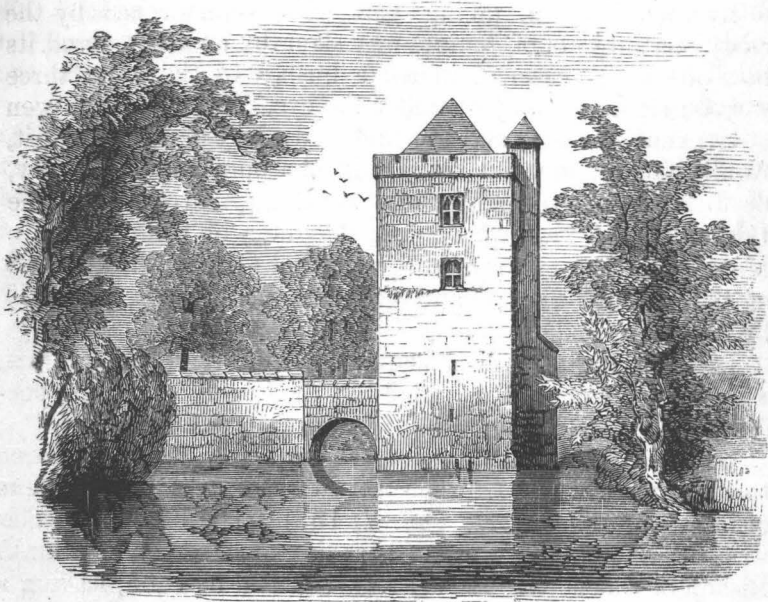


SOME ACCOUNT OF MICHELHAM PRIORY,
IN ARLINGTON.

BY THE REV. GEORGE MILES COOPER.

READ AT THE QUARTERLY MEETING, APRIL 2, 1853.



THE Austin Priory of Michelham was founded shortly before the year 1229,¹ by Gilbert de Aquila, one of a noble family settled at Pevensey, who styles himself, in the deed of foundation, "Lord of the Eagle." He was the third lord of the same name, being great-grandson of the first Gilbert, upon whom, when the possessions of William, Earl of Moreton, became escheated by his rebellion and attainder, the castle and town of Pevensey, with the lands and privileges attached

¹ Rot. Pat. 13^o H. iii, m. 7.

to the lordship, were conferred by King Henry the First. This portion of the honours and vast estates of the Earls of Moreton then took the name of the "Honor of the Eagle," from the Norman title (de Aquila) of its new possessor. In addition to the slight notice of some members of this family given at p. 42, vol. IV, of the *Sussex Arch. Coll.* I may here succinctly state the little that is known of them in connection with the early history of England. The first who, to his cost, took part in our affairs was

ENGENULF,² a companion of the Conqueror in his invasion, who perished in the fight at Hastings, A. D. 1066.

RICHER, his son, taking part with William against his rebellious subjects of Maine, was slain by an arrow from the bow of a boy, concealed in some bushes by the wayside, the weapon striking him just under the eye, Nov. 18, 1085.

GILBERT, his son, and the first lord of Pevensey of the De Aquila family, engaged actively in the opposition to Robert de Belesme in Normandy, and stood high in the favour of Henry I. He married Juliana, daughter of Geoffrey Earl of Maurtane; lost two sons, Engenulf and Geoffrey, in the wreck of the "White Ship;" and was succeeded about A. D. 1112 by his eldest son,

RICHER II, a great benefactor to the Priory of Wilmington, who, after a long and troubled life, died in 1176; being succeeded by his son,

GILBERT II, who confirmed the grants of Ralph de Dene to the canons of St. Laurence of Ottenham, and added other of his own (*Sussex Arch. Coll.* V, 158). His brother Nicolas was dean, and afterwards (there is some reason to think) Bishop of Chichester, 1210-15.³ He died in 1205, leaving a son and successor,

GILBERT III, the founder of Michelham, and last lord of Pevensey of his race; all his lands and honours being forfeited in 1235, upon his passing into Normandy without the king's

² The Anglo-Norman poet, Robert Wace, calls him Engerran de l'Aigle, and says, in his *Rom. de Rou*, "Engerran de l'Aigle came also, with shield slung at his neck; and, gallantly handling his spear, struck down many English. He strove hard to serve the duke well, for the sake of the lands he had promised him." Mr.

Taylor, in his edition of Wace (Pickering, 1837), in a note (p. 218), supposes that Engenulf or Engerran to have been the son of Fulbert, founder of the Castle de l'Aigle, on the Rille, arrondissement de Mortagne; and affirms that he was killed in the pursuit, after the battle was over.

³ Dallaway, i, 43.

licence, and granted away to others (*Additional MS. Brit. Mus.* 6359, fol. 15).

The house at Michelham⁴ was designed for the use of the Augustines, or Black Canons, as they were called, from the colour of their habits. The canons were an intermediate class, between the monks or *regular* clergy, and those called *secular*, because resident on cures, and managing their temporalities, as well as exercising spiritual functions. To a certain extent they adopted the mode of life usual in monasteries, having a common dwelling and table, an abstemious dietary, accompanied with the abnegation of many ordinary comforts, and stated hours for the joint performance of divine service; they had sometimes also churches committed to their pastoral care. Unlike the monks, however, they did not renounce the possession of private property, nor take upon themselves a formal vow of celibacy; but appropriated to their own use the proceeds of benefices belonging to them as individuals, and retained at first the right to marry, though from their habits of life it was probably but seldom exercised. And whereas monks universally adopted the tonsure, canons suffered their beards to grow, and wore caps upon their heads.

In the eleventh century, having fallen into some disorder, they were themselves divided into *secular* and *regular*; the former continuing upon their original plan of freedom from monkish vows, but observing the decree then made by Pope Nicolas II (A.D. 1059) for their better discipline; the latter devoting themselves to perpetual chastity and poverty, and adopting in its full extent the austere mode of life for which monasteries in the first ages were remarkable.

Proposing as a pattern the strict rule of Augustine, they acquired the title of regular canons of that celebrated saint. Their dress consisted of a white rocket, over a long black cassock, with a black cloak and hood.

This order of Black Canons regular of Saint Augustine, introduced into England in the time of Henry I, by his confessor, Adelwald, had so far increased that fifty-four priories belonged to them in the reign of Edward I; and at length

⁴ Michel (retained in the Scottish mickle;") signifies in Saxon "great," whence some suppose that this place, as one of his possessions, derived its name

from the first Gilbert, who is said to have been styled Gislebertus Magnus, or Gilbert Michel.

there were a hundred and seventy-five houses of these canons and canonesses (a later creation) in England and Wales.

Upon certain brethren of this order, Gilbert de Aquila, the third of that name, bestowed his donations, with the assent and goodwill of his Lord, Henry III, King of England, for his soul's health, and that of Isabella his wife, his children, brothers, and sisters, predecessors, and heirs. The charter (as given in the Monasticon) conveys to them all his lordship of Michelham, and his park of Pevensey,⁵ with the men, rents, escheats, and other appertenances, together with twenty-four acres of marsh land in "Haylsham," and twenty acres of meadow in "Wilendune;" pasture in the Dicker, the Broyle,⁶ in Legton (Laughton), and other woods in Sussex, for sixty beasts, and pannage for one hundred hogs; with timber for constructing and repairing their church and other buildings, wood for fuel and fences, and bushes to make their hedges: also the advowsons of the churches of Haylesham and Legton.⁷ All these he gives for a pure and perpetual alms.

To this charter, which is without date, Gilbert sets his seal in the presence of many witnesses, among whom are named Simeon de Echingham, Wm. de Munceux, Jordan de Saukevill, Walrond Maufe,⁸ John Gulafre, Robt. de Horstede, Robt. de Manekesy, Richd. de la Gare, and Simon de Burgedse.

He afterwards added, by a separate deed, the manor of Chintinges, in the parish of Seaford.⁹

In the Roll to which I have referred, as fixing the date of this priory, it is said that the founder "amortizavit" these lands, &c. to the Prior of Hastings; *i. e.* "gave them in mortmain," for the purposes of his new foundation; as land so alienated to a corporate body of spiritual persons could never revert to the lord, the donor lost in consequence all the customary

⁵ The manor is now styled that of "Michelham Park Gate," with some allusion doubtless to the park here granted.

⁶ Ancient names still remaining; the latter (Broleum) signifying a chase, or tract of open woody ground, something between a forest and a park, the harbour of wild animals preserved for sport.

⁷ In the Episcopal Reg. of Chichester is a deed giving Bishop Ralph de Neville's formal consent to this appropriation. He styles himself "by the mercy of God the humble minister of the church of Chiches-

ter." Lord Campbell, however, in the Lives of the Chancellors, vol. i, p. 127, gives a striking instance of his extreme arrogance and insolence towards a superior.

⁸ The knightly families of Echingham, Herstmonceux, and Saukevill, appear frequently in these ecclesiastical transactions. One of the Maufes (William) was a benefactor to Otteham; another (Andrew) is presently a donor to Michelham.

⁹ A fine farm belonging to the Earl of Chichester, still called Chinting.

services, escheats, &c., which it before yielded. In this Roll, the land in Michelham, and the marsh in "Heilesham," are stated to be each eighty acres, and the "wood of Pevense" is valued at 38*s.* rent.

These gifts were farther confirmed by Henry III, in the sixteenth year of his reign, in two charters; one dated at "Windlesore" (Windsor), on the 8th of January, the other at "Lameth" (Lambeth), January 20th, and both by the hand of Ralph, Bishop of Chichester, his chancellor.¹⁰

By a third charter, passed under the great seal by the same chancellor, he grants the canons freedom, for their manors of Michelham and Chintinges, "from shires and hundreds, suits of shires and hundreds, and from sheriff's aid," *i.e.* he exonerates them from the duty of attending or performing any services at the county or hundred courts, and also from the customary payments to the sheriff towards defraying his expenses in keeping the peace.

The whole of these documents are again recited and confirmed by his grandson, Edward II, in a deed given under his own hand at Westminster, November 20th, in the fourteenth year of his reign (A.D. 1320), wherein this king also ratifies the benefactions of several later donors.

These repeated confirmations were rendered necessary by the insecurity of the original grants, arising from the nature of the feudal tenure. The things granted were liable by forfeiture to revert to the lord of the fee—in this instance the king, of whom de Aquila held his estate "in capite." Notwithstanding, therefore, the founder bestowed his charity "in perpetuum elemosinam," and bound his heirs as well as himself, yet to give permanency to the endowment the consent of the crown was requisite. Subsequent royal confirmations gave additional strength to rights previously attained, and in times of so much disorder and violence as under our early Norman kings, every possible security must have been desirable; besides which they were needed to give validity to grants not included in former confirmatory charters. The earlier documents are usually recited in them at length, and then the new gifts are

¹⁰ This Ralph de Neville in 1233 had the unique good fortune to enjoy at the same time the Chancellorships both of England and Ireland, of which also he

succeeded in obtaining a grant for life; he was afterwards Bishop of Winchester. Vide Lives of the Chancellors, vol. i, p. 129.—*Suss. Arch. Collections*, III, 36.

specified; and in this way we now learn, from the *Inspeximus* charter of Edward II, of various acquisitions made by the canons of Michelham, beyond what was conferred on them at their first foundation.

Of these the following is a brief account:—

SIR JOHN DE HAIA (Hay), tenement of “la Knocke,” with lands, woods, meadows, escheats, &c. (now Knock-Hatch, in Arlington, a farm belonging to the Earl of Burlington).¹¹

ROBERT DE BLACHINGTON, clerk, a tenement in Kelle, given him by William de Wrotham, and Joan de Kelle, his wife.

WILLIAM DE BRACKLESHAM, Dean of Chichester (1280 to 1296), his land of “Spelterche,” in Arlington, with land given him by Richard Caperun, and a meadow, the gift to him of Thos. Bodington.

WM. DE MONTACUTE, the chapelry of “Joington,”¹² with lands and rents attached.

HUGH BAUDEGAR, land in Brithelmston, bought by him of John de Berners.

WM., SON OF GEFREY DE DITTON, his estate of Ditton, in West Ham, (now belonging to the Earl of Burlington).

RALPH DE MANEKESIE, twenty acres and a half of land, and half an acre of meadow, on the south side of the road leading from Pevensey to Lewes and reaching as far as “Wilendon” Brook (brocum), with half an acre of meadow adjoining that which belonged to the lord of Willindon.

THOMAS DE BURTON, and JOAN, his wife, the tenement called “Isenhurst,” in Maghfeld, including capital messuage, woods, mills, &c.

SIR ROBT. DE MANEKESIE, all his land of “Windebeche,” near Horsted Keynes, in the forest of Heseldon, which he held by gift of Gilbert de Aquila; allowing the canons to have during the whole year, as often as needful fencing in the aforesaid forest, to inclose the said land, under the inspection

¹¹ The date of this gift is ascertained to be A.D. 1267, from the Rot. Hund. 3^o Edw. I (1275), where the prior is said to have held “la Knocke” eight years.

¹² This name, which appears also as Jewington and Levynton, has undergone more mutations than fall to the lot of names in general. In writing formerly of Wilmington Priory, I was at loss to identify with any place in the neighbourhood “Gonington,” where it had part of its early endowment (circa 1150); see *Suss. Arch. Collections*, vol. IV, p. 40. In the progress of my inquiries I found named as its temporalities, A.D. 1324, four manors, three of which are perfectly well known, but about the fourth, “Nunington,” as it would have been too bold a guess that this could represent the Gonington of the charter, I was obliged to make the best conjecture I could, *Ibid.* p. 49. Lately, however, I have

seen the enumeration of the prior of Wilmington’s ‘Temporalia’ in Pope Nicolas’ Taxation, (A.D. 1291), where, with the three manors about which no doubt is entertained, the *fourth* is given as “Kynington (rotulo originali, *Geninton*). Now *J* and *G* are so exactly equivalent in phonetic power, *n* and *u* so absolutely incapable of being distinguished in writings of that period, being each represented by the same two minims, and *Geninton* therefore has so strong an affinity to *Jevington* on the one hand, and to *Gonington* on the other, that I cannot doubt these are all, through clerical errors of transcription, but different disguises of the word now spelt, and always pronounced “*Jevington*,” where we know, from other sources, the prior had manorial rights. *Gonington* having once lapsed into *Kynington*, would easily go a step further, and become *Nunington*.

of his woodreeves. Also pasture for their animals near the forest, with the other men of Bradhurst.

AGNES DE MONTACUTE, her demesne land in Hertfeld and Cuden, with a capital messuage, rents, and all other appertences.

SIR WALTER DE LETTON, and GUNNORA, his wife, land called "Greggeslond," in Cowden, with meadows, woods, and all things else thereto belonging; also all that land belonging to them in fee, which had been previously granted by A. de Montacute, quit of the court service which the said land had been accustomed to render at their court of Tiches (Ticehurst?).

WM. RUSSEL, and LUCY, his wife, a tenement in "Holewyche," with capital messuage, lands, woods, rents, meadows, and other appertences, in Hartfield, (now "Hollywish Farm," the property in 1835 of Lieut. Gen. Maitland).

THOS. DE WICKENDEN a field called "Warefeld," in Cowden, as it is enclosed with hedges, ditches, and water."

Warefield—now called Warelands—consists of twenty-five acres, chiefly meadow, at Kent-water, on the stream which there separates Kent from Sussex; where banks and sluices show that it has formerly been irrigated. It pays to the collége in East Grinstead a small sum yearly, a proof that it belonged to the Sackvilles in 1608. Wickenden is still a common name in that vicinity, but confined to the labouring class. There is now in Cowden no chief manor, but only some subinfeudations of little value. Two farms, called the Upper and Lower Priory, are beyond doubt the gift of Agnes de Montacute and the "Greggeslond" given by Sir Walter de Letton and the Lady Gunnora.¹³

In the seventh year of Edward I, to put a check upon the excessive accumulation of property in the hands of the clergy, —who are computed to have possessed according to some accounts a third, according to others nearly a half of the whole lands of England,—was passed the statute of Mortmain, whereby it was rendered unlawful to give lands to ecclesiastics, or for the latter to receive them, without license from the crown.

From this time all such grants required that license to give them validity; and in the following patents, extracted from the Tower Records,¹⁴ it is always formally given,¹⁵ to various

¹³ The whole of this Cowden property now belongs to the Rev. Thomas Harvey, incumbent and patron of the rectory, by whom the above information respecting it was courteously communicated in answer to my inquiries.

¹⁴ I owe Mr. Blaauw many thanks for the trouble he has kindly taken in making these extracts for me from the ancient Patent Rolls preserved in the Tower of

London. Some of these MSS. are ten yards long, consisting of several skins of parchment joined together, and requiring great care in the unrolling; while from the crabbed writing and pale ink, being six hundred years old, they are difficult and tedious to decipher.

¹⁵ "Statuto de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis edito non obstante."

benefactions not mentioned in the Monasticon; this being understood, I shall only cite so much of them as relates to the description of the gifts. (Rot. Pat.)

9^o Edw. I, m. 20.—The king allows Master Richd. de Pageham (Pagham),¹⁶ chancellor of the church of Chichester, to assign by deed to the prior and Convent of Michelham, 50 acres of land in Horsye. Dated at Westminster, May 15.

9^o Edw. II, p. 1, m. 29.—The king grants leave to the prior, &c., to hold land to the yearly value of 20 marks, and allows Nigell Payn to give 5 acres in Erlington, which Wm. de Sessingham (held?), worth 10*d.* rent. Langle, ¹⁷ July 18.

16^o Edw. II, p. 2, m. 24.—Gives licence to the prior, &c. to hold from John de Hydenye 26 acres in Haylesham—from Henry Paulyn 5 acres in the same place—from John, son of John de Redemale (Radmill) de Berington, 27 acres of land and 2 acres of meadow in Erlington—from Simon Lewyne 32½ acres, of rent of 3*s.* 6*d.*, in Haylesham and Erlington—from Nicolas de Holewych 4 acres in Sefford—from Laurence de Chillye¹⁸ 11*s.* 2¼*d.* rent in Manekesye—from John Hobbes 4*s.* 11*d.* rent in Haylesham. Wynton, March 14

16^o Edw. II, p. 1, m. 27.—Having allowed the prior and convent to hold lands “tam de feodo suo quam de alieno,” to the value of 20 marks rent, he permits John atte See to give 24 acres in Erlington—Simon Lewyne 8 acres in Haylesham—Nich. le Longe 12 acres in Haylesham—John de Dallyngeregge 20 acres in Westhame, “not held of us in capite,” of value 13*s.* 10*d.* a year—and allows the prior and convent of Michelham to have and hold them, reserving to the head lords of the fee all services due. Newcastle, August 4.

17^o Edw. II, p. 2, m. 10.—Allows Andrew Maufe to give 40 acres in Fokynton, and 10 acres in Haylesham, towards the above-mentioned 20 marks, and orders it to be enrolled. Westminster, June 7.

18^o Edw. II, p. 2, m. 30.—Recites leave to hold 20 marks, and then, wishing to give due effect to his permission, allows Andrew Maufe again to give to the prior and convent, 100 acres of land in Westhame, value 20*s.*, towards the said sum of 20 marks. Tower of London, February 20.

6^o Edw. III, p. 1, m. 18.—After the usual preface, the king allows Philip de Endleuwyke¹⁹ to give to the prior and convent of Michelham 28 acres of land, and 1 acre of meadow in Westhame, Haylesham, and Wylington (Wilmington)—and Thomas atte Wode 7 acres in Haylesham, of rent valued 5*s.* 7*d.* Westminster, March 16.

14^o Edw. III, p. 2, m. 31.—He allows Ph. de Endlenewyke to give a

¹⁶ It was customary in those days even for persons of good birth to drop their family name upon entering into holy orders, and assume in its stead that of the place of their nativity.

¹⁷ King's Langley, near Hertford, where was a royal palace.

¹⁸ Chilly Bridge and Green are in the parish of Pevensy.

¹⁹ For a brief notice of this family, who resided in Wilmington near its confines with Arlington, and of their ancient Bailiwick, see *Suss. Arch. Collections*, vol. IV, p. 64.

message, with 12 acres and 1 rood of land in Haylesham and Manekesey, valued rent 18s. 1*d.* Westminster, May 16.

39^o Edw. III, p. 1, m. 28.—Allows the prior and convent of Lewes to give to Michelham the advowson of the church of Eghynton,²⁰ taxed at 12 marks, to be appropriated to their own uses. Westminster, February 8.

I do not find evidence of any material accession of property after this date, excepting in the year 1398 the appropriation of two churches. Indeed it is apparent that, for a considerable period before the Reformation, there was generally a striking abatement in the public disposition to augment the wealth of religious incorporations. The corruptions which had crept into them, the increase of knowledge which made men more quick-sighted to discern such evils, jealousy on the part of the laity of the ecclesiastical power, by degrees grown to so great a height, the inconveniences also which were found to result from having so large a proportion of the real property of the kingdom in the "dead hand" of the church, all these causes conspired to cool the ardour of benefactors, whilst the very fact of so much having been already given, necessarily abridged the power of giving more.

In 1398, however (21^o Ric. II), Robert Reade, a prelate of great vigour and activity, who had been first Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, and afterwards translated first to Chester, and then in the same year (1396) to Chichester, in answer to a petition from the prior and convent of Michelham, bestowed upon them the churches of Alfriston and Fletching. The allegations upon which his assignment of these churches was founded, are stated to be—the ruinous condition of the conventual buildings, some in part actually fallen down, which their own means were utterly inadequate to restore; the great damage done to them by inundations of the sea, by which much of their arable land, meadows, pastures, and other fertile grounds, from whence great part of their sustenance was derived, had been suddenly swallowed up; the heavy burthen of debts already incurred, and the daily expenses they were put to in keeping out by embankments the ravages of the sea, and maintaining the hospitality imposed upon them by

²⁰ The rectory of *Ripe*, anciently called *Eckington*. This appropriation seems never to have been carried into effect,

as no mention is anywhere made of it in the valuations of the convent property.

their proximity to the king's highway,²¹ frequented by the nobility of the kingdom and other travellers. Upon these grounds the appropriation of the two churches is made to them in the usual form.²²

The conventual lands exposed to such a disaster as is here described were chiefly situate in Pevensey and Willingdon, with some portion in Hailsham and Hellingly; and the extent of the calamity shows how imperfect at that time were the defences of the levels in tempestuous seasons against inroads of the sea, which flowed on such occasions much further inland than from present appearances we are apt to suppose.

In the Patent Rolls of Ric. II, Hen. IV, V, and VI, are many records of commissioners appointed, who had a local interest in the matter, to repair the sea-banks along the coast from Bourne, through Pevensey to "Bixle" (Bexhill) and Hastings, and inland as far as Hurst (*Monceaux*), Hoo, Helyng, Aylesham, and Wylingdon. In several of these the *Prior of Michelham* is associated with others, as Roger Ashburnham, the Abbot of Begeham, John Devereux, and Thos. Erpingham, constables of Dover, Sir Wm. Fienles (Fiennes), John Pelham, and Wm. Manekesye. They are also directed to look to the "bekyns" (beacons), and array "hobelers," to defend the coast; the latter being certain tenants, bound by their tenure to keep a light nag (a *hobby*), and be on the alert to give alarm in case of invasion or any sudden danger from the sea-side.²³

The benefaction of Bishop Reade did not, in the unsettled state of the times, receive the royal confirmation without delay, expense, and trouble. In Rot. Pat. 21^o Ric. II, p. 3, m. 32 (A.D. 1398), is given at full length that king's assent to the proposed appropriation, on the ground that the revenues of the priory were so slender that, without assistance from some other quarter, the prior and convent were unable to pay their

²¹ The road past Michelham, now comparatively so private, was then the principal thoroughfare between Lewes and the towns of Hailsham, Pevensey, Battel, and Hastings; deserving doubtless to share the bad character which attached generally to Sussex roads of the period; a part of it beyond Arlington Hide has only

been rescued from its native mud within the last fifteen years, by the addition of some hard materials.

²² Episc. Reg. C., fol. 68. We learn from this deed that *John Leme* was then prior.

²³ Dugdale's Hist. of Embankments.

debts or support their burthens. The king, therefore, "of his favour, and *in consideration of forty pounds paid down,*" grants and allows them to have the advowsons of the churches of Alfricheston and Fflechyng to their own uses:—but with a proviso that "the vicarages of the said churches be sufficiently endowed according to the order of the diocesan, and some competent sums be every year distributed among the poor parishioners of the aforesaid churches according to the statute in that behalf made and provided." The king witnesses his own deed, "at the town of Salop," (Shrewsbury) February 3.

It would seem that the £40 thus extracted from the canons (notwithstanding their alleged poverty) was thrown away, owing to the deposition of this unfortunate sovereign. For in the next year, when the prior and convent state that the appropriation was not yet executed, and supplicate his successor to order execution, the king, in consideration of the premises, and "*also of ten pounds paid in our hanaper*"²⁴ by the said prior," consents to their request, and orders the appropriation to be carried into effect.²⁵

Even when possession had been obtained, from Roger Gosselyn, Thomas "Enlewyk," Richd. Sessingham, and Richd. Parker, acting under the authority of the pope and bishop, it was thought necessary to apply once more for an indemnity to those persons, who had no deed to exempt them from the penalties of the Mortmain Act. This is granted by the king, "*de uberiore gracia,*" by writ of privy seal, and made a pretext for exacting another £10 paid, as before, into the royal "hamper."²⁶

Finally, this same King Henry IV granted the canons, in 1411, the fullest confirmation ("*peramplissima confirmatio*") of their manors, lands, and liberties, as recited and sanctioned in the charters of his predecessors.²⁷

Thus at length endowed with an adequate revenue, the priory seems to have received no further accession of property, nor do we find any more complaints of poverty.

Passing now from property to income, the first valuation

²⁴ "Hanaperium" was originally a basket in the King's Chancery for receiving the fees paid for the sealing of briefs, charters, and other such documents.

²⁵ Rot. Pat. 1^o Hen. IV, p. 7, m. 11. Westminster, 26 May, (1399).

²⁶ 3^o Hen. IV, p. 1, m. 16. He speaks of the unhappy Richard as "*carissimum dominum et consanguineum nostrum nuper Regem predecessorem nunc defunctum!*"

²⁷ Rot. Pat. 13^o Hen. IV, p. 2, m. 5.

attainable of the estates belonging to our priory occurs in the taxation of Pope Nicolas, A. D. 1291, when the temporalities of the prior were estimated as follows:—

PRIOR OF MICHELHAM.

	£.	s.	d.
At Michelham	7	0	0
Chintinges	20	0	0
Marsh (marisk), with appertenances	17	0	0
Isenhirst	2	0	0
Land of "la Corie"	2	0	0
Egglesdon	2	0	0
Brichelmston	5	0	0
De Kyminton (in the original Roll, Gumiton), <i>i. e.</i> Jevington	1	6	8
Holewyk	3	0	0
What Lucy Russel receives for life from her tanyard	4	0	0
An annual payment from the canons of Bekham (Begham)	16	13	4
Sum total	80	0	0

From whence it appears that, anticipating the £4. a year they would receive from her tanyard after the death of Lucy Russel, the whole income of the house from temporal sources was at that time £80. The only specifications in the above schedule which can occasion perplexity are those of "Egglesdon" and "Terra de la Corie." The first must be intended to represent what is written in the charters "Heseldon," which in the "Peramplissima Confirmatio" just mentioned is called "Esschedoun," *i. e.* in modern orthography, Ashdown, the general name of the forest. In this confirmation mention is made of the prior's right of "pasture for his animals in the common near the forest of Esschedoun with the other men of Bradhurst," a description, it will be seen, exactly applicable to Heseldon. Bradhurst is the present Broadhurst, in Horsted Keynes, the property of Lord Dacre, where are the remains of an Elizabethan mansion, with a fine sheet of water below the church, to the north of which "Hazledown" must have been a part of the adjacent forest. With respect to the "Terra de la Corie," I can only conjecture that as the Russels gave various things in Hartfield, including (as appears here) a *tanyard*, this may have been land attached to it, "Corie" having a strong resemblance to "Corium" (a hide), whence "Currier;" the word itself I can nowhere find. It will be observed that the prior received annually a rent-charge of £16. 13s. 4d.

from the abbey of Begham (now Bayham), respecting which see *Suss. Arch. Collections*, v. V, p. 163, n. 22. The donations before separately mentioned are many of them here put together, either as marsh land, or as included in the general estate of Michelham; Jevington exhibits some further variations in the spelling. The donation of Hugh Baudefar, in Brighton, valued at £5., is what is now called the manor of Brighthelmstone-Michelham, comprising a portion of West Street and the King's Road, near the Battery, part of the site of which is held of this manor.

Next, in the Inquisition made A.D. 1340, with a view to ascertain the value of the ninth of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs, granted by Parliament to Edward III, the prior is returned as having, in the parish of "Erlingtone," one manor and three carucates of land, from which the ninth part of the corn was worth ij marks per annum, of the fleeces 1*s.* 6*d.*, but of lambs he had none. This would make the annual value of the corn and wool, £12. 12*s.* 6*d.*, an increase of £5. 12*s.* 6*d.* over the £7. at which the Michelham estate was valued fifty years before. One of the jurors is William de *Hemstede*, a name still attached to a farm in Arlington and the lane which leads to it.

Finally, in the Valor Ecclesiasticus, taken A.D. 1535 (the time of its suppression), the net income of this house rises to double its amount in 1291, viz. £160. 12*s.* 6*d.*, chiefly, no doubt, from the advance of money-rents, and partly from certain benefactions not specified in previous valuations. For in this income are included the *churches* belonging to the convent, viz. those of "Laugton, Alfryston, and Fleechyng," valued respectively at £5. 6*s.* 8*d.*, £16. 13*s.* 4*d.*, and £5. 6*s.* 8*d.* That of Hailsham is altogether omitted; it had, in fact, been long before claimed and obtained by the abbey of Begham, as a chapel of ease to their church of Hellingly. In the Year Book of 36^o Henry VI, reference is made to a disputed question of form as to a jury in the King's Bench, in a suit of the Abbot of Begham against the Prior of Michelham, but no explanation is given of the nature of the trial. Perhaps it might have been in settlement of some such previous disputes that, by a compromise between the contending parties, Hailsham Church was transferred to Begham, and the rent-charge of £16. 13*s.* 4*d.*

assigned to Michelham. The rental in this valuation is given much more in detail, and what is comprehended in the "Taxatio" under the general head of Marsh is here given in its several detached portions, as Shaldmershe, Fothermershe, Brode (broad) mershe, &c., names which, so far as I can find, are no longer recognized.

The annual profits of the priory mill are put at £2. 13s. 4d., and the mill at Mayfield let for one pound.

It would be too much to suppose that the brotherhood were left in quiet enjoyment of their possessions during those turbulent times, when kings and potent barons, and even their powerful subordinates, had little scruple in laying hands upon ecclesiastical property on any plausible pretext. So early as 1249 (33^o Henry III) Robert de Fulham, Constable of the Exchequer, obtained a writ of distringas on the lands and goods of the Prior of Michelham and Robert le Hus' for a debt of 40s., which (as is alleged) ought to have been paid in the octaves of St. Peter and St. Paul, and is now ordered to be forthcoming within three weeks from the feast of St. John the Baptist.

In 1275 complaint was made that the Prior of Michelham had withdrawn the suits and services of twenty-five tenants in his manor of Chyntyng, which tenants were accustomed to do suit and service for the hundred of Faxberewe (Flexborough); that these services were worth vs. per annum, and had been withholden vj years, to the detriment of the said hundred. Also that the prior had the assize of bread and beer in the manor of Chyntyng, by what warrant was unknown.²⁸

In consequence of this probably it was that in 1279 the prior brought forward his claim before the Judges of Assize, John de Ryegate and others, on circuit at Chichester, on the day after St. John Baptist, to have exemption from shires and hundreds and their suits, &c., pursuant to the charter of Henry III, as he and all his predecessors had therefore enjoyed it; when the verdict was in his favour.²⁹

During this reign of Edward I also the Prior of Michelham had to bring his action against Johanna de Caunvil, lady of

²⁸ Rotuli Hundred, 3^o Edw. I.

²⁹ Placita de Jurat. et Assis. Coram J. de Ryegate, &c., 7^o Edw. I.

the manor of Laughton, for the restoration of his forest rights, unjustly withholden by her, exhibiting in support of his claim the charter of Gilbert de Aquila, his founder.³⁰ The prior claimed to have pannage and herbage in all the outlying woods of the Honor of the Eagle, viz. in Wilmeton, Clavregge (in Waldron), Hawkehurst (E. Hoathly), Dicker, Broyll, Wandern (Waldron), and in a place called Bromeknoll in Eshedonne, and also in the woods of the manor of Lecton (Laughton).

In the year 1318 a more formidable antagonist enters the lists against the prior, in the person of King Edward II, who sues him for disobedience to a royal mandate in not admitting one Robert Henry to a corrody in his priory; a corrody being an allowance of victuals and clothing to be annually furnished by the convent, reserved by a benefactor in consideration of his grant, and to be enjoyed by himself or other person upon his nomination. In this case the prior defended himself by pleading that he held his priory by the foundation of Gilbert de Aquila, with the assent of the king's grandfather, Henry III, "in liberam et perpetuam elemosinam," a form of grant which barred all claims for corrodies. It is not said what was the result of this suit, but certainly the prior seems to have had law and justice on his side.³¹

Thirty years later the prior had to submit to a forced loan, one of those arbitrary exactions which afterwards, casting aside all pretence of repayment and assuming the ill suited name of benevolences, acquired such great and well deserved unpopularity under the Tudors and the Stuarts. Probably it is only one out of many by which he, his predecessors, and successors, were oppressed. As these loans were seldom repaid, and never but after a long interval, this was, in fact, a mode of levying taxes by prerogative alone, without the consent of Parliament. In such a case it can hardly be contended that "taxation" was "no tyranny." The prior had to produce "one sack of wool."³²

We have already seen that he had at least one litigation, and probably more than one, with the Abbot of Begeham. There is, however, no evidence on which we need disbelieve

³⁰ Vide *Suss. Arch. Collections*, IV, 53.

³¹ *Abbreviatio Placitorum* 11^o Edw. II de term' Pasche.

³² 21^o Edw. III. Hayley's MSS., Addl. MSS. 6343, p. 199.

that the canons of Michelham latterly held a tolerably tranquil course till they were overtaken by the dissolution.

Before that fatal event a few incidents of miscellaneous character, and of more or less interest, are recorded to have happened.

On the 26th of June, 1283 (11^o Edw. I), John de Kyrkeby (the modern Kirby), who had been chosen Bishop of Rochester, renounced his election at Michelham before the Archbishop of Canterbury (John Peckham).³³

On the 14th of September, 1302, the canons were enlivened by the presence of royalty. Edward I, in passing from Hampshire through Sussex into Kent, came from Lewes and spent the night at Michelham, proceeding onward next day to Hurstmonceaux and Battel.³⁴ A writ dated from the priory is in existence, giving the living of "Sneyeswell" (Snailwell, R. Cambr.), in the diocese of Ely, to John de Echingham, perhaps prior, and thus requited for his hospitality.

The next incident we meet with is rather discreditably to the then head of our venerable house, but luckily for his reputation, his name has passed into oblivion. At a general chapter of the Black Monks (or Benedictines), held at the monastery of St. Andrew, Northampton, July 5, 1423, at which William, Abbot of St. Edmund's Bury, and John, Prior of the cathedral church of Worcester, were presidents, "was read a long letter rhetorically written by the Prior of Michelham, canon of the order of St. Augustine, levelled against the present Abbot of St. Augustine in Canterbury; but because, as is most truly conjectured, it is not thought to have sprung from the root of charity—nay, rather has been maliciously worked up (*peractizata*) into an immoderate censure of the aforesaid venerable father—for this cause our lord presidents have decreed *that it be buried among them that sleep.*"³⁵

³³ Angl., Sacra, I, 352.

³⁴ *Suss. Arch. Collections*, II, 153-5. "It puzzles us much to understand," says Lord Campbell, "how not only the king and his court, but the king and both houses of parliament were anciently accommodated in a small town; but it appears that a great many truckle beds were spread out in any apartment, and with a share in one of these a luxurious baron was contented; the less refined not

aspiring above straw in a barn. Both Charles I and Cromwell slept in the same bed with their officers. By the statutes of Magdalen College, Oxford, each chamber on the first floor in ordinary times was to contain two truckle beds." (*Life of Waynflete*). The difficulties at Michelham must have been surmounted in a similar way.

³⁵ "Ipsam inter dormientes decreverunt sepeliri," equivalent, in modern language,

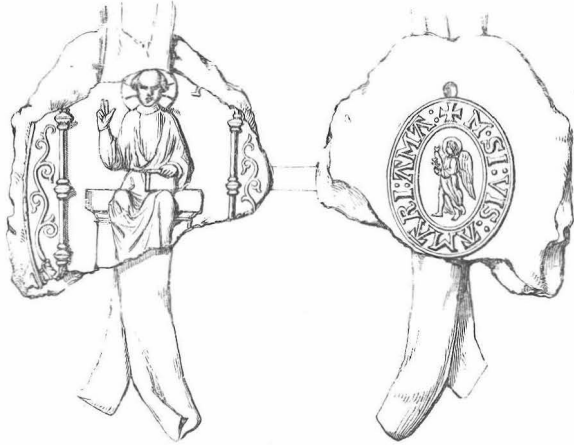
In the Lewes Chartulary, *Vespas. XV F.*, f. 120, mention is made of an exchange of a rood and a half of land at "Bristhelmstone," between Roger, Prior of Michelham, and William, Prior of Lewes, to which Amfrid de Fferyng, H. de Hertfield, Simon de Herbeting (Harebeating, in Hailsham), and others, are witnesses. A reference to the list of Lewes priors (*Suss. Arch. Collections*, III, 196-7), shows that this must have been either William Russinoll or William de Foville, and so fixes the date as between A.D. 1248-68.

It seems that negociations of this kind were not unusual between these two houses, for we learn from the same authority (f. 92) that an indenture was made, "dated at our chapter-house of Michelham, March 14, 1376" (51^o Edw. III), binding John de Cariloco, Prior of Lewes, to give to John Leme, Prior of Michelham, "all the land called La Wallond, in the manor of Langenaye, extending in length from the common pasture called La Hake on the west, to the grove (*grovam*) called Okelyng on the east; in breadth bounded on the north by the king's highway leading from La Hake towards Haylesham, and on the south by the Prior of Wilmington's wood, with other lands running east as far as Sirstreet." Michelham covenants to do service at the court of Langney, and to pay Lewes priory, on every vacancy of Michelham, 10*s.* relief and 13*s.* 4*d.* for heriot, to be distrained for if not paid. The original indenture has been discovered by Mr. Blaauw among the deeds of Lewes priory in the Star Chamber of the Chapter House, Westminster, being doubtless the counterpart of another kept by Michelham. The seal of brown wax, very imperfect, and with the inscription effaced, remains affixed to the deed, and appears to represent our Lord seated under a canopy, of which the side shafts only are left; near his head is the foot of an Omega, and around it a nimbus, within which a cruciform radiance is discernible; the left hand holds a book on his knee, the right is raised as in the act of blessing. The counter-seal, at the back of the parchment slip, is oval and much smaller, showing an angel in motion, holding what seems to be a flower in his hand, as in the Annunciation; the whole

to its being sent to the dead letter office, or perhaps rather to the parliamentary phrase, that it be "ordered to lie on the

table." This curious account is taken from Clement Reyner's *De Antiquate Ordinibus Benedictorum in Anglia*, Append., p. 175.

is encircled with the motto, ✠ M. SI: VIS: AMARI: AMA: where, whether the M stands for Mariam, or Memento, or Me, or Michelham—alluding, perhaps, in punning fashion, to *much*-loving (Michel-ama)—must be left to the reader's judgment or imagination. I have much satisfaction in exhibiting a representation of this seal, the existence of which was unknown when the last edition of the *Monasticon* was published.³⁶



Again, (f. 99), Prior de Cariloco is stated to have given license to the same John Leme to acquire the manor of Sutton the latter agreeing to pay annually for the former 100s. to Reginald Pympe de Nottlestede (Nettlestead), in the county of Kent. This is “given in our Chapter House at Lewes the Friday next before the feast of St. Michael Archangel, in the sixteenth year of the reign of King Richard II” (1392).

The following lease of the property thus acquired is preserved among the Bayham Abbey deeds in the Ashmolean library at Oxford, though it is not easy to see what connection it has with Bayham:—

“Mychelham. Know all men by these presents that we, Laurence, Prior of the House and Church of the Holy Trinity of Mychelham and the Convent of the same place, have delivered and demised to Master Simon Berneval (Barnewell?)

³⁶ That this is the seal of Michelham (not Lewes) appears from the conclusion of the deed. “In testimonium, &c. . . . predictus prior et conventus de Michel-

ham sigillum suum apposuerunt. . . . Datum quo ad nos priorem et conventum in domo nostro capitulari apud Michelham 14 mensis Marci, 1376.” (51^o Edw. III).

our farm of Sutton, for twenty shillings of lawful money lately paid for the farm aforesaid, all and singular our dues from the commencement of the term even to its end being reserved as below." [Alluding, I presume, to some schedule annexed.] "Given at Mychelham aforesaid, the 8th day of the month of December, in the 19th year of the reign of Henry the 6th after Conquest, King of England."³⁷

The following perhaps may, and I am afraid does, relate to some other Michelham (it may be Mickleham, in Surrey), but as it is short and curious, I will venture to cite it:—"Ralph de Belvoir holds two carucates of land in Michleham of Roger de Moubray, rendering annually *certain red stockings* (quasdam caligas de scarleto) at Xmas day in lieu of every service."³⁸

Two visitations of this house are to be found in the Episcopal Registers of Chichester, the one made during the episcopate of John Arundel, M.D. *Physician* to Henry VI, as well as confessor and domestic chaplain; the other during that of the munificent Robert Sherburne. The principal facts elicited by the first of these inquiries shall be briefly stated:—

Visitation of Mychelham, 1478.—"Edward Marley, prior, saith (among other things), that Dominus de Dacre hath a fee for the term of his life of v marks, under the common seal of the convent;" (Thomas Stanaker adds "and hath (had?) it for xij years"). "Also that Thomas Marley, the prior's father, hath v marks under the C. S. for the term of his life; Thomas Exbrigge xxvjs., and N. Eylrygge xiijs. ivd., in like manner." Dominus³⁹ Thomas Stanaker, canon and cellarer,⁴⁰ confirms the above, and adds, "That at the time of their lawsuit with the abbot and convent of Bigham the jewels (jocalia) of the house were sold to pay the expenses, as will appear by the inventory. It is also said that there are two mills belonging to the priory in utter ruin (in toto ruinosa). Item, the dormitory house, with other houses, buildings, and granges, are in bad condition (defectiva)." "He also saith that the prior hath given no account of their transactions for xxviiij

³⁷ I am indebted to the kindness of the Rev. E. Turner for the use of his transcripts of this lease and the visitations presently noticed.

³⁸ From Blount's *Ancient Tenures*, 121.

³⁹ This title appears to be applied to the canons much in the sense in which it

is still used of Bachelors of Arts at Oxford and Cambridge, for which it is difficult to supply an exact English equivalent.

⁴⁰ It was the office of the "Cellerarius" to procure provisions and other accommodations for the monks and all strangers resorting to the convent.

(years), nor revealed the state of their affairs to deponent or his brethren, excepting once only. He also saith that there are six canons besides the prior, whereas in old time there used to be nine. And that Dominus Thomas Helberne was absent for xv years, and after his return poisoned (toxicavit) the whole convent with his strange (diversis) and perverse humours. Dominus John Helberne saith, That the prior hath rendered no account (as is affirmed above) for xx years. Item, that Symon Smyth hath for life, for himself and his wife, under the common seal, as much in victuals as two canons have, for which he hath paid xl marks. Item, the Rector of Hothles (E. Hoathly) hath for life, under the C. S., victuals, for which he paid x pounds." He then confirms what had been said of Dominus Dacre, the prior's father, and the state of the mills and buildings, and adds:—"Item, Alyce Ford hath food and clothing from the monastery, to its hurt and damage. Dominus Thomas Andrewe saith there is one good religious canon named Dominus Elyzeus, who hath sojourned (moram habuit) at Tortington,⁴¹ of which he wished to be superior. He also saith they are without a sacrist,⁴² and that the vestments and other ornaments of the church, for want of a sacrist or keeper, are growing much out of repair. He also saith that the said prior had certain sums of money for 'obits,' left by ancient benefactors, which were due to the convent."⁴³

The troubles which thus infested what ought to have been an abode of peace and uprightness seem to have been in a measure amended in consequence of this visitation, for on the next similar occasion we find the number of canons (if we may include the prior in the nine) complete, and no further disorder alleged.

Visitation, 1521.—Dominus Thomas Holben, prior; Alan Morfote, subprior; Matthew Blackyndon, sacrist; Thomas

⁴¹ Tortington, a parish adjoining to Arundel, where was a priory of black canons, founded before the reign of King John, by the Lady Havisia (or Avice) Corbet—probably of the Albini family.

⁴² "Sacrista." This officer took care of the vessels, books, and vestments of the church; received and accounted for the oblations made at the great altar, and other altars and images; provided also bread, wine, and wax for the celebration

of Divine offices; and superintended the burial of the dead.

⁴³ "Pro obitibus ab antiquis eis debitis," an obscure phrase. "Obits" were solemn services for the dead, performed either before interment, or on the anniversary of a person's death, to pay for which, gifts and bequests were made. It looks as if the prior was putting the proceeds of some such ancient benefactions into his private purse.

Luche (Luck), preentor; Edmund Pellam, master of the novices;⁴⁴ Martin Cater and Robert Forde, novices who have professed (*i.e.* taken the canonical vows); Robert Mote and William Cooper, novices not professed.

We here see the authority on which was founded Bishop Tanner's assertion (quoted in the *Monasticon*), that "Not long before the dissolution, herein were eight canons." In 1553 the estate remained charged with annuities to the amount of £8. 6s. 8d., payable to such of the above dispossessed canons as then survived.

To the four priors named in the *Monasticon*, distinguished thus (*), I am enabled from the foregoing documents to add five more:—

PRIORS OF MICHELHAM.

A.D.			
1248-68		Roger	
1273	20 Edw. I.	*William	Occurs as a witness to Queen Eleanor's foundation of the Hospital of St. Katherine, near the Tower of London.
1381	40 Ric. II	*John	
1398	210 Ric. II	John Leme ⁴⁵	
1441	190 Hen. VI	Laurence	
1478	170 Edw. IV	Edwd. Marley	
1521	120 Hen. VIII	Thos. Holben	
1533	240 Hen. VIII	*John	
1533	240 Hen. VIII	*Thomas	Mentioned in Fiddes' Life of Cardinal Wolsey.

If some worthy chronicler of the old house had bestowed part of his leisure upon framing a record of events connected with the conventual history, or the domestic proceedings of the brotherhood, so far as might inform us of the habits of their daily life, we should have felt ourselves greatly his debtors. No doubt, according to the strictness of their rule, their time was divided between devotional exercises and

⁴⁴ "Magister Noviciorum." Every convent had a teacher not only for the younger members of the society, but for such also of the children of their neighbours as desired gratuitous instruction in grammar and church music. In the greater abbeys or nunneries the sons and

daughters of the nobility and gentry usually received their education.

⁴⁵ Thomas de Leme is one of the jury-men in the inquest of the hundred of "Wilindone" on the rebels of the barons' war, 1265.

humble but useful labours. And if human infirmities had gradually relaxed somewhat of its pristine rigour, infirmities are at all times too common to justify in us any excessive severity of censure. As no document exists alleging any grave charge against them, and as it is no uncommon thing for the innocent to be involved in the punishment of the guilty, we are at liberty to conclude, what it is far pleasanter to conclude than the contrary, that our canons fell a sacrifice to the general determination to suppress all conventual societies, rather than to any especial faultiness of their own.

But in the absence of any memorial of Michelham transactions, I may perhaps be allowed to present the reader with a lively picture of monastic life, applicable more or less to all such institutions, left us by Ælfric Archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 994, and preserved in the British Museum, MS. Cotton, Tib. A. 3.⁴⁶

It purports to be a colloquy carried on in Latin for the purpose of teaching that language to Saxon boys, with an interlinear version in their own tongue. The interlocutors are a master and a young monk, accompanied by certain labourers and artizans attached to the monastery, who are all successively interrogated as to the nature and utility of their several pursuits. The novice in his part of the dialogue gives us a minute insight into the manner in which he spent the day and the discipline he was under.

Being asked what was his occupation, he answers, "I have professed the monastic life and sing every day, at the seven assemblies (synaxes) with the brethren, and am occupied with reading and chanting; but yet I could wish to learn how to reason in the Latin tongue." When it is further inquired what he had done that day? he replies, "Many things have I done to-day. In the night as soon as I heard the signal, I rose from my pallet and went out to the church and there sang the night-song (nocturnam) with the brethren, next we sang of all the saints and the matin lauds,⁴⁷ after this prime, and the seven psalms, with the litanies and early mass,⁴⁸ then (we sang) the third laud (tertiam) and performed the day-

⁴⁶ Published by B. Thorpe, London, 1846.

⁴⁷ The first service between midnight and six o'clock.

⁴⁸ Six o'clock.

mass ;⁴⁹ after this we sang the mid-day service, and ate, drank, and slept ; again we arose and sang the nones (nonam) ;⁵⁰ and now we are here before thee ready to hear whatever thou hast to say. *Mag.* When will you sing vespers⁵¹ and compline ?⁵² *Nov.* When the proper hours arrive. *Mag.* What is thy daily food ? *Nov.* Vegetables, eggs, fish, cheese, butter, and beans, and all clean things, I eat with thanksgiving. *Mag.* And what dost thou drink ? *Nov.* Beer, if I can get it ; if not, water. *Mag.* Dost thou drink wine ? *Nov.* I am not rich enough to buy wine ; besides wine is not the beverage of boys and simpletons, but of the aged and the wise. *Mag.* Where sleepest thou ? *Nov.* In the dormitory with the brethren. *Nov.* Who waketh thee for nocturns ? *Mag.* Sometimes I hear the signal and get up ; sometimes my master⁵³ rouseth me sharply with the rod. *Mag.* Oh good boys, and well-behaved scholars, your teacher exhorts you to obey Divine discipline and conduct yourselves gracefully (elegantè) wherever you may be. Go with a desire to please (morigeratè), when you hear the church bells, and enter into the oratory, and bend in suppliant guise before the sacred altars, and stand in comely order, and sing together with one accord, and seek pardon for your faults,—then go forth without rudeness to the cloister or the school.”

Such was monastic life, or such it professed to be, before it sank into disrepute and ruin.

This priory was planted on a rich alluvial soil, high enough in situation to be removed beyond the reach of floods, but so as to have an appearance of lowly sequestered comfort. At its origin it stood at the edge of that extensive common known then, as now, by its ancient title of the Dicker, comprehending many hundred acres of waste to the west of the convent and finally enclosed within the memory of many persons now living.⁵⁴ On the other side was the primæval forest, bounded to the south-west and south by the downs and the morasses of Pevensey, and stretching away north and north-west, far into the interior, the remains of the grand “Coit Andred,” or “Silva Anderida.” Called in this eastern part the forest of

⁴⁹ Nine o'clock.

⁵⁰ Three p.m.

⁵¹ Six p.m.

⁵² Nine p.m. Making, with the midday service, the seven “synaxes.”

⁵³ The “Magister Noviciorum.” See p. 149, n. 44.

⁵⁴ It was completed, I am informed, so lately as 1815.

“Ashdowne,” a name now restricted to a more limited portion, and sometimes, for many miles inland, the forest of “Pevensel,” it has taken centuries to clear it ; and even now a few scattered and stunted pollard oaks, some of which may be seen not far from the priory, having on them the stamp of remote antiquity, bear testimony to its former existence. The names of villages, too, in this Wealden district, so many of which end in “field,” or in the Saxon “legh,” give a similar attestation, for they were established in the *open spaces* which the forest presented ; whilst those terminating in “hurst” explain themselves, as marking by their prefixes the particular portions of the *wood* in the immediate vicinity of which they arose. The termination “den,” of such very frequent occurrence in the adjoining weald of Kent, has a like woodland origin ; “Den” (in low Latin “Dena”) signifying a portion of the forest, though the meaning of the word has not been very exactly ascertained.⁵⁵ In the unwooded parts of the country, naturally better fitted for human habitation, these villages were preceded in point of time by the “burghs” or boroughs, the “tons” or towns, the “dons” or downs, the “hams” or hamlets, and we find accordingly in such parts a much greater prevalence of this latter class of names.

At the western extremity of this extensive forest, close to what was then called the “Park of Pevensy,” Gilbert de Aquila, as almost the final act of his family, raised his priory of Michelham. Vestiges of this ancient park may even yet be traced in the earthen embankment, about twenty-five feet wide, and six feet high, by which it was once enclosed, and which still remains entire to a very considerable extent. Beginning at the Upper Dicker it runs westward to Wick Street, and after some interruption resumes its course to the south at Sessingham Bridge⁵⁶ till it reaches Cane Heath ; there turning eastward, it

⁵⁵ The old Kentish family of Twisden (De Fractâ Dennâ) took its name from a property of this kind so called, in the parish of Pembury, and many other families of note have derived their names from a similar source.

⁵⁶ A family of some importance formerly derived their name from this part of Arlington, and there are still visible

appearances to the east of the bridge, in a low insulated spot, of a moated mansion, in all likelihood their residence. William and Robert de Sessingham were donors of land to Ottenham (*Suss. Arch. Collections*, V, 159), and some of them have been already mentioned in connection with Michelham.

skirts Milton Hide to the stream which separates the demesne from Tilehouse farm;⁵⁷ this stream, running north till it joins the Cuckmere, forms the northern and north-west boundary as far as the priory. A small remnant of the forest is still called Park Wood; and an old house placed at the south-west corner of the park, and known from time immemorial as the "Keeper's House," was pulled down so lately as thirty years ago; in front of which stood (and still remain) some of those venerable trees to which I before alluded. The whole of the present estate lies within these boundaries, and comprises altogether in wood, arable, and pasture, about 819 acres. Adjoining are a few patches of enclosed land, lying within the manor, and subtracted at various times from the common.

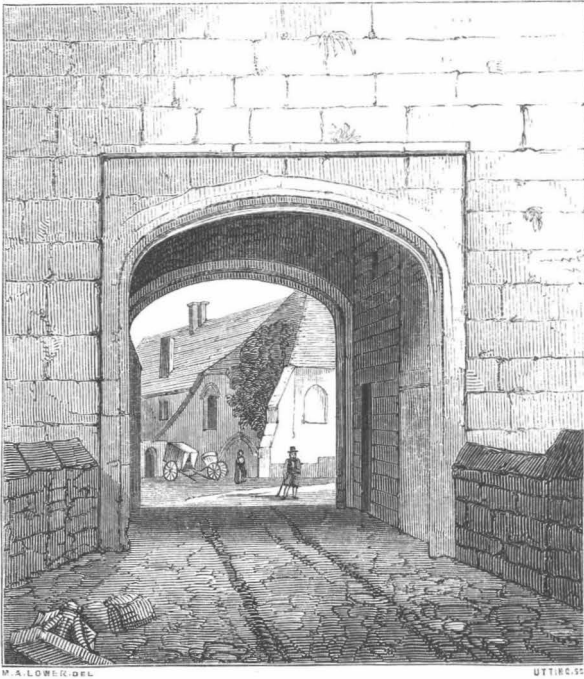
The conventual buildings occupied a quadrangular area of nearly eight acres, surrounded by a moat averaging in breadth say forty yards, now fringed with underwood, and spangled in summer with flowers of the water-lily.⁵⁸ This, though incapable of withstanding any very vigorous or sustained attack, must yet have been sufficient to protect those within it against sudden and desultory assaults from nightly marauders, or bands of lawless vagabonds roving the country in times of civil commotion. Doubtless, when the strong bars of the fine old gateway, through which alone access could be gained to them, were closed for the night, the brotherhood slept the more soundly for their sense of comparative security.

Within this comfortable entrenchment stood their dwelling-house and chapel, their barns and stables, sheltering the produce of their fields as well as the sturdy hinds and teams that cultivated them. A bridge of solid masonry leads across the moat, having a small single arch next the island, where the different character of the work shows it to be of later date, and justifies us in supposing that there was here originally a draw-bridge, a supposition which I find confirmed by the tradition of the place. This bridge communicates with a gateway much in the condition in which we may imagine it to have been 300 years since—a square embattled tower rising some fifty feet above the ground, with four square-headed trefoil windows,

⁵⁷ An alienated portion of the priory property in Hailsham, belonging, with Sessingham farm, to Mrs. Woodward.

⁵⁸ It is computed that there are in all about six acres of water.

the mullions of which are partly destroyed. It has three stories, the one below being called the dungeon, descending beneath the entrance to the level of the water; the two above are now used as store-rooms, and connected by winding steps of stone which conduct to the parapet of the roof; the stair,



roof, and floors being nearly perfect. This gateway opens into a spacious court-yard, with the house in front and the farm buildings around it; about the house are the gardens, orchards, and closes, affording all such conveniences as this little community could require. Three fish-stews, communicating by narrow channels with the moat, still exist in a condition fit for use.

The house itself presents externally on the south side a handsome elevation, though stopped windows here and there tell of rooms no longer used except for lumber; in the rear of the edifice, which has the oldest look, broken arches and unsightly junctures give proof of violence done to it at various



periods. Two mutilated arches of early English near the present back door, having columns of roll moulding with richly ornamented capitals, are represented in the subjoined woodcut.⁵⁹



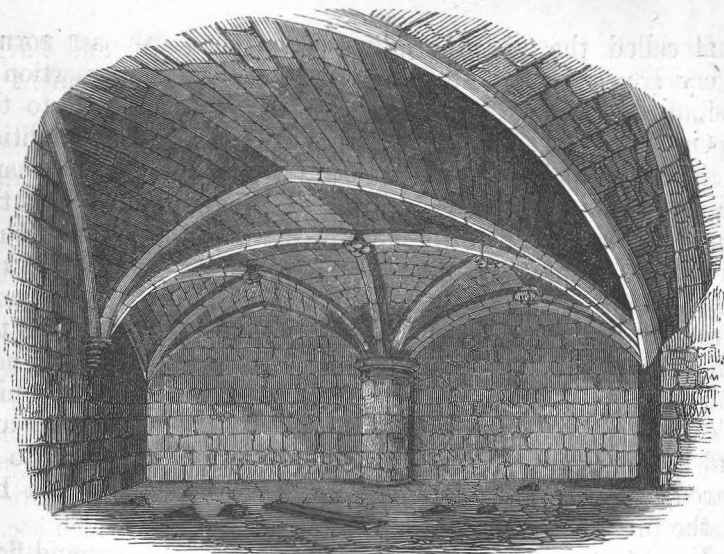
It was here on the north side unquestionably that the chapel stood, which, as no longer wanted, and, as obnoxious to the spirit of the times, was most likely to encounter the hand of the spoiler. So completely has that hand done its work, that were it not certain there must have been such an appendage to the convent, its very existence might reasonably have been matter of doubt. To a diligent inquirer, however, enough remains to show that it extended northward at least

⁵⁹ I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. which these three cuts and those at the M. A. Lower, for the drawings from beginning and end of this essay are taken.

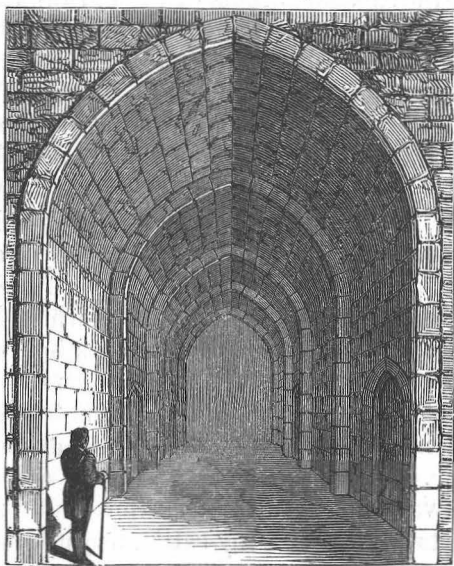
as far as the present modern stable, in the north-east corner of which may be seen, beneath the manger, a broken portion of one of its arches, the soil having been raised nearly to the tops of the pillars from which they sprang. The demolition of the ancient building has been carried so far, and so many changes and adaptations introduced to accommodate it to the purposes of a farm-house, that it is extremely difficult to form any satisfactory judgment of the original design; but an old plan, dated 1667, shows it to have been at that time much more extensive towards the north, having the principal front to the west, with three chimneys instead of the solitary one now remaining, and a roof much higher than the present, of which a small part still exists. This remaining chimney, a fine and lofty piece of stone-masonry, about sixty feet high, is to all appearance a portion of the original structure, which has undergone little, if any alteration.

In the interior the most habitable room on the ground-floor is a large light parlour, with a wainscot of oak and square windows of the later Tudor period, apparently an addition to the original structure made since its devotion to secular uses. Early in the seventeenth century, as I am informed by Mr. Lower, the house was occupied as a gentleman's residence by one Mr. Thomas Marshall. The crypt, however, which is here above ground, on account of the surrounding water, has evidently continued unchanged since its first construction, and is probably the only apartment of which this can be strictly affirmed. It is divided, like that at Wilmington,⁶⁰—which it much resembles, excepting that it is larger—into four equal compartments in all respects similar, with a complete groined roof over each, and is now made use of as a dairy. Over this is a large room, with its floor of brick and a massive stone fireplace surmounted by a funnel projecting from the wall and divided into two distinct and equal parts, having a flat stone bracket on either side of the funnel. A pointed arched doorway, opening outwards to a flight of steps, led to the chapel, and there seems to have been an entrance from without through a similar doorway at the western end, where indications of an external stair of stone may be perceived. To this also a

⁶⁰ *Suss. Arch. Collections*, IV, 62.



narrow passage below,⁶¹ running parallel to the inner side of the crypt and ribbed over with short pointed arches, conducted



from the lower apartments. Out of this passage, on the left, goes a curious recess, nick-named "Isaac's hole," much like

⁶¹ For the drawings of the crypt and passage, copied from those by Grimm in the British Museum, and also for that of the seal, I am indebted to Mrs. Blaauw.

that called the "Lanthorn" at Lewes Priory, and having every appearance of a cell for the solitary confinement of delinquents.

On the ground floor were, as I conjecture, the private apartments of the prior; that over the crypt with its double fireplace being the common-room of the canons, from which a staircase ascended to the dormitory on the floor above.

The moat is fed by the little river Cuckmere, which rising in the hills of Heathfield and following its humble course through Hellingly, performs many useful offices, this amongst others; and then, flowing onward through Arlington and Alfriston, it finds its way at last into the sea in the parish of West Dean.⁶² The old bridge which crossed it at Michelham, and had braved the fury of many a flood, has just been (it is feared) irretrievably ruined by the extraordinary inundations of the present winter, (1852-3.) Otters, a race which seems destined to become soon as extinct as the Austin canons themselves, are sometimes found, but rarely, to haunt its silent waters and hollow banks.⁶³ Owls, too, I cannot forbear to mention, frequent the capacious roofs of the old buildings, not only unmolested, but protected by the present worthy occupant, to the credit of his good taste both for the useful and the picturesque.

Among the mills turned by this stream "unknown to fame," is the ancient mill of the priory. It stands on the outside of the moat, not far from the manor pound and entrance gate of the demesne, a lowly structure, venerable in its simplicity and shaded by the relics of a few trees as venerable as itself, and too worthless, happily, to tempt the woodman's axe. Like other humble things that survive the storms by which loftier neighbours are overthrown, it continues to ply its honest vocation as merrily as when every man in the manor was obliged to bring thither his grist for the prior's gain, and notwithstanding the competition of modern rivals still distributes its benefits within a limited circle. There is even in the large space which lies before the gateway and looks like a natural common, though long inclosed, with its pound for stray cattle, its antique mill, a high

⁶² Whilst this account was in hand, a pike of eight pounds weight was caught at Michelham, in which was found one of its own species weighing three quarters of a pound, and *in this* a small roach—all perfect!

⁶³ A few years since three of these animals were seen at one time in the moat, one of which was afterwards captured.

roofed cottage called the Mill-house, clad in the grey livery of time, and backed by some pendant elms, an air of faded consequence which at once makes an impression upon the mind of a visitor. Seen under favourable circumstances these half ruined remains excite a deep interest, and are certainly amongst the most remarkable of their kind to be met with in our south-eastern counties.

It now only remains for me to say a few words about the descent of the property of this religious house.

In doing this, I have no intention of going into very minute details, but of giving, as a matter of some curiosity and interest, the broad general outlines of the course by which the bulk of the estate has come down to its present noble owner, with a short notice of some considerable portions which have been alienated from it at various times. For the first of these objects my authorities are chiefly the Burrell MSS., with a few additional particulars gleaned from other sources.

In the twenty-ninth year of Henry VIII (A.D. 1538) that monarch granted Letters Patent to Thomas Lord Cromwell, his most active agent in suppressing the monasteries, and then standing high in his favour, enabling him to hold the possessions of this dissolved priory of the king, in chief, by the tenure of military service.

Upon the attainder and execution of that nobleman, after a brief possession of two years, these estates reverting to the crown were again granted, in the way of a compulsory exchange, to William Fitz Alan, Earl of Arundel. By an indenture dated February 4th, 1541, the earl, for divers causes and good considerations, "bargained and sold to the king his manors of Shyllyngle, Hibernhoo, Woollavington, and other property in the west of Sussex; and the king on his part granted to the earl "the scite, circuit, and precinct of the late monastery or priory of Michelham," with a portion of the estates lately pertaining to the priory of Lewes; to hold the same "in capite, per servicium militare," *i.e.* by the suite of half a knight's fee, paying yearly £4. 19s. 9d. for Michelham Park Gate, £2. 3s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. for Sharnfold, £3. 17s. 6d. for Downeash, 4s. for Cowdean, 4s. for Holwech, £5. 7s. 2d. for Swanborough, £1. 6s. 6d. for Horsted, £2. 6s. 6d. for Imberhorne Felbridge; the last three formerly belonged to Lewes priory.

The king further covenants, that the said premises are worth £206. 13s. 7½*d.* yearly value, besides woods and underwoods to be sold, estimated at £131. 2s. 2*d.* And whereas the earl's premises exceed those granted by the king in the sum of £580. 6s. 7*d.*, the latter agrees to pay over that amount.

Michelham did not remain long in possession of the Arundel family, for in the first two years of Philip and Mary (1554-5) Henry Fitz Alan, son and heir of Earl William, and the last Earl of Arundel of that name, in exchange for other lands, conveyed this manor and its appurtenances to the queen; especial mention being made (inter alia) of "the tenements called Sextrie lands in Michelham, belonging lately to the office of sexton (sacrista)," and lying in "Hellingly, Willington, Jevington, and Hailesham."

By this queen they were granted in the next year to John Fote; and by him aliened in 1574 to Ambrose Smyth; who ten years afterwards transferred them to John Morley (afterwards Sir John Morley of Halnaker), and his wife Elizabeth.

On the 31st October, 1587, an indenture was made between John Morley of Halnaker, Esq., and his wife Elizabeth on the one part, and Herbert Pelham of Hellingly, Esq., on the other, whereby the former confirm to H. P. and his heirs the "scite of Michelham priory (within the moate seven and a half acres thirty-two perches) together with 767 acres of land," and its manor and messuages; excepting by name Wannock (in Jevington), Shaldmershe, Le Tylehouse land, Knockhatch, and Lowe Wall, amounting to 220 acres; and excepting also other lands aliened by Morley at sundry dates assigned, viz., certain lands to Thomas Selwyn; "Harmons, &c.," to Robert Sackville, son and heir of Thomas Lord Buckhurst; and other lands to Thomas Tyndall. All the residue was assigned to Herbert Pelham and his heirs for ever.

Mr. Pelham, it appears, soon fell into pecuniary difficulties, for in 1590 we find him granting to John Mitchel of Cuckfield an annuity of one hundred marks for fifteen years, "to be paid at the manor house of Michelham," in consideration of £400. advanced. And nine years later his whole interest in this property was made over by him to Thomas Pelham of Laughton, James Thatcher of Priest-hawes (in Westham), and Thomas Peirse of Hastings; in trust to sell the same, and out of the proceeds reserve an annuity of £400. during his life

for the maintenance of himself and family ; the residue to be applied in discharge of his debts, and the surplus (if any) paid over to him or his heirs. This he did, it is said, "because by reason of his great debts he was not able to travel about the sale of his lands for the satisfaction of his said debts, yet intended they should be paid as soon as they conveniently might."

In fulfilment of this trust, the above parties, on the 6th April, 1601 (43^o Eliz.), sold the property to the Lord Treasurer Buckhurst, Cecilie his wife, and heirs, for the sum of £4700, and it has ever since continued with the Sackvilles.

For the long space of fifty-one years this manor formed part of the jointure of the Lady Anne Clifford, only child of George, third Earl of Cumberland, who "at the age of eleven years and five months [as his daughter records with affectionate particularity] was then lying in the house called Battell Abbey, in Sussex," when by the death of his father he succeeded to his title and estate. Devoting himself to a seafaring life he terminated a most adventurous career at the early age of forty-seven, and left Anne his sole heir. When very young she was married to Thomas Richard, third Earl of Dorset ; and on the 1st July, 1623 (20^o Jac. I), an indenture was made between them and certain other parties, to enable the earl and countess to levy a fine of the manor of Michelham Park Gate and advowsons, in order to secure the site of Lewes Priory and buildings "enclosed within the walls thereof," to the use of the said earl and his heirs ; the rest (including Michelham) to the use of the earl, and (after his death) to the use of the countess for life as her jointure.

The earl died next year, leaving his widow in possession of Michelham. Anne entered a second time into wedlock, being united 3d June, 1630, to Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who appears in the Court-rolls as Lord of this manor from that date till his death, in January, 1649-50. After this event, the countess, who lived in great state at her six hereditary castles of Brough, Brougham, Pendragon, Appleby, Barden, and Skipton, enjoyed, during her second widowhood, the manor of Michelham and its appendages, until she died at the advanced age of eighty-five, on the

22d March, 1675, leaving a name famous for all time in Westmoreland and Craven.⁶⁴

It has since descended in regular succession by the heirs male until the decease of John Frederick, third Duke of Dorset, in 1825, and was carried in marriage, in 1839, by his grace's eldest daughter and co-heir, to William Pitt, the present Earl Amherst.

It will be observed that several portions of the ancient estate of the priory were alienated by Mr. Morley during his ownership; and in the sale to Mr. Pelham reservation was made of Wannock and other farms, which have never since been re-united to the main estate. The manors of Down-Ash and Sharnfold were doubtless among the lands of which the quantities only are mentioned in the deeds of gifts before cited, without notice of the names by which they were known; the former is in the parish of Hailsham, and belongs to the Earl of Waldegrave; the latter, with Ditton in Westham, to the Earl of Burlington.⁶⁵ Chinting, Knockhatch, Cowden, and Hollywish, it has been already remarked, have also passed into different hands; and though the manor of Bright-helmstone-Michelham belongs to the noble owner of the demesne lands of the priory, yet I believe it is in consequence of a re-acquisition, after it had been early separated from the other appendages of the monastery. It appears that this small manor in Brighton was one of those allotted for the maintenance of Anne of Cleves after her divorce from Henry. Upon her death in 1557, being resumed by the crown, it so continued till granted by Queen Elizabeth to Thomas Sackville, Baron Buckhurst, who, as we have seen, became also possessed by purchase of the site and manor of Michelham, and thus again brought these properties together.

There is one considerable manor mentioned among the early endowments which was severed from the rest not long after the dissolution, the manor of "Isenhurst" or Isinghurst, as it is now called, given by Thomas de Burton and his wife. This manor comprises parts of Mayfield and Waldron; and, next to Bivleham, is the most important in that half-hundred of Loxfield-Camden, both being holden of the crown in chief.

⁶⁴ A very interesting account of this remarkable woman may be seen in Hartley Coleridge's *Lives of Distinguished North-erns*, London, 1833.

⁶⁵ Mr. Figg informs me there are lands in Westham, belonging to Lord Burlington, which bear the name of "Michelham Marsh."

Anciently it was the property of the Archbishops of Canterbury, who seems to have been forcibly deprived of it. After Cromwell's attainder it was at some time (probably temp. Eliz.) granted to the Sackvilles, who sold it to the Bakers, from whom, by marriage, it passed into the Kirby family, and was sold by the late Rev. John Kirby to Morgan Thomas, Esq., the present possessor. There is, in the Burrell Papers, a visitation of the borough of Isinghurst [adjoining to the manor] giving in very full detail its boundaries in the parishes of Heathfield, Waldron, and Hellingly, and stating that it is within the Duchy of Lancaster, and has no church or town within it.⁶⁶

In the multitude of manors, farms, rectories, &c., assigned to Anne of Cleves, which may be seen in Rymer's *Fœdera*, mention is made of Brithelmstone, Broughton [supposed to be in Jevington], and *Maresfield*. Now there is nowhere in the records of this priory the slightest allusion to any property possessed by it in Maresfield. I cannot help thinking the manor intended was that written in the 'Valor Ecclesiasticus' "Mafeld." In which case there can be little doubt that, being resumed by the crown on the death of Anne, this *Mayfield* manor of Isinghurst was—like the manor of Brighthelmstone-Michelham, and probably at the same time—granted by Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Treasurer Buckhurst.

⁶⁶ This information was kindly communicated by the Rev. H. T. M. Kirby.

