Saint Egwin and his Abbey of Evesham

SAINT EGWIN

By permission of W. Dowty, Pershore.

EVESHAM IN 1530

SAINT EGWIN

AND HIS

ABBEY OF EVESHAM

BY

The Benedictines of Stanbrook

ILLUSTRATED BY VIEWS, PLAN, AND FACSIMILE

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Nihil obstat

Dom T. B. Snow, O.S.B. *Abb.*

IMPRIMATUR

DOM F. A. GASQUET, O.S.B. *Abb. Præses.*

Preface

Living in a part of England which has been called the Benedictine country *par excellence*, and surrounded as we are by the memories of Saints who sanctified themselves almost on the land where we are privileged to live, it seems our plain duty to revive, in some degree, the memory of those ancient glories of our country and of our Order. And, beginning with the holy Bishops of Worcester, we find first Saint Egwin, the third occupant of the See, better known, however, as the founder of the great monastery in the Vale of Evesham.

The history of the Saint's life, a few main facts apart, is generally acknowledged to be legendary, but it is here offered to the reader, in the belief that there are still many amongst us who delight in these old-world stories, even though a large part of them must be allowed to be imaginary. Such legends have generally their foundation in fact, and they are at least evidences of love and veneration for the saints whom they depict, and who had in some way endeared themselves to the popular mind. The simplest course seems, therefore, to take our materials

as we find them, correcting their version of facts only where it is proved to be in contradiction with acknowledged data.

A few words may be said on the existing MS. material for the life of St. Egwin. The earliest is probably that contained in a British Museum MS. (Cotton. Nero, E. I.), a beautiful codex dating from the 11th century. The lives in this volume are not all in the same hand, but the approximate date of St. Egwin's is mentioned by the scribe.[1]

Next in order of time comes the narrative of Prior Dominic of Evesham (*c.* 1125), which seems to be the life preserved in a MS. at Hereford Cathedral. The volume in which it is contained, and which has belonged to the Cathedral since the Middle Ages, is called "Pars libri qui dicitur Passionale Sanctorum." It is in a 12th century hand, very carefully executed, and admirably preserved to this day.

The third important life is from the pen of Thomas Marleberge, monk, and subsequently Abbot, of Evesham, (*c.* 1225) and is printed in the Chronicle of Evesham (Rolls Series). Marlberge founds his story on Dominic's work, his object being to prune the very luxuriant style of the earlier biographer, which had grown wearisome to the Evesham monks.

[1] "Nos vero qui in ultima millenarii sumus parte et ultra progressi."

A careful collation of Marleberge's text with the Hereford life has convinced Mr. Langton Brown (Sub-Librarian of Hereford Cathedral) that the latter is the version from which the abridgement was made, and that it is therefore the work of Prior Dominic.

The following pages were written from Marleberge's text before we had access to the other lives, but collation having proved that that author, for reasons best known to himself, altered facts in several instances, we have, in those cases, preferred the reading of the earlier authorities.

There is also a MS. life of St. Egwin in the Bodleian Library (Digby, 112); of this we have not succeeded in obtaining a copy, but from what is known, it appears to resemble the earlier lives. St. Egwin's legend is found, lastly, divided into Lessons, in a 14th century MS. at Emmanuel College, Cambridge (I., 2, b.).

The story of our Saint's life led naturally to the consideration of his work at Evesham. For the chapters dealing with the Abbey we are mainly indebted to the Chronicle[1]. The materials for the chapter on the remains of Evesham are largely derived from "*Vetusta Monumenta*," Vol. V., and considerable use has also been made of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, May's *History of Evesham*, and Habing-

[1] Rolls series.

ton's *Survey of Worcestershire*.[1] We have not attempted to write the history of the Abbey, as there are in existence two excellent works on the subject by local authors, Tindal and May.

The reader who may be curious to know something of the liturgical life of Evesham, is referred to the abbatial ceremonial, printed by the Henry Bradshaw Society under the name of "*Liber Evesham*."

It only remains to express our thanks to the many kind friends, without whose assistance this volume could not have been produced. Among them we may mention Dom Gilbert Dolan, O. S. B., Mr. Edmund Bishop, and Mr. H. G. Worth, and a special debt of gratitude is acknowledged to Mr. J. W. Willis-Bund for his generous co-operation, manifested in many ways. The material help afforded by Mr. Langton Brown has been already referred to. We also owe to him the metrical Life of St. Egwin printed in the Appendix.

By the kindness of Mr. Willis-Bund we are able to reproduce the beautiful Tau Cross of Alcester, and we owe the pictures of the Evesham chair and Abbot Zatton's seal to the courtesy of Mr. Rudge, the owner of those relics. The designs of the tail-pieces used in this volume are from fragments of tiles and other ornaments found at Evesham, and

[1] Published by the Worcestershire Historical Society.

figured in *Vetusta Monumenta*. We have to thank Lord Dillon, President of the Society of Antiquaries, for allowing us to copy these. The plan of the Abbey is reprinted, by permission of Messrs. W. H. Smith of Evesham, from "*Evesham and the Neighbourhood*," an excellent volume of the "Homeland Series." For the seal of the Abbey we are indebted to the Curator of the Victoria Institute Museum, Worcester, who has kindly allowed us to have photographs of the impressions preserved there.

Stanbrook Abbey,
Worcester.
Feast of St. Gregory the Great, 1904.

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SAINT EGWIN

AND HIS

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CHAPTER I

Saint Egwin at Worcester

THE story of St. Egwin's life takes us back to the days of the Heptarchy, at a time when Mercia was at the height of its power. This kingdom had been long in submitting to the faith; the worship of Thor and Woden had found there its last stronghold, and, under Penda, had succeeded in arresting the progress of the faith for a time, even in Northumbria. But with the death of Penda (A.D. 655), better times dawned for the Mercians, and under his sons, Peada, Wulphere, and Ethelred, the Christian faith took root in a kingdom where it was destined to flourish and bear fruit a hundredfold.

Hwiccan, or the land of the Wiccians, the scene of our Saint's life, was a province of Mercia, but was ruled by a prince of its own. Worcester, its chief city, dates back to the Roman occupation of Britain. We take the following quaint description of its situation, as well as an ingenious derivation of its name, from Habington, the historian of the county.[1] After mentioning the various names by which the city was known to the Romans (such as Branonium, or Branogenium), and noticing that Latin writers since the Conquest call it Wigornia or Vigornia, he continues: "But leavinge others heerein to thincke as they lyst, I will descend to the Saxon name for Worcester, beeing Weogareceaster, or Wireceaster, and varyinge often in thys sorte from it sealfe, but howsoeaver yet eaver it signifyethe to mee nothinge ealse but the citty of the Wiccians, which name of Wiccians thys shyre so constantly healde duringe the government of the Saxons, as the King's viceroys of this country who weare allso Leyvtenants of thys citty, weare eaver called *Duces* or *Reguli Wicciorum*, Dukes and Rulers of the Wiccians, and the

[1] Survey of Worcestershire. Worc. Hist. Soc.

Bishops of thys sea *Episcopi Wicciorum* Bishops of the Wiccians. . . . . Now to come to the name of Worcester, which synce the Conquest, drowninge thease auntient names, hathe filled the eares of all,—*Wigornia*, yf wee leave out *i* and *g* is *Wor*, which with the addition of *cester* beeing a castell, maketh *Worcester*, a fortifyed citty ; and so I subtracte from Wigornia likewise *nia*, because it is nothinge but an addition to sweeten the pronunciation.

"Plounging out of thease abstruse antiquities, which wyll rather soyle mee with errors than shewe others the waye of truthe, I will indeavour fyrst to declare the situation of thys citty, seated in the mydest of thys shyre, yf not declyninge somewhat to the west, for gayninge the benefitt of the famous ryver of Severne, which twealve miles north from hence comethe inte this county at Bewdley, and so far south leavethe us at Tewkesbury. Thus standeth Worcester pleasantly mounted on an easy ascendinge hyll rysing from the eastern bancks of Severne, which searveth it with thease streames for importation and exportation of comodityes."

Ecclesiastically, Hwiccan was included in the vast Mercian diocese of Lichfield, until

Ethelred, at the desire of Oshere, the Ruler of the Wiccians, and with St. Theodore's approval, founded the See of Worcester, which was conterminous with the province, and comprised the whole of the present county of Worcester, Gloucestershire east of the Severn, the southern part of Warwickshire, and Bristol proper.

To those who know the beautiful valley of the Severn, with its smiling orchards, it is difficult to picture that same landscape when it was covered with extensive "chases," such as those of Malvern, Feckenham, and Ombersley, and peopled by a half barbarous race. Yet such was its condition when St. Egwin became bishop, and before he had laid the foundations of his great monastery, one of the first in a kingdom which was to become remarkable for the number of its religious houses. Here, as everywhere else in Europe, the monks were to be the pioneers of civilisation.

Among the ancient sees of England which have been adorned with the "beauty of holiness," Worcester holds an honourable place. Its roll of sanctity begins with our Saint, the third Bishop, and includes the glorious names of Dunstan, Oswald, and Wulstan. St. Egwin's

predecessors, Bosel and Ostfor, were both men of holy life, and monks of St. Hilda's great Northumbrian monastery.[1] Bishop Ostfor was also an eminent scholar; he had studied in St. Theodore's school at Canterbury, and in Rome, and had the reputation of being a remarkable preacher. He wrote several works, all of which, except a book of Homilies, are said to have perished in the Danish devastations.

Egwin's episcopate fell in the long and prosperous reign of Ethelred of Mercia. This Prince availed himself of years of peace, an unusual blessing in those turbulent times, to improve the condition of his kingdom, chiefly by the foundation of monasteries; "such rare fruit," says Habington, "did God produce out of the sowre stock of Penda."

Of our Saint's early years very little is known. The authors of his life say that he was of royal race, and this fact would account, partially at least, for his influence over the kings of his time.

He was born in the country of the Wiccians, of Christian parents, by whose pious care he

[1] Strictly speaking, St. Egwin was the fourth Bishop of the Wiccians, but as Tatfride the first (a monk of Whitby, like Bosel and Ostfor) died before consecration, he is not generally counted in the list of occupants of the See.

was at once baptised and confirmed. At the age of seven he began his education, as was usual, by learning to read the Psalms. Even from his youth he despised the world and all its vanities and pleasures, and devoted himself to a life of voluntary poverty, to the service of the Church, and to the celebration of the Divine Office. Being in due course ordained Priest, he turned his attention more and more to heavenly things, and, in the words of his biographer, "built a pleasant mansion for the Holy Ghost in the court of his heart."

He had lived this life of unostentatious holiness for several years, when (*c.* 693) the See of Worcester became vacant by the death of Bishop Ostfor. The eyes of all, clergy and laity, were at once turned on Egwin, and the choice being agreeable to both the King and the Metropolitan, he was, with great reluctance, prevailed upon to accept the charge. The Episcopate brought our Saint more burdens than honours. This is doubtless nothing unusual, but in St. Egwin's case there were peculiar difficulties, arising from the ignorance and superstition of a people only half Christian, and still retaining many of the degrading customs of paganism. The Saint set himself to

his task with whole-hearted devotedness. He preached the word of God with great vigour, while in his private life he became more humble and virtuous the more he was exalted. He endeared himself to his people, and to the King, who had learned to respect the Bishop for his prudence, equity, and learning, and for the uprightness of his character.

Egwin was gentle and affable by nature, yet he knew how to be severe and unyielding when the law of God had to be defended. This firmness was soon called forth. The Saint found that many abuses prevailed among his people, and that the laws of Christian marriage in particular were scandalously contravened, and he spared no pains in his endeavour to snatch the souls entrusted to him from such terrible evils. He instructed them thoroughly in the divine precepts, and threatened them with the awful judgments of God if they persisted in their wicked courses. His sermons were chiefly on the joys and pains reserved respectively for the good and bad in a future life, and in one the Saint is said to have drawn a terrible picture of the Last Judgment and of the signs which are to

announce its approach.[1] But his hearers were slow to believe the holy man, and so remiss in fulfilling their religious duties, that they could scarcely be persuaded to assist at Holy Mass, or, if they did so, it was more for the sake of idle talk and business than for the good of their souls. The more powerful among the people, chafing at the wholesome restraint put upon their passions, were enraged against their holy Bishop, and slandered him to the lower classes. Their passion carried them so far that they lodged grave complaints against his character, both with the Pope and the King, and succeeded at length in having him banished from his See.

The Saint accepted this humiliation as Saints know how to do, but he did not sit down passively under it. He felt that his duty both to himself and to his people obliged him to clear his character from the calumnies brought against him, and therefore he cheerfully obeyed a summons from the Pope to proceed at once to Rome. This journey was performed in a spirit of sincere penance, for though Egwin's conscience bore witness that he was innocent

[1] Some of the early biographers have put this discourse into a metrical form. It will be found in a note at the end of this volume.

SAINT EGWIN'S CHURCH, NORTON

of the crimes laid to his charge, yet he knew that in God's sight he was a poor sinner, and he also remembered that the sins of his flock called for expiation. The legend tells us that to betoken the spirit which filled his heart, the Saint bound his feet in chains, and fastening them with a lock, threw the key into the river Avon at a place then called Hethomme,[1] and, accompanied by a few friends, set out for the Eternal City. In those days such a journey was extremely laborious, but braving all obstacles, Egwin embarked at Dover, and after months of untold weariness, reached Rome. His arrival was announced by the bells of the city ringing of themselves.

The Bishop's first thought was for the tombs of the Holy Apostles, where he wished at once to celebrate Mass. On his way there, he halted at a bridge to rest a little and to say the Canonical Hours, and sent his attendants, meanwhile, to fish in the river. Having ended his devotions, Egwin proceeded to St. Peter's, and after a lengthy prayer, offered up the Holy Sacrifice. As he was leaving the church, after his Mass, he met his attendants returning from

[1] The Brit. Mus. MS. has *Hruddingpol*.

their fishing, and carrying a good-sized fish which they had caught. The Saint gave thanks to God for this happy success, and ordered it to be prepared for table, when lo! on opening the fish, so runs the story, the cook found inside it the key of Egwin's chains. "Thus," says the author of our Saint's life, "the Roman Tiber gave back what the English Avon had swallowed up." The key was immediately carried to the Saint, who, seeing in this miracle a special token of God's favour, and a sign that his sins were forgiven, unlocked his fetters in the presence of an admiring crowd.

Rome soon rang with the fame of the marvel, and Egwin, who had previously been held in suspicion, was now highly commended and declared worthy of all reverence, the people flocking in crowds to see him and to ask his blessing. Before long the story of the Saint's penitential journey, and of the miraculous loosening of his chains reached the Pope's ears, and Egwin was summoned to the Pontiff's presence. On first beholding the Vicar of Christ, our Saint would have prostrated at his feet, but the Pope checked him, and, instead of blessing, the holy man insisted on being

blessed by him, and invited him to sit at his side, "He sitting between them who joined himself as a third to the two disciples of Emmaus, and who was seen as a fourth in the fiery furnace." During the remainder of his stay in Rome, Egwin was honoured in every possible way by the Pope; he was invited to celebrate Mass in the Holy Father's presence, and admitted frequently to private conferences, in which his advice was eagerly sought by the Head of the Church. During these conversations, the Pope examined into the accusations against the Bishop's character, and, being fully satisfied with his explanations, sent him back to England, with Apostolic letters commending his conduct and ordering his restoration to the see of Worcester.

King Ethelred, who was in reality attached to the Saint, rejoiced on hearing of his return, and of the miracle which had been wrought in proof of his innocence, and heartily concurred with the Archbishop of Canterbury in reinstating him in his former position.

At this time also, as if anxious to show his confidence in the holy Bishop, the King entrusted him with the education of his sons. Egwin was most zealous in discharging this

duty. He taught his royal pupils sacred and profane letters, and instructed them in virtue, warning them to avoid pride, not to place their hope in riches, to fear God, and to beg from Him that wisdom by which kings reign.

The tide of popular feeling turned, as is usual, with the Prince's favour, and Egwin found himself once more the beloved and trusted father of a devoted and united flock. His troubles had done their purifying work in his heart, and like a well-cultivated garden, he brought forth more plentiful fruit, showing his power by word and miracle, and growing more glorious before both God and man.

CHAPTER II

Saint Egwin at Evesham

DURING the peaceful times which followed his return to his See, St. Egwin continued to labour for the benefit of his flock, but his zeal for the souls of others did not make him forget his own personal sanctification. He was accustomed to refresh his spirit by retiring from time to time into a secluded spot, and there giving himself up to prayer. His favourite resort was a wild, wooded tract of land, on the banks of the Avon, called Homme, or Hethomme, the place, as the reader may remember, where the Saint threw his key into the river. This spot had an attraction for Egwin, partly, perhaps, on account of its ancient chapel, in which he loved to pray. Wishing to enjoy his seclusion in full liberty, he begged King Ethelred to bestow the place on him; his request was readily granted, and the Saint took possession, and installed some of his flocks and a few herdsmen on the land. Such was the lowly origin of the great Monastery of

Our Lady of Evesham, the foundation of which, according to the legend, came about in the following manner.

It happened one day that a swineherd, Eoves by name, wandering far into the wood in search of a stray beast, beheld three maidens; one of them, who was surpassingly lovely, held a book in her hand, and as she stood before the astonished herdsman, sang heavenly canticles, in which her companions joined. The poor man was struck dumb with amazement, and left the place in great fear. He at once informed the Bishop of the occurrence, aud the Saint, remembering that Christ, on the night of His birth, had sent the Angels to announce the good tidings first to poor shepherds, weighed the matter in his mind, and begged God's light by fasting and prayer. Thus prepared, he set out barefoot for the place described by Eoves, taking with him three attendants, and singing psalms and hymns as he went along. At some little distance from the scene of the vision Egwin left his companions, and going forward alone, fell prostrate on the ground, imploring our Lord and His blessed Mother to favour his holy quest. Rising from his prayer, he himself beheld the

THE CONVENTUAL SEAL OF EVESHAM ABBEY

vision which had been described to him. There stood the three maidens, all lovely, but one fair beyond compare, who held in her hand a book and a radiant Cross. Our Saint was convinced that this beautiful and gracious maiden was the Queen of Heaven herself; the Lady smiled, as if to confirm his belief, and, blessing him with the Cross which she carried, she and her heavenly companions vanished. The Saint was deeply consoled by this heavenly favour, and he saw in it an indication of God's will regarding a matter which he had at heart. In a time of spiritual trouble Egwin had vowed, that if restored to peace, he would build a church in God's honour. Taking the vision, therefore, as a sign of divine predilection for this wild spot, he resolved that there should be the site of a temple dedicated to God and Our Lady. The work was at once taken in hand; a large clearance was made in the wood, near the river bank, and in due time a church and monastery rose on the hallowed spot. The building was begun about A.D. 702. Ethelred showed himself a munificent benefactor to the new foundation, making over to it many villages and wide acres of pasture land. These grants were among the last acts of his reign,

for about the year 704 he resigned his crown to his nephew Kenred, and retired to the monastery of Bardney, where he became a monk. He is numbered among the Saints, his feast occurring on May 4th.

Saint Egwin's undertakings were supported by the new King of Mercia as heartily as they had been by his predecessor. About the year 708, Kenred resolved to go to Rome with Offa, King of the East Saxons, and the royal pilgrims begged St. Egwin to accompany them. There were many reasons to induce our Saint to accept this offer; one of the aims of Kenred's journey was to interest the Pope in the new monastery which he had taken under his patronage, and to present to His Holiness the saintly Bishop as an unexceptionable witness to the truth of the apparition which had hallowed the spot; while Egwin himself was anxious to obtain all possible privileges, especially that of exemption, for his beloved foundation.

On this journey the Saint's presence proved a source of blessing to his companions. As the travellers were crossing the Alps they suffered great distress from thirst, and found no natural means of procuring water. In

EVESHAM LECTERN IN NORTON CHURCH

their trouble they turned to the holy Bishop, knowing well the value of his intercession, and implored his prayers. Egwin at once fell on his knees, and prayed with great earnestness, when immediately a spring of clear water rose out of the hard and dry ground. Taking a little food which he carried with him, he distributed it to all his companions, and by God's loving mercy it was so far multiplied as to supply the needs of all. The whole party of pilgrims gave thanks to God and the Saint for this timely bounty, and pursued their way with fresh joy and fervour.

Coming to Rome (*c.* 708), the two Kings and the Bishop were honourably received by Pope Constantine. The story of the heavenly apparition granted to Egwin, and of the foundation of his monastery, was related to the Pope, and the Kings declared in detail the benefactions which they intended to bestow on the place. Besides gifts of lands, they gave the new foundation many ample privileges, freeing it from all temporal burdens, and made it over to the Holy See. The Pontiff, vying with these royal benefactors, declared the monastery to be free and independent as to

spirituals, and bestowed on it the fullest privileges of exemption.

Our Saint returned alone to England, for Kenred and Offa, captivated like many others of their race by the love of Blessed Peter, abandoned their kingdoms, and putting on the monastic habit in Rome, ended their days there in holiness.

On his return, Egwin was called upon to pay the last tribute of his respect and affection to another holy Bishop, St. Aldhelm of Sherborn. The two Saints had long been bound in spiritual friendship, which was rendered closer by the similarity of their station; both were Bishops, both were the devoted Fathers of a Community of monks, for Aldhelm had been Abbot at Malmesbury before becoming a Bishop, while Egwin, already a Bishop, was the founder of an Abbey, whither he was soon to retire, and of which he was to become Abbot. St. Aldhelm was called to his reward on May 25th, 709, and on the same day his blessed death was made known by vision to St. Egwin, who, rejoicing that his beloved brother-Bishop had reached his heavenly home, announced the news to his monks, and set out at once for Dulting, in Somerset, where the

Saint had expired. He accompanied the holy remains all the way to Malmesbury, and gave orders that at every place where the body had rested a cross should be erected. The author of St. Aldhelm's life tells us that in his time many of these crosses were still to be seen.

Having performed the last rites for his holy friend, Egwin returned to his See, and awaited the meeting of the Council which was to confirm all the privileges he had obtained in Rome. This Council was assembled by Brithwald, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the autumn of this same year 709, at Alcester, not far from Evesham. Many nobles were present, besides a large number of Bishops, among whom was the great St. Wilfrid. St. Egwin handed over to the Primate the deeds he had received from the Pope and the Kings, and they were confirmed by the whole assembly.

When the Council had dispersed, St. Egwin, accompanied by St. Wilfrid and many clerics and nobles, proceeded to Homme, or Eovesham, as the place was now beginning to be called, and on the feast of All Saints our holy Bishop had the supreme consolation of seeing his new church consecrated by the great Archbishop of York. The Church was dedicated

in honour of our Blessed Lady, Saints Peter and Paul, and all Saints. Egwin's joy must have been much increased by the presence of his holy fellow-Bishop, St. Wilfrid. This Saint was no stranger in Mercia, for during one of his periods of banishment he had been received by King Ethelred, and had acted as Bishop of Lichfield during a vacancy in the See. It was under his holy influence, strengthened, we may believe, by St. Egwin's salutary advice, that Ethelred renounced the world.

The material structure of his monastery being now completed, Egwin had to build up the spiritual edifice. He immediately gathered a number of monks and installed them under the patronage of Our Lady of Evesham. It would be interesting to know whence the Saint procured these monks, but there seems no means of ascertaining this with any certainty, though we may conjecture that they came from Peterborough, or from one of St. Wilfrid's Mercian monasteries.

Egwin, seeing his heart's desire at length fulfilled, began to long for leisure to devote himself to contemplation and the exclusive service of God. He had seen two of his Kings give up the world to lead a life of

prayer and retirement; his own most intimate friend, St. Aldhelm, had been called to his heavenly reward; and if he might not yet enter into his eternal rest, our Saint yearned for that prelude to it which the cloister affords. This desire was fulfilled in the year 710, when, after sixteen years of a laborious episcopate, Egwin retired to his beloved monastery. He there took the monastic habit, and was appointed first Abbot. It is stated that he resigned his See; contemporary charters, however, show that he remained Bishop of Worcester till his death.

Egwin was already a Saint, but his biographers assure us that after he became a monk his holiness shone forth more unmistakably in word and deed; his contempt for all worldly things was so great that no temporal loss was capable of disturbing his equanimity. His prayer was continual, and he was often favoured with visions of Angels and Saints; nor were miracles wanting to bear witness to his power with God. As to his love for the blessed Mother of God, "his most intimate Lady,"[1] it was so ardent that she was ever in his mind, and her name ever on his lips, while

[1] "Familiarissima Domina sua Sancta Maria." Hereford MS.

she rewarded his devotion by such evident proofs of her maternal love, that the things of earth seemed as nothing to him, and he lived for Heaven alone.

But while labouring for his sanctification and for the spiritual good of his own immediate family, our Saint did not neglect the souls of the people in whose midst Providence had placed him. The legend of his mission to the neighbouring town of Alcester, even if we hesitate to accept it in all its details, proves his zeal in this respect. The story as it stands in our Saint's life tells us that Alcester was an ancient, and at that time, an important place, remarkable for the beauty of its situation; it was well wooded and abundantly watered, and these advantages had induced the Kings of Mercia to honour it with a royal residence. All this natural beauty, however, found no reflection in the souls of the inhabitants, who were very wicked and given up to all vices. They were probably some of the last survivors of the Saxon idolaters, whom Christianity had not reached, or at least had not conquered. St. Egwin loved the place because it had been the scene of the Council to which his Abbey owed so much, and he determined to make

himself the apostle of these benighted souls. One day, therefore, he set out for Alcester, accompanied by some of his monks. The town was a thriving centre for iron-workers and smiths, and the Saint, on his arrival, found a number of people of this class plying their trade. He at once began his work of evangelization, and used every means that zeal could suggest to reach the hearts of these deluded men, but all in vain. They remained obdurate, and they were so incensed at the Saint's interference that they resolved to rid themselves at once of the unwelcome visitor. To this end they not only refused to discontinue their work, but they made so much noise with their hammers and anvils, that they completely drowned the Saint's voice. Egwin, perceiving that he could do no good in the face of such malice, yielded to force, and left the spot with his disciples. His heart was heavy at the sight of such deliberate aversion to the word of God, and when he was at some distance he turned and gazed on the town, as our Lord had turned to behold the ungrateful Jerusalem, which would not know the time of her visitation. Standing with his eyes fixed on the town, the defiant clangings of the hammers

still reaching his ears, Egwin saw the judgment of God fall on this perverse generation. The earth opened and swallowed up that wicked people, and the legend concludes by telling us that from that day, in memory of this judgment, no smith had ever been able to ply his trade at Alcester!

We would fain catch a glimpse of our Saint's home-life at Evesham, but his biographers are silent. We know, however, that it must have been, according to the grand and simple lines of St. Benedict's Holy Rule, a life of prayer, of study, and of manual work, passed in the midst of a devoted family who looked to him as to the centre of the happy monastic home to which God had called them.

Before his death our Saint was visited with a long illness, which came upon him in his monastery. Though ill and suffering himself, he was most solicitous for the relief of the poor and sick, and he healed many sufferers by the touch of his hands and the invocation of the Blessed Trinity. But prayer was his chief occupation; he was continually saying Psalms, keeping his eyes, heart, and hands ever lifted up to Heaven, calling on the Saints, and begging them to come and lead him to his

SAINT EGWIN'S CHURCH, CHURCH HONEYBOURNE

eternal Home. All his life long Egwin had worn a hair-shirt, but now he added to his austerities, lying in dust and ashes, still wearing the garment of penance, and persevering in holy fasts. His solicitude for the advancement of his spiritual sons increased as his end drew near. He was anxious to see them observe their holy Rule with the greatest perfection, to guard them against the vice of appropriation, to ground them in charity, chastity, and humility, in obedience, abstinence, and all other virtues; and so fully did the monks respond to their holy Father's zeal, that we are told the words used of the early Christians might have been applied to them: "The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul."

When he felt his end approaching, the Saint called the brethren round him, and addressed them in these earnest words: "I pray and beseech you, reverend and beloved sons, strive with all your might to keep and to do all those things that God has commanded. Be diligent in living up to the vows you have made, for it is written: 'Vow ye, and pay to the Lord your God'. Follow after peace and holiness, without which, as the Apostle says,

no man can see God." Having thus taken leave of his monks, our Saint breathed forth his soul on December 30th, A.D. 717.

The news of his death brought mourning to many a heart and many a home in Mercia, while to the monks of Evesham it meant an intimate and irreparable loss. Egwin had been their father, he had received most of them into religion, he had guided their first steps, he had supported them in every trial, ever urging them on to the perfection of the holy life they had vowed. Now he was gone; it seemed as if his work were done, and so it was; but though done, it was not over—it was to survive the workman, and from that time until the evil days of the change of religion, Egwin, through his Abbey, was a real and a living power in the land.

The Saint was buried at Evesham in the spot chosen by himself. His funeral was like a triumph, for, mingled with the lamentations and sobs of his bereaved flock, were heard canticles of joy from those who looked beyond the present grief and rejoiced that their beloved Father and Pastor had reached his well-earned rest. His tomb was marked by the following epitaph, which, as the chronicler

remarks, is more remarkable for straightforward simplicity than for classical purity:

" Rupe sub hac vili tegitur vir summus, et urna
" Clauditur angusta quem subvehit alta per orbem
" Veri fama volans. Genus hic spectabile duxit,
" Et mores habuit præclaros magnaque gessit.
" Ecclesiam fecit quam nunc dicunt Eovesham.
" Ditavit terris, et multa nobilitavit
" Libertate locum. Qui regni jura tenebat
" Omnimodam scripsit; subscripsit curia regni,
" Et qui Romanam sedem tunc papa regebat,
" Confirmavit eam proprio testante sigillo.
" Vita migravit quum solis per Capricornum
" Tertius ac decimus medians existeret ortus."

The lines may be translated:

Neath this rude stone concealed lies man of highest worth,
In narrow coffin closed, while high extolled o'er earth
By truthful fame swift-winged. A man of gentle race,
Great were the deeds he wrought, his manners full of grace.

Here builded he the Church by men now
Evesham hight,
Enriching it with lands, ennobled as he might
With freedom much. The same, who then
did rule this land,
All way approved; thereto each noble set his
hand;
And eke, who reigned at Rome in Peter's lofty
throne,
The Lord Pope did confirm, and sealed with
seal his own.
This life he laid aside what day in Capricorn
For now the thirteenth time the wintry sun
was born.

CHAPTER III

Saint Egwin's Shrine

THE monks of Evesham were not slow in showing honour to the remains of their holy Father and Founder. We have no detailed description of the first shrine in which the holy relics were enclosed, but we are told incidentally that it was richly adorned, until plundered by the Danes of its precious ornaments.

When, in 960, St. Egwin's church fell to the ground, the monks feared for the precious relics, but on removing the *débris* they found the shrine standing perfectly intact amid the surrounding ruins.

The event which led to the making of a new shrine, and to the solemn translation of our Saint's relics, is thus described by the Evesham chronicler. After the death of Harold Harefoot an embassy was sent from England to offer the crown to Hardicanute, who was then in Flanders. One of the envoys was Ælward, Bishop of London, who had

previously been Abbot of Evesham and at that time governed both churches. On the voyage the party was overtaken by a terrible storm, and shipwreck seemed imminent, so that all the passengers, after giving each other the kiss of peace, commended their souls to God with many tears. In these straits the Abbot-Bishop, calling to mind the merits of his holy father Egwin, lifted up his hands to heaven and prayed, saying: "O beloved father, Egwin, have pity now on thy servant, and deliver us all from this imminent peril of death. If Almighty God, moved by thy sweet merits, deign to save us from this danger, I will have a shrine of gold and silver made for thee, and I will cause thy feast to be celebrated with greater solemnity than has hitherto been seen." Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when suddenly there came a great calm, the sun shone forth again, and the ship sailed gaily on to the port. On his return to England, the Bishop hastened to perform his vow. He ordered a rich shrine to be made, and he himself solemnly translated the relics to their new resting-place, on September 10th, 1039, and decreed that the anniversary should be

celebrated in time to come as a secondary feast of the Saint.

The relics of St. Egwin were not destined to remain long in this second shrine. Abbot Manny, or Maurice, who was elected in 1044, and who rebuilt the Church of Evesham, was a man of great artistic powers,—a musician, a painter, a skilful caligrapher, and a goldsmith of no mean ability. Under his direction a number of expert workmen began to make a beautiful shrine. This reliquary was originally intended to hold the holy remains of Saint Odulf, but as the work proceeded, and the Abbot saw it growing in beauty under the goldsmiths' hands, he resolved to dedicate it to his holy Father St. Egwin. The richness of this work of art is highly extolled by the chronicler; he tells us that the shrine was made of gold and silver and adorned with gems, among which there were three of such marvellous brightness that at night part of the church was lit up with their radiance. We learn also from a miracle which occurred during its construction, that it was decorated with small sculptured figures. Godric, the master workman, while carving one of these little statues, pierced his hand with the tool he

was using. Turning immediately to the Saint, he exclaimed: "O holy Egwin, am I not working here in thy service? If therefore thou carest for the work of a miserable sinner like me, give me a proof of thine interest." The man had no sooner spoken these words, than his hand was perfectly healed of its wound and freed from pain.

This new shrine was plundered very soon after its completion by a noble lady who was a frequent visitor at Evesham, and who had set her heart on obtaining a portion of Saint Egwin's relics. This lady, Algitha by name, in her misguided devotion to our Saint, resolved to gain her end by enlisting the children of the monastery in her service. For this purpose she bribed some of them to procure a portion of the holy body for her, by whatsoever means they could devise, promising still greater gifts if they were successful. Having watched their opportunity, the boys crept stealthily one night to St. Egwin's shrine, and taking out a tooth and part of one arm, carried them to Algitha. Overjoyed at her good fortune, the lady returned home and laid by the precious relics with all possible reverence; but she was not suffered to enjoy her ill-gotten treasure,

for St. Egwin appeared to her in sleep, complaining of the forcible removal of his relics, and bidding her restore them at once to the shrine. Algitha however was not disposed to part so easily with her spoil, and even after a second admonition from the Saint she refused to obey. A third time the holy Bishop appeared to her, but with no better result. Next day the unfortunate lady found herself totally blind, and so she remained till the end of her life, yet, in spite of this evident judgment, she could not bring herself to part with the relics. However, to satisfy her conscience, she sent a message to Abbot Manny, asking for permission to keep them and promising to have them enclosed in a precious shrine. She further pledged herself to bequeath the same shrine and a portion of land to St. Egwin and his servants at Evesham. After her death her son refused to carry out these bequests, but eventually the whole legacy was secured to the monastery by Agelwy, Abbot Manny's successor, who obtained possession of the land in question. The reliquary had somehow found its way to Worcester, where the Abbot happening to see it, succeeded in having his claim recognized, and carried it off to Evesham.

The boys who had perpetrated the theft were visibly punished by God, for one of them perished by drowning, while another was troubled up to his death with almost continual illness.

The devotion of the monks to their Saint is evidenced by a story belonging to this period. Queen Edith, consort of St. Edward the Confessor, having imagined a rather strange manner of proving her love for the Saints, sent an order to some of the great English monasteries, to the effect that many relics of Saints should be sent to Gloucester, in order that she might choose from the collection whatever pleased her best. The royal command reached Evesham, and caused great consternation among the monks. Not daring, however, to resist the King and Queen, they decided on choosing the lesser of two evils, and sent the relics of St. Odulf, rather than part with those of their beloved patron St. Egwin.

The Confessor was spending Christmas at Gloucester, and on St. Stephen's Day the Queen proceeded to inspect the relics which had been collected, employing a goldsmith to open the shrines, that she might help herself to part of the sacred contents. As soon as the

man had laid his hand on St. Odulf's shrine, the Queen was struck blind; in her terror she ordered the workman to desist, and moreover vowed that if her sight were restored she would never again be guilty of such rashness. Her prayer was granted, she recovered her sight, and the relics of St. Odulf were carried back to Evesham in triumph, adorned with a handsome covering, the gift of the Queen.

The next mention of St. Egwin's shrine occurs in the time of Abbot Reginald, (1122-1149). Among the good deeds of this Abbot the chronicler records that he built a chapel in honour of the Saint, and also made a top for the great shrine to replace Abbot Manny's work which had suffered, not this time from the Danes, but from some unworthy monks, who, driven to desperation by war and famine, had stripped off the gold, silver, and precious stones, unknown to the Abbot.

The completion of the shrine was reserved for Abbot Adam, who ruled from 1160 to 1191. Not long after this (in 1207), the church tower fell, destroying the sanctuary and everything in it except three shrines (those of St. Egwin, St. Odulf, and St. Credan), which were believed to have been miraculously

preserved. Some damage, however, was done to St. Egwin's tomb, for we read that the famous Dom Thomas de Marleberge, during his Priorship (*c.* 1220), made a pedestal for the shrine and restored the ornaments and precious stones on the shrine itself, to repair the injury caused by the fall of the tower.

This is the last mention of the shrine in the Evesham chronicle; succeeding Abbots probably found it too beautiful to be improved upon, and it remained the principal treasure of the Abbey till the Reformation, when it seems to have disappeared with so many other sacred treasures. But up to those evil days, the love of the monks for their patron found expression in various ways. Prior Thomas de Marleberge, of whom we have just spoken, having restored the sanctuary, had the story of Saint Egwin's life depicted in one of the windows.

In the next century Abbot William de Chiriton (1317-44) built the noble gateway, and adorned it with stone statues of St. Egwin and of the royal founders of the Abbey. The next Abbot, William Boys, made two large bells, Mary and Egwin, which were consecrated in 1354. Egwin bore the following inscription: "Dompnus Willielmus Boys

Abbas me fieri fecit in honore Sancti Egwini.
O Pater Egwyne, tibi consono nocte dieque!
Me fugiant digne tonitrus, mala fulgura quæque.
EGWYN."

Which may be rendered:

With thee, O father Egwin, is my tolling night and day!
The awful bolt, the lightning flash, I well may chase away.

Up to the very eve of the suppression, devotion to our Saint found active expression in his Abbey. In 1522, under Abbot Lichfield, the last of St. Egwin's successors, a chapel in the north of the church was dedicated to the Saint.

CHAPTER IV

Miracles

VERY soon after Egwin's death, his tomb became famous for miracles, and pilgrims flocked to Evesham to pay their devotion to the Saint. The faith of his clients was frequently rewarded by miracles, the stories of which are given in the Annals of the monastery. We select the most striking of these events. Without accepting the wonders related as facts, we may at least regard them as indications of the love and reverence entertained for the Saint. Like many good stories, they have evidently lost nothing in the telling.

The first was a proof of the Saint's care of the faithful who had come to honour his memory. His chief feast, falling within the Octave of Christmas (Dec. 30th), was celebrated with great solemnity, not only by the monks but by the crowds of people who had come to spend the festival of our Lord's Birth at the monastery, and who remained for the holy Founder's feast. All these pious pilgrims

were entertained by the monks, receiving, as the chronicler remarks, plenteous favours from Christ, and being refreshed after the sacred mysteries with abundance of bodily food. On one such occasion the monks suddenly discovered that there was no fish in the house. While the Abbot was expressing his regret at the circumstance, he was told that a fish of extraordinary size had just been seen in the river which ran by the Abbey walls. The whole party hurried to the spot indicated, and succeeded in capturing a large seal, which supplied a meal for the entire company of monks and strangers. The capture was considered miraculous, because no such fish had ever before been seen in the Avon, but it gave occasion to no great surprise. The faithful remembered how God through St. Egwin's merits had transferred a fish from the same river to the Tiber, and it seemed very natural that now the Saint should bring a seal from the open sea to refresh his devout clients.

But the miracles of St. Egwin were not all wrought in mercy, as may be seen by the following examples. In the days of King Ethelred I., the monks of Evesham were much disturbed by the cupidity of a neighbour, who

strove to obtain possession of a large portion of the Abbey lands. As the man could not be persuaded to forego his pretensions, a day was fixed for a public hearing of the case. On the morning of that day the monks, having implored the Saint's help, set out for the appointed place, carrying with them the relics of the holy Bishop. There they found their opponent, with his followers. After hearing the evidence on both sides, the judges finding it impossible to come to any conclusion, decided that if the claimant should with his own hand lift the Saint's relics from the land which he claimed, and swear that it belonged to him, he should be judged the lawful possessor. "Now this man," says the chronicle, "was an old man, and had a very long beard. Standing up and taking off his upper garment, he laid his hand on his beard, saying: 'By my beard, I will carry away the Saint, for the land is mine, and I will possess it as my hereditary right.' The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when lo! the beard fell to the ground, as if it had been not natural but artificial. The bystanders stared in amazement, beholding the aged man without a beard. Some were moved to indignation, others to pity, but all at

length yielded to laughter. Thus it came to pass that he who unjustly invaded the land of others, lost not only the land but his own beard also. Blessed in all things be God, who in and by his saints doth such marvels!"

Another man, who had in similar manner encroached on St. Egwin's patrimony, was still more terribly punished. On the morning of the day when the case was to be decided, as in the previous instance, by the man swearing in presence of the Saint's relics that the land belonged by right to him, the Prior of the Abbey, Wiredus by name, prostrate before the shrine, with many tears recited the seven penitential psalms. Having exhorted the monks to continue the same devotions during his absence, he set out with the relics, and accompanied by several of the brethren, for the place of meeting. Their adversary was already there, and in high spirits. Before leaving home he had filled his shoes with soil from his own property, that he might be able to swear that the land he was standing on was his own. But, as the chronicler says, "God discovered the fraud hidden in the man's shoe," for, as he advanced to take the oath, an iron bill which he had in his hand struck him on

the head and he fell dead to the ground. This terrible judgment had a salutary effect in the neighbourhood, and the people dared no longer claim the land or goods of a house which was so visibly protected by its holy patron.

To return to our Saint's beneficent works; we find in the chronicle numerous examples of cures obtained through his intercession by sufferers of all descriptions. Cripples, lepers, paralytics, the deaf, the dumb, the blind,—all are represented in the list of cured. There was one class of sufferers for whom the holy Bishop showed special sympathy, which is easily explained by the well-known fact in his own life. Several of his miracles consisted in loosening the fetters, not only of criminals, but of voluntary penitents. A certain man who had led a wicked life received so strong a grace of repentance that he bound himself in different parts of his body with nine chains, resolving that he would never of his own accord relax this self-imposed penance. Fettered in this manner, the penitent went about from one shrine to another, spending his days in prayer and fasting, begging deliverance of soul and body by the intercession of the saints. By these pious exercises he was gradually set free

from eight of his chains, but the ninth was so deeply imbedded in his flesh that he considered its removal to be reserved for the blessed Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, who had received supreme power of binding and loosing. The penitent accordingly set out for Rome, and offered up his prayers at the tombs of the holy Apostles. He was there admonished in sleep to return to England and seek relief at the shrine of the blessed Bishop Egwin. Rejoicing in the hope of deliverance, the man made all haste to England, and coming to the church of Evesham, spent many days in fasting and earnest prayer. One morning, during the solemn Mass which followed Tierce, relief came at last to the sufferer. He was sitting behind the altar, when, at the *Agnus Dei*, his ninth fetter was suddenly broken in pieces, with such force that to the monks the noise seemed like that of a hammer striking the anvil, until the chain itself falling in the midst of the choir, as if it had been thrown there by a man's hand, revealed the miracle.

Another instance of this kind occurred in the case of a man who had been condemned to death for his crimes, and who was actually on his way to execution. As he passed near

the monastery of Evesham, the unfortunate man remembered that the feast of St. Egwin was approaching, and at the thought of the Saint's kindness to all in trouble, hope of escape revived in his heart. Thereupon he let himself down from the sorry beast which was carrying him to his doom, and ran with all the speed he could to the Abbey. Finding the gate open, he entered, and going straight to the church, prostrated before the altar of St. Egwin, where immediately his fetters fell off. Thus by the Saint's aid he escaped the officers of justice, who dared not tear him from the holy place.

Our Saint's power against fire is particularly remarked by the chronicler, who tells us that but for his timely intervention the monastery would often have been burnt down. Whenever any such danger was discovered, the monks carried his relics to the threatened spot, and at once the wind changed, or the fire died out of itself. It happened once that some fine houses, built on the Abbey land and frequented by the more wealthy pilgrims, were found to be on fire. The Saint's shrine was borne to the spot, and set down in the midst of the house which was most seriously threatened. When the

flames had reached the holy relics, they suddenly subsided, leaving the rest of the building safe and sound.

On another occasion the Abbey church was threatened with destruction; it was surrounded by a high hedge of thorns which once caught fire. The monks in their anxiety ran as usual for St. Egwin's shrine, and setting it on the top of the hedge near the part which was in flames, cried out: "O holy lord and father Egwin, save thyself, if thou wilt, from this peril." Thereupon all the bystanders heard a loud crackling noise, as if a hundred buckets of water had been poured on the fire, and the flames were immediately extinguished.[1]

But St. Egwin's miracles were to be spread far beyond Evesham. In the 11th century Abbot Walter, the first Norman ruler of the Abbey, determined to rebuild the church in the new style of architecture which then found favour abroad. He lost no time in destroying the old work, which we are told was among the most beautiful specimens of its kind in

[1] In the ancient Bavarian monastery of Ettal, near Ober-Ammergau, there is a miraculous image of Our Lady, who is there particularly invoked against danger by fire. For this intention it is usual to join with Our Lady's name that of St. Egwin. We are unable to say with certainty whether the Saint so invoked is our holy Bishop of Worcester, or some local Saint of the same name.

England. The new building was on so extensive a scale that all the materials of the old were utilised in making only the crypt. Then the troubles began; stone and wood suitable for the purpose were scarce in the neighbourhood, and above all money, "the most serious essential in all human concerns," says the chronicle, "was wanting." In these straits the Abbot chose out two of his monks, and furnishing them with all necessaries, sent them on a tour through the country, carrying the relics of St. Egwin. By this means a great sum was collected for the building, while the Saint lavished his favours on all sides, so that devotion to him spread far and wide. We select some of the most interesting miracles wrought during the holy Bishop's progress. Oxford was the scene of the first. When the guardians of the Saint's shrine were preaching there, a man of great faith approaching the holy relics, offered up three earnest prayers, and at each prayer he put his hand in his purse and drew out an offering. While he was thus intent on his devotions, a thief in the crowd found the opportunity of dipping his hand into the generous man's purse, and securing some of the contents. After two

successful turns, the thief made a third raid, but he had reckoned without St. Egwin. As soon as his hand was safe in the purse it became paralysed and remained as if forcibly shut up there. The unfortunate man was struck with terror; he turned pale, gazing about like a madman, and expecting immediate death. The bystanders, having discovered the cause of this strange behaviour, apprehended the thief, and marvelled greatly at the strange event; the man was handed over to the judge, and would have suffered capital punishment had not the monks who guarded the shrine interceded for him. Thus a double good deed was done by the Saint, for he delivered his client from a thief, and the thief from death.

In London the monks preached, as elsewhere, on the wonderful power of their holy patron's intercession, and their words took deep root in at least one heart. A certain Sir William Thorney, who was present at one such sermon, was called out later on in the Welsh wars to do battle for his king and country. One day, in the course of the campaign, being entrapped and surrounded by the enemy, he was brought to the last extremity. All his comrades in arms had been slain or disabled, and he

remained alone in the midst of his foes. To add to his misery, he was so weary that he could make no further use of his arms, while his poor horse seemed to have lost all vigour. In this terrible situation Sir William bethought himself, in a happy moment, of all he had heard about the holy Bishop Egwin, and inspired with confidence at the remembrance, he prayed from the bottom of his heart: "O Lord, who art ever present with those who call upon thee in trouble,—if all that I have heard of blessed Egwin be true, deliver me now from this present danger of death." At that instant, the knight felt himself endued with unusual power, and his horse, which also had recovered all its speed, bore him safe out of the enemy's reach. Sir William remained ever after very devout to our Saint, and paid a visit to Evesham, where he related to the Prior all the details of his marvellous deliverance.

The bearers of the holy relics had themselves many proofs of Egwin's power. Coming one day to the Trent, they were distressed to find that the river was much swollen. As, however, they were obliged to pass over, one of the monks, named Hereman, in great trepidation

for the safety of the relics and of his own person, placed the shrine before his saddle, hoping that the Saint and he would afford each other mutual protection! Having instructed one of the servants, who carried the Saint's arm in a separate reliquary, to take great care of his precious burden, Hereman led the way across the river, followed by the rest of the company. Our Saint evidently wished to prove that he was dependent on no man's care; the poor monk, having missed the ford, rode straight into the deep part of the river, and soon found himself up to the armpits in water. His horse, however, kept its footing, and after a hard struggle, reached the shore in safety. It was then that Hereman discovered how Egwin had guarded his passage; not a drop of water was to be seen either on the shrine or on the monk's clothes, so that it seemed, says the chronicler, as if he had merely ridden through a wood on an autumn day. The bearer of the Saint's arm had a still more wonderful escape. He, like the leader of the party, had strayed from the ford, but with more serious results, for he fell into a whirlpool in which a boat had been lost on the previous day. The people on the river bank, seeing

his danger, called out praying St. Egwin to come to the rescue. The monks, in particular, who were greatly distressed, joined earnestly in the petition. After having been lost for a considerable time under the water, the man re-appeared, but only to sink again, and even a third time. To the joy and surprise of all, however, he rose again, and made his way to the shore, when it was found that the shrine and a little banner attached to it were not even damp. The poor man was taken to the house of some kind neighbours, and was soon able to rejoin the monks.

Besides these miracles, and others which we pass over, the chronicle relates two visions in which St. Egwin was seen, and which are so charming in their details, that we cannot resist repeating them here. The Saint's feast, as we have before remarked, always brought to Evesham crowds of pilgrims, among whom were many monks. One of these was Sperculf, a monk of Coventry, who cherished a most ardent devotion to St. Egwin, and who used to spend his feast-days in the Abbey church, going round the fifteen altars, and passing the night in prayer. Once, when as usual he was keeping his vigil before Matins

in the crypt dedicated to our Lady and Saint Egwin, and was reciting the Psalter in order, he saw a wonderful vision. The door of the crypt was suddenly opened by an invisible hand, and by degrees the whole place was flooded with a heavenly and dazzling light. The monk's awe and wonder were increased when he beheld a long procession of holy souls drawn up in the most admirable order, and all vested in albs. At the head came boys carrying torches; after them, a number of young men, who were followed in their turn by men of advanced ages. Last of all came a venerable figure robed in pontifical vestments of marvellous beauty, and supported on each side by persons similarly vested. Having reached the altar of St. Egwin, the holy assembly chanted Matins, after which one of the bishops celebrated Mass, the choir of holy souls singing all the customary chants with ravishing sweetness. The canonical hours were sung after Mass, and the procession then left the crypt in the order in which it had entered. Shortly after the disappearance of the vision, the monk who had been favoured with it, heard the bells ring for the Matins of the community, and we may imagine the

fervour with which he joined that night in the chants of the Church militant, after having participated in those of the Church triumphant.

On another occasion the same monk beheld St. Egwin in vision, this time in the Lady Chapel at Evesham. It was on the vigil of one of the solemn feasts of Our Blessed Lady, and Sperculf was watching in prayer before Matins, according to his pious custom, when suddenly the doors of the church opened of themselves, and a glorious procession advanced up the church. This time St. Egwin was not the principal attraction; he was there, indeed, but acting as escort, with another person of venerable aspect, to the blessed Mother of God, whom he conducted with great pomp and reverence to the Lady Chapel. There, when Matins and Lauds had been sung, the Saint celebrated Mass with much solemnity. The monk, beholding this heavenly pageant, said to himself in wonder: "What do I see? Have I lost my reason? Is it possible that these are monks of this Abbey singing their Office here? Yet I know none of them." Then, looking more closely at the beaming faces of the singers, he recognised some who had been monks of Evesham, and who were

now dead. This added to his perplexity, and he asked himself whether the forms he saw were spirits or mortal men. To remove all doubt, he turned to one of the holy company, and enquired who the Lady was for whom Mass was being sung. He was answered in few words: "Hold your peace; know you not that our lord St. Egwin is celebrating the holy mysteries for the blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary?" Silenced by this answer, the monk returned to his place, and awaiting the end of the vision, he heard the heavenly choristers after Mass sing the hours of our Lady's Office, after which the two bishops, taking the Queen of Heaven by the hand, led her with all possible honour from the church.

Such are some of the signs and wonders which show how our Saint's memory lived on in England, especially at Evesham. But independently of such occasional instances, we have proof of the solemn homage rendered him each year on his two feasts, that of his Deposition (Dec. 30th) and that of his Translation (Sept. 10th). These two days were among the seven solemn feasts of the Abbey, the other five being Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption, and All Saints'

Day. On these occasions the Church offices were performed with great solemnity, and with all the imposing rites detailed in the Pontifical of the Abbots of Evesham, while the festivities procured a more than ordinary portion of creature-comforts for the monks.

The Saint's day was not observed as a general feast in England, but it is found in most of the Worcester Kalendars, and in those of not a few monasteries.[1] It will be noticed that the houses named in the list given below had nearly all some historical connection with either Evesham or Worcester. Some of the Kalendars give the Deposition, some the Translation, some have both feasts. In one, a Tewkesbury book, the Deposition is marked on January 2nd.[2] In an antiphoner (13th century) preserved at Worcester Cathedral, St. Egwin's name appears in the Easter *Laudes*[3] (or special Litany) with the other saints of the See, Saints Dunstan, Oswald, and Wolstan.

[1] Edmundsbury, Glastonbury, Ely, Tewkesbury, Chester, Ramsey, Winton, Gloucester (St. Peter's), Hanley Castle, Peterborough, Whitby, Pilton. For this list we are indebted to the Rev. H. M. Bannister.

[2] There is no foundation in any of the Evesham documents for the date of January 11th, assigned to the Saint's feast by the Bollandists and some other writers.

[3] These are printed in the Winchester Troper (p. 130), edited for the H. Bradshaw Society by the Rev. W. H. Frere.

The liturgical fragments connected with our Saint will be found in the appendix.

The only place where St. Egwin's memory is still honoured in the Liturgy is Stanbrook Abbey; where he is commemorated by special permission of the Holy See.

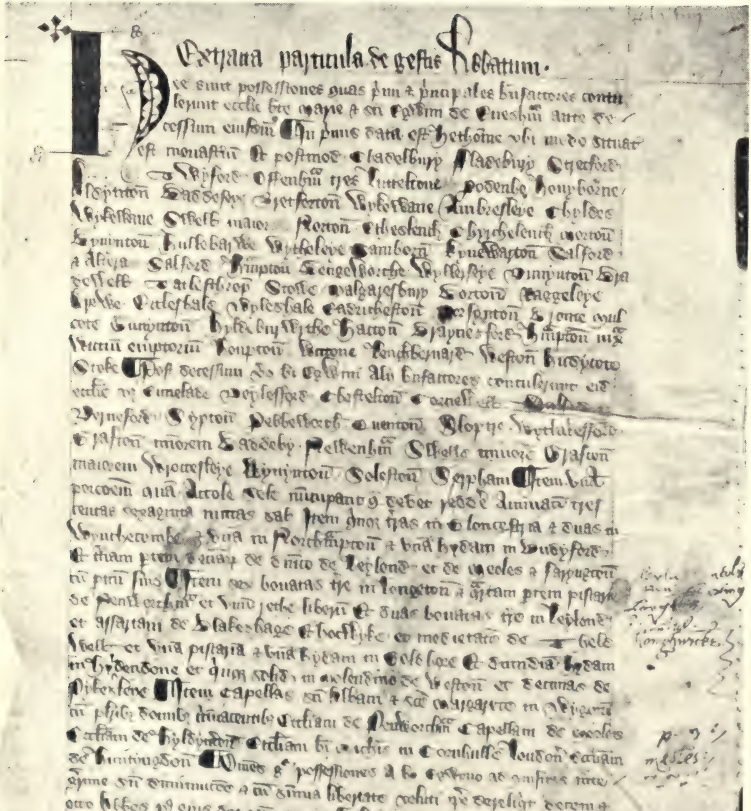
CHAPTER V

The Abbots of Evesham

IF we gauge St. Egwin's work by the gospel standard, "by their fruits you shall know them", we shall see its strength and its solidity. His Abbey had its times of trial, even of extinction, but it rose again, ever fresh and young, giving proof of the vitality which had been deposited there by its holy founder. This power of renewal, of self-reform, has been remarked as a feature in the general history of the Order of St. Benedict, and in Evesham we have a remarkable instance of it.

Of the eighteen immediate successors of Saint Egwin, we know only the names and the fact (great praise in itself) that all of them were faithful stewards of the house of God. Of the eighth, St. Credan, we shall hear more later.

At the end of two centuries Evesham, like almost all the monasteries of the kingdom, fell a prey to the Danes. The devastated Abbey-lands were afterwards given by King Edmund



PAGE OF AN EVESHAM REGISTER

List of the Abbey's Possessions. *Brit. Mus. Harl.* 3763.

to a powerful nobleman named Alchelm, who ejected the few monks who had returned to their monastic home, and appointed canons in their place. But in the great Benedictine revival inaugurated, under King Edgar's protection, by St. Dunstan and his fellow-workers, the monastery returned to its rightful owners. St. Ethelwold, the restorer of Peterborough, and of several other great houses, coming to Evesham, appointed an Abbot, Osward by name, and put him in possession of the lands which had been withdrawn from the Abbey.

A few years later the monks were again dispossessed in favour of canons, but restitution was made by the very man who had committed the injustice. This was Alfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, who, on his death-bed, came to a sense of his duty, and calling the monk Freodegar, bestowed on him the Abbey of Evesham and the greater part of its lands. It was not for twenty years, however, early in the 11th century, that the place was left in peace to the monks. The definite restoration of monastic life there was due to Abbot Ælfward, who had been a monk of Ramsey, and who settled the house once more on a solid basis. This Abbot was highly esteemed

by King Canute, who appointed him to the See of London, which he governed jointly with the Abbey. The great Danish king was a munificent benefactor to Evesham, bestowing on it many lands, and a handsome black chasuble, which was preserved in the monastery for centuries after. Of the same king's gift of the relics of St. Wistan, we shall have occasion to speak later on.

Earl Leofric and his pious Countess Godiva, when endowing the monastery of Coventry, found means to let their bounty overflow on Evesham: the Earl was a frequent visitor at the Abbey, and, finding that some property, then in his hands, had originally belonged to Evesham, he restored it to God and St. Egwin.

The Abbot-Bishop Ælfward feeling his end nigh, wished to die at Evesham, but some of the monks, instigated by the evil one, and supported by some laymen of the neighbourhood, obstinately refused to receive him. Ælfward's heart was bitterly wounded by this base ingratitude. He returned to his early home at Ramsey, where he died in 1044, leaving to the community there all the vestments and precious things which he had intended to bequeath to Evesham. Among these legacies

was a jaw-bone of St. Egwin, and St. Elphege's cowl.

The next Abbot is one of the most attractive figures in the chronicle. He is called sometimes Manny, sometimes Maurice, and was appointed by Edward the Confessor, in a council held in London. In the history of St. Egwin's shrine we mentioned the various talents with which the Abbot was gifted ; he was well-read in the sacred sciences, and was also remarkable as a singer, a caligrapher, a painter, and a goldsmith. His artistic reputation was so great, that his services had been sought among others, by the monks of Canterbury and Coventry, for the adornment of their churches. His talents found fullest exercise, however, in his own Abbey. He rebuilt on a larger scale the old church which had fallen a hundred years before, and saw the new edifice consecrated on Oct. 10th, 1054. He made shrines for St. Egwin, as we have seen, and also for St. Odulf and St. Credan, and left behind him, among other artistic treasures, a Missal and a large Psalter, written and illuminated by his own hand. About seven years before his death he was attacked by paralysis, which rendered him unable to discharge his duties as Abbot. He therefore chose one of his

monks, Agelwy or Ailwin, who was blessed at Gloucester in 1059, and relieved him of the burden which he could no longer carry. The new Abbot treated his venerable father with the tenderest care, doing nothing without his advice, and refusing, during Manny's life time, to take the place set apart for the Abbot. Abbot Manny was called to his reward on the feast of the Epiphany, 1066, on the same day and at the same hour as the blessed King Edward, and both, we may believe, entered at the same instant into the joy of their Lord. The chronicle tells us that Abbot Manny was favoured with many visions. On one occasion he heard the angels singing during the night, and going out to discover the cause of the celestial music, he saw a bright light mounting up to heaven from the church tower. Next day, on making enquiries, and being informed that a poor stranger had died that night in the tower, he concluded that the angels had been sent to conduct him to Paradise. Under Abbot Manny, Evesham seems to have been favoured by possessing many saintly souls. Three holy hermits, of whom we shall speak later on, had settled there, and the monk Ælsy probably belongs to this time. This monk was inflamed

with the fire of divine love, and lived a most mortified life, macerating his body with frequent fasts and giving himself up to prayer. Such was his austerity, that on winter nights he would stand barefoot on the cold stones during the whole of Matins. It is related of the same monk that one night, after performing his devotions before each altar of the church, he returned through the cemetery, stopping there to pray for the dead; and ending his prayer with "animæ omnium fidelium requiescant in pace," he heard the answer *Amen* coming from all the graves.

Abbot Agelwy (1066-77) was a man of a stronger build than his predecessor, but gentle withal, and very attractive as represented to us by the chronicle. He was the man for the stirring times in which his reign fell. Good Abbot Manny, going to his reward in company with the last Saxon king of England, left Agelwy to face the new state of things which the Conquest was to inaugurate. The Abbot was equal to the occasion. While many bishops and abbots hid themselves through fear, seeing the scanty respect that the Conqueror showed to Saxon ecclesiastics, Agelwy, like his friend and

neighbour St. Wolstan, faced the new king, and won his confidence by his straightforward and fearless bearing. William appointed him governor of the midland counties, and as long as he lived honoured him with his esteem. The Abbey had reason to rejoice in the royal favour, for while many other churches and monasteries in England suffered from Norman oppression, Evesham was confirmed in its possessions by a special charter. In this the Conqueror commanded that the Abbot should be left in peaceful enjoyment of his domains, for the use of the servants of God, with "my peace and protection," and that, in case these injunctions were disregarded, the said Abbot should appeal to the King, who would see that justice was done.

He was most conscientious in preserving the property of his monastery; and not only took particular care not to let his kindred become possessed of any part of it, but he secured all his family lands, as far as possible, for the Abbey.

Norman and English alike regarded Agelwy as an oracle; even the nobles looked to him for protection, and wherever he went, crowds of people flocked to him seeking redress for all

their grievances. He was highly esteemed by St. Wolstan, who was his confessor.[1] The Bishop and the Abbot frequently visited each other, and when the Archbishop of York was striving to subject Worcester to his See, Wolstan had no better friend and adviser than the Abbot of Evesham, who assisted him in his resistance both by counsel and by a gift of money.

The relations between St. Wolstan and Abbot Agelwy are very divergently appreciated by the Worcester and Evesham historians. According to the former the Abbot was a designing man for whose craft the saintly simplicity of the Bishop was no match, but the contemporary witness of Agelwy's holiness and of the amicable relations between the two prelates cannot be outweighed by the one-sided stories of the Worcester monk. That there were differences between Wolstan and Agelwy, regarding lands claimed by the churches of each, is certain. In this contest Evesham was the gainer, but the dispute does not seem to have made any rupture in the relations of the Bishop and Abbot. The *animus* of the Worcester chronicler may be appreciated by the following story. He relates that on the death of Agelwy, St. Wolstan

[1] St. Wolstan had received his earliest schooling at Evesham.

at once offered up prayers for his soul, whereupon he was immediately attacked with gout, the disease of which the Abbot had died, and was warned that his pains would continue until he ceased his intercession, "whence it appears," says Heming, "how great a sin it is to invade and seize the lands of monasteries, since God would not be prayed to for these robbers."[1] St. Wolstan, so goes the tale, discontinued his prayers, and gradually recovered without the use of any medicine.

The Abbot was always ready to come to the aid of any church in distress. Being once sent for by Lanfranc to give evidence regarding certain lands, he seems to have acted more as a judge than as a witness, and he secured the property to the church of Canterbury, on account of which kind service his obit was observed by the monks of Christ Church. In the same manner he rendered material service to the Abbey of Gloucester, which was much straitened by poverty in the early days of Abbot Serlo.

The King made use of Abbot Agelwy in connection with another monastery. Abbot Godric of Winchcombe, who had been a

[1] Heming's "Chartularium Wigorniense," Vol. I., p. 273.

chaplain of King Edward the Confessor, had opposed the Norman invasion; in punishment of which offence William committed him to custody in Gloucester Castle, and entrusted the entire government of the Abbey to Agelwy, until the appointment of a Norman Abbot.

In the distress which followed William's fierce vengeance on the rebellion of the English in 1068, crowds of afflicted people flocked to Evesham, and many of them were so spent, that on taking food they instantly died. The dead bodies of the poor fugitives lay all about the Abbey grounds, and every day the monks buried five or six. Among these destitute people there were many little boys, and these the Abbot took under his special protection, entrusting some to the servants of the Abbey and others to the monks. In after years many of these children became servants at Evesham and proved their gratitude to their benefactors. But these were only passing acts of charity in a life which was devoted, we may say, to God's poor. Besides observing St. Benedict's injunctions regarding the hospitality to be shown to pilgrims (numbers of whom, says the chronicle, came from Aquitaine, Ireland, and other countries), Abbot Agelwy had his

daily bounties. Thirteen poor men were always fed from his own table, and besides these were the twelve whose feet and hands he washed every day "with warm water," each of whom was fed and clothed like the monks themselves. Some of these pensioners were lepers, but the Abbot made no distinction in his treatment of them. In return for the charity shown them, the poor had certain obligations. They were expected to be present at Matins, at both Masses, and at all the Hours of the Divine Office, and in winter they had to remain praying in church after Matins till morning, when the *Mandatum* took place. On solemn feasts they watched all night in prayer for the Abbot and monks to whom they owed so much. From the feast of All Saints till Christmas, and again from Septuagesima till Easter, they received a penny three times a week; while at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and other great feasts, not only the portioners but other poor people received small presents of money. The beadsmen were very often infirm, blind, or lame, but when they were selected they had to be able to perform all the duties just described. There was a third class of poor, fifty in number, who every day received

portions from the Abbey kitchen, and added to all these were casual beggars not a few. Christmas and Easter always brought "a great army" of poor and pilgrims to Evesham, where they were treated with all the charity that the large heart of Agelwy could devise, receiving alms of money, food, clothes, shoes,—the Abbot himself washing their feet, and at the end sending them away happy. On the death of a pensioner, his place was immediately filled by another poor person chosen by the Prior. If, on his journeys, Agelwy met any person insufficiently clothed, he would order one of his attendants to bestow his own clothes on him, and afterwards would repay the charity twofold. The chronicler remarks that in reward for such large-hearted generosity, God blessed the Abbot with ample means, with which he was able to raise his monastery to a flourishing state. He did much to adorn the church of Evesham, buying many vestments, a cross, and a beautiful altar wrought in gold and silver. He also built the chapel of St. Nicholas. He ordained that on great feasts a candle should burn before each altar all through the night.

With regard to the Abbot's personal piety we hear only one word. The chronicle says

that he daily heard many masses, and at each made an offering to the celebrant. Instead of being surprised at the historian's silence, we should rather be grateful that he has given us even this one hint. We may apply to Agelwy what has been well said about another great Abbot: "Is not this comparative silence as to his religion precisely the healthiest sign of him and of it? The Unconscious is the alone Complete. Abbot Samson, all along a busy working-man, as all men are bound to be, his religion, his worship, was like his daily bread to him;—which he did not take the trouble to talk much about; which he merely ate at stated intervals, and lived and did his work upon."[1]

In all his good deeds the Abbot found a faithful coadjutor in Alfric, his Prior. Alfric was a young man, but his wisdom and prudence compensated for his want of years. He was especially charged with the care of the poor and of pilgrims, and the cellarer and other officials were instructed to refuse him nothing that he asked for his guests.

At length the time came for Abbot Agelwy

[1] Carlyle, "Past and Present," p. 116.

to reap the reward of his labours. He had suffered at intervals, during many years, from gout, and now he was worn out and ready to die. He passed away on Feb. 16th, 1077, leaving his monks in great sorrow. And well might they mourn, for scarcely, if ever, was another such man to rule their house. Men of worth and men of power were to hold the Abbacy, but they were to be of another race and of another stamp from the last Saxon Abbot of Evesham.

On his appointment, Abbot Agelwy had found twelve monks; at his death, he left thirty-six; and though in his lavish generosity he might have said, with St. Laurence, that the wealth of his church had been borne up by the hands of the poor into the heavenly treasure-house, he contrived to bequeath to his successor five chests of gold which he had collected for the erection of a new church.

Agelwy was succeeded by a Norman,

Walter (1077-86), a monk of Cerisy, who had been chaplain to Arhbishop Lanfrancc. In the early years of his Abbacy, through the tyranny of Odo of Bayeux, he allowed the monastery to be deprived of twenty-eight villages, and disposed of other church-lands in

favour of his relatives. Yet Walter was a good ruler; he enforced regular discipline, and increased the number of the monks. In his days the Domesday Survey was made, and it shows that the Abbey then possessed lands in the counties of Worcester, Gloucester, Warwick, and Northampton, amounting to two hundred and eighteen and a half hides and twelve acres, valued at £129 10*s*. With the money left by Abbot Agelwy, Walter began the construction of a new church. He built the crypt, and the upper church as far as the nave, and began the tower. We have seen in a previous place that he sent St. Egwin's relics round England, as a means of collecting funds for the building. He is also said to have introduced the culture of the vine, planting a vineyard across the river, on a spot still called Vineyard Hill, where the grape continued to be grown up to the dissolution. Abbot Walter died in 1086 and was succeeded by

Robert (1086-96), a monk of Jumièges, who ruled for ten years, and in whose time Evesham sent a filiation into Denmark. A list of the Evesham community at this time has been preserved, which may be interesting. It gives the number of monks as sixty-seven,

twelve of whom were in Denmark. Besides these there were five nuns, three poor people "ad mandatum" (*i. e.*, who received daily charities from the monastery, having also their feet washed by the monks), and three clerics. All these received the same portions as the monks themselves. There was a large number of servants, sixty-three in all: five for the church, two for the infirmary, two for the cellar, five for the kitchen, seven for the bake-house, four for the brewing, six for the baths, two tailors, two orchard-keepers, three gardeners, one porter at the cloister-gate, two at the great gate, five in the vineyard, four to attend on the monks when they went out, four fishermen, four servants for the Abbot's room, three in the hall, and, lastly, three watchmen.[1]

Maurice (1096-1122) was a monk of Evesham. He built the chapter-house, the dormitory, a parlour, and the chapel of St. Mary Magdalen, and did many other laudable acts, qualified by the chronicle as "valde bona."

Reginald (1122-49), a monk of Gloucester and nephew to Count Milo of Hereford,

[1] Vesp. B. xxiv. fol. 37. b.

succeeded in 1122, and died in 1149. He enclosed the Abbey and the cemetery with a wall, still called Abbot Reginald's wall, continued the nave of the church, and built St. Egwin and St. Oswald's chapels, the refectory, the parlour with its chapel, the guesten-hall, and the large kitchen. He adorned the church with many gifts, and made two large bells, "Benet" and its "fellow," and two small ones, "Gloucester" and its "fellow." Bishop Simon of Worcester having attempted to exert his authority at Evesham, in spite of the Abbey's exemption, Abbot Reginald went to Rome in person (and on foot, says the chronicle), to vindicate the rights of his church, in which, however, he was only partially successful.

William of Andeville (1149-59) who succeeded Reginald, was a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury, and his acts are described by the chronicle as "holy and manly." The latter epithet he deserved by his courage in opposing William de Beauchamp and his armed men, who, during the wars between Stephen and Matilda, had broken down the wall of the cemetery and done other damage to the property of the Abbey. The

ABBOT REGINALD'S GATEWAY

Abbot had the courage to face this armed band, himself unarmed, and pronounce excommunication on them, and the sentence is said to have had the most terrible effects on the delinquents. He also recovered the Castle of Bengeworth, destroyed it, and made a cemetery on the site. While he was visiting his old monastery of Christ Church, in 1159, he was himself "visited there by our Lord" with his last sickness, and was buried in the cathedral. A dream which he had before starting for Canterbury, in which it seemed to him that the sun was buried at his feet, was verified when the body of the blissful martyr St. Thomas was laid in that position some years later.

Abbot Roger (1159-60) reigned only one year,[1] and was succeeded by

Adam (1160-91). He was a Cluniac monk of Charité-sur-Loire, and had been Prior of Bermondsey. He ruled wisely for thirty years, enforcing regular observance with great strictness.

This Abbot was very learned, and one of the most eloquent men of his time. He

[1] Hence the heading of his reign : "De parvo Rogero sed factis magnanimo."

wrote, among other works, an exhortation to the nuns of Godstow, sermons, homilies, and letters. Clement III. granted him the use of the *Pontificalia*, except the ring. The solemn translation of St. Egwin's relics to the new shrine took place in his reign, in 1183. Abbot Adam finished the nave of the church, and the cloister, erected several other buildings, and made the two largest bells of the Abbey, "Jesus" and "Gloriosa." Among his gifts to the sacristy was a red cope embroidered with gold birds, and a stole and maniple with silver bells attached. In his last illness he ordered a gold chalice to be made, which was afterwards given by his successor for King Richard's ransom. He died in 1191, and was followed by *Roger Norreys* (1191-1213). The twenty-two years of this Abbot's rule were the most critical period of Evesham's history. There was nothing in Roger to recommend him to the monks. He was, as the chronicle says, a monk "of no monastery," for he had been expelled in disgrace from Christ Church, Canterbury, the house of his profession. His appointment to Evesham was made in the face of the community's opposition, and the sequel was not calculated to soften their antipathies.

Roger was a man of profligate life; he appropriated the revenues of the Abbey to his own uses, and stinted the monks, even in necessary food and clothing. Had not the brethren possessed among them men of integrity and courage, who dared to face the Abbot in defence of the right, the monastery must have been ruined both spiritually and temporally. It says much for the house that it stood twenty years of such a trial. Besides the internal trouble caused by the Abbot's misconduct, the Abbey came to an open rupture with the Bishop of Worcester, consequent on his claiming the right of visitation. The struggle on both these points was long and bitter, but it resulted in a triumph for the monks, who were at length delivered from the odious rule of Abbot Roger, and confirmed by Rome (in 1206) in possession of the ample exemption first gained for them by St. Egwin. Roger was deposed by Nicholas of Tusculum, the Legate, and appointed Prior of Penwortham, in Lancashire, a cell of Evesham, "the whole convent rejoicing thereat," says Habington,[1] where he ended his unhappy career in 1218. The only improvement made in the buildings during

[1] Survey of Worcestershire. Part II., p. 89.

this reign was the completion of the church tower by Thomas de Northwick, a monk, and one of the staunchest opponents of the Abbot's tyranny. By a curious coincidence this tower fell the same year as its architect died.

Randulph (1214-29), a native of Evesham and former Prior of Worcester was chosen to succeed Abbot Roger. He had been elected to the Bishopric of Worcester, but he was persuaded by the King and the Legate, Nicholas of Tusculum, to forego his claims in favour of the royal candidate, the Chancellor, Walter de Gray. Randulph was blessed in the church of St. Mary's of York. In his time was drawn up the *Customary* of the house, regulating the application of its revenues, the various duties of the Obedientiaries, and other domestic details. The document was sealed with the seal of the Convent, and confirmed first by the Legate and afterwards by the Pope. Abbot Randulph is described as living most meekly among his monks, and eradicating many abuses that had crept in during his predecessor's reign.

Randulph and another monk had been sent to Rome in 1202 to petition for the canonization of St Wolstan. On their return they were

miraculously preserved from shipwreck by the Saint's intercession. In the following year Randulph became Prior of Worcester. During his Priorship King John visited Worcester, and Randulph availed himself of the opportunity to ask and obtain several privileges.

In 1215, the Abbot, accompanied by his Prior, Thomas de Marleberge, of whom we shall hear more later, went to Rome to attend the 4th Lateran Council. In this assembly many regulations were made regarding the Benedictine Order; the most important enactment, in this connection, was that requiring the Black Monks to hold General Chapters every three years. The command was obeyed with singular promptness in England, the first Chapter being held at Oxford in 1218. Abbot Randulph, with the Abbot of Abingdon, presided at the General Chapter held at Northampton in 1225.[1]

In 1218, Worcester Cathedral was consecrated by Bishop Sylvester, in presence of King Henry III., ten bishops, numerous abbots, Abbot Randulph among them, and a crowd of nobles.

[1] Reyner. Apostolatus Bened. in Anglia. Appendix. p. 94.

Thomas de Marleburge

The next Abbot of Evesham was (1229-36). He had been the great champion of the monks in the contest with Abbot Roger, and also in the dispute regarding exemption, and he had suffered much, both in England and in Rome, for the good cause. Marleberge had studied (probably at Paris) under Stephen Langton, having among his fellow-students Richard Poore, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury.[1] Before becoming a monk he had been Professor of Laws at Oxford, and this training stood him in good stead in the troublous times of Abbot Roger's misrule.

He was the spokesman of the community on all important occasions, and he had shown that he knew how to speak his mind, not only to the Abbot, but to bishops, archbishops, and popes. The chronicle depicts him as a man of singular integrity and energy, and these qualities, which, in his circumstances, might have carried him away, were balanced by prudence and long-sightedness. There is much in his character to remind us of his great contemporary, Abbot Samson of Edmundsbury, immortalised by Carlyle.

[1] Chronicle. p. 232.

Besides his public deeds, Thomas shewed himself to be a good and diligent monk. His first post was that of "Dean of Christianity in the Vale of Evesham." He was afterwards made sacrist, and in that office did much for the adornment of the church, repairing all the shrines which had been damaged by the fall of the tower, and making a new one for St. Wistan's relics. He also obtained the approval of the Chapter for keeping a light burning continually before both the High Altar and the Lady Altar in the crypt. All his good deeds as sacrist were accomplished in one year, for at the end of that time Thomas was appointed Prior. In this position he took particular interest in the books of the monastery. On coming to religion, he had brought his valuable collection of law-books, and to these he now added many useful volumes. Thomas was himself a writer, and it is to him that we owe most of our information regarding the Abbey of Evesham. He wrote the history of the patrons and abbots of the monastery, incidentally introducing an autobiography. The choir-books seem to have enjoyed his special care, for we find that he made a large breviary, "the best in the house," a large psalter, also

"the best in the house," except the glossed copies; this latter was for the Prior's use. He found all the needful materials for writing four antiphoners, employing some of the monks in the transcription, and had some part of the offices performed by the Abbot written out "in a large hand." But Prior Thomas still kept a watchful eye to the repairs and adornment of the church. He restored the rood-screen before the altar of St. Peter, and when the Lady Chapel in the crypt had been plundered he supplied some new vestments. He also made a new tomb for his predecessor, Prior John, and for John, surnamed Dionysius. Concerning the latter monk, Thomas used to say that he had never seen a man persevere in the way of penance with such perfection as he did for more than thirty years, serving God in fasting, prayer, watching, and tears, and patiently supporting great bodily suffering and cold. It was the custom of this holy monk to dress himself in very poor clothes, and to deprive himself of all he could, that he might have wherewithal to relieve the poor, and do other good works. To return to Prior Thomas, the chronicler, enumerating his good deeds, tells us that he was always very solicitous

about the repairing and the preserving of church goods, and that he willingly gave a helping hand to all who worked earnestly for the same end; moreover, he was always on the watch to supply any little thing that might be wanting in the church or monastery.

Marleberge's Abbacy lasted only seven years. He was elected in 1229, and blessed at Chester, by the Bishop of Coventry, on March 12th, 1230. In the course of two years he paid off a great part of the debt with which the house was burdened, and by his prudent administration merited well of the Abbey. He erected an altar in the nave to the Holy Cross, with a marble top, and set up on it a beautiful crucifix with statues of our Lady and St. John. The tombs of his predecessors, Abbot Randulph and Abbot Adam, he adorned with effigies robed in pontifical vestments, and prepared a similar tomb, in marble, for himself. He died in September, 1236, and was buried in the south wall of the nave, "under the image of a Bishop (*sic*) wrought in white marble," says Habington.[1]

[1] Part II., p. 89.

Richard le Gras (1236-42), who had been Prior of Hurley, in Berkshire, was elected to succeed Abbot Thomas. In 1239, the new church, which had been begun some hundred and fifty years before, was consecrated. This Abbot was much employed in the service of King Henry III., both at home and abroad. In 1241 he was appointed Chancellor of the kingdom and Keeper of the Great Seal. Later on he was nominated to the diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, but died at LaRéole, in Gascony, before his consecration.

During Richard's abbacy flourished the famous monk, Walter de Odington, who, "lest he should sink under the labour of the day, the watching at night, and continued observance of regular discipline, used at spare hours to divert himself with the decent and commendable diversion of music, to render himself the more cheerful for other duties."[1] His treatise, "De Speculatione Musicæ," is in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (MS. 410), and is printed in Coussemaker's "Scriptores de musica medii ævi." This great work is

[1] Steven's addition to Dugdale's Monasticon. vol. i. p. 205.

considered by one authority[1] as ranking only second to that of Franco of Cologne, the father of *musica mensurata* in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Thomas of Gloucester (1243-55) had an uneventful reign. Among his bequests he left 2 marks yearly that the convent might wear albs on all the feasts of our Lady. In his time the differences between the Convent and the Bishop of Worcester were finally settled.

Henry of Worcester (1256-63), found the Abbey burdened with large debts, all of which he paid off without contracting any new ones. He increased the incomes of the obedientiaries, and finding the fabric of the church insufficiently endowed, he granted to it all the offerings made by the faithful at the monastery-cross. We catch a glimpse of the deep piety of this Abbot in the fact that he endowed a chaplain to say Mass daily in the Abbey in reparation for any negligence of which the monks might be guilty in celebrating the Holy Sacrifice, as well as for the repose of the souls of all the abbots

[1] Grove's Dictionary of Music. Article, "Notation." A page of this MS. is reproduced in "Early English Harmony" by Revd. W. H. Frere. (Plainsong and Mediæval Music Society).

and monks, of their parents, and of all founders and benefactors of Evesham. He bought many handsome vestments, which are described in detail by the chronicler; and at his death he left a sum of money to be distributed among the poor on his anniversary. He was buried in the north wall of the Abbey church, in which situation a stone coffin was discovered during the excavations made by Mr Rudge in 1822. There being no other tomb in the vicinity, this coffin is considered as being most probably Abbot Henry's. On the lid being removed, the body was found in an evidently undisturbed condition. The boots, which were of leather, were in good preservation, the soles being "rights and lefts." The right arm lay on a wooden crozier with a scroll-wrought head, and on the left were a chalice and paten of pewter. The middle finger of the right hand bore a ring of debased gold, set with an amethyst.[1]

After the death of Abbot Henry there was a vacancy of three years, during which, on August 4th 1265, the battle of Evesham was fought, just outside the town. Simon de Montfort, who had spent the previous night

[1] May, p. 113, quoting from Archæologia, vol. xx., p. 566.

with his royal captive at Kempsey, near Worcester, heard Mass and dined in the Abbey on the day of the battle. After the fearful slaughter of that day the remains of the Earl were rescued by the monks and laid in a place of honour in their Church. The popular hero was canonised by the people, and miracles were reported to have been worked at his tomb.

William de Whitchurch (1266-82) was appointed in 1266, the election being presided over by the legate Cardinal Ottobonus. The new Abbot was a monk of Pershore, and had been Abbot of Alcester. He ratified many donations of his predecessors, and in various ways improved the *status* of the monastery. He presided, with the Abbot of Winchcombe, at a Chapter of the Black Monks held at Oxford in 1271.[1] Dying in 1282, he was succeeded by

John de Brokehampton (1282-1316), one of the most eminent of Evesham's Abbots, and perhaps its greatest builder. Before his election he filled the office of cellarer. From among his "miranda opera", described by the chronicler, and covering thirty-four years, we select the most interesting.

[1] Annales Wigorn. Anno 1271.

The church was already finished, but the Lady Chapel was left for Abbot John to build; it was his first undertaking, and it was decorated with paintings representing the life of our Lord and scenes from the lives of various virgin-saints. The altar was enriched with a painted frontal and a reredos of the same description. The Abbot's next care was the Chapter-house. He built also the side of the cloister opposite to the Chapter-house, and and over it studies for the monks; he erected a large dormitory, a "noble" infirmary with many conveniences for the sick, the hall of the Abbot's lodging, and a chamber there, on the walls of which Joseph's history was represented. The church at Norton, still standing, and dedicated to St. Egwin, was another of Abbot John's erections. He built also eight granges, and erected sixteen water-mills.

In 1316, Edward II., at the Abbot's request, and in consideration of a sum of money, granted to the convent the custody of the Abbey during vacancies. This grant, which was confirmed by Richard II., in 1379, was a great boon to the monastery, for we know how prone kings were to defer elections to bishoprics and abbeys, in order to enjoy the temporalities of which

THE CLOISTER ARCH

they were considered the guardians. Abbot John had deserved some consideration from Edward II., having furnished him with one thousand marks for the expenses of his Scottish wars.

Our chronicler concludes his notice of John de Brokehampton by saying that he performed many other good deeds, which were fully known to God alone, but that what had been set down in writing was sufficient to serve as an example to his successors. The good Abbot died in August, 1316, and was buried near the font in the nave. An indulgence of one thousand days was granted to all who should say a Pater and Ave for the repose of his soul.

William de Chiriton (1316-44) was a monk of Evesham. He built, in the court facing the town, a noble gateway, with a chapel and rooms attached. The gateway is described as arched, adorned with stone statues of our Blessed Lady, St. Egwin, and the royal founders of the Abbey, and surmounted by an embattled parapet. He built also another gate, facing Merstowe Green, and a stone wall running from the gate as far as the river. By licence of Edward III.[1] he

[1] See Dugdale II., p. 20.

embattled and fortified the Abbot's house and chapel and the rest of the Abbey. He granted forty shillings annually to the almoner for clothes and shoes to be distributed to twelve poor people on St. Catharine's day.

Abbot William died December 13th, 1344, after governing his monastery twenty-eight years; he was buried near the font in the nave. A stone coffin discovered in the course of the excavations seems to be that of Abbot Chiriton. The remains, which had evidently been disturbed at a previous period, perhaps at the suppression, were clearly those of an aged person. The right arm was laid across the breast, and close to the fingers was found the leaden seal of a Bull of Pope John XXII.[1]

William Boys (1345-67), a monk of the house, was elected ("concorditer," says the chronicle) on January 1st of the next year, and confirmed by Pope Clement VI. at Avignon, early in March.[2] Returning home, he was,

[1] Vetusta Monumenta, v. p. 7.

[2] According to Habington, he was of the ancient family of Attwoode of Wolverley, in Worcestershire. "De Bosco in Latin, Boys in French, Attwode and Wode in Englishe, signify one selve paternal house, varying only in words but not in substance." And further on: "Now to conclude the Attwodes with a man of authority in his time, William de Boys, who in Church Honyborne and Holt beareth the arms of Attwoode, being a "lyon rampant, queue furche," having his head covered with an Abbot's mitre, was III. Kalendis Junii 1344 chosen Abbot of Evesham." (Survey of Worcestershire II., pp. 316 and 319).

received with great honour and affection by his monks, and installed on Whitsunday, May 16th. This Abbot was much loved, both in his monastery and outside it. The chronicle describes him as "honourable and praiseworthy, cheerful, open-handed, and a merry wit." By his cordiality and munificence he made many friends at court and elsewhere. An important privilege was obtained by him for the Abbey, granting that an Abbot newly elected should be *ipso facto* confirmed, and might be blessed by any English bishop. This grant saved much time, and the expense of a journey to the papal court. In the early part of Abbot Boys' reign the great pestilence, known as the "Black Death", reached Evesham. An instrument drawn up in 1350, and confirmed with the convent seal, describes the plague as then raging, and its victims as being so numerous, that it was found impossible to allow the poor the usual charity of each deceased monk's portion for a year. A daily Mass was founded at the same time, to be said at St. Stephen's altar for the souls of the brethren departed in this fearful pestilence.[1]

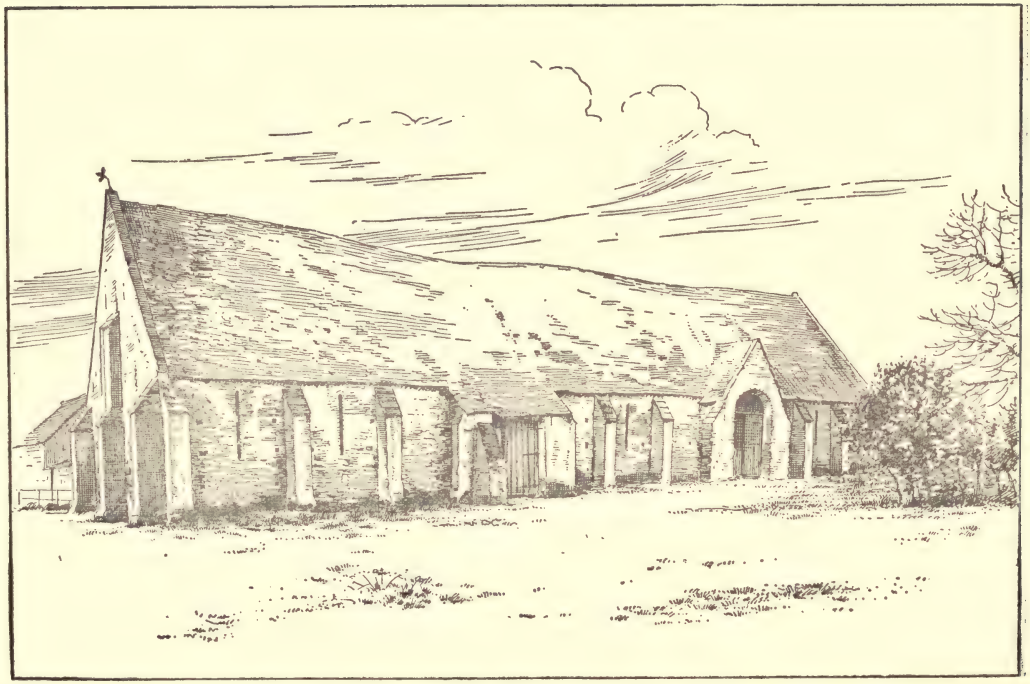
[1] Harl. MS. 3763. fol. 159 b. Quoted by May.

Abbot Boys did much for the prosperity and happiness of his monks, and made many beneficent regulations for the care of the sick. He founded a daily Mass for the abbots, monks, and benefactors of the house, and appointed two chaplains to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for the same intentions, and for the kings of England, in a chapel recently constructed in the cemetery near the gateway. He completed the peal of bells by adding two, which were baptized by the titular Archbishop of Nazareth and called respectively "Mary" and "Egwin."

Among the Abbot's gifts to the sacristy were all the necessary vestments and ornaments for pontifical functions, and a red carpet embroidered with mitres for the Abbot's seat. Abbot Boys died at Ombersley, "wearied in the end with grievous sickness," says Habington, and was buried by Bishop Lewis Charleton of Hereford, before the statue of our Lady, in the nave of the Abbey Church.[1]

John de Ombresley (1367-79), had filled the office of cellarer before his election. In accordance with the privilege obtained by his predecessor, he was blessed

[1] Habington says: "In the body of Evesham church, before *St. Egwin's* altar, where he lyeth under a marble stone," p. 89.



TYTHE BARN, MIDDLE LITTLETON

at once, the ceremony being performed at Banbury, in Oxfordshire, by Bishop John Buckingham, of Lincoln. This Abbot built the side of the cloister nearest the church, and provided it with karols for study. The Tythe-barn, still standing at Littleton, is probably of his erection. He procured many valuable things for the church, such as a precious crozier, a silver-gilt processional cross, two thuribles, and two pairs of silver basins. These, and a number of ornaments for his own private chapel, were bought from the executors of Bishop William Linn, of Worcester. The Abbot further purchased several pieces of plate for his own table and for the use of guests. He is praised by the chronicle for having governed his house wisely and discreetly both in spirituals and temporals, and for having borne with patience all the troubles which came upon him. Only one of these troubles seems to have been recorded. It is stated in Fabyan's chronicle, under the year 1376, that the tenants or servants of the Earl of Warwick made a raid on the Abbey lands, killing many of the tenants, and devastating the property.

Abbot Ombresley died in 1379, leaving his monastery "full of all good things," and was

buried before the pulpit in the nave.

Roger Zatton (1379-1418), sacrist of the house, was elected unanimously. He went to London for the royal confirmation, and was blessed there by the same Bishop of Lincoln who had blessed his predecessor. The ceremony was performed in the chapel of the Bishop's London house. Abbot Zatton showed himself generous and public-spirited, by renovating the large arch of Evesham bridge, and by giving substantial aid towards the paving of the town and other local undertakings. He also rebuilt four cottages near the cemetery gate, as almshouses for poor people who should in return pray for him and for all the departed. In his time the presbytery of the church was built. Mindful of his former office, he made many pious benefactions to the sacristy, and provided a large and "sumptuous" gradual for the Abbot's use. He had a great love for St. John the Baptist, and ordered that twenty-four candles should burn day and night before the Saint's altar, on his Midsummer feast. He made a like ordinance for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and appointed that during his abbacy a large candle should burn day and night in the Lady Chapel on the chief

ABBOT ZATTON'S SEAL

feasts of our Lady. In his time it was ordained that the feast of the Blessed Trinity should be celebrated as one of the principal feasts of the Abbey, and that St. Odulph's day should be also raised to a higher degree of solemnity. For the former feast he ordered an extra pittance of capons and wine to be provided. The large quantity specified will be understood if we remember the monastic custom of sending portions, from the monastic table, to the poor who were waiting to receive them. The Abbot therefore, by this ordinance, did a double mercy, supplying better fare than usual for the community, and enabling it to bestow a substantial bounty on the poor.

Abbot Zatton was obliged to engage in several law-suits, in which he was generally successful, but the expenses of which involved the Abbey in a heavy debt. The most important matter necessitating litigation was the claim made by Archbishop Courtenay to visit the Abbey; the Abbot, however, succeeded in proving the exemption of his monastery, and the Archbishop was obliged to withdraw his claim.

Henry Bolingbroke, afterwards Henry IV., was entertained at the Abbey in July, 1399,

when on his way from Doncaster to depose Richard II.[1]

Our chronicler tells us that in his dealings with the monks Abbot Zatton was ever "simple, straightforward, and meek; not over anxious about worldly matters, but most religious; harming no man, loving all, helping as many as he could, and ever devoted to God." As to his constancy in prayer, we are told that "as the blacksmith strikes on the anvil with his hammer, when the iron is heated, so did he persevere to the end in prayer and contemplation." He died in 1418, after a reign of thirty-nine years, leaving behind him thirty-eight monks serving God.

Towards the end of Abbot Zatton's abbacy, the monastery lost a man of eminent merit, Nicholas Hereford, who had been Prior of the house for forty years, having been appointed by Abbot Boys. Prior Nicholas procured for the Abbey many sacred vessels and vestments, and a number of books.

Richard de Bromesgrove (1418-35), the infirmarian, was the next Abbot. He was blessed by the Bishop of Bangor, then Chancellor of the University of Oxford. He

[1] May, p. 123.

ordained that on Whitsunday the monks should be served in the refectory with extra dishes, such as his predecessor had ordered for Trinity Sunday.[1] He was buried at the foot of the steps leading to the Lady Altar.

John Wykewane (1435-60), formerly Prior, succeeded in 1435, and ruled till 1460. He was blessed by the Bishop of Bath, then Chancellor of the kingdom, at Dangerswold. The only act recorded of this Abbot is that he raised the feast of the Epiphany to the rank of a principal festival. He was buried in the Lady Chapel, before the image of St. Catharine.

Richard Pembroke (1460-67), a monk of the Abbey, "having his grace to be a Doctor of Divinity," was unanimously elected to succeed Abbot Wykewane, and was blessed by John Stanberry, Bishop of Hereford.

Richard Hawksbury (1467-77) was blessed by John Chadworth, Bishop of Lincoln. In his days the monastery incurred a heavy debt through the expense of entertaining noble guests who came there in great numbers.

[1] A Register of this Abbot it preserved in the British Museum (Titus, C. ix). The resident community numbered at that time twenty-seven.

William Upton (1477-83), a monk of Evesham, and Prior of the dependent cell of Alcester, ruled for only five years, but he succeeded in paying off the debt contracted by his predecessor. He was buried between the font and the altar, and was followed in the abbacy by

John Norton (1483-91), the claustral Prior. This Abbot ordered the feast of the Visitation of our Blessed Lady to be celebrated in the monastery, and died, as he had ardently desired, on the same festival. He ordained that on his anniversary the monks should each receive twelve pence, and the convent table one deer from the park at Offenham, and wine from the Abbot's cellar. He was buried in the body of the church, "at the creeses to the Alter of Jesus."[1]

Thomas Newbold (1491-1514), the cellarer, was next chosen, but we have no details of his long abbacy. He died suddenly, and was buried in the nave at the head of his predecessor's grave.

Clement Lichfield or *Wych* (1514-39), who had been Prior, was the last Abbot of Evesham. He was blessed in his own manor-house at Offenham, by the Bishop of Ascalon.

[1] HABINGTON, p. 91.

THE BELL TOWER AND CHURCHES

Clement Lichfield was remarkable for learning and piety, and even Henry VIII.'s visitors reported him to be "chaste in his living, and to right well overlook the reparations of his house." That Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, should speak of him in injurious terms is praise in itself, and it "probably means that the Abbot did not agree with his reforming tendencies."[1] Lichfield did all that his conscience would allow to save his house from the King's rapacity. On his appointment he paid £160 for his temporalities, followed by other large loans and gifts to Henry and Wolsey; and for a whole year he was obliged to maintain twenty-four royal lacqueys daily at his table and to provide for their horses. Yet in spite of these burdens, he found means to adorn the choir, to add chantries to the churches of St. Lawrence and of All Saints at the Abbey gate, and to build the noble tower-gateway, which still stands in solitary grandeur in the cemetery.

He also endowed a free school in the Merstowe Green. The building is now used as an armoury, but over the porch, even in its modernised state, may be deciphered

[1] Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries. F. A. Gasquet, ii. p. 499.

traces of the inscription: "Orate pro anima Clementis Abbatis."

Henry VIII., however, had no intention of stopping at the impoverishing of the English monasteries; their suppression was his aim. Seeing that Lichfield was not a man to be intimidated into compliance with the royal will, Crumwell, in March, 1539, compelled him to resign, and in the following month appointed as Abbot a young monk of the house, Philip Hawford, alias Ballard, whom Latimer had assured the Vicar-General he would find a "true friend." In January of the following year, Hawford surrendered the Abbey into the King's hands, receiving as reward a pension of £240. Henry VIII. had not yet begun to employ the extreme measures which he was to use the following year in his treatment of the Martyr-Abbots of Glastonbury, Reading, and Colchester, but we cannot doubt that Clement Lichfield, had he been allowed to choose between death and obedience to the King's iniquitous demands, would have been found in the company of his brother Abbots. His noble heart was broken by the ruin of his beloved Abbey, and he died in October, 1546, at Offenham. He was buried at Evesham, in

the chantry erected by himself in the church of All Saints. His tomb was marked by a monument described by Habington: "At the entrance into this chapel lieth humbled on the ground, the resemblance of an Abbot truly great, leaving the dignity of his high place, and wise, when foreseeing the storms which overthrew this with other religious houses, he struck sail to avoid shipwreck. His resemblance is vested for the Altar in prayer; on his right hand is: *Deus in nomine tuo salvum me fac;* and on the left: *Et in virtute tua judica me,* and below, on the one side: *Quia in inferno nulla est redemptio,* and on the other: *Miserere mei sacerdotis in cujus tempore nova turris Eveshamiæ erecta est.*" In May's time there remained only a slab of marble, indented for an inlaid effigy and inscription, to mark the resting-place of the last Abbot of Evesham. Even this has disappeared, and there is now nothing to show the spot of Lichfield's interment.

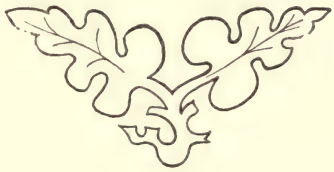
In the days of the Abbey's prosperity, its rulers had been wont to devote large sums of money to the Convent and the poor for the observance of their anniversaries. Clement Lichfield had been robbed of his Abbey's revenues, and had for some years lived on a

royal pension, but he showed the same spirit as his predecessors by a bequest, which is thus entered in the register of South Littleton, near Evesham: "The xviith daye of the monyth of October in the xxxviiith yere of the reynen of our soveraygn Lorde Kinge Henry the viii. M.v^{c}. XLVI dyed and was beryed in the paryshe cherche of Alhalowyn in Evesham Mastr. Clement Wych bacheler of divinitie and summetyme Abbot of the Monestry of Evesham the wyche gave to our cherche, before he dyed, iii kyne to have a Masse and Dirige with serten refreshyng to the parysheners at every yeres mind for ever."[1]

The history of Evesham closes nobly with the name of Clement Lichfield, for we must refuse to include among the lawful Abbots of the house the unworthy monk imposed on the community by Crumwell. The Abbey had existed for eight hundred years, and the preference shown for it by the Queen of Heaven had been justified by successive generations of monks serving God in holiness and justice. Now all was over; the monks were dispersed, the glorious monastic buildings (as we shall see farther on) were swept away in an almost

[1] Dugdale. Monasticon, ii. p. 9 (note).

unparalleled destruction, and the "voice of thanksgiving and praise" was silenced on the banks of the Avon, where it had resounded almost unceasingly since the day when St. Egwin took possession of the land of Hethomme.



CHAPTER VI

The Monastic Influence of Evesham

TO describe the influence of Evesham in ecclesiastical or civil matters would be quite beyond the scope of these pages, but the Abbey made its mark so unmistakably on the monastic history of England, that the subject merits attention. Its sons shed abroad the good odour of Christ even in far-off lands, while at home they became, in several notable instances, the providential means of reclaiming the desert places of ages, and of making them flourish as the garden of the Lord.

Only some two years after its foundation, Evesham provided the monastery of Crowland with its first Abbot. King Ethelbald of Mercia, the friend of St. Guthlac, having resolved to establish a religious house on the scene of that saint's labours, turned to St. Egwin for a trained ruler and leader for the new community, and received the monk Kenulph. We shall see how in later years Crowland repaid the Mother-Abbey by sending it a saint.

In the time of Abbot Agelwy (*c.* 1072), Evesham was called to take part in a work which had far-reaching results on English monasticism. Northumbria, famed in early days for its monasteries, had been so far wasted by the Danes that scarcely a monk was to be found in the province. It happened that a certain Prior Aldwin, of Winchcombe, reading of the ancient glories of the Northumbrian Church, conceived an ardent desire of restoring its holy places. Finding no kindred spirits among his own brethren, he came to Evesham, and there enlisted two monks in the good cause; one was the deacon Alfwy, the other an unlettered brother called Renfrid. With the permission and blessing of their superiors, the three monks set out for the North, one ass carrying all their riches,—the books and vestments for the Divine Service. They were kindly welcomed by Bishop Walcher, who placed them at Jarrow. There they gathered a community, but in a few years, for some unknown reason, a change took place. Aldwin, taking a few monks with him, repaired to Melrose, where, however, King Malcolm Canmore was not disposed to tolerate him, and he was recalled by Bishop Walcher and

established in the ruined Abbey of Wearmouth, the home of Venerable Bede. In course of time Aldwin was made Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow and he was in this position when, in 1083, Bishop William of St. Carileph, having fixed his See at Durham, translated the monks of the two monasteries to his Cathedral church.

Meanwhile, Renfrid had also left Jarrow, and had restored monastic life at Whitby. The monks being driven thence by Percy, who had at first patronized them, fled to Lastingham, and finding no peace there, they accepted the invitation of Alan of Bretagne, and removed to the church of St. Olave, near York. This was the origin of the great monastery of St. Mary of York. It is interesting to note this restoration of Northumbrian monasteries by Mercian monks, when we remember that Mercia owed its first Benedictine foundations to the great northern Bishop, St. Wilfrid. The union between Evesham and St. Mary's was so close, that the chronicler says the two were considered as being one body and one church.

But besides these foundations, Evesham had three dependent houses, or cells. One was at Penwortham, in Lancashire. The land there

THE ALCESTER IVORY

had been given to Evesham in the Conqueror's reign, and soon after a Priory was established there. The Prior was appointed by the Abbot of Evesham, and is mentioned in lists of the home community.

The second was the Abbey of Alcester, called our Lady of the Isle, a few miles from Evesham. This monastery was founded by Ralph de Boteler in 1140, but having become impoverished, and the community much reduced in numbers, it was united to Evesham in the 14th century.

The third cell of Evesham was in Denmark. According to the chronicle, the earliest monastic establishment in that country was founded from St. Egwin's monastery, but this assertion can scarcely be taken seriously. There is, however, no doubt that Evesham played an important part in the monastic history of Denmark. About the year 1095, King Eric the Good, acting under the advice of Bishop Hubald, who is said to have been himself an English Benedictine, applied to William Rufus for a colony of monks from Evesham. Twelve monks having been sent, the King settled them at Odensee, the scene of the martyrdom of his brother, St. Canute. His successor, King

Nicholas, obtained from Paschal II. the confirmation of all that had been done for the monastery.[1] The union between the two houses is described as resembling that between a mother and a child; the confirmation of the Prior of the Danish house devolved on the Abbot of Evesham, and on the death of a member of either community, prayers were recited by the other, as for one of its own sons.[2]

While on the subject of Evesham's influence, we cannot omit all mention of one of her most eminent sons, the first English Archbishop of Dublin. On the death of St. Laurence O'Toole in Normandy in 1180, King Henry II., by his urgent representations, obtained the election of "his chaplain, John Comyn, a native of England, and a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Evesham, and a man of learning and eloquence, who was, on the 6th of September, in the year 1181, elected to the archbishopric of Dublin, by some of the clergy of that city, who had assembled at Evesham for that purpose. He was not then a priest, but was subsequently ordained such at Velletri;

[1] Migne. Patrol. Latin. Vol. clxiii., p. 439. [2] Dugdale. II. Numm. xxix and xxx.

and on Palm Sunday (March 21st) was there consecrated Archbishop by Pope Lucius III."[1]

Archbishop Comyn's reign fell in eventful times, and his position was one requiring no ordinary tact and wisdom, but he seems to have been equal to the situation, and he is commended by Irish historians as a wise and just ruler. The enumeration of the chief events of his pontificate will give an idea of the Archbishop's activity. A great part of Dublin having been destroyed by fire in 1190, and again in 1192, he rebuilt Christ Church Cathedral. The architectural parallel between the east end of this building, and the corresponding portion of Pershore Abbey church, near Evesham, is very striking, and cannot but suggest the query whether they were not the work of the same architect. In both cases the three-sided apse is set out in a most unusual manner, the east being considerably larger than the south-east and north-east sides. Perhaps we have here a trace of Archbishop Comyn's Worcestershire training. It was he also who built the cathedral of St. Patrick, which seems to have been

[1] Memoirs of the Archbishops of Dublin, by John D'Alton, Esq., M.R.S.A. (Dublin : Hodges and Smith, 1838.)

regarded as the Cathedral of the transferred or amalgamated See of Glendalough. It was erected on the site of an older church of the same dedication, and was solemnly consecrated by the Archbishop, assisted by the Archbishop of Armagh and Pope Celestine III.'s Legate, Matthew O'Heney. Two religious foundations were made in Comyn's time: the Priory of St. John Baptist, on the south side of Thomas Street, founded by Alured de Palmer in 1188, and St. Saviour's Priory, near the present Law Courts, established in 1202 by William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke.

Ecclesiastical matters were regulated by several important synods, in which the Archbishop presided with the Legate, while the civil history of the city must have occupied much of his interest. In his days the erection of Dublin Castle was begun, the city was fortified, and an annual fair of eight days after the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross was granted. We have glimpses, too, of less peaceful scenes, as when, for instance, some five hundred Dublin men amusing themselves at Cullena Wood, were slain by the Irish from the neighbouring mountains. This massacre took place in 1209, on Easter Monday, and

the names of "Black Monday" and the "Bloody Fields" long perpetuated the memory of the event. A colony was sent from Bristol to re-people Dublin, and an annual ceremony was instituted of a procession to Cullena Wood, with the uttering of defiance to the Irish! King John visited Ireland in 1210, received the homage of his lieges, erected courts, and granted a mint for the coinage of pennies and farthings.

In 1212 Archbishop Comyn died, having done much to establish law and order in Irish ecclesiastical matters, and to lay firm the foundations of Anglo-Norman influence in the country.

But to return to Evesham. The Dissolution swept away both the Abbey and the other houses to which it had given birth; but Saint Mary and St. Egwin did not cease to watch over the Order of which their monastery had been one of the greatest glories. Among the dispersed community of Evesham was John Fecknam, who was destined to play an important part in the religious history of the time, and even to restore, for a short period, the Benedictine life in England. John Howman, to call him by his family name, was born about 1515 at Feckenham, in Worcestershire, and most

probably received his early education at Evesham. He became a monk there under Abbot Lichfield and being a youth of great promise, was sent to Gloucester Hall, the Benedictine house of studies at Oxford. Returning to his monastery in 1539, he had the sorrow, that same year, of seeing his venerable Abbot yield up his pastoral staff, under compulsion, to a hireling appointed by the King. After the dispersion of the monks, Fecknam distinguished himself as a controversialist, and was committed to the Tower in consequence of his fidelity to Catholic doctrines. He was released at the accession of Mary, who made him, first, Dean of St. Paul's, and afterwards head of the restored Abbey of Westminster. Regular life was resumed there on the feast of our Lady's Presentation, November 21st, 1556, and the anniversary is still observed for this and other reasons as "Dies Memorabilis" by the English Benedictines. Fecknam's heart must have gone back in loving thought to his now desolate monastic home in the vale of Evesham, and must have recalled many tender memories of his great and good father, Clement Lichfield. Among the restorations effected by Fecknam at Westminster, was the replacing of the body of St. Edward

SAINT CLEMENT'S CHAPEL, SAINT LAURENCE'S CHURCH

the Confessor in the shrine where it had formerly rested, and where it still reposes.

Queen Mary died November 17th, 1558, and with her seemed also to die the hopes of St. Benedict's English sons. The following year the monasteries were suppressed by Act of Parliament. How truly the Abbot of Westminster possessed his soul in patience, on the eve of these new troubles, is proved by the well-known story, which relates that he was engaged in planting trees when the news of the suppression reached him. The messenger having remarked that he was planting in vain, as neither he nor his monks were likely to profit by his labour, Fecknam replied: "Not in vain; those that come after me may perhaps be scholars and lovers of retirement, and whilst walking under the shade of these trees, they may sometimes think of the olden religion of England and the last Abbot of this place." On July 12th, 1559, the monks were dispersed. Fecknam, after two years of varying fortune, was sent prisoner to Wisbeach, where he spent the last twenty-three years of his life, dying in 1584. We are told by the anonymous author of a poem printed in the "Downside Review," from a MS. in the British Museum, that when

the holy Viaticum was brought to him, Fecknam joyfully exclaimed:

"Tu bona cuncta mihi tecum sapientia portas:
Tu lætitia es, tu mihi salus, vita."[1]

Thus died this great man, "the last Abbot," says the same poem, "that England knew, but worthy to be compared with the first." Referring to Fecknam's public works as a builder and roadmaker in time of peace and time of war alike, the writer in the "Downside Review" says: "This 'Praise of Fecknam' brings out very well a characteristic of the old race of monks. The monastic houses might be destroyed, the few surviving religious might be prevented from observing their Rule; but not all the evils of the time could deter the last of the Abbots of England from seizing every opportunity that offered—at Westminster and Holborn, at Bath and at Wisbeach—for planting and building and roadmaking, like the best of those that had gone before him."

Describing the tombs in the "middle alley" of the church of All Saints at Evesham, Habington mentions "a tombstone where only is to be seen John Homon, *of the blood* (I think) *of Fekenham*,

[1] "In laudem Joannis Fecknami Abbatis Westmonasteriensis." Harl. MS. 3258, fol. 45-6. "Downside Review," Vol. i., p. 430.

Abbot of Westminster, a monk sometime of Evesham, whose father's name was Homon, but being born in Fekenham, changed his name when he entered into religion; the impression on the stone a cross gradated."[1] Evesham was never forgotten by its illustrious son, for in his will he bequeathed a sum of money to the poor of the town, called in the Corporation accounts "Fekenham's money."

With Westminster ended the ancient glories of the Order of St. Benedict in England, but the old stock was not allowed to die out. "To the eyes of the unwise they seemed," indeed, "to die, but they were in peace," and from one of the last survivors of Westminster a new family was to originate,—new in its circumstances, but belonging by lineal descent to the ancient Benedictine line founded by St. Augustine of Canterbury.

Our last authentic glimpse of Evesham is singularly touching; it is afforded by a story relating to probably the last monk of that house. We quote the incident as it is given by Abbot Gasquet: "One interesting anecdote of an old monk, who lived till the beginning of the 17th century, may be allowed to find

[1] Survey of Worcestershire, i., p. 78.

a place here. His name was William Littleton, and on the dissolution of Evesham Abbey he was "subsexton," and appears as such on the pension list. The story of the end of his life may be told in the words of an old writer (Father Thomas White, alias Woodhope). Speaking of Father Augustine Bradshaw (the first Prior of the house of St. Gregory's, Doway, now settled at Downside), it is related that "at his coming to Henlip in 1603, he was met by chance there by one Lyttleton, who had formerly been a monk of Evesham, and was now best known by the nick-name of 'parson tinker.' This man was observed to cast his eyes much upon Father Augustine, and not being able to hold, he asked Mr Thomas Habington what this gentleman was, who confidently told him that it was a brother of his. 'A brother of mine!' said Mr Lyttleton, 'I have not had any living these forty years.' 'I mean,' replied the gentleman, a monk of St. Benedict's Order.' At these words he seemed to alter countenance and be much moved, and at length besought Mr Habington, for the Passion of Christ, that he might speak to him. All being related to Father Austin, a way was made to bring them

together. As soon as Lyttleton came into the room, he fell upon his knees, and with floods of tears told him what he was, beseeching Father Austin to reconcile him, which he, remaining there a day or two, did. This old man, being thus reclaimed, went home and presently fell blind, and so remained almost two years deprived of his benefice, and had he not been bed-ridden, he had been imprisoned for his conscience, and so died with great repentance, being a hundred years old."[1]

[1] "Henry VIII. and The English Monasteries," vol. ii., p. 489.

CHAPTER VII

The Saints of Evesham

THE spot chosen by Our Lady for her sanctuary became in course of time the home of many holy souls, for St. Egwin, though its chief, was not its solitary boast.

We have no details of the life of St. Credan, eighth Abbot of Evesham, who flourished in the time of King Offa of Mercia, but his merit before God was revealed to Abbot Manny, who was frequently admonished in vision to take up the holy Abbot's relics and lay them in a shrine. When at length he came with great solemnity to do this, the body was found between two others, but distinguished from them by the great brightness with which it shone. The first Norman Abbot, having little faith in Saxon sanctity, resolved, by Lanfranc's advice, to test these and other relics of the house. They were subjected to the ordeal of fire, but the fire, far from burning the sacred remains, did not so much as touch them.

Evesham was moreover the home of several

anchorets, and, if we may so interpret the "five nuns" mentioned in a list of the community,[1] of recluses. The names of three holy anchorets, Basing, Ælfwy, and Wulsy, have come down to us, though only the third is reckoned among the saints. Of the first we know only that he lived the life of a recluse for seventy-two years, but the chronicle of Evesham speaks more in detail of Ælfwy, while we find Saint Wulsy's story in the history of Crowland.

Ælfwy[2], we are told, had so clear a view of the practices of the demons, that he knew their acts as intimately as those of men whom he saw with his bodily eyes. He used to say that whenever the bells of the Abbey rang to summon the brethren to choir, crowds of devils used to hurry to the church, making so great a noise that he thought all the monks must have heard them. He described what a lamentable sight it was, to see these wicked spirits stationed on the roof of the church, or flying about, and to hear them laughing and railing at the monks, calling them by their names, revealing their evil deeds, and commanding the actions of some to be written down. The

[1] Harl. MS. 3763. [2] It is possible that this holy hermit is the person mentioned in a previous chapter, p. 60.

holy anchoret himself did not escape their reviling, for on one occasion the devil said to him: "Oh, what a good monk you are, to lose all your monkhood for a penny! Now your hypocrisy is plainly shown." The fact was that a poor man had shortly before visited Ælfwy, and offered him a penny; the anchoret refused the alms, but the man would not be gainsaid, and adjured him in God's name to take it. Ælfwy, moved by this adjuration, bade the man leave the money on the window, and it was for this that the devil reproached him. At another time the evil one mocked him for having drunk a glass of wine, which he had been commanded by his master to take.

St. Wulsy was a nobleman, whose family belonged to one of the midland counties, and was related to Earl Leofric. He retired, when quite young, to Crowland, made his profession as a monk, and obtained permission to lead an eremitical life in a cell near that monastery. During the trouble attending the wars between Harold and Hardicanute he was so annoyed by the concourse of people flocking to Crowland to seek his aid and counsel that, at the suggestion of Prior Avicius of Evesham, a kinsman of his, to whom he had applied for

advice, he withdrew to Evesham. In his journey there his eyes were closely bandaged so that he might not look on the vanities of a world which he had despised. Arriving at Evesham, he built himself a little hermitage-chapel, dedicated to St. Kenelm, and lived there for seventy-five years in great holiness.

Wulsy was held in the greatest veneration even in his life-time, and history has recorded two notable proofs of his power with God and man. In 1062, St. Wolstan was chosen Bishop of Worcester. His aversion to the dignity made him protest that nothing would induce him to accept the office, and he was only brought to compliance on being sharply rebuked for his obstinacy by the holy hermit of Evesham. There can be no doubt of the identity to this hermit Wulsy with the Saint of Evesham, for Senatus of Worcester, who wrote St. Wolstan's life, says that he had then been a hermit for *forty* years,[1] which exactly coincides with other dates.

St. Wulsy's word was also the means of finally deciding St. Edward the Confessor to re-found the Abbey of Westminster. As is well known, the holy king had vowed, in his exile,

[1] Bolland. Jan., Tom. i., p. 603.

that if restored to the throne he would make a pilgrimage to Rome. Circumstances, however, rendered it imprudent for him to leave the country, and Pope St. Leo IX. commuted the vow and required the King to build a monastery. Edward, however, hesitated to accept the dispensation, until it was confirmed by a vision granted to our holy hermit, who was instructed by St. Peter to tell the King that he should do as the Pope had ordered.[1]

St. Wulsy died in 1097, in the time of Abbot Maurice. His anniversary was celebrated on February 27th, and a "caritas" was granted to the monks on that day. Abbot Thomas de Marleberge made a shrine for his relics.

Besides those who sanctified themselves in the Abbey, or under its shadow, Evesham gloried in other Saints whose relics had found their resting-place within its walls. The first of these was St. Wistan, the young Martyr-Prince of Mercia. He was the son of Wimund, and grandson of that Wichlaf who, from being Duke of Hwiccan, had been raised to the throne of Mercia by the unanimous consent of the people grown weary of the tyranny of their

[1] St. Ælred, in his "Life of St. Edward," says that the hermit lived in a subterranean cave. (Bolland., Jan., Tom. i., p. 296.)

later kings. The Saint's mother was Alfleda daughter of King Ceolwulph. The Acts of the Saint are unfortunately very deficient in localising the scenes of his life, but it is scarcely a stretch of imagination to suppose that he was born and spent his boyhood at Worcester, for it is known that the residence of the Wiccian Dukes had been fixed there. As the young Saint is one of the glories of *Wigornia Sacra*, and as, moreover, his history is scarcely known, we may be forgiven if we quote it at some little length, taking the facts from the Life written by Marleberge and printed in the chronicle of Evesham, which has supplied almost all the material of the preceding pages.

On the death of Duke Wimund, the prelates and nobles, clergy and people, offered their fealty to his young son, but Wistan refused the dignity, not because of his youth, but because he preferred a heavenly to an earthly crown, and had chosen Christ for his portion. Whether we are to understand by this that Wistan became a monk, it is impossible to say; it seems most probable, however, that he dedicated himself to God, without renouncing the world. But whilst refusing for himself

the honours of the dukedom, the young Prince realised the danger of leaving his states without a clearly-defined government; he therefore appointed his mother to be Regent, giving her as assistants a certain number of trusty nobles. This arrangement was approved of by both the clergy and nobility, and the kingdom was established in peace.

A few years after, King Wichlaf, our Saint's grandfather, died, and was succeeded in the government of Mercia by his son Bertulph. King Bertulph had a son, named Berfert, who was one of the nobles chosen by Wistan for his mother's counsellors, but who proved himself the evil genius of the family. Urged on by ambition, and by a blind love for the widowed Queen Alfleda, this Berfert formed a design which would, he hoped, dispossess Wistan, or, if that might not be, he was ready to rid himself of the young Saint by violent means. Having gained over some of the Queen's trusted servants to support his cause, he sent them to her with an offer of marriage, bidding them represent to her the great advantages which the kingdom would derive from his power and support. Alfleda, suspecting no evil, received the proposal with some favour, yet she

withheld her consent until she had taken her son's advice. When the matter was laid before him, Wistan replied that the canons of the Church forbade such a marriage, for Berfert was his godfather, and had therefore contracted a spiritual affinity with Alfleda. Then Wistan went on with a further appeal to his mother's heart, urging her to reject the hand of a mortal man and to prefer the immortal Spouse whom he would give her. Alfleda enquiring how that might be, her son replied: "Those who are wedded to Christ, taking Him as their Spouse, shall be enriched with an everlasting dower in the kingdom of heaven." "If it be even so," said Alfleda, "let the word which thou hast spoken be accomplished in me; for I will not wed me to Berfert,—nay, nor to any perishable mortal."

The messengers, who had themselves been brought to a better mind by Wistan's arguments, returned to Berfert with Alfleda's refusal. The Prince was filled with rage and disappointment, and vowed to wreak vengeance on the holy youth, whom he looked upon as the cause of his failure. But, concealing his resentment, he proposed a personal meeting with Wistan, in order that they might, as he pretended, come

to an understanding on the matter in hand. The Saint, "with the simplicity of the dove," says Marleberge, "refused not, after the example of holy Job, to enter into judgment with his servant,"[1] and hoping to gain over his wicked kinsman, agreed to the proposal. The day fixed for the interview came; it was the Vigil of Pentecost, which fell that year (849) on June 1st. Berfert was first at the trysting-place, now Wistanstowe, in Shropshire, and seeing Wistan approach, accompanied by a large escort of men-at-arms, he feared for the success of his plot. He was resolved, however, to secure his victim at all costs, and going aside with two of his own men, armed like himself, he drew the unarmed Wistan apart, as if for private conversation, and separated him from the body of his followers. Then, like another Judas, he offered the kiss of parental affection, saying: "Come, my son, and give me a kiss in holy peace." Wistan rejoined: "In the name of holy Peace, that is, of God, do I kiss thee, so that in His Name I also be kissed by thee." Thereupon Berfert, not pitying his earthly, nor fearing his heavenly Lord, drew out the sword concealed at his

[1] Job. xxi, 13.

side, and in the very act of proffering the kiss, battered the young Prince's skull with the blade, whilst one of his attendants pierced the Saint through the body. Three of Wistan's men,—Wibald, Man, and Edulf,—were near their master. These were the very men who had formerly carried Berfert's message to Alfleda, and with whom he was enraged on account of the failure of his plans. They were now within reach of his vengeance, and were at once struck down with their master, and slain. God's justice speedily showed itself in retribution. The murderer, there and then lost his senses, and obtained neither Alfleda's hand, nor the throne which he had coveted at the cost of innocent blood.

The gentle victim, on the other hand, was as speedily glorified. A pillar of light, reaching from earth to heaven, appeared on the spot where he fell for thirty days and nights after his death, and was visible from a great distance. A still more wonderful thing is related by Marleberge, who declares that the fact had been canonically investigated, as late as 1187, by order of the famous Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury. "Every year," says our author, "for the space of an hour, on the anniversary

of the day on which the martyr fell by the swords of wicked men, and where the pillar of light had first been seen, hard by the chapel afterwards built there, a quantity of human hairs was to be seen springing up, as if growing from a man's head;—as if the hairs scattered from the head of the martyr at the moment of his death, now lived and grew again, thus fulfilling that word of Scripture: 'Not a hair of your head shall perish.' It seemed as though that head, which had refused to wear the royal crown, though not actually cut off, were bedecked with wounds and bruises, after the manner of a victor's crown."

The martyr's body was buried in the monastery of Repton, in Derbyshire, the burying-place of the Mercian kings, and was there honoured with miracles. Later on, King Canute, being very friendly to the monks of Evesham, and understanding that St. Wistan was of the family of King Kenred, the royal patron of St. Egwin, had the sacred remains removed there. At Evesham the Saint was destined to undergo a second martyrdom, by which his merits, and the sanctity of the cause for which he suffered, became all the more evident.

"The Normans being now in power," says Marleberge, "Evesham, like so many other Abbeys, had an Abbot of the French nation, the first, in fact, of the race, set over it. This Abbot (Walter), finding so many relics honoured there by the English, marvelled that a people sprung from such holy men, should have been conquered and subdued by the French. He, not understanding that this thing had happened, because the sons had not walked in their fathers' footsteps in the way of the Lord, began to doubt of the sanctity of the said relics. He determined therefore, very rashly, to test the fact by an ordeal of fire. However, that he might not appear to do this out of envy of the English, and because the fear of the Lord is over all, he enjoined on all the brethren a three days' fast, adding thereunto the suffrages of prayers, that God, by a temporal fire, would show which relics deserved to be freed hereafter from eternal fire, and to be now held as holy among men. Therefore, amidst the singing of the seven Penitential Psalms, and of the Litanies, the relics of St. Wistan were thrown into the fire. But Almighty God, considering the merits of his glorious martyr, and the longings of the brethren praying that he would preserve their

Patron unhurt, and beholding from above, as formerly he did those three children in the fiery furnace of the Chaldeans, not only prevented his martyr's body from being consumed by the fire, but (as eye-witnesses attest) the bones were taken out of the flames unburnt, and unaltered in colour. . . . Moreover, that the joy of these faithful men might be full, and that the unbelievers might be brought to repent of their error, miracle was added to miracle. For when the aforesaid Abbot Walter, terrified at the novelty of the wonder, took up the glorious head from the fire with his trembling hands, and was carrying it back to its resting-place, it suddenly fell to the ground; whereupon an abundant sweat was emitted from the head. . . . Seeing which, all lifted up their hands, and falling on their knees, raised their voices to the throne of God, praising his wonderful works. And so they took the head, and placed it in the shrine where were the rest of the holy members."[1] This happened in 1077.[1]

[1] See Chronicle. p. 335, *et seq.*

[2] According to a note in the Supplement to Stanton's "Menology" (1892), "St. Wistan is represented in the paintings of the English College in Rome. By error he is called Wulstan, a mistake into which Wilson has fallen. As Wulstan was usually written withont the *u*, the similarity between Wistan and Wulstan is very obvious." p. 249.

The Abbey also possessed the body of the holy confessor St. Odulf. This Saint, a native of Brabant, was born in the 9th century. He became a monk at Utrecht, and was persuaded by the bishop of that town to undertake a mission to the Frisians, who were wavering in the faith. The Saint was successful in his work, and remained among his converts. In the reign of King Canute some merchants, having obtained possession of part of St. Odulf's relics, offered them for sale in London. Ælfward, Bishop of London and Abbot of Evesham, purchased the sacred treasure and solemnly translated it to his monastery, on June 12th, on which day the Saint's feast was annually celebrated by the monks. The chronicle relates many miracles wrought at Evesham by St. Odulf's intercession.

All these holy memories are grouped in one little corner of Worcestershire, yet they recall the names of but a few of the Saints whom this favoured district could claim in days when the holiness which becomes the house of God was, we may say, common.

CHAPTER VIII

The Remains of Evesham Abbey

THE monastery which St. Egwin had founded on the spot chosen by our Blessed Lady, and which in later years bore the double dedication of "Saint Mary and Saint Egwin," was destined to grow into one of the greatest Abbeys of the kingdom. Its Abbot had a seat in the House of Lords, and the monastery was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction,—a privilege shared by only four other English houses, viz: Westminster, St. Edmundsbury, St. Augustine of Canterbury, and St. Alban's. In matters temporal, also, the Abbey was a power to be reckoned with; it possessed the whole of the hundred of Blakenhurst, and Henry I., in confirming these lands to the monastery, gave the Abbot civil jurisdiction, even in criminal matters, within his territories, and freedom from toll throughout the kingdom.

The buildings which composed the Abbey were of a style corresponding with this high position.

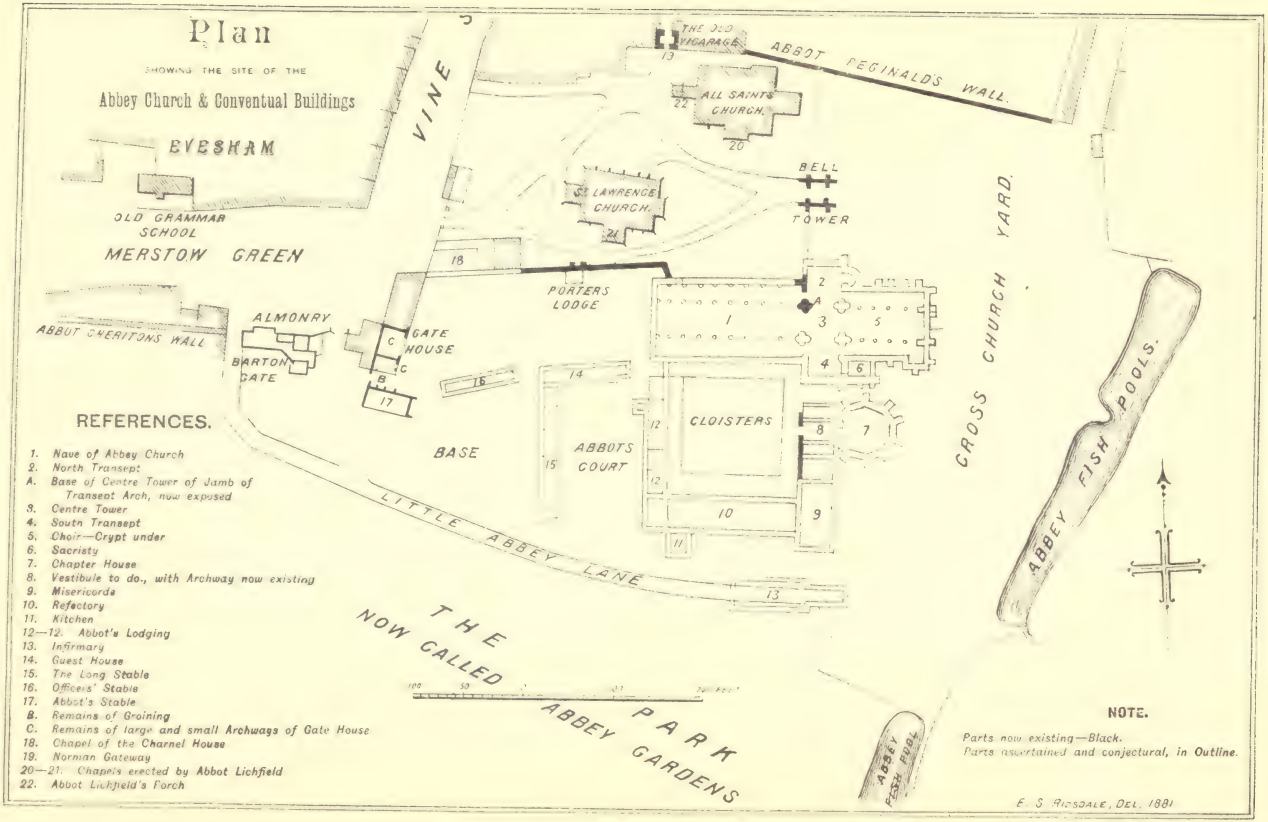
The church erected by St. Egwin in 710 was probably of wood; it, or a later building, fell to the ground in the year 960. In the following century Abbot Manny completely rebuilt the edifice on a larger scale. According to the chronicle, it was one of the most beautiful buildings of its kind in the country, but it did not commend itself to the taste of Walter, the first Norman Abbot, for he demolished the whole fabric and began a new church in the Norman style. This was the beginning of the great minster which grew to perfection during four centuries, and had added the last touches to its beauty just before it was laid low by the destroying hand of King Henry VIII. Of this building and the Abbey adjoining, we propose to give some details gathered from the chronicle, and confirmed by excavations made on the site. For, alas! it is not with Evesham as with some of our ancient Abbey-churches, such as Westminster and Gloucester, which still remain in their stately grandeur; nor can it even boast a pile of picturesque ruins, as can Glastonbury or St. Mary's of York. Of the church, we may say with absolute truth:

Etiam periere ruinæ;

while of the monastery, one single arched doorway remains. The very foundations are not entire, and it is known that those of part of the cloister were dug up and burned on the spot for lime.[1] A local writer tells us that "for centuries the ruins of the Abbey were the quarries from which stones were transported and used as building materials in the erection of many a house still standing or replaced by modern dwellings, and in the foundations of some of these are constantly being found worked stones, sometimes of exquisite device, which once formed part of the ruined pile."[2] We are told elsewhere,[3] that a descendant of one owner of the Abbey lands ascribed the misfortunes which his family had suffered to the sale of the stones of the ancient monastery and church. The destruction of the latter is no doubt due to the fact of there being in the grounds two other churches, which were sufficient for the needs of the parish.[4]

The church was in form of a Roman cross, with nave, transepts, choir, Lady-chapel, and central tower. The total length of the interior,

[1] May's History of Evesham, p. 43. [2] Evesham and the neighbourhood. Homeland series. Vol. 25. [3] Vet Monumenta, Vol v., quoting Fuller's Church History. [4] The lead from the buildings was sold for £260. Gasquet's Henry VIII.


Plan
SHOWING THE SITE OF THE
Abbey Church & Conventual Buildings
EVESHAM
VINE STREET
THE OLD VICARAGE
ABBOT REGINALD'S WALL
ALL SAINTS CHURCH
OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL
MERSTOW GREEN
ST LAWRENCE CHURCH
BELL TOWER
CROSS CHURCH YARD
PORTERS LODGE
ALMONRY
ABBOT CHERITONS WALL
GATE HOUSE
BARTON GATE
CLOISTERS
BASE
ABBOTS COURT
ABBEY FISH POOLS
LITTLE ABBEY LANE
THE NOW CALLED ABBEY GARDENS
PARK
ABBEY FISH POOL
REFERENCES.
1. Nave of Abbey Church
2. North Transept
A. Base of Centre Tower of Jamb of Transept Arch, now exposed
3. Centre Tower
4. South Transept
5. Choir—Crypt under
6. Sacristy
7. Chapter House
8. Vestibule to do., with Archway now existing
9. Misericorde
10. Refectory
11. Kitchen
12—12. Abbot's Lodging
13. Infirmary
14. Guest House
15. The Long Stable
16. Officers' Stable
17. Abbot's Stable
B. Remains of Groining
C. Remains of large and small Archways of Gate House
18. Chapel of the Charnel House
19. Norman Gateway
20—21. Chapels erected by Abbot Lichfield
22. Abbot Lichfield's Porch
NOTE.
Parts now existing—Black.
Parts ascertained and conjectural, in Outline.
E. S. RICKSDALE, DEL. 1881

exclusive of the Lady-chapel, was 281 feet, and the width of the nave, including the aisles, 76 feet. The aisles were divided off from the nave by eight Norman pillars, more than five feet and a half in diameter. The transepts, from north to south, measured 116 feet long, by 32 wide. The whole structure was of the most solid description, the walls being from four to five feet thick. The greater part was of dark blue limestone,—the stone most easily procured in the neighbourhood,—while yellow limestone from the Broadway Hills was used for outside work, and a softer and whiter kind for interior carving.

The building exhibited signs of several styles of architecture, its erection having extended practically over two hundred years. The crypt and choir, and the tower up to the first storey, were built by Abbot Walter (1077-86), and succeeding Abbots added the nave and transepts, and completed the tower. About the year 1215 this tower fell; its re-construction, which was begun by Abbot Marleberge (1229-36), was accomplished nearly a century later, under Abbot Chiriton, William Stowe the sacrist being the architect.[1] The distances between

[1] The Church was consecrated in 1239.

the supporting piers show that it was of greater diameter, as it was probably also of greater height, than Lichfield's belfry, which is still standing.

The *Choir*, which had been almost completely destroyed by the fall of the tower, was restored by Abbot Marleberge, and probably remained substantially unchanged up to the Dissolution, save for internal decorations executed by Abbot Lichfield. The plan of the choir can be ascertained only by reference to the crypt over which it stood. From the foundations discovered there, it appears that it had on each side a row of four columns like those in the nave. Its length, if we take it as starting from the east piers of the tower, must have been about 94 feet, and its width 47 feet, while the aisles at each side measured 11 feet in width.

The *Crypt*, being the work of Abbot Walter (1077-86), takes rank with those of Canterbury, Winchester, Gloucester, Rochester, and Worcester, all founded before 1085. It appears to have been almost square, the proportions being 64 by 69 feet. It was divided, by the piers supporting the choir, into three walks, and the central aisle was subdivided by a double row

of slender Norman pillars. The pavement was of rough blue stone, excepting in the middle aisle, which was tiled, and the walls were plastered and painted.

Of the appearance of the interior of the church we have only scanty details, but judging from the fragments which have been recovered, we may conclude that it was extremely rich and beautiful. Many remains of carving, such as bosses or pinnacles, are gilded over red, and numbers of tiles of artistic design testify to the taste which had ruled every detail. All the furniture of the church was handsome, and many rich shrines added to its adornment. At the time of the excavations it was remarked that the columns of the nave had been painted white, and it is surmised that this had been done "to conceal the effect of some unrecorded fire, which had turned them reddish." There was a tradition in Habington's days that the pillars of the church were of white marble gilded; it may be that they had been gilded over the white paint.

There is much diversity of opinion regarding the position of the Lady-chapel at Evesham. From several expressions in the chronicle, it seems that an altar in the undercroft was

dedicated to our Lady ("S. Maria in cryptis"), and it was in the crypt that the blessing of the candles took place on Candlemas-day, a custom which seems to show that our Lady was specially honoured there. But a Lady-chapel was added to the upper church by Abbot Brokehampton (1282-1316); it probably stood to the east of the choir, as remains of masonry were found in that position during the excavations. Judging from the period of its erection, and aided by the scanty description given by the chronicle, we may conclude that this chapel was a beautiful building of the best period of gothic architecture. The Abbot also adorned its interior with mural paintings representing the Life of our Lord and the history of various virgin saints, and for the altar made a reredos and a frontal, both painted sumptuously in gold and colours.

We may now consider the altars of the Abbey church, following mainly in our enquiry the Appendix to the *Liber Evesham*, in which the subject has been carefully worked out. Habington informs us that there were fifteen altars, besides the High Altar, and it appears that this number is quite within the mark. Our Lady had her own chapel, and an altar in

THE SALFORD CROSS

the crypt. The dedications of the other altars were, in the upper church, the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Cross, St. Egwin, St. Benedict, St. Peter,[1] St. Andrew, St. John the Baptist, St. Stephen, St. Thomas of Canterbury, and four others whose dedications are not given; while in the crypt were three altars, besides our Lady's,—namely, those of St. James, of all the Apostles, and of St. Blase. It is difficult to fix the exact position of most of these altars. We know that in 1522 the Bishop of Ascalon consecrated two altars, one in the nave, on the north side, in honour of St. Egwin, and one on the south, dedicated to the Holy Cross; and in the course of the excavations remains were discovered which may plausibly be identified with these two altars. On the south side was part of a niche surmounted by a painted and richly gilt canopy, with elegant gothic pinnacles and tabernacle work of the 15th century. On the north side, against the column nearest the central tower, was another canopy of the same style, but not so well preserved. This may have been the site, and these the remains, of St. Egwin's altar. There had been a chapel or altar to St. Egwin, even

[1] See *Liber Evesham*, col. 28; also Chronicle, p. 271.

before the whole church was completed, witness one of two *brachia* built by Abbot Reginald. But whether these "arms" were transepts or merely chapels in the body of the church it is difficult to determine.[1] Other chapels mentioned in the chronicle were probably not in the church itself, but in different parts of the monastery; for example, there was St. Mary Magdalene's chapel adjoining the *locutorium*, St. Michael's chapel in the infirmary, and the Abbot's private chapel. We shall have occasion further on to speak of the churches of All Saints and St. Laurence in the Abbey precincts.

Opening out of the church by a south door was the cloister. On the site of the east walk is the one solitary remnant of the monastic buildings of Evesham, an archway leading to the chapter-house. It is a beautiful piece of work of the decorated period, and contains a double row of niches with ornamental capitals, formerly adorned with statues (twenty in number), fragments of which are still discernible. Inside this archway was a vestibule, with a stone seat on each side, and beyond that the chapter-house.[2] This building, erected in the

[1] Habington tells us that Abbot de Boys (1367) was buried in the *body* of the Church before St. Egwin's altar. [2] The first Chapter-house was built by Abbot Maurice (1096-1122) and decorated by Thomas de Marlberge.

14th century by Abbot Brokehampton, is described by the chronicle as being most artistically constructed both within and without, having a vaulted roof unsupported by a central column.[1] From the foundations it appears that it was a decagon (51 feet in diameter), and was one more example of "that type of chapter-house which belongs mainly to the 13th century, and is a peculiar glory of English architecture." But for the destroying hand that has dealt so ruthlessly with Evesham, England might boast yet another architectural gem, vying in beauty with the chapter-houses of York and Southwell, the only two which have no central pillar. The interior carving was gilded, and a richly-carved boss, found among the ruins gives an idea of the style of ornamentation.

In the cloister nearest the church were the karols, or little recesses for study, such as may still be seen at Gloucester, while on the opposite side of the quadrangle, near the entrance to the refectory, would be the lavatory.

As to the rest of the monastic buildings, we know from the chronicle that they were in

[1] This last detail has been overlooked by May, who seems to have taken for granted that there was a supporting pillar in the centre.

keeping with the requirements of a great Benedictine house, but since all traces of them have disappeared, it would not be interesting to the general reader to attempt to fix the position and size of each part.

On the side not bounded by the river, the monastery and its dependencies were enclosed by a high wall with a broad exterior moat, parts of which were open until recent times. Large portions of this wall are still standing. In the part running north from the church stands the noble bell-tower, the pride of modern Evesham, and a fitting memorial to its builder, the last Abbot. From the time of Abbot Adam (1160-91), Evesham had possessed a campanile, apparently an erection distinct from the church. In 1261 it was damaged by lightning, but was soon restored; however, it fell completely in 1270. It would appear to have been rebuilt by Abbot Zatton (1378-1410), but his structure was replaced by that of Clement Lichfield. The Tower, which is at the same time a gateway, clock-tower, and belfry, remains today almost as it left Abbot Lichfield's hands. It was begun about the year 1533, and probably was scarcely finished at the time of the Abbot's resignation. From

the comparative absence of ornament on the side nearest the church, it appears that the transept of the Abbey-church must almost have joined the tower. We take the following description from May's History of Evesham :[1]

"The sacerdotal architect, in his construction of this tower, has with correctest taste, preferred the style of a preceding era, to the already debased manner of his own day; so that, in the absence of direct evidence to the contrary, its distinctive features might appropriate it to the reign of Henry the Sixth. The fabric is square; strengthened from base to parapet by graduated buttresses with panelled fronts. Its east and western faces exactly correspond; each being divided into three compartments. The first includes a spacious archway, under an ogee canopy with crockets and an elaborate finial; in the second is a window of considerable size, canopied in the same manner, and filled with tracery of very graceful form; and the upper storey includes a pair of narrower windows, beneath a double ogee with crockets and concluding finials. Both these fronts are entirely covered, save where arches occur, with panelled mullions under foliated transoms: and

[1] Page 54.

the whole is surmounted by an embattled parapet delicately pierced, and crowned with tapering pinnacles appropriately wrought.

"The fabric stands upon a basement twenty-eight feet square, and its height to the summit of the pinnacles is 110 feet. From the Dineley manuscript, *circa* 1684 . . . . we glean some minute particulars respecting the dial and the bells with which this clock-tower was at that time furnished. 'The tower of Clement Lichfield is built of freestone; its dial [apparently above the western front of the archway], besides the hour of the day, sheweth the age of the moon; on the other side of its arch, over it, is an anchor in an escutcheon, with this inscription, '*Qui gloriatur in Dno glorietur.*' "

Some vestiges of the anchor and inscription are still discernible above the archway to the east. The bells were at that period six, and the then tenor was inscribed: *Æternis annis resonet campana Joannis.* According to Leland,[1] the tower contained a "great bell and a goodly clock." Browne Willis[2] says that there was a peal composed of the bells of the two parish churches, which at the Restoration were taken

[1] Leland Itin. Vol. iv., p. 55. [2] Mitred Abbeys. Leland's Collectanea, Vol. vi., p. 159.

from their respective places by the young people of the town, and melted down into a new peal for the bell-tower. The present peal consists of eight bells, one of which was put up in 1631, the others in 1741. They have been recently re-hung. How the belfry came to be preserved in the destruction of the Abbey it is difficult to say. It has been supposed that it was either purchased by the town, or presented to it by Sir Philip Hoby, to whom Henry VIII. granted the Abbey lands, or by his heirs.

Passing round the Abbey-enclosure, we come to a gateway called to this day Abbot Reginald's gateway. It is a piece of Norman work, dating back to the 12th century, and built by Abbot Reginald in his wall. The upper portion of this gateway has disappeared, but the capitals remain to show that an arch originally sprang over it. The arcade is now surmounted by a timber-built tenement, which serves as the Parish Room. The lateral walls of the inside of the arcade have on each side a row of low semi-circular arches.

But the "noble gateway" of the Abbey, that facing the town, was built by Abbot Chiriton (1317-44). It was a vaulted erection,

comprising a chapel and several rooms, and the gateway itself was embattled, and adorned with stone statues of our Lady, St. Egwin, and the royal founders of the Abbey. Habington described it as deformed by age, yet "as large and stately as any at this time in England." This gatehouse was unfortunately demolished in 1712 to make room for a dwelling-house.

Going on westward we find the Almonry, situated in Merstowe Green. This building exhibits some interesting specimens of domestic architectural decoration of the Tudor style. Here it was that, in the happy days of the Abbey's existence, relief was administered with a generous hand to the needy, through the official specially appointed to that duty.

Besides the great church and the conventual buildings, the Abbey-enclosure contained two churches, one dedicated to All the Saints, the other to St. Laurence the martyr. These were intended for the use of the townspeople of Evesham; they were built and endowed by the Abbey, and were served by secular priests appointed by the Abbot. The date of the erection of these two churches has not been ascertained; they are first mentioned in Abbot Randulph's Customary (*anno* 1223), which

THE ABBEY ALMONRY

ordains that their chaplains should have bread and beer daily from the cellar, as if they were monks.

The church of All Saints shows work of various periods; the chancel and north aisle are modern, but the nave, the south aisle, and the tower belong to the 14th or 15th century, while the western porch and a chapel to the south are in the Tudor style. To lovers of old Evesham, this southern chapel is the chief point of interest; it is, in fact, the chantry erected by Abbot Lichfield for his own last resting-place, though when he built it he little dreamed that he should die in banishment from his beloved Abbey. The building is frankly Tudor in design, and less beautiful than Lichfield's other erections. May suggests that it was erected in the builder's younger days, and this suggestion is supported by the fact that a shield on the ceiling bears the monogram $_{C}{}^{P}{}_{L}$ which seems to show that the chapel was erected during Lichfield's Priorship. Here still reposes the last of that long line of Abbots who followed St. Egwin, awaiting, we may believe, happier times, when the faith which vivified that great monastery and its surroundings will once more rule in the land.

The church of St. Laurence was consecrated in the 13th century, but since that period it has been practically rebuilt. Its restoration was most probably the work of Abbot Lichfield. It seems that at the time of the dissolution the repairs were not quite completed, and the building was allowed to fall into a state of dilapidation; it was restored, however, in 1837. The chantry in the south aisle, called St. Clement's chapel, points again to Abbot Clement Lichfield as its founder. It is a real gem of architecture, in the best style of Tudor decoration, and has a very beautiful fan ceiling.

It may not be out of place here to notice that of the ten churches in the "Deanery of the Vale," immediately dependent on Evesham, and built by the monks, two are dedicated to St. Egwin. The first, at Norton, three miles from Evesham on the Alcester road, was built by Abbot Brokehampton, and dedicated on August 1st, 1295. The tower is of later date, probably 15th century, and is of the same style as most of the towers in the Deanery, which seem to be the work of one architect. The nave was rebuilt in the middle of the last century. In this church stands the marble lectern described on a subsequent page. The

second church dedicated to St. Egwin is at Church Honeybourne. It was consecrated on the Saint's feast, 1295, but a tradition, embodied in a popular rhyme, implies that it was of much more ancient foundation :

" When Evesham town was bush and thorn,
There was a church at Honeybourne. "

The present building is remarkable for its beautiful tower and steeple.

We may conclude this chapter by referring to a few other relics of Evesham. One of the most interesting is the remarkable seal of the Abbey. We take the following description of it from a recent work on English monastic seals.

" The corporate seal of the house was a dual one. As our illustration, which is taken from a very good impression, reveals, its design was highly complicated, and not altogether coherent. The obverse relates the legend which incited the foundation. Rising from the base and past the centre is a wide scroll, with a lancet-shaped cusp at the top and curves at the sides, forming a trefoiled configuration in which is seen the swineherd standing, with face to the right and feet to the left, between two oak trees, leaning on a staff and tending a sow, which suckles

a pig. A similar animal is visible on the other side. Upon the scroll is inscribed the following old English rhyme :—

✠EOVES.HER.WONEDE.ANT.WEAS.SWON.]
[FOR].PI.MEN.CLEPET.THIS.EOVISHOM.

which may be interpreted :—

Eoves here wended with his swine.
Egwin named this Eovishom.

Above the trefoil appears a representation of the Abbey church, here depicted with a tall spire or central tower (each gable having a cross finial), with a cinquefoil, perhaps intended for the sun over the roof-line, on the right hand. Immediately below the building is the legend :—

ECCE LOC' QUEM ELEGI

i. e. 'Behold the place which I have chosen.' On either side of the field, upon a level with the church, are two niches, one plain, the other trefoiled. Those on the left contain a full-length representation of the Blessed Virgin (crowned, carrying a long cross and attended by two figures—a man attired in a cloak and a woman with a book) appearing to St. Ecgwine, who, in the first of the dexter arches, kneels before her, and to whom the words last quoted

are addressed. In the trefoiled arch on the right and under a tree the Blessed Virgin is seated with her feet resting upon a platform, appearing in a vision to the swineherd, who looks up from below. Over the head of St. Ecgwine is a *fleur-de-lis*, over that of the Blessed Virgin a cinquefoil, and on either side of the trefoil shape a tree.

SIGILLVM . SANCTE . MARI [E. ET . SANCTI .
ECGWINI . EPI . E] OVESHAMENSIS .
MONASTER [II.]

"The reverse conveys in brief the erection, dedication, and original endowment of the Abbey. If anything, the design is more complicated than the preceding. It presents at the apex on the left hand side, a distinct gothic niche with cusped arch in which is enthroned the chief patroness, with the Holy Child on the left knee. On the right St. Ecgwine, vested and mitred as a bishop, kneels towards and presents her with a model of the church, here represented with a tall spire in the centre and a tower or turret at each side, a cross finial on both, and a flag on the right. On the left and right hand sides of the figures is an oak tree, allusive of acorns

from which the swine derived sustenance; over the church a sixfoiled rose; on the sinister side two *fleurs-de-lis*, and on the right, one. This constitutes the first part of the picture, which is divided from the second by a row of pointed and trefoiled arches, two large in size and crocketed with oak leaves. On the left, seated, are the three royal patrons, Kenred of Mercia, Offa of East Anglia, and Ethelred of Mercia, the first with a falcon on his wrist, the second supporting a sceptre fleury, the third inclining to the right, and presenting a charter, surmounted by a *fleur-de-lis*, inscribed :—

DAMVS · REGIE · LIBER · TATI,

and authenticated (somewhat anomalously, but in curious affinity with the subject of this work) by a large oval seal bearing the arms of England, three lions passant guardant, to Bishop Ecgwine, mitred, who kneels on the right to receive it. The latter is attended by his chaplain, who raises one hand and holds a book in the other.

DICTI [S.] ECGWI [NI . DANT.] REGE [S .
MVNERA . TRINI .] [OMNIBVS . VNDE . PI] E.
NITET . AVLA . SACRATA . MARIE .

The virtues of this unusually graphic seal obviously incline towards the curious and quaint rather than to the artistic. But what it loses artistically upon comparison, is more than recompensed by its extraordinary interest. In this regard we should find a difficulty in advancing an instance which excelled it. Of the strict canons of art the contriver was manifestly independent, and he suffered from lack of skill. His talents were literary rather than artistic. He set out to narrate a long story within a very meagre space and succeeded, incidentally achieving a not inharmonious, if complicated, disposition he can scarce be said to have aimed at. Though crude the work is not altogether lacking in merit. The treatment of Virgin and Child upon the reverse has much to commend it."[1]

The beautiful seal represented on page 92 was the private seal of the Abbot. An exactly similar one (with the name Roger changed to Clement) was used by Abbot Lichfield. It may be seen in Dugdale, Vol. II. pl. ix. We possess an impression of an Evesham seal *ad causas*, a seal, that is, which was used for documents of secondary importance. It is

[1] "Monastic Seals of the XIIIth century," by Gale Perdick, p. 72.

oval in form, and represents our Lady holding a cross, and St. Egwin kneeling at her feet.

A very handsome chair, which, after many wanderings, has at length returned to the present owner of the Abbey, must here be noticed. It is of oak, and is a piece of very handsome and solid work, measuring five feet and a half high, and having a width of three feet nine inches. "The back arches above the head, the arm-pieces fall concavely, and the workmanship is nearly plain, excepting a rich band of vine-branches, interspersed with birds and quadrupeds, which forms a luxuriant border round the back and arms." On the latter two fanciful figures emerge, and on the angles are two more figures. "The style of decoration is precisely that of our collegiate stalls of the fourteenth century, with the exception of the shield bearing the arms of the Abbey within the back."[1] It is probable that the chair, which, we may add, is in perfect preservation, was the Abbot's seat in the Chapter-house or refectory. Several of the articles discovered in the course of the excavations have been already noticed, but there are others of which a word must be said.

[1] May, p. 65.

THE EVESHAM CHAIR

The most important is a large and richly sculptured marble lectern, which was dug up in a garden near the site of the Abbey, and after lying unnoticed for many years in a yard, was sold with other stones. It is now in the church of St. Egwin at Norton. This lectern is described in *Archæologia*[1] as being composed "of a solid block of (English) marble of considerable weight, richly carved on the four sides in mezzo-relievo. On the principal front is represented a Bishop (possibly St. Egwin) in the act of giving his blessing. On the back front there are two heads of cherubim, and the carved ornaments on the other two sides are nearly alike. On three sides of the upper surface there is a ledge to confine the cushion upon which the book was placed, with two holes in the upper corners to which the cushion was tied.

"To bring the ornamental sides of the desk at right angles to the eye of the spectator, it must have been elevated upon a pillar (probably of the same material) about six or seven feet high, with a few steps for the ascent of the reader at the back."

It is thought by the writer in *Archæologia*

[1] Vol. xvii. p. 278.

that this was the lectern near the tomb of St. Wulsy, made by Thomas de Marleberge when sacristan, but May considers that the style of the figure is earlier than the 13th century, and rather points to a lectern set up by Abbot Adam (1160) in the Chapter-house.

One very interesting fragment is part of an effigy of a monk in a recumbent position: it is a beautiful piece of work in blue stone, with traces of gilding about the head.[1] The statue was found in the north aisle, but it is impossible to say at present whose tomb it had adorned. As there are no signs of abbatial insignia, the effigy can scarcely represent the figure of an Abbot. The only suggestion we can make is that it might be identified with one of two tombs put up by Thomas de Marleberge, in the time of his priorship,—one over the remains of his predecessor, Prior John, the other over those of a holy monk, called John Dionysius.[2] In any case, the fragment has an interest of its own, for it affords us, though in a shattered form, the likeness of a monk of Evesham.

Another interesting object is a beautiful blood-stone cameo, of the size of a pigeon's egg, which was dug up in the garden of the

[1] See Vet. Monumenta, vol. v.

[2] Chronicle, p. 271, and *supra*, *p.* 80.

ABBOT'S SALFORD HALL

Crown Inn. It represents the figure of an angel with a drawn sword. May thinks, judging from the form of the stone, that it may have ornamented an Abbot's glove.

It may not be out of place to mention here another relic connected with Evesham. This is a brass crucifix, with traces of the figures of our Lady and St. John, evidently the top of a processional cross. It was dug up, early in the last century, in the garden of Salford Hall, which was then, through the generosity of a kind benefactress, occupied by our community, and which is still locally called "The old Nunnery." Abbot's Salford was one of the earliest acquisitions of St. Egwin, it having been given to him by King Kenred, and the place is frequently mentioned in Evesham documents. In the 15th century, Abbot Hawkesbury, or his successor Abbot William Upton, built a larger residence at Abbot's Salford than had previously existed. "In order that the Abbot and monks might have a country residence to which they might from time to time retire for the sake of health or study, a substantial half-timbered house was built. . . . The old house has been patched and

additions made to it. . . . . The greater part of the roof is still covered with the original thick red tiles."[1] The ancient portions of the building are on the west. The cross is a good specimen of English 15th or 16th century work. In the extremities are medallions representing the symbolic figures of the Evangelists, while in the same position on the back are Tudor roses. The cross, which is preserved at Stanbrook Abbey, was used by the nuns for many years as a processional cross.

Early in the year 1903, a beautiful ivory was dug up in the garden of Alcester Rectory. Considering the manifold connections of that place with St. Egwin and Evesham, we think an account of this interesting relic may find a place in these pages.

The ornament, which is described as a Tau cross, is, as the accompanying illustrations show, an exquisite piece of work. It is of walrus ivory, and has been assigned by some authorities to the 10th century, on account of the style of the foliage, which certainly resembles the ornaments found in some MSS. of that date. Others are in favour of a later

[1] Rev. A. L. Chattaway. Transactions of the archæological section of the Birmingham and Midland Institute. 1895.

date, and their opinion is supported by the excellent treatment of the figure of St. Michael,[1] to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in 10th century work. The vigorous lines of this figure recall rather the remarkable draughtsmanship characteristic of native English art in the 11th and 12th centuries. As to the use for which the ivory was intended, the most probable conjecture, supported by the place of its discovery, is that it was the top of an abbatial crozier in form of a Tau cross. The ivory is now in the British Museum.

One more relic of St. Egwin must be mentioned. This is a pilgrim's badge, of ampulla shape, bearing on one side the figure of St. Egwin seated, wearing the mitre and holding the crozier, while at his side is seen the legendary fish with the key in its mouth. Round the badge is the inscription "Sigillum S. Egwini, Episcopi et Confessoris." On the reverse of the token is represented St. Edwin, the martyr-king of Northumbria, with the inscription: "Sigillum S. Edwini Regis Pmartiris." This curious badge has recently been described by Mr. George Clinch, F.S.A.[2]

[1] Does the figure represent Our Lord's triumph over sin and death?

[2] Bazaar, Exchange and Mart. Nov. 18th, 1903.

"The ampulla was found in August, 1863, in the deeply worn gully of a rivulet, which scarcely exceeds half a mile in length, and debouches into the Ribble at one of its numerous northern bends, N.W. of Balderstone Hall, on the opposite or southern bank, after running through a portion of the Elstow district, about half way between Ribchester and Preston."[1]

These pilgrims' badges, as is well known, were souvenirs carried away by the faithful from the shrines they had visited, and in the case of this particular token the question arises: where shall we find the connection between the two saints whom it represents? Firstly, we must suppose, with Mr. Clinch, that in some church there were relics of both saints. But where? The history of Evesham gives us no hint that St. Edwin was honoured there. We naturally turn therefore to the Abbey's connection with Northumbria. We have seen, in a previous chapter, how Evesham contributed to the restoration of many of the great northern monasteries, Whitby among others. Now we know that the body of St. Edwin was translated

[1] *Collectanea Antiqua* (C. R. Smith). Vol. vii., p. 137. See also "Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire." N. S., vol. ix. pp. 165-180.

from Hatfield, near Doncaster, to Whitby, some time between the years 695-704.[1] Evesham's later connection with the monastery would naturally have brought St. Egwin into prominence there, and would probably have obtained for it some relics of the Saint. We may therefore infer, in the absence of more positive data, that the badge in question is a Whitby souvenir.

Our Lady has re-entered on possession of her inheritance at Evesham, though in a very humble manner. In 1887 a small iron church under her invocation was erected for the Catholics of the town, though it was not till ten years later that a resident Priest was appointed. A piece of land in High Street having been purchased by the Bishop of Birmingham, the temporary church was removed there in 1900, and the foundation stone of a school was laid the same year. Lowly as is the chapel of St. Mary of Evesham, in it the new is linked on to the old by the Eternal Sacrifice, which is there offered as it was during eight centuries in the Abbey hard by.

[1] "Downside Review," vol. v., p. 273. *Die aelteste Biographie Gregors I.* Von Paul Ewald.

Appendix.

I

The following proper office of St. Egwin occurs in an Evesham Breviary, of which the "Pars Hiemalis" only is now known to exist. The MS., which dates from the 13th century, is preserved in the Bodleian Library (Barlow 41.).

DEC. 30.

IN FESTO DEPOSITIONIS S. EGWINI.

Ad I Vesp. Ant. Tecum principium.

Cap. Dedit Dominus confessionem sancto suo et excessum gloriæ de omni corde suo laudavit Dominum et dilexit Deum qui fecit eum.

R. de communi.

Hymnus. Deus tuorum militum.

V. Ora pro nobis beate Egwine. R. Ut digni.

Ant. Recolentes celebremus patris nostri festa Egwini, qui hic luce fruens multis claruit miraculis; ad postremum, societatis civibus ethereis, in Jerusalem superna collocari meruit, ut ejus mereamur ascribi suffragiis.

Oratio. Deus qui hodierna die beati Egwini confessoris tui atque pontificis animam ad æterna gaudia transtulisti, da nobis, ejus precibus illuc humiliter tendere, quo pastor gloriosus, te ducente, præcessit.

Mem. Thomæ, Nativ., B. Mariæ, Stephani, Joannis. Innoc.

AD MATUTINAS.

Inv. Confessorum Regem adoremus, qui cœlestis regni meritum et gloriam contulit sancto suo Egwino.

Hymnus. Iste confessor.

ANTT. de communi.

R. 1. O quam admirabilis vir iste Egwinus, inter confessores non minimus, qui suis temporibus clara et futuris præbuit exempla. Unde feliciter exultet Christi ecclesia.

V. Laudibus gloriosus es, beate Egwine, quod lætaris cum sanctis. Unde.

R. 2. Ecce vere Israelita in quo dolus non est inventus, qui probatus repertus est sacerdos juxta ordinem Melchisedech.

V. Statuit ei Dominus testamentum sempiternum et dedit illi sacerdotium magnum. Qui.

R. 3. Gloriosus vir Egwinus relinquens terrena mercatus est cœlestia.

V. O verum et magnum sacerdotem, qui contemnens terrena. Mercatus.

R. 4. Sancte Egwine, Christi confessor, audi rogantes servulos, et impetratam nobis cælitus tu defer indulgentiam.

V. O sancte Egwine, sydus aureum, Domini gratia tuorum gemitus solita suscipe clementia. Et.

R. 5. Ecce vir prudens qui ædificavit domum suam supra petram, in cujus ore non est inventus dolus. Quare Deus elegit eum in sacerdotem sibi.

V. Non recedat memoria ejus et nomen ejus requiratur a generatione in generationem. Quare.

R. 6. O felix Egwine, jam de tua gloria secure, nostris miseriis amans impende per Christum ; excusa mala quæ fecimus, et obtine bona quæ poscimus.

V. Ut cruciatus infernorum evadere possimus, et Dei aspectu tecum gaudere. Excusa.

R. 7. Laudemus Dominum in beati antistitis Egwini meritis gloriosis ; ad sepulchrum ejus ægri veniunt et sanantur.

V. Vere mirabilis Deus, qui assidue beatum Egwinum confessorem miraculis coruscare fecit. Ad.

R. 8. Miles Christi gloriose, Egwine sanctissime, tuo sancto interventu culpas nostras ablue.

V. Ut cœlestis regis sedem valeamus scandere. Tuo.

Ant. ad cantica. Hic vir qui inventus est sine macula, qui post aurum non abiit, nec speravit in thesauris pecuniæ, quis est hic et laudabimus eum ? Fecit enim mirabilia in vita sua.

R. 9. Vir Israelita, gaude ; coheres Christi, intercede pro nobis.

V. Ut precibus tuis a Domino veniam speremus, supplices ad te confugimus. Coheres.

R. 10. Agmina sacra angelorum, lætamini propter concivem vestrum Egwinum. De quo gaudet Christi ecclesia feliciter et exultat gaudenter.

V. Omnes virtutes, omnis militia cœlorum, merito gloriamini cum beato Egwino. De quo.

R. 11. O pater Egwine, cœlorum cives optime, condescende tuis, trahe nos ad gaudia lucis.

V. Ut regem regum tecum laudemus in æternum.

R. 12. Sint lumbi vestri præcincti et lucernæ ardentes in manibus vestris, et vos similes hominibus, expectantibus Dominum suum, quum revertatur a nuptiis.

V. Vigilate ergo quia nescitis qua hora Dominus vester veniat.

AD LAUDES.

Ant. 1. Sancte Egwine, qui cœlis lætaris cum angelis, videndo faciem Creatoris, intercede pro nobis ut mereamur Domino reddere hostiam laudis.

2. Almi Egwini præsulis meritis et suffragiis, cœlorum rex perpetua Christus ducat ad præmia.

3. Sancte Egwine, confessor Domini gloriose, adesto nobis quæsumus pius ac propitius.

4. Præsul Domini Sancte Egwine, intercede pro nobis ad Dominum Deum nostrum.

5. Sancte Egwine, intercede pro nobis, ut consortes gloriæ sanctorum tecum effici mereamur.

Cap. Dedit Dominus.

R. Sancte Egwine. (R. 4. ad Matut.)

Hymnus. Jesu Redemptor.

V. Ora.

Ant. Ave pater gloriose,
Ave sydus jam cœleste,
Decorans, Egwine, cœlum,

Nos guberna vincens humum,
Qui lætemur triumphantes,
Te patronum venerantes.

Ad II Vesp. Ant. ad Magnificat. Confessor Domini, astantem populum corrobora sancta intercessione, ut qui vitiorum pondere premimur, beatitudinis tuæ meritis sublevemur, et te duce æterna præmia consequamur.

(The following R. is inserted in the MS. on a separate sheet.)

Mater gaude digna laude
Fidelis ecclesia.
Assunt enim celebranda
Egwini solemnia.
Unde melos tangat cœlos
Organi melodia.
Christum regem collaudando
Vocali concordia,
Qui in mensa sanctum suum
Coronavit gloriæ.
Cæcis visum, claudis gressum,
Dat ejus suffragia,
Morbos curat, mortem fugat,
Divina potentia,
Renitente sponso Christo,
Cumulatur gloria.

The antiphon and prayer given below were taken by the Bollandists from a MS. preserved at the

monastery of Dieulouard. They are quoted in "Nova Legenda Anglie" from another source.

Antiphona

Sancte Presul Egwine ! solve vincula captivitatis nostræ, qui pro amore Christi, ab Anglia usque ad Romam, ferro compeditus, perambulasti ad vincula Sancti Petri ; et clavem compedis, quam in Anglia projecisti, in Roma, ex ventre piscis, recepisti.

V. Ora pro nobis, Sancte Egwine.

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Oremus

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, tribue nobis famulis tuis, per intercessionem beati Egwini Confessoris tui, atque Pontificis, poscentibus veniam, quærentibus salutis viam, pulsantibus regni cœlestis aulam, ut ad æternam majestatis tuæ mansionem, te adjuvante, possimus pervenire. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. R. Amen.

II

VERSES ON THE LAST JUDGMENT

(See p. 8.)

Judex adveniet sua premia reddere cunctis :
Et quam mira prius fient ostenta retexam.
Obductus tenebris sol obscuratus obibit :
Nec lucis solitum prestabit luna nitorem.
Horrebit celum ; tellus discussa dehiscet.
Ac suprema quidem juga tunc devexa nutabunt :
Et mare terribili confundet murmure gentes.
Tunc superum subito veniet commota potestas,
Cetibus angelicis regem stipata supernum.
Ille sedens solio fulgebit celsus in alto.
Huc assistemus collectis undique turmis :
Judicium capiens gestorum quisque suorum.
Tunc homines omnes pariter cogentur adesse :
Qui sunt, quique fuerunt, et quicumque futuri.
Unde tribus populi tundent rea pectora pugnis.
Nam constabit uterque tremens ; pauperque potensque.
O felix hominum, semperque in secula felix :
Qui tandem poterit tantas evadere clades.
Et qui cum sanctis letatus in omnia secula,
Conjunctus Christo celestia regna tenebit.

III

THE following Old English Life of St. Egwin is now printed for the first time from a 14th century MS. in the British Museum (Stowe, 949, B.). This volume contains a regular series of Saints' Lives, arranged mainly in the order of the Kalendar, and there is some reason for thinking that the collection was drawn up at Gloucester Abbey. The Life of St. Egwin, which is an addition to the original series, appears in three other MSS. in the British Museum: Egerton, 1993; Addit. 10,626; and Cotton, Jul. D. IX.; and also in a Bodleian codex. The first of these is probably the earliest version, but the text is so defaced, that the Stowe reading has been preferred. For further information regarding these MSS. the reader is referred to Dr Horstmann's "*Altenglische Legenden*," and his "Early South English Legendary" (Early English Text Society), where many of the Legends are prined.

LIFE OF SAINT EGWIN FROM BRITISH MUSEUM MS.

(Stowe, 949, f. 142. B.)

Seynt Egewyn ye holy man! was here of engelonde
Bischop he was of Wurcestre as ich am understonde
Of kynges kynde he was ycome: good man he was ynou[1]

[1] *ynou*, enough.

From ye tyme he couthe wit, to eche godenesse he drou[1]
In the countrey he was of Wurcestre : the kyng Etheldred
Kyng was of the March of Walis : and the kyng Kynred
Al this richesse he vorsok and to poverte he nam[2]
And to the order wende[3] eche after other so that he prest by cam
So that the bischop of Wurcestre : as God wolde was ded
Seynt Egewyne bischop was ychose as hii nomen her red[4]
Ther ageyn[5] he was with al is myht, ac[6] vor nauht he was so
Vor athelred king of the march ; with strengthe him nam[7] ther to
Deboner he was to gode men ; the luthere[8] he with sede[9]
The luthere men were wrothe therefore, and nome him fele to rede[10]
To belye this holy man ; for over al is falshede
To the kyng hii him bilouwe ;[11] and to the pope al so hii sende

[1] *drou*, drew. [2] *nam*, went. [3] *To ordres he wente* (Addit. and Jul.) [4] *hii nomen her red*, they took their counsel. [5] *ageyn*, against. [6] *ac*, but. [7] *him nam*, took him. [8] *luthere*, wicked. [9] *withsede*, gainsaid. [10] *nome him fele to rede*. betook them much to counsel. [11] *bilouwe*, accuse falsely.

That luther[1] man he was with alle ; and the bischopriche al schende[2]
The kyng and all the heyghe men ; with him were wrothe ynough
And pulten hym of is bishopriche ; with schennesse[3] and grete wough[4]
To Rome he was ysompned ek ; to onswerye of this trespas
The gode man seide in al his wo ; that more wurthi he was
He nam it al in pacience and cride godes ore[5]
And thoute that thei he were anoyed ; he agulte ur lord more
His legges whanne he wende to rome ; he gyvede wel vaste.
Vor wonder men come him aboute ; and were somdel a gaste. [6]
Hym wondrede who this myhte ben ;[7] and who him thyder sende
To the churche of seynt peter this holy man verst wende.
ffor he hadde y wilned longe thulke churche to se.
Tho[8] he was there atfore the weued ;[9] he sat adown a kne[10]
His orisounes he bad swithe[11] longe ; and seththe[12] he wente an hey[13]

[1] *luthere*, wicked (as they esteemed him to be.) [2] *al schende*, quite destroy. [3] *schennesse*, shame. [4] *wough*, woe. [5] *ore*, before. [6] *somdel a gaste*, somewhat aghast. [7] they wondered how hit myghte be. [8] *tho*, when. [9] afore the auter. [10] a down he fel a kne. [11] *bad swithe*, said very. [12] *seththe*, afterwards. [13] *an hey*, on high.

And revestid him and song is masse ; as al that folk y sey
His men wenten forth the while and is mete boughte
Hii boughte vurst an grete visch ; and or lord him broughte
Tho hii openeden this visch in is wombe hii founde
The keye of is fetres that he caste in havene grounde.
The keye that was in Avene ycast ; here in engelonde
In a visch weren yvounde at Rome ther was godes sonde[1]
In the watre of tyber at Rome ; the visch was ynome
Nadde[2] nevir the keye so ver withoute the grace of God ycome.
Seynt Egewine unlekk is gyues atfore hom eurichon[3]
ffor wonder that folk owrne thider, so thikke so it myhte gon
To the pope com the tithinge, agen[4] him anon he eode[5]
And aveng him with gret honour, and grete gifte him gan bede
To his paleys he ladde him vorth ; and sette him on is se
And seiden that he was beter worthi to sitten there than he.
Therfore ich am hider ycome ; to ben asoyled of the.
It is beter worthi quath the pope ; that thou asoyly me.

[1] *ther was godessonde*, thither was God's sending. [2] *Nadde*, had not, i.e. the key had never come so far. [3] *hom euerichon*, them everyone. [4] *agen*, towards. [5] *eode*, came.

Tho that he nolde no leng abide ; ther for none thinge.
His lettres he made gode ynough ; vor to bere the kynge
That he let him be bischop ; as he er was ; and he graunted hym also
Grete privilege and fraunchyse ; that in is lettres weren y do.
And sente hym with honour and prute[1] to engelond ynow.
As sone as he cam hider agen ; to the kyng verst he drou
The kyng aveng[2] him swithe faire ; vor mede he moste so.
And tho me tolde him the miracle ; that at Rome was y do.
He honourede hym vaire ynou, and bad him vor givenesse
And made him bischop as he er was, mide[3] wel grete richesse
And graunted hym al that fraunchise ; that the pope hadde y do
And in is chartre thider y send ; and gaf him mo ther to.
The Kyng Atheldred to alle gode ; and to clene lyfe he radde[4]
So that the Kyng tho ; wel holy lyf ladde
And by cam monck at Bardeneye ; and swithe holy man by cam

[1] *prute*, pride.
[2] *aveng*, receiving.
[3] *mide*, with.
[4] *radde*, counselled.

Tho was Kenred is cosyn. eyr of the kyngdam.
And was y mad kyng after him ; of the march of Walys.
So that by er beyere day ; Seynt Eyewyne was y wys.[1]
Euesham that is nou a town, and abbeye of grete richesse.
Nas[2] tho bote a wylde stude,[3] as it were a wildernesse.
Thikke of thornes and of buskes ;[4] as it were a stude for lete.[5]
An abbeye ther was seththe arered ; thoru miracle vair and grete
Ethonye was the stude y clepid ; ac euesham yut nought
Herkneth nou in what manere ; he was to abbeye ybrought
To Ethonye thulke wildernesse schepherdes ofte come
To wyten or schep, and or orf ; and tho seyzen hii there ylome
Gret liht by nyhte and ofte a day and othere miracles al so
The schiperdes for to se this wonder ofte come ther to
Eues het that a schepherde ; that al or maister was.
Thes Eues ofte as y seide ou ; to this wildernesse cam
After him was thulke stude ; y clepid Evesham.
And say ofte their vair miracle : at o tyme he gan ther se

[1] So that St. Egwin lived in the days of both of them. [2] *nas*, was not.
[3] *stude*, place (stead). [4] *buskes*, bushes. [5] *for lete*, forlorn.

Thre vaire maidenes gon up and down, nor vairor ne myhte be
The vairest of all eode a mydde, that thoughte[1] as thei it were.
Heore leuedy[2] and hor maistresse ; none vairor nere
The leuedy bar a bok an honde : swithe murye[3] hii songe
The ioye that him thouhte of the song ; tell ne may no tonge.
As he stod and byhuld him vaste[4] : he nuste[5] whare hii bycome
Gret wonder thoughte Eues ther of : and of that he say ylome[6]
To the bischop he wente stilleliche ;[7] and told him al then ende
With thre men wel priveliche the bischop gan thider wende.
To he almest to the stude cam. vorth alone he wente.
And cride yerne[8] to ihesu crist ; that he him som grace sente.
That he mihte some insiht y se - what were such to kenynge
Ententifliche[9] this he bad ; with sor[10] and wepinge
So that ur Lord herde this bone.[11] he say alle thre
These maidenes gon as hii duded er : vairore ne myhte none be

[1] *thoughte*, seemed. [2] *leuedy*, lady. [3] *swithe murye*, very merrily.
[4] *vaste*, quickly. [5] *nuste*, knew not. [6] *ylome*, often.
[7] *stilleliche*, quickly. [8] *yerne*, earnestly. [9] *ententifliche*, attentively.
[10] *sor*, sorrow. [11] *bone*, prayer, petition.

The leuedy that eode amydde hem thre : that was ur leuedy swete.
An croys of golde hes bar an honde : the maidenes here gonne grete.
Tho he hadde this y seye and the maidenes thenne wende.
The bischop thonkede ihesu crist ; that swiche[1] sihte him sende.
To the kyng he wente atheldred ; that kyng was yut tho.
And ar[2] he geue him thulke place : he nolde[3] from him go
Tho he hadde y graunted him thulke stude ; agen he wente anon.
The buskes that stode he let morie[4] as up echon.
And let there arrere a noble churche of lym and of ston.
Thare is now a vair abbeye, that monymon deth to gon.
The kyng Athelred : wel holy lyf and wel clene ladde.
And to eche godenesse drou ; as Seynt Egewyne him radde.[5]
The Kyng Kenred thoughte wel tho he was neuwe kyng
The neuwe churche of Evesham bringe to gode endyng.
And Seynt Egewine him radde ther to : so hii byseye[6] beye.[7]

[1] *swiche*, such. [2] *ar*, before. [3] *nolde*, would not.
[4] *morie up*, root up. [5] *radde*, advised. [6] *byseye*, resolved. [7] *beye*, both.

For to wende ther vore to Rome ; and duden hem in the weye.
Constantyn her founden pope : tho hii hider come.
Al hor eschynge he grauntede hem : ar hii wente fro Rome.
Vor to areren a grete abbaye ; at Evesham as he wolde.
And monye fraunchises that yut[1] beth y holde.
Seynt Egewyne and the gode kyng : wenden agen with gode pas
To the Erchebischop of Caunterbury brihtewold that tho was.
And he let holde the pope dede : and gaf more ther to
And let halewe thulke stude ; and confermy al so.
This gode kyng and Seynt Egewyne an abbeye let arere
Gret lond the kyng gaf ther to ; that thei holdeth yut there.
Seynt Egewyne byleuede al the world : and monk ther by cam.
And by gon the order there : and many gode men to him nam.
And in godes seruyse bygan al is lyf by leve
And deyde ther in midwynter - on seynt selvestres eue.
Thanne me halt yut is day, as it falleth in the yere
Mony a vair miracle ur Lord deth vor is body there
Now ihesus for the love of him let us suche lyf lede.
That we moten to heuene come ; and vorgive us our mysdede. Amen.

[1] *yut*, still.

IV

THE following description of some of the Evesham vestments, and other treasures, may be interesting to our readers. We give them under the names of the Abbots in whose time they were acquired.

Adam (1160-1191). A large black chasuble. A "second best" red cope embroidered with gold birds. A stole and maniple with bells attached.

Randulph (1214-1229). A noble ring. A mitre. Two albs embroidered with gold. Three tunics. A chasuble of red samite with gold stars for the Lady Altar. Two stoles and maniples with gold fringe and silver bells. A cope of red samite, with angels thurifying, and griffons embroidered in gold on the back. A cope of white silk diapered and variegated with gold, and a chasuble of the same material. A red samite cope adorned with gold knights and griffons. A green samite cope with angels thurifying, leopards, and gold flowers.

Thomas de Marleberge (1229-36). Two albs with gold embroidered apparels.

Richard le Gras (1236-42). Cope adorned with arabesques, called a *cantulcope*, (*i.e.*) a cope for the cantor.

Thomas de Gloucester (1224-55). A chasuble with gold castles embroidered on it.

Henry (1256-63). A red silk cope, sewed by hand, with doves and gold lilies ; and another of bawdkin (a precious stuff made originally in Bagdad)

embroidered all over with gold scallops and lily flowers wrought in red silk. A red silk chasuble, embroidered by hand, with white doves on the back. A white bawdkin chasuble, adorned with gold birds having beaks of purple silk. Two stoles, one of violet silk embroidered with kings, prophets, and flowers, and lined with green samite ; the other of various coloured silks, with shields sewn by hand.

John of Worcester, called Sebrond, Prior (*c.* 1258). A cope of red samite, "with gold prophets seated with in double circles of gold, and little lions connecting the circles with each other."

William de Lond, Prior. A red samite cope embroidered with the Tree of Jesse in gold ; and two others of dust-coloured samite, like "aurum stragulatum."

Walter de Walcote, Prior. A cope of green silk with apostles, in gold, standing in niches. A good alb with apparels representing the story of St. Catharine's life ; and another alb with apparels representing our Lord seated in glory and the Apostles standing.

John Marcle, Prior. A set of vestments of cloth of gold, the cope having on its orphreys the Passion of Christ ; also an alb on which was depicted the history of St. Egwin.

William de Whitchurch, (1266-82). A cope of purple samite with a vine embroidered in gold ; another of red samite with prophets and kings in gold, and a vine-pattern.

John de Brokehampton (1282-1316). A violet chasuble with a cross on the back ; other two violet

chasubles lined with red samite. A chasuble of white samite painted *(depictam)* with flowers.

William de Chiriton (1317-44). A violet chasuble and two tunics with yellow lily-flowers embroidered on them. A good alb of hand-work *(whypped-werk)*, and a green alb embroidered with stars.

William Boys (1345-67). This Abbot procured a complete outfit of pontifical vestments, etc. A good mitre, a crozier, rings, gloves, a fur almuce, a rochet, a tunic and dalmatic, sandals, and a book containing the pontifical offices. He bought also some vestments, including the following : A good cope of red velvet embroidered with figures in niches, and little branches of leaves, all in gold. A white cope, adorned with griffons, little animals, and flowers, wrought in gold. A blue carpet, with mitres worked on it, for the Abbot's seat at the altar and elsewhere.

William de Stowe, Sacrist (probably in Abbot Boys' time). He procured four copes : a precious gold one ; another of red velvet set with pearls, good and very precious ; the third of the best red samite ; the last of red samite with gold flowers. An alb of red samite with a gold "majestas ;" . . . another with the head of our Lord in gold, and heads of the Apostles, also in gold ; and a third of silk with griffons of white silk.

John de Bromesgrove, Sacrist. A second best alb of black velvet (evidently an alb with black *apparel*), with little branches and leaves.

John de Ombresley (1367-79). A set of vestments of white cloth of gold. The set consisted of :

chasuble, dalmatic, three tunics; one "principal" cope, one for the chaplain, two for the cantors in choir. Two frontals for the altar, one hanging above and one below. A set of blue velvet vestments, embroidered with gold work and set with pearls *(peerlus)* and other stones. This Abbot bought fifty marks' worth of pearls for a new mitre, but the mitre was not made in his day and he left the pearls in his treasury.

Nicholas Hereford, Prior, 1392. A set of vestments for the High Altar, embroidered with eagles of Cyprus gold, on a field *(le chaumpe)* of blue velvet, with a cope and dalmatics, and thirty albs with apparels of the same eagle-pattern. The set was valued at £40. A set of green velvet vestments, valued at £20, embroidered with stags' heads. A vestment of cloth of gold of Lucca, given by the Abbot, after Nicholas' death, to the Lady chapel as an offering for the Sacrist's soul. Another vestment of "*pannus cypreus.*"

Roger Zatton (1379-1514). A good and beautiful mitre becomingly adorned with pearls (evidently those left by Abbot Ombresley for the purpose). Six copes and thirty-three albs all of one set.

FINIS.

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