

**FREEMAN
EDWARD
AUGUSTUS**

HISTORY OF THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF
WELLS

Edward Freeman

**History of the Cathedral
Church of Wells**

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History of the Cathedral Church of Wells / E. Freeman — «Public Domain»,

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Edward A. Freeman

History of the Cathedral Church of Wells / As Illustrating the History of the Cathedral Churches of / the Old Foundation

PREFACE

This small volume is a reprint, with hardly any change, of three lectures which were given to a local society in Wells in the months of December 1869 and January 1870, and which were printed at the time in a local paper. I have added some notes and references, but the substance is essentially the same. The subject seemed to deserve more than local attention on more grounds than one. I wished to point out the way in which local and general history may and ought to be brought together. As a general rule, local historians make hardly any attempt to connect the history of the particular church or city or district of which they are writing with the general history of the country, or even with the general history of its own class of institutions. On the other hand, more general students of history are apt to pay too little heed to the history of particular places. I have here tried to treat the history of the Church of Wells as a contribution to the general history of the Church and Kingdom of England, and specially to the history of the Cathedral Churches of the Old Foundation. I have also a special object in calling attention to the origin and history of those foundations, to their original objects and their modern corruptions. It is quite impossible that our Cathedral institutions can stay much longer in the state in which they now are, a state which satisfies no party. If they are not reformed by their friends, they can hardly fail to be destroyed by their enemies. The awkward attempt at reform which was made thirty years back was made in utter ignorance of the history and nature of the institutions. Instead of reforming them, it has merely crippled them. Our Cathedral Churches have indeed vastly improved during those thirty years; but it has been almost wholly because they have shared in a general improvement, hardly at all by virtue of the changes which were specially meant to improve them. I wish to point out the general principles of the original founders as the model to which the Old Foundations should be brought back, and the New Foundations reformed after their pattern.

What I have now written is of course a mere sketch, which does not at all pretend to be a complete history of the Church of Wells, either architectural or documentary. I had hoped that Professor Willis would have allowed me the use of the materials of both kinds on which he grounded his lectures in 1851 and 1863. But it seems that he reserves them for the general work for which architectural students have been waiting so long. I have therefore been left to my own resources, that is, as far as documents are concerned, to the ordinary printed authorities in *Anglia Sacra*, the *Monasticon*, and elsewhere. But it is to be hoped that some day or other the documents that are locked up in manuscript at Wells and at other places may be made available for historical purposes. Some of our capitular records would be excellently suited for a place in the series issued by the Master of the Rolls.

I have given an historical ground-plan, but the scale of the book forbade any strictly architectural illustrations, while it seemed needless to give any mere picturesque views of a building of which engravings and photographs are so common.

Somerleaze, Wells,
May 18th, 1870.

LIST OF BISHOPS

BISHOPS OF SOMERSETSHIRE OR WELLS

	Consecration.	Death or Translation
Æthelhelm	909	914 ¹
Wulfhelm	914	923 ¹
Ælfneah	923	937?
Wulfhelm	938	955?
Brihtelm	956	973
Cyneward	973	975
Sigar	975	997
Ælfwine	997	998?
Lyfing	999	1012 ¹
Æthelwine } ²	1013	1023?
Brihtwine }	1013	1023?
Merewith	1027	1033
Duduc	1033	1060
Gisa	1061	1088
BISHOPS OF BATH.		
John de Villulâ	1088	1122
Godfrey	1123	1135
Robert	1136	1166
Reginald	1174	1191 ³
BISHOPS OF BATH AND GLASTONBURY.		

- 1 Translated to Canterbury.
- 2 This seems to have been a case of disputed election.
- 3 Translated to Canterbury.
- 4 Translated to York.
- 5 Translated from Worcester.
- 6 Translated to Ely.
- 7 Translated from Coventry and Lichfield.
- 8 Translated to Durham.
- 9 Translated from Salisbury.
- 10 Translated to York.
- 11 Translated from London to Salisbury, and thence to Bath and Wells.
- 12 Translated to Canterbury.
- 13 Translated from Exeter.
- 14 Translated to Durham, thence to Winchester.
- 15 Translated from Exeter.
- 16 Translated from Hereford.
- 17 Deprived for a conspiracy against Pope Leo the Tenth.
- 18 Held in plurality with York.
- 19 Exchanged for Durham.
- 20 Translated from Saint David's.
- 21 Deprived on the accession of Queen Mary and reappointed to Chichester under Queen Elizabeth.
- 22 Deprived on the accession of Elizabeth.
- 23 Father of Francis Godwin the historian, Canon of Wells and afterwards Bishop of Llandaff.
- 24 Translated to Winchester.
- 25 Translated from Saint David's.
- 26 Translated to London and thence to Canterbury.
- 27 Translated from Rochester.
- 28 Translated to Winchester.
- 29 Translated from Peterborough.
- 30 Translated to Winchester.
- 31 Deprived for refusing the oaths to William and Mary.
- 32 Translated from Saint Asaph.
- 33 Translated from Saint David's.
- 34 Translated from Gloucester.
- 35 Translated from Carlisle.
- 36 Translated from Oxford.
- 37 Translated from Sodor and Man.
- 38 Resigned. Died 1870.

LECTURE I

The subject which I have chosen for this course of lectures is one which must always have an interest beyond all others for us who live in this city and neighbourhood. In every place which boasts of a cathedral church, that cathedral church is commonly the chief object of interest, alike as its present ornament and as the chief centre of its past history. But in Wells the cathedral church and its appurtenances are yet more. Their interest is not only primary, but absorbing. They are not only the chief ornament of the place; they are the place itself. They are not only the centre of the past history of the city; their history is the history of the city. Of our other cities some can trace up a long history as cities independent of their ecclesiastical foundations. Some were the dwelling-places of Kings in days before England became one kingdom. Some have been for ages seats of commerce or manufactures; their history is the history of burghers striving for and obtaining their freedom, a history which repeats in small that same tale of early struggles and later abuses which forms the history of so many greater commonwealths. Others have a long military history; their name at once suggests the memory of battles and sieges, and they can still show walls and castles as the living memorials of the stirring scenes of bygone times. In others even the ecclesiastical pre-eminence of the cathedral church may be disputed by some other ecclesiastical building. The bishoprick and its church may be comparatively modern institutions, and they may be altogether eclipsed by some other institution more ancient in date of foundation, perhaps more ancient in its actual fabric. Thus at Oxford the cathedral church is well-nigh lost among the buildings of the University and its greatest college. At Chester its rank may be disputed by the majestic fragments of the older minster of Saint John. At Bristol the cathedral church, even when restored to its old proportions, will still have at least an equal rival in the stateliest parish church in England. In these cities the bishoprick, its church and its chapter, are institutions of yesterday; the cities themselves were great and famous for ages before they were founded. So at Exeter, though the bishoprick is of far earlier date, yet Exeter was a famous city, which had played its part in history, long before Bishops of Exeter were heard of. Even at Winchester the overwhelming greatness of the Old Minster has to compete with the earlier and later interests of the royal palace, of the fallen Abbey, of the unique home of noble poverty¹ and of the oldest of the great and still living schools of England. Salisbury alone in our own part of England, and Durham in the far north, have a history which in some measure resembles that of Wells. Like Wells, Salisbury and Durham are cities which have grown up around the cathedral church. But they have grown up – I presume it is no offence to say so – into a greater measure of temporal importance than our own city. To take a familiar standard, no one has ever proposed to strike either of them out of the list of parliamentary boroughs. Wells stands alone among the cities of England proper as a city which exists only in and through its cathedral church, whose whole history is that of its cathedral church. The Bishoprick has been to us what the Abbey has been to our neighbours at Glastonbury, what the church first of Abbots and then of Bishops has been elsewhere to Ely and Peterborough. The whole history of Wells is, I say, the history of the bishoprick and of its church. Of the origin and foundation of the city, as distinguished from that of the church, nothing is known. The name of Wells is first heard of as the place where the church of Saint Andrew was standing, and its name seldom appears in later history except in connexion with the affairs of its church. It was never a royal dwelling-place; it was never a place of commercial importance; it was never a place of military strength. Like other cities, it has its municipal history, but its municipal history is simply an appendage to its ecclesiastical history; the franchises of the borough were simply held as grants from the Bishop. It has its parochial church, a church standing as high among the buildings of its

¹ "Domus eleemosynaria nobilis paupertatis" is the style of the Hospital of Saint Cross near Winchester, as enlarged by Cardinal Beaufort. See the Licence of Incorporation in the Monasticon, vii. 724.

own class as the cathedral church itself. This parochial church has a parochial constitution which is in some points unique. But the parochial church is simply an appendage to the cathedral church; it is the church of the burghers who had come to dwell under the shadow of the minster and the protection of its spiritual lord. And it has ever retained a close, sometimes perhaps a too close, connexion with the cathedral and its Chapter. Thus the history of the church is the history of the city; no battles, no sieges, no parliaments, break the quiet tenor of its way; the name of the city has hardly found its way into our civil and military history. Its name does appear among the troubles of the seventeenth century, in the pages of Clarendon and of Macaulay, but it appears in connexion with events whose importance was mainly local. And even here the ecclesiastical interest comes in; the most striking event connected with Wells in the story of Monmouth's rebellion is the mischief done to the cathedral, and the way in which further damage and desecration was hindered by Lord Grey. And in our own times, when the parliamentary existence of this city became the subject of an animated parliamentary discussion, even then the ecclesiastical interest was still uppermost. The old battle of the regulars and seculars was fought again over the bodies of two small parliamentary boroughs. I need not remind you that the claims of the old secular foundation were stoutly pressed by one of our own members. But the monastic influence was too strong for us; the mantle of Dunstan and Æthelwald had fallen on the shoulders of Sir John Pakington, and the claims of the fallen Abbey of Evesham were preferred to those of the existing Cathedral of Wells.²

The whole interest, then, of this city is ecclesiastical; but its ecclesiastical interest in one point of view surpasses that of every church in England, – I am strongly tempted to say, every church in Europe. The traveller who comes down the hill from Shepton Mallet looks down, as he draws near the city, on a group of buildings which, as far as I know, has no rival either in our own island or beyond the sea. To most of these objects, taken singly, it would be easy to find rivals which would equal or surpass them. The church itself, seen even from that most favourable point of view, cannot, from mere lack of bulk, hold its ground against the soaring apse of Amiens, or against the windows ranging, tier above tier, in the mighty eastern gable of Ely. The cloister cannot measure itself with Gloucester or Salisbury; the chapter-house lacks the soaring roofs of York and Lincoln; the palace itself finds its rival in the ruined pile of Saint David's. The peculiar charm and glory of Wells lies in the union and harmonious grouping of all. The church does not stand alone; it is neither crowded by incongruous buildings, nor yet isolated from those buildings which are its natural and necessary complement. Palace, cloister, Lady chapel, choir, chapter-house, all join to form one indivisible whole. The series goes on uninterruptedly along that unique bridge which by a marvel of ingenuity connects the church itself with the most perfect of buildings of its own class, the matchless Vicars' close. Scattered around we see here and there an ancient house, its gable, its window, or its turret falling in with the style and group of greater buildings, and bearing its part in producing the general harmony of all. The whole history of the place is legibly written on that matchless group of buildings. If we could fancy an ecclesiastical historian to have dropped from the clouds, the aspect of the place would at once tell him that he was looking on an English cathedral church, on a cathedral church which had always been served by secular canons, on a church of secular canons which had preserved its ancient buildings

² I refer to the debate in the House of Commons on the Scotch Reform Bill of 1868, when it was discussed whether Wells or Evesham should be disfranchised. "Sir Lawrence Palk argued on behalf of Wells that it is 'a cathedral city of great antiquity.' This appeal on behalf of the seculars was at once met by the monastic zeal of Sir John Pakington, who daringly answered, that if Evesham 'cannot boast of a cathedral, it can of one of the most beautiful abbeys in England.' We should be sorry to suspect the good town of Evesham of any Anabaptist tendencies, but it is certain that, if it makes the boast which the member for Droitwich puts into its mouth, it belongs to the class of those who do falsely boast ... Mr. Gladstone had never been at Evesham; we know of no particular call of duty likely to take him there; but Sir John Pakington, a Worcestershire man, must surely have visited a borough in his own shire. How then about the beautiful abbey, one of the most beautiful in England? Any one who has been both at Wells and at Evesham must know that Wells Cathedral is still standing, while Evesham Abbey, saving its bell-tower and a small piece of wall, has long ceased to exist. But one might ask both disputants whether Sir Lawrence Palk, in his zeal for cathedrals, would enfranchise Ely and Saint David's – whether Sir John Pakington, in his zeal for abbeys, would restore Saint Alban's and enfranchise Romsey." —*Saturday Review*, July 11, 1868.

and ancient arrangements more perfectly than any other in the island. It is to the history of that great institution, alike in its fabric and its foundation, that I call your attention in the present course of lectures. And, taking Wells as my text, I purpose to compare our own church, alike in its fabric and its foundation, with other churches of the same class. The subject naturally falls into three divisions. I purpose to devote three discourses of moderate length to the early, the mediæval, and the modern history of the Church of Wells.

For a subject like that which I have chosen is obviously one which may be looked at from various points of view. A cathedral church like ours is not only a material fabric, a work of architecture; it is also an ecclesiastical institution, an establishment founded for the benefit of our Church and nation, and which has played its part, whatever that part may have been, in the general history of the country. I purpose to look at it in both aspects, aspects either of which is very imperfectly treated if it wholly shuts out the other. But I do not purpose to treat either branch of the subject in any very minute detail. A minute architectural or antiquarian memoir has its value, but it is not at all suited to a popular lecture. A minute architectural exposition, if it is to be intelligible, must be given on the spot. A minute antiquarian memoir, crowded with names and dates, is often very profitable when printed, but it is not at all suited to be read out to a general audience. Moreover I should be very sorry to trespass on the province of one to whose minute knowledge of local history I can make no claim. My object is different. I wish to treat the history of Wells Cathedral, both as a building and as an institution, in a more general, in what I may call a comparative, way. I wish to dwell on the position of our own church as one of a class, to point out how it stands among other buildings and other institutions of its own class, and to trace out its connexion with the general history of the Kingdom and Church of England.

For my first portion then this evening, I purpose to take as my subject the early days of the church of Saint Andrew, from the first time that its name is heard of in history or record to the time when both the material fabric and the ecclesiastical foundation assumed something like their present form. And as this subject will lead us into somewhat obscure times, and into many matters which people in general are far from accurately understanding, I hope that those among my hearers to whom all that I have to say is familiar will forgive me if I deal with some matters in a somewhat elementary way. I have spoken of Saint Andrew's church in Wells as a cathedral church, as a cathedral church which has always been served by secular canons; I have spoken of an opposition between the regular and the secular clergy. To some of my hearers all these terms carry their meaning at once. To others I am afraid that they may not suggest any very definite idea. But without a definite idea of them neither the general history of England nor the local history of Wells can be clearly understood. Let then my better informed hearers bear with me if I go somewhat into the A B C of the matter.

To begin then with the beginning, what do we mean when we call the larger of the two ancient churches in this city, the *Cathedral*? What is the meaning of the word? Some people seem to think it means simply a bigger church than usual – I have heard a vast number of churches in other places called *cathedrals* which have no right to the name. Sometimes people seem to think that it means a church which has a Dean and Chapter or a special body of clergy of some kind, or a church where there are prayers every day, or a church where the prayers are chanted and not merely read. Nay, some people seem to think that a cathedral is not a church at all; I have heard it said that a cathedral was not a church, but that it had a church inside it. And I do not wonder at people thinking so when they go into a cathedral church, and see the greater part standing empty indeed and swept, but never garnished. I was once in a large parish church, that of Grosmont in Monmouthshire, where the man who let me in told me very proudly: "Our church is like a cathedral." What he meant by the church being like a cathedral was that the whole congregation was rammed, jammed, crammed into the choir, while the nave stood empty and useless. Again it is not at all uncommon to hear people talk of "cathedrals and churches," as if they were two different sorts of things. And people seem also to think that some particular sort of worship is right in a cathedral, which is not right in other places. When there is a

good deal of singing and organ-playing in divine service, they call it "cathedral service," as if singing and organ-playing were something specially belonging to a cathedral more than to other places.

Now all these latter notions are simply mistakes. And those with which I began are mistakes too, though in a somewhat different way. A cathedral is simply a church, one particular sort of church, and, instead of being a thing to be proud of, it is a thing to be ashamed of if the nave of any church stands empty and useless. What is called "cathedral service" is simply divine service done in the best and most solemn way, a way which other churches may not always be able to follow in everything, but which they should try to follow as nearly as they can. On the other hand, it is very right that a cathedral church should be larger and finer than other churches, that it should have a larger body of clergy belonging to it, and that they should perform divine service in such a way as to be a light and an example to other churches. Still none of these things lies at the root of the matter; it is none of these things which makes the difference between a cathedral and another church. That difference is that it contains the throne or official seat of the Bishop. In Greek and Latin that seat is called *cathedra*, – a word which in English is cut short into *chair*– and the church which contains it is called *ecclesia cathedralis*, the *cathedral church*. *Cathedral* in short is an adjective and not a substantive, and its use as a substantive is always rather awkward and slovenly. Certain churches, namely those which contain the throne of a Bishop, are *cathedral* churches, as churches which do not contain the throne of a Bishop, but which have a Chapter or College of clergy, are *collegiate* churches, while the great mass of churches are simply *parochial* churches, churches designed for the use of a single parish, and with only a single parish priest.

The essence then of the cathedral church is its being, beyond all other churches, the church of the Bishop. It is the church which contains his official seat, and it is by taking possession of that official seat that the Bishop, as we shall presently see when our newly chosen Bishop comes among us, takes possession of his Bishoprick.³ From that seat the church, and the city in which it stands, is called the Bishop's *See*. And from that see the Bishop takes his title. Thus we call this city of Wells the see of a Bishop, the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The Bishop is called Bishop of Bath as well as of Wells, because this diocese, unlike most others, contained two cathedral churches. The Bishop had his throne in the church of Saint Peter at Bath as well as in the church of Saint Andrew at Wells. But since the time of Henry the Eighth the church of Bath has not been reckoned as a cathedral church, and the Bishop has been enthroned in the church of Wells only.

Now you may ask how it is that, while, of all the churches of the diocese, the cathedral church is pre-eminently the Bishop's church, the church which is specially his own, and whence he takes his title, it is precisely in the cathedral church that he has less authority than in any other church, that the whole management of the cathedral church seems to have passed away from the Bishop into the hands of the Dean and Chapter. The independence of the Dean and Chapter, when it is carried so far as it now is, is undoubtedly an abuse and an anomaly, and how it came about I shall show as I go on. You may also ask how it happened that the see of the Bishop of this diocese should have been placed at Wells rather than anywhere else. For it was at Wells that it was placed first of all, and it was not till nearly two hundred years after the foundation of the Bishoprick that Bath became a cathedral church.

To see how this happened we must go back to the days of the first preaching of the Gospel to Englishmen. In those parts of Western Europe which first became Christian, in Italy, for instance, and Gaul and Spain, the cities were at that time almost everything the open country was of very little account. The Gospel was therefore first preached to the people of the cities, and the cities had become almost wholly Christian at a time when the people of the country were still mainly heathens. Hence the word *pagan*– in Latin *paganus*– which at first meant only a countryman as opposed to a townsman, came to mean a heathen or worshipper of false gods. Now in this state of things the Bishop was pre-eminently the Bishop of the city; the city was his home, and the home of his original

³ This Lecture was given in the time between the election and installation of the present Bishop, Lord Arthur Hervey.

flock; it was only gradually that he came to have much to do with the people beyond the city, and, when he did so, the limits of his diocese were fixed by the limits of the civil jurisdiction of the city of which he was Bishop. In England, and indeed in the British Islands generally, the state of things was very different. The country was divided among many princes; there were but few large towns, and those that there were exercised no authority over the people of the country round them. In England therefore at first there commonly was a Bishop in each Kingdom; he fixed his throne, his *bishopstool* as it was called, in some particular church in his diocese, which thus became his special home and cathedral church; but he was not Bishop of the city in the same special sense in which an Italian or even a Gaulish Bishop was Bishop of the city. In fact in many of the English dioceses the Bishop did not even take his title from the city where his cathedral church stood, but was called from the country at large, or rather from the tribe which inhabited it. Thus up to the Norman Conquest the Bishop of this diocese was not called the Bishop of Wells, but the Bishop of the Sumorsætas, the tribe from which Somersetshire takes its name.

Now the Bishoprick of the Sumorsætas was not one of the oldest Bishopricks, one of those which were founded at the first preaching of the Gospel in England. When Augustine came to Britain in 597, only a very small part of Somersetshire was English at all; the Welsh of Cornwall still held all the land from the Land's End to the Axe. Thus Wells, if Wells existed, was within the Welsh border, though Wookey was within the English border. When the West-Saxons became Christians in 635, a Bishop was, as usual, appointed for the whole kingdom. He was called Bishop of the West-Saxons, and his *bishopstool* was placed, after some changes, in the royal city of Winchester.⁴ After a while, as Christianity spread and as the West-Saxon Kingdom grew by conquests from the Welsh, this great diocese was divided in the year 705.⁵ One Bishop remained at Winchester; the other had his *bishopstool* at Sherborne, and his diocese took in the shires of the Dorsætas, the Wilsætas, and the Sumorsætas, and Berkshire, a shire which, unlike the other three, was not called after a people. In the time of Eadward the Elder, in 909, this diocese was divided again; the Sumorsætas now got a Bishop to themselves, and his *bishopstool* was placed where it still is, in the church of Saint Andrew at Wells.⁶

Now we come at once to the question, why was Wells chosen to be the seat of the Bishoprick? I think you will easily see that there is not now, nor was there then, any diocese in England where the Bishop was more thoroughly driven to be the Bishop of the whole diocese and not merely the Bishop of one city. Somersetshire had not then, and it has not now, any one town at once larger than any of its neighbours and placed conveniently in the middle of the shire. Then, as now, the two greatest towns in the shire must have been the old Roman city of Bath at one end and the purely English town of Taunton at the other. Taunton was founded by King Ine between 710 and 722 as a border fortress against the Welsh, after he had carried the English frontier as far west as the boundary of Somersetshire goes now.⁷ Neither of these places was well suited to be the centre of the diocese. Bridgewater, which is more central, was not built till some ages later. Glastonbury, which is more central still, could not well be made the Bishoprick, because it was the seat of the greatest monastery of the West. Also Glastonbury was in those days a singularly inaccessible place. It stood on an island, and could be reached only by boats; so that unless the Bishop was to be altogether a hermit, he would have been a good deal out of place there. Some Bishops had fixed their sees in places of this kind, but it is clear that such an arrangement was in every way inconvenient, and so wise a King as Eadward

⁴ In strictness the West-Saxon Bishoprick was first placed at Dorchester in Oxfordshire in 635, and the see was not finally settled at Winchester till 670. The time between these years was one of great confusion. See Bæda, Hist. Eccl. iii. 7. Florence of Worcester, i. 235. Stubbs, Registrum Sacrum Anglicanum, 161.

⁵ See Bæda, v. 18, and the Chronicle A.D. 709. The first Bishop at Sherborne was Ealdhelm. See his life by William of Malmesbury in Wharton, Anglia Sacra, ii. 20.

⁶ See Florence of Worcester, i. 236. Will. Malm. Gesta Regum, ii. 129. Gesta Pont. in Scriptores post Bædam, 144 b; Canonicus Wellensis in Anglia Sacra, i. 554; Stubbs, 13.

⁷ In 710 Ine won a victory over the Cornish King Gerent; in 722 Taunton is spoken of as the town which Ine had built. This fixes the foundation of Taunton within that time. See the Chronicles under these years.

the Elder was not likely to sanction it. And we may be sure that the monks of Glastonbury would be then, as they were long after, altogether set against having the Bishop for their chief instead of an Abbot of their own. I conceive that Wells was chosen, because at Wells there was already a body of secular priests attached to the church of Saint Andrew.

The whole history of Wells before the time of Eadward the Elder is excessively obscure, and much of it is undoubtedly fabulous. There is a story about King Ine planting a Bishoprick at Congresbury, which was presently moved to Wells, and a list of Bishops is given between Ine and Eadward. There is also a document which professes to be a charter of King Cynewulf in 766, which does not speak of any Bishop at Wells, but which implies the existence of an ecclesiastical establishment of some kind. But unluckily the Congresbury story rests on no good authority, and the charter of Cynewulf is undoubtedly spurious. But because a charter is spurious in form, it does not always follow that its matter is unhistorical. And I am the more inclined to attach some value to it, because, while implying the existence of some ecclesiastical establishment, it does not imply the existence of a Bishoprick. Putting all things together, and remembering the strong and consistent tradition which connects the name of Ine with the church of Wells, I am inclined to think that there must have been some body of priests, probably of Ine's foundation, existing at Wells before the foundation of the Bishoprick by Eadward.⁸ If then Ine did, somewhere about the year 705, found a church at Wells with a body of priests attached to it, we can well understand why Wells should be chosen as the seat of the new Bishoprick in 909. The secular canons of Ine's foundation could receive the Bishop as their chief, and become his *Chapter*, in a way in which the monks of Glastonbury could not so well do. If this be so, then the Chapter of Wells is really an older institution than the Bishoprick. The present form of the Chapter is, as I shall presently show, comparatively modern; but if this be so, the priests of Wells are, in one shape or another, two hundred years older than the Bishop. On this view, Eadward the Elder did with the church of Wells exactly what has been done with the churches of Ripon and Manchester in our own time. Both these churches were *collegiate*; Ripon had a Dean and Prebendaries; Manchester had a Warden and Fellows. In our present Queen's reign Bishopricks were founded in these two churches; from being only *collegiate*, they became *cathedral*, and the collegiate bodies became the Chapters of the new Bishops. In the like sort it seems probable that the church of Saint Andrew at Wells, founded by King Ine as a collegiate church, was made into a cathedral church by King Eadward the Elder. Saint Andrew's church therefore may be said to have two founders; King Ine founded the Chapter, King Eadward founded the Bishoprick. Now perhaps some of you read the notice which was placed on the choir-door last week summoning all the members of the Chapter to attend for the election of the new Bishop. You might there have seen the Queen's *congé d'élire*, the writ giving leave to the Chapter to elect a Bishop. In that *congé d'élire*, the Queen calls her rights over the church of Wells her "fundatorial rights." That is to say, they are the rights which she has inherited as the successor of King Ine, as not only the successor but the direct descendant of King Eadward the Elder.

Let us now try and picture to ourselves the state of things at Wells and in its neighbourhood at either of these early times. In some respects the aspect of the country has greatly changed; in others closely connected with them the influence of the then state of things abides to this day. The traveller who in Ine's day looked down from the height of Mendip looked down on a land which had been but lately wrested from its old British owners. By the hard fighting of about a hundred and twenty years the English border had been carried from the Axe to nearly the present limits of the shire.⁹ Taunton was a border fortress, newly raised against the gradually retreating but still often threatening Welsh. If the eye caught the hills of Devon or perhaps even those of Western Somerset, it looked,

⁸ On this whole matter, see *Anglia Sacra*, i. 553, and the *Historiola de Primordiis Episcopatus Somersetensis* in Hunter's *Ecclesiastical Documents*, p. 10. The alleged charter of Cynewulf will be found in Kemble's *Codex Diplomaticus*, i. 141.

⁹ Ceawlin conquered to the Axe in 577; Cenwealh to the Parret in 658; Ine, as we see, as far as Taunton. On Ceawlin see Dr. Guest in the *Archæological Journal*, xix. 193.

no less than when it looked across the Channel to the hills of Gwent and Morganwg, upon a foreign and hostile land.¹⁰ The great natural features of the country were of course the same as they are now. The rocks of Cheddar and of Ebber, the bold headland of Brean, the island rock of the Steep Holm, the little hills scattered here and there, and the knoll of Brent and the Tor of the Archangel rising above their fellows, are objects which do not change. But in the days of Ine we must remember that those hills were truly islands. The low ground was one wide extent of marsh; the dwelling-places of man were confined to those ridges and isolated heights where the ground was high enough to be safe against accidents of tide and flood. Mendip itself was a wild forest land, peopled only by beasts of chase, and we must remember that the hunters of those days had to struggle against really formidable foes. The cave-lion had indeed long ago vanished, but we cannot doubt that the wolf still preyed on the flocks, and that the wild boar still ravaged the fields, of the men who were striving to bring the land into subjection. The inhabitants were doubtless still mainly of the old British stock, no longer dealt with as wild beasts or as irreclaimable enemies, but allowed to sit down as subjects, though as subjects of an inferior class, under the rule of the West-Saxon King.¹¹ But English influence was fast spreading; between the days of Ine and the days of Eadward the tongue and laws and manners of the conquerors had spread themselves, and, by the time of the second foundation of Wells, Somersetshire must have been mainly an English land. The evidence of nomenclature shows us that most of the sites now occupied, most of the old towns and villages, were occupied between these two dates, and the population must have been, then as now, thickly scattered over the insular and peninsular heights of the district. I need not tell you that it is mainly along those old lines of habitation that men dwell still. Along the hill-sides of Mendip and of the opposite ridges villages and houses lie thick together, while the flat land below, though it has become the wealth of the country, remains almost as little dwelled in by man as in the days when it was one impassable swamp. And in the land which was thus fast becoming part of the inheritance of Englishmen, the piety and discernment of English Kings had planted two special centres of religion and civilization, richly endowed of the wealth of the land for the common benefit of all. In the isle of Avalon, the isle of Glastonbury, the great Abbey still lived on, rich and favoured by the conquerors as by the conquered, the one great institution which bore up untouched through the storm of English Conquest, the one great tie which binds our race to the race which went before us, and which binds the Church of the last thirteen hundred years to the earlier days of Christianity in Britain. There in their island monks and pilgrims still worshipped in that primæval church of wood and wicker which time and conquest had as yet agreed to spare.¹² To the north of the old British monastery, not alone on an island, but nestling under the shadow of the great hill range itself, the younger ecclesiastical foundation, the foundation of the conquerors, was growing up. Of purely English and Christian origin, claiming no Roman or British forerunner, the church and town which were rising at the foot of Mendip drew their name from no legend of old times, from no tradition of gods and heroes, but from the most marked natural feature of the spot and from the patron saint in whose name the young foundation was hallowed. While the origin of the Abbey is lost in the gloom of hoariest antiquity, while its name of Avalon has become a name of legend, a name rather of some fancied fairy-land than of an actual spot of earth, no traditions, no legends, have decorated the birth and early years of the church and city which drew its name, as intelligible to English ears now as it was then, from the holy wells of Saint Andrew.

Two ecclesiastical foundations, two centres of civilization, were thus planted in each other's near neighbourhood; but it is the history of one only of them with which we are now concerned. I have not to follow out the tale of the monks of Glastonbury, but that of the secular priests of Wells.

¹⁰ That is, the modern shires of Monmouth and Glamorgan.

¹¹ This is shown in various passages of the Laws of Ine. See Thorpe's Laws and Institutes, i. 119, 131, 147, 149.

¹² See the whole history of the early church of Glastonbury in the first chapter of Professor Willis' Architectural History of Glastonbury Abbey.

And here perhaps it may be needful to set forth more fully the exact meaning of those words, and to say something about the two different classes of clergy in those days, the differences between whom tore the whole country in pieces at a time a little later than the foundation of our Bishoprick. Some people seem to fancy that all the clergy in old times were monks. I have heard people talk of monks even in our church of Wells, where there never was a monk. Indeed they sometimes seem to fancy that not only all the clergy but all mankind were monks; at least one hardly ever sees an old house, be it parsonage or manor-house or any other, but some one is sure to tell us that monks once lived in it. It is hard to make people understand that there were clergymen in those days, just as there are now, parsons of parishes and canons of cathedral or collegiate churches, living, as they do now, in their own houses, and in early times not uncommonly married. These were the *secular* clergy, the clergy who live in the world. The monks, on the other hand, the *regular* clergy, those who live according to rule, were originally men who, instead of living in the world to look after the souls of others, went out of the world to look after their own souls. There is no need that a monk should be a priest, or that he should be in holy orders at all, and the first monks were all laymen. Gradually however the monks took holy orders, and they did much good in many places by teaching and civilizing the people, by preaching and writing books, and, not least, by tilling the ground. But in all this they were rather forsaking their own proper duty as monks and taking on them the duty of secular priests. The main difference between them came to be that the monks bound themselves by three vows, those of poverty, chastity, and obedience, while the secular clergy did not take vows, but were simply bound, as they are now, to obey whatever might be the law of the Church at the time. Now of these two classes of clergy some of our early Kings and Bishops preferred one and some the other. But whenever a new diocese was founded, the Bishop surrounded himself with a company of clergy of one sort or the other. You will remember that when a bishoprick, say that of the West-Saxons, was founded, the cathedral church was the first church that was built and endowed. The Bishop of the West-Saxons had his home at Winchester, along with a body of monks or clergy, who were his special companions and advisers, his helpers in keeping up divine worship in the cathedral church, and in spreading the Gospel in other parts of the diocese. Gradually churches and monasteries were built in other places, and monks and clergy were appointed to serve them, but a special body of monks or clergy always remained at the cathedral church, to be the Bishop's special companions, and to keep up the cathedral church as the model and example for the whole diocese. This is the origin of the Chapters of our cathedral churches. The clergy of a cathedral were sometimes regulars and sometimes seculars; and as men looked on the monks as holier than the seculars, the seculars were turned out of several cathedral and other churches, and monks were put in their place. Hence several of our cathedrals were served by monks down to the time of Henry the Eighth, when all monasteries were suppressed, and the cathedral monasteries, as at Canterbury, Winchester, and elsewhere, were changed into chapters of secular canons. But in other churches, as in our own church of Wells, and in the neighbouring churches of Exeter and Salisbury, the secular canons have always gone on to this day. And this makes a great difference in the appearance of our buildings at Wells from those of many other cities. We have here in Wells the finest collection of domestic buildings surrounding a cathedral church to be seen anywhere. There is no place where so many ancient houses are preserved and are mainly applied to their original uses. The Bishop still lives in the Palace; the Dean still lives in the Deanery; the Canons, Vicars, and other officers still live very largely in the houses in which they were meant to live. But this is because at Wells there always were secular priests, each man living in his own house. In a monastery I need hardly say it was quite different. The monks did not live each man in his own house; they lived in common, with a common refectory to dine in and a common dormitory to sleep in. Thus when, in Henry the Eighth's time, the monks were put out and secular canons put in again, the monastic buildings were no longer of any use, while there were no houses for the new canons. They had therefore to make houses how they could out of the common buildings of the monastery. But of course this could not be done without greatly spoiling them as works of

architecture. Thus while at Ely, Peterborough, and other churches which were served by monks, there are still very fine fragments of the monastic buildings, there is not the same series of buildings each still applied to its original use which we have at Wells. I wish that this wonderful series was better understood and more valued than it is. I can remember, if nobody else does, how a fine prebendal hall was wantonly pulled down in the North Liberty not many years ago. Some of those whose duty it was to keep it up said that they had never seen it. I had seen it, anybody who went by could see it, and every man of taste knew and regretted it. Well, that is gone, and I suppose the organist's house, so often threatened, will soon be gone too. Thus it is that the historical monuments of our country perish day by day. We must keep a sharp eye about us or this city of ours may lose, almost without anybody knowing it, the distinctive character which makes it unique among the cities of England.

It is then in this way that Wells became, what it still is, the seat of the Somersetshire Bishoprick. The Bishop had his throne in the church of Saint Andrew, and the clergy attached to that church were his special companions and advisers, in a word his Chapter. We have thus the church and its ministers, but the church had not yet assumed its present form, and its ministers had not yet assumed their present constitution. Of the fabric, as it stood in the tenth century, I can tell you nothing. There is not a trace of building of anything like such early date remaining: while in other places we have grand buildings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, at Wells we have little or nothing earlier than the thirteenth. But it is quite a mistake to fancy that our forefathers in the tenth century were wholly incapable of building, or that their buildings were always of wood. We have accounts of churches of that and of still earlier date which show that we had then buildings of considerable size and elaboration of plan.¹³ And we know that in the course of the same century Saint Dunstan built a stone church at Glastonbury to the east of the old wooden church of British times.¹⁴ The churches both of Wells and Glastonbury must have been built in the old Romanesque style of England which prevailed before the great improvements of Norman Romanesque were brought in in the eleventh century. You must conceive this old church of Saint Andrew as very much smaller, lower, and plainer than the church which we now have, with massive round arches and small round-headed windows, but with one or more tall, slender, unbuttressed towers, imitating the bell-towers of Italy. I do not think that we have a single tower of this kind in Somersetshire, but in other parts of England there are a good many. There is a noble one at Earls Barton in Northamptonshire, and more than one in the city of Lincoln.

Of the foundation attached to the church at this time there is but little to say. The clergy of the cathedral did not as yet form a corporation distinct from the Bishop, and the elaborate system of officers which still exists had not yet begun. The number of canons was probably not fixed; in the next century we incidentally hear that there were only four or five. They had no common buildings besides the church, and they lived no doubt each man in his own house.¹⁵ The revenues of the church seem not to have been large. The ceremony which happened among us last week may make some of you ask whether the canons of Saint Andrew had already the right of electing the Bishop. This is a question which it would be hard to answer. I am not prepared with any detailed account of the appointment of a Bishop of this particular see in the tenth or eleventh century. But it is certain that the way of appointing Bishops in those days was very uncertain.¹⁶ It is clear that no Bishop could be consecrated without the King's consent, and that it was by a document under the King's writ and signature that the Bishoprick was formally conferred. But the actual choice of the Bishop seems to have been made in several ways. Sometimes we hear of the monks or canons choosing whom they would, and then going to the King and his Witan or Wise Men, the great assembly of the nation,

¹³ See Willis' *Architectural History of Canterbury*, p. 20; ditto *Winchester*, p. 34.

¹⁴ It is not said in so many words that the church of Dunstan was of stone, but it is plain that it was so, both because the "lignea basilica" or wooden church is distinguished from it, and because Osbern the biographer of Dunstan (*Anglia Sacra*, ii. 100) speaks of him as laying the foundations, which could hardly be said of a wooden church.

¹⁵ See the account of the Canons of Waltham in the book *De Inventione*, and those of Rheims in Richer, iii. 24.

¹⁶ I have discussed this in full in my *History of the Norman Conquest*, ii. 571, Ed. 2.

to ask for the confirmation of their choice. This confirmation was sometimes given and sometimes refused. Sometimes we expressly read that the King gave the monks or canons leave to elect freely. This is exactly what would happen now, if the *letter missive* should be lost on the road and the *congé d'élire* should come by itself.¹⁷ At other times we read of the King alone, or the King and his Witan, appointing, seemingly without any reference to the monks or canons. The truth is that in those days the Church and the nation were more truly two aspects of the same body than they have ever been since, and that those questions as to the exact limits of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, which have gone on, in one shape or another, from the days of William Rufus till now, had not yet arisen.

Things thus went on in our church of Wells without anything very memorable happening, from the days of Æthelhelm the first Bishop, who was appointed in 909, to those of Duduc, who was Bishop from 1033 to 1060.¹⁸ Tombs bearing the names of several Bishops of those days are still to be seen in the church. But they are all work of the thirteenth century, and, if the names given to them are trustworthy, Bishop Jocelin, when he rebuilt the church, must have made new tombs for his predecessors, a thing which sometimes was done. But when we get to Duduc, we are getting towards things which ought to be remembered; we are getting to the actual local history of the church of Wells itself, which hitherto it has been hard to distinguish from the general history of the Church in England. Duduc was the first Bishop who was not an Englishman; he was a Saxon. Of course there was a sense in which the Bishops before him might be called Saxons, that is West-Saxons, subjects of the King of the West-Saxons and probably in most cases themselves of West-Saxon blood. But Duduc was a Saxon from the Old-Saxon land in Germany, the old land of our fathers, and this is always the meaning of the word Saxon in the history of those times.¹⁹ This Bishop Duduc was in high favour both with King Cnut and afterwards with Eadward the Confessor. And his name at once brings us to a story which connects our church of Wells with the greatest Englishman of those days, though in a way which has brought undeserved obloquy on his name. I dare say some of you have read the tale of Harold's plundering the church of Wells, banishing the Bishop, bringing the Canons to beggary, and what not. However, I will read you the story as it stands in Collinson's "History of Somersetshire." He is speaking of the next Bishop Giso, of whom I shall say more presently.

"On his entry into his diocese, he found the estates of the church in a sad condition; for Harold earl of Wessex, having with his father, Godwin earl of Kent, been banished the kingdom, and deprived of all his estates in this county by King Edward, *who bestowed them on the church of Wells*, had in a piratical manner made a descent in these parts, raised contributions among his former tenants, spoiled the church of all its ornaments, driven away the canons, invaded their possessions, and converted them to his own use. Bishop Giso in vain expostulated with the King on this outrageous usage; but received from the Queen, who was Harold's sister, the manors of Mark and Mudgley, as a trifling compensation for the injuries which his bishoprick had sustained. Shortly after [after 1060] *Harold was restored to King Edward's favour, and made his captain-general*; upon which he in his turn *procured the banishment of Giso*, and when he came to the crown, resumed most of those estates of which he had been deprived. *Bishop Giso continued in banishment till the death of Harold*, and the advancement of the Conqueror to the throne, who in the second year of his reign restored all Harold's estates to the church of Wells, except some small parcels which had been conveyed to the

¹⁷ When a Bishop is to be elected by the Chapter, two quite distinct documents are sent; there is first the *congé d'élire*, which recognizes the undoubted right of the Chapter to elect and gives them full leave to elect, only with a little good advice as to the sort of person to be chosen. With this, as a kind of after-thought, comes the *letter missive* or *letter recommendatory*, recommending a particular person for election.

¹⁸ The names of the early Bishops, of whom but little is recorded, will be found in the Canon of Wells, *Anglia Sacra*, i. 556, and Godwin's Catalogue of English Bishops, 290.

¹⁹ He was "nazione Saxo," says his successor Gisa in the *Historiola de Primordiis Episcopatus Somersetensis*. See *Norman Conquest*, ii. 583.

monastery of Gloucester; in lieu of which he gave the manor and advowson of Yatton, and the manor of Winsham." ("History of Somersetshire," iii. 378.)

Now all this, as is commonly the case with what we read in county histories and books of that class, is pure fiction, but it is very curious and instructive to see how the fiction arose. We can trace every step. Collinson improved on the account in Bishop Godwin's Catalogue of Bishops, which was written in the time of Elizabeth.²⁰ Godwin improved on the Latin history of Wells, written by a Canon of Wells in the fifteenth century, which is one of our chief authorities on all local matters.²¹ The Canon of Wells, in his turn, improved on the original account given by Bishop Gisa, the person concerned. We have no account from Harold's side, but we have the contemporary version from the other side, and it certainly differs not a little from the version given by our worthy local antiquary. All about Harold's estates being granted to the church of Wells, all about his seizing the estates of the church, all about Gisa being banished and the Canons being driven away, is all pure invention, which has gradually grown up between Gisa's time and Collinson's. Gisa's own account, which is printed in Hunter's Ecclesiastical Documents, is to this effect.²² King Cnut had given to Duduc the two lordships of Banwell and Congresbury, not as a possession of his see, but as a private estate. These lands, together with some ornaments and relics, Duduc wished to leave to the see. But on his death Harold, the Earl of the district, took possession of them. This is the whole of the charge. Gisa does not accuse Harold of taking anything which had ever belonged to the see, but only of hindering Duduc's will in favour of the see from taking effect. We thus have Gisa's charge, but we have not Harold's answer. That answer, I conceive, would have been that, as Duduc was a foreigner dying without heirs, he had no power of making a will, but that his property went to the King or to the Earl as his representative. I cannot say for certain whether this would have been good law everywhere, but it certainly would have been good law in some places, and it at once suggests an intelligible explanation of Harold's conduct. But churchmen in those days always held that the Church was always to gain and never to lose, and we find other cases in which laymen who prosecuted legal claims against ecclesiastical bodies are called nearly as hard names as if they had robbed the Church by fraud or violence.²³ Gisa does not say that he complained to the King or attempted any legal prosecution of the matter; but he made private appeals to Harold and threatened him with excommunication. You must remember that all this concerns only the moveable goods and the lands at Banwell and Congresbury, which, before Duduc's death, had never belonged either to Harold or to the church of Wells. With Winesham Harold had nothing to do; that lordship, Gisa says, was wrongly detained from the see by a man named Ælfsige. Gisa was never banished, and it so happens that the only writ of Harold's which we have is one addressed to Gisa, assuring him of his friendship and confirming him and his see in all their possessions.²⁴ Gisa himself adds that Harold, after his election to the Crown, promised to restore the two lordships and to make other gifts as well. This he was hindered from doing by what Gisa calls God's judgement upon him, that is to say, by the Conquest of England.²⁵

Now this is a very remarkable story, as showing how tales grow, like snowballs rolled along the ground, and how dangerous it is to take things on trust from late and careless writers. You see at once how utterly different Gisa's own account of his own doings is from that in Collinson. The Canon of Wells and Bishop Godwin give the story in intermediate forms. I should strongly recommend those

²⁰ See Godwin, p. 291.

²¹ *Anglia Sacra*, i. 559.

²² See *Historiola*, 15-18; Mr. J. R. Green in the *Transactions of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society*, 1863-4, p. 148; and *Norman Conquest*, ii. 674.

²³ For examples see *Norman Conquest*, ii. 549.

²⁴ See the writ, the only writ of Harold's which is preserved, in *Kemble's Codex Diplomaticus*, iv. 305.

²⁵ After mentioning Harold's promise, Gisa (*Historiola*, p. 18) adds, "*præoccupante autem illum iudicio divinæ ultionis*," and goes on to speak of Harold's two battles and his death.

who are able to get at the books to compare all four accounts together. There cannot be a better example of the growth of a legend.

This Bishop Gisa, who succeeded Duduc in the year 1060, was a remarkable man in our local history. Like Duduc, he was a foreigner. Like several other Bishops at that time, he came from Lotharingia or Lorraine. But you must remember that the name Lorraine then meant, not only Upper Lorraine which is now part of France, but Lower Lorraine, a great part of which is now part of the Kingdom of Belgium. Gisa in short was what we should now call a Belgian, and he probably spoke the old tongue of those parts, which is one of the tongues of the Continent which is most like our own. He complains that, when he came to his diocese, he found his church mean and its revenues small; so much so that the four or five canons who were there had to beg their bread.²⁶ Of course I need not say that this is an exaggerated way of talking; but we may well believe that, like many a poor clergyman still, they were glad of any help that well-disposed people would give them. It is worth notice that another Bishop of the same time and of the same nation, Hermann, Bishop of the Wilsætas, complained that the revenues of his church at Ramsbury were so small that they could not maintain any monks or canons at all. Hermann mended matters in one way by getting the Bishoprick of Dorsetshire or Sherborne joined to that of Wiltshire and Berkshire, and in the end he moved his see to Salisbury, that is of course Old Sarum, whence it was afterwards again moved to the new city of that name.²⁷ Gisa set to work to increase the revenues of his church by buying and begging in all directions. King Eadward gave him Wedmore; his wife, the Lady Eadgyth – remember that the proper title of the wife of a West-Saxon King was not Queen but Lady – gave him Mark and Mudgeley; William the Conqueror gave him the disputed lordships of Banwell and Winesham, and he bought Combe and lands at Litton and Wormestor or Worminster.²⁸ He was thus able to make a good provision for his canons; you will doubtless remember that many of the places which I have just spoken of give their names to prebends in the church of Wells to this day. He also greatly increased the number of canons, but he did something more. Among the things which he complains of is that the canons of Wells before his time had no cloister or refectory. This means that they did not live in common, but lived, after the manner of English secular priests, each man in his own house. They therefore had no need of a common refectory or dining-hall, nor had they any need of a cloister. In a monastery the cloister is one of the most important parts of the building; it is the centre of everything, all the other parts gathering round it; and it is always built in one particular place and of one particular shape, namely a square north or south of the nave of the church. In a monastery in short the cloister is a necessity; in a secular church it is a luxury, a thing which may be very well left alone. In our secular churches therefore we sometimes find a cloister and sometimes not, and, when there was one, it might be built of any shape and in any position that might be thought good. But in Gisa's country of Lorraine the secular canons were used to live in a much stricter way than they did in England. They were not monks, because they did not take vows; but they lived much more after the manner of monks, dwelling together with a common refectory and a common dormitory or sleeping-room, and being governed by very strict rules which had been drawn up by Chrodegang, Bishop of Metz in Upper Lorraine.²⁹ You will see that the main object of all this was to hinder them from marrying, which the English secular priests, living each man in his own house, often did. Gisa's great object was to bring this discipline, the discipline, as he says, of his own country, into his church of Wells. This was what several Bishops about the same time were doing elsewhere. About a hundred years before Adalbero, Archbishop of Rheims, had done the same in his church, the metropolitan church

²⁶ *Historiola*, p. 19, "publice vivere et inhoneste mendicare necessariorum inopia antea coegerat."

²⁷ For the story of Hermann, see *Norman Conquest*, ii. 401.

²⁸ On these places see *Historiola*, pp. 18, 19. But it is as well to say that the well-known charter of Eadward to Gisa, printed in *Cod. Dipl.* iv. 162, is undoubtedly spurious, though it is useful as giving the names of places in the neighbourhood, in older, though not always their oldest, forms.

²⁹ The rule of Chrodegang will be found at length in *D'Achery's Spicilegium*, i. 565; and see *Norman Conquest*, ii. 84.

of France.³⁰ But Rheims, you may remark, though in France and the head church of France, is quite near enough to the borders of Lorraine to come within the reach of Lotharingian influences. So in our own country, at this very time Leofric Bishop of Exeter was introducing the same discipline into his church.³¹ But we find that Leofric, though by birth an Englishman, or perhaps rather a Welshman of Cornwall, had been brought up in Lorraine. It is always from Lorraine, in one shape or another, that this kind of change seems to come. And we have quite enough to show that Englishmen did not like it, as the changes which were brought in by Gisa and Leofric did not last very long either at Wells or at Exeter. Gisa, however, carried his point for the time. He built a cloister, a refectory, and whatever other buildings were needed for his purpose, and made the Canons live after the Lotharingian fashion. As their chief officer he appointed one Isaac, one of their own body, and whom they themselves chose. He was called the Provost, and his chief business was to look after the temporal concerns of the church.

Now in this account there are many things worthy of careful notice. First, mark the full authority of the Bishop in his own church; Gisa seems to do whatever he pleases. We need not suppose that he did what he did without obtaining the consent of his Chapter in some shape or other; but it is plain that the Bishop was still, to say the least, the chief mover in everything. One is also inclined to think that before Gisa's time the Canons had no property distinct from that of the Bishop. A large portion of his new acquisitions was bestowed to the benefit of the Canons; but it appears from Domesday that what they held at the time of the Survey was all held under the Bishop.³² Secondly, mark the very important change which Gisa made in the constitution of the church of Wells by bringing in the Lotharingian discipline. He did not, like some other Prelates, drive out his canons and put monks in their stead, nor yet did he, as was done at some other places, compel his canons to take monastic vows. The Canons of Wells, after his changes, still remained secular priests and not regulars. But the changes which he made were all in a monastic direction. They brought in something of the strictness of monastic discipline among a body of men who had hitherto lived in a very much freer way. I cannot help thinking that the rule of Chrodegang was but the small end of the wedge, and that before long it would, if not by Gisa, by some reforming Bishop or other, have been developed into the rule of Saint Benedict. But the next Bishop was not a reforming Bishop, and the fear of the Canons of Wells being displaced to make room for monks, or being themselves turned into monks, happily passed away. Gisa, there can be no doubt, was a good man and a diligent and conscientious Bishop, though some of his doings were such as we Englishmen are not likely to approve. At last, after being Bishop twenty-eight years, he died in 1088, and was buried under an arch in the wall on the north side of the high altar, as his predecessor Duduc was on the south side.³³ This notice is important; it shows that Gisa, among all his works of other kinds, did not rebuild the church itself; it also shows, by speaking of an arch in the wall, that the eastern part of the church had no aisles.

The next Bishop was quite another kind of man. I know not whether he is revered at Bath, but we at Wells have certainly no reason to love his memory. You will remember that, as Gisa was Bishop from 1060 to 1088, the Norman Conquest of England came in his time. One result of that event was that all the Bishopricks and Abbeys of England were gradually filled by strangers, and much greater strangers to England than Duduc and Gisa had been. The new Bishops and Abbots, just as much as the new Earls, were almost all Normans or Frenchmen, who, I suspect, seldom learned to talk English. The first Bishop of Somersetshire after the Conquest was John de Villulâ, a Frenchman

³⁰ This was about 969. Adalbero's changes are described at length by Richer, iii. 24, in Pertz's smaller collection.

³¹ See Norman Conquest, ii. 84.

³² In Domesday Book, pp. 89-89 *b*, the land of the canons is put under that of the Bishop; "Canonici Sancti Andreae tenent de Episcopo." This is much the same with the Canons of Exeter in p. 101 *b*. In the Exon Domesday, (71) "Isaac præpositus Canonicorum Sancti Andreae" is mentioned by name.

³³ Historiola, 21: "Sepultus est in ecclesiâ quam rexerat, in hemicyclo [a semicircle or round arch] facto in pariete a parte aquilonali prope altare, sicut Duduco prædecessor ejus sepultus est a meridie juxta altare."

from Tours, who was appointed by William Rufus. About this time there was a great movement, which had begun under Edward the Confessor and which went on under William the Conqueror, for moving the sees or *bishopstools* of Bishops from smaller towns to greater ones. Thus, in our own part of England, Bishop Leofric, in King Edward's time, removed the united see of Devonshire and Cornwall from Crediton to Exeter, and in King William's time Bishop Hermann removed the united see of Dorsetshire and Wiltshire from Ramsbury and Sherborne to Salisbury. By Salisbury you will of course remember that I mean Old Sarum and not New. The historian William of Malmesbury, who wrote under Henry the First, calls this change the removal of Bishopricks from villages or small towns to cities. And among the villages or small towns from which Bishopricks were removed I am sorry to say that he reckons our city of Wells.³⁴ For the first thing that the new Bishop John did was to remove his bishopstool from the church of Saint Andrew at Wells to the church of Saint Peter at Bath, on which William of Malmesbury remarks that Andrew, although the elder brother, was obliged to give way to his younger brother Simon.³⁵ Bath was then, as now, a much larger town than Wells, and was a walled city, which Wells never has been. It was an old Roman town, which had been taken by the West-Saxons in 577, a good while before Somersetshire south of the Axe became English.³⁶ The church of Saint Peter there was founded by Offa, King of the Mercians, for secular canons, but King Eadgar had, as in so many other churches, put monks instead, and Bath had ever since been a famous monastery. So, if the Bishop's see is necessarily to be fixed in the greatest town in the diocese, Bath was undoubtedly the right place, but it had the disadvantage of being much less central than Wells, being, as we all know, quite in a corner of the diocese. The Abbey of Bath was just then vacant by the death of the Abbot Ælfsige, an Englishman who had contrived to keep his office all through the reign of William the Conqueror; so Bishop John persuaded King William Rufus to grant the Abbey of Bath for the increase of the Bishoprick of Somersetshire.³⁷ This was done by a charter in 1088, which was confirmed by two charters of Henry the First in 1100 and 1111. In the next year the Bishop begged or bought of the King the whole town of Bath, which had lately been burned. The effect of these changes was that the Abbey of Bath was merged in the Bishoprick. There was no longer a separate Abbot, but the Bishop was Abbot; the church of Saint Peter became his cathedral church, and its Prior and monks became his Chapter. The Bishop also, by his grant or purchase from the King, became temporal lord of the town. Bishop John, having thus got possession of Bath and all that was in it, spiritual and temporal, reigned there at first somewhat sternly. He was, as I have said, a foreigner; he was also a skilful physician and fond of learned men of every kind. The monks of Bath, no doubt mostly Englishmen, he despised as ignorant barbarians; so he oppressed them and cut their living very short, till afterwards, we are told, he repented, and gave them their possessions back again.³⁸ He also rebuilt the church of Bath, now become his cathedral church, and greatly enriched it with ornaments and the like, and then, after being Bishop for thirty-six years, he died and was buried in 1124.

But it more concerns us to know what was going on at Wells all this time. The see had been altogether taken away, so much so that one of the charters of Henry the First speaks of the see of all Somersetshire having been moved to Bath from the town which is called Wells. I conceive that

³⁴ Will. Malms. Gest. Regg. iii. 300. "Pronunciatum est secundum dicta canonum ut episcopi transeuntes de villis constituerent sedes suas in urbibus diocesum suarum." This was in 1072, but the change at Wells did not take place just yet. In his other book, the *Gesta Pontificum* (144 *b*), he says that John "minoris gloriæ putans si in villâ resideret inglorius, transferre thronum in Bathoniam animo intendit."

³⁵ William of Malmesbury, in the place last quoted, says, "Cessit enim Andreas Simoni fratri, frater major minori."

³⁶ See the *Chronicles* under 577, and note 9.

³⁷ The charters are given in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, ii. 66, 67. In the second charter of Henry the First he speaks of "Batha ubi frater meus Willielmus et ego constituimus et confirmavimus sedem episcopatus totius Summersetæ, quæ olim erat apud villam quæ dicitur Wella." The grant of the town which is confirmed in this charter of Henry is made in a charter of William Rufus on the same page.

³⁸ So says William of Malmesbury in the passage last quoted: "Aliquantum dure in monachos agebat, quod essent hebetes et ejus æstimatione barbari."

the Bishop of Bath now looked on Wells simply as one of the lordships of the see, just like Banwell, Evercreech, Wookey, or any other, where the Bishops had houses and where they occasionally lived. So, among his other doings, Bishop John built himself a house at Wells. But the way in which he found himself a site and materials was a somewhat remarkable one. For it was by pulling down all the buildings that Gisa had built for the use of the Canons, and building his own house on the spot.³⁹ Now this shows that either the church or the Bishop's Palace has changed its place since the time of John of Tours. For we may be sure that Gisa built his cloister, refectory, and dormitory close to the church, just as they would be in a monastery. Therefore, if John built his house on their site, it must have been much nearer to the church than the present palace is. Nothing is left of either the church or the palace as they stood then, and it is most likely that the site of the palace has been changed, and that Gisa's canonical buildings and John's manor-house both stood where the cloister, library, &c. stand now. But I thought it worth while to mention this, because it was not very uncommon, when a church was rebuilt, to build the new church a little way off from the old one.⁴⁰ The reason for this was, that the service might go on in the old church while the new one was building; and when the new church was finished, the old one was pulled down and the new used instead. It is therefore quite possible that our present cathedral does not stand quite on the same site as the church which was standing in Gisa and John's time. But on the whole the chances are the other way.

The Canons of Wells were thus turned out of the buildings which Gisa had made for them, and were driven to live where they could in the town.⁴¹ The great and learned Bishop of Bath cared nothing about them, or rather he made spoil of them in every way. A portion of their estates, valued then at thirty pounds a year, was held by the Bishop's steward, Hildebert by name, who seems also to have been his brother and to have held the office of Provost of the Canons. On Hildebert's death, the estate, by the Bishop's assent, passed as an hereditary possession to his son John, who is described as Archdeacon and Provost.⁴² As I understand the matter, the estate became a kind of impropriation; Hildebert, John, and their heirs held the estate, and paid the Canons a fixed rent-charge. For though we read of the estate being taken away from the Church, yet we also read incidentally that Provost John paid each Canon sixty shillings yearly.⁴³ This would seem to show that there were ten Canons, among whom the thirty pounds had to be divided. But as we read that, when Bishop Robert recovered the property, he paid each Canon a hundred shillings, it would seem that the estate increased in value, but that John simply paid the Canons their old stipends, taking to himself the surplus, which should no doubt have been employed either in raising the stipends of the existing Canons or else in increasing their number. This is the kind of abuse which we constantly light upon in all manner of institutions, and we see that at all events it is not a new abuse. Canons in their own infancy were treated by Provosts much as Canons, in the days of their greater development, have in different places treated Minor Canons, Singing Men, Grammar-Boys, and Poor Knights. The peculiar thing is that the Provostship became hereditary, subject only to this fixed charge, exactly like a lay rectory charged with a payment to the Vicar.

I think then that, however our Bath neighbours may look at him, we at Wells have a right to set down Bishop John of Tours as the worst enemy that our church had from the eighth century to the sixteenth. We are told that he repented, but it must have been an ineffectual kind of repentance, as

³⁹ The *Historiola* mentions the destruction of Gisa's buildings, and the Canon of Wells adds (*Anglia Sacra*, i. 560), "Fundum in quo prius habitabant sibi et suis successoribus usurpavit, palatiumque suum episcopale ibidem construxit."

⁴⁰ See Willis' *Architectural History of Winchester*, 34, 35.

⁴¹ *Historiola*, p. 22. "Canonici foras ejecti coacti sunt cum populo communiter vivere."

⁴² The story of Hildebert, John, and the Provostship is given both in the *Historiola* and by the Canon of Wells. Several letters discussing the matter appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the year 1864 in the numbers for February, July, August, September, October, November, and December, especially one by Mr. Stubbs in November. That Hildebert was the brother of Bishop John appears from a charter of Bishop Robert (which I shall have to quote again) in the *Monasticon*, ii. 293, where Bishop John is called the uncle of Precentor Reginald.

⁴³ This comes afterwards in the *Historiola*, p. 24.

he made no restitution.⁴⁴ Or we may say that his repentance was geographical, for a deed is extant in which he restores to the monks of Bath all that he had taken from them, but there is no sign that he restored anything to the Canons of Wells.⁴⁵ Still his doings had one effect; the Lotharingian discipline was broken up for ever, and the secular priests of Wells were never again constrained to sleep in a common dormitory or to dine in a common refectory. John thus indirectly helped to put things on the footing which they assumed under the next Bishop but one, and which, in its main features, has been retained to this day. It is that Bishop, Robert by name, whose episcopate forms the natural boundary of the first portion of my subject. Hitherto I have had to deal with a church and a Chapter of Wells; but hardly with the church and Chapter which at present exist. I have had to speak of the early beginning of things, of fabrics and institutions alike which were far from having reached their full developement. With Robert a new era begins alike in architectural, capitular, and municipal matters. He was a founder in every sense. He rebuilt the fabrics of both his churches. He settled the relations between those two churches as they remained till the suppression of the monastery of Bath in the sixteenth century. He gave the Chapter of Wells a new constitution, which, with some changes in detail, it still retains. Last, but not least, he gave the first charter of incorporation to the burghers who had gradually come to dwell under the shadow of the minster. He may therefore be looked upon as the founder of Wells, church and city alike, as they now stand. The reign of this memorable Prelate therefore marks the first stage in my story; I will therefore now bring my first lecture to an end, and will reserve a detailed account of the important episcopate of Robert to form the beginning of my account of the mediæval, as distinguished from the early, history of the church of Wells.

⁴⁴ The Canon (p. 560) says, "Licet ipse confractus senio inde pœniteret, tamen ædificia canonicorum destructa minime reparavit, nec fundum eis injuste ablatum restituit." But the *Historiola* seems to imply at least a purpose of restitution, as its words are, "Pœnitentiâ ductus de sacrilegio perpetrato, resipuit et pœnituit, et pœnitentiam suam scriptam reliquit. Johannes vero Archidiaconus terras quas pater suus obtinuerat per hæreditatem et præposituram canonicorum nihilominus sibi usurpavit."

⁴⁵ The Charter is printed in the *Monasticon*, ii. 268.

LECTURE II

In my former Lecture I did my best to trace the history of the church of Wells from the earliest days. We have seen its small beginnings, a colony of priests planted in a newly-conquered land, with their home fixed on a small oasis between the wild hill-country on the one side and the never-ending fen on the other. There their church had risen, and settlers had gathered round it; it had grown into the seat of a Bishop, the spiritual centre of the surrounding country, a rival in fame and reverence of that great island church which stood as a memorial of the past days of the conquered, while Wells rose as a witness of the presence of the conquerors. We have seen one Prelate of foreign birth at once vastly increase the power and revenues of his see and try to subject his clergy to the yoke of a foreign rule against which the instincts of Englishmen revolted. We have seen another foreigner undo the work of his predecessor alike for good and for evil; we have seen him forsake church and city altogether, and remove his episcopal chair to a statelier and safer dwelling-place. We have seen the local foundation again brought back to a state lower than the poor and feeble condition out of which Gisa had raised it. We now come to the great benefactor whom we may fairly look upon as the founder of Wells as it is, the man who put the Bishoprick and Chapter into the shape with which we are all familiar, and who moreover gave to the city its first municipal being.

On this last head I shall not enlarge. The subject is so completely the property of others both present and absent that I should feel myself the merest intruder if I attempted to dwell upon it. I will rather go on with those parts of Bishop Robert's career which more directly concern my subject, and look at him in three lights, as his actions concern respectively the Bishoprick, the Chapter, and the fabric of the church.

After the death of John of Tours the see was held by one Godfrey, a countryman of Gisa's from Lower Lorraine, and therefore somewhat nearer to an Englishman than a mere Frenchman like John. His promotion was owing to his being a chaplain of the Queen, Henry the First's second wife, Adeliza of Löwen, with whom he had doubtless come into England.⁴⁶ He is described as being of noble birth, mild, and pious, but perhaps mere mildness was not the virtue which was most needed in those days. All that we hear of him is that he tried to get back the Canons' lands from John the Archdeacon, but that King Henry and Roger Bishop of Salisbury, who was a mighty man in those days, hindered him. He died in 1135. Then came Robert. He was a rare case of a Bishoprick in those times being held by a man who could be called in any sense an Englishman. As a rule, the great ecclesiastical offices were now given to men who were not only not of Old-English descent, but who were not even the sons of Normans or other strangers settled in England. Utter foreigners, men born on the Continent, were commonly preferred to either. But Robert was a Fleming by descent and born in England. As a native of the land, and sprung from one of those foreign nations whose blood and speech is most closely akin to our own, we may welcome him a countryman, in days when the most part of the land was parcelled out among men who did not even speak our tongue. He had been a monk at Lewes at Sussex, and was promoted by the favour of Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, the famous brother of King Stephen. Henry had been Abbot of Glastonbury before he became Bishop, and, what is more, he kept the Abbey along with his Bishoprick. He is said to have sent for Robert to look after the affairs of the monastery; that is, I suppose, to act as his deputy after he became Bishop.⁴⁷ Thus we see that the comfortable practice of pluralities, and what somebody calls the "sacred principle of

⁴⁶ The *Historiola* and the *Canon* both call Godfrey simply "Teutonicus;" but it appears from the *Continuator of Florence of Worcester* (ii. 78) and from the *Annals of Waverley* (*Ann. Mon.* ii. 219) that he was Chancellor to Queen Adeliza. We can hardly doubt that he was one of her countrymen from the Netherlands.

⁴⁷ This account of him is given both by the *Historiola* and by the *Canon* (*Angl. Sacr.* i. 561), who gives as a reason for his mission to Glastonbury, "eo quod non recte eorum aratra incedebant." His birth comes from the *Continuator of Florence* (ii. 95), who says that he was "Flandrensis genere, sed natus in partibus Angliæ."

delegation," – that is to say, the holding two or more incompatible offices and leaving their duties to be done by others or not to be done at all, – are inventions in which the nineteenth century was forestalled by the twelfth. Robert next from deputy Abbot of Glastonbury became Bishop of Bath, and he seems to have set himself manfully to work to bring his diocese and its two head churches out of the state of confusion into which the changes of John of Tours had brought them. First of all with regard to the Bishoprick. You understand of course that the removal of the see from Wells to Bath had been made without the consent of the Canons of Wells, who had an undoubted right to be consulted about the matter. In ecclesiastical theory a Bishop and his Chapter are very much like a King and his Parliament; neither of them can do any important act without the consent of the other. And here a thing had been done for which of all others the consent of the Wells Chapter ought to have been had, as their most precious rights had been taken away from them. All this time they had never formally submitted to the change, and they had been always complaining of the wrongful removal of the see, and asserting their own rights against the usurpations of the monks of Bath. And it is to be noticed that the change had never been approved or recognized by any Pope. The Bishops of Somersetshire were still known in official language at Rome as *Episcopi Fontanenses* or Bishops of Wells, not as *Episcopi Bathonienses* or Bishops of Bath. Robert now procured that the episcopal position of Bath should be recognized, and from this time for some while after our Bishops are commonly called Bishops of Bath.⁴⁸ But it would seem that this is merely a contracted form, for the style of Bishop of Bath and Wells, with which we are all so familiar, is found before very long. And there can be no doubt that the controversy was now settled by Robert on these terms, that Bath should take precedence of Wells, but that the Bishop should have his throne in both churches, that he should be chosen by the monks of Bath and the Canons of Wells conjointly, or by deputies appointed by the two Chapters, and that those episcopal acts which needed the confirmation of the Chapter should be confirmed both by the Convent of Bath and by the Chapter of Wells.⁴⁹ There are deeds hanging up in this very room to which you will see the confirmation of both those bodies. The Bishop of Somersetshire thus had two cathedral churches, as was also the case with the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and as has been the case with the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol since those sees were joined within our own memory. This arrangement lasted till the cathedral church of Bath was suppressed under Henry the Eighth, after which, by an Act of Parliament passed in 1542, the Chapter of Wells was made the sole Chapter for the Bishop.⁵⁰ Things thus came back, as far as Wells was concerned, to much the same state as they had been in before the changes of John of Tours, except that Bath still forms a part of the Bishop's style. But since the Act of Henry the Eighth it has been a mere title, as the Bishop is Bishop of Bath in no sense except that in which he is Bishop of Taunton or of any other place in the diocese. He is elected by the Chapter of Wells only; he is enthroned in the church of Wells only; and when Saint Peter's church at Bath was set up again in the reign of James the First, it was not as a cathedral, but as a simple parish church.

Bishop Robert, having thus settled himself as Bishop of Bath *and* Wells, with two churches under his special care, began to set to work to put in order whatever needed reform in both of them. He enlarged and finished the church of Bath, if he did not actually rebuild it from the ground. I speak thus doubtingly, because our accounts do not exactly agree. The little book called "Historiola de Primordiis Episcopatus Somersetensis" says that "he himself caused the church of the Blessed Peter the Apostle at Bath to be built at a great cost."⁵¹ But the history commonly quoted as the Canon of Wells says only that "he finished the fabric of the church of Bath which had been begun by John

⁴⁸ Historiola, p. 25.

⁴⁹ See the agreement in Wharton's note, *Anglia Sacra*, i. 561.

⁵⁰ The Act is printed in the *Monasticon*, ii. 293.

⁵¹ Historiola, p. 24: "Ipse ecclesiam Beati Petri Apostoli de Bathoniâ magnis c[=u] expensis construi fecit."

of Tours."⁵² Now the "Historiola" is the earlier authority, and that which we should generally believe rather than the other, whenever there is any difference between the two. But, on the other hand, stories generally grow greater and not smaller; a man's exploits are much more likely to be made too much of by those who repeat the tale than to be made too little of. When therefore the later writer attributes to Robert less than the earlier one does, one is tempted to think that the earlier writer exaggerated or spoke in a loose way, and that the Canon of Wells had some good reason for his correction. And this is the more to be noticed, because we shall find exactly the same difference when we come to the accounts which the two writers give of what Robert did at Wells. It is indeed said that the church and city of Bath were again destroyed by fire in 1135, and that this made Robert's rebuilding necessary. But the phrase of being destroyed by fire is often used very laxly of cases where a building, like York Minster within the memory of some people, was simply a good deal damaged, and had to be repaired, but did not need to be wholly rebuilt. At any rate, whether Robert altogether rebuilt or only finished, the great church of Saint Peter at Bath was now brought to perfection. Do not for a moment think that this is the Abbey Church of Bath which is now standing, and which I do not doubt that a great many of you know very well. The church of John and Robert was of course built in the Romanesque style with round arches, and in that particular variety of Romanesque which had been imported by Eadward the Confessor from Normandy into England, and which we therefore call the Norman style. But the present church of Bath is one of the latest examples of our latest English Gothic, and of that special variety of it which forms the local Perpendicular style of Somersetshire. Moreover the Romanesque church was very much larger than the present one, which covers the site of its nave only. One little bit of the Romanesque building, the arch between the south aisle and the south transept, is still to be seen at the present east end. The fact is that the later Bishops of Bath and Wells were not at all of the same mind as John of Tours. They lived much more at Wells than at Bath, and took much more care of the church of Wells. Bath indeed was quite neglected, and by the end of the fifteenth century the church was in a great state of decay. It was then, in the year 1500, that Bishop Oliver King and Prior Bird began to build the present church on a smaller scale and in a widely different style of architecture. Besides what he did to the church, Bishop Robert built or rebuilt all the conventual buildings of his Abbey of Bath, the cloister, refectory, dormitory, and the rest, all which were necessary for the monks of Bath, though the secular priests of Wells could do without them.⁵³

⁵² *Angl. Sacr.* i. 561: "Complevit fabricam ecclesie Bathoniensis per Johannem Turonensem inchoatam." This seems to be confirmed by the words of John himself in the charter which I have already quoted (*Monasticon*, ii. 268), which is dated in 1116, and where he says that he sets aside the revenues of the city of Bath "ad perficiendum novum opus quod incepti."

⁵³ *Historiola*, p. 24: "Capitulum quoque et claustrum, dormitorium et refectorium et infirmatorium, nihilominus ædificari fecit."

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