A Brief Sketch

OF THE

HISTORY

OF THE

Priory of Coldingham

BY

WILLIAM BROCKIE,
BISHOPWEARMOUTH.

INTRODUCTION TO THE
2003 EDITION.

It has been over one hundred and seventeen years since this work, by William Brockie, was first published. The volume contains much of interest for those with a desire for information on both Coldingham Priory and the fortunes of the settlement, which grew within its shadow.

While one or two of the paragraphs contained within the work are based on unverifiable local legend and myth, which greatly appealed to the romantic sensibilities of our Victorian ancestors. Mr. Brockie’s “little work” is, on the whole, well researched and written with a reasonable amount of historical rigor. The recount describing the mid eighteenth century restoration of the priory is of particular value.

This edition has been based on that, first printed by the Kelso based publishers J. & J.H. Rutherfurd. Due to our wish to make this work available to as wide an audience as possible, we have reset the entire volume. Therefore, through the power of the Internet, you may just as likely be, reading these words from a computer screen, than from a book. A prospect that William Brockie, as he wrote this work, could never have imagined, but which would certainly have amazed him.

St. Abbs, Berwickshire.
October 2003
PREFACE.

The following little work has no higher pretensions than to give a brief summary of the history of Coldingham Abbey, which, dating from the foundation of the nunnery by the Princess Ebba, is the oldest religious house in Scotland. To do full justice to the subject would require a large volume. The Documents extant at Durham, if translated into English and published at length, would alone form one of the most interesting repertories of archaeological lore that can well be conceived; but there is, we are afraid, very little chance of this task ever being undertaken. Meanwhile, the volume on Coldingham Abbey published under the auspices of the Surtees Society sufficiently answers the purpose of those who are so fortunate as to be adepts in reading the cramped and semi-barbarous Latin of the Middle Ages, with its innumerable puzzling contractions; and Mr W. K. Hunter’s “History” of the Priory, published in 1858, to which we have been much indebted, may be consulted at their leisure by such persons as wish to make themselves acquainted with what has been written at large on the subject in the English language by a competent hand. The value of the present compilation will be much enhanced to general readers by the beautiful pictorial illustrations which the publishers have then care to furnish at considerable expense.

Bishopwearmouth, Sunderland,
August 1886.
ARCH NEAR CHURCH AND PART OF KING EDGAR’S WALL
FROM N.E. (Etched by Cardonnel 1793.)

FRAGMENT OF CLOISTERS FROM S.W. (Etched By Cadonnel 1793)

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COLDINGHAM PRIORY.

Its Ancient Name.

Coldingham has a claim to very remote antiquity. It is mentioned by Beda in his “Ecclesiastical History,” and also in his “Life of St. Cuthbert,” under the Latin name of “Coludi urbs” or “Coludana urbs,” translated by King Alfred into “Coludes burh” or “Colundes burh.”

Princess Ebba’s Foundation.

The religious house there was founded by the Princess Æbba or Ebba, daughter of King Ethelfrid, and sister of Eanfrid, Oswald, and Oswin, successively kings of Bernicia. To escape from the solicitations of Penda, the pagan King of Merica, or Mid-England, who sought to obtain her in marriage, she resolved to leave Northumberland, and take refuge in East Anglia. She accordingly embarked for that purpose, but was driven by a storm on the coast of Berwickshire, and got ashore in a little creek near the promontory formed by the easternmost spur of the Lammermoor Hills, now known from her name as St. Abb’s Head. This was in the year 670. Finding a convenient spot not far from the landing place, she resolved to found a convent there, of which, when she had accomplished her purpose, she became the first abbess.

Both Monks and Nuns included.

To what monastic order it belonged is not known; but it seems that the establishment consisted of monks as well as of nuns, a juxtaposition which was by no means singular in those days, when the monasteries were in some places designed for the seats of bishops and their clergy, in others for the residence of secular priests, whose duty it was to preach and administer the sacraments over a pretty wide circuit, and in every case the convent was furnished with the means of imparting instruction to such likely youths as offered themselves for scholastic training. The double monasteries, of which there were a good many, consisted of two buildings, one of which was exclusively devoted to monks, the other to nuns, with an abbess presiding over both. All intercourse was strictly prohibited between the sexes; nor were the monks and nuns allowed to appear together under the same roof, excepting only when the priest met the sisterhood in the church for the purpose of celebrating mass at the altar. The abbess herself, when occasion demanded that she should communicate with the monks, had to deliver her instructions to them, or listen to their applications, at one of the windows of the abbey. The male and female recluses were thus debarred from enjoying each other’s society; yet they were enabled to contribute materially to each other’s comfort and welfare, for while the monks carried on the operations of husbandry and other mechanical employments that required great exertion, the nuns repaid them by such services as were more peculiarly feminine. It would appear that no vows of celibacy or of poverty were at first required of the persons who inhabited these places, though if they chose to enter the
bonds of wedlock they would have to leave the establishment. But towards the end of the seventh century it was strongly recommended to all such persons as had devoted themselves to a holy life to abstain from marrying, and in the end celibacy became universal among them. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, under whom the Church of England first became a regular compact body, with a perfect uniformity of discipline and worship, was the first prelate in this country who expressly enjoined it. He was certainly one of the greatest men that ever filled St. Augustine’s archiepiscopal chair. He died, in the 23rd year of his pontificate and the 89th of his age, in the year 690.

St. Cuthbert at Coldingham.

Beda, in his “Life of St. Cuthbert,” tells us that as the fame of the wonderful works done by that holy man, in and around the monastery of Melrose, was being spread abroad on all sides, the Abbess of Coldingham sent to him, begging him to come and edify both herself and the inmates of her monastery. “The holy man of God could not refuse what the charity of God’s handmaid so earnestly requested. He accordingly went thither, and, tarrying for some days, he expounded to all the way of justice, which he not only preached, but which in like manner he practised.” The venerable historian furthermore informs his readers that while the rest of the community were asleep at night it was the saint’s usual habit to go out alone and spend the greater part of the night in prayer and, solemn vigils; nor did he return home till the hour of common prayer was at hand. “One night” - so runs the tale - “one of the brethren of the same monastery, seeing him go out in silence, stealthily followed him, with the design of discovering where he was going, or what was his object.” He found that Cuthbert proceeded straightway to the sea, on the borders of which the monastery stood on a height; and “entering into the depths of the water, till the swelling waves reached to his arms and neck, he spent the darkness of the wakeful night in praises, which were accompanied with the sound of the waves. And when dawn was drawing near he came up to land and concluded his prayer on the shore on bended knees. And as he was doing this there came forth two beasts, vulgarly called otters [in the original ‘Lutræ’ but doubtless rather seals or sea-dogs], from the depths of the sea, which, stretched on the sand, began to warm his feet with their breath, and busily to wipe them dry with their hair. As soon as this service was concluded Cuthbert gave them his blessing, and dismissed them to their native waters, while he himself returned to the house to recite the canonical hymns with the brethren at the appointed hour. Meanwhile, the monk, who had been watching him from his hiding place, was struck with so much fear that he could with great difficulty reach home with tottering steps. Early in the morning he came to Cuthbert, and, throwing himself prostrate before him, with tears besought pardon for the guilt of his foolish presumption, never doubting but that Cuthbert knew what he had done during the night, and how much he had suffered. Whereupon Cuthbert answered - ‘What is the matter, brother? What have you done? Have you attempted to spy out why I went out at night? It was a very great fault; nevertheless, I forgive you, but only on this condition, that you promise not to reveal what you have seen to anyone before my death.’ The monk sincerely promised what the saint demanded, whereupon Cuthbert gave him his blessing, and so wiped away the fault and disquiet of mind which he had
so rashly incurred. The monk, keeping his promise faithfully, concealed in the silence of his heart the miracle to which he had been witness as long as Cuthbert lived, though he took care to publish it to many after his death."

**Dissolute Habits of the Inmates.**

It would appear that though Ebba was so holy as to be canonised as a saint after her death, the system under which she had in her charge, as abbess, a convent of men as well as of women, was not very favourable to the morals of the establishment. For Beda informs us that about the year 704 the monastery was consumed by fire, and that not owing to negligence alone (*per culpam incuriæ*), but as a judgment of heaven upon the inmates. All who knew the particulars, he says, could very easily see that the calamity happened on account of the wickedness of the inhabitants (*â malitià inhabitantium*), and chiefly of those who seemed to be the greatest amongst them (*praëcipue illorum qui majors esse videbantur;* in Alfred’s translation, *în thaera swythôn the thaer ealdormen waeron*). He goes on to say that "there wanted not a warning of the approaching punishment from the divine goodness by which they might have been corrected, and by fasting, tears, and prayers, like the Ninevites, have averted the anger of the just Judge." For a man of the Scottish race called Adamnan, "leading a life entirely devoted to God in continence and prayer, insomuch that he never took any food or drink except only on Sundays and Thursdays, but often spent whole nights in prayer," having had a vision of what was about to happen, told what he had seen to Ebba, "the mother of the congregation," who was much troubled at the prediction, but seems to have been unable to prevent the catastrophe. owing to the dissolute habits of those she ostensibly ruled over. "A person of unknown aspect," who warned the holy man as he was engaged one night in watching and singing psalms, told him that "having visited every part of the monastery, and looked into every one’s chamber and bed, he found none of them all, except only Adamnan, busy about the care of their souls, but all of them, both men and women, either indulging themselves in slothful sleep, or awake in order to commit sin. Even the cells that were built for praying or reading he saw converted into places of feasting, drinking, talking, and other luxuries, and the virgins dedicated to God, laying aside the respect due to their profession, whenever they were at leisure, applied themselves in weaving fine garments, either to use in adorning themselves like brides, to the danger of their condition, or to gain the favour of strange men, for which reason a heavy judgment from heaven was deservedly ready to fall on the place and its inhabitants by devouring fire." The Abbess was naturally much alarmed by this prediction, but was told, lest she might be too much afflicted, that the calamity would not happen in her days. The narrative goes on to the effect that the inmates of the monastery were for a short time "in some little fear," and, leaving off their sins, began to punish themselves; but after the Abbess’s death "they returned to their former filthy conversation - nay, they became more wicked, and when they thought themselves in peace and security they forthwith suffered the punishment of the aforesaid vengeance" (A.D. 709). "That all this so happened," says Beda, "was told me by my most reverend fellow-priest Ædgils, who then lived in that monastery, and who afterwards, when many of the inhabitants had departed thence on account of the
destruction, lived a long time in the monastery of Jarrow, and died there."

St. Cuthbert's Dislike of Women.

It is clear from this story that the monks and nuns, though dwelling in different parts of the edifice, were not so effectually separated as to prevent intercommunication, which seems to have led to a grievous relaxation of discipline, and the daily practice of many things quite inconsistent with their holy profession. Convinced of the danger of the too close juxtaposition of the religious of the two sexes, St. Cuthbert, soon after being made bishop of Lindisfarne, forbade the approach of women to his convent. They were not even allowed to enter the church where the monks performed their devotions, but had another church erected for their use at a considerable distance; and strange tales are related of the dreadful punishments that befell such unhappy females as presumed to disregard the saint's commandment, not only in the Holy Island, but in any of those other sacred places where his body had rested for a longer or shorter time in its migrations during the Danish inroads, and particularly in the church of Durham.

The Convents Comfortable Residences.

The monasteries in those days being generally well built, though almost all of timber, and being well endowed by the pious, were by far the most comfortable places of residence that then existed. Besides, about the end of the seventh century the doctrine began to be broached that as soon as any person put on the habit of a monk all the sins of his former life were forgiven; and this convenient tenet being currently believed, it became quite a common thing for princes and other great personages, possibly not so weary in well-doing as of the incessant turmoil outside, disappointed in their worldly aims and broken down in body and spirit, or apprehensive of the consequences that it was said would follow their misdeeds in another world if they were not absolved from them ere they took their leave of this, to put on the monastic garb, and end their days in monasteries. Ebba was not the only king's daughter by some dozens who took up a permanent residence in these places, from higher motives, we may charitably presume, than those which actuated many of the jaded world-weary entrants.

Queen Edilthryda.

Egfrid, King of Northumberland, who ascended the throne in the year 670, had married Edilthryda, the daughter of Anna, King of the East Angles. This singular female, at an early period of her life, bound herself by a vow of virginity; but her pious wish was opposed by the policy of her friends, and she was compelled to marry Tondberct, a nobleman of great power. Her entreaties, however, moved the breast of her husband, and he respected her chastity. At his death, her friends offered her in marriage to Egfrid, and she was conducted, a reluctant victim, to the Northumbrian court; but her constancy here also triumphed over her husband's passion, and after preserving her virginity during the space of twelve years, she obtained his permission to take the veil in the monastery at Coldingham, receiving it at the hands of the illustrious Bishop Wilfrid. But absence revived the affection of Egfrid, and he repented that he had given his consent to her becoming a nun.
He accordingly prepared to take her from her retreat by force, but, having been timeously warned, she got on board a vessel, and escaped to Ely, in her father’s kingdom, where she was chosen abbess of the monastery, which she governed to the day of her death. She was subsequently canonised as Elfleda, Virgin and Abbess, on account of her pious donations and exemplary austerities, and her annual festival is set down in the calendar for the 8th of February.

Ceowelph, King of Northumberland.

In a less venial spirit of self-abnegation, virtually forced upon him, Ceowelph, King of Northumberland, who, shortly after his elevation, had been seized by his rebellious nobles, shorn and shut up in a convent, but who, escaping from his confinement, had reascended the throne, only to witness the ravages of the semi-savage Mercians, and to experience the incessant alarms of impending treason amongst his subjects, voluntarily abandoned the disquieting crown, which he offered to God at the high altar, in the cathedral church at Lindisfarne, where he assumed the cowl, following the example of Cenrid, King of Mercia, and Offa, King of Essex, who had abdicated their power a few years previously, gone on pilgrimage to Rome, and assumed the monastic profession. Simeon of Durham informs us that King Ceowelph enabled Bishop Ecgred, by his pious liberality, to build a great number of churches between the Tweed and the Tyne. Amongst them were Carham, Coldingham, Jedburgh, Melrose, Norham, Tillmouth, Tyningham (in East Lothian), and Warkworth. But though he was thus generous to the Church, and had ostensibly renounced the world in order to "fight for a heavenly kingdom" with better hope of success than he had had in keeping his earthly crown, it is to be feared that his presence amongst the shaven and cowled brethren was not conducive to the strictness of their morals: for we are told that whereas, previous to his becoming a monk, the brethren in the Holy Island used to drink nothing but milk or water, according to the tradition which they had received from St. Aidan, their first bishop, this king gave them the privilege of drinking wine or ale, doubtless for "their stomach’s sake and their often infirmities."

Inroad of Superstition.

Superstition in various forms made great progress in the seventh century, particularly an extravagant veneration for relics - mostly supposititious, that is to say, manufactured - in which the priests drove a very gainful trade, as few good Christians thought themselves safe from the machinations of the devil unless they carried the relics of some saint about their persons; and no church could be dedicated without a decent quantity of this sacred trumpery - for such it was, as much as Flint Jack’s antediluvian implements or Shapira’s Hebrew manuscripts. The monastery of Coldingham possessed its due share of such old rags and bones as were supposed to have belonged to the apostles, saints, and martyrs, and therefore to be endowed with supernatural virtue, including, we believe, a piece of the true cross, and at least one of the nails by which the body of the Saviour was fixed to it. Stories of dreams, visions, and miracles of the most preposterous sort were likewise propagated without a blush by the clergy, and believed without a doubt by the laity, and extraordinary watchings, fastings, scourings, and other arts of macerating or tormenting the body, in order to
save the soul, became frequent and fashionable, while it was believed that a journey to Rome, especially on foot, begging alms by the way, was the most direct road to heaven.

**Dreadful Massacre by the Danes.**

Partaking, as we have reason to think it did, in the ups and downs of those dark and dismal times, the monastery of Coldingham subsisted without much alteration till the year 837, when it was plundered and burnt by the Danes. According to Matthew of Westminster, whose "Chronicle," however, was not written till the reign of Edward II., these barbarians inhumanly massacred the whole sisterhood, who had previously disfigured themselves to prevent them from outraging their modesty. It is certain that in that year Ingvar and Hubba, brothers, and most renowned captains, invaded England with a vast multitude of savage Danes, bent upon avenging the death of their father, Regner Lodbrog, who had been murdered in East Anglia. They had purposed to land in that part of the country, but, being driven northwards by contrary winds, they were obliged to come on shore at Berwick. The convent of Coldingham was then filled exclusively with nuns, under the government, if we may believe Matthew, of an abbess called Ebba, who must have been the second of that name who held high office there. This pious lady, according to his account, dreading the barbarities which the heathen invaders exercised against all persons devoted to religion, called together the sisters, and informing them of the hazard to which their chastity was exposed, at the same time told them she had devised a way by which, if they would follow her advice, they might escape the danger. All of them at once expressed their readiness to do anything she pleased for that purpose, whereupon she pulled forth a razor, and in presence of them all cut off her nose and upper lip. Her example was immediately followed by the whole sisterhood, and on the Danes arriving next morning in the hopes of gratifying their brutal lusts, as well as securing a rich booty, they were shocked with the deformed and bloody spectacles that everywhere presented themselves, and, enraged at their disappointment, they set fire to the convent, in the flames of which its wretched inhabitants were consumed. But there is great doubt as to the authenticity of this story, which, it must be admitted, is purely legendary, since Matthew's "Chronicle" was not written, as we have observed, till about five hundred years after the alleged date of the catastrophe, and none of the more ancient annalists, such as the compiler of the Saxon "Chronicle," and Simeon of Durham, who lived so much nearer the spot, make any mention of the affair. That the Danish vikings were capable, however, of committing enormities such as that here alleged, is historically certain. Thus, it is on record in an old Danish chronicle quoted by Frederick Barford in his "Fortællinger af Fædrelandets Historie," that King Gudrum, one of Ingvar's blood-relations, who was "so liberal with his warriors, that all the gold and silver he wan he dealt it amongst them," was at the same time so cruel (grusom) against his enemies, that he burned both dwelling-houses, churches, and cloisters, slaughtered both young and old, stuck little children on the points of spears, and violated the women.
Precious Relics.

Whatever amount of truth there may be in this mythical story, it would appear that the mortal remains of the first Ebba, which had been interred in a cemetery adjacent to the monastery over which, during her lifetime, she had presided, remained there undisturbed till the twelfth century, when a relic-hunting monk of Durham, called Elfred Westowe — that is, Alfred of Westoe, near South Shields — proceeded on a journey through the districts of Northumberland and Lothian, and raised from their sepulchers some of the bones of most of the saints and bishops who had left them there. In the course of his peregrinations, he visited the tomb of Ebba, and carried off with him to Durham a number of her bones, which he deposited in the shrine of St. Cuthbert, where, about the year 1200, as Hegge, in his legend of the saint, tells us, "St. Ebbe her foote" was found amid "a charnell howse of saints' bones," and "a whole wardrobe of saints' apparel, both coats and hoods and stockings of the apostles, with divers fractions of the crosse, and the sacred sepulchre."

King Edgar’s Re-foundation.

At what time the monks left Coldingham, or under what circumstances, we have not been able to ascertain, but the nunnery seems to have remained in ruins till the year 1098, when it was rebuilt by Edgar, king of Scots, the son of Malcolm Canmore, who, having been driven from his throne by an usurper, had fled to England, where he obtained from William Rufus an army of 30,000 men for the recovery of his dominions, Fordun tells us that on Edgar’s march towards Scotland, St. Cuthbert appeared to him in a vision by night, promising him the protection of heaven, and directing him to receive his consecrated banner from the convent of Durham, and to carry it before his troops, which, if he did, his enemies would be dissipated and fly before him. Edgar related this dream to his uncle, Edgar Atheling, by whose advice he obeyed in all points the orders of the saint. The abbot of Durham presented him with the banner, and he crossed the Tweed so confident in its virtues that it gave him the courage which ensured success; and soon after he had succeeded in re-establishing his power, he founded, or rather re-founded, the monastery of Coldingham, which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and, in testimony of his gratitude to St. Cuthbert, he made a present of the place and lands belonging to it to the Benedictine monks of Durham.

Benedictine Monks brought from Durham.

The secular clergy had been expelled from Durham by Bishop William Carilepho about ten years before this, and they had been replaced by Benedictine monks from the monasteries of Jarrow and Wearmouth. The black habit which these religious men wore procured for them the designation of Black Monks, in contradistinction to the Dominicans or Black Friars and the Carmelites and White Monks. Andrew Winton, in his ‘Cronykil,’ thus notices the foundation of the monastery by Edgar:

"Coldyngeame than foundyd he,  
And rychely gert it dowyt be,  
Of Saynt Ebb a sweet Hallow,  
Saynt Cuthbert thair thai honoure now."
Eagar’s Liberality.

A colony of Black Monks was therefore sent down to Coldingham, and the priory, as it was now styled, continued for several ages afterwards to depend as a cell on that of Durham. Edgar assisted in person at the dedication of the church, and took occasion to make a gift to it and to the monks who were to minister in it of some additional lands in the Merse besides those it had theretofore possessed. His charter makes mention of the following mansions (Scottish Mainses), besides that of Coldingham, thus bestowed on the establishment - viz., Aldcambus, Lumisden, Regminton (Renton), Reston, Swinewoode, Farndun (Farnyside), the two Eitons (Aytons), Prenagest (Prendergest), and Crammesmuhe. All these, with small variations in the spelling, are the names of villages to this day situated in the neighbourhood, Crammesmuhe being identified by Mr. Carr, the historian of Coldingham, with one of the creeks through which the fishermen’s boats are drawn up at Burnmouth, still known by the name of Cramsmoo, though it is more commonly designated Johnston’s Haven.

The Same continued.

At the altar, Edgar endowed the priory in particular with the whole village of Swinton, which they were to enjoy for ever, exempt from all claims, and disposable solely at the pleasure of the monks, on whom at the same time he bestowed 24 beasts for cultivating the land, or restoring it to its former state of tillage. He settled an annual pension of half a mark of silver [6 2/3 sterling] on the monks from every plough-land, carue, or carucate in Coldinghamshire, which district comprehended about an eighth part of the county of Berwick; and to this tax, we are told, the holders of the lands voluntarily submitted, and became engaged to the king for its punctual payment. Considerable diversity of opinion exists as to the extent of a carucate: according to Skene and Chalmers it means as much as can be turned over by one plough in the course of a year and a day, while according to Spelman and Ducange a carucate, otherwise called a hild or hide, and also a soke, contained 8 bovates or oxgangs, and 8 carucates made up a knight’s fee. But all these land measures varied in extent at different places. The whole of the donations were made for the benefit of the souls of the Scottish king’s father and mother, his brothers and sisters, and his own.

Further Donations.

The grateful monarch also granted to Coldingham the same privileges as a sanctuary “in going, returning, and abiding,” as were possessed by Islandshire and Norhamshire, both exceptionally favoured districts on the English side on account of their lying close to the Border, and consequently being convenient places of shelter to such persons as had any cause to dread the rough-and-ready Lynch law of the times. Those who fled thither for protection were allowed to remain unmolested for the term of thirty-seven days - a regulation which prevented a hot-trod pursuer from wrecking his vengeance upon his enemy’s head in the heat of passion, and afforded both parties an opportunity of bringing forward evidence of guilt or innocence in a regular court of justice. The bounds of the asylum were conterminous with Coldinghamshire,
and that "halidom," as it was styled, included within its limits the parishes of Coldingham, Eyemouth, Ayton, Lamberton, Auldcambus, Mordington, Chirnside, Buncle, and perhaps some others.

The Prior's Retinue.

Over this extensive district the priors of Coldingham long exercised not only an ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but also the chartered right of exacting certain military and other services from the landholders. Through this arrangement so eminent was the office that the prior had at one time a retinue of seventy functionaries, a number said to have been unequalled, or at least unsurpassed, in the kingdom of Scotland. Among these dignified retainers were the Eleemosinarius, or almoner; the Marescallus, or master of the horse; the Senescallus, or manager of the household; the Hostiarius, or receiver of guests; the Cellarius, or keeper of the cellar; the Braciator, or brewer; the Enunciator, or messenger; also, a cook, a smith, a carpenter, &c.

Edgar's Walls.

There is a tradition that King Edgar, at the time when he endowed the priory so munificently, caused to be erected for himself and court a palace or house, for temporary residence, on the site of the ruins still called Edgar's Walls (Eggar's Wa's). However this may have been, it is certain that his pious successor, David I., whose remarkable liberality to the Church, and his erection of numerous splendid abbeys throughout the country, including Melrose, Kelso, Jedburgh, Dundrennan, &c., drew forth the pithy remark of James I. that "he was ane sore sanct for the crown," held his court here in 1147, attended by the Bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow, the Abbot of Melrose, and many nobility of his realm, and that he displayed his usual liberality in additional gifts to the establishment which his brother had reared.

Malcolm IV.'s Charters.

Malcolm IV. was also a kind patron to the Priory. He granted the monks several charters, vesting them with the privilege of free warren, or the right of exclusive hunting within their territory, of transporting people to the village of Coldingham to re-people it, and of seizing and detaining their fugitive villeins wherever they might detect them. Malcolm likewise prohibited them responding to any pleas that might be entered against them, except in his own presence, or in that of his Chief Justiciary.

William the Lion's Princely Gifts.

William the Lion empowered the prior to exact a heavy penalty from such as were detected hunting in the woods or over the moors of Coldinghamshire without his permission, and a forester, with an ample salary, was settled in the midst of them to prevent any infringement of the royal commands. In that part of his hunting domains, called the Hound-wood, the prior established his hunting quarters for the accommodation of himself and his gay associates, whence, says Mr. Carr, in his History of the Priory, published in 1836, "sallying forth at break of day, they pursued the startled boar from his covert, and when the chase was over planted in triumph his grizzly head upon the festive board of the refectory." Both the good King Alexander and the fiery-hearted
William the Lion abode in the vicinity of Coldingham occasionally, most likely in Edgar’s palace; and it is natural to conclude that they were then wont to accompany the jolly prior in his hunting expeditions.

The Monks Exempted from Guetagium.

Alexander exempted the monks from the payment of a sum of twenty marks, which they had been in the custom of paying yearly to his exchequer, under the name of wattinga, waytinge, or guetagium, which was a tax levied from landholders for the purpose of erecting, maintaining, and guarding the royal fortresses.

Swinewood given to the Convent.

Between the years 1182 and 1232 Patrick, son of the Earl of Dunbar, made over the village and lands of Swinewood "to God, St. Mary, St. Cuthbert, St. Ebbe, and the Durham monks serving God at Coldingham," for an hundred merks of silver.

The Church of Coldingham.

The church of Coldingham was, by charter obtained in 1127 from Robert, bishop of St. Andrews, granted freedom and exemption from all episcopal aids, such as Custom, Can, or Cuneved (in Gaelic, Canmhath), meaning "first fruits." This charter was confirmed in 1193 by one of Robert’s successors, Bishop Roger. The church was a cell or dependency attached to the monastery, and its advowson was vested in the prior and a chapter of the monks. It was probably founded soon after the institution of the priory, though the first notice of it made in the chartulary is in a deed granted upwards of a hundred years later.

Growth of the Town.

During the prosperous reign of Alexander III, the town, which had grown up round the monastery, shared in the prosperity of Berwick, then one of the most flourishing ports in Britain, and it carried on a successful trade in wool, which was exported to the Low Countries to be spun and woven into cloth.

Political Complications.

Dependent as they were upon the mother church of Durham, the prior and the clergy of Coldinghamshire found it expedient to swear allegiance to the haughty and ambitious Edward I. when he was trying to annex Scotland to his dominions. The barons of the Merse, being all or mostly of Anglo-Norman or Saxon origin, and having, therefore, little interest in the preservation of the ancient independence of the Scottish Crown, originally Celtic or Pictish, were led to pursue the same course. Accordingly, when that monarch attended at Berwick, in the years 1292 and 1296, for the purpose of receiving the homage of his northern vassals, Henry de Horncastre, then prior of Coldingham, with the majority of the clergy, as well as of the barons, did not fail to obey the summons and acknowledge the justice of the King of England’s claim to be suzerain, or over-lord of North Britain, whereupon they were re-invested in their offices and estates. Moreover, a weekly market on Wednesdays and a yearly fair on the eve of St. Luke (18th October) was established in the town by King
Edward, and this fair, we are informed, was attended by Flemings and other foreign merchants from Berwick, as well as from England.

Harassing Border Strife.

The times, as all the world knows, were then very troublous, and Coldingham, lying so near the Border, was sometimes under English and sometimes under Scottish rule; and the priors, if they possessed any public spirit, could not fail to be deeply concerned in the current political State intrigues. They are consequently often mentioned in history. Powerful though they generally were, it would have been marvellous if they had been able to protect the wealth of their house from the grip of the unscrupulous nobility, not a few of whom were at constant feud with their ecclesiastical superiors, and ever ready to pounce on the Church lands if they got the least chance. Least of all could the Churchmen protect themselves from the Pope or the King, whether of Scotland or England, when it suited the purpose of any of these high and mighty potentates to molest, or, what was not much better, to protect them. The monks were frequently reduced, almost to a state of destitution, in consequence of the rapacity of the royal armies and the equally destructive sallies of the Border bandits. On several occasions they found it expedient to abandon the convent from this cause, and take refuge at Holy Island or elsewhere.

A Windfall.

But they were every now and then getting windfalls. Thus, in 1331, Prior Adam de Pontefracto (Pontefract) acknowledged a grant made to him of land for the site of a mill, near the bridge of Ayton, by Adam, the son of William de Ayton. And this was only one out of many such donations.

Edward III. thwarting Pope Benedict.

On the other hand, a few years later, his Holiness Pope Benedict X., who assumed the triple crown in 1336, went the length of bestowing, by his presumed plenary power, the profits and revenues of Coldingham Priory for life upon Hugh, Bishop of Byyblos, who had been expelled from the Holy Land by the Saracens, and was therefore only a bishop "in partibus infidelium." But King Edward III. of England, who was then master of the south of Scotland, interfered to prevent this act of injustice, and took the establishment under his protection. In the year 1359 he empowered the prior, William de Bamburgh, to grant leases of his lands and tenements, lying in the county of Berwick, to whomsoever he chose, Scots as well as English. He also, by another charter, gave him permission to purchase in England, through his servants, a supply of victuals for the support of the monks - viz., 100 qrs. of wheat, 140 qrs. of malt and barley, and 50 qrs. of oats, with the power of conveying them to the priory by sea or land. It would appear from this that the Merse, naturally one of the granaries of Britain, must at that time have been so impoverished by war, or some other calamity, as not to afford victual enough to supply its inhabitants, even those who could pay for it. Yet it stands on record that Coldingham at that time surpassed all the other towns within the Sheriffdom of Berwick in the number of its inhabitants, and in the accommodation which it afforded to travellers. The priors were likewise in a
position to be money-lenders. Thus, in 1371, Brother John de Lumley, master of the house of Jarrow-on-Tyne, borrowed six pounds sterling from Alan, chamberlain (Camerarius) of the prior of Coldingham, and two years afterwards repaid the money, with interest, amounting in all to seven pounds.

_A Justiciary Court held at Coldingham._

In 1371, William, Earl of Douglas, justiciary over the districts south of the Forth, held his court here, Berwick, the usual place of its sitting, being then in the hands of the English. He selected it, we are told, in preference to the other towns in the shire on account of the superior number of its houses and inns.

_Prior John de Aycliffe._

In 1377 the Master of Wearmouth made a contribution of 20s. - a considerable sum in those days - to John de Aycliffe, a student from the convent of Durham, to give a feast to his friends on taking his degree as a member of Durham College, Oxford. This person eventually became Prior of Coldingham, holding the office from 1400 to 1417. During the turbulent regency of the Duke of Albany he was compelled to abdicate it, and seek an asylum at Lindisfarne, leaving the convent, however, under the protection of the powerful Archibald, Earl of Douglas, one of whose dependents, the Laird of Home, in the Merse, became its sub-prior.

Conscious of their own impotence, the monks granted Earl Douglas full power to let their lands to whomsoever he chose, to levy their revenues, and to hold courts for the amercement and punishment of transgressors, and for his services he was to receive a yearly pension of £100 Scots; but this great man, who was one of the bravest warriors of the day, being too much engaged in more important affairs, appointed as his substitute or bailiff his retainer, Sir Alexander Home of Dunglass, to whom he granted a yearly pension of £20 Scots from his own salary. A few years later, Home having resigned, William Douglas, Earl of Angus and Lord of Liddesdale, was constituted special protector and defender of the priory and its appurtenances. He received for his yearly salary 113 merks. Serious disputes between rival clansmen, envious of the office on account of its emoluments, were frequent, and attended with considerable bloodshed, so that it was sometimes judged necessary to appoint joint bailiffs, giving them equal shares.

_Prior John Oll._

In the "Household Book of Jarrow," compiled by Brother John Durham, junior, keeper of the cell of Jarrow, from the feast of Mary Magdalen in the year 1431 to the feast of Pentecost 1432, among the receipts is 110s. from Nicholas Wod, for the tithes of fish from Shields, with the altarage of the chapel there, for the term of Martinmas and no more, because Mr. John Oll (Dominus Johannes Oll), treasurer (Bursarius) of Durham, had received from the said Nicholas 110s, for
the preceding Pentecost term. This John Oll or Olle became prior of Coldingham in the last-mentioned year, and held the position for sixteen years—that is to say, till 1448. He was instituted to the priory by Bishop Kennedy, of St. Andrews, contrary to the wish of the Abbot of Dunfermline, who favoured the pretensions of a monk belonging to his own establishment. In 1436, when Sir Patrick Hepburn of Hailes held out the castle of Dunbar against his sovereign, Olle and several other Borderers were taken prisoners, and compelled to come under certain obligations to the knight, from which they were released by a special mandate from James II., dated at Stirling, 28th April, in the tenth year of his reign (1447), and on the same day the King laid an embargo on the knight, prohibiting him, “under all pain and offence,” from exacting what they had agreed to give. But Olle seems to have been always in trouble. Thus, it appears that Sir David Home of Wedderburn (the first of Wedderburn), writing from Colbrandspeth, 12th March, 1442-3, complained that his relative and chieftain, Sir Alexander Home of Dunglass, had been permitted by Prior Olle to place a garrison of reivers in the “kyrk” at Coldingham “to hald as hous of weer,” and that thence they harassed those not of their party by driving off their flocks and herds, which they sold in England in a time of truce. “And thar the said Sir Alx. halds a garyson of refars, the quhilk has taken my lorde of Halis [Hepburne of Hailes] guds, my sonnis and myne, to the number of ma than ij thwasand scheip and iiiij score ky and oxin, hafand the guds to Inglish men, and made thare opin markate of thaime, and thai recept thaim agayn the vertu of the trewis.” It is plain from this that Olle was deeply engaged in the fierce clan feuds of the time, and that he tried to make his own out of them. There are still many Olls, or Oleys, in the county of Durham, and it is possible that the Prior of Coldingham

may have belonged to the same family, though the popular tradition is that the Oleys first settled in the North of England at Ebchester, or Shotley Bridge, about the reign of King William III., and that they were very skilful German sword-cutters, driven from their fatherland by religious persecution. At the Oxford Black Assize in 1577, however, when five hundred persons died of the gaol fever, Sir Robert de Olie, who presided, and Mr. de Olie, high sheriff, were among the sufferers. So that these ingenious immigrants from the banks of the Rhine were by no means the first of the name in England, and John Olle was possibly an Oxford man. Lower, in his “Essay on English Surnames,” makes Olley a familiar diminutive of Oliver.

Lord Home Hereditary Bailiff.

At length, in 1465, Alexander Lord Home was constituted hereditary bailiff in Coldinghamshire, and he expelled Prior Pensber, with many of the monks, who were forced to flee to England. He then, in spite of threats against his intrusion, followed by an appeal to the Pope, who pronounced a sentence of excommunication against him, and, in defiance of precepts issued by the Kings of England and Scotland both, persisted in his usurpation for nearly twenty years. The Homes, we are told, appropriated the riches of the convent to themselves, in the most unscrupulous way, and kept the institution on a very meagre footing, reducing the monks, in short, to the level of menial servants.
Proposed Suppression of the Priory.

In 1488, however, the Homes were in danger of being deprived of what they had for a long time been led to consider their own. King James III. had caused to be erected, at immense expense, a chapel royal at Stirling, which, in the elegance of its architecture and in the number of its functionaries, he designed should eclipse all the other religious establishments of the kingdom, and, finding that the support of it would bear too heavily upon the royal revenues, he resolved on raising the necessary supplies by the suppression of Coldingham Priory, and by annexing its property to the new chapel-royal. He accordingly obtained from the Scottish Parliament an Act of annexation, and from the Pope a Bull sanctioning the suppression of the priory. But Lord Home and his kinsmen, in close alliance with the Hepburns, energetically opposed the enforcement of these measures, and compelled the commissioners, despatched to Coldingham by the See of St. Andrews, to retrace their steps at the peril of their lives. They were countenanced in their opposition by the Earl of Angus, who readily joined them in a conspiracy to dethrone the King, whose purpose they saw it was to deprive them of the rich Church lands which they had seized upon, in some cases by sufferance and in others by pure robbery; and this insurrection terminated in the defeat and death of the obnoxious monarch, who was killed in battle, near Stirling, on the 11th of June, 1488.

Ups and Downs.

After this the convent rose and fell in its consequence and means of support, according to the shifting temper of the times. For many years it continued to be the prey of the Homes.

The Priory severed from Durham.

On the 8th June, 1504, the Parliament passed an Act annexing the priory to the Crown, and five years later, in accordance with a Bull issued by Pope Julius II., it was finally withdrawn from the church at Durham, to which it had been subordinate from the time of its foundation, and inalienably annexed to the abbey of Dunfermline, under the jurisdiction of which it continued till the eventful year 1560, when, in common with the other monastic establishments of Scotland, it sustained a final overthrow.

Prior Alexander Stuart.

Alexander Stuart, the natural son of James IV., who had previously been raised to the dignity of Archbishop of St. Andrews and Abbot of Dunfermline, was now chosen prior; but he did not long possess these profitable pluralities, for he fell at Flodden, on the 9th of September, 1513, while fighting by the side of his infatuated father. He was succeeded by Andrew Forman, who held the office only a few months.

Prior David, “The Innocent.”

The priory was next conferred on David Home, the seventh brother of Lard Home, and surnamed “The Innocent,” who enjoyed the dignity for about three years. He was then murdered by his brother-in-law.
Coldingham Priory.

James Hepburn of Hailes, aided by Hately of Mellerstain and other Border chiefs.

Truce concluded at Coldingham.

On the 17th January, 1516, one of the numerous short and uncertain truces for which the times were noted was concluded at Coldingham.

Prior Robert Blackadder.

Prior David was succeeded by Robert Blackadder, who, together with six of his attendants, was likewise assassinated, when following the sports of the chase, by Sir David Home of Wedderburn, his inveterate enemy, in the village of Lamberton, just inside the Scotch boundary line. So great at that time was Wedderburn's authority that, according to his biographer, "none almost pretended to go to Edinburgh, or anywhere else out of the country, without first both asking and obtaining his liberty." Blackadder alone, we are told, refused to succumb to him, and hence his untimely end. Another version of the story is that William Douglas, brother of the Earl of Angus, and an intimate friend of Wedderburn's - moreover, an ecclesiastic of the booted and spurred type - having looked with an eye of envy upon this rich priory, Wedderburn undertook to murder Blackadder, and took the first opportunity of executing his vile purpose, and so creating a vacancy, which Douglas immediately took upon him to fill. Though thus a mere intruder, he retained the office and emoluments till his death in 1528, in spite of Patrick Blackadder Robert's cousin, having received investiture of the monastery from the Roman Pontiff, with the consent of the regent. The dispute between the parties was hotly carried on, and Lord Home having espoused the cause of the Earl of Angus's brother, he rendered him such effectual assistance that Blackadder was compelled to abandon the office.

The Earl of Angus at Coldingham.

In the autumn of 1528, the priory afforded temporary asylum to the Earl of Angus on his flight to England. In the beginning of October we find King James at Dunbar, from whence he made a hasty march, at the head of five hundred men, to Coldingham, in the hopes of surprising and capturing the rebellious Earl, who seems to have been there at the burial of his brother. But Angus had received timely information of the King's design, and held himself at a distance with two hundred of his followers, while the King occupied Coldingham without resistance, but only to find the bird flown. So James returned to East Lothian without accomplishing his purpose, after having placed Lord Home and his brother, the Abbot of Jedworth, in command of the town and abbey; and no sooner had the King turned his back than Angus, whose force had meanwhile swelled to five hundred men, marched back, entered the abbey, drove out the Homes, and pursued his liege-lord and sovereign nearly to the walls of Dunbar. He subsequently found it expedient, however, to take refuge in England, from which, four years later, he returned, with the connivance of Henry VIII., with an English army, and, marching northward as far as Coldingham, set not only that town, but the villages near, on fire, though he spared the abbey. It should be remembered that the common dwelling-houses in those days were, throughout the Border-land, on both sides of the Tweed, mere huts or hovels, thatched with straw, from which
the inmates could retire to the nearest peel, castle, abbey, or other fortified place on the approach of an enemy, and return to repair their poor domiciles after the danger was over. This accounts for the frequent burnings and rebuildings.

*Prior Adam.*

From 1528 to 1541, one Adam, of whose surname we are ignorant, was prior of Coldingham, and during his time the English made one of their customary annual incursions into the Merse from Berwick. They seem to have met with no resistance, the Scots retiring before them; but they, nevertheless, wasted the district with fire and sword, including, as usual, the town of Coldingham, as well as Dunglass and the neighbouring villages. Prior Adam was subsequently removed to Dundrennan, in Kirkcudbrightshire, to make way for John Stuart, an infant son of James V., and during the infancy of this so-called prior, or rather commendator - for all semblance of the ecclesiastical function was by this time banished the house the King enjoyed the revenues, or such part of them as he could secure. But owing to the realm being more than ever torn asunder by intestine strife, very little could be reaped from a field so near the Border.

*Coldingham Church fortified by the English.*

In 1544 the English again marched northward as far as Coldingham, after having burned Jedburgh, Kelso, and the country round about. Seizing the abbey, they fortified the church and church tower, converting it into a castle for the King of England's use, and left a strong garrison therein, partly consisting of Irishmen. The Earl of Arran, regent of Scotland, made an effort for the recovery of the place; but he found it impossible to get the nobility and gentry to rise and help him to drive out the intruders. They were, in fact, too hotly engaged in waging petty warfare for their own selfish ends, so that the English were suffered to overrun and ravage the whole country south of the Lammermoors, reducing it almost to a desert; and many of the inhabitants of the Merse, including the people of Coldingham, receiving no protection from their own Government, and hoping for none, sought safety by swearing allegiance to King Henry, and wearing the English badge of the red cross.

*The Merse Harried.*

In the spring of 1545 fresh ravages took place. The garrison of Wark crossed the Border, and their plundering parties scattered destruction far and wide. The garrison of Coldingham, which seems to have been in distress for lack of provisions, sallied forth about the same time, and harried the villages and hamlets to a considerable distance round.

*The Abbey Burned Down.*

Further on, in the same year, the Earl of Hertford - a brutal Tilly or Wallenstein on a minor theatre - burned down the abbey, after it had stood full five hundred years, and endured many violent assaults. The same irreverent emissary of Bluff King Hall left behind him the "abomination of desolation," not only here, but at Melrose, Kelso, Jedburgh, and Dryburgh, where not only were the monastic buildings so defaced that there was little more to be done to them in the way of damage, but, as Hill Burton says, "with a meanness of heart and
pitiful despite rare in the age of chivalry," the Southron barbarians "defaced the monuments which marked the resting-places of the heroic dead" as they stood under the already roofless abbeys. "Those stately edifices, usually regarded as sacred by all but the lowest in civilisation, were," says Professor Veitch, in his letterpress explanatory of Mr. George Reid's splendid drawings of scenes on the river Tweed, "finally broken down and destroyed by King Henry VIII. s fit agents, and their ruins are very much as Hertford left them" at the close of those September days, which saw the great Border abbey "reduced from the perfection of symmetry and beauty to broken and blackened walls." It was not left to the Reformers to do the dirty work, although they have been long credited with having completed it. Doubtless, in some cases per fervid iconoclasts, of Gattonside Stumpie's type, did a deal, more or less, in the way of defacing and truncating any "graven images" which Evers, Latoun, Hertford, and their brother raiders had left; and during the two centuries between the date of the Reformation and the appearance of the Great Wizard of the North, Sir Walter Scott, the ravages of decay, coupled with the Vandalism of the people living near, who were permitted to use the abbey ruins as convenient quarries, and the carelessness and indifference of the neighbouring gentry or heritors, reduced them to the wretched condition in which they were eighty or ninety years ago.

_Spanish Mercenaries Massacred._

During the summer of 1549 a band of Spanish mercenaries, in the service of the English, having quartered themselves in the town of Coldingham, were for the most part either slain or made prisoners by a detachment of the Scottish army, principally composed of German and Spanish adventurers, who attacked them during the night when in their lodgings, before they were aware of their approach.

_Lord Grey at Coldingham._

In the year 1560, thirty-eight years after its partial consumption by fire, when Lord Grey of Wilton, then warden of the East and Middle Marches of England, was hastening forward to the siege of Leith, the town of Coldingham afforded a night's accommodation] to 6000 foot-soldiers under his command.

_Mary Queen of Scots at Houndwood._

In 1566 Mary Queen of Scots remained all night in the castle of Houndwood, then the residence of the lord prior, or rather commissator, John Maitland of Thirlstane, near Lauder, ancestor of the Earls of Lauderdale; and a small apartment used to be pointed out there as Queen Mary's room. Her numerous escort were lodged at Coldingham.

_Sir William Drury at Coldingham._

In 1573 Sir William Drury, an English general, commissioned to assist the Scots in their attempt to recover Edinburgh Castle from the partisans of their hapless, misguided, captive Queen, quartered his troops for the night at Coldingham, on his march northwards from Berwick.
Prior John Maitland.

John Maitland was ejected in the year 1570 from the office of commendator or lay drawer of revenues of the priory - a colourable arrangement made till a general settlement of the Church affairs should be effected - a thing spoken of, but never seriously contemplated. It was then conferred upon Alexander, Lord Home, who, however, had a very troublous time of it, wavering, as he did, between the old and the new religions, abjuring Popery one day and Protestantism the next.

John Stuart Commendator.

In 1619 John Stuart, second son of Francis, Earl of Bothwell, and grandson of John Stuart, natural son of James V., who, when a mere infant, had been created prior with the consent of the Pope, was constituted commendator of Coldingham, and was, according to Spottiswoode, the last who bore that title. Two years after his installation he received from King James VII. of Scotland and I. of England a charter of the lands and baronies belonging to the priory, which were united into a barony; and to support him in his extravagant career, the relation of which belongs to general history, this scapegrace alienated the greater part of the property thus acquired in small lots to private individuals, whose representatives still hold them.

The Reformation.

The Reformation, which dissolved the priory, seemed also to blast the prosperity of the town, which is now, says Sheldon, in his "History of Berwick," "reduced to the lowest grade."

The Witch Mania.

During the prevalence of the witch mania, in the reign of the British Solomon, several poor old women were burnt at Coldingham for that imaginary crime, Sir Alexander Home of Renton, sheriff_principal of Berwickshire, having been very rigorous in his prosecution of the unfortunate wretches, "against whom several malifices were alleged to have been proven." "He caused burne seven or eight of them." About half-a-mile westward from the ruins of Lamberton Church is a conical eminence, which tradition points out as the spot where, so recently as the beginning of the last century, several "wise women" of the parish were consigned to the flames.

Oliver Cromwell at Coldingham.

During Cromwell's Protectorate the ruined church of Coldingham was defended for some days against the assaults of his troops by a party of Royalists, who had entrenched themselves within the walls, and who vigorously repulsed the first detachment sent against them. Cromwell, however, bringing up a stronger force, with several pieces of cannon, shook the building to its foundation, and compelled the Royalists to capitulate, after which, to prevent it from again becoming an obstacle in his way, he blew it up with gunpowder, leaving only one of the walls standing. Subsequently great part of the ruins, which were still very extensive, disappeared through the rapacity of the people in the neighbouring village, who took away, without the least
restriction, stones for the purpose of rearing or repairing their cottages. In this practice, we may again observe, they were only like their contemporaries at Kelso, Melrose, Jedburgh, and other towns in the Merse and Teviotdale, where the remains of the monasteries were long used as quarries, in which the stones were got ready squared to hand.

Reparations.

Luckily, since the beginning of this century a better taste has set in, so that what the barbarians had left of these sacred edifices is now carefully preserved. The choir of Coldingham Abbey Church, which had been used as the parish church for nearly three hundred years, was put in good order by the heritors in 1857. The first step in the restoration was to strip the church of its cumbrous internal fittings - galleries, pews, &c. - and restore the building to the state in which it was left in the days of Cromwell, but further mutilated and defaced by the rude hand of time, and the more rude and destructive hand of man. The next was to remove a large depth of earth from the internal area, lowering the floor about six feet, and exhibiting a corresponding portion of the decorated wall hitherto lost to view. On the outside, the earth was excavated to the base of the building. Thus the ruin stood naked to view, presenting the north and east walls of the ancient building. The west wall was next rebuilt in the original style, and also the south wall in a style approaching to the ancient, but, on account of the expense, without its old decorations. The corner towers were carried up as they were supposed to have existed originally. The roof was to a considerable extent renewed, the ceiling having been replaced with polished stained wood, in imitation of oak. The whole of the beautiful architectural decorations were cleared of the unseemly coatings of white; and those parts which were effaced and mutilated were thoroughly restored, and all broken pillars and bases, where incapable of repair, were replaced by new ones of so close an imitation as scarcely to be distinguishable. The general cathedral like effect is grand and imposing, there being no galleries, and the character and arrangement of the pews and fittings being in strict conformity with the building. The architect to whom was intrusted the superintendence of the work as inspector was Mr. William Johnston Gray, of Coldingham, and the master-builder chosen for its execution was Mr. Balfour Balsillie, of the adjoining parish of Ayton, both of whom proved themselves worthy successors of those famous free-masons to whom the world is indebted for so many marvels of Gothic architecture.

Remains of the Saxon Monastery.

Discoveries made while the restoration of the priory was going on afforded conclusive evidence that the monastic establishment founded by Ebba stood almost on the same place afterwards occupied by Edgar's magnificent edifice. In excavating the floor of the parish church the workmen came upon the foundation walls of the more ancient structure. Mr. King Hunter says:-

"The whole extent of these foundations was distinctly traceable; and this part of the building appears in the original, as in the after erection, to have formed the church of the monastery, but stretching a few feet further towards the south than the more recent structure. With the exception of the east end, it is of the
same form - namely, an oblong square, of somewhat smaller dimensions than the after priory. The east end consisted of a circular projection or apse - in all probability used as the chancel. The stone is of the same description as that of which the priory is built, of a reddish colour, and supposed to have been brought from a quarry called Greenheugh, in the parish of Cockburnspath, the nearest place where such stone is now to be found.

. . . . In further proof that the priory was reared on the site of a more ancient building there was found a stone coffin deposited directly over, and two feet above, the foundation of the north wall. It was in an entire state, the sides being of rude stonework, and the covering, a dressed slab, bore the impress of ancient chisel-work.

. . . . Upon it is carved a sword in form of a crucifix, on one side of which there is the figure of a domestic cock, and on the other a bugle horn. Nor was this lonesome habitation without a remnant of its occupant, though almost reduced to his or her original earth. Some fragments of bones, which mouldered to dust on exposure to the air, and some pieces of woollen cloth, which no doubt enwrapped the body, testified that a human frame had been deposited there. The portions of cloth were put into a bottle for preservation, but, unfortunately, got into the hands of a tyro who did not value this antique specimen of manufacture; the bottle was broken, and the musty fabric fell into powder. A silver coin of the reign of James V. was found under the slab which covered the grave. It seems obvious that this interment must have taken place after the demolition of the more ancient building, and in the interior of the church of the priory afterwards erected on the same site. These foundations, therefore, have not been disturbed or visible to human eye for nearly eight hundred years, or, probably, since the days of King Edgar."

"Enough has been stated to establish the fact of the great antiquity of Coldingham as the site of a large monastic establishment, long anterior to the period of the later structure, of which a fragmentary portion still remains to tell us that, even in the eleventh century, Scotland could boast of its artizans and handicraftsmen of a different order, but not inferior to those of more advanced and more civilized ages." Some slender remains of the chapel of the Saxon convent existed, we are told, till about the middle of last century; but the surrounding cemetery being again appropriated as a burial-place, they were soon afterwards destroyed.

The Priory as it was.

Down till far on in the present century there was very little care taken - perhaps one might say almost none - to preserve from utter demolition the wreck of those splendid ecclesiastical edifices which the piety of our Catholic ancestors, in the Middle Ages, raised in so many parts of Scotland at such enormous cost. It was, as a rule, only when part of the building continued to be utilised as a place of Protestant worship that it escaped being wholly dilapidated by ruthless invaders, and these not from a hostile country, as in the days of Border raids, but from the immediate peaceful neighbourhood. At Coldingham, all that remains of the original edifice, with the exception of a few straggling fragments, is what forms part of the modern parish church. A century ago the ruins were still extensive, but they kept gradually
disappearing, through the rapacity of the feuars and others in taking away stones for the purpose of repairing their cottages - a practice which, says Chambers, "has been too common in Scotland to excite inquiry or comment." but which has now happily been put a stop to. In the year 1854, through the enlightened taste of several of the heritors of the parish, and the liberality of all of them, supplemented by a Government grant, Coldingham Priory Church underwent a thorough repair and restoration, when the excavations exposed to view a large portion of the lower part of the sacred buildings, hitherto concealed under accumulated rubbish and soil, and enabled the curious visitor to form an idea of their original magnitude and general form and arrangement. We copy from Mr. King Hunter's book, with some abridgment, that gentleman's description of the priory and its appurtenances at the time of the restoration:

"The church appears to have been in the form of a cross. The foundations of its nave are only traceable; but from measurement, its area is ascertained to have been of the same dimensions as that of the choir - viz., ninety feet in length and twenty-five in breadth. The length of its transept, internally, was forty-one feet, and its breadth thirty-four. Its north-west angle was fortified with a large tower. An octagonal building, of neatly dressed freestone, of which the foundations were discovered about thirty yards from the eastern wall of the church, was in all probability the chapter-house, in which the prior and convent held their courts and elected their office-bearers. Distant about thirty-five paces from the south wall stand the remains of a very ancient building, known by the name of Edgar's Walls, which is traditionally reported to have been the occasional residence of the royal founder of the priory.
are composed of half and three-quarter rounds deeply under cut, rising from banded-edged shafts, with floreated capitals, and annular bases resting on a circle of balls. Besides the Norman character of the buttresses, additional indications of a style earlier than that shewn in the general form and details of the windows may be traced in the square-shaped abaci of the shafts, and in the foliage of the capitals, which has much of the thin, wiry, and rather meagre execution of the floreations belonging to the transition, or semi-Norman period. The same modification, or rather admixture of styles, is also observable in the Norman arcade, which occupies the under compartment of the elevation. In arrangement, style, and detail the eastern part of the building agrees very closely with the northern. In the interior, the same order is maintained in the disposition of parts as is observed in the outside; “but, besides greater coherence of style, there is a singularity in the constructional form, which has a peculiarly rich and striking effect. An open arcade, formed in the thickness of the wall, and, in appearance, resembling a triforium, is carried along the upper compartment, of sufficient depth to admit of free passage round the building. The arches are set in couples between the windows, by which they are divided apart, but without disturbing the continuity, as their heads are so contrived as to combine with, and give a beautiful variety of form to, the general arrangement. The faces of the arches are finely moulded with a series of rounds, individually relieved by deep under-cuttings. The bearing shafts are of two kinds - those nearest the windows are semi-cylindrical triple clusters, the outer, or projecting member, being a little pointed; the intermediate ones are composed of two half-rounds, with a semi-octagonal moulding between. The bases belonging to both kinds are rolls maintaining the plane of the shaft, and are set on square plinths, the outer faces of which are flush with the plane of the subjacent wall. Single cylindrical shafts, resting on the abaci of the shafts below, are also attached to the edges of the window jambs, and from them the mouldings of the archivolt have their spring. In the shape of the arches, grouping of the mouldings, and configuration of the most of the minor details there is here to be observed a much nearer approach to integrity of style than is to be found in the external edifice. The capitals, however, still retain the square abacus. The foliage is probably better developed than is usually to be met with among early semi-Norman structures.”

Mr. Raine was disposed to think that the rich Early English arcade in the north wall must have been a work of Prior Melsonby’s, a man of taste, who was subsequently engaged, as prior of Durham, in the construction of that splendid part of the Cathedral, the Nine Altars. Thomas de Melambi (Melsonby) was installed at Durham in the year 1233.

The charters still at Durham.

The history of no establishment, of the kind in Scotland throws so much light on the bloody scenes and wretched government of the country from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century as this of Coldingham does. The original charters are still preserved at Durham, and the chartulary, we believe, is in the Advocate’s Library at Edinburgh. One of the carefully compiled volumes published by the Surtees Society contains copious extracts from these old records. A very complete, interesting, and illustrated account of Coldingham Priory and its modern restoration was published some
The late Canon Raine, in his invaluable "History of Durham" (1852), publishes "in their integrity" the charters and other records of the Priory of Coldingham, "constituting, as they do, a series of monastic documents unrivalled in antiquity and importance." He obtained them from "the inexhaustible storehouse of the muniment room of the Dean and Chapter of Durham." He gives a fac-simile of a charter said to have been granted to the monks by Duncan II., King of Scots, who usurped the Crown for about a year and a half in 1094-5. He considers that it is a genuine document, and says that if it really is so it constitutes "the earliest written record affecting the history of Scotland." Fac-similes are also given of the charters of Edgar and Alexander I., and of the Great Seals of Duncan, Edgar, Alexanders I., II., and III., and William the Lion. Mr. Raine quotes not fewer than one thousand and seventy-four charters, conveying property, rights, and privileges, directly and indirectly, to the priory. They purport to have been granted by Kings of Scotland and England, princes of royal blood, Earls of Dunbar, March, Moray, Albany, Douglas, Angus, and Mar, other nobles of Scotland, bishops of St. Andrews and Durham, priors of Durham and Coldingham, &c., &c. The list includes several papal bulls. There are likewise some valuable ancient rolls, inquisitions, and returns, perambulations, &c. These documents are all in the Latin language, and many of the words are strangely contracted, abridged, and superscribed, so as to be scarcely intelligible to many who are competent to translate at sight (ad aperturan libri) Cæsar, Virgil, Horace, or any other Roman classic. A vast amount of curious knowledge is thus locked up in them, as much so almost as if they had been written in ogham or cuneiform; and it would be a task worthy of a scholar skilled in Ducange to go carefully through them, and embody in plain vernacular English the cream of their contents. The volume entitled "Coldingham," published by the Surtees Society in 1841, includes other local records not in Mr. Raine's "North Durham." It contains, amongst other things, the correspondence of the priory, so far as preserved, occupying nearly three hundred pages, with several of its inventories and account rolls, extending from 1311 to 1446, with rentals and other records.

The Bell taken to Lincoln.

According to tradition, when the church of the priory was destroyed, its fine-toned bell was carried to Lincoln, where it is believed to be still in use.

The Name "Coldingham."

The name of the place is of doubtful derivation. It is barely possible that it may have been a consecrated spot before the Princess Ebba took up her residence there; if so, the probability is that it was a seat of the Culdees (Cultores Dei-worshippers of the true God), a sort of monks who, says Buchanan, "continued in existence until they were expelled by a more recent sort, divided into different sects, and as much inferior to them in doctrine and piety as they were superior to them in
riches and ceremonies, and other outward observances by which they attract the eye and infatuate the mind."

The Roman station of Colania cannot be Coldingham, as Camden and others have conjectured, because that station lay in the country of the Damnii, who inhabited Clydesdale, and not in that of the Gadeni or Otadeni, who inhabited the Merse and Teviotdale, and the sea coast from the Tyne to the Forth.

The Present Village.

The village of Coldingham stands about a mile from the sea, in a delightful situation, in the centre of a fine valley, watered by two rivulets - the Rickleside and the Court burns respectively - on the rising ground between which the main part of the village is built. Like Melrose, it is a burgh of barony, and the bailie or deputy of the superior or over-lord, Home of Wedderburn, is entitled to hold courts therein, for the decision of petty cases, with limited powers now defined by Act of Parliament. "The town," says a writer in Rutherfurd's "Southern Counties Register," "used to be kept in a very filthy condition: the streets were unswept, dunghills accumulated before the doors, and pig-styes containing pigs were everywhere. This is now all changed for the better, and the town has not only its scavengers, but it has its inspector of nuisances." Being within easy distance of a beautiful beach called the Sands - one of the finest bathing-places in the kingdom - Coldingham has of late years become a place of repute for sea-bathing and summer visitors, attracted as well by this circumstance as by the interesting remains of the ancient priory. There are likewise in the near neighbourhood several places well worth a visit, such as Coldingham Loch, a fine sheet of water, about a mile in circumference; St. Abb's Head, with its rocky coves and swarms of sea-fowl; Fast Castle, the "Wolf's Craig" of the "Bride of Lammermoor;" and three or four "roundabouts," or British camps, on the hills around.

More about the Priors.

Many miraculous stories are told of some of the earlier priors, but more than one of the later ones were excommunicated by the bishops of Durham for incontinence and embezzling money, or, at a later period, by the bishops of St. Andrews for like misdemeanours. All of them, from the twelfth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, seem from their names to have been Englishmen, from Horncastle, Middleton, Greatham, Quixwood, Whiteworth, Pontefract, Bamborough, Aycliffe, Pensher, &c. After that period they were all Scotchmen. The priors had the right of voting at the election of a prior of Durham, so long as their abbey was attached to that monastery; and in latter years they had a seat among the barons in the Scottish Parliament. The reason assigned for withdrawing the superiority from Durham and annexing it to Dunfermline was that it was in a state of misrule and desolation - a contingency not unlikely when the two kingdoms were at war with each other, as was often the case. Many of the priors were, as we have seen, raised to the office only after long competitions with...
rival monks, and several of them were either foully murdered or compelled to abdicate the office. One of them, William Draks or Drake, who had been formerly sacrist, and who was elected after great opposition, having been charged with many crimes of a sacrilegious nature, and, in particular, with having instigated his countrymen, the English, to set fire to the monastery and its offices fled into England, carrying with him a volume which contained a register of the infeftments and charters belonging to the priory, which he deposited, it is said, at Durham. He was succeeded by that John Olle of whom we have already spoken.

Possessions of the Convent.

Whenever there was an interval of peace and quiet, however, the priorship of Coldingham was an enviable post. Its holder stood on a footing of equality with the highest nobles of the land. Independently of the possessions held by him immediately of the Crown, through the charters of Edgar, David, and other princes, he enjoyed ecclesiastically what was in those days of great consequence, an exemption from the jurisdiction and taxation of his diocesan, the Primate of Scotland, the Bishop of St. Andrews. Besides the churches and chapels situated within Coldinghamshire, the monks over whom he presided possessed the church of Edrom - that of the Holy Trinity at Berwick - the churches of Fishwick and Swinton - of Ednam, with the chapels of Newton, Nenthorn, and Nesbit - the church of Earlston or Ersildun - the chapel of Stitchel - and the church of Smalham or Smailholm.

The Prior’s Courts.

The priors had the power of holding courts upon their lands for the settlement of disputes and the arraignment of offenders, with authority to compel their vassals to attend and aid them in the administration of justice. There were three head courts held yearly, generally in the chapter-house. The monks had likewise three other valuable privileges - those of toll, team, and infangthef and outfangthef. By the first of these they were empowered to buy and sell without paying toll or custom for their merchandise within their territory, with the right of exacting such custom from others who did so; by the second, they could dispose of their villeins or slaves in whatever way they might think proper; and by the third, they could try, convict, imprison, or release thieves or robbers, detected in the act of committing depredations on their property, without reference to the king’s courts.

Rental of the Convent.

From the rental of the priory, made up in the year 1561, it appears that the town consisted of forty-two husband-lands, each of eight acres, and from each of these the monks exacted yearly, under the name of penny-mail, the sum of 13s. 4d. Scots, with three capons and one pullet as kain fowls. An additional payment of 10d. Scots, in silver, was also levied at Whitsunday for a service denominated "Castle-works." The extent of a husband-land seems to have been eight acres. From the same source we learn that each householder in the town was bound to give the monks a certain number of days’ labour or dargs, as is still the
case, or was till very lately, with those who hold small feus on the abbey lands at Melrose. In this manner was produced £10 2s. 4d. Scots, with 59 heads of poultry and 52 days' servitude, or an equivalent in cash, during the time of harvest, turfcasting, and hay-making.

Game Privileges.

But the nett revenue of the monks, as was to be expected, varied greatly at different periods. At one time we find them almost reduced to the necessity of abandoning the monastery for want of nourishment, and at another in the receipt of an income scarcely equalled by any other religious establishment in the kingdom. So far as venison went, they were liberally provided; for not only did King Robert Bruce confer upon them the privilege of taking from the forest of Selkirk five stags for celebrating the festival of St. Cuthbert's translation, which game was to be delivered up to them by the chief forester, and transported to the priory in the King's own wains; but the prior himself had a fine preserve at Houndwood, in which all sorts of game abounded, and which was taken special care of by a dignified officer, styled the Forester, who was in the enjoyment of privileges enough to make a gustative man's mouth water with the mere mention. The following were the emoluments arising from his office:-

"Meat and Drink to himself and his man, and Horse-meat when he shall come to the house of the Lord Prior, with a Robe fit for a Gentleman at Christmas, to wear when he attends the said Lord Prior at Christmas, yearly, with the keeping of the Wrack and Waiff within the Lordship of Coldingham, and all the bounds of the same; and receiving from the said Wrack and Waiff twelve pennies of the pound, and for every ship or boat plying within the Lordship, carrying or loaded with Grass or Straw, Salt, Coals, or sicklike, if any from thence be sold, One Boll before the Mast and One Boll behind the Mast; and for the anchorage of every Ship or large Vessel twelve pennies and every boat four pennies, with a Thrieve of Oats from every husband-land of the Farms of the said Lordship of Coldingham (excepting the husband-lands of the village of Coldingham), for every Waggon of Wood four pennies, for every horse-draught one pennie, for every Log of Oak drawn with Oxen four pennies, and Wood Hens due according to custom."

The Horndean Drengs.

In King David's reign a dispute sprung up between the Coldingham monks and the Drengs of the land of Horndean. It was decided in favour of the former. The Drengs, Drenges, or Drenches, as they were variously styled, were a species of villeins, or thralls, attached to a particular manor in gross, and liable to be bought and sold along with it. They could not leave the land they were settled on without their lord's permission; and if they ran away, or were purloined from him, they might be claimed and recovered by action, like brute beasts or other chattels. They held, indeed, small portions of land by way of sustaining themselves and families; but it was through the mere will of the lord, who might dispossess them whenever he chose; and they were bound to do certain "base services," such as carrying out dung, hedging or ditching demesnes, and any other the meanest offices - not only mean and base, but uncertain as to their time and quantity, so that, as Bracton says, "they had to do whatever they were bid; and there was no call to tell them overnight what they were to do next
day, but they were always to be kept in uncertainty." In short, they were slaves in all respects, except that their lords could not kill them outright without law or reason. The Horndean drengs seem to have been of a somewhat stiff-necked, stubborn, and rebellious sort, and therefore the king himself had to be appealed to in order to bring them to their sober senses.

Sir Alexander Home's Patent.

As a specimen of the Scottish language in the fifteenth century, we give the following. It is Sir Alexander Home's Patent, granted by John Oll, Prior of Coldingham, A.D. 1442:-

"Be it knownen to all men be ther presents lettres us John Prioure of Coldyngham till have made, ordained, and stablist, and be yes presentes lettres makes, &c., a wirshipfull man Alexander Home, Knyght of that ilk, oure Bailye and Governoire of all our lordship and lands of the house and the Baronye of Coldingham, with appetenance bath in tenants and tenantdry gifand and granntand till hym our full power and autoritie for us and in oure name till our oysses and profite all our sayd lands to sett, fermes to rayse, courtys till hald, amercymnets till rayse, trespassours to punyche, breves till execute, tenantdrys to recognysse, the same tenants and tenantdrys till distreynd and hald till all arrerage and dettes ther of aught of tyme bygane and for to come till us be assethed, our men of our sayd lordshiph and lands wher eyvr thay be attached till borowe agayne till oure fredome and courte; and generally and specially all other and syndry thynges till do and fay for us in our name that till the office of Bailyery is seen to pertyne of custom or of lawe ferme and stable; we haldand and sall hald what ever the sayd our soveraign Bailye in his office on our behalfe ledes to be don. In wyttynysynyg of the whilk thyng to ther our lettres, endurants for terme of the sayd Syr Alexander hys lyfe, we hafe gart sett to our Seall, at Durham, the xiiij. day of May, the yhere of Our Lord a thousand four hundreth fourty and twa."

Northumberland's Letter to Henry VIII.

In 1522 Coldingham had an unpleasant visit from the English. The Scots had made a plundering raid into Northumberland, and the Earl of Northumberland, in a letter to Henry VIII., thus reports the reprisals made:-

"Uppon certeyne knowledge to my brother Clyfforth and me, had by credible persons of Scotland, this abominable act not onely to be done by dyverse of the Mershe, but alsose the aforesaid persons of Tyvaidall (Mark Kerr and others), and consented to as by appearance by the Earl of Murrey, upon Friday night last I let slip C. of the best horsemen of Glendaill, with a parte of your highnes subjects of Berwyk, together with George Dowglas, who came into Ingland agayne, in the dawning of the day; but afore theyre retorne, they did mar the Earl of Murreis provisions at Coldingham; for they did not onely burne the said town of Coldingham, with all the corne there-unto belonging, which is esteemed worthe CII. marke sterling, but also burned two towns nye adjoining thereunto, called Branerdgast and the Black Hill, and take xxiii. persons, LX. horse, with CC. head of cataill, which nowe, as I am informed, hathe not only been a staye of the said Earle of Murreis not coming to the Bordure as yet, but also that none inland man will adventure theyr self uppon the Marches. And I have devysed, by the advice of my
brother Clyfforthe, that within this iii. nights, Godde willing, Kelsey in like case shall be bren with all the corne in the said towe: and for this burning of Kelsay is devisyd to be done secretely by Tyndaill and Ryddisaill."

**King James V.'s Nepotism.**

James V., before his death, managed by the Pope's authority to get the priory for his natural son John. In his application to his Holiness he stated that Coldingham was a small monastery near the Border, and that it was situated in a neighbourhood where heretical sermons were often preached. For a like reason he asked, and got, Melrose and Kelso abbeys for his natural son James.

**Curious Witch Cases.**

In March, 1631, John Neil of Tweedmouth was tried for sorcery and witchcraft. Part of the charge was "meeting with the devil and other witches on Coldingham Law, and consulting how Sir George Home of Manderston might be destroyed: to that end getting and enchanted dead foal, and putting it in Sir George's stable, under his manger, and putting a dead hand, enchanted by the devil, in Sir George's garden at Berwick, by which enchantment Sir George contracted a grievous disease, of which he could not be recovered till the said foal and hand were discovered and burnt." Neil was found guilty, but his sentence does not appear. Cases of witchcraft were frequent in Coldingham parish during the incumbency of Mr. Dysart, the Presbyterian minister who, in 1694, took the place of a prelatic clergyman named Alexander Douglas. The kirk session seems to have had its hands full of them. The following is a specimen case: "Margaret Polwart in Coldingham, having a sick child, was using charms and sorcery for its recovery; and Jean Hart, a suspected witch, was employed in the affair, and also Alison Nisbet, who had lately been scratched, or had blood drawn above the breath, by some one who had suspected her of witchcraft. One of the witnesses declared that she saw Jean Hart holding a candle in her left hand, and waving her right hand about, and heard her mutter much, but did not understand a word she said. Another declared that she (the witness) did not advise Margaret Polwart to send for Jean Hart; but she heard her say that thief Christian Hopper had wronged her child, and that she would give her cow to have her child better, and that witness answered that they that chant cannot charm, or they that lay on cannot take off the disease, or they that do wrong to any one cannot recover them. Margaret Polwart was publicly rebuked."

**Conclusion.**

Mr. Carr gives a detailed account of the several grants to the monastery by the neighbouring landholders. They were both numerous and extensive; and as the Church held all its landed property in mortmain, as being perpetually inherent in one dead hand, in the course of time the whole land of the country might have come into its possession but for the advent of the iconoclastic Reformation, when so many broad acres that had been bequeathed to religious houses on condition of prayers being said for the souls of the dead in purgatory were clutched from them by the strong hand, or, what amounted to much the same thing, were handed over to some specially favoured gentleman to be held "in
commendam;” in other words, to reap all the emoluments attached to them without exercising any spiritual functions, or paying any deputy for doing so.

APPENDIX

The following letters were read at the meeting of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries in September, 1857:-

Berwick-on-Tweed, 11th May, 1857.

REV. SIR, - As I know you take some interest in ecclesiastical architecture, and also in antiquarian matters, I have taken the liberty to trouble you at present with some account of the old priory of Coldingham. We have at present a house painting there, and I am down at the old ruin whenever I am out at the job. You are, perhaps, aware that they have been making alterations in what remains of the priory, and which has been used as the parish church for two or three hundred years. I think they have done the work tolerably well - except that, in rebuilding the west, they have merely repeated the east - end. They are both now similar. I think it is to be deplored that they did not make some variation. But the inside now is remarkably fine. The north side and east end (which are original) can hardly be surpassed. They have stripped all the old galleries away, and there is little to obstruct the view. The restorations which have been made are very carefully done; and I think that if you could see it you would be much pleased with it. They have laid bare, on the outside, the foundations of the south transept. There is, in some parts, four or five feet of the wall and pillars standing. There are also the bases of the pillars of the centre tower. They have levelled the ground in the churchyard. Indeed, that is not finished yet. In doing all this they have found some curious cut stones, &c.; but the most remarkable discovery was made last week. In
clearing away some of the rubbish and debris where the great tower had been they came on the tombs of two of the priors. They lie nearly side by side. The one wanted the top cover to the grave, but the other is most perfect, and the inscription on it runs down the centre - "ERNALDUS PRIOR."

The graves are built with thin stones set on edge - the stone perhaps 6 or 8 inches thick - with one large stone for the head, cut out, as they usually are in stone coffins, for the head and shoulders. The body seemed to have been enwrapped in something that had the appearance of leather; but perhaps it is some sort of woollen steeped in pitch or wax. The bones were not disturbed. They closed them again very carefully.

My object in writing this to you, Sir, is to ask the question, Can you tell me anything of the Priors of Coldingham, or when Prior Ernald lived? and whether there was more than one of that name? The letters were tolerably well cut, and are incised on the stone. Does that lead to the period about which he died?

I fear that you will scarcely make out this scrawl of mine.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

J. D. EVANS.

The Very Rev. Charles Eyre.

Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1st July, 1857.

REV. SIR, - I received your letter, and also the newspaper sent by you, for which I thank you. It gives me some pleasure to think that the information in my letter was somewhat acceptable to you. I might have added at the time that there was found in the coffin of Prior Ernald a rod, or stick, about 2 ft. 4in. long. It was lying above the covering. It was a piece of coarse (I think) hazel stick, about the thickness of a man's finger. It broke into fragments with the least handling. There had also been shoes or sandals on the feet; and a sole of one was taken out and examined. It was the half sole, or front part; and there was with it a strengthening piece along the edge, just what shoemakers of the present day use, and call the welt; and the stitching along both was very regular, and would have done no discredit to a cordwainer of the present day. It was put back into the coffin before closing it.

Amongst the rubbish which the men had thrown aside some bits of stone were found, with letters on them; and a strict search being made, as much of the top covering slab of the other coffin was discovered as, when put together, makes it, as was conjectured, the coffin of another prior - viz., Radulf. It is said at Coldingham that he succeeded Ernald, and lived only about a year. I suppose that Prior Melsonby would then follow Radulf.

I little expected that my letter to you would have obtained, or was deserving of, such publicity. I felt somewhat ashamed when I read it in print.

I see that Mr. Raine remarks that it was not expected that stone coffins were older - at least those with a part cut out for the head and shoulders, and I never saw a stone coffin but it was so - than the time of Edward I.; yet antiquaries as well as other folk jump to conclusions sometimes very hastily. (Laughter.) These coffins of Ernald and Radulf are, without doubt, genuine stone coffins; but we must take into consideration that stone
for such a purpose is not to be had near Coldingham. I am not sure there is any freestone or sandstone in the whole parish. Therefore, the masons being in this strait, would have to do the next thing possible, and build a stone coffin with such means as they had at hand. There has even been some fragments of carving used in the two coffins mentioned above, which shows that they used what they could lay hold of. The masons at Coldingham say that all the stone for the church has been brought from a place called St. Helens; and that must be many miles from Coldingham. I believe it will be in Cockburnspath parish. It would be all to bring over Coldingham Moor - a very rough road even at this day. There has one stone coffin made of an entire stone been found. It is, however, very much broken.

There is part of some walls laid bare, which, from time immemorial, have gone by the name of Eggar’s Wa’s (Edgar’s Walls). It is about 30 or 40 yards to the south of the present kirk. It is built of whinstone, about three feet thick; and there have been three entrances or doorways down into it, as it is on a lower plane than the kirk. The doorways have freestone facings, and the steps are freestone. There are also half columns along the wall of freestone, and on the angle that remains are remnants of the corbel and groining rib (freestone). From these half columns the groining of the roof has sprung. What can it have been applied to? Has it been the refectory? They have not cleared away enough of the soil to judge of its size.

I attempted to take a photograph of the inside of the kirk, but the want of light was sore against me. I do not know whether it will print in a satisfactory way. If it does, and you will have one, I will have pleasure in sending it; but I will not, get the time at present to attempt it.

I got a small bit of the stick which was found in Ernald’s coffin, and also a small bit of the material in which the body had been wrapped.

I dare say that you will be now sick of my long rigmarole (laughter), which, please, excuse; and

I remain, Sir, yours devotedly.

J. D. EVANS.

Very Rev. Charles Eyre, Newcastle.

With reference to these letters, Mr. Raine observed that one very important fact was mentioned in them. He referred to the statement that the stone was “cut out for the head and shoulders” - a practice hitherto supposed not to be of older date than the reign of Edward the First, and yet Prior Ernaldus died before 1212. A valued lady correspondent, who takes a deep interest in the subject, her grandfather having been minister of Coldingham, informs us that the pillars Mr. Evans alludes to as the supporters of the tower are in the transept, and are those of the aisles of the south transept.

Another dressed formed the covering of a stone coffin (entire when discovered) found directly over, and two feet above, the foundation of the north wall of a religious house which preceded the Priory. This slab is now placed against the wall of the church south of the ancient archway which attracts so much attention. The tenant of this tomb, whose remains crumbled to ashes
when exposed to the air, was, from the figures sculptured upon it (a sword, a domestic cock, and a bugle horn) supposed to have been one of the Cockburns of Langton, a family from which the late eminent Lord Chief Justice of England as well as the family of Cockburn-Hood of Stainrigg trace descent.

The Coldingham Room at Durham.

There was an apartment in the monastery at Durham, called the Coldingham Room, down to about the Reformation time. It was in this room that John Wessington, Who became Prior of Durham in 1416, was accommodated by the Chapter, on his resignation thirty years afterwards, and where, on account of the great service he had rendered to the convent during his priorate, he and his attendants were to be provided by the bursar with all things necessary in food, drink, and clothing, as befitted the degree of each. The attendants were five in number: a monk as his chaplain, a gentleman or esquire (armiger), a clerk (clericus), a valet, and a page (gario). Certain lands and the profits of certain churches were assigned to him, besides this provision; and it was stipulated that if, for health's sake, he should wish to go elsewhere, he was to have the use of the apartment called Douglas Tower, at Finchale, with all needful provision, having the option of returning to Durham at his discretion. This shows clearly how great the dignity and state of the Lord Prior of Durham had become at the middle of the fifteenth century. But Wessington was an exceptional man, whose services to the church and convent had been very great. There is a long list extant of his writings, almost entirely on the history and the immunities of the church at Durham; and his works on the cathedral building were very extensive and costly, amounting in all to nearly £8000, a very large sum in that age.

Coldingham Common

"He has a conscience as wide as COLDINGHAM Common."

Mr. George Henderson, in his “Popular Rhymes, Sayings, and Proverbs of the County of Berwick,” gives the following account of the origin of this saying, which, although not quite germane to our subject, may interest some of our readers who are not likely to see that very curious book:-

“Before the year 1703, Coldingham Moor or Common was an extensive or undivided waste of about 6000 acres. It was divided by a decree of the Court of Session, the 15th January, 1773, among those heritors proving right thereto. Since that time several portions of it have been planted and cultivated; and during the last twenty years or so [say now fifty years] several feuars have taken up their residence within its bounds, and these protract an uncomfortable existence on the scanty crops which it produces; but the greater portion still [1856] is covered with heath, interspersed with bogs and mosses. It is understood that there is still about 4000 acres of this common in an uncultivated state. In ancient times this wide moor constituted part of the forest belonging to the monastery of Coldingham. It was then mostly covered with trees and brushwood - the roots of oak, birch, hazel, &c., being still frequently found embedded in the soil; and the peat mosses are full of their decayed trunks and branches. This moor has a singularly wild, bleak, and dreary aspect - so that in the ‘Memoirs of Paul Swanston’ (by Alexander
Somerville) the author, very appropriately, makes one of his characters say - 'My heart was as desolate as Coldingham Moor on a misty day;' and this naked dreariness extending several miles in every direction, the proverb is very applicable to those persons of lax principles who can accommodate their consciences to all circumstances, and which are of a very horny texture, and yet, like elastic gum, can stretch themselves to any extent.

Fair dealing is a rare jewel among mankind. The 'horse-couper' or 'cow-couper' spirit is to be found in ten thousand instances, besides in those respectable persons who deal in horses or cows. We sometimes expect a better spirit in those especially who get the reputation of 'righteous men;' but even these can stretch their 'consciences as wide as Coldingham Common,' and sometimes a good deal wider, for they set no bounds whatever to their rapacity."

Coldingham Packmen.

This name is given to the form of cloud, called cumulus, which appears in vast snowy piles, alp over alp, in the north or east, in fine summer afternoons. When weaving was a prosperous trade, packmen were not unlikely to be frequent about Coldingham. - J. HARDY, quoted by G. Henderson.

Ritchie Neill.

"Ritchie Neil was a stubborn deil, But the fishers made him his lips unseal, And put his senses in a creel."

Richard Neill was a native of Longformacus, in Lammermoor, who, about the termination of last century, traversed the country in the capacity of pedlar or packman, as Mr. Henderson tells us in his "Popular Rhymes." A young woman had a child to him, but he would by no means confess to being the father, till a few fishers of Coldingham, having enticed him into a boat, rowed out to a rock which was surrounded by the sea, where they all landed; but soon after they all leapt into the boat, and rowed away as if they intended to leave him. The tide was fast nearing the rock, and threatened soon to overwhelm him; and he cried out vehemently to the men in the boat, who hovered about for the purpose, "Life's sweet; the bairn's mine!" The upshot was that he had to pay for the child, and had to endure penance on the Repenting Stool, in Coldingham Church, for three successive Sabbaths. The first day that he mounted the stool, arrayed in sacking gown, he hung his head very demurely; on the second day he glanced a little around him; but on the third and last day he gained confidence to look boldly in the face of the people, and when he was coming out of the church he clapt his hand upon his thigh at the kirk door, and exclaimed, "Catch me here the morn!"
Serfdom and its Rights.

The following records of the sale of serfs illustrate the state of society at the time of their occurrence more vividly than any mere description can do:

Sale of the Freedom of Reginald the Provost, a Neyf of Prendergest.

I, Adam, lord of Prendergeste, make known to all present and to come who may see or hear these letters, that I, with the will and assent of Henry, my son and heir, have sold to Patrick of Prendergeste, Burgess of Berwick, Reginald the Provost, my neyf, with all his following, and have quit-claimed for ever the said Reginald and all his following to the said Patrick; from me and my heirs, for twenty marks of sterlings, which the said Patrick gave to me in my great necessity. Wherefore I freely will and grant that the said Reginald, his wife, his children, and all the following descending from them, with all their goods, as well movable as immovable, freely and peacefully, may go, return, and stay wherever they please, like other freemen, so that I, Adam, and all my heirs, shall never henceforward against them have demand or claim of their neyfship. And that this my sale may have strength and effect in future, I, Adam, have confirmed the present charter with my seal. Witnesses: Sir Richard, Prior for the time of Coldingham, Sir William of Morwinton, Sheriff of Berwick for the time, Sir Alen of Synton, Thomas of Nesebity, Robert of Paxton, Robert son of Reginald, Robert son of the Steward, David of Lungsdem, Gilbert of Lungsdem, Adam son of John, Patrick Scot, Thomas Frank, and many others. Done in the year of our Lord, 1247, on Saturday before the feast of Saint Gregory, in our Lord the Prior’s full court of Ayton. Witness the court.

Sale of Joseph Fitz Elwold, a Serf, to Coldingham.

Henry of Prendergeste, to all who shall see or hear these letters, greeting. Be it known to you all that I have granted, sold, and for ever quit-claimed from me and my heirs, Joseph son of Elwold, and all his issue, to the Prior and Convent of Coldingham, for the price of three marks, which he gave to me in my great necessity, of money of the house of Coldingham. Wherefore I will and grant that the foresaid Joseph and all his issue shall be free and quit from all reclamation of me and my heirs. Before these witnesses: Ralf the Archdeacon and John his son, Elyas of Prendergeste and Adam his son, Richard Forester and Richard his son, Richard of Ristun, William of Lumisdene, Adam of Little Ristun, Maurice son of Merlin and Reginald his brother, Adam son of Ilif of Aldengraue, Uctred son of Coleman and Roger his son, and Reginald of Little Ristun and William his son, William son of Elgi, Walter of Edenham and Robert of Edenham, Ralph the Provost, and the whole court of Homelescenel, and many others.

Sale of Osulf, a Serf, to Coldingham.

Robert of Prendergeste, to all who may see or hear these letters, greeting. Be it known to you all that I have granted, sold, and entirely for ever, from me and my heirs, quit-claimed, Osulf the Red and Walter his son, and all who shall issue from them hereafter, to the Prior and Convent of Coldingham, for the price of ten marks, which they gave to me, in my great necessity, in goods of the property of the house of Coldingham. Wherefore I
will and grant that the foresaid Osulf and Walter, and all their issues, be free and quit from all reclamation and demand of me and my heirs. In presence of these witnesses: Patrick son of Alden, Henry of Prendergest, Alan of Swinton, Helyas of Upper Eyton, Elyas of Prendergest, William of Lumesdene, Adam of Riston, Reginald of Riston, Reginald son of Merlin, Maurice his brother, and many others.

Note. - Sir Alan of Swinton, one or the witnesses to the first and third of the above deeds, got a charter of the barony of Swinton from Bertram, Prior of Coldingham, superior thereof, in the reign of William the Lion, who ascended the throne in 1165 and died in 1214. David, Gilbert, and William of Lumsden appear, with Radulph and John of the same surname, attesting different grants to the Priory in the Lion’s long reign. They were manorial tenants of the Prior and Convent. "Homelescnel" seems to be a corruption of "Homage ancestral," which William Rastall, the famous lawyer and judge in the time of Queen Mary of England, defines, in his "Termes de la Ley," as follows (his language, however, being rendered into modern English):- "Homage ancestral is, where a man and his ancestors have time out of mind held their land of their lord by homage."