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978-1-108-05234-4 - *Liber qui Dicitur Flores Historiarum ab Anno Domini MCLIV Annoque Henrici Anglorum Regis Secundi Primo*: Volume 3

Roger of Wendover Edited by Henry G. Hewlett

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Liber qui Dicitur Flores Historiarum ab Anno Domini MCLIV Annoque Henrici Anglorum Regis Secundi Primo

A former prior of Bevoise, Roger of Wendover (d. 1236) established himself as a chronicler at St Albans. This three-volume work, edited by Henry G. Hewlett (1832–97) and published between 1886 and 1889, comprises the latter part of the larger *Flores* opus and the part of the Latin text for which Wendover can claim direct responsibility. Volume 3 includes the introductory matter, glossary and index to all three volumes. Hewlett's introduction discusses the little we know of Roger of Wendover's life as well as his shortcomings and merits as an annalist – namely that he was unreasonably credulous yet invariably candid. His true importance, however, is as a key influence on his historiographical successor, Matthew Paris, whose political outlook and interests he helped to shape. A comparison is drawn between this work and that of Paris, the more gifted chronicler, who 'complemented the deficiencies of Wendover's narrative by substantial additions'.

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Liber qui Dicitur
Flores Historiarum
ab Anno Domini
MCLIV Annoque
Henrici Anglorum
Regis Secundi Primo

VOLUME 3

ROGER OF WENDOVER
EDITED BY HENRY G. HEWLETT



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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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DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

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

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

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

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be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

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

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

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

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

*Rolls House,
December 1857.*

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HISTORiarUM AB ANNO DOMINI MCLIV. ANNOQUE HENRICI
ANGLORUM REGIS SECUNDI PRIMO.

THE FLOWERS OF HISTORY

BY

ROGER DE WENDOVER:

FROM THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1154, AND THE FIRST YEAR
OF HENRY THE SECOND, KING OF THE ENGLISH.

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS

BY

HENRY G. HEWLETT,

KEEPER OF THE RECORDS OF THE LAND REVENUE.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE extent of our knowledge respecting the life of Roger de Wendover, author of the *Flores Historiarum*, is confined to the meagre notices of him preserved by Matthew Paris, who succeeded him in the office of historiographer to the Convent of St. Albans; (*Vite Viginti trium Abbatum Sancti Albani*; Ed. Wats, 1640). The later references made to him by Thomas Walsingham, who filled the same office in the reign of Richard II., and compiled the *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani* (Ed. Riley, 1867, Vol. I., pp. 270, 274), are substantially identical with those of the *Vite*.

These memorials furnish no information concerning Wendover's parentage, nor the several dates of his birth, his admission to priest's orders, his enrolment as a member of the Convent, and preferment to the post of Prior of the Cell of Belvoir in Lincolnshire, which he is found to be holding at the time when the first mention of his name occurs. The Cottonian Codex of the *Flores*, which Wats inspected when its condition was unimpaired, bore a superscription (now effaced) attributing its authorship to "Rogerus Wendovre de Wendovre, Prior de Bealvair." "Nomen illi Rogerus " Wendovre de Wendovre, ut in MS. Cottoniano diserte " reperii. Quod arguit illum generosa familia fuisse pro- " creatum. Quia scilicet agnomen traxerat gentilitium " (ut moris est nostralibus) ab agro sive oppido rurali " progenitoribus suis ab olim hæreditario. " Ad Prioratum Cellæ de Bealvoir in districtu Lin- " colniensis est promotus. Ita enim MS. prædicto " inscribitur Rogerus Wendovre de Wendovre, Prior " de Bealvair." (Pref. to Hist. Major of M. Paris,

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1684, p. 2.) From this description it may undoubtedly be inferred that he was a native of the little town of the same name in Buckinghamshire, but the evidence appears quite inadequate to warrant the further inference drawn by Wats that he was of gentle blood. The *agnomen* in question was far from uncommon in the XIIIth century, as will be seen by the references collected by Coxe; (Preface to his edition of the *Flores*, 1841, Publications of English Historical Society, Vol. I., pp. vii., viii.).

It may be reasonably presumed that Wendover was a man of mature age when appointed to be Prior of Belvoir, and that he must have filled that office for some time to have justly incurred the censure for prodigal expenditure of the monastic property which led to his deposition. The scanty notices which form our sole biographical material even leave the precise date of this event uncertain.

It is only known to have occurred during the reign of William de Trumpington, who was chosen to be twenty-second Abbot of St. Albans in 1214, and died in 1235. After recording, as the most momentous incidents of that period, the death of John, the coronation of Henry III., and the settlement of the kingdom in a state of peace, which proved to be transient, the compiler of the *Gesta Abbatum* proceeds to narrate the acts of the Abbot's official life, beginning with his visitation of the several cells affiliated to the Abbey in different parts of England. The following passage describes his visit to Belvoir.

“ Abbas igitur, Willelmus mente alacer, Thinemum et alias cellas suas gratia visitationis ut reformanda reformaret, adire disposuit, et ut moris est (sicut prædicitur) *tempore guerræ, accepta ac Rege licentiâ, versus plagam tetendit borealem. Et cum visitasset Cellam de Bealvair, audivit arcanas querelas de Priore illius domus, Domino Rogero de Wendovere, quasi dissipasset bona ecclesiæ in prodigalitate incircumspecta, sequens per omnia vestigia sui prædecessoris*

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Magistri videlicet Radulphi Simplicis, qui pro manifesta dilapidatione cunctis reprehensibilis habebatur. Corruptus igitur hoc ab Abbate, Prior se promisit talia profecto correcturum. Tamen Abbas ad horam dissimulans observabat omnia, hæc conferens in corde sua” (Riley, *ut supra*, I., 270).

As the country was disturbed by successive internal commotions in 1224, 1227, and 1231-4, either of which might answer to the description of war, the reference “tempore guerræ” is too indefinite to fix the date of this visitation. No such disturbance took place in 1219, the year to which Wats and Coxe appear to refer it.¹ As the incident next recorded by the compiler of the *Gesta Abbatum* is a fire which occurred at the Cell of Hatfield in March, 1231, and the acts of the Abbot on returning from his visitation are narrated immediately afterwards, Sir Thomas Hardy takes that year to be the limiting date before which the charges brought against Wendover, and after which the sentence of deprivation founded upon them must at all events be fixed (Descript. Catal. of Materials, III., Pref., p. xxxvii.). The order, however, in which the events recorded in the *Gesta* are entered does not prove upon examination to correspond with their succession in point of time. The entry relating to the deposition of the Priors is followed by an account of two disputes between the Convent of St. Albans and the Bishops of Lincoln and Norwich concerning their several jurisdictions over its cells, both of which the Abbot succeeded in settling by deeds of composition, respectively dated 1219 and 1228 (Riley I., pp. 275, 278). These official proceedings are introduced together by an indefinite statement that they occurred “ejus quoque tempore,” so that it is

¹ The latter, however, (Pref. to *Flores* I., p. vi.) adopts it only tentatively: “These events would seem to have happened about the year 1219;” referring to a passage in Wats’ Preface to Matthew Paris, but without giving the page. I have been unable to find the passage referred to in the editions of 1640 or 1684.

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doubtful if the compiler intended to observe any strict order of chronological sequence.

In default of more precise evidence, it may suffice to refer the visitation to one of the seven years between 1224, when the kingdom was first seriously disturbed after the departure of Louis, and 1231, the date of the fire at Hatfield. How long the Abbot's tour lasted is uncertain, but it was presumably soon after his return that he formally deposed the Priors of Hatfield, Wymondham, Belvoir, and others who had incurred his censure, and appointed their successors. The infliction of this sentence upon Wendover is thus briefly noted in the *Gesta*: "Loco igitur Rogeri de Wendovre Prioris de Bealvero, Martinum de Bodekesham Cellarium substituit." Wendover may be supposed to have thereupon resumed his former position as a simple monk in the Convent of St. Albans.

The now effaced superscription of the Cottonian Codex of the *Flores*, as has been shewn, described it as the work of Roger de Wendover, "Prior de Bealvoir." Whether this should be regarded as a mere reference to his having once held that office, or be taken to mean that he began to compose his Chronicle during the time he filled it, cannot be determined. It is scarcely probable, however, that a cell such as Belvoir should have possessed a library of much size, or that before his return to St. Albans he could have obtained access to the extensive historical materials of which he made use in the *Flores*. To allow time for the composition of his Chronicle between 1231 (if that was the date of his return) and May 1236, when he died, he must have commenced it almost immediately, and as it brings the record of events down to May in the year preceding, he was probably employed upon it nearly to the last. His death is thus registered by Matthew Paris in an obituary list among the *Additamenta* of the *Chronica Majora*: "1236; II. nonas Maii, Rogerus de Wendovre sacerdos." (Ed. Luard, Vol. VI., p. 274.)

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According to the tradition preserved in his own convent, Wendover was credited with the authorship of the *Flores* from its inception. This appears from an incidental reference made to him by Thomas Walsingham in one of the series of compilations which he made from the St. Albans records towards the end of the fourteenth century:—"Consequenter in nostro "monasterio floruit Rogerus de Wendover, noster "monachus, cui pæne debent totius regni cronographi "quicquid habent. Nam plane et perlucide ab initio "mundi per annorum distinctionem digessit cronica sua "usque ad tempora Regis Henrici a Conquestu secundi " [tertii] (*De fundatione et meritis Mon. S. Alb., App. E., "Annal. Joh. de Amundesham*, Ed. Riley, II., 303)."¹

Modern scholars, however, are generally agreed that the first half of the *Flores* is the compilation of an earlier hand than Wendover's. By whom it was made and to what extent Wendover adopted and modified it, are questions upon which there is some difference of opinion. Pits, in his "De Illustribus Scriptoribus Angliæ" (p. 845), states (but without reference to any authority) that a monk of St. Albans named Walter compiled a Chronicle of English history after the year 1180. No trace of this compilation remains, but assuming that it once existed, Sir Thomas Hardy (*Descr. Catal.*, III. Pref., p. xxxvi.) surmises that it was this which Wendover probably "found prepared to his "hand when he became historiographer of his Abbey "and dealt with according to his own fashion." Dr. Luard, the latest editor of Matthew Paris (Vol. II., Preface, pp. x-xi.), is disposed to attribute the com-

¹ I agree with Mr. Coxe in assuming *secundi* in this passage to be a mistake for *tertii* (Pref., p. xxx.); notwithstanding the doubt entertained on the point by Sir T. D. Hardy (*Descr. Catal.* III., Pref., p. xliii.) which he finds upon a marginal entry in the Corpus Christi MS. of Paris, wherein that chronicler is credited with the authorship after 1188. In other codices both of Paris and Wendover the latter is distinctly acknowledged to have brought the *Flores* down to the year 1235.

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pilation in question to the hand of John de Cella, who was Abbot of St. Albans from 1195 to 1214; grounding this supposition upon the following reference to the Chronicle of an Abbot John, which occurs in two marginal entries of the Douce Codex of the *Flores* at the end of the year 1188. "Huc usque in Lib. Chronic. Johannis Abbatis" (written on one margin); "Usque hoc Cronica Johannis Abbatis, et hic finis" (on the opposite margin). Both these entries are admittedly in a later hand than that of the MS. text, and the second in a later hand than the first.¹ The only memorialist of Abbot John de Cella is Matthew Paris, who in the *Vitæ* praises him for his learning, and mentions that in his time the *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor and other valuable MSS. were introduced into the Library of St. Albans, but makes no reference to any chronicle compiled by him.

It appears to me impossible upon such slender and conjectural evidence as the foregoing to credit either the monk Walter or Abbot John with the authorship of the compilation which Wendover employed. That one existed ready to his hand seems to be an unquestionable inference from the diversity of style apparent between that portion of the *Flores* which is prior to the middle of the twelfth century, and that which relates to events nearer to his own time. The entire work, which is in two books, begins with the Creation, and the compilation for which, by general consent, Wendover has only a divided responsibility, extends from that date down to the death of Stephen in 1154; comprising the whole of Book I., part I. of Book II., and a section of Part 2. As this period does not fall within the scope of the present edition, the compilation is excluded from any criticisms of my own, and I shall

¹ In Vol. VII. (Pref. p. x.), Dr. Luard adduces in confirmation a third marginal reference to Abbot John from another of the St. Albans MSS., but in the absence of evidence to show when it was written, it scarcely seems entitled to much additional weight.

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be content to quote the opinions of three scholars far more competent to estimate its value; Sir Thomas Hardy, Mr. Coxe, and Dr. Luard. Although differing from each other with respect to the part which Wendover took in its formation, they substantially agree in their analysis of its merits.

“From the Creation of the World,” says Sir Thomas Hardy, “down to the Nativity of Our Lord, it is taken from the Old Testament, with occasional extracts from Beda’s Chronicle, Methodius, Orosius, Geoffrey of Monmouth, St. Augustine de Civitate Dei, Lactantius, &c. From the birth of Jesus Christ down to 1066 (the end of Book I.) it is taken from the New Testament, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Beda’s Ecclesiastical History, William of St. Albans, Henry of Huntingdon, Gildas, Nennius, Florence of Worcester, Sigebert of Gemblours, William of Malmesbury, Felix’s Life of Guthlac, Symeon of Durham, Abbo and Ailred of Rievaulx. At times he [the compiler] abridges, at others he transcribes his authors, making slight additions to their narratives, which occasionally alter the sense. The chronology of the work, being derived from many sources, is necessarily liable to great uncertainty. He sometimes commences the year on the 25th of December, sometimes on the 25th March, according to the author he is following; and when copying Florence of Worcester he frequently differs from him a whole year, at other times several years, probably having been misled by Florence’s twofold chronology, that according to the usually received calculation, and that according to the Dionysian era, which is nearly twenty-two years later than the true date. As he writes in the form of annals, he assigns determinate dates to the fables of Geoffrey of Monmouth and to the wonderful stories in Malmesbury, which that writer’s better judgment had left undated. In more than one instance he states the same event in successive years, and even twice in the

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same year; which would not have been the case if he were abridging one author only.

“From 1067 to 1154 the ‘Flores’ is taken from William of Poitiers, Ordericus Vitalis, Symeon of Durham, Florence of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, John of Hexham, William of Tyre, Ailred of Rievaulx, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

“The same remarks, as to dealing with his authorities, chronology, &c., are also applicable to this portion of his work.” (Descript. Catal., Vol. III., pp. 322–3.)

“Of the second subdivision above mentioned [of Book II.], the portion reaching to about 1200 is derived chiefly from Robert de Monte, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Florence of Worcester, Ailred of Rievaulx, William of Tyre, Ralph de Diceto, Baldericus Dolensis, Chronicon Terræ Sanctæ, Benedict of Peterborough, Roger Hoveden, and the lives of Becket by his various biographers, &c.” (Ib., p. 81.)

That the compilation was made subsequent to the year 1215, Sir T. Hardy infers both from its including extracts from the *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor, which, as Paris mentions, was introduced into the Library of St. Albans by Abbot John de Cella, who died in 1214 (*Gesta Abbatum*, Ed. Riley I., 223), and from the reference made under the year 1179 to the fourth Lateran Council which was held in 1215 (Vol. I., p. 122 of present edition).

Of the notices relating to English history in the first four hundred and forty-six years of Book II., Mr. Coxe says that they “are meagre in the extreme. “The history of England, indeed, at this period is “to be sought rather in that of the Roman Empire, in “the works of Cæsar, Tacitus, Dion Cassius, Suetonius, “and others, whom Wendover, we regret to say, has “rejected for the fables of Geoffrey of Monmouth, “whom he has made almost his sole authority. The

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“ names of Caractacus and Boadicea are nowhere found
 “ in the Chronicle, whilst that of Arviragus, the creation
 “ probably of Geoffrey or of Walter of Oxford, occupies
 “ a conspicuous place. In the death of Severus, the
 “ histories of Dion and of Herodian remain unconsulted,
 “ whilst the account given by Geoffrey is followed with
 “ inconceivable blindness.” (Pref. to *Flores*, Vol. I.,
 p. xiii.)

Of the sources whence he considers that Wendover drew the materials of his own compilation, Mr. Coxe observes that “one of his principal authorities in matters of foreign history appears to have been Sigebert, the monk of Gemblours, from whom he frequently transcribes *verbatim* whole passages, and who has very often been the cause of many chronological errors which will be found in the work. From Hermannus Contractus, Marianus Scotus, and the Byzantine historians, Theophanes, Cedren, and others, he appears also to have borrowed, whence, in the earlier parts of his Chronicle, his style naturally partakes more of the character of those from whom he is copying; at the same time that, where in the compilation he has moulded the material into his own form, it will be found to be that of plain and unaffected narrative. In the later portions of his history, the writers of his own land are the sources of the events that he registers. Beda, Malmesbury, Florence of Worcester, and Huntingdon, have been carefully examined and freely used.” (Ib., pp. xxvii., xxviii.)

Dr. Luard, after giving a detailed list of the authorities relied on by the compiler from the Creation to A.D. 1066, thus analyses his mode of combining his materials:—

“ As to the compilation itself, it is evident that the compiler followed no fixed law in the way he culled his ‘Flores’; in most cases, especially in the earlier parts, he followed his authority word for word; some-

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times, however, especially in the case of Peter Comestor, he gives merely an abridgment. On the other hand, he frequently enlarges and embellishes what he has before him ; introducing rhetorical flourishes or epithets merely for the sake of doing so. He seems to consider all his authorities of equal value, and all the events told, whether legendary or historical, of equal interest. Sentences are sometimes made up out of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Bede as if of equal authority. The authorities quoted by name are Trogius Pompeius (*i.e.*, Justin) Bede frequently, Geoffrey of Monmouth as the author of the *Historia Britonum* and by name the Life of St. German (probably that by Constantius) the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles as *Cronica Anglorum* He makes no attempt to correct wrong quotations in his own authorities. He affixes dates to the stories he extracts from Geoffrey of Monmouth and the legends he copies out of William of Malmesbury quite as readily as he copies the dates from Sigebert or Florence. Sometimes he alters the expressions of his authorities to suit his own time. The dates of events copied are occasionally altered. There are also endeavours at times to make the fabulous stories more probable by altering the names given in them, which would be inconsistent with the dates to which they are assigned. In the later portion of the compilation, that is, after it is nearly confined to English history, the author mixes up the English authorities used in a very curious manner, patching together the accounts given by Florence, Huntingdon, and Malmesbury so as to be often very confusing. Sometimes he tries to reconcile discrepancies by minute alterations, but more frequently he is not in the least deterred by finding contrary accounts of the same transaction in his different authorities, and simply copies both." (M. Paris, Vol. I., Preface, pp. xli-xliii.)

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Of the use which the compiler made of his authorities between 1066 and 1201, Dr. Luard, who does not credit Wendover with any share in the work until after 1188, thus writes:—

“The authorities employed are for the most part faithfully and even slavishly copied, though occasionally they are altered, apparently merely for the sake of alteration. . . . He [the compiler] not unfrequently introduces sentences not in his original; sometimes from other sources which he had at hand; at other times entirely out of his own head, to round a period or to give greater picturesqueness to his narrative. . . . Errors are often made through sheer carelessness. . . . On the other hand, errors are sometimes made through a wish to abbreviate the original.” (Ib., Vol. II., Preface, pp. xii–xx.)

It is admitted by Dr. Luard that after the year 1188, at all events, Wendover became his own compiler, and that the *Flores* assumes the character of an original work after 1201. The question whether the date of its originality should not be fixed (as Sir Thomas Hardy contended) about thirty-four years earlier, viz., at the accession of Henry II., does not appear to me important enough to require discussion, and I am content to leave it undecided. In any case, it is scarcely possible that Wendover can have had personal knowledge of the events which he narrates prior to 1188, if indeed so early; so that for practical purposes he may be regarded as a compiler or authority at second-hand up to that date. Such errors as he has committed in this capacity, owing to a negligent or mistaken reading of the writers upon whom he has relied, will be more conveniently corrected *seriatim* in the notes which I have incorporated together at the close of this Introduction. I pass to a consideration of his salient features as an original writer.

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It is scarcely necessary to disclaim for Wendover, at the outset, any pretensions to rank as an historical artist, or as being, in the proper sense of the term, an historian at all, for whose distinctive functions he possessed no aptitude. It is only fair to estimate him according to the standard to which he invariably conformed, that of an observer and annalist of contemporary events. His characteristics in this capacity partake too largely of those common to the ordinary type of monastic chronicler to admit of delineation as an individual portrait, and there are no autobiographical touches in his narrative which serve to indicate his idiosyncrasy. If a single trace of it is discernible, it can only be inferred from his silence. The scope of his chronicle, as will be seen, embraced the entire reign over St. Albans of Abbot William de Trumpington, whose death occurred more than a year before his own, viz., in February 1235 (Vol. III., p. 102). Some excuse for resentment had undoubtedly been given to the ex-Prior of Belvoir by the Abbot's severity in depriving him of his rank for a fault which he had promised to amend, without allowing him time to prove the sincerity of his repentance. His account of Trumpington's official career nevertheless displays no trace whatever of unkindly feeling. Considering the frankness with which, as the whole tenor of his work attests, Wendover habitually criticized the acts of his ecclesiastical superiors, this silence is some evidence of his self-restraint. Regarded as a proof of obedience to his monastic vow of obedience beyond the term at which death had released him, it is creditable to his magnanimity. Shadowy as it is, it constitutes the solitary trait which can be figured in the obscure outline of his personality.

As a memorialist of his own time, Wendover is chargeable with certain grave faults and shortcomings, which are redeemed by one virtue, at least, of sterling value. Foremost in the first category must be reckoned his

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indiscriminate acceptance of rumour and suspicion as equivalent to fact and proof. For example, an accusation which was brought against the Justiciary Hubert de Burgh, of having poisoned William Longespee, Earl of Salisbury, at a banquet to which he had invited him (Vol. II., p. 298), rested upon the sole basis of an "ut dicitur," but Wendover records it with as much seriousness as if the accused had been tried by his peers and judicially convicted. An instance of the chronicler's rashness in accepting for truth a scandalous story founded upon no surer warrant than hearsay, occurs in his account of the death of Louis VIII. of France and the character borne by the Queen (Vol. III., p. 4). The charges brought against her by her enemies, and here adopted as worthy of credence, of having connived at her husband's murder by the Count of Champagne, and maintained an adulterous connection not only with him but with the Papal legate, have been repudiated by French historians as at variance with trustworthy evidence (Coxe, Vol. IV., p. 216, note).

A more excusable but not less irritating fault of Wendover's is his habit of breaking the flow of a continuous narrative to interpolate irrelevant facts. Most of the incidents thus abruptly introduced relate to ecclesiastical history, which occupies a preponderant share of his attention. Evidence of his tendency to over-rate the importance of events in which he took a professional interest, will be found so abundantly in his pages that it is unnecessary to adduce examples.

As the worst of his shortcomings may be noted his frequent failure to record some link in a chain of events which is essential either to their coherence or their elucidation. In this respect he contrasts unfavourably with Matthew Paris, who often appears to have detected the deficiencies of his predecessor's narrative and endeavoured to amend them. One of the most important of Wendover's omissions occurs in his account of

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the long contest between the State and the Church, which closed with the tragedy of Becket's assassination. The unconditional surrender of Henry II., at the moment of his victory, in a sudden outburst of remorse for the fate of his antagonist, is left unexplained for want of any previous reference to the rash words which had escaped him in anger and unwittingly furnished a warrant for the crime he had never contemplated. This is the more noticeable because of the subsequent reference made to them in connection with the King's plea for absolution (I., 90).

Two other instances may be noticed, in which the hand of Paris has repaired Wendover's omission of certain accessory features that are requisite for the realization of an historical picture. But for the testimony at first hand which Paris adduces, we should have been ignorant of the strange episode that intervened between John's surrender of his realm to the Papal see and his concession of national liberty at the demand of the Barons, when in the depths of humiliation and blindness of rage he sent a secret embassy to the Emir of Morocco, offering to become his tributary and embrace the faith of Islam (Paris, Ed. Luard, II., 559-564).¹ The expression of dignified disdain with which the Emir spurned this pitiful make-shift of despair may well have hastened the crisis which culminated at Runnymede. We are further indebted to Paris for the record of another incident in the same drama, which enables us to follow its rapid evolutions more readily than is possible by the aid of Wendover's halting story. The Pope's strenuous advocacy of John's repudiation of the Great Charter,

¹ See Appendix A. I see no reason to question, as some critics have done, the substantial accuracy of this narrative, which Paris reports upon the authority of one of the envoys. Its *verisemblance* is at least remarkable. An incidental confirmation of it is referred to by Dr. Luard (Vol. VII., Pref., p. xiv.).

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which the recency of their reconciliation makes it difficult to explain, becomes intelligible when we learn that by a private appeal to him, accompanied by a large gift of money and the promise of more, the King had secured his active co-operation against Langton and the Barons at the earliest available opportunity. The existence of this compact appears to be implied in the language of the Bull which ratified the sign manual, whereby the King abandoned his prerogative claim to control the free election of prelates and abbots by their respective Chapters and Convents. The Pope's recital that the King's surrender of this claim had been "granted and confirmed *unto us* by his letters" may be virtually construed as an assertion that the power of controlling such elections was transferred, and thenceforth vested in the Holy See (*Ib.*, II., 564-5; 607-609).¹ This gloss upon the clause of the Charter which provided for the freedom of the Church of England, but for the stout resistance of the laity, would have condemned her to perpetual slavery.

The professional tendency which (as already noticed), Wendover shews to exaggerate the importance of ecclesiastical affairs, naturally sways him most strongly when he is dealing with events that affect the interest of the Monastic orders. The necessity of making allowance for this tendency sensibly detracts from his value as a delineator of character. The half chivalrous, half brutal lineaments of Richard I., for example, emerge but vaguely out of the halo of sanctity with which he is here invested as a "pious founder" and generous benefactor of religious houses. While exalting the King's superstitious zeal in this capacity, and seizing upon every occasion of praising his heroism, wisdom, and magnanimity, Wendover dismisses with but moderate censure the violent acts of jealousy and enmity which brought about his

¹ See Appendix B.

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father's death, and records his virtual complicity in the persecution of the Jews (I., 166), and the barbarous enactments of his naval code (I., 181) without a word of blame.

The same partiality, in an opposite direction, distorts the chronicler's estimate of those whom he has reason to believe inimical to the religious vocation, more especially the prelates, whose relations with the convents of their Cathedral churches were commonly hostile. He seems to regard any overt acts of such hostility as leaving so dark a stain upon the memory of the dead as to colour their public lives to the exclusion of other tints. Thus we learn no more particulars of the career of Richard de Marsh, Bishop of Durham, than the story of his bitter quarrel with his monks, and it is upon their *ex parte* complaint that the heavy charges brought against his character appear to be mainly founded (II., 256-8). The exemplary penitence of Hugh, Bishop of Coventry, on his deathbed, is represented as the expression of his deep remorse for having supplanted the Convent of that Church by certain "irreligiosos clericos" (I., 274); and Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, obtains as his only obituary notice, the reputation of having been "inimicus virorum religiosorum" (III., 102). Where the judge so obviously identifies himself with the advocate, it is impossible to feel any confidence that his sentences are just.

In avidity for miracle and readiness to believe in its chronic manifestation, Wendover might perhaps be matched among the number of monastic annalists, but no one can possibly have surpassed him. His appetite and capacity in this respect seem practically boundless. He habitually breathes an atmosphere of marvel, and lives in a world wherein supernatural events occur only a little more arbitrarily and rather less frequently than natural events. The majority of the prodigies on which he delights to expatiate were dictated in the