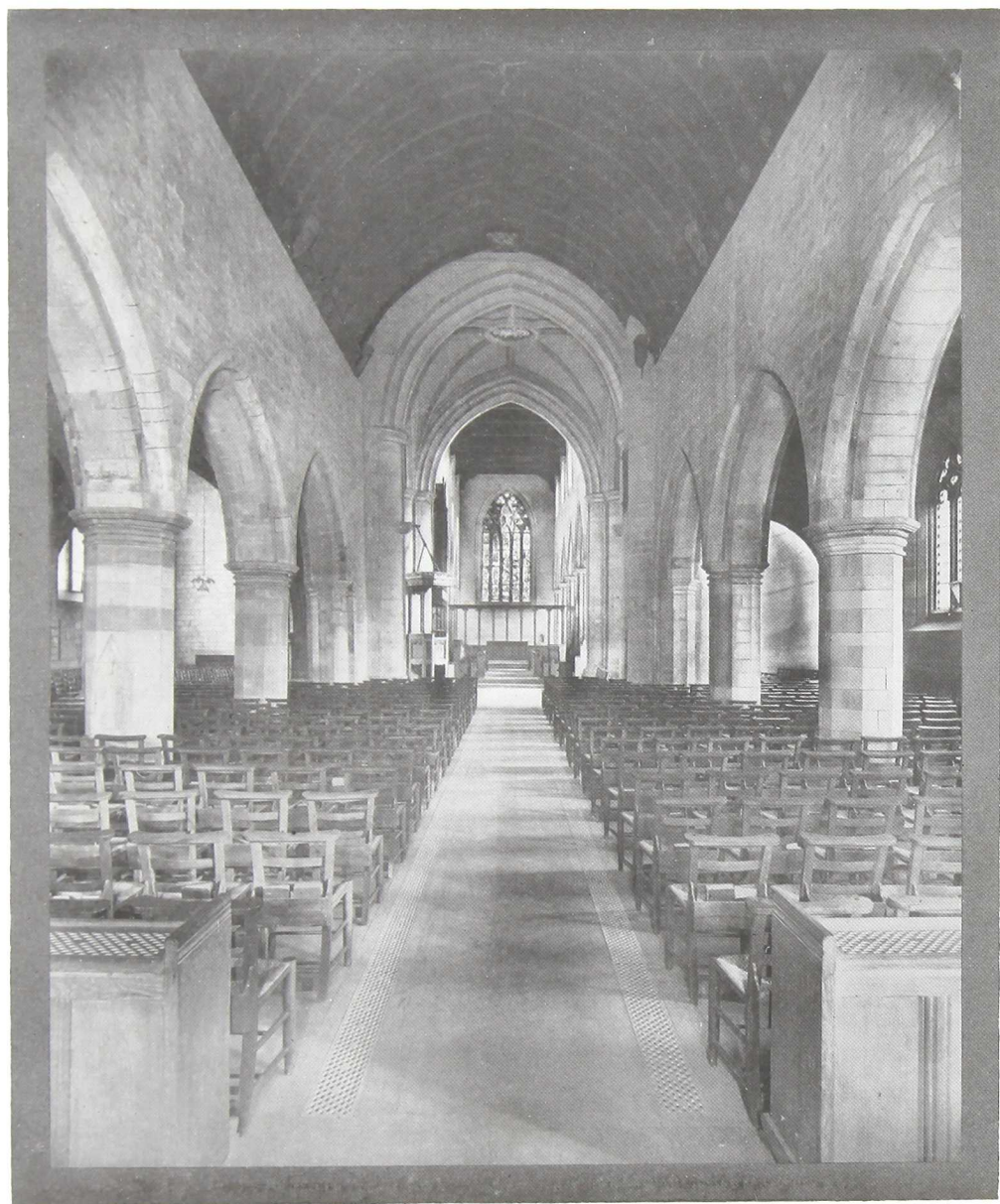


S. John's Church, Perth.

S. JOHN'S Church is dedicated to John the Baptist, who is the traditional Patron Saint of the city, which was in former days known as S. John's town. The Church's origin is hid in the mist of ages. Tradition tells us that the first erection on the present site was a temple dedicated to Mars and built by the Romans, but such is a fable and only deserves mention as a suggestion of the antiquity of the Church now known as the Church of S. John the Baptist. Very early in the Christian history of Scotland a Church was built in Perth—probably by the Picts in the sixth century A.D. We come to solid fact when we reach the twelfth century.

Queen Margaret and her son David, 'the sair sanct,' brought the Scottish Church into close relations with Rome; and in these reigns there was much activity in church building and foundations. S. John's, in all probability, was one of the new churches built in these days. The first authentic record we have of the church being in existence occurs in 1126, when David gifted the church, parsonage house, and the tithes to the Abbot and monks of Dunfermline. It is questionable how much of the church of that date still remains. There have been many alterations in the building, so many indeed that little of the original structure probably now exists, but it occupied the present site, and is only slightly altered in extent. Old engravings show the Church of S. John to have been similar in appearance to what it is now, with the exception of what was the chapter-house and one of the doorways. Little, too, is recorded of the history of S. John's during the following two centuries, unless we accept the doubtful story of the murder of Prince John of Eltham, before the high altar, by his brother, Edward III. of England, in the year 1335.

When we come to the fourteenth century we read that Robert the Bruce, about 1328, gave orders that the church, which was in a ruinous condition, should be restored, and in a letter to the Abbot and Convent of Scone he asks permission to take stones from the quarries



F. C. Inglis.

Interior, eastward view.

S. John's Church, Perth.

of Kincarrathie for the rebuilding of S. John's and the Bridge of Perth. The death of Bruce shortly after this interrupted what might have been an important restoration of the church. Civil war, and the neglect of the monks at Dunfermline left the church for some time in a ruinous state, though it is probable that some repairs were carried out which saved the church from becoming an absolute ruin.

Where history has failed to tell the story of S. John in these early days, romance has filled the gap. Sir Walter Scott in his 'Fair Maid of Perth' has weaved a story round the old church which has done much to make it familiar to many who otherwise would never have heard of its existence. In the scene which describes the ordeal of Bier-right the graphic power of the Wizard of the North has carried many readers of Scott's novel back in fancy to that far-off time, and by the chequered light streaming from the storied east window upon the high altar in front, they have seen, as in a moving picture, the actors and the incidents of the ancient ordeal by which the guilty conscience of the hidden murderer led to his detection and well-merited doom.

Perth in the fifteenth century was the capital of Scotland, kings had their residence in it, many famous people possessed houses in the city, and Parliaments met within its walls. Somewhere about 1440 the choir of the church was rebuilt, and it is not altogether a conjecture that the importance of the city demanded an enlargement of the Parish Church. The work of restoration began with the choir, but the murder of King James I. in the Blackfriars' Monastery turned the tide of the popularity of Perth, and the plan in its entirety was not completed. In after years, and until the twentieth century, the church suffered much at the hands of its enemies on the one hand, and of so-called restorers on the other hand.

Still, within its walls many great and notable events were enacted, and the Church of S. John has been closely bound up with some of the most stirring events in the history of Scotland, and of Scotland's Kirk.

Notable among these stirring events was what occurred in 1559. In May of that year John Knox preached a great sermon against the sin of idolatry to a crowded congregation representative of many parts of Scotland. The preacher, we are told, began in a feeble way, but

before long he warmed to his subject, his voice rang in every corner of the large building, and soon the utmost interest was aroused. It was after the preacher had left the building, and the better part of the hearers had also gone, that the full effect of the sermon was disclosed. Many remained to discuss what had been said; and before these left some priests, undaunted by the eloquence and fervour of the preacher, approached one of the many altars which adorned the church and prepared to say Mass, and following their example some of the worshippers joined reverently in the celebration. A young lad, seeing the officiating priest about to elevate the Host, cried out, "Down with this mummary," or words to that effect. A priest standing near struck the young offender 'a great blow,' and the boy retaliated by lifting a stone from the floor and throwing it at the priest's head. The stone missed the ecclesiastic but struck a painting of S. Bartholomew. Immediately a general revolt arose, and more stones were thrown. The priests were attacked and driven from the church; the ornaments, pictures, and images were destroyed; and in a very short space of time the interior of the church was wrecked. Knox, in his history, lays the blame of the wrecking on what he calls 'the rascal multitude,' but the spirit of destruction had been aroused, and once aroused it soon became beyond control. The idea that if the nests were pulled down the rooks would fly away had caught hold, and for some days there was a general wrecking of Church property. All the religious edifices—and Perth was rich in such possessions—in and around the city were more or less mutilated, and now only the Church of S. John remains to remind those of our time of the beauty of these buildings of a former time.

S. John's Church has witnessed other notable events in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland. Meetings of the General Assembly have been constituted and held in the Church of Perth. In 1618 an Assembly passed the Five Articles of Perth, an event which was the occasion of another outburst of public feeling and popular disfavour. And it is probable that much of the dislike to the Episcopal form of church government in Scotland is due to the unwarranted intrusion of the king's party in that Assembly. The fact is sometimes forgotten that the Reformation in Scotland was essentially a popular movement. The great boast of the Scottish Church is that it is, and has

been, a National Church, in which the people have been the prime movers and directors of its policy. When the Articles of Perth were passed in an Assembly largely composed of members pledged to support the king, there was great popular opposition. The people might not care much whether their minister was called priest or presbyter, or even bishop, but they did care when the king proposed to change the order and manner of worship to which they were attached. Three of the Five Articles of Perth are now commonly practised in Scotland without comment, and it was the method of their adoption, rather than the Articles themselves, that created the opposition that made them so unpopular at the time. It is perhaps not too much to say that if it had not been for the high-handed measures adopted by the Stuart kings there might have been unity of worship in Scotland and England. The Scottish people had won their independence after many a hard-fought fight, and while they might have been led, they refused to be driven. The scene enacted in S. John's Church at the meeting of the Assembly in 1618 was the death blow to the establishment of Episcopacy in Scotland.

In the next century there was another event which coloured Scottish Church history for many decades. The Synod of Perth and Stirling has for long met in Perth. In the west part of the church the Synod met in 1733, and was opened according to custom by a sermon. Ebenezer Erskine was the preacher, and his sermon was the occasion of the first dissent in the Reformed Church. What was at the bottom of the trouble was the question of the intrusion of ministers upon unwilling congregations through patronage. Mr Erskine took up an extreme attitude, and the Synod took action against the preacher. Erskine was deposed, and he and those who followed him formed the Associate Synod, a church which became a part of the United Presbyterian Church, and that church is now a part of the United Free Church of Scotland. The evils that have followed the introduction of patronage have been many, but in this year of grace it is fondly hoped that the last remnants of these unhappy days will disappear when Scotland hails with acclamation the advent of the Church of Scotland united, free, and national.

S. John's Church has had many associations with kings and princes. Robert the Bruce has already been

named as one who sought to restore the church and save it from becoming an early ruin. The unfortunate Queen of Scotland—Mary Stuart,—ever dear to the sentimental Scot, will always be associated with S. John's on account of the unique, magnificent, and priceless gold communion cup presented by Mary of Guise, and to this day used on sacramental occasions. The Stuart kings were from time to time occupants of the royal pew which used to grace the historic church, and though the pew has disappeared, there are still in the possession of the congregation two of the chairs used by Charles I., and cherished as interesting relics of the past history of S. John's. The only Presbyterian Church ever attended by Bonnie Prince Charlie is said to have been the same Church of Perth.

In later days Queen Anne endowed the church liberally, but these endowments have either been lost or appropriated to other uses in the days when Church property was so sadly interfered with and so little valued by those who should have cared for the preservation of what had been bequeathed and consecrated to the service of the Church.

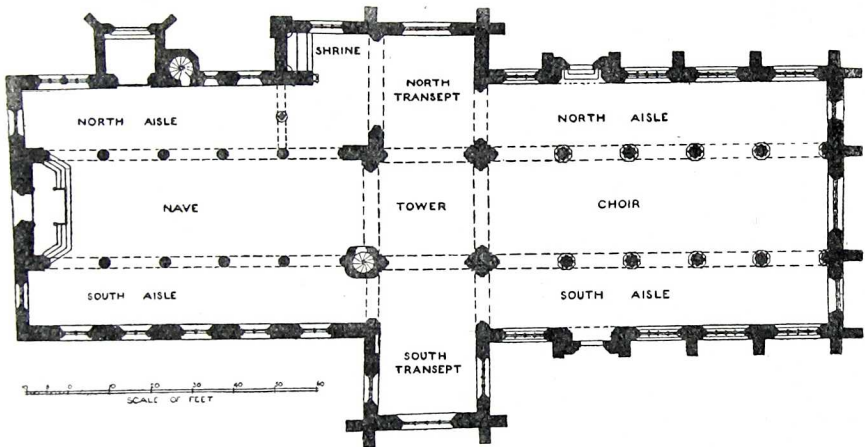
In its day the Church of Perth was indeed a glorious church, but for centuries it was allowed to remain unappreciated and in a sad state. It has been left to the twentieth century to do a great and notable thing, in the restoration of S. John's.

The Church of S. John is the one old possession of which Perth can boast, and at one time the city was rich in buildings that compared favourably with other places in Scotland.

From time to time the church was altered. For the convenience of the city, to improve the streets, and to save money, changes were carried through whereby parts of the building disappeared and the beauty of the church was impaired. In 1598 the West Church was partitioned off the nave, and in 1773 partition walls were erected dividing what remained into the East and Middle Churches of S. John. In addition, in order to accommodate the congregations, unsightly galleries and storm windows were erected whereby the beauty of the interior was altogether destroyed and the symmetry of the building debased. Other so-called improvements were made from time to time, but happily these are now all swept away, and the dreams of those who loved their Zion and the hopes of many now gone to their rest have been fulfilled.

In 1918, at a public meeting of representatives of the county and city of Perth, presided over by His Grace the Duke of Atholl, it was unanimously resolved to restore the ancient Church of S. John the Baptist as a memorial to the men of Perth and Perthshire who had fallen in the war. Sir Robert Lorimer, K.B.E., A.R.A., of Edinburgh, was appointed the architect, and plans were prepared by him. The estimated cost was £50,000. On 2nd November 1928 the church was opened and re-dedicated, and now it stands in the middle of the city a beautiful and reverent building, as well as a national heritage, commemorating the sacrifice made by the city and county of Perth during the five years of the European War.

The restoration carried through under the supervision and according to the plan of Sir Robert Lorimer, with the aid of Perth contractors and Scottish craftsmen, has given Scotland one more addition to the series of great churches that the last few years have witnessed.



The church, cruciform in shape, is a well-proportioned building, beautiful in design, and adorned with costly carvings and some good glass windows. It is of Gothic architecture, and dates back to the twelfth century. The choir is particularly finely proportioned, with moulded pillars and an open timber roof, now exposed as in the days of old, after centuries of plaster. The aisle ceilings are panelled in oak with carved bosses at the intersections. The Holy Table stands on a raised pedestal with steps leading up to it. It is commemorative of the eight ministers who served the East Church during the



Pulpit and Organ.
S. John's Church, Perth.

F. C. Ingis

120 years of its existence as a separate parish. The central panel illustrates the Supper at Emmaus, and has the words carved below: "He was known of them in breaking of Bread." There is an oak screen surrounding the Table, with stalls where the magistrates of the city will sit on the occasions of their official visits to the church. The choir stalls and the organ case are richly carved. The two ministers' chairs, both commemorative, also richly carved, are in keeping with the rest of the decorative work. The great east window, by Dr Douglas Strachan, represents in its main lights the Crucifixion, and is one of the finest windows in Scotland. The two easterly bays of the choir form a chapel. In it is the old East Church Communion Table, placed there in memory of Provost Sidey on the occasion of the one really good former restoration during the ministry of the Rev. W. G. H. Carmichael.

A very noteworthy feature in the church is the shrine, or chapel of memory,—the cenotaph of Perth. The shrine is entirely new, and serves to reveal the commemorative object of the restoration. It is situated to the north-east of the nave, and takes the place of two comparatively modern bays. The shrine is entered from the west by a double arch which is new, and from the east by an old arch which had long stood hidden by galleries and partially destroyed in former days. There is a richly mounted frame containing a panel which bears a general dedicatory inscription. Scrolls are carried on the surrounding frame to remind future generations of the vastness of the military operations and the extent to which the progress of the war led the Allied Forces. Above the panel, and at the top and sides of the frame, symbolic work has been introduced; the coats of arms of the county and city have been included in the carved stone-work, and these are greatly enhanced by artistic work in colours. There is a

Our help is in the name of the Lord
who made Heaven and Earth.

To
The Glory of God
and
In grateful memory
of those of
The County and City of Perth
who fell in
The Great War, 1914-1919,
whose names are written
in the
Golden Book within the Shrine,
this Church of
St. John the Baptist was restored
in 1923.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a
man lay down his life for his friends.

stone table beneath the frame in which the Golden Book containing the names of the 3669 men commemorated is encased. The Golden Book is a particularly fine piece of handpainted work on vellum by Mr Humphreys of London, and is chastely bound in leather with decorative work in gilt. The shrine is beautified by a three-light window illustrating the text, "And there was war in Heaven." The artist is Mr Meredith Williams. A striking figure in bronze of John the Baptist stands to the left of the shrine—the work of Fanindra Bose, A.R.S.A., a young Indian sculptor, whose early death was a loss to art.

The pulpit is in oak richly carved with symbols, and commemorates the members of the Middle Church who died in the war. The roof of the nave is barrel-shaped, finished in fumed oak, and brightened with painted panels on which are represented scenes from the life of Christ. The west window, which is in memory of the Rev. Dr Milne of the West Church, illustrates the Nativity, and is by Mr Hendrie of Edinburgh.

The restoration as now completed is a source of great pride and satisfaction to the citizens of Perth. It has fulfilled the dream of nearly 100 years, and is a noble memorial, and one of the most outstanding monuments of modern church architecture in Scotland—in fact there are those who place it as the best of all the church restorations in the land. The church which has stood in the centre of the city for 800 years, and round which Perth has grown and flourished, now renews its former glory, and in its new life of witness to the Great Head of the Church will stand as a monument of memory and gratitude rededicated to the glory of God, and open from end to end for use as one of Scotland's noblest places of worship. The liberality of some of the citizens—especially of Lord Forteviot,—the assistance of many, the best workmanship of the country, and the skill and genius of the architect have combined to give Perth and Scotland not only a worthy war memorial, but have also restored a great historic church in such a manner that, while nothing of the dignity of the old building has been lost, proof has been given that the skill of former days is still with us, and can compare with that of the old masters in architecture and craftsmanship.

WALTER E. LEE.