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THE
CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—STRONGHOLDS OF THE CHURCH IN
BRITAIN.

WINCHESTER.

IT is difficult, in the short space of a single paper, to do justice to the city and diocese of Winchester. The capital of the kingdom for centuries before London, the cradle of English civilization, the most historic of English towns, the city of Alfred and the Saxon kings, the see of the statesmen-bishops of the Middle Ages, the earliest seat of learning, and the home of the first great public school, Winchester occupies a unique position in English history. Her splendid cathedral, with its massive grandeur and noble architecture, is, with the one exception of Westminster Abbey, the most famous church in England. Here in the mortuary chests lie the bones of the Saxon kings. Here the great Cnut, and Emma, lady of the English, and the mighty Earl Godwin are buried. Here lie St. Birinus, the apostle of the West Saxons, and St. Swithun, and Archbishop Stigand, and Walkelyn, and Henry de Blois, the first founder of the hospital of St. Cross. Here may be seen the splendid chantries of William of Wykeham, of Bishop Wayneflete, the founder of Magdalen College, Oxford, of Cardinal Beaufort, and of Bishop Fox, the founder of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Here, too, lie Stephen Gardiner, and the saintly Bishop Morley, and the latitudinarian Bishop Benjamin Hoadley. In Prior Silkstead's Chapel Izaak Walton, "the Prince of Fishermen," is buried; while in the north aisle of the nave lies the celebrated novelist, Jane Austen.

Of Winchester in Roman times history is silent. We know nothing beyond what may be learnt from the discovery of coins and ornaments, of tessellated pavements and Roman bricks. After the conversion of Constantine, Roman Britain

probably became nominally Christian, and Christian basilicas were almost certainly erected at Winchester, Silchester, Portchester, and other Roman settlements. But such Christianity as may have existed in Roman times had entirely disappeared when in the year 634 Birinus began his mission to the West Saxons. Soon afterwards King Cynegils was baptized, and before long Winchester became the seat of the Wessex bishopric.

During the Saxon period there is little of interest to relate till we come to the time of St. Swithun, the instructor of the good King Alfred. It was in his days, and probably owing to his influence, that King Æthelwulf made his famous "donation" to the church, in which, as the old chronicle has it, "he booked the tenth part of his lands to God's praise and his own eternal welfare." This document was written at Winchester, and laid with great solemnity, in the presence of St. Swithun and the Witan, on the high altar in the cathedral church. When the good Bishop died he desired that he might be buried, not in the church, but in the churchyard, "where the rain of heaven might fall upon him." One hundred years afterwards it was decided to remove his bones into the cathedral; then it was that the heavens opened and the floods came, with which in popular tradition the name of St. Swithun is inseparably associated. About this time the monastic revival took place under the celebrated Dunstan, when a strange scene was enacted in Winchester Cathedral. The canons at Winchester were seculars, and were mostly married men; these the Bishop, backed up by Dunstan and King Edgar, determined to displace by monks of the order of St. Benedict. So, on the first Saturday in Lent, 964, Bishop Æthelwold strode into the choir, accompanied by one who carried a large bundle of Benedictine cowls, which were flung down in front of the Bishop's throne. As soon as the chanting of the Psalms ceased, the Bishop in a loud voice, and pointing to the heap of Benedictine clothes, bade the canons "take up the garb, or go, and forfeit your places." Whereon three only obeyed; the rest were at once thrust out of their canonries. While this drama was being enacted, a party of monks from Abingdon Abbey, says Dean Kitchin, "stood peering in at the door, eager to possess the land; they gladly came in and filled the vacant seats."

With the Norman Conquest a great change passed over the fortunes of Winchester. The unfortunate Stigand was deprived, and remained for the rest of his days in captivity, while a kinsman of the Conqueror was set upon the vacant seat. In 1079 Bishop Walkelyn began to build his stately cathedral, large portions of which, especially the massive

transepts, remain almost unchanged to the present day. The stone for building came from the Binstead quarries in the Isle of Wight, while the timber for the roof was granted by the King—as many oak-trees in Hempage Wood as could be cut down in three days. Whereupon the Bishop got together “carpenters innumerable,” and to the immense indignation of the Conqueror, swept away the entire wood, and carted it into the city! It is worthy of mention that at Winchester the famous Domesday Book was compiled, and the curfew-bell first began to be rung.

Bishop Gifford, who succeeded Walkelin, is chiefly memorable for having introduced the Cistercian Order into England. In 1129 he founded Waverley Abbey, near Farnham; and later on monasteries were established at Netley, Beaulieu, and at Quarr in the Isle of Wight. But unfortunately no Cistercian church has been preserved in the diocese; only the picturesque ruins of Netley and Beaulieu tell the story of their former magnificence. The permanent mark which the Cistercians have left is of another kind. “We may read,” says Mr. Shore, “the story of their industry on the surface of the lands which they brought into cultivation, on their great estate at Beaulieu, where the remains of the great barn, one of the largest in England, may still be seen at St. Leonard’s Grange.”

The episcopate of Henry de Blois, the younger brother of King Stephen, was one of the most eventful in the annals of Winchester. It was an age of castle-building, when, as we learn from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, “every rich man built his castle, and the land was full of castles.” The Bishop was not behind the barons in this respect. He built Farnham Castle and Wolvesey Castle at Winchester, and castles at Bishops Waltham and Hursley, and other places. It is not, however, as a builder of castles that Henry de Blois deserves our gratitude; it is rather as the founder of the hospital of St. Cross, “one of the most precious relics of antiquity which Hampshire possesses. It has memories of kings, bishops, and crusaders, of many distinguished men in Church and State who have guided its fortunes, of countless pilgrims of high and low degree, and of the poor of more than twenty generations who have claimed hospitality there, and had their claim allowed.”

We have already noticed how, in 1129, Bishop Gifford introduced the famous Cistercian Order into England; it was reserved for another Bishop of Winchester to take the not less important step of bringing the Preaching Friars into this country. This was the work of Bishop Peter des Roches, who in 1225 built the Dominicans a house in Winchester; and

shortly afterwards a Franciscan monastery was established. Unlike the Cistercians, who loved to build their houses amid quiet scenes of beauty, the Friars, Black and Grey alike, sought out the busy haunts of men, where, in the lowest and most crowded districts, they could grapple manfully, and face to face, with the sin and misery around them. At Winchester both orders settled in the poorest quarter on the north side of the city.

With William of Edington begins the long series of statesmen-bishops which lasted up to the time of the Reformation. He had been Master of St. Cross, and was a man of great capacity and wisdom. He held the office of Lord Chancellor, and when the Order of the Garter was established he was made chief officer, a position which has passed to the Bishops of Winchester ever since. To Bishop Edington is due the credit of having introduced the Perpendicular style of architecture in the cathedral at Winchester; and to him is ascribed the famous saying that "if Canterbury be the highest rack, Winchester has the deepest manger." Edington was succeeded by William of Wykeham, the greatest and most famous of all the Bishops of Winchester. The son of poor parents, born in an obscure village in Hampshire, he rose by his own merits to be one of the foremost men in Church and State. There is, no doubt, some truth in Wiclif's innuendo that he owed his advancement in the Church to his architectural skill; yet, on the other hand, while no one will dispute his abilities, he was a man of such blameless life that it was said that his enemies in attacking him were "trying to find a knot in a rush." The splendid nave of Winchester Cathedral, one of the finest specimens of Perpendicular work in England, is in the main his work; while he also repaired the Bishops' palaces at Farnham, Wolvesey, and Bishops Waltham, and a large number of churches throughout the diocese. It is, however, as the inaugurator of our grand system of public schools that William of Wykeham is mainly memorable. He has been well called "the Father of the English public school system"; and as the founder of Winchester College and of New College, Oxford, his name is rightly honoured by thousands of Wykehamists throughout the world. He died in his stately palace at Bishops Waltham in the eightieth year of his age, on "Saturday, September 27, about 8 o'clock in the morning, in the year 1404." His body was carried in solemn procession to Winchester, and buried in the chantry which he himself had founded on the exact spot where, as a child, he had loved to meditate and pray.

After Wykeham came Henry Beaufort, one of Shakespeare's Cardinals, less of a prelate than a statesman; indeed, "the only

Englishman of his day who had any pretensions to be called a politician." Shakespeare's famous picture—not an altogether fair one—of his character and death is well known. "He is consigned," says Dean Milman, "to everlasting torment by a decree, as far as the estimation of mankind, more powerful than Papal. His death of despair, described by Shakespeare, painted by Reynolds, is indelibly imprinted on the mind of man." "Lord Cardinal," says King Henry VI., standing by the awful death-bed,

"If thou think'st on heaven's bliss,
Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.
He dies, and makes no sign."

His chantry, thought by some to be the most elegant and finished in the kingdom, is inscribed with the touching scroll, "Tribularer si nescirem misericordias tuas." Bishop Waynflete, who succeeded Beaufort, was the founder of Magdalen College, Oxford, using the revenues of the suppressed priory of Selborne as part of its endowment. Just before the Reformation the see was held by good Bishop Fox, who founded the college of Corpus Christi, Oxford, not for "a company of bussing monks," as he had originally intended, but for secular students, "abandoning the attempt to pour new wine into the old bottles of monasticism." Ten years before his death the Bishop became blind, and retired from Court to his palace at Wolsey, where he lived at peace with all men. "There is a tradition," says Dean Kitchin, "that he was led daily by his chaplain into the cathedral, and guided up the steps in his chantry, and there left to sit and meditate on the chequered incidents of his past life, and the unknown future which lay before him." Wolsey, the very type of an ambitious Churchman, who had long been eagerly watching for Fox's death, managed to succeed him, but he only held the see for two years, and does not appear to have ever visited Winchester.

At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, under Henry VIII., the diocese of Winchester suffered spoliation with the rest of England. The great establishments of Winchester, Romsey, Netley, Titchfield, Southwick, Quarr, Waverley, Chertsey, as well as all the smaller houses, were swept away and their revenues confiscated. Two famous foundations, however, most fortunately escaped, though for a time they were in danger of suppression—Wykeham's College at Winchester and the hospital of St. Cross. On the accession of Mary, Stephen Gardiner, who had been deprived under the Protectorate of Somerset and confined to the Tower, was at once restored to his see of Winchester, and made Lord Chancellor of England. He crowned the Queen in West-

minster Abbey, and later on received her and Philip at Winchester, where the ill-starred marriage was celebrated—the chair in which the Queen sat being still on show in the cathedral. During her miserable reign, but not during the lifetime of Gardiner, four Protestants were burnt in the diocese for their opinions. In the time of James I. the saintly Lancelot Andrews was for nearly twenty years Bishop of Winchester. As a preacher, and especially as a writer of devotional literature, his reputation is deservedly supreme, and he has been well called “Doctor Andrews in the schools, Bishop Andrews in the diocese, and Saint Andrews in the closet.” It was during his episcopate that the Channel Islands, which for many years after their union with England remained under the episcopal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Coutances, were finally transferred to the diocese of Winchester.

During the period of the Civil War many stirring incidents took place in the city and diocese of Winchester. The city was captured by Waller, and the victorious troopers broke into the cathedral during morning service, with drums beating and colours flying, and “rode up through the body of the church and the chancel till they came to the altar.” They then proceeded, it is said, to sweep away such ornaments as remained, to demolish the organ, to ransack the muniment room, to break open the mortuary chests, and to fling the bones at the stained-glass windows. Wykeham’s chantry, however, remained untouched, owing to the zeal of one Nathaniel Fiennes, an officer in the Parliamentary army, and an old Wykehamist, who stood at the doorway with drawn sword and saved it from injury. Then, we are told, “the troopers rode through the streets in surplices with such hoods and tippets as they found; and that they might boast to the world how glorious a victory they had achieved, they held out their trophies to all spectators; for the troopers, thus clad in the priests’ vestments, rode carrying Common Prayer-Books in one hand, and some broken organ-pipes, together with the mangled pieces of carved work, in the other.” Wolvesey Palace was dismantled, and has remained a ruin ever since. The stately palace at Bishops Waltham shared the same fate, the Bishop barely escaping, according to local tradition, in a farm-cart, covered over with a layer of manure. Farnham Castle, too, fell into the hands of the Parliament, and the dungeons were filled with Royalist prisoners. It is interesting to notice that some of Cromwell’s letters are dated from Farnham. The historic siege of Basing House need only be alluded to, and the bloody battle of Cheriton, the last fought on Hampshire soil. A “famous fight” took place in Alton Church, where a

number of bullets may still be seen embedded in the pillars. Colonel Bolles was shot in the pulpit, and a memorial commemorating his death may be seen in Winchester Cathedral.

After the Restoration, George Morley, who had been chaplain to Charles II. during his exile, was made Bishop of Winchester. No more honourable or saintly man ever occupied the ancient see. A man of immense wealth, he lived the life of an ascetic, and his little room under the stairs at Farnham Castle may still be seen. Farnham Castle he almost rebuilt; the stately staircase, the magnificent hall as we now see it, the chapel with its rich carving, said to be the work of Grinling Gibbons, are due to him. He also built a new palace at Winchester close beside the ruins of Wolvesey Castle, now used, owing to the energy of Bishop Thorold, as a church house for the diocese. Two intimate friends of the good Bishop call for honourable mention. One was Thomas Ken, the author of the Morning and the Evening Hymns, at that time a Prebendary of Winchester, who built for himself an everlasting name by refusing to give "poor Nelly" a lodging. The other was Izaak Walton, the grand old fisherman, and brother-in-law of Thomas Ken, who often fished in the clear streams at Winchester and Farnham. The diocese is also indebted to Bishop Morley for the cathedral library, which he bequeathed to the Dean and Chapter, "but not for their benefit only, but also for the use and benefit of such clergymen and country parsons, vicars and curates, as have not a sufficient stock of books of their own, nor yet money to buy them."

On the death of good Bishop Morley, Peter Mews, the soldier-bishop, succeeded to Winchester. He is memorable, not for learning or piety or munificence, but for actually taking a part in the battle of Sedgemoor; and the defeat of Monmouth is said to have been due in no small degree to the skill with which he led the King's artillery into action. In the Bloody Assize which followed the rebellion one revolting incident took place at Winchester. Dame Alice Lisle, of Moyle Court, an aged lady of noble and kindly disposition, was condemned to death by the infamous Jeffreys for giving shelter to two of Monmouth's followers. The cathedral clergy remonstrated with the Chief Justice in vain, and the illustrious lady was beheaded on a scaffold in the market-place of Winchester on September 2, 1685.

Sir Jonathan Trelawney, who followed Mews, was one of the seven bishops committed to the Tower by James II. for presenting the famous petition against the Declaration of Indulgence, and the once popular song, "And shall Trelawney die," referred to him. Of the Whig bishops the most celebrated

was Benjamin Hoadley, "the object," says Gibbon, "of Whig idolatry and Tory abhorrence." He was a powerful pamphleteer, a latitudinarian of the latitudinarians, and the practical cause of the suspension of Convocation, a step which he regarded with distinct approval. He has been accused of holding Arian opinions, a charge to which his son replied that, "if it were so, he knew how to distinguish between private opinions and the practice of the Church." Hoadley was the Bishop who, when urged to restock Waltham Chase with deer, refused, from a motive, says Gilbert White, worthy of a prelate, that "it had done mischief enough already."

It is pleasant to be able to turn from the Church history of the last century, with its spiritual lethargy and flagrant nepotism, to the simple, unambitious, but most fruitful life of Gilbert White of Selborne. He was content to spend his days amid the beautiful surroundings of his native village, beneath the shadow of the beech-grown hill, noting the ways of birds and beasts, and holding communion with Nature. His celebrated letters on "Natural History" have made Selborne classic ground to all English-speaking peoples; and year by year hundreds of English and Americans visit the quiet spot in the churchyard where a simple headstone, with the letters "G. W." inscribed upon it, marks the spot where the great naturalist is buried.

In the present century it is impossible even to mention the distinguished names connected with the diocese of Winchester. It may be remembered, however, that in the early part of the century the most popular religious work, "The Annals of the Poor," was the outcome of Legh Richmond's ministry in the Isle of Wight; while in 1817 one of the most gifted of English writers, Jane Austen, was laid to rest in Winchester Cathedral. In the middle portion of the century three conspicuous names in the world of literature must be mentioned — Charles Kingsley, of Eversley, John Keble, of Hursley, and Richard Chenevix Trench, who, until he was made Dean of Westminster, was Vicar of the little village of Itchenstoke, near Alresford. Of later celebrities it would be invidious to speak, but we may be pardoned if, in conclusion, we call attention to the long line of distinguished prelates who since 1827 have occupied the throne of St. Swithun. For over forty years the princely Bishop Sumner, whose name is intimately associated with the Evangelical revival, ruled the diocese; then followed Samuel Wilberforce; then for seventeen years the saintly theologian Edward Harold Browne; then the wise and munificent Bishop Thorold, whose striking biography has lately been reviewed in the pages of this magazine.

JOHN VAUGHAN.