

XV.—SOME NORTHERN ANCHORITES.

With a NOTE on ENCLOSED DOMINICANS.

By ROTHAMARY CLAY.

In Saxon days, Northumbria was the cradle of the secluded contemplative life.¹ The Farne Islands were the home of our open-air saints—Cuthbert, Ethelwald, Bilfrith, Felgeld, Alchfrid;² and later of Tosti or Bartholomew of Farne (1151-1193). The self-exiled Dane, Henry, dwelt in seclusion on Coquet Island³ (d. 1127). He left it but once—to visit St. Cuthbert's shrine at Durham.

The *Liber Vitae* and another Durham muniment give an astonishing roll-call of *anachoritae* (mainly priests), and of *heremitae*.⁴ One is Cuthbert's closest friend, Herbert of Cumbria, who from the islet which still bears his name would watch the eagles and falcons which nested on the fells surrounding Derwentwater. In close retirement on his barren island Bishop Cuthbert could feel sunshine and sea-breezes, hear the rolling ocean and the call of friendly eiderducks. His follower, Godric, when a mariner, knew the Farnes, as well as Cumbria, and the silent spaces of Whitby moorland; he lived in Weardale within sound of flowing water, for sixty years.

Even after the coming of the Normans, the names of hermits suggest Saxon stock: Aelric, Godric, Godwin, Wulsi⁵ and Elwyn. Here in the North, there was a spiritual tradition for the Blessed Cuthbert who inspired alike Godric

¹ See Bede, *Sur. Soc.* 1 and 51.

² Clay, *Hermits & Anchorites*; R. N. Hadcock, *Arch. Ael.*⁴, XVI, map.

³ For Alchfrid see W. Levison, *England &c. in 8th century*, App. IX, 295-302; John of Tynemouth, and *Nova Legenda Angl.*

⁴ *Sur. Soc.* 13, pp. xi, 6.

⁵ T. Rud, *Codicum manusc.*, 215.

the humble sea-going pilgrim (c. 1065-1170) and Aelred, the great Cistercian leader (d. 1166). We find Aelred (brought up around Hexham and Durham) visiting Godric at Finchale about the year 1159. Abbot Aelred in his turn drew men and women into the religious life. His beloved sister, a nun, lived with other 'handmaidens of God' under an abbess. For many years she had begged her brother for holy admonitions; he in return beseeches her prayers. Writer and reader, elderly, infirm and worn, are experienced in spiritual life; but the fixed Rule is intended for future use by younger people who will follow the vocation. The *Liber de modo bene vivendo. Ad Sororem*⁶ is usually known as *Regula sive institutio Inclusarum*.

Aelred's teaching is deeply devotional. He intersperses here and there answers to presupposed questions. The daily round is threefold, manual work, reading, prayer. Worship is short and frequent; meditation is constant. Outward circumstances are not forgotten; simple food, scanty at times of abstinence, more nourishing in weakness (she herself is feeble); clothing, etc. The cell has its altar dressed in white linen, and the oratory is of Cistercian austerity: no ornaments, paintings or sculpture, no embroidered hangings and cloths. The inner joy is all that matters. She is Mary of the better part. She has two windows—one in view of the altar, never to be used for speech.

The more homely *Ancren Riwe* was soon to follow—in English—and became the popular handbook for religious.⁷ A century later Richard Rolle's letter or *Form of Perfect Living* was written for an anchoress. Later Aelred's *Informacio ad sororem* was translated into late fourteenth-century English by 'Thomas N.'⁸

The Constitutions of St. Edmund⁹ and of St. Richard

⁶ Migne, *Patrologiæ*, ed. 1854, vol. 184, col. 1192-1306.

⁷ Camden Soc. 1852; E.E.T.S., O.S., nos. 225, 229. Translation, Latin, by Simon. Bishop of Salisbury (1297-1315), E.E.T.S., no. 216. In French, *ibid.*, no. 219.

⁸ Bodleian 3938, Vernon MS., fol. a-k. *Englische Studien*, VII, 304-344.

⁹ Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, lb. III, tit. 20, "De Religionis Domibus".

(1234-46) helped to regularize the solitary life. Outside the monastery's jurisdiction the bishop of the diocese takes complete control. An abbot may licence his monk to be enclosed elsewhere, but the bishop must consider whether the place is suitable, near a church or far distant, whether town or country, because of alms; or near a monastery which may be ready to support the recluse. First and foremost, is the candidate virtuous, whole-hearted, and steadfast under trial.

The anchorite was under a threefold vow: obedience, chastity, constancy of abode. If within a religious house, obedience was to the superior alone. When transferred to an *inclusorium* outside the precinct, he or she kept the habit of original profession.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE: & CHESTER

'The recluses of the bishopric' dwelt in and around Durham, Gateshead, Chester-le-Street; and in distant hermitages as far as the Farnes and the Scottish Border. When the see was vacant, an anchoress received 'necessaries'; and Thomas, hermit of Durham, had 'whatever was due to him by his charter'.¹⁰ A guardian of the shrine enrolled in *Liber Vitæ* was: *Thomas Heremita, clericus feretr'*, who may have occupied a timber loft between pillars. This would form a bay of the choir aisle at an angle near St. Cuthbert's shrine and the Nine Altars. It was 'the goodlyest faire porch, which was called the Anchoridge', with altar and 'a marueillous faire roode'.¹¹

The bishop's charter to the Gateshead anchoress was confirmed by the Chapter; and a century later, a new site was provided in St. Mary's churchyard,¹² north of the chancel. It once became the 'Anchorage School' and is now a vestry.

Only experienced spiritual persons were permitted to

¹⁰ *Cal. Close R.* 1238; *Cal. Liberate R.* 1237, 1240. Sur. Soc. 13 *Liber Vitæ*.

¹¹ Sur. Soc. 107, *Rites of Durham* (1593), pp. 17, 209, and Plan.

¹² R.S. 62, *Reg. Pal. Dunelm.*, iii, 300-301.

enter this vocation. The bishop ordered strict enquiries into character and circumstances, and surety of support. At length the candidate was admitted by a service of striking solemnity.¹³ Plate XX, fig. 2, illustrates the moment of enclosure.¹⁴

Should several interests be involved, the authorities shared responsibility, and could even ask for royal assent.¹⁵ Thus at St. John's, Newcastle upon Tyne, licence was granted by the ecclesiastics who held the benefice of St. Nicholas:

'Confirmation of a grant by R[obert] bishop of Carlisle and the prior and convent of that place, made with the assent of the mayor and burgesses of Newcastle upon Tyne, to Christiana Umfred of a place of enclosure (*locum inclusionis*) in the churchyard of St. John's at Newcastle for her to inhabit for life.'

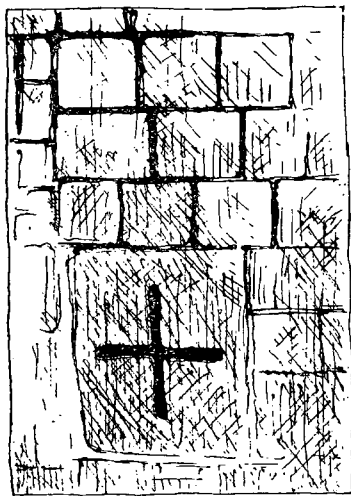


FIG. 1.

Christiana's abode was the present two-storied vestry, north of the chancel. The upper window of two lights (of the style called Decorated) would be in her living and sleeping apartment. Below, close to the sanctuary and altar, is the pierced cross-aperture through which she could see mass; and another opening for her to receive the Sacrament¹⁶ (fig. 1).

At Chester-le-Street — a notable church appropriated to Durham priory—an an-

¹³ Clay, *op. cit.*, Appendix A.

¹⁴ Enlarged from initial letter in *Pontifical*. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS. 79. By courtesy of the Librarian.

¹⁵ *Cal. Pat. R.* 1260.

¹⁶ As at Shere church, Surrey.

chorage was formed by walling up the western bay of the north aisle, and extending it as an annexe to the tower (fig. 4). Each storey had two chambers; the upper floor of the bay was once reached by an outside stair. In a recess of the upper room is a hagiocope (about 1×10 inches) (fig. 2). Within the house are blocked doorways, windows, etc., and

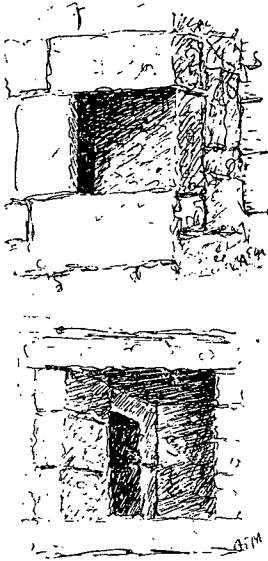


FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

in the foundations, a well. A unique window in the outside wall consists of a stone slab pierced with five openings—a vertical slit and four rectangular lights (fig. 3). John of Wessington (Washington) lived here as anchorite; the bishop sent 40s. to him in 1883-4.¹⁷ Later, John Blenkinsopp was licensed by the prior (1400). The Chantry survey in 1548 is brief: 'The Ankers howse. Incumbent, none.'¹⁸ The 'fourteen square yards of lead' noted represent the roof of

¹⁷ J. R. Boyle, *Guide*, 420, Bishop Fordham's account roll is untraced.

¹⁸ *Sur. Soc.* 22, *Eccles.* Appendix VI, p. lxiv.

the tower annexe, additional to the section of aisle. Later, the curate lodged here, and then destitute widows. About 1778, S. H. Grimm made a drawing of the church showing the aisle-chantry chapels and the anker-house, a portion of which is here shown¹⁹ (fig. 4).

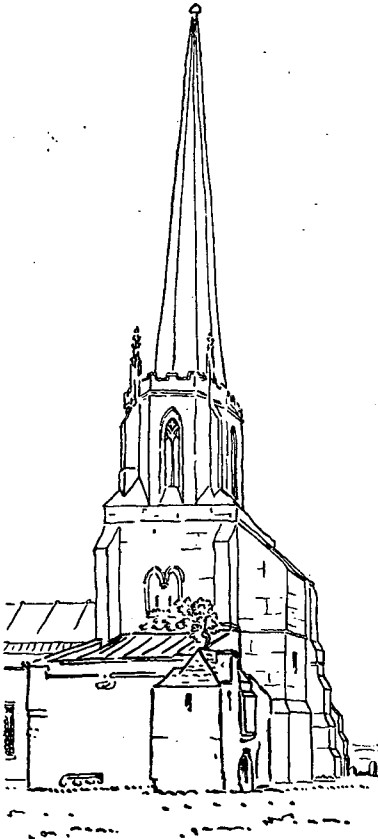


FIG. 4.

The Order of St. Benedict in its reformed statutes enjoined that no monk should dwell alone. A question elicited from St. Albans Abbey in 1253 that one solitary lived in a wood; also that, under the daughter house of Tynemouth, one monk occupied a hermitage on 'Koket'.²⁰

One homely set of rules notes that 'the state of heremites ys not cananizit', i.e. not specified in canon law. It suggests, however, that: 'He owght neuer to goo allone yf he may haue an heremyte or a seruande wyth hym.'²¹ The Augustinians of Hexham placed the hermit John, probably a priest, at St. Oswald's-on-the-Wall. Later (1301) Simon de Meynille agreed to join him, to which the archbishop gave assent.²² They were guardians of a chapel, a hallowed spot and place of pilgrimage ever since the

¹⁹ B.M., Add. MS. 15538. By permission of the Trustees.

²⁰ M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.*, vi, 247. For later hermit, Martin, see Clay, *op. cit.*

²¹ Bristol City Library, MS. 6, dated 1502.

²² Sur. Soc. 44, I, Appendix, p. xxxii.

hero king set up his Cross, before the victory of Hevenfeld. The rough hewn walls were standing in the seventeenth century, and some early work is incorporated in the present building.

The hermit's way of life was wholly different from that of the anchorite. He was initiated by a simple Office; his habit was blessed by the bishop; he made a vow of chastity and obedience, not of constancy of abode. He was free to live an open air life, cultivate his plot, move about, and do 'works of mercy'. His religious observances depended upon his training and education—whether friar, monk, lay brother, clerk. John, hermit of Lilburn in Eglington, advanced in six years from 'first tonsure' to priest (1337-1343).²³

A Dominican, *Frater John de Camera, heremita de Stayndrop*, was among *acolyti religiosi* ordained at York by the bishop of Durham (1336).²⁴ Is his name significant? Might his 'camera' be a watching chamber, in troublous times? For Stayndrop Church—linked with Durham—still has an upper room adjoining the chancel on the north; it contains a fireplace and a blocked window (in a vestry cupboard) in the church wall. At the top of the newel staircase is a square headed trefoiled window; the two mullions are set slightly skewed towards the east, but wide angled enough to watch the nave also. If the friar did indeed inhabit this room, he might undertake duties outside consonant with the aims of his Order: service of God and his neighbour. His name recurs in 1338 as sworn witness at a legal inquisition. Another possible dwelling might be the chapel of St. Mary B.V. in the field (*in campo*).²⁵

Before returning to Newcastle our course deviates to Chester, which has an interesting anchorage, now known as the Hermitage, excavated in the cliff between the Dee and St. John's. Quarrying has left it on a single spur of rock.

²³ R.S. 62, *Reg. Pal. Dunelm*, iii, 90, 199.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁵ Surtees, *Durham*, IV, 136. It needed repair and support in 1434.

Lysons records that two skeletons were found 'in coffin shaped cavities of the rock'. An old survey refers to a little stone cell, reached down steep stairs; anchorage and garden are seen on R. Holme's plan.²⁶

In 1341 Hugh le Vernoun, of a leading Cheshire family, a Cistercian monk from Vale Royal, was enclosed here. Later, the Augustinian canons of Norton petitioned the bishop to place one of their brethren in the *inclusorium sub cimiterio* (the ancient retreat below St. John's) (1354-6). The nominee was William of Hexham (formerly of Leicester, now at Norton), a devout priest, a pilgrim to the Holy Sepulchre.²⁷ The prior of Norton refers to the *recluserium S. Jacobi* as acquired by (?) their labours (*suis laboribus acquisitum*). This might refer to the extant sculptured worn canopies of tabernacle work showing the ogee form of arch. On the other hand, a new dwelling may now have been provided on a higher site; for when a Dominican, John of Chorleton, was appointed in 1363, the place of enclosure is 'near to the collegiate church of St. John'.²⁸ This would correspond to the rectangular building beside the south entrance, shown on plans as St. James's. The two retreats were separate and distinct.

A more dignified and accessible place was fitting for the reclusés of Chester, who were favoured by the royal duchy and the see. The Black Prince, staying at Vale Royal, addressed a letter to his chamberlain ordering fuel (two leafless trees) for the anchorite of Chester (1358).²⁹ Both recluses were deputed by the bishop to act as 'penitentiary'.³⁰ John Boner, anchorite of Stockport, received a similar commission (1361); and when the privilege was renewed in 1372 he sent the same day to the bishop 40s. of his alms.³¹

²⁶ S. C. Scott, *St. John Baptist Church* (1892). See B.M. Harl. 2073, f. 98, 99.

²⁷ (1357) Lichfield Act Book, Reg. Norbury, III, 138*d*; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, i, 682*n*.

²⁸ Reg. Stretton, *Hist. Coll.*, N.S., X, ii, 162.

²⁹ *Black Prince's Reg.*, pt. iii, 309.

³⁰ *Staffs. Hist. Coll.*, Reg. Norbury, O.S., i, 283, 286; Reg. Stretton, N.S., viii, 21, 32, 47.

³¹ *Ibid.*, N.S., viii, 61, 68, 96.

THE DOMINICAN RECLUSE: NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

The notable John Lacy was enclosed within the precincts of his own priory³² (plates XIX and XX, fig. 1). All that is known of him is gleaned from a manuscript which he composed or transcribed and illuminated.³³ His kalendar assigns a day as obit of his parents, John and Tylota. Though he renounced all to join the Mendicant Order, he calls to mind a previous existence by the armorial shield painted on one important folio³³ (plate XXI). His dates are approximately known. A bequest to an unnamed recluse of Newcastle upon Tyne³⁴ (1407) is followed in 1415 by Lord Scrope's notable testament, remembering 'the recluse in the house of the Friars Preachers'.³⁵ Roger Thornton relied on him as a chantry priest (1429). The drawing is dated 1420; and a closing date, 1434.

Brother John gives us his portrait and slightly indicates his dwelling (plate XX, fig. 1). Clad in his Dominican habit, leaning through the iron grille,³⁶ he is rapt in a vision of Christ's Passion. A scroll—partly defaced, as is the Rood—reads: *Christe, Lacy fratris anime miserere!* Ejaculatory prayers occur elsewhere: 'Jhesu, help Lacy.'

Lacy's manuscript is preserved at Oxford.³⁷ Briefly the contents are: Kalendar,³⁸ Commemoration of Saints, Hours of the Blessed Virgin, Office of the Departed, Psalter, devotions, instruction on Commandments, Sacraments, Deadly Sins, Works of mercy, Confession. In the 151 folios (that is 302 pages of writing) canticles and antiphons are set to musical notation.

³² For plan see *Arch. Ael.*³, XVII, 315-336.

³³ Folio 101b. *Or on a fess gules, a fleur de lys, or for difference, Lacy.* By courtesy of Mr. P. S. Spokes, Bodleian Library. John Siferwast, Dominican, introduces portrait and coat of arms in the Sherborne missal, Alnwick MS., *Roxburghe Club* edition, plate 28d.

³⁴ *Wills*, Sur. Soc. (1835), i, 45.

³⁵ Rymer, *Fœdera*, ix, 273.

³⁶ Cf. palimpsest brass at St. John de Sepulchre, Norwich, *Norfolk and Norwich Arch. Soc.*, XXI, pt. i, facing p. 54.

³⁷ College of St. John Baptist, MS. 94. By courtesy of the Librarian.

³⁸ A footnote: *Data patris bricij qui jacet inter fratres predicat, novi castri super tynam a. mcccxxxvi.*

The commentary on the Decalogue is even more detailed than that ascribed to Richard Rolle. Both warn against astrology and charms, but in a homely way current folk-lore is condemned; birth-customs, with sieve, key, ring, or laying food at the infant's head, to placate 'wicked wights'. Let the mother wrap the babe in fair white linen, sign him with the cross, see him quickly christened. There are hints of social grievances. To steal includes not only 'ocur' (usury) short measure, withholding dues, but bad craftsmanship, malingering or withholding wages. A merciless pawnbroker robs the poor; e.g. if one pledge a garment ('lene a weed') and cannot reclaim it on the proper day, the goods must not be forfeit. The Mosaic law is brought up to date: a man shall not covet his neighbour's 'ox, ne-his hors, ne his asse'. There are also topical allusions. Of late (1390) the north had been ravaged by pestilence—one of six epidemic visitations in forty years. A man must not grutch or groan against God should wife or child die through pestilence, nor should he flee from it in panic.

Plain English directions are interspersed in the liturgy: This 'prayr suinge is to be seyde wen that aryseth a man' or 'wen that a man gooth to his beed'.

Lacy wrote for lay folks—Northumbrian neighbours; he uses their speech and idiom. Prayer must be 'stronge as yron'—a homely Tyneside simile. The following words occur: ilke, silke, thilke, wodeness, kened, liefer, algate, fell.

The use of English in devotion was suspect and whilst our scribe was inditing, Archbishop Chichele himself was checking the use of the mother-tongue, for fear of Lollard influence. Lest controversy should tamper with his precious manuscript, never must his interwoven English and Latin be separated. Two folios (101-2) embossed with gold characters (plate XXI) are his petition to posterity:

'Preyeth for the saul of freyr Jon Lacy Anchor and Reclused in the new castel upon tynde the wiche that wrooth [wrote] this book, and lymned hit to his awne use. And aftur to othur, in exitynge hem to deuocion and prayers to god. And ther for for

the blessinge and loue of god and oure lady, and of saint Michael, and of him that made this book that neuer man ne woman lete departe the engeliche from the latyn for diuers causes that been good and lawful to my felynge.'

Outside monastic libraries, books were sadly scarce. Lacy therefore utilizes parochial channels for the circulation of the manuscript, which he gave during his life-time for use in the mother-church:

'Pray for the soul of brother John Lacy, anchorite of the order of friars preachers, who gave this in the first instance to Master Roger Stonysdale, chaplain of St. Nicholas church . . . for the whole of his life . . . I will that it be given, from priest to priest . . . so long as it lasts . . . a.d. 1434.'

He also gave to St. John's Church, close to his cell, an early copy of Wycliff's New Testament.³⁹ At the end are the words: *Iste liber constat fratri Johanni Lacy, &c.* The fly-leaf was originally inscribed: *Orate pro anima [—] fratris ordinis predicatorum novi Castri super Tynam.* These lines, though erased, have been revealed by ultra-violet ray.

Admonition upon 'the perils that belong to the Shrift' suggest that Brother John may himself have acted as confessor. The bishop commissioned the Dominican anchorite of Lancaster to hear confessions.⁴⁰ Anyway, he or the author gave gentle comprehensive guidance towards amendment of life. A searching self-examination comprises the ten commandments; the five wits (senses); the seven deeds of mercy (needs of hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, sick, prisoners, burial of the dead); the seven virtues (faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude). The friar adds, whimsically, knowing his penitents: 'if that thou wilt overlook them all entirely with clear conscience.'

His task completed, the scribe adds one last petition:

'Now I pray you be way of charite and mercy and gras ye wolde prey for the saule of him that maad this book saaf or makith it saaf.'

Lacy

³⁹ Bodleian MS., Rawlinson C., no. 258.

⁴⁰ Lichfield, Reg. Scrope (Act Book 6), f. 126b.

ANCHORESSES NEAR DOMINICAN PRIORIES

This paper deals primarily with the north country, but would be incomplete without noting the association of certain enclosed women with the Mendicant Orders. It is also essential to carry our story to its close.

When a woman was occasionally attached to the Friars Preachers, she was not a Dominican. Indeed, the constitution (*circa* 1358-63) prohibited the veiling and profession of women.⁴¹ Friars might not take charge of any nun or other woman, except by special licence. When in 1482 Margaret Paston bequeathed *iijs. iiijd.* to the 'ankeress' at the Friars Preachers in Norwich,⁴² she must therefore have been sanctioned by the provincial Master, or rarely, by the diocesan Bishop. Examples are also recorded at Shrewsbury (1414), Salisbury (1498), Bristol (1512), London (1521), and Worcester (1538). In such places the cell was at a distance from the domestic quarters, and the occupant did not of right share the commons. That the anchoress was not in any sense a member of the community is shown by the following instance which has just come to light:

The prior of Blackfriars, London, necessarily approved the erection of the 'new house made adjoining the church'. This anchorage (24 × 30 ft.) surrounded on three sides by the cemetery, abutted on the north aisle, near the porch.⁴³ When ready for occupation, the prior had qualms lest the newcomer, Margerie Elyote, should become burdensome. The objection was raised at the eleventh hour, the enclosure being fixed for Saturday or Sunday, Michaelmas, 1521.

What was the postulant to do? Of old, that Dominican priory was free from civic jurisdiction. As a citizen, Margerie trusted in a just settlement by the city fathers; hence

⁴¹ G. R. Galbraith, *Constitution of Dominican Order*, 215. 'De domibus, De recipiendis'.

⁴² *Paston Letters*, ed. 1904, vi, 49.

⁴³ *Archæologia*, LXIII, pp. 62, 81; note that K. Man was not enclosed at Blackfriars in Ludgate, but at Norwich. For plan, dimensions, see W. A. Hinnebusche, *Early English Friars Preachers*, p. 45; figs. 4, 5.

on the previous Wednesday, 'a woman' (unnamed) presented herself at the Aldermen's court. 'Also as she said she is [? to be] professed in the order of the Blackfriars'; and that 'the prior will not suffer her to be professed or enclosed without surety' for maintenance.⁴⁴ The prior was now summoned. At length, satisfied by her faithful promise to the court never to claim meat, drink, or clothing, the worried prior yielded. The earnest devotee went her way, and within four days the rite was duly performed; Margerie Elyote made her vow of obedience before the suffragan bishop in the church of the Friars Preachers.

Her door was shut: it remains shut. Little is known of the closing scene. The vellum scroll which Margerie laid upon the altar—signed with her own cross—is buried in records of Somerset House.⁴⁵ The infamous later prior betrayed his convent but secured his quarters, a pension, a bishopric. Margerie's cell was the chancellor-archdeacon's perquisite. When let it was still known in 1544 as 'the Ancess-lodgyng'. By that time, however, all friars and anchorites had vanished. Trumped up charges, ecclesiastical and political, of receiving forbidden books (Norwich) or possible collusion in opposing the royal divorce (Canterbury) are described elsewhere.⁴⁶ The King's tool, Cromwell, and a subservient staff could not but win.

Take for example the last recluse of the Order of Preachers at Oxford, Brother William, who had built his own retreat. The official, Dr. London, reported:⁴⁷

Ther be butt X Fryers, being prests, besid the Anker wich ys a well disposyd man . . . Item, to knowe your pleasur concerning the Anker . . . whether he schall remayne ther or nott. He byldyd the Howse owt of the grounde and wolde fayne end hys liff ther if it be the Kings Graces pleasur and yowr Lordeschips.

⁴⁴ *Corporation Records*, Repertory 5, 228.

⁴⁵ *Liber Vicarii Gen.* (R. Foxford), I, f. 13. The name, wrongly given in Clay, *op. cit.*, is clear.

⁴⁶ Clay, *op. cit.*, 165-6; *Further Studies*, *British Arch. Journal*, XVI, 79.

⁴⁷ H. Ellis, *Original Letters*, 3rd ser., iii, 190; pt. ii, 235.

William Dingle surrendered under stress. Like his companions, he accepted the habit of a secular priest.⁴⁸ All asked for 'capacities', i.e. to be listed as legally qualified to receive a benefice, free chapel, or school.

It is said that in Lynn two anchorites—a Carmelite friar, and a secular priest hitherto enclosed at All Saints—were appointed resident chaplains at the grammar school.⁴⁹

A devout religious was in a sad dilemma. Outside the contemplative life there was no longer a sphere. The religious houses with active careers—teaching, nursing, management—were now suppressed. What was 'the king's pleasure'? Could the bishops, her proper guardians, protect her? The die had, indeed, been cast years ago, in 1530. The archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Durham—the see of St. Cuthbert—and others met to discuss and control 'erroneous' publications, and they drew up a 'public instrument'. Alluding to a phrase, 'the gifte of chastity', it set forth that 'noo parson may make a vowe or promyse to lyve chaste and syngle; And that noon is bounde to keepe any suche voves, but rather to breke them'.⁵⁰ It was a staggering blow to a religious to be told by archbishop and king that it was 'damnable' to fulfil a life-vow of obedience, chastity, constancy of abode. It was left to the citizens to respect vows. The anchoress of Blackfriars, Norwich, may keep shop on a small civic allowance provided she remained 'soole and unmarried'.⁵¹ To most, surrender meant dismissal, no security, no roof; with a possible paltry pension out of a temporary 'Court of Augmentations'. The steadfast anchoress of Blackfriars, Worcester, refused submission to the Commissioner though he was a bishop (R. Ingworth, the archbishop's suffragan). After strong moral pressure, she was forced to surrender.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Deputy Keeper's Report*, viii, App. ii, 47. (Perhaps Dingley, a local name.)

⁴⁹ H. J. Hillen, *Kings Lynn*, I, 230; source untraced.

⁵⁰ Wilkins, *Concilia*, ed. 1737, iii, 733, from Reg. Abp. Warham, f. 20.

⁵¹ Norwich City Records: Congregatio 4, Edward VI.

⁵² Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 189; *L. & P. Hen.* XIII, xiii (2), no. 49.

'Ther was an Ancres with [w]hom I had not a lytyll besynes to have her grauntt to cum owte, but owte sche ys.'

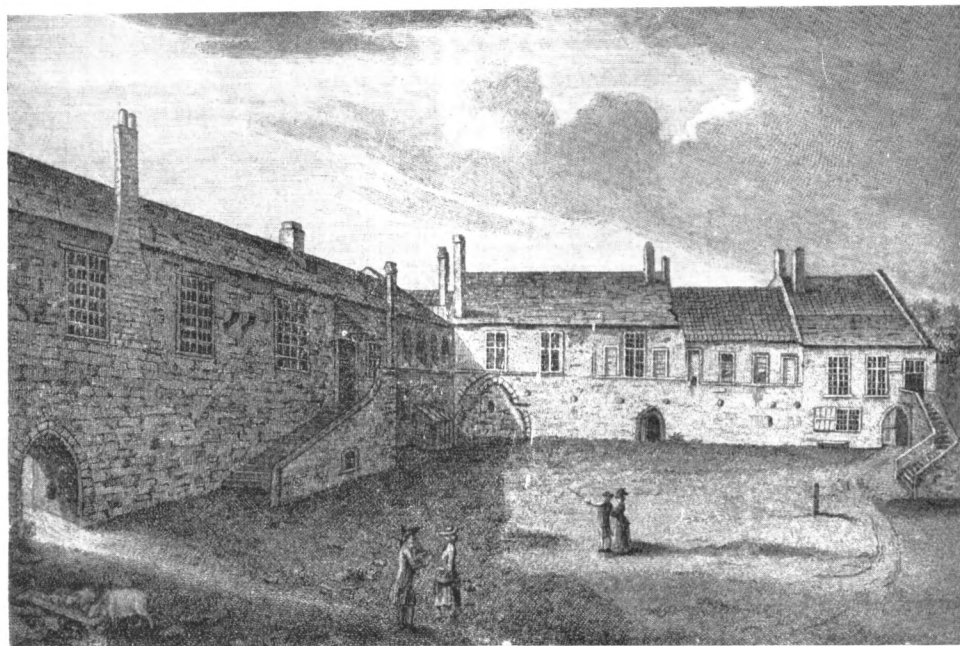
Incidentally, such a woman had received bequests and alms invariably charged with intercessions for the departed. Now that her vow was forbidden and forsaken, support was withdrawn. The anchorite was to some extent a chantry-priest, celebrating obits, trentals, and special masses. Yet such a man as Simon—'Master Anker'—in the heart of London, was a spiritual influence and practical help in a poor parish.⁵³ Most recluses, however, were linked with religious houses, and even these were to an ever-less extent prepared to nurture the 'solitary'. When the communities were dissolved, the anchorites finally vanished.

Hermitages were likewise abandoned if not already deserted before Edward VI's Chantries axe fell. Manorial free chapels were frequently provided with a hermit-clerk ordained on the 'title' of a fixed income. By this time many castles and halls had a private chapel, with a resident domestic chaplain—perhaps tutor to the family—so that there was less call for a 'solitary' from the patron's viewpoint.

Does not the word Hermitage call at once to our mind Warkworth?—in a park belonging of old to the earl of Northumberland. E. Slegge (1515) and George Lancaster (1521) are named as hermit chaplains. The latter had letters-patent entitling him to an annuity; he could cultivate his plot, keep cattle and carry free firewood with his horse. Every Sunday he might net 'the Trinity draught' of salmon in the river Coquet below.⁵⁴ In 1546 Sir George Lancaster was allowed to continue; but this private chaplaincy died out. How worth while is a visit to Warkworth! The river must be crossed; upstream amidst overhanging trees, one approaches by a flight of steps. The whole is scooped out of the crag: the chapel of the Blessed Trinity, its altar, piscina, etc., and an unusual 'decorated' window. The internal roof

⁵³ Clay, *Further Studies*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Duke of Northumberland's Alnwick MS., H.M.C.R. 3, p. 47.



BLACKFRIARS c. 1780. DRAWING BY J. BULMAN.

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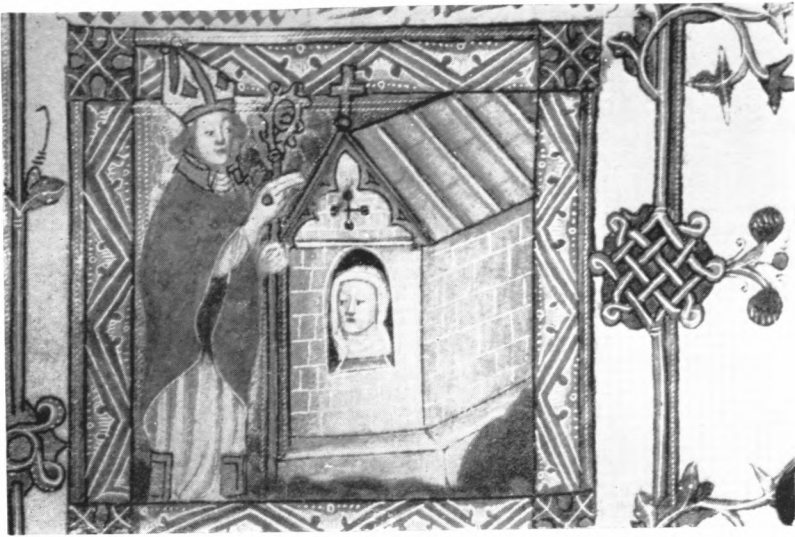


FIG. 2. SOLEMN ENCLOSURE OF AN ANCHORESS.



FIG. 1. SELF PORTRAIT FROM JOHN LACY'S MS.



FROM JOHN LACY'S MS. WITH HIS NAME AND REQUEST TO POSTERITY.

has ribbed 'vaulting', actually graven in the rock. A narrow chamber alongside was the hermit's humble home, probably his original oratory, with its altar.⁵⁵

There are no anchorites in any Christian church to-day. Heroes of faith and their renunciation must be respected; what is accepted as true vocation cannot be questioned. But 'the practice of the presence of God' is now sought and found in a retirement of the spirit amidst fellowship and service—the way of Christ and, indeed, also of His servant Cuthbert.

POSTSCRIPT

A Northumberland anchoress was enrolled (soon after 1423) in the noble Altar album of Durham (*Liber Vitæ*); *Katerina chewpayne anachorissa de standforth*. The names suggest the chapel and manor of Stamford in Embleton. B. M. Cotton. Domitian VII, f. 77b. For a Roger de Chaumpayne v. N. County H. II, 18n.

⁵⁵ Illustrations, plans. Clay, *op. cit.*, and *N. County History*, V, 124-135.