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Roger of Hoveden Edited by William Stubbs

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Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene

Roger of Hoveden's *Chronica* was begun around 1192 and covers English history from 732 to 1201, when it is assumed he died. The work is largely an annotated compilation of various other chronicles, including the *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis* (also reissued in this series). This was formerly attributed to Benedict of Peterborough, which was the view taken by William Stubbs (1825–1901) when he edited this work for the Rolls Series in 1868–71. Since the twentieth century, however, Hoveden has been recognised as the author. As a clerk to Henry II until 1189, and later as a diplomat during the Third Crusade, he was ideally placed to gain first-hand knowledge and also documents, which he provides here in full. Volume 4 (1192–1201) comprises public documents and original work by Hoveden, particularly relating to the north of England, where he was based.

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Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene

VOLUME 4

ROGER OF HOVEDEN
EDITED BY WILLIAM STUBBS



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He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be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

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.

Rolls House,
December 1857.

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CHRONICA

MAGISTRI ROGERI DE
HOUEDENE.

EDITED

BY

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REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, AND SOMETIME LIBRARIAN
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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P R E F A C E .

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PREFACE.



THE reputation of Roger of Hoveden as an independent historian rests almost entirely on the last of the four divisions into which, in the earlier volumes of this edition, his chronicle has been resolved. This division extends from the spring of the year 1192 to the winter of the year 1201, and fills the latter half of the third and the whole of the present fourth volume. It may be as well to remind the reader that the only one of the earlier divisions, the authorship of which cannot be certainly accounted for otherwise than by ascribing it to Hoveden, the portion that extends from 1148 to 1169, covers a period too remote from the date at which the work assumed its present form, to allow any special value to be ascribed to the personal recollections of the writer, even supposing that writer to have been Hoveden; whilst it is not by any means improbable that in the general search for historical manuscripts which is now being carried on, some materials may be discovered which will account quite differently for the original authorship of the second, as certainly as has been already done for that of the first and third divisions of the work. It is not, however, at all likely that such will be the case with the fourth division. If Roger of Hoveden wrote anything at all, and if the consensus of the many existing manuscripts which ascribe the finished work to him, has any real value and significance, the history of the latter years of Richard and the earlier ones of John must be referred to him as author.

The concluding portion of the Chronicle to be most certainly attributed to Roger Hoveden.

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Roger's personal history serves to confirm his title to the authorship.

And this conclusion is supported by the little, very little indeed it is, that can be ascertained of his personal history. His position as a clerk or chaplain of Henry II., his connexion with the north of England, his employment as a justice of the forests, his probable connexion with the town of Howden, and through it with the see of Durham and the family of Hugh de Puiset,—that is, all that can be said to be known about him during the years that are the subject of the latter portion of the chronicle,—will be found to agree very well with the hypothesis that ascribes to him the authorship of a work of which so large a part is devoted to the history of the see of York, in which so much prominence is given to the fortunes of the bishop of Durham and his family, and in which the few local and incidental notices that are peculiar to it belong so frequently to the neighbourhood from which the supposed writer took his name.¹

It may further be said that these few points not only are all that can be guessed about Roger of Hoveden, but touch very nearly everything that is distinctive in the chronicle. The abundant supply of valuable public documents is just what might be expected in a compilation made by a clerk of the king's court. The special fulness of the articles connected with the forest jurisdiction is in complete accord with the fact that the chronicler was a justice of the forests; his severity in remarking on the cruelty of that jurisdiction,² if we consider that it becomes apparent at the time at which he is known to have ceased to hold the office of justice, is rather confirmative of the hypothesis than inconsistent with it; and the same may be said of the occasional sharpness with which he rebukes the secular employ-

¹ See preface to vol. i. pp. xiii-xxv. | ² Vol. iv. pp. 62, 63.

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ments of the superior clergy.¹ If more were known of Hoveden's life, it would doubtless be possible to discover in similar small coincidences additional grounds for maintaining his title to the authorship.

Where so little that is certain can be advanced, it may seem unwise to rely on inferences; but the same conclusion does seem to be drawn from a consideration of the few places in which the writer or compiler allows a glimpse of his personal character to be caught. The only note of character in the book is that tendency to the marvellous on which remark has been made more than once in the prefaces to the earlier volumes.² This note, which in a mediæval historian is, of course, far from being a striking peculiarity, will be found on examination to mark a sort of unity in the method of treatment apparent throughout the work, and further to localize the authorship. The hand that introduced into the matter of fact story of the Durham and Worcester annalists, the miracles of Edward the Confessor,³ that struck at every opportunity the string of the miraculous apparent in the story of the martyr of Canterbury, that added new terrors and horrors to the sins and mysteries of the emperor Henry V.,⁴ is doubtless the same that reported, on the authority of abbot Eustace, the neglected warning sent to Henry II. when he spared the heretics of Guienne,⁵ and that placed amongst the most precious recollections of contemporary history the miracles wrought by the same abbot Eustace in support of his preaching of the sanctity of the Lord's day.⁶ This spirit of credulity marks some of the most important additions made in this compilation to the

Inference from the glimpses of personal character to be discovered in the book.

¹ See, for instance, with regard to archbishop Geoffrey, vol. iii. pp. 240, 274; and with regard to Hubert Walter, vol. iv. pp. 90, 91.

² See preface to vol. i. p. xxxvi.; vol. ii. pp. xx, liii., &c.

³ Vol. i. pp. 108-111.

⁴ Vol. i. pp. 163, 181.

⁵ Vol. ii. pp. 272, 273.

⁶ Vol. iv. pp. 76, 123, 124, 167-172.

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The credulity of the writer characterizes and localizes him.

earlier writers; it runs through the whole work, and is indeed the only characteristic of the kind that does so; it increases in intensity in the fourth and last portion; and in its fullest development localizes the writer in the neighbourhood of Howden, and the adjoining parts of Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. The argument may be taken for what it is worth. If the question be put, Are we to regard the consensus of the manuscripts as to Hoveden's authorship conclusive, or is the certainty that he was not the original author of the first and third divisions to afford a ground for disbelieving that he wrote the fourth? it may be safely advanced, in support of the evidence of the manuscripts, that there is a distinct mark of unity of manipulation throughout, that that mark is more distinct than elsewhere in the fourth portion, and that it not only serves to determine the unity of the compiler, but to fix definitively the place in which we are to look for him, as the town which gives name to the reputed author in the most authoritative manuscripts. Simply stated, it is a presumption that Roger of Hoveden compiled the whole book, and that the latter portion is more peculiarly his own.

Instances of this credulity.

A brief recapitulation of the passages which convey this impression will be sufficient. The only important addition made by Hoveden to the "Historia post Bedam" or "Liber Dunelmensis," on which the first portion of the work is based, is the account of the visions and miracles of Edward the Confessor.¹ The minor additions are, however, marked by a similar motive, the grant of Brakenholm and Hemmingburgh to Durham, an abstract of which is given,² is plainly regarded as suggested by the miraculous panic of William the Conqueror when outraging the relics of S. Cuthbert, the charter of archbishop Thomas inserted under the year 1083³

¹ Vol. i. pp. 108-111.

² Vol. i. p. 127.

³ Vol. i. pp. 137, 138.

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was also the result of a vision of S. Cuthbert and a miraculous cure that followed it; the passages touching the filial impiety and disappearance of Henry V. tell the same tale;¹ the story of the sickness and death of archbishop Thomas II.,² whilst it is probably true, is of a character specially dear to the professional hagiographer. These passages, with the exception of the particulars about Henry V., have a local bearing as well. Hemmingburgh and Brakenholm were attached to the see of Durham by a similar tie to that of Howden itself; the result of archbishop Thomas I.'s vision was to liberate the Yorkshire churches appurtenant to the see of Durham from the usual exactions, and of these Howden was one; the death of Thomas II. took place at Beverley.

In the second portion of the work it may suffice to point out the fact that the only transactions which are dwelt on with any detail are those connected with Thomas Becket, who had, before the work was undertaken, arrived at the full dimensions of the popular saint of the day. The general tenour of the history appears indeed to be modified by the writer's prepossessions as a courtier; but the archbishop's escape from Northampton castle is expressly referred to a special providence,³ and in the relation of the martyrdom and the events that preceded it, the additions to the simpler story of the earlier biographers have a special colouring. The supernatural warning vouchsafed to Becket at Sens,⁴ the story of the water changed to wine at the pope's table,⁵ the revelation to S. Godric of Finchale, on the day of the murder,⁶ and the record, probably entirely unhistorical, of the fate of the murderers,⁷ which are, strictly speaking, additions by Hoveden to the text of

¹ Vol. i. pp. 163, 181.

² Vol. i. pp. 168, 169.

³ Vol. i. p. 229.

⁴ Vol. ii. pp. 10, 11.

⁵ Vol. ii. pp. 11, 12.

⁶ Vol. ii. pp. 16, 17. This instance is important also as touching chronology. See the note at the place, and below, p. xxvi.

⁷ Vol. ii. p. 17.

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pious credu-
lity.

Benedict, illustrate the view which twenty years after the event commended itself to our author. So large a portion of the second division of the work is taken up with letters to and from the saint that further examination is needless.

Instances
from the
third por-
tion of the
work.

In the third portion of the chronicle, the following additions to Benedict, over and above those connected with the martyrdom, illustrate this point: the story of the captured hare, which, on Henry's landing in Ireland, presaged his victory over the natives;¹ the additional details of Henry's Canterbury pilgrimage in 1174;² the vision of Walter, the servant of Eustace of Flay,³ already referred to; the story of the woman in labour succoured by the devil, which may possibly be the origin of the proverb applied to the birth of illegitimate children, that the devil is the best midwife;⁴ the vision of the gigantic expansion of the cross at the battle of Ramlah;⁵ the reference, in recording the burial of Henry II., to the prophecy that he should "be veiled among the veiled women;"⁶ the additions to the conversation of Richard and Joachim on the Apocalypse,⁷ of the life of Antichrist by Adso,⁸ and the curious article on the same subject falteringly ascribed to S. Gregory.⁹

In the
fourth divi-
sion.

In the last division of the work the following cases call for special remark: the judgments that fell upon duke Leopold of Austria are traced to his misconduct towards Richard I.; an idea common, as is the language in which the story is told, to William of Newburgh and Ralph of Coggeshale;¹⁰ the story of the Cross of S. Mar-

¹ Vol. ii. p. 29.² Vol. ii. p. 62.³ Vol. ii. pp. 272, 273.⁴ Vol. ii. 302, 303.⁵ Vol. ii. pp. 132, 133.⁶ The story of the prophecy is given by Benedict, ii. 55; Hoveden, ii. 356; the fulfilment by Hoveden

only, ii. 367. He uses the same form in reference to the burial of queen Johanna, vol. iv. p. 96.

⁷ Vol. iii. pp. 77-79.⁸ Vol. iii. pp. 80-85.⁹ Vol. iii. pp. 85, 86.¹⁰ Vol. iii. pp. 274-278.

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tial at Poitiers weeping on the death of William Longchamp;¹ the unquestioning credit given to the posthumous miracles of bishop William of Poitiers,² whose life, as the historian specially mentions, had been very reprehensible in the sight of men; the revolting miracle wrought on the German crusader who had murdered his comrade;³ the agony of the cross in the cathedral of Dublin at the injuries inflicted on archbishop Cumin;⁴ the story of demoniacal possession in the neighbourhood of Genoa, which, however, may be true in the main, although scarcely probable in detail;⁵ the account of the miracles of Fulk of Neuilly, in connexion with which occurs the well-known story of his personal attack on Richard's vices;⁶ and his supernatural escapes from prison;⁷ the prohibition by a divine oracle addressed to William the Lion at Dunfermline, which prevented him from invading England in 1199;⁸ the long details of the visits of Eustace of Flay to England in 1200 and 1201,⁹ with the curious miracles wrought in confirmation of his teaching; the two extraordinary stories of the supernatural occurrences at the funeral of S. Hugh of Lincoln;¹⁰ one, the recovery of sight by a woman blind of one eye, a cure too common to be regarded as a miracle; the other wrought on a cutpurse who found himself suddenly paralyzed and irresistibly compelled to spout Latin verses; the vision of dean Rolleston of Lincoln, a fortnight after the death of S. Hugh, which seems to have helped to bring about its own fulfilment;¹¹ the announcement of the liberation of Satan in the year 1201,¹² and, last and most signal as an instance, the report of the visit of abbot Eustace to Yorkshire, and of his mira-

Miraculous stories in the concluding portion of the chronicle.

¹ Vol. iv. p. 17.

² Vol. iv. p. 24.

³ Vol. iv. pp. 26, 27.

⁴ Vol. iv. pp. 29, 30.

⁵ Vol. iv. pp. 67, 68.

⁶ Vol. iv. p. 76.

⁷ Vol. iv. p. 77.

⁸ Vol. iv. p. 100.

⁹ Vol. iv. pp. 123, 124, 167-172.

¹⁰ Vol. iv. pp. 143, 144.

¹¹ Vol. iv. pp. 145, 146.

¹² Vol. iv. pp. 161, 162.

Curious stories localizing the author.

cles wrought at Beverley, Nafferton, and Wakefield.¹ This, which is far the most extraordinary illustration of superstitious credulity in the whole work, occurs very nearly at the close of it; and the scenes of it lie within reach of Howden.

Inferences.

Such are the grounds, affording basis for something more than a presumption, of the hypothesis which I have stated above. They are indeed slight in themselves, nor do they serve to do more than establish a difference in character between Hoveden and the writer whose work he was continuing. That earlier writer is singularly free from the gossiping credulity which is common to the writers of the period, even to those who, like Walter de Mapes and Giraldus Cambrensis, might be supposed too well acquainted with the process of fabricating myths to be easily imposed on by the vulgar retailer of miracles. Here, however, we have to contrast Hoveden, not with the general run of the writers of his time, but with this one in particular. The vestiges of this common tendency in our author's treatment lead the way to a further and more important question.

Contrast between Roger and his predecessor.

How far the narration of miracles affects the credibility of the narrator.

The question how far does the recording of supernatural visions and miracles affect the general credibility of the authors who report them, is one which concerns to a very considerable extent mediæval history in general. The day is happily past when such stories were regarded as consciously purposed impostures; we can now afford to look upon them as part of the current popular belief in a majority of the races and generations of the world, and that in so great a degree that the authenticity of a writer might fairly be doubted, who was alleged as a mediæval historian and did not relate mediæval wonders. And this remark applies not merely to religious or ecclesiastical miracles, but to such portents as the green children who emerged from fairy land into

¹ Vol. iv. pp. 167-172.

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East Anglia,¹ and the discovery of living dogs and toads in hermetically sealed beds of rock.² If William of Newburgh, the most independent thinker in the whole list of our mediæval historians, found himself compelled by the mass of evidence laid before him, and by the authority of his witnesses, to accord a reluctant belief to such prodigies, we can scarcely wonder that the ordinary chronicler relating what from day to day reached his ear and seemed worth recording, should report constantly the occurrence of events which he, in common with the whole of his contemporaries, believed to be special interpositions of Divine Providence. The age of Hoveden believed in the constant infraction, by Divine authority, of the ordinary processes of the course of this world, for the purpose of honouring the relics of a large number of saints and martyrs, and of benefiting the poor and sick, clearing the character of the innocent accused, or protesting against the wickedness of the times, by the overflow as it were of the benignant influences of those holy persons. How such a state of belief came to be usual it is not our place now to inquire; it must be granted that it did prevail, and whilst such occurrences were sufficiently far removed from ordinary experience to compel notice, little misgiving was felt as to the genuineness of the relation, and no doubt entertained as to the origin of the interposition. Further than this, the belief in this constant exercise of miraculous power was closely connected with the habit of referring everything of the nature of unexpected coincidence to the same sort of special providence. Owing to this interpretation, great numbers of events and phænomena are included in the class of miracles, which are capable of simple explanation, or suggestive of much more familiar agencies than the special exertion of Divine power. And of course it fol-

Prevalence
of belief in
miraculous
stories.

Coincidences
commonly
regarded as
super-
natural.

¹ Will. Newb., lib. i. cap. 27.| ² Will. Newb., lib. i. cap. 28.

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lows that where every unexpected coincidence is regarded as miraculous and contributes its quota of verisimilitude to the general stock of wonders, a large number of stories that are not to be so easily explained, gains a credence to which by itself it has no such title.

The good faith of a writer impaired only when he declares himself an eyewitness of an impossible event.

The common sense of mankind will, I think, sanction this rule, that the general good faith of a historical writer is not impaired by his recording prodigies which were believed in his own days, except where he professes himself to have witnessed events which we believe to be impossible. But the question concerns more than general good faith ; it affects his general credibility ; we require in him not merely honesty but discernment, and ask not simply did he believe what he wrote down, but was his judgment sound enough to make his ordinary narration trustworthy, or were his opportunities of gaining information so good that only common honesty was needed to qualify him for the character of a historian ?

More than good faith requisite for credibility.

Deeply rooted prevalence of superstition.

Any one who has ever in personal experience struck across the deep and secret vein of popular belief in witchcraft, or who has watched the more refined circles of so-called spiritualism, will allow that neither natural shrewdness and simplicity, nor thorough honesty, nor enlightened education, is an effective hindrance to the belief in the frequent occurrence of events that the great majority of educated men regard as incredible, or in the reference to supernatural power, of phænomena which no small portion of that majority considers to be the result of imposture. The ploughboy who loses his watch applies to the wise woman to consult the stars on his behalf, or to furnish a spell to enchant the thief. The thief fearing to fall under the influence of the charm restores the stolen treasure. No one doubts the truth of the relation which may be easily tested ; the very belief in the powers of the witch has wrought the result, which

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spreads through the country side, and bases on ascertain-
 able fact, a doctrine which neither priest nor schoolmaster
 can overthrow. The mediæval habit of referring such
 things to miracle is at the least less degrading than the
 modern belief in witchcraft or necromancy ; doubtless
 where there was conscious imposture the sin was pro-
 portionably greater ; but where there was not, the de-
 vout simplicity of the vulgar mind, the unquestioning
 belief in ever-present benignant influences mistakenly
 identified, is worthy of compassionate pity rather than
 of contempt. It must be remembered that in many of
 the branches of knowledge the mind of a monk of the
 twelfth century was not in any respect better furnished
 than that of a modern rustic¹. His experience of the
 world was as narrow, his power of discriminating be-
 tween coincidences and prodigies as limited, his ability
 of weighing evidence on the subject of physical phænomena
 not more exercised. When we deal with secular
 writers such as Roger of Hoveden was, we find a greater
 weight of experience and more critical power than in a
 monk of the common type, but it may be doubted
 whether in matters of this special character the ordinary
 twelfth century clerk rose beyond the level of the village
 politician of the present day, who on the authority of
 his weekly newspaper gives the same credit to the quack
 advertisement or the gigantic gooseberry as to the tele-
 graphed report of the Queen's speech.

Comparison
 of modern
 with mediæ-
 val forms.

But the mediæval miracle itself is not an easy matter
 to dispose of. Those cases, in the first place, which
 belong to the class of visions, such as, to take an example
 from our author, the appearance of the Blessed Virgin

Difficulty of
 the question
 of mediæval
 miracles.

¹ Three workmen are stifled in cleaning out an old well. William of Newburgh conjectures that there was a vein of quicksilver or some other noxious substance running through the soil, lib. v. cap. 34 ; for the stifling of three men who went down into a pit in a lime kiln the writer can give no reason whatever.

Visions re-
puted mira-
culous not
incredible.

to the Crusaders,¹ or the miraculous warning of the death of Henry's sons,² must at once be set by themselves. They are beyond the pale of ordinary experience, but they are not incredible as facts and impressions. A man highly excited by the work on which he is engaged, thinking by day and by night of the blessings that his exertions on behalf of Christendom are earning for him, may have, especially whilst watching and fasting, come into such a state of mind that his dreams are full of the subject of his waking thoughts, and as vivid and impressive as waking visions could be. He dreams on board his ship of the appearance of his patron saint, S. Thomas, S. Nicolas, or S. Edmund;³ or he gazes upon the crucifix until the awful figure seems to smile.⁴ He has seen what he believes to be a miracle; specially favoured, he would be a traitor to his faith if he did not publish it. It is recorded, and the miracle propagates; it suggests the very details of prodigies that constantly repeat themselves. In this case the error, if there be an error, is not in the belief of the fact, but in the interpretation. And so wide is the applicability of this principle, that it will be found to cover all cases of mediæval visions which are not compromised by distinct attempts at prophecy, and such attempts are extremely rare. It cannot be safely taken for granted that the stories of such visions are false merely because they are improbable to our minds; nor can the historian who records them be contemned either as over-credulous or dishonest, so long as he contents himself with the record.

Exception
in the case
of distinct
prophecy.

Cures re-
puted mira-
culous.

A second large class of mediæval miracles deals with the cures of disease; and of these, exclusive of the considerable majority in which blindness or disease of the eye is healed, the largest number may be said to consist

¹ Vol. iii. pp. 119, 120.

² Vol. ii. pp. 273, 356.

³ Vol. iii. pp. 42, 43.

⁴ Or to bow, as in the Waltham story of Harold; *De Inventione S. Crucis*, cap. 20.

of the cures of nervous complaints, or of those in which the state of the nerves very much affects the part diseased, such as toothache and the like. Unquestionably a large number of cures may be accounted for simply on the ground of the faith of the patient in the remedy applied;¹ a fact which is exemplified in the case of quack medicines at the present day by the testimonials printed by way of advertisement in the papers. Of many of these it may, I believe, safely be affirmed that the ingredients are on analysis found to contain nothing more directly addressed to the remedy of the complaint cured, than were the blood and water furnished by the monks of Canterbury to the pilgrims of S. Thomas. Every such cure would go to swell the long list of miracles and strengthen the faith of successive generations of pilgrims. Cases in which the remedy failed, or the disease returned as soon as the momentary effort was relaxed, would not be recorded, or recorded only as demonstrating the patient's want of faith.² Where every one afflicted with neuralgia had recourse to a relic, every one who recovered from it would naturally ascribe his cure to the relic. Here, then, there is no question as to the facts, only as to the connexion between them.

It is probable that an analogous theory might be stated plausibly to account for the great number of cures of blindness which are on record;³ such, for instance,

¹ The recorder of the Canterbury miracles (Benedictus, ed. Giles) gives a case in which a boy was deceived into cure of acute pain by drinking water which was given him as "aqua sancti," that is, water in which the rags of S. Thomas's dress had been washed; the water being really from the nearest well. Lib. iii. c. 46.

² The Canterbury writer does

record occasionally such failures of miracle; lib. i. cap. 40, 41. In these two cases the failure is marked by a vision, in which the saint assures the patient that he shall not be cured.

³ Forty such, if not more, are recorded among the Canterbury miracles; considerably more than a seventh part of the whole number.

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PREFACE.

Cures of
blindness
reputed
miraculous.

as those in which a patient partially blind has persuaded himself that he is entirely so, or in which the remedies used for curing the blindness of one eye have had the effect of producing a morbid sympathy in the other; or in which the strong effort made on faith in the relic has nerved the patient to realize that he was not so blind as he thought he was, and the discovery has itself been regarded as the miracle; but it is needless to dwell on this, because in alleged cases of blindness very considerable allowance must be made for imposture, pretended disease and pretended cure. The opinion of the age set a premium on the reception of miraculous operation. The man who had been cured of blindness by a visit to the shrine of a saint would be popularly regarded as a special object of Divine care, and as such would be able to rely for the rest of his life on the charities of the monasteries, or on the piety of the devout. The practice of pilgrimage opened the way for successful mendicancy. Here again the miracle would be recorded, whilst the imposture was unsuspected; the detection of the imposture in but few cases out of the many would reach the ears of the registrar of miracles. There are, of course, other cases in which the cures may be ascribed to mere natural causes, such as the change of air and food, or the exhaustion of the disease, or its intermittent character. Complaints dependent on digestion,¹ fevers, ague, and even rheumatism, which we may safely argue was occasionally described as paralysis, and diseases of the skin, would fall under this head.

Coincidences
reputed
miraculous.

A third class of miracles is that in which results perfectly natural are recorded as supernatural because they have struck the imagination of the reporter as illustrative of a special providence. A candle at the shrine of S. Thomas is extinguished, and the gaseous

¹ A good instance will be found in a story told of a man named Ed- | mund, *De Mirac. S. Thom.*, lib. i. | cap. 33.

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smoke instantly catches fire again from the other lights close to it;¹ the wooden boxes filled with the water in which the martyr's rags have been washed burst with the heat of the bearer, or absorb the liquid, and are found empty;² a draught of the same liquid has the effect of an emetic, and produces a discharge of cherry-stones; a child remembers in a dream where he has placed the cheese which he has mislaid;³ an armed knight rides into a church and is thrown by his restive horse;⁴ a paralytic old woman is choked with a stolen coin;⁵ five thieves are caught with their booty within the precincts of a religious house.⁶ In the large number of cases of this sort, it may confidently be believed that stories true to the minutest particulars are preserved to us, misinterpreted perhaps, but implying nothing that should shake our faith in the narrator.

Coincidences
reputed
miraculous.

If, further, we allow something considerable for the influence of local rumour, the accumulative exaggeration of oral report, and the impossibility of contradicting a false or foolish story in any proportion to the extent of belief which it has forestalled, we shall, I think, be able to grant that a sufficiently large assortment of events apparently miraculous might easily be brought to the knowledge of any annalist to warrant him in according credit both to the general proposition, in the belief of which he was probably already settled, and to the par-

Exaggera-
tion by
rumour of
miracles.

¹ *De Mirac. S. Thomæ*, lib. ii. cap. 14, 15, 16. Compare the letter of the archbishop of Sens to the pope, Hoveden, ii. 24. "De cereis etiam circa corpus positis et extinctis sed postea per se reactis, non infida multorum relatio est."

² This is reported as occurring so frequently that the monks were obliged to use leaden or tin *ampullæ* instead of wooden bottles. The miraculous splittings then

ceased, only two or three questionable cases of the disappearance of the water from the *ampullæ* could be made out. Lib. ii. cap. 32-38.

³ *De Miraculis S. Thomæ*, lib. i. cap. 34, lib. ii. cap. 63. Similar stories about cheeses occur in the miracles of S. Cuthbert.

⁴ *De Inventione S. Crucis*, cap. 32.

⁵ *De Inventione S. Crucis*, cap. 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, cap. 31.

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The annalist records what he believes.

Cases of imposture very numerous.

How such stories affect credibility.

particular instance. He recorded the fact, or what was put before him as a fact, and accounted for it on the ground that was, on his theory of the government of the world, most probable.

But with all these allowances there remains a very considerable class of wonders of which it can only be said that either they were true miracles or they were blasphemous impostures, the record of which is, if true, a record of miracles, if not true, a conscious lie. There are others which on no theory of miracle can be regarded as conceivably possible, the pretending eyewitnesses of which condemn themselves, but which yet in all ages have found believers. To the first of these belong many of those recorded by such chroniclers as those who collected the miracles of S. Thomas or S. Cuthbert, in which prophetic visions are common, and the instantaneous cure of deep wounds or of such diseases as leprosy and dropsy. To the second belongs undoubtedly the story of the woman who having drunk of a blessed fountain vomited two great black toads, which immediately turned into very great and very black dogs, shortly after became asses, and finally went up into the air, leaving foul vestiges behind them.¹

Where the narrator, then, declares himself to have been the eyewitness of an impossible event, we can only conclude either that something did occur in his presence contrary to common experience, and that he has exaggerated it up to the dimensions of a lie; or that he has simply lied. But this is only where the recorder does profess himself to have been an eyewitness; the belief of such things being rife, it implies neither foolishness nor falseness to have been deceived by a second-hand tale.

Both Hoveden and his predecessor, the author of the "Gesta Henrici Regis," record a number of physical

¹ Hoveden, iv. 123.