

Athelney Abbey.*

BY THE LATE REV. THOMAS HUGO, F.S.A.

[Hugo, Thomas (1820-1876), the Bewick collector, eldest son of Charles Hugo, M.D., was born at Taunton in 1820. B.A., Worc. Coll., Oxon., 1842; rector of West Hackney from 1868 to his death; F.S.A., 1853. His special province in literature was as historian of religious houses in the West of England, the original sources for whose history he was the first to study thoroughly. He was also the writer of several dramas, but he was best known for his extensive collection of the works of the brothers Bewick of Newcastle, which included many of the original wood-blocks. His three works 1866, 1868, and 1870, on the wood-cuts and wood-blocks of T. and J. Bewick are exhaustive on all points. As a musician he was a facile writer, and contributed several pieces to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. He died after a short illness at West Hackney Rectory, on 31st December, 1876, and was buried in Highgate cemetery on 6th January, 1877, aged only 56.—Abridged from *The Dictionary of National Biography*.]

IN the midst of the enormous level through which some of the principal rivers of Somersetshire find their way to the sea, is a small and slightly-elevated point of rising ground, whose claims to notice, for historical interest and for physical character, would seem at a first inspection to be pretty equally balanced. The traveller, indeed, would be almost certain to pass it without remark, unless he had a companion to whom the place was known, or if his eye failed to detect, as it might easily do, a small white obelisk which crowns the summit, and tends, if nothing more, to excite his curiosity. Eminence and obelisk, however, have little in themselves to attract attention, even amid that monotonous plain above which they scarcely appear to rise. And yet there is hardly a place in England whose name is more famous, or the history of which during one

* British Museum Additional MS., 30,288, ff. 9-83.

brief moment is more affectionately remembered. Its subsequent annals, indeed, are all but forgotten—a result in some measure to be accounted for from the fact that the account of them has to be obtained for the most part from sources which few are found to explore, and from which most are repelled by the strangeness of the features with which they are accompanied. That history, however, although it relates to a religious house in a retired situation and of small revenues, is a singularly instructive one. Commencing as it does just a thousand years ago, the changes which have befallen such establishments, nearly from the time of their first introduction into this country to the final catastrophe, are here conspicuously represented. Added to this, almost every department of conventional life, whether usual or otherwise, is successively and in detail brought before us. And the pleasure is great, that so much can even now be recovered in connection with a spot so apparently destitute of human interest, whose end so falsifies and misrepresents its beginning, and whose present so negatives and belies its past.

The isle of Athelney is situated on the north side of Stanmoor, in the parish of East Lyng, and is about four miles south-west from the town of Bridgwater. It lies on the north bank of the Tone, about one mile above the confluence of that river with the Parret, on the outside therefore, and not, as frequently supposed, between those streams. It consists of an island of two low eminences, divided by a shallow depression which is, nevertheless, some feet above the vast level that stretches on every side around. The island is composed of red marl, and is twenty-four acres in extent, eleven-and-a-half acres being the complement of the eastern and slightly higher eminence, which was occupied by the Monastery, and twelve-and-a-half acres that of its fellow. It is still not unfrequently an island in fact as well as in name, although furnished with a high embankment between it and the river, and has to be reached in boats during the months of usual winters. On the eastern eminence

is a pleasant farmhouse, erected about eighty years ago, generally backed by a goodly group of hayricks and wheat-mows, and above it the obelisk already referred to. The river is crossed by a bridge of wood, similar to many that still adorn the picturesque river which flows beneath. But the eye looks in vain for any indications of the ancient glories of the place. Luxuriant crops wave on the gently swelling eminence, but of the graceful structure which once crowned and glorified it not one stone remains *in situ* to make us conscious of the treasure which we have lost.

To the lover of our older history there is scarcely a spot that can call up recollections more full of interest than that about which these pages are to discourse. That interest, however, as I said, has hitherto been for the most part associated with one single actor and with one single age. It is as the scene of the retreat of the noble Saxon king, the truly great Alfred, that most men are conscious of a reverential regard for the humble isle of Athelney. Its after fortunes are little known. It was far removed from the busy world, and was the home of a community with which the chroniclers of battles and sieges and the rise and fall of kingdoms had very little to do. It has been said by men well qualified to pronounce a judgment on the subject that "of the history of that community from the end of the eleventh century to the dissolution less is known than that of almost any other."² I am about to endeavour to supply in some measure that deficiency, at least so far as a long and careful search into records of every description both in MS. and print will enable me to do so. And I think I can promise my reader that not much will remain for him to collect when he shall have mastered what shall now be presented to him.

Athelney Abbey owed its foundation to the piety of King Alfred the Great. All the more ancient chroniclers unite in

(2). *Dugdale's Mon.* ii, 403.

attributing to him the honour of the work.³ It was done in performance of a solemn vow, as a thank-offering both for the security which he had enjoyed amid the impassable morasses by which the place was on every side surrounded, and for the good success which had crowned his efforts, when, released at length from his involuntary retirement, he had placed himself at the head of his re-assembled forces, and had become in his turn the master of the field. He had been forced to fly from a vastly superior force, and had betaken himself for safety to a region whither few would be found to follow him. He found shelter, according to the Register of the Abbey, in a small cottage belonging to St. Athelwine, son of King Kyne-gilsus, who had been a hermit here.⁴ It appears that he soon made some attempts to increase by art what had been effected for the place by nature. The Saxon Chronicle, under the year 878, tells us that at Easter, which fell on the 23rd March, the king with a small band constructed a fortress at Ethelinga-eigge, and that from this fortress, with the men of that part of Somerset, from time to time they fought against the army. This statement is repeated by Asser, Simeon of Durham, Aethelweard, Florence of Worcester, Geoffrey Gaimar, John Wallingford, Henry of Huntingdon, and others. Ingulphus adds that after his successes over the Danes he turned this fortress into the monastery.⁵ Asser, whose account is most valuable from his having visited the place as chaplain to the royal founder, describes the place as surrounded by a vast extent of impassable morasses and water, adding that no visitor could reach it except by boat, or by a bridge, which, I presume, owed its construction to Alfred himself; and the fort as excellently constructed—"arx munitissima pulcherrima operatione consita est"—and as attached to a bridge which

(3). MS. Harl. 261, ff. 27b, 104b, *al.* 107b. MS. Cott. Nero D. ii, f. 80 *al.* 86. Asser, Simeon Dunelm., Flor. Wigorn., Will. Malmesbury, John Glaston., i, 112. Leland Coll., ii, 218. *Ibid.* i, 26, 43 78.

(4). Regist. Abb. Atheln., *Collinson* i. 86. Leland Itin. iv, pt. ii, p. 135.

(5). Ingulphus sub ann. 872.

connected the island with the opposite bank of the neighbouring river, and had another tower at its eastern extremity.⁶

It is said that the place derived its name of *Æthelinga-eigge*, or, as the chronicles translate it, "Clitonum" or "nobilium insula," the isle of nobles, from the temporary habitation of the sovereign and the constant resort of his nobility during that period. It soon changed into *Athelinganye*, *Ethelingey*, *Aliennia*, *Adelingen*, *Athelygneye*, etc., until, long before the Dissolution, it had taken the form which it still assumes.

The main reason of Alfred's selection of the place, was, according to the legend, a vision of Saint Cuthbert which had been granted to him during his retreat amidst its solitudes. He had at that time little prospect of success against his own and his country's enemies, and his Somersetshire fastness was likely to become the scene of a life-long banishment. It was then that the sainted Bishop of Lindisfarne is related to have visited him. He was sleeping for sorrow, as the chronicler relates, and his attendants were gone to fish in the neighbouring river. Cuthbert declared to him that he was sent from Heaven to assure him of an early restoration to his throne. The saint added that his words should be verified by the return of his servants laden with fish, whereas there had been only too great a probability that, as the river was entirely frozen over, they would have returned as empty as they went. He ended by exhorting him to put his trust in God, and to accept the words that he had heard as proceeding from God's messenger. The same vision was granted to the king's mother, then also at Athelney, and while they were communicating to each other what they had thus supernaturally learned, the servants entered with the promised supplies. On this the king is said to have solemnly vowed that the scene of so gracious an interposition should be the site of a house which should for ever keep the blessing in remembrance.⁷

(6). Asser, ed. Camden, p. 18.

(7). Will. Malmesbury, ed. Savile, p. 43.

The place was indeed naturally endeared to the mind of the pious and grateful king, and we are told that he used to relate in happier days, and to favoured companions, not only the privations which he had endured, but the many blessings which he had here enjoyed.⁸ It was the scene not only of that solemn vision to which I have just referred,⁹ but of the visit of the beggar to whom he gave a part of his last loaf, and was soon afterwards rewarded by an abundance of provisions, and of the homely adventure with the cowherd's wife, when, as she remarked, although he was quite ready to do good service in eating the cakes, he took no care to prevent them from burning.¹⁰ It was during his retreat also, amid the seclusion of this unknown spot, that he prepared himself for his visit to the enemy's camp in the disguise of a harper, and thus gained a knowledge of their numbers and position.¹¹ And it is alleged that he entertained so profound an impression of all that he had here undergone, and so high an opinion of the character of Denewulf, the swineherd, upon whose hospitality and fidelity he had been dependant on his first arrival at Athelney, that he ever regarded the scene of the former with peculiar interest and subsequently raised the latter even to the episcopal throne of Winchester. We can hardly wonder that the locality of so many and touching events was possessed of a solemn charm and fascination of its own for one whose heart was so sensitive, so tender, and so true.

A question, however, is raised by Reyner whether the monastery was actually founded by King Alfred, or so enlarged and endowed by him that he deserves to be called its founder. He inclines to the opinion, with which Spelman agrees, that it had a greater antiquity than that usually assigned to it, because in the first place the abbey was dedicated to St. Egelwine, the brother of King Kenewalh, who reigned before the death of

(8.) Will. Malmesbury, ii, p. 121.

(9.) Asser.

(10.) Asser, p. 9. John Wallingford, p. 537.

(11.) Ingulphus, p. 869. Will. Malmesbury, ii, p. 121.

Archbishop Paulinus, and secondly, because the charter of endowment which Alfred granted to the monastery, insinuated that he enlarged rather than founded the House—"non fundationem sed amplificacem monasterii insinuat."¹²

He admits, however, that Asser describes the monastery as recently founded, and honestly adds that he quotes him the more willingly from the fact that the assertion had come with the authority of an eyewitness, as Asser is well known to have been. And he proceeds to explain a few of the verbal difficulties in the description of the plan of that writer, to which I shall presently call the reader's attention.

The charter which Reyner quotes is dated A.D. 852. This he altered to 878, but incorrectly. The date of the foundation, as furnished by some of the best of the ancient authorities, is A.D. 888.¹³

The house was founded for monks of the Order of St. Benedict, and was dedicated to our Blessed Saviour, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Athelwine. Bishop Tanner [*Turner MS.*] is in error when he says that "no mention is made in the surrender, nor anywhere but in Malmesbury, of their patron St. Egelwine." Nor have the last editors of the *Monasticon* helped us to the entire truth when they add that "in a recognition, however, of the middle of the fifteenth century this monastery is spoken of as dedicated to St. Saviour, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Athelwine."

The fact is, as we shall see as we proceed, that in a number of documents of the thirteenth and two following centuries, the name of St. Athelwine is given as that of one of the saints to whom the house was dedicated.

The original structure appears to have been worthy alike of the royal founder and of the sacred use for which it was erected. Simeon of Durham speaks of it in one place as "*Monasterium præpulchrum*," and in another as "*monasterium nobile*."¹⁴

(12). Reyner de Antiq. Benedictor. in Angl., ii, sec. 6, pp. 132, 133, 134.

(13). MS. Cott. Nero D. ii, ff. 80 *al.* 86. MS. Harl. 261, ff. 104*b al.* 107*b.*

(14). Scriptorum X, Twisden, cols. 132, 150.

Ethelred, abbot of Rievaulx, calls it "nobilissimum,"¹⁵ and Bromton, "famosum."¹⁶ In the face of these authorities, and especially of one whom I am about to cite, it is scarcely warrantable in Sir John Spelman to assert that "it was a work greater in the devotion from whence it proceeded than in the magnificence of the structure."¹⁷ It was in fact an example of a style hitherto unknown in England. The founder employed skilful workmen from abroad, and his countrymen saw with surprise and delight the edifices that resulted from their labours. The house of Athelney, we may be well assured, was no exception to the general rule. Besides the authorities quoted above, we have the account of one who, it would seem, had himself visited the place and recorded his impressions of the interesting scene. I have already stated that a strong fortress had been erected soon after Alfred's arrival. This was on the western bank of the Tone, and communicated with a bridge over the river. The monastery must have been closely contiguous to, if not on the site of, the fortress. It was small, but of ornamental character, and the style of its church was sufficiently singular to induce the monk of Malmesbury, who wrote in the twelfth century, to enter somewhat minutely into its peculiarities. He says that the building had to be accommodated to the limited space that was at command, and was consequently but of moderate size. The mode of construction, however, was new. Four piers were sunk in the ground, springing from which were four circular arches which supported the edifice. Each of these four sides terminated in an apsidal chancel or chapel.¹⁸ It would seem that Alfred's builders derived the idea of their work from the late Roman buildings to which they were accustomed, and it was assuredly an approach to the style which the Norman conquerors afterwards made common, and which in our architectural nomenclature is

(15). Twisden, col. 355.

(16). *Ibid.*, col. 812.

(17). *Life of Alfred*, ed. Hearne, p. 165.

(18). *Will. Malmesbury*, ed. Savile, p. 255.

called after their name. We are informed by the authorities already referred to that Alfred endowed his monastery with possessions of considerable value. The register of the abbey sets forth that he gave to his foundation "the whole isle of Athelney, exempt from taxes and other burdens, with common pasture, and free ingress and egress in Stathmoor, Saltmoor, Haymore and Currymoor, and all other moors within his manor of North Curry.¹⁹ In addition to this, as we gather from another charter of which but a few late transcripts have been preserved, he gave ten cassates of land in Sudtun (Sutton) with their appurtenances, all meadows, pastures, rivulets, and other appurtenances. As this charter is not without interest, as an example of an instrument of this early period, a literal translation will be acceptable:—

"Whilst our Lord Jesus Christ reigneth for ever, all the kingdoms of this wavering life and the rulers of the kingdoms from the beginning of this worthless age fail and quickly pass away. Therefore to fugitive and mortal things eternal joys are to be preferred. On which account, I, Alfred, by the divine mercy ordaining, King of the West Saxons, for the relief of my soul and the forgiveness of my sins, have given with a willing mind a certain small piece of ground of ten cassates in extent, in a place called Sudtun, by the isle of nobles, which in the English tongue is usually called Æthlingaig, for the supply of their monastic life, to the monks there under the exercise of their rule, devoutly serving Almighty God; and this liberty I have with devout mind given to the aforesaid monastery with meadows, pastures, rivulets, and all things rightly thereunto appertaining to continue for ever free from all royal tribute and compulsory works and penal causes, save and except military service against an invader, and the erection and repair of forts and bridges. Whosoever shall be willing to increase this gift, on him may God increase His blessings in the land of the living. But if any (which God

(19). *Regist. Abb. Atheln., Collinson i, 86.*

forbid), puffed up with pride and enticed by the ability of acting tyrannically, shall endeavour to infringe this and to make it of none effect, let him know that he is accursed from all the Church of Christian men, and that he shall have to tender an account in the day of judgment before Christ and His angels, unless he shall before have made amends. The aforesaid land, even the gift of this ground, is enclosed by these boundaries, Arnstore and Lceroc, etc.

This bill of the present gift is written in the 852nd year from the Incarnation of Christ, in the fourth indiction, these witnesses agreeing whose names appear."²⁰ Then follow the names of Alfred, Ealhfead, Eandulf, Cuthred, Vulfric, Elfestan, Epeheah, Mired, Mansel, Vulfric and Anulf. I fear that the present form of this charter, especially as regards the names of places and persons, is sadly full of errors. The original has long been lost, and, as I have already stated, the only copies of it that we possess are transcripts written many centuries later, and apparently the work of scribes who had a very imperfect knowledge of the document on which they were employed. Its genuineness may be suspected, as the indiction is erroneous, although Mr. Hardy has well shown that such a mistake is not absolutely conclusive against the claims of the instrument in which it occurs.

For the early history of the community at Athelney we have a most trustworthy authority in Asser, the king's chaplain and Bishop of Sherborne. He had himself visited the place, and his account is singularly complete and interesting. The first head of the new institution was a celebrated German monk, whom Alfred had invited to his kingdom in order to conduct the discipline and studies of the sacred schools which he intended to establish. This was John, surnamed Scotus, the old Saxon, and it is probable that he came from the monastery of Corbey. All the authorities unite in attributing to this eminent person the highest possible qualities. Alfred himself

(20). MS. Lansd. 447, ff. 58, 58b. Cod. Dipl. cccix, vol. ii, pp. 105, 106.

makes honourable mention of him as his mass-priest in the right noble preface to his translation of Gregory's "Pastoral." Asser calls him "acerrimi ingenii virum," and says that he was most learned in all kinds of literature and science. Ingulphus praises him as "acerrimi ingenii philosophum." Indeed, it would appear that nothing less than the presence of the highest attainments both moral and intellectual was sufficient for the requirement. It should be remembered that the institution of monachism was at that time in little favour with the great body of the people. With their successes over the Danes, wealth had produced luxury, and luxury was instinctively opposed to the religion of the cloister. Even before the time of Alfred the love of monastic institutions had begun to wax cold. The good king, however, had long felt that it was in such establishments that religion and learning could be most successfully encouraged, and in this opinion he was warmly supported by the man whom he placed over his new monastery at Athelney. With a small body of foreign monks, mostly Franks, he settled down to his life of devoted service in the midst of a wilderness, at first resorted to only for the protection which its seclusion could impart, and to which, for long afterwards, no one would have been attracted by any motive save those of separation from the world, and of devotion to a religious and literary life.

The number of foreign ecclesiastics, both priests and deacons, who had been placed under Abbot John, was not sufficient for his ardent wishes, and before long he had assembled a large body of monks, principally from Germany. Together with them were a number of "infantes," youths of tender age, as Reyner explains the word, also foreigners, who were destined afterwards for the monastic habit; and among them Asser tells us that he saw a child of pagan race—a Dane, as Reyner suggests—who was by no means inferior to his companions.

For some time all went well. A cloud, however, was coming over the scene, and that from a quarter from which no danger was apprehended. It was nothing less than a most

atrocious attempt on the life of the good abbot himself on the part of two of his monks. Asser gives us the particulars, related in considerable detail from the testimony of witnesses, and it is difficult to imagine a more shameless endeavour to neutralize the good work which had been so auspiciously begun. I would willingly, with the historian, agree to bury this evil deed in oblivion, did not truth insist on its mention, and did I not remember, with him, that good and evil, like wheat and tares, are permitted to grow together, the former for praise and sequence, the latter for blame and distant avoidance.

It appears that two of the monks, out of envy towards their superior, had seriously conspired with as many of the younger servants to murder him. The plan adopted was worthy of its framers. It was the abbot's custom to spend a part of the night in prayer before the altar, and the assassins determined to enlist the sacred scene and occasion in their unhallowed project. While he was upon his knees they designed that those already hidden in the church should fall on him and murder him, and then drag his lifeless body to the door of a house of evil repute, as though he had met his death in visiting that place; thus, as Asser remarks, "adding crime to crime, as it is said 'the last error shall be worse than the first.'"

A good providence defeated this shameless scheme. The armed assassins were shut into the church and silently waited for their unconscious victim, who came as usual to his midnight prayers. As he was kneeling before the altar the miscreants rushed out upon him and gave him some severe wounds. But they had slightly mistaken the man with whom they had to deal. Abbot John was not only a learned and saintly scholar, but no contemptible specimen of the "muscular christianity" of his age. If he had not been a good priest, he would have been an excellent soldier. He was well skilled in the noble art defensive, and could take his own part when there was fit occasion. So, the moment he heard the

sound of his enemies, before he got sight of them, he rose quickly from his knees and prepared to defend himself. At the same time he called out loudly for assistance, and declared that his assassins were demons rather than men, for that such an attempt was beyond the scope of human turpitude. His cries awoke the monks, who, though greatly alarmed, and especially at the attribution of the attack to supernatural agency, rushed to the church, not, however, before the enemy had made a precipitate retreat to the neighbouring marshes, where pursuit was impossible. The abbot was found half dead, and was carried home amid the lamentations of his brethren, including those, it is added, who were the authors of the plot. The contrivers and their agents, however, were soon discovered, and met the punishment that their crime deserved.

We must now pass to the year 1009. Abbot Ælfric, a name which has not hitherto found a place in the list of superiors, then governed the monastery, and King Æthelred II gave to him and his holy brethren a certain small piece of land, by estimation three perches in extent, situated at Hamme. The gift was as usual, subject to the "trinoda necessitas," which, as we have noticed in the case of the charter of Alfred, comprised the service of aiding the king against an invader, the maintenance of fortifications, and the building and repair of bridges. The house at this time was evidently small, as the king uses in his charter the diminutive form "monasteriolum," and it is spoken of as dedicated to St. Peter without the addition of any other patron. Ælfheah, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, are among the witnesses to this instrument.²¹

Collinson says that Alfwald occurs as abbot in the same year as the date of this gift, and that Simon succeeded him. It appears that he obtained his information from the register

(21). Cod. Dipl., n. mcccvi, vol. vi, pp. 163, 164. Middle Hill MS., n. 4810, f. 91.

of the abbey, or from some transcript of that MS. The same writer gives us the name of Athelward as abbot in the year 1016.²²

It may be presumed that Æthelwin succeeded, and that under his government the community was well known and much revered, for I find that King Cnut, who according to most writers began his reign in 1017, gave them for their prayers in behalf of his soul, land to the extent of two mansæ, or one perch, in a place commonly called Seofenempton. The brotherhood is honourably mentioned in his charter as “famossissima familia,” and the house as a holy and most celebrated place—“in illo sancto et celeberrimo loco qui Æthelinganye nuncupatur.” Æthelwold, Archbishop of Canterbury, was present and attested this donation.²³

The next notice which we possess is a very valuable one, and combined with a particularity of detail which places its object in the clearest light. It is the official return of the possessions of the abbey, contained in the Exchequer and Exon. Domesday. Unfortunately the name of the then abbot is not given, but the possessions of the house are enumerated in a manner that leaves little to be desired.

At the period of the compilation of this invaluable record, which was between the years 1083-1086, the property belonging to the abbey, in the county of Somerset, consisted of the following. I have taken the Exchequer record for the particulars of the lands, and have added the enumeration of the live stock from the Exon. Domesday.

1. *Atiltone* (Ilton).—In the time of King Edward it paid geld for eight hides. The arable land is reckoned at twelve carucates. In the demesne are four hides and there three carucates, ten villeins, six bordarii, with four ploughs, four servi, two horses, six beasts, ten pigs, forty sheep, a mill, the rent of which

(22). History of Somerset, vol. i, p. 87.

(23). Cod. Diplom. mcccxxiv, vol. vi, pp. 187, 188, 189. Midd. Hill MS., n. 4810, f. 75.

was 7s. 6d. ; meadow, forty acres ; pasture, thirty acres ; wood, a mile in length and in breadth ; annual value, one hundred shillings. Of these eight hides the Earl of Moretaine holds two, of which the arable land is four carucates, and the annual value thirty shillings. These in the time of King Edward the Confessor were held by the Abbey.

2. *Sutune* (Long Sutton).—In the time of the Confessor it paid geld for ten hides. Arable land sixteen carucates ; in the demesne, four hides, and there two carucates, four servi, eight villeins, six bordarii, with six ploughs ; six beasts, fifteen pigs, one hundred and two sheep ; meadow, forty acres ; pasture, one hundred acres ; annual value to the abbey, £8. Roger Brito is stated to hold half a hide of the land, with one plough, and Roger de Corcel two hides, against the abbot's will. Two thanes held them of the Church in King Edward's time. The arable land is two carucates ; meadow, six acres ; value, fifty shillings.

3. *Seovenamentone* (Seavington St. Mary).—It paid geld for two hides in the time of the Confessor : the arable land amounted to two carucates. There are in the demesne one hide, and there one carucate, seven villeins, three bordarii, and two servi ; one horse, nine pigs, forty sheep, meadow, six acres ; annual value, thirty shillings.

4. *Hame* (in Bridgwater).—In the time of the Confessor it gelded for one hide. Arable land, four carucates ; in the demesne, half a hide, and there one carucate, four servi, one villein, seven bordarii with one carucate, two beasts ; meadow, fifteen acres ; small wood, three acres ; annual value, thirty shillings.

5. *Lege* (East-Lyng).—It consisted of one hide, which paid no geld in the time of the Confessor. In the demesne half a hide, and there two carucates, six servi, three villeins, four bordarii, with two ploughs ; one horse, two beasts, ten pigs, and thirty sheep ; meadow, twelve acres ; wood, fifty acres ; annual value, forty shillings.

It is further stated that Earl Moriton holds two hides belonging to the abbey, in Aisselle, that Roger de Corcelle holds two hides of the manor of Sutone, and that Ralf de Limesi holds, as it would seem, illegally, one hide, which belonged to the abbey in Bosintone. These lands, it is added, could not be separated from the church.²⁴

In Dorsetshire the Abbey possessed the manor of Candel. In the time of King Edward it paid geld for four hides, one virgate and a half. At the period of the survey the arable land is stated as four carucates, whereof in the demesne were four hides, and there one carucate, two villeins, fourteen bordarii, with two ploughs, meadow, fourteen acres; wood, three furlongs in length and two in breadth. Of this land Aluredus Pincerna is said to hold the one remaining virgate and a half. The value of the whole was 67*s.* 6*d.*, whereof the abbot's portion was 60*s.*²⁵ The record supplies us with the particulars connected with the acquisition of the just mentioned manor of Candle, or Purse Candel, in the hundred of Sherburn, and county of Dorset. It appears that in the time of the Confessor the Abbey had the manor of Bisobestone, or Biscopestone, which then paid geld for nine hides. The Earl of Moretaine gave the monks in exchange for this manor that of Candel, and on the former erected his castle of Montagut, or Montagud. In the account of this transaction, supplied by the Exon Domesday, the abbey is called Aliennia: the Exchequer Domesday reads, as usual, Adelingi.²⁶

It will be seen from the preceding enumeration that in the eleventh century the possessions of the abbey amounted to twenty-six hides, one virgate and a half. The arable land is estimated at thirty-six carucates. The former of these denominations was common amongst Saxons, the latter was of Norman origin. The hide has been described as a measure

(24). Domesday i, p. 91. Exon. Domesday, pp. 175, 176, 408, 479, 488.

(25). Domesday i, f. 786. Exon. Domesday, p. 38.

(26). Exon. Domesday, pp. 260, 261. Domesday i, f. 93.

of land, "sufficient to the cultivation of one plough"—"*hida Angliæ vocatur terra unius aratri culture sufficiens.*" Its exact quantity was never determined, but, as Selden remarks, was at all times uncertain. The carucate was the Norman equivalent to which the Saxon measure was reduced at the formation of the Conqueror's Survey. It was as much arable as could be cultivated every year with one plough and the beasts belonging to it, and has been variously estimated from sixty to one hundred and fifty acres.²⁷ The annual value as then calculated amounted to the sum of £21 7s. 6d. For the earlier half of the twelfth century we have an interesting picture of the place and the community from the graphic pen of the Malmesbury monk. The historian himself was a native of Somersetshire, and, from the minuteness with which he describes the house and its inmates, we may be tolerably sure that he had visited the one and was personally intimate with the other. He says that *Adelingea* is not an island of the sea, but is so inaccessible, from marshes and morasses, that a boat is necessary for approaching it. He adds that there is on the island a large grove of alders, abounding with stags and fallow deer, and many other animals of the same kind. The solid ground, he says, was barely two acres in extent and on it was the monastery constructed. His account of the church I have already given. He describes the brethren as few in number and poor, but as consoled and compensated for their poverty by their love of that quiet and solitude which they so highly valued, and could here so perfectly and uninterruptedly enjoy. Their time was spent in sacred duties, in reciting the praises of their patron St. Egelwine, and in appreciation of his holy life. That saint was brother of the West-Saxon king, Kenewalh, but was not more renowned for noble birth than for grandeur of character and prompt ad-

(27). The meadow land is given as one hundred and thirteen acres, the pasture as one hundred and thirty acres, besides the woodland, which, as the reader will have remarked, was of considerable extent: the property could hardly have been of less extent than four thousand acres.

vocacy of all who sought his aid.²⁸ Benedict was abbat of Athelney at the period of which this is a description. There is a very curious and interesting document preserved in the Beauchamp cartulary, which he and his convent made in favour of Robert de Beauchamp,—so curious as to deserve a literal translation.

“The charter between Master Robert de Beauchamp and the Abbat and Convent of Athelingaye.

“Benedict by the grace of God Abbat of Athelingnye and also the convent of the same church to all men both their friends and neighbours, French and English, as well present as future, health. Be it known unto all those who now are and unto those who are about to come, that we with common assent have granted to Robert de Beauchamp and his heirs in fee and heirship all that land which is called Frogenemera, so that nevertheless the said Robert shall give every year one mark of silver to us and our church, and shall acquit that land for half a hide in the common county assizes. Also to the same Robert, and his ancestors and his heirs, we grant the benefit and fraternity of our church in our common chapter. This grant the aforesaid Robert has strengthened by joining right hands with the Abbat, and to the aforesaid church he has promised that he will in all things be faithfully attentive, and that he will go to the pleas and business of our church whenever he shall be called; as the friend and faithful brother of the same. And for this grant the aforesaid Robert de Beauchamp has given to Abbat Benedict of his recognizances half a marc of silver, and to the convent he has given two sextarii of honey. Witnesses, Robert, Bp. of Bath, and Hugh de Turnai, archdeacon, and Robert, archdeacon, and Ivo Dean of Wells, and Reginald Chanter, and Richard de Soc, writer, and Ralph, Prior of Athelney, and Arnold, monk, and Richard de

(28). Will. Malmesbury de gest. Pont. Angl., ed. Savile, p. 255.

Raddona, and Richard de Montacute, and Simon de Cant, William Fitzodbert and Richard his son, and Roger Fitzovert and Robert his son, Ralph, clerk of Cinnoc, Edward de Soc, and Richard —, Geoffrey clerk of —, John Clerk, Simon Clerk, Niger, brother of the Abbat, Roger de Westle, John de Stubbs (?), and many others. Farewell."²⁹

We have here, it would appear, an example of what in after-times was still more common, the endeavour to retain the good offices and friendly aid of a powerful layman of the neighbourhood on those many occasions when a body of ecclesiastics would otherwise be obliged to resort to legal measures for the protection of their rights and possessions, and not always with that amount of success which the mere justice of their claims would deserve. The same Abbat Benedict is one of a number of witnesses who attested the institution of Hywis, or Huish, as a perpetual prebend in the church of St. Andrew of Wells. Robert was at this time Bishop of Bath, and the instrument was dated the 4th of November, 1159.³⁰ A more particular account of the transaction will be found in my History of Taunton Priory, the Prior of which was also a witness on this occasion.

It may be presumed that Benedict was succeeded by Abbat Roger. His name does not occur in any list previously given, but I find him as a witness to a charter of James de Montsorell, setting forth the gift of the church of Withlacin-ton (Whitelakington) to the church of St. Andrew of Wells, and to Reginald Bishop of Bath.³¹ Reginald governed the see from the year 1174-1192, to a period between which dates our abbat is to be assigned.

Another Benedict succeeded in or before the year 1198. For about that time Savaricus, Bishop of Bath and Glaston-

(29). Beauchamp Cartulary, pp. 8, 9.

(30). MS. Harl. 6968, pp. 24, 25. Archer from Reg. Will., vol. i, f. 26.

(31). MS. Harl. 6968, p. 43.

bury, made a proposal to the abbats of Athelney and Cirencester that they should agree to the elevation of their churches, the former of Sutton and the latter of Meleburne into prebends of the cathedral church of Wells. This was done for the sake of augmenting the number of the canons, as well as for the honour and benefit of the churches so selected.³² It appears that the Abbat of Athelney complied with this proposal. For in another document, Savaricus, after making honourable mention of the religion and honesty which distinguished the brotherhood of Adheligne, permits, with the consent of Alexander the dean and the chapter of Wells, the church of Sutton to be made a perpetual prebend in the church of Wells, and that his beloved son, the Abbat Benedict, and all his successors, should be perpetual prebendaries thereof, and assigns a stall in the choir and a place in the chapter next the sub-dean. He also releases the abbat and his successors from all personal residence at Wells, but stipulates that they shall find a substitute to perform the religious services of their office, and shall pay him a pension of four mares a year.³³

The same Abbat Benedict was a witness to a confirmation of Savaricus to the Abbey of Muchelney of the tithes of the church of Somerton, reserving to the vicars their lawful dues. John, Prior of Taunton, was also among the witnesses to this instrument.³⁴ About this time Sir Richard de Locumbe gave to the abbat and convent a pension of 40s. a year from the rectory of Selworth, of which church he was patron. The grant was confirmed by Savaricus, and appears to have been paid with short intervals for several centuries.³⁵

In or about the year 1221, either the same or another Abbat Benedict gave to Jocelin, Bishop of Bath, and his successors, the advowson of the church of Ilton, with all its appurten-

(32). MS. Harl. 6968, pp. 80, 81.

(33). MS. Harl. 6968, pp. 60, 61. Et post, ff. 123, 123b. Angl. Sacr., vol. i, 563.

(34). MS. Harl. 6968, cart. pp. 5, 6.

(35). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 15b.

ances, to be ordered and disposed as their other churches and and prebends. Richard, Abbat of Muchelney, with others, attested this charter.³⁶ It can scarcely be imagined that Abbat Benedict, the friend of Bishop Savaricus, who, as we have already observed, must have succeeded not later than the year 1198, survived to 1225, at which date also his name occurs.³⁷ It would seem that a third superior of the same name is to be added to our list of these dignitaries. In the absence of positive authority, however, this is a point which we must be content to leave undecided.

Athelney had a new abbot in 1232 at the latest, for in that year Roger, Abbat of Athelney, and his convent gave to Bishop Jocelin all the tithes in Putteneye and Wern in the parish of Hiwis. The bishop had given these tithes at the dedication of the church of Hiwis for the endowment of that church, and the abbat and convent now ratified the gift.³⁸ This instrument was dated the festival of St. Maurice and his companions, in the twenty-sixth year of Jocelin's episcopate, which is coincident with the 22nd September, 1232.

Robert succeeded, and, it would appear, almost immediately after the transaction just related. He occurs, it is said, in 1232, 1249, 1260, and 1263.³⁹ In 1260 there was a difference between him and his convent and John, then chancellor of Wells and prebendary of Ilton, about a house situated in their court at Herdecote, and used for the storing of their tithes collected therefrom. The matter was amicably settled on these conditions, viz., that the dean, chancellor, and chapter should give up all right and possessions in the aforesaid, and that the aforesaid abbat and convent should give in pure and perpetual alms to the church of Ilton; the chancellor and his successors in the said prebend, a piece of land lying to the

(36). MS. Harl. 6968, p. 42.

(37). *Collinson*, vol. i, p. 87.

(38). MS. Harl. 6968, pp. 44, 45. Reg. Well., vol. i, f. 40.

(39). *Collinson*, vol. i, p. 87.

north of Herdecote, of the size of half-an-acre, and extending from the king's highway from Herdecote towards Ilford Bridge, for the building of a grange and houses for storing their tithes. The prebendary and his companions were to surround the land with a competent enclosure, and were not to erect thereon any cottage or mansion, the said grange and houses excepted, unless with the licence of the abbat and convent. This arrangement was dated in the chapter house at Wells the 1st June, 1260.⁴⁰

The next notice which occurs is one which will fitly introduce many others of a somewhat similar character. It will be recollected that the abbey was of royal foundation and that the King was accordingly its patron. This fact has been of great use to me in determining the exact dates at which many of the abbats began their conventual reign; inasmuch as the licence to the convent to elect a successor on the decease of an abbat, the royal assent and the restitution of the temporalities are entered upon the Patent Rolls. I have by this means recovered a number of dates which have not previously been determined.

During a vacancy the temporalities were in the King's hands, and we know that in the case of some of the wealthier establishments of which our ancient monarchs were the patrons, the term of such intervals was oftentimes unnecessarily lengthened, in order that their revenues might enrich an impoverished treasury. Even the Abbey of Athelney, though boasting of no great wealth, was subjected to this infliction. In the Patent Roll, of the fifty-second year of Henry III, it is set forth that the Abbat of Athelney has paid by the King's writ to Alan, son of our John de Britann, by the hand of Roger de Radeflod, on the Monday next after the festival of St. Leonard, in the fifty-second year of the present reign, which is coeval with the 7th November, 1267, the sum of ten

(40). MS. Harl. 6968, pp. 42, 43.

pounds by which the prior and convent have compounded with us for the custody of their house in the last vacancy of the same, to be held in part payment of a larger sum in which the King is bound to the said John, and of which ten pounds the abbot and convent are entirely quit. The document is in fact a receipt for the money, and is dated—witness, the King at Winchester—the 7th of November, 1267,⁴¹ the same day as the money was paid, though expressed in the roll in a different form. Twenty days afterwards, the letters patent were issued for the restitution of the temporalities to the abbat elected at the close of the just mentioned vacancy. Richard de Derham, a monk of the house, had been elected by his brethren and had received the royal assent, and these letters restored to him the temporalities of his abbey, and enjoined all who owed him service to pay the same to him as their abbat and lord. The letters are dated at Clarendon, the 27th of November, 1267.⁴²

The abbey was at this time in special favour. A few days only elapsed before the king granted to the prior and convent of Atheligenye, that they and their successors for ever should have a market every week on Monday in their manor of Lenge, and a fair every year to last three days, to wit, the eve, day, and morrow of St. James the Apostle, in their manor of Sutton, with the usual variation in favour of any neighbouring markets and fairs which might be thereby damaged. The witnesses are Robert Walerand, Robert Aguilon, Walter de Overton, Master John de Chishull, John de la Lynd, Stephen Eddeworth, and others. The charter is dated at Clarendon, the 10th of December.⁴³

It is probable that at this time the King granted the privilege of which we have a confirmation at the end of the following reign. It was that all the horses and men of the abbat and

(41). Pat. Rolls, 52 Hen. III, m. 37.

(42). Pat. Rolls, 52 Hen. III, m. 34.

(43). Cart., 52 Hen. III, m. 11.

monks of Athelyngnea, which they could swear to belong to them, should be quit of all toll, passage, pontage, and customs whatsoever through all his land, and forbidding anyone to molest or disturb them in the enjoyment of this right under a penalty of ten pounds.⁴⁴

In or about the year 1270, the Abbot of Alnigenye is returned as holding in the hundred of Cintrell, Athelney, and all his other lands—"per orationes pro domino Rege."⁴⁵

We must now pass to the early year of the next reign. King Edward I granted to the Dean and Chapter of Wells licence to grant one hundred acres of moor with their appurtenances in North Cory to the abbat and convent of Athelingney and their successors for ever, for common of pasture which the same abbat and convent have in eight hundred acres of moor of the aforesaid dean and chapter in the same vill with the usual reservation of the lord's services. The grant is dated the 12th July, 1276.⁴⁶

Abbat Richard de Derham departed this life in the beginning of the year 1280. Andrew de Sacro Fonte, monk of Athelney, was elected his successor. The royal assent to the election was dated at Dunameneye the 14th March,⁴⁷ and the restitution of the temporalities at Bristoll the 19th of April, 1280.⁴⁸

At the assizes held at Somerton just afterwards on the morrow of the festival of the Ascension, 1280, it was pleaded that the Abbat of Alingneye was bound to repair the bridge of Doulesford, which was in a dangerous condition. The abbat affirmed that neither he nor his predecessors had repaired that bridge nor was it his business so to do.⁴⁹

(44). See *post* 33 Edw. I.

(45). Test. de Nevill, p. 163.

(46). MS. Harl. 6968, cart., p. 64.

[This paragraph and also the marginal note is scored through with ink in the MS., but see Wells Cathedral MSS., f. 216.]

(47). Pat. Rolls, 8 Edw. I, m. 21.

(48). Pat. Rolls, 8 Edw. I, m. 20.

(49). Plac. de Jur. and Ass. Somers., 8 Edw. I, rot. 13, dors 5/15—2.8.

At the same assizes at Somerton, the abbat sued against Richard Fromund the moiety of one virgate of land with its appurtenances in Oggesole as the right of his church of Adelingley. Richard appears to have pleaded that one Isabella de Montacute had given the land with its appurtenances to a certain Margery, obliging her and her heirs to the warranty, and he exhibited a charter of the said Isabella in confirmation of his assertion. He further pleaded that the said Richard did homage for the aforesaid land to Simon de Montacute. Simon being summoned, said that he was not held to warranty by the aforesaid charter, because the land sued against the aforesaid Richard is not contained in the charter aforesaid, and further that the tenements are of the fee of Erle and not of the fee of Montacute. The jury gave their verdict for the abbat, adjudging to him the recovery of his seisin against the aforesaid Richard.⁵⁰

In the same year Henry de Lorti was summoned to give account by what warrant he held twenty acres of pasture called Rochemore. Henry pleaded that the pasture aforesaid belonged to his manor of Knolle, which manor he held of the Abbat of Alingeley. It was pleaded on the other side, that the pasture belonged to the manor of Somerton, and not to the manor of Knolle.⁵¹

We have already seen that the Abbat of Athelney was a prebendary of Wells so early as the time of Bishop Savaricus, and we have now to notice him in the performance of one of his privileges. On the Saturday next after the Festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the 16th of September, 1284, died Edward de la Cnoll, dean of Wells. After licence was obtained from the bishop to elect a successor, the canons were cited for that purpose, and among them the abbats of Athelney and Muchelney.⁵²

(50). Plac. de Jur. and Ass. Somers., 8 Edw. I, rot. 31, M 5/13—4.4., M 5/14—1.5.

(51). Plac. de quo Warr. Somers., 8 Edw. I, rot. 57. Rep. Plac., p. 145.

(52). MS. Harl. 6968, pp. 33, 34.

In Easter term 1289, in the King's court at Westminster, before Thomas de Weylaund, John de Lovcot, William de Burnton, Roger de Leycestre, and Elias de Bekyngham, justices, and others, a final concord was made between Andrew, Abbat of the church of St. Alwyne of Atheligeneye and Simon de Montacute, regarding a hundred and fifty acres of land with their appurtenances in Oggesole. Simon made an acknowledgment that the aforesaid land with its appurtenances was the right of the abbat and his church, and renounced all claim on the part of himself and his heirs for ever.⁵³ The reader will perceive that this is another instance of the dedication of the abbey to S. Athelwine. Others will present themselves in the following century.

In the year 1290 was the famous valuation of Pope Nicholas IV, according to which all the ecclesiastical property of the kingdom was rated down to the period of the *Valor*. The following is a condensed account of the possessions, both spiritual and temporal, of the abbey at that period.⁵⁴

SARUM. SP.

	Taxatio.	Decima.
Porcio Abbis de Athelyngine in Ecclia } de Caundel Purs }	1 0 0	0 2 0

SARUM. TEMP.

Caundel Purs. Abbas de Athelingnie	5 13 0	0 11 3 $\frac{3}{4}$
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BATH AND WELLES SP'.

Pensio Abbis de Atheleneye in ecclia } de Baggedripe }	2 0 0	
Pensio Abbis de Athelneye in ecclia } de Syleworth (Selworthy) ... }	2 0 0	

BATH AND WELLES TEMP'.

Sottone } Abbis }	Abbas de Athelneye	... 23 0 0
	Herdecote, Abbas de Atheln'	... 7 6 8
	Northcoury, Abbas de Atheln'	... 1 6 8

(53). Fin. Somers., 17 Edw. I, n. 116.

(54). Tax. Eccl. P. Nich., pp. 178, 185, 198, 204-5.

		Taxatio.
Cumberflory } apud Hyda }	Abbas de Atheln' ...	0 10 0
	Hamme, Abbas de Atheln' pitanc' ...	6 10 0
	Lenge, Abbas de Atheln' ...	9 0 0
Hoggesole and } Clavelesheye. }	Abbas de Atheln' ...	0 7 0
	Bosyngton, Abbas de Atheln' ...	1 11 0
	[Sp. 5 0 0 Temp. 55 4 4]	

In the 25th year of King Edward I, 1297, the Abbat of Athelinye was returned as possessor of lands and rent of the value of £20 per annum, and as such was summoned to perform military service in parts beyond sea. The muster was at London on the Sunday next after the octave of St. John the Baptist, the 7th July, 1297. The writ of summons was dated, witness the king, at Portesmouth the 24th May, 1297.⁵⁵

A perambulation of the forest of Neracchist was made on the 19th of March, 26 Edward I, 1298. It is there stated that the Abbat of Athelnye holds the hamlet of Stoforde which pertains to the manor of Yleton. In a perambulation of the forest of North Petherton made on the 25th of May in the same year, the Abbat of Athelyngnye is said to hold the manor of Westleng and Estleng, with woods, moors, marshes, and appurtenances.⁵⁶

The year 1300 brought another abbat to Athelney. The choice then fell on Osmund de Sow, a monk of the house. Collinson is in error where he gives the year 1297 as that of this abbat's succession. I have recovered from the Patent Roll the date of the entire transaction. Brother Osmundus de Sow and Brother Thomas de Newbury were deputed to inform the king of the death of their abbat. They received from him his licence to elect a successor, dated at Totenham the 5th of April, 1300.⁵⁷ The former of the two messengers

(55). Parl. Writs, I, p. 292.

(56). Hist. Ad. de Domerham, ed. Hearne, I, pp. 189, 199.

(57). Pat. Rolls, 28 Edw. I, m. 21.

was elected to the vacant dignity and received the royal assent dated Neuport Paynel, the 19th of the same month,⁵⁸ and the temporalities were restored to him by virtue of an instrument dated at Hildeburghworth, the 13th of the following May.⁵⁹

In the month afterwards, a writ dated at Wetherby, the 14th of June, was addressed to all persons possessed of £40 or upwards of land or rent, to perform military service against the Scots. The Abbat of Athelingnye was accordingly summoned among the other Somerset landholders. The muster was at Carlisle on the next ensuing festival of St. John the Baptist, the 24th of June, 1300.⁶⁰

This must have been a serious drain on the revenues of a place never too well supplied with means of expenditure. It does not, therefore, much surprise us to find the abbat and convent endeavouring, and we would hope effectually, to rid themselves of another and heavy grievance. The King had granted a corrody in the abbey to one of his old servants, which included all necessaries in food and clothing. On the arrival of Gilbert de Ragun, in whose favour this had been done, and who was himself the bearer of the objectionable letters, the abbat and convent returned a submissive answer to their sovereign, representing to him that at that very time they had at his majesty's appointment two other pensionaries of a similar kind, John de Hanele, clerk, who received an annual payment of forty shillings, and Nicholas Freyn, who was found in food and clothing for life. And they therefore must humbly solicit his royal mercy and forbearance, entreating him for the sake of charity to spare them, for the present, this additional burden, adding that the said Gilbert could, if he would, attest the truth of their declaration. The letter was dated at Athelyngeny the 28th of July, 1304.⁶¹

(58). Pat. Rolls, 28 Edw. I, m. 17.

(59). Pat. Rolls, 28 Edw. I, m. 16.

(60). Parl. Writs, I, p. 336.

(61). Calendar of Letters, no. 1222.

Abbat Osmund continued to preserve those friendly relations with the Beauchamp family which his great predecessor had happily commenced. In the second year of his conventual reign, and on the day on which the name of that predecessor was held in special memory, he granted a charter which sets forth that he and his convent had "received lord John de Beauchamp, deceased, lady Cecilia sometime wife of the same, lord John son of the same, lady Johanna his wife, and their children, ancestors, and successors, in all benefits, alms, and prayers, which are or shall be in our church of Athelyngenyne for ever." They also granted that the names of the said John, and of Cecilia, John, and Johanna, when they should depart this life, should be written in their martyrology, and that their anniversary should be solemnly celebrated in their church, year by year. That every year also, on the 24th October, the day of the anniversary of the said John, deceased, thirteen poor people should be fed in behalf of his soul and the souls of the aforesaid, their ancestors and successors. For this grant Cecilia, and John her son, remitted and quitted claim for themselves and their heirs, of a certain common of pasture which they had long held in a certain field in their manor of Ylton, lying between Hortemedede and Stapelemedede, as far as was included by a certain ditch. The witnesses of this instrument were Sir Gilbert de Cnovyle, Sir William de Staunton, John Sylveyn, John de Asseylonde, Laurence de Dylnton, Ralph de Stokelynche, Hugh de la Lade, and many others. It was dated at Athelyngenyne, on the day of St. Benedict, abbat, the 21st March, 1302.⁶²

To about the same time, as I conjecture, for the document is undated, we may refer the following. It sets forth that John de Beauchamp, lord of Hacche, confirmed to Osmund, Abbat of Athelyngnye, and his successors, all the crop of half-an-acre of land in Froggemere in his manor of Schepton Beauchamp, whether of corn or of oats. In default the abbat

(62). Beauchamp Cart., pp. 9, 10.

and his convent were to enter and distrain on all his land of Froggemere. The witnesses were Sir Symon de Aston, John de la Stane, Laurence de Dylngton, John Sylveyn, Rauf de Stokelynych, and many others.⁶³

On the 2nd of February, 1304-5, a writ was addressed to Walter de Gloucester, the King's Eschaetor, "to determine whether leave might be granted to the abbat and convent of Athelyngnye to hold and possess one messuage and fourteen acres of land with their appurtenances in Holeford, in the county of Somerset, which they had received by the gift and feoffament of Thomas de Holeford, against the statute of Mortmain, and without the royal licence." The writ was dated at Walsyngham, the day above named. The verdict of the jury at an inquest held at Somerton, on the 26th April, 1305, was favourable. The messuage and land were stated to be held of John de la Yerde, by the service of one pound and a half of wax, and a rent of threepence on the festival of St. Mary Magdalene; and that further the same John held the property of Geoffrey de Stawell, and he of the Bishop of Winchester, and the bishop of the king in chief.⁶⁴ On this followed the Royal Letters Patent, dated at Langele, the 6th May, 1305.⁶⁵

In the same month the monks received, by payment of one hundred shillings, a confirmation of their grant by Henry III, of freedom from toll, passage and pontage, already recorded. Humphry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex, Edmund de Manley and others, were witnesses to this charter which was dated at Harwe (Harrow), the 14th of May, 1305.⁶⁶

We have now to pass a short interval of five years. Letters Patent were issued to the dean and chapter of Wells, allowing them to give and assign to the abbat and convent of Athelningney, one hundred acres of moor with their appurtenances

(63). Beauchamp Cart., pp. 10, 11.

(64). Inq. p.m., 33 Edw. I, n. 144.

(65). Pat. Rolls, 33 Edw. I, p. 1, m. 2.

(66). Cart., 33 Edw. I, n. 36.

in North Cury, for common of pasture which the said abbat and convent had in eight hundred acres of moor of the aforesaid dean and chapter in the same vill, to which the abbat and convent were to renounce all claim for the future; with the usual reservation of the lord's services. The letters were dated at Westminster, the 12th July, 1310.⁶⁷

In the year 1316, 9 Edward II, the Abbat of Athelingeay was certified, pursuant to writs tested at Clipston, on the 5th of March, as one of the lords of the township of Purscaundel, in the county of Dorset, and as Lord of Suttone Abbats, Ilton, Sevenhampton Abbat's, Hamme, Lenge, etc., in the county of Somerset.⁶⁸

A few months afterwards a writ was issued to the Eschaetor, to determine whether licence should be accorded to Adam de Seler, of Taunton, to retain one messuage and one virgate of land with its appurtenances in Lange Sutton, held for his life of the Abbot of Athelengeneye, and by him of the king in chief, which he had held without the king's licence and in contravention of the statute. The writ was dated at Westminster, the 12th of July, 1316. The Jury was composed of the following: John de Smelton, Reginald Husee, John Gissop, John le Knyght, John Loyes (or Loges), John Bossard, Walter Isaac, Philip Corbyn, Nicholas Bek, Nicholas Mandeware, Roger Mapodre, and Thomas de Speketon, who said that the abbat held the messuage and land of the king *in capite* in pure and perpetual alms, and that the property was worth twenty shillings a year in all issues. This inquest was taken at Somerton, the 16th August, 1316.⁶⁹

We have now to notice a circumstance of peculiar interest. The ancient church, constructed by the royal founder of the abbey, in a style that was hitherto unknown in England, was

(67). Pat. Rolls, 4 Edw. II, p. 1, m. 24. MS. Harl. 6968, Cart., p. 64.

(68). Parl. Writs, pt. ii, pp. 375, 378, 380.

(69). Inq. ad q. d., 10 Edw. II, n. 49.

[The paragraphs beginning "In the same month," down to this date are scored through with pencil in the MS.]

long ere this, we may suppose, in a state that needed improvement. This, too, was the age of church building, and the good abbat and his brethren were not behind their fellows in the general march of progress. They also, at least, renovated their church, which, according to some subsequent evidence, must have been of a very magnificent character. On the 29th of June, the festival of SS. Peter and Paul, 1321, an indulgence of thirty days was granted to all who should contribute to the reparation of the conventual church.⁷⁰ It is not certain from this whether the structure was rebuilt in part, though such of course is probable. That the good work attracted the attention of distant benefactors is evident from the fact that Walter de Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter, who was murdered in London, the 15th of October, 1326, left four pounds to the Abbat of Athelney, for repairs of the church and erection of the tower.⁷¹ But from this also it may be inferred that the church was an older structure and that a portion of it at least was permitted to remain.

It was in the performance of this sacred work that the last days of Abbat Osmund were employed. His tenure of office would seem to have been a period of much peace and religious improvement. He was at the head of his house for the long space of twenty-five years.

Brothers William de Beare and Richard de Gotehirst, monks of the House, were deputed to carry the intelligence to the king; and licence of electing a new superior was dated at Langele, the 29th of January, 1324-5.⁷² The choice of the convent fell on Robert de Ile, the prior; the king's assent to the election was dated at Westminster, the 13th of February;⁷³ and the restitution of the temporalities to the lately elected abbat, at the Tower of London, the 16th of March, 1324-5.⁷⁴

(74). *Ibid.*, m. 18.

(70). MS. Harl. 6964, p. 67.

(71). In Archiv. S. Pet., Exon. Eccl.

(72). Pat. Rolls, 18 Edw. II, p. 2, m. 34.

(73). *Ibid.*, m. 32.

On the 25th of the same month he professed obedience.⁷⁵

The abbat was summoned to a council in London, by a writ dated at Dogmersfeld, the 2nd of September, 1332.⁷⁶

In 1336, there was a composition concerning tithes between the rector of Candel Purs and the abbat.⁷⁷

It is stated that in a provincial or general chapter held at Northampton, on the Monday next after the festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the 11th of September, 1340, the Abbat of Athelney was cited and appeared by his proctors.⁷⁸

Little, however, seems to have disturbed the serenity of his rule. He died less than a year afterwards, in the summer of the year 1341. John de Stoure, and John Fort, monks of the House, carried, according to custom, the news to the king, and the licence to elect was dated at Haverigny atte Boure, the 2nd of August, 1341.⁷⁹

Richard de Gothurst (the same, I presume, who accompanied Brother William de Beare in the convent's mission to the king on the death of Abbat Osmund in 1325), a monk of the House, was chosen. The royal assent was dated at the Tower of London, the 20th of August,⁸⁰ and the order for the restoration of the temporalities at Westminster, the 4th of September.⁸¹

In 1343, the abbey is mentioned as not having scholars "in studio generali secundum relationem Prioris studentium."⁸²

On the 2nd of December, 1348, Thomas le Touke of Buddelegh, was admitted to the vicarage of Lenge, on the presentation of the abbat and convent of Athelney.⁸³

(75). MS. Harl. 6964, p. 93.

(76). MS. Harl. 6965, p. 62.

(77). Reg. Wyvill., vol. ii, pp. 31, 32, 33. *Hutchins's Dorsetshire*, vol. iv, p. 28.

(78). Reyner. Append., p. 105.

(79). Pat. Rolls, 15 Edw. III, p. 2, m. 29.

(80). *Ibid.*, m. 14.

(81). *Ibid.*, m. 12.

(82). Reyner. Append., p. 107.

(83). MS. Harl. 6965, p. 193.

On the 15th of September, 1349, Abbat Richard de Got-hurst was called from the scene of his earthly labours. Licence of electing a successor was granted to the prior and convent, dated at Westminster, the 23rd of September, 1349.⁸⁴

The monks elected their prior, John Stoure, whose name also has been lately before us. On his election he commenced his journey to the king, who was then beyond sea, for the purpose of obtaining the royal assent. He died in the way, but under what circumstances we are not informed. Edward was at that time in the midst of his French campaigns, and the newly-elect had to encounter the varied contrasts to his quiet and secluded home which an invaded country would necessarily present. His death must have occurred before the 10th of October, for on that day a licence was granted for a new election, dated at Westminster, and addressed to the sub-prior and convent of Athelnyngnye.⁸⁵ The choice now fell on Robert de Hacche, a monk of the house. The royal assent was given to his election, dated at Westminster, the 22nd of October,⁸⁶ and the restitution of the temporalities was ordered by an instrument dated at Westminster the 5th of November, 1349.⁸⁷

Among the Additional MSS. in the British Museum, is preserved a very valuable document connected with this election.⁸⁸ It is an "Extent" or valuation of the temporalities of the abbey, taken, in accordance with constant usage, on the death of the late abbat. The property consists of Sutton, Lenge, Iltone, and Hurdecote, in the county of Somerset, and of Pourscaundel, in the county of Dorset. The record will give us a complete insight into the exact state and value of the possessions of the abbey in the middle of the fourteenth century.

(84). Pat. Rolls, 23 Edw. III, p. 2, m. 6.

(85). Pat. Rolls, 23 Edw. III, p. 3, m. 33.

(86). Pat. Rolls, 23 Edw. III, p. 3, m. 25.

(87). *Ibid.*, m. 19.

(88). Add. MSS. 6165, pp. 13, 14, 15, 16.

1. *Sutton*.—The return was made before Thomas Cary, the king's eschaetor, on the 17th of September, 1349, and the jurors were William Trete, Thomas Harecoumbe, John Mapoudre, John atte Oke, Walter Cothyng, Hugh Love, and Robert le Newman. They reported that there were here divers buildings which were of no yearly value beyond reprises. Also one dovecot, worth 2s. a year, also one garden, with its produce, when any, worth 12*d.* a year, herbage of the same worth 12*d.* That year, however, there was no produce. Also one water-mill, worth besides reprises, 2s., and not more, for in summer it could not be worked from lack of water. Also one wind-mill, worth, per annum, 3s. 4*d.*; also one hundred acres of arable land, whereof two parts could be in cultivation every year, and then worth 36s. 6*d.*, at the rate of 6*d.* an acre, and the third part lying in common and fallow, and so of no value. Also twenty acres of meadow, enclosed from the feast of the Purification to that of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and worth 30s., at the rate of 18*d.* an acre. Also twelve acres of pasture worth 6s. a year. Also assessed rents, payable in equal portions at Michaelmas, Christmas, Easter, and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, £4. Pleas and perquisites of the courts, worth 40*d.* a year. Sum total of the value of Sutton, £8 23*d.*

2. *Lenge*.—Return made before the same eschaetor, and on the day and year aforesaid. Jurors, Nicholas Aylward, John Joyote, William Frend, Edward le Tayllour, Richard Toky, and Simon Louyere. The report sets forth that there are there certain buildings of no value beyond reprises. Also one garden, the produce, when any, worth 12*d.* per annum, herbage of the same, worth 12*d.*, also two mills worth 10s. a year. Also four score acres of arable land, two parts of which could be sown every year, and then worth 24s., at the rate of 6*d.* an acre, the third part in common and fallow, and so of no value. Also twenty acres of meadow, enclosed from the feast of the Purification to the carrying of the crop, worth 25s., at the

rate of 15*d.* an acre. Assessed rents payable as aforesaid, 70*s.*, also eight acres of pasture, worth 4*s.* a year. Also from the lord's larder at the feast of St. Martin, 12*d.* Also one fair on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, worth 12*d.* Pleas and perquisites of the courts worth 2*s.* a year. Sum total, £6 19*s.*

3. *Ilton*.—Returns made before the same escheator, and on the same day and year. Jurors, John Bygge, Richard Bygge, John Palmere, Thomas Achewy, William Sawyere, John Cauntiloo, and others. They report that there are there certain buildings of no yearly value beyond their repair. Also one garden, the fruit, when any, worth 12*d.* a year, and the herbage of the same worth 12*d.* Also twenty acres of wood, in which there is no underwood, but the herbage of the same worth 4*s.* Also seventy acres of arable land, whereof two parts may be sown every year, and then are worth 35*s.*, at the rate of 6*d.* per acre, the third part in common and fallow and of no value. Also eighteen acres of meadow, worth 28*s.* a year, and not more, because the land is in common after the hay is carried. Also eight acres of pasture, worth 4*s.* Also assessed rents, payable as aforesaid, 53*s.* 4*d.* Also pleas and perquisites of the court, worth 20*d.* a year; sum total, 108*s.*

4. *Hurdecote*.—Returns made before the same eschaetor, the 20th September. Jurors, John Spye, Nicholas Gibbe, Peter le Whyte, Walter Toby, William Roger, Thomas Hanel, and others. They report that there are there also certain buildings of no value beyond their repair. Also one garden, the fruit, when any, worth 12*d.* a year, the herbage, 12*d.* Also fifty-five acres of arable land, whereof two parts may be sown every year and then worth 27*s.* 6*d.* a year, at the rate of 6*d.* an acre. Also seven acres of meadow, worth 7*s.* a year. Also four acres of pasture, worth 2*s.* a year. Also assessed rents, payable as aforesaid, 32*s.* Also pleas and perquisites of the court, worth 12*d.* a year. Sum total, 71*s.* 6*d.*

5. *Pourscaundel*.—Returns made before the same eschaetor and on the same day as the last. Jurors, John —, William atte More, William Cliffard, John Slape, Richard Russell, Walter atte Mulle, and others. They report that there are there certain buildings of no yearly value beyond reprises. Also thirty acres of arable land, whereof half may be sown and then worth 10s., at the rate of 4*d.* an acre⁸⁹; and the third part in common and fallow and so of no value. Also five acres of meadow enclosed from the feast of the Purification to the carrying of the hay, worth 5*s.* a year. Also six acres of pasture, worth 3*s.* a year, at the rate of 6*d.* an acre. Also assessed rents of the free tenants there, payable as aforesaid, 8*s.* Pleas of the courts there, none. Sum total, 26*s.*⁹⁰

The total temporalities of the abbey, therefore, in the year 1349, would appear to amount to the annual value of £25 6*s.* 5*d.*

The church of Long Sutton had another vicar in 1362. On the 30th March in that year, Walter de Cory was presented to that vicarage by Robert Hacche, abbat, and convent.⁹¹

On the 10th of July, 1363, a writ, dated at Westminster, was issued to John de Bekynton, the king's eschaetor, as to whether it would be to the king's damage if John Bays, John Irissh and John Troubrug, the vicar of North Cory, were to give one messuage, fifty acres of arable, and three acres of meadow, with their appurtenances in Lange-Sutton, to the abbat and convent of Athelneye for finding a wax taper burning every day during mass before the high altar of the abbey church in behalf of the soul of John Sloo, and of his ancestors, and of all the faithful departed. The inquest, accordingly, was taken at Somerton, on the 24th of July, 1363, and the verdict was favourable. The lands were reported as held by a rent of 2*s.* a year, and suit twice a year at the abbat's court in Lange-sutton for all services. It is further stated that the said

(89). There is some confusion here.

(90). Add. MSS. 6165, pp. 13, 14, 15, 16.

(91). MS. Harl. 6964, p. 146.

abbat held them of the king in chief by military service, that they were worth in all issues 8*s.* 6*d.*, besides the rent already mentioned, and that there were no other mesne men between the king and the aforesaid.⁹²

In the beginning of the following year another writ was addressed to the same eschaetor, as to whether it would be to the king's damage if Walter de Clopton and Henry Hacche were to give one messuage and the moiety of one carucate of land, with their appurtenances in Northpetherton to the abbat and convent; and also if the said Walter and Henry should allow one messuage and the moiety of one carucate of land with its appurtenances in the same vill, of which they had the reversion after the decease of one Margaret Clanyll, should revert after such decease to the abbat and convent for finding a certain chaplain beyond the number of the canons in the abbey, to pray for the health of Walter and Henry during their life, and after their decease, for their souls and those of all the faithful departed. This was dated at Westminster, the 21st of January, 1364-5. The inquest was held at Bruggewater on the 3rd of February following, Roger Sydenham, John Gonecorps, Nicholas Elworthy, Robert Stilard, William Mustard, John Peeche, Thomas Coglode, John Duce, John Andreseye, John Wedge, Walter Bereford, and Peter Grobham, being jurors. The verdict was favourable. The land was held of John de Erlegh, by knight service, and he of the king in chief. The value was 20*s.*, and there were no other mesne men beside the aforesaid.⁹³ The letters patent completing this transaction are dated at Westminster, the 26th of January, 1365-6.⁹⁴

In the Somerset assize, held at Yvelcester, before William de Wychyngham and Edmund de Chelrege, justices, on Monday next after the feast of St. Gregory, pope, in the forty-first

(92). Inq. ad q. d., 39 Edw. III, n. 16.

(93). Inq. ad q. d., 39 Edw. III, n. 17-

(94). Pat. Rolls, 40 Edw. III, p. 1, m. 44.

year of Edward III, which is coincident with the 15th of March, 1367, an issue was tried between Robert, Abbat of Athelneye, William Waryn, monk of the same house, Thomas Baillyf, of Lange-sutton, and Thomas le Hayward and Robert Rede, of the same, on the one side, and Robert and John Longh, on the other, as to whether the former had unjustly disseised the latter of common of pasture in Lange-sutton, pertaining to a free tenement of theirs in the same vill. The land referred to amounted to one hundred acres of arable land, and one hundred and twenty acres of pasture. The jury held that with reference to their common in the arable land Robert and John were seised of the same time out of mind, and that they had not been disseised as they complained; that with reference to the common in the hundred acres of pasture they were also seised; that the abbat and the others with him by taking and impounding certain oxen, had unjustly disseised the said Robert and John; that with reference to their common in the aforesaid twenty acres of pasture the said Robert and John were seised, but that the said abbot had enclosed the land with a ditch so that access was denied to the complainants and that they were thus unjustly disseised. And they assessed their damage to the amount of 40*s.* It was decided that Robert and John should recover their seisin in the aforesaid hundred and twenty four acres, and their damages. The abbat and his party satisfied the aforesaid Robert and John Longh. He and his fellow monk paid a fine of 10*s.*, and each of the others, Thomas Baillyf, Thomas le Hayward and Robert Rede, a fine of 2*s.* by the pledging of Walter de Cloptun, Mathew de Clyvedon and Richard Brit.⁹⁵

More than three years elapsed before there was an addition to the abbey revenues. A writ was then addressed to the king's eschaetor, William Cheyne, as to whether it would be to the king's damage if Richard Sydenham, John Hayt, clerk, and John Stanwygg, chaplain, were to give and assign one

(95). *Vide Pat. Rolls, 30 Henry VI, p. 1, m. 19.*

toft, fifty-four acres of arable land, eight acres of meadow, three acres of pasture, and two acres of wood, together with four pence of rent, with appurtenances, in Ilton to the abbat and convent of Athelyngneye, for the finding of a lamp continually burning for ever before the crucifix in the abbey church. The writ was dated at Westminster, the 26th of June, 1370. The inquest in consequence was held at Ilmynstre, on the Tuesday next after the feast of St. Margaret, the 23rd of July, 1370; and the jurors, who were Adam Swyft, William Hucker, William Moure, Richard Couk, William Walrond, William Dounham, William Sherp, Robert Hare, Thomas Deme, Laurence Wyly, Robert Davy and Thomas Ansty, returned a favourable verdict. The property was held of the king in chief by knight service, and was worth in all issues 13s. 4d., exclusive of the aforesaid rent. There were no more mesne men between the king and the aforesaid.⁹⁶ The king's letters patent, granting the licence, are dated at Claryndon, the 26th of the same month.⁹⁷

Early in the following year, another writ was similarly addressed to the same officer, as to whether it would or would not be to the king's damage if John Bays, John Stanwygg, chaplain, John Irysh, chaplain, and Henry Chynnock, chaplain, were to give and assign to the abbat and convent of Athelnye, one messuage, two curtilages, one toft, fifty-four acres of arable land, seven acres of meadow, and one acre of pasture with appurtenances, in Lange-sutton, for the finding of two wax-tapers for ever, in the church of the said abbey, every day burning before the high altar at high mass. The writ was dated at Westminster, the 1st of February, 1370-1. The inquest was held at Ivell, on the 6th of June, and together with a favourable verdict the jurors reported that the lands were held by knight service, at a rent to the abbey of 2s. a year for all service; and that the abbey held them of the king

(96). Inq. p.m., 44 Edw. III, 2nd nos. n. 31.

(97). Pat. Rolls, 44 Edw. III, p. 2, m. 8.

in pure and perpetual alms; that they were worth 11*s.* a year, exclusive of the rent, and that there were no more mesne men between the king and the four aforesaid.⁹⁸ The letters patent for legalising this donation were obtained at a fine of one hundred shillings from abbat and convent, and are dated at Westminster the 4th of November, 1372.⁹⁹

We learn subsequently that a property was given during the same year, situated at Littelmere, which was the subject of legal proceedings in the year 1382. The details of these proceedings will shortly be before us, and to these I refer the reader for the particulars of the gift.

This indeed was the age of donations to the abbey, and although the individual benefactions were usually small, the aggregate amounted to a considerable income. On the 26th of June, 1374, a writ was addressed to Adam atte More, the king's eschaetor, with the usual enquiries as to whether, without harm to the king, John Hayt, clerk, and Henry Hacche, clerk, might give and assign two acres of meadow with appurtenances in Lange-sutton, to the abbat and convent of Athelney, to find a certain wax taper daily before the high altar in the abbey church, burning at high mass. An inquest was held at Ivelchester, on the Monday after the feast of St. (*sic.* MS.) The land was held of the aforesaid abbat as of his manor of Lange-sutton, by knight service, and he of the king in chief, also by knight service, and was worth 3*s.* a year in all issues.¹⁰⁰ After a fine from the abbat and convent of thirteen shillings and four pence, the king's letters patent were issued, dated at Westminster, the 16th of August, 1374.¹⁰¹

On the 22nd of February, 1378, there was an election of a Dean of Wells, at which was present Robert, abbat of Athelney and prebendary of Sutton.¹⁰²

(98). Inq. ad q. d., 45 Edw. III, n. 4.

(99). Pat. Rolls, 46 Edw. III, p. 2, m. 13.

(100). Inq. p.m., 48 Edw. III, 2nd. nos., n. 4.

(101). Pat. Rolls, 48 Edw. III, p. 1, m. 3.

(102). MS. Harl. 6968. pp. 140, 141.

It appears that John Hayt and Henry Hacche had subsequently made another gift of the land just mentioned to the abbat and convent, dated the 6th of May, 1376. The royal licence had not been obtained for this procedure, and the king's eschaetor had interfered and appropriated the gift. It was represented, however, that the property was the same which had been previously granted according to law. A writ was therefore issued, to William Style, the eschaetor, commanding that if the two acres aforesaid were the same as the other two acres, they should be released, and that the abbot and convent should be put in possession. The writ, which was privately addressed to the eschaetor, was dated at Westminster, the 8th of February, 1379-80.¹⁰³

A year after this, letters patent were granted for a fine of eleven mares, authorising Henry Hacche to give two mesuages, fifty-four acres of arable land and nine acres of meadow, with appurtenances in Lange-sutton, of which he possessed the reversion after the decease of Walter Clopton, to the abbat and convent, to find a lamp before the high altar in the abbey church of St. Saviour of Athelnye, there in honour of the body of Christ, constantly burning for ever. The letters were dated at Westminster, the 10th of February, 1381-2.¹⁰⁴

The same year a writ was addressed to John Rodeston, the eschaetor, as to whether John de Beauchamp, of Lillidon, Matthew de Clyvedon, and Elias Spelly, might give two-hundred-and-twenty acres of pasture in their moor, called the Saltmore, in their manor of Stathe, to the abbat and convent, to be by them and their successors held and enclosed, in exchange for common of pasture, which the said abbat and convent had with all and singular, their beasts and cattle, in the same moor, to be surrendered and all claims renounced by the said abbat and convent to the said John, Matthew, and Elias. The writ was dated at Westminster, the 24th of June,

(103). Rot. Claus., 3 Richard II, m. 11.

(104). Pat. Rolls, 5 Richard II, p. 2, m. 31.

1382. The inquest was held at Bruggewater, on the 28th of October following, and the jurors reported that the pasture to be assigned was worth 110s. a year, and that the common of pasture to be surrendered was worth 100s. in all issues, that John Dynham was mesne and none other; concluding, as usual, with the declaration that the donors had other property sufficient for the payment of all demands—in the present case, six-hundred acres of moor, in the same moor, parcel of the manor of Stath.¹⁰⁵ The letters patent are dated at Westminster, the 25th of April, 1383.¹⁰⁶

Before the end of the year a writ of certiorari was addressed to the barons of the Exchequer, touching the possession by the abbat and convent of a certain pasture, called Littelmor, of thirty-four acres, with appurtenances in Langsutton of the value of 66s. 8d. The royal licence had not been obtained, and the land was in the king's hands. The rolls of the period, the forty-sixth year of Edward III, were to be examined and their tenor to be reported. The writ was dated at Westminster, the 1st of December, 1382. On examination of the roll it was found that a return had been made of 31s. 4d. of issues of such a pasture, which was of the yearly value of 66s. 8d., and that the abbat and convent had become possessed of the same, ten years before the date of the present report, from Elizabeth, widow of Ralph de Middelney, John Corbyn, and Richard Hare.¹⁰⁷ On the 4th of the same month of December, letters patent were issued conveying the royal pardon for various informalities connected with the acquisition of the property. This document is well worthy of abstraction. It is stated that the lands aforesaid had been obtained without the royal licence, and that the eschaetor had accordingly taken them into the king's hands: that subsequently the abbot had asserted that he and very many of his predecessors had

(105). Inq. p.m., 6 Richard II, n. 156.

(106). Pat. Rolls, 6 Richard II, p. 3, m. 16.

(107). Inq. p.m., 7 Richard II, n. 157.

been seised in their domains of the fee as of the right of their church from time out of mind, of the aforesaid pasture as a parcel of their manor of Langsutton, held by them from the abbey's foundation : that in regard of eight of the aforesaid thirty-four acres they were the same, as had been the several of Elizabeth, lady of the manor of Knolle, from the feast of the Purification to the Gule or 1st of August, in other words, to the cutting and carrying of the hay, without other profit, and that the abbat and convent had had the profit of the same to Michaelmas, and from Michaelmas to the feast of the Purification : that the aforesaid Elizabeth had common of pasture in the said eight acres and also in the whole of the remainder of the pasture aforesaid in Littelmere, with eight oxen and one boar, which common of pasture was an appurtenance of the manor of Knolle aforesaid : that the abbat and convent were in the habit of taking in and feeding their own beasts and those of others, and of deriving the profits during the same time : that the said Elizabeth had released and given up all claims to all her aforesaid profit to the abbat and his successors, namely the crops of the meadow worth 10s. a year, and the pasture for eight oxen and one boar worth 12*d.* a year : that the other two acres of the said pasture are meadow, in which John Hait, clerk, and Henry Hacche have a similar profit for the time aforesaid : that the abbat and convent had this profit for one year, by the grant of the said John and Henry, before the moor was taken into the king's royal grandfather's hands : that it had been considered accordingly that the aforesaid eight acres should remain in the hand of the king, and that all the profits aforesaid should be accounted for by the abbat and convent : that the aforesaid two acres should similarly remain in the king's hands and be similarly accounted for ; and that the remainder of the pasture, to wit, the twenty-four acres, should be removed from the king's hands, according to the tenor of the record aforesaid. The letters after conveying the pardon for the informal transfer,

restore, give, and assign to the abbat and convent, the aforesaid ten acres of meadow, and the said pasture for eight oxen and one boar, to be held of the lords of the fee by the same services as they were before they came into the king's hands. The fine was one hundred shillings, and the letters were dated at Westminster, the 4th of December, 1382.¹⁰⁸

Abbat Robert de Hacche died in the beginning of October, 1390. On the 7th of October, the king's licence was granted to elect a successor. John Hywyssh the prior was elected, and obtained the royal assent on the 18th of October, 1390. The temporalities were restored on the 2nd of November following. As a specimen of the instrument used on these occasions, my reader may be glad if I furnish him with the following in literal translation :

“Licence of electing. The king to his beloved in Christ, the Prior and Convent of Athelney, health. A humble petition has been offered to us on your part, that whereas your aforesaid church by the decease of Robert of blessed memory, abbat of that place, is deprived of the comfort of a pastor, we would be pleased to grant to you licence to choose another for abbat and pastor.—We, being favourably inclined to your prayers in this behalf, have thought fit to grant to you that licence, commanding you to choose for yourself such a one for your abbat and pastor who may be devoted to God, necessary to your church, and useful and faithful to us and to our kingdom. In testimony whereof, etc. Witness the king, at Westminster, the 7th day of October.¹⁰⁹

“Royal assent. The king to the venerable father in Christ R[alph Ergum], by the same grace Bishop of Bath and Wells, health. Know ye that to the election lately made in the conventual church of Adelneya, of John Hywyssh, prior of the same church, to be abbat of that place, we have added our

(108). Pat. Rolls, 6 Richard II, p. 3, m. 14.

[From the words of *pasture in the said eight acres* to this date is scored through with pencil in the MS.]

(109). Pat. Rolls, 14 Richard II, p. i, m. 20.

royal assent and favour, And this we signify to you by the tenor of these presents, that you fulfil what is yours in this behalf. In testimony whereof, etc. Witness the king at Westminster the 18th day of October.”¹¹⁰

“Restitution of temporalities. The king to his beloved Edward Bokelond, his eschaetor in the counties of Somerset and Dorset, health. Whereas the venerable father R., Bishop of Bath and Wells, hath confirmed the election lately made in the conventual church of Athelney, of our beloved in Christ John Hewyssch, monk of the same House, to be abbat of that place, to whom we have before given our royal assent and favour, as by these letters patent of the said bishop directed to us from thence, assure us,—We, accepting that confirmation, have taken the fealty of the said clerk, and restore to the same the temporalities of the said abbey according to custom. And so we command you, that you deliver to the said clerk the aforesaid temporalities with their appurtenances in your bailiwick in the form aforesaid. Saving our right, etc. Witness the king at Westminster, the second day of November. And it is commanded to the knights, freemen, and all other tenants of the aforesaid abbacy, that they be obedient and accountant to the said clerk as to their abbat and lord in all things that pertain to the abbacy aforesaid. In testimony whereof, etc. Witness, as above.”¹¹¹

On the 4th of August, 1391,¹¹² Brother John Huwysch, Abbat of Athelney and Prebendary of Long-sutton, took the oath in the chapter house of Wells to observe the statutes of that church.¹¹³

On the 6th of February, 1396-7, a writ was addressed to Thomas Cammel, the king’s eschaetor, with the usual questions as to whether the Abbat of Glastonbury might give

(110). Pat. Rolls, 14 Richard II, p. i, m. 17.

(111). Pat. Rolls, 14 Richard II, p. 1, m. 13.

(112). From “On the 4th of August” to the words “valuation of the property” is scored with pencil.

(113). MS. Harl. 6968, p. 148.

twenty-four acres of arable land and four acres of meadow with appurtenances, in Lange-sutton, to the abbat and convent of Athelney, in pure and perpetual alms. The writ was dated at Westminster on the day aforesaid. The inquest was held at Yewelchester, on Monday, the 10th of September, in the same year, and the jurors, John Lilleshull, John Walton, Thomas Ponton, John Burey, John Lernwytt, Robert Coker, John Notyere, Nicholas Felpus, John Boreford, John Bonde, Adam Stere, and William Grey, reported that the Abbat of Athelney held the lands aforesaid, as of his manor of Langesutton by knight service, that they were worth in all issues besides reprises, 10s. a year, that the Abbat of Athelney held the said manor in chief of Elizabeth Julers, Countess of Kent, as of her manor of Somerton, and the said Elizabeth of the king-in-chief, and that the aforesaid Abbat of Athelney and the said Elizabeth were the mesnes between the king and the Abbat of Glastonbury.¹¹⁴

In an inquest taken on the 23rd of July, 1397, after the decease of William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who died on the third of June, 1397, in obedience to a precept dated at Westminster, the 8th of June, 1397, among the fees pertaining to his manor of Shipton Mountagu, mention is made of the eighth part of one knight's fee in Hoggeshole, as held by the Abbat of Athelney, and worth 12s. 6d. a year.¹¹⁵

Two years after this, Athelney lost her abbat. John Hywyssh died on the 11th of June, 1399. The licence to elect a successor was dated (witness, Edward, Duke of York, protector), at Westminster, the 16th of that month.¹¹⁶ The royal assent was given to the election, in the conventual church of S. Athelwyn of Athelney, of Brother John Brygge, prior of the house, on the 24th of June,¹¹⁷ and the restoration of the tem-

(114). Annexed to Inq. ad q. d., 1 Hen. IV, n. 31.

(115). Inq. p.m., 20 Richard II, n. 35, t. 6a.

(116). Pat. Rolls, 22 Richard II, p. 3, m. 5

(117). Pat. Rolls, 23 Richard II, m. 7.

poralities was dated, Witness the lord keeper, at S. Albans, on the 10th of July.¹¹⁸

We have another important document of the present period in the shape of the valuation of the property upon the death of the late abbat. It is very similar to that with which I have already made the reader acquainted, and taken exactly fifty years before. I need not, therefore, give it in detail, but merely furnish the additions and the few other points of variation which it presents.

It was taken at Bruggewater, before Thomas Bathe, the king's eschaetor, on the 10th of August, 1399. The jurors were William Thorner [or Thomer], Robert Leigh, John Mucheldene, Richard de la Mare, Richard Wely, Ralph Barwe, John Bokelond, Richard Mauncell, John Broke, — Okerford, John Magot, and John Mareden.

In the returns for Sutton, two or three of the items must be noticed. The garden must have been but an indifferent one, for in the year of the latter valuation also there was no produce. The arable was worth, when in cultivation, 33*s.* 4*d.*, but 36*s.* 6*d.* in the former. The twenty acres of meadow were worth 12*d.* an acre, although they figured in the previous return as worth 18*d.* an acre.

In the return for Lenge, the garden had deteriorated. It had been worth 12*d.*, and its herbage of the same value. It was now worth 4*d.*, and its herbage 6*d.* The mills formerly worth 10*s.* were now worth 8*s.* The twenty acres of meadow worth before 25*s.*, now worth 20*s.*

In the return for Hurdecote, the garden, whose fruit was worth 12*d.*, is now estimated at 3*d.*, and its herbage, formerly worth 12*d.*, is now worth 4*d.*

In the return for Ilton, the garden, which had been worth 12*d.*, and its herbage 12*d.*, is now worth 8*d.*, and its herbage 8*d.* The herbage of the wood formerly valued at 4*s.*, is now worth 20*d.* The meadow land, of fourteen acres, is worth 18*s.*

(118). Pat. Rolls, 23 Richard II, m. 7.

The estate of Purscandel is not included in this extent, but instead of it we have an interesting and valuable addition in a return for Chavelesheigh (Claveshey). Here is said to be one carucate containing one hundred acres of land, held of Thomas Beaupeny, as of his manor of North Petherton. This land can be sown one year, and afterwards cannot be sown for ten years, on account of the poverty of the soil. In the year of its cultivation it is worth 16s. 8d., at the rate of 2d. an acre. Every year that it is not sown the pasture on it is worth 8s. 4d., at the rate of 1d. an acre.¹¹⁹

In the middle of the following year, another writ was addressed to the eschaetor with reference to the land in Lange-sutton, proposed to be given to the abbat and convent by the Abbat of Glastonbury. The answer thereunto annexed I have already given. The writ was dated at Westminster, the second of July, 1400.¹²⁰

On the 26th of May, 1410, Richard Courtenay, Canon of Wells, was elected dean of that church. The Abbat of Athel-negh and his brother of Muchelney were summoned to the election. They did not, however, appear and were pronounced contumacious.¹²¹

On the 18th of November, 1415, a convocation of the clergy was held in the church of St. Paul, in London. Among the chief dignitaries of Somerset, cited to attend it, was John [Brygge], Abbat of Athelney.¹²²

This was the last act that I can record of this abbot. He died early in November, 1424. The licence to elect a successor to him, conveyed in exactly the same terms as those already given, was dated at Westminster, the 13th of November.¹²³ The royal assent was given at Westminster, on the 28th of the same month, to brother John Petherton, monk of

(119). Add. MS. 6165, pp. 117, 118.

(120). Inq. ad q. d., 1 Hen. IV, n. 31.

(121). MS. Harl. 6966, pp. 29, 30.

(122). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 21.

(123). Pat. Rolls, 3 Hen. VI, p. 1, m. 17.

the house,¹²⁴ and the restoration of the temporalities at Westminster, the 10th of December, 1424.¹²⁵

On the (*sic.* MS.), 1430, letters patent were issued for the repayment of a series of loans. Among them are those of twenty marcs to the Abbat of Michelney, of forty pounds to the Dean of Wells, of ten marcs to the men of Wells, of fifteen pounds to the men of Taunton, of twenty marcs to the men of Bath, and of twenty pounds to the Abbat of Athelney.¹²⁶

The following year brought a fresh accession of property. Richard Kemp, of Langesutton, released and surrendered to the abbat and convent all claims present and future in respect of all lands, tenements, services, and reversions with all appurtenances in Langesutton, called Litellode, and common of pasture for eight oxen and one mare with foal in a close belonging to the same abbot and convent, called Rademore, in Langesutton aforesaid. To this were annexed the usual declarations of warranty and acquittance, and the apposition of his seal. Inasmuch, however, as his seal was not generally known, he procured the seals of John Warr, esquire, and of John Beauchamp, of Lillesdon, Esquire, then present to be added in attestation of the genuine nature of the gift. The witnesses present were Henry Sherard, Thomas Micheldever, John Maunsell, William Note, John Irlond, and others. The instrument was dated at Athelney, the 30th of May, 1431. The donor attended the chancery at Westminster, and admitted the aforesaid and all things contained in the same, on the 10th of November, 1437.¹²⁷

John Pederton, Abbat of Athelney, was summoned to the council of Ferrara, in April, 1438.¹²⁸

On the 26th August, 1446, the same abbat was present in

(124). Pat. Rolls, 3 Hen. VI, p. 1, m. 16.

(125). Pat. Rolls, 3 Hen. VI, p. 1, m. 12.

(126). Pat. Rolls, 8 Hen. VI, p. 2, m. 18.

(127). Claus., 16 Hen. VI, m. 15, dors.

(128). MS. Harl. 6966, pp. 49, 50.

person at Wells, on the election of a dean of that church.¹²⁹

An exemplification of the legal procedure connected with certain common of pasture in Langesutton in the forty-first year of King Edward III, an account of which will be found under that date, was made at the request of Abbat John Pederton, at Westminster, on the 29th of November, 1451.¹³⁰ The exemplification is a copy of letter patent previously granted, in order to be used for pleadings, and which is held to be as effectual for that purpose as the original from which it is taken.

Abbat John Pederton was gathered to his fathers on the 10th of February, 1457-8.¹³¹ He had governed his house for the long space of thirty-four years. On the 15th of the same month the licence for election was issued.¹³² Brother Robert Hylle, monk of the same house of St. Saviour of Athelney, was chosen on the 27th,¹³³ received the royal assent on the 4th,¹³⁴ was confirmed abbat on the 11th,¹³⁵ and had the temporalities restored to him on the 14th of the following month of March.¹³⁶ At his election nine monks were present and two were absent.^{136*}

On the 19th of June, 1462, licence was granted by the Bishop of Bath and Wells to Abbat Robert Hille to have divine service celebrated in his oratory.¹³⁷ This would appear to have been attached to his lodgings, but whether the licence was granted on account of some repair or rebuilding of the church, or of some bodily infirmity of the abbat himself, we are without the means of deciding.

William Wytham, Dean of Wells, died on the 16th of July, 1472, and on the 18th of December his successor was elected.

- (129). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 117.
- (130). Pat. Rolls, 30 Hen. VI, p. 1 m. 19.
- (131). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 119.
- (132). Pat. Rolls, 36 Hen. VI, p. 2, m. 16.
- (133). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 119.
- (134). Pat. Rolls, *ibid.*
- (135). MS. Harl., *ibid.*
- (136). Pat. Rolls, *ibid.*
- (136*). Dr. Archer.
- (137). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 102.

Robert Hyll, Abbat of Athelney, did not attend this election, and with John Bracy, Abbat of Muchelney, his brother prebendary, who was similarly absent, was pronounced contumacious.¹³⁸

He also departed this life on the 10th of October, 1485, and on the 29th of the same month John George, prior of the house, was elected his successor.¹³⁹ Eleven monks were then in the house.¹⁴⁰

On the 2nd of March, 1497-8, John Dyer was appointed to the vicarage of Longsutton, void by death of John Pym, on the presentation of the abbat and convent.¹⁴¹

Abbat John George was cited to Wells, at the election of a dean on Christmas Day, 1498.¹⁴²

On the 17th of August, 1499, the feast of the dedication of the abbey church was changed from the 20th of December, the eve of St. Thomas the Apostle, on which day it had been dedicated in honour of our blessed Saviour, to the 30th of August, the feast of SS. Felix and Adanctus, martyrs.¹⁴³ This makes it not improbable that the licence was granted for using the abbat's oratory for the celebration of divine service on account of some extensive repairs to, if not the entire rebuilding of, the conventual church, the completion of which was commemorated by altering the festival of its dedication to the day on which it was again used for sacred employment.

These labours were among the last of Abbat George's rule. On the 23rd of May, 1502, he is mentioned as patron of the vicarage of Lenge,¹⁴⁴ and in less than a year afterwards he left his monastery to the hands of his successor. It would not appear that the house was at this time in a very creditable state, for on the 20th May, 1503, a commission was issued to examine

(138). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 143.

(139). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 144.

(140). *Dr. Archer.*

(141). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 152.

(142). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 175.

(143). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 156.

(144). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 163.

the state of the monastery, then vacant by the death of the late abbat.¹⁴⁵

He was probably a very aged man, and had been the head of his house for eighteen years.

In July, Athelney received another abbat in the person of John Wellyngton. He was confirmed in his office on the 27th of July, 1503,¹⁴⁶ and was installed personally in his prebend of Langsutton on the 8th of the following month.¹⁴⁷

On the 17th of April, 1506, John Fry was presented by the abbat and convent to the vicarage of Long-sutton, void by the death of John Dier.¹⁴⁸

The abbat and convent presented John Symmys to the vicarage of Lenge, void by the death of Richard Dale, on the 5th of December, 1508.¹⁴⁹

In December, 1509, Abbat John Wellyngton was cited to convocation with the other chief dignitaries in the diocese.¹⁵⁰

On the 12th of August, 1510, Robert Macreth was presented by the abbat and convent to the vicarage of Lyngge, void by the resignation of John Symmys.¹⁵¹

The pension of 40s. a year from the rectory of Selworth to the abbat and convent, given by Sir Richard de Locumbe, patron of that church, which, as we have already seen, was confirmed by the good Bishop Savaricus, was paid on the 26th of June, 1512, by the rector of the said church. It appears to have gone into desuetude, but to have been amicably restored without a recourse to law for its recovery.¹⁵²

John Wellyngton, abbat, was summoned to convocation in June, 1514.¹⁵³

(145). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 167.

(146). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 174.

(147). MS. Harl. 6966, p. 42.

(148). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 5b.

(149). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 10.

(150). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 12.

(151). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 13.

(152). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 15b.

(153). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 19b.

He died at the end of the year 1516, for so early as the 7th of January, 1516-7, Richard Wraxall, his successor, was confirmed in his office, and by virtue thereof was inducted into his prebend of Sutton in the cathedral church of Wells.¹⁵⁴

John Androw was presented by the abbat and convent to the vicarage of Leng, on the death of Robert Makreth, on the 27th of September, 1519.¹⁵⁵ And on the 27th of August, 1521, John Mors was presented by the same to the vicarage of the prebendal church of Longsutton, on the death of John Fry.¹⁵⁶

On the 16th of December, 1525, William Majorensis Episcopus was presented to the vicarage of South Petherton, vacant by the death of Christopher Gunmaldun, by John Herte, Abbat of Athelney, and Richard Tomlyn, rector of Wryngton, patrons for that turn, by the concession of William, Abbat of Bruton, and his convent, to which that church was appropriated.¹⁵⁷

On the 28th of May, 1526, William Harte, possibly a brother of the abbat, was presented by the abbat and convent to the vicarage of Longsutton, void by the resignation of William Chamberlayne.¹⁵⁸

Abbat John Herte died soon after this occurrence, for on the 12th of March, 1527-8, Thomas Sutton, abbat, and convent of Atheney, granted to John Ambros, bachelor of music, an annuity of 53*s.* 4*d.*, issuing from their manor of Long Sutton, to be paid in equal portions at the four terms of the year. If not paid within fourteen days after the times appointed, the said John was empowered to enter and distrain on the aforesaid manor. This grant was allowed, with arrears from the dissolution, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 11th of November, 1540.¹⁵⁹

(154). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 24*b*.

(155). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 26*b*.

(156). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 29*b*.

(157). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 37*b*.

(158). MS. Harl. 6967, f. 38.

(159). Decrees, vol. viii, f. 61.

In the month of January, 1529-30, the same Abbat Thomas Sutton and convent gave to John Chappell and Katherine his wife a certain portion of bread and ale, and on the 11th of November following, to the same John and Katherine certain lands and tenements in Long Sutton, of the yearly value of £4.¹⁶⁰

The next year, Athelney received another superior in the person of John Maior. We have several orders granted by him and his convent to various individuals. On the 6th of September, 1531, they granted to John Horsey, of Clyston, in the county of Dorset, Esquire, for good counsel already given, and thereafter so to be, an annuity for life of 40s., issuing from their manor of Longesutton, to be paid at Michaelmas. After non-payment for a month he might enter and distrain. This also was allowed, with arrears from the dissolution, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 6th of November, 1539.¹⁶¹

On the 18th of December, 1531, the same John Maior, abbat, and convent, granted to Master William Englund, clerk, an annuity for life of £11 sterling, issuing out of their manor of Lenge, to be paid at Porlok at the four terms of the year, beginning from the Lady-day following. Non-payment empowered him to enter and distrain. Should they rescue or replevin for such distraint, they were to forfeit the sum of 100s. *totiens quotiens* by way of punishment. They put the aforesaid William into full possession and peaceful seisin of his annuity by the prepayment of 6s. 8d. This was allowed, with arrears, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 5th of May, 1543.¹⁶²

On the 10th of June, 1532, the same John Maior, abbat, and convent of Athengleye, gave to John Chappell and Katherine his wife, in recompense and satisfaction and for the surrender of the lands, tenements, bread and ale before mentioned, an annuity of 40s., issuing from their manors of Lenge and Atheng-

(160). Decrees, vol. vi, f. 104.

(161). Decrees, vol. vii, f. 164.

(162). Decrees, vol. xiv, f. 19.

leye, for the life of the survivor, to be paid at the usual four terms of the year. Non-payment to empower the grantees to enter and distrain. This was allowed, with arrears from the dissolution, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 18th of October, 1539.¹⁶³

On the 23rd of September, 1532, the same John Maior and convent gave, for certain causes specially moving them thereto, to Sir Thomas Crumwell, Lord Crumwell, an annuity of four mares sterling, issuing from all their manors, messuages, lands, and tenements, payable at Lady Day and Michaelmas, to commence from the Michaelmas following. On non-payment the grantee might enter and distrain. Possession and seisin were given by the pre-payment of 12*d.* as part of the said annuity. This is clearly an instance of those compulsory payments which this insatiate robber and most of his unscrupulous agents exacted from the helpless victims whose entire destruction they were at the very time encompassing.

The grant was of course allowed with arrears from the Dissolution, together with similar extortions from thirty other religious houses, on the 23rd of September, 1532.¹⁶⁴

On the 1st of October, in the same year, John Maior, abbat, and convent granted to their beloved friends, Richard Philleppe and Thomas his eldest son, for good counsel, the office of chief steward of their manor of Caundele Purs, in the county of Dorset. Also an annuity of 26*s.* 8*d.* issuing from the afore-said manor, payable at Michaelmas, with entrance and distraint on non-payment. Seisin was given by payment of 4*d.* sterling. This, with arrears from the Dissolution, was ordered by the Court of Augmentation, on the 8th of June, 1540.¹⁶⁵

On the 13th of December, 1532, John Maior, abbat, and convent acknowledged themselves bound to John Newporte, merchant, in the sum of £40 sterling, to be paid to the said

(163). Decrees, vol. vi, f. 104.

(164). Decrees, vol. vi, f. 124*b.*

165). Decrees, vol. v, f. 223*b.*

John or his assigns at Michaelmas, 1534. The conclusion of the document is in the vulgar tongue, for the behoof of the unlearned, and sets forth that "The condicion of this obligacon is suche that if the above-bounden John Maior, abbott of the monastery of Athelney and his covent well and truly pay or cause to be paid unto the abovenamed John Newporte m'chaunte or to his assignes sevyng and twenty poundes and sixe pence of good and lawfull money of Englund at the foresaid day abovenamed that then this obligacon to be void and of none effecte or els to stande in his full strength and vertue." The sum of £20 sterling in full recompense was allowed by the Court of Augmentation, on the 15th of November, 1540.¹⁶⁶

The reader will perceive that we have now arrived at days when the clouds were rapidly gathering for the final storm. John Maior, whose last act I have just related, was happily spared the sight of the troubles that were close at hand, and the abbey received its last superior in the person of Robert Hamlyn, in 1533 (?). I have already in previous memoirs entered so fully into the successive steps of the movement against the religious houses, that nothing need now be added except the particulars immediately connected with the community on whose history we are specially employed. The first exercise known to me of the new abbat's office is his subscription to the Declaration of the Royal Supremacy. This was made in the ordinary form, and dated in the chapter-house of the monastery of St. Saviour of Adoney, on the 17th of September, 1534, and of the reign of the most invincible prince, Henry VIII, the twenty-sixth. The signatures are placed in four columns, at the foot of the document, and the magnificent seal in a mutilated condition is appended in the usual manner. The names of the community occupy the following order. In the first column are, Dom. Robert [Hamlyn], abbat, John Benett, John Laurens. In the second, Dom. Richard Welles, prior, Henry Ponyngs, John Stephyns. In the third, Dom.

(166). Decrees, vol. viii, f. 94.

Cuthbert Harvi, Robert Edgare, Richard Alffrede. In the fourth, John Athelwyn, Richard Athelstaun, Thomas Ansell, and Thomas Genynges.¹⁶⁷

On the 13th of the following January, 1534-5, Robert Hamlyn, abbat, and convent granted to John Catcott, by the king's special command, a delivery of one loaf of monastic bread, one flagon of conventual ale, one dish of the kitchen, and thirteen shillings and fourpence of lawful English money : the food every day in the year during life, except Monday in each week when the said John should enjoy it as one of the household ; the money at Michaelmas. The said John was to hold and enjoy this grant as fully and entirely as William Testede, and John Sanffurde had previously done. The said John was at liberty to carry away the aforesaid delivery out of the monastery whither soever he pleased, and to dispose of the same according to his will without molestation from any one. Of this indenture, which was legal proof of this arrangement, one part was to remain with the said John, and the other in the hands of the abbat and convent. The Court of Augmentation allowed £4 sterling per annum in recompense and satisfaction, with arrears from the Dissolution on the 8th of November, 1539.¹⁶⁸

At this time the value of the possessions of the religious houses was taken, which resulted in the returns called the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. The total value of temporals and spirituals then belonging to the abbey is set down at £209 0s. 3¼d., and the tenth of the same at £20 18s. 0½d.¹⁶⁹

On the 10th of April, 1536, the abbat wrote to Secretary Cromwell the following letter. It still exists among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, and gives us a sad and doubtless too true a picture of the pecuniary difficulties of the house. The abbat says :—

(167). Ex. Autograph in Off. Rec.

(168). Decrees, vol. vi, f. 90.

(169). Valor Eccl.

Honorabell & my Synguler good mast' my deuty co'syderyd I lowly have me co'mendyd vn to youre good masterschepe desyryng yow to be good mast' vn to me and to my poure howse, co's'nyng the payments of oure detts that I may be out of trobell & sutte of the lawe, & I am co'tentyd to leue as pourely as ony ma' schal doo, of my degre, to the yntente that eu'y ma' may be the soner payd, worschypfull mast' deuysed su' menys that thys my pettysyon may take effecte & I am co'tentyd to abyde youre order y' thys behalffe. I truste to order me and my howse aft' suche a strayte facyon that I schal make payme't of a hundret pounds ev'y yere. I have send youre masterschepe a bocke of the detts & yerely fyes that my poure howse ys chargyd w^t whyche ys very moche. I hartly desyre yow to take the paynes to ou' see hyt & to p' uide su' remedye & ye schal have our dayly p'ayers, as knowythe God who ev' have yow y' hys blessyd tuycon & send yow long lyffe. Wrytyn at Athelney the tenthe day of Abryle.

By youre poure bedysma' }
Robert abbot of Athelney. }

Yff I cowlde have a frynd that wolde lene me iiij or v hu'dret pounds wtout ony p'phete or lucoure, I wolde gladly bynde me and my howse for the repayme't of a hundret pounds yerely vntyll the full sume be payde asstrongly as yt may be deuysyd by the lawe. Yff I hade mony to make payme't I schulde have moche mony remyttyd to paye the rest out of hande.

[*Endorsed.* Ye state of Athelney Abbey xth day of Aprile
I'res from the Abbot of Athelney.]

Thys be oure that folowyethe

Vn to the kynggs grace a hundret markes.

Vn to my lorde of glastonebury iiij schore & tenne pounds.

Vn to the abbot of donxwell iiij schore pounds.

Vn to Mast' sop' of Tanton xl li.

Vn to mast' phylyps of poule xxxij li.

Vn to the vycare of more xx li.

Vn to mast' Newport of brygewatt xxvij li.

- Vn to John browne of ufcombe xx li.
Vn to s' phylype Jordyn pryst xiiij li.
Vn to thomas mors of northe currye xlvij li. xvjsē xd.
Vn to s' rycherde Warre knythe lx li.
Vn to John curle xxvij li.
Vn to one thurston mede vj li. xiijsē iiijd.
Vn to the churche of ylton vj li. xiijsē iiijd.
Vn to s' John maior pryst vj li. xiijsē iiijd.
Vn to the churche of curry ix li. & ode mony.
Vn to the churche of thurloxton v li.
Vn to John chapel of glastonbury x li.
Vn to master anstrayge of brystow viij li. and ode mony.
Vn to walt' yongge xvj li.
Vn to wyll'am pyrsse vj li.
Vn to John cheke viij li.
Vn to Nych'us browne of tanton xlijsē.
Vn to Ric' mychyll v li. xiijsē iiijd.
Vn to Robert kene xlsē.
Vn to Jone payne xxxiijsē iiijd.
Vn to one yu'y vij li.
Vn to barnerde of tanton xlvjsē viijd.
Vn to one moddyslye xxijsē.
Vn to John goldyssmythe of Tanton lse.
Vn to Rogere bele xvijsē viijd.
Vn to Wyll'm collynggs xviijsē.
Vn to mast' smythe of brystow xxxvij li. vjsē jd.
Vn to the p'or of tanton x li.
Vn to the p'or of Saynt Joh'es of brygewatt' v li.
Vn to Wyll'm harte xxvjsē viijd.
Vn to John p'son viij li. and ode mony.
Vn to Wyll'm gredey vj li.
Vn to thomas alyn iij li. xiijsē iiijd.
Vn to Master gytson of london vj li. xiijsē iiijd.
Vn to s'gent thorneton ys exsecutours vij li.
Vn to one norma' xxxiijsē.

Vn to wyll'm brygge iij li.

Vn to oure vycare of wellys v li. vjsē viij d.

Vn to one Vsman xv sē.

Vn to snow of lamport iij li.

Vn to wyll'm pott xx sē.

Vn to John p'son of sotton xlsē.

Vn to mastres port' of som'ton xx sē.

Vn to a furrer of tanton xxvjsē viij d.

Vn to a sadeler of tanton liijsē.

Vn to thomas howes xix sē.

thes su'mys folowyng ys my detts that I borowyd at my fyrst comyng to athelney to paye my ordynary chargs w^t all. of my lorde of tauystoke xl li.

of Ric' mayow tauystoke l li.

of s' wyll'm courtenay xx li.

of Mr. s'uyngton of tauystoke xiiij li vjsē viij d.

of John wyll'ms of tauystoke v li.

Sum^a tot^l viij hundred iij schore & nine pounds xij schyl-lynggs vij pens.

thys folowewyng be the fyes & pe'cyons that oure howse ys yerely chargyd w^t all

Vn to my lord dawbeny cheffe steward xlsē.

Vn to my lord fyzwarryng xlsē.

Vn to Mast' secretory liijsē iiij d.

Vn to Mr. thomas clarke xlsē.

Vn to s' John horsey xlsē.

Vn to Mr. phylyppes of poule xxvjsē viij d.

Vn to Mr. sop' of tanton audyter xlsē.

Vn to Mr. cuffe under stewarde xlsē.

Vn to John chapell of glastonbury xlsē.

Vn to catecote for the kyngs corrody lsē.

al thos ar grontyd by couent seele before rehersyd.

Vn to s' John wadh^am knyngthe xx sē.

Vn to the schereue xlsē.

Vn to the exchet', xvjsē.

Vn to Mr. portema' xxvjs̄ viijd.

Vn to Mr. penny att'nay xiijs̄ iiijd.

Vn to oure vic' of wellys liijs̄ iiijd.

Vn to the vic' of long sutton xvjs̄ yn mony.

Vn to the vic' of leng yn mony by the yere xxxiijs̄ iiijd.

Vn to ambrose a syngyng ma' hathe by couent seale yerely—
liijs̄ iiijd. beyng at lyberte from the howse ę charged
wt no s'uyse.

Sum^a xxxiiij li. ijs̄.

MS. Harl. 604, ff. 63, 63b, 64, 64b, al. 69, 69b, 70, 70b.

On the 6th of August, 1538, Robert Hamlyn, abbat, and convent granted to John [Tregonwell], Doctor of Laws, for good counsel already given and thereafter so to be, an annuity for life of 40s., issuing from their manor of Long-Sutton, to be paid at Michaelmas. If the money remained unpaid a month after that date, the grantee might enter and distrain. Here we have another instance of shameless exaction of which this John Tregonwell was notoriously guilty. It was allowed, however, by the Court of Augmentation, with arrears from the Dissolution, on the 11th of October, 1539.¹⁷⁰

On the 20th of the same month of August, Robert Hamlyn, abbat, and convent granted to Richard Mahowe, the younger, and Philip Mahowe, son of Richard Mahowe the elder, of Tavystoke, in the county of Devon, the office of Superior and Receiver General of all and singular their demesnes, manors, lands and tenements with their appurtenances in the counties of Somerset and Dorset, with full power and authority according to the custom of the manor. Also an annuity of £5 of lawful money issuing from their manor at Lenge, during the lifetime of the survivor to be paid in equal portions at Michaelmas and Lady-day. Non-payment for the space of one month after these dates empowered the grantees to enter and distrain. This was allowed, with arrears, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 24th of January, 1541-2.¹⁷¹

(170). Decrees, vol. vi, f. 199. MS. Harl. 701, f. 104b.

(171). Decrees, vol. xi, f. 7b.

On the 20th of September, 1538, Robert Hamlyn, abbat and convent, granted to Edmund Wynsore, for good service past and future, an annuity for life of 20s., issuing from their manor of Lenge, to be paid at Michaelmas. After non-payment for a quarter of a year the said Edmund might enter and distrain. Allowed, with arrears, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 4th of February, 1540-1.¹⁷²

On the 10th of October following they granted to Alexander Popham, for good counsel past and future, an annuity for life of 26s. 8d. payable at Michaelmas: non-payment for two months was to empower the said Alexander to enter and distrain in their manor of Leng. Allowed, with arrears, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 7th of November, 1539.¹⁷³

On the 28th of the same month they gave to Edward Weston, for continuous good and faithful service, an annuity for life of four marcs, issuing from their manor of Lenge, payable at the four terms of the year in equal portions. On failure of payment the said Edward was at liberty to enter and distrain. They gave him seisin by payment of one silver penny. Allowed, with arrears, by the Court of Augmentation, on the 8th of June, 1540.¹⁷⁴

On the 1st November, 1538, they gave to William More, for good service, an annuity for life of 20s., issuing¹⁷⁵ from their manor of Lenge, and payable at Michaelmas. On failure of payment, either in whole or in part, for a quarter of a year, the said William might enter and distrain. Allowed by the Court of Augmentation, with arrears, on the 20th of October, 1541.¹⁷⁶

Three days afterwards, the 4th of November, 1538, they gave to John Montague, gentleman, and Richard Awstyn, vicar of Northecory, the next presentation to the vicarage of the parish

(172). Decrees, vol. vii, f. 27b.

(173). Decrees, vol. vi, f. 207.

(174). Decrees, vol. v, f. 221b.

(175). From "from their manor" to "20th of October, 1541," is scored through with pencil.

(176). Decrees, vol. iii, f. 49.

church of Lenge, whensoever by death, resignation, cession, deprivation, exchange, or in any other way it should next be vacant, for one turn only. This was allowed by the Court of Augmentation, on the 2nd of July, 1539.¹⁷⁷

This was the last act that I can discover as done by the inmates of the abbey previous to the final outrage to which they were subjected. On the 8th of February, 1538-9,¹⁷⁸ they met in their chapter-house and surrendered their monastery into the hands of their imperial persecutor. The names of such of the brethren who signed the instrument appear in one column on the left margin, and were : Robert [Hamlyn] abbat, Richard Wells, prior, John Athelwyne, Henry Ambros, Robert Edgar, sub-prior, John Laurens and Thomas Genynges.¹⁷⁹ These, as it will be perceived, are less by six in number than those who signed the declaration of supremacy between four and five years before. "Here I must observe," says Stevens, "that this could not be so inconsiderable an abbey as to contain only so small a number of monks, wherefore it is reasonable to believe that a much greater number, abhorring so base an act as to consent to the destruction of their monastery and to accept the reward of their wickedness, were turned out to starve and perhaps worse used."¹⁸⁰ The pension awarded to the abbat was fifty pounds a year.¹⁸¹ Stevens's supposition certainly appears borne out by the fact that the sole pensionaries which appear in the list in Cardinal Pole's Pension Book, 1556, are Robert Hamlyn lii ; Robert Edgar cs ; Henry Poyninges cs ; and Thomas Genynges liijs. iiijd.

To the instrument of surrender is appended a very perfect impression of the magnificent seal. It represents under three

(177). Decrees, vol. x, f. 245.

(178). MS. Lansd. 97, f. 3.

(179). Autograph in Off. Rec.

(180). *Stevens's* Abridgement, vol. i, p. 414.

[The real cause of the small number of monks was evidently the extreme poverty of the house and the amount of its debts.—Ed.]

(181). MS. Harl. 6974, f. 356.

canopies, in divided compartments, our Saviour between S. Peter and S. Paul, at full length and in erect attitudes. Our Saviour bears on his left arm a mound or plot, surmounted by a staff with a cross. The two apostles are represented with their customary insignia, S. Peter with his keys, S. Paul with his sword. Shields of arms occupy the right and left sides of the saints. The legend reads—SIGILLUM COMMUNE ABBATIS ET CON MONASTERII DE ATHELNEY.

The property was again valued in preparation for its disposal, and in the Minister's accounts for the year 1539 we have an exact return of the state and value of every portion. The several charges on the estates appear to have been paid, as there are orders among the decrees of the Court of Augmentation for the liquidation of the claims of the Dean and Chapter of Wells for an annual rent of 28*s.* 8*d.*, issuing from the lands, etc., called Saltmore;¹⁸² and of the Archdeacon of Taunton for an annual payment of 8*s.* 8*d.*, for synodals out of the church of West leng.¹⁸³

We will now see what was done with the spoil.

On the 7th January, 1543-4, the king granted to John Leigh, esquire, in exchange for lands in Surrey, Kent, and Derby, and £326 2*s.* 6*d.* of lawful money, the manor of Linge, in the county of Somerset, with all its rights, members, and appurtenances, formerly belonging to the Abbey of Athelney. Also the capital messuage, with appurtenances, called The Corte, in the parish of Linge, in the tenure or occupation of John Curle, and the tithes of corn and grass arising therefrom. Also a wood or coppice, called Connyngath Coppes, containing by estimation six acres, in the same parish, and the wood called Walbarough Wood, of seven acres, also in the same parish, and each of them formerly belonging to the said Abbey of Athelney. Together with this was the manor of Esse (Ash), formerly be-

(182). Decrees, vol. iv, f. 96.

(183). Decrees, vol. x, f. 354.

longing to the Priory of Taunton, with the rectory and church of the same, and Esse Woode, containing eighteen acres, also formerly belonging to the Priory of Taunton. Besides this there were lands in Somerset, belonging to the Priory of Wytham, and of St. John the Baptist of Briggewayter, the manor of Wyllyton, belonging to the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem; and in Dorsetshire, belonging to the Abbeyes of Abbottesbury, Shirborne, and Cerne. The property belonging to Athelney was valued at £92 13s. 6½*d.*, not deducting tithe; and that belonging to Taunton at £23 6s. 5*d.*, not deducting tithe. It was to be held in chief of the king, at an annual rent for Linge of £9 5s. 4½*d.*, and for Esse of 46s. 7½*d.*, to be paid at Michaelmas. The grant was dated at Westminster, the day and year above mentioned.¹⁸⁴

On the 17th of August, 1544, the king granted to John Clayton, or Clutton, gentleman, for the sum of £182 15*s.*, the site, sept, circuit, boundary, and precinct of the late Monastery of Athelney, with all its rights and appurtenances whatsoever, then or lately in the tenure or occupation of Sir John Tuchett, Lord Audley, and all and singular the houses, buildings, gardens, orchards, stables, dovecots, vineries, waters, etc., belonging thereunto. Also all and singular the lands, tenements, meadows, etc., in the parish of Ling, Seynt Michellborowe, and elsewhere in the county of Somerset, known or called by the name or names of The Island, Mille Meade, Longe Meade, Under the Orchard, Litell Meade, Langmeade, Clyvesmeade, and Brandesmeade, and two meadows, with appurtenances, in the eastern part of The Dreve, and one meadow called Brodemeade and one close by Brodemeade, two pastures in the north part of the Dreve, called Hyculer, one close in the western part of Hyculer, and one close of meadow in the western part of The Dreve aforesaid, two closes of pasture called Cosyners Lease, one close of meadow called Pypesmore, and two Willowebers, with their appurtenances. Also the other lands called The Demesne

(184). *Orig.*, 35 Hen. VIII, p. 3, rot. 98.

Landes of the said monastery. All these were to be held as clearly, entirely, and amply as the late abbat had held them. They were estimated at the annual value of £10 2s. 6d., without deducting tithe, and were to be held in chief by the service of the fortieth part of a knight's fee, and a yearly rent of 20s. 3d. of lawful money, to be paid at Michaelmas. The grant was to take effect from the Feast of the Annunciation last past. It was dated, witness Katherine Queen of England, and general ruler of the same, at Hampton Court, the 17th of August, 1544.¹⁸⁵

It would appear that this John Clayton obtained a licence to alienate the property to John Tynbere and his heirs in the following April.¹⁸⁶ There is some confusion in the exact dates, but it is certain that such a licence was obtained, though it would not appear to have been acted upon. The localities are identical with those mentioned in the grant just recited, with a few literal variations in the names. Thus, Cosyners Lease in the former is Clyverslease in this, and Pypesmore is Pypismore.

John Clayton was not permitted long to enjoy his perilous property. He died in the parish of St. Clement Danes outside Temple Bar, on the 2nd of November, in the same year. He had no lineal representative, and his brother David, of the city of Westminster, of the age of thirty-one years, his next heir, succeeded to the estate. In the order to the eschaetor to give him seizin, there are a few variations from the grant which conveyed the place to his predecessor. Longmeade is said to be by Clyvesmede, Brandesmeade is Braundesmead, Dreve is Dreave, Willowbers is Willowberes, and Seynt Michellborowe takes the more modern form of Seynt Michelles Borough. The value is stated at £9 2s. 3d. in all issues. The writ cost David Clayton half-a-marc, and was dated at Westminster the 16th of April, 1545.¹⁸⁷

(185). Orig., 36 Hen. VIII, p. 3, rot. 100.

(186). Orig., 36 Hen. VIII, p. 6, rot. 60.

(187). Orig., 36 Hen. VIII, p. 1, rot. 19.

The subsequent history of the property, into which it is not my province to enter, would only too well bear out the warning addressed by the good Archbishop Whitgift to Queen Elizabeth :—" I beg posterity to take notice of what is already made visible in many families, that church land added to an ancient inheritance hath proved like a moth fretting a garment and secretly consumed both ; or, like the eagle that stole a coal from the altar, and thereby consumed both her young ones and herself that stole it."

On the 13th of October, 1544, the king granted to William Porteman, serjeant-at-law, and Alexander Popham, esquire, and their heirs, for the sum of £754 17s. 8*d.*, the manor, farm, and grange of Claveshey, with its appurtenances in the parishes of Northepetherton and Bromefelde, and the capital messuage, house, site, and capital mansion of Claveshey, formerly belonging to the abbey of Athelney. Also the wood commonly called Claveshey or Chalveshey Wood, containing by estimation ten acres, and the wood called Holesey Wood, containing by estimation five acres in Northepetherton aforesaid, and formerly belonging to the late monastery of Athelney. In addition to this were lands belonging to the Priories of Mynchin Buckland, Taunton, and St. John of Bridgwater, for an account of which the reader is referred to my histories of the two former Houses. The annual value of Claveshey was estimated at £9, and the annual rent to the king was fixed at 18*s.* The grant was dated at Westminster, and, as stated above, on the 13th of October, 1544.¹⁸⁸

On the 3rd of March, 1544-5, the king granted to Sir William Stourton, Lord Stourton, for the sum of £1403 16*s.* 0½*d.*, the manor of Caundell Purs, with all its rights, etc., and in the county of Dorset, formerly belonging to the Abbey of Athelney, with woods called Abbottes Wod and Roughe Crofte Coppes, containing by estimation six acres, in the same manor, and formerly belonging to the same monastery. Other lands

(188). Orig., 36 Hen. VIII, p. 3, rot. 12.

belonging to various Houses in Dorsetshire accompanied the grant. The manor was valued at £8 10s. 9d. a year, and was to be held by the service of the twentieth part of one knight's fee, and a yearly rent of 17s. 1d. of lawful money, to be paid at Michaelmas. The grant was dated at Westminster, on the day and year aforesaid.¹⁸⁹

In the following year the king granted to Robert Thornhill, of Wakeryngham, in the county of Nottingham, esquire, and to Hugh Thornhill, gentleman, his brother, for the sum of £1399 18s., certain cottages, tenements, burgages, curtilages, shops, and gardens, in the burg called Michell Burough, in the county of Somerset, in the tenure and occupation of Andrew Pery, Walter Squyer, John Barker, Thomas Barker, Thomas Clere, John Skorsse, John Mychell, John Kerell, John Templer, and John Payne, formerly the property of the abbey of Athelney. Also cottages, burgages, curtilages, gardens, or shops in the vill or burg of Lamporte, or Langporte, in the occupation of Thomas Pitney, John Maye, William Chilcote, John Templer, John Glistier, Richard Spencer, John Squyer, Alexander Philypp, and John Bourne, also formerly belonging to the Abbey of Athelney. With these were included enormous tracts in the counties of Nottingham, York, Derby, Lincoln, Stafford, Essex, Sussex, Hereford, etc. The Athelney property was estimated as worth £4 15s. 2d. a year.¹⁹⁰ The exact date is omitted from the roll, but it was in the 38th of Henry VIII.

Such was the mode in which modern atheism requited the work of long ages of faith and piety! My reader will, I fear, have had more than enough of this, and I will detain him but a few moments longer.

But before I conclude, I would add a few words respecting the various objects of archæological interest, which are recorded as having been discovered on and in the neighbourhood

(189). *Orig.*, 36 Hen. VIII, p. 8, rot. 25.

(190). *Orig.*, 38 Hen. VIII, p. 3, rot. 32.

of the site. "In 1674, some labourers," says Collinson, "employed by Captain Hacker, to whom the premises then belonged, to remove part of the ruins, disclosed a very ancient sepulchre of well wrought stone, containing the skull of the deceased, the osilium, and a small fragment of cloth. The inside of this receptacle was singularly contrived, the bottom being excavated or scooped out, so as to admit the several parts of the body. They afterwards discovered the foundation of the ancient church which stood on the top of the hill to the north-east, and there found bases of pillars, elegant tracery work of windows, and divers pieces of sculptured freestone, still retaining the marks of paint and gold. The labourers were said to have likewise found at the same time a large spur of gold, which they privately disposed of for their own benefit." He adds, "About eighteen years since," that is about 1773, "in digging up some other of the ancient ruins about sixty yards from the present farm house, northward, the workmen discovered a vault eight feet square and seven feet high, containing three human skulls. The stone of the arch and side walls being taken away, the cavity was filled up, covering the skulls with earth. Fourscore yards from this funereal spot stood a chapel, the ruins of which were removed about the same period." It has been suggested that this building was the oratory already mentioned under the date of the 19th June, 1462.

Alfred's Jewel was found in the year 1693, in Newton Park, at some distance northward from the abbey. It is a most interesting example of Anglo-Saxon workmanship. A rude figure of a person crowned (holding a sceptre surmounted by a flower) on one side was supposed by Dr. Hickes to represent St. Cuthbert. The other side is filled by a large flower. I hardly need add that it is one of the chief treasures of the Ashmolean Museum, to which it was given in 1718, by Thomas Palmer, esq., of Fairfield, in this county.

Other objects of interest have come under my own observa-

tion, several silver coins of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and a pilgrim's leaden ampulla, which one of the brethren may have brought from Rheims, were submitted to my inspection several years ago, by the courtesy of Lady Slade. A few fragments of encaustic tiles, a magnificent boss of excellently carved foliage, apparently vine leaves, the points of the leaves forming a cross. Some segments of piers and set-offs of buttresses may still be seen in the farmyard and garden. . . . A few years since a very beautiful boss was in possession of the tenant, but has since been lost. It was of small size, and composed of foliage, the tops of the leaves gilt, with blue and crimson in the depressions. The designs on the tiles are invariably geometrical, or representations of leaves and flowers. No heraldic bearings or figures of animals have been reported to me. These, meagre as they are, are the sole remains of the stately structure that once occupied the spot, but which has now departed, together with the system with which it was associated.

Such is the history of Athelney Abbey. A holy hermit, as it would appear, first found a place for contemplation amid its almost inaccessible shades. Afterwards—and even this is separated from us, as I have already remarked, by the interval of just a thousand years—the scene was ennobled as the retreat of one of the best and greatest of his age and country. Within the course of these ten centuries it has witnessed most, if not all, of the phases that English society could successively present. The gratitude of a fugitive and then successful king next introduced a religious community which held it under various fortunes until the days that brought destruction alike to it and its fellows. Since then, as it would seem, it has retreated further and further into the solitude of its primæval state, and has assumed characteristics closely approaching those which were noticeable hundreds of long years ago. At present, notwithstanding the proximity of the great iron road of our own generation, it exhibits as little evidence of its former possession as it did before it was so immortalized. At the moment that I

write the golden corn is waving over it, and bending to the breeze that sweeps sharply across the surrounding plain, the river yet rolls slowly by its side, and the chime of that melodious peal which once made music far and near, is changed for the monotonous and melancholy tinkle of the distant sheep-bell, faint or full as the blast permits. Such is the scene under its most pleasant aspect. While on many a day in the year's course, when autumn harvests have been gathered, and winter rains have come, its appearance is still nearer to its original character; and its olden tenants, were they to revisit it, might point to the dreamy loneliness of its present state as an instance of the truth of the declaration that "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be"; and that "there is nothing whereof it may be said, it is new. It hath been already of old time that was before us."