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978-1-108-05229-0 - Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I: Volume 4

Edited by Richard Howlett

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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.

Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I

The fourth volume of this four-volume set of Latin chronicles, edited by Richard Howlett (1841–1917) and published between 1884 and 1889, contains the work of Robert of Torigni (c.1110–86), abbot of Mont Saint-Michel, whose chronicle is a continuation of the *Gesta Normannorum ducum* ('Deeds of the Norman dukes') up to the time of Henry II. Despite problems with the chronology of the work, Robert's chronicle remains a valuable source for the early years of Henry II's reign. Howlett's introduction provides historical background as well as an exhaustive survey of both Robert's sources and the various versions of his manuscript. However, he finds fault with the 'reticence' of a chronicler who hardly mentions the murder of Beckett or Henry's role in it. Also included is the *Continuatio Beccensis*, a chronicle from Bec Abbey of the years 1157–60, in addition to an appendix of items relating to Robert's abbacy. Helpful English side-notes to the Latin texts are provided throughout.

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VOLUME 4

EDITED BY RICHARD HOWLETT



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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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CHRONICLES OF THE REIGNS

OF

STEPHEN, HENRY II., AND RICHARD I.

VOL. IV.

THE CHRONICLE OF ROBERT OF TORIGNI,

ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF

ST. MICHAEL-IN-PERIL-OF-THE-SEA,

EDITED BY

RICHARD HOWLETT, F.S.A.,

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

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

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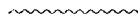
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P R E F A C E .

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P R E F A C E.

Though many continental editions of the chronicle of Robert of Torigni, abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel, have been published, the present is the first which has appeared in this country.

It is indeed astonishing that the text of a chronicle so essential for the due comprehension of the reign of Henry the Second should never have passed through an English press,¹ and it is right that it should take its place among the volumes of the Rolls Series, although the admirable work of an eminent foreign scholar, published in 1872, has necessarily limited the usefulness of the present editor.

There remained, however, not only the collation of the important English MSS.² and the due examination of the Vatican copy, but a much more complete analysis of the sources of the writer's information,³ a more thorough restoration of the true chronology, and a correction of errors as to English matters which the most learned foreigner is sure to make.

¹ Except in a translation.

² It will be proved below that the Mont-Saint-Michel, now the Avranches MS., can only be ranked as an original for the part of the chronicle after 1154. For the preceding large portion it is a mere *scriptorium* copy.

³ M. Delisle has omitted to trace many passages derived from other authors, and he has also treated all passages taken from the chronicle

of William of Jumiéges, as it appears in Duchesne's edition, as borrowed matter, whereas Robert of Torigni often merely embodies that which he himself had added to William's chronicle when he not only edited and enlarged the seven books but wrote an eighth. In making these additions Robert, of course, often borrowed from a third chronicler, whose words need to be distinguished.

Much of that which M. Delisle has placed at the foot of his pages has here been given by a geographical index and by marginal notes, while borrowed matter has been minutely indicated by differences of type.¹

References to French charters in M. Delisle's edition.

There is, however, an extremely valuable residue which the present editor has ventured to preserve, as far as he has been able, for his readers. It consists mainly of quotations from charters in French archives and other repositories, which, though generously opened to students, cannot be fully used by an Englishman not resident in France. The signal advantages of M. Delisle's position as regards these matters is evident in his work, and what he has collected should undoubtedly be made available for English students.

Plan of the present Preface.

The plan of the present Preface is (i.) to collect all ascertainable facts as to the life of abbot Robert, showing as far as possible to what extent his position enabled him to cull reliable information for our benefit; (ii.) to estimate the value of his testimony; (iii.) to investigate his chronology; (iv.) to detail the sources of his information whenever he has borrowed from other writers; (v.) to give a list of existing manuscripts of his work, with remarks on the supposed editions or successive presentations of it in various stages; (vi.) to propose a scheme by which the relationship of copies may be traced; and (vii.) to describe with some care all extant manuscripts of the chronicle.

The abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel.

The abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel enjoyed in the Middle Ages the proud position of being one of the four great centres to which pilgrims flocked from distant parts of Europe. This fact alone would give a vivid idea of the greatness of the office held by its abbot; but

¹ Dr. Bethmann has virtually omitted these parts of the chronicle where this is most needed, and has not shown the borrowed matter in the remainder with sufficient care.

the impression is deepened and widened by a visit to the now tenantless monastery, a marvel of constructive skill and a chronologised epitome of early architectural art.

The dates of the successive foundations with which man's hand has crowned the pyramidal rock may be learned from writings still extant, and we may point with confidence to one portion as the building of the second Hildebert, to another as abbot Ranulph's addition to the growing work, to a third as indubitably referable to the master spirit of Robert of Torigni.

As our task is bounded by the year 1185,¹ we may with satisfaction close our eyes to the after days, when the abbey became a fortress and a State prison; but we may with pleasure call up the image of our English Harold when, half as prisoner, half as guest of wily duke William, he went with the Norman army to St. Michael-in-Peril-of-the-Sea, a visit which the Bayeux tapestry quaintly records by exhibiting the stalwart Englishman rescuing soldiers from the quicksands with the ease of a man lifting children. "Hic," the venerable relic says, "*Willem dux et exercitus ejus venerunt ad montem Michaelis, et hic transierunt flumen Cosnonis. Hic Harold dux trahebat eos de arena.*"

Harold's
visit to
the Mount.

Dom Huynes, the monk of Mont-Saint-Michel, who wrote a history of the abbey in the 17th century,² informs us that Robert of Torigni,³ who draws his

Life of
Robert of
Torigni.

¹ It is needful to insist on the fact that the end of the chronicle exists in no extant MS., but is found only in the edition of 1513. In that the year 1186 is represented by a blank line. See p. 314, note 1.

² Edited by M. de Beaurepaire for the Soc. de l'Histoire de Normandie. Dom Huynes died in 1651.

³ He refers to himself in several places, for instance, on p. 179, as *Robertus de Torinneio*. M. Delisle quotes from *Le Roman du Mont-Saint-Michel* (Mém. de la Soc. des Antiquaires de Normandie, xx. 510) the couplet:—

El tens Robert de Torignié
Fut cil romanz fait e trové.

His
parents.

appellation of course from the town of Torigni-sur-Vire, was born of parents named Teduin and Agnes ; but we cannot say on what authority the statement is made.¹ Probably they were persons of fair position, for in the formal record of his official acts, written partly by his own hand in the cartulary of Mont-Saint-Michel, abbot Robert speaks of one "*Durandus nepos Roberti abbatis*," and elsewhere mentions that this nephew was provost of the town of Torigni.² Another relative, Philip de Chartrai (Carteret), is mentioned on p. 335.

The date of Robert's birth is nowhere stated ; but a curious passage in his chronicle, the true significance of which seems to have been hitherto overlooked, assists us in guessing his age.

He be-
comes a
monk of
Bec Hel-
louin.

Few probably to whom the idea is suggested will decline to regard the verses printed on p. 120 as a modest reference to a vision vouchsafed to Robert of Torigni himself as he lay sick in body and mind on his pallet-bed at Bec Hellouin. If he were indeed the "*scholaris clericus*" of the year 1132, we should know that the young man who became a monk of Bec in 1128³ received deacon's, if not priest's orders three or four years after taking the cowl. As he died so late as 1186 it will be most natural to suppose that he became a deacon when about 21, the earliest permissible age. These considerations would give perhaps 1110 as the date of his birth, for we must not imagine that

¹ Many of the Mont-Saint-Michel MSS. have been lost, as M. de Beaufort shows, since Dom Huynes wrote.

² He elsewhere appears, on p. 340, as *Durandus nepos Roberti abbatis*, on p. 339, as *Durant filius Roberti de Thorigneio*, and, on pp. 343-4, as *Durandus praefectus Torineii, nepos ejus*,—*ejus*, referring to William Fitz Matthew.

³ *Annal. M. Sancti Michaelis*.

From the Matriculation list of the monks of Bec in the Vatican Library (MS. Reg. 499) it appears that two novices admitted under abbot Boso, bore the name of Robert and ultimately became abbots. One of them is 54th, the other 75th among the 195. Boso ruled from May 1124 to June 1136, and strict proportion would thus give August 1127 and November 1128 as the dates of their admission.

he became a monk of so well-governed a house as Bec before 18.

His abilities were considerable, and it seems natural to find Henry of Huntingdon passing a few days at Bec in the congenial society of such a brother student as Robert. This was in 1139, when the archdeacon was accompanying the primate Theobald to Rome, and it is exceedingly interesting to find that it was from Robert of Torigni that Henry obtained the first tidings of the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, that famous troubler of the sources of English history.

His meeting with Henry of Huntingdon.

No doubt by this time Robert had completed his edition of William of Jumiéges, for he speaks of the eighth book, which he added, as being a history of the life of Henry I. "*noviter defuncto*."

Robert's edition of the chronicle of William of Jumiéges.

In a letter addressed to Gervase, prior of Saint-Céneri,¹ intended to induce him to write the life of Geoffrey of Anjou—and therefore after 7 Sept. 1151—Robert refers to himself as *ultimus monachorum Beci*; but, as M. Delisle remarks, it is probable he was made prior in 1149, when the former prior became abbot. In 1154 he was certainly claustral prior, as he so describes himself on p. 179, when narrating how he was asked by the monks of Mont-Saint-Michel to restore peace to their famous monastery.

He becomes prior of Bec.

His election took place on 27 May 1154, and archbishop Hugh of Rouen and the empress Maud signified their approval of the choice. Henry, then duke of Normandy, ratified the election on 24 June, and on 22 July two bishops, Herbert of Avranches and Girard of Séz, in the presence of three abbots, gave him the benediction. Robert, who from his new office is very often called *Robertus de Monte*, has himself recorded his acts during the five years which followed so far as concerns the property belonging to the abbey;² but

His election as abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel.

¹ See Migne, *Patrol.*, vol. 202, col. 1307. | ² See Appendix, pp. 331–345.

we miss any clue to the measures he must have taken to restore ecclesiastical concord.¹

He visits
Jersey and
Guernsey,

In 1156² he visited Jersey and Guernsey to look after abbey property. In June he received the archbishop of Rouen, and many interesting ecclesiastical matters as to this time are noted on pp. 188, 189.

and then
England.

In 1157³ he visited England, where his abbey had many possessions, notably in the diocese of Exeter,⁴ including the Cornish St. Michael's Mount. On this journey he was compelled to pay pontage to the royal officers at Southampton; but no sooner had he returned to Normandy than he appeared before Henry at Mortain and obtained redress.⁵

Receives
Henry II.
at Mont-
Saint-
Michel,

In 1158 Henry was at Avranches receiving the submission of Conan of Brittany, and moved, as Robert admits, by many entreaties, visited Mont-Saint-Michel. We may perhaps feel a touch of sympathy with the king's evident unwillingness to go. A grant of land or of a privilege of some kind was, as Henry knew, the inevitable result of such a visit, and surely enough in the abbot's parlour, after dinner, a parchment transferred certain churches at Pontorson to St. Michael-in-Peril-of-the-Sea. There are records in the Cartulary⁶ and elsewhere which show that this act was not pleasing to the bishop of Avranches; but this may have added a relish to the grant.

and after-
wards
Louis VII.

Only a few weeks later Henry again crossed the quicksands, this time with Louis VII., and though we

¹ The "*Rubrica abbreviata*," Labbe, *Nov. Bibl. MSS.*, i. 352 (see also Migne, *Patrol.*, vol. 202, col. 1327), says merely "1154. Mense "Maio, vj. kal. Junii, feria v. infra "octavas Pentecostes, electus fuit "Robertus de Torrigneio, prior "claustralis Becci. Plurima bona "operatus est et fuit custos castelli de Ponte Ursonis. Obiit "1186."

² See p. 335, § 16, 18.

³ pp. 336, 337.

⁴ The possessions of Mont-Saint-Michel in England are set forth in Adrian's bull of 1155 printed in the *Monasticon* (ed. 1673), ii. 903.

⁵ Other minor references to himself occur about p. 340.

⁶ Avranches MS. 210, *fo.* 118 *b.*

hear of no gifts, it is not improbable that the new royal pilgrim gave the gold and silver which renewed so gloriously the shrine of St. Aubert shortly after.

Again, in 1161, royal favours reached our abbot, and we find him one of the many sponsors of the infant Eleanor—*carissima domina mea et filiola in baptisinate*—and not a little proud of the circumstance. In the next year, Henry, dissatisfied with Aquilin des Fours, made abbot Robert castellan of Pontorson in his place, and the year 1163 saw our chronicler attending the council of Tours.¹

In 1165 we have another re-casing of relics, followed in 1166 by a fresh visit of the king on his return from Rennes, and in May 1169 Geoffrey, the young duke of Brittany, was solemnly received in the cathedral of Rennes by a train of ecclesiastics, among whom we recognise our author.

Three years later, in 1172, we find abbot Robert making a return of the knights' fees of his abbey, a public document which will be found in the appendix to the present volume,² and later in the year he appears in a position to which he alludes in the most courtier-like and delicate way in his chronicle.³ Were it not for the rude utterances of Benedict, Gervase of Canterbury and others, we should little suspect that it had any relation to so repulsive a subject as the public penance of a beloved and generous master.⁴ The king, the legates, and bishops came to Avranches "to treat about ecclesiastical affairs," and the statement is true

¹ M. Delisle shows that the letter of the pope dated from Anagni on the 30th of Sept. in his 5th year, which has given rise to the idea that abbot Robert went to Rome, really belongs to Alexander IV. and not to Alexander III., who was at Sens, not Anagni, at the time referred to.

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² pp. 349–353.

³ p. 254.

⁴ On p. 253 he alludes to the meeting with the cardinals, saying barely "*pro causa piæ memoria Thomæ . . .*" but this was the subject of the Michaelmas meeting too.

as far as it goes. We may say the same as to our author's record of the events of December 1170. It is veracious; but it makes no mention of the murder of Becket.¹

Visits
England
again.

In 1175 Robert of Torigni paid a second visit to England, no doubt to inspect the possessions of his abbey, nor did he return this time without a useful parchment under royal seal.

In 1177, and in 1182, Robert appears performing acts appertaining to his office, and we find him again in 1186, the last year of his life, executing three deeds² which are of purely local interest, though in one case Richard du Hommet is one of the contracting parties.

The
author's
death in
1186.

That Robert of Torigni closed his life in 1186 is sufficiently clear from several records, although the entry to that effect in the Annals of Mont-Saint-Michel was not made by a contemporary hand. Dom Huynes writes confidently on the point: "Nous avons en ce monastere
" plusieurs manu-scripts bien approuvez qui font foy
" qu'il est mort l'an mil cent quatre vingt six le vingt-
" quatriesme de juin." There is a list of abbots too in Avranches MS. 213 which confirms the date 1186,³ and there is a document referring to abbot Martin, his successor, in the Cartulary of the abbey,⁴ dated 24 December 1187. Speaking of Martin, it says, "*qui eodem*
" *anno ad hanc abbatiam venit.*" In the *Obituarium* of Bec Hellouin⁵ Robert's name appears on 23 June; in that of his own abbey⁶ the anniversary was noted

¹ The "*quo ruit ense Thomas*" verses which now appear in the Avranches MS. are thrust into the text and margin by a hand which did not write the surrounding part of the chronicle.

² Cartulary of M. St. M., *fo.* 119*b*, and MS. Bibl. Nat. Fonds Lat. 5430 A, pp. 73 and 243.

³ See also the *Rubrica abbreviata* quoted in note ¹ on p. xii.

⁴ *Fo.* 119*b*.

⁵ Paris MS. F. Lat. 13,905, *ff.* 74-78. In the preface to vol. ii., p. xv, this is referred to as not now to be traced, but the extent to which it is transcribed in this MS. is not stated by M. Delisle.

⁶ Bouquet, xxiii. 579.

for 24 June. No doubt, then, on 24 June 1186 Robert of Torigni passed away, and was laid to rest in the glorious church of his most glorious abbey. Three bays of the nave were destroyed in 1776, and the grave, losing thus its sacred shelter, is now in the open air. A stone, only distinguishable from the paving of the rest of the Plomb du Four by two small incised crosses, marks where Robert of Torigni and his successor Martin are sleeping,¹ and the youth who guides visitors over the now dismantled abbey states that he has seen the bones of our chronicler lying in the leaden box in which they rest. His place of burial.

Robert of Torigni was one of the greatest builders in the list of abbots whose work graces the lonely rock. Much that he built has now disappeared,² and one loss, important enough in itself, caused, if we may trust Dom Huynes, further heavy damage. One of the two towers by which Robert completed the western portion of the church on the Plomb du Four, split by lightning and falling in the year 1300, “ nous causa une perte irréparable, d’autant plus que les riches monuments de l’esprit de Robert furent ensevelis, sa bibliothèque et la plupart des livres qu’il avait composés.” Robert’s additions to the monastery.

It is perhaps not quite intelligible that parchment books should wholly perish even in these trying circumstances, and much of the ancient library undoubtedly survives. Among the MSS. which remain is one of William of Apulia, and this, Dr. Wilmans thinks, bears traces of having suffered from the crash.³ Supposed loss of many of his works by a fall of buildings.

¹ The tomb is marked on one of the sections in M. Corroyer’s “ Description du Mont - Saint - Michel.”

² The “ Promenoir des Moines ” may be mentioned as an existing specimen of his work. M. Delisle quotes from the *Hierarchia Neustriae*, iv. (MS. Lat. Bibl. Nat.

5201, ff. 145, 146), a list of Robert’s improvements in the monastery, obtained by Robert Cenau, bishop of Avranches, in the 16th cent., obviously from sources not now extant. He raised the number of monks from 40 to 60, and brought the library to a total of 120 volumes.

³ Pertz, ix. 240.

His writings.

M. Delisle notes with care all the works which can be attributed to our author, but they fall very far short of the “cent quarante livres sur diverses matieres” of which Dom Huynes speaks. We have already spoken of abbot Robert’s enlargement of the work of William of Jumiéges, and his other great work is now before us; but what share he took in compiling the *Chronicon Beccense* is not very clear. Probably the Annals of Mont-Saint-Michel¹, from 1135 to 1173 are due to his pen, and he had a share in preparing the “*Rubrica abbreviata*”² concerning the abbots of the monastery. Another valuable contribution from his pen is to be found at the beginning and end of his own copy of Henry of Huntingdon’s chronicle.³ This is a series of lists of bishops and abbots of France and England. Twenty-five still remain, out of the original thirty-three.

In the Cartulary his business-like spirit is plentifully evidenced, and his masterful handwriting appears on its fair pages with haughty disregard to the contrast it is presenting to the exquisite penmanship of the earlier part of the volume.

Catalogue of the Bec Library.

His minor works.

To him we owe the useful catalogue of the books in the Bec library, which we find in the same volume as his chronicle,⁴ and the treatise “*De Immutacione Ordinis Monachorum.*”⁵ If we add to this two letters, one of which is printed in the appendix to the present volume, and a preface to certain extracts from St. Augustine’s works,⁶ we have practically all that is extant which is attributable to his pen.⁷

¹ Avranches MS. 211.

² Avranches MS. 213, fo. 178. Printed by Labbe, *Nov. Bibl. Manuscr.*, i. 350. Reprinted in Migne’s *Patrol.*, vol. 202, col. 1325.

³ Paris MS. Fonds Latin 6042.

⁴ See Migne, t. 150, cols. 771–782.

⁵ This is printed in the *Monasticon* (ed. 1673), ii. 947.

⁶ Avranches MS. 80.

⁷ M. Delisle notes a few words from the preface to a now lost copy of Pliny’s Natural History preserved (see p. lxviii) by d’Achery (*Guiberti Opera*, p. 716), and observes

PREFACE.

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Robert of Torigni's position was one which especially qualified him for the work of chronicling the events of his day, though any person looking from the platform where once stood the cathedral of Avranches over to the dim islet, might at first think that there could scarcely be a lonelier spot. But we must remember that, during the reign of Henry Fitz-Empress, Normandy, from its centre to its outskirts, was a carefully garrisoned province kept in the strictest order, and accustomed to see its duke not only dwelling peacefully for long months at Rouen, but rushing through its length and breadth like a tempest, on errands of war or discipline. The land was filled with great abbeys and parcelled out among many bishops. Through it lay the road to the troublous provinces which Eleanor had brought to her royal husband. In a word, it was then a moving scene of life, and not by any means the sleepy land of plenty which we now survey.

The apparent disadvantages of his position as regards his work as a chronicler.

Not only would the knights who formed the contingent which the abbey supplied for warlike expeditions bring details of every campaign, but crowds of wayfarers arriving from distant lands to complete the four greater pilgrimages would bring tales which, after careful comparison, might be found worthy of record.

His probable means of obtaining information.

When kings and courtiers and ecclesiastics of every grade appeared at the shrine of St. Michael-in-Peril-of-the-Sea, opportunities would be found for testing previous information and learning much more. Then again, our chronicler was of an active spirit. He had visited England twice, and a man who had the enterprise to do that in the 12th century would scarcely fail to traverse the mainland of France. We find him at the council of

that Robert set the custom of copying stray documents on the fly-leaves of MSS., like the one he refers to in his chronicle, p. 279, as prefixed to a copy of one of Origen's

works. The letter not printed in the appendix here is that to the prior of Saint-Céneri referred to on p. xi.

¹ See Appendix, pp. 349, 353.

Tours, and his words as to Notre Dame seem to indicate that he knew Paris. Then, too, it is evident from his writings that, as a former monk of the house, he kept up an affectionate intercourse with Bec-Hellouin, a school of learning to which all its *alumni* seem to have looked back with love and pride. Lastly, there was the fortified town of Avranches close at hand, with its bishop and its cathedral chapter, so that, all things considered, we cannot excuse any shortcomings in our chronicler on the ground of lack of opportunities.

His special knowledge of events in the Holy Land.

So good, indeed, were his means of obtaining crusading news that even when he is borrowing from Fulcher of Chartres he can add details which his author omits, and his knowledge of later events in the Holy Land, though not always accurate, entitles him to be ranked by Michaud¹ among the original authorities for certain facts.

Value of his chronicle for the years 1154–1170.

Much we certainly have to thank him for, and his account of the period between the death of Stephen and the year 1170 is indeed very valuable, yet in truth ours is but the thankfulness felt for moonlight when the sun is absent. When Benedict of Peterborough once takes up the pen Robert of Torigni appears to our forgetful ingratitude as but a threadbare annalist, whose careless chronology is vexing to the soul, and whose cowardly reticences inspire something too like a feeling of contempt.

Still, Robert was a man of ability and a personal friend of his sovereign, and a man of his position cannot detail the events of his own days without recording much which we could by no means afford to lose. Without his chronicle our knowledge of Henry the Second's relations with continental Europe would be greatly impoverished, and so much of our insular history would also be lost, that it is indeed surprising that,

¹ Bibliothèque des Croisades, iii., pp. 91–96.

as we have already said, the work now appears for the first time in an English edition.

Robert of Torigni's chronicle is not one of those works which bring us into personal contact with the author. He never writes to us about things, but he enters facts on a record for our use, which is a very different affair. He tells us in several places of his presence, but we do not feel it any the more for the reminder. William of Malmesbury or William of Newburgh leave us conscious of their individuality: of Robert of Torigni we learn more by what he omits than by what he says. A man who only writes that which is entirely discreet, and is in all things perfectly prudent, is hiding half his heart from us, and we shall never learn from him what are the perilous controversies of his time or what is the exact nature of the strain between opposing forces which finds its issue in some patent fact, though we get the bare fact itself surely enough. The author's reticences.

Etienne de Rouen in his conceited, blundering fashion lets us see that Hugh archbishop of Rouen was an adherent of the anti-pope, and therefore a schismatic. Robert of Torigni accompanies the record of Hugh's death in 1164 with a flow of reserved compliment far different from the warm eulogiums accorded to the successive abbots of Bec.¹ Robert knew that his archbishop was of blameless life, was a charitable man and a firm administrator, and he says as much, but it is only when we get a hint from another source that we observe that he is not called *vir sanctus* like abbot Letard, or referred to as *pice memorie*, like the fourth abbot of Bec, nor is he simply though warmly termed *carissimus dominus noster*, like his successor Rotrou.

¹ In one place he calls him *vir summæ religionis*, but the words were written five years before the schism and in an access of grati-

tude for his assent to the writer's election to the abbacy of Mont-St.-Michel.

Again, when he touches on the scandalous rebellion of 1173–1174, and later when he records the death of the youth who, if he could have had his way, would at least have deposed his father, Robert writes in a tone of the mildest regret for youthful error, and praises the personal qualities of the dead prince. We see from this that throughout the work his pen is controlled by a design, long cherished, no doubt, though not carried out until 1184, of presenting a copy of the book to the king. Some blame must be intimated in a very cautious and respectful way, in order to preserve an appearance of sincerity, but it must be borne in mind by a prudent chronicler that the rough king's weakest spot is his affection for his unworthy offspring.

His attitude as regards Becket.

Once more, as has been said above, the king's responsibilities in the Becket affair would put a faithful ecclesiastic into a most unenviable position. Altogether the writer thinks the business is so delicate and painful and so like a prompted murder that the death at Canterbury had best be passed over in silence. And yet, as total silence might be regarded as implying blame, it will be safest to take a middle course, and a most discreet quatrain is current which merely says "*mit ense Thomas,*" and attributes blame to no one. Let it be added in the margin of the chronicle, so that it may pass into the text when a copy is made for the king.¹

This mental attitude ensures a continuous deduction from the fulness of truth. It is not the frame of mind of an historian, and it is scarcely that of a trustworthy recorder of facts. It does, however, permit a man to abstain from positive falsehood, and as our abbot never sins otherwise than by suppression, we may be sincerely thankful to him for his patient efforts as an

¹ See p. xiv, note 1. See also | cence respecting Henry's humilia-
p. 253, 254, as to the absurd reti- | tion at Avranches.

annalist, faithfully sustained as they were throughout a long life.

For an account of a portion of our author's times readers may be referred to the prefaces¹ to the second and third volumes in the collection of 12th century chronicles to which the present is the final contribution. Many recent writers have treated of the days of king Henry II., and the tide of hero worship has set so strongly towards him that more need not be said about his reign here.

The case is far different with the reign of Stephen, which has been inadequately treated by most historians.

The problems of Henry's reign are few, those of his predecessor's are many, and in the preface to the third volume an attempt was made to elucidate a few important points. Such use was necessarily made of the chronicle of Robert of Torigni in doing this that no apology need be offered for recurring for a moment to one curious incident.

The invasion of England by Henry in 1147² when he was but a boy of 14, a piece of history which has hitherto been rejected solely on the ground of improbability, ought perhaps to have been illustrated by the exact precedent which is found among the acts of one of his ancestors.

Miss Norgate has graphically described the fierce battle which Fulk Nerra won "before he was fourteen" "over a veteran commander who had been more than "a match for his father ten years earlier,"³ and that Henry Fitz-Empress at precisely the same age as Fulk should have made a similar attempt becomes, in view of this enterprise, no longer wonderful, no

¹ The preface to vol. ii., see p. xxvii, was written with especial but prospective reference to the present volume.

² See preface to vol. iii., xvi. The story of Fulk Nerra is not

specifically alluded to there, but is included in the reference to "the "early deeds of [Henry's] great "ancestors."

³ England under the Angevin Kings, i. 146.

longer a case in which mere probabilities can decide against the story. The strange tale of the victorious boy general, which young Henry must have heard a hundred times, fired him, as it would fire any bold lad, to make a similar trial of fortune.

Fate which was kind to Fulk frowned upon his imitator, and the *fiasco* is duly recorded. We are presented with no grandiloquent fable of victory, but a circumstantial story of failure which appears commonplace beside the brilliant feat from earlier history on which no doubt is thrown.

There is thus nothing intrinsically improbable in the matter. There is no conflict of dates, no *lacuna* in the chronicle, nothing in fact which should lead any truly cautious student of history to reject it as an error on the part of so careful a writer as the author of the *Gesta Stephani*.

There is, however, among some modern writers a tendency to incautious rejection, a misdirected following of ostentatious critics on the one hand, and on the other a vain attempt to adapt methods of reasoning derived from physical science to the fragmentary tale of human inconsistencies which we term history.

A truer science of observation might lead us to say that in human affairs nothing is reasonable in practice that is not slightly illogical in theory, and that few things have happened against the probable occurrence of which good *à priori* reasons could not have been urged.

Chronology.

Careless dating of the MSS.

Passing to the important question of chronology, we are bound to remark that the confusion which prevails in abbot Robert's chronicle is no doubt largely due to his unfortunate way of leaving his notes to be copied by his subordinates, and his date-rubrics to be inserted by the most erratic of his *scriptorium* staff.

Such is the difficulty resulting that the writer of the noble Reading copy, here quoted as H., gives the matter up at one point in despair saying, under the year 1143