

F.A. Gasquet. English Monastic Life. Methuen & Co. London, 1904.

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CHAPTER IX

EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE MONASTIC ORDERS

1. The Bishop

Normally, the bishop of the diocese in which a religious house was situated, was its Visitor and ultimate authority, except in so far as an appeal lay from him to the pope. In process of time exemptions from the regular jurisdiction of the diocesan tended to multiply ; whole Orders, like the Cistercian and the Cluniacs among the Benedictines, and the Premonstratensians among the Canons Regular, and even individual houses, like St. Alban's and Bury St. Edmunds, on one ground or another obtained their freedom from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary. In the case of great bodies, like those of Citeaux, Cluny, Prémontré, and later the Gilbertines, the privilege of exemption was in the first instance obtained from the pope, on the ground that the individual houses were parts of a great corporation with its center at the mother-house. Such monasteries were all subject to the authority of a central government, and regular Visitors were appointed by it. In the thirteenth century, on the same principle, the mendicant Orders, whose members were attached to the general body and not to the locality in which they might happen to be, were freed from the immediate control of the bishops

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of the various dioceses in which their convents were situated.

In the case of individual houses, the exemption was granted by the Holy See as a favour and a privilege. It is hard to understand in what the privilege really consisted, except that it was certainly considered an honourable thing to be immediately subject only to the head of the Christian Church. Such privileges were, on the whole, few ; only five Benedictine houses in England possessed them, and even such great and important abbeys as Glastonbury, in the South of England, and St. Mary's, York, in the north, were subject to the regular jurisdiction of the diocesan. In the case of the few Benedictine houses which, by the intercession of the king or other powerful friends, had obtained exemption in this matter, regular fees had to be paid to the Roman chancery for the privilege. St. Alban's, for example, at the beginning of the sixteenth

century, made an annual payment of £14 to the papal collector in lieu of the large fees previously paid on the election of every new abbot, and as an acknowledgement of the various privileges granted to him, such as, for example, the right to rank first in dignity among the abbots, and for the abbot to be able “even outside his own churches to use pontificalia and solemnly bless the people.” Edmondsbury, in the same way, paid an annual sum for its exemption and privileges, as also did Westminster, St. Augustine’s (Canterbury), Waltham Holy Cross, and a few others. By this time, too, some of the Cluniac houses, such as Lewes Priory and Lenton, had obtained their exemption and right of election.

In regard to the non-exempt monasteries and convents—that is ordinarily—the relation between the bishops and

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the religious houses was constant ; and, apparently, with exceptions of course, cordial. The episcopal registers show that the bishops did not shirk the duty of visiting, and correcting what they found miss in the houses under their control ; and whilst there is evidence of a natural desire on their part to bring the regular life up to a high standard, there is little or none of any narrow spirit in the exercise of their part of the episcopal office, or of any determination to worry the religious, to misunderstand the purpose of their high vocation, or to make regular life unworkable in practice by any over-strict interpretation of the letter of the law. It is, of course after all, only natural that these good relations should exist between the bishop and the regulars of his dioceses. The unexempt houses were not extra – diocesan so far as episcopal authority went, like those of the exempt Orders ; but they were for the most part the most important and the most useful centres of spiritual life in each diocese. It was therefore to the bishop’s interest as head of the diocese to see that in theses establishments the lamp of fervour would not be allowed to grow dim, and that the good work should not be permitted to suffer through any lessening on the cordial relations which had traditionally existed between the bishops and the religious houses within the pale of his jurisdiction.

The bishop’s duties to the religious houses in his diocese were various. In the first place, in regard to the election of the superior : here much depended upon the actual position of the monastery in regard to the king, to the patron, or even to the Order. If the king was the founder of the house or had come to be regarded as such, which may roughly be said to have been the case in most

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of the greater monastic establishments, and especially in those which held lands immediately from the Crown, then the bishop had nothing to say to the matter till the royal assent had been given. The process has been already briefly explained ; but the main features may again be set out. On the death of the superior, the religious would have to make choice of some of their number to proceed to the court to inform the king of the demise and to obtain the *congé d’ élire*, or permission to elect. The first action of the king would be the appointment of officials to administer the property in his name during the vacancy, having due regard to the needs of the community. He would then issue his license for the religious to choose a new superior. All this, especially if the king were abroad or in some far-off part of the country, would take time,

sometimes measured by weeks. On the reception of the *congé d'élire*, the convent proceeded to the formal election, the result of which had to be reported to the king ; and if he assented to the choice made, this was signified to the bishop, whose office it was to inquire concerning the validity of the election and the fitness of the person chosen—that is, he was bound to see whether the canonical forms had all been adhered to in the process and the election legal, and whether the elect had the qualities necessary to make a fitting superior and a ruler in temporals and in spirituals. If after inquiry all proved to be satisfactory, the bishop formally confirmed the choice of the monks and signified the confirmation to the king, asking for the restitution of temporalities to the new superior. If the election was that of an abbot, the bishop then bestowed the solemn blessing up on the elect thus confirmed, generally in some place other than

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his own monastic church, and wrote a formal letter to the community, charging them to receive their new superior and show him all obedience. Finally, the bishop appointed a commission to proceed to the house and install the abbot or prior in his office.

In the case of houses which acknowledged founders or patrons other than the king, the death of superiors were communicated to them and permission to proceed to the choice of successors was asked for more as a form than as a reality. The rest was in the hands of the bishops. In ordinary circumstances where there was no such lay patron, a community, on the death of a superior, merely assembled and at once made choice of a successor. This election had then to be communicated at once to the bishop, whose duty it was to inquire into the circumstances of the election and to determine whether the canonical formalities had been complied with. If this inquiry proved satisfactory, the bishop proceeded to the canonical examination of the elect before confirming the choice. This kind of election was completed by the issue of the episcopal letters claiming the obedience of the monks for their new superior. It was frequently the custom for the bishop to appoint custodians of the temporalities, during the vacancy at such of those religious houses as were immediately subject to him. The frequency of the adoption by religious of the form of election by which they requested the bishop to make chose of their superior is at least evidence of the more than cordial relations which existed between the diocesan and the regulars, and of their confidence in his desire to serve their house to the best of his power in the choice of the most fitting superior.

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Sometimes, of course, the Episcopal examination of the process, or of the elect, would lead to the quashing of the election. This took place generally when some canonical form had not been adhered to, as on this matter the law was rightly most strict. Less frequently, the elect on inquiry was found to lack some quality essential in a good ruler, and it then became the duty of the bishop to declare the choice void. Sometimes this led to the convent being deprived of its voice in the election, and in such a case the choice devolved upon the bishop. Numerous instances, however, make it clear that although legally the bishop was bound to declare such an election void, he would always, if possible, himself appoint the religious who had been the choice of the community.

In other instances again, the bishop's part in the appointment of a new superior was confined to the blessing of the abbot after the confirmation of the election by the pope, or by the superior of the religious body. This was the case in the Cistercian and Cluniac bodies, and in such of the great abbeys as were exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. Sometimes, as in the case of St. Alban's, even the solemn blessing of the new abbot could by special privilege be given by any bishop the elect might choose for the purpose.

Outside the time of the elections and visitations, the bishops exercised generally a paternal and watchful care over the religious houses of their diocese. Before the suppression of the alien priories, for example, those foreign settlements were supervised by the Ordinary quite as strictly as were the English religious houses under his jurisdiction. These priories were mostly established in the first instance to look after estates which had been

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bestowed upon foreign abbeys, and the number in each house was supposed to be strictly limited, and was, in fact, small. It was not uncommon, however, to find that more than the stipulated number of religious were quartered upon the small community by the foreign superior, or that an annual payment greater than the revenue of the English estate would allow was demanded by the authorities of the foreign mother-house. Against both of these abuses the bishop of the dioceses had officially to guard. We find, for instance, Bishop Grandisson of Exeter giving his licence for a monk of Bec to live for some months only at Cowick Priory, and for another to leave Cowick on a visit to Bec. Also in regard to Tywardreath, a cell of the Abbey of St. Sergius, near Ghent, the same bishop on examination found that the revenue was so diminished that it could not support the six monks it was supposed to maintain, and he therefore sent back three of their number to the mother-house on the continent. This conclusion, be it remarked, as arrived at only after careful inquiry, and after the bishop had for a time appointed a monk from another religious house to assist the foreign superior in the administration of the temporals of his priory. Upon the report of this assistant he deprived the superior for negligence, and appointed custodians of the temporalities of the house. From the episcopal registers generally it appears, too, that once the foreign religious were settled in any alien priory, they came under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the locality, in the same way as the English religious. The alien prior's appointment had to be confirmed by him, and no religious could come to the house or go from it, even to return to the foreign mother-house, without his permission.

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In regard to all non-exempt monastic establishments of men and convents of women, the episcopal powers were very great and were freely exercised. This to take some examples : the Benedictine abbey of Tavistock in the fourteenth century was seriously troubled by debt, partly, at least, caused by an incapable and unworthy superior. This abbot, by the way, had been provided by the pope; and apparently the bishop did not consider that his functions extended beyond issuing a commission to induct him into his office. In a short time matters came to a crisis, and reports as to the bad state of the house came to the ears of Bishop Grandisson. He forthwith prohibited the house from admitting more members into the habit until he had had time to examine into matters. The abbot replied by claiming exemption from episcopal jurisdiction, apparently on the ground that he had been appointed by the Holy See. The bishop, as he said,

“out of reverence for the lord Pope who had created the both of us,” waived this as a right and came to the house as a friend, to see what remedy would be found to allay the rumours that were rife in the country as to gross mismanagement at the abbey. How far the bishop succeeded does not transpire ; but a couple of years later the abbot was suspended and deposed, and the bishop appointed the Cistercian abbot of Buckland and a monk of Tavistock to administer the goods of the abbey pending another election. How thoroughly the religious approved of the action of the bishop may be gauged by the fact that they asked him to appoint their abbot for them.

In the ordinary and extraordinary visitations made by the bishop, the interests of the religious houses were apparently the only considerations which weighed with

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him. Sometimes the injunctions and monitions given at a visitation appertained to the most minute points of regular life, and sometimes the visitatorial powers were continued in force for considerable periods in order to secure that certain point that needed correction might be seen to. One curious right possessed and exercised by the bishop of any diocese on first coming to his see, was that of appointing one person in each monastery and convent to be received as a religious without payment or pension. It is proper, however, to say that this right was always exercised with fatherly discretion. Again and again, the records of visitations in the episcopal register show that the bishop did not hesitate to appoint a coadjutor to any superior whom he might find deficient in the power of governing, either in spirituals or temporals. Officials who were shown to be incapable in the course of such inquiries were removed, and others were either appointed by the bishop, or their appointment sanctioned by him. Religious who had proved themselves undesirable or impossible in one house were not unfrequently translated by the bishop to another. This is A.D. 1338-9 great storms had wrought destruction at Bodmin. The priory buildings were in ruins, and a sum of money had to be raised for the necessary repairs which were urgently required. Bishop Grandisson gave his permission for the monks to sell a corrody—or undertaking to give board and lodging for life at the priory—for a payment of ready money. A few years later, in 1347, on his visitation the bishop found things financially in a bad way. He removed the almoner from his office, regulated the number of servants and the amount of food ; and having appointed an administrator

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sent the prior to live for a time in one of the priory granges, in order to see whether the house could be recovered from its state of bankruptcy by careful administration.

One proof of the friendly relations which as a rule existed between the bishop and the regular clergy of his diocese may be seen in the fact that the abbots and superiors were frequently, if not generally, found in the lists of those appointed as diocesan collectors on any given occasion. The superiors of religious houses contributed to the loans and grants raised in common with the rest of the diocesan clergy, either for the needs of the sovereign, the Holy See, or the bishop. That there were at times difficulty and friction in the working out of these well-understood principles of subordination can not be denied ; but that as a whole the system, which may be described as normal, brought about harmonious relations between the bishop and the regulars must be

conceded by all who will study its workings in the records of pre-Reformation episcopal government.

2. The Church In England Generally

The monastic Orders were called upon to take their share in common burdens imposed upon the Church in England. These included contributions to the sums levied upon ecclesiastics by Convocation for the pope and for the king in times of need ; and they contributed, albeit, perhaps, like the rest of the English Church, unwillingly, their share to the “procurations” of papal legates and questors. Sometimes the call thus made upon their revenues was very considerable, especially

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as the king did not hesitate on occasions to make particular demands upon the wealthier religious houses. At Convocation, and in the Provincial Synods the regular clergy were well represented. Thus, from the diocese of Exeter in the year 1328-9 there were summoned to the Synod of London seven abbots to be present *personaliter*, whilst five Augustinian and seven Benedictine priories also chose and sent proctors to the meeting. As a rule, apparently, at all such meetings the abbots, and priors who were canonically elected to rule their houses with full jurisdiction, had the right, and were indeed bound to be present, unless prevented by a canonical reason. The archbishop, as such, had no more to say to the regulars than to any other ecclesiastic of his province, except that during a vacancy in any diocese he might, and indeed frequently did, visit the religious houses in that diocese personally or by commission.

3. The Order

Besides supervision and help of the bishop, almost every religious house had some connection with and assistance from the order to which it belonged. In the case of the great united corporations like the Cluniacs, the Cistercians, the Premonstratensians, and later the Carthusians, the dependence of the individual monastery upon the centre of government was very real both in theory and in practice. The abbots or superiors had to attend at General Chapters, held, for instance, at Cluny, Citeaux, or Prémontré, and were subject to regular visitation made by or in behalf of the general superior. In the case of a vacancy the election was

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supervised and the elect examined and confirmed either by, or by order of, the chief authority, or, in the case of daughter-houses, by the superior of the parent abbey. Even in the case of the Benedictines, who did not form an Order in the modern sense of the word, after the Council of Lateran in 1215, the monasteries were united into Congregations, for common purposes and mutual help and encouragement. In England there were two such unions, corresponding to the provinces of Canterbury and York, and the superiors met at regular intervals in General Chapters. Little is known of the meetings of the Northern Province ; but in the South the records show that they were regularly held to the last. The first and ordinary business of thee General

Chapters was to secure a proper standard of regular observance ; and whatever, after discussion, was agreed upon, provided that it met with the approval of the president of the meeting, was to be observed without any appeal. Moreover, at each of these Chapters two or more prudent and religious men were chosen to visit every Benedictine house of the province in the pope's name, with full power to correct where any correction might be considered necessary. In case these papal Visitors found abuses existing in any monastery which might render the deposition of the abbot necessary or desirable, they had to denounce him to the bishop of the dioceses, who has to take the necessary steps for his canonical removal. If the bishop did not, or would not act, the Visitors were bound to refer the case to the Holy See. By the provisions of the Lateran Council in A.D. 1215, the bishops were warned to see that the religious houses in their dioceses were in good order,

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“so that when the aforesaid Visitors come there, they may find them worthy of commendation rather than of correction.” They were, however, warned to be careful “not to make their visitations a burden or expense, and to see that the rights of superiors were maintained, without injury to those of their subjects.”

In this system a double security was provided for the well-being of the monasteries. The bishops were maintained in their old position as Visitors, and were constituted judges where the conduct of the superior might necessitate the gravest censures. At the same time, by providing that all the monasteries would be visited every three years by monks chosen by the General Chapter and acting in the name of the pope, any failure of the bishop to fulfill his duty as diocesan, or any incapacity on his part to understand the due working of the monastic system, received the needful corrective.

One other useful result to the monasteries may be attributed to the regular meetings of General Chapter. It was by the wise provision of these Chapters that members of the monastic Orders received the advantage of a University training. Common colleges were established by their decrees at Oxford and Cambridge, and all superiors were charged to send their most promising students to study and take their degrees in the national Universities. Strangely enough as it may appear to us in these days, even in these colleges the autonomy of the individual Benedictine houses seems to have been scrupulously safeguarded ; and the common college consisted of small houses, in which the students of various monasteries dwelt apart, though attending a common hall and chapel.

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4. The Impropriated Churches

In regard to the external relations of the monastic houses, a word must be said about their dealings with the parochial churches appropriated to their use. Either by the gift of the king or that of some lay patron, many churches to which they had the right of presentation became united with monasteries, and a considerable portion of the parish revenues was applied to the support of the religious, to keeping up adequate charity, or “hospitality” as it was called in the

neighborhood, or other such objects. The practice of impropriation has been regarded by most writers as a manifest abuse, and there is no call to attempt to defend it. The practice was not confined, however, to the monks, or to the action of lay people were found therein an easy way to become benefactors of some religious house. Bishops and other ecclesiastics, as founders of colleges and hospitals, were quite as ready to increase the revenues of these establishments in the same way.

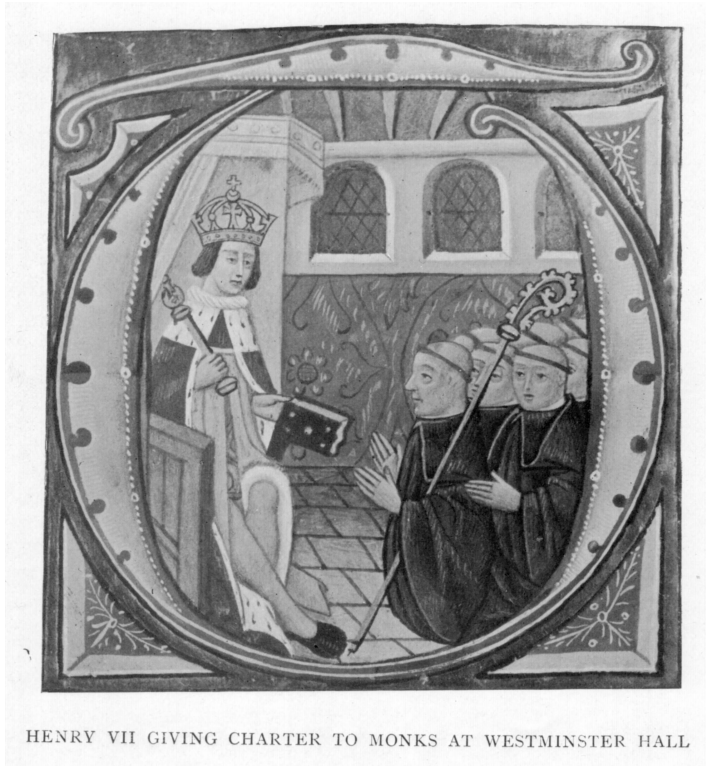
In order that a church might be legally appropriated to a religious establishment the approval of the bishop had to be obtained, and the special reasons for the donation by the lay patron set forth. If these were considered satisfactory, the formal permission of the Holy See was, at any rate after the twelfth century, necessary for the completion of the transaction. The monastery became the patron of the benefice thus attached to it, and had to secure that the spiritual needs of the parish were properly attended to by the vicars whom they presented to the cure. These vicars were paid an adequate stipend, usually settled by episcopal authority.

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Roughly speaking, the present distinction between a vicarage and a rectory shows where churches had been appropriated to a religious house or other public body, and where they remained merely parochial. The vicar was the priest appointed at a fixed stipend by the corporation which took the rectorial tithes. It has been calculated that at least a third part of the tithes of the richest benefices in England were appropriated either in part or wholly to religious and secular bodies, such as colleges, military orders, lay hospitals, gilds, convents ; even deans, cantors, treasurers, and chancellors of cathedral bodies were also largely endowed with rectorial tithes. In this way, at the dissolution of the religious houses under Henry VIII, the greater tithes of an immense number of parish churches, now known as vicarages, passed into the hands of the noblemen and others who obtained grants of the property of the suppressed monasteries.

Whilst the impropriation of churches to monastic establishments undoubtedly took money out of the locality for the benefit of the religious, it is but fair to recognize that in many ways the benefit thus obtained was returned with interest. Not only did the monks furnish the ranks of the secular priesthood with youths who had received their early education in the cloister school or at the almonry ; but the churches and vicarages of places impropriated were the special care of the religious. An examination of these churches frequently reveals the fact that the religious bodies did not hesitate to spend large sums of money on the rebuilding and adornment of structures which belonged to them in this way.

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HENRY VII GIVING CHARTER TO MONKS AT WESTMINSTER HALL

Illustration: Henry VII giving charter to monks at Westminster Hall.

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5. King and Parliament

Of many of the religious houses, especially of the greater abbeys, the king either was, or came to be considered, the founder. It has already been pointed out what this relation to the Crown implied on the part of the monks. Besides this the Crown could, and in spite of the protests of those chiefly concerned, frequently, if not ordinarily did, appoint abbots and other superiors of religious houses members of the commissions of peace for the counties in which their establishments were situated. They were likewise made collectors for grants and loans to the Crown, especially when the tax was to be levied on ecclesiastical property ; and according to the extent of their lands and possessions, like the lay-holders from the Crown, they had to furnish soldiers to fight under the royal standard. In the same way the abbot and other superiors could be summoned by the king to Parliament as barons. The number of religious thus called to the House of Peers at first appears to have depended somewhat upon the fancy of the sovereign ; it certainly varied considerably. In 1216, for example, from the north province of England eleven abbots and eight priors, and from the South seventy-one abbots and priors—in all ninety religious—were summoned to Parliament by Henry III. In 1272 Edward I called only fifty-seven, mostly abbots, a few, however, being cathedral priors ; and in later times the number of

monastic superiors in the House of Peers generally included only the twenty-five abbots of greater houses and the prior of Coventry, and these were accounted as barons of the kingdom.

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6. The Monastic Tenants

The division of the monastic revenues between the various obedientiaries for the support of the burdens of their special offices was fairly general, at least in the great religious houses. It was for the benefit of the house, inasmuch as it left a much smaller revenue to be dealt with by the royal exchequer at every vacancy. It served, also, at least one other good purpose. It brought many of the religious into contact with the tenants of the monastic estates and gave them more knowledge of their condition and mode of life ; whilst the personal contact, which was possible in a small administration, was certainly for the mutual benefit of master and tenant. Since the prior, sacrist, almoner and other officials all had to look after the administration of the manors and farms assigned to their care, they had to have separate granges and manor-halls. In these they had to carry out their various duties, and meet their tenants on occasions, as was the case, for example, at Glastonbury, where the sacrist had all the tithes of Glastonbury, including West Pennard, to collect, and had his special tithe-barn, etc., for the purpose.

Two books, amongst others, *The Rentalia et Custumaria* of Glastonbury, published by the Somerset Record Society, and the *Halmote Rolls* of Durham, issued by the Surtees Society, enable any student who may desire to do so to obtain a knowledge of the relations which existed between the monastic landlords and their tenants. At the great monastery of the West Country the tenure of the land was of all kinds, from the estates held under the obligation of so many knights' fees, to the poor cottier with an acre or two. Some of the tenants has to find part

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of their rent in service, part in kind, part in payment. Thus, one had to find thirty salmon, "each as thick as a man's fist at the tail," for the use of the monastery ; some had to find thousands of eels from Sedgemoor ; others, again, so many measures of honey. Some of those who worked for the monastery or its estates had fixed wages, as, for example, the gardeners ; others had to be content with what was given them.

Mr. Elton, in an appendix to the Glastonbury volume, has analysed the information to be found in its pages, and from this some items of interest maybe given here. A cottier with five acres of arable land paid 4*d.* less one farthing for rent, and five hens as "kirkset" if he were married. From Michaelmas to Midsummer he was bound to do three days' labour a week of farm work on the monastic lands, such as toiling on the fallows, winnowing corn, hedging, ditching, and fencing. During the rest of the year, that is, in the harvest time, he had to do five days' work on the farm, and could be called upon to lend a hand in any kind of occupation, except loading and carting. Like the farmers, he had his allowance of one sheaf of corn for each acre he reaped, and a "laveroc," or as much grass as he could gather on his hook, for every acre he mowed. Besides this general work he had to bear his share in looking after the vineyard at Glastonbury.

Take another example of tenure : one “Golliva of the lake,” held a three-acre tenement. It consisted of a croft of two acres and one acre in the common field. She made a small payment for this ; and for extra work she had three sheaves, measured by a strap kept for that purpose. When she went haymaking she brought her own rake ;

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she took her share in all harvest work, had to winnow a specified quantity of corn before Christmas, and did odd jobs of all kinds, such as carrying a writ for the abbot and driving cattle to Glastonbury.

The smaller cottagers were apparently well treated. A certain Alice, for example, had half an acre field for which she had to bring water to the reapers at the harvest and sharpen their sickles for them. On the whole, though work was plenty and the life no doubt hard, the lot of the Somerset laborer on the Glastonbury estate was not too unpleasant. Of amusements the only one named is the institution of *scot-ales*, an entertainment which lasted two, or even three days. The lord of the manor might hold three in a year. On the first day, Saturday, the married men and youths came with their pennies and were served three times with ale. On the Sunday the husbands and their wives came ; but if the youths came they had to pay another penny. On the Monday any of them could come if they had paid on other days.

On the whole, the manors of the monastery may be said to have been worked as a co-operative farm. The reader of the accounts in this volume may learn of common meals, of breakfasts and luncheons and dinners being prepared ready for those who were at work on the common lands or on the masters' farming operations. It appears that they met together in the great hall for a common Christmas entertainment. They furnished the great yule-log to burn at the dinner, and each one brought his dish and mug, with a napkin “if he wanted to eat off a cloth” ; and still more curiously, his own contribution of firewood, that his portion of food might be properly cooked.

Of even greater interest is the picture of village life led

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by monastic tenants which is afforded by the *Durham Halmote Rolls*.

“It is hardly a figure of speech,” writes Mr. Booth in the preface to this volume, “to say we have (in these Rolls) village life photographed. The dry record of tenures is peopled by men and women who occupy them, whose acquaintance we make in these records under the various phases of village life. We see them in their tofts surrounded by their crofts, with their gardens of pot-herbs. We see how they ordered the affairs of the village when summoned by the bailiff to the vill to consider matters which affected the common weal of the community. We hear of their trespasses and wrong doings, and how they were remedied or punished, or their strifes and contentions and how they were repressed, of their attempts, not always ineffective, to grasp the principle of co-operation, as shown in their by-laws ; of their relations with the Prior, who represented the Convent and alone stood in relation of lord. He appears always to have dealt with his tenants either in

person or through his officers, with much considerations ; and in the imposition of fines we find them invariably tempering justice with mercy.”

In fact, as the picture of medieval village life among the tenants of the Durham monastery is displayed in the pages of these *Halmote* accounts, it would seem almost as if the reader were transported to some Utopia of Dreamland. Many of the points that in these days advanced politicians would desire to see introduced into the village communities of modern England in the way of improved sanitary and social conditions, and to relieve the deadly dullness of country life, were seen in full working order in Durham and Cumberland in pre-Reformation days. Local provisions for public health and general convenience are evidenced by the watchful vigilance of the

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village officials over the water supplies, the stringent measures taken in regard to springs and wells, to prevent the fouling of useful streams, as to the common places for washing clothes, and the regular times for emptying and cleansing ponds and milldams.

Labour, too, was lightened and the burdens of life eased by co-operation on an extensive scale. A common mill ground the corn of the tenants, and their flour was baked into bread at a common oven. A smith employed by the community worked at their will in a common forge, and common shepherds and herdsmen watched the sheep and cattle of the various tenants, when pastured on the fields common to the whole community. The pages of the volume, too, contain numerous instances of the kindly consideration extended to their tenants by the monastic proprietors, and the relation which existed between them was in reality rather that of rent-charters than of absolute owners. In fact, as the editor of this interesting volume says : “Notwithstanding the rents, duties, and services and the fine paid on entering, the inferior tenants of the Prior had a beneficial interest in their holdings, which gave rise to a recognized system of tenant-right, which we may see growing into a customary right ; the only limitation of the tenant’s right being inability, from poverty or other cause, to pay rent or perform the accustomed services.” And, it may be added, even when it was necessary for a tenant on these accounts to leave, provision was made with the new tenant to give the late owner shelter and a livelihood.

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SENESCHAL JOHN WHITEWELL
AND MOTHER



ILLUMINATOR OF ST. ALBANS

Illustrations: Seneschal John Whitewell and Mother ; Illuminator of St. Albans

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