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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.

BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER I.

A corporate town may be considered a kingdom in miniature : as the couplet runs : -

“It is a saying of an ancient date
That little worlds we form within the great.”

So in the neighbourhood of most country towns there is almost certain to be found the seat of some nobleman possessing large landed property, who takes the lead either nominally or personally, in proceedings originating them, in and thus answers in some degree to the idea of a monarch of limited power. The burgesses represent the lower House of Parliament, the aldermen the upper, the mayor is the premier ; in short, the comparison may be carried to an indefinite extent, especially if the kingdom from which it is drawn, be itself a dependency upon some larger power. The history of an empire from obscurity to world wide rule or notoriety, has been with considerable truth likened to that of a river, traced from the narrow brook in which the village urchins played, and which seemed to lose itself in meanderings, until it becomes a channel of commerce, and finally loses itself in the ocean – of time. Just as a kingdom will often be found to owe its greatness to several co-operating causes – as the invasion of England by the Normans engrafted a new and vigorous race upon the Anglo-Saxon population – so the river is usually discovered to be indebted for its magnitude to many separate springs, or to the blending of several streams, on which an example may be seen at Malmesbury, where the Avon receiving the Newnton and other rivulets becomes properly a river. Nothing could be less interesting than a simple statement of the depth, breadth, or swiftness of a stream at certain places, and so in the history of a kingdom a bare chronicle of facts unless as a book of reference is useless – the banks of the river of Time, the views, the villas by the water side, the waving willows, the rippling sunlit wavelets, all should be alluded to. It is thus with the history of a town, and this must be the apology if in the present work the writer should seem to introduce unconnected matter.

A thousand years ago, the orthodox method of writing history – as exemplified in the chronicles of the monks – was literally to begin at the beginning, and as it is in a great measure upon these chronicles that the moderns depend for their information, a specimen may not be out of place. Thus does Nennius, a British historian, supposed to have written in the eighth century, and who describes himself as a disciple of St. Elbotus – considered to be Elvod, a bishop of Bangor – commence : “From Adam

to the flood are 2042 years. From the flood to Abraham 942. From Abraham to Moses 600, “and thus nimbly leaping from era to era until he approaches his own times. These monkish writers, if they believed what they recorded, must have been the simplest-minded men who ever existed. Their pages teem with miraculous narrations of the doings of saints – as of St. Patrick, or St. Germanus in Nennius, which Germanus prayed and fasted until fire from heaven consumed the object of his wrath, the unhappy King Vortigern, at least so runs the legend. Whenever they do condescend to mention secular affairs it is with such a noble disregard of detail or coherence that the student is often in despair, and feels inclined to doubt even the very existence of anything but monks and miracles in those days. Even such a man as Ethelwerd, who was a descendant of King Alfred, and wrote in the tenth century, has at least as much preface and prologue as history. Here is an extract exhibiting his brevity : - “A.D. 577. After the lapse of six years, Cuthwin and Ceawlin fight against the Britons, and slay three of their kings, Comail, Condidan, and Farinmeail, at a place called Deorhamme ; and they took three of their most distinguished cities, Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath.” This method was pursued even till so late a period as the fifteenth century, when flourished Sir David Lindsay, whose rhyming history of the world after a vast amount of preface begins thus : -

“Quhen God had maid the hevinis bricht,
The sone and mone, for to gyf licht,
The sterry hevin, and christallyne,
And be his sapience divyne.
The planeitis in thair circles round
Quhirling about with merrie sound,” &c.

From such materials what can be gathered is of necessity scanty and dubious. Rabelais somewhere has a pleasant ridicule of this style of composing history, and since his time it seems to have fallen into disuse. If we remember aright he represents a town to be as old as the flood, for the simple reason that to do so suits his rhyme. It will easily be seen from these examples what difficulties await the historian who attempts to trace the early history of a kingdom much less of a town, and in what mood statements should be received. Byron called history “the grand liar,” he meant apparently the history of kingdoms which, even if untrue, must have a certain grandeur ; here there is not even that advantage.

Malmesbury is first referred to as a place of importance some four or five centuries before Christ, when says a writer, who, however, lived several centuries *after* Christ, a castle was erected there. This event, if it could be relied upon as having actually occurred, might be considered as somewhere about the time of Malachi, the prophet. Dunwallo Molmutius, king of the Britons, is stated to have built it, and others at Tetbury and Lacock. He called it *Caer Bladon*. The river was of yore known as the *Bladon*, and it has been conjectured that the name was transferred to the place upon its banks. It will be noticed that the change from *Bladon* to

Avon is by no means difficult, when the long course of time is taken into consideration. *Caer* or *Cair* seems to have been an ancient British word answering to city. Nennius, the ancient British historian before alluded to, gives a list of thirty three British cities, each with the prefix *Cair*, many of which to this day retain it altered only in spelling, as *Caer Merdin*, *Caermarthen* ; *Cair guent*, *Carewent* : *Cair lion*, *Cair leon-upon-Usk*, *Cair luilid*, *Carlisle*. In this list of Nennius, *Cair Bladon*, or *Malmsbury* does not appear. The *Dunwallo Molmutius* referred to is described by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who wrote his celebrated chronicle in the twelfth century, as – when he ascended the throne – “a youth of great spirit, son of Cloten, King of Cornwall, and excelled *all the kings* of Briton in valour and gracefulness of person.” “*All the kings !*” At the time that *Malmesbury* first makes its appearance it would verily seem – if these old chroniclers are to be relied upon – that every county in England had its king. Such a state of things is at the present day almost incredible. The usual occupation of these petty kings seems to have been to make war upon each other, so that there would appear to be some truth in the statement that there is no spot in the Kingdom which has not at some time or other been a battle-field. This *Dunwallo Molmutius* is represented by Geoffrey of Monmouth as the seventh successor of *Cordelia*, the daughter of King *Leir*, or *Lear* in the kingdom. Shakespeare dramatised the story of *Leir*, or *Lear*, as is well known. *Dunwallo* reigned forty years, and seems to have been an excellent monarch – “so that in his day the murders and cruelties committed by robbers were prevented, and everybody passed safe without any violence offered him.” He was buried at *Trinovantum*. He rendered himself renowned, according to the chronicler, by establishing “what the Britons call the *Molmutine laws*, which are famous among the English to this day.” Geoffrey just mentions a king called *Bleduno*, a name which bears some slight affinity in sound to *Bladon*, but scarcely sufficient to connect him with the place. *Caer Bladon* is related to have been destroyed by wars, but a castle was built with the ruins. Meantime some of the Anglo-Saxon kings held their court at *Caerdurburge*, supposed to be *Brokenborough*, a place about a mile or so from the present town of *Malmesbury*. This may appear slightly forestalling the order of events, as between the Britons and the Saxons the dominion of the Romans intervened, but there does not appear to be any record of their proceedings at *Malmesbury*, though they have left a lasting memento of their occupation in the shape of a road which runs past the town at some little distance. It is known as the *Foss*. *Caer Bladon* does not seem to have been the name of the place for any great length of time, which renders the conjecture still more probable that it was only called thus from the river. Each writer who mentions the town appears to have given it what title he pleased, and some of them would be difficult of pronunciation at the present day. *Maildulfburgh*, *Meildunum*, *Maildulfesburch*, *Maldelmesburh*, *Ingelburne*, *Aldelmesbirig*, *Malmesburia*, *Mealdune*, *Mamesberie*, *Mamnesbirh*, *Maldelmesbiria*,

Manbebirh, Malmesbyri, Malmesburia, Maldelmesburgh, and Monasterium Malmesburiense are names that have all been employed by various writers, and at various periods to designate Malmesbury. This extraordinary confusion of names is one of the chief difficulties in studying the ancient historians. Here are no less than sixteen different designations of the same place, some it is true bearing a general resemblance, but others which would never be suspected as having been applied to Malmesbury had it not been for other circumstances. Nor is this a single example, no, nor more than half a statement of the utter confusion respecting names in the ancient records. The manuscript copies of a single author frequently vary from each other, as in the case of a town to which Nennius refers ; which in one copy is spelt Minmanton, in others, Mirmantum, Mirmantun, Minmanto, Minimantone. Again the name of a King in one version given as Guoyrancgonus, is in others, Gnoiram cono, Goiranego, Gnoiracgono. Were these copies supposed to have been made by one reading aloud, and another writing from him, little surprise could be manifested at these variations – so extraordinary is the assemblage of consonants in some of them. There are persons who object on the score of prejudice to the introduction of compound Greek words into the English language, but were their wishes to be consulted and new terms formed from the ancient British, heaven knows who would be able to pronounce them, unless a born Welchman. Who at first sight would recognise in the Cair ceri of the Britons, the Corinium of the Romans, the present Cirencester ; in Cair britoc, Bristol ; or in Cair Gloui, Gloucester ? The affairs of Malmesbury from the destruction of the erections of Dunwallo Molmutius, when it was known as Cair Bladon, seem to disappear from the records for several centuries. It emerges from this obscurity during the sixth century after Christ, when there is stated to have been a nunnery in existence. The inmates were of British extraction, but – with sorrow be it said – what is related of their character scarcely accords with the profession of perpetual virginity made by such recluses when taking the veil. This is not the place to discuss theological problems, but it may be observed in passing that all these attempts to violate the laws of nature – putting nature as it were under lock and key – appear to have signally failed ; unless, indeed, one is disposed to accept as truth Geoffrey of Monmouth's legend of Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins (who, however, were not nuns) slain for resisting the embraces of a brutal soldiery.

It appears from the statements made concerning these said British nuns that there was then a garrisoned castle at Malmesbury. The connection is obvious.

“Maiden's heart and city's wall
Were made to yield, were made to fall.”

sings the soldier in Faust, and these British maidens appear to have been no exception to the rule. In short, their conduct not exactly being what it ought to have been, they were suppressed by the first Archbishop of

Canterbury, Augustine. Augustine, says he of Monmouth, "was sent by Pope St. Gregory into Britain, to preach the Word of God to the Angles, who, being blinded with pagan superstition, had entirely extinguished Christianity in that part of the island which they possessed. But among the Britons, the Christian faith still flourished, and never failed among them from the time of Pope Eleutherius, when it was first planted here. But when Augustine came, he found in their province seven bishoprics and one archbishopric, all filled with most devout prelates, and a great number of abbeys. * * * Among the rest there was in the city of Bangor a most noble church, in which it is reported there was so great a number of monks, that when the monastery was divided into seven parts, having each their priors over them, not one of them had less than seven hundred monks, who all lived by the labor of their own hands. The name of their bishop was one Dinooth, a man admirably skilled in the liberal arts ; who, when Augustine required the subjection of the British bishops, and would have persuaded them to undertake the work of the gospel with him among the Angles, answered him with several arguments, that they owed no subjection to him, neither would they preach to their enemies ; since they had their own archbishopric, and because the Saxon nation persisted in depriving them of their country. * * * Thereupon Ethelbert, King of Kent, when he saw the Britons, disdained subjection to Augustine * * * stirred up Ethelfrid, King of the Northumbrians, and the other petty Kings of the Saxons to raise a great army, and march to the city of Bangor, to destroy the abbot Dinooth ;" but the project failed, and Ethelfrid was defeated by a British army. This abbot Dinooth was the superior of the Malmesbury convent, and it would not seem at all improbable that Augustine suppressed the nunnery on account of their connection with his adversary ; perhaps falsely accusing the inmates of violating their vows to gain his own ends. The greatdistance of Bangor, the residence of Dinooth, from Malmesbury, and the consequent inability under which he must have labored to give them assistance tends to support their supposition, and at the same times saves the credit of these Malmesbury maidens. If, too, Augustine had power in the district in which that town is situated, it would seem probable that the garrison of the place were Saxons. The distance intervening between Bangor and Malmesbury may be thought to throw discredit upon the story, but it does not appear to be stated that Dinooth was actual superior - the nunnery would rather seem to have been in his district, which places the affair in entirely a different light, as will be evident upon considering the enormous extent of the present archbishoprics. In this relation the conduct of the British prelates is much to be admired for their firm resistance of the encroachments of the papacy, of which power Augustine was the then representative. The chronicle of Ethelwerd notes this concerning Augustine. "A. D. 601. When he had reigned four years, pope Gregory sent to Augustine the pall of apostleship." It is remarkable how surely a place emerges from obscurity and becomes connected with

literature the moment it is subjected to the sway of a priesthood. This is manifested in the case of Malmesbury. For all purposes the historian it can scarcely be said to exist from the time of Dunwallo Molmutius to the suppression of this nunnery – a wide gap of perhaps a thousand years – since the first castle at Malmesbury is said to have been built four or five centuries before Christ, and Augustine would appear to have landed about A. D. 596. As it was in ancient Egypt, so it was in ancient England, arts and archives seem to have been almost entirely in the possession of a priesthood. It will be remembered that Nennius, the old British historian before alluded to, described himself as a “disciple of St. Elbotus” or Elvod, a bishop of Bangor, but this was two centuries later, Elvod living A. D. 755. This nunnery, suppressed by the Monk Augustine, seems to be the first mention of the connection of the town with the Roman Catholic clergy. Henceforth monks and Malmesbury seem indissolubly connected.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.
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CHAPTER II.
FOUNDING OF THE ABBEY.

It is a noticeable fact that all history arranges itself around certain distinct points, as planets revolve around a sun or nebulae cluster about a central star. As to discover the satellites of Jupiter the astronomer would first direct his instrument at the planet, so in endeavouring to clear away the mist of antiquity the student finds it necessary to first fix his gaze upon prominent facts, and from these landmarks deduce his position. Time itself has been almost always divided into eras distinguished by the existence of great men. The history of an empire is usually bound up with that of some great city – some capital (*a head*) – as that of the Assyrian and Nineveh, of Greece and Athens, of the Latins and Rome, of England and London. Again; that of cities arranges itself around some edifice in their midst, conspicuous for its elevation, its age, or the associations connected with it ; see that of Babylon and the tower of Belus – which some have supposed to be that of Babel - of Rome and the Capitol, of London and the Tower, while to descend to the proper topic of

this chapter, the history of Malsbury is intimately identified with that of its abbey. It may also be observed how from the dim ranks of the undistinguished, unknown dead there stand out at intervals names that are immediately connected in the mind with events that have changed to all appearance the destiny of an empire or a people, aye, and even of the world. In all ages there have been philosophers, poets, heroes – their number must be beyond conception – but the greater portion have passed away into utter oblivion, or are only cursorily scanned by the student when turning over some ancient tome. In contradistinction to these with what vivid reality do certain names stand out in the mind – with an objective reality, like sculpture. Who hears of Homer, without remembering the Trojan war ; of Plato, without in imagination listening to the soft sighing of the zephyrs through the groves of Academus; of Romulus, without the thought of the proud city that bears his name – the proud city calling itself Eternal – of Rome ; of Columbus, without remembering the discovery of America ; of Alfred, without reflecting upon the enormous extent of England's empire which he is held to have founded ? So in the memory – the traditional memory – of the men of Malsbury, must stand out in vivid distinctness the name of Meyldulph, the Scot.

Nothing is so tame as a truism, yet it is impossible to trace the course of events without pausing a moment to reflect how strangely evil and good are intermingled in them ; how the first seems to produce the latter, and the latter to be evolved from the first, until judgment is suspended upon an action, so utterly unable does one feel to pronounce whether it was in reality a curse or a blessing. What tends to render more intricate the problem is the fact that every action has a two-fold face. It must first be regarded in itself, or its immediate results, and then considered with reference to the fruits it bore in after times. These two considerations often appear to balance each other, so that nothing can be more impertinent than to pronounce an event, or a time, as one of unmixed evil or unmixed good. Such conclusions must of necessity be hasty, and betray either partizanship or inordinate self-conceit. This close connection, and yet antagonisation of evil and good, so easily observable and evident, led the early speculators to embody them – to give them an actual positive existence – by assigning their causes to two beings of opposite nature; a reasoning founded upon the analogy of human affairs. Thus the Persians identified evil with Ahriman, the Dark Spirit, and good with Ormusd, the Beneficent Power ; between whom there was a bitter hared and ceasless warfare. Something of this conception appears to have existed earlier still among the ancient Egyptians, with whom all good seems to have been considered as proceeding from Osiris, all evil from Typhon, his enemy, both of whom were gods, the first revered, the latter hated. Even in the common conceptions of Christianity there may be traced a general similitude with this ancient belief – the Holy Ghost for good, the devil for evil, being influences usually supposed to be for

ever at work, with opposite purposes. Mark, the resemblance is general ; when closely examined there are many differences. Mephistopheles describes himself in Faust as : -

“Of that power a part
Which willing evil still produces good.”

Now it is notorious that nothing has led to so much commotion, or caused more blood to be shed than religion. The thing is so well known that none can call it in question with any show of learning ; though it certainly many be argued that the fault lies not in religion, but man's nature. However, there is the fact. Witness the bloody annals of the inquisition, the ferocity of the fanatics in King Charles' time, while scarcely fifty years ago the law allowed the utmost severity to be exercised against Unitarians. And what has all this to do with Malmesbury? A great deal, as will be immediately apparent. Somewhere about six hundred and thirty years after Christ, a Scot, by named Meyldulph, made his appearance at Malmesbury. For at least a century previously Britain had been the scene of violent contests between three races, and the island now envied by the world for its possession of peace was then torn and distracted beyond conception by intestine wars. The original inhabitants were yet numerous and powerful, they had not then been driven to take refuge in the mountains of Wales, or the rocky peninsula of Cornwall. Though overwhelmed by the legionaries of Rome, and held in uncertain subjection for centuries, the natural bravery of the Britons was not exhausted ; they had been conquered rather by the artificial aids of superior arms and discipline, than by courage, and they had been slaves in name only. In fact it is been conjectured, with considerable probability, that it was only in the large towns, or in the neighbourhood of their fortresses that the Romans possessed anything more than a nominal authority : in his forest the bold Briton was still free. With the decline of the Roman power the Britons seem to have again struggled for independence against their new enemies – the Saxons – unfortunately for them invited over by Vortigern. It is not necessary to accept as literal truth the marvellous relations in Geoffrey of Monmouth : these ancient chroniclers, to use Byron's definition, were

“Men who's historical superiority
Is always greatest at a miracle,”

and therefore to be received with caution. His stories of Ambrosius, of Uther Pendragon, King Arthur, and Cadwalla need not be dealt with in detail, but should rather be taken as indications of the fact that at that date the Britons joining their forces once more struck a bold blow for liberty. It should be remembered that Meyldulph was about contemporaneous with Cadwalla of whom such wonders are related, and who is said to still live in the traditions of the Welsh. Scarcely one hundred years before him the renowned King Arthur fought and won twelve battles against the ever growing power of the Saxons. Nor was it more than two centuries previous – if Geoffrey of Monmouth is to be believed – that the stones of Stonehenge were brought over sea by the

celebrated British prophet Merlin, and erected as a monument to the memory of some princes treacherously murdered by Hengist. And although the Romans had left Britain at least two hundred years, it can scarcely be believed that the traces of an occupation extending over four centuries had as yet disappeared. Hence there are three races probably apposed to each other in their religious opinions either openly or by underhand practices : firstly the partially, or wholly pagan Saxons, deeply imbued with Scandinavian ideas concerning Thor and Odin, and no doubt accommodating their new religion to the old ; secondly the Britons indisposed to yield either civil or ecclesiastical authority to the Saxons ; thirdly the remnant resulting from the inter marriages of the Romans. Time of civil commotion are especially favorable to the display of religious antipathies, or animosities ; and such a time was that immediately preceding if not contemporary with Meyldulph. Already two instances of this have been given – firstly, the shutting up of the Malmesbury convent by Augustine, probably on account of his enmity to Dinooth its superior, and secondly the march of the Saxon army against Bangor, Dinooth's residence, resulting in a terrible battle, in which the Saxons were defeated, and lost over ten thousand men. Hence it may fairly be argued that this was a time of savage perscution for religious opinions, and although nothing is absolutely certain concerning the cause of Meyldulph's leaving his own country, excepting that it was on account of persecution, yet as he seems to have been connected with the clergy, it is not improbable that his opinions were the origin of his wanderings. Those wanderings, in those days, must have been full of peril, and Meyldulph probably hailed with delight the prospect which Malmesbury afforded him of ending his days in peace. Here he erected a hermitage, and from this time Ingelburne, such was the name of the place in those days, dates its rise and celebrity. Meyldulph may in fact be considered the practical founder of Malmesbury. His character is said to have been one of great piety, but whether what was considered piety in those days would answer to the modern idea is doubtful. It seems to have been then thought a negative virtue, whereas now it is taken rather to consist in exercise – Christian exercise. A man who in a sudden fit of remorse or other passion allows himself to be locked up in a cell for the remander of his days, and consequently neither commits murder nor robbery, can scarcely be termed pious since he has had no temptation and no opportunity. Nor does seclusion seem to have operated beneficially upon the imagination of these men. Debarred from corporeal pleasures they – from the confessions of some – would seem to have revelled in the most voluptuous visions. To escape these, or their promptings, maceration of the body and abstinence were deemed necessary ; and he who practised the greatest severity towards the flesh seems to have been thought most pious. Such a system became mutually exclusive, in opposition to what is now thought the great spirit of Christianity – expansion. Meyldulph appears to have been a man of erudition and ability, and probably from

this circumstance became so intimately connected with the rise of Malmesbury rather than from piety. Intellect is certain to make itself felt sooner or later. It is stated that when he had settled himself he availed himself of his learning to open a school, which was attended in sufficient numbers to support him. Some have even gone so far as to maintain that Malmesbury was the first place in Britian in which the language of the Latins was taught. But it will be recollected in the first place that wherever the monks went there went the Latin language, which at that date could scarcely be called dead being used by men of learning, and forming between them a common means of communicating their ideas. In the second, that Britain had been in the the possession of the Romans four centuries, and so long a period of time could scarcely elapse without there being an attempt made by the conquered Britons to become acquainted with a language to them of so much moment; in fact, the simple residence of the Romans would be quite sufficient to afford grounds for a conjecture that there must have been teachers of Latin before this time. The thing is possible though scarcely probable, and in all likelihood was a legend arising from the great scholarship of the Malmesbury monks. Meyldulph in due course of time was joined by others, amongst whom it may be presumed was the celebrated monk Aldhelm, and by their common efforts a monastery arose from the simple hermit's cell. Thus was laid the foundation of the marvellous abbey of Malmesbury. As yet, however, it had attained none of its subsequent magnificence, the monks on account of the low state of their finances being obliged to work for their living. In all probability finding that this state of things must, if not improved, result in the dissolution of the society, Meyldulph having first considered the matter well with his coadjutor Aldhelm, who now first rises into notice, determined to apply to the then Bishop of Winchester, one Lutherius, for assistance. This prelate, much famed among the West Saxons, seems to have readily lent his aid, and through his munificence the abbey received an impetus which finally placed it in a position to compete with the most celebrated in the kingdom. Meyldulph seems by this time to have grown old, and incapable of performing the duties of abbot, which office was accordingly filled by Aldhelm. This accounts for the non-appearance of Meyldulph's name in the following deed by which Lutherius transfers some property of his at Malmesbury to the abbey. "Lutherius, primate of the West Saxons by the grace of God. I, being solicited by the abbots who preside over the convent of monks which is in subjection to the parochial law (dioceses were first divided into parishes about A. D. 636), to transfer that land called the Maildulfesburch to Aldhelm, the presbyter, in which place he has lived from infancy, and there been instructed in learning and the holy wisdom of the church, do of my own will give the place to them and their successors, following the rule of the holy order with devotion, in order that he may be enabled to lead a monastic life, and this in accordance with the prayer of the abbots, and the request of the

brotherhood apparently suggested by their fraternal love.” This deed was executed in public upon the banks of the River Bladon, or Avon, somewhere about the year A. D. 675. In all probability the earliest kingly benefactor of the abbey was Kenelwalch, King of Wessex, upon the border of whose kingdom Malmesbury was situated. This Kenelwalch is, in all likelihood the Kenwalk of Ethelwerd’s chronicle, who gives the following scanty record of his deeds : - “A. D. 648. Kenwalk gave to his relation Cuthred, out of his farms, three thousand measures, adjacent to a hill named Esc’s dune (Ashdown, Berks?). Four years after he fought a battle against his own people, at a place called Bradford, on the river Afene (Avon). A. D. 658. The Kings Kenwalk and Pionna renewed the war against the Britons and pursued them to a place called Pederydan. After three years, Kenwalk again fought a battle near the town of Pontesbury, and took prisoner Wulfhere, sone of Penda, at Esc’s dune (Ashdown) when he had defeated his army. A. D. 672. Kenwalk, King of the West-Angles, died ; and his wife, Sexburga, succeeded him in the kingdom and reigned twelve months.” Ethelred, King of Mercia, was the second who assisted to raise the abbey into importance. This Ethelred seems to have been of a religious turn, as Ethelwerd thus mentions him in his chronicle : - “A. D. 704. Ethelred, son of Penda, and King of the Mercians, assumed the monastic habit, when he had completed twenty-nine years of his reign.” If he took the cowl it must naturally be supposed that he deserted the crown, nor is his the only example of men ceasing to be monarchs that they might be monks, but the fact is interesting on account of his connection with Malmesbury, which lay in the boundaries of his kingdom. Nothing could be more natural than a man of his character lending his aid to such a work. The life of Meyldulph was now drawing to a close. He might have been pardoned if in his last days he looked back with a little heart exultation at the work of which he had been the founder. However wrong these men may have been in their opinions, it would be both unjust and unwarranted to accuse them of hypocrisy or selfish designs. Give them at least the credit of earnestness. They *did* something, let their aim be what it might. He had come there a poor out-cast wanderer from his country, had raised himself a hermit’s cell, diffused his learning around him, and had watched the effect of his exertions until kings condescended to lend him their aid. For forty years, perhaps, he had been familiar with the scenery of Malmesbury. His must have been strange reflections – once a fugitive, now, though burdened with age, highly honoured. Yet it may be doubted if in his secret heart he was really happy. He was dying in a strange land. The attachment of a man to the land of his youth is invariably very strong. The faces around him no doubt expressed kindness, even reverence, but they were not those that had smiled upon his boyhood, and it is for these that the heart pines in the hour of death. He died about A.D. 676. He was the first abbot of Malmesbury, and must have been in many respects a most remarkable man. He was succeeded by Aldhelm. Not only did Meyldulph

found the future prosperity of Malmesbury, but he has been considered to have given it its name. The Venerable Bede, a celebrated Saxon writer, whose ecclesiastical history contains much curious information, and who died either in A. D. 734 or 735, calls it Meyldulphi Urbs, that is the city of Meyldulph. As it was afterwards called Mealdelmesbyrig it has been also conjectured thus the name arose from the conjoining of Meyldulph and Aldhelm, with the addition of bury. Bury is a common affix, meaning borough generally. It is sometimes bury, sometimes berrie, buria, birig, is occasionally contracted to bur, bir, or birh, or lengthened to borough as Marlborough, Wanborough, and again contracted to burgh as in Jedburgh, a town in Scotland. It appears in the German burg, castle, fort, as Strasburgh, Nuremburg. Hence Mealdelmesbyrig, or Malmesbury, would mean the place, or borough of Meyldulph and Aldhelm. This certainly has an appearance of truth, but it is scarcely possible to be too cautious in accepting an etymology. An instance of this was lately exposed. For a long time a belief had been current that in a former age Jews had been employed, or compelled to work as miners of tin in Cornwall. It was founded upon the name of a place – Marazion – which was translated Marah Zion, or the bitterness of Zion, indicative of the bitterness of the lot of the supposed Jews. Upon deeper investigation the word turns out to all appearance as formed of the Cornish for market, and thus the theory about the Hebrews falls to pieces.

To be continued.

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BY GEOFFREY.

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CHAPTER III.
ALDHELM, THE ABBOT.

The period now undergoing review is perhaps one of the most interesting in the annals of Malmesbury. We perceive the town emerging from the obscurity of centuries to take its place among the famous resorts of learning in the kingdom, and, long before the illustrious Alfred by his kingly example and munificence gave so great an impetus to literature, becoming renowned for the intellectual attainments of its inhabitants. As there are few things more capable of producing pleasure

- especially to a father - than to watch the gradual development of a child from infancy to maturity, so the early history of a place like Malmesbury - emerging so suddenly from the womb of time - is surrounded with interest, in itself, and its associations. In rapid succession appear men of great ability, learning, and renown. Malmesbury at that time seems to have been extraordinarily prolific in celebrated characters, and may perhaps congratulate itself as having given birth to as many men of note as any place in the kingdom. It would almost appear that in the long time that elapsed from Dunwallo Molmutius - a time of darkness - to the sixth century after Christ, there had been a gradual though hidden preparation going forward for the distinguished part which Malmesbury was designed to play in the great world-drama of which England is the chief actor. That long night of ten centuries now begins to be enlightened - it is to be more than compensated for by future celebrity - the monks roll away the curtain, the Mystery, such was the name of the old plays, commences, actors troop across the stage, and though the glimpses of them to be obtained may be transient, let us do our best to record their doings and their merits.

The foreground now, as ever hereafter, is filled by the abbey, which may now be considered firmly established, and so intimately connected is it with Malmesbury that it would be next to impossible to give an intelligent account of the ensuing transactions without frequent reference to that structure. The first superior - Meyldulph - was now dead, and Aldhelm, or Adelme, a monk who has been incidentally mentioned before, succeeded to the full authority of abbot, which place indeed he had actually, it would appear, occupied sometime previously on account of the increasing age of Meyldulph, which must have rendered him to a great extent incapable of fulfilling the duties of his office. But it could scarcely be until the death of the venerable Meyldulph that Aldhelm became possessed of undisputed authority, since however feeble Meyldulph may have been, his name, and the knowledge that he was the founder of the edifice, must have procured for him a degree of respect and reverence almost amounting to investing him with supreme power. On his demise, however, there can be no doubt that Aldhelm took the reins of office, and that full obedience was rendered him ; while so famous did he become in later times that the name of Meyldulph became comparatively obscure. This should not deter the impartial reader from giving Meyldulph that palm which is undoubtedly his due. The causes of an opposite conclusion are apparent. Meyldulph came from a distant country, Aldhelm for aught that is certainly known may have been born at Malmesbury, hence the desire to give the honor of originating the abbey to him, as a Malmesbury man. Nevertheless, Meyldulph the Scot was the real founder.

Where and when Aldhelm was born are two questions to which no definite, indisputable answer can be given. It is very certain that he had

an early connection with Malmesbury – so early that many have conjectured he first drew breath within the ancient city of Dunwallo Molmutius. There is some ground for this conjecture since in the deed of Lutherius (given in the preceding chapter) assigning certain lands to the abbey he is described as having been there brought up from infancy. Still this is no absolute proof of his birth having taken place at Malmesbury. Infancy is a wide term, loosely applied in general ; and even when used in the strictest legal sense extending over twenty years. At the sametime, as there is no proof of the contrary, the men of Malmesbury can if they please pride themselves as inhabitants of a town where one of the greatest men in the literature of the seventh century drew his origin. Certes, many a city has erected statues to a celebrated character on far less proof than that here given. The exact date of his birth is likewise unascertainable, but it is possible to make a calculation approximately correct. There does not appear to have been in those days such attention paid to registering births and deaths as at present, and although the system now in use may have its defects still it must be supposed somewhat superior to that of a thousand years ago, which in a word seems to have been that of trusting to chance. If a person did nothing above the common in his lifetime he died unrecorded, and his very existence was not only forgotten – that is a frequent occurrence at the present day – but absolutely unascertainable. If he rendered himself celebrated in arms or otherwise, tradition was trusted until some monk or minstrel took upon him by the aid of pen or verse to record all that could be gathered concerning him, and this perhaps at a distance of some centuries, when fame had either magnified his actions or manufactured them. This understood, let no lances be broken over a date. It is stated that Aldhelm was invested with the monastic habit, and became properly a monk, some where about the year 662, or fourteen years before Meyldulph breathed his last. Now it is very certain that he must have studied under monastic tuition some time previous to that date, not necessarily to become acquainted with the whole sweep of the dead languages, but to be initiated into the self-imposed duties of his order. Hence, giving him every allowance for the rapid progress a person of his ability probably made, he can scarcely have been received into the ranks of the clergy until his eighteenth year, which if we remember aright was the canonical age. This admitted would carry back the year of his birth to 644, some fourteen years after the arrival of Meyldulph at Malmesbury. But this after all is only a calculated conjecture.

Aldhelm's parents are also surrounded with obscurity – in so far as their names are concerned, his mother's indeed seems unknown – but in everything else his lineage is high and haughty enough. He is generally related to have been the son of one Kenred, brother of Ina, King of Wessex. But the word brother here seems to have been used in a loose sense for a near relation – much as in the Scripture sister is often considered to mean cousin – since other writers give Ina but one brother,

Ingild. Although this point may be incapable of indisputable elucidation, there can be no doubt that Aldhelm was in some way or other of the blood-royal, and hence, not only for himself, but for his origin, a man worthy of admiration. He seems indeed to have been one of those few personages who conjoined intellect, ability, and good conduct with high birth. He was at least related to Ina, whose genealogy is thus given by Asser of St. David's in his annals of Alfred the Great, whom he represents as the sixth descendant of Ingild, brother of Ina, "the famous King of the West Saxons." "Ingild and Ina were the sons of Coenred, who was the son of Ceolwald, who was the son of Cudam, who was the son of Cuthwin, who was the son of Ceawlin, who was the son of Cynric, who was the son of Creoda, who was the son of Cerdic, who was the son of Elesa, who was the son of Gewis, from whom the Britons name all that nation Gegwis (Gewissæ. – West Saxons), who was the son of Brond, who was the son of Beldeg, who was the son of Woden, who was the son of Frithowald, who was the son of Frealaf, who was the son of Frithuwulf, who was the son of Finn of Godwulf, who was the son of Geat, which Geat the pagans long worshipped as a god. Sedulius makes mention of him in his metrical Paschal poem, as follows : -

When gentile poets with their fictions vain
In tragic language and bombastic strain,
To their god Geat, comic deity
Loud praises sing, &c.

Geat was the son of Tøetwa, who was the son of Beaw, who was the son of Sceldi, who was the son of Heremod, who was the son of Itermon, who was the son of Hathra, who was the son of Guala, who was the son of Bedwig, who was the son of Shem, who was the son of Noah, who was the son of Lamech, who was the son of Methusalem, who was the son of Enoch, who was the son of Malaleel, who was the son of Cainian, who was the son of Enos, who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam." Such is the account of Asser, who was a contemporary of Alfred the Great, and from whose annals are drawn the greater part of what is known concerning that mighty monarch. Aldhelm might then through his relations Ina and Ingild claim a lineage before which the genealogical trees of the most ancient of the present aristocratic families would shrink into shrubs. Like the heroes of Grecian story he might name among his illustrious progenitors at least one god – Geat – if not two, since Woden is also mentioned amongst his ancestors. Here he had a choice which few, if any, Grecians had. One of his fore fathers gave a name to a whole nation, according to this account, and that all of them must have been of some celebrity – always premising that implicit faith is placed on this record – since their names are recorded for a period of some five thousand years, which could hardly have been the case had they been men of no note. The men of Malmesbury might in those days have seen walking amongst them a man who in himself was a proof of the truth of the Biblical relation, since his lineage might be traced to Adam. If it be objected to this aristocratic pedigree that Aldhelm's grandeur was but

reflected lustre, since he could only claim it through his near relations, it may be replied that Ethelwerd's chronicle makes him a direct descendant of the afore-mentioned illustrious ancients, and at the same time throws a little more light upon this Kenred, who is reported to have been his father. Ethelwerd states in giving the genealogy of King Ethelwulf that "his great-grandfather's grandfather was Ingild, brother of Ina, King of the Western Angles * * * and the above named kings derived their origin from King Kenred. Kenred was the son of Ceolwald, son of Cuthwin, son of Ceawlin, son of Cynric, son of Cerdic, who also was the first possessor of the western parts of Britain; his father was Elesa, son of Esla, son of Gewis, son of Wig, son of Freawin, son of Frithogar, son of Brond, son of Beldeg, son of Woden, son of Frithowald, son of Frealaf, son of Frithuwulf, son of Finn, son of Godwulf, son of Geat, son of Tætwa, son of Beaw, son of Sceldi." Here Ina and Ingild are pointed out as having derived their origin from King Kenred. If this King Kenred be the father of Aldhelm it is evident that he must have been their brother, and if it be supposed that he was the son of another mother, the discrepancies of the different relations are at once removed, and Aldhelm becomes in one sense the brother of King Ina, in another his near relation, that is, his half-brother. The genealogy given by Ethelwerd varies but slightly from that of Asser, until Sceldi is arrived at, whose father Ethelwerd represents as Scaef, and giving a marvellous account of him, ends his researches, while Asser making Heremod Sceldi's immediate predecessor, continues his list until Adam is arrived at, and he can go no farther. The existence of this discrepancy is easily accounted for upon the same principle as the gaps in the Sacred genealogies are got over, that is by supposing that only the remarkable men are recorded – the intermediate suppressed – and that while Asser heard only of Heremod, Ethelwerd occupied himself with recounting the deeds of Scaef ; thus presenting that curious paradox of both wrong and both right. The rising abbey of Malmesbury had then sufficient grounds to congratulate itself upon gaining the adherence of Aldhelm, who seems to have been the son of one king and brother of another.

There seems some good reason for believing that Aldhelm commenced his studies at Malmesbury, since he is described in the deed of Lutherius as not only having been brought up there from infancy, but also instructed there in learning. Now as Meyldulph had opened a school at Malmesbury there is great probability that it was there, and under his tuition that Aldhelm laid the foundation of that learning which was afterwards to render him famous, at the same time that his tutor was founding, by scarcely perceivable degrees, an edifice of which his pupil was one day to be the g[rea]t ornament, and which was to carry both their names down to posterity. It is true that one writer relates he was sent to Canterbury there to be instructed by Adrian the Abbot of St. Augustine's, a man of great proficiency in learning, but it does not seem to be positively stated that he had not previous to that journey undergone

a preparatory training at the hands of Meyldulph, and the conjecture that such was the case receives some confirmation in the fact of Adrian's being a man with few equals for learning at that date, and one, therefore, who would scarcely have the time to attend to a youth. Aldhelm also numbered amongst his tutors, "the holy Archbishop" of Canterbury, Theodore. Moreover, that it was at Malmesbury and under Meyldulph that Aldhelm imbibed his taste for literature would seem probable on account of the statement that he left Canterbury to become a monk, and that it was at Malmesbury he learnt Greek and Latin. In these two languages he is reported to have surpassed his fellows, as, indeed, he seems to have done in everything else. He now, about the year 662, assumed the monastic habit, and once more leaving Malmesbury, where he had been brought up from infancy and instructed in learning, returned to Canterbury, in those days a long, and perilous journey. But the more celebrated city of Canterbury is said not to have agreed with his health, and probably having formed many acquaintances during his youth at Malmesbury, and also bearing in mind the venerable Meyldulph, thither he went, and took up his abode. Soon after this Meyldulph, it would appear, becoming aged and incapable of discharging the duties of abbot, especially in such a monastery as this at Malmesbury probably was at that date – poor and almost its entire management falling on the abbot, thought it advantageous to himself and the community to establish Aldhelm as his coadjutor. Meyldulph probably recognised in Aldhelm talents fitting him to be his successor. Accordingly it was not until after considerable consultation with Aldhelm that Lutherius the primate of the West Saxons was asked to place the monastery under episcopal jurisdiction. Ina was then king of the West Saxons, and in the munificence of Lutherius towards the abbey, and also that of Ina himself, may probably be traced something of that influence which a relation such as Aldhelm might be supposed to possess over him. There were, then, over and above the talents of Aldhelm, sound reasons to induce Meyldulph to conjoin him with himself in the present conducting of the affairs of the abbey, and the monks in acquiescing in that policy. Aldhelm was at least near of kin if not, as has been shown not improbable, the half-brother of king Ina – for those days a mighty monarch – who would certainly look around him for the means of providing for his near relation, especially when that provision prevented him from aspiring to wrench the crown from him, and when it suited with his own religious leanings. This fact, and the ever increasing age and incapacity of Meyldulph, rendering Aldhelm's active superintendence necessary may account without violence for the appearance of Aldhelm's name in the deed of Lutherius, executed while yet Meyldulph lived. That deed secured Aldhelm's succession to the office of abbot, both in name as well as in reality, and accordingly upon the death Meyldulph about the year 676 there does not seem to have been any opposition to Aldhelm's occupying his place.

Aldhelm was now, if the calculation made but lately concerning the year of his birth be correct, over thirty, and had arrived at the prime of life. His character may then be considered as fixed, and seems to have been a very estimable one. Although he seems to have fulfilled the numerous ordinances of his order with the utmost regularity until he gained a wide spread notoriety for piety, and even went beyond the usual mortifications of the body then practised by those who aspired to heavenly joys, and thought the safest method of gaining them was by denying themselves the pleasures of earth, he was no bigot and could unbend his austerity. As evidence of the severity of the inflictions to which the zeal by which he was animated led him to practice upon himself, it said that there still remains a fountain known as Holy Well, in which he used to cover himself with water to his shoulders both night and day, not only in summer, but in winter. His constitution must either have been extraordinarily strong, or else continual practice, commenced in the mild season and continued into the cold season, case-hardened him, since it was remarked that his health never suffered from these untimely and unnecessary ablutions. It is not improbable that this seeming superiority which he manifested above others in the matter of strength of constitution was put down to supernatural interference in his behalf, and thus was increased the reverence with which he was beheld. Few, except Roman Catholics, will now find their admiration of his character much added to by this relation of the mortification of body to which he subjected himself, but at the same time nothing could be more illiberal than to judge him unworthy of esteem simply because he practised austerities which his religion made meritorious. His aim was true, his sincerity undoubted, the means he employed were at least innocent – they could injure none but himself – what fault can then be found with him? If in after times miracles were related to have been performed by him, which in all probability he never dreamt of, that can in no way be turned to his disadvantage, but rather places him in a higher position, being conclusive testimony of the reverence with which he was regarded by the lower orders of men. They no doubt originated from the accounts of his great piety handed down. That the monks did at a later date give their support to these legends there is no dispute, using them as engines to add to their wealth and influence, but it would be most unjust to lay the blame of such forgery and extortion upon Aldhelm, in the same way that nothing but the most sophistical reason can charge upon Christ the cruelties which have been perpetrated in the name of his religion. The miracles with which Aldhelm has been credited are certainly amusing, and if ever received as truth show with what despicable self-abasement men in a former age must have relied upon the authority which gave them its support. He is related by the extraordinary strength and wonderful virtue of his prayers to have lengthened a beam of the church which the artisan had cut too short until it was of the proper length required. Spirits have been described as

sliding down a sunbeam, but they were spirits, not material bodies ; in the following miracle Aldhelm goes far beyond that feat. On one occasion, it is stated, having said mass in the church of St. John Latrans he looked round for some one to take his “chesyble” – a sort of gown – from him, but none were near. Where-upon taking another glance around he beheld a sunbeam shining through the window, and straightway hung up his “chesyble” upon it, as though it had been a peg or celestial clothes line. At this, it is related, and no wonder, the people greatly marvelled, and the legend closes with the statement that the “chesyble” was yet at Malmesbury, and its color was purple.

But although he was thus credited, at least in after times, with supernatural powers, Aldhelm appears to have been a man of rare liberal character. Liberality in those days, and especially in an ecclesiastic, was something indeed rare, and of all the admirable points in his character perhaps this is the best. He did not confine his studies, as was usual among ecclesiastics, to the learned languages, but cultivated poetry both in Saxon and in Latin. He is even described as a performer of much excellence upon the harp, a more than good singer, an orator possessed of eloquence, and as a doctor of no little eminence. Here is an assemblage of qualities which could scarcely fail to make him celebrated, especially when united with a deep knowledge of learning, both sacred and profane. He showed his liberality in a manner very remarkable for the age in which he lived. Most ecclesiastics confined their efforts to furthering their own interests or those of their order, and to do this allowed the population around them to wallow in the mire of ignorance and barbarism, a sure way of increasing their own importance – as the possessors of knowledge. Aldhelm, on the contrary, appears to have been animated with a desire to impart some of that knowledge which he had himself gained to the rude, unpolished men who dwelt around him without the pale of the monastery. In the way in which he went about to accomplish this object he showed a sagacity and insight into the public mind which was well worthy of the character he has so long held for intellectual ability. Thinking, probably with good reason, that the common people would scarcely assemble to hear him deliver a serious discourse, while they might easily be attracted by pleasure, he determined to turn to account his talent for singing. Descending from his sacred character for a time he stood upon one of the bridges, over which the traffic from the town passed to the adjoining villages, and by singing songs of an amusing description collected crowds around him, upon whom he then employed his eloquence in the endeavour to amend their uncivilized state. He is stated to have continued this practice for some time, and to have been most successful. But he was only one among a host of men who saw, no doubt, that their interest lay in exactly the opposite direction, and that in proportion, as people plunged deeper into ignorance, so in equal ratio did their power through the aid of the sister of ignorance – superstition – increase. Hence, whatever good his efforts

may have obtained in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury they must have necessarily been confined to a small radius and no doubt perished with him. Had indeed all his successors, and the whole order of monks, instead of occupying their time in nice ecclesiastical observances, recording miracles, or practising upon the superstition of the vulgar, employed it in educating the people, the work of civilisation would have advanced with gigantic strides, and instead of being a clog upon the spread of knowledge they would have been the pioneers of learning, and as such entitled to be held in the grateful memory of posterity. The conduct of the general order of monks, however, cannot be held in any way to disparage the character of Aldhelm, whose lustre is increased by their darkness, his liberality by their bigotry, just as the brilliance of a diamond is more apparent when laid upon black velvet.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.
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CHAPTER IV
WORKS OF ALDHELM.

It has been said, probably with a great deal of truth, that there were heroes before Achilles : but wanting a poet to sing their deeds, their memory has been lost. Hence it may be concluded that there is nothing in heroism itself to make the hero immortal ; but he, like monarachs undistinguished for anything except the mere fact of occupying a throne, must rely upon the friendly or unfriendly office of the bard to hand down his name and prowess to posterity. The same seems true of philosophers and moral reformers. Doubtless there have been many men of wonderful talent, research, and learning amongst the millions who have lived and died in the last ten centuries, but how few have survived the ravages of time ! Numbers without questrion never did, and never will become celebrated, for the simple reason that they did not write, did not use the instrumentality of quill, ink, and parchment to convey their investigations or speculations down to us. Oral tradition, unless supported by superstitious observances or for a state purpose, may preserve the memory of a man for a long period, but it invariably fails in the end. Ink alone confers immortality. The ancient philosopher said that nothing was durable except ideas, and certainly it does seem that everything becomes swallowed up in the insatiable vortex of time but the

thoughts of men when placed upon paper. Nor is it so very necessary as might be supposed that such thoughts should be of an excellence surpassing the common to be handed down from generation to generation. Although the works of the ancients contain undisputed and indisputable genius taken as a whole, yet there are passages of a trivial and trifling – almost childish – character that one would almost like to hear proved interpolations. The truth seems to be that every generation produces a greater or less number of men who take delight in becoming acquainted with the deeds or ideas of their ancestors – some from curiosity, others for a moral motive, others again in the search after truth, - in short, the motives are multiform, but the result produced is the preservation of ancient works, and the consequent celebrity of their authors.

An example of the considerations here advanced may be found in Aldhelm. Though so notable as a man of genius, of high origin, of liberal leanings, of almost universal acquirements, a doubt may be reasonably entertained of his even having obtained more than a passing notice as an abbot – in the same curt style as many of his successors are mentioned – had it not been that he added to all these accomplishments that of being an author. His numerous engagements as the abbot of an ever increasing monastery, which must have demanded from him the outlay of much time and attention ; his regular performance of the religious duties of his position ; his works of supererogation – the mortifications he practised , his efforts to start a work of civilisation amongst the rude population that surrounded him ; - all these did not hinder him from writing. It may have been that the continual strain upon his bodily and mental functions, in consequence of his numerous employments and delicate task of ruling a monastery, required an occasional relaxation which like other men of intellect he found in composition. It is a general mistake that a life of ever-changing, un-relaxing employment is in all cases detrimental to authorship, although without doubt quiet, retirement, and opportunity for frequent reflection are its natural and proper aids. They, however, seem oftener to produce philosophers or poets than active authors. Whatever may have been the motives that induced Aldhelm to write, it is perfectly certain that he did, and that he became celebrated for his productions. At what period of his life, and in what succession his various works were produced, seem questions incapable of exact solution, but it may be conjectured not without reason that it was during his long occupation of the office of abbot, and active discharge of the duties belonging to that position that the majority issued from his pen. At the date at which Aldhelm flourished there was much discussion and division between the prelates of Great Britain concerning the proper celebration of Easter. In this point as well as in many others the Britons were at variance with the Anglo-Saxons who seem to have more readily accommodated themselves to the encroaching dominion of Rome than the sturdy, independent-thinking, original inhabitants of the island. An

instance of this has been already given in the opposition they made to Augustine, the papal emissary. In the time of Aldhelm a great controversy was raging amongst divines concerning Easter – a festival to which the Saxons might easily accommodate themselves as their pagan ancestors had been accustomed to celebrate peculiar ceremonies in the month of April to their goddess Eostre, from whom it is considered the modern word *easter* has been derived. Into this controversy Aldhelm – prompted, it is said, by his diocesan – plunged, and published a work “against the mistakes of the Britons concerning the celebration of Easter.” His efforts are recorded to have been in part successful, several converts being made by it from the ranks of the opposite party. The matter, however, was agitated for a long time after his decease, and it is recorded as something remarkable that St. Elbotus, or Elvod of whom Nennius, the historian, describes himself a disciple, which Elvod is said to have flourished about 755 A. D., was the first in the Cambrian or British Church (he was bishop of Bangor) to make use of the novel cycle for the regulation of Easter. Aldhelm also produced a work partially in verse and partially in prose, “In praise of Virginity,” which he dedicated to the Abbess of Barking, one Ethelburga. By his immediate predecessors this treatise was regarded as a most wonderful work, for beauty and grandeur of expression, and thought, though at the same time it was admitted that it contained phrases which required a consideration of the age in which he flourished before they could be allowed to pass without condemnation. The manners of those days must indeed have been coarse and brutal, almost beyond modern conception if those of the sixteenth century be taken as exhibiting but a medium between those of the present day, and those contemporary with Aldhelm. Allusions which now would not be tolerated even by the lower classes excepting when under the influence of liquor, seem then to have been received as good jokes, or sparkling exhibitions of a choice wit. For confirmation of this read Rabelais, or Sir David Lindsay’s “Satire of the Three Estates.” When such language and expressions as may there be found passed without condemnation between men whose position warrants one in supposing that their works were perused by the high-born of the land, it will not be wondered if some seven centuries previous to their composition manners and men were still more rude and coarse. Even in the seventeenth century allusions passed which now be sufficient to put an embargo upon a work – witness the dissertation upon Chastity in “Holy Living and Dying” Aldhelm then may readily be pardoned if in the later part of the *seventh* century his writings are not so free from coarseness as might be desired. Other works of Aldhelm’s were “Of the admonition of Brotherly Charity,” and “Of the praise of the Saints,” “Of the Monastic life,” “A Treatise on the Eight Principal Virtues,” and “Homilies and Epistles.” All these books seem to have been fully in character with his position as abbot, all being no doubt calculated to advance that religion in the ranks of whose professors he himself held so distinguished a post. But the

accomplishments of Aldhelm were too many, and his intellect too vast not to overcome restrictions his sacred character probably placed upon him. and accordingly in agreement with the account already given of his fondness for poetry both in Saxon and Latin, he issued works such as the following, the general bearing of whose contents may be judged from their titles, for in those days it does not seem to have been the fashion to place an enigma on the title page : - “ Of the rules of Metrical Feet,” “Of the Figures call Metaplasm, and Synalœpha,” “A Dialogue concerning Metre,” “Of the scanning of the Ellipses of Verses.” As Aldhelm has been previously mentioned as singing amusing songs that he might collect a crowd in order to deliver a serious exhortation, it is probable that he composed numerous short fugitive pieces, whose names or subjects have not come down, although a collection of ballads in Saxon said to have been composed by him have survived, and were published early in the seventeenth century, strangely enough in Germany. Aldhelm is also known to have written a long poem called “ Enigmas.” Nor does this in the slightest detract from his character for grave and solid productions. He is not the only one who has followed the advice of the ancient philosopher, not to keep the bow always bent. Enigmas have been the vehicles in all ages for the conveyance of much learning and moral wisdom. Like the old Roman, Aldhelm is recorded to have vaunted, certainly with pardonable vanity, that he was the first to bring Latin poetical composition into vogue in his own country ; and is stated to have quoted two lines, thus translated by Dryden, from Virgil as applicable to himself :

“ I, first of Romans, shall in triumph come

From conquered Greece and bring her trophies home” -

meaning that after having deeply searched the learning of the ancients - having conquered the difficulties of a dead language ; he (Aldhelm) had made use of his knowledge to introduce a new species of composition formed upon the model of the ancient masters. The boast was similar to that of Horace. “I was the original who set my free footsteps on the vacant sod ; I trod not in the steps of others. He who depends upon himself as leader, commands the swarm. I first showed to Italy the Parian iambics : following the numbers and the spirit of Archilochus, but not his subject and style which afflicted Lycambes. You must not, however, crown me with a more sparing wreath, because I was afraid to alter the measure and structure of his verse.” In the same way it should not detract from the laurels of Aldhelm that he availed himself of the ancient models, without doubt using them as vehicles to convey his own conceptions. But Aldhelm did not pause here ; he yet found time to philosophise and to write such works as these : - “ Of the nature of Insensible Things, metaphorically said to be indued with speech,” “Of Arithmetic,” “Of the dignity of the number seven collected from the Flowers of the Old and New Testament and the Doctrines of Philosophers,” and, strange enough at first sight, a work upon astrology.

That science, so called, has now, at least amongst the educated class, fallen so much into decline, and is treated, not without reason, with such withering ridicule that the historian, who endeavours to make Aldhelm appear as a man "in advance of his age," as the phrase goes, had best let all mention of his acquaintance with it fall into oblivion. But we believe that such a course is entirely a mistaken one, originating, perhaps, in that very phrase just quoted "in advance of his age." Such a thing, when examined point by point, is next to an impossibility. The fact is, men who have been credited with such supernatural abilities have in reality only exhibited in themselves a sort of synopsis, or encyclopedia of the learning diffused amongst their contemporaries. They are, or have been, general geniuses. Such was Aldhelm. Scholar, poet, philosopher, ecclesiastic, reformer – all in one. No wonder that he appeared as if indued with a knowledge only to be obtained as it were by an insight into the learning of after time. The cant phrase "in advance of his time" contradicts itself. How is it possible for a man to know more than he knows – for the hand of the clock when pointing to three to be at six ? The thing is absurd. Aldhelm was not "in advance of his age," but his age impersonified. Hence he expatiates upon the dignity of the number seven – a number that has almost always been regarded as surrounded with a certain mystical meaning or power – and writes a work "of Astrology." His time was one of superstition, and however great may have been his intellectual power, it is very improbable that he ever entirely escaped the contagion. Indeed it is very plain that he did not, witness this book about the number seven, and the mortifications which he is said to have practised upon himself. The greater number of his works is not now extant ; it is then impossible to submit his productions to modern criticism ; but in his own time they gained him a wide-spread fame. It reached even to Scotland – even, for in those days Scotland must have been so difficult of access, and being governed by distinct rulers, must have been to the Southerners a kind of foreign country. It is related that a Scottish prince, who was himself a candidate for literary honors, hearing of Aldhelm's fame sent his own works to the Malmesbury monk, desiring him to correct, smooth off the Scottish angularity, and render them fit for publication. This must have been very gratifying to Aldhelm. His preceptor Meyldulph had been a Scot – a Scot had taught him – now he was considered worthy of correcting the works of a Scottish prince. This was a revolution of affairs brought about by his own ability and perseverance. He might readily be forgiven a little exultation, but there does not seem to be any record that he showed that gratification which it may reasonably be supposed he felt. To add to his pleasure he received from over seas a communication that evincing that his fame was not confined to Great Britain. This was the great advantage of the Latin language. Men of every variation of speech might through it communicate their sentiments, their discoveries, their their secrets to others, with whose native tongue they were utterly unacquainted. Hence

arose the practice of writing works of great research in Latin, and the vulgar idea of a scholar – one who could read that language. Certainly, as a medium of communication between men of distant lands and different tongues, Latin may still be studied with advantage, but the simple fact of the ability to translate is no longer the distinguishing characteristic of a scholar, since so numerous, easily obtainable and reliable are the versions of the ancients that to learn it with a view of becoming acquainted with their works is for general use a waste of time, while men of science no longer confine their writings to that language. The chief of Aldhelm's works, then, being in Latin could be read by men living in foreign countries, and that such was the case he was assured by receiving in a letter from a learned resident in a distant part of France, a proof of the admiration with which they were there regarded. It was probably his works which obtained for him the friendship and correspondence of other men of note, among whom may be mentioned Hedda, Bishop of Winchester, and Wilfred, Archbishop of York.

If it is allowed that it was whilst Aldhelm filled the office of abbot he wrote those works which gained him so great a fame amongst his contemporaries and immediate successors, he no doubt had seen and felt his fame growing gradually from year to year. Compelled by their vow to perpetual celibacy – though in aftertimes much abuse crept in – and do doubt obeying that rule, as has been recorded of him with the utmost scrupulosity Aldhelm was debarred that pleasure to which most men look forward to as the solace of their advancing years, *i.e.*, watching and assisting the expanding mental and bodily powers of their children. From this, which has been defined as the “purest of all joys,” the monks were excluded – self-excluded – and they consequently sought in every possible way to fill its place with other amusements. Some, no doubt, became wedded to the most exact and superstitious observance of the ordinances of their religion, a few really strove to inculcate religious principles into the minds of the surrounding population, more mingled in intrigues in which from their inviolable character they formed the best of messengers, numbers passed their time in study, and others devoted their energies to cultivating the gardens or grounds attached to their monastery. But all these resources were feeble in their effect as substitutes compared with that occupation which Aldhelm chose to pursue in his leisure hours – writing. It was said that the works of an author are his children, and it was, no doubt, with feelings like unto those with which a father hears of the success of his son that Aldhelm in his retreat at Malmesbury from time to time received evidence that his efforts had not been in vain. In those days the path to literary fame must have been difficult indeed. Readers were few and far between. Communication with places in modern estimation but a short distance apart was dangerous and sometimes impossible, from the absence of roads, or the irruptions of a neighbouring prince. Works must have been carried by hand and on foot, running the risk of being spoiled in the

crossing of a river or thrown down and lost to lighten the traveller pursued by enemies. There were no printing presses to re-produce a book in almost incalculable numbers, no newspapers to advertise it, criticise it, or praise it. All works were multiplied by the slow process of copying. In short, taking every-thing into consideration, it seems a marvel that the works of an author in those days ever travelled beyond his cell, and a still greater one that so many – comparatively speaking – have reached the present day. Fame then was a plant of slow growth, but perhaps, from that very fact, of more lasting character than at present. Aldhelm was abbot for a period extending over twenty-eight years, and his fame, no doubt, was gradually growing during that time. Towards the close of his abbacy it was that he, in all probability, began to receive from all quarters intelligence of the light in which the reading world of those days looked upon his works. It was favorable. It is said, however, that even he renowned as he has been for piety, sanctity, and occupying so high a position in the Romish Church – even he did not escape the lynx eyes of those persons engaged in compiling the *index expurgatorius*, and that some of his works were therein laid under an embargo. The thing is at first sight surprising, but not so much so when examined. In the first place he was probably too liberal in his sentiments, too free in his thoughts, too outspoken to travel unwaveringly in that groove which the Roman Church seems to have marked out for its votaries, *i.e.*, unceasing admiration and adulation of the Roman see, religion and professions. So intricate is the Roman theology in its fully developed strength, so utterly opposed is its secret councils to the spread of general knowledge, that its heads have always taken care to expunge as far as possible from the libraries of the faithful those works which even in the most indirect manner seemed likely to undermine its domination. When has not the Romish Church been opposed to free thought ? Such a phenomena would be scarcely less unlikely to take place than for a river to regularly run backwards to its source. This is not the place to plunge into theological discussion – we are perfectly aware that grant the first principles upon which the infallibility of Rome is sought to be established, and the rest follows naturally enough – but it is necessary to record a fact for the better understanding of those circumstances which we place upon record, and that this opposition to free thought is a characteristic of the Romish Church, there can be few hardy enough to dispute. It is probable that Aldhelm, whilst giving his assent to the general principles of the religion he professed, at the same time could not fail to perceive that in some things it contradicted the source whence it was said to be drawn, and that in his works he breathed an allusion to his doubts. His poetical compositions too were scarcely in accordance with his sacred character, and these two considerations would alone seem sufficient to doom his productions.

But there was a third, and probably more powerful reason than the preceding which led to the placing some of his works upon the – amongst

Roman Catholic authors – dreaded list of the *index expurgatorius*. There seems good ground for the conjecture that Aldhelm amongst his many occupations actually found time to translate some portion of the Bible into Saxon, then the native language of the surrounding population. This it would seem was an offence not to be over looked, whatever may have been his other

excellences, at least in Roman Catholic eyes. To translate the Bible in a Roman point of view appears to have been always regarded as a deadly sin – if not against God, against Rome, which latter perhaps in the Roman mind would be a far more serious matter. The services of Aldhelm to the Roman cause in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury can scarcely be over-estimated, and this is the reward that grateful church paid to his memory. In no other religion is that terribly cold blooded maxim – sacrifice the few for the many – so awfully apparent as that of Rome. Intellect, moral worth, incalculable services, all go as nothing, if the unhappy individual has dared to trespass one hair's breadth upon that prerogative of infallibility which she considers necessary to the weal of her votaries, or her interest. Aldhelm's memory, however, will not at the present date suffer from his having translated a portion of the Bible. Justice may now be done to him without fear of the consequences.

It may not be uninteresting nor uninstrusive, if a hasty glance is given at the state of Great Britain whilst Aldhelm was engaged in his literary pursuits at Malmesbury. The Saxons had not yet gained entire supremacy, though according to Geoffrey, of Monmouth, the Britons unable, now that their power of coherence had been broken by four centuries of subjection to the Romans, to make head against their new enemies, began to give way. The success of the Saxons, according to that author, seems to have been in a great measure owing to a "grievous and memorable famine," succeeded by a pestilence, which, although it carried off both Saxons and Britons in equal numbers, yet was more fatal to the latter since they had no means of recruiting their strength, while the Saxons "according to their old custom sent word over to their countrymen that the island of Britain was now freed of its native inhabitants, and lay open them if they would come over and inhabit it." On this invitation new hordes arrived who met with little opposition, there being none to hinder them excepting the poor remains of the Britons, who continued together in the thickets of the woods in Wales." This took place according to Geoffrey during the reign of the last British king, the celebrated Cadwallader, who, seeing his kingdom desolate, was, says that author, commanded by an angel to go to Rome, which he did, and being confirmed by Pope Sergius died "upon the twelfth before the kalends of May," 689 A. D. Ethelwerd's Chronicle makes him go to Rome A. D. 684 – he then probably lived there until his death – and records that the name which the pope gave him after baptism was Peter. This event took place during the latter years of Aldhelm's occupation of the office of abbot of Malmesbury. Britain was still ruled by many monarchs, the two

most celebrated of whom were Ethelred, King of Mercia, and Ina King of Wessex.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER V.
LAST DAYS OF ALDHELM.

The kingdom of Wessex over which at this date Ina ruled seems to have been at the same time one of the most extensive and powerful of the seven into which Britain was divided by the Saxons. Mercia, the adjoining kingdom, though perhaps of equal extent, was as its name denotes – the border or *march* – mark – land towards the places still occupied by the Britons, and was consequently always subjected to the danger of irruptions from them. Moreover, its own inhabitants were in part at least of British origin, who might reasonably be supposed to look upon the efforts of their race to regain supremacy with a favoring eye. Hence the position of the Saxons in Mercia must have been one of unceasing watchfulness, and accordingly it was not until sometime after this date that their power in that part of the Heptarchy corresponded with the extent of the country they claimed to have conquered. In Wessex, matters were in an entirely different state. There the Saxons were firmly established, and were in all probability constantly recruited from their own country through Southampton, or, as it was anciently known, Hamo's Port. Accordingly, in Wessex civilization had made great advances, and the invariable companions of a state just emerging from barbarism – regularly ordained priests – began to amass wealth and influence. It was in the favouring shelter of such a kingdom as this that Malmesbury was enabled to pass its infancy without being subjected to those violent catastrophes which so retarded the settlements of the monks in other places, and it was through the agency of the then king of Wessex that one of the most famous men Malmesbury ever produced was to be advanced to a dignity which he certainly deserved.

Somewhere about the year A. D. 704 Ina, King of the West-Saxons, or Wessex, came to the conclusion of dividing his kingdom into two dioceses. That it had formerly been under the authority of one primate is exemplified by the records of Lutherius, whose former connection with

the Abbey has been adverted to. The reason of this division was probably on account of its great extent, which made it next to impossible for one person to properly oversee it, especially in those days when travelling was difficult, and the duties of a bishop, no doubt, were more onerous than at present. The diocese, which it was thus determined to divide, seems to have until then been known as that of Winchester, probably the chief city within it, and the residence of the bishop. Hedda, who has been before mentioned as being in correspondence with Aldhelm, seems to have been the last who exercised episcopal authority over the whole of the Kingdom of Wessex. Even after its division, Winchester continued to be the name of one diocese, the other was known as that of Sherborne. To this latter Aldhelm was advanced. The manner in which bishops were elected, or rather called to their high office, in those days, seems to have been a question open to endless discussion. In all probability there was great irregularity – there being divers methods not only in different kingdoms, but in the same kingdom at different times – thus creating a confusion which it seems in vain to attempt to unravel. Everything in those days appears to have depended upon circumstances ; general principles were probably recognised, but seldom carried out ; certainly they had not been reduced to the almost mechanical arrangements of the present day. How was it possible for there to have been anything approaching the clock-work regularity of to-day, when Britain was divided into seven kingdoms, not settled in themselves, and often at variance with their neighbours? Might was undoubtedly right in those times ; and it may be so now, but not with such unblushing effrontery as then. The usual way, however, of filling the office of bishop in the time of the Heptarchy seems to have been in all probability nomination by the king, and confirmation of his choice by the then representative of the present parliament. The assembly was known as the Wittena – Gemote, or meeting of the wise men ; it was to them that the bishop was amenable, and by them he might be deposed, always presuming that the king did not interpose. For in a time when there does not seem to have been any regular system of representation nor other than indirect parliamentary checks upon the monarch, he was undoubtedly all but supreme and possessed of nearly despotic power. In the case of Aldhelm, however, there does not seem any reason to believe that his being called to the high office of bishop was the occasion for the exhibition of anything more than a simple expression of the kingly pleasure. Ina, as has been before shown, was either the brother, the half-brother, or other near relation of Aldhelm ; hence there is nothing to wonder at in his selection of the abbot of Malmesbury. At the same time it would be unjust to suppose that it was simply owing to his relationship to so powerful a monarch that Aldhelm was elevated. Had there been no more motive than this he would probably have been given the whole original diocese and that long enough before the present period. Aldhelm's hardly-earned fame for wisdom, learning, and piety was, and is,

sufficient to shield him from the imputation of owing his dignity merely to favoritism ; while Ina's well-known religious leaning delivers him also from any charge of a similar nature. Undoubtedly he did feel a great and real pleasure in exercising his power to confer a benefit upon one who had so distinguished both himself and the family to which he belonged, and whose efforts were rapidly tending to raise Malmesbury, hitherto almost unknown, into celebrity.

It was in this year, A. D. 704, that Ethelred, the King of the Mercians, who just before the death of Meyldulph had lent his aid to raise the monastery from obscurity, assumed the monastic habit, after having reigned twenty-nine years.

Aldhelm, when he received information of the dignity to which he had been advanced, was in all probability about sixty years of age. This is arrived at by means of the former calculation, *i.e.*, tht he became a monk about his eighteenth year, and as he is known to have taken the monastic habit somewhere about 662, or fourteen years previous to the death of Meyldulph, while he continued abbot of Malmesbury monastery from then until 704, or twenty-eight years, he would be, upon becoming bishop, but ten years less than the allotted age of man. Like his predecessor, the monk Meyldulph, he had been now connected with Malmesbury in an ecclesiastical capacity for some forty years. There his youth had been spent, there he had arrived at middle age, and was now fast declining towards the grave when the dignity of bishop was given him. In such a period of time, probably spent almost entirely at Malmesbury, where he seems to have settled after returning the last time from Canterbury, one would imagine that he must have become acquainted with every stone in the abbey, and to have become so wedded to an unceasing, invaring routine of occupation that a change would be beheld by him with dislike, if not actual dread, on account of his health. But the strength of Aldhelm's constitution seems to have been even yet unimpaired by the long course of years that had passed over his head, as during the interval which elapsed from 704, when Ina seems to have first promulgated his decision concerning the division of his kingdom into two dioceses, and 705, when Aldhelm is recorded to have become settled in his bishopric, he actually performed a journey to Rome. In those days such a journey must have been one of great danger and difficulty even to such a man as Aldhelm, who from his position was doubtless furnished with every means of obtaining a safe transit. But at the same time it must have been then ten times more a journey of interest and ever increasing expectation than now. Then the marvellous power of the papacy was growing, and extending in all directions, and many, no doubt, who, when calm, suspected that the pretensions of Rome to a delegated mission of infallibility from Heaven were but pretentions, yet when they beheld the progress of the doctrine – carrying everything before it – became excited, and exclaimed of the Pope, “He is the Vicar of Christ on Earth !” To such a man as Aldhelm, into whose mind without doubt had

been instilled from infancy the utmost veneration for the Pontiff, his feelings upon approaching the Eternal City must have been a strange compound of joy, awe, and sorrow ; for it was well known that Pope Sergius, who then occupied the chair of St. Peter, was by no means a pure and undefiled exhibition of that chastity which his ministers extolled and professed. It is related indeed that the honest worth and fearless virtue of Aldhelm so far enabled him to overcome that superstitious veneration with which the Pontiff was looked upon, that he actually lectured "The Vicar of Christ on Earth" upon his falling away and the disgrace he had consequently brought upon his high office. Such conduct is certainly worthy of the highest admiration, and places the character of Aldhelm in a still higher position, since it is evident that *he* at least was no believer in that detestable system of sophistry by which it is pretended a man may break his oath with perfect freedom, and even with the sanction of Christ's representative. It was by Pope Sergius that Aldhelm was consecrated. As seems to have been the custom in those days, and is indeed now, but with a very different purpose, Aldhelm did not return from Rome without bringing with him some mementoes of his visit in the shape of divers articles of vertu ; amongst which was a marble altar of peculiar workmanship. It is described as made of polished marble, four feet in length, three spans broad, and a foot and a half in thickness. There was a border as it were hanging over its sides. No doubt this altar when it arrived was looked upon with feelings surpassing curiosity, and approaching veneration ; it being a characteristic of the Roman religion to transfer much of the admiration due to the heavenly power to those articles with which worship of it was intimately associated in the daily observance of minute rites. But there was yet something more which Aldhelm is related to have brought with him from Rome, and which was probably deposited at Malmesbury. This was a casket said to contain some of the relics of his predecessor, the venerable Meyldulph. Such an article could not fail to be received with veneration, and preserved with care by the monks of a monastery which Meyldulph had founded.

Aldhelm now seems to have become settled in his bishopric, and his conduct after his advancement corresponded to that by which he had distinguished himself whilst an abbot. His new dignity did not lead him to forget that he was still a man. The time for writing was probably now gone by. If he had still the ability he no doubt thought that his new duties demanded the whole of his attention. But he did not, as many would have done, make use of his advancing age as an argument for the relinquishment of labor. His ever-active mind and genuine piety led him to look around him for the means of forwarding the cause of his religion. One of the first effects of his efforts is understood to have been the founding of a monastery at Frome, which took place so early as 705. It may certainly have been in existence before that time, just as there were monks at Malmesbury before the foundation of the abbey, but it is said to have been Aldhelm who gave them the means of continuing their society

by assisting the erection of a monastery. This is what should be understood by the general term of founder. A true founder is undoubtedly he who first goes about practically to carry an idea into execution – a founder in the usual sense here is one who endows – not necessarily the originator. This monastery at Frome does not seem to have been fortunate. Although the church stood for several centuries, it would seem that an early irruption of the Danes drove the monks from their shelter so effectually that they never returned. The abbey of Glastonbury is likewise said to have been indebted to Aldhelm, king Ina, through his solicitations, adding a chapel to it at a great cost. Nor did Aldhelm stop here. Not content with founding a monastery or convent in Frome, he also is recorded to have founded one at Bradford. That at Frome was in honor of St. John the Baptist, that at Bradford was dedicated to St. Lawrence. Aldhelm is also said to have lent his aid in the erection of several other places of worship.

But, as might have been expected, it was Malmesbury that carried off the greater share of the good things Aldhelm was enabled to obtain by his influence over King Ina for the clergy of that day. When at Rome, Aldhelm had not been so dazzled by all he saw there as to forget the monastery in which the greater part of his life had been passed, and according sued and obtained a special grant from Pope Sergius ; which privileges Ina afterwards sanctioned. It would be a curious enquiry whether Aldhelm first lectured the Pontiff and then asked for these favors, or gained the privileges first, and then sermonized. Probably he was politic enough to sue first. If not, if Pope Sergius after receiving a severe rebuke for indulgence in his favourite sin, actually even then entertained so high an opinion of Aldhelm as to grant his suit, it must either be supposed that he was of a most generous disposition, or else that Aldhelm's eloquence far surpassed all that is recorded of it. Popes are not persons to be joked with, when the joker is in their power. It is not improbable that Aldhelm's journey was at least in part occasioned by his desire to obtain as it were recognition of the Malmesbury Monastery, by being consecrated at the Pope's hands, and by receiving a mark of favor from him. This confirmation of the Pope's grant to Aldhelm was not the only service which that prelate was enabled to obtain at the hands of Ina, for his favorite monastery of Malmesbury. Ina is recorded as having given the several manors of Corston, Burton, Rodborne, and Cowfolde, with all that belonged to them, to the Abbey : - a gift likely to have been highly appreciated by its inhabitants ; who were thus placed beyond the fear of having like the monks in Meyldulph's time to labor for their living. Ina's reason, over and above that of his friendship for his relation, Aldhelm, in making this magnificent gift is probably well summarised by Longfellow in "King Witlaf's Drinking Horn." Witlaf, according to the Chronicle of Ethelwerd, was a King of the Mercians A.D. 825.

"Witlaf, a King of the Saxons,

Ere his last he breathed,
 To the merry monks of Croyland,
 His drinking horn bequeathed."
 "That whenever they sat at their revels,
 And drank of the golden bowl,
 They might remember the donor,
 And breathe a prayer for his soul."

Ina was the third King who became a benefactor to Malmesbury Abbey. His reign and deeds are thus shortly summed up by Ethelwerd. "A.D. 684 * * * Ina became King of the Western English. A hundred and eighty-eight years were then fulfilled from the time that Cerdic, his sixth ancestor, received the western part of the Island from the Britons 694 * * * The Kentish men remembered the cause which they had against King Ina when they burnt his relation (one named Mull) with fire ; and they gave him thirty thousand shillings at a fixed rate of sixteen pence each - 710. The kings and Ina made war against King Wuthgirete ; also Duke Bertfrid against the Picts - 750. Ina and Ceobred fought against those who opposed them in arms in Wothnesbeoghge (Wanborough). After seven years Ina slew Cynewuf, and after six months made war against the Southern English - 728. He (Ina) went to Rome, and Ethebard received the kingdom of the West Saxons." Asser of St. David's relates the same of Ina - "Ina wen[t] to Rome and there ending his life honorably, entered the heavenly kingdom , to reign there for ever with Christ." He was the second king who, having made substantial gifts to Malmesbury abbey, retired from the throne, exchanged the crown for the cowl, and is understood to have died a monk ; though there seems some dispute as to the place in which his death took place. Asser distinctly intimates however, that it was at Rome. The character of Ina, who was very celebrated both in his own day and for centuries after, seem to have been one worthy of admiration. Like Dunwallo Molmutius, the ancient British king, who has been referred to as having first built Malmesbury, Ina was a law giver, and his laws, in Saxon, are said to still survive. Whatever may have been the reason of his patronising Aldhelm, whether it was on account of his relationship, or genuine admiration of that prelate's character and ability, it is certain that he did make use of that power which he possessed to confer elevation upon a worthy man. His choice was a correct one whatever may have been his motive. His becoming a monk and his journey to Rome may have originated in simple piety, or in remorse for some deed he had committed - as was not uncommon. At the same time his doing so was perfectly in accordance with the mannners of the age, and is no proof of a guilty conscience.

Aldhelm's life was now fast drawing to a close. It may certainly be conjectured with good reason that the violent change in his habits and regimen, probably produced by his journey to Rome, was the approximate cause of his failing. His days, like those of Meyldulph, though they had stolen away in peace had been strangely chequered ; and his thoughts, for a man like Aldhelm undoubtedly would think when he

found his end approaching, must have been very curious. His whole life, if he is allowed to have been born at Malmesbury, certainly almost all his time from infancy, had been spent in connection with the Catholic Church, and it may readily be supposed that he had in such a long course of years come to identify himself as it were with his religion. Hence he would view the progress it was making, as exemplified in the rapid rise of Malmesbury, with a pleasure that cannot now be conceived. Taught from his youth to place implicit reliance upon the dogmas and doctrines of his church, whose rites he had always performed with pious scrupulosity, and had even macerated his body with works of superogation, it may easily be supposed that no doubts disturbed his mind and that he ended his life in the same peaceful mood in which he had spent it. His years wanted but five of the three score and ten allotted to man by the Scriptures which he had so diligently studied, and even partially translated, that is allowing the former calculation to be correct. He was getting old, for Malmesbury seems to have always been a place favorable to longevity. Meyldulph died at an advanced age.

The place at which Aldhelm was when death overtook him is recorded to have been a village in Somersetshire, known as Doulting. It was in the spring of the year 709 – over a thousand years ago – and upon the 25th of May that the great, and justly celebrated Aldhelm breathed his last. Doulting henceforth became a place memorable if on no other account for this sad event, which deprived the world of one of its worthiest men. It is still a village standing at some little distance from Shepton Mallet, and the memory of the mighty man who was there laid low by the all-conquering hand of death is preserved by a spring known as St. Aldhelm's Well, for it was in honor of him that of yore the church there was built. Ina, king of Wessex, who survived Aldhelm, whom he had visited with so many marks of favor, placed the village in the hands of the monks of Glastonbury ; and one of them is related to have built there a chapel in the memory of Aldhelm, by whose influence upon that king Glastonbury had received additions to its extensive pile. Ethelwerd's Chronicle thus notices the death of Aldhelm: A.D. 709 * * * Died the holy bishop Aldhelm, by whose wonderful art were composed the words which are now read, and his bishopric was the province which is now called Selwoodshire (Sherborne).” Here Ethelwerd evidently refers to the fame which had attended Aldhelm's literary efforts, and by substituting the word “works” for “words” in the above quotation it becomes perfectly intelligible. The body of Aldhelm was conveyed to Malmesbury, and several curious ceremonies are related to have been performed during its transit. He seems to have been renowned even before his death for the miracles ascribed to him, since it is said that the stone crosses affixed to the mile stones upon the roads by which the procession passed were in honor of them. It may be doubted whether if Aldhelm could have seen this, and given expression to his sentiments, he would have been pleased, but rather offended by so much veneration paid to a mortal man. He was

buried in a chapel which had been erected to St. Michael by a certain monk, one Egwin, who seems to have had a reputation for sanctity. As might have been expected, the honor which had been paid him during life was changed into veneration after his death. The articles which had been hallowed by his touch or use, such as his psalter, the robe in which he said mass, were religiously preserved for centuries ; if indeed those that were said to have been used by him were genuine. His name was transferred to a village at some distance from Malmesbury at least the etymology of the place has given rise to that conjecture. Its present name is Hilmarton, but in the old records it is spelt Adhelmertone, supposed to be a corruption of Aldhelm or Adelm. Even one of the bells in the steeple of the Abbey was called after him, and went by the name of St. Aldhelm's Bell. Nor was this all. In after-times a fair was instituted in his honor, at least it was held about the time of the feast of St. Aldhelm, and in a meadow known as St. Aldhelm's Mead. When this fair was in progress it is related that a band of armed men were placed on foot, to keep the peace, and were probably often required in those tumultuous times. Upon this circumstance, that of keeping armed men, the men of Malmesbury are said to have boasted, as if thereby their importance was added to. But the circumstance which has, in all probability, tended the most to keep Aldhelm's name from oblivion, was his obtaining the title of Saint from the Romish Church, and consequently a place in the calendar. After his decease he is always termed Aldhelm. Certainly if learning, intellectual attainment, liberality, and piety are sufficient to constitute a saint, Aldhelm may be judged well worthy of that honor ; but it is to be feared that it was rather on account of the miracles he is reported to have performed than from anything else he had that prefix applied to his name. Still it is impossible to deny that he was a great man.

To be continued.

Word count

THE NORTH WILTS HERALD, SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 1867.

[page 8, columns 3-5]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.

BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER VI.

THE ABBOTS DANIEL, ALDHELM II., AND ATHELARD.

When Ina, king of the Western Saxons, divided his kingdom into two dioceses, it would appear that he sought for persons to preside over them

out of the monastery at Malmesbury. His choice of Aldhelm as bishop of Sherborne has already been fully discussed. The individual upon whom fell the duty of filling the office of bishop over the ancient see of Winchester seems also to have been for sometime at least an inmate of the Malmesbury establishment. His name was Daniel, and therein is summed up almost everything that is positively and indisputably known concerning him, personally. It would appear that the wide-spread fame of Aldhelm had entirely swallowed up that of his contemporary, and that historians while endeavouring to record the minutest particulars within their researches of that prelate's life considered Daniel as worthy of but a few words. Not only is what is known or related of him scanty in the extreme, but from the loose, careless manner in which his acts are recorded, there seems to be the greatest confusion even about that little. Like Mercury, the nearest planet to the sun, he is only beheld at certain periods, before the sunrise and after sunset, when the rays of the sun of day, as Ossian, if we remember aright, describes that luminary, are feeble and rapidly failing. So with Daniel, who, so far as his chance of becoming immortal was concerned, had the misfortune to be contemporary with the great Aldhelm, and accordingly is only perceived just before that sun of the seventh century blazed forth in all his splendour, and for a short period after he set in the grave. The notices concerning him are consequently short and imperfect ; and have the further imperfection of disagreeing with each other. One account, or rather one mention of him, makes him become abbot of Malmesbury in the same year that Aldhelm, his great compeer, settled into his bishopric, and records that previous to his assuming the robe of abbot he watched it all night by a spring in the neighbourhood of the convent ; which was long after, if it be not still, known as Daniel's well, in memory of his connection with it. This performance somewhat resembles the ceremony which the knights of old underwent previous to assuming the armour, when the stroke which Sir Hudibras is represented as alone suffering without resentment gave them the recognised right to wear the golden spurs : -

"That never bound his stubborn knee
To anything but chivalry ;
Nor put up blow but that which laid
Right worshipful on shoulder-blade."

Before, however, they could enter the order of knight-hood it was considered necessary for them to watch their armour during one whole night, a practice which is pleasantly ridiculed in Don Quixote. It does not appear that this long vigil which Daniel underwent was prescribed in the canons, but was rather supererogatory, and doubtless had the effect of giving him a name of piety since he is called holy Daniel. Certainly it was not out of character with his sacred profession - this watching by the abbot's robes ; they might be taken as the armour he was about to wear in the battle of the Cross. From this incidental mention of Daniel it would seem a reasonable conjecture that he had had a previous

connection with Malmesbury, though for what period of time seems to be unknown. Another account makes him become Bishop of Winchester at the same time that Aldhelm was placed in possession of that of Sherborne, in the year 705 ; and as the previous version seems to make him watch by his robes before assuming them in that year, it might naturally be inferred that it was previous to becoming a bishop, and not before being made abbot, that Daniel performed his weary vigil. The truth may probably be that, although Aldhelm became Bishop of Sherborne in 705, he did not resign the abbacy of his favorite monastery of Malmesbury until his death, in 700, severed him from all connection with mundane affairs. Then it was that Daniel became abbot, if this conjecture be correct. It is certainly very improbable that Aldhelm should give up the office of abbot, upon his becoming bishop, to Daniel, who was made bishop at the same time with himself. If two offices, that of abbot and bishop could be held at the same time by the same person, it is only reasonable to conclude that Aldhelm would continue superior of the Malmesbury monastery until his death ; he having been for so many slow-revolving years connected with that establishment. It was not, then, until Aldhelm "slept with his fathers" that Daniel became abbot of Malmesbury ; that is, in the year A. D. 709. He still held the bishopric of Winchester, and indeed is recorded to have held it forty-three years. These ancient ecclesiastics appear to have been extraordinarily fortunate in their constitutions. Meyldulph, Aldhelm, Daniel ; all three seem to have been connected with the Church each for over forty years. It might be conjectured that there was in those days something peculiar in the water of Malmesbury, which conferred a kind of mortal immortality. Meyldulph undoubtedly drank of it. Aldhelm is recorded to have felt an extraordinary fondness for water, like a frog ; he having made it a practice to stand up to his shoulders in a certain fountain ; as if, by subjecting himself to cold here upon earth, he could escape heat hereafter. Daniel too had a spring named after him, and all these three lived to a good old age. Why should not Malmesbury become a fashionable spa upon these grounds? Herein lies a hint for some speculator. Purton Spa is said to owe its excellence to a donkey having dropped its load of salt in it some time of yore ; then so much the more should the Malmesbury waters be salubrious, when such men as Aldhelm and Daniel – one of them a saint – have bathed in them of old time. The deeds of Daniel whilst he was bishop were in all probability nothing extraordinary, as they do not appear to have been recorded ; nor had he like Aldhelm a talent for making himself famous by his pen. He is related, when he felt old age stealing upon him, to have retired to the Malmesbury monastery ; there in seclusion from the world, amidst pleasant scenery, and salubrious water, to pass the remainder of his days. For what length of time he continued a living inmate of the establishment does not seem to be recorded. Here, however, he died. Where he was buried has been a matter of dispute between the inhabitants of

Malmesbury and Winchester. There seems, however, very good reason to suppose he was interred at Malmesbury ; since it is admitted it was there he died, and there his last days had been spent, if it be argued that his bishopric was Winchester, and that that city was more celebrated, it may be replied that St. Aldhelm was buried in the former place, and besides having been the contemporary and, as may be supposed, the friend of Daniel, he was in himself sufficient to render Malmesbury an illustrious burial place. As Daniel became bishop in the year 705, and is recorded to have held that office for forty-three years ; his death may be conjectured to have taken place about A. D. 748, or in general terms about the middle of the eighth century. He seems to have filled the episcopal office with dignity and piety ; and although he does not seem to have left any memento of his literary attainments behind him, his elevation to an office equal to that which was the reward of the more celebrated Aldhelm may perhaps be deemed sufficient proof of his possessing erudition and ability.

Who his immediate successor was in the office of the Abbot of Malmesbury is a matter open to doubt. There are indistinct traces, as it were, of a second Aldhelm, or Adelm, having presided over the monastery. This Aldhelm II. is stated to have been a near relation of his celebrated namesake, who, indeed, if all be true, was his uncle. But his very existence has been doubted ; and his acts, even if he did exist, are certainly utterly lost in oblivion. Yet as there could be, at least apparently, no purpose in fabricating a fictitious account of an abbot by the name of Aldhelm - since this Aldhelm II. is not related to have been a remarkable man, and hence threw no new lustre upon the name, or, by reflection, upon the abbey - there would seem some reason for believing that he did exist. His recorded relationship to the famous Aldhelm may certainly have been the natural result of the similarity of name ; while the darkness in which himself and his acts are involved may arise from his being a person of an ordinary stamp, the loss of records, and the shortness of his reign as abbot. This last, indeed, seems most probable. By one account he would appear to have preceded Daniel, and hence the successor of Aldhelm. Taking his related relationship to that prelate into consideration, and the fact that Daniel, as he is recorded to have retired to Malmesbury in his last days, did not during the greater portion of his time reside there, a conjecture may be formed respecting this Aldhelm II. which has every appearance of coherence. Might he not have been a sort of deputy abbot acting in Daniel's absence ? This would immediately render intelligible the varying accounts given of him, since he could then be without violation unnamed in the roll of regular abbots, whilst, at the same time, being the acting superior of the monastery while Daniel's time was occupied in the duties of his bishopric, he might easily be confounded as the actual abbot. Allow him to have survived Daniel and everything becomes clear. He might then, with loose, irregular writers - giving, too, ample allowance for the scantiness of records and the

difficulty of obtaining reliable information in those days – be described as the successor of St. Aldhelm, and yet as the successor of Daniel. All this is, of course, conjecture : it may after all be that he was confounded with *the* Aldhelm, who appears to have been abbot after his consecration as bishop of Sherborne.

The successor of this Aldhelm II., allowing that individual to have really existed and to have exercised the office of abbot, was one Ethelard. His name is variously spelt Ethelard, Athelard, Adelard ; and just as his name varies so do the dates which are given concerning him. Those which are here used are rather employed as approximate ones, and for the convenience of reference, than as absolutely correct and worthy of undoubting reliance. None who have ever attentively studied history will stake much upon a date. Nothing is so unreliable, nothing so open to dispute. “About” is a word that should be understood as affixed to them. This Ethelard, counting Aldhelm II., was the fifth abbot of the Malmesbury Abbey. He was not to be confounded with Adelard of Bath, who made such a noise in the twelfth century, and has been styled the father of English natural philosophy. This Adelard of Bath made himself renowned for his writings, he having translated Euclid from the Arabic, until then comparatively unknown in Europe. Some of his manuscripts are still to be seen at Oxford, and in the British Museum. So great was his love of learning that he travelled in Arabia, Spain, Egypt, France, Germany, and Italy in search of knowledge. The Adelard, or Ethelard, or Athelard of Malmesbury, on the contrary, does not seem to have written any works, at least none have survived the ravages of time ; yet he has contrived to make himself famous chiefly on account of his interference in ecclesiastical affairs. Where Athelard was brought up, and where he received instruction in the learning of his day, does not seem known with any degree of certainty ; but at the time of his becoming abbot of Malmesbury he is understood to have been a man of great erudition and ability. He is also celebrated for his piety, but that is a virtue of so uncertain a character – is so easily assumed, and moreover is a quality so indifferently estimated at different times – that it had best perhaps be passed over in silence. He does not appear to have become abbot until half the eighth century had passed away. The state of Britain, or rather that portion of it in which Malmesbury was situated, was one anything but desirable. The celebrated Offa, king of the Mercians, ascended the throne of that people according to Ethelwerd’s Chronicle in 756. His lineage is thus summed up by that writer. A.D. * * * Offa succeeded to the kingdom, a remarkable man, son of Thingferth ; his grandfather was Enwulf, his great-grandfather Oswod, his great-grandfather’s father Pybba, his great-grandfather’s grandfather Icel, his sixth ancestor Eomær, the seventh Angeltheow, the eighth Offa, the ninth Wæmund, the tenth Wihtlæg, the eleventh Woden.” From such a man, descended from a Scandinavian hero afterwards made ruler of a heaven in which the great amusement was supposed to be cutting and slashing each other

during the day and quaffing mead at night, nothing but despotic proceedings could be expected. Accordingly he is related to have finally driven the Britons out of the plain country, finding, no doubt, that his throne would never be safe until they were extirpated from his kingdom. He then constructed a defence against them – to prevent their return – to this day known as Offa's Dyke, - ditch, or entrenchment ; and considering himself no doubt a most fit and proper person to rule Britain, he next seems to have attempted by subduing the neighbouring kings to get at least the larger portion of the island under his dominion. The king of East Anglia had long been his enemy, but falling in love with one of his daughters was imprudent enough to go in person to Offa's court in order to solicit her hand. In justice to Offa it should be mentioned that according to the historians, his visitor Ethelbert would have been perfectly safe – as he relied upon Offa's honor – had it not been for the suggestions of that monarch's queen. The result was, in the words of Ethelwerd, that Offa “commanded the head of king Ethelbert to be struck off.” Offa then entered and conquered his kingdom. The deeds of Offa – his wars – are thus succinctly related by Ethelwerd, together with a few more interesting particulars. “A.D. * * * The sign of our Lord's cross appeared in the heavens after sunset (probably a comet, or some meteor), and in the same year a civil contest took place between the people of Kent and Mercia, at a place called Cittanford (or Ottanford), and in those days some monstrous serpents were seen in the country of the Southern Angles, which is called Sussex. About four years after, Cynewulf and Offa fought a battle near the town of Bensington, which was gained by Offa – 783 * * * Bertric received the kingdom of the West Angles whose lineage traces up to Cerdic. After three years he took in marriage Offa's daughter Eadburga – 794 * * * Offa died, and Egbert his son succeeded to the kingdom, and died in the same year. Pope Adrian also departed this life.” Offa also reigned forty years, and as he conquered East Anglia while Wessex is recorded to have submitted to him, he, in addition to his own kingdom of Mercia, must have borne sway over a very extended area. His natural temper seems to have been remarkably ambitious. He could never rest, and although he seems to have been almost continually engaged in warfare, yet found time to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, which brought him into collision with the Abbey of Malmesbury. Nor was his visit there attended with any benefit to the monks. Hitherto they had dwelt in peace and quietness, observing the ordinances of their religion, admiring the scenery, cultivating their landed possessions, studying their ancient times, and doubtless accumulating wealth. The storm of war was ravaging the land, but it was at a distance ; and only enough of its thunder reached their ears to make them appreciate the retirement of the monastery ; just as the pattering of rain and the howling gusts of wind without make the wanderer who has gained shelter enjoy it the more. For a century perhaps their cells had been undisturbed ; like bees they had been

accumulating wealth ; but all this was fated to be changed. Their time to share in the catastrophes which so retarded the growth of civilization in the country was rapidly approaching, and for them to find, like the same bees, that their patient industry only served to swell the spoils of a barbarian. The life of an edifice such as the abbey in which they dwelt – if the term life may be used – is like that of a man divided into periods, youth, manhood, old age, decrepitude and death. Youth is represented by growth, and during its century of repose the abbey had been gradually growing in influence and importance. “Youth,” sung the grey-haired Ossian, who mournfully complained that he had seen the tombs of all his friends, “Youth is like the dream of the hunter on the hill of heath. He sleeps in the mild beams of the sun ; he awakes amid a storm ; the red lightning flies around ; trees shake their heads to the wind ! He looks back with joy on the day of the sun ; and the pleasant dreams of his rest !” The monks of Malmesbury had long thus dreamed away their existence ; they were destined to experience a rude awakening. Wessex submitted to the Mercian monarch, and Malmesbury fell into his power. Offa came, saw, and *plundered*. Until then the monarchs who had had anything to do with Malmesbury had been mild princes, easily prevailed upon to add to its magnificence. Not so Offa, the descendant of Woden ; he laughed at monasticism except when it suited his purpose, and those of Malmesbury had good reason to rue his visit.

Offa was, however, a monarch of too much penetration not to perceive that in a despotic kingdom in the long run priests and politicians row in the same boat. He certainly was, in the words of the chronicler, “a remarkable man.” It was all very well to supply the wants of his exchequer, or to please a brutal soldiery, occasionally to sack a monastery, or overrun a convent ; but he had doubtless observed that the power of the crown in a great measure depended upon its having the support of the men who ruled the superstitious multitude. The only danger was that the priests would grow too powerful, and dictate to the politician, instead of the politician dictating to the priest. Hence it was a politic as well as a pleasant pastime to plunder such places as Malmesbury once now and then. But at the sametime, could he get a powerful priesthood entirely under the sway of the crown, indebted for their power to it, and dependent upon it, great advantages might be expected to accrue to himself and his successors. Some such considerations as the preceding, conjoined with his natural disposition to let nothing alone – the result of a nature as restless as the waves of the sea that had borne his fathers to Britain – probably led him to form a scheme as daring, as it was original, and original as it was extraordinary. This was nothing less than the splitting up of the enormous see of Canterbury. To do so it was necessary to apply to the Pope. Adrian then occupied the chair of St. Peter, and so favorably did he regard Offa’s solicitations that a bill was actually issued empowering Offa to erect a bishopric at Lichfield. The suffragans were to be the bishops of East

Anglia and Mercia – two kingdoms completely under his sway. Offa thus gained enormous power. Such an archbishopric must of necessity be more or less under his absolute control. If he could not appoint a bishop by the simple expression of his will, he, it is very probable, possessed the power of intimidating them. There were a hundred indirect ways in which a despotic, or almost despotic monarch, like Offa, undoubtedly half-worshipped by his soldiers on account of his numerous victories, could obtain his will without the employment of actual force. Offa controlled the bishops, the bishops the abbots, the abbots the monks, the monks the multitude. Here was a clever piece of political machinery for the upholding of despotism.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.
[*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]
CHAPTER VII.
ATHELARD.

While the King Offa, that “remarkable man,” was employed in overturning civil and ecclesiastical affairs, the abbot Athelard seems to have remained as yet unnoticed within the already ancient Abbey of Malmesbury. To a person of his temperament the time must have been one of deep interest and excitement. He seems to have been a man, to judge from his acts in after life, who could take a more extended view of matters than was afforded by the narrow window of his cell : a man who, although devoting his life and vigor to the aggrandisement of his office, nevertheless possessed and no doubt exercised the power of disengaging his mind from the mere routine of his duties in order to look around him and speculate upon the course of events. It was a time of change and innovation. Hitherto Britain had been parcelled out amongst a number of petty princes, none of whom before Offa seem to have entertained a thought or put in practice a scheme for the union of the whole under one monarch. That king, though unable to subdue the entire island, nevertheless had, perhaps, the best peopled, and most important part of it under his control, whilst he had inaugurated a policy unknown to his predecessors, but destined to be that of his successors ; a policy undoubtedly founded upon good reason, though, perhaps, in his case,

dictated by ambition. He ruled – practically at least – three kingdoms – Mercia, East Anglia, and Wessex. All this could scarcely be passed unnoticed by such a man as the Abbot Athelard, whose own destiny meantime was preparing him to take a part in matters which hitherto he had only watched from a distance.

Somewhere about the year 780 he was advanced to the ancient and extensive See of Winchester, which, as already recorded, had been held by a former abbot of Malmesbury, “holy” Daniel. Malmesbury, indeed, at that time seems to have been a kind of preparatory training establishment for bishops, who, when they had completed a certain indefinite term of years there, were translated to sees in the neighbourhood. The apprenticeship of an abbacy was followed by taking the episcopal degree. It would appear that nothing but a long course of years could, at least in those days, and under a religion that may pre-eminently be called a religion of routine, fit a man for high ecclesiastical offices. Intellectual ability and erudition were no doubt great aids, but they were not all that was required ere advancement could be obtained. Intellect has a habit of free thought, its pen is not always under control. Patience and long life seem to have been the great aids to preferment. So Aldhelm was nearly thirty years an abbot ere he became a bishop, despite his great learning which perhaps rather retarded his advancement. Athelard, who does not seem to have ever become an author, was, if he is allowed to have become abbot about the middle of the eighth century or 750, also thirty years before he obtained preferment. The next step, however, does not seem so difficult of attainment. Having enjoyed the See of Winchester some ten or thirteen years – there seems some disagreement as to the exact length of time he occupied that stall – Athelard now became Archbishop of Canterbury. Firstly, he had assumed the monastic habit, was then installed in the see of Winchester, and was enthroned at Canterbury. Such was, or is, the ecclesiastical phrase attending each addition of dignity. But the glories of the ancient Archbishopric of Augustine had been sadly diminished by the King of Mercia, Offa, when Athelard received information of his advancement. Lichfield seems to have absorbed a great part of the dignity and pre-eminence which it had enjoyed of old, and no doubt the income had been likewise curtailed. Offa was not the man to care much about a shadow. He knew the value of substance. If money be sinews of war, it is also the support of episcopal authority. Athelard then upon coming to examine its position, doubtless found it to be one far more splendid in prospect than in reality. He certainly had the title of archbishop, but he also had the galling reflection that, in his idea, at least, he had by the despoiling of Canterbury been deprived of that power and influence which were his due. He was not the man to sit down peacefully under such thoughts. He knew the value of the loaves and fishes, and it was hard upon being put into possession of an oven to find it empty. He no doubt speedily resolved to put every scheme on foot for the recovery of the ancient pre-

eminence of Canterbury and at the same time adding to his own influence. But Offa was not a monarch to hastily revoke his decrees, nor a man to be turned from his purpose by the whim of any disappointed individual, even if that individual might be an archbishop. This Athelard was no doubt well aware of, and it does not appear that he made any application to the Mercian Monarch. Athelard knew he had great difficulties to encounter. Not only was there the mighty power of Offa to be overcome, but there was the bull of Pope Adrian, who still filled the office of "Christ's Vicar upon Earth," to be dealt with. Such obstacles were enough to daunt any man ; but Athelard had learnt a lesson during his long career as an ecclesiastical aspirant – a lesson which he could scarcely fail to imbibe. It was to wait. There were things more powerful than Offa or Pope Adrian, though he was "Christ's Vicar," and they were Time and Death. Athelard was well aware that even "Christ's Vicar" and the mighty Mercian monarch must eventually succumb to them. The whole question resolved itself into one of time. Who could wait the longest ? It resolved itself in Athelard's favor. He had drunk of the longevity-giving waters of Malmesbury. In the year 794, when Offa's power was at its height, when forty years of supreme power had seemed to have given him a title to rule for ever, and when his alliance was even sought by the celebrated Charlemagne – a high compliment to a British King, just when Offa's star had arrived at the zenith, it was suddenly extinguished, and Offa died. Within the same year Pope Adrian left the world. These two events, however unfortunate they may have been for these two individuals, were extremely fortunate for the whilom abbot of Malmesbury. Athelard once more looked around him for the means of putting his favourite scheme into progress. The person to whom it was, of course, first necessary to apply was Offa's successor, his son Egbert, or Egred. Athelard, through the agency of powerful friends, soon endeavoured to gain the ear of the new monarch, but in this case he was doomed to be unsuccessful. A change of rulers must even in the best regulated and most mechanically managed monarchies be attended with considerable confusion. In such a state as that which Offa governed the difficulties besetting the new ruler must have been immense. No doubt he had great officers to conciliate, allies to consult, and a thousand and one other entanglements. The early part of a reign was scarcely the time to listen to a petition, the object of which was to upset an establishment which had been the work of the preceding monarch, and which had probably been zealous in its adherence to the crown which originated it. Egbert, in fact, had no time to attend to the importunations of Athelard's friends. His reign is thus summed up by Ethelwerd in his chronicle. "A.D. 794 * * * Offa also died, and Egbert, his son, succeeded to the kingdom and died in the same year." Hardly had Athelard's hopes been raised, before they were thus dashed to the ground, and Death, which had previously seemed his friend, seemed now his enemy. It may, however, be reasonably conjectured that it was through Athelard's application to

Egbert that that monarch made restoration to the Abbey of Malmesbury of that plunder which his father Offa had taken from it. So far, Athelard as having been once abbot of Malmesbury had, perhaps, reason to be gratified. The successor of Egbert in the kingdom of Mercia was Kenwulf. Athelard undiscouraged by his former ill success, seems to have lost no time in bringing his influence to bear upon the new monarch, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing his suit in a fair way to come to a fortunate issue. King Kenwulf, or his clerk for him, royalty was not obliged to be educated in those days, wrote an epistle to the successor of Pope Adrian – the “blessed Pope Leo,” who then occupied the “apostolical seat,” desiring him to attend to the case of Athelard, and do him justice by issuing a decree which should have the effect annulling that of the power “Christ’s Vicar.” This epistle was delivered into the care of Archbishop Athelard, who doubtless received it with the utmost pleasure, and who, despite his growing years, determined himself to carry it to Rome. Accordingly, like the celebrated Abbot Aldhelm, who had been his predecessor at Malmesbury, Athelard set out for the Eternal City. Luck had now turned in his favor, and he found no reason to regret his long and then difficult and dangerous journey. He was successful. Pope Leo made an answer and delivered it into his hand, which contained all that he desired – power and directions for reversing the proceedings of Offa. It is not related that Athelard, like Aldhelm, found anything to complain of in the conduct of the Pontiff ; at any rate this second traveller from Malmesbury is not recorded to have addressed anything disagreeable to Leo. Leo, indeed, seems to have been delighted with this visitor, as in the epistle which was the reward of Athelard’s efforts that prelate is described as “a most accomplished and able person, of allowed prudence, ornate manners, and worthy of honor from God and man,” thus giving the archbishop a character, which doubtless afterwards served him in goodstead, and must have been very gratifying. It is evident that Athelard was a diplomat of no little skill. King Kenwulf’s aid was accordingly sufficient. The acts of that monarch do not seem to have been manifold, nor much worthy of celebration since he is thus dismissed in Ethelwerd’s chronicle : “A.D. 796. Kenwulf, king of the Mercians, ravaged Kent and the province which is call Mersvari (probably the vicinity of Romney) and their King Reu was taken, whom they loaded with chains, and led as far as Mercia.” “819, Kenwulf, King of the Mercians, died.”

The conduct of Athelard in his persevering and successful efforts to obtain the restoration of Canterbury to its pristine importance cannot be too highly estimated ; at least by his successors in that wealthy see. It prevented the division of Britain into several archbishoprics, and the consequent diminution of the dignity attending that office which must necessarily have followed. It doubtless rendered him famous and perhaps feared in his own day, and has transmitted his name to posterity. It may reasonably be supposed to have been the chief cause of his

entering into correspondence with the celebrated Alcuin who then flourished at the court of the still more celebrated Charlemagne, of whom such wonders are related. Alcuin, when he heard of Athelard's success in his mission, is related to have addressed a congratulatory epistle to the archbishop. This must have been very gratifying to the whilom Abbot of Malmesbury. He, although he had not entered the walks of literature, was recognised by men who enjoyed celebrity in foreign courts. Athelard, however, was no stranger, - if one may judge by the character which his actions seem to invest him, - to the motives which animate men. Though he might feel pardonably a little vanity at his elevation which seemed in a great measure due to his ever-persevering industry and talent, yet it may certainly be conjectured that a man of his depth was not to be misled by appearances. Hence, however he might have been pleased by this epistle of Alcuin, it may not improbably be conjectured that he did not put down its arrival entirely to admiration of his conduct, or to entirely disinterested friendship. For there came another epistle from Alcuin of a different description, an Archbishop of Lichfield had already been appointed. His name was Adulph. It can scarcely be supposed that Athelard looked upon this prelate in any other light than that of an usurper of dignity which by right belonged to him. What must then have been his sensations upon receiving a request from Alcuin to allow the usurper to continue as an archbishop until his death? One would imagine that it led him to suspect the disinterestness of his friend at the court of Charlemagne. After working half a life-time to regain in his person privileges which properly belonged to Canterbury, he was asked to allow the usurper to remain undisturbed until his death. Athelard must have felt annoyed at this. He knew not but that his own death might take place first, in which case Adulph might obtain another reversion of the papal decree, and his labors would then be entirely lost. He seems, however, upon reflection, to have seen fit to allow Adulph to retain his title. Probably Kenwulf was averse to the violent suppression of an establishment which his celebrated predecessor had so carefully erected. It would be displeasing to the great officers who still remained of Offa's court, and doubtless considered everything which that monarch had done must have been right. Athelard, too, may have thought that a refusal would sound ungracious, and would seem to indicate that *he*, had he had the power, would have been little less despotic than Offa, of whose conduct he so much complained. Accordingly Alcuin had the satisfaction to see his effort on behalf of Adulph successful. Lichfield still continues to form a suffragan bishopric of the see of Canterbury.

King Offa, that "remarkable man," seems to have had but little reverence for the clergy of his day, by whom, no doubt, in the secrecy of their cells he was consigned to everlasting flames of fire. His numerous conquests must have necessitated the employment of a large body of soldiers, to supply whose wants, and those of his court, what so easy as plundering the monks, defenceless as oysters in their shells. The sword

is a sharp knife of wonderful power in skillful hands. Accordingly it is tolerably certain that the Malmesbury monks were not the only ones who had to deplore his visit. Their curses were not the things to daunt him. He was a Falconbridge of the seventh century –

“Bell, book, and candle shall not drive me back,
When gold and silver beckon to come on.”

Not only in Wessex, but in Kent did he overrun the possessions of the Roman clergy. In Kent he is recorded to have taken into his own hands some landed property hitherto belonging to the church. Whilst he lived it was, of course, impossible to obtain restitution, but when he had departed this life, and Athelard had undone his work at Lichfield, efforts were made to recover it. A great assembly or synod was accordingly convened at a place in Kent, called Cloveshoo. This was in the year 800, whilst Athelard was archbishop.

Athelard, however, does not seem to have entirely succeeded in his work even yet. Ecclesiastical affairs in those days moved with a slow and steady pace. It was impossible to hurry a bishop. The sacred character had become so accustomed by years of routine to travel in a certain groove that nothing was more difficult than to transplant it. At the same time, once establish anything, however great might have been the original opposition to it, and it would appear that it required at least equal exertion, and an equal expenditure of time and patience, to restore things to their former state. So it seems to have been with Offa's upstart archbishopric of Lichfield. Though it was the mushroom production of a single reign, almost perhaps of a single will, it was not to be kicked over so easily as the fungus. There had already become such things as vested interests – as those of Adulph, the archbishop himself. Although Athelard had journeyed to Rome and obtained an epistle direct from the successor of St. Peter, he could not even yet, after all these years of striving and patience, get his will carried out without undergoing certain forms and ceremonies. Already one vast assembly had been held about a matter connected with the church, and about three years afterwards, or in 803, another synod was held at the same place – Cloveshoo, in Kent – for the purpose of carrying out the directions contained in the epistle which Athelard had obtained from Leo. That pontiff was no doubt looked upon as a pope of peculiar sancity by this synod. He had become distinguished for miracles and wonders, he had conferred benefit upon Athelard, and as that prelate had previously been connected with Malmesbury, the notices given of his benefactor, Pope Leo, in Ethelwerds chonicle, may not be uninteresting. “A.D. 796 * * * The enraged populace of Rome cut out the tongue of the blessed Pope Leo, and tore out his eyes, and drove him from his apostolical seat. But suddenly, by the aid of Christ, who is always wonderful in his works, his sight was restored, and his tongue regifted with speech, and he resumed his seat of apostleship as before. 814. The blessed Pope Leo passed from one virtue to another.” Here is indeed a most wonderful miracle. It is a great pity that Athelard was not at Rome

at the time, or the Malmesbury monks formerly under his government would have no doubt taken care to chronicle every particular, whether or no Leo got the same eyes and tongue, or whether the color of his eyes, and sound of his speech was altered. Perhaps, however, these miracles are best authenticated by scanty records. Details might give rise to suspicions.

This gathering of those connected with the church at Cloveshoo seems to have been the last great event with which Athelard was mixed up. He had at last – after some ten years of striving, if his efforts are dated to commence upon the death of Offa in 794 – obtained the object he desired, the restoration of the privileges of the ancient see of Canterbury. He might be regarded as its second founder. The monks of Malmesbury when they heard of his success, might have made, and probably did make, some curious reflections. In the latter part of the sixth century St. Augustine, by suppressing the Malmesbury convent, had done his best to crush out the rising importance of the clergy in that place. A monk of Malmesbury, in a certain sense, now returned evil for good, by coming to the rescue of Canterbury formerly under St. Augustine's direction. Athelard, an abbot of Malmesbury, in the early part of the eighth century – two centuries after Augustine – by a strange revolution of affairs obtained the restoration of Canterbury to its original splendour. The occupiers of that episcopal dignity should look back upon his memory with affection, and grow warm with gratitude when they hear of Malmesbury.

Athelard did not long enjoy the triumph of his efforts. He died very shortly after the holding of the second assembly at Cloveshoo. He must have been an aged man – another witness to the longevity-giving power of the Malmesbury waters. He seems to have become abbot of Malmesbury about the middle of the seventh century, and must then be considered, even at the very lowest computation, to have attained the age of manhood. As he did not die until fifty years afterwards, his age was probably over seventy – he had attained the three score and ten years. Seventy indeed seems to have been the ordinary age of ecclesiastics in those days who had drank of the waters of Malmesbury. Meyldulph, Aldhelm, Daniel, Athelard – all four, if they did not exactly arrive at, very nearly approached it. They averaged seventy years each. Athelard was certainly a most remarkable man. His character seems summed up in two words – perseverance and patience. He appears to have possessed diplomatic abilities of the first order, and to have been at least equally formed for a politician as a priest. He was a kind of ecclesiastical Talleyrand – he knew how to work, and wait. His great work, the restoration of the See of Canterbury, will carry down his name to posterity, until that ancient city shall be no more. Malmesbury may well be proud of him. He is, by some at least, supposed to rest in her ancient abbey, whose yet remaining walls in the wonderful words of Ossian –

“Tell a tale of the times of old !

Of the deeds of the days of other years !”
To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
 BY GEOFFREY.
 [*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]
 CHAPTER VIII.
 THE DANES. – THE MONK JOHANNES.

The year in which the celebrated Athelard left Malmesbury does not seem ascertainable with any degree of certainty, though as he is related to have been translated to the See of Winchester about 780, it may reasonably be supposed that up to that date he had remained an inmate of the Abbey. His successor's name was Cuthbert. So much is known, though scarcely anything more. Up to this time the Abbey of Malmesbury had sent forth abbots into the world more or less renowned ; and for a period of some hundred years it was without doubt frequently in the mouths of men, and especially of the monks. Meyldulph, Aldhelm, Daniel, and lastly, Athelard, had all been men, who, in some way or another, rendered their names historical, and lent a lustre to the abbey which was to make it ever afterwards - as having been for a time at least their abode - a place of interest in future times. But with Athelard, the culminating point seems to have been reached, at least in the matter of abbots, since, for the next two centuries or nearly there is no record remaining of an abbot becoming famous. After that period Malmesbury again becomes noted. Nor is it to be supposed, on account of the simple silence of the records concerning the abbots who succeeded Athelard, that the abbey entirely disappeared. On the contrary, it continued to be the resort of men of learning and ability, as will be presently shown. What is meant is that for some two centuries there seems no record of Malmesbury *producing* men worthy of especial remark. Meantime, however, the town was, in all probability, extending ; for just as the establishment of a military garrison is almost invariably found to attract as it were the surrounding and hitherto scattered population, and to become the nucleus of a future town ; so the erection of an abbey and the garrisoning it with monks seems to have often, if not usually, led to the settlement of the immediate neighbourhood. The causes are in some respects similar

in both cases, the result much the same. Hence there is good reason to believe that almost in exact ratio as the abbey became renowned and prosperous so did the town in its vicinity increase in numbers and importance.

Cuthbert, the abbot who succeeded to Athelard upon that prelate's advancement to the See of Winchester, is found to have held possession of that office until about the year 796, when he seems to suddenly and unaccountably disappear.

Meantime the affairs of Britain, affairs in which Malmesbury from its public position was in those days more or less intimately bound up, assumed a new aspect. An entirely new danger threatened the peaceful retirement of the monks throughout the kingdom. At intervals they had already been taught that whenever the exigencies of the ruling monarch – unless he happened to be such a man as Ethelred, or Ina, both of whom after benefacting the order, seem finally to have become monks – required that his exchequer should be replenished, their stores, doubtless by themselves held sacred, were almost certain of being searched and appropriated by the men of the sword. Of this an instance has already been given in the case of Offa, who plundered the Malmesbury Monastery. But such visitations were few and far between ; while other monarchs ususally in the end made up the deficiency as did Egbert, Offa's son, to the monks of Malmesbury. There was, however, a time approaching in which their very existence would be put in peril. The Saxons had now firmly settled themselves in the island which they had acquired by conquest. But they were not to remain long in possession. Their usurpation was to meet with reparation. They had conquered, and were in part at least to be conquered. They doubtless felt as much aggrieved by being invaded, as did the Britons when suffering under the Saxon treachery. The dreadful Danes were coming.

In 783, writes "Ethelwerd, "Bertric received the kingdom of the West-Angles, whose lineage traces up to Cerdic. * * * Whilst the pious King Bertric was reigning over the western parts of the English, and the innocent people spread through their plains were enjoying themselves in tranquillity, and yoking their oxen to the plough, suddenly there arrived upon the coast a fleet of Danes, not large, but of three ships only ; this was their first arrival. When this became known the king's officer, who was already stopping in the town of Dorchester, leaped on his horse, and galloped forwards with a few men to the port, thinking that they were merchants rather than enemies, and, commanding them in an authoritative tone, ordered them to be made to go to the royal city ; but he was slain on the spot by them, and all who were with him. The name of the officer was Beaduherd." This event must be supposed to have taken place shortly after Athelard was advanced to the See of Winchester, and whilst Cuthbert occupied his place as Abbot of Malmesbury. The utter detestation in which the Danes were afterwards held by the Saxons, and especially by those who were monks, is very apparent in the

chronicles, where they are constantly called Pagans, and even designated as a "foul mob." Had the Saxons been at this date firmly united under the rule of one monarch, this descent of the Danes would, in all probability, have been the last as well as the first. But Offa, the celebrated Mercian monarch, had not had time in his life to firmly combine even those kingdoms under his sway, and after his death in 794 the island seems to have reassumed its normal condition ; that of being divided out into a number of petty provinces each under its particular prince. Hence the resistance that was offered to the bands of piratical Danes was slight. Often, no doubt, when the dominions of one Saxon king were overrun, his neighbors, instead of hastening to lend their aid, purposely delayed the arrival of their forces in order that should he be defeated they might take advantage of his weakness to wrench the crown from his grasp, or to gratify some spite. For as yet the danger had not become so general, nor so widely understood, as to lead to a suppression of all private feuds, and the combination of the whole island against these new invaders. There was another cause which tended to operate in favor of the Danes. The Britons, though driven from their ancient haunts, were not yet exterminated ; and it would appear that their remnants, seeing the weakened power of their Saxon enemies, and that they were distracted by the arrival of bands of marauders from the same sea which had conveyed them to the island, formed the bold idea of once more striving to be free. Their efforts are thus adverted to by Ethelwerd. "A.D. 823. A battle was fought against the Britons in the province of Defua (or Devon) at a place called Camelford. 828 * * * * King Egbert led his army against the northern Britons, and when he had subdued them all he returned in peace. 832. After four years, therefore, the Pagans (the Danes) devastated the territories of a place called Sceapige (Sheppey). After one year Egbert fought against the Pagan fleet, in number thirty-five vessels, at a place called Carrum (Charmouth), and the Danes obtained the victory. 836. A large army of Britons approached the frontiers of the West Saxons ; without delay they form themselves into a compact body, and carry their arms against Egbert King of the Angles. Egbert, therefore, having ascertained the state of things before hand, assembled his army, and twice imbued their weapons in the blood of the Britons at Hengeston (supposed to be Hengston Hill in Cornwall), and put them to flight." The Britons then must still have remained in considerable numbers since they could assemble a "large army." The Saxons were accordingly fully employed. On the one hand they had the original inhabitants of the island to contend with, on the other they were assailed by the Danes. These pagan sea-kings indeed gave the scarcely settled Saxons no rest. Battles are recorded by Ethelwerd to have taken place against them, and in which victory now favored the white horse standard of the Saxons, now the raven of the Northmen, in the several successive years of 838, 839, 840, 841, 844, and 851, in which latter year an enormous Danish fleet of 350 ship is recorded to have arrived at the

mouth of the Thames. The army which disembarked from them destroyed the cities of London and Canterbury. After other victories they were at length met by Ethelwulf with the Western Angles, and says the chronicler, "an immense number were slain on both sides, nor have we heard of a more severe battle before that day ; these things happened near Ockley Wood." Even yet the Saxons were troubled by the Britons as writes Ethelwerd. "854 King Burhred asked assistance from King Ethelwulf to subdue the Northern Britons ; he granted it, and having collected his army, passed through the Mercian kingdom to go against the Britons ; whom he subdued, and made tributary." The same year and that of 861 were also distinguished for contests with the ever increasing numbers of the Danes. In 861 the pagans are related to have been defeated by "Osric, Duke of Hampshire, and Ethelwulf, Duke of Berkshire," A.D. 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, were also years in which the proceedings of the Danes, who now formed regular armies and camps, are the chief matters recorded. In 871 they received a severe defeat at Ascesdune (Ashdown, Berks), at the hands of King Ethelred and his brother, the celebrated Alfred, who afterwards became king. Acts of violence marked the course of the pagans. Their power, their insolence, and their cruelty seem to have increased every year, and although in 877, the sixth year of King Alfred, a hundred of their ships were sunk by a storm near a rock called Swanwich, they, nevertheless, "devastate the kingdom of the Mercians, and drive out all the free men. They erect their huts in the town of Gloucester." In 878, "This *foul mob* (writes Ethelwerd) broke the compact which they had before solemnly made with the Western Angles, and they take up their winter-quarters at Chippenham. The people were everywhere unable to resist them ; some of them were driven by the *impious wretches* over the sea into Gaul. King Alfred at this time was straitened more than was becoming." This pagan army wintering at Chippenham must have been unpleasantly near Malmesbury, and one can imagine the monks there telling their beads, if then indeed it was their custom, at an accelerated rate. In fact, it would seem that it was with some detachment from this army that the Malmesbury monks first became acquainted with the sight of a Dane. The Danes are not recorded before this time to have advanced so near the resting-place of St. Aldhelm, and be it observed that Ethelwerd, the Chronicler calls this army a "foul mob" and "impious wretches," which designations would no doubt in his estimation at least exactly answer their deeds. It was, then, so far as it is possible to conjecture in A.D. 877 or 878 that the pagans first saw the ancient abbey of Aldhelm. The Danes forthwith played the devil with Malmesbury. Let not the expression be cavilled at. That individual is usually supposed to be associated with flames, and a reference to him is extremely appropriate here, since the Danes, who no doubt appeared to the monks as his agents, actually set fire to Malmesbury and burnt it. Where were the monks? Heaven knows, or perhaps purgatory better ; that precious place of their invention.

Their abbey was no doubt too substantial to be destroyed ; but excepting Rabelais we know of no author who asserts that the monastic robe is good protection against steel. Friar John of the Funnels, indeed, had a wonderful faith in his monkish habit, according to Francois Rabelais ; but he was an individual scarce appearing above once in a century. This Friar John, who with the aid of a staff or a cross made such terrible havoc in the ranks of the invaders of his abbot's vineyard, would have been very welcome at Malmesbury in this year of the Danes. It may, however, be conjectured that the monks took good care of themselves by flight. Perhaps, too, the disappearance of almost all record of the place for so long a period was owing to this irruption. The monks may have conveyed away with them documents which they forgot to return, and which were lost in course of time, or the barbarians themselves may have lighted their fires with the greasy parchment, stretched it upon their drums, if they had any, or employed the papers of the establishment to assist them in setting the town in a blaze. Nothing is too bad to be surmised concerning these "impious wretches," who were nevertheless no doubt, at that time at least, more comfortable than the dispossessed monks, compelled to wander in the cold, or like the abbot in the "Lytel Geste of Robyn Hode," made to hop and jump about for the amusement of their terrible barbarian captors. A dancing monk must have been rare sport for all but himself. These were the "good old times." Imagine the market at Chippenham invaded by a hostile host of Pagan Danes – sticking their spears into the dealers, just as the dealers stick their tasting gouges into the cheese. Conceive Malmesbury in flames, and a dark cloud of smoke hanging over the pleasant old town. Conceive, if it be possible, a king of England – the immortal Alfred – driven to take refuge in the island of Athelingay, no very great distance from Malmesbury ; and actually getting well scolded by a housewife for allowing some cakes to be burnt. "Meanwhile (writes Ethelwerd) after the Easter of that year (Easter day fell on the 23rd of March in 878) King Alfred fought against the army that was at Chippenham, at a place called Ethandune (or Heddington) and they obtained the victory. But after the decision of the battle the barbarians promise peace, ask a truce, give hostages, and bind themselves by oath : their king submits to be baptised, and Alfred, the king, receives him from the bower in the marshy isle of Alney (or Athelingay, just as Avebury is often shortened to Abury)." According to Asser in 872 "the aforesaid army of Pagans leaving Chippenham, as they had promised, went to Cirencester, which is called in British Cair Cori." In 880 "the above-named army of Pagans left Cirencester, and went among the East Angles, where they divided out the country and began to settle." It was then, to King Alfred, in all probability, that the monks of Malmesbury were indebted for the departure of the Danes, and for the safety of their establishment.

King Alfred had, however, as yet many years of weary warfare before him ere he could indulge in his favorite pursuits of literature.

Nevertheless, despite the incessant irruptions of the Danes he contrived to gather around him somewhere about the year 884 a concourse of celebrated and learned men amongst whom, according to Asser, were Werefrith, of Worcester, Plegmunda Mercian and Archbishop of Canterbury – “a venerable man and endowed with much wisdom”- as also Ethelstan, and Werewulf. “Night and day,” continues Asser, “whenever he had leisure he commanded such men as these to read books to him ; for he never suffered himself to be without one of them, wherefore he possessed a knowledge of every book, though of himself he could not yet understand anything of books, for he had not yet *learned to read anything*. But the king’s commendable avarice could not be gratified even in this ; wherefore he sent messengers beyond the sea to Gaul to procure teachers, and he invited from thence Grimbald, a priest and monk, a venerable man, and good singer, adorned with every kind of ecclesiastical discipline and good morals, and most learned in holy scripture. He also obtained from thence John, also priest and monk, a man of most energetic talents, and learned in all kinds of literary science, and skilled in many arts.”

Over the fate of this John, or Johannes, there has been much dispute. By some writers he is positively stated to have been murdered by his own scholars with the iron styles used by them in writing in the Monastery of Malmesbury, when he had retired. But then there would seem good grounds for believing that this celebrated divine died abroad, while it is allowed that the opposite report rests merely upon tradition. The confusion seems to have originated in the fact that there were two Johannes who flourished at this period, both of whom were patronized by Alfred. That monarch, it is recorded, had founded a monastery in the island of Ethelingay, which had been his retreat when harrassed and driven to extremities by the Danes, and had appointed one Johannes abbot. Now Ethelingay was by no means, except in case of danger, a desirable residence ; it being situated in the midst of a morass formed by the conflux of two rivers, and only to be approached by a boat. It could scarcely then be considered a healthy spot, and as Malmesbury, while at no great distance, offered the benefits of salubrity, and was a place celebrated for the learning of its monks, there is room for the conjecture that Johannes, Abbot of Ethelingay, took up his residence at Malmesbury, and was there for some reason or other murdered by his scholars whilst in a fit of passion. This event seems to have taken place about A.D. 887 or 888, by which time King Alfred was firmly established upon his throne, and as he was not the monarch to allow his friend’s death to be unavenged, it has been supposed, with some considerable show of reason, that he compelled the monks to erect a magnificent monument to the memory of Johannes. For in these days murder was not punished with death ; it might be condoned by the payment of the were-guild or fine. The amount of the fine varied with the importance of the slain person. A ceoil, whence the modern word churl or commoner, might be

safely murdered by any one who could afford to pay 260 thrimsas, a coin whose value was about nine-pence ; a priest's or thane's were-guild, that is a clergyman's or gentleman's – a priest was called Mass-thane, a gentleman World-thane – was 2,000 of these coins ; a sheriff's, 4,000 ; an alderman or bishop's, 8,000 ; a prince's, 15,000 ; while the life of the monarch was valued at 30,000, say about £1,100. The were-guild imposed then by King Alfred for the murder of Johannes was in all probability the erection of a monument to him. This monument was still to be seen in the twelfth century. It stood on the left side of the altar, and upon it was the following inscription : -

“Clanditur hoc tumulo sanctus Sophista Johannes,
Qiu ditatus erat jam vivens dogmate miro,
Martyrio tandem Christi conscendere regnum,
Quo, meruit, sancti regnant per secular cuncti.”

It was then currently related to have been erected to the memory of the other Johannes Scotus of Gaul or Saxony, invited over by Alfred. There are, however, good reasons for the support of the former theory. Johannes Scotus of Gaul, though a celebrated man and a monk, is related to have done his best to oppose the doctrine of transubstantiation. He must then have been very opprobrious to the Roman clergy. He was in short a heretic, and his works were publicly burnt at Rome, by order of the sovereign pontiff in the eleventh century. The Malmesbury monks would then have an interest in asserting that the monument which was a lasting disgrace to their establishment was erected to the memory of the death of this heretic, and not a witness to their violence done upon so unoffending a man as the abbot of Ethelingay. The Roman church has always seemed to consider it something very meritorious to murder a heretic. The reasoning of this was ably summed up by a Spaniard something in this way – “These heretics are doomed to hell by God, in sending them there then I shall only be executing his decrees, in short his most worthy servant.” In the words of Byron –

“Christians have burnt each other quite persuaded
That all the apostles would have done as they did.”

It is certainly scarcely probable that several centuries would pass over without some attempt on the part of the monks to palliate, if not entirely obviate the disgrace of having a monument of such a character in so public a situation as the side of the altar. Hence there is at least good ground for the conjecture that this monument was erected by them through the compulsion of King Alfred to the memory of Johannes, abbot of Etheringay, and not to Johannes Scotus, or Erigena, of Gaul. There is some mention made of a supernatural light being seen above the sepulchre of the monks. If it really did appear it was probably some effect of putrefaction if the body was really buried there, of the same nature as corpse candles. As it is also stated that this light led the monks to pay greater honors to the sepulchre of the murdered man than they would otherwise have done, it bears about it a suspicious look, as if it, too, had been fabricated to suit their interests. Malmesbury was thus in

the ninth century, in the short space of ten years, noted for two terrible events – a fire in 878, and a murder in 887 or 888.

To be continued.

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[page 8, columns 4-6]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.

BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER IX.

KING EDWARD. - ATHELSTAN.

The supposed compulsory erection of a monument to Johannes, the Abbot of Ethelingay, through King Alfred's will, seems to be the only thing in which that monarch had any connection with Malmesbury. In A. D. 900, writes Ethelwerd, "King Alfred departed out of this world, that immovable pillar of the West Saxons, that man full of justice, bold in arms, learned in speech, and above all things, imbued with the divine instructions. For he had translated into his own language, out of Latin, unnumbered volumes, of so varied a nature and so excellently, that the sorrowful book of Zoethius seemed, not only to the learned but even to those who heard it read, as it were, brought to life again. The monarch died on the seventh day before the solemnity of All Saints, and his body rests in peace in the city of Winchester. Pray, O reader, to Christ, our Redeemer, that he will save his soul !" Here is an almost unmeasured panegyric upon the great king. This is certainly not the place to criticise his character ; but he seems to have been a monarch after a monk's own mind. "A. D. 901. The successor to the throne was Edward, son of the above-named king." Even yet the Danes had not ceased from troubling in his reign. A. D. 909, a terrible battle was fought against them " in the plain of Wodnesfield." * * "The Danish army fled, overwhelmed by the darts of their enemies * * * and their three kings fell there in that turmoil or battle, viz., Halfdene, Ecwils, and Hingwar : they lost their sovereignty, and descended to the court of the infernal king, and their elders and nobles with them." In the reign of Edward the town of Malmesbury was again destroyed by fire, or, at least, it was he who restored it after it had been burnt the second time. The first destruction of the place by the flames seems to have been about the year 878, and ere another fifty years had elapsed it again became a prey to the devouring element. The men of Malmesbury must have then begun to feel that their long previous exemption from the evils of fire and sword was only to allow them to increase in prosperity that they might encounter the more

severe loss ; like corn allowed to rest until it is ripe ere placed beneath the sickle. Nor was this the only benefit conferred by Edward upon the place. Somewhere about the year 916 he is recorded to have caused the incorporation of the borough of Malmesbury. In what state the corporation was then does not seem a matter capable of complete and satisfactory investigation. Undoubtedly some form of self-government had existed in the place – as in almost all other towns of any importance – long before this ; but this seems to have been the first royal recognition of it as a borough. It has even been conjectured that the town sent representatives to the Saxon parliament, to the great assembly – the Wittena-gemote, or meeting of wise men – and could it be satisfactorily demonstrated that at that date such was the custom existing through-out Britain in similar cases, very little doubt could be entertained upon the subject, since, in those days at least, Malmesbury must have been a place of considerable importance. That it *had* representatives in the Wittena-gemote seems to us far more probable than that it *sent* them there to attend to its interests. There would doubtless be some man of importance, some neighbouring thane or noble, who, partly for his own purposes and partly at the solicitation of the town, usually waited upon the assembly of the Wittena-gemate ; but that he was actually elected, in the true and modern sense of the term, seems beyond the bounds of probability in those feudal times, and certainly does not appear capable of proof. If those who assisted the erection of the abbey can be counted amongst the benefactors of the town, then King Edward ranks the fourth – the kings Kenelwalch, Ethelred, and Ina having preceded him. He seems to have been the first who benefitted the town, and may, in one sense, at least, be termed the founder of the corporation. He died, says Ethelwerd, in 926 : - “This was the end ; his name and his pertinacity here ceased.” Ethelwerd does not inform posterity in what way Edward was pertinacious. Probably he was not so fond of the domineering clergy. He certainly has not got such a character given him as was accorded to his father, Alfred, who was so particularly noted for the patronisation of the priests.

The same year 926, writes Ethelwerd, was the one in which the grandson of the great Alfred, “the stout King Athelstan, gained the crown of the kingdom.” This King Athelstan was destined to play a great part in the history of Malmesbury. He was descended from an illustrious progenitor, and seems to have early rendered himself worthy of such a forefather as Alfred. It is related that whilst a youth he received the honor of knighthood at the hand of that monarch, perhaps being the first who became properly a knight of England. Alfred no doubt saw in him the germs of qualities which would in future years, should he live, render him famous. He was right. Athelstan did live, and did become famous ; though perhaps not to that extent which his actions – at least as a monarch – deserved. Among the men of Malmesbury, however, his memory has always been held in reverence, and they may be said thus in some degree

to compensate him for the withholding of that more general renown to which he seems to have established a claim. It would appear that his great progenitor Alfred had absorbed in himself, not only the fame rightly his due, but also no small share of that to which his descendant Athelstan was entitled. The reason is not difficult to fathom. Athelstan had no Asser. He had no contemporary biographer to relate with such vivid minuteness the every-day scenes in which he entered, the personal adventures in which he was engaged, as Asser of St. David's did those in which his friend Alfred was concerned. It seems an idea generally entertained that the Danes were expelled from England by Alfred, but the truth, if the ancient chronicles are correct, - and what other sources of information are there ? - would seem to be that it was to Athelstan, and not to Alfred, that England was indebted for the final defeat of the pagan invaders of her shores. That the Danes were still in Britain and in considerable force has already been shown, a little distance back, where a quotation from Ethelwerd gives a narrative of a battle fought against them in 909 by Athelstan's immediate predecessor, King Edward, commonly called the Elder ; but who, to judge of his character from that chronicler's sum-up of his life, might better be termed Edward the Pertinacious. In 939 - nearly forty years after the death of King Alfred - writes Ethelwerd, "a fierce battle was fought against the barbarians at Brunandune, wherefore that fight is called great even at the present day ; then the barbarian tribes are defeated and domineer no longer ; they are driven beyond the ocean ; the Scots and Picts also bow the neck ; the lands of Britain are consolidated together, on all sides is peace and plenty of all things, nor ever did a fleet again come to land except in friendship with the English." Not only then was Athelstan the benefactor of Malmesbury, but of England at large ; and the men of Malmesbury may with good reason look back to those days with pride since it was there that in reward for their loyal services - services which perhaps had a considerable degree of effect - in aiding Athelstan against the Danes, that their town was raised into importance. The inhabitants of Malmesbury are recorded to have had assisted the "stout King Athelstan" against the pagans at a battle which was fought at Sodbury-hill, about fourteen miles from the present town, while as their services were most liberally rewarded, it is only fair to conjecture that their aid was of material value in gaining the victory for their monarch.

It would appear that it was in recognition of these services that Athelstan made the grant which is contained in the following charter of his ; and which would appear to be the earliest remaining having any special reference to the town itself. It is not pretended that the following is an exact, or rather a literal, copy of the deed itself ; such a copy, could it be obtained, would in all probability be almost unintelligible. But it does contain the substance of the original charter, and was taken from the preamble of that given some several centuries afterwards by William the Third.

“I, Athelstan, King of England, do grant for myself, and my successors, to the burgesses of the borough of Medulfusberg, and their successors, that they shall have and enjoy all their functions and free customs, as they held them in the time of Edward, my father. And I command all under my government, that they do them no injury ; and that they be free from the charge of Burgbote, Brigbote, Wardwhite, Horngeld, and Scot. And I give and grant to them, that royal heath of five hides of land, near my town of Norton, *for their aid given me in my battle* against the Danes. Signed with my seal, in the presence of Edward, my brother, by the advice of Walsin, my chancellor, and Odo, my treasurer, and Godwin, my standard bearer, who procured this for the burgesses.”

Here Malmesbury is called Medulfusberg, making with the eighteen designations already given, and including the present name, no less than twenty titles borne at different times by this ancient town. It will be observed that the charter contains no notice of the form of the existing corporation, nor does it erect a new one giving a formal description of its members : it merely confirms ancient rights, adding the gift of land. It is then impossible to conjecture from it what form the corporation then had, but, in all probability, it contained the germs of the present, and bore a general resemblance to others existing around it. The extent of the land given by King Athelstan is a matter of dispute. The word hide is so loose and uncertain a term that the exact number of acres it then meant cannot be ascertained with any approach to indisputable certainty. It has been estimated at 60, 80, and 100 acres by different writers. Others understand it as so much land that could be tilled by one plough, or as much as would maintain a family. It is obvious that these last definitions are very wide and capable of a vast amount of stretching or contracting, according to circumstances. It would seem probable that it varied in various times and places. In this particular case, perhaps the estimate which makes the hide to mean one hundred acres is nearest the truth ; since formerly the heath, “near my town of Norton,” granted by Athelstan to Malmesbury, extended over about five hundred acres. This grant must have been most joyfully received by the men of Malmesbury. Their town was henceforth one which it was impossible to pass over as unnoticeable. Their gratitude was probably great. It was truly a kingly gift, and has carried down the name of Athelstan in the traditions of Malmesbury for centuries past, and will continue to do so until the town itself shall be no more. It appears that in the original charter Malmesbury is called a city ; and, indeed, divesting the mind of the modern estimation of a city, it would, compared with surrounding places in those days, have fully answered to the definition. The magnificent abbey supplied the place which, were Malmesbury at present of so much importance as of yore, would undoubtedly be occupied by a cathedral. The corporation had been suddenly lifted into the possession of land – then wealth’s almost only representative – the inhabitants were marked out for the royal favor, and distinguished both for their loyalty and their

bravery. There can be no reason to smile at the word “city”. In this charter Athelstan points out to the recipients of his bounty that it had been “procured” for them by Walsin the chancellor, Odo the treasurer, and Godwin the standard bearer. It could not then have been the result of favouritism on the part of Athelstan towards the Malmesbury men, but was purely and honestly the reward of their loyalty – “for their aid given me in my battle against the Danes,” – in which probably their conduct had been observed by one or other or all three of these officers. Their names should not be allowed to slide into oblivion, since it was through their agency that the “burgesses of the borough of Medulfusburg” or Malmesbury, became the possessors of landed property, not to mention the having and enjoying “all their functions and free customs.” Let not then Walsin, the chancellor, Odo the treasurer, nor Godwin the standard bearer be forgotten whenever the memory of this deed of King Athelstan is recalled to mind by the inhabitants of Malmesbury. It is all very well to thank the host for the dinner, but it should not be forgotten that it was the cook who prepared it. One of the sentences in the charter is rather curious – “And I command all under my government that they do them (the burgesses of Medulfusburg – Meyldulphs or Maildufsbury?) no injury.” It is an incidental proof of the unsettled state of the times which enabled the oppressor to act with comparatively little danger, and rendered such a royal command no doubt very consoling and comfortable to the said burgesses, since it seems to indicate that they were under the especial care of the mighty monarch Athelstan.

Nor was this the only benefit conferred by Athelstan upon Malmesbury. When he was crowned king at Kingston there was not wanting a certain party among the West-Saxons, who, declaring that he was illegitimate, entered into a conspiracy to prevent his enjoying the sovereign power. It is even said that the intentions of the conspirators were to lay hands upon Athelstan personally, and blind him. The person who set this plot on foot, or at least who took the lead, seems to have been one Alfred, a nobleman who possessed landed property in Wiltshire. In some way the secret leaked out, and instead of seizing Athelstan, Alfred was himself seized. He sternly denied having entered into any combination against the crown, and seems to have claimed the right – allowed by the Anglo-Saxon laws, of clearing himself from suspicion by swearing his innocence before a bishop. To give especial solemnity to the scene he went to Rome, and approaching the altar of St. Peter swore the usual oath. Instantly, says the story, he fell senseless to the ground, and having been taken while in that state by his friends or attendants to the English college at Rome, he died within three days. This awful and impressive catastrophe appears to have been received as full confirmation of his guilt – there do not seem to have been such things as *post mortem* examinations in those days – and accordingly his property was confiscated by the crown. Athelstan, however, did not retain it ; but gave it as an escape offering to the abbey of Malmesbury. Such a gift, though

of course far more valuable than was usual, does not seem to have been anything extraordinary in those days. It may even be reasonably advanced that there were sound political as well as pious causes for this munificent act. Had he retained it as an appanage of the crown, Alfred's heirs in that revengeful and bloodthirsty age might have taken it into their heads to assassinate him ; hoping in the confusion that would result to obtain possession of the property. The abbey was also indebted to Athelstan for the gifts of Keniyll, Ewryge, Horton, and Ewcline. His soul, if purchased prayers could save from scathing flames of purgatory, must have gone direct to paradise, or to whatever blest region the monks conceived it in their power to send it. Since the days of Ina, king of the West-Saxons, the monks of Malmesbury had never seen so much of the sunshine of prosperity. Twice they had been put in peril by fire – by the hostile host of the pagan Danes. Foul murder had been committed within their walls. Everything had begun to take a gloomy aspect, when the “stout King Athelstan” arose, drove their idolatrous enemies over the sea, and brought back the days of peace and plenty. They, and the inhabitants of Malmesbury generally, must have blessed him. It seems strange that no record remains of the abbots who presided over the abbey when it received this welcome and material additions to its revenue. Perhaps the glory of Athelstan had the effect of absorbing the whole attention of the times, and hence the want of information concerning the internal condition of the monastical establishment at this date.

Athelstan's sisters were married to Charles the Simple, the Duke of Aquitaine, the son of the German emperor, and Hugh the Great, count of Paris. From this last foreign potentate – Hugh – it is related that Athelstan received what were then no doubt considered as most valuable and inestimable treasures in the shape of presents. Amongst these gifts was said to be a piece of the wood of the true cross – no sham – but an actual chip from the real block, enclosed in crystal ; and, also placed in the same transparent material, some fragments of the crown of thorns which were set upon the head of Christ. These Athelstan transferred to the Abbey of Malmesbury, by whose monks no doubt they were received with the utmost veneration and joy, for however absurd or improbable such things would be considered at the present day, there seems no doubt that centuries ago they were looked upon as witnesses to the truth of the gospel narrative, and, as such, treasured up with the greatest care. One ancient writer positively declares that in his belief the possession of these relics had a most material effect in increasing the prosperity of the abbey ; which may certainly be true, taken in a *material* sense. Such precious relics would scarcely be shown without it being deemed necessary to make an offering.

Athelstan seemed to have had a great veneration for St. Aldhelm. He is supposed to have erected a monument to his memory, and is related to have made him his tutelar saint. When his relations his cousins – Ethelwin and Elwin – had been killed in the terrible, but never to be

forgotten, battle of Brunanburgh, in in Brunandune, their bodies were by his orders conveyed to Malmesbury Abbey, and there interred in close propinquity to St. Aldhelm's resting place. "Two years afterwards (writes Ethelwerd) the venerated king Athelstan died." The place in which he breathed his last was Gloucester, and, no doubt, in compliance with his expressed wish, his remains were brought to Malmesbury, and there lowered to their long home "the narrow house" of Ossian – beneath the high altar of the ancient abbey of his favorite and admired St. Aldhelm. Athelstan's character seems to have been admirable. No acts of oppression seem recorded of him. He was great in the battle field – driving the Danes – who had taxed the resources of his great progenitor Alfred to their utmost – beyond sea ; and causing, at least, during his reign, peace and plenty to be found once more in the island. He was great in political wisdom. He adopted the plan of Offa, and consolidated the kingdom. He was great from mere position – he was the first king who ruled over all Britain, and is considered to have received the vassalage of the Scottish princes. He encouraged commerce, enacting a law that a merchant, who had made three voyages, should be entitled to the rank of Thane, that is become a nobleman. If he is worthy of admiration by the inhabitants of all England, much more is he by the men of Malmesbury. The benefit conferred by him upon that town directly, and indirectly through the abbey, have already been enumerated ; and they only require to be considered to perceive how greatly Malmesbury was indebted to its future interest and importance to the "stout King Athelstan." Nor can they be accused of forgetfulness. A festival was instituted in his honor, and it is still kept on the second Tuesday after Trinity Sunday. The memory of the "venerated King Athelstan" can never fade away until Malmesbury itself is no more.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.

BY GEOFFREY.

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CHAPTER X.

KING EDGAR. – THE ABBOT ALFRIC.

In the year 947 Edred, one of the brothers of the great Athelstan, succeeded to the kingdom : “to whom (writes Ethelwerd) all the Northumbrians became subject ; and the Scots also gave oaths of allegiance and immutable fidelity.” During his reign it has been conjectured that there was a mint at Malmesbury, where money was coined, bearing on the reverse the inscription of “Malmesbury money.” There does not, however, seem to be any documentary evidence of such an establishment ; while coins are, when unsupported by other testimony, very unreliable guides. Still the thing is by no means improbable. In those days the operation of coining – legally making money – was not confined to one spot, nor under the immediate jurisdiction of the government as at the present day. It was no unusual thing for the monarch to grant the right of coining to his favorites, or to such men as had especially shown their loyalty. The natural results were that mints were to be found almost in every part of the country, and that the coinage of the kingdom became very debased. Notwithstanding the number of mints, too, coin seems in those days to have been remarkably scarce, hence its comparatively high value. The mint machinery was undoubtedly of a very rude description, if the coins turned out can be relied upon as genuine and as good witnesses to the process they had undergone. Conceive coins in use at the present day, not only of varying weight, but very varying shape ; with, here and there, a projection or an angle admirably calculated to rub a hole in the pocket. Imagine pennies scored with a deep cross that they might be broken into halfpence or farthings – fourthings – like hot-cross buns. Ore was scarce, too. No wonder with all these drawbacks and irregularities that the coinage of the kingdom was in a very unsatisfactory state. There can, then, be no improbability in the conjecture as to money having been made at Malmesbury in the reign of King Edred ; but at the same time it is one upon which implicit reliance cannot be placed. Edred, according to the chronicler, “held the kingdom nine years and a half.” He “departed in peace, on the birthday of the blessed pope and martyr Clement.” “His successor” continues the same chronicle “to the throne was Edwy who, on account of his great personal beauty, was called Pankalus by the people.” Edwy, however, was doomed to be unfortunate and unhappy. Up to within a short time previous to this the monks of Britain had married like ordinary men, but the celebrated St. Dunstan, if he did not introduce yet lent his powerful aid to bring into favor the rule of celibacy, which was afterwards almost universally adopted. When Edwy came to the crown St. Dunstan’s influence rapidly fell, the new monarch, who was renowned for his personal beauty, being fond of pleasure. At length the irritated saint grossly and wantonly insulted the king, who accordingly banished him from the kingdom. It is probable that it was this conduct of St. Dunstan’s – saint for the sake of distinctness, he was anything but a saint in modern estimation – which led King Edwy to expel the clergy, who lived in celibacy, from their establishments throughout

the kingdom. He installed in their places those monks who had refused to desert their wives and children. These men were denominated henceforth the secular clergy, or clerks ; in contradistinction to the regulars, or monks in the modern meaning of the word ; men who desert all social pleasures to devote themselves, that is by profession, to the service of God and the Catholic church. The monks of Malmesbury did not escape the general expulsion ; they were turned out of house and home, and their places taken by the secular clergy. One writer, who lived some centuries after, when the rule of celibacy had once more regained supremacy throughout the kingdom, and who had no doubt been brought up to look upon asceticism as the height of sanctity, thus speaks of this event – “Malmesbury Monastery, which had been inhabited by monks for more than two hundred and seventy years, was made a *stable* for clerks.” These are strong words, showing how deeply his mind had become imbued with prejudice.

It was some time during the reign of King Edwy that the bones of St. Aldhelm, after lying undisturbed in the tomb for some two hundred years, were discovered, exhumed, and enshrined at Malmesbury. This is related to have been done by the same celebrated St. Dunstan, who is thus recorded to have come in contact with the ancient abbey. In after years these precious relics of Aldhelm are said to have again been removed by a third saint – St. Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury. The Romish church certainly never wasted anything. She exacted the most implicit obedience from her votaries during life, and if she rewarded them with canonization after death it was to make use of their remains. A careful church !

When St. Dunstan was expelled the kingdom, his friends and partisans immediately commenced to stir up disturbances. He had left a strong party behind him, who, if they could not immediately effect his return seem to have scrupled at no means to annoy Edwy, and to at length bring their unsaintly-tempered saint back to the island. One Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, took the lead. He stirred up the Mercians, and the men of the north, and at length became possessed of so much power that he in Wessex compelled the king to give up his wife, the beautiful but unfortunate Elgina. She, it appears, was related to Edwy, so nearly that St. Dunstan took offence, or made that his pretence, and it was for insulting her that he was obliged to quit the kingdom. It could not then be but expected that upon getting possession of her whom they considered the cause of their saint’s banishment, the rude soldiery should treat her with contumely. But what they actually *did* could scarcely be surpassed in cruelty. They seared and scarred her beautiful face with red-hot irons, and then banished her over sea to Ireland. She survived this diabolical treatment, recovered of her wounds, and having returned to England, was searching for her husband, when she was again taken by Odo’s soldiers, *hamstringed*, and was at length relieved of her sufferings by death at Gloucester. Without charging Odo or St. Dunstan with this

terrible tragedy – as having been ordered by them – there is no disguising the fact that it was done by their supporters, and that St. Dunstan gained great advantages by it. For the unfortunate and unhappy King Edwy survived it but a short time. “He,” says the chronicler, “held the sovereignty four years, and was much *beloved*. ” It must have been by the people or else by his queen ; certainly St. Dunstan did not adore him. “After this,” continues the chronicler, “Edgar was crowned, and he was an admirable king.” Edgar had been proclaimed by Odo, of Canterbury, whilst Edwy still lived, and owing his accession as he did to Dunstan’s party, and moreover being in all probability completely in their power, it could not be expected that the course proceeded in by King Edwy would be continued by him. Accordingly Dunstan soon returned, and resumed his influence at the English court. He was made Bishop of London, and Worcester ; then had the primacy, Edgar having compelled the successor of Odo to resign, and with these he held the See of Rochester. No less than forty-seven, or as some say forty-eight, monasteries were founded throughout Britain, or rather perhaps endowed, and re-established. The secular clergy or clerks – those who had married, or refused to embrace celibacy – were subjected to an unceasing persecution. It was now their turn to feel misfortune and oppression. They were expelled monasteries. Malmesbury which, as the historian says, had been made a “stable for clerks,” was like-wise cleared out, and the old geldings established at rack and manger, there to say mass and meditate at their pleasure. King Edgar was the means of their restoration. His deed relating to the re-installation of the proper monks, when shorn of its technicalities, preamble and unintelligibilities – if such a word may be permitted – was somewhat as follows : -

“I, Edgar, King of England, having often attentively taken into consideration what return should be made to God for the great and extraordinary prosperity enjoyed by me, have come to the following resolution : to restore the sacred monasteries, which being composed of rotten shingles and worm-eaten boards, divine service has been neglected in them, and they were almost deserted. Having also expelled the illiterate clerks, who were subject to no rule of religious discipline, and in most places constituted as pastors persons of the holy order (of St. Benedict), and having issued gifts from my treasury for the repairing of the ruined edifices ; I have appointed Ælfric, a man who is eminently skilled and practiced in ecclesiastical matters, to preside over the Abbey of Malmesbury. Also for the good of my soul, and the honor of our Saviour, Mary his mother, mother of God, and ever a virgin ; the apostles Peter and Paul, and Aldhelm the holy bishop (whilome of Sherborne) I have restored to the use of the monastery, the meadows, woods, and lands, which in the time of the clerks came unjustly into the hands of Æthelnoth, who has been convicted of the fraud by the wise men in my presence.”

Here it will be observed it is stated that the “sacred monasteries” by which not all but a number of them, it is probable, are to be understood, are described before being restored by Edgar as “composed of rotten shingles and worm-eaten boards.” Buildings could not in those days be run up in a month. Stone could not be conveyed from the quarries to the spot designed to be built upon with the rapidity and ease of the present day. Nor does it appear that builders desired to hasten over their work. All the remains of ancient building bear evidence to the solidness of their structure, the durability of the materials, and, by inference, to the steady, slow, but sure style with which their erections were proceeded with. There were no contractors in those days, in the modern sense of the word. Hence it becomes very evident that a few poor, in many places indigent, monks could not, by their own means, erect those splendid structures, some of which, in a great measure, yet remain. Even the glorious edifice of Glastonbury arose from a humble church, whose walls were of twigs wound and twisted together, like the cottages of the poorer class at the present day. Meyldulph’s hermitage at Malmesbury may have been made of similar materials. But the Malmesbury monastery was fortunate to early attract the aid of powerful princes, hence it was probably almost from the first constructed of stone. It may, however, from this deed be conjectured that King Edgar repaired, rebuilt, or added to the existing structure. He mentions, as well be noticed, the name of Aldhelm immediately after Peter and Paul, the apostles ; as if the “holy bishop” was, in his estimation, of almost equal importance. At that date the abbey was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. Aldhelm. In the deed, too, appears that distinguishing characteristic of the Roman church, the making of Mary, or rather the calling of her, the “mother of God,” showing how early such was the custom in England, since this deed seems to have been executed about 974. Nor did the bounty of King Edgar pause here. He is also related to have given Escote to the abbey. He was the fifth kingly benefactor of the edifice, and might in one sense be considered the second founder ; since the deed above abridged states that he had restored to the monks much of their property which, “in the time of the clerks, came unjustly into the hands of Æthelnoth,” lands and woods, and green meadows. Next to King Athelstan the monks must have regarded him as their best royal friend. He went further, too, than Athelstan. He “appointed one, Ælfric, a man eminently skilled and practised in ecclesiastical matters,” to be their superior. This Ælfric seems to be the first recorded abbot since the time of Cuthbert, who left the monastery, or rather suddenly disappears from history, about the year 796. As the appointment of Ælfric was somewhere about the year 974, nearly two centuries must have elapsed since the time of Cuthbert, during which period there seems to be no account remaining of the Abbots of Malmesbury. One Alestan is indeed incidentally spoken of as having had something to do with it, at some time or other ; but the period to which he is to be referred, his deeds, and all about him, except the

mere fact of his having existed, seems involved in impenetrable obscurity. This silence may be conjecturally accounted for in several ways ; firstly, by supposing that the irruption of the Danes into Malmesbury in 878, led to the dispersion, or caused the destruction of documents relating to the affairs of the abbey up to that date ; and, secondly, that when the regular monks were expelled by Edwy they took with them and lost their records, or else that the secular clergy, or clerks, who occupied their place made away with them. It has been not unreasonably supposed that this Ælfric, who was appointed abbot by Edgar, had either taken a leading position, or had actually occupied that office over the monks of Malmesbury before their expulsion by King Edwy. That event appears to have taken place about sixteen years previous to their restoration, and the royal recognition, or appointment of Ælfric as superior of the abbey. Ælfric's birth and other particulars concerning his social standing do not seem to have been recorded ; hence he may perhaps be conjectured to have been of undistinguished extraction, and to have raised himself to eminence by his own exertions. The qualifications for an abbot were probably incapable of enumeration at any period ; although at a later date than this they were described to be the possession of a knowledge of the rules of the order, of transcribing, illuminating missals or manuscripts, ability in engrossing the scriptures and skill in chanting. As part of his duty consisted in admonishing the monks, to these might be added address and command of eloquence. After all it is evident that no exact rule could ever have been laid down. An emperor, one would imagine, ought to be an example of virtue to his people, but yet Nero was an emperor. Much depended upon circumstances, and probably upon personal address. No conclusions as to the worth of an abbot can then be drawn from the mere fact of his occupying that position. But Ælfric seems to have been a man well qualified for, and deserving of his place. He has been supposed to have actively overlooked the erections or reparations of King Edgar – he must then have had some knowledge of architecture ; and was probably possessed of taste, since he is also conjectured to have greatly contributed to the ornamentation of the building. Ælfric also caused instrumental music to be used in the service. It is not, however, recorded that he himself possessed musical talent ; but it is by no means improbable, His contemporary, St. Dunstan, was celebrated for his skill in performing ; and is related to have given an organ to the Glastonbury monastery in the same reign. But the performances which have most tended to render Ælfric famous, and which have handed down his name to posterity, were his writings. He appears to have been a philosopher as well as a priest, and a historian as well as a homilist. The monks of his time seem to have chiefly occupied themselves in transcribing, but Ælfric became a translator. Like St. Aldhelm he translated a portion of the Bible into Anglo-Saxon, though he does not seem like that ecclesiastic to have fallen under the notice of the compilers of the *Index purgatorius*. The

books which he translated were the Pentateuch, that of Job, and Judges ; and this translation had the honor of being printed and published in the year 1699 at Oxford. He is said to have written a life or biography of his great predecessor, St. Aldhelm, and to have also translated a number of Latin homilies into Saxon. His historical work was the "History of Malmesbury Abbey ; " his philosophical, "Of the Nature of Things." He must have been a remarkably diligent, as well as learned, ecclesiastic. The homilies have been by some said to have been translated by one Ælfric Bata, an Archbishop of York, who lived about fifty years after the Ælfric of Malmesbury, and by others to Ælfric, surnamed the Grammarian, a contemporary of the Malmesbury Abbot. As his very name is differently spelt - Ælfric, Alfred, and Eluric - there is nothing to be wondered at in this ; especially when the unsettled state of the times is taken into consideration. It was a great mistake of these ancient authors not to date their manuscripts, and affix their names. Such a simple expedient would have saved no end of trouble and conjecture ; not to mention discussion. They were so humble in those days, these monks, who never refused a dignity, unless unable to uphold it. At what time in his life Ælfric composed these works seems uncertain. Probably they were executed at various periods. He did not long remain Abbot of Malmesbury after his appointment to that office by King Edgar ; being advanced to be Bishop of Crediton either in 977 or 978, about four years after. There seems to be a great confusion respecting the time of his translation, as also of that of his death ; which, however, took place at Crediton, near the end of the tenth century ; some say in 988, others 999. He was undoubtedly a man of learning and ability.

To be continued.

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[page 3, columns 4-5]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER XI.
IRONSIDE - BISHOP HERMAN.

King Edgar did not long survive after the appointment of Ælfric as Abbot of Malmesbury monastery. He seems indeed to have died in the following year, or 975. Through the assistance of St. Dunstan, his son Edward, afterwards surnamed the Martyr, gained the crown. During his reign, somewhere about the year 978, a synod was held at Calne by St. Dunstan ; at which the king was not present on account of his tender age

– at least that was the pretence given for his absence. Here occurred a terrible catastrophe, which, added to the instances already given, as throwing doubt upon St. Dunstan's saintly character, seem to bear almost indisputable witness that he who enshrined the bones of the Saint of Malmesbury – Aldhelm – was by no means of so great a sanctity as was alleged. The synod seems to have been held for the purpose of discussing some matter by parties opposed to each other ; the locality appears to have been an upper room. As seemed perfectly reasonable and convenient, the opposite parties sat on different sides of the apartment. At length one side having exhausted their arguments, St. Dunstan, as the leader of the other, rose to reply ; but instead of entering fully into the question, he merely said that he would commit his cause to Christ. Suddenly that portion of the flooring upon which his opponents sat gave way beneath them, and they were precipitated to the ground ; most, if not all, being killed, or seriously injured by the descent and the falling timbers. But while this terrible tragedy took place, but a few feet distant – on the other side of the room – St. Dunstan and his party sat perfectly safe, watching the destruction of their enemies. Such a thing might have been a mere accident, but it bears upon its face such marks of collusion that St. Dunstan, even by writers who lived no great while after his time, was suspected of having prepared the floor. He was well known to be a great artist in metal, hence his sacred character could not shield him from a charge of having a knowledge of carpentry. Nor would he have been compelled to work himself. He was not the only one in those days who considered the means as of very little importance, provided the end was arrived at.

“So the end's gained, what signifies the means ?”

seems to have been then the almost universal sentiment. The historian of Malmesbury, however, gives an account which perhaps tends slightly to exculpate St. Dunstan ; unless indeed he be considered unscrupulous enough not to hesitate to sacrifice even his own adherents to enhance the prestige of his name. It is that St Dunstan alone escaped injury by dexterously seizing a beam. Shortly after this King Edward was murdered by the accomplices of Elfrida, the mother of Ethelred, who upon Edgar's death had disputed Edward's claim to the throne. It is related that St. Dunstan, at Ethelred's coronation, pronounced a curse, rather, perhaps, a prophecy, to the effect that his reign would be an unhappy one, as it had been inaugurated with blood. Strangely enough his reign was most unfortunate. Since the days of the “stout King Athelstan,” as the chronicler calls him, the dreadful Danes, driven by him over the sea, had ceased to ravage the coasts of Britain. But now appeared the celebrated Sweyn. He was the son of the then King of Denmark, but had been banished by his father ; whereupon assembling a fleet, he came to the coasts of merrie England, and disembarking his forces, took and plundered both London and Chester. This was in 982, after more than forty years of peace – at least, so far as foreign enemies

were concerned. The Witan at length found it necessary to buy off the Danes with a gift of £10,000, to obtain which the king, henceforth well called Ethelred the Unready, was obliged to levy a tax called the Dane-gelt, or Dane-money. When it came to the turn of the Malmesbury men to supply their portion of this tax, they must have remembered the tale which their forefathers had handed down of the burning of Malmesbury by the Danes, and no doubt wished in their hearts that another “stout King Athelstan” would arise to drive the marauders once more beyond the ocean. The expedient, however, of the Witan did not succeed : - it aroused the cupidity of the Danes, who saw at once the enormous wealth of the island. Sweyn again and again returned, each time only retreating after being put in possession of sums of Dane-geld far exceeding his previous demand. At length there came to Sandwich a large fleet of Danes, under the leadership of one Thurkill, from whom they were called Thurkill’s Host, and so wasted and threatened the country that no less than £48,000 was paid down as the price of peace. King Ethelred, too, who had caused a great slaughter of Danes throughout the kingdom some years previously, now took Thurkill and many of his men into his pay ; making him Earl of East Anglia. But the curse of St. Dunstan seems to have been irresistible. Sweyn once again appeared, drove Ethelred to take shelter in the Isle of Wight, and received the submission of the western thanes at Bath. Sweyn was now king. He, however, died ere long, and his son, the celebrated Canute, was saluted monarch by the Danish host. By this time the English nobles were tired of the foreign yoke, and by means of Edmund the Atheling, or as he is better known Ironside, son of the exiled king, a compact was entered into between him and the people. Ethelred then returned with an army, and Canute retired to his ships. In the following year, or 1015, a great council was held at Oxford, to which came Sigfert and Morcar, the chief thanes of the Danish Burghs - Lincoln, Nottigham, Leicester, Derby and Stamford. Edric Streone, a man who possessed the confidence of Ethelred, or rather, perhaps, had influence over him, through some pretext or other enticed these two, Sigfert and Morcar, into his private apartment, or bower, where he had them both murdered. This may, or may not have been with the knowledge of the king ; but no sooner was it known than Ethelred seized their possessions. Sigfert’s widow, Algitha, was conveyed to Malmesbury, and there confined in the convent. Whilst she was here, probably bewailing her sad fate, and endeavouring to pass away the memory of the dread events in which she had suffered by religious exercise, Edmund the Atheling - Atheling is equivalent to Heir-apparent, or Crown Prince - chanced to visit Malmesbury. He was struck with the charms or accomplishments of the widow, and actually carried her off by force ; seizing too in her right the lands of Sigfert and Morcar, despite the opposition offered him. A more romantic episode could scarcely have happened. Here was the British Heir-apparent or Crown Prince, wandering about the land until he falls in love with a lady confined

probably by the order of Edric Streone, his august father's chief counsellor. Without waiting to ask the consent of the monarch, or the Witan – the then parliament – the strong bodied Heir-Apparent, or wandering knight, - called Ironside – forthwith carries off the lady by the right of might, and enters with her the holy estate of matrimony. To conclude the matter he next lays violent hand upon property which had unjustly been confiscated to the crown. Nor can this latter proceeding be taken as indicating a want of respect on the part of Edmund for his father the king. Ethelred seems to have been entirely in the hands of that demon disguised as man, the cruel, treacherous, double renegade, Edric Streone ; and as Edric had incurred the odium of murdering the Danish Thaness, it is only probable that he enjoyed the benefit accruing from that deed. He may have designed the lady Alghitha for his own paramour. Edmund the Atheling's visit to Malmesbury may not have been so entirely undesigned. He may have seen the fair widow previously, there may have been a mutual correspondence ; when he appears upon the scene to snatch her from the polluted hands of Edric. It is perfectly possible to make a romance out of this affair. Nor does it rest entirely upon imagination. Had Edric designed the widow of the murdered Sigfert for himself, he must have undoubtedly been terribly disappointed to discover that the Atheling had fore-stalled him, and a man of his revengeful, and relentless disposition would not scruple to run up a score against the Crown Prince to be paid off upon opportunity. Now it so happens that when Edmund ascended the throne, in the due course of events, his reign turned out to be a very short one – scarcely a year elapsing before his death. He twice routed the Danes under Canute who had again arrived, but Edric who openly fought against him, now sought a reconciliation and was allowed to join his forces to those of Edmund. The next battle was lost through his treachery. Canute pursued hard upon Ironside, who, however, got together another army, and offered single combat to the Danish invader. But it was declined by Canute a meeting followed, and through Edric and the Witan it was arranged that the kingdom should be divided between the two monarchs. Shortly afterwards Ironside died, and suspicions were entertained that it was Edric Streone who caused his death.

Meantime, the affairs of the Malmesbury Abbey were in all probability of so uninteresting and routine a character that it was not thought necessary to record them ; since, from the latter part of the tenth century to about the middle of the eleventh, there does not appear to be anything extraordinary chronicled of the abbots. Now the abbots were, at least in one sense, in those days the monarchs of Malmesbury, and consequently it may reasonably be supposed that had much of interest occurred during their reigns it would have been handed down to posterity. But from the time that Ælfric was advanced to the Bishopric of Crediton, towards the close of the tenth century, to the reign of Edward the Confessor, 1057, nothing seems to have distinguished these monastical monarchs from

their subjects except the fact of their occupying a higher position in the ecclesiastical scale. Their names are indeed recorded, but scarcely anything more. Doubtless they were all in their day very reverend old gentlemen, following a certain routine, and in the sincerity of their hearts believing it to be true religion. Beyond dispute they were extremely orthodox and good children of the Church. But their names alone survive the ravages of Time, like the inscriptions on gravestones, merely serving to show that once such a person did exist, though his body may have been long ago mingled with the undistinguished dust, and his memory amongst men extinct – except upon Sundays before service. The successor of Ælfric or Alfred, Elfric or Eluric, upon his translation to Crediton, was one Athelwerd or Ethelwerd, who certainly was abbot in 982 ; but of whom he came, what he did, and where he went, seems buried in oblivion. He had six successors likewise distinguished for being undistinguished – Kineward, Brichtelmus, Britchwaldus, Edroclus, Wulsinus, and Britchwoldus – who, although nearly all of them having the Latin, or classical termination “us ” to their names, never seem to have produced anything classical enough to come down to the present date. Egelward was the next, and he reigned – if that term may be permitted – for ten years ; yet even in that space of time does not seem to have lifted himself above the common herd. Elwinus then took the abbot’s robe, and after retaining it eighteen months delivered it into the hands of Brictwold or Brickwold, for his name is spelt in both ways, which seems to be about the only thing recorded of him. After seven years of superintendence he, too, went the way of all flesh and departed this life, as the tombstones have it, in the year 1057. Thus, during the period that had elapsed up to this date from 977, or thereabouts, when Ælfric ceased to be Abbot of Malmesbury, or during nearly a century, no less than ten successive persons held that office, not one of whom has become celebrated. It seemed as though Malmesbury was designed to have periodical returns of celebrity, with long days of retirement as it were intervening. Though no doubt all these abbots drank of the waters of Malmesbury, they do not seem to have got so much benefit from them as their great predecessors – Meyldulph, Aldhelm, Daniel, each of whom appears to have been intimately connected with the monastery some forty years. Here are ten within a century. Perhaps these, unlike Aldhelm, merely sipped of the life-giving waters – he stood up to them to his shoulders.

It was during the life of the last named abbot Brickwold, or Brictwold, that one Herman, who afterwards became celebrated, in all probability was already in possession of the see of Wilton. Bishop Herman, if it is possible to judge of character from a person’s deeds, appears to have been a man of deep thought, and of a very scheming disposition. It is certainly probable that he conceived that idea which afterwards must have rendered him famous at Malmesbury, while yet the Abbot Brickwold or Brictwold lived. This idea was nothing less than the making of

Malmesbury an episcopal see by removing that of Wilton, of which Herman was himself bishop there. What was the original cause of this scheme of the bishop can of course at this distance of time be only conjectured, and it certainly does seem reasonable that one cause at least was the great magnificence of Malmesbury Abbey at that date. The abbey must indeed in those days have been far more famous than at present, when the religion which had been the cause of its erection was spread from one end of the land to the other. The kings Kenelwalch, Ina, Athelstan and Edgar had made it grants of land, or had assisted to raise it into splendour. Its monks were renowned throughout the land for their great scholarship. Its walls had produced at least one saint – Aldhelm – and had sheltered authors who in those days were most celebrated. Its library, it may be presumed, was extensive for that day. The abbey itself must have been a magnificent structure. Altogether there can be no surprise that Bishop Herman wished to share these benefits. The way in which he went about his work, to judge from appearances – would have done credit to a Talleyrand. Instead of loudly proclaiming his intention, and hence, perhaps, drawing opposition, the bishop seems to have thought that the first thing necessary was to obtain the good will of the Monks ; since although they were not the only ones to be consulted, yet they were sure to have a voice in the matter, and might, at any rate, should he take up his residence there against their wish, make his life very uncomfortable. He might have remembered the conduct of certain individuals of the abbey in the time of King Alfred, when a friend of that monarch's did not exactly please them. There was the monument to Johannes, Abbot of Athelingay, by the altar – every one might see it. Herman would probably have had an objection, however great may have been his admiration of martyrs, to be murdered with iron stiles, or, as some say, table poniards. Herman appears accordingly to have cast about for means to ingratiate himself with the monks. He seems to have come to the conclusion that the easiest way was by adorning that edifice of which, no doubt, they were – and justly – proud. He built a tower afterwards, called the "Bell Tower," from its containing a set of ten bells. This was about the year 1057 ; or about the time of the death of the Abbot Brickwold or Bricwold. That event seemed to open the way to the realization of his project. Herman accordingly applied to King Edward. That monarch summoned the Confessor, who had chosen Herman for his chaplain, and lent a favorable ear to his representations. No doubt, Herman, as chaplain, possessed frequent and favorable opportunities to ingratiate himself with the Confessor. The bishop had perhaps often heard of the peccadilloes of the prince in private. Edward, from his religious leanings was called the Confessor. He seems to have been a deep-thinking, calculating man. Undoubtedly he improved his opportunities. At any rate it is certain that Edward the Confessor granted his prayer, and gave him permission to execute his project. Herman, no doubt, went away rejoicing. But he was destined to meet

with the most powerful opposition. The monks of Malmesbury seem to have entertained the greatest dislike to the project, which if carried out they, no doubt, saw, would, in some way, affect their interest. They appear to have refused to receive Herman and to have put every scheme possible upon foot to defeat him. At that date the Godwin family had great power and influence in the nation. It is related that the monks applied to the then earl, and through their interest with him contrived to get the grant rescinded. To make all sure as it were, and not to leave a single loophole for the disappointed bishop, they lost no time in electing an abbot. Their choice fell upon one Brithric, who had before held a position in the monastery above that of a mere monk. He had been, in fact, Prior. Herman found himself utterly undone. He seems to have taken his defeat very much to heart. It was probably his pet project. He had spent no little sum in that Macchiavellian scheme to gain the good will of the monks by adorning their monastery. Had he not been partially successful perhaps the blow would not have been so hard. As it was, he is related to have deserted his bishopric and gone abroad. At length, however, the then Bishop of Sherborne, one Elfwold, died. Herman returned, was installed in that see, and added it to Wilton. He then went to Sarum, or Salisbury. Had he been successful Malmesbury might at this day have been the seat of a bishop.

To be continued.

Word count 3 087

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[page 5, columns 3-4]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.

BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER XII.

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR. – STATE OF THE ABBEY.

The character of King Edward the Confessor, so far as it is possible to judge at this distance of time, appears to have been extraordinarily weak and vacillating. He seems to have been alternately dictated to by his nobles and priests, the last of whom gave him some return by making him a royal saint. Although his nobles, by dint of threats of physical force, at times had things their own way, it would appear that the private mind of the monarch was entirely in the hands of the priests. This is perhaps illustrated by his conduct towards the monastery of Malmesbury. Bishop Herman seems to have had no difficulty in obtaining the required permission to enable him to remove the episcopal see there from Wilton,

and it was only through the influence of the Earl Godwin - influence probably purchased in some way or other by the monks - that the grant was rescinded. Edward was thus by one of his powerful nobles prevented from carrying out the favorite design of one of his priests. He seems, however, to have kept Malmesbury in his mind as a place to which he was pledged to present something in discharge of the promise to the bishop. About seven years after the election of Brithric as abbot, and when his life was rapidly drawing to a close, Edward seems to have bethought him of Malmesbury, and perhaps, in accordance with the religion in which he had so much faith, intended by benefacting the abbey to engage the prayers of the monks on behalf of his soul. In the year 1065 he granted important privileges to the abbey, contained in a charter from which the following is an extract :-

“All things that are written, observes the apostle, are written for our learning, that by patience, and consolation of the scriptures we may have hope. Therefore, eternable durable joys are to be purchased instead of earthly and fleeting ones, and good things are to be obtained by hope. For God himself will render retribution of all our actions in the day of examination, according to everyone's desert. Wherefore, I, Edward, through the divine favor governing the royal sceptre of the English, being asked by Brithric, abbot of the monastery of Malmesbury, with the consent of my bishops and nobles, for the honour of the holy mother of God, Mary, perpetual virgin, and for reverence of St. Aldhelm, formerly abbot of the same monastery, afterwards Bishop of Sherborne, whose glorious body in the same church venerably repose, and shines with many miracles, do grant, and by my royal authority do enjoin, that the same church, and all its lands and possessions which this day it holds, or hereafter by the bounty of my faithful people it may hold, in perpetual right, and in perpetual peace they may hold.

And I do grant and enjoin that the same church be free from all worldly yoke, namely, of shires, and hundreds, and pleas, and quarrels, and all gelds and customs. I grant moreover to it full liberty, that is Saca and Toka, Tol and Theam, Infangtheoffe, Manbuche, &c. Whoever, therefore, assists this our donation of liberty, may it lead him to the enjoyment of paradise. Whoever contemns it, may he with hands and feet bound, be plunged into the depth of hell.”

The opening sentences of the charter contain evidence enough of the purpose for which it was granted. It was for the purchase of “eternable durable joys.” The preamble is remarkable as showing how thoroughly Edward's mind had become imbued with the doctrines of religion, so that even in a legal deed he could not resist the opportunity of exhortation. “All things that are written, observes the apostle, are written for our learning, that by patience and consolation of the scriptures we may have hope.” This might without suspicion of quotation from a deed of this character be made the opening sentence of a sermon. Certainly it may be quite correct that “eternable durable joys are to be purchased instead of

earthly and fleeting ones," but it seems difficult to discover the connection between the promise and the conclusion. Where is the why of the "therefore"? That why instead of preceding follows. It is because "God himself will render retribution of all our actions in the day of examination, according to everyone's desert." Meantime it probably escaped Edward that whilst he thought himself of laying up treasures for future enjoyment above, his monks and priests who so highly extolled "eternable durable joys," were remarkably fond of the "earthly and fleeting ones," - such as gold and silver, woods, meadows, and lands. It was wonderful that no suspicion ever seems to have entered the heads of the gentlemen who lived in the good old times as to the sincerity of these professions. It never seems to have occurred to them that whilst they themselves parted with everything in order to obtain these "eternable durable joys," the monks who affected to put so low a value upon the "earthly and fleeting ones" took good care to get as many as possible of them into their possession, and made noise enough if such "impious wretches" as the Danes, for instance, dared to lay hands upon their sacred stores. Herein, too, again appears the name of the venerated St. Aldhelm ; he seems to have been then considered a saint worthy of being placed in close propinquity to "Mary, perpetual virgin, who herself follows next to God." It appears incidentally that the body of St. Aldhelm was then still at Malmesbury, "and shines with many miracles." This would seem to intimate that miracles were considered to be worked at the shrine of St. Aldhelm in the same way as they were at that of Thomas a Becket, famous in after times. The grant of "perpetual peace" would, no doubt, have been thought by the monks as an inestimable gift had not experience shown them that it was but a mere phrase. The following sentence was far more satisfactory. "And I do grant and enjoin, that the same church be free from all worldly yoke." Here was something substantial, and although a "fleeting" earthly joy it does not appear that the monks were so wrapt up in the contemplation of "eternable and durable" ones as to refuse its acceptance ; nor, indeed, can it be supposed that they found fault with the next :- "I grant, moreover, to it full liberty, that is Saca, and Toka, Tol and Theam Infangtheoffe, Manbuche." Very curious antique phrases these, and somewhat hard to decipher in their exact and indisputable meaning. They, however, may be taken as generally to imply those manorial rights which were so marked a feature of the feudal times - rights most of which all in the present day consider themselves in full possession of, without having ever received a charter from the reigning monarch - such as the liberty of sale or purchase, having markets, mills and fairs, and things of the like nature. There was another right now to be obtained, at least in that fulness and completeness which was characteristic of that period - the right of exercising jurisdiction over vassals. The Baron of Bradwardine, however, according to Sir Walter Scott, prided himself upon having in the middle of the eighteenth century documents which gave him full power to hang,

draw and quarter his retainers, making him in fact a king upon a small scale on his estate ; which rights the baron somehow thought it prudent not to exercise. Consult the Waverley novels upon that subject. But the most curious part of the charter is its conclusion - "Whoever, therefore, assists this our donation of liberty, may it lead him to the enjoyment of Paradise. But whoever contemns it, may he, with hands and feet bound, be plunged into the depth of hell." This blessing upon him who should follow out the purpose or intention of the donor, and curse upon him who should thwart it, seems to have been an ordinary wind-up to such deeds in those days. Some resemblance may perhaps be traced in it to the last verses of the Apocalypse, where the writer states that if any man should take away from what he had there put down God would take away from him his "part out of the book of life." The charter makes no mention whatever of the town of Malmesbury, though conferring upon the monastery manorial rights which it may be supposed would be sure to affect the town more or less. It is conjectured at that date to have formed part of the royal demesnes. The authority of the abbots then probably extended only to the abbey lands and appendages, which, however, were very large. According to the charter of Edward the Confessor, the numerous manors which had been granted, or given to the monastery at various times, and by various persons, were no less than three hundred and forty hides of land. If the estimate which assigns one hundred acres to the hide be the correct one - some even assert that it was one hundred and twenty - there would then be the enormous number of thirty-four thousand acres of land in the possession of the abbey. All this was not of course under cultivation. Much of it was probably occupied on feudal tenure, and did not return a direct rent. But even then the income derived from it must have been immense. Allowing only one-third to be properly cultivated, or say ten thousand acres, then reckoned in modern money, and at the rents of the present day, this would give an income of at least fifteen thousand, if not twenty thousand pounds ! The lands must have extended for miles and miles : it may be doubted whether the most extended view that it was possible to obtain from the abbey steeples would include the whole. The abbey itself was a structure correspondingly grand. It was built in the form of a cross, and if tradition is to be trusted, covered a space of forty-five acres ! This seems scarcely probable. Forty-five acres ! There are many farms of less extent. But when examined, the tradition turns out to have a foundation in fact. In calculating the extent of the abbey there must not only be taken into consideration what is called the conventual, or Abbey Church. To this must be added the residence of the abbots, and the vast buildings set apart for the use of the monks. It must be remembered that in such edifices as that of Malmesbury, the peculiar offices which were the distinguishing feature of a monastery - such as the eleemosynaria or alms-house, the infirmary, and the sanctuary - were all separate structures from the main-building. The monks had, too, their weavers,

tanners, shoe makers, bakers, and the like, all of whom had, of course, their shops. In short, a monastery was a town in itself. There were the out-door and uncovered appanages, such as ambulatories, or places for the monks to exercise themselves in, orchards, rabbit warrens, fishponds, gardens. There were also dove-yards, and even vineyards. The Malmesbury dove-yard long after it had disappeared gave its name to the spot upon which it had once stood, if it does not do so now. The historian of Malmesbury states that a Grecian monk, one Constantine, travelled there from his own land, and bringing with him a knowledge of the treatment of the vine, he planted a vineyard. This, it appears from the same writer, was situated towards the south and west of the Worthys. These monks of Malmesbury seem to have been well provided for. When all these circumstances are taken into consideration, there seems little room to doubt the afore-mentioned tradition. Reckoning abbey-church, monastery proper, abbot's mansion, the various offices, and the surrounding gardens, orchards, and vineyards - all probably under the immediate superintendence of the monks - it certainly may have covered forty-five acres, which the tradition assigns it. It may here be remarked that there was a farm no great distance from the town, and upon the road to Chippenham, which was a grange belonging to the monastery; that is, it was under the superintendence of one of those individuals known as *Grangiarii* and its produce perhaps especially applied to the sustenance of the monks. These numerous houses and farms, scattered all over the country, and known as the granges, seem all to have been at one time or another connected with some monastery. The monks at Malmesbury seem to have had no necessity - at least in so far as material comforts were concerned - to repine at their lot. They had a magnificent house to live in, an enormous income both in corn and kind. If they delighted in gardening, as men of their class generally did, there were acres upon acres of land attached to the abbey upon which to exercise their skill. If they had a literary taste they had every means to gratify it at their disposal. They had, indeed, their religious routine to be attended to, but it does not seem to have been of a very onerous character. They must certainly have taken up some time, and been found at first rather awkward ; but no doubt time accustomed them to perform it without difficulty. The day was divided into eight services. The first of them began at twelve, or one o'clock in the morning, and was called matins. The next was Lauds, at three, after which the majority retired to the dormitory, but some spent the interval to prines at six in private prayer. Then at eight or nine - authorities differ, and so may the customs at different times and in different places came Thirds ; after which the monks repair to the chapter house. Here the Prior proclaimed a sort of petty sessions by pronouncing the words "*Loquamur, de ordine nostro,*" that is, "*Let us speak of our order*" (or of the affairs of our order) when there were any complaints to be made, or submissions to be heard, there were they listened to, and proceeded with. To this succeeded the service

of the sixth hour, after which study and literary work was the order. Now came the nones, when a service was sung. It was now time to dine, and dinner was accordingly served up in the refectory; whither went the monks; even this could not be done without psalm singing or praying. It is not improbable that the modern custom of saying grace before and after meat originated in the monasteries. After dinner succeeded the Vespers, and that service concluded, the monks were free to dispose of their time until five, which was the ancient supper time. Then came a conference of sacred subjects, to which succeeded the office called Compline, at six. That over, and the day's work was done. They might retire to bed, wherein they are said to have taken their slumber without undressing - at least such was the custom in some abbeys. Like modern clergymen, on Sunday the monks delivered exhortations. It is obvious that all the monks could never have engaged in all these services. They were probably divided by a kind of tacit agreement amongst them. Here and there might perhaps be one who either from the absolute want of something else to occupy his mind, from real piety, that is in sincerity, or else from a desire to gain a name for it, was careful in his attendance upon them all; but in all probability when once the novelty of the thing had worn off, the majority shirked the routine as much as possible. It was not such a pleasant thing to get up at one o'clock of a cold rainy winter's morning, to go through a service as cold and inanimate as routine could make it. Nor could it have been altogether agreeable to be obliged to retire to rest so very early in the evening in order to be able to arise at the required moment. It must have been far pleasanter to sit over the burning logs of wood, and dip deep into the circling horn of mead ; whilst some old greybeard told the tale of the days of long ago to the smoke that curled up the chimney probably, since such gentlemen are apt to be remarkably diffuse and digressive. The principal officers over the monasteries which were independent of the bishops - of which was Malmesbury - were the Prior and Sub-Prior. The Prior was next to the Abbot, and governed the abbey when he was absent. The Sub-Prior had also a share in the controlling of the monks. Below him was the cellarer - that is, the house-steward, a place of no mean importance in certain places, since it is related that the City of Ely was under the government of the cellarer of that ancient abbey. Next came the almoner, or distributor, or at least superintendent of alms which each day were distributed to the poor ; the pittancer who took care of the extra provisions shared out on certain occasions; the Chamberlain, who looked after the sleeping department or dormitory, and supplied the monks with some part of their clothing ; lastly came the lay-brethren, who elected them to the service of the proper monks - performing menial offices, or tilling the land. Here was an establishment of a wonderful extent, and, as might have been expected, the monastical monarchs - the Abbots - who were the heads of the concern, lived in no small state. Not only had they their proper mansion adjoining the monastery, but actually had country

seats and parks upon the estates belonging to the Abbey. Cole Park, in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury (anciently known as Cowfolde Park), was one of the parks of the Malmesbury Abbots. Only one - mark that! Such was their sumptuousness. These Abbots were almost entirely, if not quite, independent of the Bishops, and were known as Mitred Abbots. Their jurisdiction was supreme in their district, and they even had seats in the House of Lords. It could scarcely be expected that with all these dignities the abbots should be remarkable for their humility. Accordingly it is related that when upon their travels they were attended by a vast train of retainers ; he of Glastonbury, when he went out, had upwards of one hundred - so that it was said their trains resembled the triumphal processions of a Cæsar, that is of an emperor ! No wonder with the chance of arriving at this elevation that men of an ambitious turn became monks, and submitted to deprive themselves of pleasures by vows which, moreover, in later times at least, they were absolved from keeping in anything but name. The ceremony of initiation was very simple, at least in the order of St. Benedict, which was that professed at Malmesbury. The aspirant was taken into the church, Miserere sung, appropriate prayers offered up, the benediction given, the secular habit put off, and the monastic assumed, which was followed by prayer, then came the kiss of peace, and after three days of silence the novice had become a monk.

Such was the vast establishment which arose from the hermit's cell of Meyldulph. No wonder Herman wished to remove his episcopal see to Malmesbury ; nor that the monks, who perhaps saw that if such a project was carried into execution their chance of becoming Abbot was gone, vehemently opposed him.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY. CHAPTER XIII.

THE MONK OLIVER. - WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

Whilst the public affairs of the abbey were receiving so much attention - and, it may be added, the possessions of the monastery were being so much extended - the internal affairs of the establishment once more became conspicuous. The monks for whom all these benefits were designed and received, and who, through them became celebrated, again spring into notice for their own peculiar accomplishments, or rather those of one of them. For perhaps three-quarters of a century Malmesbury had not produced a man who had made himself famous, and

through his exertions added new laurels to those already in the possession of the abbey. Since the death of the celebrated Ælfric, or rather his translation from Malmesbury to the bishopric of Crediton, there had been no man of Malmesbury who had lifted himself into notice. Malmesbury monastery had itself become famous through the connection which such men as King Edgar and Edward the Confessor, and, no doubt, the memory of St. Dunstan, who enshrined the bones of St. Aldhelm, was held in much reverence here : but the monks themselves, like the ten abbots whose names alone survive, do not seem during this three-quarters or more of a century to have rendered themselves more distinguished than usual. There was now, however, a plant growing up within the shelter of the Malmesbury monastery, who was destined again to attract, through his own personal exertions, the attention of the world. Those ancient walls that had witnessed the performances of such men as Aldhelm and Athelard were again to behold an extraordinary man.

Somewhere about this time the monk Oliver rises into notice. Of his birth, parentage, and early days, like those of so many of his celebrated contemporaries, little or nothing seems known with certainty. His very name has not been uniformly spelt. Besides Oliver, he has also been called Egelmer, or Elmer. There is an apparent difference between these two last names enough to arouse a suspicion of the existence of another who has been confounded with the Malmesbury man. But the fact seems to be, that in the ancient writings not only was *g* very near in its form to *y*, but that the early printers often confounded the two. Eyelmer would naturally be contracted to Elmer. Neither of these names are suited to the modern tongue, hence that of Oliver has been here preferred. Until Oliver became a monk of Malmesbury monastery, little or nothing seems known concerning him, though it has been asserted that he was born there. But he was not a man of the ordinary stamp, who upon mingling with so many monks would lose his identity amongst them. His genius could no more be mixed and lost in their uniformity than oil with water; though he joined them, and lived with them, he was still separate and individual. Study amongst them, like almost everything else, religion not excepted, had been reduced to a routine. Regularly after the service called Sixths, which was that immediately preceding Nones, or the mid-day service, they were marched off into the cloisters, there to spend their time until dinner in what was called study. This chiefly consisted in such manual labour as transcribing or illuminating. It cannot certainly be denied that they transcribed with the greatest care ; nevertheless mistakes were made ; but allowing their transcriptions to have been perfectly correct, this cannot entitle them to more praise than that of possessing patience. There could be nothing original in the mere act of copying. Illuminating on the other hand was a process which certainly required some considerable skill, taste, and even genius. It consisted in ornamenting those works which had been transcribed with figures, borders, or gigantic initial letters in colour. The works over which they

appear to have spent most time in this way were the mass-books, or missals, many of which are still preserved, and even under glass cases, as at Oxford and in the British Museum, strike the eye with the brilliance of their hues. The reason probably that the missal received so much attention was the reverence in which it was held, almost approaching that paid to the Bible itself, persons being sworn upon the missal as they are now upon the Testament in the present law courts, to which practice indeed it may be conjectured that the monks with respect to their missal gave rise. The figures with which the missals were ornamented, though sometimes only remarkable for their oddity, often did the designer and executor much credit, while the illuminated initial letters are of so dazzling and brilliant a description that it is difficult to conceive how the novices contrived to fix their attention upon the text. A practice somewhat similar to this prevails even at the present day, though it is now done by the aid of engraving. From these illuminated works much curious information has been gathered concerning the residences of our ancestors, and from the portraits to be found upon them a regular series has been formed illustrating the features possessed by our earlier kings or rulers. Although it is of course impossible to place much reliance upon this, yet the thing is very curious, since in the nineteenth century may be seen through the labors of the monks approximate portraits of the monarchs of the ninth. Such were the usual studies of the monks. But Oliver could not be thus confined. Although he appears to have been a man of much learning, and had no doubt perused the works of the ancients, it was not so much as a man of deep erudition that he was to become famous as for one who originated something. His favourite study seems to have been mathematics, since he is recorded to have written a work upon geometry, nor did he scorn the darker mysteries of divination, since he, like his celebrated predecessor, St. Aldhelm, is also related to have issued a book upon Astrology ; then by no means a science in so much disrepute as at present. Neither of these has survived the ravages of time. It was not as an author that Oliver was to be famous. His favourite study, mathematics, probably led him by insensible degrees to turn his attention to mechanics. But in this science he was not to be bounded by the narrow circle of productions which had preceded him. He did not make himself renowned by constructing a mill to grind the abbey corn, nor did he search for the fulcrum - which Archimedes so much desired - whereupon to rest a lever that should enable him to overturn the world, and thus shoot far beyond Alexander, who merely conquered its surface. Oliver, confined in his cell, seems to have envied the free denizens of the air, since, like the Psalmist, he appears to have wished for the wings of the dove, that he might fly away; though as for rest it would perhaps in those days have been difficult to discover a place more favorable to that than the Malmesbury monastery, guaranteed as it was by Edward the Confessor's Charter, in the possession of perpetual peace. Oliver, in short, had a great longing to emulate the doves who cooed and

circled around the haughty steeples of the abbey. He found that his monastic habit was no magic mantle by which, like that used by Mephistopheles, he could raise himself up and float through the atmosphere like a swift winged swallow. He required the aid of artificial means. He set himself to work, and no doubt after many trials, deep thought, and much monastical meditation, came to the conclusion that he had at length discovered the means which was to open up a new element - the air - to man's dominion. It has been said that he was a bold man who first ate an oyster. He must have been not less bold who could do what Oliver did. Ascending one of the haughty abbey towers he placed his machinery in order, and, fearlessly trusting himself upon it, launched himself forth into the atmosphere. Nor did he sink immediately to the ground, as no doubt the monks had confidently predicted. What must have been their astonishment to behold him floating high in the air over those gardens and orchards amongst which they had no doubt seen him roam like other men upon his feet? What must have been Oliver's own sensations as he felt himself borne along by the wind in a region no great distance beneath the clouds ? What did the doves and swallows think upon beholding this unfeathered, huge, unwieldy bird skimming along beneath the sky? So gigantic a hawk it would be difficult to elude had he a power of turning, twisting, and rapid flight corresponding to his size. But their apprehensions upon that head were quickly laid. Oliver, after floating no less than a furlong, or over two hundred yards, was seen to rapidly descend, apparently compelled by a power over which he had no control. He had fallen. When assisted to rise it was discovered that the shock of his descent had fractured both his legs ; thus dearly had he paid for a few moments of success. This adventure must have caused an enormous amount of talk amongst the Malmesbury men at that date. Legends they might indeed have heard of witches cutting through the air on a moonlit night by merely bestriding a besom, and greasing it to go faster. The monks themselves had no doubt heard from their learned companions of Dædalus and Icarus's unfortunate attempt. But all these were nothing more than traditions. Here was the real thing. They had seen it. It was perhaps fortunate for Oliver that he did injure himself, since otherwise it would have been ten to one if he was not set down as a magician, like the celebrated Roger Bacon, who flourished no great while afterwards. As it was, he could not be accused of sorcery, since he would certainly in that case have provided for his own safety, if not success. Of what construction his machinery was seems open to dispute. It certainly was not a balloon. He is described as placing wings upon his hands and feet ; but such an account is too wide and loose to be accepted in its literal sense. These wings were probably something which spread out and supported him - like a huge umbrella or parachute. No matter whatever it was. He flew, though his flight was a short one. He must have been a man of no little courage, since there does not seem to be any record of any one

having previously made such an attempt either in Britain or abroad. Malmesbury, then, was the scene of the first English aeronautic attempt.

Oliver's accomplishments, moreover, did not end here. Not only did he study astrology, but is related to have been something of a prophet. In those days, as is well known, and indeed for long after, the appearance of a comet was beheld with awe as the forerunner of dearth, death or disaster. Such superstitions were not confined to comets. A curious instance is given in Ethelwerd's Chronicle: "A. D. 734 * * * The moon appeared as if stained with spots of blood, and by the same omen Tatwine and Bede departed this life," and previously in 729 "a comet appeared, and the Holy Bishop Egbert died." It happened that shortly after the death of a French monarch in 1060 or thereabouts, one of those mysterious skyey strangers, a comet, made its appearance in the heavens. Oliver upon seeing it gave utterance to the following prophecy: - "Art thou arrived, O ! messenger of evil, omen of that destruction which shall cause many mothers to pour forth lamentations !"

Nor was he wrong. A day was fast approaching which certainly should cause "many mothers to pour forth lamentations," and even perhaps force tears from eyes that had never wept before. A foreign yoke was preparing for England. Events were thickening fast. William, called the Conqueror, landed upon the British coast near Hastings on the 28th of September, 1066, and after defeating King Harold, whose forces had been exhausted by contests in another part of the kingdom, seized the crown. However great a misfortune this event may have been for the English of that date, it in the end had at least the effect, strange as it may seem, not of destroying all vestiges of the ancient state of Britain, but of preserving them. Just as an heir upon taking possession of an estate hitherto unsurveyed would probably cause it to be mapped out at earliest convenience; so King William on a gigantic scale had his newly gained kingdom surveyed, and the accounts written down in a work since known as the Domesday Book. That work fortunately is still in existence, and, even were it ever destroyed, has been so carefully copied that little real loss would be sustained. It enables the antiquary to become acquainted with the state of the land in the days of the Conqueror. When the surveyors reached Wiltshire it appears that Malmesbury was the first place investigated. The following is an extract from a translation of that part of Domesday Book, relating to the Malmesbury manors : -

"The king has 26 messuages in the borough of Malmesbury, and 25 other messuages that pay no taxes. These houses pay ten pence each as rent, in all forty two shillings and sixpence. Half a ruined messuage, part of the fee of the Bishop of Bayeux, does no service. The Abbot of Malmesbury has four messuages and a half, and the out-burgesses have nine cottages (coscez) who are assessed with the burgesses. The Abbot of Glastonbury has two messuages. Edward the Sheriff three messuages. Radulf de Mortemer has one and a half. Durand dc Gloucestre one and a half. William de Ou one. Humphrey de L'isle one. Osbern Giffard one.

Alured de Merleberg has half a ruined messuage. Geoffery Mariscul the like. Tovi has one messuage, and the fourth part of another. Drogo, son of Ponz, half a one. The wife of Edric has one. Roger de Berchelai holds one under the king, and Erulf de Hesding the like ; which he unguardedly took possession of. These two do no services. The king has a waste tract of land which belonged to Azor.

The king received from the third penny of Malmesberie six pounds. Walter Hosed pays the king eight pounds from two parts of the borough of Malmesbury, and the borough itself paid as much T. R. E. (*Tempori Regis Edwardi* ; that is, within the reign of Edward the Confessor), and the pleas of the hundreds of Cicemtone and Sutelesbery were holden in this manor, which belonged to the king. The borough pays one hundred shillings in money. The Earl Harold had an acre of land in this borough in which are four messuages, and six other minors, and a mill pays ten shillings. All this paid T. R. E. one hundred shillings ; and when he undertook any expedition by sea or land, he accepted either twenty shillings, towards the maintenance of the sailors; or took with him one man for the honour of five hides (say five hundred acres of land). The Bishop (of Coutances) held Malmesberie. Gislebert held it T. R. E., when it was assessed at one hide. Here is half a yardland. Three yardlands are in demesne, where is half a plough land, with three borderers (*bordarii*). Here are four acres of meadow, and the pasture in length two furlongs, and in breadth one. It is worth thirteen shillings.

“Chetel holds one hide at Malmesberie. Goodwin held it T. R. E. Here is one ploughland, which is in demesne. With the borderers (*bordarii*) there are six acres of meadow; and the pasture is three furlongs in length, and half a ploughland. It is worth twenty shillings.”

The commission set afloat by William may have performed their labors in a manner suited to his expectations, but their survey would scarcely have satisfied a modern monarch. It would appear that in those days Malmesbury belonged to the Crown. Twice the King is described as having no less than fifty-two messuages there in the first sentence quoted above. The rent certainly was not in modern estimation much to find fault with - only tenpence each - but the value of money in those days was far higher than at present. The Bishop of Bayeux, if we remember aright, also held extensive property in the neighbourhood of Swindon. The term *coscez* is supposed to have arisen from a French word meaning to lie down, and those who held possessions under that tenure were obliged to furnish their lord with lodging should he pass that way. There were nine cottages in *coscez* in the possession of the out burgesses of Malmesbury. The name of Alured de Merlebergh seems to intimate that he also had some connection with Marlborough - anciently spelt Marlebrough, a very near approach to Merlebergh.

Ernulf de Hesding is mentioned as holding one messuage “which he unguardedly took possession of.” Did he then seize it when unguarded? Such a thing would have been by no means out of character with the

times. The Bishop of Contances is described as holding Malmesbury, probably as other manors were held. A ploughland has been estimated at about one hundred and twenty acres ; and a fourth of a ploughland, or say thirty acres, was called a yardland. Three of these yardlands are represented as in demesne, that is, they were in possession of the lord of the manor, and cultivated for his especial benefit by his servi, a word whose meaning very nearly approached that of slaves. The service which the bordarii performed was that of providing such articles as poultry and eggs for their lord; such being those which they are supposed to have possessed in the greatest quantity. The other terms used in the above quotation respecting land are meadow and pasture - pasture being that which is now generally called leaze, that land fed by cattle, and meadow meaning such land as was mowed for hay. The pasture here spoken of was "in length two furlongs (over four hundred yards) and in breadth one furlong. It is worth thirteen shillings." Was this the annual rent or the actual value? If the actual value it appears almost ridiculously small, and even if only the rent was to be understood would be in modern times utterly out of proportion. The Abbot of Malmesbury held four and a half messuages. The word messuages appears to be derived from a French term meaning house-room. It is now written by them maison. Here it probably means a house and adjoining land. All these terms are now sufficiently wide and loose to cause a deal of discussion, but were then probably understood well enough. At the same time it may be doubted if even then they had an exact meaning attached to them. Land had not been then mapped out with the precision of the present day. Vast plains were entirely unenclosed. There seems to have been but few land marks. The borders of an estate appear to have been somewhat indefinite. The reason was obvious, land had not then the high value of to-day ; nor was the population so crowded as to cause the smallest garden-patch to be eagerly snatched at, or carried into chancery. They do not seem to have cared much for details, these noble ancestors of ours. If they cooked meat it was often whole animals, and it is an indisputable fact that they measured their meat just as we do land, by the yard and foot. Imagine a yard of beef ! About three square inches would perhaps puzzle a modern, but the capacious maws of the Conqueror's companions - capacious enough to swallow up all England - were not probably satisfied with less than half a foot on their platters, if it were only for dignity's sake. They used the same daggers with which they stuck their enemies instead of knives. They cared little about detail. The same disregard was carried into everything, and land did not escape. A plough-land must have frequently varied in extent, if it was as much as one plough could properly till, and consequently its divisions. What matter - they who measured their meat by yards were scarcely likely to care about a rood more or less ! *To be continued.*

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.

BY GEOFFREY.

[*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]

ESTATES OF THE ABBEY – WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

CHAPTER XIV.

Nothing that the most cruel and tyrannous ingenuity could have devised could in all probability have brought home to the minds of the Saxon thanes or nobles - and, indeed, their followers - the condition of subjection to which they had been brought, than the system of surveying set on foot by the Conqueror. There must have been many a distant outlying place - far away from the fatal field where the battle axe of the Saxons went down before the lance of the Normans ; far, too, from the capital, as was Malmesbury - which had never yet beheld the steel head pieces or prancing chargers of the dreaded and hated invaders. But there was not a nook in England into which the commission sent out by the Conqueror was not to penetrate, not a homestead that was not to be registered, not a cottager but he must tell whether he was one of the *coscez*, and obliged to give lodgings upon occasion to his lord, or a *bordarii*, and compelled to provide him with poultry and similar provisions. This must have been extremely irritating to the Saxon population. Without doubt many a Saxon sword was longing to leap from its scabbard, many a hand played with the dagger-hilt, many a Saxon half drew his bow, and dropt it with a sigh - convinced of the uselessness of the attempt - as he beheld the haughty Normans approaching his domains that had never yet in his memory been polluted by the foot of a foreigner, unless it were a pilgrim from Palestine, and he brought a blessing with his staff - these a curse with their swords. Undoubtedly many a Saxon maiden, though of dauntless courage, yet felt her heart beating fast as the clang of the Norman steel drew near, for though chivalrous to the high born, if report says true, many of them were unrestrained libertines towards those who were defenceless. Few things at this day, to descend from the poetical but not the less true to the practical, are more unpleasant than the rendering up an account to the tax-gatherer of the extent of property in possession ; how must it have been then? When no man knew not but that the ancient home of his fathers might attract the attention of some Norman knight, and then what could save it for his family? For the Conqueror was most liberal - as well he might be - to his companions. Not only did he dispose of property which never had been and was never likely to come into his personal

possession, but by spreading out his band over the country each Saxon earl, or churl, each Saxon Thane or noble was taught to feel the power of the Norman, and no combination could be made to dispossess him of his conquest since he had thus willing spies in every direction. His companions thus received their reward, and most liberal these rewards were. Witness the couplet in one of the cantos of Don Juan, when, speaking of his own ancestors, Lord Byron writes:

“Ernulf and Radulfus - eight and forty manors
Were their reward for following Billy's banners.”

These names Ernulf and Radulfus - or Radulf with the Latin termination “us” - both occur in the preceding quotation from that part of Domesday Book relating to Malmesbury given in the last chapter. Yet says the poet very truly

“I can't help thinking it was scarcely fair
To strip the Saxons of their *hides* like tanners.”

The pun is a good one - hides not only meaning skins, but as has already been shown - a Saxon measure of land. How the term originated it would be difficult to decide, unless there was once in old time an English Queen Dido. Dido, be it known, landing with a few subjects in a foreign land, asked of its prince as much land to build a city upon as she could cover with an ox's *hide*. He laughed, and granted her modest request. Thereupon that deceiver Dido cut the *hide* up into long thin strips, and so encompassed a goodly measure of land, sufficient for her purpose.

Still, however disagreeable the working of the Conqueror's commission may have been to the then inhabitants of the land, it was most advantageous to the antiquary, since through their record - the Domesday Book - he has, as it were, a map of England in the latter part of the eleventh century. In the last chapter this was sufficiently well shown by quotations from it which referred chiefly to the manor of Malmesbury. But the advantages of it do not stop there. Even the sacred seat of St. Aldhelm was not to be left unpolluted by the Norman steel clad tread. The halls of this ancient abbey at Malmesbury had to re-echo the scarce subdued laugh of the invader, and the guardians of the wide lands which, since the Saxons had founded it, had grown wider and wider, were to render up an account of their possessions. What must have been the sensations of the Malmesbury monks when they beheld the Conqueror's commission at the gates of their monastery ? If they suffered the present generation have got the benefit. Things are balanced after seven hundred years have elapsed. This is a warning not to judge hastily. Through the record contained in Domesday Book, not only can the extent of the property then belonging to the abbey, between the years 1081 and 1086, during which the record was preparing ; but its actual value at that date, and approximately at the present, can be ascertained ; while curious facts concerning the ancient names of places in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury may also be gathered. It must be understood that the Norman pound - unlike, very unlike, the sovereign of to-day whose weight is estimated by grains - the Norman pound actually *weighed* a

pound. It was a pound's weight of silver. Like the present sovereign it was divided into twenty shillings, but there again the likeness ends. The Norman shilling must have been equal in weight to three of the shillings in use at the present day, consequently its value even nominally must have been three times that of the modern coin. But to get at its true value another thing must be taken into consideration, namely, the relative proportion which a certain coin bore in those days to the amount of kind to be obtained by it. In other words, what could you in 1081 have bought with a Norman shilling ? How many men could you have employed with it for a week ? or, how long would a single man have laboured to gain possession of it ? Then by comparing the modern value of labour or provisions with that of the ancient, the value of that certain coin is arrived at, that is, approximately. Now authorities differ concerning the price of labour in those days, some placing it as *high* as eleven pence a week, others reducing it to nine pence ; and both supporting their opinions by divers good and satisfactory reasons, which, however, only prove what must at once be evident to all, that just as the value of labour varies at the present day in various places and at various times - even in the different months of the year - so it did then, seven hundred years and more ago. A modern would estimate the price which he had to pay for labour by striking an average ; the same process applied to these different accounts makes the usual pay for labour in the days of William the Conqueror as ten pence a week. Ten pence a week ! With what joy would farmers hail a return of such "good old times !" They might, however, find themselves mistaken. Labourers had to support themselves then as now, although, no doubt, they received a good deal in kind from their employers, but this added to their ten pence would be against the employer. It cannot then be otherwise than supposed that the ten pence a week of the ancient labourer was equal to the ten shillings of the modern one. From this calculation, which, let it be observed, is but an approximate one, exactness is out of the question - it follows as a matter of necessity that in those days provisions, and the other requirements of life were worth about twelve times as much as at present ; that is, it was then possible to buy for a penny what would now be bought for a shilling, and what would then have cost a shilling would now be worth twelve. To estimate properly then the actual value of the rents which will presently be given in modern money it is not only necessary to multiply them by three in order to get the nominal value of the money, but also by twelve, that the actual value of the coin in these days may be arrived at. In other words to obtain a correct idea of the annual income of the abbots of Malmesbury in 1081, or in the day of the Conquest, as recorded in Domesday Book, it is necessary to multiply the sums therein given by thirty-six times. This in an approximate manner will shew the income.

The first manor which seems to be mentioned as in the possession of St. Mary's Church at Malmesbury in the days of William the Conqueror, is that of Hiwei, in Wiltshire, and it was valued - the extent being eleven

hides, at eight pounds per annum. At that time it may be observed the ancient church of St. Aldhelm was dedicated to him in conjunction with the Virgin Mary. Hence it was called the church of St. Mary. The modern name of this manor is Hywaye. If the hide be estimated at one hundred acres, it must in those days have extended over no less than eleven hundred acres of land ; and would form in itself in these days a very pretty present from a prince to a favourite. The rent of this estate was then eight pounds. Eight pounds for eleven hundred acres ! At the present day that man would think himself extremely fortunate who could get into his possession at £800. But it must not be forgotten that this eight pounds to be understood in modern money requires to be multiplied by thirty-six times. This makes only £288, still a very low sum. The annual rent, allowing the previous estimates to be correct, both of the number of acres contained in a hide, and the relative value of coin, of a single acre, would on this estate, in the reign of Willam I., have been only about five shillings. There were, however, still several draw-backs. In the first place it cannot have been supposed to be so well cultivated as at present. No land was, nor was it possible for it to be so. Hence, the return it would make would be far less than at present. At this day in the backwoods of America land can be obtained for that sum. There must be also taken into consideration the fact that all land was in those days held in some form of feudal tenure. Now it was a distinguishing characteristic of this description of tenure that payments were often made in kind, and that the tenant was considered in a great extent personally under the control, and at the disposition of his lord. Did the king undertake an expedition by sea or land - see the preceding quotations - he either expected, and in fact exacted a certain amount of pecuniary assistance, or took with him "one man for the honour of five hides." Hence this estate, over and above paying certain annual rent might also, in case of emergency, be called upon to furnish two men - no slight drawback. An instance of this had occurred in the reign of King Ethelred the Unready. Between the years 1006 and 1008 great preparations were made to resist the ever increasing numbers of the Danes, under the celebrated Sweyn, and it is recorded that every owner of nine hides of land - say nine hundred or in round numbers a thousand acres - had to provide a man armed with head piece and breast plate ; while those who possessed three hundred and ten hides - say thirty thousand acres, much such an estate as that which the present Duke of Rutland is so famous for farming - had to furnish forth a ship for the contest. Again the tenant was expected, had his lord any private feuds against his neighbours, to assist him not only by proxy but in person. To these drawbacks, too, must be added the incessant danger from marauders or the incensed retainers of another lord, so that no man knew that his house might not be burned over his head during the night ; himself murdered with a cross bow bolt as he endeavored to escape ; and his daughter, if she happened to be beautiful, carried off to satiate the sensuality of some brutal Saxon Thane or a dissolute Norman noble.

Moreover, in all probability, his estate was partially settled upon by cottagers from whom he could get but little, perhaps its borders were ill marked, and consequently liable to encroachment, or a great part of it moorland, or furzeland, unfit for much except breeding rabbits. Altogether these eleven hundred acres at a fraction over five shillings an acre would have been scarcely so desirable a possession as a modern homestead at a modern high rent. The modern English farmer has at least peace - so essential to success. It has always been a matter of wonder and admiration of their perseverance to us, how in those days farmers did contrive to get a living at all. What with Danes and Normans, private feuds, and public quarrels, marauders, and feudal obligations, the life of a yeoman must have been in those days one of unceasing toil and incessant care. It had, however, perhaps one good effect, that of exercising almost all in the use of arms, and to this may probably be traced the rapid progress which England made in gaining the respect of the world, when once she became united in herself. Still to look around at the smiling English landscape of the present day, to gaze along the banks of such a river as the Avon at Malmesbury, one can but earnestly hope that the last drop of blood has been shed upon British sod, and that never more may British water be mingled with British gore. The men of Malmesbury, with their traditions of the glorious days of Athelstan, would doubtless echo the sentiments of the two townsmen in "Faust" : -

2nd Townsman: “Nothing I know to me has greater charms
Upon a Sunday or a holiday (say the second
[Tuesday after Trinity).
Than a snug chat of war and war's alarms
While people fight in Turkey far away.”
“One stands besides the window - takes his
[glass,
Sees down the stream the painted vessels pass,
Then gladly home returns as evening chimes,
With blessings upon peace and peaceful times.”

3rd Townsman: Yes, neighbour, yes! I little care,
How matters may be managed there,
All things they there may overthrow,
And break each other's heads at will,
Only at home pray let us go
According to old custom still.”

The next place that is mentioned in the Domesday Book record is what then called Dantesie, which extended over ten hides and paid six Norman pounds, or £204 modern money. This is now known as Dantsey - a very slight change for so many - seven - centuries in the spelling.. Upon this estate there stood a mill which paid a rent of twenty shillings. Mills in those days as at present seem to have been very profitable concerns. The reason then was their scarcity. It was one of the manorial rights of the lord to be allowable to erect a mill or to allow another to do so, and none who lived within the boundaries of his manor dared to carry his corn elsewhere to be ground. This no doubt was a right that was often abused, and must have led to great oppression of the poor, as all such monopolies

invariably do. Twenty shillings was a large sum of money in those days. Multiplied by three to get its nominal equivalent in modern money, and it is sixty. Multiplied by thirty-six to get its real value and it amounts to £36. At Dantsie, or in modern spelling Dantsey, there was also a wood no less than three-quarters of a mile square. The next place is spelt Brecheorde, which brought in a rent of four Norman or 142 modern pounds. The extent was five hides. This estate contained another wood whose breadth was one furlong, and length two. Brecheorde is supposed to survive in the modern name Brinkworth.

Nortone, now Norton, where were five hides of land, paid four Norman pounds. Here also was a mill which paid fifteen shillings. Chemele, now Kemble, and Newentone, now Newton, each were recorded as consisting of thirty hides ; the former paid £13, the latter £12. In Chemeles there was a wood no less than a mile and a half long, and three furlongs broad ; as also two mills, which latter paid fifteen shillings. Two more mills in Newentone, or Newton, paid thirty shillings. Cerletone manor extended over twenty hides of land, say at least 2,000 acres ; and paid eight pounds. It contained a wood two furlongs in length, and one in breadth. A mill upon it paid fifteen shillings ; which sum appears to have been the ordinary rent of a mill. This manor is now well known in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury as Charlton. The h has often been added to Saxon words originally spelt without it ; as ceorl, now pronounced and written churl, originally meaning a husbandman, now a rude rustic fellow. Charles is said to be another variation of this word. So Charles Wain - the constellation would mean the waggon of the husbandman. Gardone, three hides, paid five Norman or £180 modern money. It is now known as Garsdon, and then contained a wood two furlongs broad and three quarters of a mile long ; together with two mills paying twenty five shillings. Credvelle, now Crudwell, forty hides, say four thousand acres, paid *four pounds* Norman, or £144 modern money. This vast estate was rented at about *eighteen pence an acre* in the money of the present day ! The reason soon becomes evident - it had a wood within it *three miles square*. Wood in those days was not so valuable as now. Breme, now Bramhill, thirty-eight hides, or about three thousand eight hundred acres, was rented at 16 Norman, or £576 modern money. This estate was probably in a higher state of cultivation than the preceding, and it, moreover, contained two mills paying thirty shillings. There was also a wood three miles long, and a quarter broad. Piritone, better known as Purton, of thirty-five hides, paid also sixteen Norman pounds, or £576 in modern money. In this there was a wood three miles square, and a mill upon it paid five shillings - a lower sum than usual. Liteltone, or Littleton, in Gloucestershire, also belonged to the abbey, and was rented at five pounds, it containing five hides. Another estate in Warwickshire, then known as Nieuebold, now Newbold, of three hides, paid £210 Norman money. But the largest estate of all was one in the immediate neighbourhood of Malmesbury ; now well known at least as a place -

Brokenborough, then spelt Brochenberge. Here were fifty hides, or five thousand acres, rented at thirty Norman pounds or £1,080 in modern money. In this too then was a large wood - extending indeed over an area four miles and a half in length, and in breadth three miles ! There was upon it, too, eight mills paying £6 12s 6d Norman money. Altogether there were fifteen manors containing 290 hides, say thirty thousand acres, and yielding an annual income of £138 10s in Norman, or- allowing the previously made estimation of the relative value of coin to be correct - about £5,000 in modern money, in the possession of the abbey of Malmesbury when Domesday Book was compiled in the year 1081 A.D. ! Upon this vast estate - which afterwards received additions - there were 21 mills, and woods of enormous extent, at a rough calculation, say over twenty miles square.

No wonder that the Abbot rode in state, no wonder that it was a generally received idea that the monks lived comfortably! With a money income of £5000, and no doubt a vast quantity of provisions was paid in kind, they could indeed afford to make Malmesbury monastery one of the most magnificent in the kingdom ; so that it afterwards was commonly said the highest steeple at Malmesbury in the days of the abbey's grandeur towered seven yards, or 21 feet, above that of the cathedral at Salisbury ! And all this had resulted, all this had grown up from the simple hermit's cell erected by the wandering Scot - Meyldulph ! An overwhelming illustration of the extraordinary power possessed by the Roman Catholic religion over the minds of its votaries. For all this was made up of gifts. Nothing had been taken by force. In those days truly the monks must have seemed the monarchs of Malmesbury.

When William the Conqueror landed in 1066, Brithric, who, it will be remembered, had been "appointed" by Edward the Confessor. was abbot of the Malmesbury monastery. But when Thanes and nobles were ejected from their estates all over the kingdom, it could not be expected that so valuable a living - if that term may be admitted - as Malmesbury would be left undisturbed. The Normans were even harder masters to the monks - than the Danes ; and Brithric was compelled to give up his place. The monk Turald was made abbot in his stead by the Conqueror - who made even the monks of Malmesbury feel that he was conqueror in reality as well as in name. Turald came from a place called Fescamp, in Normandy. He remained Abbot until 1070, and was then being translated to Peterborough, succeeded by Warrin de Lara, who died in the same year that the surveying commission was set on foot - 1081. The Conqueror then appointed one Godfrey Gerneticensis Abbot, whom he translated here from being the procurator of the famous abbey of Ely. Somewhere about this date the Conqueror himself became a benefactor of the abbey, and his charter, like that of Edward the Confessor, denounces maledictions upon those who should interfere with it, and blessings upon those who should add to the possessions of the abbey. His queen Matilda, too, whose character seems to have been very estimable, gave some land

at Garston to the abbey. It may be doubted, however, whether her husband's gifts were dictated by pure piety. Here is his character given by the Saxon Chronicle, written by a contemporary:

“He was a very wise man, and very rich and more splendid, and stronger than any of his predecessors were. He was mild to the good men who loved God (the clergy), and beyond all measure severe to the men that gainsayed his will. So stern was he, and wrathful, that one durst not do anything against his will. In his time had men much distress, and very many sorrows. Castles he let men build, and miserably swink the poor. The king was very stern, and took from his subjects many a mark of gold, and many hundred pounds of silver, that he took with right and with great might from his people for little need. He was fallen into covetous and greediness in land withal. He made great deer-parks, and there-with made laws that whoso killed a hart or a hind that man should be blinded. He forbade (to touch) the harts, as also the hares; he loved the tall deer as if he were their father. He also set by the hares and they must go free. His rich men murmured, and the poor men shuddered at it ; but he was so stern that he recked not all their hatred, for they must follow all the king's will if they would have life or have land, or even his peace.” He, however, refused to do homage to Pope Gregory VII., and asserted his supremacy over the English clergy. He founded churches and monasteries ; yet scarcely found burial in one of them. His death took place in 1087. He was about to be interred in the church of St. Stephen's, at Caen, when a voice was heard crying, “Clerks and bishops, this ground is mine ; it is the site of my father's house ; the man you are praying for *took it from me to build this church* : on the part of God I forbid the body of the despoiler to be covered with my mould.” His demand was found just, and sixty shillings were paid him for the ground, which was too small, and in putting down the body it burst, driving all from the church by the stench. Such was the end of the man who conquered England, and deposed Brithric, the abbot of Malmesbury monastery.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]

CHAPTER XV.

ROGER OF SARUM AND ROBERT OF DEVIZES – SEIGE OF
MALMESBURY. – WILLIAM THE HISTORIAN.

The Abbot of Malmesbury Monastery, Godfrey Gerneticensis, whilome procurator of Ely, who had been translated from thence by William the Conqueror, enjoyed that office for some twenty-four years. He died in 1105. The Monk Edulf of Winchester then supplied his place, and reigned until the year 1118. He was then deposed by the celebrated Roger le Poer, Bishop of Sarum, or Salisbury. Roger le Poer was one of the most remarkable men of his age, and gave in his own person a striking instance of the unsettled state of the times which allowed men to rise from obscurity by the most singular paths. He appears to have been a Norman by birth and extraction. He early entered the church, and became a curate at Caen, a place in Normandy. Here he might have remained, perhaps undistinguished until his death, had it not been for his gaining the notice of Prince Henry, who afterwards became King of England, and was then surnamed Beauclerck, or fine scholar. The way, however, in which Roger was fortunate enough to attract the young prince's attention scarcely agrees with the character which that prince afterwards gained when a monarch. It is said that Roger mumbled over a mass before the prince, whom he probably saw was in a hurry, at such a rate that the royal worshipper swore aloud that he had at length discovered a priest fit to be the chaplain of a soldier. From that date Roger's fortune rapidly increased. He was attached to Henry's person forthwith, and no doubt made use of the many opportunities that position must have given him to ingratiate himself with the future monarch. Roger became Bishop of Sarum, the ancient name of Salisbury, in the year 1107. Henry, his patron, ascended the throne in 1110, and henceforth Roger became one of the chief men of the kingdom. He was advanced to the post of Lord Chief Justice, a place which was then it seems by no means deemed unfit for an ecclesiastic to hold. In that age the spiritualities and temporalities appear to have been intimately intermingled. The next step up the ladder of fortune made him Lord Treasurer, and he finally became Lord Chancellor. Even yet the scale of dignities which were to be showered upon him had not been exhausted. He was so much in the confidence of Henry that whilst the monarch was abroad or absent, Roger actually, if not nominally, held the office of Regent of the Kingdom ! What must have been the sensations of the man ? Once a poor curate, now a king in all but name. His was a life of strange vicissitudes. He had now been advanced to the highest place which it was in the power of the monarch to bestow : he had gained the summit of the mountain. It was now his turn to descend. Henry died in 1135. Had justice been regarded in those days his daughter, Matilda, would have succeeded to the crown ; but right was not yet strong enough to combat ambition combined with ingratitude. Forgetting the benefits he had received at the hands of Henry, Roger le Poer assisted Stephen against the daughter of his dearest patron. Matilda's partisans were too few and too little accustomed to act in concert, and Stephen gained the throne. Meantime Roger had not been

idle at Malmesbury. He knew full well that the times were of a character in which might was superior to right. His own life had been an instance of that. The very king upon the throne reigned in despite of right. It was not to be expected, if royalty itself thus acted, that the subject's property would be safe. Roger accordingly set about fortifying Malmesbury. He built a castle which seems to have been adjacent to the abbey. It was an edifice that did great credit to the architect and mason, the stones, according to a historian, being so closely set together that their joints were not perceivable, while the structure itself was magnificent. Roger also built walls. In those days, as has been already remarked, the contractor, and the rapid rate of modern building operations, were unknown, and these fortifications seem to have been long in course of erection. Roger, however, did not confine his attentions to Malmesbury; but seized also upon Abingdon Abbey. From such attentions in all probability the Abbot of Abingdon would have willingly been excused. Roger's reign was now rapidly drawing to a termination. His black ingratitude to Henry would seem to have recoiled upon himself ; and to those who are so inclined his downfall may furnish an instance of reparation upon earth. King Stephen, it seemed, had acted as arbitrator between him and the Earl of Richmond, perhaps then better known as Allan of Britain, with whom he had quarrelled. Roger le Poer, no doubt proud beyond measure, does not seem to have considered himself fairly treated, and in the plentitude of his power set at naught the majesty of the crown by attacking the earl. Herein he committed a fatal error. His ingratitude to Henry - his treachery to Matilda - had no doubt been observed and noted down by Stephen, who would probably draw from it the conclusion that, did opportunity serve, the offended bishop would not hesitate to turn traitor the second time. Moreover, the king had become alarmed at the enormous increase of ecclesiastical influence. Here was a fair pretext for striking a blow at its progress. Accordingly Stephen hesitated not to arrest both Roger and the Bishop of Lincoln, his nephew. Another of Roger's nephews even shut himself up in his uncle's castle at Devizes, and obstinately refused to surrender it. Stephen was successful, and the castle fell into his hands, as did also Roger's castles at Salisbury and Sherborne. Malmesbury Castle was also seized by the king. These events do indeed reveal the immense strides which the ecclesiastics had made to usurping both temporal and spiritual power in the kingdom. Here is one of the head members of the body, Roger le Poer, in possession of at least three castles, namely, Malmesbury, Sherborne, and Salisbury. Roger had held possession of Malmesbury not less than twenty years, when he was at length compelled to deliver it into the hands of the king. He was not, moreover, a solitary instance. Numerous other prelates held similar possessions - although so seemingly out of character with their sacred professions - and these of course beheld with alarm the fall of the most prominent of their order. So powerful was the influence they brought to bear upon Stephen that it has even been conjectured the

crown would have been compelled to give way to the cowl - the monarch to the monk - as in many other instances, had not the hopes of the party been suddenly disappointed by the death of Roger. It has been surmised that grief for loss of his property which had fallen into the hand of the king so prayed upon his mind that it resulted in depriving him of life. Besides his castles, his fortifications, his jewels and plate, Stephen had also seized upon no less than fifty thousand marks in money, an enormous sum in those days. Roger in fact was a millionaire of the twelfth century. His avarice, it is said, increased with his gains ; hence the blow fell upon him with irresistible force, and he succumbed beneath it. Whatever may have been his faults, and they were not a few, his genius was undoubted. After his death Stephen does not seem to have feared the ecclesiastical party, for he knew that their leader, their rallying point, the man who could unite all their varying interests in one, was gone to return no more. Roger's rise was rapid, and remarkable ; his fall no less so. His character may be summed up in two words - ambition, avarice.

In the year that followed the usurper's death - 1140 - the monks of Malmesbury seem to have recovered themselves, and returned to their usual routine so rudely disturbed by Roger. The Monk John, who was an inmate of the monastery, was by then elected to fill the office of abbot; but the legate of the Pope when applied to refused to give his sanction to the proceeding. Simony seems in those days to have been rampant. The refusal was probably only a contrivance to extort money. It was like the judges in Rabelais who paid but little attention to the case before them, merely saying "Gold! Gold!" gold satisfied them, gold satisfied the legate, and John was allowed to become abbot. His reign which had commenced so unpropitiously was fated to be unfortunate. The castle at Devizes, probably partially dismantled and deserted since the siege of it by Stephen, was taken possession of by one Robert, a sort of British buccaneer or filibuster. His other name does not seem to have survived, if indeed he had another. Men in those days often contented themselves with a single name - such as John or Robert, to which was added that of the place where they drew their extraction, had performed some remarkable action, or usually resided. So this soldier may be called Robert of Devizes. He was robber, marauder, and sacrilegist all in one : a very incarnation of all that was wicked in those days. All Wiltshire felt his terrible scourge, and mourned the feeble hand of government which permitted such outrages to be committed with comparative impunity. Cruelties were perpetrated in all directions : churches were no longer sanctuaries of safety; in fact it was against them and monasteries that Roger, who was doubtless duly cursed with bell, book, and candle, directed his attacks. Malmesbury monastery was too near to escape his notice. The monks must have trembled at his approach. Many, probably most, fled; for he threatened to put them to death. So dire was the vengeance that Robert vowed against the ecclesiastical order that one

seems driven to conclude that he had suffered some terrible injury at their hands. Not content with threatening the monks, and desecrating the monastery, Robert actually attempted to destroy the abbey. But the solid structure that had been reared above the bones of St. Aldhelm resisted his attacks, and no doubt the saint got credited with another miracle. The monks knew how to turn all things to their advantage. Amongst them probably this Robert of Devizes was known as Robert the Robber. They had reason to hate the letter R. Firstly had come Roger, now it was Robert. Whether or no these terrible events had anything to do with the death of the abbot seems to be unrecorded, but it is most probable that they had, since he died during the month of September, in the same year of his election, having upheld the reins of government a few months, and those most troubled ones. The abbot John is related to have been an estimable man, possessing two qualities ill fitting him to live in those days, beneficence and liberality. The latter may have been one cause why his election was objected to.

Stephen is by one writer related to have besieged Malmesbury in 1140, when it was held by the partisans of Maud, and it has been surmised that a place called Castle Ground, or Burnt Ground, at Malmesbury was the spot where a battle was fought between the rival parties. Nothing seems known as to the issue of the fight.

The successor of the abbot John was one Peter, who is related to have taken part in a procession when Matilda entered the city of Winchester, probably after she had defeated Stephen early in 1141. Stephen, however, regained his crown, as Matilda, having disappointed the hopes of the people, found it necessary to withdraw to Normandy. She did not yet despair of the throne. Her son Henry was now approaching man's estate, and promised to make a formidable enemy to the usurper ; who had, however, alienated many of his old supporters by insisting upon the delivering up of their castles into his hands, and who had, by resisting the encroachment of the Pope got his party laid under an interdict - then a serious matter. At length a declaration appears to have been made in young Henry's favor, and he crossed over from France to assist his partisans, whom Stephen had shut up in the town of Wallingford, and was closely besieging. In order to distract Stephen's attention, and to relieve the garrison of Wallingford, Henry shortly after his arrival in England marched upon Malmesbury, which was held by the supporters of Stephen. His attack was most successful, the town and the castle - probably that which Roger le Poer had erected - fell into his hands ; and only one incident occurred to check his career. A desperate defence was made by one of the castle towers - since known as Jordan's, such was the name of the defender - and despite his most energetic attempts Henry was unable to gain possession of it. He then determined to starve out the garrison, and accordingly blockaded all approach, and sat down to form a camp between the walls of the town and the banks of the Avon. King Stephen fell into the snare. Leaving Wallingford, Stephen with a large

army marched upon Malmesbury. Upon arriving, he found that he had not much bettered his position, as Henry, well aware of the smallness of his forces, would not leave the defence which his camp afforded him. Stephen, in consequence, was compelled to attack under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Not only did his army suffer severely from the cold, but he was allowed scarcely any time to make proper dispositions, being under the impression - probably a correct one - that if he delayed to destroy the little army of Henry, that prince's partisans would have time to collect their forces, and either come to his assistance or attack him in the rear. The local conformation, too, was greatly against him. Henry occupied the opposite side of the river, which it was necessary to pass in order effectually to attack him ; yet despite these drawbacks it is related that Stephen determined upon an assault, probably influenced in a great measure by the desire to relieve the brave defenders of Jordan's tower, which still held out. He ordered an advance to be made, but the weather itself was against him. Hail and sleet coming on obscured all sight of the enemy, who, with it in their backs, were but little discomforted; while their weapon's force was augmented by being driven forward by the wind. Stephen's men at length, despite all these obstacles, seem to have advanced to the very edge of the river, but to their dismay found it impassable, being swollen by rain. Their courage, half dead as they were with the rain and the cold, failed them, and Stephen was compelled to retire. It was not until then - when they found all hope of relief gone - that the tower which had so long held out was given up to Henry. A compromise was shortly afterwards effected between the two claimants of the crown, by which Stephen was to retain it during life, and Henry returned to Normandy. Stephen died in the following year. His reign had been a turbulent one, and full of evils for the men of Malmesbury; who would probably have fully subscribed, especially the monks, to the picture given by the Saxon Chronicler, of those dreadful days : - "In this king's time was all dissension and evil, and rapine; for against him soon arose the rich (great) men that were traitors; when they found that he was a mild man, and did no justice (execution) * * * They sorely oppressed the wretched men of the land with castle-works, and when the castles were made they filled them with devils and evil men * * * Many thousand did they kill with hunger. * * * Wretched men died of hunger, some took to alms who were once rich men. * * * Never yet was more wretchedness in the land, and never did heathen men worse than they did; for after a time they spared neither church nor churchyard, but took all the goods that were therein, and then burned church and all together [this would seem a correct description of the deeds of Robert of Devizes at Malmesbury], neither did they spare bishop's land nor abbots, nor priests, but robbed monks and clerks, and every man who was able robbed another ; *if two or three men came riding to a town all the township fled before them, believing that they were robbers. The bishops and learned men cursed them evermore, but*

nought *thereof came on them, for they were all accursed, and foresworn and abandoned.* Such, and more than we can say, we tholed [knew, suffered] nineteen winters for our sins.”

Yet it was in the early part of the twelfth century that Malmesbury monastery became famous as the residence of a writer whom Archbishop Usher is said to have called “the first of our historians.” His family name was Somerset, but he is better known as William of Malmesbury. He appears to have become early connected with the town, if he was not born there ; and to have joined the community of monks in his youth. In time he became librarian, and it was then that he conceived the idea of writing that work which has rendered his name celebrated as the preserver of many facts which probably would otherwise have fallen into oblivion. This he is said to have compiled from ancient manuscripts which he discovered in the library. The first part of this history extends from the arrival of the Saxons to the decease of Henry I. The original title is “*De Gestis Regum Anglorum, Libri V,*” that is “of the Acts, or exploits of the kings of England.” “*Historiæ Novellæ, Libri II,*” is the name of the continuation of this work which extends down to 1143. These two works are dedicated to Robert, Earl of Gloucester. Much that is known of Malmesbury in early times is gathered from this history. William seems to have been perfectly contented with his situation of precentor and librarian of Malmesbury, since he appears to have continued in it until his death in 1143 or 1148, a few years after the date at which his history ceases. William seems to have had a very modest opinion of his own works, if it be possible to judge from the following quotation : - “I am not anxious concerning the precise censure of my contemporaries. But I hope that when partiality and malevolence are no more, that I shall receive from after times the character of an industrious though not an eloquent historian.” His desire has been more than gratified. No history of the early days of the English monarchy could be written without examining his writings. He certainly was a most industrious author, as, besides his history, he also wrote the following works: - “*De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum Libri IV,*” that is of the Acts of the English bishops, or pontiffs, and accordingly it consists of an account of the various bishoprics of Britain - a sort of ecclesiastical history, or chronicle. “*De Vita Aldhelmi,*” or the Life of Aldhelm. All these works have been printed and republished at divers periods, both in the original and translated. Malmesbury may justly be proud of this man. Without ostentation, or ambition, he has yet contrived by means of his history to make the name of Malmesbury familiar as a household word to all who have searched the history of the past ; and whilst the works of Aldhelm, so celebrated in his day, now lie only upon the shelves of the antiquary, his history has become a classic. All honor to William of Malmesbury. A contemporary of his, and it is supposed from a passage in his writings, a companion, was one Peter Baldwin, also a monk of Malmesbury ; who made himself famous in his own day for poetry. Nor was William the only historian of

Malmesbury. In the same century - the twelfth - lived Godfrey of Malmesbury, a monk of the same order ; who, something after the manner of William, wrote the "annals," extending from the coming of the Saxons into Britain up to the time of Henry the First. The fame of William has, however, and it would seem justly, swallowed up that of these lesser writers.

To be continued.

Word count 3 469

THE NORTH WILTS HERALD, SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 1867.
[page 2, columns 5-6]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]
TRANSACTIONS AT, AND CONCERNING MALMESBURY
FROM 1154 TO 1553
CHAPTER XVI.

After the tremendous disturbances to which Malmesbury had been subjected in Stephen's reign, the affairs of that place seem to sink into comparative insignificance for several centuries. The notices of it which occur in history are scattered, and incapable of forming a flowing narrative. The abbots were no longer celebrated for their great ability - of many of them nothing is known beyond the date at which they flourished. Hence it has been thought convenient, both for reference and reading, to arrange the notices that do occur in their chronological order, as nearly as can be ascertained.

Henry II., who reigned from 1154 to 1189, presented six pounds ten shillings of Norman silver to the monastery; it is supposed in some slight acknowledgment of the attachment the monks had shown to his mother. During this reign Robert Fitzhardinge is related to have had the castle and town of Malmesbury, which was granted to him by the monarch, together with the appendages - lands and hundreds. The rent was thirteen pounds ten shillings. This favor he purchased for one hundred marks in money. A mark was generally taken as 13s. 4d.; one hundred marks then, would be nominally less than £60. Robert Fitzhardinge was the first who held the title of Lord Berkeley, of Berkeley.

A.D. 1159. Gregory is mentioned as abbot.

1174. Robert was abbot.

1180. Albert Foliott, whilome Prior of Glastonbury, became abbot,

and on his death in

1181 or 82 was succeeded by the monk Nicholas of St' Alban's.

This Nicholas, ere translated to Malmesbury monastery, had been Prior of Wallingford, and whilst occupying that place was despatched about the year 1175 into Ireland by Henry II., carrying with him a bull of Pope Alexander III., which confirmed that of Adrian IV., also that bull of Adrian which made over the lordship of Ireland to that monarch. Such was the way in which those proud Popes *granted* lordships to English monarchs in those days! Nicholas was accompanied by William Fitzadelm. Fitzadelm interpreted means son of Adelm, or Aldhelm. This, however, could scarcely have been a son of the saint.

A.D. 1187. Nicholas was deposed, and the sub-prior of Winchester, Robert de Mehun,
elevated to his place.

1205. Death of Robert de Mehun, and succession of Walter Loring.

John was now king, and by his permission the castle, which had been built adjoining the abbey, and obstructed its enlargement, was razed to the ground in order that the monastery might receive the additions which were necessary for the convenience of the monks. John granted to the abbots of Malmesbury the mead ; and in the same reign the town fell into their possession. The monks were now, indeed, the monarchs of Malmesbury. John's widow, Queen Isabel, gave a charter to the abbots, confirming them in possession of the town in fee-farm. The rent was fixed at twenty pounds. Conceive holding a town such as Malmesbury for £20! In modern ears it sounds ridiculous.

A.D. 1122. Death of the abbot Walter Loring, and accession of John Wallensis, whose name

has become historical, he having attested Magna Charta, in the ninth year of Henry III,

or in 1225.

1246. Election of Jeffry as abbot.

1260. William de Colerne became abbot.

Somewhere about this date the celebrated order of St. John of Jerusalem raised a hospital at Malmesbury. It was governed by a prior who had under him the usual inferiors ; brethren and sisters of the order. They had a chapel, and all things accustomary. A decree relating to them issued by Constantine, an officer of Walter, then bishop of Sarum or Salisbury, is said to be still extant. It was concerning some tithe matters which required to be adjusted between them and the vicar of the parish of St. Paul at Malmesbury ; and bore both the seal of the office, and that of the abbot of the monastery, who was then the patron of the church. It is considered that this hospital stood adjacent to the South Bridge.

Edward surnamed Longshanks ascended the throne in 1272. It has been generally supposed that it was in his twenty-third year or 1295 that the borough of Malmesbury was first required to return members to Parliament. Other authorities, however, consider it to have been in 1298, of which year there is said to remain a return of knights, citizens, and

burgesses. Two burgesses were returned for Malmesbury with their mancupators. Chippenham, Downton, and Devizes likewise returned two ; while New Sarum - Salisbury - sent up two citizens ; and two knights were returned for the county. The constable of Merleberge, and the bailiff of Wortle and Calne, likewise received writs ; but made no response ("Qui nullum inde dederunt responsum").

A.D. 1296. Death of William de Colerne, who had been abbot for 36 years,

and successor of William de Badminton whose decease took place in

1323, When Adam de la Hooke, or Att Hok, became abbot.

1340. Adam de la Hooke died at Malmesbury, and was succeeded by

John de Tintern.

1348. Death of de Tintern and accession of Simon de Aumeney.

Much dispute has taken place concerning these last two abbots, as to which of them it was who concealed Robert de Gurnay, an accomplice in the cruel assassination of Edward II. at Berkeley Castle, from justice, and which of them received the pardon which Edward III. was pleased to grant. There seems no possibility of settling it indisputably. The murder took place in 1327. Adam de la Hooke was *then* abbot, but it does not of necessity follow that it was he who concealed Gurnay.

A.D. 1360. Death of De Aumeney, and accession of Walter Camme.

1396. Succession of Thomas de Chelesworth.

Edward III had chosen the Abbot of Malmesbury to be one of the twenty-five fixed upon by him to sit in the House of Peers. Two priors were also so qualified, to these again two more abbots were afterwards added. The following were the local parliamentary companions of the Abbot of Malmesbury. The abbots of Cirencester, Gloucester, Abingdon, Evesham and Tavistock. In this reign the abbey is understood to have received considerable additions and decorations. Two members were returned for Malmesbury with their mancipators in the thirty-sixth year of Edward III., 1339. Malmesbury also returned two members in the forty-third year of that monarch ; yet in his twelfth year as the sheriff neglected to make his precept it must be supposed that the corporation of Malmesbury had omitted to exercise their power of electing representatives.

King Richard III granted in 1389 to the Malmesbury men a confirmation of their existing privileges. The deed is said to still exist in the British Museum, and to be thus headed - "A charter of divers liberties, with a heath (Bruera, Burnt heath), containing five hides of land granted (*concess*) by King Athelstan to the burgesses of the town (*villæ*) of Malmesbury, for a victory gained against the Danes. Richard also granted a mitre to the Abbot of Malmesbury, who had not hitherto been able to wear that head dress, although he had been independent of the

diocesan. The life of this monarch was written by a monk of the Malmesbury monastery, and has been printed and re-published.

Henry IV., who ascended the throne in 1399, also granted a confirmatory charter to the burgesses of Malmesbury, renewing their privileges and franchises. It has been found from examination of the patent rolls that in this reign the vicar of St. Paul had an income from the property of the monastery, situated in Brokenburgh, Milbourn, Burton, and Malmesbury. The amount mentioned is seven shillings.

Henry V. also granted a deed to the corporation, restoring them a field which had been hitherto set apart for the support of a chapel under the jurisdiction or protection of a foreign abbey. As this was the monarch who conquered so large a portion of France it may readily be conjectured that he thus made use of his Conquest to free many places in England, which had hitherto been under French administration, from the foreign yoke, and restore them to English hands. So that the men of Malmesbury felt personally benefitted by their monarch's expensive expeditions.

A.D. 1423. One William became abbot.

1424. Election of Robert Persue as abbot.

1434. Death of Persue and accession of Thomas Bristave.

1456. Death of Bristave, and succession of John Andover.

1462. Andover died, and was succeeded by John Aylee, who is supposed

to have departed this life in 1479.

Henry VI. applied the fee-farm of the abbey of Malmesbury to the royal purveyance in the early part of his reign ; but in his thirty-first year granted it to William Elton, Esq. Whilst this monarch sat upon the throne, William of Worcester, a well-known writer, was journeying through the land, writing down such particulars as he thought worthy of preservation. Coming to Malmesbury he measured the abbey church by striding it, and recorded its dimensions. They were as follow. Length of the whole church, including the choir, one hundred and seventy-two steps ; breadth, forty-two. Length of the chapel dedicated to Mary at the east end, thirty-six steps ; breadth, fourteen. Length of the cloisters (severally) about sixty-four steps. Breadth of the principal nave beyond the wings, twenty-two. Allowing three feet to each of these steps, and the breadth of the church of St. Aldhelm would be 516 feet, and the breadth 126. In the thirty-third year of Henry VI. or in 1445, the parliamentary affairs of Malmesbury took a new phase, a separate indenture being returned. This was the first time. The election was made by the burgesses and aldermen ; but the seal has been destroyed. The document is said to still be in existence but in a very unsatisfactory state, much of it being mutilated.

Malmesbury also made a return - recorded in the reign of Edward IV., 1477. He also gave two charters to the town, which, like so many others, confirmed existing privileges, and therefore contain no feature of much interest. They give another name to Malmesbury; Medulfunesi's Villa.

This prince passed through Malmesbury in 1477, after his victory over Warwick the King-Maker, upon the memorable field of Barnet. He was marching to meet Queen Margaret, who, although terribly dispirited by the defeat, managed to rally herself; and then followed the bloody battle of Tewkesbury, in which she was made prisoner. This monarch's queen had twenty pounds a year paid her from Malmesbury as pin-money - toilette money, or private income.

A.D. 1509. Thomas Olvesten, who had become abbot, died and was succeeded by Richard Frampton.

Evil days were now rapidly approaching the monks of England. The great - in more senses than one - the great Henry VIII. sat upon the English Throne. The power of the monks had reached its height. Their influence had rolled over England like a mighty torrent, which had increased from a small spring - pure at the source - until, combining with smaller muddy rivers, it inundated the surrounding country. The monstrous legends of the monks were never so absurd as now, their trickeries had never been so brazen, their impieties so outrageous. Some of these legends are so curious, and display so great an amount of superstition, that it may not be amiss to relate a few, since they show clearer than any amount of reasoning the mental degradation of the day. Lucifer left a minstrel in care of hell, and went out to walk about upon the earth. St. Peter thereupon lured the minstrel to play at *dice*, staking the souls that were in torture under his care. St. Peter won, and Lucifer, upon returning, found his fire out and the place empty. Whereupon he kicked the minstrel out of hell, swearing none of that profession should henceforth darken his doors. The whole great drama of the Christian dispensation was displayed on the stage - God himself being introduced as an old man - and the spectators are stated to have been at one time convulsed with laughter at the antics of mimic demons, at another shuddering with fear at the representation of the lake of sulphur. From the books which still survive, containing entries of the various sums paid for articles used by the actors, the following strange items have been extracted. "A new hook to hang Judas, 6d. Fuel for keeping the fire at hell-mouth, 4d. Girdle of God, 9d. God's *coat of white leather*, 3s." The infamous John Tetzal had aroused the wrath of Luther. Tetzal is said to have declared that he had saved more souls from hell by the indulgences he had sold than St. Peter had by preaching ! Had any one ravished the mother of God he could *sell* a pardon for it ! Such was the mental condition of the day. The morality of the monks was at a still lower scale. Despite their vows of chastity their dissoluteness had almost passed into a proverb. The picture drawn by Rabelais is probably an exaggerated one ; but one tenth of the dissipation he describes as passing within the walls of monasteries and convents would have been sufficient to justify his bitter satire and their suppression. Sir Daniel Lindsay's works are full of references to the dissoluteness of the Roman clergy ; of which he was an eye witness. One piece of his, called "Kittie's Confession," displays the

immorality which resulted from private confession. It is too long, and too coarse to be quoted at length ; but the opening lines give a good idea of its contents : -

“The curate Kittie culd confesse,
And scho (she) told on baith mair and lesse ;
Quhen scho was tellaud as she wist, (knew)
The curate Kittie would have kist,” &c.

The ballads of the day are full of singular allusions as that one beginning : -

“A lovely lass to a friar came
To confess in the morning early.”

Byron aptly expressed this tendency of monastical seclusion : -

“ And apropos of monks their piety
With solitude has found it hard to dwell.
These vegetables of the Catholic creed
Are apt exceedingly to run to seed.”

These were the men who had vowed chastity. Such were the vows of the Malmesbury monks, as appears from the following bull of Pope Innocent :

“Innocent Bishop, lowest of the servants of God, to his beloved sons the abbot of the monastery of Malmesbury and his brethren both present and to come ; dedicated to a regular mode of living. It is meet, that those who choose a religious life should be under apostolical protection, lest any rash intrusion should shake them from their purpose - which God forbid - and lessen the strength of religion. Therefore, beloved ones in the Lord, we have graciously assented to your reasonable petitions, and taken the monastery of Malmesbury, in the diocese of Sarum, in which by divine service you are engaged, under our crown and St. Peter's protection, ordaining that the monastic order, which is instituted in the said monastery (according to God and the rule of St. Benedict), be there and at all times inviolably observed.”

Yet, notwithstanding the apostolical protection, the monks had much fallen away from their vows. A day of reckoning was at hand. At length the fiat went forth for the suppression of monasteries, and they were ordered to be delivered into the king's hands. Richard Frampton, the last abbot of Malmesbury, quietly gave up his charge on the 15th of December 1539 ; and accepted a pension. Other of his inferiors were also to receive salaries in order to maintain them decently until their death, to be paid them twice a year by the commission appointed for such purposes, namely, upon the Feast of the Annunciation and of St. Michael the Archangel. The first payment was to begin in the following year, 1540, on the Feast of the Annunciation. The amounts of these pensions were as follows. Robert Frampton, otherwise known as Selwin, whilome abbot, 200 marks, say £120. Walter Stacye, sen., the land steward and chamberer, £13. 6s. 8d. John Codrington, B.D., prior, and Walter Suttan, B.D., sub-prior, each £10. John Gloucester, sen., and tierce (or third prior) Richard Pilton, abbot's steward, Phillip Bristowe, and Thomas Tewkesbury, sens., each £6. 3s. 4d. John Cantine, chapel warden, £8.

Rauf Sherwood, sen., Richard Asheton farmerer, Antonie Malmesbury, sub-sexton, William Alderley, Thomas Dorselye, Thomas Gloucester, John Horselye, chaunter, Thomas Stanley, pittancier, William Brystone, Thomas Froster, student, Robert Elmore, priest, William Wynchcombe, and William Byfley, each £6. The abbot Frampton was also to have a tenement, situate in the High Street of Bristol (Bristowe), which had until lately been occupied by Thomas Harte, and also a garden in the suburbs of the town near the Red Cross, late in the tenure of the same person. Robert Southwell, Edward Carne, John London, William Beners sign their names to this. The whole amount of the incomes allowed to these twenty-two monks scarcely amounted to £270 - a strange contrast to the princely revenue they had hitherto enjoyed. Of these twenty-two only seven - Walter Stacey, Richard Asheton, Thomas Froster, Thomas Stanley (married), and Walter Suttan, Anthony Malmesbury, John Horseley - received pensions in 1553 ; or fourteen years after the suppression of the monastery. The rest had either died, been dispersed, or neglected to claim their pension. And such was the end of the magnificent abbey of Malmesbury - in so far as the monks were concerned. Dating from the death of the founder Meyldulf in 676 to the suppression in 1539, no less than eight hundred and sixty-three years had elapsed since the foundation of the Malmesbury monastery.

To be continued.

Word count 2 965

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[page 3, columns 5-6]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]

CHAPTER XVII.

HENRY VIII - HOBBS - KING CHARLES.

Henry VIII became more intimately connected with Malmesbury than was brought about by the issuing of his decree for the dissolution of monasteries, which took effect there. In 1531 he granted a charter to the corporation, which like some many other documents confirmed them in the possession of their rights. It has been supposed that this was purchased from the monarch. The burly king was, however, now destined to become personally acquainted with Malmesbury. After the dissolution he is known to have kept a stud of horses in Cole Park, anciently called Cowfolde Park, which had been one of those in the possession of the abbot of the monastery, in order to enable him to enjoy the pleasures of hunting. One day after having pursued the chase until he was satiated in

Bradon Forest - about four miles from Malmesbury - the monarch, followed by his train, alighted at the door of a rich inhabitant, one Mr. Stumpe, who had gained a large fortune in the clothier's trade. Although entirely unprepared for the royal visit, Stumpe was not the man to lose his wit at the moment it was most wanted, and accordingly ordered the meal which had been prepared for his workmen to be served up, doubtless with due explanations, before the hungry monarch. Through the influence of this William Stumpe, the abbey-church was converted into that for the parish, and was thus preserved from destruction to delight the antiquarian, and to be the pride of Malmesbury. The library which the monks had formed was, however, almost, if not entirely, destroyed, like that of so many others at that period. So great was the number of manuscripts taken from some of these monastical libraries, and so little were they valued, that they were actually used to wrap up wares in shops, to scour candlesticks, or clean boots ! A wanton destruction, the results of which have been keenly felt in later times. Stumpe, however, does not seem to have got the abbey presented to him as a sort of acknowledgment for satisfying the hungry monarch. Henry the Eighth knew too well the value of money, and is recorded to have sold the abbey, and demesne, to his whilome entertainer for £1500. The date of Stumpe's death is unknown. His son James became a knight, and married the daughter of Sir Edward Baynton. Sir James Stumpe was High Sheriff of Wilts in Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth's times.

It was during the reign of Henry the Eighth that the great archæologist, Leland, visited Malmesbury. He describes the abbey as most magnificent. There were then two steeples. One was standing at the west end of the church ; the other had partially fallen in memory of man, and had been re-built. The immense extent of offices which had belonged to the abbey were filled with looms for the weaving of cloth. So great was the demand, and in so flourishing a state was the trade, that it had been determined to build two streets for the clothiers in the rear of the abbey ; which, once all monks and meditation, had become all cloth and clothiers. One can imagine a passing monk exclaiming - doubtless in Latin, that none might understand or take offence - "Ye have made my house a den of money changers !" Three thousand cloths, according to Leland, were then the annual produce of the place. Leland saw also weavers in a little church adjacent to the south side of the transeptum of the abbey ; and tradition then said that it was here Johannes Sectus was murdered by his scholars in the reign of Alfred the Great. He speaks too of no less than three nunneries which had once been in existence in the town. One of these is supposed to have had stood outside the town, on the road to Chippenham, close to the south bridge. The site of the other two is not certain, though one has been conjectured to have stood in Burnivale - on the very spot where Meyldulph erected his hermitage. In the time of Leland some part of the gates and walls were standing, but even then were much decayed. He speaks of a work since known as the Eulogium

Historiarum, as the Malmesbury Chronicle. It was the work of a Malmesbury monk. Here is an extract from it : - "The town of Malmesbury standeth on the very top of the great slaty rock, and is wonderfully defended by nature ; for Newton water cometh two miles from north to the town, and Avon water cometh by west, and they meet about a bridge at the southeast part of the town, and run so near together in the bottom of the west suburb that there within a burbolt shot the town is peninsulated. It has four gates all ruinous. The walls in many places stand full up, but now very feeble ; nature hath diked the town strongly. It was sometime a castle of great fame, wherein the town hath since been builded : for in the beginning of the Saxon's reign, as far as I can learn, Malmesbury was no town. The castle was named of the Britons *Caer Bladun* ; the Saxons first called it *Ingelburn*, and after of one *Maidulphus*, a Scot, that taught good letters there, and after procured an abbey there to be made ; it was named *Maidulphorhyri* : *i.e.*, *Maidulphi curia*. The king of the West Saxons, and a bishop of Winchester were founders of this abbey. *Aldhelm* was then, after *Maidulph*, abbot there, and after bishop of *Sherburn*. This *St. Aldhelm* is patron of the place. The town hath a great privilege of a fair about the feast of *St. Aldhelm*, at the which time the town keepeth a band of harnesid men (armed men) to see peace kept, and this is one of the brags of the town, and they be furnished with harness. * * * There were in the abbey churchyard three churches. The abbey church, a right magnificent thing, where there were two steeples, one that had a mighty high pyramis and fell dangerously in *hominum memoria* (in the memory of man) ; it stood in the middle of the transeptum of the church, and was a mark to all the country about, the other yet standeth a great square tower at the west end of the church. The townsmen of late bought this church of the king, and made it their parish church."

In the first year of the reign of Queen Mary the election of members for the town was made by the burgesses. The indenture is said to still remain, and to have the common seal of the burgesses attached to it. The indenture of the next year's election does not mention the alderman.

In the time of Queen Elizabeth a part of the lands once belonging to the Knights Hospitallers at Malmesbury, an order that was suppressed in 1540, are recorded to have been in the possession of John and William Marsh, who handed them over to John Stumpe - probably a descendant of William Stumpe - of Malmesbury. Stumpe also bought other of the lands from two London gentlemen - Andrew Palmer and John Herbert. In 1580, Stumpe generously transferred this property to the corporation for the nominal sum of £26 13s. 4d. It was to be held in common socage under the sovereign manner of East Greenwich. During the reign of Elizabeth one Henry Knynett claimed the demesne of Malmesbury, and is understood to have managed to make it good, since in 1566 he allowed the abbey church to continue in use as a parish church. The estate appears to have afterwards come into the family of the Suffolks through

marriage. In 1578 some portion of Stumpe's property was in the hands of a clothier of Malmesbury, one Adam Archarde. The reign of Elizabeth seems to have seen the break up of the Stumpe family, which had been so influential at Malmesbury in that of Henry VIII. There seem, however, to have been persons of that name connected with the town until the days of James I. Malmesbury was a noted place for the clothing trade in the time of Elizabeth. The town seal was cut in the year 1615. The principal figure upon it is a castle, which has three towers, one on each end -these two are embattled - and one domed in the centre. A pennon waves over the last. On both sides of the castle are three ears of wheat upon a stalk. On the dexter side, in chief, a six-pointed mullett ; on the sinister side a unicrescent, also three balls - two at the edge of the sinister tower, and the other near the domed one. Water forms the base of the escutcheon. It was in the latter part of the sixteenth century in all probability that those brass or copper coins, which may still be seen - those tokens which were issued by the clothiers and tradesmen of the town - were struck. The almshouse has been supposed to have been founded in the reign of Elizabeth ; though not established until 1629. A little later than this - in 1631 -William Cale, of Bristol, was the lessee of the manor of Malmesbury ; which seems to have been in the hands of one Anne Warneford. On her death the husband of her third daughter - William Plomer -became heir.

Meantime there had been growing up at Malmesbury a plant which was designed to render it famous. In the year 1588 a Mr. Hobbes was the minister of the parish of Westport, Malmesbury ; and his wife (it is said in terror of the Spanish Armada, then on its progress towards England) was prematurely delivered of a son. He was named Thomas. The house in which he was born has been down some seventy years. When eight years old the young Hobbes became a scholar of Robert Gatimer, master of the Malmesbury Grammar School ; where by his evident capacity for study he seems to have been a favourite. From here, in 1603, he was taken to Magdalen Hall, Oxford. He had, ere this, translated Euripides, the Greek author's "Medea," into Latin verse. He was now fifteen. His charges at college were chiefly disbursed by a relation, Francis Hobbes, Alderman of Malmesbury, who seems to have been very fond of his nephew, since at his decease it was found that he had left an annuity to him. With this Hobbes was enabled to pursue his studies, and took in 1607 the degree of B.A. Next year, 1608, he became tutor to the son of Lord Hardwicke, who was afterwards Earl of Devonshire. He obtained this place by the assistance of the principal of Magdalen. In company with his pupil he left England, and made a tour through Italy and France in 1610. On his return Hobbes sent forth into the world his first literary attempt - which was a translation of Thucydide's History. That author, together with Euripides, Virgil, and Homer, was his favourite study. Hobbes again went abroad in 1631 as the companion of Sir Gervase Clifton, and afterwards became tutor to the young Earl of Devonshire ; going abroad with him nor

returning until 1637. Four years later he went to Paris, and here was allowed the honor of teaching mathematics to King Charles the Second, who had fled his country. When Charles grasped the sceptre, Hobbes shared in that good fortune, being allowed a pension of £100 per annum. He seems to have passed the remainder of his days with the Earl of Devonshire. Hobbes was now famous as an author. His works were. "Elements of Law, moral and politic ;" "The Leviathan: or the matter, form and power of a Common-wealth, ecclesiastical and civil;" "Behemoth, or the History of the Causes of the Civil Wars in England;" "Human Nature, or the fundamental elements of policy;" "An English Version of the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer;" "Ten Dialogues on Natural Philosophy; together with several small pieces, and treatises on mathematics. "The Leviathan," which was written whilst he was at Paris, caused an immense amount of sensation, as also a book of his called "De Cive." The ecclesiastics were up in arms against him. "The Leviathan" was even suppressed, or rather condemned, by Parliament, being classed in a bill against atheism and profanity, which passed in October, 1666. "De Cive" was also condemned by the convocation of 1683; and it had the Leviathan burnt. He has been much vilified as an atheist, yet it would appear that he was himself a Christian, since he took the sacrament. His learning was undoubted - it is borne testimony to by Lord Clarendon - who was his friend, and passes a high encomium upon him. Perhaps one of the reasons of the extreme dislike with which he seems to have been held by a certain class of clergy, and of the charges which have been brought against him, was his political opinions - well calculated to be heard with favour by King Charles, but not so by the opposition of that day. Those charges are not only unsupported, but are in themselves unworthy of hearing. Yet such is the force of prejudice, that Hobbes has never been looked upon with favour - never found readers except amongst those who were determined to investigate things for themselves. One cause perhaps of his being charged with atheism was the dread with which he is said to have contemplated death ; but this is no proof, the most orthodox have felt a similar fear of the unknown. He is, too, understood to have dreaded a visit from the spirit-land ; to have doubted the existence of his own soul, yet feared the visit of other peoples. Byron alludes to this failing in one of his poems, where his hero is awaiting an apparition he imagined he had seen the previous evening

"In short he felt some qualms very

Like those of the philosopher of Malmesbury."

Hobbes certainly was the philosopher of Malmesbury. Since the days of Aldhelm it has produced no such man. Malmesbury has indeed been famous for literary characters -Aldhelm in the seventh century, William of Malmesbury in the twelfth, and Hobbes in the seventeenth. Hobbes's genius was recognised in his own day, and procured him the notice of illustrious inhabitants of foreign countries. Amongst those who visited him was the celebrated Cosmo Medicis, once Prince, later Duke of Tus-

cany. At length, after some ninety-one years chiefly spent in study, Death whom Hobbes so much dreaded cut off the philosopher of Malmesbury. This was on Dec. 4th, 1679. Hobbes was another instance of the extraordinary longevity of Malmesbury men. He was interred at Hault-Hickwall in the church ; and a monument raised to commemorate him. This short account of Hobbes has led us to somewhat forestall other portions of our history. It is now necessary to retrograde to the year 1645, in which it is said King Charles passed through Malmesbury and was entertained by the corporation at the banqueting house, on the east side of the tower. The spot is supposed to have been that which had been formerly an *hospitium* to the abbey. Previous to this Henry VIII. had been entertained by William Stumpe upon the same place. The building was afterwards converted into a workhouse. Charles, however, was too closely beset by the parliamentary forces to be allowed even a quiet night's rest in the town of Malmesbury. Prince Rupert, who was in possession of Cirencester, learning that the king was in danger from a parliamentary party, rode over to Malmesbury to rescue him. He was in time, and Charles escaped to Cirencester behind the Prince. Shortly afterwards, in the same year, Waller, a parliamentary officer, made a forced march through Wiltshire, and captured the garrison of Malmesbury which was entirely unprepared. Waller had with him a force of some 2000 horse. However, Waller and Essex being defeated at Roundway Down, near Devizes, by the king, whose soldiers henceforth called it Run-away Down, it would appear that Wiltshire was cleared of the rebels, and consequently that Malmesbury fell once more into the King's hands. An entry in the parish register supports this conjecture. It is the baptism of the daughter of Thomas Dahridgecourte, lieutenant-colonel in the King's army, and deputy-governor under Colonel Home, or Howard, of Malmesbury. The date is November 6th, 1643. Another change of the fortune of the field threw Malmesbury again into the possession of the parliamentary party ; and tradition says of Cromwell himself, pointing out a hole in the wall of the abbey church, reported to have been caused by a cannon ball, as a witness of the fact ; like the bricks in the chimney of Shakespeare. Tradition also maintains that the Worthneys was the site of a camp ; from which site it is supposed the parliamentary forces made their attack upon the town, as certain houses once standing in the Abbey Row are known to have been destroyed by fire in the civil wars. Marmaduke Pudsie, says the register, lieutenant-colonel of the garrison, was married to Margaret Serge, of the abbey, on the 30th September, 1644. Thomas Serge, Esq., held the manor of Malmesbury in 1656. The question is - on whose side was the garrison ? Malmesbury is known to have been garrisoned up to June, 1646, but very little more beyond that fact seems to have transpired.

Charles I. in 1636 grated a new charter to the corporation, which created an alderman, twenty capital burgesses, and twenty-four assistants. The alderman then became a justice of the peace. This charter

seems to have been merely the royal recognition of laws previously existing.

In 1654, as is learnt from a deed, the clothing trade was still carried on at Malmesbury; and even so late as 1729 the manufacture of medley-clothing, drugget-making, and spanish clothing is recorded to have been persevered in. These occupations dropped before the expiration of the eighteenth century. During this period the election of members of Parliament seem to have been almost entirely made by the capital burgesses and alderman, the common seal being used ; but the free burgesses remaining inactive, as if having full confidence in their superiors. When, however, the Prince of Orange ascended the English throne the return was made in the ancient manner by the alderman, ten capital burgesses, fifteen assistants, nineteen land holders, and twenty-seven commoners, altogether seventy-two persons. This was in 1689, and was a sort of re-assertion of right. Charles II. having required the surrender of all charters, Colonel Wharton was the person elected, but he, being chosen for another place, a second election occurred ; sixty electors signed their names. The first contest appears to have taken place in 1697, when, although the members elected by the capital burgesses were returned, a petition was presented against it on Dec. 14, 1698. Another election took place in 1699, and another petition went up against it. The upper portion of the corporation now seem to have determined to keep the right of election amongst themselves. David Parker, Esq., however, stood up for the popular interest in 1701, but failed, while having preferred a petition against the members returned of the capital burgesses, and being unable to prove a charge of bribery which he had made against them, he was ordered to be prosecuted by the Attorney General, and even taken into custody. In 1702 the whole of the corporation appear to have exercised their rights: but later the capital burgesses again usurped the power. In 1722 a contest occurred - there being a split amongst the capital burgesses; and a petition was presented against the return of Sir John Rushout and Lord Hillsborough. It seems to have failed of effect. In 1796 a contest also took place, this time between men who represented the two branches of the corporation. Thelluson and Smith were the candidates supported by the capital burgesses; Vassar and Luxford appealed to the others. The two first were returned, and a petition followed from Vassar and the free burgesses. Mr Vassar's was examined by a committee, but rejected, as was also one which he presented in the following year. That of the free burgesses passed unnoticed.

1664 must have been a very pleasant year in one respect to the inhabitants of Malmesbury. The number of paupers relieved was *eight*, and the amount of the poor rates was £187s.2d. Distilling was carried on here in 1674. Silk weaving appears also to have been the occupation of some Malmesbury men in 1687. Woollen cloth manufacturing was given

up about 1750, but afterwards revived in the latter part of the eighteenth century by Mr Francis Hill.

To be continued.

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HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MARQUIS OF WHARTON – THE POETESS OF MALMESBURY –
PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS

A relation of the Stumpes - a name celebrated at Malmesbury - held the manor in 1671. His name was Godwyn Wharton, Esq. He appears to have represented the town in Parliament in 1695; and from him it has been supposed the property descended to Thomas Lord Wharton who became Marquis of Wharton and Malmesbury. Philip Duke of Wharton is also conjectured to have held it for a time. It then came into the hands of the Northwick family. The Marquis of Wharton was a very remarkable man. He was a great politician, and was fortunate enough to attract the attention of no less than three sovereigns - William, Anne, and George I., under which last monarch he was privy-seal. Anne made him - in 1706 - Viscount Winchenden in Bucks and Earl of Wharton. He then in 1708 became the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Six years afterwards the title of Marquis of Wharton and Malmesbury was added to his other honors. Wharton had not been entirely idle in the Revolution of 1688. His character seemed to have been an estimable one. He bestowed his patronisation upon worthy men, one of whom Sir Richard Steele - a well-known writer of the day - acknowledged the debt in the "Spectator" in the most warm and ample terms. The marquis died in 1715. On the death of Philip Duke of Wharton in 1731 the title became extinct.

It was during this period that the poetess of Malmesbury flourished. Mary Chandler drew her first breath at Malmesbury in 1687. Her father was a dissenting clergyman, not entirely unknown to literature, he having published a tract in 1705. His daughter was brought up as a milliner, and when arrived at a proper age was intrusted with the care of a shop at Bath. One of her poems on Bath gained much applause, and attracted the attention of Pope. Pope even paid her a visit. She had displayed a taste for poetry even from her childhood, often amusing her companions with riddles in verse ; and when older devoting herself to the study of classical authors. Horace pleased her better than Homer or Virgil

- he descended to private life ; they soared where none could follow. Her person was unfortunately somewhat deformed, but her mind and morality amply made up for her physical disfigurement ; so that she attracted the notice of a gentleman who came from a great distance to offer her his hand, which, however, the poetess declined, and appears to have lived single her whole life. Her death took place after much illness - on the 11th September, 1745, at the age of fifty-seven. She was not the only one of the family who displayed some literary ability. Her father had appeared in print, and his son Dr. S. Chandler produced "A Critical History of the Life of David," together with other works. His death took place in 1766 at the age of seventy-three years.

Numerous titles have been derived from Malmesbury. Amongst these were Marquis of Malmesbury, Duke of Malmesbury to the Whartons; Earl and Baron to the Right Hon. James Harris, Earl of Malmesbury, Viscount Fitzharris, of Heron Court, Hampshire, Baron Malmesbury and Knight of the Bath.

That part of our history which relates to ancient Malmesbury is now rapidly drawing to a close ; and, as it were to put the finishing stroke, we have not thought it out of place to give the names of the parliamentary members for Malmesbury since 1741: -

- 1741 Giles Erle, Esq. - W. Rawlinson, Esq.
- 1747 John Lee. - James Douglass, Esq.
- 1751 Hon. Ed. Digby.
- 1754 Rt. Hon. Lord G. Bentinck. - Brice Fisher, Esq.;
- 1760 Wm. Conolly.
- 1761 Rt. Hon. Richard (Tylney), Earl Tylney in Ireland. -Thomas Conolly.
- 1763 Rt. Hon. John (Child), Earl Tylney in Ireland
- 1768 Rt. Hon. Arthur (Chichester), Earl Donegal in Ireland. - Hon. Thomas Howard.
- 1774 Hon. C. J. Fox. - Wm. Strahan, Esq.
- 1780 Hon. G. (Legge) Viscount, Levistram. - Hon. Art. (Hill) Viscount Fairford.
- 1784 Rt. Hon. Peniston (Lamb), Viscount Melbourne in Ireland. - Hon. J. Maitland, Viscount Maitland.
- 1790 B. B. Hopkins, Esq. - Paul Benfield, Esq.
- 1791 Sir J. Saunderson.
- 1795 Francis Glanville, Esq.
- 1796 Peter Isaac Thelluson, Esq. - Smith, Esq
- 1797 Phillip Metcalf, Esq.
- 1802 Claude, Scott, Esq. - Sam. Scott, Esq.

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CHAPTER XIX.
MODERN MALMESBURY.

A more didactic subject could scarcely be chosen than a simple description of a modern town - with the names of streets, the number of chimney tops, gutters and lamp posts. Such a description cannot fail being dry and uninteresting. Hence we have considered it best in the present work to approach the town of Malmesbury as it were from a distance, to describe its appearance from afar ; then to enter and pass through it taking all that is worth seeing on our way.

Most strangers would probably attempt to reach Malmesbury by rail, but in such an attempt they would be miserably disappointed : since although the first sod of railway was turned near the town a few years ago with great ceremony and exultation the enterprize was abandoned, in spite of the most energetic efforts on the part of several landowners interested in the welfare of the town, and the grass has grown green above the spot. The nearest railway station is Minety - a small place upon the South Wales branch of the Great Western line ; this is seven miles from the ancient seat of Aldhelm. The road, however, is good, and as it perhaps affords the best view that can be obtained of the town, will amply repay the journey. The first mansion which is seen stands about a gun shot distance from the station, half-hidden amongst trees. It belongs to Mr. Fitzgerald. Further on a magnificent wood runs for a great way beside the road ; it is known as Stone-Hill and is the property of the Earl of Suffolk, who indeed owns an immense estate in the neighbourhood. Upon the left will be noticed some fir plantations of considerable extent overshadowing with their dark and sombre foliage a broad sheet of water well known as Braydon Pond. This is an American nomenclature - it would certainly be pronounced a lake by a visitor ; and a most beautiful one too. Even the glimpse that can be obtained of it from the road is sufficient to show its great extent : - it is said to be "three miles round," that is, it is a three miles walk around it. A piece of water of this size can scarcely be called a pond in this post-diluvian age. When mammoths, leviathans, and behemoths crashed through primeval forests, wallowed in original mud or drank streams dry at a draught, it might have - had it then existed - been termed a pond. But now when things do not go upon such a gigantic scale Braydon Lake or Braydon Mere would be a far more elegant and fit appellation. The traveller if on foot would soon become conscious of the antiquity of everything near Malmesbury. The very mile-stones are defaced, and utterly illegible through age. The farm-houses which frequently occur on either side of the road are roofed with the ancient "stone-slates" - brown and mossy with age. The scenery is

pleasant but not grand - it is that peculiar, rich English landscape, characteristic of the Western counties : green meadows, wide woods, brawling streams, farm-houses, laborers' cottages, orchards - an air of peace, contentment, and rural wealth and happiness - these are its charms. There are no dangerous precipices, no frowning rocks, or wild, bare heaths ; all is smiling and softly beautiful. The road now rises and falls, but there is nothing abrupt even in this ; everything steals upon the sight. The first and only village is Charlton. Here the road to Malmesbury branches to the left ; that which apparently continues straight on goes but a short distance through the village, and terminates at the entrance to Charlton Park. On each side of it stand ancient houses, suggestive of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with that peculiar color and look - the result of age and exposure to the weather - which cannot be successfully imitated. At the very edge of the park stands Charlton Church, its tower grimly frowning over the smiling pleasure grounds. A first glance is sufficient to show the great antiquity of this place of worship. The grave-yard is full - the stones lie thick as leaves in autumn - so that it has become necessary to enclose a semi-circular piece of ground, encroaching upon the Park, in addition to the old "God's Acre." Over the porch is the face of a sun-dial - but the gnomon is gone, and it is consequently useless. There is an inscription upon it - "Jno. Stump, Ch. Warden, 1792." Within the porch, upon the left hand, is an inscription in memory of John Waters, gent, who departed this life in 1676. Above the door which gives entrance to the church is a niche, which probably once contained an image, which has disappeared. Within is a magnificent, though modern, monument. The church-tower is firmly bound up with a luxuriant growth of ivy, whose stem has attained a diameter equal to that of a small tree. This probably is a great assistance to the erection, enabling it to weather the storms of winter with safety. Close by is a large yew-tree - sombre and melancholy enough, especially in contrast with the adjoining gardens. Leaving Charlton Church, and returning to the Malmesbury road, another church tower will be descried upon the left. This is Garsden. Near it, but much hidden by the trees, is the hamlet of Milborne. Here the road becomes skirted upon the right by a high bank, covered with trees and shrubs, giving it what is called a picturesque appearance. It crosses a stream, which runs to join the Avon, coming through Charlton Park, the wall of which forms a barrier upon the right side of the road. This wall is said to extend for a distance of five miles completely encircling the Park - and to have been eight or nine years in course of erection. A little further a glimpse may be obtained of Charlton House, the seat of Earl Suffolk. The entrance from Malmesbury is beneath lime trees, which form a pleasant canopy of shade to the weary traveller ; who can here, through the lodge-gates - if he be tall enough - see a little of the Park. The mansion is situated a great distance from the road, almost hidden by numerous trees ; many clumps of which, scattered about the Park, give it a very beautiful look, and as on account

of its great extent it is impossible to see more than one boundary at a time, it has a perfectly natural appearance, and requires none of artificial aid to render it private and secluded. The mansion itself is a study, and - unless by an architect in technical terms, baffles description. The most striking peculiarity are four turrets, with eastern domes ; which, taken together with several other circumstances, has made us often institute a comparison between this mansion and the chateau at Valencay, long the favourite residence of Prince Talleyrand. The stables and offices are completely hidden by trees, and separated from the main building. To return to the Malmesbury road. A glimpse may now and then be here obtained of the steeple of St. Paul's, Malmesbury and upon approaching Whychurch turnpike gate, a partial view, through the interstices of the trees, may be got of the abbey itself. Passing through the turnpike, upon the right hand stands Whychurch farm -a very ancient building, which it has been conjectured once had some connection with the Roman Catholic clergy. It appears to have been formerly spelt Whit-Church - perhaps *White-Church*, from the White Friars, or the color of the building. The field upon the right is known as the Worthy's. The road here dips down, and the abbey is lost sight of - hidden not only by the conformation of the ground, but by some magnificent chestnut trees which overhang the way. A few steps further and the traveller hears the rushing sound of water - he stands upon a bridge over the Newnton river, Malmesbury is before him upon the hill, and the abbey, dark with the storms of ages, looks loweringly down upon the winding vale, and willow-guarded stream. The color of the abbey walls has been compared to that of the Duke of Beaufort's mansion at Badminton. It appears to us like the darkness of a monk's hood, whence the spirit of the past looks down, frowningly and sorrowfully, upon the present. After crossing the bridge the road again rapidly rises and Malmesbury is entered. This part of the town is known as Holloway. On either side, but particularly upon the left, arise high and massive walls forming on the left hand a kind of bastion, considered to be a remnant of the old town wall. The road here divides into two branches, one running through to Cross-Hayes Square, the other and main branch coming into Oxford Street, and placing the traveller opposite the Market Cross. This is an octagonal erection. Eight pillars surround a centre column. From these eight spring arches to each other, and to the central column. Above this towers a sculptured turret, much mutilated ; but upon which two figures may still be made out. They both face the abbey. One is St. Peter with his key, the other is probably St. Lawrence with his gridiron. There are also traces of a crucifix. The turret is said to have been formerly surmounted by a cross, which is now broken off. Beneath it forms a shelter from the storms of heaven. Over the right arches are balls or other ornaments, some mutilated, others perfect. That to the south, facing High Street, had formerly a sun dial ; part of which still remains. The cross is now looked upon with very little veneration. Vehicles are run into it for a temporary shelter, and the pillars are

covered with printed bills of different colors ; men out of work and other idlers here have their great rendezvous. Children play in and out. The stonework has consequently become much defaced, though in some places there still remain a few inches showing its original smoothness and polish. There are two entrances. This cross was standing when Leland visited the town in the reign of Henry VIII ; and he describes it as having been erected in the memory of man to shelter poor market people from the rain, which certainly the vault is well calculated to do. These crosses, however, served other purposes, to deliver sermons from, or to lead men to prayers. A more conspicuous spot could scarcely have been chosen at Malmesbury. High Street, the most populous and best built in the town, runs down the hill exactly opposite its south side. St. Paul's steeple towers up upon the right - it is all that remains of St. Paul's Church, and here a chime of five bells used to call to divine service as required - and to the north rises the abbey. The view of the abbey is, however, much interrupted by some low ancient houses, one of which has a curious projecting balcony, if that term might be used - it is rather the roof or part of it - flat and used as a sort of flower garden. Here too is a Friendly Sabbath School and the Malmesbury Reading Room. On the right will be readily found the White Lion, an inn of very antiquated appearance. The walls are said to be of immense thickness. It is considered to have been an appendage to the abbey, used as an *hospitium*, or place to entertain travellers, which office it still fulfils. Proceeding down High Street evidences will be seen on every side of the present and former prosperity of Malmesbury. There are, however, no attempts to attract attention by the enormous extent of plate glass displayed in more modern towns which have grown up under the influence of a floating population brought in by rail. A modest display of goods, a name, and that is all the indication which can be seen. A great amount of business is nevertheless said to be transacted. A peculiarity - the result of the great antiquity of the place and of the custom of intermarrying in order to preserve corporation rights - is the number of similar names, such as Hanks, Heys and others. It is even said that the true Malmesbury population are all more or less intimately related - one great family. This is one advantage of a corporation - it makes men perhaps greater friends, more attached to their native place, and imbues them with what is called the *esprit de corps*. At the same time it debars progress. Some even stigmatise the corporation as the ruin and bane of Malmesbury, asserting that there is not a single large tradesman in the place who is really a Malmesbury man in proof of the statement. Such may now be the case, but it is evident that of yore the corporation has been of the greatest service to this town. It consists of commoners, who are said to be nearly three hundred in number, "twenty-fourths," from whom the burgesses are chosen, who are twelve. These twelve elect an alderman, who cannot take office unless he is able to entertain the others with a dinner. The alderman is chief magistrate. The present alderman is

Mr. William Grant, a rope maker. There is also a High Steward. At present this office is filled by Col. Miles, who appoints a Deputy Steward, Mr. Chubb. High Street is the principal street of the place. Here are two large inns. The first is the George Commercial Hotel, where good accommodation can be obtained for man and horse at moderate charges, and where the antiquary may congratulate himself upon residing in a house that has been established nearly two centuries. Further down on the other side of the street is the Red Lion. At the bottom of the hill upon the left may be seen an ancient arch of very peculiar workmanship. It forms the end of the almshouse. This is the spot where stood the convent of British nuns in the sixth century, under Dinooth, - abbot of Bangor ; which establishment was suppressed by Augustine, then Archbishop of Canterbury. Here, too, was the hospital of the Knights of Jerusalem - Knights Hospitallers as they were called, and it has been conjectured that this ancient arch is a remnant of their hospital. It is defended from defacement by iron railings. Near by is the entrance to the almshouse - an ancient porch, over which there is a curious figure carved in the stonework. Immediately over the arch there is a tablet with the following inscription of eighteen lines : - (1) " Memorand. that whereas King Athelstan (2) did give unto the free school within this (3) borough of Malmesbury ten pounds, and to (4) the poor people my (this word is scarcely legible) Almshouse of St John. (5) Ten pounds to be paid yearly by ye alderman (6) and burgesses of ye same burrough for Ever. (7) That now Michael Weekes, esq., late of (8) This s'd Burr'h and now Citizen of London (9) hath augmented and added to ye afores'd gift (10) Vizt to ye S'd Free School ten pound to ye (11) S'd Almshouse ten pounds more to be Paid (12) yearly at St. John's aforesa'd within this (13) Burr and by his trustees for Ever and hath (14) also given to ye Minister of this town (15) For ye Time being x 20 s by ye year for Ever (16) to preach a Sermon yearly on ye x 19 day (17) of July and to his said Trustees x 20 s by the year begining on the 25th day of March. Anno Domⁿ, 1694."

This inscription is merely a memorandum of gifts, and explains itself. A short distance further the traveller stands upon a bridge over another river - the Avon, which flows upon the south-west side of the hill upon which Malmesbury is built ; just as the Newnton does upon the North-east. Malmesbury is in fact almost surrounded by water - there being no less than six bridges, five of which are thoroughfares ; while it is only possible to enter the place without crossing a stream upon one side, namely the Sherston road. This bridge near the ancient arch is called South-bridge, and is the entrance to the town from Chippenham. Standing upon it two conspicuous erections are at once apparent. Upon the left at the back of the Almshouses is the Gas House and Gasometer ; over the river is the extensive silk-ribbon manufactory of Messrs. Thomas Bridges and Co. The silk arrives here in a raw state and is unpacked in the upper stories of the building. Much of it is Chinese, and the packages often contain small slips of paper stamped with Chinese

characters. The operation of cleaning employs a large number of children who tend the machinery used for that purpose. Most of these are very young and sing at their work. Overseers superintend them, and talking is not allowed ; for the simple reason that attention is required to be exercised to properly manipulate the silk. Beneath is the winding department ; lower still the looms where the ribbons are made. The machinery is of an order impossible to describe. There is a sameness in it. Apparently the greatest attention is paid to the comfort of those employed. The rooms are very large, well lighted, and though necessarily warm, not overheated. Nevertheless, from being so early put to work the children have an old look ; but nothing of that careworn expression sometimes seen in factories. The machinery is driven by water power. Leaving the factory the road rapidly rises and turns to the left, splitting into two. That to the left runs to Cowbridge, where there is a strange but extensive mansion and some beautiful gardens, the seat of S. B. Brooke, Esq. A little beyond it is Cowbridge - a very long bridge over the Avon. This road is the one to Brinkworth and Wootton Bassett. Brinkworth was formerly a manor belonging to the abbey of Malmesbury. It is a beautiful village. The church is an ancient structure. A clock in the tower must from its appearance be very old. The face is square - much like a sun-dial. The rectory is also a very ancient erection. Away to the right the downs are covered with wood for many a wide acre. This is known as the Great Wood, Grittenham. On the left, but some distance on, are Braydon Woods. At Brinkworth there was formerly a mill which was rated at so much in Domesday Book. There is a mill here still of very old appearance, and of somewhat unusual construction ; there being six sails instead of four. Here remain some portions of the village stocks. The other branch of the road after crossing South Bridge is known as the Chippenham. On the right hand, not far from Cowbridge Gate, stands the mansion of Colonel Miles, High Steward of the borough. Here are some beautiful gardens, which at certain seasons are, by the kindness of the owner, thrown open to the public. A row of fine lime trees runs parallel to the road. Near by stands an old farmhouse upon the left hand. This is thought to have been the spot where stood one of the nunneries anciently existing at Malmesbury. It has lately been undergoing repairs, during which an iron plate was found with an inscription of the date of 1606. Adjacent is a field known as the Chapel Close, which, perhaps, once belonged to the nunnery. By means of a footpath upon the left side of the road it is, from here, possible to closely approach Cole Park, anciently known as Cowfolde Park, which was once a country seat of the abbots of Malmesbury, but is now the residence of A. Lovel, Esq. Here too Henry VIII. once kept a stud of horses. The mansion appears to be in great part modern, but is surrounded by a broad moat filled with water, which gives it an air of antiquity. The principal approach is by a splendid avenue of elms, wherein the rooks have made a settlement. Turning to the left the path goes over the hill to Cowbridge. This hill is known as Cam's or

Camp's hill, there being some indications of a camp or castle upon its summit. The intrenchments or mounds remaining are of great extent, and well marked. On the south west side of the hill they run down some considerable distance. To the south-east there is a well-marked mound or bank thrown up, which appears to be particularly known as the castle. This spot is also known as the Burnt Grounds - tradition relating that a battle was once fought here by King Stephen against some of his numerous enemies. It may have been then that the castle was burnt down. Cennis Hill is the highest ground near Malmesbury, and consequently just such a spot as the ancient armies would choose for an encampment. The view from it is very fine. Malmesbury Abbey can be seen to the north, the Avon flows by to the south-east, and a large stream joins it at the foot of the hill, where stands Cowbridge. Downs and green dales, woods, parks, and meadows extend for miles. Standing here, and noting the fertility of the surrounding country, it is impossible not to observe the wisdom which led the monks to settle at Malmesbury ; nor of Dunwallo Molmutius, who chose a spot equally well wooded and watered to build a city, which, situated upon a hill between two rivers, might in those days have been easily defended. The river Avon is not famous as a fishing stream, but trout are occasionally caught in it. It is certainly surprising that no small skiffs are kept - it would afford a fine row ; but the people of Malmesbury, like those of Lechlade - who have the Thames, and only use it to float coal-barges - do not seem to be of that opinion, since the only boat we ever saw was a flat-bottom, sunk to the bottom, near South Bridge.

To be continued.

Word count 3 730

THE NORTH WILTS HERALD, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1867.
[page 2, column 4 and page 3, columns 1-2]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[*Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.*]

CHAPTER XX.
MODERN MALMESBURY.

Returning to South-Bridge, and turning to the right, after passing the Almshouse, brings the traveller to another bridge on the Newnton river, which joins the Avon but a little farther - just past a mill. The view here is very beautiful - the river winding along at the foot of a steep bank, or escarpment, upon which the town of Malmesbury is built. This hill has much the appearance of having once been fortified - probably the town

wall ran along its summit, while the river at the foot would answer the purpose of a moat. The other side of the river is level, and forms a beautiful meadow, which has lately fallen - by will - into the possession of some Roman Catholics, who have accordingly come to take up their residence in the town, once so celebrated for its connection with them. Retracing these steps to the almshouse, a small steep street will be noticed upon the right hand - this is Silver Street. It leads into Cross Hayes Square. Here is Ebenezer Chapel, enlarged in 1848. Mounting a short distance up High Street, it will be observed that there is an offshoot from it upon the left hand. This is King's Wall. It is a narrow, dark passage between two walls, one of which is built upon the every edge of the hill, and over it a tall man may obtain glimpses of the Avon winding along far beneath. The old town wall, or fortification erected in Stephen's time, probably ran along here. The present wall would be useless for defence, since it is too high to fire over, and too thin to withstand a cannon-ball. At the extremity of King's Wall lies the suburb of Burnivale, deep down in the hollow, between the hill upon which the Abbey stands, and the River Avon. Mr. Luce's brewery stands here. Further, once stood an ancient building known as the Chapel House. It seems to have now entirely disappeared, its place being occupied by a sort of almshouses, inhabited by poor persons. Near this spot it is supposed that Meyldulph erected his hermitage over a thousand years ago. Here, too, stood the third nunnery, and it has been supposed that the Chapel House was a remnant of that establishment. Whoever enquires on the spot for the Chapel House, in the expectation of seeing an ancient erection, will be much amused upon having a modern wooden building pointed out to him, used as a chapel and ragged school by the Methodists of this part of the town. Burnivale leads into that quarter of the town known as Westport. Close here stands a Primitive Methodist Chapel, erected in 1856. A little further the road divides into two. That to the right leads to Sherston, and is the only way by which the town can be entered without crossing the water. On this road stands the Malmesbury Union Workhouse, a large and extensive building. The present number of inmates is considered to be about 150. Malmesbury Union, if we remember aright, contains twenty-five parishes. The other road crosses a bridge over the Avon known as Turketul Bridge. Here is a beautiful view of the western end of the abbey, which towers up above the surrounding house. Burnivale appears from here to be built something in the form of a parti-amphitheatre ; it is certainly seen to best advantage at a distance. Near this bridge is a tannery. Very shortly after crossing the bridge the road turns to the right, and has something of a romantic appearance on account of the over-hanging trees and steep banks. At a short distance upon the left hand stands the house known as the Arches. The next place of any note is upon the same side and is known as Thornhill. From here there is a fine view of the vale through which the Avon flows. Across it - far away on the right - stands Higham farm house, apparently an ancient building.

After passing Thornhill the road commences to rise. The summit of this hill - known as Shade Hill - affords a good look out over the much celebrated common of Malmesbury, and the land granted by King Athelstan to the corporation, in recompense for the services of the town people which enabled him to gain a victory over the Danes at Sodbury. Shade Hill is the highest part of this land. The common is now almost all arable land, well cultivated. It extends, it is said, for two miles, and covers a space of some five hundred acres. It is held by the burgesses and corporation generally in allotments varying with circumstances. Some have eight, some twelve, others fifteen, and it is said a few have as much as thirty acres ; which they can till themselves or let out. The alderman by virtue of his office takes the largest plot, which is sufficient to support him. The effect of this arrangement - this allotmenting - is said to be deprecatory of progress ; since men who have a few acres, enough to supply them with the necessities of life, do not trouble themselves in the endeavour to rise from the position to which they have been born, or come by right of inheritance, or marriage. The common appears from Shade Hill almost perfectly level. Upon the left run downs, known as Ail's Heath, White Heath, and Burnt Heath. The village of Calsten lies in its extremity, while upon the right it is bounded by Higham Wood. It certainly was a most magnificent gift - this land presented by King Athelstan, and it is no wonder that his memory is still fresh in the minds of the inhabitants of Malmesbury, even after an interval of so many slow circling centuries. All these places - Burnt Heath, Higham - are connected with the history of ancient Malmesbury. Bruera or Burnt Heath was anciently in the occupation of the corporation, held of the Abbey. Higham is mentioned in the already given extracts from Domesday Book. Everything in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury carries back the mind into the past, and it is difficult to believe when not actually in the town and in sight and hearing of the various branches of industry there going forward that one is living in the eighteenth century. Looking over this corporation ground, one would not be in the slightest surprised, and for a moment while in that mood not consider it extraordinary, if the "stout King Athelstan" should himself appear riding at the head of his victorious army returning from the conquest of the Danes. The very air that blows around Shade Hill, fresh from the woods and winding river, whispers strange things of olden times as it sighs through the green-leaved trees. It is not until some laborer employed by a burgess upon his land passes that the spell is broken ; for he carries a hoe or a spade - not a spear, and whistles a merry modern tune, instead of making the welkin ring with the blast of the horn. Returning to Turketul Bridge, it will be noticed that there is an offshoot from the main-road upon the left. This leads up into Westport-high-town, if it might be so termed. On the left hand of this branch road or street stands the National School, a substantial-looking structure, in strange contrast with the anything but firm-looking houses near. It might easily be taken for a place of worship at first sight. Upon

the top of the hill, on the same side, is the piece of ground enclosed for burial purposes by the Baptists ; on the right Malmesbury Cemetery, which does not contain a chapel. Further is the Police Station, which, although it stands so near Westport, is in Brokenborough parish. Brokenborough, as has been before mentioned, is a village some distance from Malmesbury, said to have been once a Roman settlement, certainly a British and Saxon one. Its ancient name was Caerderburge. It is mentioned in Domesday Book, and then belonged to the Abbey. The police station is tenanted by the superintendent, Mr. Woodman, an able and most intelligent officer, and by a staff of men. It is a small, but neat and comfortable dwelling, of the usual type. The situation is dry and healthy. From here the road leads into a three-cornered open space - it could be called square - known as the Horse Fair. Two streets branch out of it upon the right. The first goes down to Turketul Bridge, passing the front of the Independent, or New Congregational Chapel, now in course of erection, or rather of re-construction. The other passes by the entrance to the same chapel yard. Here, on the right hand, close to the gateway, is a strange and very ancient building, occupied by poor persons. The porch, or entrance, is arched and evidently very old, while a window, built up, also gives indications of extreme antiquity. This is the house in which the former philosopher of Malmesbury - Thomas Hobbes - lived. Hobbes was born in Westport in 1588. His father was then minister of Westport Church. Wishing to learn what reputation the celebrated Hobbes had left behind him in his native place we one day accosted a woman, apparently an inhabitant of the house, asking her, while pointing to the arched window, if it had ever been a chapel. "No it hadn't - it were a mansion in times past." "Who lived in it?" "Oh it were an infidel." And who was he ? She could not remember his name. Was it Hobbes? "Oh, yes, that were it." A short distance further stands Westport church or Westport St Mary, which is a chapel of ease to the vicarage of Charlton. The living is worth £520 per annum with residence, and is in the gift of the Lord Chancellor. The present incumbent is the Rev. George Hutchinson M.A. We were informed by an inhabitant of Westport that before the restoration of this church which had taken place in his memory - some thirty years ago - it was a very small, and dilapidated building, resembling a "barn", but very ancient. The oldest inscription was dated 1672. The road here turns to the right - this leads to Tetbury, over a bridge. Tetbury is distant from Malmesbury five miles, and the inhabitants of both places have considerable dealings with each other. Turning to the right from Westport Church leads into a street which is known as the Abbey Row. This next to High Street is the best-built street in the town, and certainly most pleasant situation. The houses are all situated upon the left side of the road ; upon the other is a stone wall or parapet, part of it defended with sharp spikes apparently placed there to prevent children cliimbing over, or to sharpen up the unwary who should sit down upon them. Beneath this wall, which is built upon the edge of

the hill lie terrace gardens ; lower still Burnivale, the hill terminating in meadows which run to the side of the Avon river. Over it the ground again rises. Upon the left hand - facing the river - is the abbey and the steeple of St. Paul's Church, upon the right Westport, beneath the suburbs of Burnivale, Turketul Bridge, and the river. From this spot there is a very pleasant view. The Abbey Row, in fact, makes the most pleasant promenade in Malmesbury. Here the road is wide, and there being no houses upon one side nothing obstructs the sight. Immediately below stood the hermitage of Meyldulph, near that the ancient nunnery, of which the chapel house was considered a remnant. The antiquity of the greater part of Malmesbury is immediately evident from here. Looking down upon the tops of the houses they are seen to be roofed with the ancient stone-slates, dark and mossy with age ; bricks are not used here, stone is too plentiful, which circumstance contributes to give the place generally an ancient appearance. Numbers of the houses have a dingy, yellowey white look, having been washed over with something. This is far more pleasant to the eye than glaring red bricks. In the Abbey Row stands the Baptist Chapel, almost hidden by lime trees, which overshadow the graves in the yard before it, placed in unpleasant proximity to the houses. At the extremity of the Abbey Row stands the steeple of St. Paul's Church. It is said that the vicar of Malmesbury is still inducted in this steeple. The church has long been down. When Leland visited the place in the reign of Henry the VIII, the body of it had disappeared, the remainder at the east end was used as a Town Hall. Its use as such was discontinued in 1623. The steeple appears to be still perfectly firm, though it has a very ancient appearance. From here two ways lead to the Market-Cross - one for horses and carriages by the White Lion, the other for foot-passengers behind the block of houses standing below the steeple. This latter way will be preferred as affording a beautiful view of the south side of the ancient abbey. From the Market-Cross a street leads to that part of the town known as Holloway. Here stands a tower or observatory said to have been built by Dr. Player, and now, with the house beneath it, in the occupation of Messrs Jeston and Kinneir. Upon this spot it has been supposed, from some relics of antiquity which were found here, stood an *hospitium* belonging to the abbey, or place to entertain strangers with monkish hospitality. Here, too, it was that the celebrated clothier of Malmesbury, Mr. Stumpe, was suddenly called upon by the burly king, Henry the VIII ; who with his retinue had ridden in hungry enough, probably from hunting in Braydon Forest. Mr. Stumpe was equal to the occasion as has been already related. On the same spot stood the Banqueting House in which King Charles I was entertained by the corporation of Malmesbury about 1643. His flight from here to Cirencester behind Prince Rupert has been alluded to previously. Nearly a century ago there stood here a summer-house in which tradition related the king slept a short time before he started. This place was afterwards called the work-house. Turning to the right from here the street leads

into Cross Hayes Square. On the right hand, opposite the tower, stands the Moravian Chapel. Cross Hayes Square is of considerable extent, and of rather an oblong form. It is surrounded with buildings, but being nearly all old, and without the least attempt at regularity, they do not call for any especial comment. Here is the Town Hall - a modern erection, used for the purpose of law-courts. On the left hand is an infant school, erected and supported by Mrs. Kemble and S. B. Brooke, Esq. It is easily found by a conspicuous gilt ball upon the roof. The date is 1857. Further down, upon the same side, stands a house in which the Roman Catholics, who have recently entered the town, hold service upon Sundays. They are said to contemplate building a chapel. Their sensations upon looking at the abbey must be very strange. They were at first subject to much annoyance by the lower class of children disturbing their services, which has been very properly put a stop to. On the right hand side of the square is the back entrance to the George Hotel. Lower down, upon the same side, a narrow street communicates with High Street. Here dip-candle making is carried on. The Malmesbury volunteer corps are assembled and drilled in this Square. The corps is in a very flourishing condition, at least as regards numbers, there being over ninety members. The range for rifle practice is at the south end of the town, near Carris Hill.

Malmesbury gives its name to the hundred, and stands in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol. The deanery is called Malmesbury north. The living of St. Paul's, with Corston and Rodbourne, annexed is worth £430 per annum. It is in the patronage of the Lord Chancellor. At Corston, which is two miles distant from Malmesbury, though in the same hundred, there is a free school supported by R. H. Pollen, Esq., and others. Rodbourne is also at some distance. R. H. Pollen, Esq., has a residence there. The incumbent of St. Paul's, Malmesbury is the Rev. Charles Pitt, M.A. It so chancing that when the dissolution of monasteries took place in the reign of Henry the VIII that this church was dilapidated, the abbey church was purchased by Mr. Stumpe, the clothier, and used in its place by means of a license from the celebrated Archbishop Cranmer. Mr. Stumpe thus conferred a double benefit upon posterity - providing them with a place of worship, and preserving the ancient abbey from destruction. The municipal population of Malmesbury is over three thousand. It now only sends one member to Parliament. The present representative is Viscount Andover, eldest son of Earl Suffolk, of Charlton Park. The number of registered electors was 315 in 1859. By the addition of eleven parishes with a population of nearly seven thousand the constituency has been much enlarged. Numerous trades are and have been lately carried on at Malmesbury. Amongst these are silkribbon manufactory, pillow lace, cloth, breweries, tanneries, dip-candle manufactory, &c. Although the place has no railroad, and is situated ten miles from Chippenham, the nearest station of any importance, a large amount of business is carried on. The two rivers greatly contribute to

keep up something of its ancient importance. They supply a motive power much less costly than steam - especially where coal has to be brought ten miles in waggons - which is availed of in driving the machinery of silk ribbon manufactory, and several mills. The water of the town is forced up by a pumping engine from the river into a large tank placed near the abbey, and from thence distributed to the houses. Almost all the sects of religion have places of worship in or near the town. The average population of Malmesbury and Westport is 7,920.

Several noblemen and gentlemen of high standing in society own estates, or residences, in or near Malmesbury. The first of these is Earl Suffolk, who is spoken of with much respect by the inhabitants. His estates are of vast extent, comprehending several villages. George (Lord) Northwick is lord of Malmesbury manor ; but does not reside here. Sir Hungerford Pollen and Sir John Neeld, own estates in the neighbourhood. The Duke of Beaufort's mansion at Badminton is ten miles distant. Hunting is much indulged in by the gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

To be continued.

Word count 3 141

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[page 2, columns 4-5]

HISTORY OF MALMESBURY.
BY GEOFFREY.

[Written expressly for the North Wilts Herald.]

MODERN MALMESBURY.
CHAPTER XXI.

The most striking entrance to the abbey is through a battlemented archway, close to the Market Cross, facing High Street. This is the south side. Immediately after passing beneath the wall the abbey, the upper portion of which can be alone seen from the street, bursts upon the sight, and seems to grow larger and more grand as it is approached, until standing opposite the porch it is almost impossible not to allow an exclamation of wonder to escape one. The abbey here presents its whole south side to the observer. It is immediately seen to be as it were of two stories, as from over the lower arched windows - pointed arches like mute stone hands in the attitude of prayer - the roof falls back ; then rises the second story, supported by flying buttresses, ornamented with pointed pyramidical pillars. Here are six windows of equal extent. The upper roof appears to be of modern slate, the lower the old stone slate; giving the upper part a light, and the lower a more heavy appearance. A general air of extreme antiquity pervades the whole erection - gloomy and dark, like the dim vistas of the past. The entrance to the interior is

here beneath a magnificent stone porch of enormous size. The arch towers high above the head wide enough to admit numbers at the same time. It is strangely sculptured. From the battlements of the porch look down mutilated faces carved out of the stonework, the sphinxes of England cut by her ancient priesthood, to be the surprise and puzzle of posterity. Many a century must have passed away since first those curious countenances stared down stolidly upon the stone flags beneath, on the passing processions of the monks, the gay dresses of the cavaliers, the prim parliamentarians, the strange dresses of the seventeenth century - on the black palled coffin, and the babe about to be christened. They must have witnessed curious scenes of sorrow and of joy ; and have yet remained unmoved, unchanged through all, as if mocking at the human beings who made them. Three arches there are to this porch at the entrance, one within the other, and all sculptured. Each is divided into numbers of lozenges, or ovals, containing figures of men and women - some of them defaced and entirely gone, others standing out in as bold relief as when the chisel finished them, in all but color. Dark they are, dark is all that is ancient of this venerable building, symbolical of the times when it was founded, of the men who worshipped there - dark, and dumb like Fate, yet saying unutterable things. There may have been perhaps at first eighty of these sculptured arches. Nor is the vault within left plain. On either hand, high above, are the apostles - six upon each side, with an angel over them, while above the inner door is the Saviour and two supporting seraphs. Beneath, upon the right hand, is a large niche, said to have contained the holy water in days gone by. The visitor feels inclined, gazing around this ancient porch, to concur with the old sexton who shows the building - himself an ancient who has occupied the post these fifty years past - who, as he turns back the lock with his gigantic key, itself a relic of the past, observes, "It is the finest carved porch in the kingdom."

On entering the doorway the church does not, as might have been expected, burst upon the sight - the porch has not yet been entirely left behind. Here will be noticed an inscription which, since (as this old sexton will inform a stranger) it has been mutilated, or rather altered, may be worth giving, with a view to prevent future mistakes:

"Vnderneath this Stone Resteth ye Body of William Rabence of ye Abbey gent. who ended this life Novm 5. 1700."

Some mischievous person or persons scooped out tails to the noughts with their knives, making the date 1799 - all but a century out. The voice here sounds hollow and sepulchral, re-echoed as it is by the vaulting roof. Another door leads beneath the present gallery and organ loft, at the west end of the church. Beneath it is dark and gloomy. The gallery is supported by modern pillars. Here is the font, an ancient piece of stonework, leaded within. On the left, against the wall, hang two boards, with the following inscriptions, the first of which explains the present condition of the church, the latter relates to an almshouse.

“The accommodation in this church was enlarged in the year 1823, by which means 341 additional sittings have been obtained, and in consequence of a grant from the society for promoting the enlargement and building of churches and chapels, 300 of that number are hereby declared free and unappropriated for ever, and are in addition to 60 previously provided.

George Bisset, Vicar.

R. Player, John Player, Churchwardens.”

The other, which is in ancient characters and considerably abbreviated, runs thus:

“Robert Jennor, of Widhil, in the county of Wilts, Esq., about the year 1622, did erect an almhouse for eight poor people of the town of Malmesburie, and endowed it with 40s. p. an. for ever to be payd out of his manor and lordship of Widhil.

“Mr. Henry Grayle, one of the capital burgesses of Malmesburi, dy'd April 6th., 1661, and by will bequeathed £10 p an. for ever to be payd yearly out of his estate in Somerford Magna to ye Church Wardens and overseers of ye town of Malmesburie for ye apprenticing of poor children of ye said town.

“Mr. Edmund Wayte, one of ye capital burgesses of Malmesburie, dy'd in June, 1661, and by will bequeathed 40s. to ye poor of Malmesburie ; 20s. to ye poor of Burton Hill, and 20s. to ye poor of West Port yearly to be payd out of Canopp's Mill into ye hands of ye Churchwardens of ye respective places and by them to be distributed on each Good Friday for ever.”

The above endowment of an almshouse has long been lost, the building itself down, and the site seized and sold by the parish.

Stepping out from beneath this dark gallery, the body of the church is immediately entered. The roof arches over at a height of some sixty feet - a modern house might be built beneath it, chimneys and all, and never reach it - and the opposite wall beneath which is the communion table is nearly one hundred feet distant. The effect of this vastness is indescribable. On either hand huge pillars - eight in all - support the gigantic structure ; and, although they are sixteen feet to the capitals, appear but dwarfs from the largeness of their diameter - five feet three inches - and on account of the general scale of the building. Like the sturdy stems of aged oaks upholding their wide spreading heads, are these massive pillars ; from which spring arches one to the other. From these arches again spring others, over these last are the second tier of windows, six on each side. They were originally nine, ere either end of the abbey fell in ruins. On the right hand high up, about midway down the wall, is a strange looking house - if it might be so called - projecting over the church, something like an enormous stone box pew hoisted up and affixed to the wall. It is called the abbot's seat, and tradition relates that it was from here he delivered the benediction. It would certainly afford him a view of the whole body of the remaining abbey church. The

question that immediately suggests itself is, how on earth did he get into it ? There appears at first sight no gallery, but a closer inspection reveals just beneath the second tier what looks like a succession of narrow arched tunnels running completely round the building inside, which a certain young lady once compared to rabbit holes. For what purpose these tunnels were constructed is not immediately evident. They would afford the monks an opportunity of passing around the church without disturbing service, or perhaps were found useful in making repairs. From the body of the Church they, from their great and dizzy height, appear too small to admit a man, but we have been assured by one who has traversed them that a six footer would have no difficulty in passing through in an upright posture. Unless those portions of these galleries now open were in olden times closed up, it must have required a steady nerve and firm foot to walk through them, on account of their narrowness, and the dizziness necessarily consequent upon so great a height. At the extremity of the centre aisle over the communion table is suspended an immense painting, the gift of Lord Suffolk, representing the raising of Lazarus. It is said to measure twelve feet by ten. The wall beneath it is ancient, but behind and above it is comparatively modern. One third way down the centre aisle stands the desk from which the burial service is read, itself standing upon monuments of the departed. It faces the west end of the church, where is a high arched window comparatively modern. The gallery there contains an organ also modern, at least in comparison with the abbey itself. The word modern as applied to this building must be used in a very wide sense. At the extremity of the Church towards the east are two chapels, at least such was their ancient use. They are fenced off as it were from the main body of the building by some ancient stone walls and iron bars. That upon the right hand contains a marble monument in memory of Lady Marshall, who died in 1625. The inscription runs thus.

"Stay gentle passenger and reade thy doome,
I am, thou must be, dead.

"In assured hope of a joyful resurreccion, here rests deposited all that was mortall of the religious and virtuous Lady Dame Cyscely Marshall, daughter of the Honourable Sir Owen Hoptan, Knt. late lieftenant of the Towne Royal, the faithful, modist, and loyall wife of Sir George Marshall, Knt. Whether transcended in her more the ornaments that beautified a wife, a mother, a matrone, is still a question betwixte her all disconsolate husband, daughter, servants. Onely this is agreed upon all hands, such were her perfections in each state, that in vayne will any epitaph endeavour to delyneate them. What was her faith, hope, charity, temperance, piety, patience, may (to better purpose) be expected from the triumph of an archangell in the day of Gods general retribuccion them from the faynte, and flagging attribuccions of any particular penn. To close all, with her close thies two spirituale ejaculacons. Miserere niei Deus, et domine recipe animam miam ! (Have mercy upon me God,

receive my soul O Lord !) were the wings, whereon the last breath of this turtle mounted towards heaven. To whose sweete memory her sad mate hath devoted this poor monument, which, - "Oh let no prophane hand violate." Emigravit 23 Apryll. Anno Salat 1625.

The following is an extract from the register which may be very properly introduced here: "John Bridle reputed to be a gypsie, deceased September 21, 1657 at John Perynis house upon the Ffosse in Shipton parish in Gloucestershire; and was buried in King Athelstons chapel by (near) King Athelston, and the Lady Marshall, within the abbey church at Malmesbury. This buriall was September 23, 1657. Howbeit, he was taken up again by the means of Thomas Ivey esq. who then lived in the abbie, and by the desires and endeavoures of others out of the said chapell was removed into the churchyarde, and then was reburied neere the east side of the church poorch, October 7, 1657 in the presence of Thomas Ivey of the abbie esq., Pleadwell of Mudgell Esq., Rich. Whitmore of Slaughter, in the countie of Glocester, and Dr. Qui of Malmesbury with very many others."

On the left hand of this monument is an inscription in Latin dated 1712, old style, 1713 new. Immediately without this chapel, fixed upon a pillar is a marble monument with the following inscription: - "Sacred to the memory of Thomas and Edward Luce, sons of Thomas Luce, Esq., of this borough, and Susan his wife. Thomas was born at Malmesbury on the 13th of August, 1824, and died on the 22nd October, 1845, at Bombay." Mentioning that he was a midshipman in the Indian navy, the inscription proceeds: "His brother officers erected a tomb over his remains in the Colaba Cemetery at Bombay in token of their estimation of his amiable qualities and of their sorrow for his loss."

"Edward was born at Malmesbury on the 5th Feb., 1831, and was killed by a cannon ball at the bombardment of Sebastopol on the 11th April, 1855, a lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. Lord Raglan's despatch said of him: "The Royal Artillery have to lament the death of Lieutenant Luce, who was a zealous officer of much promise.' In every stage of his short life he was conspicuous for gentleness of demeanour, exemplary conduct and a deep sense of religion. His grave is at the foot of Inkerman." The chapel upon the right hand is used for parish meetings. Upon this side is the pulpit, which is carved and has a carved canopy over it. At the foot of the pulpit stairs is King Athelstan's monument. He is not even supposed to be buried here, the monument having been brought in here from another part of the edifice to save it from destruction ; and is moreover placed in such a position as instantly to demonstrate that the monks had no share in its arrangement, the head being towards the west. The monument is of an oblong form and over four feet in height. Upon it rests a stone figure of the 'Stout King Athelstan' laid out in state. He is clad in his robes with ornamented sandals and large sleeves. The countenance is much mutilated, but the general contour of the head gives it a sturdy appearance. If this be a truthful representation - Athelstan was a king

every inch of him. A canopy forms the extremity of the monument over his head, which is crowned. His hair is most luxuriant, rolling down upon his neck and shoulders. The beard descends slightly upon the breast, and the upper lip is covered with a moustache. The arms are broken off, and it is impossible to say whether they were or were not crossed over his breast, as is so often in similar monuments. Upon each side of the shoulders are two seated figures of a small size, so much mutilated that at present it seems impossible to determine what they represent. The feet rest against the figure of a lion, in the attitude of watchfulness. On the whole the monument is in a very fair state of preservation. Over it there is an inscription dated 1793, close by one of 1734: - ancient in themselves, but of yesterday in comparison with the date of the death of Athelstan which took place in 941, over nine centuries ago. The communion table is as usual railed off. The railing partly conceals an ancient monument against the wall dated 1699. On either side of the table are old chairs, carved, of a very ancient and rather uncomfortable stiff-backed appearance. Immediately behind the table is the monogram I.H.S. Above this the wall, which as far as the lower side of the picture here suspended is ancient, is covered with strange carvings of dogs, and griffins, and other figures of small size, and some of them mutilated. The reading desk is on the left side of the communion table if looked at while passing up the aisle, on the right standing facing the organ. Over it is a monument to Elizabeth Warneford dated 1631. The Warnefords once held the manor of Malmesbury. Within the chapel upon this side of the church - now used as a vestry-room, or place for the clergyman to change his gown - are preserved two ancient bosses which have been dug up near the abbey. One of them displays the wounds of Christ : the heart in the centre, the hands and feet disposed around, and pierced. Here also upon a table are preserved some remnants of the ancient mosaic pavement of the church. It will be noticed that many of the monuments instead of being of stone are of copper, displaying the ghostly death's head, cross bones, pickaxe and spade - especially down the north aisles. It is through this left hand chapel - at the extremity of the north aisle - that exit may be gained to the eastern part of the yard. Within the vestry-room is the following curious inscription, said to be of a captain of the garrison of Malmesbury in the time of the civil wars: -

“Near this place lyeth the body of Thomas Stumpe, gent., who departed this life the 6th day of April, Anno-Dom. 1698. Cetalis Suœ.

O Death how cruel is thy Dart
To strike ye Captaine to ye Heart.
Too good He was here to remaine
Iehovah tooke Him for to traine,
In grave his body to remaine
Till Christ himself doth come againe!”

The Stumpe family seem to have long held a respectable position in Malmesbury. Near this inscription is a copper plate affixed to the wall

upon which are these words: "The gift of Thomas Stumpe, of Malmesbury Abbey, gent., 1689."

At the eastern extremity of the abbey-church, exposed to the storms of heaven, stands a magnificent arch some sixty feet in height. The stonework upon its summit is in ruins and ready to fall. There is a circular hole through it, said to have been made by a ball from a cannon when Cromwell besieged the town. There were originally two of these arches, as is evident from the remains. It was at this end of the building that the cross aisle was, the abbey being built in the form of a cross ; that part which is still used as the parish church formed the tree of the cross. A large portion of the western wall of this cross aisle still remains, much covered with ivy and other plants ; of ivy a kind of tree grows upon it. Along this wall too is visible the before mentioned gallery. To the east of this arch is an ancient building known as the Abbots' House, or Abbey House ; where it is considered that the abbots resided. It is a strange old gabled structure, rising up exactly at the edge of the hill upon which Malmesbury is built. It is now in the occupation of Dr. Jennings. The windows facing the Newnton river are arched. A great part of the roof of one of the gables has been taken off and glass substituted, in order to make a greenhouse or conservatory. Passing round the abbey to the west end, which is also in ruins, there stands a cannon said to have been taken at Sebastopol. It was at this end of the abbey that the castle of Malmesbury stood, which was razed by permission of King John that the abbey might be extended. The Bell Inn now stands upon its site, which was well chosen ; this being the narrowest part of the hill upon which Malmesbury is built, hence it could be defended upon both sides. The abbey churchyard is on the south side. Here are two curious inscriptions upon tomb-stones.

The following is commemorative of the death of a servant killed by a tiger in 1703, which had been in an exhibition, and which she had teased.

"In bloom of youth she's snatched from hence,
She had not time to make defence;
For tyger fierce snatched life away,
And now she lies in bed of clay,
Until the resurrection day."

The next is said to have been written by Oldham the poet, on Dr. Abia Qui, who died in 1675 : -

"He, by whose charter thousands held their breath,
Lies here, the capture of triumphant Death ;
If drugs or matchless skill could death reclaim,
His life had been Immortal as his fame."

The best view that can be obtained of the Abbey, the Abbots' house, and of Malmesbury, is by passing down the hill towards the river Newnton, on the north side of the abbey. Here on the left stands what is called the Abbots' Mill. It is still used as a mill. The upper stones are gained by a bridge from the hill, it being built at the foot. The building is evidently very ancient, and is much hidden by ivy. At the foot of the hill a bridge crosses the river and a path will take the stranger up the opposite hill

into a field known as the Worthys, whence the abbey itself and Malmesbury can be seen to best advantage. The abbey is most impressive at night, when the sounds of the industrious toilers of the town are silent, and the stars look down dimly through the pall-like clouds upon the vast mausoleum. It is tenanted no longer save by the dead. At night the olden times seem to return, and though a shudder might ensue the cowed form of a monk might be met without surprise. It is an abbey such as might have suggested the lines of Byron.

Beware, beware of the Black Friar
 That sitteth by Norman's stone,
 For he mutters his prayers to the midnight air,
 And his mass of the days that are gone.
 When the Lord of the Hill, Amundeville,
 Made Norman Church his prey,
 Though he came in his right, with King Henry's might,
 To turn church land to lay,
 One monk remained, unchased, unchained,
 And he did not seem formed of clay.
 For he's seen in the church, and he's seen in the porch,
 But he is not seen by day.
 Amundeville he is lord by day,
 But the monk he is lord by night,
 Nor wine nor wassal could raise a vassal
 To question that friar's right.

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Such is the present condition of Malmesbury. The abbey cannot be described, it must be seen. Thus have we traced its rise, its progress and its fall, and now farewell to the merrie monks of Malmesbury.

Word count 3 766