21).

1511. Dec. 24. Thomas Runkorne or Runcorn, bequeathed to the three houses of friers of Chester every place 6s. 8d. Proved 27 Feb. 1511/2. (6 Fetiplace. Sheaf, 3s., xv, 23).

1513/4. Jan. 4. Rafe Huxley of Tattenhall bequeathed to the Black Friars of Chester 3s. 4d. Proved 28 April, 1514 (Harl. MS., 2079, f. 161a. Sheaf, 3s., xxi, 39).

1518. Aug. 24. Nicholas Deykyn of Chester, felt capper, bequeathed . . . to each of the three Chester friaries for 3 trentalls of masses. Proved 3 Nov. 1518, 11 Aylofffe. Sheaf, 3s., xiv, 8.

1519. April 17. William Rogerson of Chester, ironmonger and alderman, bequeathed to each of the three orders of friars 10s. Proved ult May 1519 (17 Aylofffe. Sheaf, 3s., xiii, 90).

1520. Dec. 4. Margaret Hawarden of Chester, bequeathed 6s. 8d. "towards the reparacon of the churche of the Blak Frerys." She also left them "broken ledde in peses and gobbetts at the oversight of the prior and her executors." Proved 17 Jan., 1520/1, (Chetham Soc, o.s., li., 7 et seq.)

1525. April 1. Henry Manley of Pulton, willed that there be given to every order of friars within Chester, to each house, a bushel of wheat.

1525/6. Feb. 10. James Godyker (Goodacre of Woodchurch) bequeathed to the 3 orders of Friars in Chester . . . to every house 3s. 4d. (Harl. M.S, 2067 f. 1; Sheaf, 3s., xx, 67). Date of probate not known.

1525/6. Ralph Egerton of Ridley left "To the Blak Freres of Chestre xxxs. towards buylding their Fratrye." Proved shortly after. (Hist. Soc. of L. and C., lxix, 110; Ormerod, 2 ed., ii, 246).

1526. Dec. 8. (proved shortly after). William Danald of Chester bequeathed "to the three houses of fryers in Chester a bushel of barley, to pray for my soul." (Harl. MS., 2067, f. 5; Sheaf, 3s., xx, 71).

1527. Aug. 30. (proved 8 Oct. following). Thomas Sparke Doctor of Canon Law, left "To the three orders of freris of Chester xs., that is to eu'y howse iijs. iiijd. to the repa'con of their howses." (Chetham Soc., o.s., xxxiii, 17).

1527/8. March 23. (proved 2 April following). Elizabeth Hurleston of Chester, widow, bequeathed "to the Blakke Ffrers . . . vis. viijd." (Chetham Soc., o.s., xxxiii, 36).

## 7. PREPARATIONS FOR THE STORM.

The prosperity of the Friars Preachers of Chester, even more than that of the other Chester friaries, had been diminishing for long before Henry VIII decided to dissolve them, and the poverty of the Friars Preachers was then great. The financial stress and numerical weakness of the Chester house in the years immediately preceding the Dissolution doubtless justified the letting of the lands and buildings to prevent them falling into utter desolation and ruin. Some apprehension of the fate looming over the priory must have been felt.

The Ministers' Accounts for 1539-41 (31 and 32 Henry VIII, no. 126; and Misc. Books of Court of Augm., xcv, f. 361) contain particulars of leases granted by the Black Friars in a few of the years preceding the Dissolution.

1531/2. March 1. A garden to Richard Dyken for life, at 3s. 4d. yearly.

1531/2. March 6. A garden to William Bexwycke for life, at 5s. yearly.

. . . . . 2 tenements and 2 gardens late in the tenure of Peter Calcotte . . . . . at 16s. yearly.

1535/6. March 20. 2 tenements with a garden, late in the tenure of John Carter, to Richard Kelly, salter, for life, at 6s. yearly and a further 3s., with the obligation of carrying out repairs for which the prior undertook to provide timber and all other necessaries.

1536. May 1. A tenement with a garden to Randall Loyde for 20 years, at 10s. yearly.

1537. May 12. Lands, gardens, orchards, with 2 old chambers and a ruinous building with the surrounding stone walls on the east and north of the house and church, leased by Hugh Brecknock,

prior of the convent, to Ralph Waryn, gentleman, and Ellen his wife for 101 years, at 27s. 4d. yearly  
Namely:—

A parcel of the premises divided into 2 parts lying next to the mansion in which the said Ralph was living—3s. 4d.

The Priors' Orchard—3s. 4d.

The garden in the tenure of John Pycke—2s. 4d.

The orchard and garden in the tenure of Richard Leftwiche, gentleman,—3s. 4d.

The garden in the tenure of Humphrey Lloyd, gentleman—3s. 4d.

The orchard in the tenure of William Bexwicke—5s.

The garden in the tenure of Richard Dycenson—3s. 4d.

The common orchard—5s.

The total of the amounts set forth is 29s. but it appears that the 27s. 4d. represents a slight reduction for the lease of the whole premises.

1538. July 6. A tenement with a garden to Richard Leftwyche for 60 years, at 20s. yearly

1538. July 8. 3 houses lying together at the lower end of the church within the parish of Saint Martin together with divers other necessary houses and an orchard and garden adjacent to Richard Hope for 50 years, at 7s. yearly

#### 8. THE SUPPRESSION OF THE FRIARY.

In a session of Parliament commenced in February 1536 there was granted to the king and his heirs all religious houses in the realm of England of the value of £200 and under, together with all the lands and goods belonging to them. The number of these houses then suppressed was 376 and the value of their lands, etc. was more than £32,000 yearly. Stowe (964) writes—The moueable goods as they were solde, Robine Hoods pennie woorthes, amounted to more than £100,000, and the religious persons that were in the sayde houses, were cleerlie put out. Some went to other greater houses, some went abroade to the worlde. It was (saith mine author) a pitifull thing to heare the lamentation that the people in the countrie made for them; for there was great hospitalitie kept among them. and, as it was thought more than tenne thousand persons, maisters and seruants had lost their liuings by the puttinge down of those houses at that time.

As was the case with the two other friaries in Chester the act of suppression of the Black Friars of Chester was carried out by Dr. Richard Ingworth, suffragan bishop of Dover and sometime prior of the Black Friars of Rowley Regis, who had been specially appointed by the king to visit the houses of the mendicant orders. The suppression of all the Chester friaries took place on the same day and the resignation of the friars is thus recorded (Exchq. T. R. Misc. Books, vol. 13, p. 13):

Memorandum this xv day of August in the xxxth yer of ovr most dred souveren lord kyng Henry ye viijth. [1538]. Rychard, byshop of Dover & visyter vnder ye lord privy seale for the kyngs grace, was in Chester wher yt in presens of Master Phoke a Dutton meyar ther, Joh'is Aldersey, Henry Gee, Raffle Rogerson, Raffle Goodeman, Wyllm Bestwyche aldermen of ye cete, with Thomas Martin late schrewe, was in all the howseys of freers within ye seyde cete wher the hedys of all ye seyde howseys with all ther brederyne gaffe ther howseys with all ye pertenans into ye seyde vysyters hands to the kyngs vse without any co'sell or constreynnyng but very pouertie constreyned them. Thus ye seyde vysyter receyved the howseys & made Inventories of eche howse & deliuered them

with ye howseys and stuff in to ye mayors hands & hys assyneys and gaffe euery freer letters to depart & payd hys owyn charges & so departeyd. Thys wytteneise me ye seyde meyar with oders vnder wrytyn.

Phoke Dutton mayre of the cety of Chester  
 Rauffe Rogerson alderman [mayor 1534]  
 Thomas Marten [Sheriff 1534]  
 Henry Gee [Mayor 1533 and 1539]  
 Rauffe Goodman [Sheriff 1529, Mayor 1547]

The deed of surrender (Exchqr. T.R. Misc. Books, vol. 153, pp. 7-10) is quoted below:

Memorandum thys xv day of August in ye xxx yere of kyng Henry the viijth. Whe the prior and convente of the black fryeres in West Chester withowt any coacyon or co'sell but for very pouerte have and do resyne our howse with all that to yt be longe in to the handdes of the lord vysytor to the kynges vse, besechynge hys grace to be goode & gracyous to vs. In wytenes to thys byll whe subscribye our names wt our proper handds the day & yere before wryten

Frater Hugo Brecknocke prior ibidem prefato die  
 Frater Johannes Sargent s(ub) pprior  
 Frater Johannes Byrd  
 Frater Robert Romesay  
 Frater D(avi)d Griffhet

In the State Papers (Henry VIII, vol. 13, part 2, 1538, pp. 169-70) there are two letters from Ingworth. The first of these is addressed to Cromwell and is dated 23 August, 1538. The writer trusts to send particulars of the whole substance of his business. At the date of writing he was at Ludlow, and reports that he had been to Denbigh, Bangor, Landvase (Llanfaes), Rudlonde (Rhuddlan), West Chester, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Schrewysbery, and had visited 13 convents, only one of which, the Black Friars of Shrewsbury had been left standing. Ingworth trusts that Cromwell will be good lord for the warrants for such friars as give up their houses, to be had at his coming (to London) which will be the week after Holy Rood.

The second letter of the same date is addressed to Latimer. In it Ingworth states that he had visited 18 (sic) places and left but one standing. He mentions Brygenorth, Aderyston, Lychefylde, Stafford, Bewmares, and Ludlow, in addition to those mentioned in the letter to Cromwell. At the close he remarks that the friars in these parts where he had been, have many favourers and great labour is made for their continuance. Divers trust to see them set up again, and some have gone up to sue for them.

#### 9. REALIZATION AND DISPOSAL OF THE SPOIL.

The amount of lead on the despoiled buildings was a valued part of the plunder but the Bishop of Dover noted at the time of surrender that "The blak freres in Westcester" yeilded only wat covered "oon Ile of the Church and two panes (?sections) of the cloyster leads" (Exchequer R.T. vol. A3/11, f. 7 and 8).

The whole possessions of the late convent brought in a yearly income of £4 12s. as shewn in the Ministers' accounts for this and later years (Misc. Books).

After the Friary had been dissolved a statement of the buildings, lands, etc. that had belonged to it was rendered by the ministers or receivers of the Crown



between Michaelmas 1539 and the same feast in 1540 (P.R.O., S.P. Hen. VIII, para. 142, p. 184). The account is as follows:

The receiver charges himself with £4 7s. od. [?should be £5 9s. od.] for:

The farm of the site of the church, with an alley extending from the east part of the Friars Preachers called le Black Friars, let by William Bolles and John Wyseman, the king's commissioners, to Tho's Smythe and Richard Sneyde—3s. 4d.

The site of the old hall, dormitory, two cloisters, chapter house and frayter, let to the said Smythe and Sneyde—10s. od.

The farm of three houses lying at the lower part of the church there within the parish of St. Martin, together with divers other houses, an orchard and a garden, demised to Richard Hope at—7s. od.

The farm of the tenement within a garden within the stone walls of the said brethren, in the tenure of Edmund [?Edward] Corkyn at—9s. od.

One cottage there with garden in the tenure of Margaret Denysse, widow from year to year—4s. od.

The farm of two tenements and two gardens ther, late in the tenure of Peter Calcotte at 16s. od. per annum.

One tenement with a garden, late in the tenure of John Carter at 6s. od., now let to Rich'd Kelley, slater, 3s. od.

One cottage there in the tenure of Eliz. Hussey—6s. 8d.

One cottage with a garden let to R'd Leftewiche at—20s. od.

One garden let to W'm Bexwickes at—5s. od.

One garden let to R'd Dyken or Dycons at—3s. 4d.

Another garden in the tenure of John Pyke from year to year at—[?2s.] 3s. 4d.

Another garden there abutting on tenement of Master [?Ralph] Dampert let to Ralph Wrynne, said to be on lease, at—3s. 4d.

One tenement with a garden there let to Randall Loyde at—10s. od.

One orchard and one old house in the same orchard, with a garden let to Ralph Wrynne, said to be on lease, at 5s. od.

The cottages of Denysse and Hussey were void from Michaelmas 1540 (Ministers' Accounts).

In a petition dated from Chester 31 Jan. 1539/40 Rauff Waryne prayed Cromwell to grant him the preferment of the house of the Black Friars at Chester. He stated that it adjoined the backside of his house and added that most of the gardens of the Friary were already in his hands by lease. The document is endorsed:—"Ao. xxx<sup>o</sup>, Mr. Waren, alderman" (P.R.O., S.P. Hen. VIII, 132, p. 184). A lease to Ralph Waryne was enrolled in the Court of Augmentations on 4 July, 1539 and the fulfilment of it decreed (Misc. Books).

The whole of the possessions of the late convent, of which Randal Arrowsmith became bailiff for the Crown brought in a yearly revenue of £4 12s. od. as shewn in the Ministers' Accounts.

In Misc. Augm. Book, 216, f 200 the following details are given of the lease to Thomas Smythe of Chester, yeoman [?alderman]. "All the house called the olde hall and the house called the Frayt' and the house called the Dorter, the house lately called the Chapyt' house and all other houses within the site circuit and precincts of the late house of priory of the friars Preachers commonly called le blak freers in Chester, and two late cloisters belonging to the late priory and the land and soil belonging to them and all that site late the church of the priory and the land and soil belonging to it, and the olde Alley within the said priory, and the land and soil of the Alley from the east gate to the west gate of the same, paying a rent of 11s. 8d."

This lease was granted by the king on 8 July 1543 for a term of twenty-one years from the following Michaelmas. The grant is also recorded in Misc. Books of Augs, vol. ccxvi, f. 20b. but the rent is there shown as 13s. 4d. yearly.

In a summary of Particulars for Grants dated 35 Henry VIII 24 Feb., 1543/4 the premises of the late Black Friars are thus described. To John Cocks, citizen and salter of London—The scite of the late Pryorye of Freers Prechers in the P'ishes of the Holly Trynytye and Seint Martyn: 3 houses, 1 orchard, 8 tenements, 3 cottages and 13 gardens, with 1 other orchard, an aley, 2 cloisters, and 1 dorter (the trees barely sufficing to maintain the hedges and fences and so not valued).

On 5 May, 1544 a grant enrolled on the Patent Rolls may be thus summarized. The King to all, etc. Know that we for £35<sup>8</sup> 6s. 5½d. paid to us by John Cokkes, citizen and salter of London, have sold to him his heirs and assigns the sites of the three Chester friaries (details given). Those relating to the Black Friary are as follows:

All the house and site late of the Friars Preachers commonly called the Black Friars within our city of Chester lately dissolved, together with all messuages, houses, cottages, chambers, gardens, buildings, tofts, gardens, orchards, lands, tenements and houses whatsoever with the appurtenances now or late in the several tenure or occupation of

|                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Richard Hope          | William Bexwyke   |
| Edmund Corkin         | Richard Leftwyche |
| Margaret Denys, widow | Richard Dyton     |
| Peter Calcot          | John Pyke         |
| John Carter           | Richard Wryne     |
| Richard Kelley        | Randle Lloid      |
| Elizabeth Hussey      | Thomas Smythe     |
|                       | Richard Snede     |

or their assigns in the parishes of Holy Trinity and St. Martin within the aforesaid city. And all and singular the messuages, houses, buildings, lands, tenements, gardens, orchards and hereditaments whatsoever with appurtenances in the said parishes and belonging to the said late Friars Preachers.

The grant was to John Cocks and his heirs and assigns for ever, and the name of Elenor wife of Cokes is mentioned. The tenure was by the 40th part of a fief and the yearly rent a tenth of 9s. 2½d. The bells and lead, except gutters and windows were reserved to the Crown (Pat. Roll 36 Henry VIII, p. 18, m. 6, 37).

Morris (145) quotes the above tenants, with a few variations, as tenants of Black Friars, lately held by Edward Bridge of London, gentleman, and Elizabeth his wife, but Edward *Bygges* and his wife did not come into possession until 1559 (*vide infra*).

#### 10. THE WARDENS.

The list of Wardens, sometimes styled priors, of the Black Friars of Chester is very incomplete. Canon Morris (pp. 146 and 571) gives the names of six only, but

the following list, although doubtless still incomplete adds considerably to the number.

1. Henry de Eschburn (Ashbourne). This friar was born, it is supposed, at Ashbourne in Derbyshire. He studied philosophy and theology at Oxford where he also taught and obtained unusual repute so that he scarcely had his equal in England in those sciences. Being called upon to govern the convent at Chester as prior he executed his duties with so much diligence that he very frequently mourned the arrival of the evening time (Leland). He now employed his leisure in revising what he had written and delivered at Chester, Oxford and elsewhere, and produced "Commentarium Salomorris" and "Item in Ecclesiasten," both of which Leland saw in Queen's College, Cambridge, as well as three other works. Even Bale admits that these writings were well worth study in his age. Eschburn is thought to have died about the year 1280 (Possivimus in Apparet. Sac.; Wood, Hist. and Antiq. Oxon; Leland's "Comment de Script Brit." and "Collectanea"; Bale, Pits, etc.).

On 3 August 1241 Brother Henry then prior of the Friars Preachers of Chester was a witness to an agreement between the Abbots of St. Werburghs' and Stanlawe respecting the right of pasturage on Stanlaw Marsh (Chetham Soc., n.s., lxxix, 199).

2. William de Macclesfield. Palmer states that this man belonged to the Chester Friary,? as prior. He was born of a good family seated at Macclesfield during the pontificate of Innocent IV (1243 to 54). Having received the rudiments of religious education at Chester he was sent to the convent of St. Jaques at Paris where he was made bachelor of Divinity, and at Oxford he received the cap of master of theology and taught in the Dominican school. He ranked among the principal learned men of his age, being one of the ablest and most zealous defenders of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas against Henry of Ghent and Friar William de le Mare, a Franciscan. Macclesfield was the friar of various English convents and sat in some General Chapters of his Order where he met Fra Nicolo Boccacino who was then the 9th Master of the Order and eventually became Pope Benedict XI. In the provincial chapter held at Bristol at the Assumption 1302 Macclesfield was elected Definitor for the next General Chapter. To this assembly, held at Besancon on 26 May 1303 Macclesfield accordingly went on foot although he was in the decline of life. Leland says that he acted in the Chapter as an ambassador of Edward I by whom he was highly esteemed. Certain it is that the king gave 40s. on April 19 towards the expense of this journey for him and his companions (Onus Garder. 31 Edw. I de Term Pasch). Benedict XI, in his first creation of cardinal on 18 Dec., 1303, raised Macclesfield to the dignity of cardinal priest with the title of S. Sabrian. He died on his homeward journey at Canterbury, was buried among his religious brethren of London, and, as a contemporary, Trivet, states, he never knew of his elevation to the purple. In the General Chapter at Toulouse, 17th etc. May 1304, Macclesfield's decease was thus noted—"Denuntiamus fratribus universis, quod tenentur ad suffragia pro fratre Gulielmo de Maclesfeld, definitor Angliae in capitulo Bisuntino, defuncto post ipsum capitulum, antiquam ad conventum proprium pervenisset." He wrote ten theological works but none of them have **seen** the press (Trivet; Leland's Commen; Anton. Senen; Wood's Quelif et Echard; Bullar's Ord Praed, etc.).

3. John . . . . In 1262 John, prior of the Friars preachers is mentioned in Harl. MS., 2072, f. 43.

4. John Arneway, prior 21 Edw. I (1292-3). Harl. MS. 2072. Reference is from Harl MS. 7568, f. 185a.

5. Thomas Belot, prior 4 Ric. II (1380-1) Harl. MS. 2025. Reference from No. 7568, f. 185a. In Harl. MS. 2025, f. 35 Thomas Belot prior of the Black Friars was plaintiff against John (Philip) de Blaby in a plea of trespass.

6. William de Melburne, prior of the Friars Preachers is mentioned in a plea of 1345 (Chester Plea Roll, 56, m. 6d.).

7. William de Bury. In 1352 William de Bury, prior of the Friars Preachers of Chester, was defendant in a suit (Chester Plea Rolls, 63 m. 13 and 64 on d.).

8. Richard Runcorn. At a date in or before 1395 Friar Richard Runcorn, prior of the Friars Preachers of Chester was charged by Sir William Bagot, knight, for retaining a chest of charters, writings, etc. relating to the inheritance of the knight, and consequently the prior was committed to the prison of the North Gate. On 18 March 1394/5 an agreement was reached and, as Bagot acknowledged himself satisfied, the prior was set at liberty (Recog. Rolls of Chester, 18 and 19 Ric. II, m. 1 d, (2) and 4, and m. 3 d. (4); Sheaf, 3s., ix, 26; and Morris, 146). On 18 Jan., 1396/7 the same prior being about to quit Chester for a time, probably to go to the Papal Court, had royal letters patent appointing Friar Ralph Wylot, John Davidsonsone of Hawarden, Randal le Cartwrighte, and Adam de Werberton, cryor, to act as his attorneys in all pleas and plaints for the space of one year (Recog. Rolls of Chester, 20-21 Ric. II, m. 2 (7). On 16 Feb. 1398 Friar Richard Runcorn, prior of the Order of Preachers of Chester was licensed to hear confessions within the limits of the priory (Lichfield Reg.).

9. Richard Torbok, prior and Alex. Kingsley sub prior 3 H. V., (1415-6) (Harl. MS. 7568, 185a).

10. Alexander de Kingsley, prior of the Black Friars, Chester, 3 H. V. (1415-6) (Ormerod 2 ed., ii, 90. See pedigree).

11. Thomas Wooton, prior 22 H. VI. (1443-4). (Reference from Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185a).

12. John Brown, prior. In 33 Henry VI. (1454-5) John Brown prior with William Lampshagh, Robert Holt and several other brethren of the Order, assaulted in the Sunday night after the feast of St. Wolfran, John Coke, late servant of Abbot Richard de Oldon, Bishop of Man. (Morris 146). In 1462 John Brown was bound over to keep the peace to the Abbot of Chester (Morris, 130 and 146). In 31 Henry VI. (1452-3) and 3 Edw. IV. (1463-4) John Brown is described as prior (Harl. 2057. Ref. from Harl. MS. 7568 f. 185a).

13. Robert Holt, prior 36 H. VI. (1457-8). (Ref. from Harl. 7568 f. 185a).

14. John Holland prior, ? date. (Harl. 2176. Ref. from Harl. MS. 7568 f. 185a). 1468. April 26. Li' ap Gruff' ap Jevan Lloid, David ap Jevan ap Bleth' and Thomas Englefeld gave recognizances to John Holand, prior of the Friars Preachers of the city of Chester and David Ferour for 60s., in exoneration of Sir William Stanley, knight, sheriff of Flint (7 and 8 Edw. IV., m. 4(6) 37/475

?D.K.P.R.). Note.—David Ferrour, Ferrour or Ferror, was a deputy for John Troutbeck, chamberlain of Chester, appointed June 14, 1444 with John del Dedwood by William Horton (*ibid.* 37/197).

1469. Indulgence from John Holand prior of the Friars Preachers in Chester, dated Chester in the Feast of St. Michael, 1469. A blank space has been left for the name of the individual, and there is no seal, but the foot of the parchment has been folded lengthwise and part of it slit evidently to form a tag on which the seal could be affixed. "Devotis q. in xto sibi dilectis. . . . . Frat' Johes Holand Prior conventis frm ordini" etc. etc. This document was in the possession of J. Ireland Blackburne esq. in 1851 ("History of Warrington Friary," edited by William Beamont for Chetham Society. Chet. Soc., Is., vols 86 and 87).

1470. May 3. Ithel ap Jollo, ringilder, of Kilken, Thomas ap Ithel ap Madoc and Rees ap Gruff' ap Jevan Lloid recog. to John Holand, prior of the Friars Preachers of the city of Chester. £4 (9 and 10 Edw. IV m. 4 (3) 37/412).

15. William Edmundson, prior 11 Edw. IV (1471-2). (PI 27, Harl. 2176, ref. from Harl. MS. 7568 f. 185a).

16. Matthew Eves. 1473, Oct. 29. John Stubbs and John Botiller of Halton, gave recognizance to Matthew Eves, prior of the Friars Preachers of the city of Chester. £7 13s. 4d. (37th Rep. D.K.P.R., 12 and 13 Edw. IV, 4, m 6 (4) pp. 141 and 693).

1505-6. In Bookers' Birch Chapel, published by the Chetham Soc., Is., xlv, there is a grant by Matthew Eves, associating Richard and Agnes Platt in the prayers and other labours of the brethren, together with a commemoration after death (Sheaf, 3s., vi, 55). J.B. the writer of the note in the "Sheaf" remarks there is a curious error in the original.

17. Thomas Waterton. 20 Edw. IV (1480-1, Harl. MS. 2057, ref. from Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185a). 1488 July. Thomas Waterton, prior of the Friars Preachers at Chester (Chester Plea Rolls, 189, m. 25d. 21d. 19d.).

18. 1537. Hugh Brecknock (Morris, 146).

#### 11. THE POSSESSION OF THE THREE CHESTER FRIARIES BY THE COCKES, BYGGES AND DUTTON FAMILIES.

As has already been stated the sites and premises of the three Chester friaries were sold by the king to John Cokes on 5 May, 1544. This London tradesman was a great speculator in church property and, having acquired wealth, he became John Cocks of Redbourn, co. Herts., esquire. Within a fortnight of purchasing the three Chester friaries, namely on 16 May, 1544, he obtained permission, upon which he acted, to alienate the White Friars to Fulk Dutton, an alderman and mayor of Chester, (C.A.J., n.s., xxxi, 29), but Cokes appears to have retained possession of 7 messuages in White Friars Lane which had belonged to the friary, as his son and heir was in possession of them in 1583.

On 30 July, 1556, the Queen gave Cocks permission to alienate all his manors, etc., including the Chester Grey and Black Friaries to his son Thomas Cocks of Beymondres or Beaumonts near St. Albans, gentleman (Rot. Memorand. L.T.R. 4

and 5 P. and M., Hil. Term No. 49). On 12 Oct., 1559, Thomas Cocks obtained a licence to alienate for ever the sites of the Grey Friars and the Black Friars to Edward Bygges of London, gentleman, and Elizabeth his wife (Pat. Roll., 948, 1 Eliz., part 2). The grant of the Black Friars included all their messuages, tofts, gardens, lands, etc. in the parishes of Holy Trinity and St. Martin. This transfer does not appear to have been carried out in full as a further licence was granted on 7 Feb., 1560/1, whereby Thomas Cocks and Bridget his wife together with Edward Bygges and Elizabeth his wife were empowered to alienate both friaries to Richard Dutton (son of the above mentioned Fulk) of the city of Chester, gentleman (Pat. Roll 966, 3 Eliz. part 4).

Richard Dutton died on 2 August, 1583, but his inq. p.m. was not held until 28 April, 1590. It is set forth in detail in "The Duttons of Dutton" (pp. 220 and 221), and there is a copy or abstract of it in the Earwaker MSS. in the possession of this Society. The references to the property of the Black Friars are given hereunder.

The house and site of the Friars Preachers called Black Freers in the city of Chester lately dissolved and 8 messuages and 4 gardens in the parishes of Holy Trinity and St. Martin's in Chester to the said house belonging.

All part of the possessions of the Friars Preachers and held of the Queen in chief by service of 100th part of a knight's fee, paying yearly to the Queen:—for the house site and other premises of the Friars Preachers—*gs.* 2½*d.*

The property late of the Friars Minors, Friars Carmelite, etc. are also set forth in this document.

## 12. CONCLUSION.

In these notes of the first establishment in Chester of the friars it will be gathered that the high ideals that inspired the founder and his disciples met with warm sympathy and support here as elsewhere and that for many years a devoted band of followers increased. Later, however, the influence of the friars gradually waned, partly due to a decline of many of the friars from the high standard of living which had been urged by the early members, and partly, no doubt, due to the growing desire of the people for the religious principles advocated by Wycliff and other reformers of the later middle ages.

It would appear clear that the prosperity of the Chester Black Friars at the dawn of the Reformation was at a very low ebb, and that it even exceeded that of the Grey and White Friars. The brothers had been reduced in numbers to five, only one aisle of the church remained, and the conventual buildings, as well as other premises, appear to have been in a ruinous condition.

This being so it is hardly surprising that when later possessors pulled down what was left and erected new houses on the site, even the memory of the dissolved buildings was forgotten, and that their location has only been gradually recovered by the occasional discovery of interments etc. in a limited area. Truly a moralist might justly have observed the place thereof shall know them no more.

It is hoped in a future paper to give some particulars of the devolution in later centuries of the plot of ground which once belonged to this Black Friary, including particulars of the buildings erected on the site of the Friary, of the house now known as Stanley Palace, and of Watergate House.