HUGH II.,
Eighth Abbot of Reading.

By Jamieson B. Hurry, M.A., M.D.

READING ABBEY during its long history had three Abbots bearing the name of Hugh: Hugh de Boves, Hugh d'Anjou and Hugh Cook Faringdon. The histories of the first and third are well known.[1] The following notes refer to the second who was perhaps the most famous of the three.

Abbot Hugh II., *vir magnæ religionis et honestatis vitæ*, "a man distinguished by his religious zeal and high character," was appointed Abbot of Reading in 1180, and filled that office for nineteen years.

According to Lorain, he was connected with the family of Anjou and therefore of noble birth; hence in after years he became known as Hugh d'Anjou.[2] As a youth he bore an excellent character, and received a religious education at Cluny itself. At what age he took monastic vows at Reading is not known, but he held the Abbacy with great distinction.[3]

Leland says that he was "A skilful divine, from education and diligence in his studies; and that in the course of his reading he produced many elaborate observations upon subjects which were abstruse to inexperienced students. His theological questions are not trivial, but give light to difficult passages of Scripture."[4]

Hugh made his Abbacy memorable by the erection of the vast Hospitium of St. John, of which a portion, largely rebuilt, is still extant.[5] Even to this day, therefore, Reading is the richer for his foundation.

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[1] Cf. In Honour of Hugh de Boves and Hugh Cook Faringdon, first and last Abbots of Reading, by J. B. H.

[2] H. Champly states that his maternal grandfather had occupied the throne of Jerusalem. Histoire de l'Abbaye de Cluny, p. 92.

[3] Lorain states that Hugh II. began by governing, in the capacity of prior, one of the principal English Monasteries, viz., *St. Pancras of London* (*sic*), but he is probably confusing Hugh II. with Hugh I., who was Prior of St. Pancras at Lewes before becoming first Abbot of Reading. Histoire de l'Abbaye de Cluny, p. 148.

Hugh II. has in other matters also been confused with Hugh I. as well as with Hugh VI. of Cluny. Histoire Littéraire de la France, Vol. XVI., p. 534.

[4] Commentarii de Scriptoribus Britannicis, p. 265. Both Leland, Coates (History of Reading, p. 283) and others seem to have attributed to Hugh II. various works that were written by Hugh I.

[5] Hugh II. is said also to have built a cloister at Reading. Histoire Littéraire de la France, Vol. XVI., p. 534.

The exercise of monastic hospitality was not only enjoined on all Benedictines by the "Rule," but was emphasised by the foundation charter of Reading Abbey which says: "Whoever shall, by the will of God, and by canonical election, be made Abbot, let him not misuse or bestow the alms of the monastery on his lay kindred, or on other persons, but use them for the entertainment of the poor, ot pilgrims or of guests."

The original hospitium probably stood on the site now occupied by Mr. W. C. Blandy's house and the old Town Hall.[1] But with the growth of the town and the increasing *prestige* of the Abbey, the number of pilgrims and travellers applying for hospitality rapidly increased, taxing the accommodation of the original building to the utmost. Thus it came about that while persons of a better class received hospitality, the poor were often unable to gain admission.

Hugh refused to tolerate such a condition which was in direct opposition to the Founder's wishes, and determined to rebuild the Hospitium on a much larger scale.

Accordingly he erected outside the gate of the Abbey a splendid building, to which the Church of St. Lawrence was attached as an endowment. For this he had previously obtained the permission by Charter of King Henry II., as well as the sanction and co-operation of Hubert Walter, the bishop of Salisbury, who may be regarded as the co-founder of the Hospitium.[2]

The Hospital consisted of three main divisions, (a) a residence house for the brethren and sisters, connected by a wooden cloister with the Church, and giving them access by a private door to the aisle which led to their Chapel in St. John's Chancel; (b) a refectory or guest-house of noble dimensions, at least 120 feet long by 20—30 feet broad (covering the area of the old Town Hall); (c) the Dormitory running at right angles to the latter and measuring about 200 feet in length.

So far as is known, the great Hospitium of Abbot Hugh underwent no important changes till the reign of Henry VI. in the middle of the fifteenth century (1438), when the nave of St. Laurence's Church was altered (during the episcopate of William Ayscough), its tower reconstructed, and the hospital entirely rebuilt. From that

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1 Guilding, The Ancient Hospital of St. John the Baptist at Reading. Reading Literary and Scientific Society Report for 1892, p. 17; Victoria County History of Berkshire, Vol. II., p. 99.

2 The deed of foundation will be found in the Monasticon. Various other deeds appear as appendices in Bruce, Laud's Benefactions to the County of Berks, p. 55.

date the hospital rapidly declined, and in 1480 seems to have been entirely suppressed.[1]

Many causes doubtless contributed to this extinction of the hospitium. Other hostelries had sprung up in the town and supplied accommodation to travellers and pilgrims. Possibly also the jealousy of the Guild Merchant may have discouraged itinerant craftsmen. But whatever the reason for the changes the refectory and the residence house of the hospital brethren in 1485 became the home of the Grammar School. The dormitories, however, continued to be used for the reception of mendicants and wayfarers of the poorer class down to 1539, when the Abbey was dissolved. The master's house was sold by Henry VIII. as part of the Abbey, and was not again recovered.

Various events of national interest occurred at Reading during Hugh's Abbacy.

Thus on August 5th, 1184, King Henry II. held a Council at Reading, convened for the purpose of electing an Archbishop of Canterbury in the place of Richard, the successor of Thomas à Becket. The Council was attended by John, Archbishop of Dublin, the Duke of Saxony, the Suffragan Bishop of the Province, as well as by the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury.

The King did not approve of the nominees of the Prior and Convent of Canterbury, and the Council was eventually adjourned to Windsor.

A still more important function took place on March 17th, 1185, when an embassy consisting of Heraclius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem,[2] and Lord Roger de Molins, Master of the Hospitallers of Jerusalem, paid a visit to King Henry II. at Reading in order to persuade him to accept the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

For many years King Baldwin of Anjou, then on the throne of Jerusalem, had been fighting hard against the Turks under their famous leader Saladin. In his dire extremity Baldwin decided to appeal to the Angevin King of England, and entrusted his appeal to the two dignitaries of the Latin Church in the East just mentioned.

Henry, who was on the way to York when this important embassy landed in England, at once changed his route and hurried

[1] For two hundred years supplies in money and goods were sent by the inhabitants of Thatcham to the support of the hospitium for which the revenues of the Church were partly appropriated. So important was this Hospital considered that Popes Clement III. and Celestine III. were consulted about it. Barfield, Thatcham and its Manors, *passim*.

[2] The Patriarch claimed homage even from the King of Jerusalem. Ramsey, The Angevin Empire, p. 225.

southward to meet the emissaries at Reading. At the Council, Heraclius, in a flood of tears, threw himself at Henry's feet and thus addressed him: "My Lord the King, our Lord Jesus Christ calls you, and the cries of His people invite you, to the defence of the Holy Land. Behold the keys of its forts, which the King and nobles of the realm transmit to you by me, because you are the only one in whom, under God, they place their trust and hope of their preservation. Come then, Sir, and delay not to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies; forasmuch as Saladin, the chief enemy of the cross of Christ, and all the nations round about us, arrogantly boast that they will speedily invade the Holy Land (which God avert)."

At the end of this speech Henry took Heraclius by the hand and raised him up, saying "May our Lord Jesus Christ, the only powerful King, be the defender of his people, and we, assisted by Him, to whom honour and glory belong, will (as far as we are able) co-operate with Him therein." After these words the King received from the hands of the Patriarch the keys of Jerusalem and of all the principal forts belonging to the realm, with those of the Holy Sepulcre in which Christ had been buried, and the Banner of the Holy Cross, as a mark that the King of Jerusalem committed to him the chief command of his forces. But all these Henry soon afterwards returned to the prelate who brought them, till he should have taken counsel with his bishops and nobles. There was likewise delivered to him, by the same hand, a letter from Pope Lucius, exhorting him to consider the great and imminent danger lest a land, which had been consecrated by the blood of Christ, should be polluted by the filth of Mohammedan superstition, and, after being freed from the yoke of the infidels, with many labours and perils, by his glorious predecessors, should now again be subjected to their tyranny. In order to prevent such an irreparable loss to the Christian religion his Holiness urged him to receive these ambassadors *as sent from Christ Himself*, and concluded the exhortation with gently reminding him of the vow he had made, and recommending it to his wisdom and serious meditation to ponder with himself how his conscience would be able to answer on that point to "the infallible and tremendous judgment of God."[1]

The King was deeply impressed, indeed the whole assembly was moved to tears on hearing the grievous desolation of the Holy Land.

1 Lyttleton, "History of King Henry II.," p. 210.

There was much in the proposal to tempt Henry to embark on a crusade and go to the assistance of his young cousin Baldwin;[1] but if he went it must be both as Count of Anjou and King of England, with all England's resources at his back, and for this the sanction of his people was necessary.

A Grand Council was accordingly held at Clerkenwell, on March 18th, the King of Scots and his brother David being present. Henry bade them advise him as they thought best for his soul's health, and promised to be guided by their decision.

After deliberation the Council unanimously advised the King to stay at home, and not to abandon the work to which he was pledged by his coronation oath, viz., to keep his realm in peace and order and secure from external foes.

The Patriarch returned to his country bitterly disappointed at the failure of his mission.[2]

In 1186 Hugh again entertained Henry II., who received the three ambassadors he had recently sent to France (Ranulf de Glanvill; William de Mandevill, Earl of Essex and Albemarle; Walter, Archbishop of Rouen) to pacify King Philip, who was demanding the wardship of Elianor, the presumed heiress of Bretagne. A truce with King Philip had been secured, but only for about three months, and the King, after consulting with Baldwin, the Archbishop of Canterbury, despatched a fresh embassy in order to extend the truce.

In 1191 Hugh was doubtless closely associated with the exciting events in which John, the Chancellor, William of Longchamp, and Geoffrey, the Archbishop of York, were concerned.

On Oct. 5th, a council of bishops and barons was held at the bridge over the Loddon, when it was decided to depose the Chancellor. On the following day, Oct 6th, at high mass in the great Church at Reading, the whole body of bishops lighted their candles and publicly excommunicated all who had been concerned in Archbishop Geoffrey's arrest.[3]

In 1199 Hugh II. was appointed 17th Abbot of Cluny, where

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1 King Henry had received absolution for the murder of Thomas à Becket, on condition that he should proceed in person to the succour of Palestine and maintain, at his own expense, two hundred Templars for its defence.

2 Further particulars of the mission of Heraclius will be found in Addison, "The Knights Templars," p. 115.

3 Norgate, England under the Angevin Kings, Vol. II., p. 308.

he became Hugh V. or Hugh d'Anjou.[1]

In his new office he became famous for his piety, his learning and his graciousness which made him highly popular with both French, English and Spanish.

The golden age of Cluny had passed its meridian when Hugh returned to his old home at Cluny. The spiritual fervour and the zeal for good works of earlier years had in some measure cooled down. A desire for self-indulgence had crept in. There was less faith in St. Benedict's *aspera et dura per quæ itur ad Deum.*

Hugh at once set himself to remedy this condition and promulgated a revised set of Statutes, which are still extant.[2] The principal alterations refer to the regular visitation of daughter houses and the grouping of these into provinces. He also allowed the use of meat. The ancient rules of the Order referring to simony, the society of women, luxury, unnecessary travelling and every form of idleness were again insisted on, and Hugh strenuously inculcated the practice of abstinence, of alms, of hospitality, and the orderly conduct at elections and at the various deliberations of the Chapter.[3]

The Statutes were promulgated at the end of October, 1200, and at first aroused some opposition; but Pope Innocent III. by a bull dated Jan. 29, 1205, gave him his full support and confirmation. Hugh took an interest in, and enriched, the famous library;[4] he was also the means of relieving the monastery of its debts. Other reforms which he introduced aimed at strengthening monastic life against the temptations of wealth, evil habits and subservience to temporal authorities.[5]

The first reference to the General Chapters of Cluny is found in these Statutes.[6]

At this period monasteries frequently had charge of the children of kings and princes, and there was always a tendency to relax the obligations of chastity, poverty and obedience. Hugh vigorously

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[1] The seals used by Hugh at Reading and at Cluny are still extant. The former is figured and described in "Reading Abbey," p. 97. The latter is described by M. Douet d'Arcq in the Collection de Sceaux, Vol. II., No. 8650, and it bears the legend: "Sigill. Hugonis Abbatis Cluniacensis (1203)."

[2] Cf. Marrier and Duchesne, Bibliotheca Cluniacensis, Col. 1457; Migne, Patrologiæ Cursus, Vol. 209, p. 882.

[3] G. F. Duckett gives the charter relating to a dispute between Hugh and the Earl of Warrenne, patron of St. Pancras at Lewes, as to the right of nomination to the monastery. Charters and Records of Cluni, Vol. I., p. 86 f.

[4] Histoire Littéraire de la France, Vol. XVI., p. 534.

[5] Lorain, l. c., p. 148; Vita S. Hugonis Lincolnensis (Rolls Series), p. 90.

[6] Bibliotheca Cluniacensis, Col. 1470.

opposed such tendencies, and also introduced the regulation that the Abbot of Cluny should take no important step without the approval of a Council of twelve monks.

The extensive influence of the Abbot of Cluny is well shewn by the fact that in 1202 Raymond, the Count of Toulouse, one of the great Princes of the South of France, petitions the Abbot for permission to erect a palace at Saint Saturnin-du-Port, now le Port-Saint-Esprit, on condition of paying a tribute to the Abbey, and of renewing this tribute at every change of ownership.

In the year 1206 a great festival took place in honour of the transference from Constantinople to Cluny of the head of the Pope and martyr St. Clement. The ceremonial has been handed down in great detail.[1]

Hugh died on September 29th, 1207. He had proved a man of strong character and high ideals, worthy to rank with the other great Abbots who ruled at Cluny.

[1] Patrologiæ Cursus, Series II., Vol. 209, p. 909.

Note.

BELLS AT GOOSEY, BERKS.—In the third part of Mr. Hallam's "Church Bells of Berkshire" in the "Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal," II., 108, is the following; "The Bell Cot of Goosey contains two bells. There being no ladder, I could not see them. One is said to be very ancient." The inscriptions are :—

(1) 1599 PRAYS THE LORD.
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(2) 1799 (no other inscription).

The first bell is about the size of an ordinary 5-minute bell, and the second is a little larger.—G. W. B. HUNTINGFORD, Stanford-in-the-Vale.

Query.

DOES any one in this neighbourhood possess an original illuminated MS. of the Psalter? Apart from Oxford, Eton and Windsor, are there any Libraries, public or private that have one?—F. ST. J. THACKERAY, Maple-durham Vicarage, Reading.