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The Dow of Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward the First, reproduced for the first time from an original glass panel at Dale Royal in Cheshire.



The Ancient Abbey of Vale Royal

BY JNO. H. COOKE

(Read 16th January, 1912)



TO the archæologist the regal title of Vale Royal signifies historic and monastic grandeur and magnificence, associated with a later period of sacrilege, vandalism, and intolerant bigotry.

Without its sacred past, Vale Royal would never have been known and its world of letters and litanies would not have been written or recited.

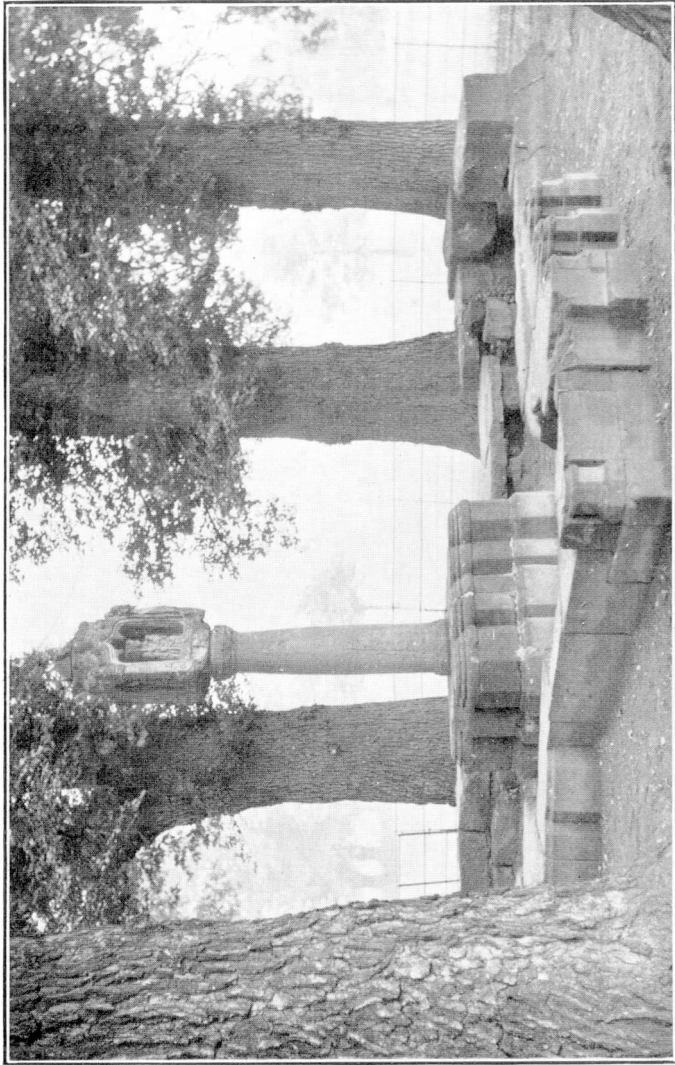
The imperishable name of our greatest Plantagenet king—Edward I.—breathes a religious life into every dead stone, hewn and chiselled for the construction of its great abbey church, whilst, some three hundred years later, that uxorious Tudor sovereign, Henry VIII., for personal greed and gain, and in the name of another religion, professing the same great founder, Christ, demolished its masonry so completely that scarce one stone is standing upon another, and excavations, six feet deep, have had to be made to discover its site and foundations.

It is the duty, as also the pleasure, of the archæologist to cherish the past, to dive deep into mediæval memories, to search for hidden and forgotten truths,

buried in obscurity, and to present, with microscopic minuteness, some details of the birth and creation of this noble abbey, six hundred years ago, and to rejuvenate the monks, who in the white robes of the Cistercian order, walked its cloisters and kept the lamp of literature and Christian love burning in those dark ages of the world.

An inspection of the finished structure is always more beautiful and impressive than detailed drawings, yet no contemporaneous picture or plan exists. Until some two summers ago, we could only look and walk over the green grass of the lawn attached to the present mansion house, with here and there a sculptured stone, lying lonely, to remind us of the great historic past.

It is only by travelling to London and searching in the archives of the great museum of the British empire we learn that the great monastery with its abbey church cost the equivalent of half-a-million of present day money, took seventy-three years (1277-1350) to build, and that its royal founder decreed "that there should be no monastery more royal than this one, in liberties, wealth, and honour, throughout the whole world." We picture the sovereign lord of these realms, a man of valour and strength, taking from round his bare neck a tiny bit of the true and holy cross, the sacred ensign of Christ, obtained by adventures as a crusader in the Holy Land, and gently and securely depositing the sacred relic in the foundation stone he laid in front of the site of the high altar on the Ides of August, 1277 (*i.e.*, 13th August). It is only by laying on one side the grassy shroud which for hundreds of years has preserved



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General View of the Nun's Grave

and protected what at most is but the buried outline of past magnificence, we are able to discover that this great Cistercian church was 420 feet long—from the sacred east to the setting west—twenty feet longer than Olympia in London, recently selected for the play of “The Miracle”—forty feet longer than Fountains Abbey, which had hitherto boasted of being the largest Cistercian church in this country. We now know that it had a north and south transept, which, like extending arms, measured 200 feet from tip to tip. We have brought to light some of the glazed tiles, decorated with the lion crest of the lion-hearted founder. The masons marks have been laid bare and the tracery of the mullioned windows, slotted at the sides for the reception of the ancient glass, form impressive details full of thoughtful reflection and study. We no longer search ordnance maps and surveys to find the site, or to discover the historic “Nun’s grave.” They are there—proved by the actual stones—silent witnesses of the spirit and zeal which once animated and invigorated the religious life of this great nation.

According to a recent extended translation of the abbey leger, it appears that prior to the consecration of the site of the abbey, the place used to be called *Wetenhale-Wez* or *Quetennehalewes* and *Munche-newro* otherwise *Munethenwro*. The former name meant holy wheat or wheat of the saints, and Abbot Peter (the fifth in succession) writes that this

“Is a fitting name for it, because the body of Christ is built up of the pure grain of wheat, and of no other, and in God that wheat was thereafter to be blessed there, concerning which it is written in the gospel, ‘Unless the grain of wheat falling to the earth die, it abideth alone,’ and so the place is well called *Quetennehalewes*. Or it is well

called wheat of the saints, for 'quetenne' is wheat, and 'halewes' saints, as meaning that in this place wheat would be cultivated, by means of which holy and religious men, dwelling in the body in this vale of tears, should be literally fed, so that thus by temporal means, the saints would come to their kingdom, or final dwelling place."

The same writer states that the lord the king had fittingly called the place Vale Royal "or in English Kingesdale," to signify that every reasonable creature pre-ordained by God himself to life eternal ought to be kingesdale, that is to say, a king ruling himself well in the vale of humility and thus will deserve to hear these words from Christ: "Come, spouse of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord has prepared for thee for ever. And none will receive this crown, save those who have been willing to strive in the vale royal, that is to say, in the humility of Christ."

The name of Vale Royal probably appears for the first time in the "Itinerary and Journies of Edward I.," recently compiled by Gough from state papers, where it is stated that King Edward was at "Walerscote near Vale Royal," on the 7th, 8th, and 9th days of August, 1277.

The charter (still in the possession of Lord Delamere) granting royal privileges to Vale Royal is dated 1299, and states "which place we have caused to be named the Vale Royal."

In writing about the site selected for the great monastery, one must not omit the forcible description given by the fifth abbot of the vision which was seen by the shepherds and others in the place where the abbey now stands:—

"Catholic and thoroughly trustworthy men tell that when the place which is now called Vale Royal was an empty

waste, a great number of years before the abbey was founded there, they have often heard their fathers tell that on the solemn festivals of Mary, the Mother of God, in that same place about the middle of the night, they and their shepherds would hear voices which seemed to be singing in Heaven, and a great light would appear to them, transforming the darkness of night into day; and this would be accompanied by the ringing of bells, and after the Church was built, some, who survive to this day, declare that in the blackness of night, they have seen a light so great that many who saw it thought the whole church was in flames. And it is a fact that people have come running up in the greatest wonder to see so magnificent a sight; others, dwelling a long way off, have been fetched out of their houses by their neighbours, and have praised God for the miraculous vision. This indeed, I say, that it appears to all men that that place was truly pre-ordained by Christ for all eternity for a monastery, seeing it was thought worthy to be the scene of so many miraculous events to the eyes of mortals. And in further proof of this I will not omit at the end something which is worthy of a place at the beginning, to wit, that when the king of England, the founder of the said abbey, had charged his monks who were then living at a convent in the manor of Dernehale, seeing that that place was not suitable for an abbey, to provide for themselves out of all the kingdom of England a place in which an abbey could be suitably established, and they in obedience to the king's commands, went about at great cost inspecting possible sites in divers places, still they never found a resting place until they came to the place called Munechenewro and Quettenhalewes, which had been fixed by God from the beginning, as no sane man can doubt, for them to set up their tabernacles there for ever."

There seems to be no doubt that Vale Royal abbey was consecrated and erected at the instance of King Edward I., in pursuance of a vow made when in great danger of shipwreck at sea. The details and description of the shipwreck written by the fifth abbot enlarge upon this point. He writes as follows:—

"Now this same Edward was so keen a fighter that, for love of the Cross, he had several times visited the Holy

Land to exterminate the pagans. And, on one occasion, when he was returning back to England, he came down to the sea, and he and all his people were duly taken on board; and when he was on his way to England accompanied by a great concourse of people, storms suddenly arose at sea, so that all the ship's rigging was torn to pieces in a moment, so that the crew were helpless and unable to do anything, and utterly despairing of their safety, they called loudly upon the Lord, and those who were in the ship with him suggested that each one should vow to the Lord whatsoever the Holy Spirit should put in his mind; but when this had been done by them all most devoutly, the storm still did not cease, but rather waxed greater and greater. Then, seeing death approach so near, all those who were in the ship, besought the prince with tears and with earnest entreaties, to deign to make some vow because he had not vowed anything with the others, for thereby he would please the Lord and deliver his companions from the imminent peril in which they stood. The most holy prince acceded to their tearful prayers, and most humbly vowed to God and the blessed Virgin Mary that if God would save him and his people and goods, and bring them safe to land, he would forthwith found a monastery of white monks of the Cistercian order, in honour of Mary, the mother of God, in some suitable place in the kingdom of England, which he would so richly endow with goods and possessions that it should be sufficient for the maintenance of one hundred monks for ever. And behold, the power of God to save his people was forthwith made manifest; for scarce had the most christian prince finished speaking, when the tempest was utterly dispersed and succeeded by a calm, so that they all marvelled at such a sudden change. And so the ship with all that was in it, though she was broken, torn, and disabled in many places, so that she was endangered by the water that rushed in everywhere, was miraculously borne to land by the Virgin Mary, in whose honour the prince had made his vow, without any human aid whatsoever. And when they all saw these things they marvelled and rejoiced, and praised and glorified the blessed Virgin, who never suffers her servants to perish. But in addition to all this, another miracle is said to have taken place in that same hour, which cannot be passed over in silence; for when they had all carried their goods safely out of the ship, the prince remained behind in the ship, but as soon as the ship was empty, he left it and went on shore, and as he left, in the twinkling of an eye, the ship

broke into two pieces, that by this it might be understood that the holy man, so long as he remained in her, by his merits preserved the ship whole. For after the said ship had broken in two, the depths of the sea were forthwith stilled, and made no further manifestations that men could see."

The details of this shipwreck, so graphically described by the fifth abbot, could only have been written by him about the year 1330 (probably sixty-six years after the shipwreck), whereas by recent research it has been proved that Prince Edward only went to the Holy Land on one occasion, namely, when he set sail from Dover on the 20th August, 1270. He did not return to England until after the death of his father, Henry III., which occurred on the 10th November, 1272, and the news of that death reached him at Sicily. The date of the foundation charter of the abbey of Darnhall (to which place the monks from Dore in Herefordshire were, in pursuance of the vow, first sent by Prince Edward prior to their translation to Vale Royal) is the 2nd August, 1269, a *year before* the prince set sail for the Holy Land. Moreover, that charter granted by Prince Edward states that "we being sometime in danger at sea" have founded the abbey at Darnhall, a monastery of the Cistercian Order.

No mention is made in the Darnhall charter connecting the shipwreck with the prince's voyage to or from the Holy Land; indeed, it could not be correctly referred to, because according to recent authorities, he only went to the Holy Land almost exactly a year *after* the date of the charter. The charter issued by King Edward creating Vale Royal monastery is dated 1299 "upon a vow once made being in danger of ship-

wreck." Here again there is no reference to the Holy Land. We are therefore compelled to look for some shipwreck prior to 1269, as the occasion when the vow was made at sea to build a monastery. The *Dictionary of National Biography*, in an article written by the Rev. W. Hunt, under the head of King Edward I., states that he as Prince Edward in the year 1263, immediately after Christmas, set sail for France, and "*had a stormy passage and made vows for his safety.*" Sir James Ramsey in his *Dawn of the Constitution* (page 210), says Henry III. (the father of Edward I.) crossed from Dover to Calais on the 2nd January, 1264, and that Prince Edward, his son, had gone over a few days before. It seems, therefore, certain that the vow could not have been made on his return journey from the Holy Land in 1272, but was made about Christmas, 1263. Such a date also more correctly coincides with the statement in Tanner's *Notitia Monastica*, that

"Prince Edward, eldest son of King Henry III., began in his father's lifetime, viz., A.D. 1266, an abbey in his manor of Dernehale for one hundred monks of the Cistercian order, but when he became king in 1277, he laid a foundation to a stately monastery not far from thence, in a more pleasant situation, which he called Vale Royal."

Assuming the description written by the fifth abbot was not penned until about the year 1330, that date would be fifty-three years after the foundation stone was laid by the king in 1277. It is therefore evident that the description referred to must have rested entirely upon tradition and cannot be received as correct, especially having regard to the words in the official documents creating the charters of Darnhall and Vale Royal.



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St. Catherine of Alexandria, on one side of the Cross
placed above the Nun's Grave

An ancient description still appearing in one of the bedrooms at Vale Royal somewhat confirms the above remarks. It is as follows:—

“Kinge Edwarde in fulfilmente of a vowe to the B.V. Mary for preserving him from shipwreкке layed August 2nd, 1277, the first stone of this Abbaye, which he caused to be named Valle Royale.”

There is no mention of the Holy Land in this description.

OF HIS MAJESTY AND THE NOBLES WHO WERE PRESENT
WHEN THE FOUNDATION STONE WAS LAID.

The most remarkable figure was that of His Majesty King Edward I., the Justinian of England, then in the prime of life at the age of thirty-eight, full of vigour, accustomed to ride some thirty miles on horseback each day of the year. Notice his elegant form and majestic stature, so tall that few of his own people reach his shoulder. The length of his outstretched arm is even the foundation of our yard measure of to-day. His tomb in Westminster Abbey is nine feet long. His ample forehead and prominent chest added to the dignity of his personal appearance. He was most agile in the use of the sword, and his length of limb was not only the cause of his being named “Longshanks,” but gave him a firm seat on the most spirited horse. His hair was light before he went to the east as a Crusader to fight for the Cross, but it became dark in middle life. When animated he was passionately eloquent. He has been aptly termed “the greatest of the Plantagenets.”

We see there too the Spanish beauty, Queen Eleanor, married when she was ten and her bridegroom fifteen,

afterwards educated in France, forsaking the pleasures of a royal life and accompanying her lord through all his dangers in the Holy Land, so much so, that she was surnamed "the faithful." Fearless to danger, she answered his dissuasions by saying "the way to Heaven is as near from Palestine as from England." To our nation she was a loving mother, a column and pillar to the whole realm. She was a godly, modest, and merciful queen. The English nation in her time was not harassed by foreigners, nor the country people by the surveyors of the crown. The sorrow-stricken she consoled as became her dignity, and she made friends those who were at discord. In her we are told "strife ever found a peacemaker, the oppressed protection, and the distressed sympathy." To his friend, the Abbot of Cluny, King Edward writes, "In life I loved her dearly, nor can I cease to love her in death." Every time Charing Cross is mentioned a loving tribute is paid to her memory, for Edward speaking in French called her "*chère reine*" (dear queen), and on that spot he erected a cross where her body rested on its way to Westminster Abbey. Thus the words Charing Cross (a corruption of *chère reine*) signify the dear queen's cross.

With so great a founder and with so splendid a queen, we can well imagine with how much love and prayer each stone of the great building was cut, chiselled, and laid, how fine was the delicate tracery of the magnificent mullioned windows; with the most durable timber was each canopied stall carved, all, as it was then, for the love of God, to endure for ever and ever!

Amongst others present on this great occasion was Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, formerly the



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One side of Cross erected above Nun's Grave, containing a statue of St. Nicholas, one of the Patron Saints to whom Vale Royal Monastery was dedicated.

closest ally of Simon de Montfort (who had imprisoned King Edward when he was prince), but afterwards his bitterest rival, who later still became the king's son-in-law by marriage with the king's daughter, Joan of Acre, so called because she was born in the Holy Land.

There was also present the king's cousin, Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, who subsequently acted as Regent whilst King Edward was in Gascony.

There also were William Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who, on the 16th November, 1276, was authorised to take command at Chester; Maurice de Croun; Otto de Grandison, who in the Welsh war took command of the Anglesey division, and subsequently was one of the commissioners to arrange peace with the Welsh prince; and Robert Tiptoft, another peace commissioner, subsequently in command of the army in South Wales.

All these noblemen and warriors laid stones, after the king had laid the first on the site of the high altar, "In honour of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the holy confessors, St. Nicholas and St. Nicasius, the bishops." Queen Eleanor of Castile, the wife of the king, also laid two stones, one for herself, and the other for her son Alfonso. He is not likely to have been present, as he was then only four years of age, having been born at Bayonne in 1273. He was the only living child of the marriage at that time, but unfortunately he died in 1284, otherwise he would have ascended the throne, and England would have had a King Alfonso instead of a King Edward II.

Robert Burnell, bishop of Bath and Wells, and chancellor of England, the son of a Shropshire squire,

was present, and joined Anian II., bishop of St. Asaph, in the celebration of high mass. Burnell had accompanied the king when he was prince and crusader in the Holy Land; he had only been promoted to his high office three years previously, but for fifteen years after being at Vale Royal, he held the office of chancellor of England, and possessed the chief place in Edward's counsels.

OF THE MONKS WHO WERE TRANSFERRED TO
VALE ROYAL.

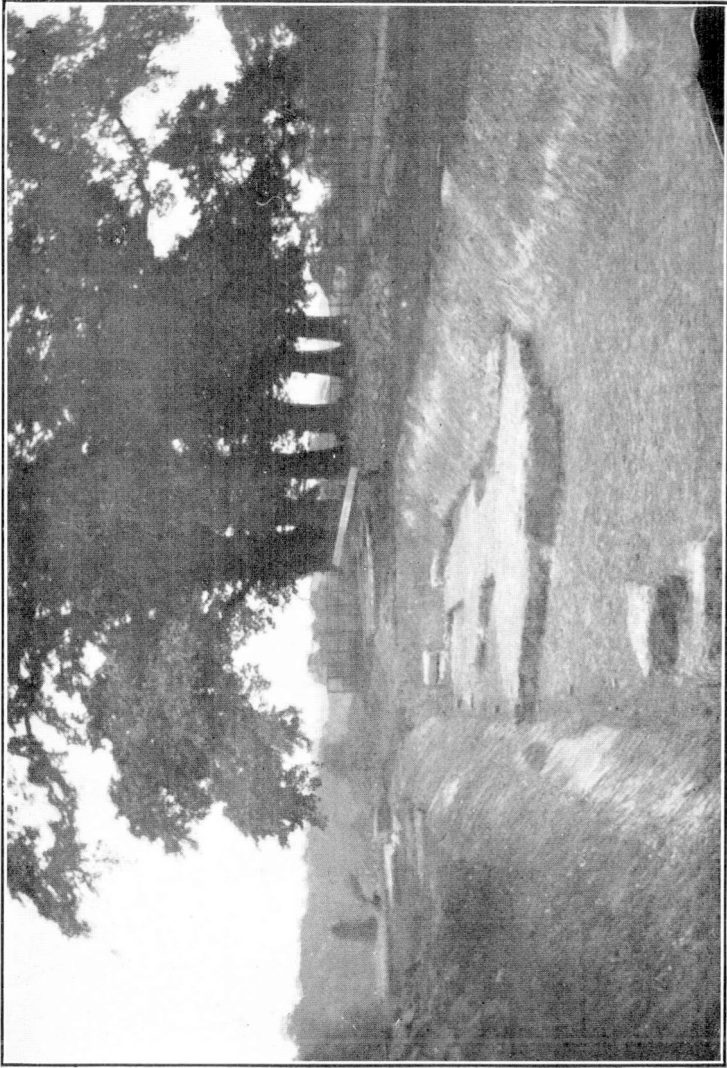
History tells us that shortly after the shipwreck, about Christmas, 1263, Prince Edward was held as hostage by the rebellious barons of England, led by Simon de Montfort, the great Earl of Leicester. As such hostage he had to accompany De Montfort, and amongst other places he was imprisoned at Hereford. During his imprisonment there, the prince received many kindnesses from the monks of the Cistercian Order, then located at Dore Abbey, not far from the city of Hereford. They visited him, gave him information of what was going on outside, and solaced him with their sympathy. Probably they assisted in his escape, for on Thursday, the 28th May, 1265, the prince was allowed to go a ride for an airing in the meadows on the north side of the city, in the company of Thomas de Clare, his bedfellow Henry de Montfort, and Robert de Ross. Under the pretence of testing their respective steeds, Edward kept his attendants riding races till their horses were exhausted. A little before sunset a horseman on a grey charger appeared on Tillington Hill and waved his cap. The prince caught the signal, and setting spurs to his horse, an animal provided by his friends, galloped off

with De Clare and five other men who were in the secret. He joined Roger Mortimer, who was waiting for him in a neighbouring wood. One can almost picture his escape on horseback, and the secret joy of the monks, one of whom had previously conveyed the messages necessary to ensure so successful a result. This, and other benefits received, induced him to select those monks as the object of his promised munificence, and in fulfilment of his vow on the occasion of shipwreck. Other reasons no doubt would influence the prince, because he was married to Queen Eleanor in a Cistercian monastery in Castile, in Spain; his vow was to the Virgin, and all Cistercian monasteries were founded and dedicated to the memory of the Queen of Heaven and earth, holy Mary. In addition, when he was only seven years of age, he was taken ill in Beaulieu Abbey, another Cistercian monastery, and attended to by his mother, the queen, who, for permitting her to stay in that abbey, and supplying her with flesh meat, contrary to the regulations of the order, was the unfortunate cause of severe punishment to some of the officers of that abbey.

Accordingly, in 1266 or later, Prince Edward commenced to build and provide an abbey at Dernhale, now Darnhall, about three miles from Vale Royal, and subsequently, on the 14th of January, 1273, a colony of Cistercian monks from Dore in Herefordshire arrived there, but finding Vale Royal "a more pleasant situation," it was decided to erect an abbey there.

The date 1277, more than 600 years ago, looks quite sufficiently ancient and far distant from us, yet in

order to determine more closely the architecture of Vale Royal and the *régime* of the monks, we have to familiarise ourselves more closely with the origin and foundation of the Cistercian order. Vale Royal, with one exception (Buckland in Devonshire), was the youngest daughter of the Cistercian order in this country of the pre-reformation type. The first Cistercian abbey in England was founded in 1129, at Waverley, in Surrey, and therefore has been styled the mother church. Then followed Tintern in 1131, Rievaulx in 1132, Byland and Furness in 1134, Melrose 1136, Newminster 1138, Kingswood 1139, and Fountains in or about 1140. The Order made such rapid progress during its early years, that in 1151 as many as 500 houses had been founded in Europe and Great Britain. The general chapter then ruled that no others should be established; nevertheless, by the middle of the thirteenth century, the number had increased to no fewer than 1800. In England and Wales there were seventy-six houses. Abbot Gasquet in his *English Monastic Life*, published in 1904, gives a list of 108 Cistercian abbeys in Great Britain, of which thirty-five then presented considerable remains, thirty-eight had interesting ruins, and of thirty-five no remains could then be seen. Vale Royal is one of the abbeys founded 125 years after the prohibitory order was issued. These dates are all interesting because, as times progressed, the style of architecture adopted, and the life led by the monks, varied with the age and surroundings. Indeed, Vale Royal was conceived in the last century of what is termed the middle ages, and attained its majority and manhood in the period best known as the renaissance or re-birth.



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Excavations at Vale Royal, with general view of Nun's Grave.

We have the same process going on to-day, both in the Church of England and the Nonconformist sections of the community, as well as in public and parliamentary life. Our religious and social life is entirely different from those of our ancestors, 150 years ago, as is also our architecture.

According to the original rules of the order, no Cistercian monastery was to be built in cities, in castles or villages, but in places remote from the conversation of men, and all their churches were to be dedicated and founded in honour of the Blessed Mary. What more sacred and silent spot could be found than Vale Royal, distant as it is about two miles from the little village of Over?

Another rule of the order was that no towers of stone, for bells, nor of wood, were to be built to an *immoderate* height, so as to be suitable to the simplicity of the order. Other rules required that the glass windows should be white only. Curiosities in carvings, paintings, buildings, pavements, and other like things, were to be rigidly excluded, because they were not consistent with poverty. Tables that appertained to the altars were only to be painted in one colour. Father abbots, on the occasion of their visits, were instructed carefully to enquire about any breach of these rules, and cause the same to be observed.

“To the grandeur of Cluniac foundations, the Cistercian buildings were the strongest contrast and a silent rebuke. There was no splendour in their original institutions; everywhere an austere simplicity—a puritan plainness; for costly tapestries, naked walls; for heaven-aspiring roofs, low rafters; for immense windows with their gorgeous wealth of stained glass, narrow openings just sufficient to let in the day; for silver candelabra, iron candlesticks; no splendid

ritual; no elaborate music. But the rigour of the Cistercians themselves was, in due time, to thaw beneath the sun of the world's favour."

And in the thirteenth century, when Vale Royal was founded, modifications in style of architecture and conduct of daily life had crept in gradually, slowly but surely. Fuller has put it:—

"As mercers, when their old stuffs begin to tire in sale, refresh them in new names, to make them more vendible; so when the Benedicts waxed stale, first the Cluniacs, next the Cistercians, re-dressed the drowsy Benedictines."

From the above we may fairly conclude that the tower of Vale Royal, situate where the north and south transepts join the nave, was of an immoderate height, and not pinnacled with a spire, similar to some of our modern churches; yet its architecture, from our point of view, must have been of an elaborate and not a severe character. Probably the glass for the windows was made at Vale Royal, because in the charter of 1299 there is a grant of

"A stone quarry and other things, which shall be necessary for erecting and sustaining of buildings, within our abbey aforesaid, and for the making of glass."

The monks of the Cistercian order were generally known as the white monks, because of the white dress they adopted, as a symbol of purity. The Cistercian order was derived from and was an off-shoot of a community of Benedictine monks (often called the black monks because of the colour of their dress), who were established at Molesme, in France, under that excellent superior, St. Robert, he having under him St. Alberic as his prior. St. Robert left Molesme in disgust of the conduct of his religious associates, and entrusted his authority to his prior, St. Alberic, who

vigorously applied himself to the restoration of rigid discipline. His efforts were fruitless; his brethren were deaf to his salutary corrections; they broke out into open rebellion, heaped upon him abusive language, and ultimately cast him in a dungeon. St. Alberic was ready to lay down his life for his brethren, but seeing that they repaid his love with hatred, he thought it best, on his release, to withdraw from the storm, and allow it to pass over. Alberic ultimately returned to his brethren at Molesme, at the command of his bishop, and afterwards, in or about the year 1098, concluded a successful arrangement for a final departure of the order, to seek a breathing place for their fervour in the deserts of Citeaux, also in France. It was from the name of this secluded spot we receive the designation of the order—Cistercian. St. Alberic joined his brethren in their manual labours, and boldly marched on before them, in all the austerities of their sublime state. They had no other provision for their travels than the vestments and sacred vessels for the celebration of the holy mysteries, and a large breviary for the due performance of the high office. To prevent misapprehension, it should be stated that their complaint was that the strict rules of St. Benedict were not fully observed by their Benedictine brethren, some of whom they had left at Molesme. Some of the relaxations they complained of were as follows:—

(1) Novices were sometimes admitted to full profession before the expiration of their year's novitiate, contrary to chapter 58 of St. Benedict's rule.

(2) Some of the religious (as distinguished from *conversi* or converts, or lay brethren) made use of

skins and furs in their clothing for the purposes of warmth, contrary to chapter 55.

(3) The regular fast was dispensed with on certain days and particular festivals, contrary to chapter 41.

(4) Strangers were not welcomed with the salutation ordained in chapter 53.

(5) Those of their brethren at Molesme who said the divine office in private, did not say it upon their knees, as appointed by chapter 50.

(6) The junior brethren in passing before their seniors did not ask their benediction, according to chapter 63.

(7) Abbots had adopted the practice of receiving indifferently all religious, who presented themselves, without the consent of their proper superiors, and without letters of recommendation, contrary to chapter 61.

(8) Benedictines were engaged in many employments contrary to the spirit and profession of a recluse life.

It seems wise to mention these complaints so that we may know that no complaints of an immoral character were made, and may also judge of the austere yet religious characters of St. Robert and St. Alberic, the founders of the order of the reformed Benedictines to be thenceforth called Cistercians, and those who were associated with them. With the approbation of Rome, St. Alberic drew up, with the consent of his community, several ordinances for the better observance of St. Benedict's rule, but with some important changes. One change was that of the colour of the dress worn by the order. He sub-

stituted white for the dark brown or black of the Benedictines. The reason assigned for the change of colour in the habit, was, devotion to St. Mary, observable in the order from the beginning. It was a standing law that all Cistercian monasteries should be founded and dedicated to the memory of the Holy Maiden Mother. The immediate cause of the adoption of the white habit is mysterious; it seems difficult to give a satisfactory reason as to why the change was made, without the sanction of any statute of the order, especially as it was opposed to the custom, if not to the rule, of the primitive Benedictines. A tradition is even current in the order, that St. Alberic saw the Blessed Virgin in a vision putting upon his shoulders the white garment; and that he changed the tawny colour of Mary Magdalene to the joyful colour sacred to the Mother of our Lord, in consequence of the consolation which the vision afforded him in the difficulties with which he was then struggling. The one thing certain is, that the white garment was assumed in honour of the purity of St. Mary, the special patroness of the Cistercians. She was the spotless Lily of the Valley in which the King of Heaven deigned to take up His abode, and the Cistercians thought it well that she should protect, by her prayers, their lowly houses, which were hidden from the world, in secluded valleys, and make them also the dwelling place of her Son. The black monks or Benedictines reproached the Cistercians with wearing a garment fit only for a time of joy, while the monastic state was only one of penitence, but the white monks answered that the life of a monk was not only one of penitence, but was like that of the angels, and, therefore, they wore white

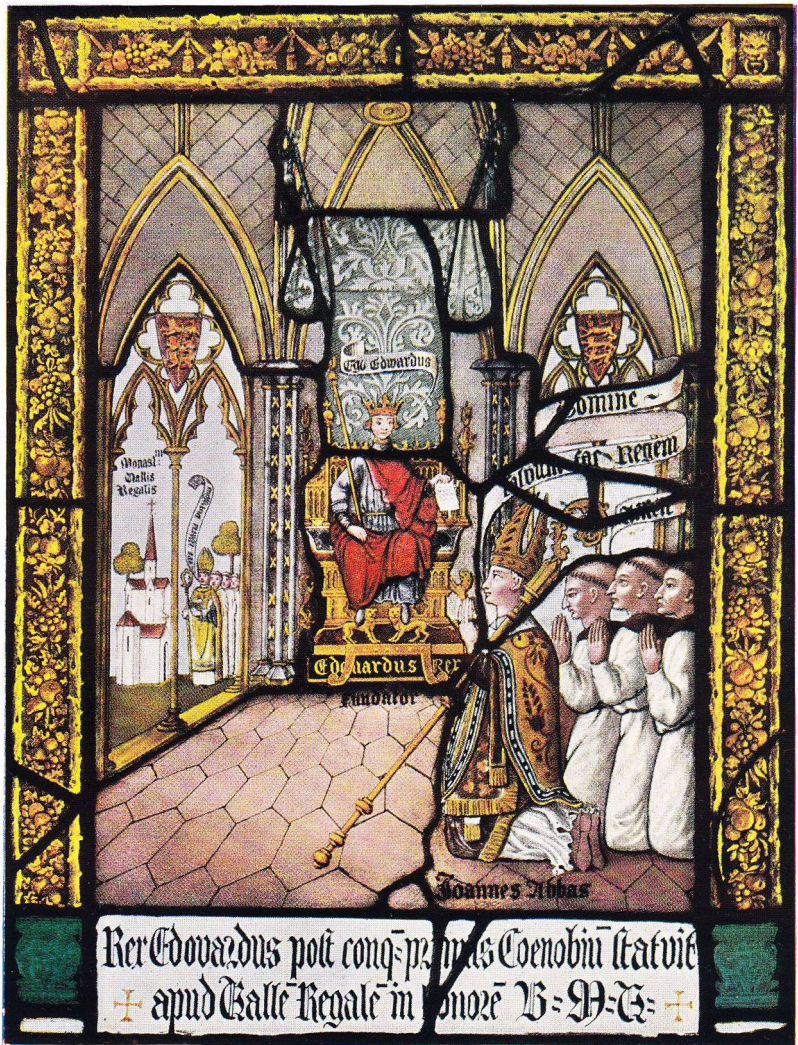
garments to show the spiritual joy of their hearts. And, notwithstanding their coarse bread and hard beds, there was a cheerfulness about the Cistercians which may in a great measure be traced to what we should now call a sympathy with nature. In fact, in some small degree the Cistercians were the non-conformists of the decadent yet powerful order of the Benedictines.

OF THE FIRST FOUR ABBOTS WHO RULED
AT VALE ROYAL.

A very full and correct account of each of the first four abbots is set out in the historical novel, written by the author of this paper, entitled "Ida; or the Mystery of the Nun's Grave at Vale Royal in Cheshire," pages 343-368, inclusive. This account is taken from a translation of a copy of the abbey leger, which is now in the British Museum. The original abbey leger cannot be found, but a copy was made in 1662 by a writer who does not sign or state his name. A photograph of a page of this copy is inserted with the illustrations accompanying this paper.

The first abbot was John Cheampeneys, and a beautiful portrait of this abbot is set out in the coloured illustration entitled "The Dedication of Vale Royal by King Edward I." Underneath the abbot are written the words "Joannes Abbas." The description referred to states that:—

"Our Saviour willed that John should be the first shepherd to rule his monastery, in order that it might be made manifest through this, to all men, that not only the abbot selected by God, but also the place itself, should enjoy favour, and because the grace of God had saved the king



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The Dedication of Dale Royal Abbey by King Edward the First, with portraits of the King and John Champneys, the first Abbot, reproduced for the first time from an original glass panel at Dale Royal in Cheshire.

from the waves of the sea, by the same grace he governed the Abbot John on land. And, in truth by virtue both of his christian name and of his surname, he was rightly the first abbot of the aforementioned place; for John means he in whom is grace or the grace of God And his surname also of Cheampeneys became him well, for it means a champion. And indeed he was the boldest champion. For he overcame miraculously the three enemies, the world the flesh, and the devil And in addition to this he overthrew other enemies, who would have attacked his house; and so, he was not unworthy of his name John or the grace of God, and of his surname of Cheampeneys, for by the grace of God, he so bore himself, that he justly deserved the title of the Champion of Christ, who obtained the victory everywhere."

The second abbot was Walter De Hereford:—

"Who was a man of most beautiful appearance, as regards externals, but seeing that such beauty is coupled with vanity, unless it be accompanied by the beauty that is hidden within, we will speak briefly of his other qualities And he is rightfully called Walter, which being interpreted means untamed, for it is never recorded that he feared the insults of men. On one occasion a certain knight came with a multitude of armed men, and wrongfully claimed the right of taking his way straight through the monastery, and when the Abbot heard this, he went out unarmed, with a few attendants, and so upheld the rights of his monastery, that in a short time, they all turned and fled, which was brought about, there can be no doubt, by the character of the man. And, therefore, this Walter, that is to say the untamed, was right worthy to be made abbot of this new monastery, for it was necessary, if in its newness it was to be undisturbed by all men, that he, untamed, should stand like a wall against them, and thwart their malice in the beginning, as medicine is prepared to overcome things in the beginning It was, therefore, not without reason that this Walter, that is the untamed, succeeded in saintly order to John, that is, the grace of God, in order that by this means, it might be made clear to all that the dauntless nature of Walter, by which he resisted his enemies and evil spirits, was not to be ascribed to himself but to the grace of God, so that in truth he might say, 'by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace was not in vain in me.'"

The third abbot was a noble and religious man, John De Hoo. Good, gentle, and simple:—

“He also ruled himself and the holy convent committed to his charge with great integrity, even as his predecessors had done; and he was so merciful and gracious to all, that he justly deserved to be called John, that is he in whom dwells the grace of God, for he was of such an affectionate disposition, that very often he was unable to restrain his tears for erring brethren, and yet so stern was he at times, though gentle with all, that those whom he found straying from the path of God, were removed for the time from his flock, as by this means, their souls should be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ His surname was Hoo, which being interpreted means a rousing-up, for if one wants to rouse a man up, one calls out ‘Hoo,’ that is to say, ‘arise and make ready.’ And he was fittingly called Hoo, because he had been roused by the voice of God, and had heard Him saying ‘unless a man shall renounce all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.’ And having heard this, he left all things and followed Christ the Redeemer, for which reason he deserves to be called John, that is, the grace of God. And it was well that this John succeeded Walter, who, according to the interpretation of his name was the untamed, for unless prelates be merciful, men will not be found to bear the penalties canonically appointed for their sins. But this John appeared so merciful and gentle, that he would even conceal men’s sins by awarding secret penance, bearing in mind the words of our Lord, when he said, ‘be ye merciful even as your Father is merciful; and judge not, and ye shall not be judged; and beware of condemning sinners, for we all err; we either are, or were, or may be as this man is.’”

The fourth abbot was Richard De Evesham who:—

“From the flower of his youth up, has loved his Creator with all his heart, and at length succeeded in winning from God, the better part, which, like Mary, he had chosen He read day and night in the law of the Lord, that thereby he might keep his body and soul spotless to God. For he had read how the Saint, loving the sanctity of the scriptures, did not love the vices of the flesh, and overcame his body by vigils and by fasting no less than by the harshness of a hair shirt, and he himself, by his continual meditations, upon the things of

Heaven, left this world wholly behind And by these and other tokens, this man, the Lord Richard, proved that he could truthfully be called Richard, which means 'laughing dear and sweet', for in this life he himself abstained from laughing, and, like our Lord, his sadness was not turned to joy. Sweet also he was, for he had clung perfectly only to Him of whom the Church sings, saying, 'good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach sinners in the way.'"

"Therefore these four Abbots, who fought each in their own day do fight manfully for the Abbey of Vale Royal, that for her sake they were ready even to penetrate iron walls, may be compared to the four angels which John saw in the Apocalypse standing on the four corners of the earth holding the four winds of heaven, lest they should blow upon the earth and hurt anyone. And the sound of them, like that of the four evangelists, went out into all the earth, to overcome the peoples, and all the enemies of the said monastery. And to them may be applied the words spoken by the angel of John: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and have made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, and so that they may not toil in vain in their Lord's vineyard and without their daily penny. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple; where they shall hunger no more, nor thirst, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the King's throne, shall lead them unto the fountains of the waters of life, with whom they shall be crowned, and shall live for ever and ever, Amen.'"

