Dunstan at Glastonbury.

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DUNSTAN and Alfred are the two great names of our history before the Conquest, and both names are closely linked with the traditions of Somerset. The peasant of Taunton Dean commemorates in his "ashen-fagot ball" the delight with which Alfred's men, coming up cold and hungry through the night to the gathering before Ethandun, clustered round the camp fires of ashen logs;* and the turf-digger of the marshes of the Axe tells the tale of Dunstan's interview with the Devil. When we pass, however, from tradition to history, there is a marked difference between our knowledge of the one great Englishman and of the other. It is impossible to define the exact relation of Alfred to the political system with which his name is associated, or to rely on the poetic legends of the wanderer in the hut of the cow-herd, or the harper in the camp of the Danes. But whether as man or as statesman, Dunstan is perfectly real to us. The ecclesiastical policy which covered England with countless religious houses, all looking back to his cœnobium at Glastonbury as their

* Trans. Som. Arch. Soc., 1849, p. 37.

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fount, was only swept away at the Reformation. The secular policy by which the great minister strove, however prematurely, to combine national unity with the utmost provincial liberty, has left its traces in the real oneness and as real hatred of centralization of the England of to-day. Dunstan is remarkable as the first of that great line of ecclesiastical statesmen who counted among them Lanfranc and Wolsey, and ended in Laud. But he is still more remarkable in himself, in his own vivid personality after eight centuries of revolution and change. In the dim hazy light of our early national history Dunstan stands out perfectly human and real.

The restriction of this paper to his life at Glastonbury prevents me from entering here on many questions of great interest, which have, I think, been as yet insufficiently appreciated in their bearing on his general history. Prominent among these is the contrast between the tone of the English chroniclers, with whom Eadgar is all and Dunstan nothing, and that of the monastic biographers, with whom Dunstan is all and Eadgar a reckless voluptuary. Or, again; something might be gained from a critical comparison of the various chronicles commonly blended under the name of the English (or Anglo-Saxon) Chronicle. The only one of them that gives any full notices of him is that which originated in Canterbury itself.* One question indeed, on which the

* *B* (Cott. Tib., A. vi.) only once mentions him: 977 Trans. of Bp. Sideman.
C (Cott. Tib., B. i.) „ twice: 1. Same entry in same words.
2. Death in 988.
D (Cott. Tob., B. iv.) „ thrice: 1. 'Driven beyond sea,' 957.
2. Council at Calne, 978.
3. Death, 988.
E (Bodl., 636.) „ thrice: 1. Consecrates Ethelwold, 963.
2. Calne, 978.
3 Death, 988.

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whole character of his life depends, I shall be compelled to notice here, I mean the strange fortune by which a false biography of the man has been almost universally substituted for the true. But I shall only rectify this error here in so far as it affects our Somerset Dunstan, not Dunstan the statesman, the primate, the reformer, but Dunstan the boy, the monk, the abbot of our Somerset Glastonbury.

Dismissing the later hagiographies, the life, by William of Malmesbury (as yet unpublished, but of whose character we can judge from his copious notices in the Gesta Regum etc), the metrical compilation of Adalard, and the fragment by Osbert or Eadmer, all mere copies of their predecessors, but enlarged by the admission of the worthless traditions of Glastonbury, there are but two biographies of historic importance. The first is that of a priest, who has left us but his initial "B," but whom (adopting Mabillon's conjecture), we may call Bridferth of Ramsey. It is dedicated to Dunstan's scholar, Archbishop Ælfric, and is the work of a contemporary and acquaintance of the subject of its biography. It professes to be drawn partly from personal observation, partly from information supplied by Dunstan himself, partly from the reminiscences

F (Cott. Dom. A. viii.) „ eight: 1. Birth, 925.
2. Gift of Glastonbury, 943.
3. Banished, 955.
4. Return, 959.
5. Archbp., 961.
6. Calne, 978.
7. Trans. King Eadward, 980.
(*D* and *E* mention this, but omit mention of Dunstan.)
8. Death, 988.

I have compiled this from Thorpe's Edition. A's (C. C. C. 173) entries are but insertions from *F*. *F* is supposed to have been compiled at Canterbury.

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of his scholars.* Its style, verbose, inflated, laden with texts of Scripture, is the style of its day, but its inner truthfulness and simplicity is its own. No Dunstan is more unlike the conventional Dunstan than the Dunstan of Bridferth's biography. Very silent about miracles, unacquainted with the anchorite's cell or the visits of Satan, the writer pictures simply enough a quiet Englishman, versatile, accomplished, kindly-hearted, waiting for the call which he knew must come, and the work which he knew he had to do, as quietly as Cromwell waited for his work by the banks of the Ouse.

The conventional Dunstan did not appear for nearly a century after Bridferth. On the destruction of the records and MSS of Canterbury by the great fire which destroyed the Cathedral in 1070, Osbern, Precentor and Sub-prior, a man of great literary note in his day,† was commissioned by the convent to supply, in Dunstan's case, the loss. He had before him, he tells us, two classes of biographies, the one (probably the metrical compilation from B by Adalard) written "with plenty of elegance but with little diligence," the other (no doubt that of Bridferth himself) "with plenty of diligence but with little elegance." Osbern determined to combine the merits of both, but his diligence and his elegance were alike fatal to Dunstan. The first shewed itself in the large additions now made to his biography. Partly, these were due to a third class of lives which, he asserts, had perished in the fire, but fragments of which

* "Quæ vel videndo vel audiendo ab ipso didicerat vel etiam ex ejus alumnis quos a tenellâ juventutis ætate ad viros usque perfectos doctrinarum pabulis decenter instructos ipsemet educandos deduxit" (B in præfat.) And in relating his death "Arbitror æquum esse ut ea quæ vel egomet vidi vel audivi pro posse caritatis enodem."

† "Osbernus, qui ejus vitam Romanâ elegantiâ composuit, nulli nostro tempore stylo secundus." W. Malm. gest. Reg. lib ii., sec. 149 Hardy.

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remained "in an English version." But, whatsoever be the truth of this, the bulk of his additions can be clearly traced to another source. In the interval between Bridferth and Osbern the monks of Glastonbury had spared neither pains nor invention in providing legends and relics of the greatest of their Abbots. Osbern* had visited the sacred spot, had seen the saint's work-cell, had handled (he boasts) the very products of his craft, had bedewed them with his tears, and adored them on bended knees. Around them clustered a jungle of myths as baseless as the contemporary myths of the same great Abbey about Joseph of Arimathea. It was easy, however, for the "elegance" of Osbern to throw them into shape, and the biography which resulted soon drove the simpler tale of Bridferth from the field. Nor even now is it possible, even while irritated by the carelessness of his copying, his indifference to chronology, his unscrupulous emendations and transpositions of the authority which he follows, to refrain from admiring the rare dramatic faculty with which Osbern has succeeded in blending these discordant accounts together, and creating out of them the weird demoniac Dunstan who is so familiar to all of us.

But though familiar he is not very intelligible. This poetic creation of a Canterbury monk of the eleventh century has sadly puzzled the historian and biographer of the nineteenth. The latest biography is that by Dean Hook, and is an honest attempt to do justice to the great minister. But it is almost amusing to see the Dean's

* Osbern. sec. 13. "Miserum me ac peccatorem fateor inspexisse, sanctum sessionis ipsius locum vidisse, quædam etiam manuum illius opera peccatribus manibus contrectasse, oculis appouisse, rigasse lacrymis, et flexis genibus adorasse." Immediately before this comes the story of the "Destina or work-cell," immediately after it the interview with the Devil.

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efforts to bring his vigorous common sense to bear on this imaginary Dunstan. In successive pages he appears as an "able statesman," as a "bold reformer," as "frenzied," as "partially insane," a "delirious dreamer," a "monomaniac," a "ventriloquist." But with this wealth of resources for explanation the Dean leaves him a puzzle after all. For, as the world is at present constituted, it is not by ventriloquism or monomania that men are enabled to do what Dunstan undoubtedly did, to revive religion and learning over the length and breadth of the land, and to hold together for half a century a monarchy which, in its artificial structure and balanced policy, contained within it the seeds of its own decay.

To render him intelligible we have but to recur to Bridferth's biography, and to view the Dunstan he depicts for us in connection with his country and his time. We claim him as a Somerset man, but we must not confound the Somerset of the tenth century with the Somerset of to-day. In the forest near Malmesbury and the masses of wood beneath the edge of the chalk downs of Wilts still linger the scanty remains of the great forest which, bent like a bow from Severn to Selwood, must have greatly narrowed Somerset to the north-east and the north; westward, its boundary was the Parrett; the Bryt-welch wandered either free, or as nominal tributaries from Quantock to Exeter; and Glastonbury in Dunstan's day was still "in West-Saxonum Finibus."* The little vill marked a stage in the long history of the West-Saxon Conquest, a history very difficult to follow in the meagre notices of the national chronicle. The Conquest was protracted through a century and a half by the external and

* Bridferth. cap. 1., sec. 8.

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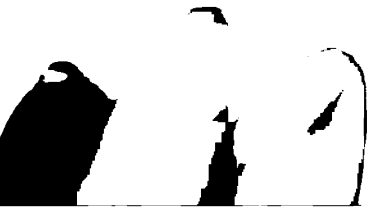
internal hindrances of the conquerors, by endless wars with Sussex, by a life and death struggle with Mercia. An interval of eight years of inaction separates the victory at Deorham, which made Ceawlin master of Bath, from the victory at Bradford, when under Kenwalch the invaders overspread the country north of Mendip. A second campaign, three years later, ending in the victory at "Peonna" on the skirts of the great forest that covered Somerset to the east, settled the conquerors round the sources of the Parrett. Then followed a lull of a quarter of a century, ere Kentwine swept down the vale of Avalon to "drive the Britons to the sea," and Ini pushing his way southward round the marshes of the Parrett to the aid of his kinsman Nun against the Welch prince Geraint, guarded the frontier of the new conquests by his wooden fort on the banks of the Tone,* and established beneath the heights of the Tor his "cænobium" of Glastonbury. This protracted Conquest was the root of the after supremacy of Wessex. Long after external aggrandisement had ceased elsewhere, while the other English kingdoms were wasting their stength in inter-necine wars, Wessex had new march lands to share among his victorious soldiers. Each successive wave of invasion has left its mark in the local names of the district over which it passed, and the varying proportion of these to the Celtic or other non-English names around them throws a little light on the character of the Conquest. We may take as a rough index the well-known English termination "ton." North of Mendip this bears to all other names the proportion of about one third; between Mendip and the Parrett of a fourth. Across the Parrett, but east of the road from Watchet to

* Our Taunton.



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Wellington it decreases to a fifth, and west-ward of this it becomes rapidly rarer and bears only the proportion (in different districts) of an eight or tenth. The "tons" and "hams" of the settlers were the seedplots of a new life before which the old Romanized Somerset was passing away. The new settlers left the towns to themselves, and toiled among their British serfs at husbandry as heartily as they had toiled at war. No picture better illustrates the life of the early English settler than that of the Icelander in the Saga of Burnt Njal, sowing the seed with one hand and holding his bare sword with the other. Irish pilgrims wandered from hamlet to hamlet, and the gypsy-like court of the king settled at vill after vill till the beeves were all slaughtered, and the mead-pitchers empty. Meanwhile the great towns, the villas, the industrial works of the Roman æra fell, unheeded, into decay. Bath was dwindling away, though still great enough for the coronation of a king. The peasant told among the ruins of Ilchester, the curious legend of the birds and the blazing brands which probably illustrates the mode of its capture. Bristol was not as yet, and not a town rose among the villages and hamlets between Bath and Exeter. The country houses of the great provincials, which had studded so thickly the face of the country lay burnt or in decay. The mines of Mendip and Brendon, whence their wealth had been drawn, were abandoned or forgotten. The sea burst again through the neglected barriers, and the Tor rose like an island out of a waste of flood-drowned fen and marsh that stretched westward to the channel.

From one of these English families who had chosen it as their settlement the little hamlet at its base took its name

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of Glastonbury, the borough of the Glœstingas.* It was already a place of pilgrimage. The first inhabitants of Ini's cœnobium found, as they alleged, "an ancient church built by no art of man," and to this (probably some deserted Roman villa) they added an oratory of stone. It was doubtless the only church in the district, and hence was crowded with worshippers from the neighbourhood.† The cœnobium lay on the border of the estate of Heorstan,‡ the husband of Cynedridis. Both are asserted by Osbern to have been of royal blood; they were certainly well-connected. One brother, Athelm, the first of the Bishops of Wells, became Plegmund's successor in the see of Canterbury; another brother, Elfege, was Bishop of Winchester; Kinesige, the Bishop of Lichfield, is mentioned incidentally as a kinsman. Heorstan was at any rate a Thane of some wealth, a man of piety as the times went, and fond of joining the pilgrims as they passed by, taper in hand, to the adjacent shrine. On one of these occasions his boy, Dunstan, accompanied him to share his nocturnal vigils, and the early biographer tells a charmingly natural tale‖ how, while his parents watched, the weary child fell into a pleasant sleep, and woke to tell his dream of an old man, clad in white, who had led him through ever-lengthening aisle and cloister of church and cell. Dreams of this kind

* So Kemble. Saxons in England, vol. i. Appendix. But "antiquo vicinorum vocabulo Glastonia noncupata." B. sec. 3.

† In ea siquidem ipsius loca primi Catholicæ legis neophyti antiquam Deo dictante repererunt ecclesiam nullâ hominum arte constructam .... huic etiam aliud addiderunt opere lapideum oratorium quod Christo ejusque Apostolo. S. Petro. dedicaverunt. Porro dehine universorum circumquaque fidelium frequentia colebat, et jam dictæ insulæ pretiosum locum humiliter frequentabat. B. sec. 3.

‡ Erat quædam regalis in confinio ejusdem viri insula. B. sec. 3.

‖ B. sec. 3. Osbern's expansion of this is a fair specimen of his workmanship. Osbern. sec. 3.

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are the heritage of childhood, but it was easy for Dunstan living, like Warren Hastings, to realize in stone and mortar the fancies of his youth, to look on them as revelations from heaven. This is the only incident of his childhood recorded by either biographer; but we glean in the progress of his story a few details which give us a hint of his home. It must have been in his father's hall that the fair, diminutive boy* with his scant, but beautiful hair† caught his charm over animals,‡ his love for the "vain songs of ancient heathendom, the trifling legends, and the funeral chaunts,"‖ which afterwards roused against him the charge of sorcery. Thence, too, from the practice, as we see it in the story of Cœdmon, of passing the harp round the hall from one reveller's hand to another, he may have derived his passionate love of music and his "custom"§ of carrying his harp in his hand on journey or visit. His parents fade from sight as they lead him to school, but they lived long in the heart of Dunstan. Years after, amid other celestial revelations, he told of a vision of Heorstan and Cynedridis among a company of angelic spirits.¶

Neighbours were not the only pilgrims to the Church of Christ and St. Peter. It became the centre of the religion of the West, and even the great Athelstan himself came thither to pray and carouse. None held it in greater honour than the wandering scholars, the "peregrini" of Ireland. From the 6th century to the 8th the Irish had been the great missionaries of Christianity; from the 9th

* "Quantitate quidem corporis parvulum." Osbern. 3.
† "Tenui sed formosâ cæsarie erat." Osbern. 14.
‡ See story posteâ. B. 6.
‖ Charges of his enemies, posteâ. B. 6.
§ "Sumpsit secum ex more citharam suam quam linguâ paterna 'hearpam' vocamus." B. 12.
¶ Osbern, Sec. 1.

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to the 11th, precisely when all learning threatened to become extinguished, they were the missionaries of knowledge.* A tradition of its having been the resting-place of a Patrick the Younger made Glastonbury the resort of the "Hiberniensium peregrini," who left here, as along the Rhine or the Danube, their "books," to be hereafter diligently studied by Dunstan.† To the cœnobium, whose library was thus enriched, he was now brought for education by his parents. It is pleasant to think how little change time can have made in the natural features of the scene on which he must have gazed—the great moor, the islet-hills dotting it, the cliff-like mass of Mendip in the distance. It was a time of profound peace for the West during the youth of Dunstan; the war under Eadward and his sister of Mercia rolled stubbornly northward, the solitary descent of the Danes upon Watchet was repulsed, and it was only in the dawn of the youth's manhood that the slender, golden-haired Athelstan swept by to drive the Brit-Welch from Exeter. But the traditions of the death-struggle with the Danes must have been fresh in the minds of all; Heorstan may have been one of the men of Somerset who gathered to Alfred at Selwood; Athelney, where the King lurked, lay but a few miles off across Polden; and Wedmore, where Guthrum's chrysmal-fillet was unbound lay below in the marshes. Amid these scenes and traditions the boy who was to carry on and complete the

* Ozanam, Civilization chez les Francs, i. 102.

† B. 5. "Porro Hiberniensium peregrini locum quem dixi Glastonise *sicut et cæteræ fidelium turbæ* magno colebant affectu, et maxime ob B. Patricii junioris honorem qui faustus ibidem in Domino quievisse narratur. Horum etiam libros, rectæ fidei tramitem philosophantes, diligenter excoluit; aliorumque prudentium quos ab intimo cordis aspectu Patrum Sanctorum assertione solidatos esse persensit, solubili semper scrutamine indagavit," The words in *italics* preclude Osbern's fiction of an "Irish School."

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work of Alfred passed the years of his youth, outstripping his companions, and roving* over the literature, sacred and profane, of his house, till the overtasked brain broke down into fever and delirium.† Bursting from the control of his nurse the boy rushed down the road toward the church, whirling from side to side the stick he had snatched up to keep off the hounds which his frenzy imagined in pursuit of him. He scaled the ladders which led to the roof, and threading his way along its timbers descended in safety among the slumbering "custodes." The result of this wonderful escape was a resolve on the part of his parents to devote him to the life of a "Clericus," or professional man of the day, and with this purpose he was now placed in the cœnobium of Glastonbury.‡ Here his rapid progress continued; his knowledge, especially of the Irish books in the library, became famous in the neighbourhood, and reached (perhaps when wandering in the neighbourhood) the court of the King. He seems himself to have made his appearance there, but only to excite the ill-will of the courtiers, many of whom were kinsfolk of his own. Charges of magic, of addiction to the old heathen legends, and spells, were made against him; his enemies drove him from the king's train, and,

* B. 6. "Velut apis ingenioса"—"How doth the little busy bee"?

† B. 5. Breaks out into verse on the subject. For the dogs, of
"Fustem ac surculeum rapuit tunc forte repertum
Quocum percutiens ambabus partibus auras,
A canibus rabidis *quasi* se defenderet,"
with Osbern's "Neodum itineris medium confecerat, cum malignus spiritus latrantium canum multitudine stipatus occurrit, viamque eunti interludere contendit." Dunstan shakes his stick in his face and abuses him! Sec. 5.

‡ Osbern places this event after his admission to the "school" at Glastonbury. It is clear from B. 4, 5, (whom he is copying) that he only entered the cœnobium in consequence of it, and had been well taught *before*.

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waiting him as he passed through the marshes, threw him from his horse, and, with the wild passion of a rude age, trampled him underfoot in the mire.* A mile off stood a friend's house, and thither Dunstan crawled as they rode away; the fierce house-dogs rushed out at one who, in his miry guise, seemed more monster than man, but (the story lights up a side of Dunstan's character) recognized his voice and fawned upon him.† It was probably to the house of his kinsman,‡ Elfege the Bald, Bishop of Winchester, the demesnes of whose see covered a large part of Somerset, that the bemired scholar made his way. "Become a monk," was the probably very friendly advice of Elfege, but the charms of a young lady-love,‖ whose caresses he every day enjoyed, were of more weight than the attractions of celibacy. A severe attack, however, of what seems to have been a dropsical disease, seconded the exhortation of his kinsman, and Dunstan rose from his sick-bed a monk. A narrow escape from a falling stone and the death of his Glastonbury friend, the deacon Wulfrid, confirmed him in his choice.

* B. 6. Nonnuli propriorum sodalium et Palatinorum, tum quam maxime consanguineorum suorum qui salutiferis actibus ejus invidebant . . . dicentes illum ex libris salutaribus et viris peritis non saluti animarum profutura sed avitoe gentilitatis vanissima didicisse carmina et historiarum frivolas colere incantationum nœnias . . . . projecerunt in lutulenta palustrium loca et . . pedibus superimprimebant . . in foetenti volutabro dehonestarent. . . . . accorimi canes . . . . crudeli latratu hunc invasarunt, tamen ut blandientis vocem audierunt, mox esse illius ex eo tantummodo reticentes agnoverunt.

† Osbern gives a sketch of his court-life—makes him court-favourite, and judge!! This, in a boy, staggers modern biographers, but they still follow Osbern in placing here the episode of the self-sounding harp. Hook. i, 387.

‡ B. 7. "Propinquus ipsius."

‖ Cujus quotidie blanditiis foveretur, "The lively discussion between Elfege and Dunstan, in Osbern, Sec. 11, (and thence enlarged by Dean Hook, i. 389, 390) is a fair specimen of his invention. Bridferth, whom he is closely following, gives not a syllable of it.

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Wulfrid appeared to him in a dream, relating things of heaven and earth, and, on Dunstan asking a sign, led him into the porch, pointed to an unoccupied spot on its southern side, and announced the burial of a priest there before three days elapsed. Dunstan, visiting the place at daybreak with a group of friends, threw a stone at the spot as he passed, saying lightly "If what I dreamt be true, a priest has to be buried here ere three days are over." No sooner had he retired than the fated priest entered, chose it as the spot of his interment, and died within the appointed time.*

The incident had no small effect on the fortunes of Dunstan. The priest thus buried had been the spiritual guide (perhaps the husband†) of Ethelfleda, one of those Englishwomen of high rank who, like Bertha or Hilda, play no unimportant part in our early church history. Desirous, after her husband's death, of living the life of a nun unattached, she built for her residence a dwelling near the western part of the church, and spent her wealth in works of charity and the entertainment of pilgrims. Amongst these came King Athelstan, and the story of the royal dinner gives a lively picture of the English court on its travels. The "prœvisores" of the King's table arrive the day beforehand to see if all be ready, and, after due inspection, signify their approval of the preparations "if only there is no lack of mead." Ethelfleda, hurt at the apprehended disgrace, flies to the altar of the Virgin and implores her aid for the morrow. On the morrow the King arrives, followed by the long train of his court,‡ and after prayers and mass adjourns to the hall for dinner. All day

* B. 9.

† B. 9. "Magister atque sacerdos." Ibid 10 "post amissum virum."

‡ B. 10. "Stipatus magno comitatu."

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long the cup-bearers with horns and vessels draw at the mead cask, but without exhausting it, till the feast ends and the King rides off.* Dunstan had become a monk, but the monastic profession seems to have been little more than a vow of celibacy. He now became the chaplain and guide of Ethelfleda. "He ever clave to her and loved her in wondrous fashion" is the simple remark of his early biographer.† The wealth of his devotee was placed unreservedly at his command, his sphere begins to widen, we see him followed by a train of pupils,‡ busy with literature,‖ writing, harping, painting, designing. One morning the Lady Edelpyrm summons him to her house to design a stole which she is embroidering. He goes, carrying with him his harp (as was his wont) to amuse his friends in their labours. Dinner over, as he returns with Edelpyrm and her maidens to their toil, the harp, hanging on the wall, sounds, without mortal touch, tones which frame themselves in the excited ears around into the antiphon, "Gaudent in cœlis," while girls and matron drop their embroidery and stare at one another in mute amazement.§

We may pause here to compare this genial scholar-life, so far as it has gone, with the Rembrandtesque sketch which Osbern and the modern biographers and historians in his train have made so familiar to us. In his story the usual wonders prelude the birth of the wondrous child; a

* B. 10. "Pincernis, ut assolet in regalibus conviviis, cornibus scissis aliisque indiscretæ quantitatis vasibus totum diem propinantibus."

† B. 10. "Huic vero semper adhoerebat Dunstanus qui hanc proe cæteris modis mirabilibus adamavit." B. 11. Quasi propriam matrem unice custodivit.

‡ B. 11. "Cum se sequentibus scholasticis."

‖ "Inter sacra literarum studia, ut in omnibus esset idoneus artem scribendi, necnon citharizandi, pariterque pingendi peritiam diligenter excoluit." B. 12.

§ B. 12. "Attonitæ sese invicem aspiciebant."

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sudden darkness fills the church as his mother, Cynedridis, kneels there in the gloom of a February morning, every taper save her own is extinguished and needs to be re-kindled at its flame.* The books left by the Irish peregrini are transmuted into an establishment of Irish scholars, receiving for education the sons of the adjacent thanes, which again in the after-developement of the Dean of Chichester is discovered to have "resembled closely one of our modern colleges."† The youth visits the court, becomes favourite and chancellor, and flies a disgraced courtier. In his bitterness he turns, not merely monk, but anchorite. His cell does not, from Bridferth's silence, seem to have arisen in the first biographer's day, but Osbern has seen it "more like a tomb than a dwelling," five feet in length, in breadth about two-and-a-half. Here the wild anchorite worked the night through at his forge, and through its little window the Devil looked in at the grey of eve.‡ Very vivid is Osbern's rendering of the well-known legend—the Devil chatting of wine and women while the saint is quietly heating his tongs at the fire until the longed-for moment arrives, when, snatching them from the forge, he fastens on the "grisly face,"‖ and, struggling with might and main, drags the monster inside. At last the Devil wriggles away, breaking, with shouts of "Oh, what has this bald-head done?"§ the slumbers of the villagers. His fame gathers to the cell pilgrims of every age and rank, amongst them Elgiva, who, entranced with his conversation, resolves to settle there and live and die with him.

It is impossible not to admire the wild poetry of Osbern's

* Osbern sec. 2. † Hook, Arch B. Cant. i. 385.
‡ "Sub obscuro vespere." Osb. 14.
‖ "Larvalem faciem." I know of no authority for the "nose." Osb. 14.
§ "Oh, quid fecit calvus iste." Osb. 14.

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conception of the anchorite, but no conception could have been less in accordance with the Dunstan of Bridferth and of fact. From the happy quiet of his Glastonbury life he was now suddenly called into a wider sphere by the change of ministry which seems to have followed the death of Athelstan and accession of Eadmund in 940. The tie which had bound him to it had been previously broken. It chanced one day that Dunstan had been absent from the common vespers and was approaching the church at eve with his scholars to complete the office, when, in the waning light of the eastern sky, he saw afar off a white dove of wondrous beauty, winging its way to the house of Ethelfleda. It was the precursor of her death.* The old jealousies seem to have revived on Dunstan's appearance at the court, then stationed, apparently, at "Ceodrium," perhaps Cheddar.† The faction of his opponents prevailed, he counted the game lost, and betaking himself to some envoys from Essex, then staying at court, besought and obtained a promise of settlement in that kingdom and prepared to depart in their train. Eadmund spent the day in the chase; the red deer which he had pursued dashed over Cheddar cliffs,‡ and the King's horse only checked itself on the brink of a ravine, while Edmund, in the bitterness of anticipated death, was recalling his injustice to Dunstan. He was at once summoned on the King's return, "Make haste and saddle your horse," said Edmund, "and journey with me." The royal train passed from Mendip over the marshes to Glastonbury;‖ there, entering the church, the

* B. 11. † B. 13.

‡ B. 14. "Est ibi in proximis locis Ceoddis quoddam inter alia plura præcisi montis præcipitium, mirâ quidem et immensâ profunditate devexum."

‖ "Viam quæ ducit Glastoniam recto tramite." B. 14.

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King took Dunstan by the hand, bestowed on him the kiss of peace, and seated him in the priestly chair as Abbot of Glastonbury.

Dunstan can have been still but a young man when he became (in the Benedictine sense of the word) the founder of English monasticism. The King's gift was rather that of the royal vill and its accompanying fisheries than of what later times would regard as a religious house. What came of the gift was the creation of Dunstan himself. Every English Abbey of the future looked back as its parent to the cloister that rose to realise the dream of his youth. Every great monastic school looked back for its model to the great school of the West, whence four primates had mounted in succession the chair of Canterbury.

1. Of Dunstan himself as Abbot very little is told us. We see him in various stories walking, staff in hand,* with brother Elfege, from cell to cell, inspecting the kitchen arrangements, superintending the new buildings, the fruits of Ethelfleda's legacy, up at dawn correcting faulty manuscripts, busy in reconciling the brethren or engaged in Divine Service with eyes and hands uplifted and face often bathed in tears. But the life of Ethelwold gives us a pleasant peep into the interior of the Abbey.† Learned, active in body and mind, the son of the burgher of Winchester had mounted into court-favour, and, with a view to promotion, had been ordained with Dunstan. He now joined him in his new monastery. In study, whether of books or of music, in prayer and mortification, Ethelwold rapidly took the lead of his fellows; but even when appointed Dean he still remained abbey-gardener, and

* "Spiculo quod semper secum chira dextera convehebat." B. 16. . . . "quem semper secum manu advehebat baculum." B. 17.

† Life by Wolstan. Acta Sanct, Aug. 1, p. 88.

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gathered with his own hands the apples and beans for the brethren's refection. In him Dunstan saw the great engine he needed for the developement of monasticism in England. A dream showed him a tree of wondrous height, stretching its branches north and south, eastward and westward over all Britain, its boughs laden with countless cowls, while a cowl of larger size than all crowned the topmost twig. The tree, Dunstan interpreted, was England as it was to be; the big cowl, Ethelwold.

2. Ethelwold, a famous teacher himself, as Abbot of Abingdon, probably learnt the art under Dunstan. All tradition told of the kindliness of Dunstan's teaching. A hundred years after, when the annual whipping time for Canterbury school arrived (it was a yearly custom in the Cathedral to give the boys a sound whipping all round at Christmas, not for any definite fault, but with a view to their general improvement), the poor little wretches crowded weeping to his shrine, and besought aid of their "dear father Dunstan." Dunstan it was—so every Canterbury schoolboy believed—who set the masters first asleep and then a quarrelling till the whipping blew over.* And the tradition is only in accordance with the few stories preserved of his actual intercourse with his boys. In the midst of a visitation, at Bath, his thoughts were with them, and he told how he had seen the soul of one of them carried heavenward, along a path of light, among an innumerable company of angels.† More interesting—because more authentic—is the tale told to Bridferth by the boy, afterwards a prelate,‡ who shared the adventure. The

* Osbern. Miracles, Bk. II., sec. 11. (in Mabillon. A.S.B.O. Sæc. 5.) The story (Osbern shared it himself) is most interesting and vividly told.

† Osbern. Life. Sec. 23.

‡ Bridferth. Sec. 18. Probably told by Archbishop Ælfric.

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monks had all quitted the Abbey to meet the funeral train which was bringing thither the corpse of the Steward Wulfric. None remained save the Abbot and one little schoolboy; and the two walked out together to see if the brethren were in sight. As they went along* "singing according to their wont," a stone, flung at them from the other side of the old Church, missed Dunstan's head, but knocked off the cap which he wore.† "Run and pick up the stone," said the Abbot, turning to the boy, "and bring it for me to look at." All men agreed that no stone of the kind, big or little, was to be found within the borders of Somerset; that it was, in fact, a "shy" of the Devil's. Dunstan, however, bade it be preserved in safe keeping, and so became, it would seem, the first geologist of the West.

Here, however, we must leave the Dunstan of Bridferth, less romantic, less dramatic than his better-known "double," yet (as it seems to me) more natural, and no less great. He leaves the impression, not of the wild anchorite or the stern fanatic of the common biographers, but of a nature gay, sunny, versatile, artistic; full of strong affections, and capable of inspiring others with affections as strong. As a boy, his schoolfellows weep for him in dread of his death;‡ as a youth he has a bosom friend in the Deacon Wulfric; throughout his manhood he seems always to have won the devotion of women, of his lady-love, of Ethelgiva, of the queenmother Eadgive.‖ His affability is one of the marked traits of his character; he is the favourite alike of his schoolboys, his monks, and

* "Dum semper ex more psallendo incederet." Ib.
† "Pileum, quo caput velabat." B. 18.
‡ "Flebat scholasticorum coetanea turba." Osb. 5.
‖ See B 19.

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the populace.* Quick-witted, of strong memory, a ready and fluent speaker,† of gay and genial address, an artist, a musician; he was at the same time a hard student, an indefatigable worker, busy at books, at building, at handicraft. We leave him as yet neither minister nor archbishop, but Abbot Dunstan; his slender frame leaning on his cross-headed staff, his scant fine hair covered by his cap, singing psalms with the little schoolboys, and dreaming of a future for England, when, from that seed-plot at Glastonbury, monasteries should be scattered broadcast over the land, and cowls should hang upon every branch of that mighty tree. The funeral of King Eadmund rolls in; the hour has struck when the dream has to be thrown aside for action, and the Dunstan of Somerset must broaden with the Dunstan of England.

* See the picturesque scene at his funeral. Osbern, Sec. 59. "Sub immenso murmure lugentium populorum, feretrum densissime ambientium facies suas dissecantium, palmis sese ferientium, atque amaris vocibus, 'Heu! Heu! carissime Patre!' clamantium."

† "Dicendi facultas." Osbern, 43.

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