

**CHRONICON MONASTERII  
DE BELLO. NUNC PRIMUM  
TYPIS MANDATUM**

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Chronicon Monasterii de Bello. Nunc primum typis mandatum by Battle Abbey

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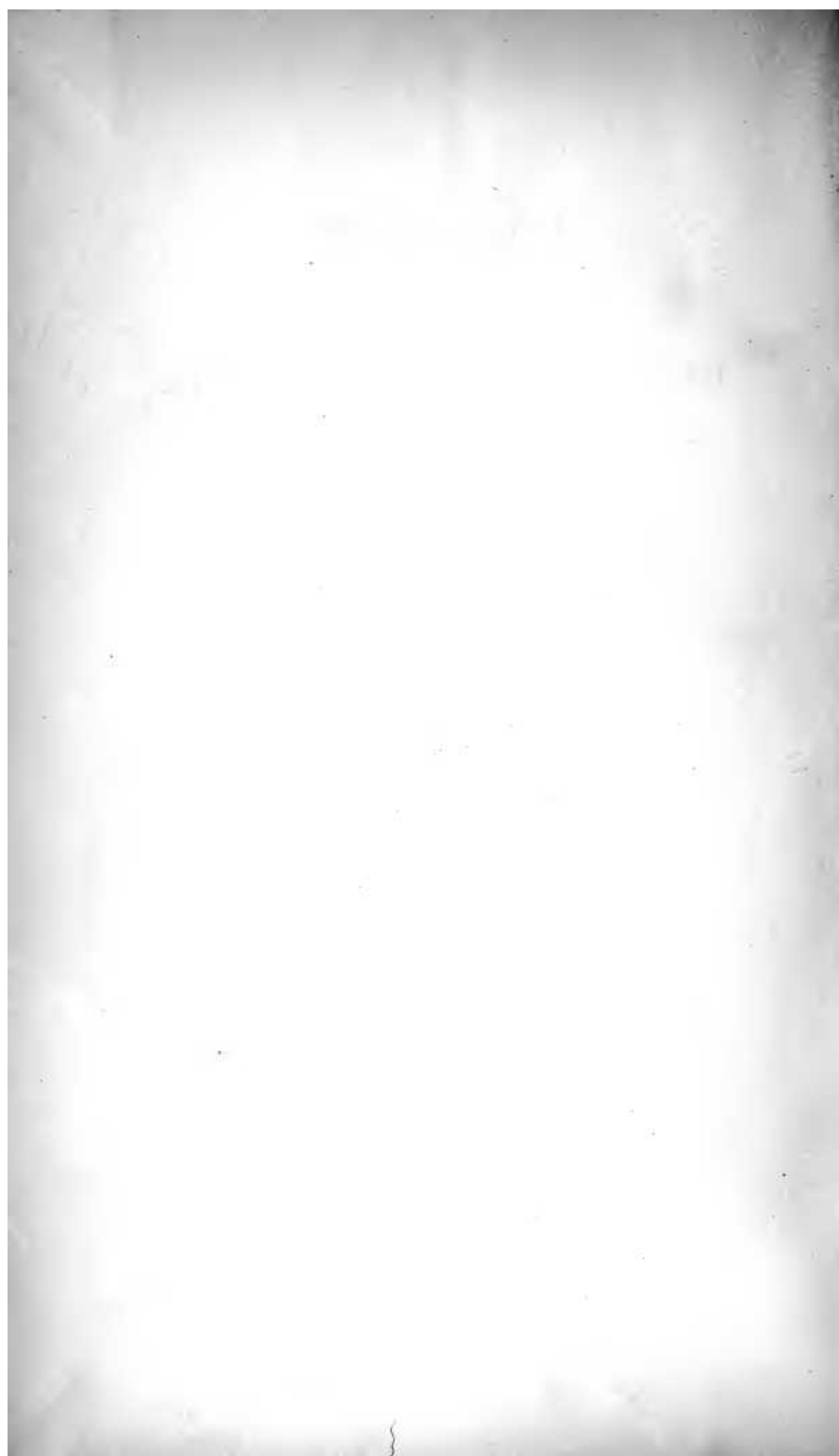
**BATTLE ABBEY**

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CHRONICON  
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## PREFACE.

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THE following HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION OF BATTLE ABBEY, now for the first time presented to the public, has been printed from a transcript made by the Record Commission, under the direction of the late Mr. Petrie. For permission to use this transcript, the Society is indebted to the liberality of Sir James Graham, who kindly permitted them the loan of this and of other papers of a similar nature.

It needs scarcely to be stated, that the present Editor has carefully collated Mr. Petrie's copy with the original manuscript preserved in the Cottonian Collection, in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> The Notes, Index, and the Preface, together with the Apendix at the end of the Volume, have also been added by the same hand.

Although Mr. Petrie had evidently intended to prepare this work for the press, in order that it should form part of our National Chronicles, and had carefully read it for that purpose, yet he had made little or no progress in his task, except so far as a few conjectural emendations marked in pencil (where he doubted the fidelity of the transcript) may be considered to be of this description. It has not been deemed necessary to retain those queries, nor his occasional suggestions of various readings, for these reasons, among others: first, because it has ever been a rule with the present Editor, to adhere strictly to the MS. wherever the original yielded a tolerable sense; and, secondly, because it could not be ascertained, whether

<sup>1</sup> Domitian II. A MS. on vellum of the twelfth century.



Mr. Petrie, on more mature consideration, would have retained such emendations, had he lived to finish his work.<sup>1</sup> With this brief statement we may now proceed to make some observations on the Chronicle before us.

It commences with the Battle of Hastings, and extends to the year 1176—an era of the utmost importance in the annals of English Monasticism. The great struggle between the two powers of the Church (the prelaty and the religious orders) dates itself from this period, and the dawning of that emancipation from Episcopal interference, which was fully consummated by the latter under Innocent III.

In the weakness of that political system, which exercised a very inefficient control over the turbulent spirits of the age, it was the policy of William I. and his successors to raise up some antagonistic power sufficient to restrain the great Barons, whether secular or ecclesiastical, who trampled under foot all social institutions, and seemed to look upon this kingdom as their own possession by the right of conquest. Respecting no laws, they made no scruple of plundering the Church, and set its protectors at defiance, imitating those acts of oppression of which their Sovereigns were guilty on a greater scale.

To these causes may be assigned the development of an ecclesiastical order till then unknown; and the existence of a class of bishops endowed with power and authority, living in splendour and riches, never before witnessed by our Saxon forefathers, as never required in their times. Such power and authority was necessary to check the fierce despotism of this age, which had otherwise soon converted this country into its primitive barbarism.

With this power and influence of the Bishops grew the power and wealth of the Religious Foundations; for,

<sup>1</sup> Two instances may be mentioned: at p. 8, ten lines from the bottom, Mr. Petrie had proposed to read *sævo* for *scævo*, contrary to the sense of the passage, as much as against the rules of criticism; again, at p. 99, line 13, the transcriber had written *proculat*, to which Mr. Petrie had added, as a note, '*proculio*, longe dimoveo.'

with few exceptions, the prosperity of the hierarchy and of the monastic orders was a common cause, and at this time neither of them had reason to be jealous of the other.

The reign of Stephen and the troubles consequent upon its disturbances, raised the nobility, both ecclesiastical and secular, to a degree of importance never enjoyed by them before. But in the lawlessness which then prevailed, Monasticism seemed to make no progress; it was enough, says the Author of this work, if a man could preserve only a small portion of his own, without attempting to recover what had been unjustly taken from him. And yet this assertion must not be admitted without some qualification. In the great struggles of this reign, and in the rapid interchange of power from one Prince to another, new notions were gaining ground, which led to great and unforeseen results. Men had learned to see that some other authority existed than that with which they had been familiar—one that till then had been overlaid by the tyranny and domination of the Norman Kings. Externally unfavourable to Monasticism, the fierce convulsions of this reign tended to advance in a great measure an invisible and Divine power, and taught men to recognise another dominion, one that was based upon an invisible and spiritual, but not the less real foundation.

It is not intended by these remarks, to assert that this conviction was altogether new to England; there is sufficient evidence of its acknowledgment in the earlier Councils of the nation. But thus much may be affirmed with certainty, that it was a novel thing in its new shape, in this distinct, separate, and independent existence. It was never before brought so vividly before the eyes of men—it was never so dogmatically asserted—it was not considered so much a distinct and independent element—it did not address itself so prominently to men's senses, nor was the necessity of it so strongly felt. In

the more patriarchal government of the Anglo-Saxons—more mild as it was more religious in its character—the power of the Prince was a reflection of the power of the Lord; it was in a manner derived from him, as his was from the father of the family. Each great landowner formed a centre round which his tenants and his vassals gathered; each one had little or no connexion with other Lords, no systematic form, no clear line of demarcation defining the just limits of ecclesiastical and lay jurisdiction, for no such necessity existed. But it was far otherwise when the Norman power was established in this country: it disturbed all previous relationships—crushed all usages, and remodelled them upon a stern and unbending system—systematized the whole forms of government, swallowed up all independencies, and made all dependent upon the King's person as the source of power. Then all individual independency was gone, and with it the ancient independency of family circles and lordships. Then, for the first time, the doctrine was sensibly taught, that all authority emanated from one prime and visible head. Were this the place for such details, it might easily be shewn that these remarks apply with equal justice to the ecclesiastical as well as to the civil power. And how thoroughly the Norman Kings had learned to persuade themselves of the truth of it, how well they had conned their lesson, might be further shewn by reference to the acts of their reigns, and from the History now before the reader. Let him turn, for an exemplification of it, to the remarkable conference held before Henry II., when these new opinions, to which the troubles of Stephen's reign had given life and vigour, came to be seriously argued.

It was not to be expected that the principles thus promulgated by the Norman Sovereigns, and upheld by them with so much tyranny and oppression, should not, sooner or later, be turned against themselves, even had their reigns been less marked than they were with violence and