

VIII.—THREE ADDITIONAL MIRACLES ATTRIBUTED  
TO SAINT ACCA OF HEXHAM.

By CADWALLADER J. BATES.

[Read on the 27th July, 1898.]

Saint Wilfrid who founded Hexham and chose it as the haven of his closing years, died after all at Oundle on the Nen. The body of the intrepid champion of the Northern Church, buried in the first place at Ripon, is said ultimately to have been carried captive to Canterbury. His successor St. Acca although he seems to have ended his days in exile was laid to rest at the foot of his splendid cross at Hexham, and consequently came to hold the foremost place in the traditions of that church. The aureole of St. Eata who had occupied the Tyneside see during Wilfrid's banishment and who was buried in a small stone chapel to the south of the sacrarium, must have been to some extent dimmed by his intrusion.

Acca was trained under Bosa whom Theodore of Tarsus by a stretch of legatine power had placed in the despoiled chair of Eborius at York. On Wilfrid's restitution by king Alfrid, Acca passed into the metropolitan's service and remained his most faithful henchman to the very end. He accompanied him to Friesland and Rome in 704; it was to him that the wayworn saint first confided his vision of the Archangel Michael at Meaux. Acca's love of literature won for him from Bede the Venerable an admiration that the sublimity of Wilfrid had failed somehow to inspire. To Acca, as his diocesan, the great doctor of the Northumbrian church dedicated most of his theological works.

The 'miracles' attributed to St. Acca form a considerable portion of those relating to the saints of Hexham that were collected by St. Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx, in the twelfth century. Aelred's tractate was printed by the late Rev. James Raine in his *Priory of Hexham* from a manuscript in the Bodleian library. Raine knew of the existence of another manuscript which had been in the possession

of the Savile family and sold in 1861, and lamented that it had not been in his power to obtain access to it.<sup>1</sup> Circumstances that would once almost have been deemed miraculous have recently given me a conditional sight of this precious manuscript; the present owner has most ably collated it for our Society with Raine's printed text, and has also furnished the translations.

The chief divergence is the addition of three 'miracles' in the Savile manuscript in a hand much clumsier but probably only slightly later than the rest; the earlier portion, at any rate, claims to have been written at the dictation of St. Aelred himself.<sup>2</sup> From its minor variations we learn that the bones of St. Acca were found at the time of their translation in 1154 in a coverlet which it had taken much work to make,<sup>3</sup> and that the size of the bones proved the bishop to have been a tall man.<sup>4</sup> Other relics too are said to have been placed at this translation in the third shrine beside those of St. Babylas of Antioch and some of St. Acca's dust, and are specified as those of the martyrs SS. Marcus and Marcellinus of the Theban legion, of the martyr Felicissimus, of the martyr Irenaeus and one of his companions, of St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, of St. Faith, virgin and martyr, and of the martyr St. Felicitas.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that in all probability Wilfrid and Acca passed the scene of the massacre of the Theban legion at St. Maurice in the Rhone valley in returning from Rome. Wilfrid in early life spent more than three years at Lyons, where St. Irenaeus taught and suffered, and on

<sup>1</sup> Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, i. p. 173n. The Savile MS. was sold again in the July of this present year (1898); an unwarranted criticism on Mr. A. B. Hinds for not having referred to it in vol. iii. of the *History of Northumberland*, 1896, appeared in the *Athenaeum* of July 23rd, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> 'Incipiunt miracula sanctorum patrum qui sancta hagustaldensi ecclesia requiescunt dictata a venerabili hechelredo abbate.' Savile MS. 1 recto, in red. — Cf. Raine, *Hexham*, i. p. 173n.

<sup>3</sup> '(sacras explorant exuvias) operoso velamine circumamictas.' Savile MS. 11 verso. Cf. Raine, *Hexham*, i. p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> '(reliquiis apposuerunt.) Sicut autem ex qualitate ossium dabatur intelligi procere stature fuit sanctus praesul Acca.' — *Ibid.*; Raine *Hexham*, i. p. 195.

<sup>5</sup> '(cum Sancti Babile episcopi et martyris sacris reliquiis) et sanctorum martyrum marci et marcellini de legione thebeorum Felicissimi martyris Yrenei martyris et cuiusdam socii eius, sancti Germani autisiodorensis episcopi sancte Fidis virginis et martyris sancte Felicitatis martyris, partem pulveris de corpore Sancti Accae episcopi posuerunt.' — Savile MS. 14 recto et verso. Cf. Raine, *Hexham*, p. 200.

leaving it his way probably led through Auxerre. His collection of relics on this<sup>6</sup> and subsequent occasions<sup>7</sup> is especially mentioned by his trusty biographer Eddi; nothing can be more likely than that he should have conferred some part of it on Hexham.

To translate freely the three additional 'miracles' given in the Savile manuscript:—

## I.

The Lord in his mercy hath shown forth his loving kindness and hath in these our days given unto his people signal evidence of the merits of our blessed father Acca. There is in the monastery at Hexham a certain craftsman of Hexham<sup>8</sup> usefully employed in constructing the conventual buildings.<sup>9</sup> On the solemn festival of St. Acca,<sup>10</sup> when the ardent devotion of the brethren caused them to pass the night in the praises of God, a little girl, the niece of this person, was suddenly taken ill. In the calm of the night's sleep she was seized with sudden pains, and unable to bear the acute suffering completely disturbed the repose of the others with her immoderate cries and moans. Grievously was he put about by his niece's indisposition, for he was bringing her up as his daughter. The next morning a great swelling appeared over the whole of her body; her skin looking as if it had been burnt with fire. When the vestments of the blessed Acca were exposed in the church to be seen and kissed of the people, the girl was borne with the rest of the crowd to the service in honour of the blessed bishop. At the touch of the healing garments all the swelling passed away and her skin was restored to its former beauty.

<sup>6</sup> 'cum multiplici benedictione et reliquiarum sanctarum auxilio navem ascendens.'—*Vita S. Wilfridi*, vii. Gale, *Historiae Britannicae Scriptores*, xv. iii. p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> 'reliquiarum sanctarum ab electis viris plurimum ad consolationem Ecclesiarum Britanniae adeptus, nomine singulorum scribens, quae cujusque sancti essent reliquiae.'—*Ibid.* xxxii. Gale, iii. p. 68; 'moreque suo ab electis viris sanctus reliquias nominatim congregans.'—*Ibid.* liii. Gale, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> 'in monasterio hagustaldensis [*sic*] minister;' *lege* 'hagustadensi.' As an inmate of the monastery the 'minister' no doubt would be called a 'lay-brother' nowadays.

<sup>9</sup> The gateway of the monastery may possibly be of this date: 'officinis' would not refer to any important works: Ducange gives 'Architectus' = 'faber qui facit tecta.'

<sup>10</sup> St. Acca's day was the 20th of October.

## II.

A certain noble, and powerful, William de Veupunt,<sup>11</sup> was wont in his campaignings to resort to the guest-house of Hexham church. It chanced once that he came thither, and being hospitably welcomed sate him down to dine. His son, a little lad, was with him, who too greedily swallowing a piece of apple, it stuck in his throat and he fell senseless. The table being removed up sprang the lord; the lady<sup>12</sup> also, in a great stew, with frantic cries and womanly lamentings, and with her all their household. Snatching up the child they carried him in all haste to the church, where neither with thumps nor bumps on his back and breast could they ease his choking. Gaining admission, after some hours, to the innermost sanctuary, they lay the boy beside (or *upon*) the high altar of St. Andrew, under the relics of St. Acca and his companions. Earnestly persevering in all prayers and supplications, they merited to be heard. For suddenly the boy (recovering his powers only by a direct act of God) spat out the piece of apple, all stained with blood, and speedily achieved his wholeness of health and full wellbeing.<sup>13</sup>

## III.

In the early days of his elevation, Roger<sup>14</sup> the archbishop undertook many enquiries and much trouble with a view to join house to house, and to couple field with field. On this errand he came to Hexham and called to him among other of his tenants one Huctred de Acum, a man well in years, with whom he long remained in converse respecting his estates which lay on all sides of the neighbourhood, their position, their rents, the terms upon which they were held, and the tenants. 'Qui (*sic*) gloriaris in malicia'<sup>15</sup>—for he dared to speak evilly before the ruler, and with wicked craft uttered

<sup>11</sup> William de Vipont (Veteri Ponte) held Elrington, Alston, and Newbrough, by a grant of King John.

<sup>12</sup> Maud, the wife of William de Vipont, was the daughter of Hugh de Moreville, one of the murderers of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

<sup>13</sup> The boy was probably Ivo de Vipont, who afterwards bestowed the advowson of Alston on the canons of Hexham.

<sup>14</sup> Roger de Pont l'Evesque, archbishop of York, 1154-1181.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Psalm lii. 51.—'Quid gloriaris in malitia, qui potens es in iniquitate?'

many cavils and slanders against the church of Hexham and the brethren. At length, upon the same day, while on his way home through the woodland of Akewood,<sup>16</sup> after crossing the river Tyne, and in the path that leads to St. John's church, he caught his foot and fell headlong face foremost upon a prong, so that one of his eyes was torn out and flung far from him. [The pain brought him to a sense of his wickedness<sup>17</sup>] and he, the false accuser, on his way thence, stricken to the very heart with woe, pondered amid his groans—'Ill hath my mouth spoken against the blessed patron Acca and his house and lo! deserved his wrath from which I suffer.'<sup>18</sup>

## APPENDIX.

The following is an accurate transcript, line for line, of the three 'miracles' as given in the Savile MS., the many contractions being amplified:—

*fo. 15 verso. lin. 9.*

Misericors dominus dedit benignitatem. & in his diebus nostris insignia meritorum beati patris nostri acce populo suo innotuit. Habetur enim in monasterio hagustaldensis minister quidam architectus in constructionibus fratrum officinis utiliter necessarius. In die itaque sollempni sancti acce quo fervens fratrum devotio in laudibus dei pernoctaverat: puella parvula neptis eiusdem ministeri incurrit egritudinem repentinam. Sub silentio enim nocturni soporis irruerant in eam dolores subiti, unde ipsa impatiens vehementis passionis: nimis clamoribus & eiulatu quietem quiescentium omnino perturbavit. Indoluit graviter praefatus minister super hac sue neptis molestia: quia eam paterno voto aluit. Mane autem facto: apparuit in toto corpore eius tumor nimis & inflatio enormis. & universa

<sup>16</sup> Raine has confused 'Acuudam,' i. p. 58 (Akewood), with Acomb in footnote *p*, and also in his Index of Places, clxxxv.

<sup>17</sup> Text obscure.

<sup>18</sup> The first miracle seems alluded to in MS. Cotton, Vitellius, A. xxx. 262 *b*, but is there attributed to St. Eata: 'Puella a tumore et inflatione, tactis vestimentis beati Eatae episcopi, sanatur, et superficies cutis pristino decori redditur.'—Raine, *Hexham*, i. p. 219.

*fo. 16 recto.*

superficies cutis quasi combusta igni. Cumque vestimenta beati acce' in ecclesia contuenda & deosculanda populo exponerentur: delata est puella praefata cum reliqua turba ad officium beati praesulis. Ad tactum itaque salutarium in dumentorum: tumor omnis & in flatio in puella resedit. & superficies cutis pristini decoris restituta est indecus.

Homo quidam nobilis potens in procinctu milicie

*i. de veteri ponte*

willelmus de veupunt. hospicium ecclesie haugustaldensis frequentare consuevit. Accidit autem ut veniret illuc: & liberaliter receptus. discubuit pransurus. Puer etiam parvulus filius eius delatus est cum eo. Qui particulam pomi cum edatior gustaret: hesit in gutture eius. unde exanimis corruit. Amorta igitur mensa: prosiluit herus. prosluit & hera cum clamoribus & iulatu femineo exestuans. & cum ea tota familia: rapientesque puerum citius intra ecclesiam detulerunt. ibique nec pugnibus nec percussionibus in scapulis in pectore pueri quicquam commodi conferre poterant suffocato. Post aliquas horas admissi in interiora penetralia: secus magnum altare

sancti andree sub pignoribus bea

ti acce <sup>etius</sup> sociorumque puerum exposuerunt. Totis itaque votis precibus insistentes: exaudiri meruerunt.

Puer enim subito non nisi a deo resumptis vite viribus illam pomi particulam expuit cruentam. & integram salutem & plenam sospitatem citius optinuit.

In primordiis promotionis sue rogerus archiepiscopus multam disquisitionem & sollicitudinem habuit: quomodo domum ad domum coniungeret. & agrum agro copularet. Venit itaque ad hagus taldunum. & inter ceteros homines suos quandam huctredum de acum virum grandevum ascivit ad se. Quem conveniens super suis circumquaque circumiacentibus terris. & situ terrarum. & redivitibus earum: super tenuris & tenentibus. cum eo diu contulit. Qui gloriaris in malicia: quia coram potente praesumpsit loqui in iniquitate. multas questiones & calumpnias movit subdolo ingenio adversus ecclesiam haugustaldensem & fratres. Denique eadem die per nemus de acuudomum reversurus. amne tina transmisso. insemita que ducit ad ecclesiam sancti iohannis: offendens pedeprepsis prona facie subito super furcu

*fo. 16 verso.*

lum corruit. evulsusque oculus eius procul ab eo proectus est. Vexatio intellectum dedit auditui. unde

*ad cor*

rediens praevaricator ingemuit: ingeminans frequenter. Os meum maligne locutus est ad versus beatum patronum accam & domum eius. & ecce iusta ipsius indignatione multatus sum.