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Deerhurst, Pershore and Westminster

by C. S. Taylor
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DEERHURST, PERSHORE, AND WESTMINSTER.

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WHEN we visited Deerhurst last summer we were taken first to the Old Minster, in which S. Alphege had worshipped, and where he ruled as Abbot, which is certainly one of the oldest churches in England. Then we visited a little chapel situated about eighty yards from the Minster burial-ground, which we were told was built by a certain Ealdorman Odda in memory of his brother Elfric, who died at Deerhurst in December, 1053, but who was buried at Pershore. The chapel was consecrated on April 11th, 1056, being Thursday in Easter week. It is to be noted that the day usually given, April 12th, is wrong. It arises from reading the inscription in the Ashmolean Museum as if it were "II IDIBUS," whereas it is really "III (I)DIBUS," the initial letter of the word IDIBUS being included in the letter D. If the date intended had been April 12th the expression used would have been *Pridie Idus*, or some contraction of that form. Odda died at Deerhurst on August 31st, 1056, and he, like Elfric, was buried at Pershore. We thus find a very close connection between Deerhurst and Pershore in the middle of the eleventh century. A man in high position builds a chapel in memory of a brother who died at Deerhurst, and yet both the one who built the chapel and the one in whose memory it was built are within little more than three years buried at Pershore. Furthermore, if we asked to whom this little chapel now belonged we should be told that it was the property of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster; and if our curiosity was aroused by the statement, and we desired to find out when S. Peter of Westminster acquired this property, we should discover that in the great Foundation Charter of Westminster

Abbey, which was laid on the altar at the consecration of the Abbey on Innocents' Day, 1065, after the death of Queen Edith, who passed away on December 19th, 1075, Pershore with all that belonged to it, and Deerhurst with all that belonged to it,¹ should be among the ample endowments provided by the dying King. Thus a triad of very noble houses was connected with this little chapel in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Deerhurst Minster, even then a venerable fane, where Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury, saint and martyr, had spent the early days of his monastic life, and who had won his martyr's crown only half a century before, looked down upon it; while Pershore was one of the very earliest of the Huiccian religious houses, claiming to have been founded in 689 by Oswald, brother of Osric, the first Christian ruler of the Huiccians. But if the glories of these two houses lay in the past, those of the great house of S. Peter of Westminster lay in the future; and by means of the Deerhurst and Pershore estates, which, as we shall see, were appropriated to Westminster, the life of those two old Huiccian Minsters has been carried on until now through a series of glories upon glories which can be equalled in the history of no churches in Western Christendom, except perhaps the Basilicas of S. John Lateran and S. Peter at Rome.

We naturally turn to Domesday Survey to see whether the pages of the great record will throw any light upon the relation of the three houses one to another; and being on the spot, we refer first to the entries concerning Deerhurst. There is no difficulty in finding Deerhurst Hundred;² but then a very remarkable fact emerges, there are only two landowners in the Hundred—S. Peter of Westminster and S. Denys of Paris, to which church the ancient Minster at Deerhurst, with all that belonged to it, had been given by William the Conqueror. The possessions of the two houses may be summarised thus:—

¹ Dugdale, *Mcn.*, i. 294; Thorpe, *Dipl.*, 404.

² D B., f. 166.

S. PETER OF WESTMINSTER.

	Hidage.	Modern Acreage.	Value. £ s. d.
Deerhurst	5 ...	2,930	} 40 0 0
Elmstone Hardwick	5 ...	2,613	
Bourton-on-the-Hill	8 ...	2,960	
Todenham	7 ...	2,477	
Sutton Brailes	5 ...	1,135	
Sundry Tenants	29 ...	4,157	
	<hr/> 59	<hr/> 16,272	<hr/> 40 0 0

S. DENYS OF PARIS.

	Hidage. h. v.	Modern Acreage.	Value. £ s. d.
Uckington	5 0 ...	880	} 30 0 0
Staverton	3 0 ...	758	
Coln S. Denys	5 0 ...	2,430	
Little Compton	12 0 ...	1,800	
Preston-on-Stour	10 0 ...	1,990	
Welford	15 0 ...	3,550	
Corse and The Haw	2 2 ...	2,190	
Wolston	5 0 ...	787	
The Leigh	1 0 ...	1,720	
Deerhurst Walton	1 0 ...		
Kemerton	0 2 ...		
In the above-mentioned lands	4 2 ...		
	<hr/> 64 2	<hr/> 16,105	<hr/> 30 0 0

It will be noticed that the portions of the two churches are almost exactly the same. The acreage in the two cases coincides, though the hidage pertaining to S. Denys is slightly larger than that of S. Peter. That the value of the more highly rated property was less than that of the other may only be owing to the difficulty which a foreign house might naturally experience in obtaining the best return from its lands. We notice also that the Capital Manor of Deerhurst had been separated from Deerhurst Minster and joined to the Westminster estate, so that the only Deerhurst property belonging to the Minster was the hamlet of Deerhurst Walton. This is important, because, as we shall find, the same thing had happened at Pershore. A layman might well covet a capital manor, and pass by the fabric of the church; and

from the fact that both Odda and Elfric died at Deerhurst we should gather that this was the chief residence of their family. We note, moreover, that the farmhouse of which Odda's chapel formed a part is known as Abbot's Court; that is to say, it is the Court House, or Manor House, of the Manor of Deerhurst. The site then on which Odda built his chapel was that of the Manor House of the ancient ecclesiastical estate of Deerhurst; and the question arises, How did he obtain the right to do this?

To obtain an answer to the question we turn to the records of the period to discover what we can find concerning the history of Deerhurst. We have already seen that in the Foundation Charter of Westminster Abbey, bearing the date of Innocents' Day, 1065, Deerhurst, with all that belonged to it, was granted to the Abbey, subject to the life-interest of Queen Edith, who died on December 19th, 1075.¹ A writ is also extant, purporting to have been issued by King Edward to Archbishop Ealdred of York (1061-1069), Bishop Wulstan of Worcester (1062-1095), Bishop Wulfwig of Dorchester (1053-1067), and the authorities of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire, certifying them that he gave to S. Peter and the brethren at Westminster the cotlifs or hamlets of Pershore and Deerhurst, with all their possessions.² Kemble accepts the writ as genuine; and though early Westminster documents are open to suspicion, it is difficult to see what purpose there could be in forging such a writ as this, when Domesday Book, only a quarter of a century later, gives evidence, which no man might oppose, that the Capital Manors of Deerhurst and Pershore, with many dependencies of each house, really did belong to Westminster Abbey.

But the Church of Deerhurst is the subject of quite another grant during the lifetime of Queen Edith. The register of S. Denys at Paris contains a grant of William the Conqueror purporting to have been made at Winchester

¹ Dugdale, *Mon.*, i. 294; Thorpe, *Dipl.*, 404.

² Dugdale, *Mon.*, i. 300; *K. C. D.*, DCCCXXIX.; Earle, *Land Charters*, 340.

on Easter Monday, April 13th, 1069.¹ The King grants to S. Denys the Church of Deerhurst, in the county of Gloucester, with all that belongs to it, as his ancestor, King Edward, gave it to Baldwin for his own proper uses before he received from the King the Abbacy over which he now presides,² and as the Conqueror after he obtained the kingdom granted to him. The King also confirmed to S. Denys Teynton, in Oxfordshire, which the Confessor had granted to it. The charter is witnessed by a large number of high dignitaries in Church and State, as it naturally would be at such a time; for King William usually spent the Easter Festival at Winchester, as he spent Pentecost at Westminster and Christmas at Gloucester. There seems to be no reason for doubting the genuineness of the charter. King William certainly did spend the Easter Festival of 1069 at Winchester,³ whither he had returned after recovering York from the Northumbrians, who had rebelled against him; on the other hand, as it speaks of "*Willielmus rex I.*," its present form must be later, and probably considerably later, than the Conqueror's reign.

Loefstan, the predecessor of Baldwin in the Abbacy of S. Edmunds, died, it is said, on August 1st, 1065;⁴ Baldwin must therefore have been in possession of Deerhurst Church before that time, how long before there is no evidence to show. Mr. Freeman thought that he must have been appointed to the Abbacy of Bury S. Edmunds between 1062 and 1066:⁵ the writ of his appointment, which is addressed to Bishop Æthelmær and Earl Gyrrh, must be later than 1058, because Gyrrh was not appointed to the Earldom till 1057.⁶ We may take it then that Baldwin obtained the Abbacy of Bury S. Edmunds after August 1st, 1065, and held Deerhurst with it till Easter, 1069, when Deerhurst was given to Baldwin's old house of S. Denys. We may be fairly sure, however, that Baldwin did not obtain possession of

¹ Dugdale, *Mon.*, iv. 664.

² Bury St. Edmunds.

³ *Ordericus Vitalis*, 512 D; Freeman, *N. C.*, iv. 242.

⁴ Dugdale, *Mon.*, iii. 100.

⁵ *N. C.*, ii. 602.

⁶ *K. C. D.*, iv. 225.

Deerhurst till after the expulsion of Earl Godwin and his sons in 1051: Mr. Freeman, indeed, speaks of Baldwin as the one Norman or French prelate who was appointed to an English church during the later days of King Edward, while the influence of Harold was paramount. He seems to have owed his advancement to his skill in medicine. He had been a monk of S. Denys. It is clear then that during the early years of the Conqueror's reign, until the death of Queen Edith in December, 1075, one portion of the Deerhurst estates, that which pertained to the Capital Manor of Deerhurst, belonged to the old Lady, with reversion to Westminster Abbey; while the other portion, that which was still attached to the Minster, about equal in area, but with a greater hidage, and therefore probably a higher potential value, belonged first to Baldwin—possibly as Prior or Abbot of Deerhurst—and then to the Abbey of S. Denys at Paris.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no extant record at all of the history of Deerhurst between the time when S. Alphege obtained the Abbacy of Bath after the consecration of Æscwig to the See of Dorchester in 978 and December, 1053, when Elfric died there; for though Florence of Worcester places the meeting between Edmund Ironside and Cnut after the battle of Assandune in the autumn of 1016 at Deerhurst, he says nothing about the Minster in that connection.¹ What Florence says is this, that Edmund, with his companions, sat on the west bank of Severn at Deerhurst, while Cnut and his company were on the eastern side. It would seem that preliminaries were discussed in this fashion, and then the Kings were conveyed in boats² to an island called Olaneg—apparently Alney Island, opposite to Gloucester—where a division of the realm was agreed upon. Cnut was to have Wessex, Essex, and East Anglia; while Edmund was to retain his crown and rule what was left. It is important to note that Florence carefully distinguishes between the gathering at Deerhurst on each side of the intervening river and the meeting on the island after a journey in boats: any

¹ *M. H. B.*, 593 A.

² *Trabariis*.

attempt to bring Olanege to Deerhurst is quite contrary to the tenor of the narrative. Moreover, with regard to S. Alphege, we must notice that it is more than probable that he was driven from Deerhurst in the persecution of the Benedictine monks which broke out under Ælfhere, Ealdorman of the Mercians, immediately after the death of King Edgar on July 8th, 975, and that he came out of retirement on his appointment to the Abbacy of Bath in 978. In that case the history of Deerhurst would be blank for seventy-eight years, for the first half of which period we know that confusion reigned in the Benedictine Monasteries of Mercia.

We may sum up what is known of the history of Deerhurst in the tenth and eleventh centuries in this way. Florence of Worcester tells us that in 969 King Edgar commanded S. Dunstan of Canterbury, S. Oswald of Worcester, and S. Ethelwold of Winchester that after driving out the clerks they should place monks in the greater monasteries which were founded throughout Mercia.¹ S. Alphege begins to sign as Abbot, no doubt of Deerhurst, in 970, but there is no signature of his on an undoubted document between 975, when the persecution under Ælfhere broke out, and 978, when he became Abbot of Bath. In December, 1053, Elfric died at Deerhurst, and on April 11th, 1056, the Chapel of the Holy Trinity was consecrated. Probably soon after 1051 Baldwin, a monk of S. Denys, became possessed of Deerhurst Minster, which he held, first alone and afterwards together with S. Edmund's Minster, till April 13th, 1069, when the ancient Church of Deerhurst, with the estates which still belonged to it, were granted by the Conqueror to S. Denys. The Capital Manor of Deerhurst no doubt belonged to Odda in 1056, and on his death it probably passed to the King, who would seem to have granted it to Queen Edith, on whose death on December 19th, 1075, it would have passed to Westminster Abbey in accordance with the Confessor's Foundation Charter of his Minster.

¹ *M. H. B.*, 577 B.

We now pass to the consideration of the estates of Pershore Minster, and here we are much helped by a Charter of Confirmation which was granted by King Edgar to Foldbriht, the first Benedictine Abbot of Deerhurst, in 972.¹ Though Kemble doubted the charter, later authorities have accepted it; and considering the subsequent history of the Minster, it is not easy to fix upon any period when a fictitious document of the kind is likely to have been concocted, or when it could have been uttered with any possibility of success. Professor Earle comments upon it in these words: "Kemble stigmatised it, but Mr. Bond has passed it without remark;² and Mr. Macray, who kindly examined it at my request, saw nothing suspicious in the handwriting."³ We may then fairly consider that the document is genuine, and feel that we are on safe ground in comparing it with the entries in the Domesday Record.

The following table gives in the first column the estates mentioned as belonging to Pershore Minster in the charter of 972, and in the second column the owners of the same estates in Domesday Book; the Domesday estates belonging to Westminster Abbey being printed in ordinary type, those still remaining to Pershore Minster being printed in italics, while those which had passed to other owners appear in bolder type:—

CHARTER OF 972.			DOMESDAY BOOK.		
		Mansi.		ii.	v.
Brihtulfingtune	...	x.	Bricstelmestune .	x.	.
Cumbrincgtune	...	x.	Cūbrintune	...	xi. .
			<i>Cūbritone</i>	...	...
Pedneshamme	...	v.	Pendesham	...	ii. .
Eccyncgtune	...	xvi.	Aichintune	...	xvi. .
Byrlingahamme	...	x.	Berlingehā...	...	iii. i.
Deopanforda	...	x.	Depeforde...	...	x. .
Strengesho	...	x.			
Bettesforda	...	x.	Beford	...	x. .
Cromban	...	..	
Stoce	...	x.	Stoche	...	xv. .

¹ *K. C. D.*, DLXX.; *Cart. Sax.*, 1282; Earle, *Land Charters*, 441; British Museum, *Facsimiles*, pt. iii., pl. 30.

² In the British Museum *Facsimiles*.

³ *Land Charters*. 441.

CHARTER OF 972.	DOMESDAY BOOK.
Pyritune x.	Peritune vi. .
Uuadbeorhan iii.	<i>Wadberge</i>
Cuiincgtune iii.	<i>Ciuintone</i>
Broctune) iii.	<i>Broctune</i>
Piplincgtune x.	Piplintune... .. viii. .
Snoddesbyri x.	Snodesbyrie xi. .
Niuuantune vii.	Newentune x. .
Eadbrihtincgtune iii.	{ <i>Edbritone</i>
Uihltafestune v.	{ <i>Edbretintune</i>
Flæferth v.	
Graftune v.	
Deormodescaldtune v.	Dormestun v. .
Husantreo } v.	Husentre vi. .
Meretune }	
Broctune iii.	<i>Broctune</i>
Hleobyri ii.	
Langandune xxx.	Longedune xxx. .
Poincguic vii.	Poiwic iii. .
Beornthesleahē iii.	
Actune iii.	Achetone v. .
Suthstoce }	<i>Havothesberie</i> xvii. .
& Hilleahē }	Hildeslei i. .
& Tresham }	
& Cyllincgcotan }	
& Ealdanbyri } xl.	Aldaberie v. .
& Dydimeretune }	Dedmertone iii. .
& Badimyncgtun }	Madmintune iiiii. .
& Uptun... .. }	
Deorham x.	Dirham vii. .
Longanege v.	<i>Dirham</i> iii. .
Lidanege vi.	Langenei v. .
Uuiggangeate vi.	Lindenee vi. .
Beoleahē v.	<i>Beolege</i> }
Gyrdleahē v.	<i>Gerlei</i> } xxi. .
Sture x.	<i>Sture</i> } xx. .
Bradanuēge xx.	<i>Bradeweia</i> xxx. .
Coltune v.	
Uuiguennan x.	
Hortun i½	

It is said in the Survey that the Church of S. Mary of Pershore held the Manor of Pershore with 26 hides paying geld, and that there pertained to it these Berewicks: Civintone, Edbritone, Wadberge, Broctune, Edbretintune,

Wicha, Cūbritone; also that the Church held in 1086 21 of the 26 hides.¹ But because the hidage of each estate is not mentioned, it has not been possible to record it in the Domesday column of the table.

The mention of Horton in the Pershore Charter is interesting. This manor appears in the Survey as a possession of Robert de Todei, with no trace of a Pershore connection, though it lies between Hawkesbury and Dyrham, which were both Pershore estates. It is rated at 10 hides, and it will be seen that while the Hawkesbury group of estates in the charter account for 40 mansi, in the Survey they are rated only at 30 hides. It seems likely therefore that the 10 hides of Horton ought really to be added to the latter sum to make up the number.

It is quite clear that the estates containing 338½ hides mentioned in the Pershore Charter of 972 are the same with those found in the Survey under the heads of Westminster and Pershore, thus:—

Westminster	156.1	hides.
Pershore	117	„
Other owners	36	„
	<hr/>	
	309	„

In other words, that S. Mary of Pershore had been robbed for the benefit of S. Peter of Westminster, much as S. Mary had superseded S. Peter in the dedication of Worcester Cathedral, and as S. Peter of Bath had been deprived of Kelston for the benefit of S. Mary of Shaftesbury.

This conclusion is confirmed by the entries in Domesday relating to the Worcestershire estates of the two houses. At the end of the list of Westminster estates it is said that "All these above-mentioned lands lay, and lie, in Pershore;"² while a sentence at the end of the statement of the properties of Pershore is still more explicit: "The County says that

¹ *D. B.*, f. 175.

² "Omnes hæ supradictæ terræ jacuerunt et jacent ad Persore."—*D. B.*, f. 175.

the Church of Pershore ought to have Church-scot from all three hundred hides; that is to say from every hide where a free-man dwells one load of grain at the Feast of S. Martin, and if he has more hides let them be free. And if that term be broken let him who has withheld the grain pay elevenfold, nevertheless he shall first pay what he owes. And the Abbot of Pershore has forfeiture from his own 100 hides, as he ought to have from his own land. From the other 200 hides the same Abbot has the load (of grain) and payment, and the Abbot of Westminster has forfeiture, because the land is his. And the Abbot of Evesham has his rights from his own land, and all others likewise from their lands."¹ The mention of Church-scot is interesting. It was a payment of grain at Martinmas, and was quite distinct from tithe. In the laws of Ine, c. 690, one who withholds Church-scot must forfeit 60 shillings and render the Church-scot fourfold—a terrific penalty. The Pershore penalty rather runs on the lines of a law of Ethelred the Unready, A.D. 1014: "And let Church-scot be paid by Martinmass; and let him who does not pay it indemnify it with twelvefold, and cxx. shillings to the King."² It is repeated in the so-called Laws of Henry I., a collection of Old English Statutes: "Whosoever shall withhold Church-scot, beyond the Feast of S. Martin, let him render it to the Bishop, and pay elevenfold, and to the King l. shillings."³

It is evident that the ancient Pershore estates in Worcestershire are regarded as containing 300 hides, that they have been systematically divided into two portions one twice as large as the other, that the larger portion has passed into the possession of Westminster Abbey, and that the ancient owner keeps only one-third of its former property. But still, the ancient Minster retains the right to the spiritual payment of Church-scot from the whole 300 hides, though forfeitures remain to it only from the land actually in its possession. We see then that the very same thing had happened at Pershore which there is good reason for

¹ D. B., f. 175 b.

² *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, 146.

³ *A. L. and I.*, 225.

thinking had happened at Deerhurst—that the ancient estates of the Church had been divided and a portion secularised, only that in the case of Deerhurst the division had been a more equal one.

In tracing the history of Pershore we are able to obtain much more information than we could do in the case of Deerhurst. William of Malmesbury relates that in the Benedictine revival of the Mercian Monasteries under King Edgar the Monastery of Pershore was set up and completed by Egelward, Ealdorman of Dorset; and he goes on to say that the greater part of its property was lost, part through avarice, part by neglect, but that the greater portion was conveyed to Westminster by Kings Edward and William.¹ Abbot Foldbriht appears in 970, in 972 he obtained a great Charter of Confirmation from King Edgar, and he died at the Minster before the persecution of the monks which followed King Edgar's death. Though the Minster was evidently cruelly plundered by Ealdorman Ælfhere, it does not seem that the church was suppressed; for Florence of Worcester relates² that when Leofsi, Bishop of Worcester, died on August 19th, 1033, he was succeeded by Brihteah, Abbot of Pershore, sister's son of Wulstan, Archbishop of York 1003–1023, and Bishop of Worcester 1003–1016. He was no doubt appointed to the Abbacy at some date during his uncle's Episcopate, but there does not seem to be any evidence to fix his accession more exactly, though as he only held the See for five years he was very probably an elderly man at the time of his appointment. Ælfric also appears as an Abbot of Pershore in documents which were passed by Kemble at different dates between 1044 and 1052:³ so that it seems probable that Pershore Minster existed for at least the thirty-six years which elapsed between 1016 and 1052. And as Elfric, the brother of Odda, was buried there in 1053, and it may be taken as fairly certain that its existence was

¹ *Gesta Pontificum*, § 162; *R. S.*, 298.

² *Chron.*, 1033; *M. H. B.*, 597 D.

³ *K. C. D.*, DCCLXXII., DCCLXXVII., DCCLXXVIII., DCCXCVII.

continuous from that date onwards, we may say that if the life of the Minster was interrupted at all, the break can only be placed between 975 and 1016.

We note that Ælfric, Abbot of Pershore, disappears about 1052, and also that Elfric, brother of Odda, died at Deerhurst in December, 1053, and was buried at Pershore, and pass on to consider what Leland has to tell us about Ealdorman Odda. He says that Odda succeeded by right of heirship to that most wicked Consul Delfer; that Delfer arrogantly injured and plundered Pershore Minster, with many others, and that in consequence he came to a bad end, being eaten of worms; that Odda when he succeeded to his inheritance, and understood the strange evil which had happened to the plunderer, not only liberally restored to the Church of Pershore the land which that wicked one had stolen away, but made a vow of perpetual continence lest any heir of his should dispossess the Church of God; that having become a monk at Deerhurst and died there, he was carried to Pershore and there buried.¹ Again, Leland says that King Edgar placed monks at Pershore, that Elferic stole their lands, and that "Comes" Odda, his son (*filius*), restored them.²

This was no doubt the Pershore tradition, and like many other traditions, though the details are not strictly accurate, the substance is true. The wicked Delfer is, of course, Ælfhere, Ealdorman of the Mercians, who during the eight years which elapsed between the death of King Edgar in 975 and his own death in 983 plundered the Benedictine Monasteries of Mercia and drove out the monks. His son Ælfric, who succeeded him as Ealdorman, was banished in 986, and we cannot trace him with any certainty after that date, for there was a perfect chaos of Ælfrics ecclesiastical and secular at this period.³ Still, though Ælfric was thus a very common name, it is worth noting that a brother of Odda bore it.

¹ Dugdale, *Mon.*, ii. 415; Leland, *Collectan.*, i. 284.

² Dugdale, *Mon.*, ii. 416; Leland, *Itin.*, v. 1. ³ Freeman, *N. C.*, i. 639.

Though Leland calls Odda a son (*filius*) of Ælfhere, yet the long interval of time, seventy-three years, which elapsed between the deaths of the two men would seem to show that the younger must have been rather the grandson than the son of the elder. In this case Odda and his brother Elfric would have been the children of Ælfric or of a brother of his; it would have been a very natural thing to call the younger Elfric by the name of his father. We find also Edith, a sister of Odda, who had held in the days of the Confessor Ledene in Radelav Hundred, in Herefordshire.¹ Her successor was Albertus Lothariensis, and as a Lotharingian was more likely to have prospered in the days of Edward than of William, we may assume that she, like her brothers, died before the Conquest. In a charter of 1048 the name of Dodda, whom Mr. Freeman suspects to have been a kinsman, occurs with Odda:² we might find here some ground for the Oddo and Doddo of Tewkesbury mythology were it not that in *K. C. D.*, MCCCXXXIV., of 1046, Odda and Ælfric appear as brothers, and Dodda Cild is separated from them by Ordgar and his two brothers.

We learn from the Confirmation Charter of 972 that at the time when it was granted lands of the Church of Pershore had been alienated, and were held by false title-deeds which purported to convey an hereditary right. Of course, when the monks were driven out these rights were very probably revived, and they may be represented in Domesday by the estates which were conveyed by the charter of 972, but which in 1086 belonged neither to Pershore nor to Westminster. But the tradition recorded by Leland was clearly that Ælfhere took the lands of the monks, and that Odda inherited them by natural descent from him; and knowing what we do of the conduct of Ælfhere, there would be no difficulty in accepting the tradition as true. Further, if Elfric, who disappeared about 1052, were the first Abbot of Pershore mentioned after 975 we might naturally identify him with the brother of Odda who died in December, 1053,

¹ D. B., f. 186.

² *N. C.*, ii. 581; *K. C. D.*, iv. 116.

and think that Ælfhere did really appropriate all the estates of the Church, as Earl Godwin secularised and took for himself the estates of Berkeley Minster half a century later, and that in process of time his grandson was provided for by restoring one-third of the estates to the Minster and making him Abbot. But the Abbacy of Brihteah, which preceded that of Elfric, and which, as we have seen, lasted probably for at least seventeen years, shows that this was not so, and that at any rate from the time of the accession of Cnut the Minster was endowed with a portion of its ancient lands. Still, in that case also, it would be quite in accordance with the spirit of the times that Pershore Minster should be regarded as a family benefice, and that one of Ælfhere's descendants should be made its Abbot. No other Abbot of Pershore appears during the reign of the Confessor, but it is said that Abbot Roger died in 1074, Abbot Eadmund on June 15th, 1085, and Abbot Thurstan in 1087.¹ We may very well think then that in 1053 the greater part of the old estates of the Minster were held by grandsons of Ælfhere, those which the Church had been allowed to retain by Abbot Elfric, and those which had been secularised by Odde; the former continuing as the endowment of the Minster till the dissolution of the House five centuries later, the latter passing on the death of Odde to the Confessor, being granted by him to the Lady Edith, and passing on her death to Westminster Abbey.

But if this were all, it is not easy to see in what way Odde was a benefactor to the Church of Pershore; and that he was regarded not simply as a local benefactor, but also as one who held a very high position among men of saintly character according to the ideas of the time, is quite clear. Florence, the monk of Worcester, in recording Odde's death and burial, describes him as "a lover of churches, a comforter of the poor, a defender of the widows and fatherless, a helper of the oppressed, a guardian of purity."² The manuscripts of the Chronicle C and D, compiled probably at Abingdon

¹ Dugdale, *Mon.*, ii. 411.

² *M. H. B.*, 608 c.

and Worcester, refer to his death in these words: "This year died Earl Odda, and his body lies at Pershore, and he was ordained a monk before his death;" to which the Worcester copy adds: "A good man he was, and pure, and right noble." No doubt there is in these entries a trace of local Worcester enthusiasm for a diocesan hero of saintliness, but it will be worth while to enquire into the reasons for the high praise given by the Worcester Chronicler, who was a contemporary of Odda, and was most likely personally acquainted with him: "god man and clæne and swithe æthele."

The title "good" no doubt bears not only the meaning of rich in this world's goods, but also one who had so used the mammon of unrighteousness which he had inherited from Ælfhere as to be an inheritor of the true riches of the kingdom of heaven. With us the adjective good has almost emancipated itself from this secular meaning, though we still say that a man is good for such an amount, but in Old English it had very commonly the sense of rich. The epithet "clæne"—*pure*—answers to the "*virginitatis custos*" of the eulogium of Florence, and no doubt refers to the purity of his unmarried life. It will be remembered that Leland says that Odda had dedicated himself by a vow of voluntary chastity, so that no heir of his should disinherit the churches which Ælfhere had plundered. "Æthele"—*noble*—no doubt in its double meaning towards God and towards the world. This was a very common thought with Bede,¹ and the words in which he describes S. Mellitus, who succeeded S. Augustine at Canterbury, might well have served the Worcester Chronicler for Odda: "Erat carnis origine nobilis, sed culmine mentis nobilior."² Odda was, as we have seen, most likely a descendant of Ælfhere. Florence of Worcester, in noting Ælfhere's death, calls him "Regis Anglorum Eadgari propinquus,"³ which Mr. Freeman takes to mean kindred by the mother's side:⁴ Odda was therefore of noble birth, but far

¹ Plummer, *Bede*, ii. 90.

² Bede, *H. E.*, ii. 7.

³ *M. H. B.*, 580 A.

⁴ *N. C.*, i. 633.

more noble would have seemed to the Worcester monks his voluntary chastity and his care for the churches of God.

Yet, still we seem hardly to have reached the real reason for this monkish admiration of Odda. It seems fairly clear that he held almost to the time of his death half the estates of the Old Minster at Deerhurst and two-thirds of those of Pershore, and this conduct might seem to be hardly altogether admirable. It is likely that we must go back to the tradition recorded by Leland, that Odda on succeeding to the inheritance of Ælfhere, bearing in mind the evil fate which had befallen that robber of churches, had dedicated himself to perpetual virginity, and the vow to effect its purpose must most likely have been made in early life. There is nothing to show precisely the age of Odda, except this, that Elfric, his brother, and probably a younger brother, died in 1053, he died in 1056, and his sister Edith died apparently towards the end of the Confessor's reign. It would seem that the two brothers and the sister lived out their allotted span, and passed away within a few years of each other. Supposing Odda to have lived out his seventy years, he would have been born about 986, and would have reached his twenty-first year in 1007. And if on entering on his inheritance he had restored a portion of the estates of both churches, and had retained for himself a life-interest only in the remainder, his chastity and his proposed restitution would have excited the enthusiastic admiration of any monk.

The banishment of Ælfric, son of Ælfhere, would seem to have been perpetual, as allusion appears to be made to it in two Abingdon charters of the period. In one which is undated it is said that "Ælfric cognomento Puer" had taken by violence from a widow, Eadflæd, three estates, Feornebeorh, Wilmalehtun, and Cyrne, of which the first and last are probably Farnborough, near Wantage, and South Cerney.¹ These estates King Ethelred restored to Abingdon Minster. By the other charter, which was granted in 999, King Ethelred bestowed upon Abingdon Minster xv. cassates at Cyrne,

¹ *K. C. D.*, MCCCXII.

which "quidam Comes vocitamine Ælfric" had stolen from a certain matron, Eatflæd.¹ South Cerney appears in Domesday as a manor of xiii. hides and i. virgate, which was claimed by Abingdon Abbey, but which had been held for the last ten years of the Confessor's reign by Archbishop Stigand. In each charter mention is made of a council at Cyrneceastre, or Cirencester, at which this plundering Ælfric was banished; and as no mention is made of his return, it may probably be assumed that he had not come back by 999, sixteen years after his departure. His property would no doubt have been forfeited on his exile; and assuming that Odda was his heir, it would have been restored to him when he came of age, most likely in the first decade of the eleventh century. But a man whose grandfather had been the greatest robber of churches in his time and who had been eaten of worms, and whose father had plundered churches in his turn and had been banished, might well take a serious view of his responsibilities when he entered on his ill-gotten inheritance; and under the circumstances the restitution of a part of the stolen lands to the Church, and a vow which would ensure the ultimate restitution of the remainder, would be very natural.

But, as we have seen, the remainder did not return to the Minsters to which it had belonged, but it passed to the Lady Edith, and ultimately to Westminster Abbey; and it will be needful to consider how this came to pass. Odda was admitted to the Religious life apparently under the name of Agelwin by Aldred, Bishop of Worcester, who in later days crowned both Harold and the Conqueror; but this cannot have taken place till nearly the end of his life, for he was evidently not a monk when his brother Elfric died. With regard to the name Agelwine or Æthelwine, assumed by Odda when he became a monk apparently on his death-bed—"ante suum mortem monachizatus" are the words of Florence of Worcester—we may notice that the great friend and patron of the monks after the death of King Edgar was

¹ K. C. D., DCCIII.

Æthelwine Ealdorman of the East-Angles, who on account of his good works was known as "Amicus Dei." As early as 969 with the help of S. Oswald he had founded a monastery at Ramsey, and on the death of Edgar he protected the monasteries in East Anglia from any such persecution as that which broke out under Ælfhere in Mercia. He lived until 992, and supposing Odda to have been a child of Ælfric the son of Ælfhere, Æthelwine would have been of the chief men in England during his early years. In any case Odda, in entering the Religious life, might well have chosen the name of one who on account of his friendship for the monks was known as "the friend of God."

We do not know the circumstances under which the Deerhurst and Pershore estates of Odda passed into the possession of the Lady Edith, but she was not scrupulous in her dealings with the lands of the Church. When in 1046 her brother Swegen seduced Eadgifu, Abbess of Leominster, the highest lady in the land was not above profiting by the ruin which fell upon the House, though her mother Gytha had refused to eat the fruits of the lands of Berkeley Minster which Godwin, her husband, had secularised.¹ In Domesday it is said that Queen Edith had held Leominster; and still in 1086 the Abbess held a little manor of only one hide at Fencote, and of the £120 which the noble estate of Leominster would have yielded if it had been unencumbered one-half was retained for the maintenance of the nuns.² We notice that, as at Deerhurst, half the estates of the Church remained to it, and half were secularised. Other instances of strange dealings with Church lands on the part of the Lady are mentioned by Mr. Freeman.³ Still, in the cases of Deerhurst and Pershore, her greediness was *felix culpa*; it was far better that the lands should pass to S. Peter of Westminster than that they should fall into the hands of the spoilers some five centuries after Odda's death. It is in consequence of the avarice of the last of the Ladies of the English that Odda's

¹ D. B., f. 164.

² D. B., f. 180.

³ N. C., ii. 46.

Beornthesleahe	...	...	...	...	iii.	Mansi.
Uuiggangeate	...	...	...	...	vi.	„
Coltune	...	...	...	...	v.	„
Uuigennan	...	...	...	...	x.	„

Of these Cromban is probably represented by Crūbe¹ in the Bishop's Hundred of Oswaldeslau, in Worcestershire, where Ordric held 1 hide and Siward held 5 hides; Graftune may be represented, at any rate in part, by Grastone,² rated at 3½ hides, which was a member of the King's great Manor of Bremesgraue; while there can be little doubt that Uuigennan is represented by Wicuene,³ rated at 10 hides, now Child's Wickham in Gloucestershire. Wicuene had been held in King Edward's time by Balduin, no doubt Abbot Baldwin, who still held at the date of Domesday half a hide of land at Kemerton from Westminster Abbey. The remaining 36 hides may very likely to a great extent be included in the excess of the hidage attributed to Beolege, Gerlei, Sture, and Bradeweia over the number of *mansi* attributed to the corresponding estates in 972. There is little evidence to show when the Church lost these estates, but it is clear that Lydney did not become a possession of the Crown till the beginning of the Conqueror's reign.⁴

¹ D. B., f. 173. ² D. B., f. 172. ³ D. B., f. 168. ⁴ D. B., f. 164.