

F.A. Gasquet. English Monastic Life. Methuen & Co. London, 1904.

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CHAPTER II

THE MATERIAL PARTS OF A MONASTERY

1. THE CHURCH

In any account of the parts of a monastic establishment the church obviously finds the first place. As St. Benedict laid down the principle that "nothing is to be preferred to the Opus Dei," or Divine Service, so in every well-regulated religious establishment the church must of necessity be the very centre of the regular life as being, in fact no less than in word, the "House of God."

In northern climates the church was situated, as a rule, upon the northern side of the monastic buildings. With its high and massive walls it afforded to those who lived there a good shelter from the rough north winds. As the northern cloister usually stretched along the nave wall of the church and terminated at the south transept, the buildings of the choir and presbytery and also the retro-chapels, if there were any, gave some protection from the east wind. Sometimes, of course, there were exceptions, caused by the natural lie of the ground or other reason, which did not allow of the church being placed in ordinary English position. Canterbury itself and Chester are examples of this, the church being in each case on the southern side, where also it is found very frequently

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in warm and sunny climates, with the obvious intention of obtaining from its high walls some shelter from the excessive heat of the sun. Convenience, therefore, and not any very recondite symbolism may be considered to have usually dictated the position of "God's House."

Christian churches, especially the great cathedral and monastic churches, were originally designed and built upon lines which had much symbolism in them ; the main body of the church with its transepts was to all, of course, a representation of Christ upon the cross. To the builders of these old sanctuaries the work was one of faith and love rather than a matter of mere mercenary business. They designed and worshipped whilst they wrought. To them, says one writer, the building "was instinct with speech, a tree of life planted in paradise ; sending its roots deep down into the crypt ; rising with stems in pillar and shaft ;

branching out into boughs over the vaulting ; blossoming, in diaper and mural flora ; breaking out into foliage, flower, and fruit, on corbel, capital, and boss." It was all real and true to them, for it sprang out of their strong belief that in the church they had "the House of God" and "the Gate of heaven," into which at the moment of the solemn dedication "the King of Glory" had come to take lasting possession of His home. For this reason, to those who worshipped in any such sanctuary the idea that they stood in the "courts of the Lord" as His chosen ministers was ever present in their daily service, as with the eyes of their simple faith they could almost penetrated the veil that hid His majesty from their sight. As St. Benedict taught his disciples, medieval monks believed "without any doubt" that God was present to them "in a special manner" when they

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NORWICH CATHEDRAL, WITH CLOISTERS

Illustration: Norwich Cathedral, with cloisters.

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Insert: groundplan of Beaulieu

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“assisted at their divine service.” “Therefore,” says the great master of the regular observance, “let us consider in what manner and with what reverence it behoveth us to be in the sight of God and the Angels, and so let us sing in choir, that mind and voice may accord together.”

So far as the religious life was concerned, the most important part of the church was of course the presbytery with the High Altar and the choir. Here all, or nearly all, public services were performed. The choir frequently, if not generally, stretched beyond the transepts and took up one, if not two, bays of the nave ; being enclosed and divided off from that more public part by the great screen. Other gates of ironwork, across the aisle above the presbytery and in a line with the choir screen, kept the public from the south transept. Privacy was thus secured for the monks, whilst by this arrangement the people had full access to all parts of the sacred building except the choir and the transept nearest to the monastery.

The choir was entered, when the buildings were in normal English position, from a door in the southern wall of the church at the juncture of the northern and eastern walks of the cloister. At the western end of the same northern cloister there was generally another door into the church reserved for the more solemn processions. The first, however, was the ordinary entrance used by the monks, and passing through it they found themselves in the area reserved for them within the screens which stretched across the choir and aisle.

In the centre of the choir stood the great raised lectern or reading-desk, from which the lessons were chanted, and from which, also, the singing was directed by the cantor and his assistant. The stalls were arranged in two or

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more rows slightly raised one above the other. The superior and the second in command usually occupied the two stalls on each side of the main entrance furthest from the altar, the juniors being ranged nearest to the presbytery. This was the common practice except at the time of the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, or during such portion of the Office which preceded the Mass. On these occasions the elders took their places nearest to the altar, for the purpose of making the necessary oblation to the Holy Sacrifice. In many monastic choirs, for this reason, the abbot and prior had each two places reserved for their special use, one on either side near the altar, and the other in the entrance of the choir. Besides the great lectern of the choir there was likewise a second standing-desk for the reading of the Gospel at Matins, usually placed near to the steps of the presbytery. In some cases, apparently, this was always in its place, but more

frequently it was brought into the choir for the occasion, and removed afterwards by the servers of the church.

There were in every church, besides the High Altar, several, and frequently numerous, smaller altars. The *Rites of Durham* describes minutely the nine altars arranged along the eastern wall of the church and facing the shrine of St. Cuthbert.

“They,” says the author, “each had their several shrines and covers of wainscot over-head, in very decent and comely form, having likewise betwixt every altar a very fair and large partition of wainscot, all varnished over, with very fine branches and flowers and other imagery work most finely and artificially pictured and gilded, containing the several lockers or ambers for the safe keeping of the vestments and orna-

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CANONS IN CHOIR

Illustration: Canons in choir

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ments belonging to every altar ; with three or four aumbries in the wall pertaining to some of the said altars.”

It would be now quite impossible to describe the rich adornments of an English medieval monastic church. The *Rites of Durham* give some idea of the wealth of the plate, vestments and hangings, and the art treasures, mural paintings and stained windows, with which generations of benefactors had enriched the great northern sanctuary. What we know of other monastic houses shows that Durham was not an exception in any way ; but that almost any one, at any rate of the greater houses, could challenge comparison with it. A foreign traveler almost on the eve of their destruction speaks of the artistic wealth of the monastic churches of England as unrivalled by that of any other religious establishments in the whole of Europe.

2. THE CLOISTERS

In every monastery next in public importance to the church came the cloisters. The very name has become a synonym for the monastery itself. The four walks of the cloister formed the dwelling-place of the community. With the progress of time there came into existence certain private rooms in which the officials transacted their business, and later still the use of private cells or cubicles became common, but these were the exception ; and, at any rate, in England till the dissolution of the religious houses, the common life of the cloisters was in full vigour.

In the normal position of the church on the north side of the monastic buildings, the north cloister with its

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openings looking south was the warmest of the four divisions. Here, in the first place, next the door of the church, was the prior's seat, and the rest of the seniors in their order sat after him, not necessarily in order of seniority, but in the positions that best suited their work.



THE CLOISTERS, WORCESTER

Illustration: The Cloisters, Worcester

The abbot's place, "since his dignity demands," as the Westminster Customal puts it, was somewhat apart from the rest. He had his fixed seat at the end of the eastern cloister nearest to the church door. In the same cloister, but more towards the other, or southern end, the novice-master taught his novices, and the walk immediately

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opposite, namely, the western side of the cloister, was devoted to the junior monks, who were, as the Rule of St. Benedict says, "*adhuc in custodia*": still under stricter discipline. The southern walk, which would have been in ordinary circumstances the sunless, cold side of the quadrangle, was not usually occupied in the daily life of the community. This was the common position for the refectory, with the lavatory close at hand, and the aumbries or cupboards for the towels, etc. It was here also that the door from the outside world into the monastic precincts was usually to be found. At Durham, for example, we are told that—

"there was on the south side of the cloister door, a stool, or seat with four feet, and a back of wood joined to the said stool, which was made fast in the wall for the porter to sit on, which did keep the cloister door. And before the said stool it was boarded in under foot, for warmth. And he that was the last porter there was called Edward Pattinson."

The same account describes the cupboards near of the refectory door in which the monks kept their towels—

“All the forepart of the aumbry was thorough carved work, to give air to the towels.” There were “three doors in the forepart of either aumbry and a lock on every door and every monk had a key for the said aumbries, wherein did hang in every one clean towels for the monks to dry their hands on, when they washed and went to dinner.”

We who see the cold damp-stained cloisters of the old monastic buildings as they are to-day, as at Westminster for example, may well feel a difficulty in realising what they were in the time of their glory. Day after day for centuries the cloister was the center of the activity of the religious establishment. The quadrangle was the place

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where the monks lived and studied and wrote. In the three sides—the northern, eastern, and western walks—were transacted the chief business of the house, other than what was merely external. Here the older monks laboured at the tasks appointed them by obedience, or discussed questions relating to ecclesiastical learning or regular observance, or at permitted times joined in recreative conversation. Here, too, in the parts set aside for the purpose, the younger members toiled at their studies under the eye of their teacher, learnt the monastic observance from the lips of the novice-master, or practiced the chants and melodies of the Divine Office with the cantor or his assistant. How the work was done in the winter time, even supposing that the great windows looking out on to the cloister-garth were glazed or closed with wooden shutters, must ever remain a mystery. In some places, it is true, certain screenwork divisions appear to have been devised, so as to afford some shelter and protection to the elder members and scribes of the monastery from the sharper draughts inevitable in an open cloister. The account given in the *Rites of Durham* on this point is worth quoting at length :—

“In the cloister,” says the writer—and he is speaking of the northern walk, set apart for the seniors—“in the cloister there were carrels finely wainscotted and very close, all but the forepart, which had carved work to give light in at their carrel doors. And in every carrel was a desk to lie their books on, and the carrel was no greater than from one stanchell (centre-bar) of the window to another. And over against the carrels, against the church wall, did stand certain great aumbries of wainscot all full of books, with great store of ancient manuscripts to help them in their study.” In these cupboards, “did lie as well the old ancient written Doctors of the Church as

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THE CLOISTERS, GLOUCESTER, SHEWING CARRELS

Illustration: The Cloisters, Gloucester, Shewing Carrels.

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other profane authors, with divers other holy men's works, so that every one did study what doctor pleased him best, having the Library at all times to go and study in besides these carrels."

In speaking of the novices the same writer tells us that—

“over against the said treasury door was a fair seat of wainscot, where the novices were taught. And the master of the novices had a pretty seat of wainscot adjoining to the south side of the treasury door, over against the seat where the novices sat ; and there he taught the novices both forenoon and afternoon. No strangers or other persons were suffered to molest, or trouble the said novices, or monks in their carrels while they were at their

books within the cloister. For to this purpose there was a porter appointed to keep the cloister door.”

In other monasteries, such for example as Westminster and St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, these enclosed wooden sitting-places seem to have been very few in number, and allowed only to those officers of the house who had much business to transact for the common good. At Durham, however, we are told that “every one of the old monks” had his own special seat, and in each window of the south cloister there were set “three of these pews or carrels.”

3. THE REFECTORY

The refectory, sometimes called the *fratry* or *frater-house*, was the common hall for all conventual meals. Its situation in the plan for a monastic establishment was almost always as far removed from the church as possible, that is, it was on the opposite side of the cloister quadrangle and, according to the usual plan, in the southern walk of the cloister. The reason for this arrangement is obvious. It was to secure that the church and its pre-

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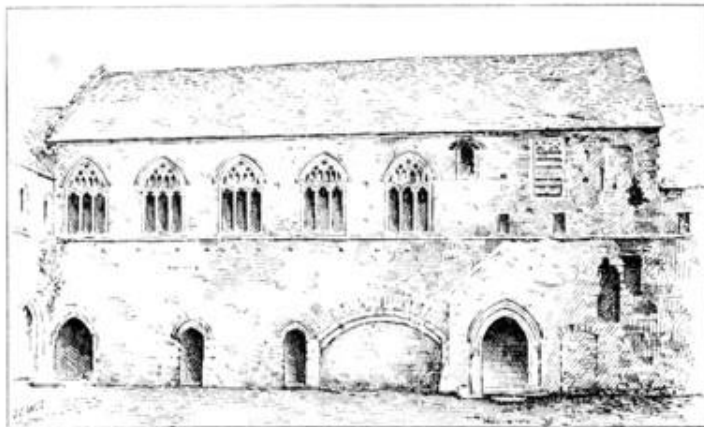
cincts might be kept as free as possible from the annoyance caused by the noise and smells necessarily connected with the preparation and consumption of the meals.

As a rule, the walls of the hall would no doubt have been wainscotted. At one end, probably, great presses would have been placed to receive the plate and linen, with the salt-cellars, cups and other ordinary requirements of the common meals. The floor of a monastic refectory was spread with hay or rushes, which covering was changed three or four times in a year ; and the tables were ranged in single rows lengthways, with the benches for the monks upon the inside, where they sat with their backs to the paneled walls. At the east end, under some sacred figure, or painting of the crucifix, or of our Lord in glory, called the *Majestas*, was the *mensa major*, or high table for the superior. Above this the *Scylla* or small signal-bell was suspended. This was sounded by the president of the meal as a sign that the community might begin their refecton, and for the commencement of each of the new courses. The pulpit, or reading-desk, was, as a rule, placed upon the south side of the hall, and below it was usually placed the table for the novices, presided over by their master.

“At which time (of meals),” says the *Rites of Durham*, “the master observed this wholesome order for the continual instructing of their youth in virtue and learning ; that is, one of the novices, at the election and appointment of the master, did read some part of the Old and New Testament, in Latin, in dinnertime, having a convenient place at the south end of the high table within a fair glass window, environed with iron, and certain steps of stone with iron rails of the one side to go up into it and to support an iron desk there placed, upon which lay the Holy Bible.”

In most cases the kitchens and offices would have been situated near the western end of the refectory, across which a screen pierced with doors would probably have somewhat veiled the serving-hatch, the dresser, and the passages to the butteries, cellars, and pantry.

Besides the great refectory there was frequently a smaller hall, called by various names such as “miserichord,” or “oriel” at St. Alban’s, the “disport” (*deportus*)



THE REFECTORY, CLEVE ABBEY

Illustration: The Refectory, Cleve Abbey

at Canterbury, and the “spane” at Peterborough. In the smaller dining-place those who had been bled and others, who by the dispensation of the superior were to have different or better food than that served in the common refectory, came to their meals. At Durham, apparently, the ordinary dining-place was called the “loft,” and was at the west end of a larger hall entered from the south alley of the cloister, called the “frater-house.” In this hall “the great feast of Saint Cuthbert’s

day in Lent was holden.” In an aumbry in the wainscot, on the left-hand of the door, says the author of the *Rites of Durham*, was kept the great mazer, called the *grace-cup*, “which did service to the monks every day, after grace was said, to drink in round the table.”

4. THE KITCHEN

Near to the refectory was, of course, the conventual kitchen. At Canterbury this kitchen was a square of some forty-five feet ; at Durham it was somewhat smaller ; and at Glastonbury, Worcester, and Chester the hall was some

thirty-five feet square. A small courtyard with the usual offices adjoined it ; and this sometimes, as at Westminster and Chester, had a tower and a larder on the western side. According to the Cluniac constitutions there were to be two kitchens : the one served in weekly turns by the brethren, the other in which a good deal of the food was prepared by paid servants. The first was chiefly used for the preparation of the soup or pottage, which formed the foundation of the monastic dinner. The furniture of this kitchen is minutely described in the Customals : there were to be three *caldaria* or cauldrons for boiling water : a third, with an iron tripod to stand it upon, to furnish hot water for washing plates, dishes, cloths, etc. Secondly, there were to be four great dishes or vessels : one for half-cooked beans ; another and much larger one, into which water was always to be kept running, for washing vegetables ; a third for washing up plates and dishes ; and a fourth to be reserved for holding a supply of hot water required for the weekly feet-washing, and for the shaving of faces and tonsures, etc.

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Insert: Groundplan for Repton Priory

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In the same way there were to be always in the kitchen four spoons: the first for beans, the second for vegetables, the third (a small one naturally) for seasoning the soup, and the fourth (an iron one of large size) for shoveling coals on the fire. Besides these necessary articles, the superior was to see that there were to be always at hand four pairs of sleeves for the use of the servers, that they might not soil their ordinary habits ; two pairs of gloves for moving hot vessels, and three napkins for wiping dishes, etc., which were to be changed every Thursday. Besides these things there were, of course, to be knives, and as stone wherewith to sharpen them ; a small dish to get hot water quickly when required ; a strainer ; an urn to draw hot water from ; two ladles ; a fan to blow the fire up when needed, and stands to set the pots upon, etc.

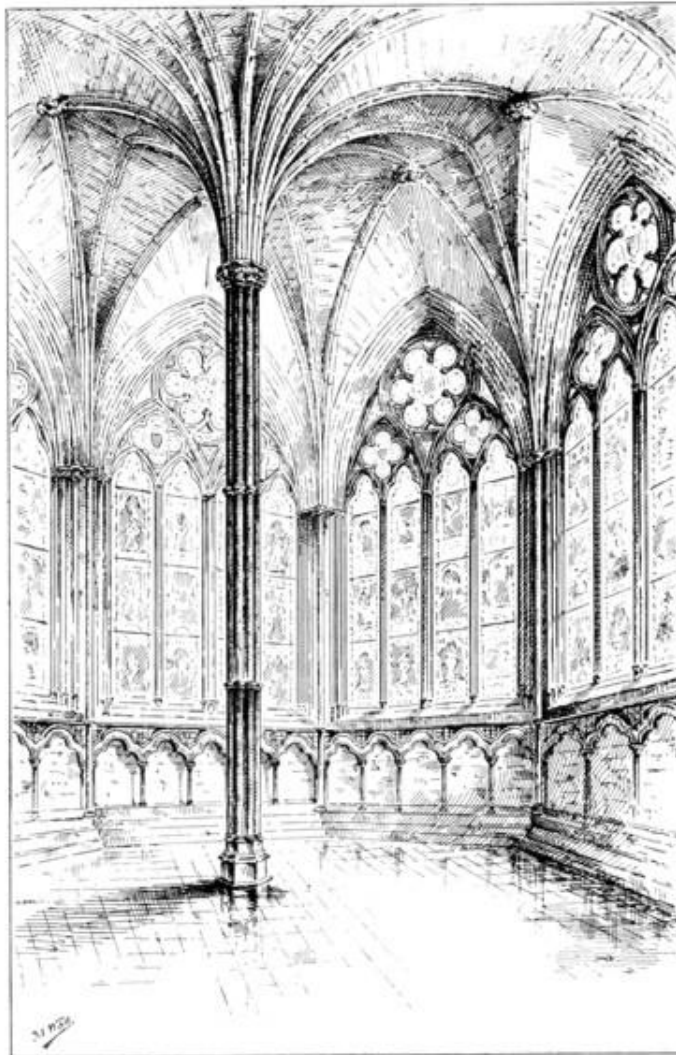
The work of the weekly cooks is also carefully set out in these constitutions. These officials were four in number, and, upon the sign for vespers, after making their prayer, they were to proceed to the kitchen and obtain the necessary measure of beans for the following day. They then said their vespers together, and proceeded to wash the beans in three waters, putting them afterwards into the great boiling-pot with water ready for the next day. After Lauds on the following day, when they had received the usual blessing for the servers, after washing themselves they proceeded to the kitchen and set the cauldron of beans on the fire. The pot was to be watched most carefully lest the contents should be burnt. The skins were to be taken off as they became loosened, and the beans were to be removed as they were cooked. When all had been finished, the great cauldron was to be scoured and cleaned "*usque ad nitidum.*" Directly the

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beans had been removed from the fire, another pot was to be put in its place, so that there might always be a good supply of water for washing plates and dishes. These, when cleaned, were to be put into a rack to dry ; this rack was to be constantly and thoroughly scoured and kept clean and sweet.

When the cooking of this bean soup had progressed so far, the four cooks were to sit down and say their Divine Office together whilst the hot water was being boiled. A third pot, with vegetables in cold water, was to be then made ready to take its place on the fire, after the Gospel of the morning Mass. When the daily Chapter, at which all had to be present, was finished, the beans were again to be put on the fires and boiled with more water, whilst the vegetables also were set to cook ; and when these were done the cooks got the lard and seasoning, and, having melted it, poured it over them. Two of the four weekly cooks now went to the High Mass, the other two remaining behind to watch the dinner and to put more water into the cooking-pots when needed. When the community were ready for their meal, the first cook ladled out the soup into dishes, and the other three carried them to the refectory. In the same way the vegetables were to be served to the community, and when this had been done the four weekly cooks proceeded at once to wash with hot water the dishes and plates which had been used for beans and vegetables, lest by delay any remains should stick to the substance of the place and be afterwards difficult to remove.

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THE CHAPTER HOUSE, WESTMINSTER

Illustration: The Chapter House, Westminster

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5. THE CHAPTER-HOUSE

The chapter-hall, or house, was situated on the eastern side of the cloister, as near to the church as possible. Its shape, usually rectangular, sometimes varied according to circumstances and places. At Worcester and Westminster, for example, it was octagonal ; at Canterbury and Chester rectangular ; at Durham and Norwich rectangular with an apsidal termination. Seats were arranged along the walls for the monks, sometimes in two rows, one raised above the other, and

at the easternmost part of the hall was the chair of the superior, with the crucifix or *Majestas* over it. At the centre a raised desk or pulpit was arranged for the reader of the Martyrology, etc., at that part of Prime which preceded the daily Chapter, and at the evening Collation before Compline.

6. THE DORMITORY

The position of the dormitory among the claustral buildings was apparently not so determined either by rule or custom, as some of the other parts of the religious house. Normally, it may be taken to have communicated with the southern transept, for the purpose of giving easy access to the choir for the night offices. In two cases it stood at right angles to the cloister—at Worcester on the western side, and at Winchester on the east. The *Rites of Durham* says that “on the west side of the cloister was a large house called the Dortor, where the monks and novices lay. Every monk had a little chamber to himself. Each chamber had a window towards the Chapter, and the partition betwixt every chamber was close wainscotted, and in each window was a desk to support their books.”

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The place itself at Durham, and, indeed, no doubt, usually, was raised upon an undercroft and divided into various chambers and rooms. Amongst these were the treasury at Durham and Westminster, and the passage to the chapter-hall in the latter. The dormitory-hall was originally one open apartment, in which the beds of the monks were placed without screens or dividing hangings. In process of time, however, divisions became introduced such as are described by the author of the *Rites of Durham*, and such as we know existed elsewhere. The cubicles or cells thus formed came to be used for the purpose of study as well as for sleeping, which accounts for the presence of the “desk to support their books” spoken of above. The dormitory also communicated with the latrine or *rere-dorter*, which was lighted, partitioned, and provided with clean hay.

For the purpose of easy access, as for instance at Worcester, the dormitory frequently communicated directly with the church through the south-western turret ; at Canterbury a gallery was formed in the west gable-wall of the chapter-house, over the doorway, and continuing over the cloister roof, came out into an upper chapel in the northern part of the transept ; at Westminster a bridge crossed the west end of the sacristy, and at St. Alban’s and Winchester passages in the wall of the transept gave communication by stairs into the church.

7. THE INFIRMARY

In the disposition of the parts of the religious house no fixed locality was apparently assigned by rule or custom to the infirmary, or house for the sick and aged. Usually it appears to have been to the east of the dor-

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mitory ; but there were undoubtedly numerous exceptions. At Worcester it faced the west front of the church, and at Durham and Rochester apparently it joined it ; whilst at Norwich and Gloucester it was in a position parallel to the refectory. Adjoining the infirmary was sometimes the *herbarium*, or garden for herbs ; and occasionally, as at Westminster [sic], Gloucester, and Canterbury, this was surrounded by little cloisters. The main hall, or large room, of the infirmary often included a chapel at the easternmost point, where the sick could say their Hours and other Offices when able to do so, and where the infirmarian could say Mass for those under his charge. According to the constitutions of all religious bodies the care of the sick was enjoined upon the superior of every religious house as one of his most important duties.

“Before all things, and above all things,” says St. Benedict in his Rule, “special care must be taken of the sick, so that they be served in every deed, as Christ himself, for He saith : ‘I was sick, and ye visited me’; and, ‘What ye did to one of these My least Brethren, ye did to Me.’”

On this principle not only was a special official appointed in every monastery, whose first duty it was to look to the care and comfort of those who were infirm and sick, but the officials of the house generally were charged with seeing that they were supplied with what was needed for their comfort and cure. Above all, says the great legislator, “let the abbot take special care they be not neglected,” that they have what they require at the hands of the cellarer, and that the attendants do not neglect them, “because,” he adds, “ whatever is done amiss by his disciples is imputed to him.” For this reason, as stated

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times, as for instance immediately after the midday meal, the superior, who had presided in the common refectory, was charged to visit the sick brethren in the infirmary, in order to be sure that they had been served properly and in no ways neglected.

8. THE GUEST-HOUSE

The guest-house (*hostellary*, *hostry*, etc.) was a necessary part of every great religious house. It was presided over by a senior monk, whose duty it was to keep the hall and chambers ready for the reception of guests, and to be ever prepared to receive those who came to ask for hospitality. Naturally the guest-house was situated where it would be least likely to interfere with the privacy of the monastery. The guest-place at Canterbury was of great size, measuring forty feet broad by a hundred and fifty feet long. The main building was a big hall, resembling a church with columns, having on each side bedrooms or cubicles leading out of it. In the thirteenth century John de Hertford, abbot of St. Alban's, built a noble hall for the use of guests frequenting his abbey, with an inner parlour having a fireplace in it, and many chambers arranged for the use of various kinds of guests. It had also a *pro-aula*, or reception-room, in which the guest-master

first received the pilgrim or traveller, before conducting him to the church, or arranging for a reception corresponding to his rank and position.

In the greater monastic establishments there were frequently several places for the reception of guests. The abbot, or superior, had rooms to accommodate distinguished or honoured guests and benefactors of the establishment. The cellarer's department, too, frequently had to entertain merchants and others who came upon

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business of the house : a third shelter was provided near the gate of the monastery for the poorer folk, and a fourth for the monks of other religious houses, who had their meals in the common refectory, and joined in many of the exercises of the community.

The *Rites of Durham* thus describes the guest-house which the author remembered in the great cathedral monastery of the North :—

“There was a famous house of hospitality, called the Guest Hall, within the Abbey garth of Durham, on the west side, towards the water, the Terrar of the house being master thereof, as one appointed to give entertainment to all states, both noble, gentle, and whatsoever degree that came thither as strangers, their entertainment not being inferior to any place in England, both for the goodness of their diet, the sweet and dainty furniture of their lodgings, and generally all things necessary for travellers. And, withal, this entertainment continuing, (the monks) not willing or commanding any man to depart, upon his honest and good behaviour. This hall is a goodly, brave place, much like unto the body of a church, with very fair pillars supporting it on either side, and in the midst of the hall a most large range for the fire. The chambers and lodgings belonging to it were sweetly kept and so richly furnished that they were not unpleasant to lie in, especially one chamber called the ‘king’s chamber,’ deserving that name, in that the king himself might very well have lain in it, for the princely linen thereof....The prior (whose hospitality was such a that there needed no guest-hall, but that they (the Convent) were desirous to abound in all liberal and free almsgiving) did keep a most honourable house and very noble entertainment, being attended upon both with gentlemen and yeomen, of the best in the country, as the honourable service of his house deserved no less. The benevolence thereof, with the relief and alms of the whole Convent, was always open and free, not only to the poor of the city of Durham, but to all the poor people of the country besides.”

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In most monastic statutes, the time during which a visitor was to be allowed free hospitality was not unlimited, as, according to the recollection of the author of the *Rites of Durham*, appears to have been the case in that monastery. The usual period was apparently two days and nights, and in ordinary cases after dinner on the third day the guest was expected to take his departure. If for any reason a visitor desired to prolong his stay, permission had to be obtained from the superior by the guest-master. Unless prevented by sickness, after that time the guest had to rise for Matins, and otherwise follow the exercises of the community.

With the Franciscans, a visitor who asked for hospitality from the convent beyond three days, had to beg pardon in the conventual chapter before he departed for his excessive demand upon the hospitality of the house.

9. THE PARLOUR OR LOCUTORIUM

In most Customs of monastic observance mention is made of a *Parlour*, and in some of more than one such place. Here the monks could be sent for by the superiors to discuss necessary matters of business, when strict silence had to be observed in the cloister itself. Here, too—it may be in the same, or in another such room—visitors could converse with the religious they had come to see. Sometimes, apparently, among the Cistercians, the place where the monastic schools were held, other than the cloister, was called the *auditorium* or *locutorium*. At Durham, the room called the parlour stood between the chapter-house and the church door, and is described as “a place for merchants to utter their wares.” It apparently had a door which gave access to the monastic cemetery,

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as the religious were directed to pass through it for the funeral of any of the brethren. During the times of silence, when anything had to be settled without unnecessary delay, the officials could summon any of the religious to the parlour for the purpose ; but they were warned not to make any long stay, and to take great care that no sound of their voices disturbed the quiet of the cloister.

10. THE ALMONRY

No religious house was complete without a place where the poor could come and beg alms in the name of Christ. The convent doles of food and clothing were administered by one of the senior monks, who, by his office of almoner, had to interview the crowds of poor who daily flocked to the gate in search of relief. His charity was to be wider than his means ; and where he could not satisfy the actual needs of all, he was at least to manifest his Christian sympathy for their sufferings. The house or room, from which the monastic relief was given, frequently stood near the church, as showing the necessary connection between charity and religious. In most of the almonries, at any rate in those of the larger monasteries, there was a free school for poor boys. It was in these that most of the students who were presented for Ordination by the religious houses in such number during the fourteen and fifteenth centuries, (as is shown by the Episcopal registers of the English dioceses), were prepared to exercise their sacred ministry in the ranks of the parochial clergy.

11. THE COMMON-ROOM OR CALEFACTORY

The common-room, sometimes called the calefactory or warming-place, was a room to which the religious re-

sorted, especially in winter, for the purpose of warming themselves at the common fire, which was lighted on the feast of All Saints, November 1st, and kept burning daily until Easter. On certain occasions, such as Christmas night, when the Offices in the church were specially long, the caretaker was warned to be particularly careful to have a bright fire burning for the community to go to when they came out of the choir. The common-room was also used at times for the purpose of recreation.

“On the right hand, as you go out of the cloisters into the infirmary,” says the *Rites of Durham*, “was the Common House and a master thereof. This house was intended to this end, to have a fire kept in it all the winter, for the monks to come and warm them at, being allowed no fire but that only except the masters and officers of the house, who had their several fires. There was belonging to the Common House a garden and a bowling alley, on the back-side of the said house, towards the water, for the novices sometimes to recreate themselves, when they had leave of their master ; he standing by to see their good order.

“Also, within this house did the master thereof keep his *O Sapientia* once a year—namely, between Martinmas and Christmas—a solemn banquet that the prior and convent did use at that time of the year only, when their banquet was of figs and raisins, ale and cakes ; and thereof no superfluity or excess, but a scholastical and moderate congratulation amongst themselves.”

12. THE LIBRARY

“A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armoury” was an old monastic saying. At first, and in most places in England probably to the end, there was no special hall, room, or place which was set aside for the reception of the books belonging to the monastery. In the church and in the cloister there were generally cup-

Insert: Groundplan of Watton Priory

--page not numbered—

boards to hold the manuscripts in constant use. It was not till the later middle ages that the practice of gathering together the books of an establishment into one place or room became at all common. At Durham, about 1446, Prior Wessington made a *library*, “well replenished with old written doctors and other Histories and Ecclesiastical writers ; to which henceforth the monks could always repair to study in, “besides their carrels” in the cloister. So, too, at St. Alban’s, Michael de Mentmore, who was abbot from 1335 to 1349, besides enriching the presses in the cloister with books, made a collection of special volumes in what he called his

study. This collection grew ; but it was not till 1452 that Abbot Whethamstede finally completed the *library*, which had long been projected. About the same time, at Canterbury, Prior Thomas Goldstone finished a library there, which was enriched by the celebrated Prior William Sellyng with many precious classical manuscripts brought back from Italy. In the same way many other religious houses in the fifteenth century erected, or set apart, special places for their collections of books, whilst still retaining the great cloister presses for those volumes which were in daily and constant use.

In addition to the above-named parts of every religious house, there were in most monasteries, and especially on the larger ones, a great number of offices. The officials, or obedientiaries, for instance, had their chequer or scaccarium, where the accounts of the various estates assigned to the support of the burdens of their special offices were rendered and checked. There were also the usual workrooms for tailors, shoemakers, etc., under the management of the chamberlain, or camerarius, and for the

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servants of the church, under the sacrist and his assistant. The above, however, will be sufficient to give some general idea of the material parts which composed the ordinary English religious house. More, however will be learnt of them, and especially of their use, when the work of the officials, and the daily life led by the monks in the cloister is discussed.

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--end chapter--