



CHANCERY SEAL OF BISHOP HATFIELD.

Obverse: enthroned as bishop.

Reverse: Knight, as lord of the Palatinate of Durham.

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VI.—BISHOP HATFIELD'S VISITATION OF DURHAM PRIORY IN 1354.

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The injunctions Bishop Hatfield sent to the prior of Durham after his visitation in 1354¹ were so innocuous that they require explanation. They contained nothing to show that the priory had suffered any temporal or spiritual harm as a result of the Black Death. There was no attempt to reorganize the priory's finances or to secure the annual rendering of accounts, and the bishop did not legislate against monks wandering abroad, the presence of women in the precincts, the eating of meat or the breaking of silence.² Hatfield's injunctions were largely confined to ordering the restoration of privileges to the monks, and to censuring certain obedientiaries for a careless performance of their daily duties. Two explanations suggest themselves. It is possible that the injunctions did not reflect all the troubles in the convent, for the bishop's reservation of the right to correct, at a suitable opportunity, other serious matters discovered at the visitation suggests omissions. At the same time his reservation shows that his investigation of conditions in the convent was not limited to the matters covered by the injunctions, and this in turn implies that he was not hindered by the monks in his inquiry. Alternatively, there may really

¹ Durham Dean and Chapter muniments, 2.8. Pont. no. 4, and see pp. 98-100 below.

² Cf. Bishop Bateman's injunctions to Norwich Cathedral Priory of 1347,—C. R. Cheney, *Norwich Cathedral Priory in the Fourteenth Century—B.J.R.L.*, 20 (1936) pp. 105-117; and episcopal injunctions of 1300 (pp. 6-23) and 1307 (pp. 29-35), and metropolitan injunctions of 1403 (pp. 52-56) sent to Ely Cathedral Priory—S. J. A. Evans, *Ely Chapter Ordinances and Visitation Records, 1241-1515—Camden Miscellany*, 17 (1940).

have been little the matter with the priory, either because it escaped the worst effects of the plague or because it was strong enough to withstand such a disaster.

Different people held varied opinions on Hatfield as bishop of Durham. Edward III, who nominated him in the face of sneers from pope and cardinals, was clearly influenced in his choice by English relations with Scotland. It was useful for the king to have a soldier in one of the northern bishoprics, and though by being with the king at Crecy in 1346 Hatfield missed the battle of Neville's Cross, where the English army was led by the archbishop of York and the bishop of Carlisle, he was on Edward's last Scottish campaign in 1356.³ Several times he was commanded to stay on the border and take military precautions against imminent Scottish invasions.⁴ Hatfield was, however, a civil servant by training, having entered the king's service at an early age, and having served as keeper of the privy seal for the two years immediately before his consecration in 1345. The king therefore employed him many times as his commissioner in negotiations with the Scots.⁵

Certain fellow members of the clergy doubted whether Hatfield possessed the qualities desirable in a bishop. The cardinals objected to him as "*levem et laicum*", and the pope said, unkindly, that if the king of England had asked for an ass to be made bishop he would have allowed it.⁶ In 1363 John Thoresby, archbishop of York, declared Hatfield had no degree,⁷ and this is supported in a recent article, where Hatfield is described as uneducated, and so untypical of the bishops of this period.⁸ He was yet interested enough in learning to bequeath £3000 to Durham priory to refound their college at Oxford.⁹ Nor did Thoresby have much

³ J. R. L. Highfield, *The English Hierarchy in the Reign of Edward III—T.R.H.S.* 5th series, 6 (1956), p. 135.

⁴ D.N.B.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Chronicon Angliae 1328-88*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Rolls Series, 1874), p. 20.

⁷ *Calendar of Papal Petitions*, I, 1342-1419, p. 472.

⁸ J. R. L. Highfield, *op. cit.* pp. 131-2.

⁹ Durham, 2.5 Ebor. no. 15.

regard for Hatfield's morals. In an attempt to persuade the pope to revoke a bull granting Hatfield exemption from metropolitan jurisdiction, the archbishop wrote that "Thomas, bishop of Durham, . . . who . . . fears not the rod of discipline, inasmuch as his bishopric is in remote parts on the Scottish border and far from the papal court, and has abundant rents, greater than those of the archbishop and of the bishop of Carlisle together, lives a dissolute life, to the scandal of the church, the danger of souls, and wastes the goods of the see."¹⁰ The archbishop of York was, however, likely to be prejudiced against the bishop of Durham, and there is no other evidence to support Thoresby's savage indictment.

In his own diocese the bishop of Durham was held in high regard. In a brief description of his episcopate¹¹ the contemporary writer, William de Chambre, made no claim for Hatfield's piety, but he never suggested the bishop had lived a dissolute life. He wrote that the bishop was an ambitious man, but at the same time a generous one, famous for his hospitality and daily alms-giving, his rebuilding of Durham castle and his gifts of decorations and vestments to the cathedral. In spite of this liberality, the chronicler reported that Hatfield died "*satis dives et plenus bonis*". Chambre went on to say that the bishop was friendly with his monks and maintained peace in the church, and there is a variety of evidence to support this statement. On several occasions the prior and convent trusted Hatfield to arbitrate between them and the vicar of one of their churches to settle a suitable portion for the incumbent,¹² and the bishop employed both Prior Fossour and Prior Walworth as his vicars general.¹³ He watched over the priory's negotiations with his archdeacons with a benevolent eye,¹⁴ and near the end

¹⁰ *Cal. Pap. Pet. op. cit.* p. 472.

¹¹ William de Chambre in *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, ed. James Raine (Surtees Society, 9, 1839), pp. 137-9.

¹² Durham Cartulary II, f. 273 r., and 2.3. Pont. nos. 7, 12:

¹³ 1.2. Archid. Dunelm. no. 57, and Registrum Hatfield, f. 126 v.

¹⁴ 2.1. Archid. Northumberland no. 11, and 1.1. Archid. Dunelm. no. 12a.

of his life, in a letter which began "Filij carissimi", he begged for the prayers of his monks to support him through his illness.¹⁵

With his personal qualities and administrative experience Hatfield might reasonably be expected to be, as indeed he was, good-humoured and businesslike in his dealings with the cathedral priory. Not a religious man, it seems likely that he was less concerned with the convent's spiritual condition than with its material welfare,¹⁶ for his previous experience would enable him to recognize and reorganize careless or dishonest administration. This was fully borne out in his handling of the visitation, when he was practical and thorough without being harsh. It must be remembered, however, that in an episcopate of thirty-six years the bishop only visited Durham priory three times,¹⁷ and he may have taken unusual trouble over the visitation because it was a rare occurrence.

Hatfield's conduct of the visitation was distinguished, in the first place, by its straightforwardness. He refused to allow himself to be diverted from the main business by arguments on procedure, and he did not take issue with the monks on matters which had been settled in the past. More than a hundred years before, in the treaty between bishop and convent called "le Conventit", it had been agreed that the bishop was not to be paid a procuration fee because he could live in Durham castle while the visitation was in progress.¹⁸ Hatfield confirmed this arrangement in 1346 before he visited the priory for the first time.¹⁹ Secondly, he abided by a compromise made between Bishop Bek and the convent by the pope in 1302, which ruled that a visiting bishop must not be accompanied by more than two or three clerks, one

¹⁵ Reg. II, f. 157 v.

¹⁶ Cf. Bishop Bateman. C. R. Cheney, op. cit. p. 96.

¹⁷ 1347, 1354, 1371—Durham, 1.8. Pont. no. 9. It was an enthusiastic bishop who visited the same house once in four years—M. D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, I (Cambridge, 1956), p. 81.

¹⁸ *Feodarium Dunelmensis Prioratus*, ed. W. Greenwell (S.S., 58, 1871), p. 214.

¹⁹ Durham, 4.6. Pont. no. 3.

of whom was to be a Benedictine monk, and a secular notary.²⁰ At each of his visitations Hatfield brought with him two clerks, a Durham monk and a notary,²¹ and in doing so showed more tact than Bishop Skirlawe, who, at the end of the fourteenth century, tried to introduce black monks from other houses, with the inevitable result, an appeal to Rome.²² Finally, while the visitation was actually in progress, he yielded to the claim of the prior and convent that they ought to be represented at the "correctiones compertorum", which were to be made with their advice. Ten members of the convent, including the prior and subprior of Durham and the heads of four cells, were immediately chosen for this purpose.²³ The monks were within their rights to claim this privilege, which they had possessed since "le Convent" in 1229,²⁴ and Hatfield probably knew that to oppose them on this would be to delay the proceedings unduly and put himself in the wrong. By not arguing about these matters of procedure he was able to conduct an orderly visitation and avoid such undignified squabbles as had happened in the past.

Comparisons with other visiting bishops show that Hatfield was unusually thorough, and though he was often away from his diocese in London or Scotland he did not fail to visit the priory in person. To make sure that most of the monks were present in Durham at his visitation in 1354 he took the simple precaution of giving them five weeks' notice of his coming. He issued two mandates, one to the prior and convent of Durham citing them to his visitation on 23rd July 1354,²⁵ and the other to the prior, commanding him to call in all the monks living in the cells.²⁶ The bishop thus allowed enough time for messengers to reach the farthestmost cells, Coldingham, Oxford, Lytham and Stamford, and for

²⁰ Calendar of Papal Letters, 1198-1304, I, p. 603.

²¹ Durham, 1.8. Pont. no. 9.

²² Cart. III, f. 311 v. Petition by the prior and convent to the pope against Skirlawe's action. I am grateful to Mr. M. G. Snape for this reference.

²³ 2.8. Pont. no. 9.

²⁵ Durham, 2.7. Pont. no. 3.

²⁴ *Feodarium*, op. cit. p. 214.

²⁶ 2.7. Pont. no. 6.

all the brethren, except those left behind to say the daily office and care for the property, to travel back to the mother house. This was necessary at Durham, where a number of monks had to be summoned from more than a hundred miles away. About a third of the total number of monks lived in the cells, and four of the nine cells were outside the bishop's diocese and so beyond the scope of his jurisdiction except when the monks who staffed them were cited to a visitation. Hatfield's action was in marked contrast to the behaviour of the archbishop of York in 1345. In a hurry to visit Durham "sede vacante"²⁷ before Hatfield's election to the bishopric, he gave the prior and chapter only five days warning of his arrival. They replied that they themselves would be present at his visitation, but that they had not summoned their brethren from the outlying houses because of the shortness of notice.²⁸

Hatfield did not rush the proceedings. He was at the priory for four days,²⁹ and it was unusual, at least in the thirteenth century, for a bishop to spend more than one day, or at the most two, visiting a single house.³⁰ In spite of this, a considerable amount of business still remained unfinished when he left, and instead of appointing commissaries to make an end to it, as was the normal practice,³¹ Hatfield was determined to dispose of the outstanding matters himself. Some ten days after his departure he wrote to the prior and pointed out that proceedings had not been concluded in the cases of the prior himself and thirteen of the monks, and he required them to be present in the chapter house to answer to himself or his commissaries on 27th August.³² On the 28th Hat-

²⁷ The archbishop of York could not visit the diocese of Durham while the bishop was alive. When Archbishop Neville proposed to visit during Hatfield's episcopate in 1376 he was strictly forbidden to do so by the king. Reg. II, f. 294 r.

²⁸ Reg. II, f. 121 v.

²⁹ 2.8. Pont. no. 9.

³⁰ C. R. Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century* (Manchester, 1931), pp. 119-120.

³¹ A. Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln*, I (Lincoln Record and Cant. & York Soc., 1915), p. xi.

³² Durham, Reg. Hatfield, f. 17 r.

field, now in residence just outside Durham at Kepier, wrote again to the prior and asked him to see that the six monks who had pleaded their innocence to the charges against them were reassembled in the chapter house on the following Saturday.³³ On 1st September from Auckland castle the bishop issued letters patent which confirmed that two of these men had cleared themselves.³⁴ It seems that the accusations against the prior and two others yet remained unanswered, and Hatfield twice postponed proceedings because he was unable to be present.³⁵ It was not until March, 1355, seven months after the visitation, that he was able to send his written injunctions to the priory.

To make sure that all the monks were aware of the contents of his injunctions, the bishop ordered that every member of the chapter was to be told what he had written, and was to be given a copy of the same. His action was uncommon, for while other visitors sometimes directed their injunctions to be copied the practice was not general.³⁶ In 1347 Bishop Bateman contented himself with ordering that one copy of his injunctions was to be hung up in the chapter house at Norwich, and one sent to each of the five cells.³⁷ The prior of Durham fulfilled Hatfield's intentions. On 15th April, 1355, at the hour of chapter, he had the injunctions read and explained to the monks assembled in the chapter house. He promised to observe the bishop's commands, ordered his brethren to do the same, and handed the original document to the subprior for copies of it to be made for all the members of the convent.³⁸

It is clear that Hatfield conducted his visitation in a methodical and unhurried manner. He planned his work in advance, and so was able to give the priory adequate notice of his arrival. He did not force the pace of the proceedings, and, at some personal inconvenience, he brought them to an end himself and did not appoint deputies to do

³³ Ibid. f. 17 v.

³⁴ Ibid. f. 18 r.

³⁵ Ibid. ff. 18 v. and 19 r.

³⁶ C. R. Cheney, *Norwich Cathedral Priory*, op. cit. p. 95 n.

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 116-17.

³⁸ Durham, 2.8. Pont. no. 4.

so for him. He was concerned enough for the welfare of the individual monks to require a copy of his injunctions to be given to each, and, direct and businesslike in his methods as he was, Hatfield omitted any pious preamble to his injunctions, and opened with a peremptory command to the prior to obey, and see that his monks obeyed, such statutes as he had found it necessary to make.

The mere fact that Hatfield was an efficient visitor makes it unlikely that he would have allowed the convent to hinder his inquiry. He would not have spent four days at the priory if the monks had agreed among themselves to tell him that all was well. The injunctions, and other documents issued as a result of the visitation, record many accusations by one man of another, enough to show that there was no conspiracy to suppress information. There were accusations against the prior and other officers of the house, against private monks, and criticisms of the removal of former privileges and of the disrepair of the church. Among the fourteen monks Hatfield interviewed after the visitation were the prior, bursar, terrar, feretrar, hostiller, sacrist, cellarer and almoner of Durham, the master of Wearmouth and the prior of Lytham.³⁹ Far from not having enough charges there were too many, and the bishop had the difficult task of sifting true from false. He put ten articles to the prior for answer,⁴⁰ but only three form the bases for injunctions, so he must have accepted the prior's answers to the remainder.

The final suggestion to explain why the injunctions may have been incomplete is the bishop's reservation of his right to correct other serious matters discovered at the visitation after the issue of the injunctions. It is most improbable that he had come upon something so bad that it could not be included among the other statutes, but had instead to be communicated privately to the priory. Many injunctions addressed to other houses contained mandates on matters much more unpleasant than anything Hatfield sent to Durham. It must be supposed, therefore, that he had not

³⁹ Reg. Hatfield, f. 17 r.

⁴⁰ 2.8. Pont. no. 5.

been able to deal with every matter raised at the visitation before the issue of the injunctions. In spite of all his efforts and the length of time involved, he had not been able to finish, and he had been unwilling to delay the delivery of the injunctions, incomplete though they were, after the end of March, 1355. It is fairly certain that the charges which remained unanswered, and for which Hatfield reserved his authority, were those against the prior of Lytham. On 17th March, 1355, the prior of Durham wrote to the bishop acknowledging the receipt of his mandate, and certifying that he had sent letters to Robert of Kellawe, prior of Lytham, bidding him appear before the bishop. He explained that not enough time had yet elapsed for him to receive a reply.⁴¹ The injunctions were dated 26th March, and, for lack of other information, it must be assumed that Hatfield refused to delay them any longer, and decided to delegate Kellawe's case to the prior of Durham to be heard at leisure. On 14th April the bishop wrote to Kellawe and confirmed that he was innocent of the sin of adultery as he had purged himself before the prior.⁴² That, however, was not the end. On the same day Hatfield asked the prior to inquire, on his behalf, into the charge that Kellawe had taken £140 from Coldingham priory against the will of the prior there, and gave him power to punish the accused.⁴³ After further delay, Kellawe succeeded in purging himself of that charge as well.⁴⁴ If the accusations against the prior of Lytham can be safely identified with *aliis quibusdam articulis gravioribus* mentioned immediately before the dating clause in the injunctions, and there exists no evidence to set against this theory, then only the internal condition of the priory remains to explain the innocuous injunctions.

The priory and its property did not escape the Black Death, which occurred four or five years before Hatfield's visitation. There were a number of deaths, both among the community and also among the priory's tenants, the imme-

⁴¹ Reg. Hatfield, f. 20 v.

⁴² Ibid. f. 23 v.

⁴³ Ibid. f. 23 v.

⁴⁴ Cart. Misc. 1181.

diat result of which was to disrupt the internal organization of the convent and reduce its revenue. It is impossible to calculate exactly how many monks died. There were seventy-three present at Hatfield's election in 1345,⁴⁵ and this is a minimum number since some would be left behind in the cells. Perhaps eighty is a reasonable guess for the whole community. The names of only forty monks exist for the year 1350-1, and this again is the minimum, but it is probably safe to say that definitely a third, and possibly more, of the earlier total perished. This is roughly borne out by the number of monks alive between 1345 and 1349 whose names do not appear again after that date. Of these, the probable victims of the plague, ten were very young and were either still in minor orders or were newly ordained priests, and eight had been present at an election in 1313,⁴⁶ and so were not less than sixty years old. A deathroll of these proportions must have been extremely demoralizing to the survivors, and it must also have thoroughly upset the organization. Normally about a third of the community staffed the cells and two thirds lived in Durham, but in 1350 the cathedral priory must have been very denuded to keep the cells in existence at all. This would mean that the saying of the daily office would suffer from lack of numbers, and that some unsuitable monks might be appointed bursar, sacrist, almoner or one of the other obedientiaries merely because the prior had so few men among whom to choose.

There seems to have been a fairly heavy mortality among the priory's tenants, at least in the county of Durham. It is impossible to estimate the proportion of people who died, but a list remains of the names of some of the tenants at will who were killed by the plague.⁴⁷ While the incidence of deaths varied, so that nearly fifty men and women died who held land from the prior in Billingham in the south by contrast with only fifteen at Jarrow in the north, the effect on the priory was the same in each case, a loss both of rents and

⁴⁵ Cart. Misc. 2636.

⁴⁶ Reg. II, f. 16 r.

⁴⁷ Loc. IV, nos. 146, 147.

of labour services. Though some holdings were taken over by the surviving relatives of dead tenants, others could not be relet and were either acquired by the priory for direct cultivation or were temporarily left uncultivated. At least three manors, Aycliffe, Hesleden and Rainton, and possibly more, which were at farm in 1346-7⁴⁸ and again in 1364-5,⁴⁹ were supervised by sergeants between 1349 and 1351.⁵⁰ Another result of the plague was the monks' failure to sell all their tithes. In the financial year 1349-50 the bulk of the tithes of corn from the parishes of Aycliffe and Pitlington remained unsold, and had to be consumed by the priory or on the manors.⁵¹

This dislocation in the organization of the Durham estates was reflected in the account rolls as a fall in the annual incomes of both the priory and its dependent cells. Finchale priory's yearly revenue was over £200 before the Black Death,⁵² but that figure was not reached again until fifteen years later.⁵³ Holy Island's income fell from £200 in 1345-6⁵⁴ to £140 in 1350-1⁵⁵ and did not recover before Hatfield's death in 1381. Because the cells had smaller incomes they were proportionately more seriously affected than the cathedral priory. The bursar of Durham, with a greater income than any other officer, received about £1470 net in 1347-8.⁵⁶ In 1349-50 his receipts had fallen below £1200, largely owing to the unsold tithes, and unpaid arrears amounted to £260.⁵⁷ This decrease was halted by the leasing of bondage lands for money rents which began in 1350-1,⁵⁸ and the bursar's net income remained about £1200 a year, being augmented by £100 borrowed annually, until 1358-9 when his net receipts totalled some £1600.⁵⁹ The

⁴⁸ *Rentale Domus Dunelm.* 1339-1349, f. 139 r.

⁴⁹ Bursar's a/c 1364-5, mm. 1, 3.

⁵² Finchale a/cs 1347-8, 1348-9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 1349-50, m. 8, 1350-1, m. 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 1364-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 1349-50, mm. 1, 2.

⁵⁴ Holy Island a/c 1345-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 1350-1.

⁵⁶ Bursar's a/c 1347-8, m. 3, i.e. £1770 gross, less £300 of balance in hand, arrears, borrowings.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 1349-50, mm. 1, 2, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 1350-1, m. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 1358-9, m. 4.

fact that the convent weathered the storm as well as it did must be partly attributed to the competence of the bursars of this period, John de Newton from 1349 to 1354, and Adam de Darlington from 1354 to 1357. Though the situation gradually returned to normal there is no doubt that the priory and its cells were noticeably affected by the Black Death, both inside the houses and outside on the estates, and that they were still recovering from this experience when Hatfield arrived at Durham in the summer of 1354.

Although it is quite possible that the bishop suggested emergency measures at the time of the visitation, and did not wait to embody them in his formal statutes, the fact remains that there is virtually no trace of this ordeal in the injunctions. A general order was given for the divine office to be solemnly celebrated in the cathedral both by day and by night, and this statute is common to so many sets of injunctions⁶⁰ that it is easy to overlook the basis for the order, which was in the articles put to the prior.⁶¹ Fossour was accused of not providing enough clerks to serve the monks celebrating mass, so that the standard of worship in the church had declined. He answered that the appointment of clerks and servants to the church was the duty of the subsacrist, and because it was his custom to say mass in his own chapel and to be present in the church only in choir he had not immediately noticed their absence, which he attributed to the recent outbreak of the plague. When he did notice it, which was a long time before the visitation, he ordered that the clerks from the almonry should assist in the church.

The only other mention of the Black Death was as an excuse pleaded by Fossour for not replacing the monks who had died. He said that the number of monks at Durham was not fixed, but was limited to what the convent's possessions could support, and that the plague had not only killed

⁶⁰ E.g. in the injunctions of Bishops Gray and Flemmyng of Lincoln, to certain Benedictine houses. A. Hamilton Thompson, *op. cit.* pp. 2, 22, 54, 71, 102, 104.

⁶¹ Durham, 2.8. Pont. no. 5.

some of the brethren, but it had also made it difficult to recruit others. He asserted that he had all the monks who could be maintained at that time and that there were enough of them to say the daily office in a proper manner. Hatfield must have been convinced by this argument for there is no injunction to increase the size of the community.⁶² He was probably aware that if the decline in numbers had not corresponded with the fall in income the priory would have been in serious financial difficulties.

The bishop did not legislate against the breaking of the Rule by private monks. He made no regulations to enforce silence in the inner precincts or the exclusion of women from the priory, nor did he forbid the monks to leave the house without permission, to keep private property, to eat meat at the wrong time and in the wrong place or to wear unsuitable clothes. This type of offence was common among the religious at all times, for it was the result of the monks' failure to maintain the standard of perfection demanded by the monastic system.⁶³ Though a bishop could never abolish such self-indulgences he did not therefore give up the attempt.⁶⁴ It must be assumed that Hatfield omitted injunctions on this topic because the standard of morals and discipline in the priory and its cells was reasonably high. That is not to say that there were no lax individuals. In spite of the absence of the *detecta* and *comperta* there is evidence that three monks were accused of such a failure in morals. Robert de Kellawe, prior of Lytham, was charged with adultery,⁶⁵ John de Durham, the prior's chaplain, with incontinence,⁶⁶ and John de Newton, the bursar, with the accumulation of private property and wasting the goods of the house.⁶⁷ They all established their innocence by compurgation, but there may have been others who were found

⁶² At the time of Prior Fossour's death in 1374 there were more than 72 professed monks attached to Durham Priory, i.e. about the same as before the Black Death. Loc. XIII, no. 8 a.

⁶³ A. Hamilton Thompson, *op. cit.* p. xii.

⁶⁴ C. R. Cheney, *Episcopal Visitation*, *op. cit.* pp. 166-7.

⁶⁵ Durham, Reg. Hatfield, f. 23 v. ⁶⁶ Ibid. f. 18 r. ⁶⁷ Ibid. f. 18 r.

guilty and did penance before the bishop. Even so, none of these offences can have been so prevalent as to prompt Hatfield to legislate against it.

Hatfield had two intentions in framing his injunctions, to restore to normal certain conditions which affected the monastery as a whole, and to correct the prior and some of the obedientiaries for minor lapses in the performance of their duties. He was concerned to see that the sick monks were provided with food and enough servants, and that a competent doctor was always living in the monastery.⁶⁸ He ruled that the monks were to have their customary holidays, under the supervision of a senior member of the community, and that they were to be adequately equipped when going out to visit their friends. He forbade anyone to revenge himself on another for any statement made during the visitation.⁶⁹ There were two other injunctions of general interest, first that the distribution on the anniversaries of three late bishops should be continued, and secondly that the repairs needed on the church and bell tower were to be carried out within two years. All these statutes were designed to re-establish previous customs which had lapsed, perhaps for lack of money or through the carelessness of the officers of the house.

The injunctions which were addressed or indirectly referred to particular obedientiaries have the same characteristic. They were intended to correct omissions, to remind officers to perform certain duties which had recently been left undone. Thus the cellarer was ordered to visit the sick in the infirmary daily, as was the custom, and the almoner to send four loaves twice a day to the clerks of the almonry, according to the old custom. Statutes such as these imply some individual but no overall slackness in the administration, and the number of obedientiary and cell account rolls which remain for this period show that the

⁶⁸ Master John de Esshendon was appointed the priory's doctor in the same year, 1355. B.M. Cotton MS. Faustina A VI, f. 58 v.

⁶⁹ One of the earliest and most frequently-repeated statutes. G. G. Coulton, *The Interpretation of Visitation Documents*, *E.H.R.* 29, 1914, p. 37.

officers were accounting every year, and were thus subject to regular supervision. Because there was no need, Hatfield did not reorganize the financial system or even criticize the method of account and audit.

The two remaining injunctions were designed to stop the prior being unfairly dictatorial and autocratic in his control of the house. It is obvious that Hatfield accepted most of Fossour's answers to the charges made against him in the course of the visitation.⁷⁰ The bishop did not refer again to the prior's statements that money and tithes were rightfully owed to the exchequer of the prior and convent of Durham from the cells of Holy Island, Jarrow and Wearmouth, and the church of Bedlington, and that he had not deprived the monks of these cells of an essential part of their income. The bishop believed the prior's denials that he had left the priors of Stamford and Wearmouth alone without companions. Hatfield continued to have doubts, however, on the extent to which the prior consulted the convent in the administration of the priory, and the two remaining charges formed the bases for these injunctions.

In the first place, Fossour was accused of sending monks to the cells without good cause or because they opposed him in chapter. To this he replied that he was the effective head of the house, and so possessed the right to send monks to and from the cells without giving a reason. Secondly, he was charged with not consulting the senior monks, with appointing young and inexperienced men to hold office, and with not admitting the seniors to the audit of the obedientiaries' accounts, so keeping them in ignorance of the state of the house. He answered that he took counsel with the whole convent on important matters and the seniors on less urgent business, as he was bound to do. He only appointed to office professed monks of legal age and approved behaviour, and always called the senior brethren to the audit. In spite of the prior's answers Hatfield considered it was necessary to safeguard the rights of the other monks, and commanded the

⁷⁰ Durham, 2.8. Pont. no. 5.

prior to call all the monks together when there was important business to discuss, to listen to them kindly and allow them to speak freely, and to act on the advice of the older and wiser ones among them. The bishop made his intention even clearer by saying that important documents were to be sealed on three occasions in the year with everyone present.

It would be unsafe to argue from the omission of injunctions on serious matters that the priory was sound in discipline and administration⁷¹ if a probable explanation for its satisfactory condition did not exist. It has been said that the regularity of Benedictine life depended, in the last resort, on the heads of houses,⁷² and also that the incompetence or self-will of a superior was the most common cause of trouble on the administrative side.⁷³ Clearly Fossour was a strong prior, but though the bishop found it necessary to curb Fossour's autocratic temper he did not have to correct him for neglecting his duties or for setting a bad example. In Fossour's case, at least, self-will allied with ability had prevented the worst abuses prevalent in monastic life. Outside the visitation documents there is positive evidence to show Fossour's maintenance of discipline, particularly in his effective control of the cells. In his appointment of Simon of Alwent to be cellarer of Coldingham Fossour directed him to receive and spend all the revenues allocated to his office with the advice of the prior of the cell. Alwent and the prior were to keep accounts of these receipts and expenses, and produce them at annual chapter.⁷⁴ In 1361 Robert of Kellawe, prior of Lytham, obtained a bull from Innocent VI which granted that during his lifetime he was not to be moved from Lytham by his superior without good reason. On hearing them, the prior of Durham demanded that he should give up the bull and renounce any rights it gave him. Kellawe did so.⁷⁵

From the evidence which exists there can be no doubt

⁷¹ G. G. Coulton, *op. cit.* p. 37. ⁷² C. R. Cheney, *op. cit.* p. 161.

⁷³ M. D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, II (Cambridge, 1955), p. 210.

⁷⁴ *Faustina* A VI, f. 61 v.

⁷⁵ Durham, 2.4. Ebor. no. 29.

that Hatfield was an effective visitor, and capable of exerting his authority over a dominant personality such as Fossour's. The first time the bishop asked Fossour to answer the ten articles criticizing his rule of the priory the prior refused, saying the charges were vague and obscure.⁷⁶ Yet his detailed answers to these same charges exist, showing that the bishop was more successful in a second application. His injunctions must, therefore, be accepted as an accurate indication of the state of affairs in the priory and its dependencies. The trivial nature of these statutes show that the administration and discipline of the convent of Durham in 1354 was of a high standard, in spite of the short time which had elapsed since the Black Death, and much of the credit for this satisfactory condition must go to Prior Fossour.

⁷⁶ 1.8. Pont. no. 1.

BISHOP HATFIELD'S INJUNCTIONS, 1355.

Thomas, permissione divina Dunelmensis episcopus, Dilecto filio Johanni, priori ecclesie nostre Cathedralis Dunelmensis, salutem, gratiam et benedictionem.

Ad correctionem et reformationem quorundam defectuum et erratum (sic) in visitacione nostra nuper in ecclesia nostra predicta per nos personaliter exercita compertorum procedere, statuere et Iniunctiones salubres facere, ac ne similia inposterum (sic) perpetrentur diligenti studio precavere quantum nobis possibile fuerit cupientes, Tibi in virtute sancte obediencie firmiter iniungendo Mandamus quatinus Iniunctiones, statuta et mandata nostra salubria Inferius subsequencia quantum ad te pertinent diligenter observes. Et a capitulo ecclesie nostre predictae universo quantum ad ipsum pertinet, ac a singularibus monachis dicti capituli confratribus nostris quantum ad ipsos pertinet, districte facias observari sub pena canonica tibi ineventu qua predicta facere contempseris auctoritate nostra legitime inferenda.

In primis, dei nomine invocato, Statuimus, Volumus et Mandamus quod in ecclesia nostra Cathedrali predicta sollempniter et tractim divinum celebretur officium, nocturnum pariter et diurnum, sicut decet ecclesia Cathedralis.

Item, volumus et Mandamus quod fratres tuos monachos dicte ecclesie benigne ad ardua negocia monasterii discutienda convoces, et eos benigne audias et libere loqui permittas, et cum consilio seniorum et saniorum, secundum regulam sancti benedicti super hoc editam, cuncta (sic) disponas.

Item, volumus et mandamus quod celerius quo comode (sic) poteris provideas fratribus Medicum competentem, qui moram faciat infra Monasterium, sicut hactenus fieri consuevit.

Item, volumus et mandamus quod infirmi Monachi in infirmaria constituti de lenibus et delicatis cibis secundum naturam infirmitatum eorum procurentur, et habeant famulos necessarios sicut solebant, et visitentur per Celerarium singulis diebus, pro ut moris est.

Item, volumus et Mandamus quod monachi habeant debitas et consuetas Recreaciones, sine Acceptacione personarum, secundum ordinacionem supprioris et capellani prioris, pro ut moris exstitit ab antiquo.

Item, volumus, iniungimus et mandamus quod quando prior non curat exire cum monachis ad spaciandum more solito, tunc supprior vel aliquis senior associet sibi fratres indigentes recrea-

cione, pro ut moris exstet (sic) ab antiquo, et recipiat supprior sex denarios pro coquina, et quilibet de sociis tres denarios, et quilibet de Ministris necessariis duos denarios per singulos absencie dies.

Item, statuimus et Iniungendo Mandamus quod Monachis licenciatis visitare amicos suos providiatur de vectura armigeris et aliis necessariis, ut honeste incedant et visitentur ab obedienciariis, sicut visitari consueverunt.

Item, volumus et Mandamus quod obedienciarum habeant equos infra septa Monasterii pro sua et fratrum vectura exeuncium de licencia, sicut fieri consueverunt.

Item, quod amici monachorum et hospites ad Monasterium declinantes honorifice admittantur et competenter procurentur, iuxta facultatem officii.

Item, statuimus, volumus et firmiter Iniungendo Mandamus quod bona assignata elemosine pro sustentacione pauperum faciat prior Elemosinario liberari pauperibus iroganda (sic), et de bonis subtractis elemosine faciat prior elemosinario responderi, iuxta facultates Monasterii, cum ad hoc tempus se optulerit oportuum (sic).

Item, volumus et Mandamus quod elemosinarius singulis diebus clericis in elemosinario existentibus quatuor panes ad iantaculum et quatuor ad cenam faciat Ministrari, more antiquo.

Item, precipimus, volumus et Mandamus quod distributiones que fieri consueverunt in diebus anniversariorum bone Memorie Willelmi, Hugonis et Phillipi, quondam episcoporum Dunelmensis, fiant more solito.

Item, precipimus sub pena predicta et firmiter iniungendo Mandamus ne aliquis cuiuscumque condicionis aut status existat contra quem aliquid est vel fuit in visitacione nostra compertum seu detectum aliquid malum dicet dampnum vel gravamen faciat, vel fieri mandat, vel procuret, clam vel palam, hiis quos scit vel suspicatur aliquid deposuisse contra eum in visitacione nostra predicta precipue cum depositiones habemus ad correctiones salubres tendere dinoscantur penas quidem canonicas transgressoribus in hac parte infligendas nobis specialiter reservantes.

Volumus etiam et precipimus omnia premissa distincte et aperte notificari omnibus et singulis de capitulo nostro predicto, et cuilibet copiam fieri eorumdem.

Item, volumus et Mandamus quod in arduis negociis sigillaciones fiant tribus temporibus anni, omnibus congregatis.

Item, tibi precipiendo Mandamus, sub pena superius annotata, quod defectus iam imminentes in coopertura et refectone ecclesie nostre cathedralis et campanilis eiusdem infra bienium

(sic) a die confectionis presencium continue numerandum refici facias et congrue reparari.

Reservantes specialiter nobis potestatem super aliis quibusdam articulis gravioribus in visitacione nostra supradicta nobis detectis et delatis Iniunctiones et correctiones faciendi imposterum pro loco et temporibus oportunis. Valet.

Data in Manerio nostre de Aukland, die xxvj Mensis Marcii anno domini Millesimo trescentesimo quinquagesimo quinto, et nostre consecracionis decimo.

The above is an extract from Durham, 2.8. Pont. no. 4, a notarial instrument recording the receipt and publication of the injunctions by the prior and convent, 15th April, 1355.

It is one of three versions of the same document which still exist, that is 2.8. Pont. nos. 4 and 10, and Reg. Hatfield, f. 21 v. All are copies of the original, and the copy in Hatfield's Register, which is a slightly abridged version, has been printed in *Depositions and Ecclesiastical Proceedings*, ed. James Raine (Surtees Society, 21, 1845), pp. 11-14.