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People of Some Importance in Medieval Gloucester

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PEOPLE OF SOME IMPORTANCE IN MEDIÆVAL GLOUCESTER.

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THE Bodleian Library holds a book belonging to Jesus College and entitled "Evangelia SS. Johannis, Lucae, Matthiae." It is inscribed, "Olim Monasterii de Winchcombe ex dono Johannis Gloucester utrinque mutilatum" (partly mutilated). (Cf. *Landboc*, vol. ii., p. liv.)

Within it is written: "This boke was givyn unto the Monastery at Winchcombe by John Gloucester some tyme of Gloucester, dyar." The writing is of the thirteenth century: therefore it is a precious relic, and must be the gift of a prosperous and prominent burgher of Gloucester in those pious days of Henry III., when so much religious building was proceeding in every quarter of this Norman-walled and castled city. By trade a dyer (tinctor), he had married doubtless, and should be traceable in the municipal records there. We have seen how it became possible to trace the contemporary John of Gloucester, King's Mason, from Gloucester to Westminster, to Windsor, and Guildford, and back to Minsterworth. Let us see if we can do something with this namesake, of another more stationary calling.

If, first of all, we turn to Register A of Abbot Froucester (MS. in Chapter Library at Gloucester), fol. 467, we find also a grant by John of Gloucester, Dyer, "for the good of my soul and the souls of my forebears, I have given and granted to God and the Chapel of blessed S. Brigida, which now is in the Infirmary of the Monks (of St. Peter's Abbey), a rent of 5 shillings from certain land lying between the bridges which William Torel and his heirs released in perpetuity." His witnesses are William, the Writer; William de Sumery;

and Stephen of Cornwall ; the latter two being the Provosts, or Reeves, of Gloucester in 1249. Probability seems to point to identity of these " Donors."

If from this we betake our research a step further in the direction indicated, the Corporation records (W. H. Stevenson) help us not a little. *c.* 1230 we open upon a grant of Reiner, " the palmer," to John the Dyer, son of Sampson of Eckington, of a piece of land (free of land-gavel) lying next Reiner's own land, and again next to the land of William the Dyer, who may, or may not, be a near relative. They constantly appear together as witnesses to grants. Another grant to the same John, of land in the Fuller's Lane (*Venella fullonum*), Parish of St. Nicholas, occurs by way of " demise " from William, son of Asketill of Liliton (No. 271) ; so, it is obvious that John the Dyer was a man of possessions. Moreover, his father is shown to have been Sampson of Eckington (near Pershore). Now Reiner the Palmer had a wife, Matilda, who appears as joint-owner with him in those his grants ; further, they possessed a daughter, Isabel, who married Henry, the son of an important person, namely, Henry the Goldsmith, and who kept a shop hard by their land in Ebridge Street (Parish of St. Nicholas). John the Dyer, of Gloucester, was witness to their marriage transaction, *i.e.* the grant of their shop.

But, before proceeding further with this group, let me notice the Torels above-mentioned, whose land was released, we saw, in perpetuity. In fact, the family does not henceforth, though prosperous, figure further at this period in Gloucester ; but possibly, like many well-to-do individuals at that stirring portion of middle thirteenth century, it moved to the larger sphere of London. The Torels, it is clear, had lived in Gloucester, surrounded by the Masons, Founders, Goldsmiths and Dyers, in that new extension of the city secured by the building in 1170-75 of Henry II.'s West-gate Bridge ; and, perforce, they belonged to one or another of those hereditary callings. There may have been two William

Torels, father and son. The first occurs before 1220 (No. 139 C. Corp. Rec.), and in (c.) 1250 (No. 448, 449 *id.*) William Torel, the above-mentioned. (who released the before-mentioned plot of land between the bridges to John the Dyer), also released an annual rent (20d.) from other adjoining land which Torel had given to one Robert of Bredon in free marriage with his daughter Cecilia. A little earlier (c. 1240) we find Alice, daughter of Roger, son of Cecil¹ quit-claiming to John the Dyer 3 marcs which he had paid for her, "magnum negotium," with a 5s. annual rent issuing from *the Mansion* of the Torels between the bridges, "which William (Torel) yearly gave me free from all service or exaction soever," and I guarantee this same rent "to John the Dyer, and his heirs, and I renounce every right both for myself and my heirs which we had in the aforesaid rent." This deed dates c. 1240. Thomas, Dean of Gloucester, D. John Payn (*Chaplain*) and Walter (*Deacon*) are the witnesses.²

From this we gather that the Torels had owned a large house (*Mansio*) and were thriving folk, and that in addition to Cecilia Torel, wife of Robert of Bredon,³ William Torel was closely related to Alice, daughter of Roger, son of Seissyl. Perhaps, therefore, his daughter Cecilia derived her name not from St. Cecilia, but from a Welsh forebear (see Cal. Corp. Rec., No. 119, note 3). Also the five shillings given to God and St. Bridget's Chapel in the Infirmary is accounted for. Further, it must be added, they are found owning certain land at Minsterworth, being a field called *Cowmede* ("Cumede") of 3 acres. This, later in the century, passed from Roger, fourth son of Roger Fitz-Cecil (Seissyl) to another William the Dyer and Alice his wife (? sister of Henry the Goldsmith). In (c.) 1287 William the Dyer quit-claimed certain rents to his daughter Margery, together with Anastasia, daughter of

¹ *i.e.* Seissyl, Welsh personal name.

² Ex. Reg. B, Abbot Froucester.

³ Perhaps a son of Richard of Bredon, a citizen of Gloucester (c.) 1200. Cf. *Trans. B. and G., Arch. Soc.*, vol. xxxviii., p. 25, Robert of Bredon was living 1258.

Henry the Goldsmith. The last-named was then succeeded by his son Peter the Goldsmith, and Henry the younger and Richard the Burgess. The whole of which series of transactions, it may be granted, strongly points to certain intimate family relationships. .

It may be of interest to suggest, therefore, that another Henry of Gloucester, citizen and goldsmith of London, son of William of Gloucester, and Willelma, daughter of Thomas of Basings (parents of John of Gloucester, goldsmith and founder), who died December 15th, 1332, were with much probability the descendants of the Goldsmiths of Ebridge Street, Gloucester, prominent in Henry III.'s reign above given. For trades were strongly hereditary in those times. William, the father of this last Henry, was of course the same King's Chief Goldsmith in 1256-57 who was in charge of the Mint, who completed the shrine-work for the Confessor's tomb in 1269, and a multitude of fine statuettes and jewelled figurines, especially a small effigy (? gilt bronze) of Katharine, daughter of Henry III., for her tomb in Westminster Abbey.

But it is perhaps of even more significance further to suggest that the William Torel, Goldsmith of London, who made (c. 1280) the recumbent bronze effigies of Eleanor and of Henry III. at Westminster, may have been indeed the son of the William Torel whose mansion in the Ebridge Street, Gloucester, in that reign had passed to Cecilia Torel and her husband Robert of Bredon "in free marriage." It is the more remarkable that in 1355 we find a Thomas of Bredon and a Thomas of Gloucester Masons at Westminster Abbey, and in 1360 Robert of Gloucester, King's Mason at Windsor, occurs in conjunction with John de Sponley (K. M.), doubtless a native of Spoonley, near Winchcombe, not (I think) as Sir William St. John Hope tentatively suggested in his *Windsor Monograph* (vol. i.) from far-off Shropshire.

Reiner the Palmer was already living (c. 1240), (cf. W. H.

Stevenson, Cal. Corp. Records, Glos., No. 383-384) when he released and sold (with assent of Matilda his wife) a 2s. rent from land purchased from him by William the Stamper (Cnusare) in order to enlarge a piece of land already belonging to the latter.

In 1273 Peter the Goldsmith (Clerk of the Pyx) possessed, by grant from Henry the Money-Changer, a shop in Gloucester next to the land that formerly belonged to Reiner the Palmer, and towards the bridge in Ebridge Street (Gloucester), and in 1250 the same Henry the Changer was witness with John of Gloucester, King's Mason, to a grant of land in Ebridge Street by the Prior of St. Bartholomew (their neighbour) to one John of Eldersfield.

This, I venture to think, may contribute not a little toward showing how important a place as the begetter of artists of various kinds was that thirteenth-century city of Gloucester, where, in addition to the Norman monasteries of St. Oswald's and St. Peter's and Lanthony, there were then building St. Bartholomew's Priory, a Priory of Carmelites (site, the modern Cattle Market), and near Southgate both a Dominican and a Franciscan house, thus surrounding the King's Castle on every side, except on that overlooking the river westward. All the above-mentioned individuals were interested by the arising, in their midst, under the Queen's patronage, of St. Bartholomew's Priory Hospital; while certain of them were employed in intimate handiwork at the royal Castle hard by. It is perhaps only by collecting and grouping these individuals, and identifying their movements between London and Gloucester and Windsor, the royal cities, that we can fully realise how Gloucester presently became the true originator of the style (*c.* 1350) known as Perpendicular.

¹ Since my paper in vol. xl. *Trans. B. and G. Arch. Soc.*, I have further been enabled to identify the "*Frater Johannes*" who was the architect of Hailes Abbey (see note, p. 166), employed by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, the king's brother. He appears in 1237 as Custos of the work on the Queen's Lodgings at Windsor (Close Roll, a. 12 Hen. III.).