

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MUNIMENTS OF THE ABBEY OF
WESTMINSTER.

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THE work "Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey," by the Dean of Westminster, has already made known the circumstance, in only too favourable terms, of my being engaged in improving the condition of the Records of that ancient and most interesting foundation. But the aim of that work was far too high, and its scope too wide, to permit the author to do more than glance at some of the most important documents in the collection, to use much of the information they contained, and to discuss concisely their bearing and effect. And now that my labours have been brought to a close, and a selection of the most remarkable and interesting of those Records has long been submitted to minute inspection by the public—in accordance with that system of creating a regard for everything connected with the noble structure to which they relate, which has of late years increased so much the public interest in such matters—the time seems to have arrived for giving some general idea of the entire collection. Such an account will have both advantages and disadvantages in appearing after such a work as the "Historical Memorials," and may be thought to present only the crumbs of a feast from which the best dishes have been carried off; but yet the value of what remains will be found to be much enhanced by the attractions of that work.

I propose first to glance at what was probably the early condition of the Abbey Muniments. A substantive portion of the fabric, as rebuilt by Henry III., was the gallery in the south transept for the purposes of a Muniment Room. Sir G. G. Scott has carefully described its architectural details, spoken of the large oaken chests of the thirteenth century which are kept there, and of the probable value of their con-

tents.¹ In my work upon this collection, which was brought to a close last autumn, I failed to observe any indications of an earlier arrangement of the Records than that made by Richard Widmore, the librarian of the Chapter about 130 years ago. Widmore certainly must have been an active and industrious man. Besides attending to his official duties, he wrote an "Inquiry into the First Foundation of Westminster Abbey," and a "History of the Abbey," which are much quoted in the "Monasticon," and, perhaps, some other works; and he compiled an "Account of the Records," which it was my task to retrieve from the confusion into which a large portion had fallen, and to improve upon. Widmore made free use of the Abbey archives in his writings, and speaks of his labours in their arrangement. The old chests in the Muniment Room seem to have been no great favourites of his, as he made suggestions to have presses put up for the documents in their stead, and it is not improbable that some of the chests were got rid of by him. During his time, too, I think it must have been that the inner portion of the Muniment Room was fitted up as it now is. It is difficult to say when it was made into two stories,—with the worst possible effect to its light and accommodation; but it was probably divided into two portions during the reign of Richard II. I may, perhaps, here venture to go so far out of my province as to commend to the skilful architect of the Abbey the idea of removing this upper room at least, if not the whole inner portion of the Muniment Room. Besides the badge of Richard II. upon the plaster portion, which might probably be preserved, there is no *prestige* about what is a cumbrous and ugly mass of woodwork, answering no practical purpose, and which, if cleared away, would reveal some of the delicate features of the architectural decoration of the South transept, with its symmetrical window openings, graceful and rich mouldings, bosses, and diaper work, the *respond* to the aisle of the North transept, and which had been coarsely blocked up with brick-work. The opening up of these windows would add considerably to the beauty of that portion of the noble structure we all admire and reverence.

The Records originally kept in the Muniment Room in the South transept were doubtless only the manorial docu-

¹ "Gleanings from Westminster Abbey," 2nd ed. 1863, p. 54.

ments.² These were then by far the most numerous and important of the collection, and each chief officer of the Abbey had his own section to attend to. A system then prevailed which has now nearly died out, if not entirely. Instead of the income of the establishment being received by one officer, and distributed to the various branches for expenditure, the places themselves which were the sources of income were assigned to a certain section of the establishment, put into the hands of the officers themselves, and kept under their own management. Thus a most fruitful source of quarrel and jealousy existed, and was always causing difficulties and troubles. The Bailiff, Chamberlain, Cellarer, Sacrist, and Treasurer, had each his share of the estates of the Abbey appropriated to his office; and the accounts of those estates, and the documents connected with them, together with their own official accounts, were in their custody, and were the occupants of the old chests in the Muniment Room. These accounts are sometimes accompanied by Indentures or Inventories relating to the office, describing the duties of the officer, and setting out the stock which passed from one to another. In illustration I would refer to a charter of Abbot Wenlock in the time of Edward I., which appropriated the manor of Amwell in Hertfordshire to the Cellarer of the Abbey, and to an earlier one of Abbot Humez, granting Parham in Sussex to the convent—an instrument made in Chapter in very solemn form, the common seal being said to be affixed at the “very altar of St. Peter, the Prince of Apostles,” and having in it a clause in which any one infringing the charter is “terribly anathematized.”

Henry III., in his solicitude and care for the Abbey, actually took in hand the settlement of a serious dispute among its officers about their rights and revenues. In 1225 a formal agreement or “composition” had been made between Abbot Berkyng and the convent for the distribution of the revenues to the various branches of the Monastery. In 1252, while all the cares of the rebuilding of the Abbey were upon the king’s hands, so serious a dispute had arisen “by reason of the composition,” that he had to interfere to reconcile the members of the establishment. That instru-

² See the Introduction to the “Domesday of St. Paul’s, of the year M.CC.XXII,” edited for the Camden Society by the

late Archdeacon Hale, for an account of manorial arrangements of ecclesiastical foundations.

ment, ratified by the King's great seal, finally arranged matters. Three complaints were made—the dealing of the Abbot with refractory “obedients”—the provision of flesh-meat to the monks by the Abbot—and the visitation of the manors. The Abbot's power was confirmed as to the first particular; he was released as regards the second; and it was agreed that once a year the chief manors were to be visited by the Cellarer. The elections of Cellarer and hosteler were settled by the same document, and the church of Fering in Essex was given to the Prior and convent in aid of their charges by the settlement. There are many other references among the Archives to such an appropriation of property to sections of the Abbey.

The great bulk of the Abbey muniments are (of course) the manorial documents. I have not attempted to make an estimate of their number, but it amounts to many thousands. Dealing, as in duty bound, in the first place, with the charters, I am launched upon a wide and difficult inquiry—that of the genuineness of many of the early charters to the Abbey.

Very soon after what may be called the revival of a taste for mediæval learning, the authenticity of many of the early and curious Saxon charters was doubted. From the time of Sir Henry Spelman to that of Sir Frederic Madden there have arisen authors and critics of whom each one has gone beyond his predecessor in casting doubt upon these MSS. The distinguished Henry Wharton, whose monument is in the Abbey, hit upon the right explanation in his “*Anglia Sacra*,” published in 1691. He said that the fraudulent monastic charters had been long ago detected by learned men, and that the forged Saxon charters were generally made after the Conquest, when the Norman victors tried to wrong the owners of property and rights, and to abstract them “*per fas aut nefas*.” And the latest writer upon the subject, Mr. Thorpe, the editor of the “*Diplomatarium Anglicum Ævi Saxonici*,” published in 1865, thus sums up the argument and the facts: “But even those generally regarded as decided forgeries may not always be false with respect to their substance, being probably fabrications by the monks as vouchers for the possession of lands which justly belonged to them by prescription, or of which the original title had been lost or destroyed, or of which the Norman conquerors had despoiled them. Such charters are

usually distinguished by their magniloquence. And when the monastery was troubled and impleaded by the Norman justiciar, or the soke invaded by the Norman baron, the Abbot and his brethren would have recourse to the artifice of inventing a charter for the purpose of protecting property, which, however lawfully acquired and honestly enjoyed, was like to be wrested from them by the captious niceties of Norman jurisprudence or the greedy tyranny of the Norman sword."

Westminster shares the stigma, such as it is, of such forgeries with many another great religious establishment, with Peterborough, Worcester, Croyland, &c., and they may be traced to the many disputes as to the rights of the Abbey, chiefly in regard to the question of jurisdiction, and the great fair granted to the Abbey in opposition to the City of London. The principles of determining what really are such forgeries are not yet, however, quite settled; and Kemble, the editor of the great collection of Saxon charters, the "*Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*," a work of the highest character, often finds himself at issue with the great Saxon scholar of the seventeenth century, Dr. Hickes, and, with the modesty of talent, owns that he may not be always right. He continues (writing in 1840), "So many and various are the difficulties, which stand in the way of a decisive judgment, that I do not entertain the hope of having rarely fallen into error when investigating the authenticity of my documents. My leaning is generally rather *against* than *for* any charter respecting which a doubt has suggested itself to my mind; and it must, therefore, be borne in mind that many have been marked with an asterisk, not to express my belief that they were absolute forgeries, but merely to denote that there were circumstances of suspicion about them."

Of the Westminster charters before Edward the Confessor, eight in number, Kemble prints four, two being marked as doubtful; and Thorpe prints two, one being from the "*Niger Quaternus*," which seems to confirm a charter of King Edgar's, marked as doubtful. I may be permitted, I trust, to direct special attention to the charter of Bishop Dunstan. I need not touch upon its import—it has prominently stamped upon it the characteristics of forgery; no one who had seen a MS. of the tenth century would receive such characterless writing as of the year 959; it has a seal pen-

dant to the charter by a thin strip of silken tissue (probably of the twelfth century) passed through a rough hole made between two lines of the writing in such a way as no one ever saw a seal appended—and yet the seal itself has many marks of authenticity. No other seal of the great bishop is known to exist—no seal of any English bishop of that date is known to exist—no pendant seal is known in England before the time of Edward the Confessor, and yet the seal may be genuine—in the sense of its having been made by authentic *matrices*, or its being a genuine example removed from a genuine instrument. On the continent at that period seals were always affixed *en placard*, that is, on the face of the instrument, in which an incision was made, and through which the wax protruded and received the counter-seal, which was expressly designed to protect the seal itself from being tampered with. On these accounts this seal of Bishop Dunstan may deserve further consideration. The reverse bears his counter-seal as Bishop of Worcester, a circumstance in itself strongly militating against the authenticity of the seal.

Coming now to the charters of Edward the Confessor, eight in number, two of these are certainly spurious, one of which is the noble-looking charter of consecration, dated 28th December, 1065, or 5 calends of January, 1066, and which is most probably of the twelfth century. A late investigator (Mr. Walter de Gray Birch) has discovered that the Confessor-king used three great seals, of one of which only a small fragment is known, and that is appended to one of the Westminster charters. Several of the other charters before Henry I. are also doubtful, though the seals may be impressions from genuine matrices; but this branch of the subject may, I trust, be further investigated by an abler hand.

After the charters may be specified the rolls of accounts of manorial officers, deeds of feoffment, &c., and perhaps more than the usual variety of instruments relating to dealings with land and the exercise of rights thereon. All these are of great value for topographical and archæological purposes, and as to mediæval Westminster, I might say that there is scarcely a square foot of its great extent but what is dealt with by the Abbey records, from the reign of Henry III. to modern times. Taking one portion as an illustration, the well-known district of Tothill Fields, about which we

are told a great deal in the "Memorials." In the late Peter Cunningham's excellent "Hand-book of London" we are informed that the author found no earlier trace of the name than one in the fifteenth century—that the origin of the name is unknown, and that in the time of Elizabeth it was a common place for duels and assemblies of various kinds, not generally of the best. Stow describes a duel fought there in 1571 with all his interesting minuteness.

There are, however, many deeds among the Abbey muniments giving the name "Totehull" early in the thirteenth century. It was not till the middle of the seventeenth century that this large tract of land, the waste of the manor, spreading from the Abbey Close on the east to Eye and Chelsea on the west, and from the Thames on the south to the manors of Hyde and Knightsbridge on the north, was found to be of great value. Population was increasing, buildings were encroaching upon the waste, and every one that could do so was robbing or spoiling it. The inhabitants had "common" there, but they were not satisfied with their rights. The "field-keepers" had a hard time of it in resisting encroachments, and they reported that the disorders committed there "tended to the defacing of the said fields, the hindrance of the meeting of the gentry for their recreation at bowles, goffe, and stow-ball, and the general prejudice of the inhabitants of the Citie and liberty of Westminster." In 1658 the inhabitants of Westminster petitioned the Governors of the Free School and Almshouses—who had the manor during the Commonwealth—setting out "That the said fields heretofore was a place for walking in and recreation, and for exercize and discipline of horse and foot, and y^e herbage very advantageous and profitable to many poore inhabitants; but now the waies into y^e same are utterly destroyed, that neither horse nor foot can draw or come into y^e same; Colonel Ludlowe's coach being lately so mired there that he was forced to have a teame of horses to drawe it out; Also, *where a great Hill lately stood, consisting of many thousand loads, there is now a pond, that a horse lately in the daytime was strangled and smothered therein,*" &c. The petition is signed by twenty-two inhabitants, who pray for a surveyor to be appointed to prevent the abuses complained of. Some doubt has been thrown upon the origin of the name of this part of Westminster, and its flat-

ness has been urged as an objection to its derivation from the ancient word signifying a beacon or look-out station.³ That objection appears to me to vanish before the statement in the petition of 1658, that there had been a great hill there, consisting of "many thousand loads"—doubtless of good gravel or sand. Horse-races were run in Tothill Fields, and the following letter was written by Wilcocke, Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, in 1736, drawing the attention of Mr. Gell (the steward) to the complaints that had been made about the disorders committed at such gatherings.

Letter from the Bishop of Rochester (Dean of Westminster) to "Mr. Daniel Gell at Westminster Abbey."

"Bromley, Sept. 28, 1736.

"SIR,—I sent to inquire after you yesterday, but neither you nor your clerk were in town; and I send again to-day to advise you that complaints are made of the great disorders committed in Tothill fields at the late races. It has been signified to me from Court that the Government is offended at the riotous assemblies that have met there, the Dean and Chapter have been highly reflected upon, money having been demanded at the booths and scaffoldings as for the use of the Dean and Chapter, and for which we are threatened to be complained of to Parliament; and the nobility and gentry who have children at our school are under the greatest uneasiness about it.

"What I would have you do therefore, is to give notice that as they ended last Saturday, they are not to be revived again, nor allowed any more; and to give order that the booths and benches be forthwith taken away, and the fields reduced to their former state. Let me hear from you by to-night's post that you'll do this or else I shall be obliged to come to town myself to see it done.

"Yours, &c.,

"JOS. ROCHESTER."

² Several examples of the present use of the word applied to elevated spots could doubtless be found. Many of our readers will recollect that at Carnarvon the bold mass of rock just outside the town on the north-east, which affords so excellent a view, is called "Twt Hill," and a

modern row of houses at its foot is named "Twt Hill Terrace." Halliwell gives "Toot, to pry inquisitively. *North*. Also to gaze at eagerly." Also "Tote, to look, observe, or peep. (A.—S.)" Also "Totehill, an eminence—'montaignette,' Palsgrave."

But the amusement lingered on, as among the papers in the Muniment Room is a printed bill of the races held there in 1747, for which "a saddle, bridle, and surcingle, value two guineas," were the prize for the first horse, and "a whip at half a guinea" was given to the second best.

In 1748 an action was brought by the officers of the Abbey for nuisances in the fields, in which the rights of the Chapter were involved, and this was settled by an arbitration, which virtually set out the fields for building purposes, and the district has been gradually covered.

The name of "Thieving" or "Thieves" Lane for the street now called "Princes Street," the route by which robbers entered the Sanctuary, appears in deeds about the middle of the reign of Edward III. ; and the earliest notice of the word "Jerusalem" in connection with the precincts, is where the "Jerusalem Garden" is mentioned in a "Kitchener's" Account of the reign of Henry VII.

Returning now to the general collection of muniments, among the manorial documents will be found some of a special character, to a few of which I will direct attention. Under "Sabridgeworth," in Hertfordshire, is an entry of an indenture (25 Edw. III.) between the Abbot of Westminster and an Italian society of merchants, in which the Abbot agrees to acknowledge the debt of 80 florins incurred by Benedict de Chertsey, on condition that the said merchants procure the confirmation of the churches of Sabridgeworth and Kelvedon from the Pope.

Under "Knightsbridge" is an agreement made in 31 Henry II., between the Abbot and two brethren of Paddington, whereby the latter release all their rights in consideration of the receipt of 40 marks and four corrodies for themselves and their wives.

Under "Stanes" is a voluntary surrender by Herbert Archdeacon of Canterbury to the Abbot of Westminster, of land there which his father had forcibly "extracted" from the Abbey.

Under "London" we have a deed establishing the Guild of the Blessed Mary and St. Dunstan, in 1441 ; and an indulgence by the Bishop of Laodicea, in 1260, of twenty days to those praying at the tomb of Matilda la Fauconore de la Wade in the church of St. Martin-le-Grand.

Under "Westminster" are many documents relating to

the Hospital of St. James in the Fourteenth century, comprising inquiries as to the misconduct of the master and brethren, the finding of a jury, and penances imposed, and injunctions for the future regulation of the hospital. As to "St. Stephen's," there are many proceedings in disputes between the Abbot and the dean; letters from the king; appeals to Rome; articles "pour nourrir amour pees et tranquillite" between them, and a settlement of the disputes, chiefly of the time of Richard II. Among the more modern papers are Mr. Hawkesmore's report on the works in progress at the Abbey in 1735, "being a defence of the style of his works, prefaced by an Essay on Gothic Architecture."

Under "Eye, Eyebury," is the following letter from John of Gaunt to the Abbot of Westminster, desiring to have the use of the manor-house of Neyte (Eye), the Abbot's favourite country house, where Litlington and Islip died, for his residence during Parliament.

Letter of John of Gaunt to the Abbot of Westminster.

DEPAR LE ROY DE CASTILLE ET DE LEON DUC DE
LANCASTRE.

Trescher en dieu et nostre tres-bien ame. Nous vous salvons tres-sovent. Et porce que nous sumes comandez par nostre tres-redoute seigneur le Roy pour venir a cest son prochein Parlement a Westmonster, et que nous y duissons estre en propre person, toutes autres choses lessees, en eide et secour del roialme Dengleterre, et sumes unqore tout destitut de lieu covenable pour nous et nostre houstell pour le dit Parlement, vous prions tres-cherement et de cuer que vous nous veuillez suffrer bonement pour avoir vostre manoir del Neyt, pour la demoere de nous et de nostre dit houstel durant le Parlement susdit. En quele chose fesant tres cher en dieu et nostre tres-bien ame vous nous ferrez bien graunt ease et plesaunce, paront nous vous voloms especialment bon gree savoir et par tant faire autre foiz pour vous et a vostre request chose agreable de reson. Et nostre seigneur dieux vous eit touz jours en sa tres sainte garde.

Donne souz nostre prive seal a Norbourne le xxvii jour de Septembre.

(Endorsed) A nostre tres-cher en dieu et tres-bien ame l'abbe de Westmonster.

Under "Suffolk" is entered a confederation between the Abbots of Westminster (William de Humez, the last Norman Abbot) and Bury St. Edmunds (Hugh de Northwold), being one of affection and charity, promising aid, advice and assistance to each other in case of need, and divine services at their decease. I need scarcely mention that the Abbey of St. Edmunds Bury was one of the most important in the kingdom, and shortly preceding the date of this agreement it had become famous from the great meeting of the insurgent barons within its walls, and their swearing at St. Edmund's altar to secure the Magna Charta from King John.

Among the "Curiosities" which, strangely enough, is not a title of one of the sub-divisions of the section "Various Persons and Things," is the well-known lease by the warden of the Lady Chapel to Geoffrey Chaucer of a house and garden contiguous to that structure. There is also an agreement between the Abbot and two bell-founders of Reading, "for the new castyng of ii belles of the rynge of the said monasterye," 31 Henry VIII., which may, it is hoped, appear in a future portion of this Journal.

It is, however, under the somewhat quaint title, "Various Persons and Things," that Widmore brought together the documents of more general interest. The subordinate headings—"Anniversaries, viz. of Abbots, &c.,"—"Compositions between the Abbot and Monks,"—"Corrodies and Pensions,"—"Fabrick,"—"Funerals,"—"High Waies, Bridges, and Sewers,"—"Jews,"—"Indulgences,"—"Inventories of Goods,"—"Jurisdiction,"—"Law Suits,"—"State and History,"—and many others equally comprehensive and discordant, testify to the wide range of subjects over which the documents spread, and the difficulty experienced in classifying them—a difficulty which has not always been effectually met. A simple chronological arrangement of the whole might have been more satisfactory.

In considering this miscellaneous portion of the collection we shall arrive at documents which have no apparent connection with the Abbey, and which could only be found among its archives by circumstances similar to those which

Her Majesty's Commissioners have lately found affecting many collections of historical MSS. in private custody. The contiguity of the Royal Treasury, and the intimate relations often existing between the King and the Abbot of Westminster, will account for many of these extraneous documents being found among the Abbey archives.

Under the heading "Abbots" are many documents relating to their election, their rights and privileges, and expenditure. Among them is a roll of letters, apparently from various members of the monastery, chiefly in reference to the then vacant Abbacy, to which (in the opinion of most of the writers) a person is elected of whose "infamia et insufficiencia" the important personages intended to be influenced are said to be ignorant. This is the case of the scandalous election of Abbot Kydyngton, mentioned in the "Historical Memorials." The division headed "Coronations" does not bear out the promise of its title—the fact being that the great pageants and ceremonials of the Abbey are not subject-matter for its muniments. Under the title "Corrodies and Pensions" we have evidences of a curious and ordinary mediæval practice, the "boarding" of persons who had furnished the house with a sum of money in consideration of such a return, by which monasteries and other like foundations became a species of savings' bank to the community, and by which their own temporary wants were often supplied. The heading "Fabrick" supplies us with many interesting documents relating to the structure of the Abbey. As is well known, the re-building of the Abbey, in the reign of Henry III., was undertaken at the king's own cost, and the principal documents relating to that re-building have been found among the public records of the country; but there are among the Abbey muniments several documents (sixteen in number) which dovetail into the other existing records, and afford many interesting particulars. It was not till the end of the reign of Edward III. that the works might be said to have been under the care of the Abbot, and from that time the accounts of the "Custos novi operis" are found among the archives. Early in the succeeding reign, the famous Richard Whittington of London was one of the Wardens of such works.

Abbot Wenlock, in A.D. 1290-91, got into serious trouble on account of his harbouring one of the Friars Minors, and

incurred excommunication by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The offence was grave, and the Abbot was judicially ordered to surrender the run-away friar with the books he had brought with him, and to do penance in his own Abbey. The sentence was only mollified on an appeal to Rome, and the infraction of one of the items of the settlement—that all documents relating to the controversy should be given up to the friars—has preserved at Westminster the records of this singular case.

Coming to the title "Funerals" we have many important and most interesting documents, but the subject has been so thoroughly treated in the "Historical Memorials" that it may be passed over here.

The heading "Jews" deserves special notice. This is not the place, however, to do more than to call attention to the numerous documents under the title. An ark (*arca*) or strong box was kept at several places in which those people were directed to keep the documents showing their dealings with their Christian neighbours, and among the Abbey archives we find these in much greater number and extent than I know of anywhere else in this country. It is more probable, however, that these documents belong rather to the contents of the ancient Royal Treasury. They consist of seventeen rolls of accounts, and upwards of 400 "stars"³ and other deeds of the time of Henry III. and Edward I. in the Hebrew language.

Coming to the heading "Indulgences," etc., we find an "Indulgence by William Bishop of Connor of sixty days to all worshipping at or visiting the church of Westminster, A.D. 1257," while the Abbey was being rebuilt; a "Bull of Pope Urban IV., authorising the Abbot to grant dispensations to members of the monastery offending its rules, A.D. 1262"; "Indulgence by the Bishop of St. David's of forty days to those praying and worshipping in the church of Westminster and before the shrine of St. Edward, 1269"; "Absolution pronounced by the delegates of the Abbot on Robert de Wendon and his son for opposing the Abbot in the matter of a will (a pilgrimage to Rome is one of the conditions imposed), 1277." These must be considered as specimens of the documents under this title. Under that of "Inventories

³ From the Hebrew "*chetar*," a bond, or obligatory instrument.

of Goods" we have some very interesting lists and other documents, as also under the heading "Jurisdiction."

The documents under the title "Law Suits, etc.," comprise many accounts of the expenses of the Abbot and members of the monastery when travelling upon the business of the house, including those of Abbot Wenlock going to Rome, and brother Colchester also engaged abroad, and chiefly at Rome.

Of the intimacy existing between the King and the Abbot we have an instance under the title "London." It is a receipt by John de Northwich, citizen and goldsmith, for goods seized by the King and placed for safe custody in the care of the Abbot of Westminster, 45 Edw. III. There are many deeds relating to the transactions of the great Italian companies of merchants who lent money to the Abbots of Westminster in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, under the heading "Mercatores Florentini." Under that of "Monks—their vows," are twenty-one original subscriptions of such persons on entering the monastery. In these days of rapid correspondence and "clearing-houses" there is an item under the title "Pope—payments to him" that reads very strangely. It is an "Acknowledgment by the Bishop of St. David's of the return of £200 deposited with the treasurer of the Abbot of Westminster, because no London merchant or other person could be found to transmit the same to the Pope; A.D. 1297." Under the same title we have an entry showing how actively the papal officials behaved in a case of arrears due from the Abbot in 1318, how they sequestered some of the Abbey manors, and made a peremptory order for payment under threat of excommunication—this was for the money borrowed by Abbot Ware in Rome.

Of the disputes between members of the monastery and other scandals of the house we have many illustrations among the Records.

Under the title "Records, &c.," is an item which may have some special interest as regards the Chapter House. It is an "Indenture witnessing the delivery, in the Chapter House of Westminster and in the presence of witnesses, by Thomas Archbishop of York (Chancellor of England) to the Abbot of Westminster, of certain papal Bulls and other documents to be by them kept in a certain little coffer; 18 Richard II." Abbot Colchester was a great favourite with

the king, or we might be surprised to find the custody of the Abbot preferred to that of the officers of the adjoining Royal Treasury. In the reign of Henry VI. we also find an entry showing a somewhat similar transaction. The subject of the relics belonging to the Abbey has been so fully dealt with in the "Memorials" that I need not allude to the documents bearing upon them.

Under the comprehensive title "State and History, King's Revenue, King's Works," we have many documents that fall into series of the National collection, and are in no way connected with the Abbey. It would occupy too much space even to name these in detail, and the task is less needed on account of Her Majesty's Commissioners upon Historical MSS. having obtained permission to print the miscellaneous portion of the catalogue of the muniments in a forthcoming report. The documents found under the peculiar circumstances detailed by Sir G. G. Scott, and which were and still are in the little turned wooden boxes of the fourteenth century called "skippets," of which examples have been shown at one of the meetings of the Institute,⁴ might also be fairly considered to have been at one time a portion of the collection in the Royal Treasury.

The "Books" of the Abbatial collection are very few. There are three Cartularies relating to Westminster; the "Niger Quaternus," and two others lately entered in the calendar, and others are known of; and one relating to Luffield, in Northamptonshire.⁵ If the monastery had a library, there are now but few remains of its contents. The later series of "Register Books" begin in the first year of Henry VII., and continue to the present time. None of the historical works of the monk-writers of Westminster are now among the archives of the Abbey. These chiefly found their way into the hands of the great collector of the seventeenth century, Sir Robert Cotton, to whom our historical literature is so deeply indebted, and are now in the British Museum. Those writers were Sulcardus, who lived in the time of William the Conqueror; John de Reding, in the fourteenth century; John

⁴ See *Arch. Journ.* vol. xxviii. p. 133.

⁵ The Muniments themselves seem to have suffered very little by spoliation. Among the Public Records the documents relating to Westminster are not

numerous, and the few of those which may have belonged to the Abbey collection were doubtless severed from it at the period of the Dissolution.

Flete, sacrist and prior at the end of that century (whose MS. is in the Chapter Library) ; and Sporle, who flourished about the year 1450, and who, being the latest writer, and copying almost entirely from Flete, thought proper to carry back the history of the Abbey earlier than any other, asserting it to have been built in the year 184, when King Lucius embraced Christianity ; and that his story was not entirely disbelieved might be inferred from the fact that the charter of King Lucius is said to have been pleaded by Dean Goodman as to the question of Sanctuary.⁶ Of the mysterious writer, Matthew of Westminster, whose "Flores Historiarum" was one of the first historical MS. published by Archbishop Parker in 1567, little was known till Sir F. Madden edited the works of Matthew Paris in 1866, and cleared up the mystery. There is no doubt that the name, Matthew of Westminster, is a composite growing out of the circumstances of the work. The Chronicle was written at St. Albans by Matthew Paris to about the year 1265, then sent to Westminster, and continued by monks there from that year to about 1325, principally by one John Bevere, about whom I was enabled to furnish a few particulars from the Abbey muniments.

⁶ See "Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey," p. 380.