

BOYDELL MEDIEVAL TEXTS



SAINT SIMON  
DE MONTFORT

THE MIRACLES, LAMENTS,  
PRAYERS AND HYMNS



Edited and Translated by  
DAVID COX

SAINT SIMON DE MONTFORT

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SAINT SIMON DE MONTFORT

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PRAYERS AND HYMNS

Edited and translated by David Cox

THE BOYDELL PRESS

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In memory of  
Iris Mary Pinkstone  
1932–2020



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## *Preface and Acknowledgements*

The forbidden miracle cult of Simon de Montfort earl of Leicester, who died in 1265, produced a remarkable body of literature before expiring from natural causes after some fifteen years. The writings included laments, prayers and hymns, and a book of some two hundred miracles. The products of that creative surge reveal how some people tried to cope with political events that they could feel and describe but could not influence.

In 1840 James Orchard Halliwell published an edition of the miracle book and, whatever the shortcomings of the sole manuscript and however slight his contribution to our understanding of it, Halliwell's edition has been consulted with profit by generations of historians. A century and a half later Iris Pinkstone, founder of the Simon de Montfort Society, was aware that an English translation would be needed if the full potential of the miracle book were to be appreciated, especially as proficiency in Latin ought no longer to be assumed. A further consideration was that many of the names mentioned in the manuscript were unrecognizable after medieval recopying; Halliwell could not overcome that obstacle, but in the present century it can be breached with tools that he never had. Iris therefore tried to find a competent translator. I understood her aspiration at the time and might have offered to help, but I was busy with other publications and sadly, just as I found myself able to make a start, we received the news of Iris's death.

Nevertheless, my belated readiness to carry out her project coincided happily with the re-emergence of another scheme, which I had imagined some decades earlier but had not been qualified to begin at the time: a collected edition and translation of the Montfortian verses and prayers. It became obvious that such an edition would complement that of the miracle book, and the present volume therefore assembles all the known texts that Simon de Montfort's cult produced. Most of them have been printed at least once since 1800, but in scattered places and in various editorial styles. It will be a modest step forward to have them brought together, freshly edited and translated.



The Simon de Montfort Society has of course encouraged the project from the beginning. I record my thanks to all the repositories that have provided images of manuscripts in their possession. 'Anno milleno' (203), not previously published, is included here by permission of the Master and Fellows of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. In matters of detail several individuals have also come to my assistance, among whom I should like to mention Anne Bailey, Paul Cullen, Paul Duffy and Abigail Hartman. Michael Bennett gave wise advice on the organization of the material, and my wife Janice has kindly commented on the Introduction, while Richard Barber and Christy Beale, together with their professional colleagues, have guided the book through the press with meticulous skill and consideration. But the begetter and rightful dedicatee of the project remains, of course, the late Iris Pinkstone.

## Abbreviations

<i>Ann. Monastici</i>	<i>Annales Monastici</i> , ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (Rolls Series, 1864–69)
<i>AN Political Songs</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Political Songs</i> , ed. I. S. T. Aspin (Anglo-Norman Text Soc. 11, 1953)
<i>Barking Ordinale</i>	<i>The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey</i> , ed. J. B. L. Tolhurst, 2 vols (Henry Bradshaw Soc. 65–6, 1927–28 for 1926–27)
<i>Beauchamp Cart.</i>	<i>The Beauchamp Cartulary Charters 1100–1268</i> , ed. E. Mason (Pipe Roll Soc. new ser. 43, 1980 for 1971–73)
<i>Bk of Fees</i>	<i>Liber Feodorum. The Book of Fees Commonly called Testa de Nevill, Reformed from the Earliest MSS. by the Deputy Keeper of the Records</i> , 2 vols in 3 (HMSO, 1920–31)
<i>BRUO to 1500</i>	A. B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500</i> , 3 vols (Oxford, 1957–59)
<i>Cal. Chart. R.</i>	<i>Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , 6 vols (HMSO, 1903–27)
<i>Cal. Close</i>	<i>Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , 46 vols (HMSO, 1892–1963)
<i>Cal. Fine R.</i>	<i>Calendar of the Fine Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office</i> (HMSO, 1911–in progress)
<i>Cal. Inq. Misc.</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery) Preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , 7 vols (HMSO, 1916–68)

ABBREVIATIONS

- Cal. Inq. p.m.* *Calendar of Inquisitions post mortem and Other Analogous Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office* (HMSO, 1904—in progress)
- Cal. Pat.* *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office* (HMSO, 1891—in progress)
- Chron. Canterbury–Dover* *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series, 1879–80) 2, pp. 106–324
- Chron. et Annales* ‘Willelmi Rishanger, monachi S. Albani, chronica’, *Chronica S. Albani* [I] 2, pp. 1–230
- Chron. Evesham* *Chronicon Abbatiae de Evesham, ad annum 1418*, ed. W. D. Macray (Rolls Series, 1863)
- Chron. Furness* ‘Continuatio chronici Willelmi de Novoburgo ad annum 1298’, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett (Rolls Series, 1884–89) 2, pp. 503–83
- Chron. Lanercost* (1839) *Chronicon de Lanercost. M.CC.I–M.CCC.LXIV*, ed. J. Stevenson (Bannatyne Club, 1839; Maitland Club, 1839)
- Chron. Melrose* (1835) *Chronica de Mailros*, ed. J. Stevenson (Bannatyne Club, 1835)
- Chronica S. Albani* *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, 12 vols (Rolls Series, 1863–76)
- Close R.* *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 14 vols (HMSO, 1902–38)
- Close R. (Suppl.)* *Close Rolls (Supplementary) of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1244–1266* (HMSO, 1975)
- Complete Harley 2253* *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. S. Fein, 3 vols (Kalamazoo, 2014–15)
- Complete Peerage* G. E. C[ockayne], *The Complete Peerage*, ed. V. Gibbs and others, 13 vols (London, 1910–59)
- Cron. Maiorum* *De Antiquis Legibus Liber. Cronica Maiorum et Vicecomitum Londoniarum*, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Soc. 34, 1846)

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>English Baronies</i>	I. J. Sanders, <i>English Baronies: A Study of their Origin and Descent 1066–1327</i> (Oxford, 1960)
<i>Feudal Aids</i>	<i>Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids; with Other Analogous Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office, A.D. 1284–1431</i> , 6 vols (HMSO, 1899–1920)
<i>Flores Historiarum</i>	<i>Flores Historiarum</i> , ed. H. R. Luard, 3 vols (Rolls Series, 1890)
<i>Heads</i>	<i>The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales</i> , ed. D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke, V. C. M. London and D. M. Smith, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2001–8)
<i>Liturgische Reimofficien</i>	<i>Historiae Rhythmicae: Liturgische Reimofficien des Mittelalters</i> , ed. G. M. Dreves and C. Blume, 8 vols (Leipzig, Analecta Hymnica, 1889–1904)
<i>London Wills</i>	<i>Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688</i> , ed. R. R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London, 1889–90)
Marlborough, <i>Hist.</i>	Thomas of Marlborough, <i>History of the Abbey of Evesham</i> , ed. and transl. J. Sayers and L. Watkiss (Oxford, OMT, 2003)
<i>Miracles</i> , ed. Halliwell	‘Miracula Simonis de Montfort’, <i>The Chronicle of William de Rishanger, of the Barons’ Wars. The Miracles of Simon de Montfort</i> , ed. J. O. Halliwell (Camden Soc. [15], 1840), pp. 67–110
<i>Mon. Angl.</i>	W. Dugdale, <i>Monasticon Anglicanum</i> , ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel, 6 vols in 8 (London, 1817–30)
<i>Northumb. Pleas</i>	<i>Northumberland Pleas from the Curia Regis and Assize Rolls 1198–1272</i> [ed. A. Hamilton Thompson] (Publications of the Newcastle upon Tyne Records Committee 2, 1922 for 1921)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (Oxford, 2004, and online)

ABBREVIATIONS

OMT	Oxford Medieval Texts
Oxnead	<i>Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes</i> , ed. H. Ellis (Rolls Series, 1859)
<i>Peterborough Abbey</i> (CBMLC)	<i>Peterborough Abbey</i> , ed. K. Friis-Jensen and J. M. W. Willoughby (Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 8, 2001)
PN	<i>The Survey of English Place-Names</i> (English Place-Name Soc.) [cited by county volume]
<i>Political Songs</i>	<i>The Political Songs of England, from the Reign of John to that of Edward II</i> , ed. T. Wright (Camden Soc. [6], 1839)
<i>Reg. Giffard</i>	<i>Episcopal Registers, Diocese of Worcester: Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard, September 23rd, 1268, to August 15th, 1301</i> , ed. J. W. Willis Bund, 2 vols (WHS, 1902)
Rishanger, <i>De Bellis</i>	‘Chronicon Willelmi de Rishanger. De duobus bellis apud Lewes et Evesham commissis’, <i>Chronica S. Albani</i> [IV] 3, pp. 491–565
Rob. Gloucester	<i>The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester</i> , ed. W. A. Wright, 2 vols (Rolls Series, 1887)
<i>Rolls and Reg. Sutton</i>	<i>The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton 1280–1299</i> , ed. R. T. Hill, 8 vols (Lincoln Record Soc. 1948–86)
Rolls Series	<i>Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages</i> (London, 1858–99)
<i>Rot. Hund.</i>	<i>Rotuli Hundredorum Temp. Hen. III et Edw. I in Turr’ Lond’ et in Curia Receptae Scaccarii West. Asservati</i> [ed. W. Illingworth], 2 vols (Record Commissioners, 1812–18)
<i>Rot. Selecti</i>	<i>Rotuli Selecti ad Res Anglicas et Hibernicas Spectantes, ex Archivis in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Deprompti</i> , ed. J. Hunter (Record Commissioners, 1834)



ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Song of Lewes</i>	<i>The Song of Lewes</i> , ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1890)
TNA	London, The National Archives
VCH	<i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England</i> [cited by county volume]
WHS	Worcestershire Historical Society
<i>Worcs. Subsidy</i>	<i>Lay Subsidy Roll for the County of Worcester,</i> <i>circ. 1280</i> , ed. J. W. Willis Bund and J. Amphlett (WHS, 1893)

Secondary works frequently cited are given in an abbreviated form in the footnotes; full details may be found in the Select Bibliography.

## *Introduction*

The texts in this edition are all related to the sudden death of Simon de Montfort earl of Leicester, which occurred on 4 August 1265 at the battle of Evesham in Worcestershire. As a revolutionary politician and soldier he had been so popular and successful in England that during his lifetime some had begun to portray him as a Christ-like saviour. The shock of his death, magnified by horror at the royalist mutilation of his corpse, launched a miracle cult so vigorous that it soon spread to parts of the British Isles that were well beyond his burial place at Evesham abbey.<sup>1</sup> In defiance of royalist threats the cult lasted some fifteen years, during which Earl Simon's devotees compiled a miracle book and composed laments, prayers and hymns.

### The miracle book

The monks of Evesham welcomed pilgrims at Simon de Montfort's grave and recorded every miracle story that came to them. Some miracles had been generated locally but reports of many more were received from other parts of the country. It seems that they usually came by word of mouth; in only two instances is there some indication that a report was delivered in writing (127, 190).<sup>2</sup> When a story was given orally, the monks' first task was to write a summary, not necessarily in complete sentences, of what may have been a long-winded or unstructured tale.<sup>3</sup> At Evesham the note needed to record the identity (not necessarily the name) of the miracle's recipient and that of the informant (if it was someone else); where the recipient lived (unless they were a prominent person whose residence was well known); the nature of the miracle; and who else could vouch for the story. When the informant referred to a minor place outside Worcestershire and beyond the adjoining counties nearest to Evesham (Gloucestershire and Warwickshire) they

<sup>1</sup> R. C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Bold numbers refer to items edited below.

<sup>3</sup> Evidence for such notes elsewhere is given by L. E. Wilson, 'Writing miracle collections', in S. Katajala-Peltomaa, J. Kuuliala and J. McCleery (eds), *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 15–35 (at pp. 20–3).

were asked for its county or its nearest well-known town.<sup>4</sup> Those details were enough to make the story credible and verifiable.<sup>5</sup> There are only two references to testimony on oath (127–8) and none was needed, for there was no prospect of the formal canonization proceedings that would have called for sworn statements.<sup>6</sup> The recording monk could choose to include more details than those described, but he often settled for the minimum. In particular, the date of a miracle was not of the essence and was not routinely taken down. The monks' preliminary notes would thereafter have remained a collection of loose sheets until a miracle book was started. Meanwhile they did not have to be kept in the exact order in which the stories had arrived; that may be why reports that reached Evesham simultaneously are sometimes found separated in the book (e.g. 29 and 31; 41–5 and 47). In any case, the monks were more interested in the substance of the stories than in their precise chronology.<sup>7</sup>

To find the earliest date at which the notes could have been entered in a miracle book one need look no further than its first item (3), which happens to record an incident that can be closely dated and provides the *terminus a quo*. The following extract from it contains the pertinent clues:

One Richard, surnamed Badger, from Evesham, was on his way towards Stratford upon Avon with his merchandise when a large army came into view, approaching from Kenilworth. In fear he turned back along the road and there he met Sir William Beauchamp with all his retinue ... Richard said, 'Take care! Look, here come your enemies.' ... And this was a year later [than the battle of Evesham]; that is, in the second year and during the war.

Since William Beauchamp died in the earlier part of 1269,<sup>8</sup> the incident must have occurred before then. Closer dating comes from the reference to an armed force of Beauchamp's enemies from Kenilworth approaching Evesham from the direction of Stratford upon Avon. Kenilworth castle, thirty miles north-east of Evesham, was the chief stronghold of the Montfortian rebels immediately after the battle of Evesham. The king laid siege to it in late June 1266<sup>9</sup> but until then the occupants were able to range over Warwickshire and prey upon the population.<sup>10</sup> The first

<sup>4</sup> This practice sometimes helps the translator to distinguish between major and minor places that have the same name, and to identify places of which the names are garbled in the MS.

<sup>5</sup> R. Bartlett, *Why can the Dead do Such Great Things?* (Princeton and Oxford, 2013), pp. 564–5.

<sup>6</sup> See Wilson, 'Writing miracle collections', pp. 23–5.

<sup>7</sup> See also Bartlett, *Why can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, pp. 562–3.

<sup>8</sup> *Reg. Giffard* 1, pp. 7–9; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* 1236–72, p. 220.

<sup>9</sup> *Cron. Maiorum*, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> D. C. Cox, 'The battle of Evesham in the Evesham chronicle', *Historical Research* 62 (1989), pp. 337–45 (at p. 344).

miracle in the Evesham book had evidently occurred before the siege, while the Kenilworth rebels were still at large.

The item's final clause, though difficult to construe, holds even more dating evidence. In the unique and late manuscript it reads thus (with capitalization and abbreviation exactly as here):

& h<sup>o</sup> a<sup>o</sup> reuoluto. In E s'c'do A & T G<sup>11</sup>

Correct interpretation of this is not straightforward<sup>12</sup> but a simple reading is possible if one assumes that abbreviations have led to scribal errors during copying. In some earlier copy of the miracle book it is possible that 'In E' had read 'I E', thus:

& h<sup>o</sup> a<sup>o</sup> reuoluto. I E s'c'do A & T G

which can be extended as:

Et hoc anno reuoluto. Id est secundo anno et tempore guerre.

which translates as:

And this was a year later; that is, in the second year and during the war.

By that reading, it seems that the first miracle to be entered in the Evesham book had occurred in the 'second year' (which presumably began on 25 March 1266) and before late June that year, when the Kenilworth rebels were finally contained. The phrase 'during the war', if that is the correct translation of 'T G', would suggest further that the entry was not copied into the book until after the rebellion had come to an end; 'during the war' would have been redundant while the war was in progress, but afterwards it would have given a context for the story.<sup>13</sup> All in all, it seems to me that the Evesham miracle book was probably started some time after 1 July 1267.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> London, British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian A VI, fol. 163v.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. C. Valente, 'Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, and the utility of sanctity in thirteenth-century England', *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995), pp. 27–49 (at pp. 45–6 n. 90); J. E. St Lawrence: 'The *Liber miraculorum* of Simon de Montfort: Contested sanctity and contesting authority in late thirteenth-century England' (Univ. of Texas Ph.D. thesis, 2005), pp. 17, 143.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s my father and his contemporaries often used the phrase 'during the war' when referring to the years 1939–45.

<sup>14</sup> The end of the rebellion: A. Jobson, *The First English Revolution: Simon de Montfort, Henry III and the Barons' War* (London, 2012), p. 160.

Some decades earlier, the abbey had had good experience of setting out a miracle book after St Wulfsgie, an eleventh-century recluse, was buried in the abbey church. His book had been compiled c.1200<sup>15</sup> and two leaves have survived from an early-thirteenth-century fair copy of it, a handsome production written in double columns with red rubrics and red and blue pen-flourished initials.<sup>16</sup> The organizer of Simon de Montfort's miracle book is likely to have known it and may therefore have visualized something similar as a fair copy of his own collection. He may be cautiously identified as the sacrist of the abbey, who was by custom a senior monk charged with custody of the abbey church and its contents and with keeping all the offerings made there;<sup>17</sup> by 1271 that man was Reynold of Inkberrow,<sup>18</sup> who had been a monk of Evesham since 1259 or earlier.<sup>19</sup> As sacrist, Reynold may have been the person who started Earl Simon's miracle collection and who at some point had the items copied into a book.

Such a book was desirable as a convenient file of stories from which to tell visitors to Evesham about past miracles and to suggest the wonders that their own offerings might bring about; Earl Simon's miracle book eventually offered so wide a variety of tales that the monks could cite whichever seemed relevant to the concerns of any particular visitor. Pilgrims, thus instructed, could go away and tell others about what they had learnt, just as the book's epigraph (2) recommends. The epigraph reads simply 'Nichil opertum quod non reueletur, etc.' (Nothing is covered that should not be revealed, etc.) It alludes to the Sermon on the Mount and was an appropriate saying at a time when everyone needed to treat the miracles with secrecy. The 'etc.', however, conceals an exhortation that was considerably more defiant of authority:

Therefore fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid, that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops. And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> D. Cox, *The Church and Vale of Evesham, 700–1215: Lordship, Landscape and Prayer* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> London, British Library, Harley MS 4242, fols 65–6. Described in C. Drieshen, 'The lost miracles of Wulfsgie of Evesham' <<https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2021/07/the-lost-miracles-of-wulfsgie-of-evesham.html>>.

<sup>17</sup> Marlborough, *Hist.* p. 544.

<sup>18</sup> *Mon. Angl.* 2, p. 31; *Chron. Evesham*, p. 282.

<sup>19</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1258–66, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 10: 26–8 (cf. Luke 12: 2–5).

Christ's injunction would have been closely applicable in the early years of Simon de Montfort's cult if the abbey wanted visitors to reject the threat of secular punishment and to tell everyone about the miracles. Exposition of the epigraph and of stories from the rest of the book would have stimulated them to spread the word, and for a time there was certainly publicity enough to generate a spectacular influx of funds to the abbey. The Lanercost chronicle refers to the 'daily' offerings of Earl Simon's devotees at Evesham and to the impressive building works that were made possible with their money.<sup>21</sup> A description of the new Lady chapel, begun ten years after the battle, tells of 'windows, a beautiful vault, and gilded bosses' and 'the story of the Saviour and the stories of various virgins splendidly painted'.<sup>22</sup> The miracle book helped with the cost of such works; indeed, nothing suggests that it had any other public purpose.<sup>23</sup>

### The miracles

The progress of Simon de Montfort's miracle cult can be traced in broad outline by reference to the few datable stories that appear in the Evesham book.<sup>24</sup> Since the datable miracles are mostly entered in date order, each undatable miracle probably occurred at some time between the nearest datable ones before and after it. One may therefore suggest that the events between 3 and 103 can mostly be assigned to 1265–66 and that most of the miracles between 103 and 175 would have happened between c.1266 and 1272.<sup>25</sup> The latest datable miracle was reported to Evesham in 1279 (195) and two further stories were entered before the book was closed; it thus appears that the abbey received some twenty reports between c.1272 and c.1280 but none after that. The miracle cult had evidently been widely supported until the early 1270s, but outside Evesham abbey it had declined thereafter and had reached virtual extinction c.1280.



The nature of Simon de Montfort's miracles is well attested by the Evesham book. John Theilmann compared Earl Simon's reported cures with those of seven other English cult figures, from Earl Waltheof to King Henry VI, and found that cases of

<sup>21</sup> *Chron. Lanercost* (1839), p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> *Chron. Evesham*, p. 286. For the date see London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero D III, fol. 222r.

<sup>23</sup> A point also made by St Lawrence, 'The *Liber miraculorum*', pp. 24–5, 338–41; J. [E.] St Lawrence, 'A crusader in a "communion of saints": Political sanctity and sanctified politics in the cult of St Simon de Montfort', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 38 (2007), pp. 43–67 (at p. 44).

<sup>24</sup> 3, 14 (see 198), 94, 103, 108, 115, 160, 175, 187, 189–90, 194–5, 197. Those MS dates that depend solely on roman numerals are disregarded here because of the possibility, and in some cases the certainty, of scribal error.

<sup>25</sup> Some miracles are known to have occurred well before they were entered in the book (e.g. 115, 160) but they are too few to invalidate these rough calculations.

blindness and of mental illness formed a smaller proportion of Montfort's cures while his proportion of chronic and crippling conditions was greater.<sup>26</sup> The miracle book usually describes a patient's symptoms but rarely has a diagnosis, and it uses the blanket term *gutta* (gout) over a broad range of painful ailments. Meanwhile, of the accidental injuries presented to the earl, about half were to children.<sup>27</sup>

One in ten of the cures in the book resulted from a visit to Evesham abbey or to the nearby 'Earl's well' but most of the rest were obtained at home, usually by 'measuring' and penny-bending. John Brown had been suffering from a form of paralysis:

after being measured to the earl he made up his candle to the measurement, and when he came to Evesham he recovered from the disability to which he had been subject. (16)

The story refers to a custom whereby the patient or an affected part was measured with a piece of string in the name of a saint.<sup>28</sup> Seven in ten of the cures in the Evesham miracle book were achieved in that way. After the cure, the string was sometimes used to make the wick of a candle,<sup>29</sup> to be taken to the saint's resting-place as a token or offering. But people who could not afford beeswax were not obliged to make a candle, because tallow, a cheaper alternative, was not acceptable in a church.<sup>30</sup> The few candles mentioned in the Evesham book were therefore made for patients of superior means, and they usually charged a subordinate or friend with taking their candle to Evesham. Likewise only better-off patients sent waxen thank-offerings in the form of images of themselves or of their cured limbs. As an alternative to measuring, one could just bend a penny in Earl Simon's name, but that was relatively rare. A bent penny alone would sometimes produce a cure, but if a penny was bent it was usually done to accompany a measuring, the two actions together resulting in a miracle. The penny might be gilded as well as bent (86); it could also be sent to Evesham in token of a cure obtained by other means (6); and it could even be sent in memory of someone who had prayed to Earl Simon and failed to be cured (186).

<sup>26</sup> J. M. Theilmann, 'English peasants and medieval miracle lists', *The Historian* 52 (1990), pp. 286–303 (at p. 292).

<sup>27</sup> E. C. Gordon, 'Accidents among medieval children as seen from the miracles of six English saints and martyrs', *Medical History* 35 (1991), pp. 145–63 (at p. 151).

<sup>28</sup> Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, pp. 95–6. See 96, 160, 193.

<sup>29</sup> See 72, 95.

<sup>30</sup> C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200–1520*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 73–4.

Most of the miracles in the book had been granted in response to prayers and measurings, but some had occurred unexpectedly after dreams or visions involving Earl Simon. A miracle of that kind might be bestowed on one of his supporters, but it was more likely to be experienced by a sceptic or critic. In one vision Simon de Montfort told a former enemy that, ‘Some are penitent, some will be penitent and some without penitence will die a bad death.’ (169) By appearing in person Montfort would bring about repentance or else contrive a drastic punishment.



In 1844 W. H. Blaauw suggested that ‘persons of all ranks’ had attested Earl Simon’s miracles,<sup>31</sup> and as late as 2019 I carelessly echoed that opinion;<sup>32</sup> but within the pages of the miracle book it cannot properly be said that all ranks are represented. There I have counted 182 recipients of miracles, including children;<sup>33</sup> the proportion of children is markedly smaller than in comparable collections.<sup>34</sup> Of all recipients at least a third had noble, knightly, gentry, mercantile or ecclesiastical status; the secular and religious clergy made up a fifth of all recipients, and thus a much higher proportion than they did in the general population.<sup>35</sup> Altogether Simon de Montfort’s miracle cult attracted greater than usual proportions of men and upper-class people, including senior churchmen.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile as many as two-thirds of recipients mentioned in the book may have belonged to the households of manual workers;<sup>37</sup> about half of all miracle recipients who appear in it are actually of unstated occupation or rank, but they probably belonged to manual households because their names rarely if ever occur in contemporary public records. Those supposed manual workers might have included anyone from substantial farmers and master craftsmen downwards, but in practice a lack of money or leisure probably prevented many at the lower end of the manual scale – not to mention paupers, vagrants and criminals – from making their stories known at Evesham, if indeed they had any. Servants and the poor do occur in the book but only as the observers of miracles, not as the recipients.



<sup>31</sup> W. H. Blaauw, *The Barons’ War including the Battles of Lewes and Evesham* (London and Lewes, 1844), p. 258.

<sup>32</sup> D. Cox, *The Battle of Evesham: A New Account*, 2nd edn (Evesham, 2019), p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> This is fewer than the number of entries in the miracle book because some people appear in more than one entry.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon, ‘Accidents among medieval children’, p. 151; C. Valente, ‘Children of revolt: Children’s lives in the age of Simon de Montfort’, in J. T. Rosenthal (ed.), *Essays on Medieval Childhood: Responses to Recent Debates* (Donington, 2007), pp. 91–107 (at p. 99n).

<sup>35</sup> J. C. Russell, ‘The clerical population of medieval England’, *Traditio* 2 (1944), pp. 177–212 (at p. 179).

<sup>36</sup> Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 135.

<sup>37</sup> For the criteria defining social rank I have followed Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 17–25.