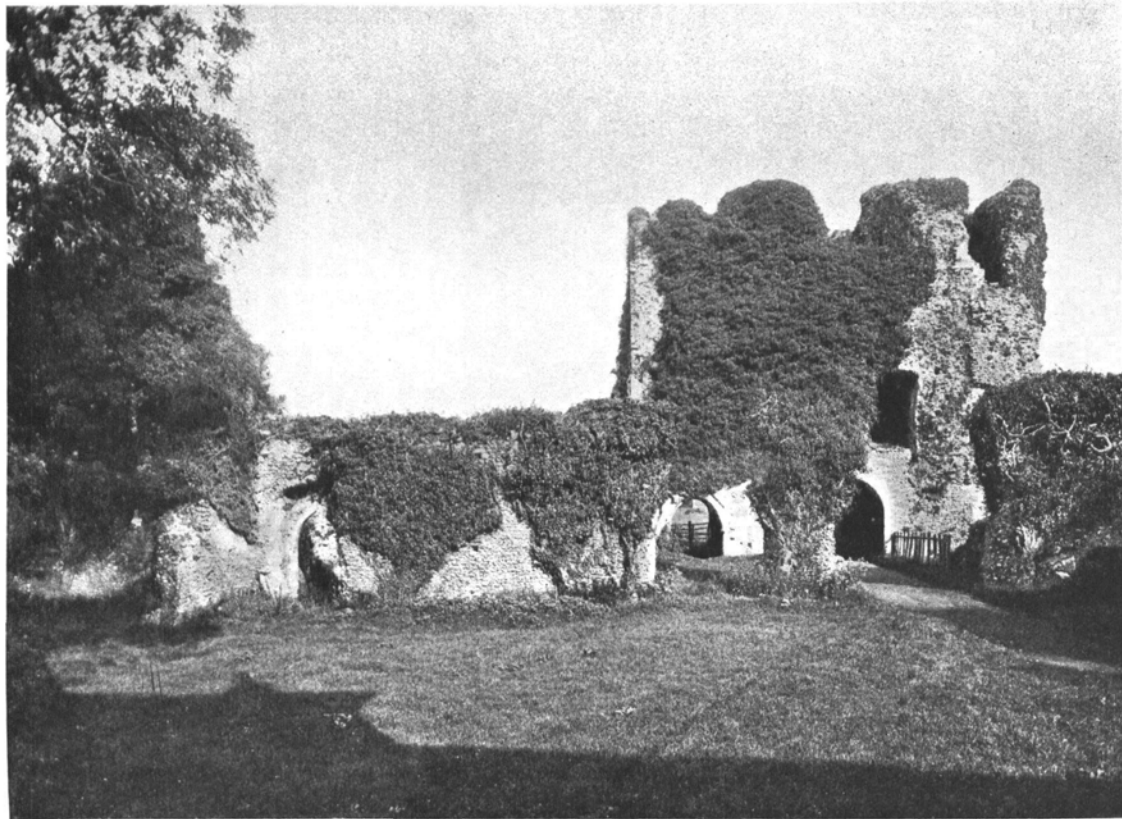




<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

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N.E. corner of
Forensic Parlour.

Procession
Door.

S. wall of Nave.

Tower.

Cloister door.

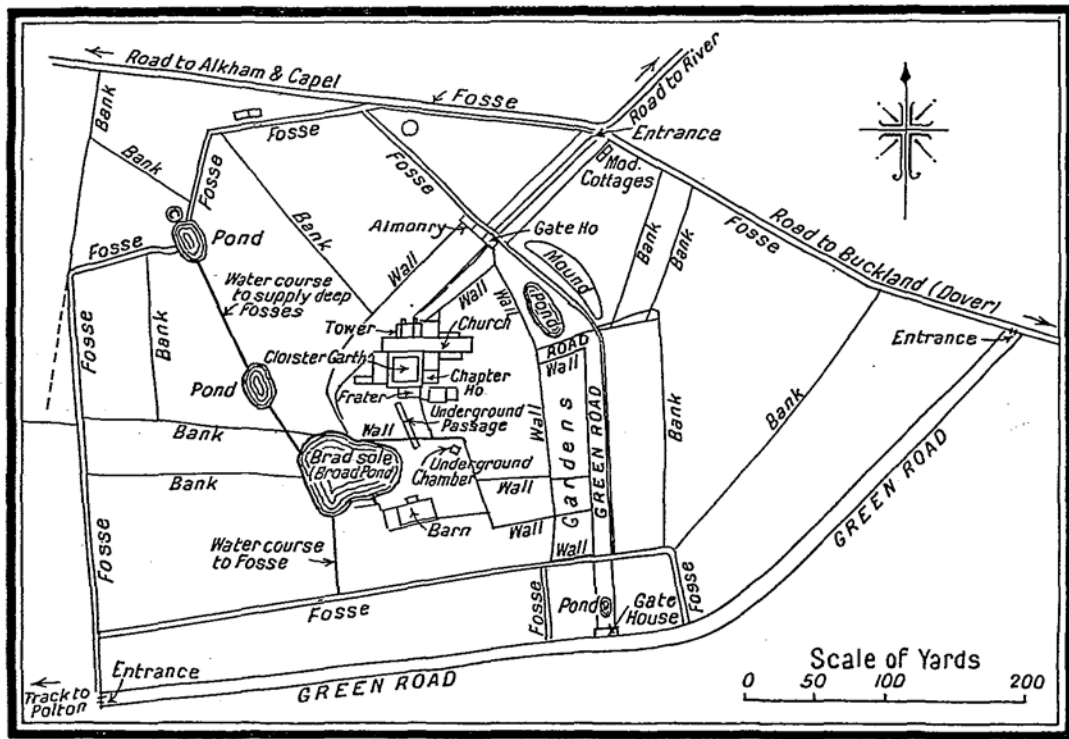
CHURCH OF St. RADEGUND'S ABBEY, FROM THE CLOISTER.

ST. RADEGUND'S ABBEY, DOVER.

BY S. E. WINBOLT.

ON a high chalk plateau (over 400 ft.) about a mile and a half N. of the Dover-Folkestone road, and three miles from both Folkestone and Dover, stand the considerable remains of St. Radegund's Abbey. It is little known because rather inaccessible, reached as it is from Alkham and Capel by a narrow lane, steep in places and badly surfaced, by a similar lane from Buckland, and by a steep road from River with a better surface. All three ways no doubt existed when the Abbey was founded in 1191. Privacy was part of the attraction of the site; other attractions were the self-contained farm, bounded north and south by east-west valleys, and a fine supply of water for the farm and the horses offered by a big pond with a never-failing spring—Bradsole, a Saxon name meaning "broad pond." It looks as if a Saxon settlement in the valley at Polton close by had developed this pond for use in its upland pastures. Of Polton there is now little left: its church has vanished. St. Radegund's, partly a residence and garden, and partly a farm, owned by Mr. Thomas Else (a member of the Kent Archæological Society), is private; but though it is not a show place, Mr. Else is always pleased, when in residence, to show it to small parties of interested visitors, and to arrange in his absence for visitors who apply to him. During the summer of 1930 he kindly invited me to stay at the Abbey in order to make investigations, and the following article is the result of three delightful weeks spent there. My work was with spade, measure and compass, and for a week I had the assistance of Mr. H. Cardew-Rendle.

Just half a century ago the late Sir (then Mr.) William St. John Hope, with financial help from the Kent Archæological Society, dug out the foundations of walls of



PLAN OF THE DEMESNE LANDS OF ST. RADEGUND'S ABBEY, DOVER.

the church, and made a plan of it and of the central buildings of the monastery. This will be found in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XIV. He hinted that there was much more investigation to be done on this highly provocative estate, where fragments of walls above ground and long lines of turf-covered wall foundations everywhere raise problems. Indeed the work of ten diggers for ten weeks at St. Radegund's could not fail to be historically fruitful. What is here offered is an instalment only, carrying on to some degree the admirable work of St. John Hope in 1880. My main aim was to produce a plan of the demesne lands of the Abbey: secondarily to that, I have added two buildings to St. John Hope's plan: and third, I append a few facts about St. Radegund.

I. PLAN OF THE ABBEY DEMESNE LANDS.

The whole Abbey estate consisted of some 400 acres, about 300 of which were probably farmed for the monastery. The area described was the immediate concern of the monks. Its periphery was nearly a mile (c. 1,720 yards), and roughly in its midst stood the Abbey buildings—church, cloister garth, frater, chapter house, infirmary, etc. (see *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XIV). To a large extent, especially on the N. and S., the boundaries seem to be of a semi-defensive character, consisting of deep fosses and considerable banks. In the immediate neighbourhood of the monastery big flint walls completely shut in the precincts. The following description of the accompanying plan begins at the N. where the three ancient tracks, from Alkham, River and Buckland, meet at the entrance. From this a road 100 yards long, defended on either side by an inner ditch, a bank, and an outer ditch, led to the Gate House which spanned the road. We return to the entrance. The north boundary is for some distance the lane to Alkham, inside which (now so overgrown as to be unsuspected) is a deep fosse, with a bank on the inner (or S.) side. At the point where a deep fosse from the Gate House joins it, a deepish fosse with interior bank runs W. of S.W., and then returns a little W. of S., with a bank inside, until

it reaches a pond, from which it was supplied with water by means of a channel derived from Bradsole Pond. Leaving the pond, it turns westward for a short space as a deepish fosse, and then almost due S. in the same character, until it meets old field banks coming from E. and W. From this point southward to the S.W. corner of the home farm the fosse is now shallow with a bank inside (E.), but it has probably been filled in by cultivation, and was in the monastic times fed by the deepish fosse along the S. front.

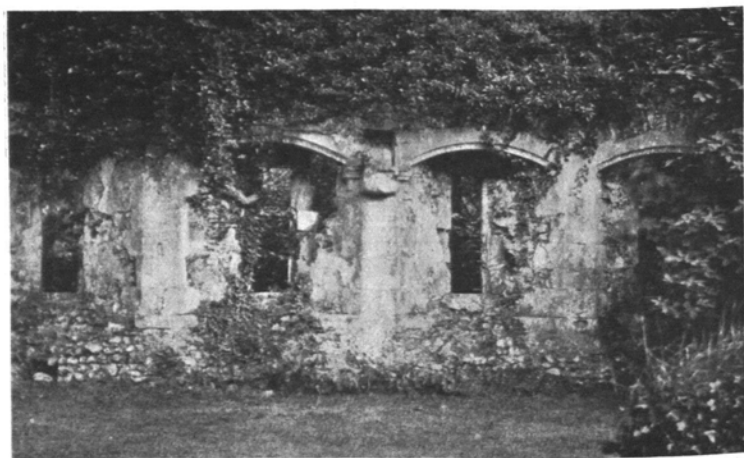
But to return for a moment to the pond above mentioned where the fosse turned an angle from S. to W. Close to the pond on the N. are the remains of what appears to have been a barrow surrounded by a fosse ; it is 27 ft. in diameter, but broken down on the S. side. If this is a barrow, it suggests occupation of this high ground in prehistoric times, long before the Saxon pastured around Bradsole. The field to the N.W. of it is traversed by an old field ditch and bank from N. to S., while another leaves the fosse N. of the pond and barrow and traverses the field in a direction W. of N.W.

We now return to the S.W. corner, where a track, visible lower down to the S.W. across the shoulder of a hill as a terraced way, probably came in from Polton. Here was the entrance to the long broad green road which bounds the demesne lands on the S. and leads to the southern Gate House, the ruins of which are still standing. At an average of about 50 yards N. of this road, and running roughly parallel with it, is a deepish fosse with a bank on either side. This was fed with water from Bradsole by a cut which is easily identified. Just as the northern Gate House was protected, so the southern, which admits to another broad green way leading to an eastern approach to the Abbey buildings, was set in an area defended on N., E. and W. by fosses. Passing eastwards from the southern Gate House the green road becomes broader, and, gradually turning an angle makes N.E. for an entrance in the Buckland lane. Here it averages some 55 ft. in width. For its whole length



REMAINS OF SOUTH GATE HOUSE.

Looking N.W.—before one side fell in 1930.



WINDOWS IN WEST WALL OF FORENSIC PARLOUR.

(See *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XIV, p. 151.)

of about 730 yards this S. and S.E. road runs between interior ditches and exterior banks. In such a width there was ample room for a cavalcade: in those days a distinguished visitor would bring in his train not less than twenty horses. To complete our periphery: the N.E. boundary is the Buckland lane, with a deep fosse inside it, and a bank inside that; and so we return to the northern entrance where we started. One stretch of deep fosse remains to be recorded, that from the N. Gate House S.E. for 100 yards or so, to a point where the green road from the S. Gate House turns in left (W.) towards the Chapter House at the head of a pond. These defensive boundaries are, surely, rather remarkable; wet fosses enclose the whole of the home farm except on the E. and S.E.

The green road leading N. from the S. Gate House has a ditch on the E. side, and on the W. a ditch, and a bank outside that. Opposite the E. end of the church it turns in almost at right angles westward towards the Chapter House, and there was almost certainly a postern gate in the flint wall (still partly standing) at its western end: the big cill stone lies on the grass.

We next follow the periphery of the flint wall surrounding the precincts, here and there extant in fragments, but always evident under the grassy banks which cover its foundations. Beginning at the N. Gate House, we find that the broad approach to the tower (on the N. side of the church) was enclosed on the N.W. by a wall starting from the Almonry buildings W. of the Gate House, and on the S.E. by another from Gate House to church tower. The former (N.W.) curves round to S.E., and, joining the wall of the garden S.W. of the Frater, impinges on Bradsole in the middle of its northern side. Returning due E. it enclosed the court of the Frater, crossed above an underground passage, and then turned N. to the end of the slype between the Frater and the Common Hall, and S.E. (after a few more yards of easterly course), and then E. and again N. to enclose an area (divided by another E.-W. wall) S. of the Infirmary buildings. Just before it turns N.W. in its course

to the N. Gate House it is breached by the above-mentioned postern gate. Thus the area immediately surrounding the monastic buildings was completely walled in. Outside the wall on the E. side, and between it and the green road, were, I think, three gardens extending from N. to S. and separated by two E.-W. walls. N. of the inturning road was a pond, 35 yards by 9 yards, fed from the deep fosse along its N.E. side by a channel at its southern end. Our digging proved that its southern bank at least was revetted with big flints laid in regular courses. Outside the deep fosse opposite the pond is a big mound, which is something of a mystery. I can explain it only as the upcast from the pond and/or deep fosse; but why it should have been dumped so far away from the fosse it is difficult to say. The pond was probably dug later than the fosse which fed it; if so, the spoil of the pond had to be barrowed across the fosse on planks.

Of the features inside the larger periphery, a few words are demanded by Bradsole, the barn, the underground passage and chamber and the tower. But attention should first be called to the division of the land by numerous old field banks and ditches. Of these it can be safely said that they are ancient. It is obvious that they have been disregarded (as they are now) for centuries, though they still attract attention. The age-long permanence of such banks is a commonplace. Their date might be a matter of dispute. Are they due to the monastic economy, or to that of Simon Edolph to whom Queen Elizabeth consigned the place in 1590? For my part I am strongly inclined to assign their origin to the monks, and to suppose that this piece-meal arrangement was discarded by Edolph. A careful search in the ditches, long sealed by grass, might possibly produce pottery or other evidence of date. I suppose that the gardens inside and outside the precinct walls were cultivated entirely by the monks, and that the small fields outside were their concern, but farmed with outside help. A glance at the plan will show that apart from the spaces connected with the two Gate Houses, the



Simon Edolph's North Porch.



From the South-East.

THE BARN.

yard N. of the barn, and the gardens on the E., there are no fewer than sixteen fields of varying degrees of smallness—five on the E. side, one triangular piece to the N., six on the N.W., and four on the S. Generally speaking, their boundaries radiate from the monastic buildings in the centre, and seem to be in relation to them. The monastery was self-supporting and needed a great variety of produce, a moderate quantity of each sufficing.

Bradsole, which provides an unfailing supply of water for farm and defensive purposes (the drinking water was from a well c. 450 feet deep), and that on high chalk land, was and is the quintessence of the situation. It is a big pond, now divided by a solid causeway on which are farm buildings, and seems to have supplied water to the system of deeper moats by channels to the N., W. and S. The Barn is a very fine building, but it has been finer, and I think in monastic times served other purposes: in short, it was a big Guest Hall. At the E. end on the ground floor are four original windows and a doorway near the S.E. corner; and above, two bluntly-pointed windows—all obviously of the earliest type of Early English architecture. The western end shows windows of the same construction. An inspection of this building as it now is, provides a puzzle, but the solution that appeals to me is this. The present barn which is some 90 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a deep northern entrance, 15 feet long, is only part of the original building, which extended further westward. Simon Edolph found the building partly ruinous—the monks had been warned more than once by their Visitors that their buildings were in bad repair, as well as that they themselves were slack in their garden work—and adapted the best part of it as a barn, adding a north porch with a Tudor depressed arch. Whatever be its architectural history, the barn is a very interesting building.

The underground passage S. of the Frater is not mentioned by St. John Hope, but its vaulting was probably broken through long before 1880. It is now visible for over 40 feet outside the wall which bounded the Frater

Court on the S. side. If, as seems probable, this wall was part of the boundary of the monastery precincts, there is some point in its starting outside the wall and being carried under the court to the arch of the kitchen yard, and the undercroft cellars, and the cellarer's quarters. The open part outside (S. of) the wall has long been used as a rubbish dump, but this did not deter me from descending into it and examining it fairly thoroughly. Also, by digging through the turf, I found its unbroken top under the present lawn 12 feet inside the wall, but I had not enough time or digging power to find its northern end; moreover, the necessary excavation would seriously derange the garden and thoroughfare for many weeks. So the enigma must remain at present unsolved. The length showing outside the garden wall is 43 feet 4 inches, and I found by digging that its vaulting is not broken down close to the wall on the outside. If it actually continues to the kitchen-yard arch (W. of the Frater), to this must be added another 60 feet—103 feet 4 inches in all.

Its height from the floor to the top of the vaulting is 9 feet, and to the spring of the vaulting 5 feet 10 inches; its breadth is 8 feet 2 inches. The very solid construction is of flint and stone, rendered with a coating of brownish plaster such as is seen also in remaining patches on the walls of the cloister garth. Near the S. end is a pointed arch, which admits into a rectangular chamber (S. of the arch), 3 feet long and 4 feet 4 inches wide. Then comes the end wall, of the original masonry, and no mere later blocking. The chamber was almost certainly the place of entrance and exit, and as there are no signs of steps in the masonry, we may conclude that a wooden ladder was used. The entrance was probably closed with a trap door, screened against inspection by Visitor or strangers. I have no doubt that this well-built passage is original work of about 1191, and that its purpose was secrecy from anyone except the regular inmates. Leading direct to kitchen yard and cellars, it was used, we may suppose, for the introduction of wine and food definitely outside the menu of a monastery.

No wonder the monks grew lazy in their gardening and allowed their buildings to grow ruinous.

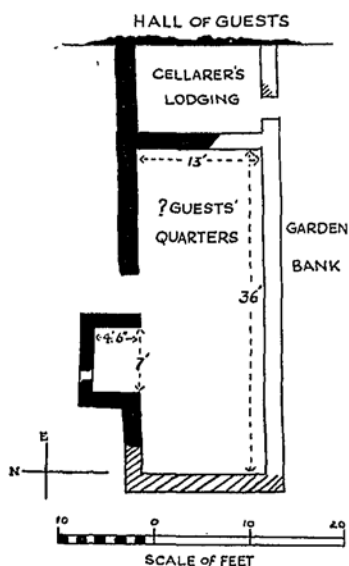
Quite recently (? in 1928) was discovered by accident an underground chamber some 30 yards S.E. of the S. end of the passage. This was investigated by Mr. S. Armstrong Payn, Junr., the intrepid explorer of the very deep well recently found in Dover Castle.¹ The chamber has an arch on either side, and appears to me to be an inspection chamber of the great sewer of the monastery, and to have no connection whatever with the passage. Its approximate dimensions are, height 12 feet, breadth 8 feet, length 15 feet (but it has obviously been longer, one end having fallen in). The sides are of chalk, and the pointed arches of Caen stone. Underground passages are, of course, always "intriguing," and until the pick, shovel and the light of an electric lamp and common sense are brought to bear on them, extravagant legends persist in the minds of country folk around. Naturally these specimens connect with Dover Priory or even with Dover Castle, to reach which they must tunnel under the river Dour! Drainage is the less romantic explanation of many of them.

The Tower, somewhat exceptionally built against the N. wall of the nave of the church, is so massive that, like the moats and banks, it almost suggests a defensive purpose. Its measurements are E.-W. 42 feet, and N.-S. 24 feet, and two big buttresses project on the N. side for 7 feet. These were obviously refaced by Edolph, who used the same chequer ornament of stone and flint as on his house built up against the remaining buttressed S. wall of the Frater. He also converted the tower into an entrance gate. The northern recessed arch has voussoirs of Tudor bricks (dimensions, 9 by 4 by 2 inches): the S. arch is a modern restoration. Inside the Elizabethan dwelling house are preserved remains of the Refectory pulpit, the capitals of two columns about 3 feet apart; the columns were no doubt destroyed at the construction of the brick breast of a fireplace in the present sitting room.

¹ See page 168 of the present volume. ED.

II.—BUILDINGS ADDITIONAL TO ST. JOHN HOPE'S PLAN.
(*Arch. Cant.*, vol. XIV.)

(a) To the S.W. of the Cloister Garth still exists to a large extent a building which St. John Hope conjectured to be the Hall of the Guests. S.W. of this he marks a room, probably the Cellarer's Lodging. Although this is now covered by a big rockery composed of big stones from the ruins, I ascertained that the walls are still there, partly



PLAN OF BUILDINGS ADDITIONAL TO ST. JOHN HOPE'S PLAN.

(*Drawn to same scale.*)

above and partly below ground, and that its internal measurements are 13 feet by $9\frac{1}{2}$ feet. His plan indicates a possible building in a line W. of the Cellarer's Lodging. This I worked out. Its walls are partly above ground, but effectively concealed by a dense jungle of ivy and undergrowth, and partly under turf or mould. It was a long apartment, with interior measurements of 36 feet by 13 feet. There was a doorway from a garden or court on the N. side, and adjoining it westward a projection N. of 7 feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, probably with a window. The walls are $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick and probably supported a room or rooms above. I conjecture that the ground floor was a Guests' Refectory and that above were sleeping quarters. This, I think, completes the buildings on this side.

(b) N.W. of the north Gate House were turfed hummocks suggestive of wall foundations connected with the Almonry buildings. Next to the Gate House was apparently an open space, perhaps a yard. N.W. of this we traced the flint wall foundations of a room (with internal measurements

of about 33 feet by 12 feet), in which, probably, refreshments were served to callers.

(c) S. of the E. end of the Church St. John Hope marks a cemetery. In the middle of it we dug a big trench 12 feet long, 6 feet deep, and 3 feet wide without finding any sign of the soil's ever having been moved. To the E. of this we dug another trench with the same result, and I am inclined to doubt if this area was the cemetery.

III.—ST. RADEGUND.

Who was St. Radegund, who was *she*? So little is the saint known in this country that even the sex is often mistaken. If even Mr. A. G. Bradley, well-known as an attractive topographical writer, confesses ignorance, a few lines about her seem to be called for. In *England's Outpost*, a book on the Kentish Cinque Ports and their vicinity, published by R. Scott but undated, he writes (pp. 335-336): "Who St. Radigund was, I do not know, but the dedication is coupled with that of St. Mary, so it is just possible even the founders were not quite sure of their saint and took this precaution." St. Radegund (not Radigund), as to whose identity our author is ignorant, was one of the most authentic and most engaging figures of the sixth century—queen, nun, foundress of a monastery at Poitiers, and, later, Saint with a widespread cult, to whose tomb in her church at Poitiers some 100,000 pilgrims even now journey every year. Two contemporary biographies¹ still exist and can be read by anyone "meticulous" enough to wish to admire and sympathise with a woman of flesh and blood. The best available account of her life is that by F. Brittain (Bowes & Bowes, Cambridge, 1925). She was born about 520, daughter of Berthaire, a pagan king of Thuringia, and married Clotaire, youngest son of Clovis, who was first Christian King of Neustria (i.e., N.W. France), and became in 558 King of France and the greater part of Germany. Her sensual and brutal

¹ *Sanctae Radegundis Vita*, by Baudonivia, in Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus*, vol. 72, pp. 663-80. Paris, 1849. *Opera Omnia* of Venantius Fortunatus. Rome, Fulgoni, 1786. The text and French translation in *Vie de Sainte Radegonde*, by René Aigrain. Paris, Bloud, 1910.

husband having murdered (c. 544) her brother, Queen Radegundis fled from his court at Athies, and finding her way to Poitiers, settled there and founded a nunnery in 552. She lived and died there (587). Gregory of Tours arranged her burial, was present at it and described it. Today the Church of St. Radegunde, containing her black marble tomb, is one of the chief attractions of the city of Poitiers. Within four centuries of her death (i.e., about 900) her cult was introduced into England, and we find King Malcolm IV of Scotland founding and chartering the priory or nunnery of St. Mary and St. Radegund at Cambridge in 1164. It soon became known simply as St. Radegund's. When Bishop Alcock in 1497 converted the nunnery into a college, he retained the dedication to St. Mary and St. Radegund, and added that of St. John. This is now Jesus College, Cambridge. The rarity of English dedications to St. Radegund is possibly due to the fact that her help was constantly invoked by the French in their wars with the English: in France there are over sixty churches and chapels dedicated to St. Radegund (in Brittany called St. Aragond). Before the Norman Conquest her cult was recognised in England at Winchester and Glastonbury. Besides the nunnery at Cambridge, five English parish churches and two monastic houses adopted St. Radegund as sole or joint patron, and two Catholic side chapels were dedicated to her, at Exeter and Old St. Paul's. Besides St. Radegund's Abbey, near Dover, a house of Trinitarian Canons, founded at Thelesford, Warwickshire, early in the thirteenth century, was dedicated to St. John Baptist and St. Radegund. Churches have been named after her at Postling (Kent), Scruton (North Riding of Yorkshire), Whitwell (Isle of Wight), Grayingham (Lincs.) and Maplebeck (Notts.). So, after all, we can be quite sure of our saint. The founder of St. Radegund's, Bradsole, is not known. Mr. Bradley follows an old guide-book error in attributing the Abbey to "the Earls of Perth." An Earl of Perche, which is an ancient County of France in the N.E. corner of Aquitaine, had some connection with it as a patron.