

XV.—COLDINGHAM.

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COLDINGHAM is a place of great antiquity, being first mentioned by the Venerable Bede, under the somewhat high-sounding name of *Coludi Urbs*, as the site of a monastery, in the time of Oswy, King of Northumbria, who began his reign A.D. 642. It was, according to a usage then common in the Anglo-Saxon church, a double monastery, consisting of two communities, one of men and another of women, under the same head. It was founded by a Saxon Princess, Ebba, daughter of Ethelfrid the Ravager, and great grand-daughter of Ida, the Man of Fire, who founded the kingdom of Bernicia. She was the sister of the two Kings, Oswald and Oswy. It is generally believed that she made her profession under Finan, the second Bishop of Lindisfarne. Her brother Oswy, it is said, first intended to marry her to a Scottish Prince, but yielded to her wishes to consecrate her life to the service of God. Most writers say that she first presided over a small community of women on the banks of the Northumbrian Derwent, at a place where there had been a Roman station, and now named after her, Ebba-ceaster, or Ebchester. But there is nothing of this in Bede, and it is possible that the name of the place, whatever its real meaning may be, suggested the story. Hilda, a daughter of the rival house of Ælla, after presiding over a monastery at Hartlepool, had finally settled in the far south of Deira, the southern division of Northumbria, at Streanes-halch, better known by its Danish name of Whitby. Ebba, on the other hand, chose for the site of her house the far north of Bernicia, the northern province, on a bold and precipitous headland, which still retains her name, St. Abb's Head. The situations of her monastery and that of Hilda's were very similar; each a lofty promontory looking over the North Sea, and exposed to all its wild storms—no token of life

but the scream of the sea bird. Perhaps an occasional boat might be seen, but this would be very rare. On the whole nothing could exceed the picturesque desolation of the spot where Ebba fixed her abode. The coast of Fife can be seen on a clear day to the northward, with the Isle of May in the foreground, the solitary rock of the Bass in the near neighbourhood to the west, while on the east the view stretches along the Northumbrian coast to Lindisfarne, Bamburgh, and the Farne Islands. The promontory is of immense height, though 500 feet perpendicular* may be an exaggeration. The building would be of a very humble character, like all these early monasteries, probably of wood, as Lindisfarne, and, no doubt, also the Mailros of that day. Modern refinement, and what at least deems itself to be enlightenment, may smile at the high-born Saxon lady and her brethren and sisters settling on this desolate spot to sing their psalms of penitence and praise, and to encourage one another in the pursuit of holiness, "declaring plainly that they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly." Doubtless they had good reasons for choosing their lot and the place of their habitation, and the moral force of their example could not but tell favourably on their fierce and warlike countrymen.

The earliest notice we have of Ebba's monastery from the Venerable Bede is in his *Life of St. Cuthbert*. When Cuthbert was Provost of Mailros, the fame of his holiness had reached Ebba, "who ruled a monastery situated in the place which is called the *City of Colud*, and was esteemed by all alike for her piety and her nobility, for she was the uterine sister of King Oswy." She sent to Cuthbert praying him to visit her and her community, that they might profit by his exhortations. He could not refuse to grant the request of the handmaid of God, so he came to the place, and remained some days, setting forth the way of righteousness alike by his deeds and his words. It was his wont, when all were at rest, to go out alone to prayer during the night, and when he had thus passed the watches of the night, to return home when the community met for morning prayer. One night a brother of the monastery saw him going quietly out, and curiosity tempted him to follow. He went

* Montalembert. *Les Moines d'Occ.*, XIII. ch. 2, "qui descend a pic de près de cinq cents pieds dans l'Océan."

down to the sea, on the margin of which the monastery stood, waded into deep water till the waves covered his arms and reached his neck, and passed the dark hours of the night singing psalms to the accompaniment of the melody of the waves.* When dawn approached, he came to land, and bent his knees in prayer on the shore. As he was thus employed, two sea-otters came out of the water, lay down before him, and began to warm his feet with their breath and to wipe them with their hair. Having rendered him this service, and received his blessing, they returned to their native element. He then went home, and joined the brethren in their morning lauds. The brother who had been watching him was so struck with terror that he could hardly find his way home. The first thing that he did was to prostrate himself before Cuthbert, and with tears to entreat pardon, having no doubt that the holy man knew all. Cuthbert replied, "What aileth thee, my brother? What hast thou done? Hast thou been tracing my footsteps in my night journey? On this sole condition I pardon thee, that, as long as I live, thou never tell anyone what thou hast seen." The brother promised, and kept his word, for never, while Cuthbert lived, did he speak of the matter to anyone.

When Oswy died, he was succeeded by his son Egfrid, the nephew of Ebba. This Prince was first married to Edilthryda or Etheldreda, one of the daughters of Anna, King of the East Saxons, and, by her mother, niece of St. Hilda. Etheldreda had been married before, but had kept her virginity, and she did the same after her marriage to Egfrid. When she had been twelve years his wife, she at length obtained from him a most reluctant consent that she should take the veil, and it is somewhat remarkable that she did not go to her own aunt, Hilda, but to her husband's aunt, Ebba, at Coldingham. Here she received the veil from the famous Bishop Wilfrid. She remained at Coldingham about a year, when she heard that her husband was coming to recall her. By Ebba's advice she took flight, and went to Ely, where she had a large possession, which had been given to her by her former husband. Here she founded a monastery, which, two hundred years after was destroyed by the Danes. It was rebuilt afterwards, as a Benedictine Monastery, and created an Episcopal See by Henry I. Etheldreda is still regarded as the founder and patroness of Ely.†

* *Pervigiles undisonis in laudibus tenebras noctis exegit.*

† Her name stands in the Calendar of the Prayer Book, 17th October.

Wilfrid's part in this transaction seems to have given offence to the King, and he was never again reconciled to Wilfrid. Ermenburga, Egfrid's second queen, fomented the quarrel, and Wilfrid was eventually deprived of his Bishopric. He appealed to the Pope, and obtained a decision in his favour. But Egfrid declined to obey the papal rescript, alleging that the decision had been obtained by misrepresentation, and instead of being restored to his See, Wilfrid was spoiled of his goods and cast into prison. The Queen appropriated his reliquary, and wore it as an amulet about her neck. Wilfrid's place of confinement was Dunbar, not far from Coldingham. After a time the King, accompanied by the Queen, came to visit his aunt, the Abbess of Coldingham. While they were there, the Queen became very ill, and the Abbess administered to them both a severe rebuke for their treatment of Wilfrid, telling the Queen that, if she wished to recover, Wilfrid must be set at liberty, and she must restore his reliquary. She was obeyed—the reliquary was restored, Wilfrid was released, and the Queen recovered her health.

There is no reason to doubt the personal devotion and piety of Ebba, but it must be owned that she was not altogether happy in the management of her monastery. After her death, which took place in 683, the monastery was destroyed by fire, and its sad fate was looked upon as a judgment caused by the misconduct of its inmates. Yet they were warned beforehand. There was in the monastery a monk named Adamnan, who led a life of great strictness and devotion. One day he had occasion to go to some distance with another of the brethren. As they were returning, when they came within sight of the lofty buildings of the monastery, Adamnan burst into tears, while the distress of his countenance betrayed the agitation of his mind. In answer to his companion's enquiry, he foretold the destruction of the monastery on account of the irregularities by which it was defiled. Adamnan's companion lost no time in telling the Abbess what he had heard, and she sent at once for Adamnan. He told her that recently, when he was watching and praying during the night, a visitor, who was unknown to him, appeared, and commended him for employing his time so well. He then proceeded to tell him that he had gone through the house and visited every cell and every bed, and found that there were none among its inmates but himself who

took any care for their souls. The cells, which were intended for reading and prayer, were the scenes of idle talk and junketing, while the virgins dedicated to God employed their leisure in making very fine garments, either to adorn their own persons, as if they were brides, or to give them away, so as to win for themselves the friendship of men outside. The Abbess asked why he did not tell her all this sooner. He said he was afraid of disturbing her; but there was this comfort, that the ruin would not come while she lived. The story of the vision was made known to the community, and produced a reform for the present; but, after Ebba's death, they returned to their old ways, and became even worse. Then, when they were saying "Peace and safety," the destruction which had been foretold overtook them.

It seems, however, that before long the monastery was restored, but so far as appears, for women only, and, it may be hoped, was ordered with greater regularity. It was afterwards (about 870) destroyed by the Danes, like Lindisfarne, Mailros, and other religious houses, and there is a legend—which, however, comes before us at too late a date to be at all trustworthy—that another Ebba was then the Abbess, and that, when the attack of the barbarians was impending, she called the sisters together, and in their presence mutilated her face with a knife in a very shocking manner, exhorting them all to follow her example in order to preserve their honour. They at once did so, and the expedient succeeded so far as their honour was concerned, but in the rage of their disappointment the Danes destroyed them all.

For two centuries Coldingham lay waste, and the monastery was never rebuilt on the same site. Only the ruins of a chapel which belongs to a later period mark the spot. Little change has taken place in the surroundings. Fast Castle and Tantallon are the creations of later times, but the opposite coast of Fife, the Isle of May, the Bass, and all the natural scenery are the same—the scream of the seabird is the same as that to which Ebba and her brethren and her sisters listened. The roll of the North Sea is the same as that which was the accompaniment to St. Cuthbert's nocturnal psalm. The very ground all around is the same, for cultivation has not approached the site of the ancient monastery. These reflections render it a spot of deep interest to all who delight in recalling the memory of the simple piety and devotion of these ancient times.

After a desolation of two centuries the Monastery of Coldingham was revived, but, like Mailros, on a different site, and like Ely, Whitby, and many others, for a different class of religious—the monks of the order of St. Benedict. The new site is as much distinguished for its soft beauty as the old was for its wild grandeur. It is placed in a valley about two miles inland from St. Abb's Head. It was founded and amply endowed about the year 1100 by Edgar, King of Scots, "and given to God and St. Cuthbert, to the Church of Durham, and the monks serving God, and to them who should hereafter serve Him in that church, for ever, and for the souls of his father and mother, and for the health of his own soul and body, of his brothers and sisters, and for all his ancestors and successors." Edgar was one of the sons of King Malcolm Canmore and St. Margaret, and was next in succession to his father; but Donald, a brother of his father, usurped the throne. After a time, by the help of auxiliaries from England, led to battle, it is said, under the banner of St. Cuthbert, he overcame all opposition, and was seated on his father's throne. Out of gratitude to St. Cuthbert for the help which he believed he had afforded him, he founded this house in his honour. Succeeding kings of Scotland, great lords, with others of humbler rank, enriched it with their benefactions, including the advowson of several churches. It was peopled by a colony of monks from Durham.* The Prior was always a monk of Durham, appointed by the Prior and convent of that place, and removable at their pleasure, though he was generally allowed to retain his office until his death or promotion, or until he found it desirable to retire. Several of the Priors of Coldingham became Priors of Durham, a very great advancement. We have some accounts of the allowances made to a retiring Prior of Durham, and also many of the allowances made to a retiring Prior of Coldingham, and the difference between the two marks very strongly the splendour of the Priorate of Durham and the comparatively humble condition of the Prior of Coldingham.†

* The great Abbey of Durham had eight cells or dependent houses—Coldingham in Berwickshire, Holy Island and Farne Island in Northumberland, Jarow, Wearmouth, and Finchale in Durham, Lytham in Lancashire, and Stamford in Lincolnshire—besides Durham College in Oxford where some of the younger monks resided for the purpose of study.

† As to a Prior of Durham, Robert de Walworth (who had been Prior of Coldingham), on his retirement in 1391, was to have lodging either in the cell of Finchale, or at Durham in the apartments called *Coldingham*, with food and drink for himself, for a monk as his chaplain, and for a gentleman, a clerk, a

The first two centuries after the foundation of the Benedictine Priory of Coldingham were years of quiet and prosperity. There was, upon the whole, with occasional interruptions, peace between England and Scotland, and it need hardly be said that this was very essential to the comfort of a house situated in one of two independent countries, and affiliated to a greater house in the other. During these two hundred years Scotland was, for the most part, peaceful and happy, making very great advances in prosperity, in wealth, and all the accompaniments of civilized life. Yet there were occasional breaches of the peace, and from its position, so near the border, Coldingham necessarily felt the effects. In 1214 the foolish and wicked King, John (certainly the worst in every way who ever ruled England) made an inroad into Scotland, in the course of which Coldingham was burned. Still, on the whole, the two kingdoms maintained mutual peace, and Scotland enjoyed prosperity; but this favourable state of things was not destined to last. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the direct succession to the crown of Scotland failed. Many candidates came forward to claim the crown on the grounds of collateral kinship to the family which had become extinct. Reference was made to Edward I., King of England, and he availed himself of the opportunity to claim the over-lordship of Scotland. The Scottish nation would not give up their independence, and the result was that as the two preceding centuries had been a time of peace, occasionally interrupted by warfare, the three which followed were a time of war, broken now and then by truces more or less prolonged. And this state of things lasted until, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, James VI. of Scotland was called to the throne of England as the nearest heir to the crown. But by that time the Priory of Coldingham had ceased to exist.

In these troublous times of war between England and Scotland the valet, and a page (*garcio*), with fire and other necessaries for his apartments, and all reasonable demands for himself and visitors; for other expenses, a great part, if not the whole of the tithes of Pitlington, near Durham. The provisors for two subsequent Priors on retirement are much the same, only that instead of the tithes they were to have a stipend of forty pounds. As to a Prior of Coldingham, Adam de Pontefracto, on his retirement in 1339, was to have apartments and food, with fuel and light, and one servant, also a payment of ten marks a-year. To John Oll in 1446, and Thomas Nessbit in 1456, was assigned a pension of ten marks a-year, charged on fisheries on the Tweed. There is no mention of apartments and food. Perhaps they were taken for granted.

possessions of the Church of Durham, on the borders or near them, as Lindisfarne, Norham, and Coldingham, were exposed to great disasters, so that the income of the church was much impaired. And, notwithstanding their ample endowments,* the monks of Coldingham were often reduced to great straits, and sometimes had to leave their home and go to Holy Island, or even to Durham. Besides all this, the litigations in the court of Rome, caused by disorders about to be mentioned, were a very heavy drain on the resources of Durham.

In 1304 a strange kind of aggression was attempted on the Priory of Coldingham. From the very beginning of his episcopate, Antony Bek, Bishop of Durham, was on very bad terms with the Prior and Convent of Durham. He had a particular aversion to Richard de Hoton, who was Prior at the time, and he scrupled at no means by which he might annoy him and his brethren. Hugh, Bishop of Biblis, in Palestine, had been expelled from his See by the Saracens, and thus reduced to poverty; and the Bishop of Durham, who, though he was also Patriarch of Jerusalem, might have been expected to be a defender of the rights of the Convent, suggested to the Pope, Benedict XI., that he should provide for Hugh with the revenues of the Priory of Coldingham. The Pope adopted the suggestion, and issued letters accordingly. It was not to be expected that the Prior and Convent of

* In the Surtees volume on Coldingham Priory there is an account of the income of the monastery. The allusions it contains to forfeitures subsequent to the battle of Falkirk, in which Wallace was defeated by the English, fix its date about the year 1298. The roll is not quite complete; but, adding together what we have, the rental amounts to £338. Nearly two centuries and a half later, Henry VIII. dissolved all the religious houses whose income did not exceed £200; and this proved fatal to all the monasteries in the diocese of Durham, but the great Abbey of Durham itself. If we consider that in these two centuries and a half very great changes must have taken place in the relative value of money and land, £338 seems a very large income in 1298.

A curious indication of the wealth of Coldingham is to be found in a letter from William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews, to Richard de Kellaw, Bishop of Durham, in the year 1311, complaining that the monks of Coldingham refused to contribute to the expense of sending delegates to the Council of Vienne, holding that they were not bound to do so. Now it did happen sometimes, when there was a schism in the papacy, that one Pope was owned in Scotland and another in England; in which case the monks of Coldingham would be in a dilemma between their allegiance to Durham on the one hand, and the obedience they owed to their diocesan, the Bishop of St. Andrews, on the other. But there was nothing of the kind here; Clement V., who summoned the Council, though not a Pope to be proud of, was owned by all, and the Council was attended by delegates from England, Scotland, and France alike. The Bishop of St. Andrews remarks that their excessive wealth had rendered them proud and insubordinate: "*Sed ipsi monachi propter nimiam, ut credimus, mundanorum habundanciam in tantam superbiam sunt elati, ut suis superioribus obedienter respondere . . . non curant universo.*"

Durham would submit to be thus robbed without protesting against it. They pleaded that the Pope's letters had been obtained surreptitiously by the suppression of truth and the suggestion of falsehood on the part of the Bishop of Durham. The protest furnishes some interesting particulars about the Priory of Coldingham. 1. The Prior was not appointed, as the Bishop had alleged, by the Prior of Durham, but by the common consent of the Prior and Convent. 2. There were residing at Coldingham thirty monks in the time of peace, and seven in time of war between England and Scotland. At this time there were seven, and when peace returned there would be thirty. These lived upon the revenues of Coldingham, and in addition, in time of peace, paid sixty-nine pounds every year to the Prior and Convent of Durham. If their revenues were taken away, the payment to Durham would cease, and the monks would have to return to Durham, to the scandal of religion and great loss and damage to the Convent of Durham. 3. The revenues of Coldingham arose from possessions bestowed on the church of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert at Coldingham by various kings of Scotland, for the good of their own souls and those of their ancestors and successors. If the revenues were taken away, divine service would cease, to the hurt and damage of the founders. Hugh came to England and presented the papal letters to King Edward I., in the Parliament at Westminster. But the King and Parliament refused to admit them, and thus the whole design was frustrated.*

Robert II., King of Scotland (1371-1390), the first of the line of Stewart, formed the design of withdrawing Coldingham from its dependence on Durham, and placing it under the Benedictine Monastery of Dunfermline. This wears on the sur-

* There is a remarkable letter addressed to Edward I. in 1286, by the Community of Scotland, in reference to the marriage proposed between Edward's son and their young Queen, Margaret (the Maid of Norway): It is interesting chiefly from the view it gives of the civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries of Scotland at the time, and the order of their precedence. It is signed—

1. By the Bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow, who did not become *Archbishops* until 200 years later.
2. By two Guardians of the Realm.
3. By the ten remaining Bishops of that day.
4. By twelve Earls.
5. By twenty-three Abbots (nearly the whole).
6. By eleven Priors—among whom the Prior of St. Andrews ranks first, and the Prior of Coldingham second, thus showing the importance of Coldingham.
7. By forty-eight Barons.

face the aspect of a very arbitrary and unjust proceeding; but there are some considerations which may tend at least to modify this view. The Priory was founded by a Scottish king, and at a time when there were few, if any, great religious houses in the land.* His mother, St. Margaret, had been the means of erecting a stately church at Dunfermline, but there was no monastic foundation there till the time of her youngest son, the second successor of Edgar, David I. To him also was due the foundation of all the stately monasteries in the neighbourhood of Coldingham, Kelso, Melrose, Jedburgh, and Dryburgh. Edgar, himself, was at peace, and in alliance with England; indeed, it was by English aid that he had been seated on the throne. The foundation was a thank-offering to God and St. Cuthbert. What more appropriate, considering *all* these circumstances, than to place his new foundation under the protection of St. Cuthbert at Durham?

But in the time of Robert II. all this was changed. England and Scotland had been engaged for nearly a century in bitter warfare—the English determined to entirely subjugate Scotland, the Scots contending for the independence of their country. It was manifestly most inconvenient that there should be a colony of Englishmen, especially so near the Border, appointed at the will of Englishmen, in all but complete independence of the Scottish king, for the Prior and Convent of Durham declined to allow him to have any voice in the selection of a brother of their own house to be Prior of Coldingham. On the other hand, there were now many religious houses of great importance in Scotland. Dunfermline belonged to the same monastic order as Durham, and there it was that King Edgar's father, Malcolm Canmore, and his saintly mother, Queen Margaret, were buried; and there, it might very fairly be said, if the royal founder had lived in King Robert's days, he would have placed the superiority over Coldingham.

From the first, Coldingham was in the position of what came to be called an "alien priory," that is, a cell in one kingdom dependent on some greater house in another, and possibly hostile, country. There

* There is good reason for believing Coldingham to be the oldest monastic foundation of more recent times in Scotland. It was founded by Edgar in 1098. Scone, most likely the next in order of time, by his successor, Alexander I. while in the reign of David I., the youngest of Malcolm Canmore and St. Margaret's sons, there were a great number—Dunfermline among the rest.

were many of these in England; as a natural consequence of the close connection which long subsisted between England and Normandy, some great Norman monasteries had their dependent cells in England. When England lost Normandy, and was at war with France, this came to be found a great inconvenience, and, early in the fifteenth century, the King and Parliament of England dissolved all "alien priories," confiscated their revenues, and granted them to the Crown for secular purposes—surely a far more violent and unwarrantable proceeding than King Robert's design of transferring a cell, situated in his kingdom, from a monastery in a hostile country to a monastery of the same order in his own. It is not at all likely that any religious house in Scotland had cells in England, but many of them had property in that country, of which they were entirely deprived by the English. It is not perhaps necessary to mention that charges of misconduct had been brought against English Priors of Coldingham, because when a measure of this kind is in view, such charges are never wanting. It is very possible that they were true, but it is equally possible, perhaps even likely, that they were not. Whatever might be the truth of these allegations, they were put forward as the reason for the change which the King contemplated, and a charter was issued investing the Abbot of Dunfermline with the right of appointing the Prior of Coldingham, and filling the house with monks of his own convent.

Among all her dependencies, Coldingham was the richest jewel in the crown of Durham, and it is not to be supposed that the Prior and Convent would tamely submit to be deprived of it. They made their protests to the King of Scotland and to the Bishop of St. Andrews, in whose diocese Coldingham was situated, and to whom the priors on their appointment had to promise obedience. They got the King of England to interfere in their favour, but it does not appear that the charter granted to Dunfermline was ever cancelled. Both dignitaries, the Abbot of Dunfermline and the Prior of Durham, presented to the Priory of Coldingham, and it would appear that sometimes the nominee of the one and sometimes the nominee of the other was in possession. About 1441 the Prior and Convent of Durham appointed John Oll, a monk of Durham; and the Abbot of Dunfermline appointed William Boys, a monk of Dunfermline. Each pleaded his

cause before the Bishop of St. Andrews, and the Prior of Durham himself made a reply to the pleadings of Boys. The paper of the monk of Dunfermline was a very able and learned one, much more so than that of the Prior of Durham. In the course of it he names a whole series of monks appointed Priors of Coldingham by the Abbot of Dunfermline, and some of these seem to have been actually in possession, at least for a time. The ultimate decision, however, on this occasion was in favour of Oll.*

The frequent wars between England and Scotland were not the only source of trouble and loss to the Priory of Coldingham. The kingdom of Scotland was scarcely ever in the enjoyment of internal peace. The authority of the sovereign, who was often a minor, was very much hampered, and not seldom set at naught by a fierce and turbulent nobility; and the border clans were at all times rude and lawless. It was difficult for Coldingham to maintain its position, even in times of peace, and the Prior and Convent were induced by this state of things to have recourse to the dangerous expedient of making a powerful nobleman their bailiff and protector. This was the great Archibald, Earl of Douglas. The powers conferred on him by the Prior and Convent of Durham and the Prior of Coldingham are very extensive. They constitute him "their sovereign bailie and governor of all their lordship and lands of the house and barony of Coldingham—granting him full power and authority for them and in their name, to their use and profit, all their lands to sett, farms to raise, courts to hold, amercements to raise, trespassers to punish, briefs to execute, tenantry to recognise, the same tenants and tenantry to distrain and to hold till arrears be paid, and in general to do all things that by law and custom appertain

* We find the Prior of Durham exercising discipline upon delinquent monks at Coldingham. In 1453 there is a letter from him to the Prior of Coldingham, concerning one John Moorby, who disgraced the order by too much frequenting the houses of the laity and common taverns, and indulging in beer (*exercens cerevisiã*, we owe the Lord Prior thanks for this phrase). John is recalled to Durham; and when it is represented to the Prior that he is in bad health (perhaps a consequence of his *exercise*) he is still ordered to come, but a carriage (*vectura*) is to be provided and a monk in good health sent with him. The Prior of Durham is to send another monk to Coldingham to supply his place.

Again, John Dorward and Robert Knoute are accused of strolling about the neighbourhood, and indulging in idle and offensive talk. They are not to be allowed to go out of the monastery without leave from the Prior, which is to be very sparingly granted; and a paternal letter is addressed to them by the Prior of Durham, pointing out the evil of their ways and enjoining amendment and submission to their own Prior.

to the office of governor and sovereign bailie." The Earl's stipend was to be one hundred pounds Scots.

It was soon found that Douglas's engagements would not allow him to perform his duties in person, and he devolved them upon Alexander Home, a member of one of the most powerful border families. This arrangement seems to have gone on for forty or fifty years, and then, as might have been expected in these lawless and unscrupulous times, the Homes intruded two members of their own family into the priory—Patrick Home, archdeacon of Teviotdale, and John Home, a canon of the Collegiate Church of Dunbar. Protests, of course, followed; remonstrances to the Bishop of Glasgow, in whose diocese Teviotdale was situated, to the Bishop of St. Andrews, who was John Home's diocesan as well as that of the Priory of Coldingham; appeals to Rome and to the Kings of England and Scotland. But the Homes kept possession for twenty years, when the dispute was settled in favour of Durham; though, as the next transaction proves, the Homes did not forego their claims.

After the middle of the fifteenth century, the history of the Priory of Coldingham becomes very obscure.* There appears no trace of any appointment of a Prior by the authorities at Durham later than 1469. It seems as if either, notwithstanding the ratification of Oll's appointment, the Abbot of Dunfermline ultimately gained the victory, or, what is more likely, the Homes bade defiance to both. In 1469, Matthew Wren was sent from Durham, and in his time it was that the usurpation of the Homes seemed at least to come to an end. The next assault on the priory came from the King of Scots. James III. had built a magnificent Chapel Royal at Stirling. Unfortunately he lacked funds wherewith to endow it, but these he thought might be provided by the suppression of some other religious house. The English priory on the border seemed, for several reasons, the most suitable for his purpose. Accordingly, in 1485, he obtained an Act of Parliament for the purpose. The scheme was to dissolve the priory; appropriate one-half

* In the accounts of the monastery we find many entries of sums paid for students and scholars at Oxford. Perhaps this was unique among Scottish monasteries. But the Abbey of Durham had a college of its own at Oxford, called Durham College. Being a monastic foundation, it fell at the Reformation. Sir Thomas Pope purchased the site and buildings, and founded Trinity College; which, during the present century has given a Cardinal to the Roman Church, and three heads of houses to the University of Durham.

of the revenues to the support of the Chapel Royal, and with the other half to found and endow a collegiate church for secular canons at Coldingham. But these proceedings aroused the determined opposition of Lord Home and his kindred, who seem by this to have regarded Coldingham as in a great measure their own property. They violently drove away the Commissioners who came from the Archbishop of St. Andrews* to carry out the dissolution; and historians are agreed that this was one link in the chain of events which led to the rebellion which ended in the defeat and death of the unhappy King.

The events of the following reign seem to indicate that whether the patronage of Coldingham was nominally vested in the Abbot of Dunfermline or not, the real power was in the hands of the King. The Scottish Church had now become very corrupt. Its wealth was very great, and the Crown assumed the sole power of bestowing the greater preferments, such as bishoprics and abbacies, and many very unworthy men were intruded into the highest offices—men who took no care for the discharge of the duties of their calling—not only occupying civil offices, for which, in those days when the lay nobility were not only turbulent, but also very ignorant, there might be some excuse; but mingling in family feuds, not seldom appearing in the field. Their moral character besides was often very bad. They were great pluralists, it being quite the order of the day for one man to hold a bishopric and several abbacies at the same time.

Two appointments to the Archiepiscopal See of St. Andrews would almost seem to indicate that they were preparing the way for the Calvinistic Reformers, by proving beforehand that the office of bishop was quite superfluous. On a vacancy in the year 1497, James Stewart, Duke of Ross, the King's brother, a young man of twenty-one, was appointed Archbishop. He was also Chancellor of the Kingdom and Commendator of the Abbey of Dunfermline, and in that capacity would claim a right over the Priory of Coldingham. Deeds were dated in such a year of his administration, from which it may be inferred that he enjoyed the emoluments of his high office; but it is very doubtful whether he was ever consecrated. Indeed, he was removed by death before he attained the canonical age. After his decease, the See was kept vacant for some years, being intended for

* St. Andrews became an Archbishopric in 1472.

one who was then a mere child; Alexander Stewart, illegitimate son of James IV. His appointment was sanctioned by the Pope, at the instance of his father. He also was Chancellor of the kingdom, at the age of sixteen, and Commendator of Dunfermline and Coldingham. He is said to have been a youth of great promise, and his father took great pains with his education, sending him abroad for that purpose. He attracted the esteem and affection of the great Erasmus. But he perished with his father in the fatal field of Flodden before he attained the age of twenty. The priory now came into the hands of another prelate, Andrew Forman, Bishop of Moray. He seems to have been a friend of the Homes, and on attaining the Archbishopric of St. Andrews, he gave it up that a member of that family might succeed. David Home was afterwards murdered by Hepburn of Hailes: a curious illustration of the fearful state of the Scottish border, and perhaps, also, an indication of the wealth of this piece of preferment. At length, when the Reformation came, about 1560, all the Scottish monastic foundations fell, and, with the rest, Coldingham. The title of Prior continued to be held by various laymen as their claim to the property of the priory, and this usage did not cease till some time in the seventeenth century. But the priory was entirely secularized, and, as might be supposed, the Homes came in for a large share of the spoils.

What befel the church and monastic buildings at the time of the Reformation we know not, but there are two periods on record at which they must have sustained much damage. James V. died in 1542, leaving his daughter, the unfortunate Queen Mary, a child of a few days old. Two years after a fierce contest took place between the Regent Arran and his opponents, in which Coldingham was besieged by the Regent, and battered by his cannon. It was a time when there was no security for churches. Just before this a great tumult had taken place in Dundee, when the religious houses there and the neighbouring Abbey of Lindores were destroyed. At the same time Henry VIII. was wooing the baby Queen for his son Edward in a very rough fashion—at the point of the sword—and his hostility was especially directed against the abbeys, because he had been unable to prevail on his nephew, the king just deceased, to follow the example he had set in England in seizing on the property of the monasteries.

It was then that Kelso, Melrose, Jedburgh, and Dryburgh were irretrievably ruined. Rather more than a century after, Cromwell invaded Scotland, and gained his great victory over the Scots at Dunbar, near Coldingham, and then the priory again suffered most severely. There was at that time a massive square tower at the north-west angle of the transept, and in this the occupants of the priory defended themselves for some days. But the cannon of the besiegers having rendered it insecure they were forced to surrender. The tower continued to stand in its shaken condition till about 1776, when it fell. There were old people still alive in 1836 who remembered it, and represented it as having been about 90 feet high. After the surrender, as it would seem in very wantonness, the enemy placed a quantity of gunpowder in the church, by the igniting of which the south wall was levelled with the ground. It was rebuilt in the style of the time, when the church was refitted as a place of worship in 1662.* It is hardly needful to add that, as in all similar cases, the buildings were treated as a quarry of ready-hewn stone by the people of the town and the neighbourhood for nearly a century and a half. All this, and especially the last-mentioned circumstance, amply accounts for the remains of Coldingham Priory being so very scanty. The conventual buildings have almost entirely perished, and the north and east sides of the choir, with a few poor fragments of the nave, are all that remain of what was once a very beautiful church. The choir has been repaired by the erection of a south and west wall, and the addition of a roof, and now serves as the parish church. It is evidently regarded with pride, and is most sedulously cared for by the minister and his heritors. The churchyard is a pattern of neatness and good order. Unfortunately, the *débris* of the ruins have raised it far above the natural level, and having been long used as a cemetery, it is perhaps impossible now to ascertain the dimensions and arrangements of the nave by any excavations. Nevertheless, these scanty remains are full of interest.

The choir, or rather what remains of it, is extremely beautiful. It has no aisles, and belongs to the Transition period, when the old Romanesque or Norman was changing into the First Pointed or Early English. On the outside, there is an arcade of semicircular arches,

* Carr's *History of Coldingham*, p. 312, and note—a book of great research—to which the writer has been considerably indebted.

above which are pointed windows with rich mouldings. In the inside there are two arcades, one above the other, the upper one having a pointed window at every third arch. In both arcades the arches are divided by shafts with capitals, no two of which are alike. In the upper arcade there is behind these shafts, in the thickness of the wall, a passage which runs all round. The lower arcade was, till a late period, almost hidden by galleries or lofts, and the shafts had been cut away to give more room for the pews, by which every corner of the church was filled. But the lofts have been removed, the shafts and everything else have been restored as carefully as possible. The minister was desirous that the interior of the south wall should have been decorated in the same way as the north wall, but the expense, which would have been very great, seems to have frightened the heritors; though Scottish heritors, as a rule, cannot be called unduly parsimonious with their churches. It would certainly have been a mistake to have continued the arcades over the interior of the west wall, for, while there is little doubt that the south side was formerly ornamented like the north, there was no wall anciently at the west, but an arch opening into the choir from the transept. There is nothing unsightly about the south and west walls, which are built of excellent ashlar. It is indeed most satisfactory to see an ancient church and the surrounding cemetery so well cared for. Some fragments still left show that the nave was Norman, and remind us of Lindisfarne, which is a likeness of Durham, though somewhat later. The choir as it stands is clearly subsequent to the time of the foundation of the monastery. A question suggests itself—Have we the original choir? It was usual to build the choir first, and hence we should infer that the choir had been rebuilt. Yet, belonging as it does, to the Transition period, it seems strange that it should have been rebuilt so soon. Was the original choir destroyed at an early period, perhaps in some of the frequent disturbances on the border?*

* In 1854, in the process of the repairs of the church, which have been so admirably carried out, the foundations of a more ancient building were discovered. Now the character of the architecture of the present church, especially of the remains of the nave, make it all but certain that it was coeval with the foundation of the Benedictine Priory in 1098. On the other hand, there is no doubt that St. Ebba's Monastery stood on the promontory which bears her name. The words of the Venerable Bede, in describing St. Cuthbert's nocturnal penance, seem decisive:—"Ille egressus monasterio . . . descendit ad mare, cujus ripæ monasterium idem superpositum erat." The newly discovered foundations, therefore, do not belong to Ebba's Monastery. What then are they? We must remember that, between the

- From measurements taken when the foundations were more easily traceable than they are now, it appears that the nave was of equal dimensions with the choir, viz. : 90 feet by 25. The transept 41 feet by 34. Some years ago the foundations of an octagonal building, supposed to be the chapter house, were discovered about 30 yards from the north-east corner. Chapter houses were sometimes very small—there is a remarkable instance at Llandaff Cathedral—but this one seems to be at a very great distance from the church, though we cannot now tell what there was between. A print of the year 1836 shows a modern belfry on the west gable. This has been removed, no doubt on account of its incongruity, and the bell now hangs on the gable of a somewhat stately south porch.

Towards the end of August last, a party of gentlemen connected with the Durham and Northumberland Architectural and Archaeological Society paid a visit to Coldingham on a most lovely day. They left Berwick about ten o'clock in the forenoon and drove to Coldingham, by Ayton, through a most beautiful country. They proceeded first to St. Abb's Head, and visited the site of the ancient monastery. There they were joined by the Rev. David Munro, the minister of Coldingham, who made the party welcome to his parish, and showed them every attention. After this they retraced their steps to Coldingham, and visited the remains of the Benedictine priory with so much interest, that it was the general feeling that the place deserved another visit, and a somewhat more minute inspection than the time permitted on that occasion. The President of the Durham Society proposes to make another visit next year, and this Society could not do better than join their Durham friends in an excursion to a place of such beauty and of so very great interest.

destruction of Ebba's Monastery by fire, about 685, and the foundation of the Benedictine priory, 400 years elapsed, and, though we cannot trust the legend of the second Ebba and her nuns, we may well believe the monastery was re-built. The site may even then have been changed. Anyhow, during four centuries there was ample time for a church to have been built on the present site and destroyed, wholly or partially, perhaps more than once, by the Danes. But the discoveries of 1854 seem to make it certain that the present site was not occupied for the first time in 1098.



Styca of EANBALD (from Coldingham).