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Cambridge by Arthur Gray

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ARTHUR GRAY

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OF
SAINT RADEGUND
CAMBRIDGE

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PREFACE.

WHEN this publication was first projected I had hopes that the portion of it relating to the buildings of the Nunnery would have been, wholly or in part, furnished by my friend, Mr T. D. Atkinson. Though Mr Atkinson's engagements have prevented him from taking so large a part in the work as was originally contemplated, I gratefully acknowledge the assistance he has throughout given me both in exploration of sites and buildings and in placing at my disposal his notes and suggestions.

The extent of my indebtedness to the *Architectural History* is, I hope, apparent in the section dealing with the Nunnery buildings. But my principal obligation to the Registrary is not of the kind that can be acknowledged in a footnote. Without his suggestion this work would never have been written; without the advantage of his counsel and knowledge it would have been much more imperfect than it is.

Among other friends who have given me valuable help are Prof. Maitland, Prof. Skeat, the Rev. J. H. Crosby, Minor Canon of Ely, and the Rev. O. Fisher, Honorary Fellow of Jesus College and Rector of Harlton.

The Catalogue of Charters here printed includes only such as relate to property situated in the town and fields of Cambridge. I have not deemed it worth while to give abstracts of those which are concerned with the scattered holdings of the Nuns in other places. The Catalogue remarkably supplements the very detailed information about medieval Cambridge which is supplied by the Hundred Rolls. Combining what is to be learnt from each source it would be no

difficult task to make a very complete directory of the town in the last quarter of the 13th century. The witnesses to the Charters in most cases were the mayor and four bailiffs with two or three occupants of property adjoining the tenement in question. I have generally given the name of the first witness only.

Extracts of some length from the Account Rolls were given in the First Report of the Historical MSS. Commissioners: the accounts in full are here printed for the first time. They furnish some interesting materials for illustrating life in an English Nunnery at the close of the middle ages. In the earlier and more prosperous years to which they introduce us, it is a life wholly untinged by the influences of the University. The Nuns were drawn from the families of the better class burgesses and lesser gentry of the county, and their habits and education were those of their class. The town and its religious houses still occupied in their outlook a far larger space than the University. The 'good friendship' of the Chancellor—in a matter, perhaps, of arbitration with a College—was appropriately recompensed in the year 1449—1450 with a present of a crane, value twelve pence; it is set in quaint juxtaposition with the Christmas box to the Mayor's waits, who receive the magnificent sum of 2s. 3d. The proportion of the two sums is possibly an indication of the relative consequence in the Nuns' thoughts of the academic and municipal corporations, both of which, it may be observed, had an origin long subsequent to that of their own establishment.

On the debated subject of the date of the first emergence of a University at Cambridge the S. Radegund's charters throw no light. Among the variety of tenants mentioned in the deeds of the 12th and 13th centuries there is no individual or corporation whose name or description suggests connection with an organized community of scholars. The surnames of the tenants previous to 1300 indicate that they were almost exclusively from the neighbourhood of Cambridge. Of migrants from Oxford or scholars from over sea there is no hint; the

Jews were the only strangers to Cambridge with whom the Nuns had acquaintance in those early days. A solitary 'Scolemayster' (Charters 157, 158), who dwelt hard by the site on which Peterhouse afterwards rose, represents the learning of Cambridge in the first years of the 13th century. Possibly he was connected with a monastic school.

Before taking leave of my subject I should not forget to mention two members of my College who have worked in the same field in generations by-gone. John Sherman's History of Jesus College (written about the year 1666) is introduced by a sketch of the History of the Nunnery which he entitles *Reliquiæ Sanctæ Radegundis sive Fragmenta quaedam Historiæ Prioratus*. Sherman had made a faithful study of the Nunnery muniments. He is generally accurate and, as he may have had before him documents which are not now discoverable, it is possible that he is right in some matters about which I have supposed him to be mistaken. But I do not think that since his time there has been any noteworthy subtraction from the Jesus muniments. Well protected from damp, dust and insects, they have probably profited by the neglect in which they have generally lain for 200 years. About the middle of last century their repose was disturbed by the careful hands of Dr Lynford Caryl, who was Master of Jesus, 1758—1780, and Registry of the University from 1751 to 1758. He arranged and catalogued them in a very exact and methodical manner. Among his merits not the least was that of writing in a very clear and beautiful hand. I have discovered some fifty charters of Nunnery date which escaped his notice, but none of them are of much importance. When the present Treasury was built in 1875 and the documents were transferred to it, some of them were misplaced, and for a time I supposed them to be lost. But gradually all, or nearly all, those mentioned in Dr Caryl's catalogue have found their way back to their places.

ARTHUR GRAY.

JESUS COLLEGE,
October, 1898.



Fig. I. SEAL OF THE PRIORY.

ANNALS OF THE NUNNERY.

§ 1. *Foundation and connection with the See of Ely.*

THE establishment, near Cambridge, of the cell of Benedictine nuns which was later known as the Priory of S. Mary and S. Radegund seems to date from the earliest years of the reign of King Stephen. There is no evidence to fix the precise year of its institution but it is fairly certain that it falls within the episcopate of Nigellus, who succeeded the first bishop, Hervey, in the see of Ely in 1133.

The Priory seems to have had no charter of foundation, nor is there any extant record of its first endowment. Such property as it possessed in early days was acquired gradually and in comparatively small parcels. Even the endowments which it derived from royal benefactors such as the Countess Constance and Malcolm of Scotland were not so important as to entitle the donors to be regarded in any sense as founders or patrons.

It is true that in the letters patent of Henry VII for the dissolution of the Nunnery and the erection of the College in its room it is asserted—evidently on the representation of Bishop Alcock—that S. Radegund's Priory was 'of the foundation and patronage of the Bishop, as in right of his cathedral church of Ely.' This was, I believe, the first and only occasion on which such a claim was advanced by a bishop of Ely, and, having regard to the circumstances under which it was made, I do not think that much importance should be attached to it. In the charter which the Lady Margaret obtained, a few years