THE STORY OF FORD ABBEY

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FULL VIEW OF FORD ABBEY.

Frontispiece.

The Story of Ford Abbey

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE PRESENT DAY

By

SIDNEY HEATH

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON :
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1911

ENTRANCE TOWER, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 5.*

Photo by F. Higgins & Son, Chard.

Dedicated to

MR. & MRS. FREEMAN ROPER

OF FORD ABBEY

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Dr. Pring's *Memoir of Thomas Chard* is a mere hash up of Oliver and Dugdale, and is of but little value, as the author gives the abbot of Ford all the offices and preferments held by his namesake the prior, as, indeed, do all the modern writers on Ford. A small volume published in 1846 under the initials "A.W." contains a good deal of fairly accurate architectural description, as also does a valuable paper by the late Gordon Hills in 1864, published in *Collectanea Archæologica*. The same remarks apply to *Some Architectural Works of Inigo Jones*, by H. Inigo Triggs and Henry Tanner, junr. (Batsford).

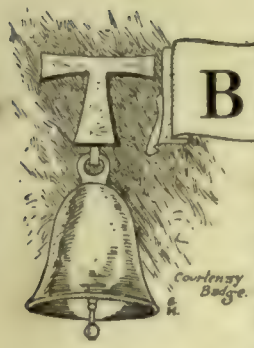
In a special degree the thanks of the author are due to Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Roper for permission to make an exhaustive study of the structure, take photographs, and make drawings.

WEYMOUTH, 1911.

BACK VIEW, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page* 12.

THE STORY OF FORD ABBEY

INTRODUCTION



BEFORE turning to a detailed account of the monastic house of Ford, it may be of interest to give a slight sketch of the monastic orders in England, which may possibly help the mind to realise fully the great power, both social and religious, possessed by the mediæval monasteries, and at the same time convey some idea of the general conditions of their rule, and of the buildings erected for the accommodation of the inmates.

A monastery may be briefly defined as a home for those who professed the monastic life, and the word is used also to denote abbeys, priories and nunneries, as the arrangements of the various buildings differed but little from each other. Monks are thought to have been unknown, by name at least, for the first 250 years after Christ, those who up to that time lived a life of seclusion from the world being known as ascetics.

The mission of S. Augustine to England in A.D. 597 was the means of introducing the Benedictine rule into this country, although a system of monasticism had for many years been established in the land. Abbot Gasquet says :—" The Celtic monastic system was apparently in vogue among the remnant of the ancient British Church in Wales and the West Country on the coming of S. Augustine. Little is known with certainty, but as the British Church was Celtic in origin it may be presumed that the Celtic type of monachism prevailed amongst the Christians in this country after the Saxon conquest."

The monks originally were mostly laymen who enjoyed all things in common. They took no part in civil affairs, and during the days when great austerity was observed, they generally avoided settling

near a town, building their houses in the waste and barren parts of the country.

At the head of the establishment was the Abbot (*abbas*—father). The word was used from the earliest times "as a title appropriate to designate the superior of a religious house, as expressing the paternal qualities which should characterise his rule. S. Benedict says that "an abbot who is worthy to have charge of a monastery ought always to remember by what title he is called," and that "in the monastery he is considered to represent the person of Christ, seeing that he is called by His name."[1]

The second superior of the house was the prior, whose duty it was to take the abbot's place during his absence, to supervise the discipline of the house, and to look after the government of the monastery in general. The prior's assistant in the duties of his office was the sub-prior, who had no special position in the community, except that in the absence of the abbot and prior, their duties devolved upon him. An English writer says: "The sub-prior should be remarkable for his holiness, his charity should be over-flowing, his sympathy should be abundant. He must be careful to extirpate evil tendencies, to be unwearied in his duties, and tender to those in trouble. In a word, he should set before all the example of our Lord."

In large monasteries were usually third and fourth priors, also called *circas* or *circatores claustri*, that is, watchers over the discipline of the cloister. "Their duty chiefly consisted in going round about the house and specially the cloister in times of silence, to see that there was nothing amiss or contrary to the usual observance. They had no authority to correct, but they kept their eyes and ears open in order to report. They did not go about necessarily together, but according as special duties might have been assigned to them by the abbot. When, in the course of their official investigations, they found any of the brethren engaged in conversation or work out of the ordinary course, it was the duty of one of those so engaged to inform the official of the permission they had received."[2]

Other officials of a monastery were often known by the name of *obedientiaries*, and sometimes the prior and sub-prior were included under this name. But as a rule they were not so called, as they assisted in the general government of the monastery. The

[1] English Monastic Life (F. A. Gasquet).
[2] Ibid.

Photo by F. Higgins & Son, Chard. FORD ABBEY CLOISTER. *Facing page* 14.

obedientiaries had various duties, and often exercised great power in their own spheres. According to the size of the monastery, so the number of obedientiaries varied, but it may be of interest to mention a few here, with their respective duties.

The *cantor* or *precentor* was one of the most important officials of a monastery, for on him devolved the management of the numerous services in the church, the selection of the music to be sung, and the portions of Scripture to be read. He recognised no superior but the abbot in anything pertaining to the church services. Besides this, he was also librarian and archivist. In the absence of the precentor the *succentor*, or *sub-cantor* fulfilled his duties.

To the *sacrist* was committed the care of the church fabric, together with the sacred plate and vestments, and such shrines or reliquaries as the monastery possessed. He had also to supervise the lighting of the entire establishment. In his duties he was assisted by the *sub-sacrist* or *secretary*, who had charge of the offerings made to the church, and had also to see that the stock of wine for the altar, incense, candles, or wax was replenished when necessary. He was also to purchase materials for the repair of the fabric, and was the custodian of the monastic treasures. Other assistants of the sacrist were the *treasurer* and the *revestiarius*, the former of whom, as the name implies, was in charge of the church plate and valuables, while the latter was chiefly concerned with the vestments, the curtains, or other hangings belonging to the church. Connected with the domestic part of the establishment were the *cellarer*, whose chief duties were to see that the stores were not running short, and to superintend the servants; the *kitchener*, who presided over the entire kitchen department, and had to keep a strict account of the expenditure in provisions; and the *refectorian*, who had charge of the refectory.

To each monastery an infirmary was attached, and the official in charge was known as the *infirmarian*. According to an old Custumal, the infirmarian "must be gentle, and good-tempered, kind, compassionate to the sick, and willing as far as possible to gratify their needs with affectionate sympathy." For the relief of the poor an *almoner* was appointed, whose principal duty was to distribute the alms of the monastery among the poor who came to the monks for relief.

The official deputed to attend to wayfarers and extend to them

the hospitality of the house, was the *guest-master*, or *hospitarius*; while the duty of the *chamberlain* or *camerarius*, was to overlook the garments of the monks, repairing them when necessary, and substituting new ones when the old were past repair.

One of the most important officials in a monastery was the master of novices, who, as his name implies, had under his supervision those who were desirous of entering the religious life, and drilled them in the rule of the house during their year of probation.

Besides these regular officials, many were weekly servers, who took it in turns to draw water, to wait on the brethren at meals, and to be generally at the disposal of the refectorian.

The daily life of the inmates of a monastery was a strenuous one. In most establishments, matins began at midnight, when the signal for rising from slumber was the ringing of a small bell. Following Matins came Lauds, or *Matutinal Laudes*, the morning praises, as they were supposed to be, celebrated at the dawn of day. Prime was said about seven, and at about half-past eight, except on days of fasting, the bell was rung for *mixtum*, or breakfast, and while the monks were engaged at their morning refection, the bell was kept ringing for the morning Mass. The daily Chapter was held immediately on the conclusion of the Mass, and from this the monks passed to a discussion on the general business of the house. The High Mass, or *Magna Missa*, began at ten o'clock. At about eleven the mid-day meal was served, during which the monk whose turn it was to be " reader " read passages of scripture to his brethren. In the summer after dinner the monks were allowed to retire to the dormitory for rest or sleep, as they began their day an hour earlier than in the winter, thus shortening their night's rest. The whole time of the monks was not spent in religious exercises, for from twelve o'clock to five in winter, and from one to six in summer, they were employed in manual labour, and outdoor exercise. On the conclusion of their work the bell was rung for Vespers, followed by supper. The evening reading took place in the Chapter House, and was known as the *Collation*. The last service for the day was Compline, said at seven o'clock in the summer and eight in the winter. Then the monks trooped forth in solemn silence to their dormitory, to rest until the matins bell roused them once more to begin the arduous round of a conventual day.

Photo by E. Higgins & Son, Chard

GENERAL VIEW, FORD ABBEY.

Facing page 17.

The uses of monasteries were many and various. They were the only schools, strictly speaking, in the country, and these were generally superintended by the almoner, and had no connection with the claustral school of the novices. " There, young clerks were to have free quarters in the almonry, and the almoner was frequently to see them set to argue one against the other, to sharpen their wits. He was to keep them strictly, or, as it was called in those days of belief in corporal punishment, " well under the rod," and he had to find, out of the revenues of his office, all " discipline rods," both for the boys and for use in the monastic chapter. On feast days, when there were no regular lessons, these young clerks were to be set to learn the Matins of the Office of the Blessed Virgin ; or to practice writing upon scraps of parchment. If they did not learn, and especially if they would not, the almoner was to get rid of them, and fill their places with those who would."[1]

In the great monastery of Jarrow, Beda, " The Venerable Bede," wrote his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, and on account of his school of six hundred monks, Green has called him, " the father of our national education."

To the almoner also, as denoted by his name, was intrusted that most important work of all monasteries, the giving out of food and clothing to the poor who came to beg alms in the name of Christ. The monasteries were the chief support of the needy, for " Poor Laws " as we know them, were not passed until thirty years after the Dissolution. Besides providing for those in need, the monastery was always ready to extend hospitality to travellers and wayfarers, for in those days to " entertain strangers " as well as friends was a practical part of religion. The usual time allowed for a traveller to receive free hospitality " was apparently two days and nights, and in ordinary cases on the third day the guest was expected to take his departure. If for any reason a visitor desired to prolong his stay, permission had to be obtained from the superior by the guest-master. Unless prevented by sickness, after that time the guest had to rise for Matins, and otherwise follow the exercises of the community. With the Franciscans, a visitor who asked for hospitality from the convent beyond three days had to beg pardon in the conventual chapter before he departed, for his excessive demand upon the hospitality of the house."[2]

[1] English Monastic Life (F. A. Gasquet).
[2] Ibid.

As the monasteries nearly always possessed a *secular* infirmary, apart from the one for the sick brethren, we may rightly presume that to the monks came the diseased in body, as well as the distressed in mind. S. Thomas' Hospital, London, was originally a religious house, until the Act of Henry VIII. transformed it into a secular foundation.

In pre-Reformation days there were various religious orders existing in England. Abbot Gasquet classifies them under four headings, viz.: (1) monks, (2) canons regular, (3) military orders, and (4) friars. The monks embraced the orders of the Benedictines, the Cluniacs and Cistercians, the two last being offshoots of the great Benedictine body; and the Carthusians. The Canons Regular were clergy who formed themselves generally under the rule of S. Augustine, and lived a life similar to that of the monks. In England they became known as Augustinian Canons, Premonstratensian Canons, and Gilbertine Canons. The military orders were the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars. Abbot Gasquet says: "The Hospitallers began in A.D. 1092 with the building of a hospital for pilgrims at Jerusalem. The original idea of the work of these knights was to provide for the needs of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land and to afford them protection on their way. . . . . The Military Order of the Templars was founded, according to Tanner, about the year A.D. 1118. They derived their name from the Temple of Jerusalem, and the original purpose of their institute was to secure the roads to Palestine, and protect the holy places.

During the reign of Henry VIII. there were in England six hundred and sixteen houses of religion, while of the religious orders there were 186 Benedictines, 101 Cistercians, 173 Augustinians, 28 Knights Hospitallers, etc. In Yorkshire the Cistercians were the chief traders in wool with the merchants of Flanders.

The various orders of Friars differed from the monks in that they had no settled habitation, and therefore did not live as families, but travelled from place to place preaching.

Through their influence, schools and hospitals were founded, and at Oxford the schools they established eventually developed into the famous University. In their earlier days they seem to have devoted their lives to the service of the poor, but as was the case with most religious movements, the enthusiasm which had sustained the early adherents to the cause began to wane, and at the end of the four-

teenth century, owing to their self-indulgence, they ceased to be of any real benefit to the community. As Gardiner says, " The friars were the last helpful gift of the mediæval church to the world. Like the old monks in their self-abnegation, and in their complete renunciation of the pleasures and interests of the world, the friars introduced an entirely new element into the ecclesiastical system. The monk stood apart from humanity for his own soul's welfare, crucifying the flesh in order that the spirit might live, and indirectly teaching by example, and not, except accidentally, by direct word or guidance. The friar's work was carried on, not in retired cloisters, but in the busy haunts of men. He lived not for himself, but for others. Wherever men were most wretched, struck down by the most loathsome of diseases, or pinched and hunger-starved by famine, there the little mission chapel of the friars was raised."

During the reign of Ethelwulf in 839, the monasteries suffered greatly from the invasions of the Danes, who seem to have shown a special partiality for the good things of these rich, but defenceless houses. In the time of Edwy the Fair (955-959) the country witnessed a violent personal quarrel in consequence of the king's marriage with Elgiva, which was declared by the monks to be uncanonical.

The king thus found himself in opposition to Dunstan, a monk who had been made Abbot of Glastonbury by King Edmund, and who found that the unsettled condition of the country brought about by the Danish wars had caused so lax a state of discipline in the monasteries, that he immediately began their reformation by expelling the secular canons from the cathedrals, establishing the Benedictine order of monks, and founding forty new abbeys and their attached schools.

There were two classes of monasteries in this country, the National and the Foreign Orders, the former being composed of the Benedictines and Augustinians, and the latter of the Cistercians and Carthusians. The National Orders submitted more or less to episcopal control, but the Foreign Orders recognised no authority but that of the Pope. The authority of the English bishops over the monastic houses was considerably weakened by the custom that sprang up of appointing foreigners to the headships of these establishments. As the Roman see gradually, and by an infinite variety of methods, increased its hold on the English Church, the Pope, particularly during the reign of King

John, proceeded to appoint Italian monks to vacant ecclesiastical offices of all degrees in such numbers that the native clergy were in danger of being ousted from all the richer benefices of the Church. The national spirit, however, revolted against this importation of foreign clerics, who were treated in a very characteristic manner. " Certain madde fellows " went round their glebes, threshed out their corn for them, and gave it to the poor, and altogether showed such hostility to the intruders that it became evident that they had powerful friends in the background. " After that," says Godwin, " the Italians were not so eager upon Church benefices."

It has become customary with certain modern critics to affirm that the conditions of life during the Middle Ages were deplorable from every point of view. The clergy, no less than the sturdy yeomen, have been described as living wholly vicious and well-nigh barbarous lives. This impression is quite erroneous concerning the greater part of the population, as a study of the social laws and the architecture of the period will quickly prove, and has probably arisen from the fact that people have always been more disposed to comment on that which our mediæval ancestors *had not* than to give them credit for possessing that which they *had*. To understand properly any age or any custom and to estimate fairly its character and influence, we must, by the force of sympathetic imagination, transport ourselves into that age, acquaint ourselves with its leading activities, and endeavour to think and feel as the people who lived under its dominion felt and thought. It is futile to measure a past age by the standards of our own.

With regard to the personal life of the monks, the Rev. G. F. Nye writes : " Some tilled the soil, and cultivated the waste land. Others, again, were the architects who designed and erected the magnificent structures in which they dwelt, the stately ruins of which for strength and artistic beauty have seldom been equalled—never excelled—and often, indeed, presenting architectural features which have been the despair of modern architects of the world. Their busy lives taught men that to subdue the earth, to labour with honest and skilful hands for daily bread, was work for God too."

Certain it is that the old monks were a great influence for good —they taught the ignorant, relieved the poor, and by their material industry showed the people around them that Christianity had its

BACK VIEW, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 21.*

practical as well as its purely devotional and ascetic side. Their buildings were equipped with chapels, cloisters, dormitories, kitchens, granaries, and store houses; and between the time of the Norman Conquest and the reign of Edward III., some twelve hundred of these establishments were erected.

During the twelfth century the Church grew greatly in power and in wealth, while the advent of the friars proved to be of great and substantial benefit to the poorer classes, for the friars did much to counteract the self-indulgence that had by this time crept into the majority of the religious houses.

In the time of Henry VII., nearly one-third of all the land in the country was held by the Church, which was the great power in England, being able to keep the nation in peace, or to give its voice for foreign war. Besides this, it was the great repository of learning; and after the death of so many barons in the Wars of the Roses, the number of Spiritual Lords was nearly twice that of the Temporal Lords in the Upper House. The Church also exercised control over the legal jurisdiction of the country, and any criminal able to read had the right of demanding that his case should be taken out of the Civil Courts and tried in the Courts of the Church. The monasteries were numerous, their united revenues amounting to many millions. The first attack upon these religious houses came from Wolsey, who in 1523 obtained Bulls from the Pope authorising him to suppress forty of the smaller monasteries, that is, those whose revenues were under £200 a year, and to devote the sum to the support of schools and colleges. On the fall of Wolsey, Cromwell worked hard to replenish the Royal Treasury. He was a man who appears to have obtained an extraordinary influence over the King, to whom he suggested that he should style himself "Head of the Church." Pleased with this advice, Henry appointed him Vicar-General and Chancellor, with power to visit the monasteries and report as to the value of their possessions. This he did in a manner so thorough that he was known throughout the country as the "Hammer of the Monks." The visitations of 1535-6 were ostensibly undertaken with a view to the *reformation* of the monastic houses, but this thin veil of disguise was quickly discarded by the commissioners, who proceeded to take possession of everything that could be turned into money for the Royal Exchequer. The reformation of the houses was far less in the minds of the king's

agents than the prospect of plunder, and this especially applies to the pillage of the parish churches in the reign of Edward VI.; for by that time there were no "superstitious relics" remaining, and many of the pillagers were honest enough to acknowledge that their object was to gain "a great masse of money" for the needs of the king.

In 1536, after the break with Rome had taken place, the great attack on the monasteries began by the passing of a Bill in Parliament dissolving the smaller houses, and granting all their property to the Crown. Three years later, another Act was passed suppressing the larger monasteries, whose revenues also went the way of the former. Cromwell's memoranda, still in existence, give a good idea of the way in which the property was divided. "Item, to remember Warner for a monastery—Mr. Gostwick for one, Kingsmill for Wharwell, Freeman for Spalding, myself for Laund," and so on.

By these means the king became possessed of an annual revenue of £30,000, and of about £100,000 in exchange for the jewels and treasures taken by his agents, the net gain to the Crown being equal to about one and a half millions of our present money. No part of this sum was at any time restored to the Church, but a very small portion was eventually used for the founding of Grammar Schools.

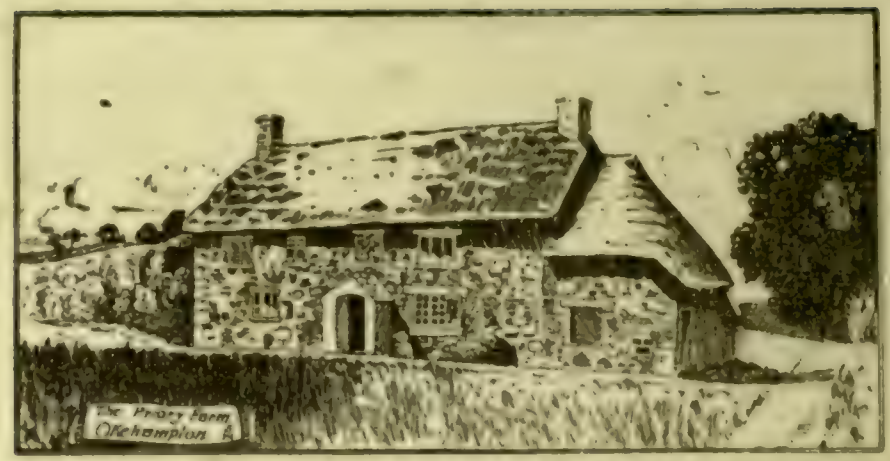
Some of the abbots and monks endeavoured to hide their treasures, others attempted to sell the property to laymen, but these incidents coming to the ears of the commissioners, twelve abbots were executed as an example to others.

After the monastic property and revenues had been dissipated, Henry turned his attention to the cathedrals, parish churches, and the valuable chantry revenues. The exact number of the chantries thus confiscated will probably never be known, but in S. Paul's Cathedral alone there were as many as forty-seven, possessing an annual revenue of some £12,000 a year of our present money, and the total value of all the confiscated chantry revenues must be computed at several millions of pounds.

There is little doubt that the people, especially the poor, suffered greatly at the dissolution of the religious houses, for their thriving villages were now turned into barren sheep-walks, arable land became pasture, and the destitute could no longer ask for alms at the door of the almonry of the monastery. Thousands of peasants were thrown out of work, and poverty became general among the lower classes.

This condition of things continued until the end of the century, when the founding of almshouses and hospitals by wealthy merchants or benevolent persons throughout the country did something to alleviate the sufferings of the poor.

Even in the darkest days of English monasticism it is gratifying to find how rarely the individual conduct of an archbishop or abbot caused any actual scandal to dim the bright escutcheon of the Church. There were certainly prelates who appear to have been more influenced by worldly ambition than by religious zeal, and yet a larger number whose religious ardour, brooking no opposition, led them into acts of bigotry and intolerance. There were also not a few whose martial instincts were but partially hidden under clerical vestments, men who fought equally with both the temporal and the spiritual arm. Some, too, were courtiers and *bon vivants* at the time they professed the austere monastic rule; but there were few of them who failed to stand the only test by which they can be judged to-day—the respect of their contemporaries—and fewer still who disgraced their office by sensual profligacy or actual crime.



CHAPTER I

FOUNDATION AND EARLY HISTORY.

IN 1842, for the convenience of county business, the parish of Thorncombe, containing the fine old monastic house of Ford, was transferred from the county of Devon to that of Dorset.

The latter shire was already singularly rich in ecclesiastical remains, the legacies of pre-Reformation days, when this little southern county was, for its size, the richest monastic county in England, and even at the present day it possesses three great Minsters of non-cathedral rank—Sherborne Abbey, Wimborne Minster, and Milton Abbey. In Saxon days Sherborne was an episcopal see for more than three hundred years, until the Bishopric was transferred to Salisbury. The Benedictines had their abbeys of Abbotsbury, Cerne, Shaftesbury, and Winterbourne Came, and the Cistercians those of Bindon and Tarrant Crawford. There were many minor foundations

of which almost every stone has vanished, but enough is left in ruins to show that in ecclesiastical remains, history, and associations, the county of Dorset is almost without an equal among our English shires.

Ford Abbey was a welcome addition to the list, being one of the earliest Cistercian houses erected in the country. The year 1136, in which the community settled at Brightley, before removing to Ford, is one to be long remembered as having witnessed the foundation of the Cistercian Abbey of Warden, Bedfordshire ; the restoration of the monastery belonging to the same community at Melrose ; and the foundation of the Hospital Church of S. Cross, at Winchester ; a record that has hardly been excelled in the annals of our history.

It appears that a knight of Devon, one Baldwin de Brioniis, having rendered many services to William I., that monarch, with the generosity he displayed in disposing of his conquered territory, presented Baldwin with so many estates that he is computed to have possessed the largest revenue of any man within the county of Devon. Having made him a man of wealth, William bestowed upon him in marriage his niece Albreda. The son of this union, Richard, in 1133 began to build an abbey or priory at Brightley, in the honour of Okehampton, Devon, and on the completion of the building in 1136, he requested Gilbert, Abbot of Waverley,* in Surrey, to send him twelve of his Cistercian monks to establish a community in the new monastery. Accordingly, the twelve brethren journeyed thither on foot in procession, with the Cross uplifted, and were received at Brightley with great kindness by Richard. Their patron, however, did not live long after he had accomplished his desire, and the little community somehow failed to carry on the work owing to the " great want and barrenness of the soil," so that in 1141 they resolved to return to Waverley. They are said to have petitioned to be removed because the ground at Brightley produced only " thyme and wild nightshade," which, if so, does not increase one's appreciation of their farming, or on the other hand, of their veracity, for the very name *Bright-ley*—meaning the " bright " or " clear " pasture—seems to indicate its reputation as a pleasant and fruitful spot. The site had been chosen by Richard from among his vast estates, and it is indeed just such a place, in the lowlands by the river, in which the farmer monks of those days delighted to

* The monks of Waverley were the first of this great order to settle in England, having established themselves there in 1129,

live and work. The more probable explanation of their exodus is that Richard's successor in the barony did not regard the community favourably; in many charters of this date a clause is inserted prohibiting the alienation of burgages to houses of religion, and it is well-known that the legislature had to interfere in later times. As has been seen, the monks in 1141 set out to return to Waverley, but passing by the Manor of Thorncombe, they were met by Adelicia, the sister of Richard and successor to his estates. The popular and touching story is to the effect that Adelicia, observing the manner of their return on foot and in procession, as before, called them to her, and learning from them of the failure of her brother's enterprise, was overcome with grief, and exclaimed to the weary abbot and his monks, "Far be it from me, my lord, and you, holy fathers, that so damnable a reproach and so shameful a danger should alight upon me as that what was by my lord and brother Richard, out of a pious and devout affection, so well and solemnly begun for the honour of God, and the salvation of all of us, I, his sister and heir, and to whom at his decease he bequeathed all, should want either will or power to perfect. Behold my manor where you now are, which is very fruitful and well-wooded, and which I give you for ever, in exchange for your barren land at Brightley, together with the mansion house and other houses. Stay there until a more convenient monastery may be built for you upon some other part of the estate, nor will we be wanting to you in this, but will give you our best assistance to carry on that building."

It may seem rather a thankless task to question the veracity of this oft-repeated and touching tradition, but the incident is rather too dramatic to have been purely accidental, and one cannot help thinking that the whole affair, if it happened as related, was to a great extent pre-arranged.

The house at Brightley never appears to have grown to any notable dimensions, and the present remains are very scanty indeed; for had the edifice been of any size or architectural character, there would be indications of worked stone, however slight, in the walls of the adjacent hamlet, if of nothing more important. In any case there must surely have been a chapel to receive the remains of their patron, Richard, before these were removed for burial to Ford, together with those of another Richard, the first abbot.

It has been stated that the only remaining relic of the old Priory

is a round-headed granite arch in one of the walls of the barn at the farm now occupying the site, but there is little doubt that portions of the walls of the monastic domestic buildings are also incorporated in the more modern structure. The fact that the barn orientates with remarkable precision and that the arch is in the West wall leads one to suggest that this may have been the chapel, of which the arch was the doorway. It is deeply splayed internally, and bears much resemblance to similar openings in the older part of Okehampton Castle. This farm is still known as the *Priory* Farm, and belongs to the Okehampton Charity Trustees, and there are many indications that it is the only existing link with the original holding of the monks at Brightley. Whether this be so or not, the fragments of Brightley Priory will always be of interest by reason of their having formed the germ of the famous house of Ford.

To return to the pious Adelicia, we find that her generous offer, whether pre-arranged or spontaneous, was gratefully accepted by the monks, who were soon installed in a temporary house at Westford, whence they superintended the erection of the monastery; and after seven years, in 1148, the house was so far completed that they were able to inhabit it. The site they had selected was in a valley, on the left bank of the river Axe, at a place called, according to Leland, "Hertbath" (balneum cervorum), which, from its contiguity to a passage across the river, became known as *Ford*. The monastery was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

A fairly accurate account, but one containing some serious errors, of the early history of the abbey, is to be found in an ancient MS., entitled "FUNDATIONIS ET FUNDATORUM HISTORIA," which appears to have been compiled by a monk belonging to the community some time before its suppression by Henry VIII.

The date of the foundation as given by the monk is probably correct, and is supported by the charter of the first year of Richard I., in which the king confirms to the Cistercian community the gift of the church and manor of Thorncombe conferred upon them by Adelicia. In 1141, the brothers took up their abode in Thorncombe, and the monk speaks of "fit and regular offices" having been built to which the community removed from their temporary residence at the manor house, in 1147. This is many years too early for any part of the building at present existing, although considerable portions of it are

undoubtedly those of the original abbey. This discrepancy may be accounted for by taking the "fit and regular offices" to be only temporary monastic edifices, for which the Cistercian rule provided as carefully and thoroughly as for the permanent building, which generally took many years to build.

The site chosen by the monks was influenced largely by the position of the river Axe. A river was an almost invariable accompaniment to a Cistercian monastery. On the high ground at Ford a small spring formed a stream which flowed northwards into the river, and by throwing up banks in the course of this stream, the monks formed three or four fish ponds, on different levels, and these ponds, in a modernised form, remain to the present day. The stream was also used in the industrial court, where it worked the corn mill, the saw mill, and the other mechanical appliances of the abbey.

The monastery of Ford was at first well endowed, and several great families enriched the abbey coffers from time to time. The Courtenays were naturally the greatest benefactors, being the patrons of the foundation from their connection with the family of the original founder. Another old Devonshire family, the de Pomeroys, of Berry Pomeroy Castle, near Totnes, also became powerful protectors of the monks of Ford.

On the death of Adelicia in 1142 the inheritance of the patronage of the monastery passed, according to the monk's MS., to Alicia, daughter of Adelicia, and wife of Ralph Avenel; then to Alicia's daughter Matilda, wife of Robert de Avranches; and thirdly to Matilda's daughter Hawisia, who married Reginald de Courtenay, after which, through their son Robert de Courtenay, it proceded in regular descent in the line of the Courtenay family.

Many genealogists, including Sir William Pole, have disputed the descent of the Courtenays as traced by the monk of Ford, without however substituting any complete pedigree in its place. This erroneous genealogy, having been repeated by all the chroniclers of Ford Abbey, and disputed but not amended by many antiquaries, the whole subject has hitherto been involved in chaos. If, however, the more modern writers on Ford had but consulted the MS. papers of Tristram Risdon (1608-28) in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter (since published in book form) the slips made by the monk would have been obvious. The truth appears to be that Baldwin had three children,

GENERAL VIEW, FORD ABBEY.

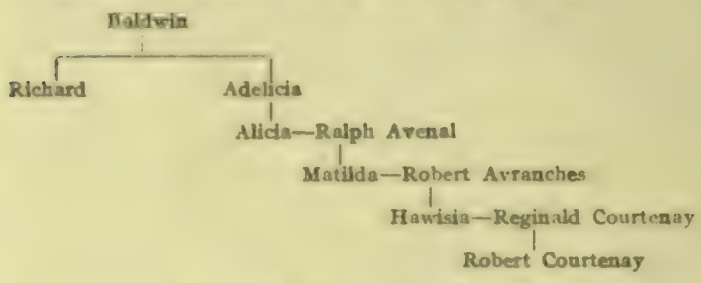
Facing page 28.

Richard, Adela or Adelicia, and *Emma*. Adelicia married but had no children, Emma married first William Avenell, and secondly William Averinches or Avranches. On the death of Baldwin in 1155, his son Richard succeeded to his estates and dying in 1162 the property devolved on his son Baldwin. This Baldwin fought under Henry II., and as a reward for his valour the king gave him the daughter of Ralph de Doliz in marriage, together with the honour of Chateau Reaulx. Baldwin dying without issue, the manor of Okehampton passed to Adelicia, his aunt, and on her death to her nephew Ralph Avenell, the son of Emma by her first husband. Ralph, having annoyed Reginald, Earl of Cornwall, by disdaining to marry his daughter, the latter raised a title against him for the barony of Okehampton, and nominated Matilda, daughter of Robert de Averinches, who was Emma's son by her second husband, as the rightful heir; for it seems that during the lifetime of Richard, Emma's brother, he became so fond of his nephew Robert, that he caused his knights and freeholders to consider Robert as his heir. For this reason, incited by the Earl of Cornwall, Robert's daughter Matilda brought a suit against Ralph Avenell, when the jury found that by right of "attornment" and the homage of fealty done to him by the knights and freeholders of Richard, the barony belonged to Robert and his descendants. Matilda married Robert Fitz-Roy, brother of Reginald, Earl of Cornwall, and the illegitimate son of Henry I., by whom she had one daughter Matilda, who married Reginald de Courtenay.

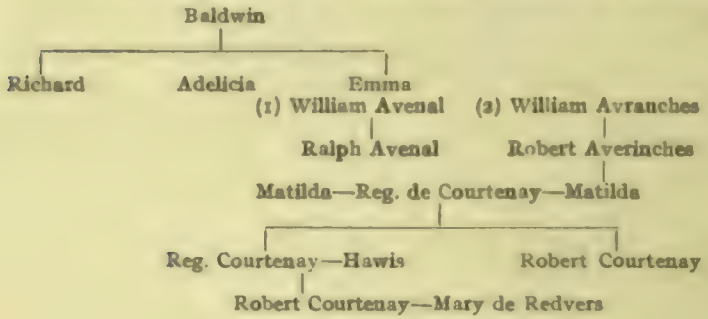
This Reginald de Courtenay came into England with Queen Elinor, wife of Henry II., and on him the king bestowed the barony of Okehampton. He married Matilda, daughter of Robert Fitz-Roy, a marriage of which there was no issue. Reginald, however, had previously married Matilda Donjon, by whom he had two sons, Reginald and Robert, the first of whom married Hawis de Ayncourt, by whom he had a son Robert, who, on the death of his mother Hawis, in 1219, succeeded to the honour of Okehampton, and through whom Ford Abbey proceeded in regular descent in the line of the Courtenay family.

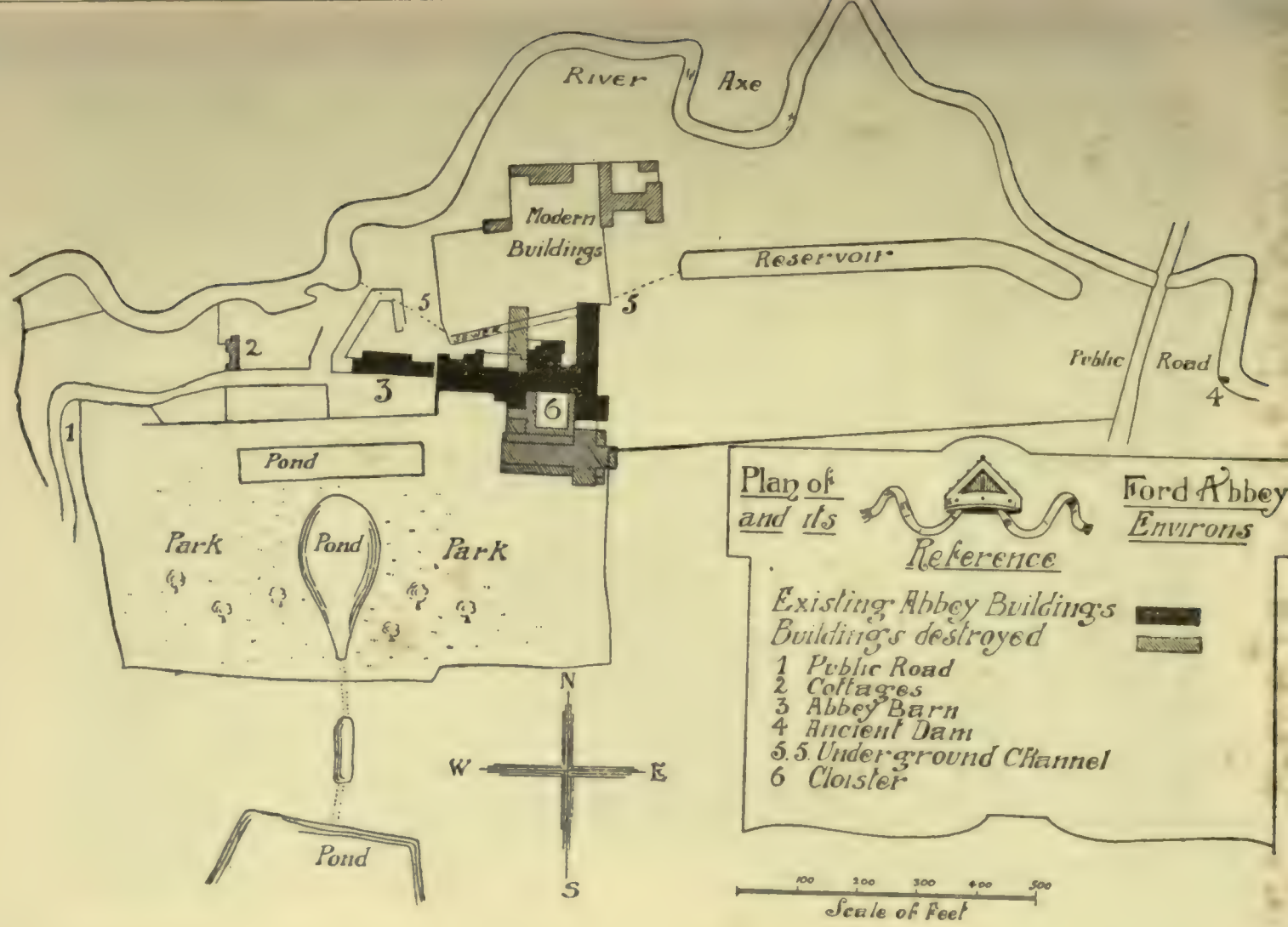
The following genealogical tables will help to show where the monk went wrong in assigning to Alicia, who died without issue, the children of her sister Emma, an error which figures in all the published accounts of Ford Abbey, and one which has hitherto caused endless confusion.

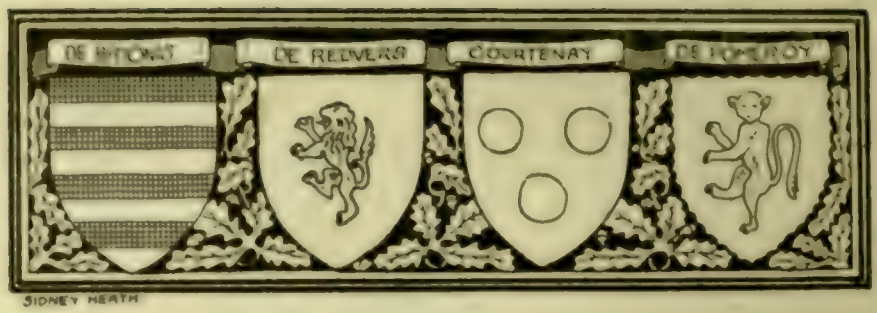
Genealogical Table from the Monk's MS. :—



Genealogical Table of the Author (based on Risdon) :—




River Axe
Modern Buildings
Reservoir
Public Road
4
5
5
2
3
6
1
Pond
Park
Pond
Park
Pond
N
W
E
S
Plan of and its
Ford Abbey
Environs
Reference
Existing Abbey Buildings
Buildings destroyed
1 Public Road
2 Cottages
3 Abbey Barn
4 Ancient Dam
5.5 Underground Channel
6 Cloister
100 200 300 400 500
Scale of Feet



CHAPTER II

GENERAL PLAN

ALTHOUGH the order of the Cistercians was not of English foundation, its subsequent development was considerably influenced by an Englishman, S. Stephen Harding, who received his education at Sherborne School, Dorset, and afterwards made his profession in the Cluniac monastery of Molesmes. This order, however, with its growing wealth and self-indulgence, failed to satisfy the deep religious nature of the Dorset monk, who, leaving Molesmes, took up his abode at the new settlement of Citeaux, where he appears to have realised his ideal of the monastic life.

He rose to be head of this community, which he governed for twenty-five years with great ability and remarkable success. Here he received S. Bernard and thirty monks into the order, and he lived to see, before his death in 1134, several other houses founded on the model he had inaugurated. The system of the Cistercian order was mainly the work of Harding, who devoted his whole life to restore monasticism to the high position from which it had fallen. The severest austerity and a strict observance of rules marked the early days of the Cistercian brotherhood, who led a life in marked contrast to the Benedictines and the Cluniacs. As a rule Cistercian buildings were plain, simple structures, which in their general arrangements

ENTRANCE HALL, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 32.*

adhered to one common and normal plan. It would be difficult to select any particular house of this order as the typical example, yet the variation of all their buildings is of so slight a character that it is comparatively easy to assign to any part of a house once belonging to them its specific name and its original uses.

Mr. Bond tells us that it is probable that all the plans of Cistercian Churches in England were drawn from one or other of the mother churches in Burgundy. "One reason for this is that the daughter abbeys of the Cistercian churches were not independent of one another like those of the Benedictines. All were founded subject to a periodical and strict visitation carried out from or on behalf of the mother-abbey. Thus from first to last there was kept up a regular intercourse and communication with continental architecture, which in the case of the Benedictines did not exist. Moreover, the Cistercians were constrained far more than any other order to manual labour. Instead of study, as with Benedictines and Cluniacs, they were enjoined manual labour. This we know often took the form of manual labour in putting up their own monastic buildings and churches. They worked so much with their own hands at building, especially the *fratres conversi* that they must have known far more about planning and building construction than Benedictines or Cluniacs; and no doubt frequently learnt to take a genuine interest and pleasure in the operation of building."

Ford Abbey followed the general plan of such buildings, and has retained, in spite of much alteration and re-building, a considerable portion of its monastic architecture and plan.

The principal entrance was from the westward, and the wall bounding the monastery on this side appears to have started from the bank of the river. This wall would enclose the industrial court, an invariable accompaniment of a Cistercian foundation, in which the endeavour of the brethren was to be self-supporting. They also worked at their several trades, smithing, carpentry or building, and their skill in the last two was devoted to repairing or extending various parts of the edifice. They were their own bakers, brewers, and millers. and the industrial court would contain sheds and buildings for all their various occupations.

To the left of this court was the barn for the storage of the rich crops from the monastic lands. This building is still standing, and

shows considerable remains of fourteenth century work. At this point we come to a massive and lofty wall, no doubt part of the original enclosure of the inner precinct containing the strictly monastic edifices. Through it, and somewhere at this spot, must have been the gateway, for a sort of gatehouse exists a little to the left, where a porter, either monk or layman, always superintended the ingress and egress of the inner precinct.

The cloister court would be entered by a gateway on its western side. Of this cloister only the north wall remains, although those portions of the buildings which originally bounded the court remain on the east and west sides respectively. Generally the north walk of the cloister was the place in which the novices were daily instructed in the rule, and here was often a recess for the seat of the claustral prior. Here, too, would be the separate seats and desks, known as carrells, where the monks sat to read.

Still standing near the centre of the eastern side of the Ford Abbey cloister court is the Chapter House *in situ*.

Adjoining the chapter house on the south there would be, judging by other houses of the order, the Sacristy, intervening between the chapter house and the church. It opened into the latter, the north transept of which joined immediately on to it, but no traces of the sacristy remain. The north wall of the church must have enclosed the cloister on its south side. The position of the church was to the south of the other buildings, a position rendered essential by the necessity of having the domestic buildings and offices in close proximity to the river. Had the river been to the south we should have found that the church had been placed to the north of the domestic buildings, as at Fountains, Cleeve, etc. At the south end of the eastern boundary of the cloister there was a doorway, now blocked up ; and, immediately opposite, another doorway. The interior of this portion of the house is now so filled up with stairs and modern fittings that the remains of these doorways are scarcely visible, except on minute examination, but if once discerned they are quite obvious, as also are the ancient vaulting shafts. Here no doubt would be the entrance from the cloister court to the private gardens, placed to the east of the monastery. This entrance passage crosses the end of a wing, 168 feet long, running due north from the chapter house. The wing was originally in one length, with the exception of the passage

just mentioned, and was divided by a row of eleven columns down the centre ; the whole covered with groined vaulting. All the columns remain entire, as also does the vaulting with the exception of one bay next to the passage, which, together with the division wall, have been destroyed to make room for the modern stairs leading to the upper floor.

During the monks' occupation the ground floor of this wing was devoted to various purposes, such as the brothers' parlour and the noviciates' school. The upper floor was the monks' dormitory, to which access was gained by an arched stairway still existing but walled up. In the western wall of the dormitory running northwards from the old stairway, are thirteen lancet windows ; a figure that corresponds with the number of brethren who occupied this apartment. Hearne describes this wing thus :—" But now, though one of the chief uses of the cloysters was for walking,yet in Religious Houses they had sometime galleries for the same end. We have an instance of it in Ford Abbey, in Devonshire, which is one of the most entire abbeys in England ; in the east front whereof, which is the oldest of the two fronts (though the south front be the chiefest), there is a gallery called the Monks' Walk, with small cells on the right hand and little narrow windows on the left."

Still keeping on the upper floor we find that the southern portion of this wing opened into the library, situated over the chapter house, through which, above the sacristy, was a communication with the north transept of the church, containing the night stairs used by the monks when taking part in the midnight services, or those held at an early hour in the morning—the exact times varied in the different orders.

There appear to have been two infirmaries in the monastery, one for the use of the monks, the aged, infirm, and sick, the other for laymen. In the *Monasticon*, already referred to, the author speaks of land given in the twelfth or thirteenth century, to support three poor persons in the *secular* infirmary, which would be properly placed in the western part of the monastic precinct, but all traces of this building have disappeared. The monks' infirmary was adjoining the northern end of the east wing, and was entered by means of a door with a double opening in the east wall, now blocked up. This door would afford access also to the necessary offices of the monastery,

under which passed a stream of water which acted as the main sewer. The stream was obtained by a dam in the river, which diverted a supply of water into an artificial watercourse across the meadows and garden ; the overflow escaped under the out-offices and wing of the building.

On the north side of the cloister and at right angles to it was the refectory, adjoining which was the lavatory, but whether this latter was a mere recess or a structure of great beauty, as often found, it is impossible to say. The position of the refectory with regard to the cloister was in accordance with the regulations of Cistercian houses ; the great exception being found at Cleeve Abbey, where the refectory is parallel with the cloister and not at right angles to it.

Attached to the refectory on the west was the kitchen, the original fireplace being at the south end. An ingeniously contrived staircase of stone at the back of the fireplace gave access to the hall above the refectory, and to all the upper portions of the west wing. An invariable feature of monastic refectories was the pulpit, from which a monk read to the brethren while dining. Examples of refectory pulpits remain at Beverley, Shrewsbury, Chester, etc.

This west wing extended southwards towards the church, and northwards as far as or possibly beyond the stream or sewer. The ground floor contained the entrance to the cloister court and was vaulted in a double avenue corresponding to the east wing. Here were situated the abbey storehouses, and rooms for the lay brothers when engaged on indoor employments, and here was in all probability that very important part of all mediæval houses, whether religious or secular, the *guesten-hall*, or *hospitium*, where the monks extended hospitality to all needy wayfarers or to visitors and honoured guests. The hospitality did not end with food and entertainment, for above the hall were dormitories for the guests, the lay brothers, and domestics.

The sewer from the east wing passed under the domestic court to the north of the refectory and kitchen ; under the north end of the west wing ; and then through the industrial court and farmyard, finally emptying itself into the river.

DINING ROOM, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 37.*

CHAPTER III

CHURCH AND CHAPTER HOUSE

IT may be taken as a general rule in Cistercian monasteries that the church was raised a few steps above the cloister, and the form of the ground at Ford Abbey makes it pretty clear that this arrangement was adhered to there. No trace of the church remains, but by comparing the general plan of Ford with other establishments of the order, it is easy to conjecture its exact position and form. It may here be mentioned that the chapter house has been frequently written about as the chapel, but although it is at present used as such, in regard to both position and plan, this portion of the structure would be entirely contrary to the well-defined rules of the Cistercian order in regard to a church or chapel. It is therefore an error to suppose that it originally fulfilled that purpose, and its having been mistaken for the church may be accounted for by the fact that the old historians have made but few references to " the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Ford." Hearne, however, mentions it in his account of Godstow Abbey, when he says :—" There were private chapells in many other religious houses, one whereof (to instance no more) is now to be seen in the easternmost end of Ford Abbey before mentioned, and is made use of as the family chapell ; the Abbey Church itself, which stood at the east end of the said south front, about two hundred feet above the chapell (commonly called *the Oratory*) being so entirely demolished that the oldest man living in those parts (as I am assured

by a very ingenious friend) does not remember to have seen any part of it standing, though in making the gardens they often dig up human bones."

Dr. Oliver tells us that the church was consecrated on December 19th, 1239—almost a century after the monks settled at Ford. In the ancient MS. of the monk it is related that several interments of patrons of the abbey took place in the church many years before 1239, and Dr. Oliver's date may be that of a re-consecration, for the founder of this community, Richard Fitz-Baldwin, is said to have been buried here. Both he, and Richard, the first abbot, were in the first instance buried at Brightley, but afterwards Adelicia gave orders for their remains to be disinterred and removed to Ford. Adelicia herself died in 1142, and was buried in the new abbey church, all three interments being, if we are to believe the monk, "in the presbytery, beyond which now the high altar is erected." Hawisia de Courtenay died in 1219, and was buried on the south side of the presbytery, while her husband, Reginald de Courtenay, who had predeceased her in 1194, was buried on the north side. The next recorded interment is in 1242, that of Robert de Courtenay, who was buried in the presbytery "with great devotion and honour." The monk describes his monument as being that of an armed knight with a Latin inscription in verse. Camden states that this monument was in the form of a pyramid, on which was engraved an effigy in armour, erected to the memory of "Robert, Lord Courtenay (ob. 1242), who married Mary, youngest daughter of William de Redvers, Earl of Devonshire." On it was this inscription :—

"Hic jacet ingenui de Courtenay gleba Roberti
Militis egregii virtutum laude referti
Quem genui strenuus Reginaldus Courtiensis
Qui procer Eximius fuerat tunc Devoniensis."

Camden's account, however, must not be too readily accepted, for epitaphs were rarely used at that date, and the construction of the inscription points to its being at least two centuries later.

The last recorded interment is that of Robert's son, John, who died in 1273, and was buried near his father, before the high altar.

John Courtenay was as distinguished for his piety as his ancestors, and equalled them in his devotion and goodwill to the monks of Ford. His firm belief in the efficacy of their prayers is shown by the following

story. Once, as he was returning from a long voyage, he and all on board his vessel were in imminent danger of shipwreck, and despaired of saving their lives. Then John Courtenay spoke words of encouragement to them. "Mariners," he said, "be not afraid, but take courage, behave yourselves like men, and lend us your assistance who are ready to be ship-wrecked but for one hour, and by that time my monks of Ford will be risen to their prayers, and will intercede for me to the Lord, so that no storms, or winds, or waves shall be able to shipwreck us."

Their ship being brought safely to land, the crew, who a short time before had been filled with despair, were full of joy, and they, together with the Lord John Courtenay, gave solemn and devout thanks to God for their safety.

Hugh Courtenay, who succeeded John, was a very different man from his predecessor. He took away all the cattle belonging to the monks which were in the grange at Westford, and caused their oxen at Westford and Orchard to be loosed from the plough, and driven away to Dartmoor. The second time he visited Orchard, the people of the abbey threatened to shoot him, and were successful in driving him away.

It was customary for founders, patrons, and persons of rank to be buried in the church of the monastery, while the abbots were, in many cases, interred in the cloister, between the church and the chapter house, and occasionally in the chapter house itself. In later times the abbots were usually buried within the church.

The foundations of the church would probably have been traced out by the monks at a very early period of their building operations, and such progress would be made that the eastern part could be used for services long before the complete dedication, that is, if such took place in 1239. There is therefore no reason to question the statement of the monk as to these early interments.

Although no traces remain, the church probably followed the usual Cistercian plan. The rule of the order enacted that an abbey church was to have no aisles or triforium, and but one low tower, but this precept was soon neglected.

Mr. Francis Bond tells us that of the normal Cistercian plan with unaisled apsidal presbytery as found on the Continent we have no example in England, but that the other three types are all represented.

According to the same authority "the earliest in England and by far the most common is that with short aisleless presbytery, as at Kirkstall and originally as at Fountains, and Dore." In these cases the transept has one, two, or three rectangular chapels on the east side of each arm, which are separated from one another by solid walls, and this plan is the most common throughout Europe. Mr. Bond also tells us that in England it appears in the very first house built by the Cistercians —that of Waverley, in Surrey, founded in 1129—which has been proved to have been a church with aisleless nave and aisleless rectangular presbytery, and with a transept containing only one chapel in each arm. Some authorities, including Mr. Harold Brakspear, think that this plan was that of the first church of Tintern, founded two years after Waverley.

Strangely enough in Bond's interesting papers on "Mediæval Church Planning in England," contributed to "The Builder," no mention whatever is made of Ford Abbey, which, founded in 1141, must be regarded as one of the most important of the Cistercian foundations in this country.

The width of the nave at Ford was probably the same as that of the transepts, a proportion observed in all Cistercian churches of an early period, and the same width was followed for all the main portions, not only of the church itself, but of the monastery as well.

Each aisle would be about half the width of the nave, so that from these various measurements the church plan can be readily re-constructed. The length was subject to greater variations, for when the cloister court formed an oblong from west to east, its length was generally sufficient for the nave of the church without its overlapping the western wing of the domestic buildings. In those cases where the court was nearly square the nave would probably cover the end of the western wing, as it might have done at Ford. The chancel was usually long enough to have a window on either side beyond the chapels attached to the transepts.

The church would naturally be subject to slight alteration and reconstruction from time to time, and the most likely alteration to have taken place would be the lengthening of the chancel eastwards, a relaxation of the rule governing the simple plan of the churches begun even before the time the one at Ford appears to have been dedicated.

The fittings and furniture of a Cistercian church were to follow the austere rule applied to the larger fabric. Upon the altar there was to be but one candlestick, and that of iron, the crucifix was to be of painted wood, the chalice of silver-gilt, and the vestments of the simplest kind.

Adjoining the north transept of the church, as we have seen, was the sacristy, and to the north of this again, the chapter house, in which, after the Chapter Mass, the daily Chapter was held, when the blessing of God was invoked upon the day's work, the lives of the martyrs were read, and faults against the rules of the monastery confessed and corrected; and all the important business of the day was here transacted.

This chapter house still shows considerable fragments which testify to its Norman origin. It is a noble apartment, with a pointed vault of two bays having shafts and ribs of transition Norman character. The wall ribs are enriched with the usual chevron ornament of the period, although even here the portions that remain bear evidences of mutilation, and are partially obscured by a pulpit and wall panelling. The quoins also on the exterior of the eastern end exhibit marked characteristics of the Norman style. The room was originally lighted only at the eastern end, but no trace of this window remains, the one now in position being of fifteenth century date. When this window was inserted the exterior of the eastern wall was completely cased over, in much the same manner as the western wall was treated in the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding this disfigurement the usual characteristics of a Cistercian chapter house may still be recognised. In the centre was an entrance arch, where now is a doorway, and on either side a smaller arch not reaching to the ground, into which stone window frames have been inserted. These three arches originally formed an open arcade, protected by the cloister which ran along the front. Notwithstanding the external seventeenth century dressings and other alterations, this old chapter house has retained much of the work of the twelfth-century builders, and the date of its erection may be fixed as being between 1165 and 1170. In its upper storey was the library, a large and lofty room since the raising of the roof (when the whole abbey was converted into a mansion), and one that contains but faint traces of its mediæval condition.

SIDNEY HEATH

CHAPTER IV

THE ABBOTS OF FORD

THE head of a monastery was the Abbot, a name which appears to have been first given as a title of honour to aged or distinguished monks. The word is derived from *Abba*, the Chaldee or Syriac form of the common Semitic word for Father, and was chosen to designate the head of a monastery because he stood in the relationship of a father to the community. The abbots of the greater houses held their estates under the monarch, as barons, and as such they were entitled to the political rank of this class, in virtue of which they sat and voted in Parliament. According to Fuller, sixty-four abbots and thirty-six priors were called to Parliament during the reign of Henry III., but this number being thought too many, it was reduced by Edward III. to twenty-five abbots and two priors, to whom were afterwards added two abbots, bringing the total up to twenty-nine. On the death of an abbot of one of the greater monasteries, two of the brethren were deputed by the community to carry the intelligence to the king, and to beg leave of him to elect a successor. During the vacancy of the office the Crown administered the revenues of the monastery. The abbot could be elected by his future subjects in one of three ways:—" (1) By individual voting, *per viam scrutinii*; (2) by the choice of a certain number, or even of one eminent person, to elect in the name of the community, a mode of election known as

electio per compromissum; and (3) by acclamation, or the uncontradicted declaration of the common wish of the body."[1] No one could be chosen for the office until he had reached the age of twenty-five years; and the appointment was for three years, or for life, according to circumstances connected with the endowment, etc.

When the abbot had been duly elected, he was accompanied by the community in procession to the church, where he was proclaimed as their new superior, after which the *Te Deum* was sung. But even yet he was allowed to take no part in the administration until after his confirmation and instalment.

When the election had taken place and the necessary documents recording it had been drawn up, some of the brethren were despatched again to the King, or in the case of the smaller houses, to the founder or patron, to obtain his consent to the choice of the community. "In the event of this petition being successful," says Abbot Gasquet, "the next step was to obtain confirmation from the ecclesiastical authority, which might either be the bishop of the diocese, or in the cases of exempt houses, the Pope. In either case the delegates of the community would have to present a long series of documents to prove that the process had been carried out correctly. First came the royal license to choose; then the formal appointment of the day of election; the result of the election; and the method by which it was effected; the letter signed by the whole community, requesting confirmation of the elect in his office, and sealed by the convent seal; the royal assent to the election, and finally an attested statement of the entire process by which it had been made."

Should the election not prove satisfactory, the ecclesiastical authority either called for another election, or appointed someone of his own choosing to the office.

The monastic system according to the Rule of S. Benedict was based entirely upon the supremacy of the abbot. Implicit obedience to the authority of the superior was enjoined upon the brethren, and his commands were to be obeyed without question or hesitation. Upon this principle the success of the entire system depended.

There was no limitation to the number of houses over which an abbot could preside, provided that they belonged to the same, or a kindred community.

[1] English Monastic Life (F. A. Gasquet).

During the eleventh century some of the wealthy and more powerful monasteries began to claim exemption from the visitations of the bishops of the dioceses wherein they were situated, and to put themselves under the direct authority of the Pope, and having gained partial exemption from episcopal government, the abbots practically exercised quasi-episcopal jurisdiction over their own houses and estates. They were also allowed to consecrate priests from members of the minor orders, by benediction.

From the earliest times, all abbots appear to have been entitled to carry the pastoral staff[1] as the badge of their office, within the domain of the monastery, when such was exempt from diocesan jurisdiction, and during the tenth and eleventh centuries it became customary for them to wear the ring, mitre, gloves, and sandals, and all the insignia of a bishop.

The *Monasticon Devoniensis* gives the names of the abbots of Ford, which form apparently a very complete chain.

The first abbot of the community, Richard, was never actually at Ford, he having died at Brightley before the removal of the brethren from that place. He was, however, buried at Ford, and was succeeded in the abbacy by Robert de Penynton, who was appointed before the removal to Ford in 1141, and remained in office until after 1168. The third abbot, Baldwin, was one of the most notable men who ruled at Ford, as well as one of the most enlightened prelates of his time. He remained at Ford until he was promoted to the see of Worcester in 1181, but his stay in the Midlands was of short duration as three years later he was translated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury. His name is closely connected with the long and bitter feud that played an important part in the early annals of " the Mother-City of the Anglo-Saxons." It appears that Baldwin, together with Hubert Walter, attempted to found a great church and college of secular canons, who were to form in future the chapter of the Archbishop; for the community of Christ Church, Canterbury, consisted of regular monks whose influence and power had grown so enormously since they had acted as guardians of the shrine of the

[1] The crook of a staff when borne before a bishop was turned outwards, but reversed or turned inwards when carried before an abbot. The staff as a symbol of jurisdiction was carried before the prelates in all functions performed within such jurisdiction.

STAIRCASE, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page* 41.

new and popular martyr, S. Thomas à Becket, that they proved to be a veritable thorn in the side of the Archbishop. The monks of Christ Church naturally regarded this as an infringement of their prerogative, and as an attempt to supplant them by a community much more likely to be influenced by King and Archbishop, inasmuch as they would be but slightly under the Papal jurisdiction. This new college was at first established in the parish church of Hackington, in spite of the stubborn opposition of the monks, who immediately appealed to the Pope. The Archbishop promptly suspended them, and Henry II. visited Canterbury in person to allay their fears and to entreat them to withdraw their appeal and settle the matter by arbitration. When they refused the King begged Baldwin to cancel his order of suspension, because " he was in despair at losing so many valuable intercessors." To oblige Henry, Baldwin granted them a general absolution, but was as far as ever from being deterred in his original project. Instead he made arrangements for the college to be removed to a site opposite S. Dunstan's Church, and the foundations were laid on February 18th, 1187. The new building was still called Hackington College, and this name appears on many old documents in reference to this plot of land in the parish of S. Dunstan. In the end the monks proved victorious, for the Pope ordered the destruction of the college. Even then, however, the indomitable Baldwin was not to be denied, for he made another transfer of this unfortunate foundation to Lambeth, but this also was destroyed by Papal authority. As a writer Baldwin will always be remembered as the author of De Sacramento Altaris, a work written in Ford Abbey before he was appointed abbot. It is a work of peculiar interest from its having been printed at Cambridge by John Siberch in 1521, the year when the first printing press was introduced there, and its being the fourth book printed by Siberch. To the historical student Baldwin is better known for his celebrated tour through Wales in 1188, on a mission to preach a crusade for the recovery of Jerusalem. His success there is said to have been remarkable.

Hoveden, an old chronicler, gives the following description of the crowning of Richard I. by Baldwin in Westminster Abbey, on September 3rd, 1189 :—" The archbishop covered his head with a linen cloth, hallowed, and set his cap thereon, and then, after he had put on his royal garment and his uppermost robe, the archbishop delivered him

the sword with which he should beat down the enemies of the church; which done, two earls put his shoes upon his feet; and having his mantle put upon him, the archbishop forbade him, on the behalf of Almighty God, to presume to take upon him this dignity except he faithfully meant to perform those things which he had there sworn to perform. Whereunto the king made answer that by God's grace he would perform them. Then the king took the crown beside the altar and delivered it to the archbishop, which he set upon the king's head."

Having thus crowned Richard I., Baldwin accompanied that monarch to the Holy Land, where he showed the same pluck and endurance that had characterised his clerical rule; and at the head of his own retainers he saved the Christian forces from total defeat before Acre. He died broken-hearted in Palestine, and was buried in the city of Tyre. The generally received opinion is that this famous man was of humble origin, but Dr. Hook has thrown a doubt on this point and has suggested that from his name he may have been connected with the family of the founder of Ford Abbey. It seems very improbable, however, that his connection with so illustrious a man as Richard Fitz-Baldwin should have remained unrecorded, especially as he was born only some twenty years after the death of Richard.

Baldwin's successor at Ford was one Robert, but he did not hold the office for long, as in 1191, John de Ford, or Devonius, became abbot. He seems to have travelled much, and "came home the richer in knowledge and in manners," so that, as Fuller states, "Ford Abbey had more learning therein than three convents of the same bignesse anywhere in England." Of this abbot Prince wrote that he "carrys the signature of his country in his forehead." His birthplace is unknown, but Dr. Oliver tells us that he "resigned in 1191, Bindon Abbey," to become abbot of Ford, which he retained until his death in 1220. He wrote many theological works, of which MS. copies are still in existence, but none have ever been printed. Unfortunately or perhaps fortunately his ACTA JOHANNIS REGIS cannot be traced, but as he was the friend and confessor of King John, it would probably be most interesting reading. His MS. Life of St. Wulfric, or a copy, is in the Cottonian MSS. and another copy is in the Library of Eton College; each possesses separate dedications to Bartholomew, Bishop

of Exeter, and to Archbishop Baldwin. He died in 1220 and was buried in the Abbey of Ford.

It was about this time that one of the monks, Maurice Somerset, did much to uphold the reputation of this secluded monastic house as a seat of learning. He had received his early education at Oxford, and was eventually elected Abbot of Fountains Abbey.

After the death of John Devonius came another John, of whom no record appears to exist, save that he is mentioned as being in office in 1234.

In 1236, Roger, sometimes called "the Cistercian," was abbot. He wrote the *Revelations of St. Elizabeth of Flanders; A Narrative of the Martyrdom of the* 11,000 *Virgins at Cologne;* and a metrical poem, *Encomium Mariæ.* Of these three Latin MSS., none of which were printed, the first was at one time among the Cottonian MSS., the second is in the Library of St. John's College, Oxford, and of the third nothing is known.

Roger was succeeded in the abbacy by John de Warwick, and, according to the monkish historian, he was in office when Robert de Courtenay, who died in 1242, gave to the monastery certain privileges which he had purchased of Walter Pomeroy. From the same authority we learn that Adam became abbot in 1240, and was in office when Robert de Courtenay was buried at Ford two years after.

The tenth abbot, William, died in 1262, and was buried in the chapter house of the parent abbey of Waverley, in Surrey. Dr. Oliver calls William the ninth abbot, but he is really the tenth, including the first one who died at Brightley. After William came William de Crewkerne, whose term of office was somewhat stormy in consequence of quarrels with Hugh de Courtenay, then residing at Colcombe, Colyton, and Bishop Bronescombe, the spiritual head of the diocese. The result was that he was excommunicated in 1275, but the monk states that he remained abbot until 1282. On account of this feud, Hugh de Courtenay chose Cowic Priory as his place of interment, where his widow was also buried in 1328, thirty-six years after her husband.

A Nicholas was abbot in 1283-4, and William de Fria sometime before 1287, when, according to the monk, he was engaged in a lawsuit with Hugh de Courtenay. He is described as a man of great goodness and much learning, and in 1297 he resigned the abbacy of Ford

to become abbot of Newenham. On his death his body was taken to Ford for burial.

Henry succeeded him, and was in office on January 16th, 1319. He was followed by John de Chidley, who came into office June 24th, 1330, and who is mentioned in Bishop Grandisson's Register of 1345 in a letter which impeaches his probity. A period of depression seems to have overtaken the monastery at this time and to have rendered the position of abbot a post of difficulty, for we find him excusing his abbey from contributing to liquidate the demands of the Papal Court upon the bishop of the diocese, on the grounds of the heavy expenses incurred in repairing the dilapidated buildings, especially the church, which was almost in ruins.

Adam, the next abbot, in 1354, found the church greatly in need of rebuilding, for it was discovered that John de Chidley had not restored the property as he had stated.

John Chylheglys is mentioned as abbot on May 24th, 1373. Walter Burstok took office in 1378, and was still abbot in 1382, when he was succeeded by Nicholas, who is mentioned in 1388, and again in 1410.

It is interesting to note that in 1402, during the abbacy of Nicholas, Robert Chard, a monk of Ford, obtained permission to immure himself as an anchorite in a "solitary house," or cell, beneath Crewkerne Church.

John Bokeland took the abbacy on June 10th, 1419, and was succeeded by Richard, and then by Robert, who was abbot on June 11th, 1448. In 1462 Elias took office, and on July 31st, 1489, William White was head of the community. He is mentioned December 7th, 1490, and again on April 18th, 1521.

Then came the last abbot of Ford, Thomas Chard, the final link in the long chain of devout and earnest men who had for nearly four hundred years worthily upheld the traditions of this stately home of religion and learning, and who had done so much to keep unsoiled the honour of Church and State, before the ecclesiastical changes of Henry VIII. took place. Chard, no doubt, saw that a change was impending, and that the days of his abbey, as a monastic house at any rate, were numbered. However this may have been he remained long enough to carry out many important architectural changes in the building, which, together with a record of his life and work, must be dealt within another chapter.

TOWER FRONT, FORD ABBEY. *To face page 40.*

CHAPTER V

THOMAS CHARD

On becoming Abbot of Ford, Thomas Chard immediately set about improving the monastery, both in its construction as well as in matters of law and discipline. With this object in view he decided to build a new refectory of an unusually magnificent description. The site he chose was the space intervening between the west side of the ancient buildings and the wall enclosing this inner precinct. A space in the old west wing he converted into a buttery or a serving room, and by making a doorway through the wall of the kitchen, he obtained the necessary communication with his new refectory. The length of this hall, as originally completed by the abbot, was one hundred and fifteen feet, although its present length is only fifty-five feet, scarcely half of its original extent.

The breadth is about twenty-eight feet, and the height is exactly of that measurement, although it is evident from the fact that the stone mouldings of the shafts between the windows terminate abruptly at the top, that the roof is not so high above the windows as the designer intended, and an examination of the roof itself shows that it is a later work altogether, and the ceiling an arrangement of the materials of the original panelling. This ceiling is flat, but curves away slightly at the sides, and is formed of beautifully carved panels, painted and gilded with gold stars in the compartments.

Although much reduced from its former size this refectory is still a magnificent hall of four bays, lighted on the south side by four fine windows, with another bay containing the external entrance. The north wall contains five blank windows similar in design to those on the south.

The western half of the refectory is now filled up with apartments in three storeys besides the basement, and the ancient south wall has been completely transformed. These modern apartments occupy the space of five more bays, which once had windows corresponding to the four still remaining. The west wall remains for the most part in its original state, and it appears to have contained two windows, for although the exterior is so covered with ivy as to conceal every feature, yet the modern builders who altered Chard's magnificent work left the upper part of one of the windows exposed to view in one of the rooms upstairs. The head of this window is on a level with those of the ancient side windows, and except that its lights are a little narrower, it seems to have coincided in every respect with them, and it is possible that a corresponding window was in that part of the wall now filled up.

On the north side four of the bays were blank wall, as a mass of buildings was placed to the north of the refectory in that part, but the fifth bay still possesses its regular window just clear to the west of the projecting buildings. The lower part of the window has been blocked up, but the upper has retained its glazing.

Besides the refectory, Thomas Chard built many other chambers in close proximity to it. The beautiful tower on the south side was his work, the ground floor of which forms the entrance porch to the refectory. Above the porch is a series of chambers connected by a turret stair, and lighted by the bay windows seen in the front of the

tower. The rooms can now be approached from the modern saloon. In order that his name should be handed down to posterity Chard placed upon the parapet above the windows an inscription recording the date of the erection of these buildings in 1528, and his own name as the founder.

AN'O D'NI MILLESIMO QUINGESIMO VIC^MO OCTA° A D'NO FACTUM EST, THOMA CHARD, ABB.

The buildings to the north of the new refectory consisted of a set of chambers, the extent and importance of which can only be conjectured from the portions that remain. The abbot's initials, T.C., in letters about two feet high, are sculptured on one of the windows on the north side. The fragment itself is not an insignificant mass, containing as it does a basement and three floors over it, and it is higher by one storey than the lofty walls of the refectory. Besides two sets of garderobes, of which the shafts remain, it held only the staircase and ante-chambers to another set of apartments. This suite, which appears to have formed a wing to the north, although possibly never completed, can be traced only by marks whence its walls sprang out from the side of the staircase. Evidence of its height, which was one storey less than that of the portion still standing, may be deduced from the state of this wall, the space which it covered being faced with rough rubble, and the rest with ashlar. This makes it apparent that it was of the same height as the refectory, although probably divided into two storeys.

The ancient staircase was superseded by a modern one when the abbey was transformed into a mansion, and to give an adequate access to the foot of it, the external wall on the east side was completely cut away to a height of ten or twelve feet, and a timber support to the upper part inserted.

Long before Chard's time the old rules for the arrangement of a Cistercian Abbey had fallen into desuetude, so that it is somewhat difficult to assign any specific purpose to these buildings north of the refectory, and to the small chambers in the south tower. A monastery, whether favoured with prosperity or struggling against adversity, would be compelled from time to time to change its form, either by the addition of new portions or the destruction of old ones. An early change, and one which became a recognised feature of a house of this order, was the providing of a separate lodging for the abbot, and this

was usually placed in the eastern part of the grounds, most remote from the public.

From the increasing poverty of the foundation at Ford, it seems to have dispensed with this luxury down to Chard's time, for there is no trace of any such building to the east. It is quite possible that Chard intended some new part of the monastery for his own use, and if so, was adhering to the primitive rule of the order, that the abbot should be housed in the western part, whence he could conveniently receive strangers and guests. The north side of the cloisters—all that remains of this once beautiful portion of the abbey—owes much of its appearance to Thomas Chard, although there are many indications that his work here was never completed. The exterior of the cloister is formed by a series of beautifully designed Gothic windows, and over them a frieze of stonework, the panels being charged with upwards of forty shields ; on two occur the name of Thomas Chard in full, on many others his initials, or the insignia of his office as abbot. On other shields appear the arms of various benefactors to the abbey (see Chapter VIII.).

It is not easy to conjecture whether Chard intended to complete the quadrangle of the cloister, or in what way he proposed to unite this northern portion with the east and west walks. Outside the two extreme bays one would expect to find some sign of preparation for the walls which would have abutted there, and the form of the buttresses at either end seems to indicate some such intention, as these have the appearance of having been prepared to receive some adjunct. At the east end also, the arch would be the most natural means of communication with the eastern cloister-walk, but the elaborate panelling continues above. In the extreme bay at the west end there is no arch, but an ordinary window with the frieze above, as if the designer had relinquished all idea of continuing the cloister on this side. In the interior of the cloister the back wall is panelled with tracery corresponding with the windows, the bays being divided by vaulting shafts. Here the new work appears to have been in part only a casing of the older structure, and the original wall is thus partially preserved.

Before Chard's time there were various openings through it into the staircase, the refectory, and the kitchen, but he left only one opening at the east end, and this is now blocked up. He seems also to have done away with the ancient staircase to the dormitory, and provided in its

SCREEN AND STALLS IN CHAPEL, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 53.*

Panel over Cloisters

place a narrow passage leading to the refectory. This had been rebuilt before Chard's time, reduced in length at the north end, and raised to form two storeys. An oak roof of rich workmanship was revealed by the fall of part of the modern ceiling which had hitherto concealed it.

Regarding the actual condition of the monastery at the time Abbot Chard undertook its restoration, there is no record, but from what remains of his work, it must have been little short of a rebuilding of the entire fabric. Leland, who visited the abbey whilst the work was in progress, writes :—" Coenobium nunc sumptibus plane non credendis abbas magnificentissime restaurat "—(" The Abbot at incredible expense is now restoring the monastery most gloriously.") Risdon says of Ford :—" This fabric, though it have yielded up to time its antique beauty, yet somewhat sheweth of what magnificence once it was ; whose structure, stately and high withal, amongst curious carvings sheweth the letters T.C. intermixed, which (some affirm) served for the last abbot's name there, Thomas Charde."

This restoration or rebuilding of the Abbey of Ford, although his largest undertaking, and one which the Dissolution debarred him from completing, was by no means the only occasion on which Thomas Chard had proved himself a generous benefactor and a gifted architect. In addition to rebuilding the chapel of S. Margaret, at Honiton, he appears to have added much to the church of Awliscombe, where the beautiful south porch, its adjoining chantry, and the north or Tracy aisle, all bear the impress of his hand and mind. The south window of the chantry is especially fine with an array of bosses and tabernacled niches, but the east window is poor in comparison. The sculpture on the capitals of the pillars of the Tracy aisle is good, the easternmost bears a shield on which is the " Sacred Heart," surrounded by the Crown of Thorns, and the pierced hands and feet of the Redeemer.

In the east window of the aisle are four figures, among them S. Catherine and S. Barbara, while the central light contains what is apparently the Abbot's monogram, above which is *the pelican in her piety*, allusive perhaps to Bishop Fox, who bore this device for his arms, and who was head of the diocese from 1488-1494.

It has also been suggested that as Dr. Chard was warden of Ottery College, 1513-1518, about the time when the beautiful Dorset aisle was built there, the inspiration of this eminent architect may have

influenced the design of this fine structure, as the work must have been constantly under his observation during this period.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISSOLUTION

WHILE taking so active a part in the preservation of his abbey, Dr. Chard by no means neglected the spiritual and scholastic welfare of the brethren ; for he attended with his accustomed thoroughness to the internal administration of the affairs of the community ; and his rule was marked by that steady and consistent devotion to duty for which his public life was distinguished. One of his first acts was to appoint a master for the monastic school, William Tyler, M.A., of Axminster, " pueros domus sive monasterii nostri litteris grammaticalibus informabit, docebit et dogmatizabit." He was also " at fit times to expound and declare subjects from holy writ whenever and as much as the abbot should require in the refectory of the monastery." Very probably the necessity of appointing a schoolmaster arose from the incompetency of the monks, whose growing neglect of the stringent rules of their order incapacitated them from filling a post which in former times had been undertaken by each in turn. For his services

Master Tyler received an annuity of £3 6s. 8d., and a gown of four yards of broad cloth, at five pence per yard, his table like one of the brethren, and a furnished chamber in the monastery, possibly one of the numerous rooms added to the original building by the abbot. In more strictly secular matters, a long list of leases granted by Chard indicate at once his activity in that direction. In Pulman's "*Book of the Axe*," we read that the last abbot's government "was judicious, and his devotion to his duties great. But his career must have been an anxious and troublous one. The approaching Reformation was indicated by repeated occurrences which must have kept him in a state of constant alarm; whilst the unscrupulous character of the monarch held out little hope of consideration or respect for the ancient faith and its institutions, should they prove impediments to his kingly purposes. With reason might the Crosier tremble in the grasp from which it was destined to be speedily and rudely snatched."

Shortly after Chard's accession a highly interesting transaction took place, and one very characteristic of the times. The document whereon it is recorded is still in existence and was at one time in the possession of the late F. G. Coleridge, Esq., of Ottery S. Mary. It has been referred to as being merely an acknowledgment of a debt due to Cardinal Wolsey, but its ominous nature must have been only too well understood by Chard. It reads as follows:—

"Ego Thomas, abbas monasterii beate Virginis Marie de Ffordâ, ordinis Cisterciensis, Sacre Theologie Professor, fateor me debere Reverendissimo in Christo Patri Dño Thome Cardinali Eboracensi, necnon legato de latere, pro procurationibus variorum monasteriorum dicti ordinis infra regnum Anglie *ciiili. vs.* solvendos London predicto Reverendissimo Dño Cardinali ad tria Festa Pascha immediate subsequentia post datum presentium per equales portiones. In cujus rei testimonium sigillum meum opposui et manu propriâ subscripsi. Datum anno Dñi millesimo quingentessimo vicesimo tertio, die vero mensis Augusti septimo decimo.

"Per me Thom^{a}, abb^{e} de Fforda."

Seal, a stag's head cabossed. Indorsed:—

"Recepi xxv^{to} Aprilis a° 1524 primam solutionem tercie partis xxxiiij^{li} viij^{s} iiij^{d}."

The real significance of this letter appears to be that Wolsey, pandering to the depraved tastes of the king, was willing to procure

for him at any costs the means of continuing in the indulgence of his pleasures, and that for this purpose he had availed himself of his prerogative as legate *à latere* from the Pope, to extort money from the clergy with which to supply the king. Four months prior to the date of the abbot's letter, on April 15th, 1523, Henry assembled Parliament ostensibly to lend an air of authority to their proceedings, and after much opposition Wolsey succeeded in exacting a considerable subsidy from the clergy. This transaction furnishes the clue to the proper understanding of Chard's letter, which bears the date of the following August. This extortion of money from the Church was the beginning of the end so far as the religious houses were concerned, and when the final blow came it resulted in the entire confiscation of all Church property. Within the short period of two years the king became possessed of the revenues of six hundred and forty-five convents, two thousand three hundred and seventy-four chantries and free chapels, and one hundred and ten hospitals, while ninety colleges were demolished in several counties. The total amount of the revenues of these establishments was £161,000, and the whole was annexed to the Crown.

Prior to the Reformation the Cistercians alone possessed in England 101 abbeys and monasteries, and their yearly revenues are estimated at about £370,000 of our present money.

Chard doubtless foresaw the storm that was gathering over the church, but far from being dismayed, he seems to have been braced to further efforts, the efforts, perhaps, of despair, for right up to the last moment he appears, as we see by many unfinished portions, to have worked at his beloved building in the hope perhaps that its very beauty and majesty might avail to spare the stately pile he had erected from the fate that other, and even fairer, houses had met with at the hands of the despoilers. But neither the piety of the abbot, nor the creation of his hands availed to save Ford Abbey from the clutches of the king.

On March 8th, 1539, the work of Thomas Chard was arrested, and he became a helpless spectator of the desecration of his buildings and the extinction of his hopes. The wording of the document of surrender, which he and the brethren were induced to sign, must have been singularly out of harmony with their feelings, as with heavy hearts and reluctant hands they attached their names and seals to the royal

document, of which the following is a translation :—

" To all the faithful in Christ, to whom this present writing shall come: Thomas Chard, abbot of the monastery or abbacy, and of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Ford, in the County of Devon, of the Cistercian order, and the same place and convent, everlasting salvation in the Lord.

Know ye, that we, the aforesaid abbot and convent, by our unanimous assent and consent, with our deliberate minds, right knowledge, and mere motion, from certain just and reasonable causes especially moving our minds and consciences, have freely, and of our own accord given and granted, and by these presents do give, grant, and surrender and confirm to our most illustrious prince, Henry VIII., by the grace of God, king of England, lord of Ireland, supreme head of the Church of England in this land, all our said monastery or abbacy of Ford aforesaid. And also all and singular manors, lordships, messuages, etc. In testimony whereof, we, the aforesaid abbot and convent, have caused our common seal to be affixed to these presents. Given at our Chapter House of Ford aforesaid, on the 8th day of the month of March, and in the thirtieth year of the reign of King Henry aforesaid. Before me, William Petre, one of the clerks, etc., the day and year above written.

" By me, William Petre."

Per me Thomā abbem.
Willūs Rede, prior
John Cosen.
Robte Yetmister.
Johēs Newman.
Johēs Bridgwatr.
Thomas Stafford.
Johēs Ffawell.
W. Winsor.
Elizeus Oliscomb.
William Keynston.
William Dynyngton.
Richard Kingesbury.

There is no evidence to show why so much of the abbey was spared, or why it escaped far better than its fellows. Dr. Chard was a man of much influence,and although he was powerless to arrest the spoliation of the property he appears to have been successful in preserving a

large portion of the fabric from total destruction, although the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Ford was immediately razed to the ground, and all the fittings, images, paintings, manuscripts, etc., consigned to the flames.

The annual revenue of the abbey at the Dissolution has been differently estimated by Dugdale and Speed, the former computing it at £374 10s. 6½d., and the latter at £381 10s. 6d. The actual sum was probably somewhat less than either of these two amounts as in the Ecclesiastical Survey of Devon and Cornwall returned to the Crown by Bishop Veysey, on Nov. 3rd, 1536, the revenue of Ford Abbey is thus estimated :—

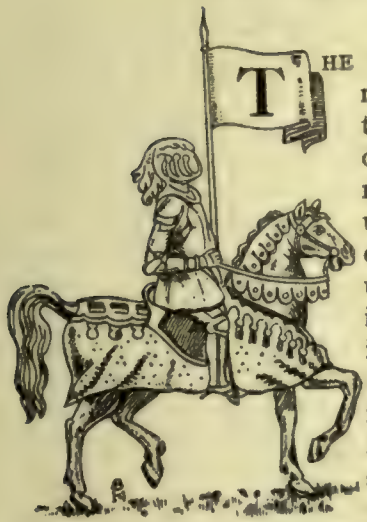
> " Decanus Honyton, abbatia de Forde, ubi Thomas Charde est abbas, totalis verus annuus Valor tam temporalium quam spiritualium a die et Anno praedictis ad £373 11s. o½d."

The pensions granted as compensation to the members of the community of the house of Ford for their lives reached a total of £161 13s. 4d., of which the ex-abbot was entitled to £80 a year, together with " fourtie wayne loads of fyre wood to be taken yerely during his lyfe owte of such woods being no pte. of demaynes of the said late howse, as thofficers of the king's courte of the augmentacōns or there deputies for the tyme shall appoynte and assigne." Eighteen months only had elapsed from the time when Thomas Cromwell and his Commissioners began their work of destruction, and the smaller foundations were already things of the past, the walls roofless, the windows shattered and broken, while moss and ivy were rapidly converting into picturesque ruins the magnificent structures which had been for centuries a standing testimony to the skill of man and fitting attributes to the worship of God. Well might the saintly abbot of Woburn solemnly declare that such " a scourge was never heard since Christ's passion," as he prayed aloud to God to have mercy upon those whose blood was shed like water, and whose habitations were utterly defiled and cast down.

Photo by F. Higgins & Son, Chard. MONK'S WALK, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 60.*

CHAPTER VII

ARMORIAL BEARINGS AT FORD ABBEY



THE old abbey seal, which had eluded the research of many antiquaries, including the editors of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, was discovered by Mr. Davidson, of Sector, near Axminster. It is of oval form, the usual shape for monastic seals, and is divided into three compartments, in the uppermost of which is a bell suspended in a steeple, and in the canopy beneath is the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Infant on her knee. On the dexter side is the shield of Courtenay—*or, three torteaux, a label of three points;* on the sinister the shield of Beauchamp—*vair*, similar to those of Frithelstock Priory, the Beauchamps being the donors of the manors of Strete and Charmouth to the abbey. This last has often been described as the arms of Beaumont—*vairy and gules*—and Rogers in his "Sepulchral Effigies," queries as to whether they may not have been intended for the device of de Brioniis—*checquy*, whose arms occur in conjunction with those of the Courtenays on the central tower, but the probability is that they represent the insignia of Beauchamp.

In the lower compartment of the seal is the abbot erect, in his right hand a pastoral staff, and in his left a book, at his feet are three

monks kneeling, with their hands raised in supplication. The marginal inscription reads:—" S : COMMUNE : MONASTERII : BEATE : MARIE DE : FORDA. The frieze of the great hall and cloisters, and the panels between the windows of the south tower, are profusely ornamented with shields bearing the arms and devices of numerous benefactors, the initials and insignia of Thomas Chard, and the regal emblems of the Tudors. The Bishop's mitre and pastoral staff, the abbot's or prior's cap and staff, the initials T.C., and the abbot's badge, *a stag's head cabossed*, occur singly or together all over the façade. The monk in his MS. attributes the stag's head cabossed to the then Bishop of Exeter, but it formed no part of the augmentation either of Bishop Oldham, or of his successor, Veysey.

The Rev. F. Warre suggests that the ancient cognisance of the abbey was a stag's head cabossed, with a crozier passing through it palewise, in allusion to the earliest name of the site on which it stood, *Hertbath*.

In Chard's letter to Wolsey, mentioned in the previous chapter, the stag's head cabossed was used as the seal which the writer expressly refers to in the body of the letter as " *sigillum meum*," and it frequently occurs with his initials or name in various parts of the building. The arms of Dr. Chard were, according to Dr. Pring, a lineal descendant of the abbot's family, *or and gules quarterly*.

To return to the south tower, we find the panel in the middle course bears the monogram and insignia of Thomas Chard, with two small shields of similar character. The three panels on the lower course also testify to the munificence of the abbey's patrons. The first panel bears on a shield in the central lozenge *a lion rampant*, the arms of De Redvers, Earl of Devon, around it on four smaller shields are (1) *a lion rampant* (de Redvers), (2) blank, (3) *Barry of five*, apparently *checquy*, (4) *Barry checquy and plain* (De Brioniis, Baron of Okehampton). The bearings and marshallings of these arms appear to refer to the descent of the Barony of Okehampton to Robert de Courtenay, who married Mary de Redvers, daughter of William de Redvers, Earl of Devon. According to Pole, the arms of Robert Courtenay, as found on his seal are *party per pale, checquy the first side, the other plain, over all two bars*, being very similar to those depicted over the gateway.

The second panel bears a shield in the central lozenge which is

divided quarterly, but is blank, probably unfinished. Being encircled with the garter it was possibly intended to contain the royal arms. Of the shields around, two are blank, the third bears *an eagle volant grasping a bundle of sticks*, and the fourth the *lion rampant* of de Redvers.

This curious device on shield three is evidently a badge of the Courtenays, for it is found in alliance with the Courtenay escutcheon over the cloisters, and also on the pillars of the porch of Tiverton Church. According to Cleveland, Richard de Redvers, the fifth Earl of Devon, was the first to bear the *lion rampant*, his predecessors having borne *Gules, a griffin seizing a little beast, or.*, but this could scarcely be mistaken for the *eagle*. The fifth earl was succeeded by his uncle, William de Redvers, whose daughter married Robert de Courtenay, as previously stated.

The shield on the central lozenge of the third panel is divided quarterly, but is blank ; on the shields around are (1) *an eagle volant grasping sticks*, (2) *a dolphin* (badge of Courtenay), (3) blank, (4) *a swan ducally gorged and chained* (Bohun). All these shields and devices occupying the place of honour over the entrance to the abbey, refer to the family of Courtenay as chief patrons and benefactors. Immediately over the arch of the doorway is a large scroll shield of more modern date, bearing the arms of Prideaux, impaling those of his second wife Ivery.

The royal arms over the great hall are not in the centre, as no doubt they were before the alterations took place which transformed the west end of the hall into a suite of rooms. The arms consist of a rose crowned, encircled with a garter, and supported by a dragon and a greyhound, the badges of Henry VII. On the old west wall of the original hall may still be seen, although hidden by ivy, the portcullis, cut in stone, another badge of the Tudors.

The frieze over the windows of the cloisters is particularly rich in sculptured armorial bearings. Over the first window are six shields, the first, second, and fifth displaying the devices and insignia of Abbot Chard ; the third the arms of Poulett—*three swords in pile points downwards* ; the fourth, *a mail gauntlet holding a dagger point erect* (Poulett) ; and on the sixth are the initials " R.U." The third and fourth shields display the arms and crest of Poulett, of Hinton St. George. Sir Hugh Poulett was appointed by Abbot Chard to the

post of Head Steward of the Abbey, with a pension of 100s. This family was also allied to the Courtenays, Sir William Courtenay of Powderham, who died in 1557, having married Elizabeth, daughter of John Poulett, Marquis of Winchester, K.G., a distinguished nobleman at that time. In the spandrils of this window are the monograms "T.E." and "J.S." The initials "R.W." may refer to Prior William Rede, or to Richard Exmestre, *alias* Were, one of the inmates pensioned at the Dissolution with £8; and the initials "J.S." are possibly those of John Bridgwater *alias* Stone, who also was the recipient of a similar pension.

Over the second window are four shields and two in the spandrils, all filled with the monogram and devices of Abbot Chard.

In the frieze over the third window are similar shields with the same devices, and in the spandrils two shields, one with *a dolphin* (Courtenay); the other the initials "T.C."

Over the fourth window are three very interesting panels. In the central diamond of the first is a *stag's head with crozier*, over it, *an episcopal mitre*. Around are four shields, 1 and 2 containing "T.C." and an abbot's staff and cap, 3 and 4, the abbot's monogram. The second panel contains in the central lozenge a shield quarterly of four; 1 and 4, *three torteaux* (Courtenay), 2 and 3, *a lion rampant* (de Redvers), surrounded by the garter and motto. Around are four shields, (1) *an eagle volant grasping a bundle of sticks* (Courtenay); (2) *a dolphin* (Courtenay); (3) *a boar* (Courtenay); (4) *a swan ducally gorged and chained* (Bohun). In the third panel the small top corner shields contain the letters T. and C. respectively; whilst on the hatchment shaped panel in the centre occurs the stag's head and crozier; and above these, as a fitting termination to the whole, is the abbot's cap, surmounted by a bishop's mitre.

Over the fifth window are four shields; the first and second displaying Abbot Chard's devices; the third *paly of three*; and the fourth "J.V." and a bishop's crozier, this last evidently for John Veysey, Bishop of Exeter. In the spandrils T.C.

Over the sixth window are four shields, also with devices of the last abbot. One spandril contains the initials "R.L.," the other, two staves of office, and the letter S., which may have been intended for the device of Sub-Prior John Stone, who may have held two offices.

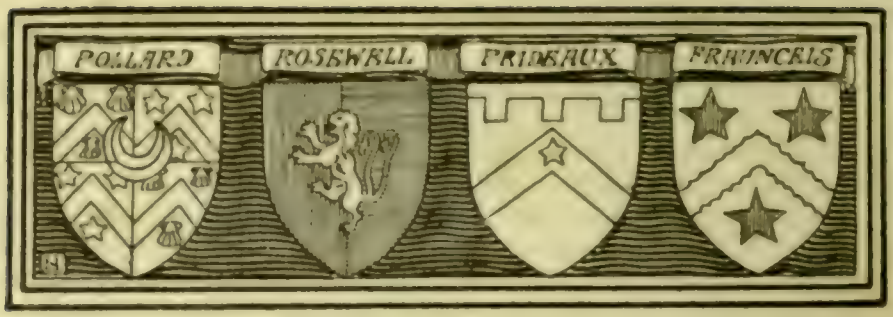
In the frieze over window seven are four shields, two bearing the

DRAWING ROOM, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 64.*

arms and crest of Poulett, another the device of Chard, and the fourth the initials " R.W." In one spandril " T.C." and in the other " L.S."

In the frieze and spandrils of the eighth window are six shields, all charged with the devices of Chard.

The shield and badges of Courtenay in the central panel over the fourth window of the cloister may refer to William Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who married the Princess Katherine, daughter of Edward IV., for both were living at the time Chard was abbot. Their arms similarly emblazoned are found in Tiverton Church, where Katherine was buried.



CHAPTER VIII

POST-DISSOLUTION OWNERS AND HISTORY

AT the Dissolution Henry VIII. granted the abbey and all its appurtenances for twenty-one years at a rent of £49 6s. 6d. and afterwards in fee, to Richard Pollard, Esq., who was subsequently knighted by the king. From Sir Richard it passed to his son, Sir John Pollard, who sold it to his cousin-german Sir Amias Poulett, of Hinton St. George and Curry Mallett. Sir Amias had enjoyed the most intimate associations with the abbey, as both he, and his father before him, had held the office of the Head Stewardship of the monastery during the *régime* of Thomas Chard. This gentleman is also distinguished from his having been for a short time the custodian of Mary, Queen of Scots. From Sir Amias Poulett, the abbey and estates passed by purchase to William Rosewell, Esq., solicitor-general to Queen Elizabeth; and thence to his son, Sir Henry Rosewell, who, in 1649, conveyed them to Sir Edmund Prideaux, Bart., of Netherton, county Devon. Sir Edmund was educated at Cambridge, and after being admitted a student of

the Inner Temple, was called to the Bar on November 23rd, 1623. He was returned as Burgess for Lyme Regis in the Long Parliament, and supported the Parliamentary forces against the king. He appears to have been a man of marked abilities, as in 1643 he was appointed one of the Commissioners of the Great Seal, and three years later he was granted the privileges of a King's Counsel, the combined offices being worth some £7,000 a year. It is somewhat singular that, while holding the first-named office, he was allowed to retain his seat in Parliament, and when he relinquished the Great Seal, the House of Commons, as an acknowledgment of his valuable services, ordered that he should be allowed to practise within the Bar, and have precedence next after the Solicitor-General, to which important office he himself was raised in 1647. Although on the side of the Parliament he took no part in the trial of Charles I., nor in those of the Duke of Hamilton and others. Nevertheless, he shortly afterwards accepted from the dominant party the office of Attorney-General, a post which he retained for the remainder of his life.

His remarkable organising abilities were shown in 1649, when as Master of the Post Messengers and Carriers, a post he had acquired in 1644, he established a weekly conveyance to every part of the kingdom, a great improvement on the system he had found in vogue, and under which letters were sent by special messengers, whose duty it was to supply relays of horses at a given mileage.

It is said that the emoluments accruing to his private purse from the profits of this improved postal service were not less than £15,000 a year. Sir Edmund was twice married, and by his first wife Jane, daughter and sole heiress of Henry Collins, Esq., of Cadhay, Ottery St. Mary, he had a daughter Mary. He married secondly Margaret, daughter and co-heir of William Ivery, of Cotthay, Somerset, by whom he had three daughters, and a son Edmund, who succeeded him at Ford Abbey, but the baronetcy, having been bestowed by Cromwell, was not recognised after the Restoration.

It was Sir Edmund Prideaux who brought Inigo Jones to the abbey to convert it into a habitable mansion, which he did by largely altering the interior, and inserting square-headed windows in the walls of the state rooms. All this work is very interesting to the architect, as there is very little of Inigo Jones' work in Dorset, but to the antiquary and lover of the purely beautiful, these pseudo-classical

additions completely destroy the harmonious composition of the building as left by Chard. It was Jones' intention to convert the whole of this fine old Gothic house into a classical one, but his death in 1652 interfered with this project, and it is probable that had not this event taken place, there would be little to see to-day of the wonderful structure erected by its last abbot. It is only fair, however, to add that internally the house was much improved and highly embellished, making it one of the most magnificently appointed houses in the country. Sir Edmund did not live long to enjoy his new home, as he died in 1659, one year after its completion, and was buried in the adjoining chapel.

Edmund Prideaux the younger had for tutor John Tillotson, who afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury, and who is said to have written more than a thousand sermons ; he was much esteemed by William III., and the parting eulogy of his royal master, a man of few words, was emphatic :—" The best man that ever I knew, and the best friend that ever I had."

Edmund Prideaux, although he took but little part in the grave political troubles of his day, is remembered in history as the entertainer of the ill-starred Duke of Monmouth, who visited Ford Abbey in 1680, on his journey of pleasure to the West Country. This was a somewhat unfortunate incident for Mr. Prideaux, as after the Rye House affair he was suspected of favouring the Duke's cause, and Ford Abbey was searched for arms vainly. When Monmouth subsequently landed at Lyme Regis, in 1685, Mr. Prideaux, like a prudent man, remained quietly at home, but the house was visited at night by a small party of the rebels requiring horses, and it is said that one of them, Malachi Mallock, while in the house, drank to the health of Monmouth. This incident becoming known in London, a warrant was issued for Mr. Prideaux's arrest, and he was taken to the Tower on a charge of High Treason. Notwithstanding that nothing could be proved against him he was kept a close prisoner until he had paid the sum of £15,000 to the infamous Jeffreys, after which his pardon was signed on March 11th, 1685.[1]

In 1681 he was elected member with Mr. Trenchard for Taunton. On the accession of William III., he petitioned Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill to charge the estates of Jeffreys with the restitution of this money, but the Bill failed to pass. Edmund Prideaux had by

[1] This must have been 1686, the legal year not commencing until the 25th March (see Appendix).

CEILING, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page* 29.

his wife Amy Fraunceis one son and three daughters. The son died at Oxford when nineteen years of age, and was buried in the abbey chapel, where a handsome monument was erected to his memory. The second daughter married John Speke, Esq., of Whitelackington, and the third daughter, Margaret, married in 1690 her cousin Francis Gwyn, Esq., of Llansanor, co. Glamorgan. Edmund Prideaux died intestate in 1702, survived by his widow and daughter Margaret. Mrs. Prideaux having renounced all claim to the estates, letters of administration were granted to Margaret Gwyn, whose husband Francis, thus, through his wife, inherited Ford Abbey. This Francis Gwyn was descended from the Herberts, Earls of Pembroke, and had been Clerk of the Privy Council and Under-Secretary of State during the reign of Charles II.; Secretary of the Treasury to James II., and Secretary and Privy Councillor in Ireland during the reign of William and Mary. He took possession of Ford Abbey the year of Queen Anne's accession, in 1702, and during her life fulfilled the office of Secretary of War, a post from which he was dismissed by George I. in 1714. It was to this gentleman that Queen Anne presented the remarkable tapestries woven from the world-famed cartoons of Raphael, and for which Mr. Gwyn was afterwards offered £30,000 by Catherine, Empress of Russia. Mr. Gwyn died in 1734 at the age of eighty-six, and was buried in the chapel where his wife, who predeceased him in 1709 had been previously laid to rest. He was succeeded by his eldest son, who, dying intestate and unmarried, two years afterwards, in 1736, the estates devolved on his brother Francis Gwyn, who in 1741 was M.P. for Wells, which city he represented in several Parliaments. He was twice married, but died without issue in 1777. By his will he devised Ford Abbey and all his lands in Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Glamorgan, to his wife during her lifetime, and afterwards to her cousin John Fraunceis, or Francis, of Combe Fleury, Somerset, and his heirs male on condition that he took the name of Gwyn. The widow lived to enjoy the property for only three years, dying in 1780, when John Fraunceis, by royal license, assumed the name of Gwyn and entered into the possession of his inheritance. He died in 1789 and was succeeded by his eldest son, John Fraunceis Gwyn, an accomplished scholar, who married first Eliza, daughter of James Norman, of Thorncombe, and afterwards Dinah, the only child of Mr. Reuben Good, of Winsham, Somerset.

The family of Fraunceis was originally of Fraunceis Court, in the parish of Broadclyst. Their arms were *argent, a chevron engrailed between three mullets gules.* Sir William Pole says that the arms of "Fraunceis of Ivedon" were "the same with *a label of three azure,*" and these arms may still be seen in the south chantry window of Awliscombe Church.

In 1815 Mr. Gwyn let the abbey for a period of three years to Jeremy Bentham, while he himself travelled on the Continent. In the quiet precincts of this Cistercian house, the old philosopher studied and wrote, and here he entertained James Stuart Mill and other celebrities, one of whom, Sir Samuel Romilly, wrote most interesting descriptions to his friends of the "magnificent and beautiful palace" in which he had found his friend installed. Francis Horner relates a visit he and a friend paid to Bentham at Ford Abbey, one spacious room in which, a tapestried chamber, the utilitarian philosopher had made into what he called his "scribbling shop"—two or three tables being set out, covered with white napkins, on which were placed music desks with manuscripts; and here the visitors were allowed to be "present at the mysteries, for he went on as if we had not been with him." On his death, June 6th, 1832, Bentham left directions for his body to be dissected, and the skeleton to be preserved at University College, where it may still be seen.

On his death in 1846, the remains of Mr. Gwyn, who for many years had been totally blind, were laid in the mausoleum in the chapel, and in the same year Ford Abbey, its furniture and surrounding estates, were purchased by G. W. F. Miles, Esq., of Bristol, who in 1864 disposed of them to Mrs. Bertram Evans, whose eldest son, Mr. W. Herbert Evans, and Miss Evans, were successive owners. On the latter's death in 1906 the estates and house passed to her cousin, Mrs. Roper, the present occupier, and wife of Mr. Freeman Roper, a Justice of the Peace for the County of Dorset.

For the following note on the old chapel bell I am indebted to Mr. L. B. Clarence and the Rev. Herbert Pentin[1]:—

"In the little bell-cot on the roof of the chapel-tower hangs a mediæval bell—a pre-Reformation bell. Bell-founders before the Reformation very seldom put their names on their bells, much less the names of churchwardens, or the doggerel rhymes which we find on more

[1] Dorset Transactions vol. xxviii., p. xxxiv.

modern bells. The founders, however, can usually be identified by the lettering of their inscriptions, and various ornamental devices, some of them known as foundry-marks, also cast upon their bells.

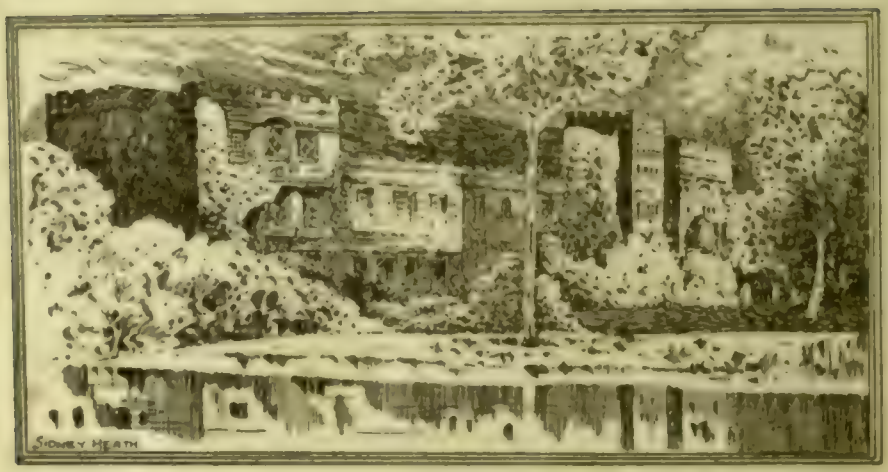
The inscription and the ornaments of this Ford Abbey bell tell us that it was cast by one of a family of Norwich bell-founders, who bore the surname of Brasyer, a name derived from their craft, and who cast very fine and handsome bells in that city in the 15th and 16th centuries; perhaps also in the 14th.

A William Brasyer, of Nottingham, was admitted to the freedom of Norwich in 1376. A Robert Brasyer was Mayor of Norwich in 1410, and two Richard Brasyers, father and son, were casting bells there between 1456 and 1510. This Ford Abbey bell may have been cast by any one of them; and it is noteworthy as the only specimen of their handiwork known to exist in this part of England. . . . . In all probability this Ford Abbey bell was cast at Norwich and conveyed by sea to Lyme or Bridport, and so to Ford Abbey.

The inscription on the bell is Leonine or rhymed Hexameter, in very handsome Lombardic capitals.

FAC MARGARETA—NOBIS HEC MUNERA LETA,

showing that the bell was dedicated to S. Margaret. Between the two halves of the hexameter are two grotesque leonine heads, one of them in the centre of a cruciform ornament. On the waist of the bell is a shield, bearing the ordinary device, or "foundry stamp" of the Brasyers—three bells on a field adorned with something like sprigs of some plant."



CHAPTER IX

FORD ABBEY AT THE PRESENT DAY

FORD ABBEY at the present day is a noble country mansion standing amid surroundings of exceptional beauty which are partly natural, but at the same time owe much of their picturesque appearance to the efforts of the successive owners, who, from the twelfth century onwards, appear to have taken advantage of the splendid opportunities afforded by the fertility of the soil and the geniality of the climate in this secluded and lovely valley of the Axe. Little, however, has been really altered, and the gloss of modern civilisation has not penetrated deep enough to obliterate the handiwork of the early occupants. With the passing of time the fishponds of the monks have become ornamental lakes, whereon the white water-lilies and arums grow in abundance; and round the margins, where perhaps the brethren fished or meditated grow clumps of rhododendrons, intermingled with masses of roses, pampas grass, and tritomas. On

the eastern side of the abbey is a sunk garden, where shrubs and low-growing trees flourish in abundance, brightened by groups of flowers in irregularly shaped beds. Then there is a rock-garden, a wild garden in a disused gravel pit, and a walled-in garden wherein is grown fruit of all kinds, vegetables, and herbs for the use of the household. The grounds are bisected by a broad walk from one end to the other, at the western end of which is a long wall six feet in height, and at its foot a border containing some ancient apple trees, very beautiful during their short season in blossom. Later in the year the apple blossom is replaced by masses of climbing roses and by groups of hardy herbaceous plants, almost covering the face of the wall.

One of the best views to be obtained of the house *en masse* is from the curving drive bordered by fine specimens of oak, beech, and chestnut, alternating with masses of rhododendrons, pampas grass, and especially fine araucarias. Beyond the immediate environs of the Abbey proper is the park, once the home of a numerous herd of deer, but since 1860 no longer tenanted by these graceful creatures. The park contains some remarkably fine timber, mostly comprised of magnificent oaks and ancient pine trees, and conspicuous among them a splendid specimen of a cedar of Lebanon. With such a wealth of material it is little wonder that the park is beautiful at any season of the year, but especially so perhaps in the springtime, when the green sward is carpeted with a luxuriant growth of daffodils, narcissi, snowdrops, and many other heralds of summer.

The Abbey as left at the Dissolution appears to have satisfied its first occupiers so far as its domestic arrangements were concerned, for it was not until it came into the possession of Sir Edmund Prideaux in 1649, that any serious structural alterations were attempted. This gentleman, as we have already seen, employed Inigo Jones practically to re-model the whole edifice, which the latter would undoubtedly have done had not death intervened. As it was, by far the greater part of these alterations were not completed until several years after the architect's death in 1652. The work of Inigo Jones is mostly found on the south front, but is fortunately mainly confined to the interior, and all that can be seen from the outside are some square-headed windows, around which are classical architraves similar to those designed by the same architect for the south front at Wilton. The state apartments, however, to the west of the hall are entirely the work

of Jones, and comprise two rooms, a drawing and a dining room, both panelled chambers with richly decorated ceilings, which have been described by modern architects as somewhat crude in execution, and by no means equal to a good deal of Jones' work in a similar direction to be found elsewhere. The grand staircase, which was not completed at the designer's death, is, strangely enough, much better finished than the earlier portion of the work, which seems to indicate that the workmen took some time to master the technicalities of the classical detail.

The dining-room above mentioned is a handsome room, lighted by three large windows overlooking the pleasure grounds and the adjacent park. On the walls, between carved and gilded pilasters, hang four pieces of old Gobelin tapestry, representing :—

(1). Scipio Africanus leading Asdrubal the last Carthaginian General, prisoner into Rome.

(2). A Roman gladiator slaying a lion before the statue of Jupiter.

(3). Cyrus, King of Persia, with the vessels full of gold and silver for rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem.

(4). The Temple at Jerusalem in course of building.

Above this apartment is a room called Queen Anne's room, from its having been prepared to receive Her Majesty when she purposed a visit to Mr. Francis Gwyn. Certain circumstances, of which there appears to be no record, prevented this visit from taking place. The room, however, has been left as it was arranged to receive the Queen, with the exception of some old tapestry representing a Welsh wedding, which has been removed to one of the corridors.

The staircase, already described, leads to the saloon, also the work of Inigo Jones. It is an apartment fifty-eight feet long and twenty-five feet in height, with decorations very similar in character to the rooms already mentioned, on the ground floor. Here hang the famous tapestries wrought from the cartoons of Raphael and which alone draw many art-lovers and connoisseurs to this secluded Dorset home. The scenes represented on the tapestries are :—

(1). The scene at Lystra described in Acts xiv., when priest and people wished to sacrifice to S. Paul and S. Barnabas as Jupiter and Mercury.

(2). The Saviour's charge to S. Peter.

(3). SS. Peter and John healing the lame man at the gate of the Temple.

(4). Ananias and Sapphira.

(5). The miraculous draught of fishes.

When they were placed in position it was found necessary to remove certain panels to provide sufficient space for these tapestries, which are bordered at the sides by pillars, wreathed with grape-vines and Cupids gathering the fruit, and at the top by festoons of fruits and vegetables grouped around a shield in the centre.

The popular tradition is that these tapestries were made in the looms of Arras for the King of Spain, but were taken from a Spanish vessel by some English man-of-war, and having become a "droit" of the Admiralty, they passed by Queen Anne's desire, to her Secretary for War. Their place of origin is somewhat obscure, and the fact that they bear the Mortlake badge does not tend to elucidate the problem. The cartoons from which they were worked were unquestionably drawn expressly for Pope Leo X. by Raphael as patterns for tapestry, and at least two sets, one in gold, and the other in silver, were woven at Brussels, the one being placed in the Vatican, and the other presented to Henry VIII. This latter was sold to the Spanish Ambassador in 1649. It is said that for richness of colouring the Ford Abbey specimens are much superior to the set in the Vatican, and of the "silver" set nothing seems to be known. The original cartoons were bought by Charles I. on the advice of Rubens and removed from Brussels in 1630. Their first resting-place is unknown, but is thought to have been Whitehall. Be this as it may, William III. caused them to be hung at Hampton Court Palace, where they remained until 1865, when they were removed to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they are now. They were the property of His late Majesty King Edward VII., but were bequeathed by him to the nation.

As one would naturally expect, Ford Abbey to-day is full of old furniture, china, bric-a-brac, and pictures which have been accumulated by its successive owners. Among the more notable of the pictures are two of Nell Gwyn, the actress, who, by the way, was no relation to the family of that name who lived here; one of Lucy Walters, the mother of the Duke of Monmouth; and a good contemporary portrait of Oliver Cromwell.

Life's ever-changing drama has but one and the same back-

ground, for though the actors come and go, the landscape remains the same, and the meditations and the acts of men, hundreds of years ago were set in the valley of the same low hills and took place amid the same winding streams as those which at the present day remain unmoved and unchanged throughout those vicissitudes of this mortal life.

The West of England in the middle ages must have been very much the West of England of to-day, and the low-lying valley of the Axe but little different from that which is now one of the loveliest in the land.

The abbey, set like a gem in its midst, has been but little worn and mutilated by time and fortune. The lapse of centuries, the changing fashions in building, have, after all, dealt kindly with it, and seen as it is the graces of Art and Nature are charmingly combined, and one stands in doubt which more to admire: the green leaves of Nature, or the stone leaves of Art.

So we take leave of Abbot Chard and his pious monks, who, should they ever re-visit the scene of their earthly labours, will find it but little changed, save that the cawing of the rooks in the morning has displaced the mattins bell, and the sweet song of the nightingale is the night-call to vespers now that the monastery bell is rusted and silent for ever.

"We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too: the deep foundations that we lay
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock;
A distant age asks where the fabric stood;
And in the dust sifted and searched in vain
The undiscoverable secret sleeps."

THE YEW HEDGE, FORD ABBEY. *Facing page 76*

APPENDIX

THE PRIDEAUX PARDON

The following is the full text of this remarkable document :—

JACOBUS SECUNDUS DEI GRATIA ANGLIE SCOTIE FFRANCIE ET HIBERNIE REX FIDEI DEFENSORIS &C. OMNIBUS AD QUOS PRESENTES LITERE NOSTRE PERVENERINT SALUTEM SCIATIS QUOD NOS DE GRATIA NOSTRA SPECIALI AC EX CERTA SCIENTIA ET MERO MOTU NOSTRIS PARDONAVIMUS REMISIMUS ET RELAXAVIMUS AC PER PRESENTES PRO NOBIS HEREDIBUS ET SUCCESSORIBUS NOSTRIS PARDONAMUS REMITTIMUS ET RELAXAMUS EDMUNDO PRIDEAUX NUPER DE FFORD ABBEY IN COMITATU NOSTRO DEVONIE ARMIGERO SEU QUOCUNQUE ALIO NOMINE VEL COGNOMINE SEU ADDITIONE NOMINIS VEL COGNOMINIS AUT LOCI IDEM EDMUNDUS PRIDEAUX SCIATUR CENSEATUR VOCETUR SIVE NUNCUPETUR AUT NUPER SCIEBATUR CENSEBATUR VOCABATUR SIVE NUNCUPETUR OMNES ET OMNIMODAS PRODITIONES MISPRISIONES PRODITIONUM REBELLIONES INSURRECTIONES FELONIAS ET MALEFACTA QUECUNQUE PER SE SOLUM SIVE CUM ALIQUA ALIA PERSONA VEL ALIQUIBUS ALIJS PERSONIS ANTE PRIMUM DIEM MARTIJ ANNO DOMINI MILLESIMO SEXCENTESIMO OCTOGESIMO QUINTO FACTA COMMISSA SIVE PERPETRATA LICET IDEM EDMUNDUS PRIDEAUX DE PREMISSIS VEL ALIQUO PREMISSORUM JUDICATUS ARRESTATUS APPELLATUS RECTATUS IMPETITUS ATTINCTUS CONVICTUS CONDEMNATUS UTLAGATUS SIVE ADJUDICATUS EXISTIT VEL NON EXISTIT AUT INDE JUDICARI ARRESTARI APPELLARI RECTARI IMPETIRI ATTINGI CONVINCI UTLAGARI CONDEMNARI SIVE ADJUDICARI CONTIGERIT IN FUTURO. AC OMNIA ET SINGULA JUDICAMENTA JUDICIA CONDEMNATIONES ATTINCTURAS FINES EXECUTIONES IMPRISONAMENTA PUNICIONES PENAS MORTIS PENAS CORPORALES ET OMNES ALIAS PENAS ET PENALITATES QUECUNQUE SUPER VEL VERSUS PREDICTUM EDMUNDUM PRIDEAUX DE PRO SIVE CONCERNENTIA PREMISSIS SEU EORUM ALIQUO HABITA FACTA REDDITA SIVE ADJUDICATA AUT IN POSTERUM HABENDA FIENDA REDDENDA SIVE ADJUDICANDA NECNON OMNES ET SINGULAS UTLAGARIAS VERSUS DICTUM EDMUNDUM PRIDEAUX RACIONE SEU OCCASIONE PREMISSORUM SEU EORUM ALIQUORUM VEL ALICUIUS EORUM PROMULGATUS SIVE IN POSTERUM PROMULGANDAS AC OMNES ET OMNIMODAS SECTAS QUERELAS FORISFACTURAS IMPETICIONES ET DEMANDAS QUECUNQUE QUE NOS VERSUS IPSUM RACIONE PREMISSORUM SEU EORUM ALICUIUS HABUIMUS HABEMUS SEU IN FUTURO HABERE POTERIMUS AUT HEREDES SEU SUCCESSORES NOSTRI ULLO MODO HABERE POTERINT IN FUTURO SECTAMQUE PACIS NOSTRE QUE AD NOS VERSUS PREFATUM EDMUNDUM PRIDEAUX PERTINET SEU PERTINERE POTERIT RACIONE PREMISSORUM SEU EORUM ALIQUORUM VEL ALICUJUS EORUM ET FIRMAN PACEM NOSTRAM EI INDE DAMUS ET CONCEDIMUS PER PRESENTES VOLENTES QUOD IDEM EDMUNDUS PRIDEAUX PER VICECOMITES JUSTICIARIOS BALLIVOS AUT ALIOS MINISTROS NOSTROS HEREDUM SEU SUCCESSORUM NOSTRORUM OCCASIONE PREMISSORUM SEU EORUM ALICUIUS MOLESTETUR OCCASIONETUR PERTURBETUR SEU IN ALIQUO GRAVETUR VOLENTES QUOD HE LITERE NOSTRE PATENTES QUOAD OMNIA ET SINGULA PREMISSA SUPERIUS MENTIONATA &C. BONE FIRME VALIDE ET EFFECTUALITER IN LEGE SINT ET ERINT LICET CRIMINA ET OFFENSE PREDICTA MINUS CERTE SPECIFICATA EXISTUNT QUODQUE HEC PARDONATIO NOSTRA IN OMNIBUS CURIJUS NOSTRIS ET ALIBI INTERPRETETUR ET ADJUDICETUR IN BENEFICENTISSIMO SENSU PRO FIRMIORI EXONERACIONE RELAXACIONE ET PARDONACIONE PREFATI EDMUNDI PRIDEAUX AC ETIAM PLACITETUR ET ALLOCETUR IN OMNIBUS CURIJS NOSTRIS ABSQUE ALIQUO BREVI DE ALLOCACIONE IN EA PARTE PRIUS OBTENTO SEV OBTINENDO NON OBSTANTE ALIQUO DEFECTU AUT ALIQUIBUS DEFECTIBUS IN HIS LITERIS PATENTIBUS CONTENTIS AUT ALIQUO STATUTO ACTU ORDINACIONE PROVISIONE PROCLAMACIONE SIVE RESTRICCIONE AUT ALIQUA ALIA RE CAUSA VEL MATERIA QUACUNQUE INDE IN ALIQUO NON OBSTANTE IN CUIUS REI TESTIMONIUM HAS LITERAS NOSTRAS FIERI FECIMUS PATENTES TESTE MEIPSO APUD WESTMONASTERIUM VICESIMO DIE MARTIJ ANNO REGNI NOSTRI SECUNDO.

PER BREVE DE PRIVATO SIGILLO.

BARKER.

This document, of which a reduced facsimile is here given, is in the possession of John Fraunceis Griffith, Esq., of Llansannor House, Glamorgan, a lineal descendant of the recipient of the pardon. The original parchment, of which the genuineness is beyond question, measures 28 inches by 22 inches, but the seal has become crushed.

In Edmund Prideaux's private pocket-book the following memoranda were discovered :—

"My confinement :
" 19th June ('85), seized by a messenger, Mr. Saywell.
" 14th July ('85) released by Habeas Corpus.
14th Sept. ('85) carried to ye Tower by Evans.
" Released ye 11th of March, 1685."

This date, as has been stated in a footnote in Chapter IX., must be taken as 1686, the legal year not commencing until the 25th March.

Mr. Hugh Norris, writing in "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries," vol. II., part XII., says :—

"The result of this arrest was that he was *given* to Jeffreys by the king, with the sole proviso that his life was to be spared. The Chief Justice accordingly 'squeezed' him to the extent of imposing a fine of £15,000, a goodly sum indeed in James's days, but which was paid in about seven months, the sum of £240 being allowed as discount (!) on £2,400 which was paid before the stipulated period. The truth of the matter appears to be that Jeffreys was anxious to obtain possession of Ford Abbey as soon as he had disposed of the owner, and this appears all the more probable in consequence of his having offered Charles Speke and other persons in custody, free pardons if they would but swear to some circumstance that would effectively brand the unfortunate Edmund Prideaux as a rebel.

This diabolical plot not being attended with success, Jeffreys utilised the £15,000 as part purchase-money of some estates he subsequently bought of Lord Albemarle.

Mr. Prideaux's Bill for the restitution of this money failed to pass owing to the opposition of Lord Chief Justice Pollexfen, the trustee for the children and creditors of the then deceased judge.