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Edited by William Stubbs

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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.

The Historical Works of Master Ralph de Diceto, Dean of London

Ralph de Diceto (d. 1199/1200), dean of St Paul's, was both a painstaking compiler of information and an intellectual historian of remarkably wide vision. This two-volume collection of his writings, originally published in 1876, covers the history of the world from the Creation to 1202 (it was continued posthumously). The historian J.F.A. Mason wrote that the *Abbreviationes chronicorum* (included in Volume 1, together with the first part of the more important *Ymagines historiarum*) at the time represented the most ambitious attempt at a world history made by an Englishman. In his preface as editor to this volume, William Stubbs (1825–1901) gives a characteristically thorough background to the author, writing extensively on, among other topics, the question of Ralph's mysterious name. His edition also benefits from the reintroduction of Ralph's elsewhere-omitted marginal *signa*: a pictorial code of crosses, swords, and crowns being torn at by jealous hands.

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VOLUME 1

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

*Rolls House,
December 1857.*

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RADULFI DE DICETO DECANI LUNDONIENSIS
OPERA HISTORICA.

THE
HISTORICAL WORKS
OF
MASTER RALPH DE DICETO,
DEAN OF LONDON.

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS

BY

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AT LAMBETH.

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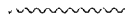
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**P R E F A C E.**  
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P R E F A C E.

IN the roll of English Historians of the twelfth century no name stands higher than that of Ralph de Diceto. He has been more fortunate than either Roger of Hoveden or the author of the "Gesta Regis Henrici"; for the great ecclesiastical position which he occupied for more than fifty years made him, modest and retiring as he seems to have been, a definitely public man. As a public man, he left traces of his presence in the record of public affairs, and these traces furnish us with some important points of his personal biography. I propose, in the following pages, to attempt a sketch of the career of the author, and to give an account of the external history of the book now before us, reserving for the introduction to the second volume what has to be said about the intrinsic value of his labours, the sources of his information, and the relations of the *Imagines Historiarum* to the other contemporary annals of the same age.

Prominence
of Ralph de
Diceto, as a
public man.

The most obscure point, perhaps, in our author's personal history is his name. It is peculiar to himself. History and record alike give him the name of "Radulfus de Diceto," and the surname he shares with no other. He almost invariably uses it in full, whenever he writes about himself; he prefixes it at length to his literary works; he inserts it in the salutation of his letters; he heads the acts in which he and his chapter join with his full name "Ralph de Diceto the dean of the church of S. Paul at London, and the chapter of the said church, to all to whom these presents shall come, greeting"; and he dates his survey of the estates of his church by

Obscurity of
his name.

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PREFACE.

Significance
of the
author's
name.

this among other notes “per Radulfum de Diceto decanum Lundoniensem, anno primo sui decanatus.” It may be thought that in the latter documents he used this form merely for the purpose of distinguishing his own acts as dean from those of his predecessor Ralph of Langford; but the same peculiarity is found whilst he is acting as archdeacon before he became dean; and it is carefully observed by his contemporaries; Gilbert Foliot, John of Salisbury, William FitzStephen, Arnulf of Lisieux, distinguish him as “Radulfus Dicetensis” or “Radulfus de Diceto.” It would almost seem that he prided himself for some reason on the surname which he had assumed, or else that he held so humble an opinion of his own importance that he thought it requisite on every occasion to distinguish himself from the more conspicuous persons who bore the same Christian name. Illustrations of this practice will abound as we proceed. Any conclusion however, to which we may come upon the point, must be regarded as showing that, at a period at which surnames whether patronymic, local or official, were becoming much more common than they had been, Ralph de Diceto was one of the very first to use such a name distinctively and invariably. It is this peculiarity which enables us to detect his presence on occasions and in documents, in which, if he had been content to follow the common practice, it would have been unnoticed.

Not a family
name.

The fact that no other person has been discovered who bore the name of “Diceto” is a very strong argument against the hypothesis that it is a patronymic or family name like Biset or Belet, Basset, Foliot, or Lycett.¹ If it be interpreted as denoting the birth-place of the bearer, or some benefice which he held in early life, there seems to be an insuperable difficulty in the identification. The word might be a Latinized form of an English local name such as Dicet or Dissset; but no place of such name

¹ Bishop Baneroff calls Ralph de Diceto Ralph Dycett; Statutes of S. Paul's (ed. Simpson), p. 279.

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is known to exist. Possibly it may lurk still in some remote Shropshire or Essex manor, but it has yet to be discovered. Ditcheat in Somersetshire might tempt us, in its present form, to identify it with Dicetum, but in the days of Ralph it was still Dichesyeat. It might also be a Latinized form of a French Dicy, Dizey, or Dissai, and of such places there is no lack, but there is nothing in Ralph's personal history to connect him with them. Under such circumstances any lengthened speculation would be simply a waste of ingenuity. As however the name is a part of the history of the man, it demands some brief consideration.

Is it a local name?

The first and indeed the only positive claimant of the honour of giving name to our author is the town of Diss, in Norfolk. In this case neither the antiquity of the claim nor the grounds upon which it is based entitle it to more than the character of a guess. Diss appears in Domesday book in several places and invariably in the form of "Dice."¹ Now supposing the final "e" of Dice to have been sounded, the Latin form Dicetum might be a probable translation of Dicé; but no such form is known to occur. Diss is never, so far as records have thrown light upon the point, Latinized as Dicetum. It appears as "Dize" in the Pipe Rolls of Henry II.²; as "Disze" in the Pipe Rolls of Richard I.³; as "Disce" in the Patent Rolls of John.⁴ It is "Dysse" in the Taxation of Pope Nicolas in 1291.⁵ The records of the abbey of Bury S. Edmund's show that among the inmates or officers of that house there were, contemporary with our author, three at least who took their names from Diss. Jocelin of Brakelond mentions Master William of Dice, who was master of the schools: his son Walter who was a candidate for the living of Chevington; and a monk named John: they are John, Walter, and William "de Dice"

Claim of Diss in Norfolk.

¹ Domesday, vol. ii. ff. 114, 129, 149, 154, 176, 210, 215, 228, 263, 269, 272, 276, 278.

² Rot. Pip., Hen. II., ed. Hunter.

³ Rot. Pip., 1 Rich., ed. Hunter, p. 39.

⁴ Rot. Pat., ed. Hardy, i. 190.

⁵ Taxatio P. Nicol., p. 84 b.

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Claim of
Diss as
giving name
to our
author.

and "de Dicia."¹ The list of the sacrists of S. Edmunds, printed in the *Monasticon*, contains the name of "Willelmus de Disce" who filled the office for four days in Abbot Sampson's time.² The Royal Library, now in the British Museum, contains a volume with the inscription "Hunc librum scribi fecit Willelmus de Dice, servus et monachus S. Edmundi, ad honorem, S. Edmundi."³ In a document appended to Jocelin's *Chronicle*, William of Diss is called "Willelmus de Dicia." Dyssa is the form used by Alexander III. These facts seem to show that without further evidence the claim of Diss should not be allowed, and there are circumstances which tend to show that *Dicetum* should be sought elsewhere.

Ralph was
not the
parson of
Diss.

In the first place, the common practice of calling a beneficed clergyman by the name of his parish may suggest that Ralph was the rector of *Dicetum*. But he was not rector of Diss. Uncertain as are the number and situation of his several preferments, we know that the church of Diss was held during his life by two persons with whom he seems to have had no connexion. This is proved by a document which so greatly struck the fancy of Bishop Bale that he twice mentions it in different works, once in the "*Scriptores*"⁴ and once in the "*Votaries*," as showing that two persons, father and

¹ "Walterus filius magistri Willelmi de Dice;" "Johannes de Dice;" "Willelmus dictus de Dicia." *Joc. Brakelond* (Camd. Soc.), pp. 32, 83, 84, 102.

² "Waltero de Banham successit Willelmus de Disce, qui cum modo electus fuisset ad illud officium, et in illo a die Sancti Thomæ martyris usque ad Circumcisionem Domini, per quatuor videlicet dies stetit, interim sompnium oculi sui capere non potuerunt; qui videns se ibidem proficere non posse, suam ab abbate Sampsonis (A.D. 1182-1211) petit cessio-nem." *Mon. Angl.*, iii. 163.

³ Casley's *Catalogue*, p. 127.

⁴ Bale, *Scriptores* (second edition), p. 217: "in Nordovlgia Wulkerellus presbyter Guilhelmo filio, ut legitimo heredi, sacerdotium de Dyssa reliquit." We have no further knowledge of the dispute. The patronage of the church must, however, have been claimed by the lords of Diss; for in 1216 Robert de Goldingham has letters of presentation from the king to the church of "Disce," owing to the fact that the lands of Robert FitzWalter were then in the king's hands. *Rot. Pat.* (ed. Hardy), i. 190.

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son were at this period successively parsons of Diss. He had seen a decretal epistle of Pope Alexander III., addressed to John of Oxford when Bishop of Norwich, and written, therefore, between 1175, when John of Oxford was consecrated, and 1181, when Alexander III. died. In this letter the Pope "commaundeth that Wylyyam the "new person of Dysse, for clayminge the benefyce by "inheritaunce, after the decease of his father person "Wulkerell which begate him in his presthode, should "be dispossessed, no appellacyon admitted."¹ The letter itself has not been found, and is not among the collected epistles of Alexander III., but Bale's authority on such a point is not to be questioned. By the name Wulkerell we may take it for granted that the common East Anglian Wulfketel is meant, and in the story we have one of many instances of the tenure of ecclesiastical benefices in hereditary succession, a practice which the popes found it extremely difficult to suppress, and which is the subject of many extant letters of Alexander himself, preserved among Foliot's epistles and in the appendix to the Acts of the Lateran Council of 1179. Wulfketell and William would leave no room for Ralph, unless we suppose him very early in life to have held the benefice and afterwards to have resigned it. Such a supposition, however, is scarcely reconcileable with the fact that he clung so tenaciously to the name.

In the second place, if Ralph had been, either by birth or by preferment, connected with Diss, we might fairly expect that we should be able to trace the connexion in his books; we might expect to find some minute particulars or some special words of respect or disrespect, touching the Lords of Diss, to whose patronage he might be indebted, or whose acquaintance he must have made. The Lord of Diss during great part of Ralph's life was

¹ Bale, *Votaryes* (ed. 1551), fo. 98 b. See Blomfield, *Hist. Nor-* folk, i. 11, which first called my attention to this fact.

Ralph shows
no special
connexion
with Diss or
its lords.

Richard de Lucy, the chief minister of Stephen and the great justiciar of Henry II. Richard died the year before Ralph was promoted to the deanery of S. Paul's, and was succeeded in his lordship by his son-in-law, Walter FitzRobert.¹ Although the great position and high character of Richard de Lucy would give the historian an ample opportunity of dilating on the virtues of a fellow townsman, he nowhere mentions him with such special remark. The Bigods and the Mandevilles, on the contrary, the patrons of the priories of Thetford and Walden, under whom Ralph held the livings of Finchingfield and Aynho, receive especial mention; the former with additional particulars of personal history, and the latter in terms of exceptional compliment.²

The claim of
Diss is not
ancient.

In the third place, it is to be considered that, with one possible exception, no historical writer before the seventeenth century seems to have thought of identifying Dicetum with Diss. The one apparent exception is that of the author of the "Livre des Reis de Britanie," who wrote in the time of Edward I.³ This writer, translating directly or mediately from the *Imagines*, describes the pious founder of the cemetery of S. Thomas of Canterbury at Acre, as William the chaplain of "Rauf de Disze, le haut den de Londres." In this case it is probable that Disze (or Diszé) is simply a retranslation of Diceto, but at first sight it looks like an in-

¹ Blomfield, *Hist. Norf.*, i. 2.

² William of Mandeville is specially spoken of in connexion with his expedition to the east, when he presented several churches with cloths brought from Constantinople (vol. i. p. 428); his marriage, which took place at Pleshey, within Ralph's archidiaconal jurisdiction (vol. ii. p. 3); his victories in Flanders (ii. 32); and his death (vol. ii. p. 73). For particulars about Hugh Bigod see vol. i. pp. 248,

377, 378, 385. Richard de Lucy is mentioned as excommunicated by Becket in 1166 (vol. i. p. 318), and in connexion with the foundation of Lesnes Abbey in 1178 (*ib.* p. 425); but in the account of the rebellion of 1173 not even his name occurs.

³ "Le livre de reis de Angleterre," p. 256. See also Mr. Glover's note in the Introduction, p. xii., where Decize is suggested as the true Dicetum. Diss does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Glover.

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tentional identification with Diss. Setting aside, however, this instance, we find such a number of curious misreadings of the name as proves that the early writers had no idea of connecting it with a well-known English town. Gilbert Foliot when he first made acquaintance with Ralph called him Diotecensis,¹ a sufficient proof that he did not recognise the place from which the name was derived. Some still stranger forms are mentioned by Selden in the Prolegomena to Twysden's "Decem Scriptores."² Thomas of Walsingham, the learned and industrious compiler at S. Alban's, calls our author Radulfus de Luzeto;³ the manuscripts of Higden's Polychronicon have Radulfus de Byzeto, which Trevisa translated "Raulf le Bruys," and which appears in Caxton as "Raph de Bruys;"⁴ Bale in the first edition of the *Scriptores* called him "Radulphus de Rizeto;"⁵ John Ross of Warwick had read it "Ralph de Duceto;" and John Pyke, who largely used the books before us, referred to the writer more than once as "Ralph de "Doiceto."⁶ In the collections made by Edward I. on the question of the over-lordship of Scotland, the name appears in the printed copies as "Dizeto."⁷ The early bibliographers were content to call him by the name by which he called himself, but were in some doubt as to his nationality. Leland confessed himself unable to determine whether he was an Englishman,⁸ and did not include him in the list of the writers of Britain. Bale

Early writers do not identify Diceto with Diss.

Various mis-readings of the name.

¹ See below, p. xxx, note 2.

² Page xxix.

³ Walsingham, ed. Camden, p. 55; ed. Riley, vol. i. p. 34.

⁴ Higden, lib. vii. cap. 39, ed. 1538.

⁵ *Scriptores* (ed. 1549), fo. 97. It is corrected in the second edition.

⁶ Selden, as quoted above, note 2.

⁷ *Fœd.*, i. 769.

⁸ "Fuit doctor Theologiæ, at non

"satis mihi constat num etiam "Anglus fuerit;" Dugdale, S. Paul's (ed. 1658), p. 283. Bale and Wharton call him English, and their judgment would be valuable if we were certain that the contrary view had ever been presented to them. See Wharton's Appendix to Cave's *Historia Litteraria*, and Bale as quoted above.

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PREFACE.

The origin
of the claim
of Diss.

Accepted in
recent
times.

called him an Englishman, but he contented himself with the usual generalities that show how little he knew about him beyond the existence of his works. Pits followed Bale and Leland. The identification with Diss appeared first, I believe, in the second edition of Dugdale's *History of S. Paul's*, published in 1716, with the author's own corrections, by Dr. Maynard.¹ We are not told whether in this particular case the addition had Dugdale's authority, and the loose, inaccurate way in which it is given would seem to suggest that it had not. In the list of the deans Ralph de Diceto is said, in a parenthesis, to be of "Disca in com. Suffolk." Dugdale himself must have known that Diss was in Norfolk. However this may be, Henry Wharton either was ignorant of the conjecture, which was published several years after his death, or refused to accept it;² and Gale, who mentions that he had seen the form "Dissetum" in the *Chronicles of Walden Abbey*, does not proceed to argue from the fact.³ Tanner does not notice it in his *Bibliotheca*. Yet it commended itself to the authors of the *Histoire Litteraire de France*, who, finding somewhere the name of "Thomas de Disce, a priest of the province of York," withdrew somewhat hastily a claim which they had prepared to make on behalf of France as the native country of Ralph de Diceto.⁴ There were several places in France which might be understood by Dicetum, but there was a Diss in England, which furnished to them a satisfactory solution of the question. It is on their authority, we may presume,

¹ It does not appear in the edition of 1658, pp. 9, 48; it is in Maynard's edition, pp. 10, 51; and repeated in Ellis's, p. 7.

² Wharton, "de decanis Londoniensibus," p. 203. Cf. *Ang. Sac.*, ii. p. xxvii.

³ In the preface to the "Quindécim Scriptores," A.D. 1691. The

MS. which Gale saw, and which is now MS. Arundel 29, is a seventeenth century transcript. The name is spelled Disceto in the text of this MS., but the form Disseto may occur in the margin. See below, p. xlix.

⁴ *Hist. Litt.*, vol. xvi. p. 499.

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that recent writers have called our author "Ralph of "Diss."

The proper form of the name is "Diceto," as it is given in all the manuscripts and records which proceeded directly from the author's hand; but very soon after his death, in the records of his cathedral it is found written "Disceto;"¹ the modern copy of the Chronicle of Walden has the same form, and it is found also in a document which will be adduced farther on, issued by Bishop Hugh of Lincoln before the death of Ralph. There seems to be no ancient authority for the form Disseto; and Dizeto rests on a document issued a hundred years after his time.

The form "Dicetum" itself, according to the analogies of mediæval Latin and French, would naturally represent the French Dissai, as Alnetum represents Aulnay, Fraxinetum Fresnay, Salicetum Saussai, or as Virenetum represents the English Verney. But the parallel halts in one important point, for there is no tree "dicus," "dica," or "dix," which is required to make it complete; nor does the word occur in French geography any more than in English. It seems lawful to infer from this that it is an artificial name, adopted by its bearer as the Latin name of a place with which he was associated, but which had no proper Latin name of its own. So explained it may belong to some English place, Diss, Dicton, Ditton, or other, or to a French Dissai, Dizy, or Dissé; but with this difference, that whilst it has no proper relation with the English names, it stands in a true etymological relation to the French. There are in the province of Maine three places of the name required:³ Dissai-sous-de-Lude, known in Latin

¹ See Statutes of S. Paul's (ed. Simpson), pp. 33, 109, 125, 174, where it is written Disceto; at p. 63 Dean Baldock (A.D. 1294--1303) writes it Dyceto; and at

p. 153 Bishop Braybrooke (A.D. 1382--1405) writes Disseto.

² Cauvin, *Géographie ancienne du diocèse du Mans*; Institut des Provinces de France, vol. i. s. vv.

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Places in
France
which might
be called
Dicetum.

documents as Diceium; Dissé-sous-Ballon, and Dissai-sous-Courcillon, near Château du Loir, Latinized as Disiacus. In other parts of France are found Dizy, in the department of the Marne in Champagne, and Dizy in that of the Aisne in Picardy; while there is Dicy in that of the Yonne in Burgundy. The neighbourhood of Le Mans has perhaps the first claim, if we consult the internal evidence of our author's writings. The great care bestowed on the history of the counts of Anjou is sufficient to call attention to it. Either Dissai-sous-Courcillon, which was bestowed by Bishop Siegfrid¹ on Fulk the good count of Anjou, might allege in its favour the prominence given to that count in the *Abbreviationes*; or Dissé-sous-de-Lude, one half of which was given by Bishop Ulger of Angers to his cathedral, might adduce the verses about Ulger which Ralph has written in the margin of his book, under the years 1139–1142.² At the utmost, however, we can only say that etymologically the balance inclines in favour of one of these towns, and would give Ralph a French nationality which there is little in his books to refute and some slight circumstances to countenance.

Obscurity of
nationality.

Internal evidence on a point like this may be read almost any way. Our author's writings nowhere contain any statement that he was an Englishman; if they did, such a statement at the period at which he wrote might mean no more than that he was born of French descent in England. Neither do they contain any assertion that he was a Frenchman; if they did, it might mean no more than that he was sprung from the Normans of the Conquest. As to the indirect evidence which may be sought in the tone and spirit of his narrative, little can be said. The early portions of the *Abbreviationes*, in which, if he were English, some signs of English sympathy might be expected, are merely extracts from previous writers. No definite inferences

¹ Gallia Christiana, ii. 135.

| ² Below, vol. i. pp. 252–255.

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can be drawn from the plan of selection, from the modifications, the omissions, or additions of the compiler. The descriptions of Angers and Aquitaine which are the purple patches of the first pages of the *Imagines*,¹ and which may be thought to prove that Ralph, when he began that work, contemplated something more ambitious in tone, and more comprehensive in character, than a mere book of annals, are in this respect worthy of special attention. The picture of Angers is drawn by one who was fairly well acquainted with the site; no such picture of an English city occurs in the book. We are not indeed assured that the description is not extracted from the work of some other author; in common with the other Angevin memoranda it is claimed for another hand; and, although I hope to be able to show that the grounds upon which that particular claim is based are untenable, the disproof of the claim of one competitor does not prove the claim of the other. Another indication, stronger perhaps than this, may be found in the fact that towards the close of the *Abbreviationes*, at that point, that is, of the work at which the author is passing from his extracts from earlier writers to the record of his own personal reminiscences, the greater part of the matter which cannot be referred to older authority concerns either the church of S. Paul in London, which was his final home, or contemporary events in France.² As the memoranda touching S. Paul's may be easily accounted for by his connexion, lifelong as it would seem to have been, with that cathedral, the references to French history, to the visit of Eugenius III. to Paris,³ the election of the Archbishop of Bourges and consequent interdict,⁴ the crusade and the taxation which was caused by it,⁵ may be due to the

Some points suggest a French nationality.

¹ Vol. i. pp. 292-294.

² Vol. i. pp. 247-258.

³ Vol. i. p. 256.

⁴ Vol. i. p. 256.

⁵ Vol. i. pp. 256, 257.

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Nothing
determined
by these.

fact that in his youth, in a native home in France, he had been struck with these events. But it is quite as probable that he remembered them because at the time they occurred he was a student in the University of Paris. The question of nationality is really involved in the same obscurity as the meaning of the name; but that Ralph was an Englishman of the period of amalgamation, an Englishman in his sympathy with the sound legislation of Henry II., and with the national aspirations of the reconstituted England, there can be no doubt.

Probable
date of our
author's
birth.

Equally uncertain are the point of our author's parentage and the date of his birth. Although we can follow him through fifty years of a somewhat distinguished career, we find no traces of great age at the close, no signs of youthful action or premature promotion at the beginning. If he had been more than eighty when he died, some one of the many annalists of the time would almost certainly have recorded the date and circumstances of his death. Yet unless we suppose him to have been exceptionally young when, in the year 1152, he was made archdeacon, he could not have been much under eighty when he died. As, however, it is necessary to have some hypothetical string on which to arrange the known events of his life, we may suppose him to have been born between 1120 and 1130. His notices of events touching the history of S. Paul's begin in 1136, and certainly have the appearance of personal recollections.¹

Was he con-
nected with
the family
of Belmeis?

There are some points, which now meet us, that suggest a not impossible theory of the parentage of Ralph de Diceto. He was appointed to his archdeaconry by Bishop Richard II. of Belmeis; the office of archdeacon was very frequently reserved by the bishops for their nearest kinsmen; the family of Belmeis for more than

¹ Vol. i. p. 248.

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half a century was all powerful in the chapter of S. Paul's; and Ralph more than once betrays a tenderness as to clerical marriage and the propriety of a son succeeding to his father's benefice. Some illustration of the scenes in which his early years were passed may result from a short examination of these points.

In 1108 Richard I. of Belmeis was made Bishop of London. His family derived their name from the Norman village of Beaumais on the Dive, Bellus Mansus. He had himself risen to importance in the service of the house of Montgomery, had been sheriff of Shropshire under the earls of that house, Roger, Hugh, and Robert of Belesme,¹ and had probably recommended himself to the king by his fidelity and loyalty at the time of the rebellion of the last-mentioned earl. In his own person and by his kinsmen he founded an important Shropshire family, before he became a bishop. As bishop he showed himself a great prelate of the true Norman type, a magnificent builder, a great state official, and a most liberal benefactor to his church. He is said to have devoted the whole of his episcopal revenue to the restoration of his cathedral; he founded the cathedral schools; he obtained great privileges for the chapter from the king; and, by purchasing and enclosing land and houses round S. Paul's, he formed the churchyard and neighbouring streets into a sort of cathedral close.² As was the common practice, he provided out of the patronage of the see for several of his kinsmen. One nephew, William, son of his sister Adeline, was dean of S. Paul's from 1111 to 1138;³ Ralph of Langford and Richard of Belmeis, sons of Walter the

Family of
Belmeis.Bishop
Richard I.

¹ Orderic. Vital., lib. xi. cap. 31; Ann. Winton. Ang. Sac., i. 297; Eadmer, Hist. Nov., pp. 96, 97. The best account of the family will be found in Eyton's History of Shropshire, vol. ii. pp. 193, sq.; a pedigree, partly conjectural, is there given, which cannot be entirely accepted.

² Wharton, Episc. Lond., pp. 46-50.

³ Below, vol. i. p. 251.

How
Richard of
Belmeis
promoted
his kinsfolk.

Richard II.
of Belmeis.

bishop's brother, were made canons;¹ a still nearer kinsman, Walter the bishop's son, was prebendary of Newington, and appears in the Great Roll of the Pipe for the 31st year of Henry I. as "filius episcopi Londoniensis," paying ten marks for a right judgment touching the church of Illing.² Another of the family, William, was archdeacon of either London or Colchester.³ The position thus created for the family was defended by them as a part of their inheritance, and not without the quarrels incidental to family parties of the kind. Shortly before his death in 1127, the bishop appointed his nephew Richard, who was still a child,⁴ archdeacon of Middlesex. Gilbert the Universal, who succeeded to the see in 1128, held it for only six years, and his death in 1134 was followed by a disputed election and a vacancy which lasted until 1141. It is possible that

¹ Eyton regards Ralph of Langford as sister's son to the bishop, and supposes that his mother had married a man of the name; but the words of our author (vol. i. p. 250) seem clearly to prove that he was brother of the second bishop Richard, and in that case his name of Langford would be derived from one of the many Langfords or Longfords where he may have had preferment.

² Rot. Pip., 31 Hen. I.; Newcourt, Repertorium, i. 186.

³ See below, p. xxiii. This enumeration probably does not exhaust the list of the bishop's kinsmen in the chapter. Richard of Belmeis was buried in the priory of S. Osyth, which he founded, with the epitaph, "Hic jacet Ricardus Beaumeis *cognomento Rufus Londoniensis* episcopus, vir probus et grandævus per totam vitam laboriosus, fundator noster religiosus, qui multa bona nobis et ministris ecclesie sue S. Pauli contulit; obiit xvi.

"kal. Jan. 1127; cujus animæ propitiatur Deus." Weever, Sep. Mon., p. 607; Mon. Angl., vi. 308; Newcourt, ii. 455; Eyton, ii. 200. I do not know the date of the inscription, but it is curious that a Richard Ruffus was archdeacon of Essex for several years during the century, and that another Richard Ruffus was prebendary of Twyford in 1181 and holding certain lands of the church which had been let to his predecessor of the same name. Moreover, Ailwardus Ruffus was archdeacon of Colchester from 1150-1162 or thereabouts; and Guido Ruffus was the last dean of Waltham. Archdeacon Hale, however, doubts whether the archdeacon Richard is rightly called Ruffus; Domesday of S. Paul's p. lxxxvii.

⁴ "Nondum plene pubes;" it was a common practice to nominate very young men as archdeacons and send them to Paris or Bologna to be educated.