

THE CHRONICLE OF ETHELFLED

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649548934

The Chronicle of Ethelfled by Anne Manning

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017


This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ANNE MANNING

**THE CHRONICLE
OF ETHELFLED**

THE
CHRONICLE
OF
ETHEL FLED.



SET FORTH BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE, & CO.,
25, Paternoster Row.

1861.

Co



PREFACE.

WE would not advise the frugal reader to consume too much midnight oil in ascertaining the authenticity of this pseudo-chronicle, lest he thereby impair his entertainment. We have collated it with that of Asser, from whose manuscript we derive nearly all the information we possess, and are accustomed to believe, of our glorious king. But doubts have been raised concerning the genuineness even of Asser's work; and had ALFRED written his life himself, there be those who would have found it done amiss. Let us earnestly enjoin the reader, therefore, to believe as much or as little of this work as he chooses: taking heed not to call anything in it an anachronism

till he has searched the Saxon historians and likewise Sharon Turner; lest peradventure he himself be caught tripping.

There seemed no reason why our pseudo-translation should not be in the modern vernacular, save in the occasional use of an archaistic expression which had "no incongruity nor unnatural strangeness," to suggest the good abbeſs's own use of an evident Saxonism badly Latinized.





CHRONICLE of ETHELFLED.

— — — — —

BOOK I.

INASMUCH as sundry persons have taken in hand, whether with or without reason, to set forth in order the notable things which in divers times and places have happened, it seems good also to me, Ethelfleda, Abbess of this poor house of St. Audrey, to record certain events, for causes that will in fit season appear.

I Ethelfled, second daughter of Athelred, surnamed Mucil, Earl of the Gaini,¹ was born in the year of our Lord's incarnation 858. My sister Ethelfwitha was by five years my elder. Now it came to pass, about a week after her first coming into this naughty world, that my mother had a dream concerning her, somewhat after the fashion of the patriarch Joseph, to the effect that

¹ Gainborough.

2 *Chronicle of Ethelfled.*

the child newly born should eventually be set up on high, and that her father, mother, and kindred should do homage to her, which in due time came to pass. And this gives me occasion to think that dreams are not always mere phantasies of the brain, but that on occasions suited for the discernible action of a superior intelligence, visions of forthcoming events are sometimes disclosed to the inward and spiritual sight.

By reason of the frequent incursions of the pagans, who laid hands alike on live stock, arms, chests of plate, and noble damsels, my father was fain to commit my sister and me to the care of an aunt, who was Superior of one of the very few religious houses left in Mercia for the refuge of holy and high-born virgins. This was about the time of the good King Ethelbert's death. Ethelred his brother then reigned over West Saxony in his stead. That was in the days of our King Buhred. It mattered very little to my sister and me who reigned, as long as mother Gundred let us see her hive the bees and take the honey. Ethelwitha was fairer and more facetious than I, therefore the greater favourite; and being by so many years m

Chronicle of Ethelfled. 3

elder, had many pleasures and indulgences which I had not ; but, on the other hand, I had many pleasures too, all to myself. For instance,—fabling certain flowers to talk to one another and to me, and to tell of their how and about. Also fancying certain trees and patches of chalk on the hill-side into images of dragons and ghosts until I was fore ydrad, and yet feeling a strange mixture of pleasure and trepidation in going up to the dragon's mouth with a handful of grass, and saying, "Dragon, will you bite me?" and then running away. There were certain peep-holes through the oak-palings, and dark corners among the tree-roots, that I should have been sorry if any had wift of except myself. Once, lying under a hollow oak, I seemed to feel the fairies pulling at my hair, that they might get withinside of the trunk. One of my peep-holes looked into our burial-ground. I knew defunct persons lay there, their faces all turned upward ; and my aunt the Abbess told me their souls went to heaven. I thought if I kept a sharp look-out, I should see some of them going there, on a starry night, if any of the nuns would but die.

There was a Sister who, I think, was as

4 *Chronicle of Ethelfled.*

learned as Leobgitha, the correspondent of Boniface. She was always making enigmata, and poring over manuscripts. Of her I acquired my facility of writing, which the King says is remarkable; but, in regard of its neatness, I am always at the mercy of my pen;—however, I now always have a good one.

About the year 869, my sister and I were sent home. Thenceforth, my father, mother, and Ethelfwitha were much at court; but, by reason of my tender years, I went not. After one of these their visits, it was currently reported among us that Alfred, Prince of the West Saxons, whose sister had married our king, would shortly come to see our chafe. The best tablecloth was washed, and many dishes were cooked; howbeit, he came not. The fewer, the better cheer; and I was less disappointed than was Ethelfwitha. This time, she told me so many fine things about the court, that when they all returned to it, which they shortly did, I felt for the first time lonely. They had made a pretty clear larder before they went, and I was left nominal mistress of the household, both fervile and freed, but with very little to do, except to see a stag now and then put his head