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978-1-108-04261-1 - *Historia Monasterii S. Augustini Cantuariensis* by Thomas of Elmham,
Formerly Monk and Treasurer of that Foundation

Edited by Charles Hardwick

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Rolls Series

Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, usually referred to as the 'Rolls Series', was an ambitious project first proposed to the British Treasury in 1857 by Sir John Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, and quickly approved for public funding. Its purpose was to publish historical source material covering the period from the arrival of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII, 'without mutilation or abridgement', starting with the 'most scarce and valuable' texts. A 'correct text' of each work would be established by collating 'the best manuscripts', and information was to be included in every case about the manuscripts used, the life and times of the author, and the work's 'historical credibility', but there would be no additional annotation. The first books were published in 1858, and by the time it was completed in 1896 the series contained 99 titles and 255 volumes. Although many of the works have since been re-edited by modern scholars, the enterprise as a whole stands as a testament to the Victorian revival of interest in the middle ages.

Historia Monasterii S. Augustini Cantuariensis, by Thomas of Elmham, Formerly Monk and Treasurer of that Foundation

Thomas of Elmham (1364–1427?) was treasurer of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, when he compiled this work, which he called the *Speculum Augustinianum*, around 1414. He planned to give a complete history of the Abbey, and the chronological table covers the period from 597 to 1414, but the main text ends in 806, with a collection of documentary sources from the period 1066 to 1191 appended. His failure to complete the work was probably due to his appointment as Prior of the Cluniac House at Lenton in Nottinghamshire. Elmham made great use of documentary sources in the Abbey's famous library, reproducing and editing original charters, as well as using the work of earlier historians of the House, though, unfortunately, many of the sources he uses were forgeries or corrupt transcripts, produced to support the Abbey's claims to royal and ecclesiastical privileges. This edition by Charles Hardwick was published in 1858.

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RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI
SCRIPTORES,

OR

CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND

DURING

THE MIDDLE AGES.

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THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER THE
DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the Reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

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The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

In compliance with the order of the Treasury, the Master of the Rolls has selected for publication for the present year such works as he considered best calculated to fill up the chasms existing in the printed materials of English history; and of these works the present is one.

Rolls House,
December 1857.

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HISTORIA
MONASTERII S. AUGUSTINI CANTUARIENSIS,

BY

THOMAS OF ELMHAM,
FORMERLY MONK AND TREASURER OF THAT FOUNDATION.

EDITED

BY

CHARLES HARDWICK, M.A.,
FELLOW OF ST. CATHARINE'S HALL, AND CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

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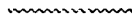
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INTRODUCTION.



WHEN St. Augustine and his fellow-missionaries passed along the vale of the Stour to Canterbury, in the spring of 597, the rude descendants of the Jutic pirates, who had settled in the lathes of Kent, evinced no disposition to abandon the old mythology of Northern Europe. It is true that Christianity had ceased to be arrayed against them as the creed of enemies, whom they had fought and subjugated, tortured and destroyed. The foreign worship was now celebrated under the auspices of Queen Bertha in Canterbury itself; and thus, apart from any influences which might have been exerted by the Celtic slaves, or by occasional tidings of the Irish missionaries, who were active on the northern coasts of Britain, the public mind was being silently prepared for a solemnity which claims to be regarded as the starting point in the great march of English civilisation,—the baptism of King Æthelbert at Canterbury, on Whit-Sunday, A.D. 597.

Arrival
of the Ro-
man mis-
sionaries
in Kent.

And as Canterbury became the earliest seat of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, the primitive centre both of intellectual and religious illumination for the southern shires of England was the abbey of St. Augustine, whose muniments are brought to light in the following pages. Planted in the suburbs of that city, and incorporating with itself a heathen fane, which, on conversion to Christian uses, was dedicated in honour

Vast im-
portance of
St. Augus-
tine's
abbey.

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of the Roman boy Pancratius, the new convent waxed in fame, in beauty, in resources, till at length the Canterbury pilgrim, who stopped to gaze at Fyndon's gateway, might have easily mistaken the vast pile of buildings for some royal or imperial residence. It had a frontage of two hundred and fifty feet; it was endowed with eleven thousand six hundred and eighty acres of land.¹

Its proper
title.

The proper name of this foundation was the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul;² but when the old monastic church was consecrated by Laurentius, in 613, the remains of St. Augustine were transported thither, and his name occasionally substituted for those of the two great Apostles. As late, however, as 1325, when the high altar of the new church was dedicated afresh, St. Peter and St. Paul are still enumerated at the head of a list of saints who were supposed to exercise especial patronage within the sacred enclosure.

Choice of
the locality.

The main object both of Æthelbert and Augustine was to found, in the new monastery, an appropriate burial-place not only for themselves, but their successors in all future ages; and the site was chosen at some distance from the town of Canterbury, partly, as of late suggested,³ in compliance with the practice of an age in which the public cemeteries were always so situated, and partly, as the present Author seems to think, in fancied imitation of our Lord Himself, who "suffered without the gate."

¹ See Mr. Dunkin's "Report of the Proceedings of the British Archaeological Association" (1844), p. 139.

² Tit. I. § 9.

³ Mr. Stanley's "Memorials of Canterbury," p. 24. Gervaise in his "Actus Pontif. Cantuar.," col. 1641. ("Scriptores X."), had observed al-

ready, in connexion with this point : "Dicebant enim Romani primi in Angliam missi civitatem non esse mortuorum, sed vivorum." Cf. below, p. 115. We find from the same writer (*ibid.*), that all persons, high and low, monks and townsmen, were alike interred "in atrio ecclesie apostolorum Petri et Pauli."

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But whatever reasons may have guided the founders of St. Augustine's in their choice of a locality, it is unquestionable that much of the early greatness of their foundation was due to its peculiar and exclusive right of sepulture. Both honour and advantage were reflected upon it by the proximity of the illustrious dead. We are enabled to realize the vast importance attached to this privilege by noticing the warmth and bitterness of the regrets which followed its suspension and ultimate withdrawal.¹ The earliest deviation from the rule prescribed by St. Augustine occurred on the demise of Archbishop Cuthbert in 758.² Till that period the cathedral church of Canterbury (known as Christ-church, or the Church of the Holy Trinity) had occupied a very subordinate position as compared with what the Augustinians loved to designate the "*mater primaria*" of English institutions, and "the special nursling of the mother of all " churches."

A society of monks, indeed, was also organized in the cathedral church as early as the reign of Æthelbert;³ but these, who constitute the "envious rivals" of our Author, were for centuries eclipsed by the superior reputation of the monks of St. Augustine's. It was clearly from a consciousness of such depreciation that Archbishop Cuthbert was at length resolved to strike

¹ See Hist., pp. 317, *sq.* Thorne's account is written with the same asperity: "Cuthbertus igitur, Cantuariensis archiepiscopus, a beato Augustino undecimus, sub anno Domini DCCXLIII. animadvertens destitutionem ecclesiæ, cui præsidebat, eo quod nullo honorabilis sepulturæ decore fulgeret, dum, defunctis archiepiscopis, eorum corpora auferrentur, et ad monasterium istud, juxta decreta summorum

pontificum, tumulanda transferrentur, dolo concepto iniquitateni parturiendo condoluit, et qualiter illa consuetudo mutaretur, tam studiose, quam seditiose tractavit." —("Scriptores X.," col. 1772).

² Thorne's date (748) is incorrect. That given by our Author is confirmed by other authorities. See Godwin "de Præsulibus," ed. Richardson, p. 45.

³ See Hist., pp. 133, 134.

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Artifice by which the Augustinians were robbed of their distinctive privilege. a blow in favour of his priory. As he felt his end approaching, he gave utterance to a scheme, "long cherished," says the adverse chronicler, "in his treacherous bosom,—a scheme most deadly, serpentine, yea, even matricidal,"—which was to bind his family of monks by a solemn oath that they would neither divulge the fact of his illness nor his death, and would abstain from all public celebration of his obsequies until the body had been interred for several days. The funeral bell, however, tolled at last; and when the monks of St. Augustine's, with the abbot at their head, proceeded to assert their ancient right of burying the departed prelate, they found to their intense annoyance that the work was already done. The same "vulpine" policy was adopted, we are told, on the death of Bregwin, the next archbishop; and although Jambert, his successor, who was formerly abbot of St. Augustine's, and who in that capacity had led an armed band of monks against the sister-institution, was himself eventually interred according to the primitive regulations, those regulations were never permanently re-established, nor, as may be readily conceived, was the "opprobrious" conduct of the Christ-church monks forgiven or forgotten.

Subsequent struggles with the Christ-church monks.

I have somewhat dwelt upon this topic, because it is continually suggested, with greater or with less distinctness, in the course of the present volume. The fraternal feelings which subsisted for a while between the abbot and archbishop, and between the monks of St. Augustine's on the one hand and of Christ-church on the other, had gradually died away; and many pages in the history of both foundations are darkened by the narrative of feuds and broils and jealousies, of furious charges and as furious counter-charges, of stubborn lawsuits and envenomed bickerings, which are sometimes thought to be the special characteristic of these later and less favoured ages.

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The feuds at Canterbury were again both complicated and embittered by the circumstance that the presiding spirit of one foundation was himself a bishop, and a bishop armed with the authority befitting the primate of All England. Whatever may have been the dominant cause, it is a fact that the episcopal and monastic systems have been seldom found to work harmoniously together. At first a large proportion of the monks appear to have been laymen, and even where some members of the confraternity were admitted into holy orders, and so contracted new relations to the bishop of the diocese, they must have felt themselves continually sheltered by the independent genius of their institutions. The monastic property, for example, was never suffered to subside into the general mass, of which the bishop was at first the chief administrator. A spirit of independence thus engendered, and in many cases fostered by concessions of episcopacy itself, would be productive here and there of lasting benefits; it served to keep alive the smouldering embers both of civil and religious freedom;¹ and in times when bishops were too prone to wield the crosier as an engine of oppression or of self-aggrandizement, and when the secular clergy could but mutter their complaints in secret clubs or *conjuraciones*, the monastic element in European society became itself a timely counterpoise, and often led the way to healthy reactions.

On the other hand, it is indisputable that as corruptions crept into the cloisters, with the increase of their wealth and reputation, many abbots grew proud and domineering as the bishop or the feudal lord in their immediate neighbourhood. The

¹ See M. Guizot's remark ("*History of Civilization*," ii. 94), who looks upon the earlier race of monks as champions of liberty, in the "same way as the borough retained some wreck of the municipal system:"

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convent, with its spreading pastures and its goodly parish-churches, had become an independent organisation,—a diocese within a diocese. Protected by a long array of charters, partly old and genuine, partly fabricated in the clumsiest fashion, to promote the temporal interests of his house, the abbot soon aspired to rank completely on a level with the bishop or archbishop: he also wore the mitre; he pronounced the solemn benediction; he obtained a seat of honour in the councils of the Church; he consecrated vessels and even edifices for the service of religion; he absolved or reconciled the excommunicated; he boasted that he was set free entirely from domestic vassalage and local jurisdictions; and as the “consort, colleague, and commissioner” of all the highest dignitaries of the Church, evaded their demands upon him, by devoting himself more fervently to the obedience of the Roman pontiffs.

Effect of
papal ex-
emptions
granted in
their be-
half.

There is good reason for believing that the earliest papal grant in favour of such complete exemption,—exemption not only from the ordinary jurisdiction of the bishop in whose diocese the convent might be situated, but from all episcopal control whatever,—was accorded to the monks of Fulda, at the instance of St. Boniface,¹ in 751. A similar claim, though resting originally, we shall see, upon a far less truthful basis, was advanced by the great Canterbury convent, whose annals we are now considering. The constant plea of Augustinians, in their struggle with the archbishop, was, “that the aforesaid monastery, by virtue of papal grants of privilege, had been exempted since its very foundation from all ordinary judicatures,—exempted not in head and members only, but in all things appertaining to it within and without.” They

¹ See the Letter of Pope Zacharias in the works of Boniface, ed. Giles, i. 187; Mabillon, “Annal. Ord.

S. Benedict.,” ii. 157; Schröckh, xx. 61 sq.; Dronke, “Codex Diplom. Fuldensis,” pp. 2, 3, (Cassel, 1850.)

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held that no one, save the Roman pontiff, or a legate, to whom such power might be occasionally entrusted, had jurisdiction of any kind over their monastery, "the abbot or the monks, the clerics or the tenants;"—but that all ordinary jurisdiction was consigned to officers of the society itself; the abbot, in particular, having a plenary power in all the churches appropriated to the monastery, or otherwise belonging to it, so that he could institute or displace the clergy of those churches, and, in a word, could exercise all kinds of jurisdiction, "such as bishops were accustomed to exercise in their own dioceses."¹

It could hardly be expected that archbishops of Canterbury would allow these arrogant pretensions to grow up and circulate unchallenged; and the reader who desires to track the controversy through its many tedious windings will find ample means of forming a true judgment on the merits or demerits of the various combatants, in the chronicle of Gervaise on the one side, and in documents appended to this treatise on the other.

A single instance may be here adduced, as serving to throw light on papal instruments now published *in extenso* for the first time. The learned monk of Christchurch positively declares that all the abbots of St. Augustine's anterior to Silvester (1151–1161) were accustomed, on applying for the archiepiscopal benediction, to make the ordinary vow of canonical obedience. Silvester also (runs the story) is induced to sue for benediction, like his numerous predecessors in that office. He declines, however, to receive it in the cathedral church; and the archbishop, as the natural consequence, declines to give it him elsewhere. Sil-

The Archbishops of Canterbury resist the growth of such exemptions.

Example drawn from the benediction of Abbot Silvester.

¹ See, for instance, Thorne, col. 1987, where we have the "articuli liberati pro parte abbatis et conventus S. Augustini" at full length.

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vester now (*“collecta pecunia”* is the quiet sarcasm of his critic) goes to Rome, and there is even more successful than he seems at first to have expected. He brings back a papal instrument, not only commanding the archbishop (Theobald) to give him the accustomed benediction, but to give it without calling for any profession of canonical obedience.

Appeals to
Rome.

With this mandate Theobald is going to comply, when a fresh combatant steps forward in the person of the prior of Christ-church, who is anxious to preserve the credit of his foundation, or at least to do his utmost in reducing the pride of his opponent. He enters an appeal to Rome; the business is suspended; but Silvester, nothing daunted, traverses the Alps afresh, and on his reappearance at St. Augustine's, exhibits a new mandate, calling on the archbishop to proceed with the benediction according to the wishes of his rival, without heeding fresh appeals from any quarter, “which also,” adds the chronicler, “came to pass. This man was the first and the last who received in his own church, and at the hands of the archbishop, not a gift of benediction, but a burden of execration.”¹

Spirited
letter of
Archbishop
Richard to
Alexander
III.

It is true that some exalted privileges of St. Augustine's (this one in the number) were curtailed in after times; but as the consequence of almost every application to the Roman see, the favours of the pope were lavished more profusely on the monks at the expense of bishops and archbishops. A remarkable illustration of this state of things is furnished by a letter of the English primate, Archbishop Richard, (next to Becket in the series,) which is worthy of especial notice here, because it will be found to throw some light upon another group of papal instruments, now rescued

¹ Gervas. “Chron.” col. 1370.

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from oblivion. The letter¹ was addressed to Alexander III. about the year 1180, on the occasion of a quarrel between the abbot of Malmesbury and the bishop of the diocese in which that convent had been planted. After mentioning a story then current, to the effect that an exemption might be had at Rome for the annual payment of an ounce of gold, he tells the pontiff plainly, what, to sober-minded people like himself, appeared to be among the very worst abuses of the age :—

“Adversus primates et episcopos intumescunt abbates, nec est qui majoribus suis reverentiam exhibeat et honorem. Evacuatum est obedientiæ jugum, in qua erat unica spes salutis, et prævaricationis anti-quæ remedium. Detestantur abbates habere suorum excessuum correctorem, vagam impunitatis licentiam amplectuntur, claustralisque militiæ jugum relaxant in omnem desiderii libertatem. Hic [Hinc(?)] est, quod monasteriorum fere omnium facultates datæ sunt in direptionem et prædam. Nam abbates exterius curam carnis in desideriis agunt, non curantes dummodo laute exhibeantur, et fiat pax in diebus eorum; claustrales vero tanquam acephali otio vacant et vaniloquio; nec enim præsidem habent, qui eos ad frugem viæ melioris inclinet. Quod si tumultuosas eorum contentiones audiretis, claustrum non multum differre crederetis a foro. Hæc omnia, reverende pater, vestræ correctionis iudicium postulant tempestivum. Nisi enim huic malo maturius remedium habeatur, verendum est ne, sicut abbates ab episcopis, ita episcopi ab archiepiscopis, et a prælatis suis decani et archidiaconi, eximantur.”

¹ It will be found among the printed works (Ep. lxxviii.) of the Archdeacon of Bath, Peter of Blois, who was attached to the household of Archbishop Richard, and had even gone to Rome as proctor for him in his controversy with St. Augustine's.

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Here he must have felt that he was treading upon perilous ground, and therefore added half-apologetically:—

“Arguemur temeritatis, et dicemur os nostrum posse
suisse in cœlum, qui non de superbiæ spiritu, sed
de atramentario doloris hæc scribimus. Sentimus
equidem familiares angustias, qui publicas deplo-
ramus; nec fortitudo nostra fortitudo est lapidis,
nec caro nostra ænea est, ut tam enormes injurias
dissimulare possimus.”

He then alludes particularly to the case of St. Augustine's, and proceeds to draw a startling parallel between the Roman pontiff, with his “many flocks and herds,” (the David of his age,) and the archbishop of Canterbury (the Uriah), with his single “ewe lamb,”—a piece of property which, had no evil passions arisen in his neighbours, he might still, he says, have “cherished in his bosom with the forethought of a pastor and the tenderness of a father.” He allows, indeed, that Roman pontiffs for the most part granted their exemptions from a genuine disposition to promote the peace of convents and to shield them from the tyranny of bishops; but he urges, nevertheless, that as the issue of the great experiment was found to be confusion and disaster, the pontiff would act wisely if he ceased to give it any longer the support of his high authority. “*Conservet vos Dominus,*” is the concluding prayer, “*ad servandam debitam ecclesiis libertatem.*”

The English monarchs side with the Archbishops against the Abbots.

The bold tone of this production seems to indicate that the archbishop felt more confidence than many of his predecessors in the friendship and alliance of the English crown. And such was really the case. Amid the struggle now awakening between the royal and the papal forces, it grew manifest that while the pontiff and the abbot almost uniformly took the same side, the common interest of the king and primate would often tend to draw them also far more closely to each

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other. Thus the temporary reconciliation or "Composition," as they termed it, between Archbishop Richard and Abbot Roger, was not only ratified by Henry II. in 1182, but wrung from the unyielding monks almost entirely by the pressure of the royal power;¹ and it is equally symptomatic of a change in English feeling, that when the pope on this occasion gave orders for the benediction of the abbot of St. Augustine's, without requiring any vow of canonical obedience, he could find no prelate who was willing to execute the orders. He first applied to the Archbishop, who steadily refused. He then asked the Bishop of Worcester, and was equally unsuccessful. A third application to the Archbishop of Rouen shared the same fate; and the result was, that the task of pronouncing the ordinary benediction devolved upon the pope himself. The abbot elect was graciously entertained at the Tusculan, and there admitted to his office, in the presence of the whole pontifical court, of divers other prelates, and an innumerable concourse of clergy and people. The mitre and the ring were at the same time publicly conferred on Roger, or, to use the soft expression of the chronicler, were now *restored* to St. Augustine's, after a very long disuse; and Alexander, it is added, as a signal proof of "speciality and unvarying love," sent over

Refusal to proceed with the benediction of Abbot Roger;

which finally took place at Rome.

¹ Thorne's version of the matter is worth extracting: "Anno Domini M.CLXXXII., cum controversia diu fuisset mota inter Ricardum archiepiscopum et abbatem sancti Augustini, et ejusdem loci conventum, super accusatione privilegiorum istius monasterii, exactione professionis ejusdem abbatis, et cæteris, quæ prius tacta sunt, tandem monachi sancti Augustini, gravaminibus et expensis multipliciter afflicti, rege *Henrico pur-*

tem archiepiscopi favente, compulsi sunt per ipsum regem cum prædicto archiepiscopo pacem et concordiam per modum compositionis inire," etc., col. 1835. Just before, however, when the abbot himself was inclined to give way, the monks "velut lapides solidissimi minus cedentes, quo magis cæduntur, resumtis viribus, prædicto archiepiscopo opposcentes se murum, pro domo Domini viriliter restiterunt."

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to the convent his own cape¹ and girdle as a gift in perpetuity.

Chroniclers of St. Augustine's. A foundation so important and so venerable, ever acting as a great depository of ancient wisdom, and, in spite of all the sins and follies which impaired its usefulness, diffusing far and wide the elements of Christian civilisation, would be sure to find among its inmates a succession of devoted chroniclers and champions. Four of such demand a passing notice at our hands:—

Gocelin.

1. The first was Gocelin (or Gotseline), a French monk of St. Bertin's, who came to England in the train of Hereman, bishop of Salisbury, in 1058. "Is multo episcopatus et abbatias perlustrans tempore, præclaræ scientiæ multis locis monumenta dedit, in laudibus sanctorum Angliæ post Bedam secundus."² Among his other wanderings, Gocelin appears to have been at Ely soon after 1082, and subsequently at Ramsey; but in 1098 we find him settled as a monk of St. Augustine's, and ardently engaged in writing eulogies upon the Canterbury saints. He was excited in his efforts chiefly by the outburst of enthusiasm attending the recent translation of relics to the new church, as finished by Abbot Wido in 1091; but also by a wish to vindicate the favourite saints and worthies of the monastery from the malice of detractors. With the latter object he wrote his *Life of St. Mildred*, and especially the "*Libellus contra inanes S. Mildredæ Usurpatores*;" both of which, as well as other works of Gocelin, appear to have been used by the

¹ The reading *plumale* in Thorne (col. 1824) is clearly a mistake for *pluviale*; as Du Cange indeed has pointed out (s. v.)

² Will. Malmesb. p. 130. ("Script. post Bed." Francof. 1601.)

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Author of this volume, though he never mentions Gocelin by name.¹

2. Thomas Sprott, however, seems to be the earliest inmate of St. Augustine's whose production can be brought within the sphere of genuine history; for Gocelin, regarded from our point of view, was little more than a hagiographer, reducing into shape the multitude of older lives of saints, and there indulging his imagination very freely, but adding little to our real knowledge even of the subjects of his eulogy.

The "Chronica" of Sprott, to which the Author of the present volume was anxious to acknowledge his obligations in the outset, is said to have extended from the Creation to the year 1272, or, more correctly, 1232.² The work, however, was no longer visible at St. Augustine's when Leland made his famous tour in Kent to search for antiquarian treasure. ("Nusquam etenim illic apparet Spotti³ historia, et verisimile est omnino periisse.")⁴ And although a copy, once surviving in the Cotton Library (Vitellius, D. 11.), was used by Dugdale in compiling the "Monasticon," that volume also has now perished. The so-called "Chronica" of Sprott, which Hearne edited in 1719, agrees neither with quotations made from the Cotton MS., nor with one pointed reference to Sprott con-

¹ See pp. 217 sq. It also noticeable that Gervaise of Canterbury speaks with seeming disparagement of Gocelin ("Script. X." col. 1633), where he calls him "nescio quem Gocelinum." Thorne, on the other hand dignifies the work "de Translatione sancti Augustini," with the title "*Chronica* Gotselini" (col. 1783.)

² Thorne's Prologue is made to say M.CCLXXII. (col. 1758); but in the body of the work (col. 1881),

we are informed, just before the entry at A.D. 1231, "Hucusque chronica sua partim perduxit T. Sprot; abhinc idem frater Wilhelmus [Thorne] sui temporis digessit historiam." Is not M.CCLXXII. a misreading of M.CCXXXII.?

³ Another form of the name not unusual.

⁴ See the various "Testimonia de Thoma Sprotto" prefixed to Hearne's edition of the so-called "Chronica," pp. lxi. sq.

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tained in the present volume. It seems to be a collection of mere "excerpta," relating to English history, and St. Augustine's in particular.¹

William
Thorne.

3. But while it is most likely that this chronicle of the Canterbury monk has perished, we have reason for believing that the substance of it has descended to us partly in the present volume, but more completely in the "Chronica" respecting the abbots of St. Augustine's, compiled by William Thorne (de Spina), a member of the same foundation. Thorne informs us that the earlier half of his production (as far, that is, as 1272, or rather 1232)² was chiefly borrowed from that source, though not without considerable augmentation and retrenchment: "Ego Willelmus dictus Thorne necessario compulsus, et exemplo priorum merito provocatus, quædam superflua a compilatione dicti Thomæ resecaus, quædam notabilia suis in locis eidem superaddens, aggregatis hinc inde diversorum processuum codicellis, proprii sudoris labore, ad utilitatem fratrum et commoditatem legentium, reliquum temporis in unum corpus propagare curavi." The latter half of Thorne's chronicle, which is far more copious than the earlier, has continued the annals of the monastery to the closing years of Richard II., the last entry bearing date 1397.

Design of
the Author
of this
History.

4. We now approach the Author of the present History, who undertakes to handle the same subject, and who follows, at no distant period, in the

¹ I am glad to be supported in this view by the learned Author of the General Introduction to the "Monumenta Britannica," who says (p. 28, n. 1): "There seems no ground whatever for attributing these chronicles to Sprott; they are brought down more than a century after the time of his death."

When Reyner wrote his "Apostolatus Benedictinorum in Anglia" (Duaci, 1626), it was believed that the genuine Sprott was in the possession of Abbot, "qui nunc vocatur Cantuariensis episcopus," (p. 46.)

² See above, p. xv. n. 2

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steps of William Thorne. His aim, however, is still more ambitious, and in the part which has come down to us, the work has been constructed on a scale of grandeur, or more properly of diffuseness, which has few examples in the literary products of that age of compilations. We gather from the introductory Table, which may justly be regarded as a kind of index to the whole work, that the Author had intended to distribute his materials under "Tituli," corresponding to the list of Abbots who had ruled in St. Augustine's. The whole number thus obtained is sixty-two, including one "Titulus" of introductory matter ("de Fundatione").

But so vast was the conception of the Author, and so fatal the facility with which he passed from St. Augustine's to the general history of the Anglo-Saxon church, that fourteen only of these "Tituli," embracing an account of little more than two hundred years, appear to have been absolutely finished; while the rest of the volume is made up of what may be entitled preparations, or rough materials, for the projected history,—such as charters, bulls, and other muniments relating to St. Augustine's, and ranging all of them between the Norman Conquest and the early years of Richard I. (circa 1192). The work accordingly is superior to the "Chronica" of William Thorne, in giving us a large collection of the older archives, and narrating the chief events of all that early period in our history, where Thorne is well-nigh silent; while it is inferior to his Chronicle in the want of some historical commentary to illustrate the import of the bulls and charters brought together in the last division. In other words, the two productions, as now extant, when regarded in this light, become (if I may so express it) reciprocally complementary.

The splendid manuscript from which the text of our edition is derived has long been known to antiquarian

How far executed.

Its relation to Thorne's Chronicle.

Account of the Trinity Hall MS.

b

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scholars,—a circumstance which ought to be distinctly mentioned in this place, as serving to account for the publicity already given to the more valuable part of its contents. It was consulted, for example, by Spelman, Selden, Twysden, Somner, Dugdale, Hickes and Wanley, by Lewis, the historian of the Isle of Thanet, by Wheloc and Smith, the editors of Bede, by Bishop Stillingfleet, in composing his “*Origines Britannicæ*,” and still more recently by Mr. Kemble, the distinguished editor of the “*Codex Diplomaticus*.” With the exception of a modern copy of it in the Harleian Collection, No. 686,¹ our manuscript appears to be the only form in which the Author’s industry had, till the publication of this volume, been transmitted to our times.

Its presentation to the College.

The manuscript was executed in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and is now in the possession of the Master and Fellows of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, to whom it was presented by Robert Hare, the Cambridge archæologist,² who died November 2, 1611. The following entry on the first page will serve to indicate the spirit and intention of the donor:—

“*Liber iste quondam spectavit ad cœnobium beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli, sive Augustini, juxta muros civitatis Cantuariæ. Ipso autem monasterio sub regimine regis Henrici octavi sublato, bonisque omnibus monachorum spoliatis, et in usum regium conversis, idem liber fortuito pervenit ad manus magistri Roberti Haer, qui dedit eundem Collegio sive Aulæ Sanctæ Trinitatis Cantabrigiensis, ibidem*

¹ I am indebted for a knowledge of this fact to Nasmith’s edition of Tanner’s “*Notitia Monastica*” (Kent, xii. § 2.) Excerpts of some early portions of the work will

also be found in the Hare Papers (MS. Caius Coll. Camb. No. 391).

² See “*Cambridge Portfolio*,” edited by the Rev. J. J. Smith, i. 149 sq. Lond. 1840.

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“ tuto et secure custodiendum. Hac tamen conditione,
 “ ut, si imposterum (favente Deo) monasterium illud
 “ reædificari contingeret, tunc magister et socii Collegii
 “ sive Aulæ Sanctæ Trinitatis prædictæ eundem li-
 “ brum monachis ejusdem cœnobii restitui facerent,
 “ quoniam ad eos de jure pertinere debet.”

We are now in a position to inquire respecting the age and name of the Author, and the value of his work as an historical compilation.

The first of these points is readily determined. From Age of the
Writer. the body of the narrative we may collect that the Welsh rebellion¹ under Owen Glendower had been recently crushed;—an intimation which will bring us to the first decade of the fifteenth century. We gather also, from the use of the expression “*piæ memoriæ*,”² that Archbishop Arundel was no more at the date of the first “*Titulus*,” which, as he died on the 20th of February “1413” (*i.e.* 1414), will place the transcription of the present MS., if not the actual composition of the work itself, after that year. On the other side, as the chronological Table ends abruptly in the first quarter of a page at the year 1418, and as the entries for three or four years preceding are made in a different hand, the inference is necessitated, or, at least, suggested very strongly, that the execution of the work for some cause or other had been discontinued soon after 1413; nor have we any intimation in the body of the narrative, considered as distinct from the chronological Table, to favour the hypothesis of later origin. We are at liberty, therefore, to conclude that 1414 is approximately the time at which the work of our Author was finally interrupted.

Who that Author was we are unable to decide at His leading
characteristics. once with equal certainty. The manuscript itself has neither title nor colophon. From it, however, we may

¹ pp. 256, 257.| ² p. 89.

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safely argue that the writer, when embarking on his project, was a monk of St. Augustine's. He is ever anxious to extol the dignity and vindicate the rights of that foundation. He inherits all the acrimony of his predecessors with respect to the adjoining monastery of Christ-church, which he never fails to represent as a subordinate society. His hatred also of the "Gregorians," or the confraternity of canons-regular, founded at Canterbury in honour of St. Gregory, is equally apparent, and arose from precisely the same feeling which is noticeable in the case of Gocelin,—a fear lest members of the new establishment should anyhow make good their claim to the possession of the relics of St. Mildred.¹ But these "æmuli" are not the only foes denounced by our historian. He loses no opportunity of manifesting his deep antipathy to Lollards. Everything most vile, most murderous, and most sacrilegious, which he finds in earlier annals of his country, rises up before him as a dark precursor of the modern heretics, who dared to say that temporal riches ought never to have been bestowed upon "the monasteries and ministers of holy Church."²

Dislike of the Christ-church monks ;

of the Canons of St. Gregory's ;

and especially of the Lollards.

So far, however, the characteristics of the Author are precisely those which would be found in almost every monk of St. Augustine's, writing in the troublous interval between the first conviction of John Oldcastle,

¹ See above, p. xiv. Capgrave's version of this matter runs as follows : " Inveni enim scriptum in cœnobio sancti Gregorii Cantuariæ, quod anno Domini MLXXXV., Lanfrancus archiepiscopus corpora sanctarum virginum Mildredæ et Edburgæ, in Thaneto insula sepulta, de terra levavit, et in ecclesia beati Gregorii Cantuariæ, quam ad pauperum solamen paulo ante

de rebus ecclesiæ, cui præsidebat, ditaverat, cum magno honore transferens collocavit. Ibi revera scrinium satis pretiosius adventantibus ostenditur, sed altercationem inter monachos et canonicos pro corpore sanctæ Mildredæ nondum tempore sedatam, peritioribus discutiendam relinquo."—*Nova Legenda*, fol. ccxxxiv. ed. 1516.

² p. 208.