

ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOTES OF TAVISTOCK AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.

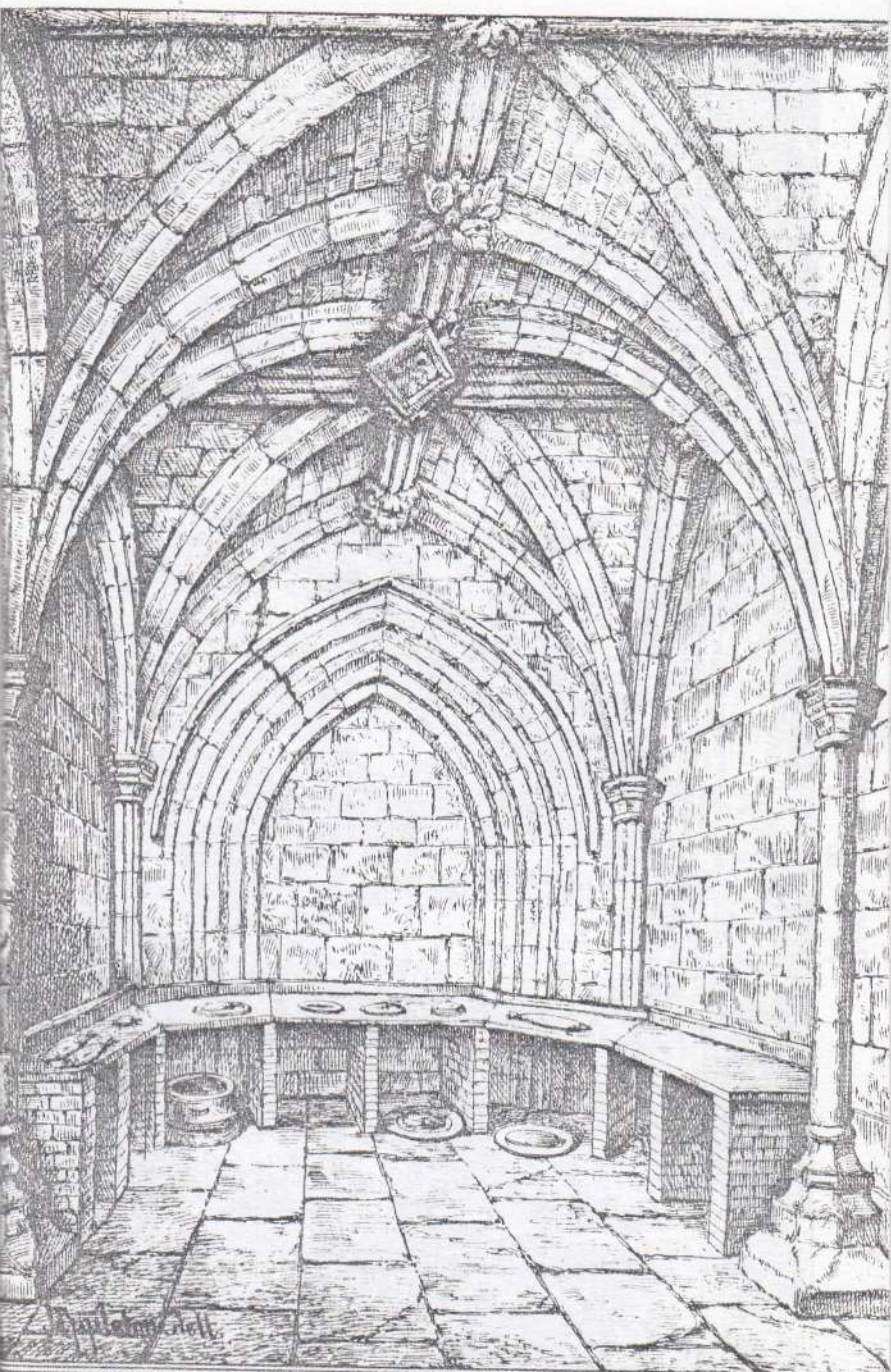
BY E. APPLETON, F.I.B.A.

IN the good old times, long gone by, Tavistock appears to have been a place of very great importance; for we find its historians referring to it as a place of "*note and fame second only to Exeter*" in point of size and architectural grandeur, especially in the time of King Edgar. Its history dates back to a very remote period, as will be seen by the following notes collected from various sources and authorities. The first account we have of it is that in or about the year A.D. 961, a monastery was founded by one Ordulph, son of Orgar or Orgarius, called also by Polydore, Hordogarius, who was a Duke of Devonshire, and kept his court at Tavistock. The monastery is said to have been dedicated to the blessed Virgin and St. Buriën, and by others to the Virgin and St. Rumonus; at any rate St. Rumonus was one of its bishops, who was translated from Ireland and was buried at Tavistock and canonized. The monastery was completed about the year 981. It appears that Ordulphus was instigated to form the monastery by a vision, in which he was commanded to build an oratory, and that his wife was guided by an angel to a beautiful spot for the site; and it was here Ordulph erected his abbey, (even on a grander scale than directed, making it large enough for 1000 men, to which were added other houses for the services of the Monks,) and richly endowed it. Returning to Ordulph, the founder of the monastery, history states him to have been a man of amazing strength and size, and that he once exercised his powers upon the gates of Exeter to the discomfiture of its inhabitants. This Ordulph was the brother of the celebrated beauty Elfrida, who became the second wife of King Edgar. For the sake of the ladies of my audience, I must not fail to mention a story or legend, doubtless to a great extent true, to show the folly of the fair sex, and the treachery of the unfair sex. Elfrida, as before mentioned, was the sister of Ordulph, and only daughter of

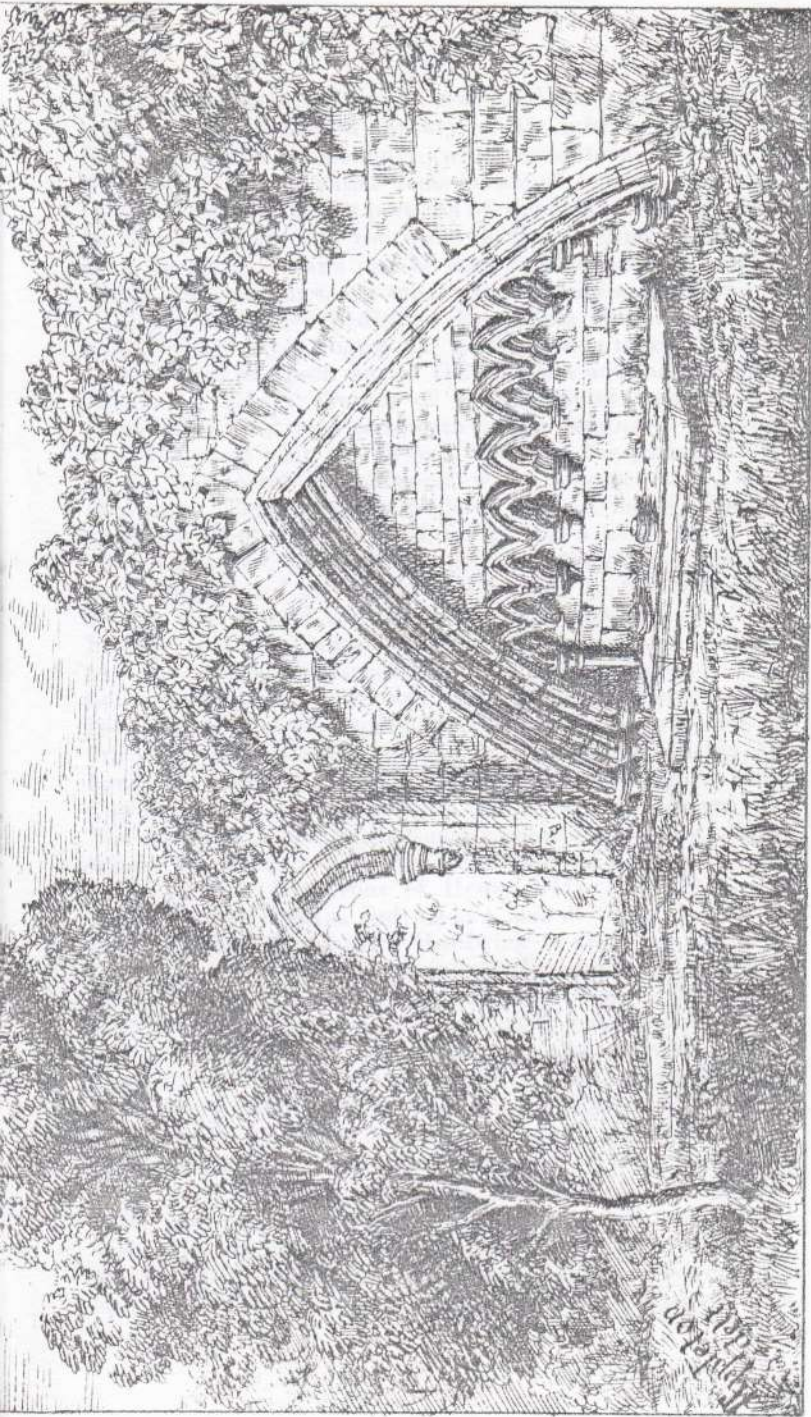
Orgdar. She is said to have been possessed of surpassing beauty, or, as our historian has it, "she was the paragon of her sex and the wonder of nature." It is therefore not surprising that her charms were talked of far and near. King Edgar, hearing so much of her, sent one of his nobles, Ethelwold, Earl of East Anglia, to see this pearl, with instructions that if the report of her were true he was to seize her for the king. Ethelwold was so much struck with the beauty of the young lady, that instead of performing the duty assigned to him by the king, he determined to appropriate her to himself; and to accomplish this disparaged her to the king, informing him that there was nothing very particular about the lady, and that there were many others at the court much superior to her, whereupon Edgar for the time thought no more about her, and she became the wife of Ethelwold. Still, however, fresh reports reached the king of the surpassing beauty of Elfrida, and he resolved to go and see for himself, which he did under the excuse of going on a hunting expedition at Exeter, where once arrived he started off for Tavistock. Ethelwold hearing of the king's approach, and knowing his weakness when ladies were in the question, thinks it necessary to put his wife upon her guard, and lectures her upon the virtue of discretion, advising her to conceal her charms and veil her beauty, the king being not over scrupulous as to the number of his wives, if he took a fancy to any fair damsel. Elfrida, however, in the vanity of her sex resolves to act very differently, and upon the king's arrival at her lord's mansion, which he honours with a visit, presents herself in all the attractions of superb dress, to add its power to her own irresistible fascination. The next day Ethelwold was killed while hunting, accidentally say some, others that the king knew all about it. At any rate, Elfrida thereupon became a queen, and was, as history informs us, the mother of the princes Edmund and Ethelred. The former did not live long, and Ethelred became king in 978, after the death of his half-brother Edward surnamed the martyr, who was the son of Edgar by his first wife Elfreda. Ethelred seemed to have been a great benefactor to the monastery of Tavistock, for we are informed that he not only confirmed all the acts of his uncle in 991, but granted many additional privileges. The monastery was occupied by Augustine Friars (some say Benedictine). From this time the kings of England claimed the honour and exercised the right of founders and patrons of Tavistock Abbey. King Edgar died in 975. The monastery founded by Ordulph, or Orgdar, scarcely stood thirty

years, for it was destroyed by the Danes in 997, during one of their invasions to this part of the country; but it was speedily rebuilt with greater grandeur and magnificence on an enlarged scale, and its extent may be judged of to this day from the ruins still existing. This abbey after its restoration was consecrated by the Bishop of Crediton in 1032, and is said to have "eclipsed every religious house in Devonshire in the extent, convenience, and magnificence of its buildings." The chapel adjoining the Bedford Hotel is said to have been erected on the site of the abbey refectory, but this is very doubtful.* Under the reign of King Canute, and the zeal and influence of its second Abbot Livingus, the monastery greatly flourished. Livingus was created Bishop of Crediton, and St. Germans was united to his see. He died in 1046, and was buried in Tavistock abbey; he was succeeded by Eldred, who crowned William the Conqueror. There appears to have been a chapter house of some importance, for in the history of the Abbots we find John Chubb was deposed for his extravagance, neglect of discipline, and abuse of power, *in the chapter house* of Tavistock. Also in Leland's Collectanea we read of the circular *chapter house* with its forty-six arches and thirty-six niches or seats, let into the walls and surrounded with curious sculptures. Orgar's bones are said to have been deposited in the cloisters. There was also a school called the Saxon school, which was pulled down in 1736. Buckland Abbey, belonging to the Cistercians, founded by Amicia 1278, formed part of the monastery; it afterwards became the seat of Sir Francis Drake. Dunterton, Milton Abbot, and Brentor, also belonged to the monastery. Robert Champeau, otherwise Campbell, was Abbot in 1285, and is highly commended for his piety and zeal; during his government several parts of the abbey were rebuilt, particularly the conventual church of St. Mary and St. Rumon, which is said to have been 126 paces long, exclusive of the Ladye Chapel. It is perhaps a portion of this Abbot's work which still remains on the south side of the present parish church, erroneously stated to be the grave of Ordulph, unless erected as a monument to his memory some 300 years after his time, the architecture plainly proving that it was not erected at the period of his death. This small vestige of the earlier buildings of the abbey, measuring only a few feet, is

* The accompanying illustration shews the *porch* of the *reputed* refectory, but it is far more probable that a *chapel* always stood here. Over the porch is a parvise with a very good timber roof.



Larder at Bevoise Hotel, commonly called entrance to Refectory of Abbey.



Altar Tomb, Tavistock.

all that remains to tell us of a stately edifice in the prevalent style of the thirteenth century, (little inferior perhaps to Wells, Exeter, or Glastonbury,) which once stood on this spot; the rest of the conventual remains are of a much later date. (See illustration.) Many portions of the older buildings may be detected built into the walls of the existing ruins, and some beautiful details can be seen in the vicarage garden, which also contains many other very interesting remains.

Bishop Stapledon dedicated this noble church and two altars in the nave, August 21, 1318; it was taken down in 1670. In it had been buried the founders and (according to Rudborne) Edwin, brother of king Edmund Ironside, and many other illustrious persons in their generations. On May 21st, the same year, the Bishop dedicated the parish church of St. Eustachius at Tavistock, which adjoined the Abbey enclosure. There appears to have been a leper house in existence about the year 1374, for we find a note that on the 26th September, in that year, Bishop Brantyngham granted an indulgence of 20 days to all persons in the Diocese of Exeter who should contribute to the support of the leper house. In 1380 Thomas Cullyng was Abbot, and is stated to have finished the tower begun by his predecessor. The house lately pulled down near the new church is said to have been a portion of the leper house. Bishop Brantyngham, on 7th July, 1391, licensed to this Abbot a chapel within his house at Morwell, built by him. About the year 1462, Cowick Priory was granted to the Abbey by Edward IV. The Abbey of Tavistock had many noble benefactors, among whom are numbered Ferrers, Fitzbernard, Edcombe, and many others. By favour of Henry VIII. the Abbot was honoured with a mitre, and made a peer of the realm by the title of Baron Hurdwick; Hurdwick is about a mile from Tavistock. Till the suppression of Tavistock Abbey, Werrington continued its principal manor. On the 20th March, 1539, the Abbot (probably John Peryn), with twenty of his brethren, surrendered his monastery, and received for so doing a pension of £100 a year; and on July 4th, in the same year, Henry VIII. granted the site of the Abbey and the principal part of its estates, together with the borough and town of Tavistock, the rectory and advowson of the vicarage, to John, Lord Russell, afterwards created Earl of Bedford. After the suppression of the Abbey, a chapel was formed within its enclosure, and was licensed by Bishop Veysey, March 10th, 1540, for the celebration of divine service. The last Abbot's will, dated October, 1549, at Tavistock, was

proved in the Prerogative Court, April 30th, 1550, and it is believed the Abbot was buried in the parish church of Tavistock. The Convent of Tavistock may undoubtedly challenge the honour of possessing the first printing press in Devonshire and Cornwall; for we find this note, "Walton's translation in English metre of 'Boetius de Consolatione,' emprinted in the exempt monastery of Tavistoke in Denshyre, by one Thomas Rychard, Monke of the said monastery, 1525, 4to;" and "The Confirmation of the Tynners' Charter, 26 Henry VIII., in 16 leaves 4to." Copies of some of the works then printed are still preserved in Exeter College, Oxford.

At the west end of the town stands an old gateway which formed part of the residence of the Fitz family, and said to have been the spot on which a duel was fought between Sir John Fitz and Sir Nicholas Slanning, in which the latter was killed. In the church there is a monument to Sir John Fitz, of Fitzford, and Gertrude his wife, daughter of Sir William Courtenay, of Powderham, said to have been erected by Mary, only child of Sir J. Fitz. Some of the Fitz family married with the Glanvilles and Percys. There is also a monument representing Judge Glanville and his wife, with their seven children. Prince also mentions an honorary monument to Queen Elizabeth, now gone. The Bear Inn, at Exeter, was the Abbot's town house; the last Abbot leased it for a term of sixty years, from November 7th, 1538, to Edward Brygeman. In 1701, when Prince published his *Worthies of Devon*, were to be seen the arms of Ordulf the founder of Tavistock Abbey, on painted glass, in the great window of the dining room, also the arms of Brygeman. The principal remains of the ancient buildings now to be seen are: First, the beautiful altar-tomb in the churchyard. Second, a gateway in the vicarage grounds, probably belonging to the Abbot's hall. Third, the still house, and Betsy Grimbal's tower (who is said to have been a nun, and was murdered there). In the neighbourhood we have Walreddon house, erected in the reign of Edward VI., and partially destroyed in the civil wars. It once belonged to Lady Howard, who was the heiress of Sir John Fitz, and married four times, her last husband being Sir Richard Glanville, governor of Lydford castle. Crowndale Farm, the birth-place of Sir Francis Drake, is also an object of interest in the neighbourhood. An interesting building is to be seen at Tiddebrook, said to be the monastery hospital. Holwell, for many years the residence of the Glanvilles, prior to their residence at Kilworthy, was a house of much pretensions, erected in the 16th century. Sir John, son of Judge Glan-

ville, was speaker in the House of Commons in the reign of Charles I. Time will not permit us to say much of Lydford, one of the earliest towns in Britain, erected by Julius Caesar, B.C. 54, and once possessing a mint for tin pennies. Domesday book calls it a *walled town*. Assizes were held alternately here and at Exeter. The castle dates as far back as the middle of the 13th century, and was afterwards given by Edward II. to Piers de Gaveston, in 1307. Nothing now remains but the "Keep." Judge Jeffries presided as judge at Lydford castle.