

Communication from the Reverend E. H. Evans, M.A., concerning an Early Sixteenth Century Manuscript and certain Printed Matter found in the Watching Loft, St. Albans Abbey Church, in January, A.D., 1912.

IN the early part of the year 1912 a young man was taking measurements in the Watching Loft in the Saint's Chapel, in connection with his architectural work, when at the top of the North-east corner he noticed that some papers had been stuffed into a rather large hole there. He took no particular notice of these old papers, and replaced them where he had found them. Some time afterwards he mentioned the circumstance to me in the course of conversation, and together we went up into the Loft. We removed the papers, and after getting rid of the worst of the accumulated dust and dirt, we realized that they were fairly ancient documents which had evidently been in the hole for a very long time. It is quite possible that they may have been stuffed into the hole by a monk on watch there, who felt a draught. The documents were much torn, and needed careful handling.

They comprise three separate fragments, two of them being printed documents.

1. This is merely a fragment and comes from a book which was printed abroad, probably in Paris, as the only printers in England of the contemporary date who had a type as small as this were some Oxford printers, and their type does not agree with the type used in this document. It forms a portion of a Calendar—in fact, a kind of “Old Moores’ Almanac.” The year for which the dates of the occurrence of the New Moons are correct is 1521. We may therefore conclude that it was printed in 1520—the same year as that of the second fragment. The forecasts for the first three months of the year were given on a previous page, and begin upon this fragment in the middle of April. The rest of the first leaf and the whole of the second prepared the reader for various events likely to happen within the year. The headings are as follows:—“Concerning the fruitfulness and scarcity of this year,” “Concerning Peace and War.” There are also several paragraphs relating to the sun and moon, and lastly, one which does not end upon the leaf, about the Most Illustrious and Powerful Charles Cæsar Augustus—probably Charles V., Emperor of Germany.

2. The second fragment has been easily identified. It consists of the title page and one other of a book of which no complete copy is known to exist. There is a copy of the last leaf in the Collection of Ames and Herbert, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The title page reads thus:—

“The Institution of a Christian Man. Printed in London by Henry Pepwell, in St. Paul’s Churchyard, at the sign of the Holy Trinity; in the year of Our Lord, 1520.”

This “Institution of a Christian Man” must not be confused with the “Institution of a Christian Man,” generally known as the “Bishops’ Book,” which was published by the authority of Henry VIII. in 1537. It was compiled by Dean Colet (1466-1519), and was put into Latin verse by his friend Erasmus. The fragment contains an exposition of the Creed down to “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” and also an instruction to the Christian on preparation for death, including the use of Confession, Holy Communion and Extreme Unction.

3. This is a Manuscript. I submitted it to experts at the Record Office, who say that it was written certainly during the reign of Henry VIII. It is evidently a letter from one named Waldenus to a person named Este or East. The following is a translation of the letter :—

“Waldenus to his master Este greeting. I wonder greatly that you, a man so distinguished, and the high priest of first-class literature, should have enjoyed (looked favourably upon) our trifles, *i.e.*, the rude poems which are of no intellectual worth or splendour. I blush considerably to give now to a letter-carrier letters for you, so great a man, and of such learning, except that you will give your opinion upon them. Furthermore, I should not like altogether to refuse such a trifling gift to you, endowed (as you are) with so many virtues and illuminated also with gifts of extreme eloquence, lest I should seem to you impolite. Besides you will perhaps think us slack, owing to our being tired out, or too lazy to spend time (in such a way)—or finally (what is worse) given to excessive drinking. I send you at last, others, not the same which you requested by daily entreaties, if I am not to say by violent demands—poems, not indeed sufficiently finished for your eyes—of which I desire there should be no other reader but yourself. I will not detain you further, for you are a man with whom I am on very friendly terms by letters, beseeching you, if I have made by chance any mistakes in my letters, your very polished style will correct it. Farewell, Glory of Letters, and remember me in your prayers.”

On the reverse side of the letter, in the same hand, is written :—

“ A person whose mind is disturbed with foul vices,
From his own deeds looks harder at the deeds of others.
Do not, I pray, look at mine (though thine own deeds are bad);
Guess whatever you like, you do not know what I think to myself.”
(Translation.)

And :—

“ We have spent much labour in the hay-time in carrying in fodder for the cattle to be nourished in winter.”

It would be interesting to trace who these people were. As to the writer of the letter, I can make no suggestion other than that his name may connect him in some way with the village of Walden.

As regards the man to whom the letter was written, Este, or East, there seems to be some reason for connecting him with William Este, who was Archdeacon of St. Albans in 1538, and held that office at the surrender of the Abbey to the Crown on 5th December, 1539, when he was allotted a pension of £12. He was Archdeacon again in 1550, and was also Rector of the Abbey Parish in 1555. It seems likely that he was a monk of St. Alban's Abbey as far back as 1520—the suggested date of Waldenus's letter—and may well have been a man of considerable learning since he was chosen to be Archdeacon, not once, but twice. We may therefore venture to suggest that Archdeacon William Est, whilst a monk of St. Alban's Abbey, was the recipient of this letter. It is interesting to note that this early Rector of the Abbey Parish and Archdeacon of St. Albans held office in the Church of England both before and after those changes which took place in the middle of the Sixteenth Century.

The three documents have been carefully restored at the Record Office, have been placed in glazed frames, and now hang in the Vestry of the Cathedral.

[NOTE.—It is quite evident from the *Records of the Old Archdeaconry of St. Albans* that William Est, B.D., appointed Archdeacon of St. Albans before the Dissolution, in 1538, held office as Archdeacon as late as 20th October, 1554—that is through the later years of the reign of Henry VIII., through the reign of Edward VI., and into the reign of Queen Mary. Giles Ferrars seems to have held the office of Archdeacon in 1546, but only for a few months. On the 24th August, 1546, Dr. Est instituted, and on 28th August he inducted John Amery to the Vicarage of Codicote. It is important to note that as Archdeacon he continued to exercise some, at any rate, of the prerogatives of the Abbot of the dissolved Monastery, for he both instituted and inducted priests to the cure of souls at Codicote in 1546 and at St. Michael's in 1549.—H.R.W.H.]

The Victoria History of the County of Hertford.**Volume IV.**

NO special mention has been made in our Proceedings as to the progress of the "Victoria Histories of the Counties of England," under the Editorship of Mr. William Page, F.S.A., a Member of this Society of many years' standing, a Vice-President, and for a number of years one of its Secretaries.

The recent issue of the History of Hertfordshire, Volume IV., is an outstanding event in Local Archæology.

The long-looked-for section upon Celtic and Romano-British Hertfordshire by Mr. Page is a fascinating piece of work and contains much suggestive material for further research. In the Ecclesiastical History of the County the Pre-Norman section is by the same author, and this, with the Post-Norman section, brings together the Church History of the County in a way never before possible. This will be of enormous help to those who are trying to work out the story of the life which centres round our old Parish Churches. The Social and Economical History section will be found equally suggestive, and it will throw much light upon the somewhat dry and uninviting contents of old Church Chests and Muniment Rooms, often the despair of the budding antiquary.

Mr. Page deals most thoroughly with the Story of St. Alban, examining judiciously all the more recent theories and researches connected therewith, and drawing well-balanced conclusions therefrom which are reassuring and convincing. In the early history of St. Alban's Abbey he throws considerable light upon the succession of the Saxon Abbots, which will repay careful study.

To another of our Members, Mr. A. Whitford Anderson, we are indebted for the careful and discriminating Architectural Description of the Churches, which is of very great value. Other Members of our Society have had some share in the work, and to them and to the many other men and women who have assisted, all lovers of the past and what it has to teach us are deeply indebted. Experts in various departments of research may, of course, find points open to adverse criticism, but they will find many more to commend.