

BEVIS MARKS.

BY

MRS. BELL DOUGHTY.

A letter read by F. A. LINDSAY-SMITH, J.P., C.C., to the Society, at the Portuguese Synagogue, JULY 1st, 1913.

DEAR MR. LINDSAY-SMITH,—
Some time ago you quoted to me a passage from Stow's "Survey of London," relating to the town house of the Abbots of Bury in what is now called Bevis Marks, which ran :

"Next is one great house, large of rooms, fair courts, and garden plots: sometime(s) pertaining to the Bassets, since that to the Abbots of Bury in Suffolk, and therefore called Buries Markes, corruptly Bevis Marks, and since the dissolution of the Abbey of Bury to Thomas Heneage the father and to Sir Thomas his son. Next unto it is the before-spoken Priory of the Holy Trinity"—
and you asked me if I knew anything of it, or could fix the date at which it passed from the Bassets to the Abbots of Bury.

I have consulted the expert authorities on S. Edmundsbury, namely, Sir Ernest Clarke, and Dr. Montague James, the Provost of King's College, Cambridge. Sir Ernest Clarke, who is the editor of Jocelin's Chronicle of the Abbey and of the "Bury Chronicles of the Thirteenth Century," has given me some most valuable information, but confessed, in his own words, to having "long been puzzled as to the Town House of the Abbot of S. Edmundsbury," who, as a Mitred Abbot,

was a Member of the King's Council, and had frequently to reside in London. He knew nothing about the Bassets in connection with this house, except so far as Stow mentions them. The Provost of King's said definitely, "There is no talk of Bassets" in the Abbey Registers; and Dr. R. R. Sharpe, of the Guildhall, the editor of the Letter Books of the City of London, told me that "the Index of Deeds enrolled in the Court of Hustings has no reference" to this property passing from the Bassets to the Abbots of Bury.

As far as the Bassets are concerned, there was such a family in the immediate neighbourhood, for one of them, Robert Basset, was Alderman of Aldgate in the time of Edward IV, and when the Bastard Falconbridge invaded the City in 1471, he, with the men of the Ward, drove Falconbridge's followers out as far as St. Botolph's, Aldgate, where he was reinforced by the Constable of the Tower, and they chased the rebels as far as Mile End and Stratford. The MS. recording Basset's adventures is preserved in the Public Library at Ghent. It is interesting to note that, while Alderman Basset was driving out Falconbridge's men at this end of the City, our old friend Alderman Sir John Crosby, of Crosby Hall, was with the Lord Mayor driving them out at the London Bridge end—but this by the way.

It is curious, too, that the first mention of the ancestor of the Heneage to whom this Town House of the Abbot of Bury at Bevis Marks was given at the Dissolution (Heneage Lane is, of course, called after him), was a Sir Robert Heneage, who was one of the witnesses of a grant of land, in Lincolnshire, by Nicholas Basset to the Monks of Brucia,¹ in the time

¹ Brigg.

of William Rufus. And the Priory of the Holy Trinity, which "marched," as we say, with the Abbot of Bury's house and ground, ultimately fell into the hands of a Basset heiress, who married Lord Henry Howard, grandson of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk (after whom Duke Street is called), and Margaret, only daughter and heiress of the Thomas, Lord Audley of Walden, to whom the Priory of the Holy Trinity was given at the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII.

So much for the Bassets. But no word, as you see, of any house of theirs passing to the Abbots of Bury.

I have obtained, however, from the Provost of King's College, Cambridge, some most interesting, valuable, and apparently before unnoted information which shows that this Abbots of Bury's house—adjoining the Priory of the Holy Trinity—was in their possession at least two centuries before even Sir Ernest Clarke knew of any definite mention of their town house. The Provost has most kindly gone through for me the MS. registers of the Abbey, which are in the University Library at Cambridge. These registers were put together by some monkish editor early in the fourteenth century, and take us back to at least two centuries before that.

The apparently earliest mention of this London house (which is referred to as "beside the Church (Ecclesia) of Holy Trinity, London") is in reference to the gift of a certain David Dacus—or the Dane.

Dr. Montague James has given me the extracts in the original monkish Latin, but for convenience's sake I give here my husband's translation of them. The early fourteenth-century compiler of the deeds says:—

"A certain London citizen, by name David the Dane, conferred the house of the Abbacy in the

same place" (i.e., by the Priory of the Holy Trinity) "to Saint Edmund, and S. Libertus, son of Genardius of Cheshunt, in his portion, constituted S. Ædmund his heir, as it appears in the Black² Register of the Vestiarius" (fol. 152).

In MS. 4, 19, of this collection there is a deed which says:—

"I will it to be known that I have appointed as heir to me the blessed King and Martyr Ædmund in the estate of London which David the Dane gave to S. Ædmund when at the same time he had undertaken the habit of religion."

It appears, therefore, that this David gave this London property by the side of the Priory of the Holy Trinity to the Abbots when he became a monk of Bury.

The fourteenth-century editor goes on:—

"Also Robert, the son of Radulf, added to the aforesaid mansion his own portion, as appears in the aforesaid register of the Vestiarius (MS. fol. 151)."

The actual deed (Tf. 2. 33) runs thus:—

"That ye may know that I have given to God and to the Church of S. Ædmund's my holding, which is beside the Church of Holy Trinity, London, next the Hospice of the Abbot of S. Ædmund." To these as witness, "Theobald, prior of the same Church, and William the Sacrist."

² The books were called according to their binding: *Cf.* "Liber Albus" of the City of London.

Nothing could be plainer than that! Now as to the date of this deed. Theobald was certainly Prior before 1148 A.D., because he is referred to before that time. How much before it is difficult to determine; but William the Sacrist was not in office apparently (so Sir Ernest Clarke) before 1156 or 1160, so we may date this addition to the Abbot's House at Bury-Marke somewhere about that time—i.e., from 1156 to 1160 A.D. How long before this David the Dane gave the house it is impossible (at present) to say.

The fourteenth-century editor again narrates:—

“Also Richard of Kentaville confirmed the (? his) portion with an annual rent of sixpence, as appears in the foresaid black register of the *Vestiarius*.”

The actual deed says:—

“I have granted to S. Ædmund and his Church the holding which Robert, the son of Radulf, held in London, nearest to the holding which S. Ædmund had held previously in the same City, just as the aforesaid Robert sold the same holding to the Abbot Hugo. . . . Ye may know also that that which I sold to the same Abbot Hugo is the property which is that land which was owed to me.”

Now Abbot Hugo was Abbot Hugo the First, who reigned from 1156 to 1180, which quite agrees with our dating Robert the son of Radulf's gift in addition to the original house at from 1156 to 1160 A.D. The fourteenth-century editor also, in speaking of the London property of the Abbey, says (Ref. W.T., fol. 191):—

“Situated in front of the Hospice of the Abbot

(of Bury), in the Parish of S. Katherine, is the Priory of the Holy Trinity, London."

And he goes on to say that Abbot John of Bury, who reigned from 1279-1301, has been disseised of—

"one messuage with belongings in the Parish of S. Katherine of Holy Trinity" (i.e., St. Katherine Cree).

He was reinstated in this messuage 23 Ed. I, i.e., 1294-1295 A.D.

I think these extracts from the manuscripts of the Abbey are enough to show that at the latest the Abbots of Bury had a house, in what is now known as Bevis Marks, before 1156 A.D. How much earlier than that David the Dane's gift was it is impossible at present to say. The first Abbot of Bury was Uvuis, who was consecrated in 1020. The Priory of the Holy Trinity, which was between what is now Duke Street and Mitre Street, was founded in 1109 by Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I, and, as you know, its Prior was "ex-officio" Alderman of the Ward of Portsoken and performed all the office of Alderman up to the time of the Dissolution.

Stow knew much more about the Priory of the Holy Trinity than he did about the Abbot of Bury's property, because he was the possessor of, or had access to, four manuscript folios which he calls "The Liber Trinitatis" and "my book which some time belonged to the Priory of Holy Trinity." These manuscripts were once thought to be lost, but they have been since discovered in the Hunterian Museum of Glasgow University. The Guildhall Library possesses a manuscript copy of them. As I said, there are four folios, and I need not add what a fine "quarry" they would be.

This is rather a rambling letter, but I think I have shown that the Town House of the Abbots of Bury S. Edmunds, as far as one can judge at present, was the gift of David the Dane, some time after 1020—the date of the first Abbot—and certainly before 1156.

S. Edmund was murdered by Danes. Canute the Dane practically founded the Abbey. Hardicanute the Dane granted it its charter, so it was quite fitting that “David the Dane” should give the Abbey its London house.

Believe me, with many regrets that I have not yet had the leisure to track *quite* home David the Dane,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) JANET HUNTER DOUGHTY.