



THE  
MONKS OF THE WEST  
FROM ST. BENEDICT TO ST. BERNARD

THE CONVERSION OF IRELAND, SCOTLAND  
AND ENGLAND

THE COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT

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## DEDICATION

To Tope Pius IX.

Most Holy Father,

I lay at the feet of your Holiness a book which, for many reasons, owes its homage to you. Intended to vindicate the glory of one of the greatest institutions of Christianity, this work specially solicits the benediction of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the supreme head and natural protector of the Monastic Order. Long and often interrupted, sometimes for the service of the Church and of yourself, these studies were taken up again at the voice of your Holiness, when, amid the enthusiasm not to be forgotten which hailed your accession, you declared, in a celebrated encyclical letter, the duties and rights of the Religious Orders, and recognised in them “those chosen phalanxes of the army of Christ which have always been the bulwark and ornament of the Christian republic, as well as of civil society”.

Your Holiness is well aware, moreover, that this homage is in no way intended to withdraw from criticism or discussion a work subject to all human imperfections and uncertainties, and which assumes only to enter upon questions open to the free estimate of all Christians.

It is solely in consideration of the melancholy and singular circumstances in which we are placed, that you will deign, most Holy Father, to hear, and perhaps to grant, the desire of one of your most devoted sons, ambitious of imprinting upon the labour of twenty years the seal of his affectionate veneration for your person and your authority. What Catholic could, in our days, give himself up to the peaceful study of the past without being troubled by the thought of the dangers and trials by which the Holy See is at present assailed without desiring to offer up a filial tribute to him in whom we revere not only the minister of infallible truth, but also the image of justice and good faith, of courage and honour, shamefully overpowered by violence and deceit?

Accept then, most Holy Father, this humble offering of a heart inspired by a sincere admiration for your virtues, an ardent and respectful sympathy for your sorrows, and an unshaken fidelity to your imprescriptible rights.

I am, with the deepest respect,

Your Holiness

Most humble and most obedient Servant and Son,

CH. DE MONTALEMBERT.

April 21, 1860.



## BOOK I

### THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH

The Roman people, victorious over all nations, and masters of the world, yet enslaved during three centuries by a series of monsters or madmen, scarcely interrupted by some endurable princes, exhibits in history the greatest wonder of the debasement and downfall of man. The peace of the Church, proclaimed by Constantine in 312, was, on the other hand, a prodigy of the power and goodness of God. The Empire, vanquished by an unarmed crowd, laid down its arms before the Galilean; persecution, after a crowning paroxysm, the most cruel of all, gave place to protection; humanity breathed again; and truth, sealed by the blood of so many thousand martyrs, after having been sealed by the blood of God made man, could henceforth take freely her victorious flight to the ends of the earth.

However, there is a wonder still greater: it is the rapid and permanent decay of the Roman world after the Peace of the Church. Yes, if there is nothing more abject in the annals of cruelty and corruption than the Roman Empire from Augustus to Diocletian, there is something more surprising and sadder still—the Roman Empire after it became Christian.

How came it that Christianity, drawn from the catacombs to be placed on the throne of the Caesars, was not able to regenerate souls, in temporal matters as well as in spiritual, to restore to authority its prestige, to the citizen his dignity, to Rome her grandeur, and to civilized Europe the strength to live and defend herself? Why did the imperial power, when reconciled to the Church, fall more and more into contempt and impotence? How is it that the memorable alliance of the priesthood with the Empire, hindered neither the ruin of the State nor the servitude and mutilation of the Church?

Never had there been a revolution more complete; for it was not only her own emancipation which the Church celebrated in seeing Constantine adopt the cross for his standard, it was an intimate and complete alliance between the cross and the imperial sceptre. The Christian religion had scarcely ceased to be proscribed, when already she was patronized, and then dominant. The successor of Nero and Decius seated himself at the first general council, and received the title of Defender of the Sacred Canons. The Roman republic and the Christian republic joined their hands, so to speak, in that of Constantine. Sole head, sole judge, sole legislator of the universe, he consented to take bishops for his counsellors, and to give the force of law to their decrees. The world had one monarch; the monarch was absolute: no man dreamed of disputing or limiting a power which the Church blessed, and which glorified itself by protecting her.

This ideal, so dear to many minds, of a man before whom all men prostrated themselves, and who, master of all these slaves, bowed down in his turn before God, was thus seen and realized. Such a state of things lasted for two or three centuries, during which time everything fell to pieces in the empire: and the Church has never known a period in which she was more tormented, more agitated, or more compromised.

While imperial Rome sank into degradation, the Church had led the greatest and most noble life, not only, as we picture to ourselves too much, in the depths of the catacombs, but striving heroically and in full day, by suffering and arguments, by eloquence and by courage, by her councils and schools, by her martyrs first and above all, but also by her great apologists, such as St. Irenaeus, St. Justin, St. Cyprian, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius, who at once renewed and purified Greek and Latin eloquence. War had succeeded so well with her that when she was offered peace, she already filled all the earth.

But after having held out so gloriously through a battle of three centuries, what means could she take for resisting the influence of victory? How maintain her triumph at the height of her combats? How escape succumbing, as all victors here below succumb, to pride and the intoxication of success? For the vigilant and fertile education of warfare, for the holy joys of persecution, for the dignity of permanent and avowed danger, an entirely new condition was substituted, and upon ground full of another description of difficulties. Associated henceforth with the same imperial power which had in vain essayed to destroy her, she became in some degree responsible for a society enervated by three centuries of servitude, and gangrened by all the refinements of corruption. It was not enough for her to govern the ancient world,—she had still to transform and replace it.

It was a formidable task, but not above her power. God chose that very moment to send to His Church a cloud of saints, of pontiffs, of doctors, of orators, and of writers. They formed that constellation of Christian genius which, under the name of Fathers of the Church, have attained the highest place in the veneration of all ages, and forced respect even from the most sceptical. They lighted up the East and the West with the radiance of all that was true and beautiful. They lavished in the service of truth an ardour, an eloquence, and a knowledge, which nothing has ever surpassed. A hundred years after the peace of the Church, they had covered the world with good works and admirable writings, created a refuge for every grief, a guardianship for every weakness, a patrimony for every distress, lessons and examples for every truth and every virtue.

And still they did not succeed in forming a new society, in transforming the pagan world. By their own confession, they fell short of their task.

That long cry of grief which echoes through all the pages which Christian saints and writers have left us, strikes us at once with an intensity which has never been surpassed in the succession of time. They felt themselves attacked and swallowed up by pagan corruption. Listen to Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, Salvian especially—listen to them all! They denounced the precocious decay and disgraceful downfall of the Christian people, who had become a prey to vice. They saw with despair the majority of the faithful precipitate themselves into the voluptuousness of paganism. The frightful

taste for bloody or obscene spectacles, for the games of the circus, the combats of the gladiators, all the shameful frivolities, all the prostitutions of persecuting Rome, came to assail the new converts, and to subjugate the sons of the martyrs. But a little, and a new Juvenal might have sung the defeat of those who had reconquered the world for God, and the vengeance executed by the genius of evil upon its victors: —

“Victumque ulciscitur orbem”.

However great a margin we may leave for exaggeration in these unanimous complaints, they prove not less certainly that the political victory of Christianity, far from having assured the definite triumph of Christian principles in the world, had provoked a revival of all the vices which the Christian faith ought to have annihilated.

But paganism retained and renewed its empire much more than in merely private and domestic life, by the nature and action of the temporal power in upon the midst of the Church. No symptom of that transformation to which the idea and exercise of power should one day yield amongst Christian nations, appeared here. Constantine and his successors were baptized: but not the empire nor the imperial power. The hand which opened to Christians the gate of power and favour, was the same which had laid ambushes for them, in which any other than the immortal spouse of Christ must have perished without hope or honour. The emperors aspired to become the masters and oracles of that religion of which they ought only to have been the children, or at most the ministers. Scarcely had they recognized her right to exist, when they believed themselves invested with the right of governing her. The baptized of the evening expected to be the pontiffs and doctors of the following day. Not being able to succeed in that, they began to persecute her on account of Arius, as their predecessors had done on account of Jupiter and Venus.

Constantine himself, the liberator of the Church, the lay president of the Council of Nicaea, was soon tired of the liberty and increasing authority of the new freemen. Won by the ecclesiastical courtiers, who already surrounded his throne, he exiled St. Athanasius, the most noble and pure of Christians. It was even worse under his successors. Let us hear Bossuet on this subject: “The Emperor Constantius put himself at the head of the Arians, and cruelly persecuted the Catholics ... This persecution was regarded *as more cruel* than that of Decius and Maximinus, and, in a word, as a prelude to that of Antichrist ... Valens, emperor of the East, an Arian like Constantius, was a still more violent persecutor, and it is he of whom it was said that he seemed to soften when he changed the penalty of death into that of banishment!

But more dangerous even than persecution was the invasion of politics into the Church. When, after forty years of disputes, Constantius imposed on the East and West the equivocal formulary of the Council of Rimini, the world, according to the celebrated expression of St. Jerome, groaned and was astonished to find itself Arian, thanks to the servile conduct of an Episcopacy which permitted itself to be led and frightened by the eunuchs of the imperial palace.

The trial must have been cruel, for then occurred what never happened before, and has rarely been seen since—a pope gave way to its pressure. Liberius, according to the common opinion, yielded, after a noble resistance, to the torments of exile: he sacrificed, not the truth itself, but the intrepid defender of the truth, Athanasius. He recovered himself, and pledged the infallible authority of his See to no error; he only compromised the fame of his persecutors. But at his name we see a shadow and cloud glide across that column of light which guides the observations of every Catholic when he plunges into the obscurities of history.

Violence, exiles, and massacres, recommenced in the fifth century, and were prolonged from generation to generation. Every heresiarch found an auxiliary on the imperial throne; after Arius, Nestorius; after Nestorius, Eutychus; and thus we proceed from persecution to persecution, until we reach the bloody oppression of the iconoclast emperors, after which nothing could follow but that crowning schism, which separated forever the free and orthodox West from the East, which remained prostrate beneath the double yoke of error and force.

But what evils and bitterness existed during these long and dark centuries, and before that final rupture! They were no longer pagans, but Christians who persecuted Christianity. It was no longer from a praetorium or circus that the emperor, a personification of implacable ancient Rome, sent the Christians to the wild beasts; it was in the midst of Councils, and in the name of a fictitious orthodoxy, that he deliberated his sentences, marked with the triple stamp of chicanery, falsehood, and cruelty. Before coming the length of exile and execution, conscience and intelligence were tortured by their formulas and definitions.

The finest genius and most noble spirits of that age, which was so fruitful in great men, exhausted themselves in vain in reasoning with these crowned casuists, who dogmatized instead of reigning, and sacrificed in miserable quarrels the majesty of the Church and the security of the State. Exile itself must have been a solace to these holy confessors, obliged to argue respectfully with such antagonists. While the empire fell into decay, and the avenging nations entered on all sides by the breach, these pitiful autocrats, already masters of a clergy which vied in servility with the eunuchs of the imperial antechamber, wrote books of theology, arranged formulas, fabricated and condemned heresies in confessions of faith which were themselves heretical. (Such were the *Henoticon* of the Emperor Zenon, in 482, condemned by Pope Felix III; the *Ecthesis* of Heraclius, condemned by Pope John IV; and the *Type* of Constantine II, condemned by the Pope St. Martin). And as if these crowned theologians were not enough, the empresses too must needs interfere in their turn to govern consciences, define dogmas, and persuade bishops. We see an Ambrose involved in contention with a Justina, and a Chrysostom the victim of the follies of an Eudoxia. Nothing was too insane or too contemptible for this wretched government.

The example of Theodosius may be quoted against us; but what a crimson light is thrown upon the condition of that pretended Christian empire by the celebrated penitence which did so much honour to the great Theodosius and to St. Ambrose! What a society must that have been in which the massacre of a whole town could be decreed in cold blood, to avenge the injury done to a statue! What a tale is that of the torments

and sufferings inflicted upon the inhabitants of Antioch before the intervention of the bishop Flavian had appeased the imperial wrath! The horror of such a rule, had it lasted, must have stained for ever the Christianity it affected to adorn. And besides, for one Theodosius, how many were there like Valens, Honorius, and Copronymus! The frightful temptation of possessing omnipotence, turned all these poor heads. The Christian princes were no stronger to resist it than the pagans. To monsters of cruelty and luxury, such as Heliogabalus and Maximinus, succeeded prodigies of imbecility and inconsistency.

The bitterest element for the Church in all this, must have been the pretence of those melancholy masters of the world to serve and favour her. She had to pay very dear for the material support lavished upon her by the imperial power, which protected without honouring and even without understanding her. Every decree made in favour of Christianity—to close the temples, to interdict the sacrifices of the ancient worship, to repress or root out the last remains of paganism—was accompanied or followed by some act intended to affect questions of dogma, of discipline, or of ecclesiastical government. A law of Theodosius II sentenced heretics to a penal servitude in the mines, and he was himself an Eutychian. Thus heresy, believing itself sufficiently orthodox to proscribe everything that differed from its views, ascended the throne where omnipotence awaited it! The same emperor, and his colleague Valentinian II, decreed the penalty of death for idolatry. But idolatry reigned in their own hearts and around them. The pagan tradition of the divinity of the prince pervaded the Court and all the acts of government. The most pious among them, the great Theodosius himself, spoke unceasingly of their *sacred* palaces, of their *divine* house; they permitted, their officials to adore their *eternity*. The same Valentinian, who punished idolaters with death, endeavouring one day to call the Romans to arms against an invasion of Vandals, declared his proclamation to be signed by *the divine hand*, speaking of his own!

Thus the divinity of the prince, that invention of the Caesars, which had put a seal to the degradation of Rome, and placed slavery under the sanction of idolatry—that hideous chimera which had been the principal pretext of persecution, and which had drunk the blood of so many human victims—still lasted a century after the peace of the Church. Sacrifices were no longer made to the Caesars after their death, but during their life they were proclaimed divine and eternal. It was only a word, but a word which exhibited the corruption of souls, and the unconcealed thralldom of Christian ideas.

The Church has passed through many trials: she has often been persecuted, often compromised, betrayed, and dishonoured by her unworthy ministers. I doubt if ever she stood nearer the brink of that precipice down which God has promised she shall never fall. I doubt if she ever endured a sadder lot than under that long series of monarchs who believed themselves her benefactors and protectors, and who, at the same time, refused to her liberty, peace, and honour.

If such were the miseries of the Church, still so young and so near her blood-stained cradle, what must have been the condition of the State, and of lay society? A single word is enough to define it. Paganism existed in undiminished force, as has been demonstrated by one of the most excellent historians of our own age: “Civil society, like religious society, appeared Christian. The sovereigns and the immense majority of the



people had embraced Christianity; but, at bottom, civil society was pagan; it retained the institutions, the laws, and the manners of paganism. It was a society which paganism, and not Christianity, had made”

And this paganism, we should not forget, was paganism under its most degenerate form. Men were still at that point where, according to Tacitus, the politics of the wisest consisted in supporting all emperors whatsoever. All the Roman greatness, according to the strong expression of Montesquieu, had only served to satiate the appetite of five or six monsters. After Constantine, the sovereigns were better than these monsters, but the institutions were of less and less value. A hundred and twenty millions of men had still no rights save that of belonging to a single man, to a chance master, called by a caprice of the army, or an intrigue of the court, to the imperial throne. Despotism, as it grew old, became at once feebler and more vexatious. It weighed upon all and protected none. It exhausted a world which it could not even defend. The power of one, says Salvian, is the ruin of the world: “*unius honor, orbis excidium*”. Peace, comfort, and security everywhere disappeared. After the conversion of Constantine, as before him, the bonds of that skilful system of taxation which ended by ruining labour and property in the Roman world, were drawn tighter in every reign. This system, aided by that of the law, raised an emperor to be the sole representative of the sovereign people, and supreme proprietor of all the wealth of the empire. The impost absorbed all that accusations and confiscations had left of the patrimony of free men. Lactantius says it was necessary to buy even the liberty of breathing. According to Zosimus, the fathers prostituted their daughters to have means to pay the tax. The proprietor and the citizen were nothing more than public debtors, and were treated with all the barbarity which the old Romans used to their debtors. They were thrown into prison, scourged, their wives scourged, and their children sold. Torture was universally employed as a means of tax-gathering; formerly reserved for slaves, its use was extended to all the citizens. It is thus that absolute power understands and practises equality.

The Roman republic, says Salvian, expired even when she seemed still living, strangled by taxation, like the traveller who dies in the grasp of brigands. The empire, which originated amid the proscriptions of the triumvirate, worthily completed its work by a fiscal system which seemed to its despairing victims a universal proscription.

The administrative system of Diocletian, aggravated by the Christian emperors, and brought to perfection by Justinian, became thus the scourge of the world. We see in Eumenes, in Lactantius, and in Salvian, who wrote more than a century after the conversion of Constantine, the picture of that oppression, the most ingenious and cruel which has ever crushed a civilized people. But it is not in the Fathers or historians, but in the very text of the imperial laws, that we find the most eloquent representation of these disgraceful plagues of the Roman world. The hypocrisy of the language then used does not suffice to disguise the brutality of the facts, nor the horrible nature of the universal slavery.

The aristocracy, the first victim of despotism, deprived at once of power and independence, and replaced everywhere by officials, was smothered under the pompous and ridiculous titles of *excellency*, *eminence*, *serenity*, *clarissimus*, *perfectissimus*, which concealed their nonentity from no one, but the usurpation of which, even by carelessness

or ignorance, was punished as a sacrilege. The citizens of the towns, held responsible for the taxes, and condemned to the magistracy as to the galleys, suffered, under the name of *curials*, an oppression skilfully organized, and applied without pity. A law of the two sons of Theodosius punished, by the confiscation of his goods, the impiety of the unfortunate rich man who fled out of those towns, transformed into prisons, to take refuge in the country.

In the country there was no longer anything to distinguish the cultivators from the slaves; and the agricultural population, exhausted by the abominable fiscal exactions, without protection and without encouragement, grew disgusted with their labour, and fled into the woods. Those who revolted were sure of being pursued and murdered, under the name of Bagaudes, like so many wild beasts. Others preferred the rule of the Barbarians, and anticipated that rule by fleeing to them: that captivity seemed to them less dreadful than imperial slavery, and their sole wish was never again to become Romans. It is not rare, says Orosius, to find Romans who prefer a free poverty among the Barbarians to the anguish of a life tormented by the exactions of Rome. Bossuet describes the circumstances in two words: "Everything perished in the East: ... All the West was a desert". Labour withdrew; the soil remained uncultivated; the population declined. Impotence, decay, and death were everywhere. The provinces which the barbarians and imperial officers vied in invading and wasting, had not even energy enough to shake off the yoke. "The world is dying in Rome", said the lords of Gaul to the Emperor Avitus, and Rome herself seemed condemned to die abandoned by her emperors, and ravished by the Goths. Nothing remained to her of those noble days in which Roman liberty and civic majesty threw forth upon human nature a light which, thank God, cannot be forgotten.

Of those two great things, the greatest perhaps in profane history, the Roman senate and people, *senatus populusque Romanus*, we have thus ascertained the fate of one. As for the Senate, more degraded still, if possible, than the people, it interfered in the government only to sanction every crime and reward every baseness. It existed during the five centuries between Augustus and Augustulus without leaving a single act or discussion worthy of recollection. On the other hand, its records register carefully the number of acclamations with which it saluted the new emperors, and of curses with which it pursued the fallen sovereigns, even those to whom it had paid most slavish adulation. Excluded from all political power from the times of Diocletian, it existed only as a kind of great municipal council, charged with the task of dishonouring in history the name and title of the most august assembly which has ever governed men.

Nothing has ever equalled the abject condition of the Romans of the Empire. Free, they had conquered and governed the world; enslaved, they could not even defend themselves. They tried a change of masters; they gave themselves two, and then four: they redoubled despotism in all its shapes; nothing would do. With the ancient freedom, all virtue, all manliness disappeared. There remained only a society of officials, without strength, without honour, and without rights.

I say without rights, for in all the imperial world no one possessed even a shadow of a serious and inviolable right. I affirm it boldly, despite all the learned panegyrists of that rule. The Roman Empire, type and cradle of all modern servitude, has found

numerous apologists and admirers in these days, thanks to the readiness with which the task of justifying the present by theories borrowed from the past is now undertaken. The progress of civil law and democratic equality, regarded by them as the highest expression of Roman civilization, has been specially dwelt upon.

But Roman law, which aided the patricians to organize, under the republic, the freest and strongest government which history has known, changed its face and nature under the empire.

How absurd and chimerical were the teachings or practice of civil law in a state where the person and property of every citizen might be delivered, without debate or any appeal whatever, to the will of the worst villains whom the world has ever seen! The criminal law, so humane, so protecting, and so liberal up to the time of the proscriptions, had become in the hands of the emperors a system which, according to the strong expression of Bacon, tortured the laws in order to torture men. As for political law, it was given up to such anarchy that, of the thirty-four emperors who reigned from Commodus to Diocletian, in the golden age of Roman jurisprudence, thirty were killed by their successors. I confess I do not know in all history a spectacle more repulsive or grotesque than that of the labours of all these jurisconsults, who, on questions of usufruct, trusteeships and interdicts, could split a hair, but who could not, during five centuries, discover the least barrier to the sanguinary violence of a horde of Praetorians, nor to the monstrous caprices of a Heliogabalus or of a Commodus.

As for equality, it had no other guarantee than the title of Roman citizen, prostituted by Caracalla as a supreme derision to the enslaved world. This worthy successor of that Caesar who had thoughts of making life horse a consul, knew well what he did in bestowing upon all the provincials exempted from certain imposts, the full civic right of paying to the treasury all that the treasury exacted. The people who were honoured by that title knew also how much it was worth. The name of “Roman citizen”, Salvian tells us, hitherto so much esteemed and dearly purchased, was regarded now not only as a vain and disgraceful title, but as a kind of abomination.

Let us pass over the decay of the arts, the meanness of literature, the non-existence of the sciences; but we must acknowledge that in this so-called Christian society, the moral poverty is a thousand times greater than the material, and that servitude has crushed souls even more than bodies. Everything is enervated, attenuated and decrepit. Not a single great man or illustrious individual rises, to the surface of that mire. Eunuchs and sophists of the Court govern the State without control, experiencing no resistance but from the Church. After Theodosius, the throne of Constantine acquired a degree of public respect only by the brief reign of Pulcheria, a truly Christian woman and saint. But if, here and there, a great captain, a man of heart and talent, rises above the crowd, we see him fall like Stilicho, like Aetius, like Belisarius, under the murderous jealousy of a master who cannot tolerate either a power or fame which is not his own by the side of his omnipotence. While they live, their renown procures them only proscription, and even death does not suffice to give it lustre. The infected air they breathed seems to have paled their glory: it has neither distinction nor charm in history.

To discover some trace of that greatness and strength which are the legitimate inheritance of the only in the most noble creature of God, we must turn to the Church.

There alone, in the various orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and despite the yoke of the theological emperors, it was still possible to live, to struggle, and even to shine.

The great and the small, the last scions of the patricians of Rome, the old races of the conquered countries, the plebeians of all the provinces who had been dignified *en masse* with the despised title of Roman citizens, after that name had lost all its value,—all could seek again their lost dignity and forfeited freedom in the city of God. The Church alone offered a sufficient sustenance to all the energy, activity, intelligence, and self-devotion which remained among them: for she invited all to an inexhaustible series of sacrifices and victories. Genius, glory, virtue, courage, freedom—all that makes life honourable, even in a human point of view—was to be found only in the Church, amid these great controversies, and incessant struggles for the salvation of souls and the triumph of truth, in which she had always reason, genius, and right on her side, though these were not enough to gain her cause before the throne of her protectors.

But God, by the side of the spiritual society instituted and regulated by Himself, has created temporal society; and if he has there, as everywhere, reserved to Himself, the secret conduct of events, and the charge of striking the great blows of his infallible justice, He has given up its ordinary government to the free and intelligent activity of man. To withdraw life, or all that makes life valuable, from this temporal society—to reduce it to stagnation, servitude, indifference, and moral misery—to recognize in spiritual society only the right of living and increasing, and in religious controversy alone the means of moving souls to impassioned sentiments—is to thrust humanity to the edge of a precipice. This condition, as well as its contrary excess, is to be seen repeatedly in history; but such a state of things is repugnant to the laws of creation. It is neither in conformity with the will of God, nor the interest of the Church, to condemn civil society to the condition of a nonentity. A man has other rights than that of choosing between the priesthood and slavery. There is nothing which approaches nearer to heaven than a monastery inhabited by monks who have willingly separated themselves from the world; but to transform the world into a cloister, peopled by unwilling monks, would be to create beforehand a counterfeit hell. God has never made the slavery and degradation of the world a condition of the liberty of His Church. Happily, other times shall follow, in which, by the side of a Church triumphant, free, and fertile, shall rise a society ardent and humble in its faith, but also energetic, warlike, generous, and manly, even in its errors; in which authority shall be at once sanctified and limited, and freedom ennobled by sacrifice and charity; in which heroes shall crowd upon saints; in which cloisters, however closely peopled, shall no longer be the sole asylum for upright and noble souls; in which many men—not all, but many—shall regain the full command of themselves; in which the sovereigns shall have to render an account to their people, the strong to the feeble, and all to God.

In the fourth and fifth centuries the very dawning of that necessary renovation was not yet visible. The old imperial world existed still. Christianity had accepted that abject condition, as it accepts all, with the supernatural confidence of aiding what was good in it, and of lessening the evil. But despite her divine force and origin—despite the humble and zealous devotion of the Fathers and pontiffs to the decrepid majesty of the Caesars—despite her men of genius and her saints—Christianity did not succeed in transforming the ancient world. Had she succeeded in taking full possession, with the

elements which then constituted it, she could only have made a kind of Christian China. God spared her that abortion: but the history of this period remains an ever memorable example of the powerlessness of genius and sanctity to overcome the corruption engendered by despotism.

The old world was then at the point of death. The empire gave way slowly, in shame and contempt, stricken by a melancholy weakness which did not even inspire pity. Everything dropped into incurable decay. Such was the fate of the Roman Empire two centuries after it had become Christian. In spiritual affairs it was on the road to that schism which, under the Byzantine Caesars, separated from unity and truth more than half of the world converted by the apostles. In temporal affairs it issued in the miserable regime of the Lower Empire, the hardest censure we can pronounce upon which, is to name its name.

In order that the Church should save society, a new element was necessary in the world, and a new force in the Church. Two invasions were required—that of the Barbarians from the north, and that of the monks from the south.

They came;—first the Barbarians. Behold them struggling with the Romans, enervated by slavery, and with the emperors, powerless in the midst of their omnipotence.

First obscure, victims and prisoners disdained by the first Caesars; then auxiliaries, by turns sought and feared; then irresistible adversaries; at last victors and masters of the humiliated empire : they come, not as a torrent which passes on, but as a flood which advances, draws back, returns, and finally remains master of the invaded soil. They advance, they withdraw, they return, they remain and triumph. Those among them who were desirous of arresting their course and allying themselves with the terrified Romans, are in their turn set aside, passed over, and surmounted by the tide which follows. Behold them! They come down the valley of the Danube, which puts them on the road to Byzantium and Asia Minor; they ascend its tributary streams, and thus reach the summits of the Alps, from whence they burst upon Italy. They pass the Rhine, cross the Vosges, the Cevennes, the Pyrenees, and inundate Gaul and Spain. The East imagined that it would be spared: vain delusion! The storm bursts from the heights of Caucasus, and overflows these regions in their turn. The wolves of the north (thus St. Jerome entitles them), after having devoured everything, come to drink in the waters of the Euphrates. Egypt, Phoenicia, Palestine—all the countries which they do not visit in their first incursion—are already taken captive by fear. It is not one nation alone, like the Roman people, but twenty different and independent races. “For many years”, says St. Jerome again, “Roman blood has flowed daily under the blows of the Goth, of the Sarmatian, of the Quadi, of the Alan, of the Hun, of the Vandal, of the Marcoman”. It is not the army of a single conqueror like Alexander and Caesar; there are twenty kings unknown but intrepid, having soldiers and not subjects, accountable for their authority to their priests and warriors, and obliged by force of perseverance and audacity to earn a pardon for their power. They all obey an irresistible instinct, and unconsciously carry with them the destinies and institutions of the Christendom to come.

Visible instruments of divine justice, they come by intuition to avenge the nations oppressed and the martyrs slain. They shall destroy, but it will be to give a substitute for



that which they have destroyed; and, besides, they will kill nothing that deserves to live, or that retains the conditions of life. They shall shed blood in torrents, but they shall renew by their own blood the exhausted sap of Europe. They bring with them fire and sword, but also strength and life. Through a thousand crimes and a thousand evils, they shall reveal, though still under a confused form, two things which Roman society has ceased to know—the dignity of man, and the respect for woman. They have instincts rather than principles to guide them; but when these instincts shall have been fertilized and purified by Christianity, out of them shall spring Catholic chivalry and royalty. One sentiment above all shall be derived from them, which was unknown in the Roman empire, which perhaps even the most illustrious pagans were strangers to, and which is always incompatible with despotism—the sentiment of honour: “That secret and profound spring of modern society, which is nothing else than the independence and inviolability of the human conscience, superior to all powers, all tyrannies, and all external force”.

They carry with them, in addition, freedom—not certainly such freedom as we have since conceived and possessed, but the germs and conditions of all freedom; that is to say, the spirit of resistance to excessive power, a manful impatience of the yoke, and a profound consciousness of personal right, and the individual value of every soul before other men as before God.

Freedom and honour! Rome and the world had been bankrupt in these qualities since the times of Augustus. We owe these gifts to our ancestors, the Barbarians.

In a purely religious point of view, more than one great heart among the Christians had recognized at once the mysterious characteristics by which God had distinguished those races which seemed to proceed only out of His wrath. With a confidence which was not shaken by the fury of the hurricane which crossed their path, and which lasted two centuries, this discovery was declared. Amid the calamities and sufferings of the first invasion of the Goths, St. Augustine remarked the marvellous forbearance of the soldiers of Alaric before the tombs of the martyrs: he even went so far as to speak of the mercy and humility of these terrible victors. Salvian does not hesitate to say that the Barbarians, even heretics, led a better life than the Romans, even those who were orthodox. “Their modesty”, he says elsewhere, “purifies the earth, all stained by Roman debauchery”. Paul Orosius, a disciple of St. Augustine, compared them to Alexander, and to the Romans of the republican times; and he adds: “The Germans now overturn the world, but if (which God forbid!) they end by remaining its masters, and govern it according to their own customs, posterity perhaps will one day salute with the title of great kings those in whom we can only see enemies”.

Let us not exaggerate, however, nor anticipate the truth. The germs only of the great conquests of the future existed amid the fermentation of these confused and turbulent masses. At the first glance, it is cruelty, violence, a love of blood and devastation which seems to animate them; and, as among all savages, these explosions of natural brutality are allied to all the refinements of deceit.

These undaunted men, who knew so well how to vindicate human dignity against their sovereigns, respected it so little that they slaughtered entire populations as if for sport. These warriors, who knelt around their prophetesses, and recognized something

sacred in woman, made their captives too often the playthings of their lust or cruelty, and their kings at least practised polygamy.

In respect to Christianity, their attitude was uncertain, their adhesion tardy and equivocal. If there were early Christians among the Goths—if, from the beginning of the peace of the Church, German bishops appeared in the Councils of Arles, Nicaea, and Sardica—if, at the sack of Rome in 410, Alaric commanded the Church, the sacred vessels, and the Christian women to be respected—if the barbaric nations as a whole, personified by their two most formidable chiefs, seemed to stand arrested before St. Leo, who alone could control Genseric, and make Attila fall back—it is not the less true that two centuries of invasions into the bosom of the Christian world had not sufficed to identify the victors with the religion of the vanquished. The Saxons, the Franks, the Gepids, and the Alans remained idolaters; and, a thousand times worse, in proportion as these people were converted to Christianity, they became the prey of a miserable heresy. Truth served them only as a bridge from one abyss to another. When it was repressed by Theodosius in the empire, Arianism turned aside to seduce and govern the future victors of the empire. The Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Herules, the Burgundians, became Arians. Euric and the Sueves in Spain, Genseric and the Vandals in Africa, sacrificed thousands of martyrs to that doctrine which was the idol of all tyrants, because it encouraged at the same time the revolt of reason against faith, and the usurpations of secular power upon the Church.

And soon the corruption of Roman manners pressed upon and infected these young and passionate races. Their energetic vitality abandoned itself to the caresses of a decrepid civilization. Conquest was on the point of becoming lawless revel, and the world was in danger of having changed its masters without changing its destiny.

Who then shall discipline these indomitable races? Who shall shape them to the great art of living and governing? Who shall teach them to found kingdoms and commonwealths? Who shall soften without enervating them? Who shall preserve them from contagion? Who shall prevent them from precipitating themselves into corruption, and rotting before they were ripe?

It will be the Church, but the Church by the monks. From the depths of the deserts of Egypt and the East, God brought forth a host of black-robed men, more intrepid and patient, more indefatigable and less indulgent to themselves, than Romans or Barbarians ever were. They spread themselves noiselessly over all the empire, and when the hour of its ruin had come, they are to be found everywhere, in the West as well as in the East. The Barbarians came: and in proportion to their progress, by their side, before, behind, wherever they had passed with fire and death, other armies come to encamp in silence, other colonies form, arrange, and devote themselves to heal the miseries of invasion, and to gather the fruits of victory. At length, when the destroyers had invaded, ravaged, and conquered everything, a great man will appear. Benedict is destined to be the legislator of labour, of voluntary continence and poverty; he shall count his children, who shall be also his soldiers, by thousands. From among the Barbarians themselves his followers shall arise; their chief shall one day fall at his feet. He will raise him up as a vassal and auxiliary. He will write a rule which, during six centuries, shall light Europe like a Pharos of salvation, and be the law, the force, and the life of those pacific legions,

which were destined in their turn to inundate Europe, but only to fertilize her, to raise her ruins, to cultivate her devastated fields, people her deserts, and conquer her conquerors.

The Roman Empire, without the Barbarians, was an abyss of servitude and corruption. The Barbarians, without the monks, were chaos. The Barbarians and the monks united recreated a world which was to be called Christendom.

## BOOK II

### MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE EAST

The monks were now in conflict with the Barbarians. In the fourth century began that apostolical struggle and mission, which continued till the twelfth century, and ended only after the final constitution of Catholic Europe.

But whence came the monks? and what is a monk? It is important to answer this question briefly. A monk is a Christian who puts himself apart from the world, in order more surely to work out his eternal salvation. He is a man who withdraws from other men, not in hatred or contempt of them, but for the love of God and his neighbour, and to serve them so much the better, as he shall have more and more purified and regulated his soul.

This idea of retirement and solitude is the root of the very name of monk, which comes from the Greek word *mónos*, solitary. But as many Christians have in all ages obeyed the same impulse, these solitaries have joined each other; they have thus reconstituted the social life from which they appeared to flee; and that life, founded upon an absolute community in thought and action, has formed the basis and strength of the monastic condition.

But it was not enough for a monk to separate himself from the world; he had also to abstain from what is lawful in the world. The monk is, then, essentially, a man who deprives himself of that which he might enjoy without reproach. He accepts not only the precepts of the Gospel, but its advice. To avoid what is forbidden, he renounces what is permitted. To reach goodness, he aspires to perfection. To make sure of his salvation, he would do more than is necessary to save him. He binds himself to a kind of chastity, of submission, and of poverty, not required from all Christians. He renounces, by a generous effort of his free choice, the ties of marriage and family, individual property, and personal will; and he puts this triple sacrifice under the safeguard of an irrevocable promise, of a vow. Having thus triumphed over his body by continence, over his soul by obedience, and over the world by voluntary poverty, he comes three times a victor, to offer himself to God, and to take his place in the first rank of that army which is called the Church.

This condition of life is as old as the world. It has two origins—a natural, and a supernatural.

Yes; this life of solitude and privation, so contrary in appearance to all the inclinations of man, finds its root in human nature itself. All men, at some certain

moment of their life, have felt that mysterious and powerful attraction towards solitude. Every nation has recognized and honoured it; all religions have adopted and sanctioned it. The philosophers and moralists of paganism have emulated each other in glorifying that impulse of nature. The oriental world pursued it passionately. India, for three thousand years, has had her ascetics, who pushed to delirium the science of mortification and the practice of voluntary chastisements. They are still to be found, wandering over the world, or living in vast communities in all the nations which recognize the law of Buddha. They have produced nothing, preserved nothing; the pride of error, and the corruption of idleness, have rendered them useless to the human mind as to society; but, even in their abject condition, they bear an immortal testimony to that profound instinct of the soul which the only true religion has transferred into an inexhaustible source of virtues and benefits.

In the midst of ancient civilization, Pythagoras and his disciples, who already went by the name of cenobites, Plato in his *Republic*, Epictetus in his *Cebetis Tabula*, and many others, have recommended this manner of existence as the last goal of wisdom. But Christianity alone has known how to discipline these fugitive impressions, to give them an efficacious bearing and a permanent energy, by the institution of the monastic order. She alone was entitled to offer a divine sanction, an infallible aim, and an eternal recompense, to that inclination of nature acknowledged by all.

By the side of this purely human and natural origin of the monastic life, we must also acknowledge ancient one supernatural and celestial. In the ancient law, where everything is a figure or symbol of the new law, models of a solitary and tranquil life consecrated entirely to the cultivation of the soul, are already to be found. Samuel, in whom the chain of prophets properly commences, Elijah especially, then St. John the Baptist, have been regarded by many, and not without reason, as the types and first masters of monastic life.

The apostle himself describes to us the prophets clad in goatskins, wandering in the deserts, on the mountains, in the caves and dens of the earth. St. Augustine shows them sequestered from the people, buried in retirement, far from cities, forming communities and schools, vowed to prayer, to labour with their hands, and to study. They were clothed in sackcloth or the skins of beasts. Their poverty was visible in all their life. Elisha had for furniture only a pallet, a table, a chair, and a candlestick. He accepted no presents except barley-bread and a little meal, such as are given to the poor. The frugality of the prophets was not less remarkable. The angel gave Elijah only bread and water for a long journey. Obadiah, the steward of Ahab, a man who feared God, says Scripture, nourished a hundred prophets with bread and water in a cave. Elisha cooked wild herbs for the food of his brethren, the sons of the prophets.

Another example less known is that of the Rechabites. Nine hundred years before Christ, in the time of Jehu, king of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab, a just man, interdicted his descendants from living under a roof, from drinking wine, and from possessing lands, and bound them to dwell apart, under tents, all the days of their life. Three centuries afterwards, Jeremiah found them scrupulously faithful to the rule prescribed by their ancestor, and addressed to them, in the name of God, these words—“Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, therefore thus saith



the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever”. Perhaps we might trace in them, if not the ancestors, at least the models of the Essenes and Therapeutists, the monks of Judaism, who lived, the first in the times of the Maccabees, upon the shores of the Dead Sea, and the last, two centuries later, in Asia Minor and Egypt. Both lived in the desert, in cells, preserving celibacy, renouncing property, pleasure, and delicate food, and concentrating their time to manual labour or to the study of the Holy Scriptures. Porphyry, and Pliny the naturalist, have spoken with admiration of the Essenes. Philo, the most eloquent of the Jews, has described the pure and self-denying life of the Therapeutists; he shows them inhabiting cells upon an eminence beyond the Lake Moeris, precisely upon the Mount Nitria, so celebrated since then in the history of the Fathers of the desert. Eusebius, it is known, made them out to be Christians, and the evangelist St. Mark has been supposed their founder. This opinion appears ill-founded. It is difficult, however, not to see in these solitaries the direct precursors of the monastic order.

But it belonged to the Gospel to fertilize, to perfect, and to perpetuate these examples. The words of the Redeemer, the Son of God, are express. He said to the young noble, whom he loved at the first glance, and who asked of him the way to life eternal—“One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me”. And again—“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions*; and in the world to come, eternal life”. Since these divine words were diffused through the world, men have been found, who, far from being repelled by the sternness of the language, or saddened as he was who heard it first, have felt in it a sweetness and attraction beyond all the seductions of the world, and who, throwing themselves in a multitude into the narrow way, have undertaken to prove that there is nothing impracticable to human weakness in the counsels of evangelical perfection. This has been found to be the case during eighteen centuries, and is still so, despite the dislike and prohibitions of the false wisdom of modern times. Governed by these words of the Gospel, the most illustrious fathers, doctors, and councils, have declared religious life to be founded by Jesus Christ himself, and first practised by His apostles. The highest authorities have agreed to recognize that it was born with the Church, and that it has never ceased to coexist with her.

It may be said of it, as of the Church herself, that it exists by right divine.

We know with certainty, by the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, that the first, Christians lived as the monks have lived since. Coming forth from the guest-chamber, they to whom had been given the happiness of seeing the Lord Jesus with their own eyes, and who listened every day to the words of the apostles, had but one heart and one soul: they put everything in common—fortune, prayer, labour—they sold all their goods to consecrate the produce to the common need, and thus destroyed at a blow both poverty and riches. It is said expressly, and more than once repeated, that all who believed lived in this fashion. History has not recorded how these bonds relaxed and were dissolved at last, but we can understand how they became impossible, in proportion as the number of Christians increased, and in presence of family rights and

interests; at any rate, they lasted long enough to authorize Eusebius and St. Jerome in asserting that the first-known monks were no other than the first disciples of Jesus Christ.

We might even affirm, that during the three first centuries all Christians retained a certain monastic character. They were austere and even rigid in the severity of their faith and the young ardour of their enthusiasm. They remained pure in the depths of universal corruption. Their life was more or less hidden amid pagan society. They were of that old world as if they had not been. Then came persecutions which shortened the way to heaven: these took the place of penitence and trial. The dungeon of the martyr was as good, says Tertullian, as the cell of a prophet. In the intervals of peace which the persecutions left to them, they bound themselves to exercises and penitences which have since terrified our weakness. There were besides a great number among them, whom a desire for perfection led back to the self-abnegation of the earliest days. These devoted themselves to the practice of evangelical precepts by renouncing marriage and property. They condemned themselves to fasts, to silence, to every kind of austerity; such Christians, says Bossuet, were solitary, and changed towns into deserts. Sometimes, indeed, they endeavoured to live thus in the midst of the Christian community; but more frequently they fled from the cities, from the noise and commerce of men absorbed in the cares of lucre or of public affairs. Thus, far from all contact with the crowd, and even with the family, they drew near to God and the Divine Mediator, who had so recently shed His blood upon Calvary. Their example was always contagious, and this tradition was never interrupted; each successive generation of Christians furnished recruits to that race, which reproduced itself only in spirit. The name of *Ascetics* and of *Anchorites*, and even that of *Monks* or solitaries, was bestowed upon them, and when they lived together, their common dwelling was called a *monastery*; it was then a condition and profession admitted in the Church. Virgins and widows, inspired by the love of God, rivalled these venerable men in courage, austerity, and penitence, and, like them, formed themselves into communities. Both were regarded everywhere as the flower of that harvest which the Son of man came to gather on earth.

But the time arrived when this germ was to develop itself with prodigious fertility. This was at the period of the last persecutions and first invasions of the Barbarians, between the reign of Decius and that of Diocletian. All at once the deserts were filled with solitaries, who sought there a refuge from Roman corruption, from the cruelty of the Caesars, and from the barbarity of the future victors of Rome. And the empire learned that besides the Christians, who, mingled with pagans, formed already the half of the world, there existed immense reserves of men, still more ardently devoted to the new law. The monks appeared. They came at the appointed moment to replace the martyrs and to restrain the Barbarians.

## THE STORY OF FEBRONIA

And more than one monk began by claiming his place among the martyrs. There were even nuns whose names are reckoned among those immortal virgins, whose tortures and invincible resistance to pagan lust and cruelty form one of the most heroic

pages of the history of the Church. We must quote, at least, one glorious example. During the persecution of Diocletian, there was at Nisibis in Mesopotamia a monastery of fifty virgins. One of them, Febronia, aged twenty-five, was celebrated at once for the marvellous brilliancy of her beauty, the extreme austerity of her life, the depth of her ascetic knowledge, and the eloquent exhortations which the noble matrons of the town came every Friday to hear from her lips. But out of respect for the modesty and reserve of her spiritual daughter, the abbess caused a veil to be held before the seat of the young nun when she spoke, so that she had never been seen from her most tender infancy, not only by any man, but even by any woman of the world. The young widow of a senator, still a pagan, and destined by her family a second marriage, desired, at any risk, to make acquaintance with this learned and pious nun, and introduced herself into the convent under the disguise of a foreign sister. They passed an entire night in reading the Gospel and conferring upon Christian doctrine, embraced each other and wept together, and the senator's wife left the convent converted to the faith of Christianity, and determined to preserve the chastity of her widowhood. "Who then", said Febronia to the abbess, "was that travelling nun, who wept as if she had never heard the holy Scriptures explained before?". "It was Hieria", answered the abbess—"Hieria, the widow of the senator". "Ah!", said Febronia, "why did you not tell me? for I spoke to her as to a sister". The noble widow became in truth the sister and friend of the nun; she remained with her during a serious illness which confined Febronia to the narrow plank of wood on which she took her repose, and prevented her from fleeing, with the bishop, the clergy, the monks, and most of her companions, when Selenus, the minister of imperial cruelty, charged with the execution of the decrees against the Christians, arrived at Nisibis. Denounced because of her beauty, Febronia was dragged before the tribunal of the persecutor: he asked her if she was free or a slave: she answered, "A slave, and the slave of Christ". Stripped of her garments, and given up to all the tortures which the rage of expiring paganism had invented against Christian weakness and modesty, she endured their insults and torments with a heroic calm. The judge reproached her with making so much account of her beauty that she did not blush at her nudity. "My Christ knows well", said she, "that till this day I have not seen the face of a man. But thou, insensate judge", added the victim, with that boldness which we find in the acts of Agatha, of Agnes, and of Cecilia, "tell me what athlete presents himself at the Olympian Games without disrobing himself? and does he not remain naked until he has vanquished his adversary? To work then, that I may strive against thy father the devil, to the scorn of all thy torments". Her teeth and her tongue were torn from her mouth in succession; her breasts, her feet, and her hands were cut off. The old abbess, who witnessed at a distance the progress of that cruel struggle, uttered great cries, and prayed with a loud voice in the Syrian language that her dear Febronia might resist to the end; the people uttered anathemas on Diocletian and his gods. Hieria addressed public imprecations to the wretch Selenus. Finally the heroic virgin was beheaded. Her blood was the seed not only of Christians, but of the religious. The two nephews of Selenus declared themselves Christians, and embraced monastic life; and the noble Hieria, giving herself and all her possessions to the monastery, deposited her bracelets, her jewels, and all her ornaments, in the coffin of her friend; then throwing herself on her knees before the abbess, "Take me", said she, "I beg of you, my mother—take me for your servant instead of Febronia".

Febronia was henceforward quoted by the bishops of Mesopotamia as the model of nuns. The anniversary of her agony became the great fete of the monasteries of that country. Her life was written by a nun who had been an eyewitness of her martyrdom; and tradition records, that at the nightly prayers, the spirit of the holy martyr was seen to reappear in her place in the choir, as if to join her sisters in their devotions.

But Constantine succeeded to Diocletian. The peace of the Church was proclaimed. Such sufferings became rare and exceptional. The martyrs had accomplished their mission: the monks rose up to continue their work. There remained, indeed, under a different form, the same war to wage, the same enemy to vanquish. “The persecution”, says Bossuet, “made fewer solitaires than the peace and triumph of the Church. The Christians, who were so simple, and such enemies to luxury, feared a peace which flattered the senses more than they had feared the cruelty of tyrants. The deserts became peopled by innumerable angels who lived in mortal bodies without holding to the earth”.

The most trustworthy judgment accordingly accepts the end of the third century as the period of the regular constitution of the monastic order. Egypt, that antique and mysterious cradle of history, that land already consecrated in the memory of Christians as having been the prison of the people of God and the refuge of the infant Jesus and His mother —Egypt was again chosen to be the cradle of the new world, created by Christian faith and virtue. Monastic life was finally inaugurated there, amid the deserts, by the Pauls, the Anthonys, the Pacomes, and their numerous disciples. These were the founders of that vast empire which has lasted to our own days, the great captains of the permanent warfare of soul against flesh, the heroic and immortal models offered to the religious of all ages. Their miraculous conversions, their poverty, literally evangelical, their labours, their prodigious austerities, and their miracles, have been bequeathed to posterity in immortal lines by the eloquence of St. Athanasius, St. Jerome, and St. Ephrem.

In a book exclusively devoted to the monks of the West, even the merest sketch of the monastic history of the East ought not to be expected. Besides, who has not read the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*? Who is so ignorant or unfortunate as not to have devoured these narratives of the heroic age of monasticism? Who has not breathed with delight the perfume of these flowers of solitude? Who has not contemplated, if not with the eyes of faith, at least with the admiration which is inspired by an indisputable grandeur of soul, the struggles of these athletes of penitence, and even the marvellous histories of those lost women who, having in vain essayed to corrupt them, showed themselves worthy of imitating, and capable sometimes even of surpassing them, by prodigies of penitence and sanctity? The reader of these narratives cannot lay them down. Everything is to be found there: variety, pathos, the epic sublimity and simplicity of a race of men artless as infants and strong as giants. They have made the Thebaid an immortal and popular name; they have reduced the enemies of truth to the homage of silence; and, even in our uncertain and debilitated age, they have found eloquent panegyrists among the most celebrated and sincere writers of our day.

ST. ANTHONY, 250-356

Though we scarcely cast a glance upon that glorious crowd, yet from the midst of it rises a figure so universally renowned, that we must pause to contemplate him. It is Anthony. Young, rich, and noble, at twenty years old he heard that text of the Gospel read in a church, "If thou wouldst be perfect" ..., and he applied it to himself. He sold his three hundred acres of rich land, and, giving the price to the poor, plunged into the desert to seek God and His salvation there. There he lived at first alone, in a painful and incessant struggle against the cruel temptations of the devil and the flesh. At length he succeeded in overcoming the sensual ardour of his youth by fasting, macerations, and, above all, by prayer, "that prayer as long as the night", says Bossuet, which absorbed his nights so much as to make him dread the day. "Oh, sun!", he said at one time when that orb flooded him with its light, in the midst of his prayers, "wherefore dost thou rise already, and turn me from contemplating the splendour of the true light?". At thirty-five the battle was gained. In subduing his body, he attained freedom of soul. He crossed the Nile, and went deeper still into the most unknown deserts. There he passed other twenty years in the ruins of an old castle. That long and happy solitude was disturbed by the disciples who gathered round him, by the neighbouring hermits who came to ask him the secrets of the knowledge of God. Pilgrims of all nations brought their infirmities to him to be cured, their consciences to be purified. The Neo-Platonic philosophers carried their doubts and objections to him, and found in him the subtle and vigorous defender, ingenious and eloquent, of Redemption. They gathered and established themselves round him; they remained there to imitate and obey him; he became the father and head of all the anchorites of the Thebaid, whom he thus transformed into cenobites. In governing them by his example and instructions, he substituted for an isolated existence the life in common so necessary to break down pride, and to fortify, enlighten, and animate fervour. He guided them at once in the culture of the soul and in the labour of the hands, a double and incessant activity which was henceforward to fill their life. Anthony became the first of the abbots, and, like Abraham, the father of a great people which should have no end.

He issued from the desert only to combat paganism and heresy. He went to Alexandria, at first to encourage the Christians there, and to seek martyrdom for himself during the persecution of Maximin; he returned there at the head of an army of monks, to preach in the public haunts against the Arians, and bear witness to the divinity of Christ. He thus confronted at once two great enemies, pagan corruption and heresy. After having braved the imperial magistrates, dared their soldiers, and refuted their arguments, he well deserved to have for his guest, friend, disciple, and biographer, the immortal Athanasius, the great bishop and eloquent doctor, who, at the cost of so many sufferings, saved the true faith, and secured the triumph of the decrees of Nicaea. The Emperor Constantine and his sons wrote to Anthony humbly as to their father, recommending to him the destinies of the new Rome. He was proclaimed the bulwark of orthodoxy, the light of the world. The very sight of him excited popular enthusiasm everywhere; pagans, and even the priests of the idols, gathered round his path, crying, "Let us see the man of God". But he hastened to return to his Thebaid. "The fish die", said he, "when they are drawn to land, and the monks lose their strength in towns: let us



return quickly to our mountains, like fish to the water". He completed his life there in the midst of an always increasing stream of disciples and pilgrims, who received his instructions in the Egyptian language, and who admired even the unalterable beauty of his features, which age did not destroy, and especially his gayety, his joyous and winning affability, infallible sign of a soul which soars into serene regions. He left to his brethren, in a memorable discourse, the narrative of his long battles with the devil, and at the same time the code of virtues and graces which are necessary to the solitary life. Finally, he died more than a hundred years old, after having established by his example, and by his immense popularity, the influence and grandeur of the monastic life.

#### ST. PAUL. THE FIRST HERMIT

Near him stands Paul, who had preceded him by twenty years in the desert; Paul, the most illustrious and constant of anchorites, who is considered the founder of that eremetical life which the great Anthony adopted, transformed, and replaced by the cenobitic. Discovered by Anthony in his cavern, in the shade of the palm which furnished him with food and clothing, he offered to him that hospitality which history and poetry have vied in celebrating, and died bequeathing to him that tunic of palm leaves, with which Anthony invested himself, on the solemn days of Easter and Pentecost, as with the armour of a hero dead in the arms of victory.

#### ST PACOME, 292-348

Then comes Pacome, younger than St. Anthony by forty years, but dead before him. Born a pagan, a soldier under Constantine before he was a monk, he practised in solitude a discipline a hundred times more austere than that of camps; during fifteen years he never laid down, but slept only standing, supported against a wall, or half-seated upon a stone bench, after days of the hardest labour, as a carpenter, a mason, or a cleanser of pits. He gave to the cenobites, whom Anthony had governed by his oral instruction and example, a written rule complete and minute, the very words of which had been brought to him from heaven by an angel. He founded upon the Nile, at Tabenne, in the higher Thebaid, the first monastery properly so called, or rather a congregation of eight monasteries, each governed by an abbot, but united by a close tie, and placed under the same general superior. These were filled by many thousands of monks; and when Athanasius, already celebrated for his zeal against Arianism, and his glorious struggles with the Emperor Constantius, came from Alexandria and went up the Nile to visit, as far as the higher Thebaid, these numerous communities whose fidelity appeared to him the principal bulwark of orthodoxy, Pacome led an immense army of monks, his own presence among whom he in humility concealed, to meet the stranger, all chanting hymns, and burning with the spirit which should vanquish and bury all the heresies. This was the first review of the new army of the Church.

For his purpose was indeed to train soldiers, or, to speak more truly, athletes tried and invincible. Let us listen to the words which he desired every monk, in the evening, before lying down upon his bed, to address, in the name of his soul, to all the members of his body, apostrophizing them one after another, in order that he might subdue them to be only pledges of obedience to the divine law, and weapons of warfare in the noble service of God.

“While we are still together, obey me, and serve the Lord with me, for the time approaches when you, my hands, shall no longer be able to thrust yourselves forth and seize the goods of others, nor to close yourselves to strike the victim of your wrath; the time when you, my feet, shall be no more able to run in the paths of iniquity. Before death separates us, and while this separation, brought upon us by the sin of the first man, remains unaccomplished, let us fight, let us persevere, let us struggle manfully, let us serve the Lord without torpor or idleness, till the day comes when He will wipe off our terrestrial sweats, and conduct us to an immortal kingdom. Weep, my eyes; and thou, my flesh, accomplish thy noble service: labour with me in prayer, lest the seeking for repose and sleep should end in perpetual torments: be vigilant, sober, laborious, that thou mayest merit the abundance of good things reserved for thee, and that eternity may not echo forever that dismal lamentation of the soul to the body: Alas! alas! why was I ever attached to thee, and why should I suffer, because of thee, an eternal condemnation?”

After Pacome, whom all agree to recognize as the first who brought monastic life to rule and order, came Ammon, the friend of Anthony’s youth, rich, like him, but in addition married. He lived for eighteen years with his wife as a sister, then retired into the desert, and was first to found a community upon the celebrated mountain of Nitria, at the confines of Libya, where more than five thousand monks soon collected to form a sort of religious republic, where they might live in labour and liberty. Among these was another Ammon, called to be the bishop of a neighbouring city, who cut off his right ear, in order to escape by that mutilation from the episcopate which would have been forced upon him.

As there were two Ammons, there were also two Macarii; one called the *Egyptian*, or the elder, who was first to establish himself in the vast desert of Scete, between Mount Nitria and the Nile; the other called the *Alexandrine*, who, among so many penitents, distinguished himself by the incredible rigor of his austerities. To subdue the rebellion of his flesh, he obliged himself to remain six months in a marsh, and there exposed his body naked to the attacks of the gnats of Africa, whose sting can pierce even the wild boar’s hide. He also wrote a system of rules for the use of the solitaries who surrounded him, and whose rigorous abstinence is proved by the fate of a cluster of new grapes offered by a traveller to St. Macarius. Despite his desire to taste them, he gave them to one of his brethren who was at work, and who had also a great wish for them, but who offered them to another, who in his turn passed them to a third. The tempting cluster passed thus from hand to hand till it came back to the hands of Macarius, who gave thanks to God for that universal mortification, and threw the grapes far from him.

These two patriarchs of the western deserts of Egypt lived much together; they were exiled together by the Arians, who feared their zeal for orthodoxy. They crossed the Nile together in a ferry-boat, where they encountered two military tribunes, accompanied by a great array of horses with decorated bridles, of equipages, soldiers, and pages covered with ornaments. The officers looked long at the two monks in their old dresses humbly seated in a corner of the bark. They might well look at them, for in that bark two worlds stood face to face: old Rome degraded by the emperors, and the new Christian republic, of which the monks were the precursors. As they approached the shore, one of the tribunes said to the cenobites, “You are happy, for you despise the world”. “It is true”, answered the Alexandrine, “we despise the world, whilst the world despises you; and you have spoken more truly than you intended; we are happy in fact and in name, for we are called Macarius, that is to say, happy (*makários*)”. The tribune made no answer; but, returning to his house, he renounced all his wealth and rank, and went to seek happiness in solitude.

Thus the two Thebais and all the deserts of Egypt were peopled. We see them at the end of the fourth century full of monks and monasteries, united among themselves from that period, like the modern orders and congregations, by a common discipline, by reciprocal visits, and general assemblies.

Nothing in the wonderful history of these hermits of Egypt is so incredible as their number. But the most weighty authorities agreed in establishing it. It was a kind of emigration of towns to the desert, of civilization to simplicity, of noise to silence, of corruption to innocence. The current once begun, floods of men, of women, and of children threw themselves into it, and flowed thither during a century with irresistible force. Let us quote some figures. Pacome, who died at fifty-six, reckoned three thousand monks under his rule; his monasteries of Tabenne soon included seven thousand, and St. Jerome affirms that as many as fifty thousand were present at the annual gathering of the general congregation of monasteries which followed his rule.

There were, as we have just said, five thousand on the mountain of Nitria alone. Nothing was more frequent than to see two hundred, three hundred, or five hundred monks under the same abbot. Near Arsinoe (now Suez), abbot Serapion governed ten thousand, who in the harvest-time spread themselves over the country to cut the corn, and thus gained the means of living and giving alms. It has even been asserted that there were in Egypt as many monks in the deserts as inhabitants in the towns. The towns themselves were, so to speak, inundated by them, since in 356 a traveller found in a single town of Oxyrynchus upon the Nile, ten thousand monks and twenty thousand virgins consecrated to God.

The immense majority of these religious were cenobites—that is to say, they lived in the same enclosure, and were united by common rule and practice under an elected head, whom they everywhere called abbot, from the Syriac word *abba*, which means *father*. The cenobitical life superseded, rapidly and almost completely, the life of anchorites. Many anchorites, to make their salvation more sure, returned into social monastic life. Scarcely any man became an anchorite until after having been a cenobite, and in order to meditate before God during the last years of his life. Custom has therefore given the title of monks to cenobites alone.

Ambitious at once of reducing to subjection their rebellious flesh, and of penetrating the secrets of the celestial light, these cenobites from that time united active with contemplative life. The various and incessant labours which filled up their days are known. In the great frescoes of the Campo-Santo at Pisa, where some of the fathers of Christian art, Orcagna, Laurati, Benozzo Gozzoli, have set before us the life of the fathers of the desert in lines so grand and pure, they appear in their coarse black or brown dresses, a cowl upon their heads, sometimes a mantle of goatskin upon their shoulders, occupied in digging up the soil, in cutting down trees, in fishing in the Nile, in milking the goats, in gathering the dates which served them for food, in plaiting the mats on which they were to die. Others are absorbed in reading or meditating on the Holy Scriptures. Thus a saint has said, the cells united in the desert were like a hive of bees. There each had in his hands the wax of labour, and in his mouth the honey of psalms and prayers. The days were divided between prayer and work. The work was divided between field-labour and the exercise of various trades, especially the manufacture of those mats which are still so universally used in southern countries. There were also among these monks entire families of weavers, of carpenters, of curriers, of tailors, and of fullers: among all, the labour was doubled by the rigor of an almost continual fast. All the rules of the patriarchs of the desert made labour obligatory, and the example of these holy lives gave authority to the rule. No exception to the contrary can be quoted, or has been discovered. The superiors were first in hardship. When the elder Macarius came to visit the great Anthony, they immediately set to work at their mats together, conferring thus upon things important to souls; and Anthony was so edified by the zeal of his guest that he kissed his hands, saying, “What virtues proceed from these hands!”.

Each monastery was then a great school of labour, and at the same time a great school of charity. They practised this charity not only among themselves, and with regard to the poor inhabitants of the neighbouring countries, but especially in the case of travellers whom the necessities of commerce or public business called to the banks of the Nile, and of the numerous pilgrims whom their increasing fame drew to the desert. A more generous hospitality had never been exercised, nor had the universal mercy introduced by Christianity into the world blossomed anywhere to such an extent. A thousand incidents in their history reveal the most tender solicitude for the miseries of the poor. Their extraordinary fasts, their cruel macerations, that heroic penitence which was the heart of their life, did not destroy their perception of the weakness and necessities of others. On the contrary, they had learned the secret principle of the love of their neighbour in that daily struggle against the sensual ardour of their youth, against the perpetually renewed rebellion of the flesh, against the recollections and temptations of the world. The *Xenodochium*—that is, the asylum of the poor and strangers—formed from that time a necessary appendix to every monastery. The most ingenious combinations, and the most gracious inspirations of charity, are to be found in their history. A certain monastery served as a hospital to sick children, and thus anticipated one of the most touching creations of modern benevolence; and another was transformed by its founder, who had been a lapidary in his youth, into a hospital for lepers and cripples. “Behold”, said he, in showing to the ladies of Alexandria the upper floor, which was reserved for women—“Behold my jacinths”; then, in conducting them to the floor below, where the men were placed—“See my emeralds”.

They were hard only upon themselves. They exercised this hardness with that imperturbable confidence which gives the victory; and this victory they won, complete and immortal, in the most unfavourable conditions. Under a burning sky, in a climate which has always seemed the cause or the excuse of vice, in a country given up at all times to every kind of laxness and depravity, there were thousands of men who, during two centuries, interdicted themselves from the very shadow of a sensual gratification, and made of the most rigorous mortification a rule as universal as a second nature.

To labours simply manual, to the most austere exercises of penitence, and the cares of hospitality and charity, they united the culture of the mind, and the study of sacred literature. There were at Tabenne a special family of *literati* who knew Greek. The rule of St. Pacome made the reading of portions of the Bible a strict obligation. All the monks, besides, were required to be able to read and write. To qualify themselves for reading the Scriptures was the first duty imposed upon the novices.

Amongst them were many learned men and philosophers, trained in the ancient knowledge of the schools of Alexandria, and who must have carried to the desert a treasure of varied learning. Solitude instructed them how to purify their gifts in the crucible of faith. It doubled the strength of their mind. The new science, theology, found scholars nowhere more profound, deeply convinced, and eloquent. They therefore feared no discussion with their old companions of study or of pleasure; and when they had refuted and confounded the heretical sophists, they opened their arms and their hearts with joy to receive the bishops and orthodox confessors who came to seek a shelter with them.

It is not, then, wonderful if the hero of those great conflicts of faith against tyranny and heresy, the great Athanasius, wandering from trial to trial, and from exile to exile, especially loved to seek an asylum in the cells of the cenobites of the Thebaid, to share their studies and their austerities, to collect the narrative of their struggle with the flesh and the devil, and to renew his courage and his soul in the refreshing waves of monastic prayer and penitence. He had always counted upon the sympathy of the monks, and always seconded with all his might the progress of their order. He could then regard himself as at home among “those houses vowed to prayer and silence, rising from stage to stage along the Nile, the last of which lose themselves in solitude, like the source of the stream”. In vain his persecutors searched for him there; at the first signal of their approach he passed unperceived from one monastery to another, and there took up the course of life of an ordinary monk, as assiduous as any in the offices and regular labour. He ended always by taking refuge in an unknown cavern to which one faithful person alone knew the road. His retirement in the desert lasted six years. His genius could but increase there, his eloquence took a more masculine and incisive character. It was from thence that he wrote to the bishops of Egypt to enlighten them, to his church in Alexandria to console it, and to the persecutors and heretics to confound them. It was to his hosts of the Thebaid, as to the witnesses and soldiers of orthodoxy, that he addressed the famous *Epistle to the Solitaries*, which contains so dramatic and complete a narration of the Arian persecution under Constantius. It is entitled, “To all those who lead, no matter where, the monastic life, and who, strengthened in faith, have said, ‘Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee’.” In this he sets forth an apologetic account of his life and doctrines, he relates his sufferings and those of the faithful, he

proclaims and justifies the divinity of the Word, he stigmatizes the courtier bishops of Caesar, docile instruments of those vile eunuchs who disposed of the empire and the Church as masters; he accuses the Emperor Constantius of having deprived all the churches of freedom, and of having filled everything with hypocrisy and impiety; he claims for truth the noble privilege of conquering by freedom, and throws back upon error and falsehood the necessity of taking constraint and persecution for their weapons. Let us quote his noble words, immortally true, and always in season—"If it is disgraceful for some bishops to have changed in fear, it is still more disgraceful to have done violence to them, and nothing marks more clearly the weakness of an evil cause. The devil, who has no truth, comes with axe and hatchet to break down the doors of those who receive him; but the Saviour is so gentle that he contents himself with teaching, and when he comes to each of us, he does no violence, but he knocks at the door and says, Open to me, my sister, my spouse. If we open to him he enters; if we will not, he withdraws; for truth is not preached with swords or arrows, nor by soldiers, but by counsel and persuasion. It belongs to the true religion never to constrain, but to persuade".

Inspired by such teachings and by such an example, the monks, when the satellites of the persecutors pursued the orthodox confessors even into the desert, scorned to answer them, presented their throats to the sword, and suffered tortures and death with joy, holding it more meritorious to suffer for the defence of their legitimate pastors, than to fast, or to practise any other austerity. They themselves went forth, when it was necessary, from their Thebaid, to go to Alexandria, to snatch their last victims from the last persecutors, and confound by their courage, by their abrupt and penetrating language, and even by their presence alone, the most widely spread and dreaded of heresies.

But, however great and strong their influence might be in polemics, and in the midst of a population agitated by these struggles, it was more powerful still in their proper sphere in that solitude to which they always returned like Anthony, their model and master, with so much alacrity and joy.

It was in the desert especially that their triumph shone, and that the world, scarcely yet Christian, recognized in them the envoys of heaven and the conquerors of the flesh. When towards evening, at the hour of vespers, after a day of stifling heat, all work ceased, and from the midst of the sands, from the depths of caverns, from *hypogeums*, from pagan temples cleared of their idols, and from all the vast tombs of a people dead, the cry of a living people rose to heaven : when everywhere and all at once the air echoed the hymns, the prayers, the songs pious and solemn, tender and joyous, of these champions of the soul and conquerors of the desert, who celebrated in the language of David the praises of the living God, the thanksgivings of the freed soul, and the homage of vanquished nature,—then the traveller, the pilgrim, and especially the new convert, stood still, lost in emotion, and, transported with the sounds of that sublime concert, cried aloud. "Behold, this is Paradise!"

"Go", said the most eloquent doctor of the Church at that period—"go to the Thebaid; you shall find there a solitude still more beautiful than Paradise, a thousand



choirs of angels under the human form, nations of martyrs, armies of virgins, the diabolical tyrant chained, and Christ triumphant and glorified”.

The holy doctor spoke of armies of virgins, because in all times Christian women had shown themselves, both in number and zeal, the emulators of men in the practice of monastic virtues and austerities. Virginity had been honoured and practised in the Church from its origin. Besides the sublime maids who bore it triumphant through the last agonies, there were a multitude who preserved it for many years in the midst of the world. For there were nuns, as there had been ascetics and hermits, before the regular and popular institution of monastic life. With all the more reason, when the towns and deserts of Egypt became populated with monasteries, the sex whose weakness Christianity had ennobled and purified, came there to claim its part. The most illustrious fathers of the desert found each in his own family a woman eager to comprehend and imitate him. The sisters of Anthony and Pacome, the mother of Theodore, the wife of Ammon, followed them into the desert, either to lead them back, or watch over them. These hearts, steeled by an immortal love, repelled them with unyielding resolution; then the sorrowing Christian women avenged themselves by embracing the same kind of life which raised their fears for their brothers. They established themselves in an enclosure, distinct but near, sometimes separated by a river or by a precipice from those whom they had followed. It was impossible to refuse to them counsels, rules, and precepts which they observed with an ardent fidelity; and soon a multitude crowded into these sanctuaries to practise fasting, silence, austerities, and works of mercy.

There dwelt first, and above all, the heroic virgins who brought to that shelter their innocence, their attractions, and their love of heaven. Of these all ranks and all countries furnished their contingent by thousands. They hesitated at no sacrifice to procure an entrance there, nor before any trial to be permitted to remain.

Here, it was the slave Alexandra who, fearing her own beauty, and in pity for the poor soul of him who loved her, buried herself alive in an empty tomb, and remained ten years without permitting any one to see her face.

There, it was the beautiful and learned Euphrosyne, who, at eighteen, deserted her father and her husband; and, to escape the better from their search, obtained admission, by concealing her sex, into a monastery of monks, where she remained thirty-eight years without leaving her cell. Her father, in despair, after useless search by land and sea, came to the same monastery to seek some comfort to his increasing grief. “My father”, he said to the first monk whom he met, “pray for me; I can bear up no longer, so much do I weep for my lost daughter, so much am I devoured by this grief!”. And it was to herself he spoke, to his daughter, whom he did not recognize in the monk’s dress. At sight of the father from whom she had fled, and whom she too well recognized, she grew pale and wept. But soon, smothering her tears, she consoled him, cheered him up, promised that he should one day see his daughter again, and thus encouraged him for his further life; then finally, when she felt herself dying, she sent for him to her bedside, revealed the secret of her sacrifice, and bequeathed to him her example and her cell, where her father, so long inconsolable, came to live and die in his turn.

But more strange recruits for these sanctuaries of virginity were the celebrated courtesans, the dancers, the mercenary and imperious beauties whom Egypt, and

especially Alexandria, seemed then to produce in greater number and more perfidious and undaunted than elsewhere, as if to subject Christian virtue to a war still more dangerous than the persecution out of which it had come. Men and demons excited them violently against the solitaries. It was not enough for these female conquerors to seduce, to dazzle, and to govern the profane lay crowd of their adorers of every age and condition; they longed to vanquish and enchain the strong and pure men who believed themselves safe in the shelter of their retreats. Their pride could not be satisfied without this triumph. They hastened into the desert; they knocked at the doors of the cells, they displayed to the eyes of the suppliant and dismayed solitaries those attractions which had been too often found irresistible, and that pomp with which the East has always adorned voluptuousness; they employed in that effort all the audacity, the address, and the charms which they possessed, and yet almost always they were overcome. They returned vanquished to Alexandria, and went to hide their defeat in a monastery; or they remained in solitude to throw themselves, after the example of their victors, into the depths of repentance and divine love.

#### THE DANCER PELAGIA

The first place in the sacred annals of the desert seems to belong to those true martyrs of penitence, those glorious rivals of the Magdalene, the first friend of Christ, to Mary of Egypt, to Thais, to Pelagia, the celebrated actress of Antioch, to all those saints to whom the worship of the Christian nations has so long remained faithful. The saints who have written the lives of the Fathers have related the history of these courtesans, as they are called, with a bold simplicity which I should not venture to reproduce. A burning breath seems to pass across the narrative, which for an instant inflames their imagination, and is then extinguished in the pure and serene atmosphere of Christian chastity. “We were”, says one of them, “seated at the feet of our bishop, that austere and vigorous monk, from the monastery of Tabenne. We were listening to and admiring his holy and salutary instructions; suddenly there appeared before us the first of the *mimes*, the most beautiful of the dancers of Antioch, all covered with jewels; her naked limbs were concealed under pearls and gold; she had her head and her shoulders bare. A great retinue accompanied her. The men of the world were never tired of devouring her charms with their eyes; a delicious perfume exhaled from all her person and sweetened the air we breathed. When she had passed, our father, who had longed gazed at her, said to us, “Have you not been charmed with so much beauty?” And we were all silent. “For me”, resumed the bishop, “I took great pleasure in it, for God has destined her to judge us, one day ... I see her”, he said later, “like a dove all black and stained; but that dove shall be bathed in the waters of baptism and shall fly towards heaven white as snow”. Shortly, in fact, she returned to be exorcised and baptized. “I am called Pelagia”, she said, “the name which my parents gave me; but the people of Antioch call me the Pearl, because of the quantity of ornaments with which my sins have adorned me. Two days after, she gave all her goods to the poor, clothed herself in haircloth, and went to shut herself up in a cell on the Mount of Olives. Four years later, he who had admired her incomparable beauty so much, found her in that cell and did not recognize her, so much

had penitence and tasting changed her. Her great eyes were hollow and sunken as in wells. She died thus. Such was", says the narrator, "the life of that courtesan, of that hopeless one. God grant that we may find mercy like her at the Day of Judgment!" A different narrative, a type of innocent vocations, and the first detailed and authentic example of those contests between the cloister and the family, which have been renewed during so many centuries for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, is, however, more worthy of being quoted from these precious annals.

## EUPHRASIA

Euphrasia was the only daughter of a senator, nearly related to the Emperor Theodosius; her father having died while she was still a child, she was betrothed to a wealthy noble, and in the interval, before she came to marriageable years, her mother took her to Constantinople and Egypt, to visit the immense estates which they possessed there, and which extended into the higher Thebaid. They often lodged in a monastery of nuns of extreme austerity, and both conceived a great regard for these virgins, whose prayers for the soul of her husband and the future of her daughter the young widow incessantly craved. One day the abbess said to the little Euphrasia, "Do you love our house and our sisters?". "Yes", answered the child, "I love you". "But which do you love best, your betrothed or us?". "I do not know him any more than he knows me; I know you and love you; but you, which do you love best, your betrothed or me?". The abbess and the other nuns who were there answered, "We love thee, thee and our Christ". "Ah", said the child, "I also love you, you and your Christ". However, the mother, who had been present during this conversation, began to lament and weep, and would have led her daughter away. The abbess said to her, "You must go away, for those only who are vowed to Christ remain here". The child answered, "Where is He, this Christ?". The abbess showed her an image of the Saviour. She threw herself upon it, kissed it, and immediately said, "Well! I devote myself truly to my Christ; I shall go away no more with my mother, I will remain with you". The mother tried in vain with many caresses to induce her child to go with her; the abbess joined her persuasions to those of the mother. "If you remain here", she said, "you will have to learn the holy books and all the psalter, and fast every day till evening as the other sisters do". "I learn already to do all that", answered the girl, "only let me remain here". Then the abbess said to the mother, "Madame, she must be left to us; the grace of God shines on her; the virtue of her father and the prayers of both will procure her eternal life". The mother, conducting her daughter before the image of Christ, exclaimed, weeping, "Lord Jesus Christ, be gracious to this dear little girl, who seeks Thee, and who has given herself to Thee". She was then clothed in the monastic dress. Her mother said to her, "Lovest thou that dress?". "Yes, certainly, my mother; for I have learned that it is the robe of betrothal which the Lord gives to those who love him". "May thy bridegroom then render thee worthy of him!"

These were the last words of the desolate mother, who embraced her daughter and went away beating her breast. She died soon after, leaving the young Euphrasia sole heir of a double and immense patrimony. At the solicitation of the nobleman who was to

have married her, the emperor wrote to her to return to Constantinople. She answered him that she had already a bridegroom, and supplicated him, in the name of the close friendship which had united him to her father, to dispose of all her fortune for the advantage of the poor, of orphans, and of churches, to free and portion her slaves, to remit all their taxes to the cultivators of her paternal domains, and, finally, to intercede for her with the empress. In reading the letter, the empress said to her husband, “Truly this girl is of imperial race”. The will of the young heiress was executed. She remained divested of everything in her Egyptian monastery; she lived there from the age of twelve to thirty, occupied with the harder labours, cleaning out the chambers of the sisters, carrying wood and water to the kitchen, and even stones for the buildings, baking the bread in the great oven of the community, and attending to the sick children and the poor idiots who were brought to the nuns, as to the source of all remedies. All these merits did not preserve her from the trials, assaults, and calumnies which are the portion of the saints, and which pursued her even up to the day when she was laid in the tomb, where her mother awaited her coming.

Let us haste to close the volume which contains these too absorbing tales, and pursue our rapid course across the first ages of monastic glory, which the following ages only extended and increased.

Meantime, Egypt being speedily occupied, the stream of monastic life overflowed and inundated the neighbouring countries. The monks passed on to people the burning deserts of Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. Sinai was occupied by them almost as soon as the Thebaid. At the commencement of the fourth century, while the last pagan emperors were exhausting their rage against Christians throughout all the empire, the Arabs—who did not recognize their laws, but whom the instinct of evil associated with them in their war against Christ—murdered forty solitaries who had fixed their sojourn upon the holy mountain where God gave His law to Moses. Others came to replace them, and there came also other Arabs or Saracens to sacrifice their successors, and these alternations between the pacific colonization of the monks and the bloody incursions of the Saracens, were prolonged during the rest of the century. But the destroyers tired sooner than the monks, and ended by becoming converts, a portion of them at least. St. Nilus was the principal apostle of these savage tribes, and the great monastic colonizer of Mount Sinai.

#### St. HILARION, 302-372

In Palestine monastic life was introduced by Hilarion. This young pagan, born at Gaza, having gone to study at Alexandria, where he was converted to Christianity, was drawn by the renown of Anthony into the desert. “Thou art welcome”, said Anthony, seeing him approach his mountain—“thou art welcome, thou who shinest early as the star of morning”. The young Syrian answered him, “Peace be with thee, thou column of light which sustains the universe”. He passed two months with the patriarch of the cenobites, made up his mind to be a monk like Anthony, and to imitate him returned to his own country, where nothing of the kind had yet been seen. After having given all his goods to the poor, he established himself at sixteen upon the side of a mountain in a

cabin of rushes, near a cistern which he had dug with his own hands, and which served to water the garden which produced his food. There he delved, sang, prayed, fasted, plaited baskets, and, above all, strove against the temptations of the devil. In vain the recollections of the beautiful women of Alexandria, of the sumptuous repasts, and all the seductions of the pagan world, came to arouse his senses. He undertook to reduce his body, like a beast of burden, by hunger and thirst, and succeeded thus in subduing his passions. He passed twenty-two years in solitude; but that austere virtue in so young a man, and the miraculous cures obtained by his prayers, gradually extended his fame throughout all Syria; that fame attracted the crowd; that crowd gave him disciples and emulators; to receive them he had to form communities : and there is no doubt that the foundation of the monasteries which have risen from that time at Jerusalem and Bethlehem, as if to approach the new institution to the places consecrated forever by the Nativity and Passion of its divine model, date back to his labours. He had the honour of undergoing persecution under Julian the Apostate, and of being proscribed at the desire of his own compatriots of Gaza. But that trial was short, and it was much less proscription than the desire to escape his too great fame which conducted him into the Mediterranean isles, into Sicily, the Cyclades, and even into the isle of Cyprus. From country to country, and even beyond the sea, he fled from the fame of his virtues and miracles which pursued him.

The island of Cyprus, so celebrated by the worship of Venus, and the associations of which made it the sanctuary of pagan sensualism, had the singular grace of being purified by a ray of monastic light, before becoming the last asylum of that Catholic royalty which the Crusades were to inaugurate near the tomb of Jesus Christ. Nothing can better depict the victory of the divine Son of the Virgin over the goddess mother of Love, than the sojourn of Hilarion at Paphos. The austere monk, whose youth had been but one long and triumphant struggle against voluptuousness, remained two years at the gates of that town, so dear to erotic poetry, whilst the Christians of the island crowded round him, and brought the possessed to him to be healed. He afterwards found a retreat more solitary, near the ruin of an ancient temple, doubtless consecrated to Venus, where he heard night and day the bellowing voices of a whole army of demons, impatient of the yoke which the soldier of chastity and prayer came to impose upon their ancient subjects. These nocturnal clamours rejoiced him greatly, for he loved, he said, to see his enemies face to face.

There he died, an octogenarian, epitomizing his life in these well-known words—  
“Go forth, then, my soul, go forth: what hast thou to fear? For nearly threescore and ten years thou hast served Christ, and dost thou fear to die?”

Even to this day the Cypriote people, confusing in their recollections the legends of good and evil, the victories of the soul and the triumphs of sense, give to the ruins of one of the strong castles built by the Lusignans, which command their island, the double name of Castle of St. Hilarion and the *Castle of the God of love*.

ST. EPIPHANIUS



Hilarion left upon the metropolitan see of the island, sanctified from henceforth by his presence and memory, an illustrious monk, St. Epiphanius, who had been his disciple, and who had come to rejoin him at Paphos. A Jew by origin—converted in his youth by seeing the charity of a monk, who divested himself of his own garment to clothe a poor man—Epiphanius himself became a monk, and had acquired great fame for his austerity, in Palestine first, where Hilarion had trained him, and afterwards in Egypt, where he lived during the persecution of Julian, and where Christianity kept its ground better than in the other quarters of the East, thanks to the authority of Athanasius and the influence of the Thebaid. Raised in spite of himself to the episcopate, he continued to wear the dress of a hermit, and it was at the request of the superiors of two Syrian monasteries that he wrote the history and refutation of the eighty heresies then known. He was the friend of St. Basil, St. Jerome, and St. Chrysostom. He knew Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and Latin, equally well: he always devoted this knowledge to the defence of orthodoxy in faith and discipline, which he served by his works not less than by his journeys to Rome, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. He was born in a cool valley, at the foot of Mount Olympus, and not far from Cape *Pifani*, which still retains the trace of his name in that alteration made by European sailors of the word *Epiphanius*.

The Emperor Julian, whose mind was greater than his heart, was not unaware of the grandeur of the monastic institution, and, even in persecuting the monks, dreamt of male and female convents for his regenerated pagans. It was desiring the resuscitation of a corpse. The work of God needed no emperor: the saints were sufficient for it. The monastic life which they produced, and in which they perfected their title to heaven, propagated itself rapidly, and thanks to this, the conversion of the East to Christianity was being accomplished. At Edessa in the centre of Mesopotamia, St. Ephrem carried to this work the authority of his long career, of his poetic and popular eloquence, of his austere genius, and of his noble combats against the shameless corruption which infected that oriental civilization, from which it was necessary to separate truth and the future.

Edessa was then the metropolis of those Syriac populations which had preserved their language and national spirit in the shelter of Greek influence. Ephrem was at once their apostle, their doctor, their orator, their poet. He translated the dogmas proclaimed at Nicaea, and the events of holy and evangelical History, into popular songs which might be heard many centuries after, in the plains of Syria. Becoming a monk at the same time as he became a Christian, he continued to his last clay to instruct the monks his brethren and the people of Edessa. His eloquence was nervous and full of fire and unction. “The Holy Spirit”, says St. Gregory of Nysse, “gave him so marvellous a fountain of knowledge, that, though the words flowed from his mouth like a torrent, they were too slow to express his thoughts. . . . He had to pray that God would moderate the inexhaustible flood of his ideas, saying: Restrain, Lord, the tide of thy grace”. For that sea of knowledge, which would unceasingly flow forth by his tongue, overwhelmed him by its waves. This great man of words was also a man of action: when Sapor, king of Persia, then the most redoubtable enemy of the Romans, came for the third time to besiege Nisibis (A.D. 349), the bulwark of the faith and of the empire, Ephrem hastened to place himself by the side of the holy bishop Jacobus, who had baptized him; the two together, first upon the breach, superintended the works of defence, which ended in the



defeat of the Persians. Some years later, when Julian, directing his arms against Persia, at the height of the persecution which he had renewed, seemed to threaten Edessa, which boasted of being the earliest converted city of the East, Ephrem sustained the courage of the inhabitants by his discourses, and to this critical moment belongs a famous oration entitled the *Pearl*, designed to celebrate under that symbol the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price of the Gospel, and in which are mingled “the mystic ardours of a solitary and the zeal of a Christian soldier hastening to his martyrdom”. A faithful observer of monastic poverty, in the will which he dictated to his disciples, and in which he describes himself as a labourer who has finished his day’s work, and a merchant traveller who returns to his own country, he declares that he has nothing to bequeath but his counsels and prayers—for Ephrem, says he, “has not even a staff or a wallet”. His last words were a protest in favour of the dignity of man redeemed by the Son of God. The young and pious daughter of the governor of Edessa having come in tears to receive his last sigh, he made her swear on his deathbed to use no longer a litter carried by slaves, because the apostle has said, “The head of man should bear no yoke but that of Christ”.

In his discourses, this holy doctor condemns severely those vices and passions of the world which hid themselves under the robe of the monk. He denounces the contrast, then too frequent, between the exterior and the heart of the Religious—between the appearance and reality. He laments already the relaxation of ancient severity. And yet he had lived for several years among the hermits of Mesopotamia, who reduced themselves in some degree to the state of savages, and who were surnamed *Browsers* because they had no other food than the mountain herbs, which they cut every morning with a knife, and ate uncooked. While he was still living, a Syrian monastery opened its doors to St. Simeon Stylites, who, from the top of his column, where he remained forty-eight years, was to present to the world the spectacle of the strangest and rudest penitence which it had yet seen. Such prodigies were, no doubt, necessary to strike the imagination and seize the conviction of the independent and nomadic people of these deserts; for it must not be forgotten that the Roman world under Constantine and his immediate successors was still half pagan. The rural districts especially remained faithful to idolatry. The monks succeeded at last in shaking their faith and converting them. Villages and entire tribes were led to the faith of Christ by the preaching of St. Hilarion in Syria, and of St. Moyse among the Saracens. Other monks converted the Phoenicians. St. Simeon Stylites saw, at the foot of his column, not only his compatriots the Syrians, but also Persians, Arabs, Armenians, and even men who had come from Spain, Britain, and Gaul, to look on that prodigy of austerity, that slayer of his own body. He rewarded them for their curiosity and admiration by preaching to them the Christian truth. They went away Christians. The Arabs came in bands of two or three hundred; and thousands among them, according to Theodoret, an eyewitness, enlightened by the light which descended from the column of the Stylite, abjured at his feet their idols and their vices, and returned Christians into their deserts.

With such men for chiefs and masters, the monks spread their own manner of life simultaneously with the instructions of the faith, into all Mesopotamia, into Armenia, and beyond the Euphrates as far as Persia and India; and the native Religious of these distant regions were seen arriving in bands to join the pilgrims of the West, of Africa,

and of Asia Minor, who came to adore at Jerusalem the traces of the passion of our Saviour.

### MARTYR MONKS IN PERSIA

These monks were not only missionaries, but often also martyrs of the faith among these idolatrous nations. One day that the sons of the king of Persia were at the chase, three monks were led before them who had been found taken in one of the immense nets which the royal huntsmen held over the surface of a whole country. At the sight of these shaggy and almost savage men, the princes asked one of them if he was a man or a spirit. The monk answered: "I am a man and a sinner, who am come here to weep for my sins, and to adore the living Son of God". The princes replied that there was no God but the sun: a controversy ensued, and ended by the execution of the three hermits, whom the young princes amused themselves by taking as a target for their arrows. The last and most illustrious of these martyrs was Anastasius, who was a soldier of Chosroes when the true cross was taken by that prince: the sight of the sacred wood made him a Christian; he went to Jerusalem to become a monk; taken prisoner by the Persians, he endured tortures and death clothed in his monk's robe, which he called his dress of glory.

Up to this period all these saints and monks lived in groups, under the sway of a discipline, always severe, but changeable, and varied according to the climates and individual instincts. This did not sufficiently preserve zeal from excess, nor weakness from scandalous falls. Certain primitive rules indeed existed, which circulated under the name of Anthony, of Macarius, of Pacome especially, and of his successor Orsiesus, but they had neither the authority nor the extent necessary to form a lasting legislation. Then God raised up a great man, St. Basil. His glory consists not only in having vanquished heresy and made head against emperors, but in having given to the monastic order a constitution which was shortly adopted by all the monks of the East.

### ST. BASIL. (329-379)

Born in Cappadocia of a rich and noble family educated with care at Caesarea, at Constantinople,—and above all at Athens, he had there contracted with his young compatriot, Gregory of Nazianzus, that indissoluble friendship, austere and impassioned, which fills so fine a page in the history of Christian affections and literature. "It was", says Gregory, "one soul which had two bodies. Eloquence, the thing in the world which excites the greater desire, inspired us with an equal ardour, but without raising any jealousy between us: we lived in each other. We knew only two paths: the first and the most beloved, that which led towards the Church and its doctors; the other less exalted, which conducted us to the school and our masters". Excited by the emulation which was born of that tender intimacy, Basil drank largely at the fountains of profane knowledge and philosophy. From these he drew enough of noble

pride to refuse all the dignities that were offered to him. But his sister Macrine, who, despite her rare beauty, in consequence of the death of her betrothed, remained a virgin, soon initiated him into a still higher and more disinterested philosophy. He quitted the schools to travel in search of the saints and monks: he lived with them in Egypt, in Palestine, and in Syria; he recognized the ideal of his soul, which was enamoured at once of intellect and piety, in these men, who appeared to him travellers here below and citizens of heaven. He made up his mind to live as they did; and having returned to his own country, he retired at twenty-six into his paternal domain, which was situated in Pontus.

It was a savage place, barred by profound forests from all access of men, situated at the foot of a mountain environed with woods, deep valleys, and a rapid river, which fell foaming over a precipice. In this cherished retreat, which his imagination, inspired by classic influences, compared to the isle of Calypso, he could cultivate at ease that taste for the study of God's grandeur and perfection in the works of Nature, which inspired him with his famous discourse upon the *Six days of Creation*, known under the name of the *Hexameron*. And there, seeing in the distance the Euxine Sea, he was naturally led to connect the various aspects and thousand sounds of the sea with those of the human crowd, which he believed himself to have left forever, and that contemplation dictated to him a passage too fine not to be quoted. "The sea offers us a lovely spectacle when its surface is bright, or when, rippling gently under the wind, it is tinted with purple and green: when, without beating violently upon the shore, it surrounds the earth, and caresses her with its wild embraces. But it is not this which constitutes in the eyes of God the grace and beauty of the sea; it is its works which make it beautiful. See here the immense reservoir of water which irrigates and fertilizes the earth, and which penetrates into her bosom to reappear in rivers, in lakes, and in refreshing fountains; for in traversing the earth it loses its bitterness, and is almost civilized by the distance it travels. Thou art beautiful, oh sea! because in thy vast bosom thou receivest all the rivers, and remainest between thy shores without ever overleaping them. Thou art beautiful, because the clouds rise from thee. Thou art beautiful with thine isles spread over thy surface, because thou unitest by commerce the most distant countries—because, instead of separating them, thou joinest the nations, and bearest to the merchant his wealth and to life its resources. But if the sea is beautiful before men and before God, how much more beautiful is that multitude, that human sea, which has its sounds and murmurs, voices of men, of women, and of children, resounding and rising up to the throne of God!"

Upon the other bank of the river Iris, the mother and sister of Basil, forgetting their nobility and wealth, prepared themselves for heaven, living on terms of complete equality with their servants and other pious virgins. He himself was followed into his retreat by the friend of his youth, by his two brothers, and an always increasing crowd of disciples. He then gave himself up entirely to austerities, to the study of sacred literature, and to the cultivation of the soil, eating only hard bread, lighting no fire, but fed and warmed by the ardour of his zeal for the service of God and the salvation of souls. In that rude apprenticeship he strengthened his soul for the great conflicts which raised him to the first rank among the doctors of the Church and holy pontiffs. When Julian the Apostate threatened the world with a return to that paganism which was

scarcely vanquished and for from being extirpated, St. Basil was drawn by force out of his solitude to be ordained a priest, and some years after was made Bishop of Caesarea. It is well known how he astonished the world by the superiority of his genius and his eminent virtue. Ecclesiastical history does not contain a more glorious episode than the narrative of his intrepid and calm resistance to the attempts of the Emperor Valens against the faith of Nicaea, and his celebrated conference with the prefect of the praetorium Modestus. "I have never met with so much boldness", said the minister of the imperial will. "Doubtless", answered the saint, "you have never met a bishop". On going out from that conference, the prime minister said to his master, "Sire, we are vanquished; this bishop is above menaces; we have no alternative but force". The emperor drew back, and the Church hailed Basil as the hero of the time. However, his great soul was as tender as strong; his unshaken faith longed always for a reconciliation with the misled Christians. Saddened by the divisions of the Church in the East, he passionately implored help from the West, from Pope Damasus, and, above all, from his illustrious rival in glory and courage, St. Athanasius. He understood so well the necessity of being gentle with the weak, that a certain leaning towards error was imputed to him, from which Athanasius defended him by two memorable epistles against the accusations of those extravagant minds, which are to be found in all ages, pusillanimous at the moment of peril, bold and implacable before and after the storm.

The monks whom he had trained were the most useful auxiliaries of orthodoxy against the Arians and semi-Arians, enemies of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost. They exercised the most salutary influence on all the clergy. Thus he continued to govern and multiply them, as priest and as bishop. He regarded them as the richest treasure of his diocese. He called them into his episcopal city; then, traversing the towns and plains of Pontus, he renewed the aspect of that province by collecting into regular monasteries the isolated monks, by regulating the exercise of prayer and psalmody, the care of the poor, and the practice of labour, and by opening numerous convents of nuns. He became thus the first type of those monk-bishops who subsequently became the benefactors of all Europe and the originators of Christian civilization in the West. He seemed to have had especially in view the union of active with contemplative life, and of connecting the monks with the clergy and Christian people that they might become its light and strength. Such is the spirit of his numerous writings upon monastic life, which demonstrate the grandeur of his genius, not less than his epistles and doctrinal works, which have gained him the name of the Christian Plato. Such especially appears his famous *Rule*, which shortly became the code of religious life, and was eventually the sole rule recognized in the East. Drawn out in the form of answers to two hundred and three different questions upon the obligations of the solitary life and upon the meaning of the most important texts of Holy Scripture, and partly adapted to communities of both sexes, it bore throughout the stamp of the good sense and moderation which characterized its author. It insisted upon the dangers of absolute solitude for humility and charity, upon the necessity of minute obedience, upon the abnegation of all personal property as of all individual inclination, and, above all, upon the perpetual duty of labour. He would not allow even fasting to be an obstacle to work: "If fasting hinders you from labour", says he, "it is better to eat like the workmen of Christ that you are". This was the pivot of monastic life, according to this patriarch of an institution, which so many ignorant and idle generations have not blushed to accuse

of indolence. “Athletes, workmen of Jesus Christ”, says this great bishop, “you have engaged yourselves to fight for Him all the day, to bear all its heat. Seek not repose before its end; wait for the evening, that is to say, the end of life, the hour at which the householder shall come to reckon with you, and pay you your wages”.

#### ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

There is a name inseparable from the great name of Basil, that of another doctor of the Church, Gregory of Nazianzus, the tender friend of Basil’s heart and youth, the companion of his studies and his retirement, the associate of his struggles and victories for orthodoxy, and, after his premature death, the celebrator of his glory. Like him, but not without a struggle, Gregory had renounced the world, reserving of all his temporal possessions only his eloquence, to employ it in the service of God. “I abandon to you all the rest”, said he, addressing himself to the pagans, at the moment when Julian interdicted to the Christians even the study of letters—“wealth, birth, glory, authority, and all possessions here below, the charm of which vanishes like a dream: but I put my hand upon eloquence, and regret none of the labours, nor journeys by land and sea which I have undertaken to acquire it”. And later he added, “One sole object in the world has possessed my heart: the glory of eloquence. I have sought it in all the earth, in the west, in the east, and especially at Athens, that ornament of Greece. I have laboured long years for it; but this glory also I come to lay at the feet of Christ, under the empire of that divine word which effaces and throws into the shade the perishable and changeful form of all human thought”. He had besides shared with Basil his solitary and laborious life, and when they were both drawn from that to be condemned to the still more painful toils of the episcopate, Gregory loved to recall to his friend the pleasant times when they cultivated together their monastic garden. “Who shall bring back to us”, he wrote to his friend, “those days when we laboured together from morning till evening? when sometimes we cut wood, sometimes we hewed stones? when we planted and watered our trees, when we drew together that heavy wagon, the marks of which have so long remained on our hands?”. He was called to Constantinople to confound the heretics there; and it is well known what glory he won by his courage and that eloquence which had at last found its true element, and how the will of the Emperor Theodosius, and the suffrages of the second ecumenical council, elevated him, in spite of himself, to the patriarchal chair, where he would employ against the Arians only the weapons of persuasion. “Let us never be insolent when the times are favourable”, he had already said to the orthodox, delivered from the persecution of Julian—“let us never show ourselves hard to those who have done us wrong: let us not imitate the acts which we have blamed. Let us rejoice that we have escaped from peril, and abhor everything that tends to reprisals. Let us not think of exiles and proscriptions; drag no one before the judge; let not the whip remain in our hands; in a word, do nothing like that which you have suffered”. He descended from that elevation as promptly as he could, happy to leave the centre of theological dissensions, and of that corruption the excesses of which he had depicted with so much boldness and grief. It was to re-enter into a rustic solitude in his native country. There he ended his life, after two years divided between the



hardest austerities of monastic life and the cultivation of poetry, which he continued to pursue, that the pagans might not be left in sole possession of the palm of literature, and also to give a free course to the noble and delicate sadness of his soul. His graceful, melancholy, and sometimes sublime verses have gained him a place almost as high as his profound knowledge of divine things; and the monastic order may boast of having produced in him the father of Christian poetry, as well as the doctor who has merited the name of Theologian of the East.

No other man had painted monastic life with an admiration so impassioned as the illustrious friend of Basil in his discourse upon the death of Julian, in that passage where he apostrophizes him as the enemy of the Church, confronting him with “those men who are on earth, yet above the earth, ... at once bound and free, subdued and unsubduable, ... who have two lives, one which they despise, another which alone fills all their thoughts ; become immortal by mortification; strangers to all desire, and full of the calm of divine love; who drink at the fountain of its light, and already reflect its rays; whose angelical psalmodes fill all the watches of the night, and whose rapturous souls already emigrate towards heaven; ... solitary, and mingling in the concerts of another life, chastising all voluptuousness, but plunged in ineffable delights; whose tears drown sin and purify the world; whose extended hands stay the flames, tame the beasts, blunt the swords, overturn the battalions, and come now, be assured, to confound thy impiety, even though thou shouldst escape some days, and play thy comedy with thy demons”.

Thus, a century after Anthony had inaugurated cenobitical life in the deserts of Egypt, it was firmly established in Asia Minor, and carried as far as the shores of the Euxine, by Basil and his illustrious friend. From that time no province of the Oriental Church was without monks. They established themselves like an orthodox garrison in the midst and at the gates of Constantinople, the principal centre of the heresies which desolated the Church in the fourth century. Acquiring in solitude and labour that strength which contemporary society, enslaved and degraded by the imperial rule, had lost, the monks and nuns formed already an entire nation, with the rule of Basil for their code; a nation distinct at once from the clergy and from the common believers; a new and intrepid people, spreading everywhere, and multiplying unceasingly, and in which neither the friends nor the enemies of the Church could fail to recognize her principal force.

Her enemies especially did not deceive themselves violent on this score, and from thence arose a permanent and desperate opposition against the new institution. This arose from various sources, but the efforts and results by which it showed itself were identical. The pagans and Arians, who, united, formed the great majority of the population of the empire, showed equal virulence. All the savants, philosophers, and men of letters among the pagans, were emulous in their protest. The impassioned activity of the monks against idolatry, their efforts, more and more successful, to extirpate it from the heart of the rural population, naturally exasperated the last defenders of the idols. Besides, the voluntary suffering which they preached and practiced, the subjection to which they reduced their bodies, the war which they declared with nature, were the antipodes of Greek wisdom. All the wit that remained in that worn-out society was exercised at their expense. The rhetorician Libanus pursued



them with his mockeries, accused them of making their virtue consist in wearing mourning, and hoped to wound them by calling them *black men*. The sophist Eunapius lamented that it was enough for any one, as he says, to appear in public with a black robe, in order to exercise tyrannical authority with impunity. He depicted the monks as men whose lives were not only base but criminal. The echo that all these sarcasms would awaken amid the corruption of the two Romes may be supposed. But amongst these vain protests of a vanquished world, those who went farthest in rage and rancour against the Religious were the rich, and heads of families, who saw their children and heirs abandon them to bury themselves in solitude and penitence; for it was then, as it has always been since, in the bosoms of the most opulent families that these sacrifices were consummated.

The Arians were still more implacable than the pagans. The tendency of these enemies of the divinity of Christ was in everything to abuse, degrade, and restrain the spirit of Christianity. How should the monastic life, which was its most magnificent development, escape their fury? The war between them and the monks was therefore long and cruel. The emperors came their accomplices. The persecution which paganism had scarcely time to light up to its own advantage under Julian, was pitiless under the Arian Constantius, and more skilful, without being more victorious, under the Arian Valens. In the time of Constantius entire monasteries, with the monks they contained, were burnt in Egypt; and after the death of Athanasius, in the frightful persecution which the intruder Lucius, imposed by Valens, raised in Alexandria, a troop of imperial soldiers ravaged the solitude of Nitria, and massacred its inhabitants. Twenty-three monks and eleven bishops, all children of the desert, are named among the confessors of the orthodox faith who were then condemned to the mines or to banishment. The slavery of the unfortunate rich men whom the imperial government condemned to fill municipal offices under the name of *curials* and of *decurions*, and to be held perpetually responsible to the treasury, is known. In that age of fetters, this chain seemed the hardest of all. Many sought to break it by taking refuge in the voluntary servitude of the cloister. The Arians profited by that pretext to suggest to the Emperor Valens a law which commanded the Count of the East to search out the deserts of the Thebaid, and seize these men, whom he calls loose deserters, in order to send them back to their civil obligations. Another law of the same emperor, inspired by the same spirit, endeavoured to compel the monks to military service, and beat to death those who refused to enrol themselves. A great number were sacrificed for this cause in Nitria. Most of the magistrates gladly executed these sovereign orders; and the monks were everywhere snatched from their retreats, surrounded, imprisoned, beaten, and exposed to most tyrannical harassments. These legal cruelties encouraged the violence of private persons who were animated by hatred of the faith of Nicaea or of Christian virtue. Under pretext of penetrating into the monasteries, and bringing out of them the young monks fit for military service, bands of ruffians forced their gates, invaded their cells, seized the monks, and threw them forth into the streets or upon the highways; and each boasted of having been the first to denounce a monk, to strike him, or to cast him into a dungeon. “It is intolerable”, said these friends of humanity, “to see men free and noble, healthy and strong, masters of all the joys of this world, condemn themselves to a life so hard and so revolting”.

Thus the philosophers and the emperors, the heretics and the profligates, were leagued against the cenobites, and the invectives of the one had for a corollary the violence of the others. And even among orthodox Christians there were critical spirits: these reproached the new institutions with withdrawing its disciples from public life; depriving society of the beneficent influence of those who were best qualified to serve it; stealing away from their duties men born for the good of their neighbours and their kind; and, in short, opening too honourable an asylum to indolence, unworthiness, and hypocrisy.

### ST. JOHN CRYSTOSTOM

It was then that God raised for the defence of his servants another great man, greater by his eloquence than any hitherto appeared in the Church—St. John Chrysostom, the Christian Cicero. Born at Antioch, his friend and the companion of his studies was a young man who desired to embrace the monastic profession, and who had proposed to him to prelude it by life in common. But he himself was destined for the bar and public life. He was, besides, retained in the world by the love of his mother, who besought him not to render her a widow for the second time. Suddenly the two friends were chosen as bishops. Then John, convinced of his unworthiness, abandoned at once the world, his friend, and his mother, and escaped ordination by flying into solitude. But in that solitude he discovered a new world. It was in the mountains near Antioch that he sought a retreat, and these mountains were already peopled by monks, emulators of the disciples of Anthony and Basil. The ardent young man took one of them, an old Syrian of formidable austerity, for his master and guide in monastic life, and devoted four years to that spiritual education. Then he passed two years alone, secluded in a cavern, exclusively occupied in subduing his passions, which he compares to wild beasts. It is thus that he prepared unawares the power of that eloquence which was to delight his contemporaries, make the very churches echo with the applauses which it raised, and draw out of the cities a crowd intoxicated with the happiness of hearing him, and scarcely sheltered from the ardour of the sun by vast awnings suspended over them. But, above all, it was in this rude apprenticeship that he learned to know the combats and victories of the monks. He derived from this the right and the power of speaking the truth concerning their life, and in 376, at the height of the persecution of Valens, he wrote his three books *Against the Adversaries of Monastic Life*, which carried his fame afar, and vindicated innocence and uprightness with the incomparable eloquence of which his name has become the symbol.

He shows, in the first place, by the example of the Jews and pagan emperors, the terrible chastisements which are incurred by persecution of the saints and friends of God. He addresses himself then to those fathers whom the conversion of their sons had rendered furious, and who cried out, I burn, I rend, I burst with rage! He shows them, by examples borrowed even from profane history, the grandeur and fertility of sacrifice, labour, and solitude. He paints to us one of these young and noble lords, who might then be seen clothed more miserably than the meanest of their slaves, labouring barefooted on the earth, lying down upon hard couches, emaciated by fasting, and he asks

triumphantly if there had ever been a greater or more noble victory of human courage than that sacrifice of all worldly possessions for the possessions of the soul. Then turning to the Christian parents who have been persuaded to mingle their lamentations with the rage of the pagan fathers, he crushes them under the weight of the divine authority and reason enlightened by faith. That admirable invective against the parents who, opposing the vocation of their children, enslave and kill their souls, a thousand times more cruel than those who murder their sons or sell them as slaves to the barbarians, should be quoted entire. He exhorts them ardently to confide the education of their sons to the solitaries—to those *men of the mountain* whose lessons he himself had received. He grants that they might afterwards return to the world, but only after having initiated them thus in Christian virtue, for the monasteries were the sole asylums for purity of manners in the midst of universal corruption. These are, he says, refuges destined to fill up the abyss which separates the ideal of the law of Christ from the reality of the manners of Christians; certainly he would turn no one from public life or social duties, if society was faithful to its duties; monasteries would be useless if the cities were Christian. But they were not so, and to prove it, the holy doctor drew a picture of the corruption which he had witnessed at Antioch and elsewhere.

Nothing could be more repulsive than these manners, which reproduced all the excesses of ancient debauchery in their most revolting refinements. How deeply everything was poisoned in that empire, still so dazzling for its strength and immensity—how little the conversion of the emperors had converted the world—and how miserable was the condition of souls and consciences amid that over-vaunted alliance of the Church and the empire—is seen there. Society was Christian only in name; the heart and mind remained pagan. In the East especially, where the bishops and clergy were infested by stubborn and incessantly renewed heresies, and where the government of souls was either absorbed or rendered impossible by the perils of orthodoxy, the monks alone offered to Christian virtue a resource and a hope. Thus their intrepid apologist never names monastic life otherwise than as the true philosophy. It was this that made simple Christians more powerful than emperors, because it put them above the vices which ravaged the empire; and he develops this idea in an admirable supplement to the three books of his apology, where he establishes a comparison between the power, the wealth, and the excellence of a king, and those of a monk living in the true and Christian philosophy. He compares them in war and in peace, in their daily and nightly occupations, in prosperity and in adversity, in life and in death; and he awards the palm of incontestable superiority to the potentate who has the privilege of delivering souls from the tyranny of the devil by his prayers alone.

These magnificent pleadings sum up all the arguments in favour of monastic life with an eloquence which remains always true. They have never been better expressed; and it is enough to re-read and repeat them, against the same objections, the same sophisms, the same falsehoods perpetually reproduced. After the lapse of fifteen centuries, we find these noble words always opportune and conclusive; because in that constantly renewed struggle between the friends and enemies of monastic life, it is the unvarying ground of human nature—it is the soul and its life by love and faith—it is the eternal revolt of evil against the sole influence which insures victory and fertility to goodness, the spirit of sacrifice—which are brought in question.

The great and celebrated doctor did not content himself with this brilliant stroke. He continued, during all the course of his career, to defend and extol the monastic institution, not only as he admired it in the Thebaid, where the tabernacles of the cenobites shone, as he says, with a splendour purer than that of the stars in heaven, but, even such as it was seen, with its infirmities and divisions already apparent, throughout the East. Almost all his works bear the trace of this predilection; but it is nowhere more visible than in his Ninety Homilies upon St. Matthew, preached during his sojourn at Antioch, from which we shall quote a curious passage, which is strangely and sadly seasonable even in our own time.

He here sets forth the effect which the contrast of monastic life with the feasts, pomps, debauches, and prodigalities of wealth should produce upon the souls of the poor. He supposes a man of the lower classes transported suddenly into the midst of the theatres of Constantinople, where voluptuousness used all its resources to stimulate the sated appetite of the wealthy classes of the Lower Empire, and he adds : “The poor man will be irritated by that spectacle; he will say to himself, ‘See what profligates, what debauchees—children perhaps of butchers or shoemakers, and even of slaves—see what luxury they display; whilst I, a free man, born of free parents, who gain my living by honest labour—I cannot enjoy such happiness even in a dream’; and so saying he goes away, penetrated with rage and sadness. But among the monks he experiences an entirely contrary impression. There he sees the sons of the rich, the offspring of the most illustrious races, clad in garments which the poorest would not wear, and joyful of that mortification. Think how much more pleasant his poverty will appear to him! When the courtesan at the theatre exhibits herself all adorned and jewelled, the poor man mutters with rage, thinking that his own wife neither wears nor possesses any such ornaments; and the rich man returns to his house inflamed by his recollections, and already the captive of his guilty desires, to scorn and ill-use his wife. But those who return from visiting the monks bring with them only peace and happiness: the wife finds her husband delivered from all unjust covetousness, more gentle, more accommodating, more tender than before; the poor man consoles himself in his poverty, and the rich learn virtue and abstinence”.

Doubtless, this striking vindication did not put an end to the persecutions of which the monks were victims. They continued to be slandered, vexed, and cruelly treated whenever, as often happened, the imperial power became the prey or the instrument of heresy. A law of Valentinian II ordained, in 390, that all the monks should leave the towns, where they had become more and more numerous since the time of Basil, and retire into the desert. But it was abrogated by Theodosius.

Chrysostom, whose life we do not undertake to relate, was afterwards raised to the See of Constantinople. He gained there the admiration of the whole Church by the heroism of his long martyrdom. He employed all his authority to protect the monks, as also to maintain regularity in the order. With one hand he severely repressed the vagabond monks, who fled from discipline, yet pretended to keep up the exterior and the respect due to their order; on the other, he entered into relations with the Religious who were already to be found among the Goths, with whom the empire began to be inundated, and sent monks to Phoenicia to labour there for the extirpation of paganism from that country.

However, this great champion of the honour and liberty of the monks was not destined to find among all of them the gratitude which he merited. In these violent struggles against the abuses and injustice of Byzantine government, spiritual and temporal, which gained him from the historian Zosimus the name of demagogue—which inflamed against him the imbecile jealousy of the Emperor Arcadius, the wounded pride of the Empress Eudoxia, and the interested rage of the courtiers and the rich, and which twice thrust him from his patriarchal see—Chrysostom had won the sympathies of the people, who often rose on his behalf. But he had constantly to contend, not only against simoniacal bishops and a servile clergy, but even against monks who too often mingled in the intrigues and violence of which he was the victim. He has himself related to us how, during the cruel fatigues of his exile, the short interval of hospitable repose which he hoped to find at Caesarea was disturbed by a horde of monks, or rather of ferocious beasts, placed there by a courtier bishop, who terrified the clergy and even the soldiers of the garrison, and succeeded in expelling him from the city in all the heat of a fever by which he was devoured, and at the risk of falling into the hands of the Isaurian brigands who ravaged the country. But the violence of wretches, unworthy of the name and robe they bore, drew from him no recrimination, and especially no retractation of the praise which he had up to that time lavished on the true monks. He had a soul too just and too lofty to forget for a personal wrong all the examples of monastic courage and virtue with which his memory was stored. He especially loved to recall that he had seen the hermits of Antioch, whose disciple and advocate he had been, quit their mountains and caverns to console and encourage the inhabitants of Antioch threatened by the bloody vengeance of Theodosius. While the philosophers of the town went to hide themselves in the desert, the inhabitants of the desert issued from it to brave and partake the common danger. In the midst of the universal consternation they appeared before the ministers of imperial wrath like lions, says Chrysostom, and made them suspend the execution of the pitiless sentence.

“Go”, said one of the monks, a simple and unlettered man, to the commissioners of Theodosius, “go and say from me to the emperor: you are an emperor, but you are a man, and you command men who are your fellow-creatures, and who are made in the image of God. Fear the wrath of the Creator if you destroy His work. You, who are so much displeased when your images are overthrown, shall God be less if you destroy His? Your statues of bronze are made anew and replaced, but when you shall have killed men, the images of God, how can you resuscitate the dead, or even restore a hair of their head?”. Having said this, and the judge yielding, they left the city and returned into their solitude.

#### TELEMACHUS THE MONK

The same year which saw the barbarity of the monks of Caesarea toward St. John Chrysostom is to forever memorable in the annals of humanity by the heroic sacrifice of an Eastern monk. In its desperate struggle against the religion which was to avenge and save the human race from its long decline, paganism had found a popular and strong refuge in the public spectacles. These circus games, which had been the price of Roman



servitude, faithfully paid by the emperors to a degraded people, but which were as sanguinary as amid the struggles of her warlike history, preserved their fatal ascendancy over the hearts, the imaginations, and the habits of the Roman people. In vain had the doctors and defenders of the Christian faith expended since Tertullian their most generous efforts and unwearied eloquence against this remnant of the vanquished civilization. In vain they represented to the disciples of the Gospel, the horror of these bloody games, in which so many thousand martyrs of every age, sex, and country had perished, and where the devil unceasingly recruited new victims, voluntarily enslaved to luxury and cruelty, for the innumerable spectators. In vain, at last, the sovereign authority sanctioned the prohibitions of the Church. The public taste had stubbornly maintained its favourite recreation during all the fourth century against the Church and the emperors. The combats of the gladiators were still the delight of Roman decadence. St. Augustine has left a striking picture of the infatuation which mastered their souls, when, like Alypius, they allowed themselves to be intoxicated by the bloodshed in the amphitheatre, the fumes of which transformed into pagans, into savages, the most intelligent and worthy spectators. Under the reign of Honorius, the Christian poet Prudentius demanded in eloquent verse the abolition of that cruel scandal. "Let no one die again to delight us with his agonies! Let the odious arena, content with its wild beasts, give man no more for a bloody spectacle. Let Rome, vowed to God, worthy of her prince, and powerful by her courage, be powerful also by her innocence".

The weak Honorius, far from listening to this appeal, had, on the occasion of his sixth consulate, restored to life an entirely pagan institution, the celebration of the secular games, and had specially included in it the combats of gladiators. When the announcement of these games had been published everywhere in all the empire, and had thus penetrated into the deserts, a monk, until then unknown, named Telemachus, of Nitria according to some, of Phrygia according to others, took one of those resolutions, the simple grandeur and immense results of which appear only after their accomplishment. He left his cell, travelled from the depths of the East to Rome, arrived there in time to be present at the imperial solemnities, entered the Colosseum, burst through the waves of people all palpitating with a ferocious curiosity, and threw himself between the gladiators engaged in combat. The indignant spectators pursued this untimely interruption, this fool, this black fanatic, first with furious clamours, then with blows of stones and sticks. Stoned like the first martyrs of Christianity, Telemachus fell, and the gladiators whom he had desired to separate, completed the work. But his blood was the last shed in that arena where so much had flowed. The nobleness of his sacrifice showed the full horror of the abuse which he would have overthrown. An edict of Honorius proscribed forever the games of gladiators. From that day it is no more heard of in history. The crime of so many centuries was extinguished by the blood of a monk, who happened to be a hero.

But we must here leave the monks of the East. They have occupied us thus far only as the precursors and models of the monks of the West. It is not our task to relate the conflicts, often generous, which they had to wage during the fifth and sixth centuries against the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, one of which contested the unity of the person of Jesus Christ, and the other the duality of His nature, which ravaged successively the Church of the East, and which were sustained with perseverance and



obstinacy by almost all the emperors and patriarchs of Constantinople. Nor shall we need to contemplate the sad decline of their strength and virtue, to the state of stagnation, and then of decay, which became by degrees the dominant character of monastic life in the East.

Doubtless there still remained, after the glorious names which we have quoted up to this point, some names honoured and dear to the Church. St. Dalmatius, St. Euthymius, St. Sabas, St. Theodosius, St. John Climachus, and others, filled with the odour of their virtues the monasteries of Constantinople, the solitudes of the Thebaid, the lauras of the environs of Jerusalem, and the peaks and gorges of Sinai. In the struggles which demanded so much heroic patience, constant vigilance, and calm and intrepid courage; against the pride and blindness of the emperors, the passionate presumption of the empresses, and the bad faith and envy of the patriarchs of Constantinople, the orthodox popes and bishops found zealous and faithful auxiliaries among the monks of the East. Many suffered martyrdom in defence of the dogmas which had been established by the General Councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople. Let us give a word of recollection in passing to that monk of the monastery of Studius, near the golden gate of Byzantium, who, in the conflict between Pope Felix III and the patriarch Acacius, had alone the courage to publish the decree of excommunication pronounced against the latter by the pope and sixty-seven bishops of Italy. As the patriarch was on his way to church to celebrate pontifical mass, this monk attached to his mantle the sentence which condemned him, and thus made him carry it himself to the foot of the altar and before all the people. He paid for this boldness with his life. History has not preserved his name, but has glorified his example, which, however, had scarcely any imitators.

For it must be admitted that, by means of theological discussions and subtleties, the spirit of intrigue and revolt introduced itself into the monasteries. Eutychius himself was a monk and abbot of Constantinople, and after him the Eutychians and the Origenists made numerous recruits in the monastic ranks: they appeared under the monastic habit as under the episcopal tiara, in the synods and in the councils. Among the true servants of God, false brethren glided in almost everywhere, raising with warmth condemnable or extravagant opinions. Others, more numerous still, wandered from town to town, or from house to house, and thus casting off all discipline, compromised at once the sanctity of their institution and the dignity of their robe. Their superiors, spiritual and temporal, used their authority in vain to repress that abuse, which reappeared perpetually.

To bring a remedy to these scandals and dangers, and with the formally acknowledged intention of restraining all these vagabond and turbulent monks, the General Council of Chalcedon, on the proposition of the Emperor Marcian, decreed that no monastery should be built henceforward without the consent of the bishop of the diocese, and that the monks, as much in the towns as in the country, should submit to the episcopal authority in everything, under pain of excommunication. They were expressly interdicted from going out of the monastery where they had been first received, and from mixing themselves with any ecclesiastical or secular business. After having renewed an ancient prohibition against the marriage of monks, the Council

ordained besides that every monastery, once consecrated by the bishop, should preserve its special destination in perpetuity, and could never become a secular habitation.

These enactments became from that time part of the common law of Christendom, and must be kept in remembrance, because we shall have afterwards to record the numerous infractions to which they were subjected. Besides, they did not exercise upon the monks of the East a sufficiently efficacious influence to maintain them at the height of early times. After an age of unparalleled virtue and fruitfulness—after having presented to the monastic life of all ages, not only immortal models, but also a kind of ideal almost unattainable—the monastic order allowed itself to be overcome, through all the Byzantine empire, by that enfeeblement and sterility of which Oriental Christianity has been the victim. One by one, these glorious centres of light, knowledge, and life, which the Anthonys, the Hilarious, the Basils, and the Chrysostoms, had animated with their celestial light, were extinguished, and disappeared from the pages of history. While the monks of the West, under the vivifying influence of the Roman See, strove victoriously against the corruption of the ancient world, converted and civilized barbarous nations, transformed and purified the new elements, preserved the treasures of ancient literature, and maintained the traditions of all the secret and profane sciences, the monks of the East sank gradually into nothingness. Intoxicated by the double influence of courtierism and theological discord, they yielded to all the deleterious impulses of that declining society, of whose decay despotism was at once the result and the chastisement, and the laxness of whose morals gave an irresistible ascendancy to all the caprices of power, and constant impunity to its excesses. They could neither renovate the society which surrounded them, nor take possession of the pagan nations which snatched away every day some new fragment of the empire. They knew no better how to preserve the Church from the evil influences of the Byzantine spirit. Even the deposit of ancient knowledge escaped from their debilitated hands. They have saved nothing, regenerated nothing, elevated nothing.

They ended, like all the clergy of the East, by becoming slaves of Islamism and accomplices of schism. Since then, fifteen centuries have passed over their heads without interrupting their downfall for a single day, or preparing a regenerator for the future. It has been with religion as with the glory of arms and the splendour of letters. Following a mysterious but incontestable law, it is always from the East to the West that progress, light, and strength have gone forth. Like the light of day, they are born in the East, but rise and shine more and more in proportion as they advance towards the West.

As the empire of the world passed from the Asiatics to the Greeks, and from the Greeks to the Romans, the truth passed from Jerusalem to Rome. Monastic life, like the Church, was founded in the East; but, like the Church also, acquired its true form only in the West. We must follow and study it there, to admire its complete and lasting grandeur.

### BOOK III

#### MONASTIC PRECURSORS IN THE WEST

The monastic stream, which had been born in the deserts of Egypt, divided itself into two great arms. The one spread in the East, at first inundated everything, then concentrated and lost itself there. The other escaped into the West, and spread itself by a thousand channels over an entire world which had to be covered and fertilized. We must return upon our track to follow it. Its beginnings are certainly less ancient and less brilliant, but the bed which it hollowed for itself is, on the other hand, deeper and more prolonged.

First of all, we anew encounter Athanasius, whom we have seen associated with the great patriarchs of the cenobites—the guest, the disciple, and the client of Anthony, the defender of Basil. His life is well known. Exile was then the portion of the confessors of the faith, but it was also the means chosen by God to spread afar the seed of virtue and truth. Constantine, who troubled the Church after having delivered it, inflicted that penalty first upon Athanasius. Constantius and the Arians subjected him to it so often, that he might be said to have lived almost as much in exile as in his see. He returned there always calm and intrepid, happy to be the victim and not the author of these violences which always mark the weakness of an evil cause. Twice persecution constrained him to take refuge in the Thebaid, and three times an imperial order exiled him to the West. He became thus the natural link between the Fathers of the desert and those vast regions which their successors were to conquer and transform. Victor over Arianism by the strength of faith, courage, and patience alone, sustained by the popes against the emperors and bishops unfaithful to the divinity of Jesus, it belonged to him more than to any other to introduce the monastic institution to Rome, the head and centre of the Church, which could no longer remain a stranger to this new and wonderful development of Christian life. It was in 340 that he came for the first time to Rome, in order to escape the violence of the Arians, and invoke the protection of Pope Julius. This pope convoked the adversaries of the bishop of Alexandria to a council, from which they drew back, knowing that if they appeared, they should there encounter a truly ecclesiastical tribunal, where there should be neither count nor soldiers at the doors, nor orders of the emperor.

While the pope and the council (A.D. 341) did justice to the glorious defender of the divinity of Christ, he spread in Rome the first report of the life led by the monks in the Thebaid, of the marvellous exploits of Anthony, who was still alive, of the immense

foundations which Pacome was at that time forming upon the banks of the higher Nile. He had brought with him two of the most austere of these monks. The one was Ammonius, so absorbed in the contemplation of divine things that he did not deign to visit any of the wonders of Rome, except the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul; the other, Isidore, gained all hearts by his amiable simplicity. These two served as guarantees of the truth of his tale, and as types to the Romans who might be tempted to follow their example. Monastic life, however, was not completely unknown in Rome. Traces of its existence are visible during the last persecutions, in the Acts of the martyrs: they have preserved to us the story of St. Aglae, a noble and rich Roman lady, who lived a luxurious and disorderly life with Boniface, the first among seventy-three intendants who aided her to govern her vast domains. After that guilty *lasion* had lasted several years, Aglae, moved by compunction, and having heard the Christians say that those who honoured the holy martyrs should share their protection before the tribunal of God, sent Boniface to the East, to seek there the relics of some martyr, in order to build them an oratory. "Madame", said the intendant to his mistress, at his departure, "if my relics come to you under the name of a martyr, will you receive them?". She reproved that pleasantry, but it was a promise: he died a martyr at Tarsus, after cruel tortures, voluntarily undergone. His body was brought to Aglae, who received it with great and tender respect; and after having deposited it in a chapel, built at the distance of fifty stadia from Rome, she distributed all her goods to the poor, obtained thus the boon of a complete conversion, and took the veil as a nun, with some women who desired, like her, to devote themselves to penitence. She lived thus thirteen years in the retirement of the cloister; and after her sanctity had been manifested by more than one miracle, she died and was buried in the chapel of St. Boniface.

At the peace of the Church, a daughter of Constantine had founded a first monastery of women above the tomb of St. Agnes, on the very site where, having won immortality in the memory of men by braving the judges and murderers of the empire, that young conqueror appeared, in the midst of an army of virgins, white and dazzling, to the weeping parents, to give them assurance of her eternal happiness.

The narratives of Athanasius had, notwithstanding, all the effect of a revelation. They roused the hearts and imaginations of the Romans, and especially of the Roman women. The name of monk, to which popular prejudice seems already to have attached a kind of ignominy, became immediately an honoured and envied title. The impression produced at first by the exhortations of the illustrious exile, was extended and strengthened during the two other visits which he made to the Eternal City. Sometime afterwards, on the death of St. Anthony, Athanasius, at the request of his disciples, wrote the life of the patriarch of the Thebaid; and this biography, circulating through all the West, immediately acquired there the popularity of a legend, and the authority of a confession of faith. Athanasius, to the eyes of all the western Christians, was the hero of the age and the oracle of the Church. His genius and courage had raised him to the pinnacle of glory. How much credit that glory would add to his tale, and to the instructions which flowed from it, is apparent. Under this narrative form, says St. Gregory of Nazianzus, he promulgated the laws of monastic life.

The town and environs of Rome were soon full of monasteries, rapidly occupied by men distinguished alike by birth, fortune, and knowledge, who lived there in charity,

sanctity, and freedom. From Rome the new institution, already distinguished by the name of *religion*, or *religious life*, *par excellence*, extended itself overall Italy. It was planted at the foot of the Alps by the influence of a great bishop, Eusebius of Vercelli, who had, like Athanasius, gloriously confessed the faith against the Arians, and who, exiled like him, had sought in the Thebaid the same models which the bishop of Alexandria had revealed to Rome. It is thus that the Arian persecution, and the exile of the confessors of the faith, carried afar and fructified the monastic seed. The history of this time might be summed up in the celebrated phrase of Tertullian, thus modified: "*Exilium confessorum semen monachorum*". Returned to Italy, Eusebius gave the first example, often imitated since, and always with success, of confiding to monks the care of the worship in his cathedral. From the continent the new institution rapidly gained the isles of the Mediterranean, and even the rugged rocks of the Gorgon and of Capraja, where the monks, voluntarily exiled from the world, went to take the place of the criminals and political victims whom the emperors had been accustomed to banish thither. The monks of the Gorgon might one day be seen embarking and hastening to meet the relics of St. Julia, a noble virgin of Carthage, brought into slavery by the Vandals of Genseric, and afterwards martyred by the pagans at Cape Corso, where her master, a Syrian merchant, had stopped to sacrifice. When they had possessed themselves of this treasure, they bore it away into their nest of rocks, flying over the waves with full sails, in their frail skiff, like birds of the sea. The earth and the sea had to recognize new guests and new masters.

From that time, and during all the second half of the fourth century, there was a great and admirable movement towards spiritual and penitential life in Rome, and throughout Italy. The Spirit of God breathed upon souls. It was, above all, in the midst of the Roman nobility that the words of Athanasius fell like thunder, and inspired all hearts. These old patrician races, which founded Rome, which had governed her during all her period of splendour and liberty, and which overcame and conquered the world, had expiated for four centuries, under the atrocious yoke of the Caesars, all that was most hard and selfish in the glory of their fathers. Cruelly humiliated, disgraced, and decimated during that long servitude, by the masters whom degenerate Rome had given herself, they found at last in Christian life, such as was practised by the monks, the dignity of sacrifice and the emancipation of the soul. These sons of the old Romans threw themselves into it with the magnanimous fire and persevering energy which had gained for their ancestors the empire of the world. "Formerly", says St. Jerome, "according to the testimony of the apostle, there were few rich, few noble, few powerful among the Christians. Now it is no longer so. Not only among the Christians, but among the monks are to be found a multitude of the wise, the noble, and the rich".

They thus purified all that was too human in their wounded souls, by virtues unknown to their fathers—by humility, chastity, charity, scorn of self and tenderness for the misery of others, the love of a crucified God, whose image and rights were recalled by the poor, the sick, and the slave. All these divine novelties came to revive in these great hearts the masculine traditions of austerity, of abnegation, of sobriety and disinterestedness, which had shone like an aureole around the cradle of their ancient splendour. The monastic institution offered them a field of battle where the struggles and victories of their ancestors could be renewed and surpassed for a loftier cause, and

over enemies more redoubtable. The great men whose memory hovered still over degenerate Rome had contended only with men, and subjugated only their bodies: their descendants undertook to strive with devils, and to conquer souls.

Even for their merely human glory, and the great names which crushed them by their weight, what better could the most superstitious votary of the worship of ancestors desire for them. Political power, temporal grandeur, aristocratic influence, were lost forever amid the universal debasement. God called them to be the ancestors of a new people, gave them a new empire to found, and permitted them to bury and transfigure the glory of their forefathers in the bosom of the spiritual regeneration of the old world.

These great names, which had disappeared from history amid the debasement of the empire, reappear thus to throw forth a last ray which should never grow dim, by identifying themselves with the inextinguishable splendours of the new law.

The Roman nobility then brought into Rome, and reproduced there, a brilliant example of the marvels of the Thebaid. The vast and sumptuous villas of the senators and consuls were changed into houses of retirement, almost in every point conformed to monasteries, where the descendants of the Scipios, the Gracchi, the Marcelli, the Camilli, the Anicii, led in solitude a life of sacrifice and charity. The bearers of these great names did not always shut themselves up in that retirement, but they dignified themselves with the title of monk, adopting the coarse dress, selling their goods, or bestowing them on the poor, lying down upon hard couches, fasting all their life, and keeping in the active ministrations of charity a rule as austere as that of the cloister.

They were seen to mingle with the senatorial purple their mantle of coarse gray cloth, and to make plebeians of themselves in costume, trampling human respect under foot, which appeared then the most difficult of victories, for St. Jerome says, "Men have been known to resist torments, who yielded to shame. It is not a small thing for a man, noble, eloquent, and rich, to avoid in public places the society of the powerful, in order to mix among the crowd, to identify himself with the poor, to associate with peasants, and being a prince to make himself one of the people".

But the metamorphosis which certain great ladies of Rome had undergone, was still more admirable. These women, hitherto so proud of their noble birth, and so refined in their delicacy, who, as St. Jerome says, could not proceed a step except carried in a litter by eunuchs, and who even then could not endure the inequalities of the ground which they had thus to traverse, who found the weight of a silken robe too heavy, and fled from the least ray of the sun as from a conflagration, are shortly to be seen devoting themselves to the hardest labour's and the most repulsive cares.

### *The family Anicia*

Among the great houses which exemplified this Christian transformation of the Roman nobility, the family Anicia, which reckoned its descent back to the best times of the republic, and which seems to have been the richest and most powerful in Rome at the end of the fourth century, should be especially distinguished. It reckoned then



among its members the famous Anicius Petronius Probus, who was prefect of the praetorium—that is to say, the first personage in the empire after the emperor, and whose son Petronius, was, according to some, a monk before he came bishop of Bologna. It afterwards produced the two greatest personages of monastic history, St. Benedict and St. Gregory the Great; and already the two most illustrious doctors of the West, St. Jerome and St. Augustine, vied in celebrating the glory of a race, in which every man seemed born a consul, yet which had given a still greater number of virgins to the Church than of consuls to the republic.

### *Demetrias*

Their enthusiasm had for its object a young nun of the same race, Demetrias, whose grandfather, brother, and two uncles were consuls from 371 to 406. After the conquest of Rome by the Goths, she took refuge in Africa with her mother Juliana and her grandmother Proba. While Proba sought to unite her to one of the young Roman nobles who were their companions in exile, the virgin Demetrias, inspired by a recollection of St. Agnes, threw aside all her ornaments, clothed herself in a coarse tunic, and a veil still coarser which concealed her face, and threw herself, in that attire, at the feet of her grandmother, explaining herself only by tears. After the first moment of surprise, the mother and grandmother applauded the sacrifice. The whole Church in Africa was touched by it, and the two greatest writers of the time have immortalized her in their letters. St. Augustin congratulated her mother and grandmother by one of his most eloquent epistles. St. Jerome, blessing the voluntary victim, compared the effect of this news to that of the days when a victorious consul raised the hopes of the republic when cast down by some disaster.

### *Marcella*

A young widow, Marcella, whose name alone is enough to recall the best days of the republic, and whose rare beauty, enhanced by the long and illustrious line of her ancestors, drew around her numerous suitors, was the first to receive the narratives of St. Athanasius, and put his instructions into practice. Afterwards, when St. Jerome came to Rome to renew those instructions and narratives by adding to them the example of his own life, Marcella, with her mother Albinia, and her sister Asella, placed herself at the head of that select number of illustrious matrons who took him as their guide and oracle. She astonished the holy doctor by her knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, she fatigued him by her thirst always to know more of them than he could teach her; she made him afraid to find in her judge rather than a disciple. In her palace on Mount Aventine, she collected, under the presidency of that giant of controversy, the most worthy among the Christians, and the most pious among the noble ladies, for mutual strengthening and enlightenment. After having thus first given to Rome the true model of a Christian widow, she passed the last thirty years of her life in her suburban villa transformed into a monastery, and there, in the absence of Jerome, during the

troublesome contests which took place between him and Rufinus upon the doctrines of Origen, she became the support of orthodoxy in Rome, the adviser and auxiliary of Pope Anastasius.

*Furia*

About the same time a Roman lady of the first nobility, Furia, whose name indicates her descent from the great Camillus, being left a widow young and without children, addressed herself to Jerome to ask his advice upon her condition, in which she desired to remain, in opposition to her father and her relatives, who urged her to marry again. He drew out for her a rule of life which should make her widowhood an apprenticeship to monastic life. And shortly after, in the year 400, he had to conduct in the same path the young Salvina, daughter of the king of Mauritania and widow of Hebridius, the nephew of the Emperor Theodosius, a great friend of the monks and of the poor. She became the model of widows at Rome and Constantinople.

*St. Paula*

But the most illustrious of all is that Paula whose mother was directly descended from Paulus Emilius and the younger Scipio, whose father professed to trace his genealogy up to Agamemnon, and whose husband was of the race of Julius, and consequently of the line of Aeneas. The noblest blood of Rome flowed in the veins of these holy women, immortalized in Christian history by the genius of St. Jerome. Who does not know these daughters of St. Paula—Blesilla the widow, who died so young, so amiable, so learned, and so penitent, after having been married to a descendant of Camillus—and Eustochia the virgin, whom Jerome honoured by dedicating to her the code of Christian virginity? It is known that he afterwards addressed to Loeta, the step-daughter of Paula, the first treatise on the education of women which the Christian spirit had inspired, and which prepared for cloistral life the young Paula, devoted to the Lord from the cradle, and a nun, like her grandmother and her aunt. He offered, with the candour of genius, to educate her himself, and, “old as I am”, said he, “I shall accustom myself to infantile lisplings, more honoured in this than Aristotle was, for I shall instruct, not a king of Macedonia destined to perish by the poison of Babylon, but a servant and spouse of Christ, to be presented to Him in the heavens”.

Paulina, the third of the daughters of Paula, was married to Pammachius, himself as noble by his consular birth as was his wife. Becoming a widower and heir of the great possessions of Paulina, he also embraced monastic life, and was worthy of being declared by Jerome the general-in-chief of Roman monks—“the first of monks in the first of cities”. “When he walks in the streets”, adds, the holy doctor, “he is accompanied by the poor whom Paulina had endowed and lodged in her house. He purifies his soul by contact with their mean garments ... Who should have believed that a last descendant of the consuls, an ornament of the race of Camillus, could make up his

mind to traverse the city in the black robe of a monk, and should not blush to appear thus clad in the midst of the senators? It is thus that he, ambitious of the celestial consulate, wins the suffrages of the poor by gifts more powerful than games or spectacles. An illustrious man, eloquent and rich, he descends from the highest rank of the state to be the companion of the Roman populace. But before giving himself to Jesus Christ, his name was known only in the senate; ignored when he was rich, it is blessed today in all the churches of the universe”.

### *Fabiola*

Pammachius, who thus consecrated his fortune and his days to the poor, was at once seconded and surpassed in his works of charity by a widow of a heart still more great than her name; this was Fabiola, of that wonderful race of the Fabii, three hundred of whom fell in a single combat for Rome, and who saved the city by bestowing on her that great man against whom the arm of Hannibal could not prevail. Married to a frightful profligate, she had availed herself of the Roman law to repudiate him, and to unite herself to a more worthy husband; afterwards, enlightened by her faith, she expiated that fault by a public penitence in the Basilica of the Lateran, and consecrated her widowhood to a long and fruitful penance. She employed her immense wealth in the foundation of the first hospital which had yet been seen in Rome, where she collected the sick poor, gathered from the squares of the city, to serve and nourish them with her own hands, to bathe their sores and ulcers, from which others turned their eyes, to tend their diseased members, and to solace the agony of the dying. She did this with so much tenderness and maternal feeling, that the healthful poor wished for sickness that they might become her patients. Her maternal generosity extended from the poor to the monks. She was not content with, providing for the necessities of all the cenobites of both sexes at Rome and throughout Latium; she went in her own person, or by her messengers, to relieve the poverty of the monasteries hidden in the bays of the Mediterranean, and even in the isles, wherever, indeed, choirs of monks raised their pure and plaintive voices to heaven.

Finally, in concert with Pammachius, and thus giving a prelude to one of the most permanent and universal glories of the monastic order, she built at the mouth of the Tiber a hospice for the use of the pilgrims who already thronged to Rome; there she waited their arrival and departure, to lavish upon them her cares and her alms. The fame of her munificence soon resounded through all the Roman world; it was spoken of among the Britons, and remembered with gratitude in Egypt and in Persia. At the approach of death, she convoked by writing a multitude of Religious to distribute to them all that remained of her wealth. When this woman, who was called the solace of the monks, slept in the Lord, all Rome celebrated her obsequies; the chant of psalms and Halleluiahs rose everywhere: the squares, the porticoes, the roofs of the houses, could not contain the crowd of spectators. “I hear from this distance”, wrote St. Jerome at Bethlehem, “the thronging footsteps of those who precede her bier, and the waves of the multitude which accompany it. No, Camillus did not triumph so gloriously over the Gauls, nor Papirius over the Samnites, nor Scipio over Numantium, nor Pompey over

Mithridates; the pomp of all these victors is not equal to the glory of this courageous penitent". And he spoke with justice, for she had inaugurated in the world, between the disgrace of the Roman empire and the miseries of the barbarian invasion, a glory unknown to the past; she had created that charity which gives more than bread, more than gold — the charity which gives the man himself—the charity of the monk and of the nun.

*Marcella at the sack of Rome by the Goths*

In the country of Lucretia and Portia, too long stained by the Livias and Messalinas, these Christian heroines completed Roman history and opened the annals of the monastic order; they bequeathed to it types of chastity, charity, and austerity, which nothing had then equalled, and which nothing has since surpassed. Monasteries of men and women multiplied around them in Rome, where each prepared himself by prayer, fasting, and abstinence, for the formidable crises of the future, and where the last scions of the old and invincible Romans waited the coming of the barbarians. When Rome was taken and sacked for the first time by the Goths in 410, the soldiers of Alaric, penetrating into the eternal city, found Marcella calm and intrepid in her monastic palace on Mount Aventine, as the Gauls of Brennus eight centuries before had found the Roman senators waiting death in silence on their chairs of ivory, like gods, according to Livy. They demanded gold from that venerable mother of Roman monasteries; they refused to believe in the voluntary poverty which her coarse tunic attested; they struck her down with sticks and whips. She submitted patiently to these outrages, but prostrated herself before the barbarians to ask mercy for the modesty of the young nun who was her companion. This was in a manner to attempt an impossibility: these ferocious beasts, as St. Jerome says, who periodically invaded, the empire, delighted in taking as the playthings of their savage lust the delicate forms of noble Roman ladies, of free women and consecrated virgins. However, she triumphed by her prayers and tears over their licentiousness. These obscure barbarians renewed the sacrifice which has immortalized the younger Scipio; and Marcella, taking refuge with her whom she had saved at the tomb of St. Paul, died as if buried under that supreme and difficult victory.

*St. Jerome (A.D. 340-420)*

All these holy and generous women have been spiritual revealed to us by the man of genius, who was their contemporary, their biographer, and their oracle. For forty years St. Jerome, first at Rome, then at Bethlehem, instructed, governed, inspired, and attracted them to the highest possessions. He admired them more, perhaps, than he had

been admired by them, and he desired that posterity should share this admiration : he has succeeded by bequeathing to it these narratives, distinguished by his impetuous energy and ardent emotion, which the Church has adopted, and which form one of the finest pages of her annals.

Monastic history claims the glory of St. Jerome—of that lion of Christian polemics, at once inspired and subdued; inspired by zeal, and subdued by penitence. We must not attempt to retrace here all the life of this great doctor, who, born in Dalmatia, carried successively to Rome, Gaul, and Constantinople, the almost savage impetuosity of his temper, the ardour of his faith, the indefatigable activity of his mind, the immense resources of his knowledge, and that inexhaustible vehemence, which sometimes degenerated into emphasis and affectation, but which most frequently attained to true eloquence. That which specially interests us is the monk, the hermit, who, coming from the West, attempted to lead back the monastic current to its source in the East, and who would perhaps have succeeded in regenerating for long ages the monks of the East, if God had permitted him to instil into them the courage and energy which he had brought from the depths of his mountains. Drawn towards solitude by a passionate attraction, and by the desire for salvation which possessed him, he fled the vices and voluptuousness of Rome; he sought an asylum in Syria among the numerous anchorites who made that country the rival of monastic Egypt. He made a sort of citadel for himself in the burning desert of Chalcis, upon the confines of Arabia. There he buried himself in the study of Hebrew and Chaldean, and prepared himself to become the commentator and translator of the Holy Scriptures. He joined to this the cultivation of ancient literature, and of his favourite author Cicero, but so eagerly that he took fright and vowed to renounce it, under the impression of a remarkable dream, forgotten afterwards, as was also his rash engagement, to the great profit of his genius and our edification, for none has ever evoked more appropriately and majestically the great recollections of classic antiquity. Other visions, still more menacing, troubled him in the midst of the prayers, the austerities, and the excessive fasts which he imposed upon himself for the love of his soul; he was pursued with the remembrance of the delights of Rome, and of its choirs of young girls, who came to people his cell, and to make it an accomplice of his own burning imagination; but soon the blessed influence of solitude, inhabited for God, triumphed over those apparitions of the past. He felt himself sufficiently strong, sufficiently reassured, to call to the end of his retirement a friend of his youth, whose salvation was dear to him. He cried to him across the seas, “O desert enamelled with the flowers of Christ! O solitude, where those stones are born of which, in the Apocalypse, is built the city of the Great King! O retreat which rejoicest in the friendship of God! What doest thou in the world, my brother, with thy soul greater than the world? How long wilt thou remain in the shadow of roofs, and in the smoky dungeon of cities? Believe me, I see here more of the light”.

After having enjoyed that light for five years, he was driven from his dear solitude by the calumnious accusations, which his character as a man of the West excited around him. He took refuge successively in Jerusalem; at Antioch, where he was ordained priest, but on condition of not being attached to any church, and of continuing to live as a monk; in Constantinople, whither he was drawn by the fame of St. Gregory of Nazianzus; in Rome, where he was secretary to the great pope Damasus; and in

Alexandria, from whence he went to visit the hermits of the Thebaid. Finally, in 385, he returned, not to leave it again, to the Holy Land, and settled at Bethlehem, where he built for himself a little monastery with a hospice for pilgrims. There, in a poor and narrow cell, eager to receive the inspirations of faith near the manger of the Saviour, and faithful above all to the law of labour, which he regarded as the foundation of monastic life, this glorious cenobite accomplished the translation and commentary of the Scriptures. He produced thus that Vulgate which has made him “the master of Christian prose for all following ages”. He joined to that great work the education of some little children, whom he instructed in humane letters. He received there with hospitality the monks whom his renown drew from all the corners of the world, and who overwhelmed him by their visits, and the remains of the Roman nobility who, ruined by the sack of Rome, fled to Bethlehem to seek food and shelter from him. He continued there the bold warfare which he had waged all his life against the errors and disorders with which he saw the Church infected, and which raised such violent enmities against him. A severe outbreak of this enmity came upon him towards the end of his days, when the Pelagians, to avenge his attacks against their chief who issued his dogmas at Jerusalem came to besiege, plunder, and burn the communities directed by Jerome, who only escaped by taking refuge in a fortified tower.

During his sojourn in Rome, he had spread the love for monastic life with as much zeal as success. At Bethlehem he continued that apostolic office, and led back from the bosom of Italy numerous and illustrious recruits, who gave their all for the benefit of the poor of Christ, and whom he enrolled in the monastic legions. He pursued strictly those who resisted, or turned back at the last moment. He writes to Julian: “Thou hast given thy goods to many poor, but there are many more still to whom thou hast not given. The riches of Croesus would not suffice for the solacement of those who suffer. Thou protectest the monks, thou makest gifts to the churches, thou puttest thyself at the service of the saints; one thing only remains for thee to do: it is to change thy life, and henceforth to be a saint among the saints”.

But his admiration for monastic life did not blind him to the vices and abuses which already appeared among the cenobites. No one has denounced, no one has branded, more energetically than he, the false monks, the false penitents, the false widows and virgins. He points out with a bold hand all the faults and dangers of the institution : sometimes the black melancholy, degenerating into hypochondria, which followed an excess of reading or immoderate fasts, and which was more adapted to receive the help of medicine than the instructions of penitence; sometimes the pomp and luxury which disguised themselves under the cloak of the solitary, without giving up the dainties of the table, the vessels of gold, and the delicate glass, the herd of boon-companions and attendants; or, again, the hypocrisy which worked upon the credulous piety of nobles and of women; but especially the pride, which emboldened so-called converts to judge their brothers who remained in the world, to disdain even the bishops, and to come out of their cells in order to wander about the towns, and annoy, under a false air of modesty, the passers-by in public places.

This legitimate severity inspired him with all the more lively an admiration for the first great founders of monastic life, whose traditions he had collected, and whose atmosphere he had breathed in Egypt. He undertook to write the lives of some of the



most illustrious—of Paul, of Hilarion, of the solitary Malchus, whom he had known and heard in Syria; he added to these the biographies of the illustrious Roman women who, a century later, had renewed even in the bosom of Rome marvels worthy of the Thebaid. “These are”, said he, with a pride, in which the echo of warlike and literary ambition seems to resound—“these are our models and our leaders. Every profession has its models. Let the Roman generals imitate Regulus and Scipio; let the philosophers follow Pythagoras and Socrates; the poets Homer; the orators, Lysias and the Gracchi: but for us, let our models and our chiefs be the Pauls and the Anthonys, the Hilarions and the Macarii”. Then, making a noble return upon himself, he terminates thus one of his finest narratives: “I conjure thee, whoever thou mayst be, who readest this, to remember the sinner Jerome, who would much rather choose, if God gave him the option, the tunic of Paul with his merits, than the purple and the empire of kings with their torments”.

Such lessons, supported by his glorious example, sufficed, and more than sufficed, to make that father of the West in his Eastern refuge the head and oracle of the cenobites of his time. Disciples therefore gathered round him in a crowd, and when he died an octogenarian, in 420, he could leave directions that he was to be buried beside the noble Paula and her daughter Eustochia, who had come to live and die near him and the humble sanctuary where the Saviour of men was born.

Jerome had been the leader of that permanent emigration which, during the last years of the fourth century, drew so many noble Romans and Christians of the West towards Palestine and Egypt. In proportion as souls were more penetrated with the truths of the faith, and gave themselves to the practice of Christian virtues, they experienced an attraction more and more irresistible towards the countries which were at once the cradle of the Christian religion and of monastic life. Then were seen beginning those pilgrimages which ended in the Crusades, which ceased only with the decline of faith, and which have been replaced by explorations too often inspired by the love of gain or by frivolous curiosity. Two great interests then moved the hearts of Christians, led them from their homes, and threw them into the midst of the difficulties, perils, and tediousness, now incomprehensible, of a journey to the East. They would kiss the footsteps of the Lord Jesus upon the very soil where He had encountered life and death for our salvation; they would also survey and see with their own eyes those deserts, caverns, and rocks, where still lived the men who seemed to reach nearest to Christ by their supernatural austerity, and their brave obedience to the most difficult precepts of the Saviour.

*St. Paula at Bethlehem*

The illustrious Paula, still young, and attached to Italy by the most legitimate and tender ties, hastened to follow in the steps of St. Jerome, in order to visit the solitude which the Pauls and Anthonys had sanctified. She left her country, her family, even her children, and, accompanied by her daughter Eustochia, crossed the Mediterranean, disembarked in Syria, went over the Holy Land, and all the places named in Scripture, with an unwearied ardour: then descended into Egypt, and, penetrating into the desert of Nitria, into the cells of the holy hermits, she prostrated herself at their feet, consulted them, admired them, and withdrew with reluctance from these blessed regions to return into Palestine. She established herself in Bethlehem, and founded there two monasteries, one for men, which Jerome seems to have governed; the other, very numerous, for women, where she secluded herself with her daughter and a multitude of virgins of various conditions and countries. Both ended their days there, as also did the young Paula, who came to rejoin her grandmother and aunt, to live and die near the tomb of Jesus Christ, and thus to justify the tender solicitude with which St. Jerome had surrounded her cradle. The grandmother held there as did her daughter, the office of sweeper and cook, and the care of the lamps, which did not hinder them from taking up again with perseverance their former Greek and Hebrew studies. The Vulgate was undertaken by St. Jerome to satisfy the ardour of these two women, to enlighten their doubts, and guide their researches. It was to them that he dedicated his work, and he took them for judges of the exactness of his labour. In this convent study was imposed upon the nuns, and each had to learn every day a portion of the Holy Scripture. But more than study, more even than penitence, charity governed all the thoughts and actions of this generous Roman. She lavished her patrimony in alms: she never refused a poor person: Jerome himself felt obliged to reprove her for her prodigality, and preach to her a certain prudence. “I have but one desire”, she answered him, with the same passion of charity which afterwards burned in St. Elizabeth; “it is to die a beggar, it is to leave not a mite to my daughter, and to be buried in a shroud which does not belong to me. If I am reduced to beg”, she added, “I shall find many people who will give to me, but if the mendicant who begs from me obtains nothing and dies of want, who but me shall be answerable for his soul?”. Accordingly, when she died, she left to her daughter not an obolus, says Jerome, but on the contrary a mass of debts, and, which was worse, an immense crowd of brothers and sisters whom it was difficult to feed, and whom it would have been impious to send away. In reality, though she allowed herself to be advised and blamed for her exorbitant almsgiving, she knew well that he would understand her, who had stripped himself of all, and who afterwards sent his brother Paulinian into his own country, into Dalmatia, to sell the possessions of the family there, and make as much money of them as he could, in order to relieve the poverty to which the monasteries of Bethlehem were reduced.

However, it is pleasant to know that these austere Christians, these Romans so boldly courageous against themselves, preserved in their hearts an abundant vein of tenderness, and attached themselves with ardour to those ties which they believed it possible to retain in giving themselves to God. Maternal and filial love still overflowed their intrepid hearts. At the funeral of Blesilla, her eldest daughter, Paula could not restrain her grief, and fell fainting: her life was supposed in danger. Jerome, in an eloquent letter, had to use all his authority to lead her to resignation to the will of the Most High, showing her that the excess of her grief was a scandal in the eyes of the

pagans, a dishonour to the Church and the monastic condition. When Paula died, twenty years later, in her convent of Bethlehem, Eustochia, after having lavished the most minute and indefatigable cares upon her during her last illness, hastened from her mother's deathbed to the grotto where the Saviour was born, to obtain of God, by tears and prayers, that He would permit her to die at the same time, and be buried in the same coffin. Then, as they bore that holy woman to her tomb, she threw herself upon the body of her mother, kissing her eyes, clasping her in her arms, and crying out that she would be interred with her. Once more St. Jerome had to repress that weakness, and separate the orphan nun from the holy remains, to place them in the tomb which he had hollowed out of a rock beside the grotto of the Nativity, and upon which he carved these words: "Here reposes the daughter of the Scipios, and of Paulus Emilius, the descendant of the Gracchi and of Agamemnon, Paula, the first of the Roman senate; she left her family and Rome her country, her fortune and her children, to live poor at Bethlehem, near Thy cradle, O Christ! where the Magi honoured in Thee the man and the God".

The noble Fabiola, whose liberality towards the poor in Rome we have already recorded, had also come to Jerusalem and to Bethlehem, and was there with St. Jerome and St. Paula. But she did not remain there. The fear of the invasion of the Huns recalled her to Rome. Marcella, who survived all these holy women, although their elder both in age and conversion, had not yielded to the eloquent tenderness of the appeal which Jerome addressed to her, in the name of Paula and her daughter. "Leave", they said to her, "that Rome where everything is adverse to the vocation and peace of a nun. Here, on the contrary, in this country of Christ, all is simplicity, all is silence. Wherever you go, the husbandman, leaning on his plough, murmurs the praises of God; the reaper refreshes himself by the chant of psalms, and the vintager, in cutting his vine, repeats the songs of David. These are the love-songs of this country, the melodies of the shepherd, the accompaniment of the labourer".

*The two Melanias. Melania the elder (A.D. 347-409)*

But, about the same period, another woman, illustrious and holy, issued from another branch of the family of Marcellus, Melania the elder, daughter of a consul, mother of a praetor, celebrated in all the Church for her shining virtue and devotion to the monks, became the stem of a numerous line of holy souls, belonging at once to the monastic life and to the first nobility of Rome. Under her direction another monastic colony rose at Jerusalem, rivalling by its devotion and charity that which Jerome and Paula directed at Bethlehem.

Left a widow at twenty-two, having lost in the space of a year her husband and two of her sons, and having only one little child, whom she confided to Christian hands, Melania left Rome and sailed towards Egypt, to console her grief and warm her faith by the marvellous spectacle of the life led by the solitaries who seemed already to live with the angels. It was in 372, the last year of the life of St. Athanasius. Melania, at her landing, saw the great bishop of Alexandria, and received from his hands a relic of the Thebaid, a sheepskin which he himself had received from the holy abbot Macarius. She penetrated afterwards into the desert of Nitria and of Scete, and passed nearly six

months in receiving the lessons and studying the austerities of the solitaries who dwelt there. The bishop Palladius and the priest Rufinus, who met her there, have left to us the most fascinating narrative of her pilgrimages in these holy solitudes. At the death of Athanasius, the Arians, sure of the support of the Emperor Valens, raised against the orthodox one of the most atrocious persecutions which history has recorded. The monks, as has been already said, were its principal victims. Melania, who had already braved the interdict of the emperor by landing in Egypt, put her life and her fortune at the service, of the confessors of the true doctrine. She concealed some from the search of the executioners; she encouraged others to appear before the tribunal of the persecuting magistrates, where she accompanied them, where she was herself cited as a rebel against the divine emperor, but where her courage triumphed over the confounded judges. For three days she provided, at her own expense, for the five thousand monks whom she found in Nitria. A great number of orthodox bishops and monks having been banished to Palestine, she followed them; and this noble woman might be seen in the evening, disguised under the coarse mantle of a servant, carrying to the prisoners the assistance they needed. The consular magistrate of Palestine, not knowing who she was, arrested her in the hope of a great ransom. Upon this she resumed all the pride of her race, and invoked, like St. Paul, her rights as a Roman. “I am”, she said to him, “the daughter of a consul; I have been the wife of a man illustrious in his generation;—now I am the servant of Christ. Despise me not because of my mean dress, for I can attain a higher rank if I will; and I have sufficient credit to keep me from fearing you, and to hinder you from touching my goods. But lest you should do wrong by ignorance, I have thought it right to let you know who I am”. And she added, “We must know how to make head against fools, setting our pride against their insolence, as we loose a hound or a falcon against the deer”. The terrified magistrate offered excuses and homage, and left her all liberty to communicate with the exiles.

Piety retained her in the Holy Land, whither she had been drawn by her generous sympathy for the defenders of the faith. She established herself at Jerusalem, and built a monastery there, where she collected fifty virgins. For twenty-five years she devoted to the relief of the poor, and the entertainment of the bishops, monks, and pilgrims of every condition, who came in multitudes to these holy places, her own services, and the revenues which her son sent to her from Rome. She was guided and seconded by the celebrated priest Rufinus, who inhabited a cell on the Mount of Olives, and who was at that period the old and tender friend of Jerome. A dispute afterwards took place between Rufinus and Jerome, occasioned by the doctrines of Origen: their rupture long agitated the Church, and drew from them melancholy invectives against each other. Melania succeeded in bringing about a public and solemn reconciliation between them, but it was not lasting.

*Melania the younger (A.D.380-439)*

In the meantime, the only son whom Melania had left in Rome, and who had become praetor, had married Albina, the sister of Volusian, prefect of the city, one of the most noble personages of the time. He had one daughter, named Melania, like her

grandmother, who had been married at a very early age to Pinianus, the son of a governor of Italy and Africa, and descendant of Valerius Publicola, the great consul of the first year of the Roman republic. But the inclination of this young woman drew her rather towards penitence and solitary life than to the pomps of Roman decadence. Melania the elder, desirous of aiding her to walk courageously in the way of salvation, left Jerusalem to join her in Rome. She landed at Naples, in the end of the year 398, and immediately there came to meet her, with her children, a crowd of Roman senators and nobles, who made the Appian Way resound with their luxurious carriages, their caparisoned horses, and gilded chariots. She rode amongst them, mounted upon a sorry horse, of no more value than an ass, and clothed with a coarse tunic of rushes, woven like a mat. She added by this manifest humility to the great reputation which she enjoyed everywhere.

*St. Paulinus de Nola, (A.D. 353-431)*

She stopped at Nola to visit a saint who was her relative and emulator. Paulinus, born at Bordeaux, counted among his ancestors a long succession of senators; he had himself been consul under the Emperor Gratianus; his wealth was immense; he was the friend of the poet Ausonius, and himself a poet; he had married a very rich Spaniard, who was the first to bear the predestined name of Theresa. The husband and wife had mutually excited and drawn each other towards retirement and mortification. Ausonius endeavoured in vain to retain his friend in the world, and to put him in opposition to his wife. From year to year their life became more rigid; they retired to a little estate near Barcelona; there they lost their only son. Then Paulinus lived with his wife as with a sister, left the senate and the world, solemnly changed his dress in the Church of Barcelona, distributed all his wealth to the poor, and buried himself in a small inheritance which he had reserved at Nola, in Campania, near the tomb of the martyr Felix, of which he constituted himself the guardian. This Roman consul, who had become the watchman of the relics of a martyr, lived as poorly with his Theresa as the poorest and most austere monks; but he continued, according to the advice of St. Jerome, to cultivate eloquence and poetry, consecrating them to sacred subjects, and also his former friendship. "The last moment", wrote he to Ausonius, "which shall free me from this earth, shall not take away the tenderness I have for thee; for this soul which survives our destroyed organs, and sustains itself by its celestial origin, must needs preserve its affections, as it keeps its existence. Full of life and of memory, it can no more forget than it can die". Many Christians joined him, and inhabited cells adjoining his, so that they formed a company of monks, subject to a rule of their own.

Melania bestowed upon Paulinus and Theresa a portion of the wood of the true cross, which she had from the bishop of Jerusalem, and then pursued her route towards Rome, when she was received with universal respect and admiration. She remained there several years, always occupied in extending among her own family and around her the love of monastic life, exhorting all who approached her to leave the world, to sell their goods, and follow her into solitude. She first won the husband of her niece, Apronianus, a patrician of the rank of *clarissimus*, who was still a pagan; she converted him not only

to the Christian faith, but to monastic life, and his wife Avita at the same time. She confirmed her granddaughter, Melania the younger, already the mother of two children whom she had lost, and still only twenty, in the resolution of keeping continence with her husband.

The barbarians, who year by year closed around Rome their circle of fire and sword, and who shortly were to scale the sacred walls, could now be heard approaching. These presentiments of the ruin of the empire seconded and completed the work and exhortations of the illustrious nun. She urged her relatives and fellow-citizens to throw their wealth into the lap of God and the poor, rather than leave it a prey to the rapacity of the barbarians. At last, in 409, a year before the conquest of Rome by Alaric, all that holy and noble tribe began their march towards the desert. But in the first place the younger Melania, heiress of so many opulent lines, enfranchised her eight thousand slaves, and distributed to the churches, to the hospitals, to the monasteries, and to the poor, all the vast domains which she possessed in Spain and in Aquitaine, in the Tarraconaise, among the Gauls; she reserved to herself those in Campania, Sicily, and Africa, only to serve for future liberalities. She then sent immense sums even to Palestine and the Thebaid by the hands of a Dalmatian priest. It was so much saved from the enemy, so much snatched from the claws of the barbarian lion. Afterwards they embarked. Melania the elder, who led this triumph of the new faith at the moment when antique Rome was falling, drew with her all her descendants, her son Publicola, her daughter Albina, her granddaughter Melania the younger, with Pinianus her husband, and a multitude of others. They went first to Sicily, and from thence to Africa, where St. Augustine awaited them.

Melania the elder, after having seen the death of her son, and wept for him as a Christian mother should weep, left the rest of her family to return to her convent at Jerusalem, where she died forty days after her return.

Melania the younger became then, in a manner, the head of the monastic caravan. From Carthage, where they had landed, they came to Tagaste, where Alypius, the celebrated friend of St. Augustine, was bishop; and from Tagaste to Hippo, where Augustine himself received them with tender and respectful cordiality. The people of that town, who were accustomed to impose vocations, and who had thus won St. Augustine, desired to seize the husband of Melania to ordain him a priest by force, in the hope of winning thus to their church and their poor the wealth which the husband and wife distributed with profusion. There was a complete riot on this account, of which St. Augustine has left us the record, and which he could not appease, although he threatened the rioters that he would cease to be their bishop if they persisted in using violence to the stranger. The multitude would only be calmed by a promise that if Pinianus ever consented to enter among the clergy, it should only be in the Church of Hippo. Going back to Tagaste, Melania and Pinianus founded two monasteries, the one of eighty monks, the other of a hundred and thirty nuns; they lived there seven years in extreme poverty. Melania gained her living by transcribing manuscripts, which she did with equal skill and rapidity, while her husband cultivated a garden. Afterwards they went together to Egypt to honour and succour with their alms the solitaries of Nitria and its environs. At last they arrived at Jerusalem and there separated. Pinianus, the former prefect of Rome, pursued his occupation of gardener in company with thirty other



monks. Melania, who had not yet attained the age of thirty, became a recluse in a cell upon the Mount of Olives, where she remained fourteen years; she afterwards built a church and monastery for ninety penitents, upon one of the sites where our Lord rested when bearing His cross.

These holy consorts, in ending their career near the Holy Sepulchre, found there the memory of their grandmother, Melania the elder, with the always warlike zeal and exalted fame of St. Jerome. They could bask in the last rays of that great light. In the last epistle which he wrote and addressed to St. Augustine, Jerome speaks of them and calls them his children, his in common with the bishop of Hippo.

It is thus that this choir of holy women, noble widows, and generous patrician ladies, of whom Marcella, Paula, and Melania are the leaders, transmitted the line of monastic virtue and traditions from St. Athanasius to St. Augustine, through St. Jerome. The greatest names of the Church—of the East as well as of the West—have thus a part in the development of the cenobitical institution. We would fain linger over them, and enjoy their glory at length and in detail. But we must hasten our steps, and pass on to names more obscure and ages less known: we shall find there the grandeur which is inalienable from truth and virtue.

It would be a serious mistake to suppose that these heroic women, during their lifetime, encountered everywhere the admiration and sympathy which Christian posterity has given them; or that so much self-devotion, and so many generous sacrifices, could be accomplished without exciting a warm and powerful opposition from all the pagan elements, still so numerous and tenacious, which remained in Roman society. Among many Christians, the repugnances of our poor nature, always infirm and always jealous of every pure and superior force, were joined to the persevering animosity of pagan instincts. Our holy heroines had to be constantly in the breach, occupied in braving the entreaties, the importunities, and even the injurious words of their relatives, and of all in the nobility who were averse to sacrifices so great. They were often reproached with robbing their children of their patrimony, or with abandoning them at an age when the maternal cares were a sacred duty. But the great examples of abnegation, poverty, and humility, which they offered to all classes of their fellow-citizens, excited special exasperation. It was not only, as a historian says, “the male and female animals of the senatorial order” who were furious against these superhuman virtues; the popular masses also burst forth in opposition. This was clearly apparent at the funeral of Blesilla, the eldest daughter of Paula, in 384, when the Christian people of Rome collected in the streets, crying aloud, “This young woman has been killed by fasts ... When shall this detestable race of monks be expelled from the city? Why are they not stoned? Why not thrown into the Tiber?”. Then, making maternal grief itself a weapon against all that the mother and daughter had most loved here below, the same accusers proceeded, showing Paula in tears, overwhelmed under the weight of her affliction: “Behold”, said they, “how they have seduced this unhappy matron: for a sufficient proof how little she desired to be a *monkess*, never woman among the heathen has wept thus for her children”.

The same sentiments as those of the plebeians at Rome were also found at Carthage, which had then become Roman and Christian, but was lost in all the excesses

and refinements of corruption. Salvien informs us that when men in cloaks, pallid, and with shaven heads, were seen to appear in the cities of Africa, and especially in Carthage, coming from the monasteries of Egypt or the holy places of Jerusalem, the people scourged them with maledictions, hootings, and hisses, and hunted them through the streets like pernicious beasts.

*The poet Rutilius*

And even when the popular masses had ended by yielding to the sway of these great examples, a large number of people still continued to entertain feelings of contempt and rage towards the monks, especially amongst the literary class; and vigorous traces of this are to be found in the poems of Rutilius Numatianus. This Poitevin writer had long lived at Rome. He returned into his own country in 416, some years after the striking conversions which the Melanias, the Paulas, and the Marcellas had worked upon the Roman nobility; he has described the emotions of his voyage in a poem which is still in existence. Crossing the Mediterranean, he came in front of the isles and rock which were inhabited by patricians lately converted: “Behold”, says he, “Capraja rises before us; that isle is full of wretches, enemies of light; they draw from the Greek their name of *monks*, because they would live without witnesses. Fear of the evils of fortune has made them dread its gifts. They make themselves poor in anticipation, lest one day they should become so; was there ever seen folly so perverse?”. And further: “I see the Gorgon raise herself among the waves opposite the coast of Pisa; I detest these rocks, scene of a recent shipwreck. There one of my fellow-citizens has lost himself, descending alive into the tomb. He was recently one of us; he was young, of great birth, rich, well married. But, impelled by the furies, he has fled from men and gods, and now, credulous exile, lies decaying in a foul retreat. The unhappy one! he expects to feed upon celestial good in the midst of filth, more cruel to himself than the gods whom he offends should have been. Is not this sect more fatal than the poisons of Circe? Circe transformed only the bodies, but these transform the souls”.

This last adherent of paganism saw clearly: it was the souls which transformed themselves. From thence came, the irremediable ruin of his gods, and the victory of the ideas and institutions which he pursued with his impotent malice.

The complaints and invectives of the pagan poets and rhetoricians came too late. The monks who had found apologists and models in the greatest doctors of the Eastern Church—Athanasius, Basil, and Chrysostom—were no less supported in the West, where they could invoke the example of Jerome, and where they had won to their cause the irresistible influence of Ambrose and of Augustine.

*St. Ambrose (A.D.340-397)*

Bishop Ambrose celebrated with love those very isles of the Mediterranean, peopled with monks, from the sight of which the poet Rutilius had turned with disgust. “It is there”, said he, “in these isles thrown by God like a collar of pearls upon the sea, that those who would escape from the charms of dissipation find refuge: there they fly from the world, they live in austere moderation, they escape the ambushes of this life. The sea offers them as it were a veil, and a secret asylum to their mortifications. She helps them to win and defend perfect continence. There everything excites austere thoughts. Nothing there disturbs their peace: all access is closed to the wild passions of the world. The mysterious sound of the waves mingles with the chant of hymns; and while the waters break upon the shore of these happy islands with a gentle murmur, the peaceful accents of the choir of the elect ascend towards heaven from their bosom”.

Ambrose was that great man, eloquent and courageous, to whose cradle, as to Plato’s, came a hive of bees, to leave upon the lips of the predestined infant the presage of a persuasive and irresistible eloquence. He had been the victorious advocate of Christianity against the plaintive pleading of Symmachus in favour of the altar of Victory, the last effort of official paganism. He had defended the rights of orthodoxy against the violence of Justina the Arian empress, and those of humanity and justice against the Emperor Theodosius, bathed in the blood of Thessalonica. Such a pontiff could not ignore the vital importance of the monastic institution, to the faith of which he was so intrepid and eloquent a champion. Accordingly we find he supported at the gates of his episcopal city a monastery full of excellent monks. He was unwilling that converts should be frightened by requirements above their strength. “Let us”, said he, “leave those to flutter like sparrows who cannot soar like eagles”. But he seemed to be especially interested in the religious vocation of women. At the request of his sister Marcellina, who was a nun in Rome, he collected in three books, entitled *The Virgins*, the sermons which he had virginity, delivered in honour of monastic virginity. Nothing could be more eloquent than the opening of the third book, where Ambrose, carried back by memory to the day when this dear sister took the veil at Rome, in the church of the Apostles, at Christmas, hears and repeats the exhortation of the pope Liberius to the young novice. He did not fail to point out the dangers with which conventual life was surrounded in the splendour of Roman patrician society: and yet his words were so persuasive that the Milanese ladies shut up their daughters, lest, by hearing his sermons, they should be led too early into monastic life. He afterwards wrote a treatise *On Virginity*, which drew upon him the reproach of having denied the sanctity of marriage, and of preaching doctrines which, if put in practice, would condemn the human race to extinction. To these accusations, which have been renewed from age to age, the bishop of Milan answered, as the defenders of Christian sacrifice have always responded—“How!”, said he, “these virgins shall be free to choose a husband, and they shall not have the liberty of fixing their choice upon a God! ... It is complained that the human race will fail. I ask, who has ever sought a wife without finding one? The number of men is greater in those places where virginity is most esteemed. Inform yourselves how many virgins the Church of Alexandria and those of Africa and the East are accustomed to consecrate to God every year. There are more of them than there are men in Milan”.

Elsewhere, in that triumphant response to Symmachus, which breathes the ardour and force of a belief victorious by the energy of virtue alone, when he has struck dumb

the pompous rhetoric of these sons of the persecutors, who demanded the re-establishment of the altar of Victory in the midst of the senate, and who claimed the right of making bequests in favour of the vestals, he contrasts the sight already presented by the Christian monasteries with that of these vestals, who, despite the honours still showered upon them, and the easy devotion of a temporary vow, were so few in number. "You can bring together only seven, and that with difficulty; yes, despite the bandeaux, the diadems, and the purple with which you adorn them, notwithstanding the pompous litters, the numerous escort of servants, the privileges and immense profits which you offer them, these are all you can enrol in the service of chastity. But raise your eyes and your souls. See elsewhere this nation of innocents, this multitude of pure souls, this assembly of virgins; their heads are not ornamented by jewelled bands, they have but a coarse veil ennobled by its use. They do not seek, they cast aside everything which heightens beauty; they have neither purple nor luxury, no privileges, no profit, no delicacies, nothing, in short, but duties which reanimate their virtues".

Ambrose, whose renown reached even the Barbarians, converting the queen of the Marcomans, and drawing from the depths of Mauritania virgins who came to Milan to receive the veil from his hands, was considered the principal doctor of the Latin Church till Augustine appeared.

*St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430)*

It was at Milan, and in 385, the same year in which St. Jerome left Rome for the second and last time, to plunge again into the solitude of Bethlehem, that the inspired language of Ambrose, and the sight of this life entirely devoted to the service of God and our neighbour, began to open the eyes of the young Augustine. It was there, a year later, that a revelation of what was passing in souls drawn by the spirit of God towards monastic life, burst upon him with a light which he no longer desired to resist. At nineteen he had been filled with contempt for the baseness of the contemporary world, and inspired by a noble enthusiasm for the good and the beautiful, for intellectual struggles, and the attainment of wisdom, by reading the *Hortensius* of Cicero. But a day came in which he learned that there is something greater than knowledge, and a purer enthusiasm than that of eloquence or philosophy. What the genius of Cicero had done for his mind, the life of Anthony, related by Athanasius, did for his soul. We have already mentioned that Athanasius had written a *Life of St. Anthony*, in which he summed up the marvels of the Thebaid, and which spread through all the West, like the glory of the illustrious fugitive who was its author. Let us leave Augustine himself to relate how it reached as far as Treves, originating in the very heart of the imperial court monastic vocations, the narratives of which were destined to produce other conquests of grace. This immortal page of the *Confessions* belongs essentially to monastic history: it shows, by the testimony of the greatest man of the time, that action of the Thebaid upon the West, of which the holy patriarch of Alexandria, exiled in Gaul and Italy, had been the providential instrument. It offers, besides, the most eloquent and exact picture ever

traced of those struggles of the soul, from which have proceeded, both before and after Augustine, all those conversions which have filled monasteries and heaven.

Augustine was at Milan, where he lectured on eloquence with his friend Alypius, when he received a visit from one of his African countrymen. Potitianus, one of the first military officers of the palace, and already a Christian. “We seated ourselves”, says Augustine, “to talk, when he happened to notice a book which lay upon a card-table before us. He opened it; it was the Apostle Paul. ... I confessed to him that reading this was my principal study. He was then led by the conversation to speak to us of Anthony, the monk of Egypt, whose. Name, so glorious among Thy servants, was unknown to us. He perceived this, and confined himself to that subject; he revealed this great man to our ignorance, which astonished him exceedingly. We were in a stupor of admiration to hear of these unquestionable marvels, which were so recent, almost contemporary, worked in the true faith, in the Catholic Church. And we were mutually surprised, we to learn, and he to teach us, these extraordinary facts. And from thence his discourse flowed upon the holy flocks of the monasteries, and the perfumes of virtue which exhaled from them towards their Lord, over those fertile wastes of the desert, of which we knew nothing. And even at Milan, outside the walls, was a cloister full of good brothers, trained under the wing of Ambrose, and we were ignorant of it.

“He continued to speak, and we listened in silence; and he told us how one day, at Treves, when the emperor was spending the afternoon at the spectacles of the circus, he and three of his companions went to walk in the gardens close by the walls of the town; and as they walked two and two, one with him, and the two others together, they separated. The two latter entered a cabin on their way, where lived some of these voluntary poor who are Thy servants—these poor in spirit who shall inherit the kingdom of heaven—and there they found a manuscript of the life of Anthony. One of them began to read it; he admired it, his heart burned, and as he read the thought rose of embracing such a life, and leaving the warfare of the age to serve Thee : they were both in the service of the emperor. Suddenly filled with a divine love and a holy shame, he grew angry against himself, and casting his eyes on his friend, ‘Tell me, I pray thee, whither all our labours tend? What do we seek? For whom do we carry arms? What can be our greatest hope in the palace but to be friends of the emperor? And how frail is that fortune! what perils and how many perils before reaching the greatest peril! Besides, when shall that be attained? But if I desire to be a friend of God, I am so, and instantly’.

“He spoke thus, all shaken by the birth of his new life, and then, his eyes returning to the holy pages, he read: his heart changed to thy sight, and his mind freed itself from the world, as was soon after apparent. He read, and the waves of his soul flowed trembling; he saw and overcame, and he was already Thine, when he said from his soul, ‘It is done, I break with all our hope; I will serve God, and now, in this place, I begin the work. If thou wilt not follow me, deter me not’. The other answered that he also would win his share of the glory and spoil. And both, already Thy servants, built the tower which is raised with that which is lost by following Thee.

“Potitianus and his companion, after having walked in another part of the garden, reached this retreat, seeking them, and warned them that it was time to return, because the day fell. But they, declaring their design, how this resolution had come to them and



established itself in their minds, entreated their friends not to oppose their determination, if they refused to share it. The latter, not feeling any change of heart, nevertheless wept over themselves, said Potitianus. They piously congratulated their comrades, recommending themselves to their prayers. Then they returned to the palace, their hearts still drawn towards the earth; and the others, their hearts still aspiring towards heaven, remained in the cabin. Both had betrothed brides, who, on hearing this, consecrated to Thee their virginity”.

Augustine continues: one never wearies of quoting him. “I devoured myself inwardly : I was penetrated with confusion and shame while Potitianus spoke. He went away. And then what did I not say to myself? In that violent disturbance of the inner world, where I pursued my soul to the most secret stronghold of my heart, with a face troubled like my spirit, I seized Alypius, and cried out, ‘What then are we doing? how is this? what hast thou been hearing? These ignorant men rise; they take heaven by force; and we, with our heartless sciences, behold us wallowing in the flesh and in our blood! Is it shameful to follow them, and are we not rather disgraced by not following them?’ He was silent in surprise, and looked at me, for my accent was changed; and my forehead, my cheeks, my eyes, the colour of my face, disclosed my mind much more than the words that escaped me. Our house had a little garden ... The tempest of my heart led me there ... Alypius followed me step by step; for I was alone even in his presence. We seated ourselves as far off as possible from the house. I trembled in my soul, and excited myself into the most violent indignation that I still could not yield myself to Thy will, to Thy alliance, O my God, to which all the powers of my soul urged me, crying: Courage! . . . But these vanities of vanities, my ancient mistresses, shook me by my robe of flesh, and whispered to me, ‘Dost thou send us away? What! from this moment shall we be no more with thee forever? And from this moment, this very moment, shall this be no longer permitted to thee, and forever?’ ... They attacked me no more in front, quarrelsome and bold, but by timid whisperings murmured over my shoulder, by furtive attacks, they solicited a glance ... The violence of habit said to me, Canst thou live without them? But already even this spoke with a languishing voice. For on the side to which I turned my face, and which I feared to pass, the chaste majesty of continence disclosed herself ... She stretched out to receive and embrace me, her hands full of good examples; children, young girls, youth in abundance, all ages, venerable widows, women grown old in virginity, and continence was not barren in these holy souls : she produced generations of celestial joys, which she owed, O Lord! to Thy conjugal love. And she seemed to say to me, with a sweet and encouraging irony: What I canst not thou do a thing which is possible to these children, to these women?

“Then a frightful storm arose in my heart, charged with a rain of tears. To give them entire vent, I rose and withdrew from Alypius. I threw myself on the ground under a fig-tree, and gave full course to my tears, ... and I addressed Thee, not in these terms, but with this meaning: ‘O Lord, how long wilt Thou be angry against me? Remember not my past iniquities’. For I felt that they held me still. And I allowed these pitiful words to escape me, ‘When? what day? tomorrow? after tomorrow? wherefore not at this instant? why should I not make an end at once with my shame?’ And all at once I heard proceeding from a neighbouring house like the voice of a child or of a young girl, which sang and repeated these words: ‘Take, read! take, read!’ I stayed my tears, and



saw in that a divine command to open the book of the Apostle, and to read the first chapter that came. I knew that Anthony, coming in one day while the Gospel was being read, had taken as addressed to himself, these words: ‘Go, sell that which thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me’; and that such an oracle had immediately converted him to Thee. I returned quickly to the place where Alypius was seated; for on rising I had left the book of the Apostle. I took it, opened it, and read in silence the first chapter on which I cast my eyes. ‘Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof’. I would not, I had no occasion to read further. Scarcely had I completed these lines, when, as if a light of assurance had spread over my soul, the darkness of doubt disappeared”.

The remainder of the tale, and how the immortal son of Monica became a Christian, then a priest, then a bishop, and in short the greatest doctor of his times, and, perhaps, of all ages, is well known.

Nut it is not sufficiently known, that from his return to Africa, if he was not, properly speaking, a monk, he lived according to the rules of monastic life.

When only a priest, he formed at Hippo a monastery, where he lived in evangelical poverty. On his promotion to the episcopate, being no less desirous to continue the life in common with the servants of God which he had led since his conversion, he founded a second community composed of the clergy of his episcopal see, in the midst of which he ended his career, and which became a nursery of bishops. When accused by the Donatist Petilian of having introduced a novelty into the Church by inventing monastic life, he answered that if the name of monastery is new, the manner of life followed by the monks, founded upon the example of the apostles and first Christians, is as ancient as the Church.

The monastic institution, then, can claim the glory of him who has been declared the greatest and most celebrated of theologians, the father and master of all preachers of the Holy Gospel, and who takes his place between Plato and Bossuet, between Cicero and St. Thomas d'Aquinas, in the first rank of those rare minds who soar over time. This man, great in thought as in faith, in genius as in virtue, and born to exercise over his own time and all times the most legitimate sway, received his final training from the exercises and austerities of cloistral life. Doubtless all is not perfect in the remains he has left to us: the subtilty, obscurity, and bad taste of an age of literary decay, are to be found there. But who has ever excelled him in the extent, the variety, and inexhaustible fertility of his labours, the profound sensibility and charming candour of his soul, the ardent curiosity, the elevation and expansion of his mind? Two great productions stand forth from the mass of his innumerable works, and will last as long as Catholic truth: the *Confessions*, in which repentance and humility have involuntarily clothed themselves in the sublime robes of genius, and which have made the inner life of Augustine the patrimony of all Christians; and the *City of God*, which is at once a triumphant defence of Christianity, and the first essay at the true philosophy of history, which Bossuet alone was destined to surpass. His life, consumed and devoured by an inextinguishable thirst for goodness, is but a long combat, first against the learned follies and shameful vices of

the Manicheans; then against the culpable exaggerations of the Donatists, who pushed their sanguinary rigorism the length of schism rather than submit to the wise indulgence of Rome; again in opposition to the Pelagians, who claimed for human liberty the right of doing without God; finally and always, against the remnants of paganism, which struggled in Africa with all the old obstinacy of Carthage against the new and victorious religion of Rome. He died at seventy-six, upon the walls of his episcopal city, besieged by the Vandals, a living image of that Church which rose between the Roman empire and the barbarian world to protect the ruin and purify the conquest.

The ardour of controversy was always tempered in this holy soul by tender charity. “Slay error”, he said, “but always love the man who errs”. Let us also quote this passage against the Manicheans, which is worthy of being reckoned among the noblest effusions of Catholic faith, and of which those forgetful neophytes who constitute themselves the avengers of truth should be perpetually reminded: —

“Let those persecute you, who know not with what labour the truth is found, nor how difficult it is to avoid error. Let those persecute who do not know how rare and hard it is to vanquish, even with all the serenity of a pious soul, the attractions of the flesh; who do not know what efforts are necessary to heal the eye of the inner man, that he may look at his sun ... Let those persecute you who are ignorant by what sighs and groans a knowledge of God is attained, and how imperfect it is even then. In fine, let those persecute who have never yielded to the error in which they see you involved. As for me who, long and cruelly tossed to and fro, have at last seen the pure truth, ... me who, to dissipate the darkness of my mind, have been so slow to submit to the merciful physician who called and caressed me; me who have wept so long that God might deign to reveal himself to my soul; me who of old sought with eagerness, listened with attention, believed with rashness, who have endeavoured to persuade others, and to defend with obstinacy those dreams in which you are held enchained by habit; as for me, I can be severe upon you in nothing, but ought to bear with you now as I bore with myself at a former time, and treat you with the same patience which my neighbour showed towards me, when, furious and blind, I struggled in your error”.

At a later period, it is true, he supposed he had been mistaken in refusing to employ any other means than those of persuasion against the heretics. He asked or accepted the aid of the sword of the Caesars, still red with the blood of Christians sacrificed to false gods, and of orthodox believers immolated to Arianism. But this was always accompanied by a protest against the infliction of capital punishment, or any other cruel penalty, upon the votaries of error. He found these incompatible with Catholic gentleness; and entreated the imperial clemency not to stain the memorial of the agonies of the servants of God, ever glorified in the Church, with the blood of an enemy. Moreover, between these two opinions we are free to choose, for imitation and admiration, that which is most completely in accordance with his genius and his heart, as with the true glory and strength of the Church.

But we cannot here expatiate upon St. Augustine. We must return to that which concerns exclusively his connection with the monastic order. He gave it first of all his example by living, as has been seen, from the time of his conversion, as a cenobite with other cenobites, and in imitation of the monks whose customs he had studied at Rome.

He was especially careful to secure the strict observance of monastic poverty by himself and the brethren of his episcopal monastery. This law of personal disinterestedness based upon a community of goods, was an urgent necessity in such a country as Africa, where the thirst for gold and luxury was universal, and where friends and enemies watched with a jealous eye the progress of clerical wealth. Augustine took, therefore, great pains in rendering account to his people of the employment of the modest patrimony on which his community was supported, and of his unceasing refusal of donations and legacies to augment it, when their source did not appear to him completely pure. "Let him", said he, "who would disinherit his son to endow the Church, seek whom he will to accept his bequest; it shall not be Augustine. Still more, if God pleases, no man shall accept it".

### *Rule of St. Augustine*

Such an example, seconded by such a genius, could not remain barren: and Augustine is justly regarded as having introduced the monastic order for both sexes into the Church of Africa, in the midst of that incredible corruption which surpassed that of all the rest of the world, and of which Salvian has left us too faithful a picture. Not only did numerous monasteries multiply upon African soil, according to the wish manifested by Augustine, on lands and gardens given up for that purpose by the great proprietors of the country; but the secular clergy themselves seem to have imitated, in many quarters, the model offered to them by the bishop of Hippo and the brethren who lived under his roof, and also by that of his friend Alypius, now become bishop of Tagaste. He had besides founded in Hippo a monastery of women, of which he made his own sister superior. It was to calm the dissensions which had arisen there, and to prevent all disorder in future, that Augustine drew out the famous Rule which bears his name. Written in 423, divided into twenty-four articles, and originally destined for these simple African nuns, it was resuscitated under Charlemagne, as we shall see further on, and became then the fundamental code of an immense branch of the monastic order. It has served as the basis of a multitude of congregations; and principally of the canons-regular who have borne up to our days the name of St. Augustine. Eight centuries after the ruin of ancient Rome and the invasion of the Barbarians, when St. Dominic desired to create in the midst of the triumphant Church a new army to ward off new dangers, he did not hesitate to adopt for its rule the constitution which the greatest of the Fathers of the Church had given to the modest convent of his sister.

Thus, without suspecting it, not content with reigning over his contemporaries and posterity by his genius and doctrine, Augustine enriched the domains of the Church with an institution which, after fourteen centuries, still remains fruitful and glorious in many of its branches.

But even in his lifetime he rendered to the Church and the monastic order a more direct and not less remarkable service. Such is the lamentable infirmity of human things, that progress in goodness is always accompanied by a corresponding recrudescence of original corruption. It disguises itself under a thousand devices and novel forms, but it always reappears in order the better to establish the merit and freedom of Christian

devotedness. The abuses of the monastic order had risen amidst the primitive fervour of the institution. They displayed themselves forcibly in the general depravity of Africa, at the very period when Augustine carried there the first fruits of his zeal and austerity. The monasteries were filled with a certain number of men escaped from the hard obligations of rural or municipal life, such as were endured under the last emperors of the West, who came there to seek and practise indolence. Still more, a sect of hypocritical and sluggish monks was formed, called the *Messalians*, who wandered through the country and the towns begging, selling or displaying relics and amulets. They preached against labour, appealing to that text, “Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”. And in order to be more like the birds, who do not divest themselves of their plumage, they allowed their hair to grow — the reverse of the regular monks, for the complete tonsure was already a kind of consecrated custom. From thence arose scandals and disorders. The Bishop of Carthage, whose diocese was especially troubled with them, entreated his colleague of Hippo to put down these impostors. Augustine did it in a celebrated essay, entitled *De Opere Monachorum*, which remains to us as an exposition of the motives of that law of labour which has been the glory and strength of the monks, and also as an unchangeable sentence pronounced beforehand against the laxness of after ages.

Some curious details as to the manner by which monasteries at that period recruited their ranks are to be found here. “Sometimes slaves”, says he, “sometimes freedmen of old standing, or men enfranchised by their masters on purpose that they may become monks, are seen arriving to embrace the religious profession; these peasants, labourers, and plebeians, have passed an apprenticeship rude enough to render them apt in their new condition. To refuse them would be a crime, for many of them have already given great examples of virtue”. He would then have these applicants admitted even although the motive which led them was doubtful, whether it was to serve God, or only to flee from a hard and indigent life, to be fed clothed, and even honoured by those who had been accustomed to disdain and oppress them. But he would have them, above all, rigorously constrained to labour. Contrasted with these plebeians, he quotes the example of patricians, whose conversion at the same time edified all the Church, and who watered with their sweat the monastic gardens. “It is not right”, says he, “that mere workmen should be idle where senators are seen to labour; nor that peasants should be fastidious, where the lords of vast patrimonies come to sacrifice their wealth”. He also combats the apologists of religious idleness by the example and words of St. Paul, who passed his life making tents by the labour of his hands. To those who pretended to do away with labour in order to sing the praises of God, he answered that they could very well sing and work, as the boatmen and labourers often did. He ended by sighing for the regulated and moderate work of the monks who divided their day between manual labour, reading, and prayer, whilst it fell to his lot to consume his life in the painful and tumultuous perplexities of the episcopate, then complicated by the settlement and arbitration of a multitude of temporal affairs.

Thus, after having had for their defender the greatest of the Fathers of the East, St. John Chrysostom, the monks had the honour of finding a legislator and reformer in the

most illustrious and eloquent of the Fathers of the West. Both consecrated their genius to defend and regulate an institution which appeared more and more necessary to the Church and Christendom.

*St. Fulgentius (A.D. 456-533)*

Before leaving Africa let us refer to another holy monk, illustrious by his eloquence and writings, a bishop like Augustine, and like Athanasius exiled for the faith. St. Fulgentius, the abbot of an African monastery, inspired by reading the life of the Fathers of the desert, went to the Thebaid to live as a solitary. But Egypt, torn by schisms and heresies, and already given up to the spirit of death, had, at the end of the fifth century, only rare intervals of light and fervour. Fulgentius had to content himself with extending the monastic institution in Sardinia, whither he was exiled by a Vandal and Arian king, and of consolidating it by his best efforts in Africa, where the Church, at one time so flourishing with its seven hundred bishoprics, was soon to sink during the struggle waged against a decrepit and corrupt civilization by the fury of the Vandals, that ferocious nation which was the terrible precursor of the terrible Islam.

The persecution of the Vandals drove back the cenobitical institution from Africa to Spain: we shall speak hereafter of its obscure and uncertain beginnings in the Iberian Peninsula.

But in the first place let us return to Gaul, which has been too long passed over in this rapid review of the origin of the monastic institution in the West, and which was about to become the promised land of monastic life. Here again we find Athanasius, and the fertile seed which that glorious exile had spread through the world. Exiled to Treves by Constantine in 336, he inspired all the clergy of the Gauls with his ardour for the Nicene faith, and for the noble life of the solitaries of the Thebaid. The narrative of St. Augustine has showed what effect the history of St. Anthony, written by St. Athanasius and found by them at Treves, produced upon some officers of the imperial court. This event demonstrates the sudden power with which that enthusiasm for monastic life extended itself in the midst of the dissolute, impoverished, and saddened existence of the Roman Empire, at the gates of which the Barbarians already struck redoubted blows. From Treves, which was its cradle in the West, the new institution, aided by the influence of the writings of Athanasius, spread rapidly through Gaul, where it had the singular fortune of being first established by the greatest and most lastingly popular man of the Gallican Church. That man was St. Martin, bishop of Tours.

*St. Martin of Tours (316-397)*

Born in Pannonia of a pagan father, a tribune of the imperial army, the young Martin, at the age of ten, made his escape from his father's house to give himself to Christ, and to be educated by the priests, with the intention of becoming a monk like the hermits of Egypt and the East, whose fame had already travelled to the banks of the



Danube. But it was in vain: in his capacity as son of a veteran, the laws of the empire obliged him to serve in the army. Servitude existed everywhere in this imperial world. His own father betrayed him. At fifteen Martin was seized, bound, and enrolled by force in the cavalry, which he could not leave till he had made twenty campaigns! He lived with the frugality and austerity of a monk, although he was still only a catechumen, and it was during this long and cruel novitiate that his miraculous meeting occurred at Amiens with that poor man to whom he gave the half of his cloak, and who has made his fame so popular. Delivered at last, this veteran of the Roman army, educated in camps for the Church, sought in Christendom for a bishop under whose wing he could find shelter for the rest of his days. His choice was fixed upon St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers. There was none more illustrious in the Church. He vied with Athanasius in defending the divinity of Jesus, and, inaccessible like him to seductions and violence, resisted victoriously, as he did, every effort of the imperial power in favour of heresy. Both had the same fate. The Patriarch of Alexandria had scarcely returned from the exile which had sent him from the Nile to the Rhine, when the illustrious doctor of Poitiers was banished for the same cause into the depths of Asia Minor. Aided by the immense extent of the empire, despotism did not hesitate to cast a confessor of the faith from one extremity of the world to the other; but these caprices of blind force remained powerless, and the arm of the persecutor only served to throw afar the seed of truth and the example of courage.

Hilary received the old soldier with joy, conferred minor orders upon him against his will, and then sent him to Pannonia to convert his mother. The Arians, everywhere implacable and all-powerful, soon expelled him from his own country, at the same time as the holy bishop of Poitiers was on his way to exile. Martin would not return to Gaul without his friend; he stopped at Milan in a monastery, and then went on to the almost desert isle of Gallinara, in sight of the coast of Genoa, where he lived on roots to prepare himself the better for monastic life.

The triumphant return of Hilary in 360 led him back to Poitiers, and it was at the gates of this town that Martin then founded, with the concurrence of the bishop, that monastery of Ligugé which history designates as the most ancient in Gaul. His youthful ambition was satisfied; all his trials, all his crosses were surmounted: behold him a monk! But soon a pious fraud drew him from his cloister to raise him to the metropolitan see of Tours. In vain he struggled against the hand of God which refused repose and obscurity to him. From that moment during his whole life, as after his death, the Christian universe was filled with the fame of his sanctity and miracles.

He was, in the first place, the most dreaded enemy of all the remnants of paganism which existed among the Gauls. We see him, accompanied by his monks, going over the country, casting down the Druidical monuments and oaks consecrated by the ancient national worship of the Gauls, and, at the same time, the temples and statues of the Roman gods; victors and vanquished together yielded to the new conqueror. However, the rural population defended their altars and venerable trees with a desperation which went so far as to threaten the life of Martin. But he braved their rage with as much resolution as he put forth in contending with demons; for in the midst of his apostolic journeys, like Anthony in the depths of the Thebaid, the great bishop was assailed by frightful phantoms, which took the form of the gods whose altars he had broken,



appearing to him in the shape of Jupiter or Mercury, oftener still of Venus or Minerva, and making the air resound with their clamours and reproaches.

But God had specially chosen him, as well as St. Hilary, to save Gaul from that contagion of Arianism which infected at once Romans and Barbarians. The two bishops opened the glorious annals of the Gallican Church by the noblest personification of dignity and charity. Martin was called to Treves, where he retraced the steps of St. Athanasius, and was destined to meet with St. Ambrose. The Emperor Maximus held his court there, amid the abject adulation of a crowd of bishops, who enthralled the dignity of the priesthood to imperial favouritism. "Alone among them all", says his biographer, "Martin preserved the dignity of an apostle" He did still more for the honour of his name and his faith by protesting against the intervention of secular power in ecclesiastical causes, and against the punishment of the heretic Priscillian and his associates. The Emperor Maximus had yielded to the importunities of the Spanish bishops, who, themselves scarcely escaped from the sword of pagan executioners, already demanded the blood of heretics. Martin pursued the accusers with his reproaches, and the emperor with his supplications. He insisted that excommunication, pronounced against the heretics by episcopal sentence, was sufficient, and more than sufficient, to punish them. He believed that he had succeeded, and left Treves only on receiving the imperial promise that mercy should be extended to the culprits.

But, after his departure, the unworthy bishops returned to the charge, and wrested from Maximus the order to execute Priscillian and his principal disciples. Informed of this detestable judgment, Martin returned from Tours to Treves, to procure the safety, at least, of the rest of the sect. But he had solemnly rejected the communion of persecuting bishops; and he only consented to remove the brand with which the public reprobation of so holy a bishop marked his colleagues, on perceiving that this was the sole means of saving the lives of the Priscillianists who remained to be murdered in Spain, where, however, the death of their chief, who was henceforward regarded as a martyr, far from extinguishing his heresy, served only to strengthen and extend it. Still he reproached himself greatly with his concession; he declared with tears that he felt his virtue lessened by it. During the sixteen remaining years of his life he kept back from all the assemblies of bishops, fearful of meeting those whom he regarded as guilty of a crime and unheard-of novelty in the annals of the Church. He thus kept the noble promise which his master, St. Hilary, had made when, denouncing to the Emperor Constantius the atrocious cruelties of the Arians against the Catholics, he added, "If such violence was employed to sustain the true faith, the wisdom of the bishops should oppose it; they should say, God will not have a forced homage. What need has He of a profession of faith produced by violence? We must not attempt to deceive Him; He must be sought with simplicity, served by charity, honoured and gained by the honest exercise of our free will". And the glorious confessor added: "Woe to the times when the divine faith stands in need of earthly power; when the name of Christ, despoiled of its virtue, is reduced to serve as a pretext and reproach to ambition; when the Church threatens her adversaries with exile and prison, by means of which she would force them to believe, she who has been upheld by exiles and prisoners; when she leans upon the greatness of her protectors, she who has been consecrated by the cruelty of her persecutors!"

Martin, on returning to his diocese, had also to undergo the scandalous envy and enmity of many bishops, and of those priests of Gaul who had been so soon tainted by Roman luxury, and who already made themselves remarked by the pomp of their equipages, their costumes, and their dwellings. But amid the cares of his episcopate, he sighed more than ever after the sweetness of monastic life. To enjoy this he founded, half a league from Tours, the celebrated monastery which has honoured his name for more than fourteen centuries. Marmoutier was then a kind of desert enclosed between the right bank of the Loire and the scarpèd rocks which overlook the course of the stream; it could be entered only by a very narrow path. The holy bishop inhabited there a cell made of interlaced branches, like that which he had for only too short a time occupied at Ligugé. The eighty monks whom he had collected there dwelt for the most part in pigeon-holes hollowed in the rock, and were attired only in camel skins. Among them were many noble Gauls, who were afterwards drawn from their retreat to be made bishops, like Martin, in spite of themselves.

Arrived at the end of his career, eighty years old, and eager to receive his celestial reward, he yielded to the tears of his disciples, and consented to ask from God the prolongation of his days. "Lord", said he, "if I am still necessary to Thy people, I would not draw back from the work". *Non recuso laborem!* Noble words which ought to be the motto of every Christian, and which was that of the monks for ten centuries.

The influence which the recommendation and guarantee of such a man would exercise in the extension of the monastic order may be easily comprehended. But God decided that he was ripe for heaven: he died, and when his body was carried to the tomb which was to become the most venerated sanctuary in Gaul, two thousand monks formed its funeral train. Sulpicius Severus, his enthusiastic disciple, wrote his life, which soon attained, throughout the West, in the East, and even as far as the Thebaid, a popularity equal to that of the *Life of St. Anthony* by Athanasius, and diffused everywhere at once the glory of the saint and that of the institution which he had loved so much.

*Sulpicius Severus (A.D.363-410 or 423)*

This Sulpicius Severus, a rich noble of Aquitaine, and an eloquent advocate before he became the disciple of St. Martin, had been the friend of St. Paulinus of Nola. Like the latter, he had given up the world, his fortune, and his career at the bar, had sold his patrimony, and chosen for his dwelling one of his villas in Aquitaine among his slaves, who had become his brothers in *religion*. They lived there together, praying and labouring, sleeping upon straw, eating only brown bread and boiled herbs.

It should be remarked to the honour of these first neophytes of the cenobitical order in Gaul, that it cost them a much greater sacrifice to conform themselves to the austerity of this new life, than it did to monks belonging to the naturally temperate population of Africa or the Levant. These poor Gauls, accustomed to the abundant and solid food of northern nations, found in confining themselves to the abstinence prescribed by monastic rules, that the rations of the monks of Egypt and Palestine were

indeed very meagre. The half-loaves of barley-bread and little handfuls of herbs which sufficed for the meals of the Thebaid, revolted their rebellious stomachs. Doubtless they often heard the beautiful words of St. Athanasius repeated: "Fasting is the food of angels". But it did not satisfy them. "We are accused of gluttony", they said to Sulpicius, "but we are Gauls; it is ridiculous and cruel to attempt to make us live like angels: we are not angels; once more, we are only Gauls". These murmurs did not prevent them from reserving, out of the produce of their labour, enough to support the poor whom they received in a hospice, in order that they might render them the humblest services. It was in this austere retreat that Sulpicius Severus wrote the biography of St. Martin and his *Sacred History*, which extends from the beginning of the world to the year 400, and was the first attempt at ecclesiastical history made in the West.

Charity had been the soul of the efforts of St. Martin and his disciples, in the extension of the cenobitic institution upon the banks of the Loire, but it excluded neither the study nor love for sacred literature. Neither the care of the poor, nor the practice of any other monastic virtue suffered by it; yet we see intellectual life, and especially the culture of the defence of Christianity, reigning in a great and celebrated monastery, which was during all the fifth century the centre of monastic life in the south of Gaul, and which merits to itself alone a detailed history.

The sailor, the soldier, and the traveller who proceeds from the roadstead of Toulon to sail towards Italy or the East, passes among two or three islands, rocky and arid, surmounted here and there by a slender cluster of pines. He looks at them with indifference, and avoids them. However, one of these islands has been for the soul, for the mind, for the moral progress of humanity, a centre purer and more fertile than any famous isle of the Hellenic Archipelago. It is Lerins, formerly occupied by a city, which was already ruined in the time of Pliny, and where, at the commencement of the fifth century, nothing more was to be seen than a desert coast, rendered unapproachable by the numbers of serpents which swarmed there.

#### *St. Honoratus*

In 410, a man landed and remained there; he was called Honoratus. Descended from a consular race, educated and eloquent, but devoted from his youth to great piety, he desired to be made a monk. His father charged his eldest brother, a gay and impetuous young man, to turn him from ascetic life; but, on the contrary, it was he who gained his brother. After many difficulties he at last found repose at Lerins; the serpents yielded the place to him; a multitude of disciples gathered round him. A community of austere monks and indefatigable labourers was formed there. The face of the isle was changed, the desert became a paradise; a country bordered with deep woods, watered by beneficent streams, rich with verdure, enamelled with flowers, embalmed by their perfumes, revealed the fertilizing presence there of a new race. Honoratus, whose fine face was radiant with a sweet and attractive majesty, opened the arms of his love to the sons of all countries who desired to love Christ. A multitude of disciples of all nations joined him. The West could no longer envy the East; and shortly that retreat, destined, in

the intentions of its founder, to renew upon the coasts of Provence the austerities of the Thebaid, became a celebrated school of theology and Christian philosophy, a citadel inaccessible to the waves of barbarian invasion, an asylum for literature and science, which had fled from Italy invaded by the Goths; in short, a nursery of bishops and saints, who were destined to spread over the whole of Gaul the knowledge of the Gospel and the glory of Lerins. We shall soon see the beams of that light flashing as far as Ireland and England, by the blessed hands of Patrick and Augustine.

There is perhaps nothing more touching in monastic annals than the picture traced by one of the most illustrious sons of Lerins, of the paternal tenderness of Honoratus for the numerous family of monks whom he had collected round him. He could read the depths of their souls to discover all their griefs. He neglected no effort to banish every sadness, every painful recollection of the world. He watched their sleep, their health, their food, their labours, that each might serve God according to the measure of his strength. Thus he inspired them with a love more than filial: "In him", they said, "we find not only a father, but an entire family, a country, the whole world". When he wrote to any of those who were absent, they said, on receiving his letters, written, according to the usage of the time, upon tablets of wax: "It is honey which he has poured back into that wax, honey drawn from the inexhaustible sweetness of his heart". In that island paradise, and under the care of such a shepherd, the perfume of life breathed everywhere. These monks, who had sought happiness by renouncing secular life, felt and proclaimed that they had found it; to see their serene and modest joy, their union, their gentleness, and their firm hope, one could have believed one's self in presence of a battalion of angels at rest.

The churches of Arles, Avignon, Lyons, Vienne, Troves, Riez, Frejus, Valence, Metz, Nice, Venice, Apt, Carpentras, and Saintes, borrowed from the happy isle, as it was everywhere called, their most illustrious bishops. Honoratus, taken from his monastery to be elevated to the metropolitan see of Arles, had for his successor, as abbot of Lerins, and afterwards, as bishop of Arles, his pupil and relative Hilary, to whom we owe the admirable biography of his master. Hilary, whom the gently and tender Honoratus had drawn from worldly life after a desperate resistance, by force of entreaties, caresses, and tears, retained in the episcopate the penitent and laborious life of the cloister of Lerins. He went through his diocese and the neighbouring country always on foot and barefooted even in the snow. Celebrated for his graceful eloquence, his unwearied zeal, his ascendancy over the crowd, and by the numerous conversions which he worked, he was once at variance with the Pope, St. Leo the Great, who deprived him of his title of metropolitan to punish him for certain uncanonical usurpations; but Hilary knew how to yield, and after his death the Great Pope did him justice by calling him *Hilary of holy memory*.

#### *The doctors and saint of Lerins*

Amongst this harvest of saints, prelates, and doctors, which Lerins gave to Gaul and to the Church, there are still several whom it is important to indicate, because they are reckoned among the Fathers, and illuminated all the fifth century with their renown.

Holding the first rank among these was the great and modest Vincent de Lerins, who was the first controversialist of his time, and who has preserved to posterity the name of the isle which had been the cradle of his genius.

He composed the short and celebrated work which has gained him immortality, in 434, three years after the Council of Ephesus, and on occasion of the Nestorian heresy which that council had condemned. He would not put his name to it, and entitled it humbly, “Remarks of the Pilgrim”, *Commonitorium Peregrini*. In this he has fixed with admirable precision, and in language as decisive as it is simple and correct, the rule of Catholic faith, by establishing it on the double authority of Scripture and tradition, and originating the celebrated definition of orthodox interpretation: *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*. After having thus established the immutability of Catholic doctrine, he demands: “Shall there then be no progress in the Church of Christ?”. “There shall be progress”, he answers, “and even great progress, for who would be so envious of the good of men, or so cursed of God, as to prevent it? But it will be progress, and not change. With the growth of the ages and centuries, there must necessarily be a growth of intelligence, of wisdom, and of knowledge, for each man as for all the Church. But the religion of souls must imitate the progress of the human form, which, in developing and growing with years never ceases to be the same in the maturity of age as in the flower of youth”.

Vincent has inscribed at the head of his masterpiece a testimony of his gratitude for the sweet sanctuary of Lerins, which was for him, as he says, the port of religion, when, after having been long tossed about on the sea of this world, he came there to seek peace and study, that he might escape, not only the shipwrecks of the present life, but the fires of the world to come.

With Lerins also is associated the great fame of Salvian, the most eloquent man of his age after St. Augustine, and surnamed the *master of bishops*, though himself only a priest. He passed five years at Lerins; he experienced there the charms of peace and solitude in the midst of the horrors of barbarian invasion, and that frightful corruption of the Roman world, of which he has traced so startling a picture in his treatise upon the *Government of God*.

After these illustrious priests come bishops not less celebrated and holy. And in the first place Eucher, whom Bossuet calls the great Eucher, who was a senator, the father of two sons, and still in the flower of his age, when he retired with his children to Lerins.

Already by assiduous study, familiar with the classic models, and versed in all the secrets of the art of writing, he there learned to know the secrets of monastic life; this inspired his eloquent *Panegyric on Solitude*, his treatise *On Contempt of the World* and *Worldly Philosophy*, and his tender and sprightly correspondence with St. Honoratus. Cassianus dedicated to Eucher, in conjunction with Honoratus, many of his *Collationes*, or conferences upon monastic life, which have had so lasting an influence in the Church; he associated the two friends in his veneration. “Oh, holy brothers”, he said to them, “your virtues shine upon the world like great beacons: many saints will be formed by your example, but will scarcely be able to intimate your perfection”. Like Honoratus,

Eucher was taken from the cloister to the episcopate, and died while occupying the metropolitan see of Lyons.

*St. Lupus of Troyes (A.D. 383-479)*

But the influence of the holy and learned Provençal isle shone still further than Lyons. Thence Troyes chose for its bishop that illustrious St. Lupus, who arrested Attila at the gates of Troyes, before St. Leo had arrested him at the gates of Rome. It was he who demanded of the king of the Huns, “Who art thou?”, and who received the far-famed response, “*I am Attila, the scourge of God*”. The intrepid gentleness of the bishop-monk disarmed the ferocious invader. He left Troyes without injuring it, and drew back to the Rhine, but took the bishop with him, thinking that the presence of so holy a man would serve as a safeguard to his army.

St. Lupus undertook a journey perhaps less painful but not less meritorious, when he was chosen for his eloquence and sanctity by the Council of 429 to combat the Pelagian heresy in Great Britain, along with St. Germain of Auxerre. For the fifty-two years during which he held his bishopric, he observed faithfully all the practices of monastic fervour which he had learned at Lerins, and at the same time was warmly interested in the maintenance of ecclesiastical studies, and had a passionate love for literature, which made him keep up to his old age an epistolary correspondence with Sidonius Appollinaris. This eminent scholar, then occupying the episcopal see of Clermont, declared that he never met either barbarism or defect of punctuation in anything written by his venerable brother of Troyes. His virtues and enlightenment, earned for him the praise of being, in the emphatic but sincere style of the period, “the father of fathers, the bishop of bishops, the prince of the prelates of Gaul, the rule of manners, the pillar of virtue, the friend of God, the mediator for men with Heaven”.

*St. Caesarius of Arles (A.D. 470-542)*

Some years before the death of St. Lupus, another saint, Caesarius, the son of the Count de Châlons, was born in Burgundy, and passed his youth in the shadow of the cloisters of Lerins before succeeding the first fathers of the holy isle, Honoratus and Hilary, upon the archiepiscopal see of Arles. He was for nearly half a century the most illustrious and the most influential of the bishops of Southern Gaul; he presided over four councils, and directed the great controversies of his time. He maintained nobly the independent and protecting authority of the episcopate against the barbarian sovereigns who occupied Provence by turns, and whose jealousy was roused by his great influence over the people. He was exiled by Alaric, king of the Visigoths, and imprisoned by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths; but both ended by rendering him justice and homage. He was passionately loved by his flock; he swayed their hearts by that eloquent charity, of which the hundred and thirty sermons he has left us bear the stamp.



But he continued always a monk, in heart, life, and penitence. He even made out, for the use of various communities of men, a sort of rule, in twenty-six articles, less celebrated, less detailed, and less popular than that which he wrote for the great monastery of women, with which he endowed his metropolitan town. He was labouring with his own hands at the construction of this sanctuary, when Arles was besieged in 508 by the Franks and Burgundians, who ruined all that he had done, and employed the materials which he had collected for their works of circumvallation. But as soon as the siege was raised, Caesarius resumed his work and completed it. And the better to insure the future prosperity of this refuge, which he raised amid the foaming waves of the barbarian invasion, like an ark in the midst of the deluge, he procured a confirmation of his foundation from Pope Hormisdas, who, at his express desire, exempted it even from episcopal jurisdiction. He made his own sister Caesaria the abbess, who governed it for thirty years, and shortly gathered there two hundred nuns. This brave Christian woman caused to be prepared, and ranged symmetrically round the church of the monastery, stone coffins for herself and for each of the sisters. They all lived and sang day and night the praises of God in presence of the open tombs which awaited them.

It was into this church that Caesarius himself, feeling his end approach, had himself conveyed to bless and console his daughters. And certainly, at that last moment, he did not forget his dear island of Lerins, that metropolis of monastic fervour, the glory of which he proclaimed in these impassioned words—"O happy isle, O blessed solitude, in which the majesty of our Redeemer makes every day new conquests, and where such victories are won over Satan! Thrice happy isle, which, little as she is, produces so numerous an offspring for heaven! It is she who nourishes all those illustrious monks who are sent into all the provinces as bishops. When they arrive, they are children; when they go out, they are fathers. She receives them in the condition of recruits, she makes them kings. She teaches all her happy inhabitants to fly towards the sublime heights of Christ upon the wings of humility and charity. That tender and noble mother, that nurse of good men, opened her arms to me also: but while so many others owe heaven to her teaching, the hardness of my heart has prevented her from accomplishing her task in me".

#### *The Abbey of St. Victor of Marseilles*

Another monastic metropolis upon the same coasts of Provence, the Abbey of St. Victor at Marseilles, rivalled Lerins in importance. This abbey was built in the midst of those great forests which had supplied the Phoenician navy, which in the time of Caesar reached as far as the sea-coast, and the mysterious obscurity of which had so terrified the Roman soldiers that the conqueror, to embolden them, had himself taken an axe and struck down an old oak. It was built over the grotto where the holy martyr Victor, a Roman legionary, had been buried, at the end of the third century. It thus connected with the holy memory of the age of martyrs the more pacific, but still hard and incessant, labours of the new confessors of the faith. Its founder was John Cassianus, one of the most remarkable personages of the time. Born, according to the common opinion, in the country of the Scythians, according to others, at Athens, or even in Gaul, he was first a

monk at Bethlehem, and then in Egypt, where he dwelt seven years among the hermits of Nitria and of the Thebaid. He has left us a close and fascinating picture of their life. He went afterwards to Constantinople to find St. John Chrysostom, who ordained him a deacon, and sent him to Rome to plead his cause with Pope Innocent I. At Rome he became the friend of St. Leo the Great before his elevation to the papacy, and at his request wrote a refutation of the heresy of Nestorius against the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Having thus surveyed all the sanctuaries and studied the saints, he came to Marseilles and founded there the great Monastery of St. Victor, which shortly reckoned five thousand monks, partly within its own walls and partly among the houses reared in the shadow and under the influence of this new sanctuary.

It was to instruct and discipline this army of monks that Cassianus wrote the four books of *Institutions*, and the twenty-four *Conferences* or *Collationes*. These two works have immortalized his name, and retain the first rank among the codes of monastic life. In some he describes, even to its minutest details, the manner of living, of praying, and of self-mortification, which he had seen practised by the hermits of the Thebaid and Palestine. In others he develops their internal life, their mind, and their supernatural wisdom.

Cassianus had no desire that his monastery should be like Lerins, a kind of seminary for priests and bishops of the neighbourhood. Although he had been himself ordained a deacon by St. John Chrysostom, and a priest by Pope Innocent I, he was disposed to maintain and increase the ancient barrier which separated the monks from the secular clergy. He recommended the monks to avoid bishops, because the latter sought every occasion to impose upon them some ecclesiastical office in the world. "It was the advice of the Fathers", says he, "an advice always in season, that a monk should at all hazard flee from bishops and women; for neither women nor bishops permit a monk whom they have once drawn into their friendship to remain peacefully in his cell, nor to fix his eyes upon pure and heavenly doctrine, by contemplating holy things".

But the Christian nations made a successful movement against those prohibitions of primitive fervour. They ardently sought, as priests and bishops, men trained in the monastic sanctuaries. And it was bishops and priests from the cloisters of St. Victor and of Lerins, who gave to the clergy of Gaul, in the fifth century, that theological science and moral consideration, in which prelates, taken from the Gallo-Romanic aristocracy, without having passed through monastic life, were too often deficient.

However, the Church, which during all the fourth century had to contend against Arianism, encountered, in the fifth, a new and not less serious danger in Pelagianism. After having denied the divinity of the Redeemer, heresy aimed a mortal blow at his doctrine and at Christian virtue, by denying the necessity of grace. Pelagius, the author of this heresy, was a Breton monk; his principal disciple was also a Breton, Celestius, a monk like himself. Their dreadful error was long contagious. St. Augustine devoted all his knowledge and talent to confute it, and it was soon proscribed by the Church.

It has been asserted that this heresy found some support in the great monasteries of Southern Gaul, the services and merits of which have just been glanced at. Attempts have been made to prove that Pelagian opinions had their principal centre in the

Monastery of Lerins, and that Cassianus, after the condemnation of Pelagius, invented semi-Pelagianism. Happily no charge is more unfounded; and the silence of the Roman Church, then, as ever, so vigilant in the defence of orthodoxy, sufficiently absolves those whom modern historians have perhaps intended to honour by an imputation which they themselves would have rejected with horror. One defender of semi-Pelagianism alone proceeded from Lerins, the celebrated and virtuous Faustus, Bishop of Riez, who, besides, was not condemned till after his death. But Lerins equally produced St. Caesarius, who gave the last blow to that error in the Council of Orange in 529. It is, however, an undoubted certainty that, in the celebrated abbeys of St. Victor and Lerins, all the great questions of free-will, predestination, grace, and original sin, were studied and discussed with the attention and energy which became the holy life of these solitaries, and that this noble school of Lerins, while divided according to the individual predilections of its writers between the supporters and the adversaries of Cassianus and St. Augustine, sought to reconcile intelligence and freedom, in the highest possible degree, with grace and faith. Lerins was besides ardently devoted to Catholic unity, and to the authority of the Church; all its doctors give evidence of this in their writings, and one of the most illustrious, St. Hilary of Arles, as has been seen, by his dutiful submission to the sentence pronounced against him.

*St. Germain of Auxerre*

Thus enlightened by the double light which St. Martin had called forth in the West, and the school of Lerins in the south, there rose by degrees throughout all the provinces of Gaul, monasteries which came to console her invaded cities and rural districts, devastated by the incessant incursions of the Goths, Burgundians, and Franks. It is pleasant to trace back to the illustrious Bishop of Auxerre, St. Germain, whose popularity in Gaul and Italy almost equalled that of St. Martin, the origin of a monastery which bears his name, in his episcopal city and which became one of the most celebrated abbeys of France in the Middle Ages.

Not far from Auxerre, upon the confines of Eduens and Lingons, in the country already occupied by the Burgundians, and which was destined to bear their name, might be seen, between the Serain and Armançon, one of these deserts which were formed under the Roman administration. There was built the Abbey of Réôme, which is considered the most ancient in Burgundy, and which has since, and up to our own days, been called Moutier-St.-Jean, after its founder. This founder was the son of a senator of Dijon, with whom is associated one of those delightful tales which then began to spread throughout Gaul, and which prove the gradual victory of Christian morals over the hearts and imaginations of men, amid the struggles of barbarism with Roman decrepitude. His name was Hilary, or *the Joyous*, and that of his wife Quieta, or *the Tranquil*. The tenderness of their conjugal union, and the regularity which reigned in their house, excited the admiration of the inhabitants of Dijon. When the senator died, he was interred in a marble tomb which he had prepared for himself and his wife, and the splendour of which, an age later, dazzled Gregory of Tours, who has transmitted the story to us. Quieta rejoined him there at the end of a year; and when the covering of the

sepulchre was raised to let down the body of the widow, the spectators cried out that they saw the husband extend his hand to encircle the neck of his wife, and all withdrew transported with admiration at that miracle of a conjugal tenderness which lasted even in the tomb. The son of this exemplary couple, John, introduced monastic life into Burgundy, and at the same time began the cultivation of the plains of Auxois, now so fertile and well cleared, but then covered with impenetrable forests. John, and some companions who had joined him, courageously set to work. The axes with which they cut down the trees in the immediate neighbourhood of their retreat, were stolen from them to begin with. A trifling matter, doubtless, and in appearance unworthy of history, but which gains interest from the thought that the work thus thwarted has succeeded by the sole strength of perseverance in well-doing, and has lasted thirteen centuries.

At a still earlier period, Auvergne had attracted attention by the sanctity of its monks. It was the heart of Gaul; it was the country of the young Vercingetorix, the first hero of our history, so pure, so eloquent, so brave, and so magnanimous in misfortune, whose glory is all the rarer and dearer to good hearts from having been revealed to us only by his pitiless conqueror. The beautiful plain of the Limagne, overlooked by the table-land of Gergovie, where Caesar met his only check, had attracted by turns the admiration and covetousness of all its invaders. Enervated by imperial despotism, those Gauls who had conquered Rome before they were conquered by her, and who had resisted with so much heroism the legions of Caesar, could only bow without resistance under the yoke of the Barbarian conquerors. The Vandals had not spared Auvergne in that frightful invasion in the early part of the fifth century, of which St. Prosper of Aquitaine has said, that if the entire ocean had overflowed upon the fields of Gaul, its vast waves would have made fewer ruins. The Visigoths followed, bearing with them Arianism and persecution, condemning the bishops and priests to apostasy or martyrdom, giving up all the sanctuaries to sacrilegious devastation, and leaving after them, according to the testimony of Sidonius Apollinaris, cattle ruminating in the roofless vestibules, and eating grass beside the overthrown altars. But, amidst those lamentable servitudes, a new life and liberty began to appear. Christian fervour had taken root there; it disputed the empire of souls with Roman corruption; it produced all those acts of virtue, courage, and abnegation which live in the narratives of Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours.

Before the East had revealed monastic institutions to the West, before St. Martin, before even the peace of the Church, the Roman Austremonius, one of the seven bishops sent into Gaul by Pope Fabian, had planted numerous Christian associations among the forests preserved and consecrated by Druidical superstition, and at the foot of the extinguished volcanoes of Auvergne. Issoire was the first of these foundations, and at the same time the place of his own retreat, and the scene of his martyrdom. The history of his successor Urbicus, and of that fatal night when the wife whom he had left to become a bishop came to reclaim her place in the bed of the dishonoured priest, is known. Withdrawn from his see after this scandal, he found in one of these new monasteries an asylum and a tomb, which he shared with his wife and the daughter who was born to them.

Most of the modern cities and villages of Auvergne owe their origin to communities which were formed during the invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries,

and where the Auvergne Catholics, whose rather effeminate civilization has been described by Sidonius Apollinaris, took refuge from the Arian persecution, and the calamities of which they were too submissive victims. One of these, founded about 525, received the name of *the Arverne monastery*, as if all the nationality of the country had taken refuge there. They were soon joined there by the Visigoths, who, when once converted, willingly mingled with the Gallo-Romans to serve together the God of the Gospel, and the Son of God equal with the Father. Some came from a still greater distance, for a hermit of the Thebaid, born in Syria, and persecuted by the Persians, is known to have ended his days in a cell near Clermont.

Anchorites and even *stylites* appeared there as in the deserts of Mesopotamia and the country of Treves, where Gregory of Tours met with a Lombard monk who had long lived upon the top of a pillar, from which he preached the faith to the people, braving the intemperance of a sky less clement than that of the East. In the monastery of Randan, the same Gregory knew a priest who constantly maintained a standing position, and whose feet were diseased in consequence. From thence he went to render homage to a monk called Caluppa, who passed his life in a cavern, at the top of one of the peaks of Cantal, a prey to ecstasies and diabolical temptations. Some herdsmen had one day seen from a great distance an old man kneeling on the top of a hill, his arms raised towards heaven. They disclosed his existence without being able to address him, for even when the bishops came to visit him, this austere solitary would only permit them to approach the foot of his rock, whilst he, kneeling on the ledge of his grotto, received at that height their address and benediction.

### *The two brothers Romain and Lupicin*

Long before that recent growth of the great monastic tree, and as long as it lasted, a new centre of monastic life arose in the eastern extremity of Gaul, upon those hills of Jura which separate Gaul from Switzerland, and in the heart of the province Sequanaise, which, after having been the scene of the first exploits of Caesar on this side of the Alps, was to become the Thebaid of the Gauls. A native of Sequanaise named Romain, trained at the monastery of Ainay, near Lyons, left at the age of thirty-five his father's house, and, carrying with him the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, and some tools and seeds of vegetables, made his way into the high mountains and inhabited forests which overlook his native country, found a site enclosed between three steep heights, at the confluence of two streams, and there founded, under the name of Condat, a monastery destined to become one of the most celebrated in the West. The soil was little adapted for cultivation, but in consequence of its difficult access, became the property of the first occupant. He found shelter at first under an enormous fir-tree, the thick branches of which represented to him the palm which served the hermit Paul in the desert of Egypt for a tent; then he began to read, to pray, and to plant his herbs, with a certainty of being protected against the curious and importunate by the extreme roughness of the paths which crossed those precipices, and also by the masses of fallen and interlaced trees called *chablis*, such as are often met with in fir woods not yet subjected to regular care and attendance.



His solitude was disturbed only by the wild animals, and now and then by some bold huntsman. However, he was joined there by his brother Lupicin and others, in so great a number that they were soon obliged to spread themselves and form new establishments in the environs. The two brothers governed these monasteries together, and maintained order and discipline not without difficulty among the increasing multitude of novices, against which an old monk protested, complaining that they did not even leave him room to lie down in. Women followed, as they always did; and upon a neighbouring rock, suspended like a nest at the edge of a precipice, the sister of our two abbots ruled five hundred virgins so severely cloistered, that having once entered into the convent they were seen no more, except during the transit of their bodies from the deathbed to the grave.

As for the monks, each had a separate cell; they had only the refectory in common. In summer they took their siesta under the great firs, which in winter protected their dwelling against the south and north wind. They sought to imitate the anchorites of the East, whose various rules they studied daily, tempering them by certain alleviations, which were necessitated by the climate, their daily labour, and even by the constitution of the Gaulish race. They wore sabots and tunics of skins, slightly tacked together, which protected them from the rain, but not from the rigorous cold of these bleak heights, where people are, says their biographer, at once crushed and buried under the snow, whilst in summer the heat produced by the reflection of the sun upon the perpendicular walls of rock is insupportable. Lupicin surpassed them all in austerity; he slept in the trunk of a tree, hollowed out in the form of a cradle; he lived only upon pottage made of barley-meal ground with the bran, without salt, without oil, and without even milk; and one day, disgusted by the delicacy of his brethren, he threw indiscriminately into the same pot the fish, the herbs, and the roots, which the monks had prepared apart and with some care. The community was greatly irritated, and twelve monks, whose patience was exhausted, went away. Upon this an altercation arose between the two brothers. "It would have been better", said Romain to Lupicin, "that thou hadst never come hither, than come to put our monks to flight". "Never mind", answered Lupicin, "it is the straw separating from the corn; these twelve are proud, mounted upon stilts, and God is not in them". However, Romain succeeded in bringing back the fugitives, who all became in their turn superiors of communities.

For a colonizing fertility soon became the manifest characteristic of this new republic: and it is in reference to Condat and its children, if I do not deceive myself, that monastic annals employ for the first time, the trite but just image of the swarm of bees from the hive to describe the colonies of monks which went forth from the mother monastery to people the Sequanaise and the neighbouring provinces with churches and monasteries. They all recognized the authority of the two brothers; they already excited the admiration of orthodox Christians. Sidonius Apollinaris, whose cultivated mind loved to keep on a level with all contemporary events, knew and praised the solitudes of the Jura, and congratulated their inhabitants on finding there a foretaste of the joys of Paradise.

*St. Eugende (A.D. 426-510)*



Towards the end of Romain's life, a child of seven years old was brought to him, who was destined one day to succeed him, and to give for several centuries his name to Condat. Eugende, fourth abbot, substituted a common dormitory, where he himself slept, to the separate cells of the monks, and specially occupied himself in promoting the work of education in the community. Greek and Latin literature was taught there with success, not only to the future monks, but to youths destined to return to the world: and Condat became the first school of Sequanie, and one of the most celebrated in Gaul. Study of the ancient orators was united to the work of transcribing manuscripts, under the direction of Viventiole, the friend of the celebrated St. Avitus, bishop of Vienne, whose eloquence he corrected, and whose barbarisms he noted, in that curious correspondence which all literary historians have recorded.

These intellectual labours did not imply their abandonment of manual work, and Viventiole sent to his friend a chair of boxwood made by his own hands, which marks the beginning of that valuable branch of industry, still existing, after the lapse of fourteen centuries, in the cottages of Jura. Avitus answered him gracefully: "I wish you a chair in return for the seat which you have sent me". The prophecy was accomplished when Viventiole became metropolitan of Lyons in the beginning of the sixth century, and by the nomination of Avitus (towards 514).

All those districts situated between the Rhone and the Rhine, and overshadowed by the Jura and of the Alps, were then occupied by the Burgondes, a race whose manners were gentler and more pure than any of the other Barbarian races, and who, becoming Christians and remaining orthodox till about the year 500, treated the Gauls less as conquered subjects than as brothers in the faith. They were naturally much under the influence of the monks of Condat, and that ascendancy was exercised, as everywhere, for the benefit of the oppressed. Lupicin, already broken by age, went to the Burgonde king Chilperic, who resided at Geneva, to plead with him the cause of some poor natives of Sequanaise, who had been reduced into slavery by a subordinate potentate. This petty tyrant was one of those degenerate Romans, courtiers and oppressors, who, sometimes in the name of the decrepid power of the Emperor, sometimes by flattering the new-born authority of the Barbarian kings, equally found means of trampling on and spoiling their inferiors. He was perhaps one of those senators of Gaul whom the Burgondes had admitted in 456 to a share of the conquered soil: add Lupicin, although of Gallo-Roman origin, seems to have been less favourably disposed towards Roman government than that of the Barbarians. Gregory of Tours has recorded a tradition which well depicts the impression made upon the popular imagination by this apparition of the monks confronted with the triumphant Barbarians. He relates that when Lupicin crossed the threshold of the palace of Chilperic, the throne upon which the king was seated trembled, as if there had been an earthquake. Reassured at the sight of the old man clothed with skins, the Burgonde prince listened to the curious debate which arose between the oppressor and the advocate of the oppressed. "It is then thou", said the courtier to the abbot—"it is thou, old impostor, who hast already insulted the Roman power for ten years, by announcing that all this region and its chiefs were hastening to their ruin". "Yes, truly", answered the monk, pointing to the king, who listened—"Yes, perverse traitor, the ruin which I predicted to thee and to thy fellows,

there it is. Seest thou not, degenerate man, that thy rights are destroyed by thy sins, and that the prayer of the innocent is granted? Seest thou not that the fasces and the Roman purple are compelled to bow down before a foreign judge? Take heed that some unexpected guest does not come before a new tribunal to claim thy lands, and thy domains". The king of the Burgondes not only justified the abbot by restoring his clients to liberty, but he overwhelmed him with presents, and offered him fields and vineyards for his abbey. Lupicin would only accept a portion of the produce of these fields and vineyards, fearing that the sentiment of too vast a property might make his monks proud. Then the king decreed that they should be allowed every year three hundred measures of corn, three hundred measures of wine, and a hundred gold pieces for their vestments; and the treasury of the Merovingian kings continued to pay these dues long after the fall of the kingdom of the Burgondes.

The importance of the social and political part taken by the abbot Lupicin is also proved by the curious narrative of his intervention in the prosecution raised by Egidius, the representative of imperial authority in Gaul, against the Count Agrippinus, accused before the Emperor Majorian of having treated with the Barbarians. The abbot of Condat, who was the friend of this Count, and like him favourable to the Barbarians, became his *fidejussor* or security, and was accepted as such by Egidius, who kissed his hand as he put it into that of the Count.

*King Sigismund founds Agaune, monastic metropolis of the kingdom of Burgundy (512-522)*

Fifty years later, another Burgundian king, Sigismund, after having renounced Arianism and restored freedom to the Church in his kingdom, desired to build up the ruins of the monastery of Agaune, and sought at once in Condat and Lerins for monks to Burgundy, inhabit it. This new sanctuary was built at the entrance of the principal passage of the Alps, in one of the finest landscapes in the world, at the spot where the Rhone, having ended the first stage of its course, escapes by the gorges of the Valais to precipitate its muddy waters into the limpid azure of the Lake of Geneva. It was built in honour of the spot where St. Maurice and the Theban legion suffered martyrdom, having been stopped there, and preferring to die rather than to massacre the Christians who had risen in the great national insurrection of the Bagaudes against the rightful oppression of Roman conscriptions and taxes. Their relics were collected there and deposited in a church more than once crushed by the fall of the rocks, between the masses of which the impetuous stream with difficulty forces a passage. Agaune took and has retained to the present day the name of St. Maurice. It was from that time the monastic metropolis of the kingdom of Burgundy, so often destroyed and so often restored. A hundred monks descended from Condat to inhabit it; their former abbot, Viventiole, then bishop of Lyons, assisted by his friend Avitus, presided at the ceremony of inauguration, and established, in a discourse which has been preserved to us, the principal conditions of the manner of life which the brethren were to lead there. The monks of Condat and Agaune followed for some time the same rule; the same mind and discipline thus reigned from north to south in the Burgundian dominions. But

Sigismund gave greater splendour to his foundation. By the liberality of his gifts, as many as nine hundred monks could be collected there, who, divided into nine choirs, sang alternately, and without intermission, the praises of God and the martyrs. This was called the *Laus perennis*, and it will be seen that the great Burgundian monastery was not the only one from which that tide of prayer gushed forth, keeping no silence night nor day. King Sigismund added himself to the number of this incessant choir, when he became a monk, to expiate the crime which he, like Constantine, had committed in sacrificing the son of his first marriage to the treachery of his second wife. How he perished, with all his family, slain by the son of Clovis, is well known.

*The monk Severin (A.D. 402-482)*

If, from the Rhone to the Danube, and from Savoy to Pannonia, we follow the Roman frontier, at all points encroached on and broken through, we shall always find monks at the post of honour and danger, of devotedness and salvation. Already we have seen them in conflict with the Goths, the Franks, and the Burgondes. Let us recognize them upon the path of the Germanic races, whom Attila had temporarily drawn out of their natural course, the Thuringians, the Alemans, the Rugians, the Herules, who were about to overleap the last obstacles, and give the last blow to the phantom of the empire. Their influence was especially apparent in the life of Severin, written by one of his disciples, and brought to light in our own days by Ozanam, a writer full of charm and authority, who scarcely leaves anything to be gleaned wherever he has passed.

Severin had established himself in Noricum, in these countries which have since become Bavaria and Austria, and inhabited a monastery near the present site of Vienna. He would never disclose the place of his birth; but his language denoted a Latin origin, and his life proved that he had dwelt long in the monastic deserts of the East, before introducing cenobitical life on the banks of the Danube. Several centuries passed, however, before monastic life bore here its full fruits. But to Severin remains, in the grateful recollection of the people and the Church, the merit of its beginning.

A true physician and shepherd of souls, he devoted his wonderful activity and treasures of courage, patience, and skill, to maintain the faith in those provinces which were already almost entirely Christian, to preserve the life and goods of the invaded population, and to convert the conquering bands whose barbarism was aggravated by the Arian heresy. He repeatedly directed with success the military defence of Roman cities besieged by the Barbarians: and when victory was declared, as it usually was, for the latter, he occupied himself with unwearied solicitude in alleviating the fate of the captives, in feeding and clothing them. Hardy as he was by means of fast and mortification, he hungered when they were hungry, and shivered when the cold seized upon their naked forms. He seemed to have inspired Barbarians and Romans, on both

banks of the great river which no longer guarded the territory of the empire, with equal veneration, and the king of the Alemans, subdued by the sight of that dauntless charity, having offered him the choice of any favour he pleased, Severin asked of him to spare the lands of the Romans and set his prisoners at liberty. He held the same influence over the king of the Rugians, another tribe which had come from the shores of the Baltic to establish themselves in Pannonia. But the wife of this king, more ferocious than himself, and wildly heretical besides, attempted to deter her husband from following the advice of the abbot, and one day when he interceded for the poor Romans whom she had sent into servitude beyond the Danube, she said to him: "Man of God, keep thyself calm to pray in thy cell, and leave us to do what seems good to us with our slaves". But he was unwearied in his efforts, and almost always ended by triumphing over these savage yet still uncorrupted souls. Feeling his end approach, he called the king and queen to his deathbed. After having exhorted the king to remember the reckoning which he should have to render to God, he put his hand upon the heart of the Barbarian and turned to the queen: "Gisa", said he "lovest thou this soul better than silver or gold?" And as Gisa protested that she loved her husband better than all treasures: "Well then", said he, "cease to oppress the just, lest their oppression be your ruin. I entreat both of you humbly, at this moment when I am returning to my master, to abstain from evil, and to do yourselves honour by your good deeds". "The history of invasions", adds Ozanam, "has many pathetic scenes, but I know nothing more instructive than the death of this old Roman, expiring between two Barbarians, and less moved by the ruin of the empire than by the peril of their souls".

But it is his meeting with the German chief who was destined to overturn the dishonoured throne of the Roman emperors, which has specially preserved from oblivion the memory of Severin. Among the Barbarians who, on their way to Italy, voluntarily arrested their course to ask the benediction of the saint, in whom they instinctively honoured a greatness born to survive all that they were about to destroy, came one day a young Herule, poorly clad, but of noble race, and so tall that he had to stoop his head to enter the cell of the monk. "Go", said Severin to him, "go to Italy: now thou wearest but sorry furs, but shortly thou shalt be able to make gifts". This young man was Odoacer. At the head of the Thuringians and Herules, he took possession of Rome, sent Romulus Augustulus to die in exile, and, without condescending to make himself emperor, was content to remain master of Italy. In the midst of his conquest, he remembered the prediction of the Roman monk whom he had left upon the banks of the Danube, and wrote to him desiring him to ask all that he would. Severin took advantage of this to obtain the pardon of an exile.

It is pleasant to see this sweet and holy memory hovering over the catastrophe which terminates the shameful annals of old Rome, enslaved and degraded under her vile Caesars, and which opens the history of modern Europe.

Thus, from the middle of the fifth century, the cenobitical institution, proceeding from the Thebaid, has occupied one by one all the provinces of the Roman empire, and encamped upon all the frontiers to await and win the Barbarians.

The immense services which this institution has rendered to the Church, the new and necessary force which it has lent to society, fainting between the avenging embrace

of the Germans, and the despicable languor of expiring imperialism, may be already appreciated.

The monks were from that period the direct instruments, after the papacy, of the salvation and honour of Europe. They rendered her capable of that gigantic and supernatural effort against the inveterate paganism of the old world and the impetuous current of the northern invaders. Contemporaries themselves perceived it: no one disputed the solemn testimony of the priest Rufinus, who was not himself a monk, but who had long studied and observed them: "There is no doubt that without these humble penitents the world could not have retained its existence".

Everything around them was calculated to sow terror and despair. On one side, the savage hordes of a hundred hostile nations filled Gaul, Italy, Spain, Illyria, Africa, all the provinces in their turn, with blood and horror: and after Alaric, Genseric, and Attila, a well-founded presentiment of the final fall of Rome and the Empire increased in all hearts every day. On the other hand, Arianism, with its implacable and multiplied obstinacy, and the many heresies which succeeded each other without intermission, rent the Church, disturbed consciences, and made men believe in a universal overturn. When the judgments of God appeared in the beginning of the fifth century, the world lost its senses. Some plunged into debauchery to enjoy like brutes the last remnant of happiness; others sank into incurable melancholy.

The lovers of solitude, the men of penitence, sacrifice, and voluntary humiliation, alone knew how to live, hope, resist, and stand fast. To those who reproach the monkish spirit with enervating, debasing, and making sluggards of men, let it suffice to recall what monks were in these days of desolation and despair. They alone showed themselves equal to all necessities and above all terrors. Human courage has never been more tried than among the monks; it has never displayed greater resources nor more constancy: it has never showed itself more manful and unshakable.

They opposed to the successive waves of the Barbaric invasion an insurmountable barrier of virtue, courage, patience, and genius; and, when all external resistance was found impossible and useless, it was found that they had formed, for all the germs of civilization and the future, shelters which the floods might pass over without engulfing them. In the midst of that deluge which annihilated Roman Europe and the ancient world, they concentrated themselves in a high and pure sphere, which was destined to survive all that chaos, and from which life was to descend upon a new world.

Their courage was only surpassed by their charity, by their tender and inexhaustible compassion for all the miseries with which they saw the world overwhelmed. They loved their neighbours passionately, because they loved God more than themselves. They drew the secret of this love and supernatural force from Christian self-renunciation, from the voluntary expiation of their own faults and the faults of others. In opposing poverty, chastity, and obedience, the three eternal bases of monastic life, to the orgies of wealth, debauchery, and pride, they created at once a contrast and a remedy. In sacrificing by a spirit, of mortification, all permitted privileges, marriage, property, and the free disposition of their time and their life, they became the guardians and saviours of those who justly desired to retain these legitimate possessions, and who saw them exposed, in so desperate a condition of society, to irremediable outrages.



But let us not mistake regarding this. They never dreamt of making that exceptional life the common rule. They knew that it could only be the privilege of certain souls, more entirely penetrated than the rest by the blood of the Saviour. They did not assume to impose their evangelical counsels as precepts upon all. They remained faithful to the interpretation of the sacred text, which has never varied from the first popes until now. Their leaders always resisted the excesses of intemperate zeal in the Gnostics and others, who would have rendered obligatory upon all that which was only possible for some. Doubtless, certain events, certain lives, might be quoted which seem to lean towards excess: but there are excesses inseparable from the force and vigour of all great movements of the soul, and which only serve to reveal the existence of a vital and fertile current. In their hearts, and on the whole, they remained sheltered from all unregulated exaltation, firmly attached to apostolic traditions and the infallible prudence of the Church. They had no tendency, such as they have been accused of having, to transform the entire universe into a cloister: they desired only to create and maintain, by the side of the storms and failure of the world, the home, the refuge, and the school of a peace and strength superior to the world.

This was the cause of their powerful action upon the world from that period. In vain had they fled from men, for men followed them. All the good heart, high mind, and clear intellect, which remained in this fallen society, rallied round the monks, as if to escape from universal ruin. Their spirit breathed from the depths of the deserts upon towns, upon schools, and even upon palaces, to light them again with some gleams of vigour and intelligence. The distracted people sought them, listened to them, and admired them, though understanding them little, and imitating them still less. But their existence alone was the most energetic protest against pagan materialism, which had ended by depraving all souls, and by undermining the social constitution of the Old World. They awoke in man all those intellectual and moral forces which could aid him to strive against the unheard of calamities of the time. They taught him to struggle against that empire of sensuality which was to be so painfully expiated under the yoke of the Barbarians. They showed him at once the road to heaven and that of the future in this world, the sole future possible to these long-enervated races, a regeneration by suffering, voluntarily accepted and courageously endured.

They did not limit themselves to prayer and penitence: they spoke, they wrote much; and their masculine genius, their young and fresh inspiration, prevented the new Christian world from falling back from its first advances, either by literature or politics, under the yoke of exhausted paganism. The Fathers trained in the school of monastic life preserved the public mind, in these ages of transition, from the danger which it ran of allowing itself to be overborne and taken advantage of by scholars, elegant, but puerile and behind the age, whose dream was the reconstruction of a society which should find types in the pagan authors, such as Ausonius and Symmachus, and have for its heads and emperors apostates or Arians, such as Julian and Valens.

Among the populations degraded by the imperial yoke, the monks represented freedom and dignity, activity and labour. These were, above all, free men who, after having divested themselves of their patrimonial possessions, lived less by alms than by the produce of their labour, and who thus ennobled the hardest toils of the earth before the eyes of that degenerate Roman world in which agriculture was almost exclusively



the portion of slaves. They alone recalled to the world the noble days of Cincinnatus, the dictator who was taken from the plough!

How St. Augustine repressed the criminal folly of those who would have substituted a pious idleness for that labour which the first Fathers of the desert gave so glorious an example of, and which all monks continue to practise with an unwearied zeal, has been seen. Thanks to them, and despite the ravages of the Barbarians and the indifference of the Romans, the lands of Egypt, Africa, and Italy, the most fertile and longest cultivated in the world, retained some traces of their ancient fruitfulness, till the time when the monks were to go to clear the countries which had been until then beyond the reach of all cultivation.

But the Church claimed them still more strongly than the world. In their origin, despite the tonsure and the black robes which distinguished them from laymen, monks formed no part of the clergy, and were not reckoned among ecclesiastical persons. St. Jerome, in several passages of his writings, declares that the monks ought to be like other laymen, submissive and respectful not only to the priests, but also to all the members of the clerical profession. They then formed a sort of intermediate body between the clergy and the faithful, like a formidable reserve of trained Christians. The secular clergy were to see in them an ideal which it was not given to all to attain, but the presence of which alone constituted a check upon any falling away of the ministers of the Lord. From the depths of their solitude, at Nitria as at Lerins, they also mixed actively in all the great controversies which diffuse so much life through the history of the fourth and fifth centuries. They were always found in the first rank of the armies of orthodoxy. In vain had their first founders endeavoured to interdict them from accepting ecclesiastical dignities, or even holy orders. From the earliest times they were drawn forcibly from their retreats to be ordained priests and bishops by the voice of the people, and by the enlightened choice of pastors such as Athanasius.

The number of priests in their ranks soon increased, from which came the greatest bishops of Christendom, Basil, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Martin of Tours. This has not been sufficiently attended to: the Fathers of the Church, the great doctors of that primitive age, all, or almost all, proceeded out of the monastic ranks. Excepting St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose, and St. Leo the Great, all the other Fathers and all the doctors of these two centuries were monks, or trained in monasteries. We have already reckoned among them the four great doctors of the Eastern Church, Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzus; and in the Western Church, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Fulgentius, Sulpicius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassianus, Salvian, St. Caesarius of Arles, and afterwards St. Gregory the Great. No literature offers to the admiration of men greater names than these. Their writings remain the arsenal of theology. They have presided over the development of doctrine and all the primitive history of the faith. That alone should be enough to assure an ever glorious place to the monastic order in the annals of the Church and the world. But it was not destined to stop there. Its part was only beginning. For a thousand years longer none of the great names of the Church shall be strangers to it; for a thousand years it shall inscribe its name at the head of all the great pages of history.

But at the period of which we speak, the monks were not the first, but the only, strong and great. Under a sway which united excess of license with excess of servitude, amidst political abjectness and social decrepitude, they alone were found worthy, pure, and intrepid, the sole orators, writers — in a word, the only men who preserved an independent standing. Thus they crossed the immense remnant of enslaved nations, and marched with a tranquil and steady step to the conquest of the future.

In this new world which began to dawn, they replaced two wonderful phenomena of the ancient world — the slaves and the martyrs: the slaves, by their indefatigable activity and heroic patience; the martyrs, by a living tradition of self-devotion and sacrifice. The long struggle which had vanquished the Roman Empire without transforming it, was then to be continued under other names and other forms, but with the same power and success. An instinctive consciousness of this glorious succession must have existed in the mind of the unknown writer who commenced the biography of a Gallo-Roman monk of the sixth century with these words: “After the glorious combats of the martyrs, let us celebrate the merits of the confessors; for they also have conquered and lived only for Christ, and to them death has been gain; they have also become heirs of the heavenly Jerusalem. Now the camps and citadels of the soldiers of Christ shine everywhere. Now the King of heaven proclaims everywhere the titles and extends the glory of these numerous athletes, whose inanimate ashes triumph still over the enemy of the human race”.

Let us, however, be on our guard against a blind enthusiasm and partial admiration. Shadows were not wanting to this picture, nor blots in this light.

The monks were not always nor everywhere without reproach. All contemporary chronicles prove that from that time a considerable number of men, strangers to the true spirit of the monastic condition, stole in among them, not to speak of those whom the desire to escape slavery or famine drove into their ranks. We are obliged to admit that, even in this period of robust and glorious youth, disorders and abuses infected the monasteries. But from the first these were denounced, reprimanded, and stigmatized by the most illustrious among the cenobites or apologists of the monastic institution, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine. The greatest and most serious of these disorders, that which was most repugnant to the fundamental spirit of the institution, and at the same time that which threatened to increase with the greatest rapidity, in spite of the severe decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, was the passion for change and motion which drew bands of monks to the great roads and public places of the empire, there to give themselves up to all kinds of unwonted and boisterous demonstrations. Under the name of *Messalians* or of *Gyrovagues*, they passed their life in wandering from province to province, from cell to cell, remaining only three or four days in one place, living on alms extorted from the faithful, who were often scandalized by their bad morals, always wandering and never stable, enslaved to their passions and to all the excesses of conviviality; in short, according to the testimony of the greatest of monks, living such a life that it was better to keep silence than to speak of it.

Others existed elsewhere, named in the Egyptian language Sarabaites, and who, to quote again the testimony of the reformer whose strongest laws were intended for their defeat, carried the stamp of the world into the cell, “like molten lead, and not like gold

tried in the furnace”. They lived two or three together, without rule or leader, caring only for their own flocks, and not for the sheep of the Lord, taking their own desires and enjoyments as a law, declaring holy all that they thought and preferred, and holding all that displeased them as prohibited.

These unworthy monks, “whose shaven heads lied to God”, found encouragement for their wandering and disorderly life in the absence of any uniform rule or legislation imposed and approved by the Church.

Most of the great leaders of the cenobitical institution had, since St. Pacome, made out, under the name of Rule, instructions and constitutions for the use of their immediate disciples; but none of these works had acquired an extensive or lasting sway. In the East, it is true, the rule of St. Basil had prevailed in a multitude of monasteries, yet notwithstanding Cassianus, in visiting Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, found there almost as many different rules as there were monasteries. In the West, the diversity was still more strange. Each man made for himself his own rule and discipline, taking his authority from the writings or example of the Eastern Fathers. The Gauls especially exclaimed against the extreme rigor of the fasts and abstinences, which might be suitable under a fervid sky like that of Egypt or Syria, but which could not be endured by what they already called Gallican weakness; and even in the initial fervour of the monasteries of the Jura, they had succeeded in imposing a necessary medium upon their chiefs. Here, it was the changing will of an abbot; there, a written rule; elsewhere, the traditions of the elders, which determined the order of conventual life. In some houses various rules were practised at the same time, according to the inclination of the inhabitants of each cell, and were changed according to the times and places. They passed thus from excessive austerity to laxness, and conversely, according to the liking of each. Uncertainty and instability were everywhere.

We have, therefore, committed a sort of anachronism in speaking, up to this point, though in conformity with the language of contemporary authors, of the monastic order. A general arrangement was precisely what was most wanting in monastic life. There were an immense number of monks; there had been among them saints and illustrious men; but to speak truly, the monastic order had still no existence.

Even where the rule of St. Basil had acquired the necessary degree of establishment and authority—that is to say, in a considerable portion of the East—the gift of fertility was denied to it. The distinctive character of the institutions and creeds of the East—which, after a first impulse, last without increasing, and remain stationary for ages, like trees planted in the shade which have roots but no fruit, and vegetate indefinitely without either rise or extension—might be remarked in it from that time.

In the West also, towards the end of the fifth century, the cenobitical institution seemed to have fallen into the torpor and sterility of the East. After St. Jerome, who died in 420, and St. Augustine, who died in 430, after the Fathers of Lerins, whose splendour paled towards 450, there was a kind of eclipse. Condat still shone alone upon its heights of the Jura up to the beginning of the sixth century; but illustrious cenobites brilliantly occupying the first rank in the polemics and developments of Christian life, were no longer to be seen as formerly. Except in Ireland and Gaul, where, in most of the provinces, some new foundations rose, a general interruption was observable in the

extension of the institution, whether because the final triumph of the Barbarian invasion had stifled for a time the efforts of zeal, and troubled the fountain of life at which these victorious races were to assuage their thirst, or that intervals of apparent inaction are necessary to the creations of Christian genius as to the forces of nature, in order to prepare them for the decisive evolutions of their destiny.

If this eclipse had lasted, the history of the monks of the West would only have been, like that of the Eastern monks, a sublime but brief passage in the annals of the Church, instead of being their longest and best-filled page.

This was not to be: but to keep the promises which the monastic order had made to the Church and to the newborn Christendom, it needed at the beginning of the sixth century, a new and energetic impulse, such as would concentrate and discipline so many scattered, irregular, and intermittent forces; a uniform and universally accepted rule; a legislator inspired by the fertile and glorious past, to establish and govern the future. God provided for that necessity by sending St. Benedict into the world.

## BOOK IV.

### ST. BENEDICT.

#### I.

#### HIS LIFE.

St. Benedict was born in the year of our Lord 480. Europe has perhaps never known a more calamitous or apparently desperate period than that which reached its climax at this date.

Confusion, corruption, despair, and death were everywhere; social dismemberment seemed complete. Authority, morals, laws, sciences, arts, religion herself, might have been supposed condemned to irremediable ruin. The germs of a splendid and approaching revival were still hidden from all eyes under the ruins of a crumbling world. The Church was more than ever infected by heresy, schisms, and divisions, which the obscure successors of St. Leo the Great in the Holy See endeavoured in vain to repress. In all the ancient Roman world there did not exist a prince who was not either a pagan, an Arian, or a Eutychian. The monastic institution, after having given so many doctors and saints to the Church in the East, was drifting toward that descent which it never was doomed to reascend; and even in the West, as has just been seen, some symptoms of premature decay had already appeared. Thus, indeed, the monks gave too often an example of disorder and scandal as well as the rest of the clergy.

In temporal affairs, the political edifice originated by Augustus—that monster assemblage of two hundred millions of human creatures, “of whom not a single individual was entitled to call himself free”—was crumbling into dust under the blows of the Barbarians.

In the West, the last imperial phantom had just disappeared. Odoacer, the chief of the Herules, had snatched the purple of the Caesars from the shoulders of Augustulus in 476, but disdained himself to put it on. He had succeeded in filling up the sink of pollution which called itself the Roman Empire, and in which, for five centuries, the glory and strength of ancient Rome, and the blood and substance of the world conquered by her arms, had been consumed. But Italy, though delivered from that oppressive fiction, remained a prey to successive floods of Barbarians. Already ravaged by Alaric and Attila, she had not enjoyed a breathing-time under the momentary shelter of the genius of Theodoric.

In the East, two theological tyrants disputed the dishonoured throne of Constantinople. (The Henoticon, or edict of union, published in 482, in opposition to the Council of Chalcedon, where the heresy of Eutychus, who held the divinity and humanity of our Lord to be the same nature, had been condemned). One of these, Basilicus, had found five hundred bishops to subscribe the anathema which he launched

against the pope and the orthodox Council of Chalcedon: the other, Zeno, authorized heresy in his edicts; he exhausted with his spoliations and debaucheries the nations whom he did not even attempt to defend against the Barbarians. Thus commenced a period of miserable and sanguinary disputes, which lasted, without intermission, for thirty-four years, until the advent of the predecessor of Justinian.

In the other parts of Europe, the Barbarians founded states and kingdoms, some of which were destined to be not without distinction, but of which not one belonged even to the Catholic faith.

Germany was still entirely pagan, as was also Great Britain, where the new-born faith had been stifled by the Angles and Saxons. Gaul was invaded on the north by the pagan Franks, and on the south by the Arian Burgundians. Spain was overrun and ravaged by the Visigoths, the Sueves, the Alans, and the Vandals, all Arians. The same Vandals, under the successor of Genseric, made Christian Africa desolate, by a persecution more un pitying and refined in cruelty than those of the Roman emperors. In a word, all those countries into which the first disciples of Jesus Christ carried the faith, had fallen a prey to barbarism, and most frequently to a barbarism which the Arian heresy employed as the instrument of its hatred against the Church. The world had to be a second time reconquered.

Christian souls everywhere saw with terror the formidable prophecies of the ancient law against a false-hearted race realized anew. “Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful ... Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it”.

Amidst this universal darkness and desolation, history directs our gaze towards those heights, in the centre of Italy, and at the gates of Rome, which detach themselves from the chain of the Apennines, and extend from the ancient country of the Sabines to that of the Samnites. A single solitary was about to form there a centre spiritual virtue, and to light it up with a splendour destined to shine over regenerated Europe for ten centuries to come.

Fifty miles to the west of Rome, among that group of hills where the Anio hollows the deep gorge which separates the country of the Sabines from that once inhabited by the Eques and Hernici, the traveller, ascending by the course of the river, comes to a kind of basin, which opens out between two immense walls of rock, and from which a fresh and transparent stream descends from fall to fall, to a place named Subiaco. This grand and picturesque site had attracted the attention of Nero. He confined the water of the Anio by dams, and constructed artificial lakes and baths below with a delicious villa, which took, from its position, the name of *Sublaqueum*, and of which some shapeless ruins remain. He sometimes resided there. One day, in the midst of a feast, the cup which he raised to his lips was broken by thunder, and this omen filled his miserable



soul with unusual terror; Heaven had marked this place with the seal once of its vengeance and of its mercies. Four centuries after Nero, and when solitude and silence had long replaced the imperial orgies, a young patrician, flying from the delights and dangers of Rome (A.D. 494), sought there a refuge and solitude with God. He had been baptized under the name of Benedictus, that is to say, Well said, or Blessed. He belonged to the illustrious house of Anicius, which had already given so many of its children to monastic life. By his mother's side he was the last scion of the lords of Nursia, a Sabine town, where he was born, as has been said, in 480. He was scarcely fourteen when he resolved to renounce fortune, knowledge, his family, and the happiness of this world. Leaving his old nurse, who had been the first to love him, and who alone followed him still, he plunged into these wild gorges, and ascended those almost inaccessible hills. On the way he met a monk, named Romanus, who gave him a haircloth shirt and a monastic dress made of skins. Proceeding on his ascent, and reaching to the middle of the abrupt rock, which faces to the south, and which overhangs the rapid course of the Anio, he discovered a dark and narrow cave, a sort of den, into which the sun never shone. He there took up his abode, and remained unknown to all except to the monk Romanus, who fed him with the remainder of his own scanty fare, but who, not being able to reach his cell, transmitted to him every day, at the end of a cord, a loaf and a little bell, the sound of which warned him of this sustenance which charity had provided for him.

He lived three entire years in this tomb. The shepherds who discovered him there, at first took him for a wild beast; by his discourses, and the efforts he made to instil grace and piety into their rustic souls, they recognized in him a servant of God. Temptations were not wanting to him. The allurements of voluptuousness acted so strongly on his excited senses, that he was on the point of leaving his retreat to seek after a woman whose beauty had formerly impressed him, and whose memory haunted him incessantly. But there was near his grotto a clump of thorns and briers: he took off the vestment of skins which was his only dress, and rolled himself among them naked, till his body was all one wound, but also till he had extinguished forever the infernal fire which inflamed him even in the desert.

Seven centuries later (A.D. 1223), another saint, father of the most numerous monastic family which the Church has produced after that of St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, came to visit that wild site which was worthy to rival the bare Tuscan rock where the stigmata of the passion were imprinted on himself. He prostrated himself before the thicket of thorns which had been a triumphal bed to the masculine virtue of the patriarch of the monks, and after having bathed with his tears the soil of that glorious battlefield, he planted there two rose-trees. The roses of St. Francis grew, and have survived the Benedictine briers. This garden, twice sanctified, still occupies a sort of triangular plateau, which projects upon the side of the rock a little before and beneath the grotto which sheltered St. Benedict. The eye, confined on all sides by rocks, can survey freely only the azure of heaven. It is the last of those sacred places visited and venerated in the celebrated and unique monastery of the *Sacro Speco*, which forms a series of sanctuaries built one over the other, backed by the mountain which Benedict has immortalized. Such was the hard and savage cradle of the monastic order in the West. It was from this tomb, where the delicate son of the last patricians of Rome buried himself

alive, that the definite form of monastic life—that is to say, the perfection of Christian life—was born. From this cavern and thicket of thorns have issued legions of saints and monks, whose devotion has won for the Church her greatest conquests and purest glories. From this fountain has gushed the inexhaustible current of religious zeal and fervour. Thence came, and shall still come, all whom the spirit of the great Benedict shall inspire with the impulse of opening new paths or restoring ancient discipline in cloistral life. The sacred site which the prophet Isaiah seems to have pointed out beforehand to cenobites, by words so marvellously close in their application—“Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit (*cavernam laci*) whence ye are digged”—is there recognized by all. We lament for the Christian who has not seen this grotto, this desert, this nest of the eagle and the dove, or who, having seen it, has not prostrated himself with tender respect before the sanctuary from which issued, with the rule and institution of St. Benedict, the flower of Christian civilization, the permanent victory of the soul over the flesh, the intellectual enfranchisement of Europe, and all that charm and grandeur which the spirit of sacrifice, regulated by faith, adds to knowledge, labour, and virtue.

The solitude of the young anchorite was not long respected. The faithful in the neighbourhood, who brought him food for the body, asked the bread of life in return. The monks of a neighbouring monastery, situated near Vico Varo (the *Vario* of Horace), obtained, by dint of importunity, his consent to become their ruler, but, soon disgusted by his austerity, they endeavoured to poison him. He made the sign of the cross over the vessel which contained the poison, and it broke as if it had been struck with a stone. He left these unworthy monks to re-enter joyfully his beloved cavern, and to live by himself alone. But it was vain: he soon found himself surrounded by such a multitude of disciples, that, to give them a shelter, he was compelled to found in the neighbourhood of his retreat twelve monasteries, each inhabited by twelve monks. He kept some with him in order to direct them himself, and was thus finally raised to be the superior of a numerous community of cenobites.

Clergy and laymen, Romans and Barbarians, victors and vanquished, alike flocked to him, attracted by the fame of his virtue and miracles. While the celebrated Theodoric, at the head of his Goths, up to that time invincible, destroyed the ephemeral kingdom of the Herules, seized Rome, and overspread Italy, other Goths came to seek faith, penitence, and monastic discipline under the laws of Benedict. At his command they armed themselves with axes and hatchets, and employed their robust strength in rooting out the brushwood and clearing the soil, which, since the time of Nero, had again become a wilderness. The Italian painters of the great ages of art have left us many representations of the legend told by St. Gregory, in which St. Benedict restores to a Goth who had become a convert at Subiaco, the tool which that zealous but unskilful workman had dropped to the bottom of the lake, and which the abbot miraculously brought forth. “Take thy tool”, said Benedict to the Barbarian woodcutter—“take it, work, and be comforted”. Symbolical words, in which we find an abridgment of the precepts and examples lavished by the monastic order on so many generations of conquering races: *Ecce labora!*

*The young patrician monks : Maur and Placidus*

Besides these Barbarians already occupied in restoring the cultivation of that Italian soil which their brethren in arms still wasted, were many children of the Roman nobility whom their fathers had confided to Benedict to be trained to the service of God. Among these young patricians are two whose names are celebrated in Benedictine annals: Maur, whom the abbot Benedict made his own coadjutor; and Placidus, whose father was lord of the manor of Subiaco, which did not prevent his son from rendering menial services to the community, such as drawing water from the lake of Nero. The weight of his pitcher one day overbalanced him, and he fell into the lake. We shall leave Bossuet to tell the rest, in his panegyric, delivered twelve centuries afterwards, before the sons of the founder of Subiaco: "St. Benedict ordered St. Maur, his faithful disciple, to run quickly and draw the child out. At the word of his master Maur went away without hesitation, ... and, full of confidence in the order he had received, walked upon the water with as much security as upon the earth, and drew Placidus from the whirlpool which would have swallowed him up. To what shall I attribute so great a miracle, whether to the virtue of the obedience or to that of the commandment? A doubtful question, says St. Gregory, between St. Benedict and St. Maur. But let us say, to decide it, that the obedience had grace to accomplish the command, and that the command had grace to give efficacy to the obedience. Walk, my fathers, upon the waves with the help of obedience; you shall find solid support amid the inconstancy of human things. The waves shall have no power to overthrow you, nor the depths to swallow you up; you shall remain immovable, as if all was firm under your feet, and issue forth victorious".

However, Benedict had the ordinary fate of great men and saints. The great number of conversions worked by the example and fame of his austerity awakened a homicidal envy against him. A wicked priest of the neighborhood attempted first, to decry and then to poison him. Being unsuccessful in both, he endeavored, at least, to injure him in the object of his most tender solicitude—in the souls of his young disciples. For that purpose he sent, even into the garden of the monastery where Benedict dwelt and where the monks labored, seven wretched women, whose gestures, sports, and shameful nudity, were designed to tempt the young monks to certain fall. Who does not recognize in this incident the mixture of Barbarian rudeness and frightful corruption which characterize ages of decay and transition? When Benedict, from the threshold of his cell, perceived these shameless creatures, he despaired of his work; he acknowledged that the interest of his beloved children constrained him to disarm so cruel an enmity by retreat. He appointed superiors to the twelve monasteries which he had founded, and, taking with him a small number of disciples, he left forever the wild gorges of Subiaco, where he had lived for thirty-five years.

Without withdrawing from the mountainous region which extends along the western side of the Apennines, Benedict directed his steps towards the south along the Abruzzi, and penetrated into that Land of Labor, the name of which seems naturally suited to a soil destined to be the cradle of the most laborious men whom the world has known. He ended his journey in a scene very different from that of Subiaco, but of incomparable grandeur and majesty. There, upon the boundaries of Samnium and

Campania, in the centre of a large basin, half-surrounded by abrupt and picturesque heights, rises a scarped and isolated hill, the vast and rounded summit of which overlooks the course of the Liris near its fountain head, and the undulating plain which extends south towards the shores of the Mediterranean and the narrow valleys which, towards the north, the east, and the west, lost themselves in the lines of the mountainous horizon. This is Monte Cassino. At the foot of this rock, Benedict found an amphitheatre of the time of the Caesars, amidst the ruins of the town of Cassinum, which the most learned and pious of Romans, Varro, that pagan Benedictine, whose memory and knowledge the sons of Benedict took pleasure in honoring, had rendered illustrious. From the summit the prospect extended on one side towards Arpinum, where the prince of Roman orators was born, and on the other towards Aquinum, already celebrated as the birthplace of Juvenal, before it was known as the country of the Doctor Angelico, which latter distinction should make the name of this little town known among all Christians.

It was amidst these noble recollections, this solemn nature, and upon that predestinated height, that the patriarch of the monks of the West founded the capital of the monastic order. He found paganism still surviving there. Two hundred years after Constantine, in the heart of Christendom, and so near Rome, there still existed a very ancient temple of Apollo and a sacred wood, where a multitude of peasants sacrificed to the gods and demons. Benedict preached the faith of Christ to these forgotten people; he persuaded them to cut down the wood, to overthrow the temple and the idol. Let us listen to Dante, who has translated, in his own fashion, the narrative of St. Gregory, in that magnificent song of the *Paradise*, where the instructions of Beatrice are interrupted and completed by the apparition of the patriarch of the Western monks:

“Quel monte, a cui Cassino e nella costa,  
Fu frequentato già in su la cima,  
Dalla gente ingannata e mal disposta:  
Ed io son quel che su vi portal prima  
Lo nome di colni che 'n terra adusse  
La veritè, che tanto ci sublima:  
E tanta grazia sovra mi rilusse  
Ch' io ritrassi le ville circostanti  
Dall' empio colto, che'l mondo sedusse”.

Upon these remains Benedict built two oratories, one dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the first solitary of the new faith; the other to St. Martin, the great monk-bishop, whose ascetic and priestly virtues had edified Gaul, and reached as far as Italy. Round these chapels rose the monastery which was to become the most powerful and Monte celebrated in the Catholic universe; celebrated especially because there Benedict wrote

his rule; and at the same time formed the type which was to serve as a model to innumerable communities submitted to that sovereign code. It is for this reason that emulous pontiffs, princes, and nations have praised, endowed, and visited the sanctuary where monastic religion, according to the expression of Pope Urban II, “flowed from the heart of Benedict as from a fountain head of Paradise”; and which another Pope, who himself issued out of Monte Cassino to ascend the apostolical chair, has not hesitated to compare to Sinai, in these lines of proud and bold simplicity which he engraved upon the altar of the holy patriarch —

“Haec domus est similis Sinai sacra jura ferenti,  
Ut lex demonstrat hic quae fuit edita quondam.  
Lex hinc exivit, mentes quae ducit ab imis,  
Et vulgata dedit lumen per climata saeculi”.

Benedict ended his life at Monte Cassino, where he lived for fourteen years, occupied, in the first place, with extricating from the surrounding country the remnants of paganism, afterwards in building his monastery by the hands of his disciples, in cultivating the arid sides of his mountain, and the devastated plains around, but above all, in extending to all who approached him the benefits of the law of God, practised with a fervor and charity which none have surpassed. Although he had never been invested with the priestly character, his life at Monte Cassino was rather that of a missionary and apostle than of a solitary. He was, notwithstanding, the vigilant head of a community which flourished and increased more and more. Accustomed to subdue himself in everything, and to struggle with the infernal spirits, whose temptations and appearances were not wanting to him more than to the ancient Fathers of the desert, he had acquired the gift of reading souls, and discerning their most secret thoughts. He used this faculty not only to direct the young monks, who always gathered in such numbers round him, in their studies and the labors of agriculture and building which he shared with them; but even in the distant journeys on which they were sometimes sent, he followed them by a spiritual observation, discovered their least failings, reprimanded them on their return, and bound them in everything to a strict fulfillment of the rule which they had accepted. He exacted from all the obedience, sincerity, and austere regulated life of which he himself gave the first example.

Many young men of rich and noble families came here, as at Subiaco, to put themselves under his direction, or were confided to him by their parents. They labored with the other brethren in the cultivation of the soil and the building of the monastery, and were bound to all the services imposed by the rule. Some of these young nobles rebelled in secret against that equality. Among these, according to the narrative of St. Gregory, was the son of a *Defender*—that is to say, of the first magistrate of a town or province. One evening, it being his turn to light the abbot Benedict at supper, while he held the candlestick before the abbatial table, his pride rose within him, and he said to himself, “What is this man that I should thus stand before him while he eats, with a candle in my hand, like a slave? Am I then made to be his slave?”. Immediately

Benedict, as if he had heard him, reproved him sharply for that movement of pride, gave the candle to another, and sent him back to his cell, dismayed to find himself at once discovered and restrained in his most secret thoughts. It was thus that the great legislator inaugurated in his new-formed cloister that alliance of aristocratic races with the Benedictine order of which we shall have many generous and fruitful examples to quote.

He bound all—nobles and plebeians, young and old, rich and poor—under the same discipline. But he would have excess or violence in nothing: and when he was told of a solitary in the neighboring mountains, who, not content with shutting himself up in a narrow cave, had attached to his foot a chain the other end of which was fixed in the rock, so that he could not move beyond the length of this chain, Benedict sent to tell him to break it, in these words, “If thou art truly a servant of God, confine thyself not with a chain of iron, but with the chain of Christ”.

And extending his solicitude and authority over the surrounding populations, he did not content himself with preaching eloquently to them the true faith, but also healed the sick, the lepers, and the possessed, provided for all the necessities of the soul and body, paid the debts of honest men oppressed by their creditors, and distributed in incessant alms the provisions of corn, wine, and linen which were sent to him by the rich Christians of the neighborhood. A great famine having afflicted Campania in 539, he distributed to the poor all the provisions of the monastery, so that one day there remained only five loaves to feed all the community. The monks were dismayed and melancholy: Benedict reproached them with their cowardice. “You have not enough today”, he said to them, “but you shall have too much tomorrow”. And accordingly they found next morning at the gates of the monastery two hundred bushels of flour, bestowed by some unknown hand. Thus were established the foundations of that traditional and unbounded munificence to which his spiritual descendants have remained unalterably faithful, and which was the law and glory of his existence.

So much sympathy for the poor naturally inspired them with a blind confidence in him. One day, when he had gone out with the brethren to labor in the fields, a peasant, distracted with grief, and bearing in his arms the body of his dead son, came to the monastery and demanded to see Father Benedict. When he was told that Benedict was in the fields with his brethren, he threw down his son’s body before the door, and, in the transport of his grief, ran at full speed to seek the saint. He met him returning from his work, and from the moment he perceived him, began to cry, “Restore me my son!” Benedict stopped and asked, “Have I carried him away?” The peasant answered, “He is dead; come and raise him up”. Benedict was grieved by these words, and said, “Go home, my friend, this is not a work for us; this belongs to the holy apostles. Why do you come to impose upon us so tremendous a burden?” But the father persisted, and swore in his passionate distress that he would not go till the saint had raised up his son. The abbot asked him where his son was. “His body”, said he, “is at the door of the monastery”. Benedict, when he arrived there, fell on his knees, and then laid himself down, as Elijah did in the house of the widow of Sarepta, upon the body of the child, and, rising up, extended his hands to heaven, praying thus:



“Lord, look not upon my sins, but on the faith of this man, and restore to the body the soul thou hast taken away from it”. Scarcely was his prayer ended, when all present perceived that the whole body of the child trembled. Benedict took him by the hand, and restored him to his father full of life and health.

His virtue, his fame, the supernatural power which was more and more visible in his whole life, made him the natural protector of the poor husbandmen against the violence and rapine of the new masters of Italy. The great Theodoric had organized an energetic and protective government, but he dishonored the end of his reign by persecution and cruelty; and since his death barbarism had regained all its ancient ascendancy among the Goths. The rural populations groaned under the yoke of these rude oppressors, doubly exasperated, as Barbarians and as Arians, against the Italian Catholics. To Benedict, the Roman patrician who had become a serf of God, belonged the noble office of drawing towards each other the Italians and Barbarians, two races cruelly divided by religion, fortune, language, and manners, whose mutual hatred was embittered by so many catastrophes inflicted by the one and suffered by the other, since the time of Alaric. The founder of Monte Cassino stood between the victors and the vanquished like an all-powerful moderator and inflexible judge. The facts which we are about to relate, according to the narrative of St. Gregory, would be told throughout all Italy, and, spreading from cottage to cottage, would bring unthought-of hope and consolation into the hearts of the oppressed, and establish the popularity of Benedict and his order on an immortal foundation in the memory of the people.

### *History of Galla*

It has been seen that there were already Goths among the monks at Subiaco, and how they were employed in reclaiming the soil which their fathers had laid waste. But there were others who, inflamed by heresy, professed a hatred of all that was orthodox and belonged to monastic life. One especially, named Galla, traversed the country panting with rage and cupidity, and made a sport of slaying the priests and monks who fell under his power, and spoiling and torturing the people to extort from them the little that they had remaining. An unfortunate peasant, exhausted by the torments inflicted upon him by the pitiless Goth, conceived the idea of bringing them to an end by declaring that he had confided all that he had to the keeping of Benedict, a servant of God; upon which Galla stopped the torture of the peasant, but, binding his arms with ropes, and thrusting him in front of his own horse, ordered him to go before and show the way to the house of this Benedict who had defrauded him of his expected prey. Both pursued thus the way to Monte Cassino; the peasant on foot, with his hands tied behind his back, urged on by the blows and taunts of the Goth, who followed on horseback, an image only too faithful of the two races which unhappy Italy enclosed within her distracted bosom, and which were to be judged and reconciled by the unarmed majesty of monastic goodness. When they had reached the summit of the mountain they perceived the abbot seated alone, reading at the door of his monastery. “Behold”, said the prisoner, turning to his tyrant, “there is the Father Benedict of whom I told thee”. The Goth, believing that here, as elsewhere, he should be able to make his way by

terror, immediately called out with a furious tone to the monk, “Rise up, rise up, and restore quickly what thou hast received from this peasant”. At these words the man of God raised his eyes from his book, and, without speaking, slowly turned his gaze first upon the Barbarian on horseback, and then upon the husbandman bound, and bowed down by his bonds. Under the light of that powerful gaze the cords which tied his poor arms loosed of themselves, and the innocent victim stood erect and free, while the ferocious Galla, falling on the ground, trembling, and beside himself, remained at the feet of Benedict, begging the saint to pray for him. Without interrupting his reading, Benedict called his brethren, and directed them to carry the fainting Barbarian into the monastery, and give him some blessed bread; and, when he had come to himself, the abbot represented to him the extravagance, injustice, and cruelty of his conduct, and exhorted him to change it for the future. The Goth was completely subdued, and no longer dared to ask anything of the laborer whom the mere glance of the monk had delivered from his bonds.

But this mysterious attraction, which drew the Goths under the influence of Benedict’s looks and words produced another celebrated and significant scene. The two principal elements of reviving society in their most striking impersonation—the victorious Barbarians and the invincible monks—were here confronted. Totila, the greatest of the successors of Theodoric, ascended the throne in 542, and immediately undertook the restoration of the monarchy of the Ostrogoths, which the victories of Belisarius had half overthrown. Having defeated at Faenza, with only five thousand men, the numerous Byzantine army, led by the incapable commanders whom the jealousy of Justinian had substituted for Belisarius, the victorious king made a triumphal progress through Central Italy, and was on his way to Naples when he was seized with a desire to see this Benedict, whose fame was already as great among the Romans as among the Barbarians, and who was everywhere called a prophet. He directed his steps towards Monte Cassino, and caused his visit to be announced. Benedict answered that he would receive him. But Totila, desirous of proving the prophetic spirit which was attributed to the saint, dressed the captain of his guard in the royal robes and purple boots, which were the distinctive mark of royalty, gave him a numerous escort, commanded by the three counts who usually guarded his own person, and charged him, thus clothed and accompanied, to present himself to the abbot as the king. The moment that Benedict perceived him, “My son”, he cried, “put off the dress you wear; it is not yours”. The officer immediately threw himself upon the ground, appalled at the idea of having attempted to deceive such a man. Neither he nor any of the retinue ventured so much as to approach the abbot, but returned at full speed to the king, to tell him how promptly they had been discovered. Then Totila himself ascended the monastic mountain; but when he had reached the height, and saw from a distance the abbot seated, waiting for him, the victor of the Romans and the master of Italy was afraid. He dared not advance, but threw himself on his face before the servant of Christ. Benedict said to him three times, “Rise”. But as he persisted in his prostration, the monk rose from his seat and raised him up. During the course of their interview, Benedict reproved him for all that was blamable in his life, and predicted what should happen to him in the future. “You have done much evil; you do it still every day; it is time that your iniquities should cease. You shall enter Rome; you shall cross the sea; you shall reign nine years, and the tenth you shall die”. The king, deeply moved, commended himself to his

prayers, and withdrew. But he carried away in his heart this salutary and retributive incident, and from that time his barbarian nature was transformed.

Totila was as victorious as Benedict had predicted he should be. He possessed himself first of Benevento and Naples, then of Rome, then of Sicily, which he invaded with a fleet of five hundred ships, and ended by conquering Corsica and Sardinia. But he exhibited everywhere a clemency and gentleness which, to the historian of the Goths, seem out of character at once with his origin and his position as a foreign conqueror. He treated the Neapolitans as his children, and the captive soldiers as his own troops, gaining himself immortal honor by the contrast between his conduct and the horrible massacre of the whole population, which the Greeks had perpetrated, ten years before, when that town was taken by Belisarius. He punished with death one of his bravest officers, who had insulted the daughter of an obscure Italian, and gave all his goods to the woman whom he had injured, and that despite the representations of the principal nobles of his own nation, whom he convinced of the necessity for so severe a measure, that they might merit the protection of God upon their arms. When Rome surrendered, after a prolonged siege, Totila forbade the Goths to shed the blood of any Roman, and protected the women from insult. At the prayer of Belisarius he spared the city which he had begun to destroy, and even employed himself, at a later period, in rebuilding and repeopling it. At length, after a ten years' reign, he fell, according to the prediction of Benedict, in a great battle which he fought with the Greco-Roman army, commanded by the eunuch Narses. The glory and power of the Goths fell with him and his successor Teias, who died in a similar manner the following year, fighting with heroic courage against the soldiers of Justinian. But it did not consist with the designs of God to let Italy fall a second time under the enervating yoke of the Byzantine Caesars. The rule of the Barbarians, although hard and bloody, was more for her welfare. Venice and Florence, Pisa and Genoa, and many other immortal centres of valor and life, could issue from that sway, whilst the incorporation of Italy with the Lower Empire would have condemned her to the incurable degradation of the Christian East.

#### *St. Scholastica*

The Ostrogoths had scarcely disappeared when the Lombards, imprudently called in by Narses himself, came at once to replace, to punish, and to make them regretted, by aggravating the fate of the Peninsula.

Placed as if midway between the two invasions of the Goths and Lombards, the dear and holy foundation of Benedict, respected by the one, was to yield for a time to the rage of the other. The holy patriarch had a presentiment that his successors would not meet a second Totila to listen to them and spare them. A noble whom he had converted, and who lived on familiar terms with him, found him one day weeping bitterly. He watched Benedict for a long time; and then, perceiving that his tears were not stayed, and that they proceeded not from the ordinary fervor of his prayers, but from profound melancholy, he asked the cause. The saint answered, "This monastery which I have built, and all that I have prepared for my brethren, has been delivered up to the pagans by a sentence of Almighty God. Scarcely have I been able to obtain mercy for

their lives!”. Less than forty years after, this prediction was accomplished by the destruction of Monte Cassino by the Lombards.

Benedict, however, was near the end of his career. His interview with Totila took place in 542, in the year which preceded his death; and from the earliest days of the following year, God prepared him for his last struggle, by requiring from him the sacrifice of the most tender affection he had retained on earth. In the history of most saints who have exercised a reformatory and lasting influence upon monastic institutions, the name and influence of some holy woman is almost invariably found associated with their work and devotedness. These bold combatants in the war of the Spirit against the flesh seemed to have drawn strength and consolation from a chaste and fervent community of sacrifices, prayers, and virtues, with a mother or sister by blood or choice, whose sanctity shed upon one corner of their glorious life a ray of sweeter and more familiar light. To instance only the greatest: Macrine is seen at the side of St. Basil, and the names of Monica and Augustine are inseparable; as in later ages are those of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clara, St. Francis de Sales and St. Jeanne de Chantal.

St. Benedict had also a sister, born on the same day with himself, named Scholastica: they loved each other as twins often love, with fraternal regard, elevated into a passion. But both loved God above all. Still earlier than her brother, Scholastica had consecrated herself to God from her infancy; and in becoming a nun, she made herself the patroness and model of the innumerable family of virgins who were to acknowledge, adopt, and follow the code of her brother. She rejoined him at Monte Cassino, and established herself in a monastery, in the depths of a valley near the holy mountain. Benedict directed her from afar, as he did many other nuns in the neighborhood. But they met only once a year; and then it was Scholastica who left her cloister and sought her brother. He, on his side, went to meet her: they met upon the side of the mountain, not far from the door of the monastery, in a spot which has been long venerated.

There, at their last meeting, occurred that struggle of fraternal love with the austerity of the rule, which is the only known episode in the life of Scholastica, and which has insured an imperishable remembrance to her name. They had passed the entire day in pious conversation, mingled with praises of God. Towards the evening they ate together. While they were still at table, and the night approached, Scholastica said to her brother, “I pray thee do not leave me tonight, but let us speak of the joys of heaven till the morning”. “What sayest thou, my sister?”, answered Benedict; “on no account can I remain out of the monastery”. Upon the refusal of her brother, Scholastica bent her head between her clasped hands on the table, and prayed to God, shedding torrents of tears to such an extent that the table was flooded with them. The weather was very serene: there was not a cloud in the air. But scarcely had she raised her head, when thunder was heard, and a violent storm began; the rain, lightning, and thunder were such, that neither Benedict nor any of the brethren who accompanied him could take a step beyond the roof that sheltered them. Then he said to Scholastica, “May God pardon thee, my sister, but what hast thou done?”. “Ah, yes”, she answered him, “I prayed thee, and thou wouldst not listen to me; then I prayed God, and he heard me. Go now, if thou canst, and send me away, to return to thy monastery”. He resigned himself against his

will to remain, and they passed the rest of the night in spiritual conversation. St. Gregory, who has preserved this tale to us, adds that it is not to be wondered at God granted the desire of the sister rather than that of the brother, because of the two it was the sister who loved most, and that those who love most have the greatest power with God.

In the morning they parted to see each other no more in this life. Three days after, Benedict, being at the window of his cell, had a vision, in which he saw his sister entering heaven under the form of a dove. Overpowered with joy, his gratitude burst forth in songs and hymns to the glory of God. He immediately sent for the body of the saint, which was brought to Monte Cassino, and placed in the sepulchre which he had already prepared for himself, that death might not separate those whose souls had always been united in God.

The death of his sister was the signal of departure for himself. He survived her only forty days. He announced his death to several of his monks, then far from Monte Cassino. A violent fever having seized him, he caused himself, on the sixth day of his sickness, to be carried into the chapel consecrated to John the Baptist: he had before ordered the tomb in which his sister already slept to be opened. There, supported in the arms of his disciples, he received the holy viaticum; then placing himself at the side of the open grave, but at the foot of the altar, and with his arms extended towards heaven, he died standing, murmuring a last prayer.

Died standing! — such a victorious death became well that great soldier of God.

He was buried by the side of Scholastica, in a sepulchre made on the spot where stood the altar of Apollo which he had thrown down. On that day two monks, one of whom was in the monastery and the other on a journey, had the same vision. They saw a multitude of stars form into a shining pathway, which extended towards the east, from Monte Cassino up to heaven, and heard a voice which said to them, that by this road Benedict, the well-beloved of God, had ascended to heaven.

## II.

### HIS RULE.

Such was the life of the great man whom God destined to be the legislator of the monks of the West. It remains to us to characterize his legislation, that is to say, the rule which he has written, and which has been the undying code of the most august and fertile branch of the ecclesiastical army.

We must first observe that this rule is the first which has been written in the West and for the West. Up to that time, the monks of this half of the Roman world had lived under the authority of rules imported from the East, like that of St. Basil, or of traditions borrowed from the monks of Egypt or Syria, like those of which Cassianus had given so complete a collection. St. Benedict did not assume either to overthrow or replace the

authority of these monuments, which, on the contrary, he recalled and recommended in his own rule. But the sad experience of his beginning, of all that he had seen and suffered in his youth as anchorite, cenobite, and superior; had convinced him of the insufficiency of the laws by which the Religious of his own time and country were governed. He perceived that it was necessary, for the suppression of the laxness which appeared everywhere, to substitute a permanent and uniform rule of government, for the arbitrary and variable choice of models furnished by the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, and to add to the somewhat confused and vague precepts of Pacome and Basil a selection of precise and methodical rules derived as much from the lessons of the past, as from his own personal experience. His illustrious biographer instructs us to see in his rule an exact reproduction of his own life in the cloister.

He undertook, then, to reform the abuses and infirmities of the order which he had embraced, by a series of moral, social, liturgical, and penal ordinances, the entire collection of which constitutes that *Rule* which, in immortalizing his name and work, has given to the monastic institute in the West its definitive and universal form.

Let us listen to his own exposition, in his preamble, of the spirit and aim of his reform, given in a style peculiar to himself, the somewhat confused simplicity of which differs as much from the flowing language of St. Augustine and St. Gregory as from the correct elegance of Cicero or Caesar:

“Listen, oh son! to the precepts of the Master, and incline to him the ear of thy heart; do not fear to receive the counsel of a good father and to fulfill it fully, that thy laborious obedience may lead thee back to Him from whom disobedience and weakness have alienated thee. To thee, whoever thou art, who renouncest thine own will to fight under the true King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and takest in hand the valiant and glorious weapons of obedience, are my words at this moment addressed.

“And in the first place, in all the good thou undertakest, ask of him, in earnest prayer, that he would bring it to a good end; that having condescended to reckon us among his children, he may never be grieved by our evil actions. Obey him always, by the help of his grace, in such a way that the irritated Father may not one day disinherit his children, and that also the terrible Master, enraged by our perverse deeds, may not give up his guilty servants to unending punishment because they would not follow him into glory.

“Then, let us rise up in answer to that exhortation of Scripture which says to us, ‘It is time for us to awake out of sleep’. And with eyes open to the light of God and attentive ears, let us listen to the daily cry of the Divine voice: ‘Come, my son, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Work while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work’.

“Now, the Lord, who seeks his servant in the midst of the people, still says to him, ‘What man is he that desireth life and loveth many days, that he may see good?’ When if, at that word, thou answerest, ‘It is I’, the Lord will say to thee. ‘If thou wouldest have life, keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it’. And that being done, ‘Then shall my eyes be upon you, and my ears shall be open to your cry. And, even before thou callest me, I shall say to thee, Here am I!’



“What can be more sweet, O beloved brethren, than the voice of the Lord urging us thus? By this means the Lord, in his paternal love, shows us the way of life. Let us then gird our loins with faith and good works; and with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel, let us follow upon his footsteps, that we may be worthy of seeing him who has called us to his kingdom. If we would find a place in the tabernacle of that kingdom, we must seek it by good works, without which none can enter there.

“For let us inquire at the Lord with the prophet ... then listen to the answer He gives : ... He who shall rest in the holy mountain of God is he who, being tempted by the devil, casts him and his counsel far from his heart, sets him at defiance, and, seizing the first off-shoots of sin, like new-born children, breaks them to pieces at the feet of Christ. It shall be those who, faithful in the fear of the Lord, shall not exalt themselves because of their services, but who, remembering that they can do nothing of themselves, and that all the good that is in them is wrought by God, glorify the Lord and his works. . .

“The Lord waits continually to see us answer by our actions to his holy precepts. It is for the amendment of our sins that the days of our life are prolonged like a dream, since the Apostle says : ‘Art thou ignorant that the patience of God leads thee to repentance?’ And it is in his mercy that the Lord himself says: ‘I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn to me and live’.

“Having thus, my brethren, asked of the Lord who shall dwell in his tabernacle, we have heard the precepts prescribed to such a one. If we fulfill these conditions, we shall be heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Let us then prepare our hearts and bodies to fight under a holy obedience to these precepts; and if it is not always possible for nature to obey, let us ask the Lord that he would deign to give us the succor of his grace. Would we avoid the pains of hell and attain eternal life while there is still time, while we are still in this mortal body, and while the light of this life is bestowed upon us for that purpose; let us run and strive so as to reap an eternal reward.

“We must, then, form a school of divine servitude, in which, we trust, nothing too heavy or rigorous will be established. But if, in conformity with right and justice, we should exercise a little severity for the amendment of vices or the preservation of charity, beware of fleeing under the impulse of terror from the way of salvation, which cannot, but have a hard beginning. When a man has walked for some time in obedience and faith, his heart will expand, and he will run with the unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God’s commandments. May he grant that, never straying from the instruction of the Master, and persevering in his doctrine in the monastery until death, we may share by patience in the sufferings of Christ, and be worthy to share together his kingdom”.

In this programme the saint insists on two principles: action or labor, and obedience. These are indeed the two fundamental bases of his work: they serve as a clew to conduct us through the seventy-two articles of the rule which we shall now attempt to describe.

Benedict would not have his monks limit themselves to spiritual labor, to the action of the soul upon itself: he made external labor, manual or literary, a strict obligation of his rule. Doubtless the primitive cenobites had preached and practised the

necessity of labor, but none had yet ordained and regulated it with so much severity and attentive solicitude. In order to banish indolence, which he called the enemy of the soul, he regulated minutely the employment of every hour of the day according to the seasons, and ordained that, after having celebrated the praises of God seven times a day, seven hours a day should be given to manual labor, and two hours to reading. He imposed severe corrections on the brother who lost in sleep and talking the hours intended for reading. "If", said he, "the poverty of the place compels them to gather their harvest themselves, let not that grieve them, for they will be truly monks if their live by the labor of their hands, like our fathers and the apostles. But let all be done with moderation because of the weak". Those who are skilled in the practice of an art or trade, could only exercise it by the permission of the abbot, in all humility; and if any one prided himself on his talent, or the profit which resulted from it to the house, he was to have his occupation changed until he had humbled himself. Those who were charged with selling the product of the work of these select laborers could take nothing from the price to the detriment of the monastery, nor especially could they raise it avariciously; they were to sell at less cost than the secular workmen, to give the greater glory to God. Labor was thus regulated in the monastery as in an industrial penitentiary, and the sons of the Roman patricians or the Barbarian nobles found themselves subjected, in crossing its threshold, to a severe equality, which bound even the laborer more skillful than ordinary monks, and reduced him to the humble level of an ordinary workman.

Obedience is also to his eyes a work, *obedientiae laborem*, the most meritorious and essential of all. A monk entered into monastic life only to make the sacrifice of self. This sacrifice implied especially that of the will. By a supreme effort of that will, still free and master of itself, it freely abdicated its power for the salvation of the sick soul, "in order that this soul, raising itself above its desires and passions, might establish itself fully upon God". In giving even the legitimate use of his own will, the monk, obeying a superior whom he had spontaneously chosen, and who was to him the representative of God himself, found an assured defence against covetousness and self-love. He entered like a victor into the liberty of the children of God. But this sacrifice, to be efficacious, had to be complete. Thus the rule pursued pride into its most secret hiding-place. Submission had to be prompt, perfect, and absolute. The monk must obey always, without reserve, and without murmur, even in those things which seemed impossible and above his strength, trusting in the succor of God, if a humble and seasonable remonstrance, the only thing permitted to him, was not accepted by his superiors; to obey not only his superiors, but also the wishes and requests of his brethren. Obedience became the more acceptable to God and easy to man, when it was practised calmly, promptly, and with good will. It became then the first degree of humility. "Our life in this world", said the holy abbot, "is like the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream: in order to reach heaven, it must be planted by the Lord in a humbled heart: we can only mount it by distinct steps of humility and discipline".

What can we do but lament over those who, in this generous abnegation of self, have seen only something borrowed from the worship of imperial majesty in degenerate Rome, and a fatal present made to Europe to weaken its own virtues? No, this is neither a production of social decay, nor a sign of spiritual servitude. It is, on the contrary, the triumph of that moral and spiritual liberty of which imperial Rome had lost all

conception, which Christianity alone could restore to the world, and the reign of which, specially extended and secured by the Children of St. Benedict, saved Europe from the anarchy, slavery, and decrepitude into which it had been thrown by the Roman empire.

Doubtless this passive and absolute obedience would, in temporal affairs, and under chiefs appointed from without, and governing according to their interests or passions, become intolerable slavery. But besides the fact that among the Benedictines it was to be, always and with all, the result of a free determination, it was also sanctified and tempered by the nature and origin of the power. The abbot holds the place of Christ: he can ordain nothing that is not in conformity with the law of God. His charge is that of the father of a family, and of the good pastor: his life should be the mirror of his lessons. Charged with the important mission of governing souls, he owes to God the severest reckoning, and almost at every page of the rule is enjoined never to lose sight of that terrible responsibility. He has not only to rule them, but to heal them; not only to guide them, but to support them, and to make himself the servant of all whom he governs, obeying all, while each obeys him. He must accommodate himself to the most diverse humors and characters, but at the same time admit no respect of persons between the nobles and plebeians, the freemen and the slaves, the rich and the poor, who are under his authority.

### *The chapter*

The exercise of this absolute authority is limited, besides, by the necessity of consulting all the monks assembled in a council or chapter upon all important business. The abbot has to state the subject, and to ask the advice of each, reserving to himself the right of making the final decision; but the youngest must be consulted like the others, because God often reveals to them the best course to follow. For lesser matters, the advice of the principal members of the monastery is sufficient, but the abbot can never act without advice. His permanent council is composed of deans or elders, chosen by the monks themselves, not by order of seniority, but for their merit, charged with assisting the abbot, by sharing with him the weight of government. He can also, by the advice of these brethren, name a prior or provost, to be his lieutenant. Finally, the abbot himself is elected by all the monks of the monastery: they may choose the last new-comer amongst them to be their chief; and once elected, his authority ceases only with his life. But in case of the election of an evidently unworthy person, the bishop of the diocese, or the neighboring abbots, or even the Christians of the environs, are entreated to prevent such a scandal.

This absolute authority of the abbot, fixed in a rule which he is neither permitted to modify or transgress, was then limited at once by the unchanging constitution of the community, by the necessity of consulting either an elect number or the whole body of his subordinates upon all business, and finally by the election from which it proceeded; and this election, made by a limited number of electors, all essentially competent, and personally interested in their work, made the chief in reality the servant of all those whom he commanded.

It must be acknowledged that the spirit of Community or association was never more strongly organized. There is, in this combination of authority, at once absolute, permanent, and elective, with the necessity of taking the advice of the whole community and of acting solely in its interests, a new principle, to which nothing in the pagan world nor in the Lower Empire was analogous — a principle which demonstrated its energetic fertility by the experience of ages. The community drew an irresistible force from the union of these wills purified by abnegation, and concentrated towards one sole end under a single hand, which was ruled and controlled in its turn by the spirit of sacrifice. Between the profligacy of the Empire and the anarchy of conquest, the Benedictine cloister, that living image of Christianity, presented to the decaying world a system which retained at once the vigorous discipline of the Roman legions and that spirit of self-devotion and domestic unity remarked by Tacitus in the German guilds.

It has been said with truth, that there exists in this rule an evangelical foundation and a feudal form. The institutions which it founded, like the words and images which it employed, bore a certain warlike stamp. It seemed to extend a hand to the feudal system, which originated in the camps of the victorious Barbarians. Of these two forces, the one organized and consolidated material conquest, the other created a hierarchy and army for the conquest of souls.

The monastery, like a citadel always besieged, was to have within its enclosure gardens, a mill, a bakery, and various workshops, in order that no necessity of material life should occasion the monks to leave its walls. A certain number of Religious, whom the abbot judged worthy, might be raised to the priesthood, for the spiritual service of the house, without ceasing, on that account, to be subject to ordinary discipline.

One monk, chosen from among the most worthy, under the title of cellarer, was specially charged with the administration of the goods of the monastery, the distribution of food, the care of the furniture, of the hospital, and, in a word, with all the details of material life. Finally, the most generous and delicate hospitality was enjoined towards the poor and all the strangers who should visit the monastery; this was to be exercised by the direct care of the abbot, but without disturbing the solitude of the monks, or the silence of their cloisters. Let every stranger be received, says the rule, as if he were Christ himself; for it is Christ himself who shall one day say to us, “I was a stranger, and ye took me in”.

The community thus founded and governed was supported besides by two conditions indispensable to its security and duration: the reciprocal tie of all its members by the solemn engagement of the vow, and the formation of collective property by the sacrifice of all that was individual. The renunciation of personal will naturally led to that of individual property. Everything in the monastery was to be in common; the fortune like the labour, and interests like duties. The rule, therefore, denounced the idea of personal property as a vice which it was most essential to root out of the community. It was necessary, then, in becoming a monk, that a man should solemnly and forever relinquish all his possessions, either to his own family, or to the poor, or to the monastery itself; reserving nothing to himself, possessing nothing of his own, absolutely nothing, not even tablets or a pen for writing, but receiving everything from the abbot, and that only for present use.

An institution in which celibacy was implicitly the fundamental basis, alone could bear a discipline so contrary to human nature. But even where a man, by giving up marriage, made himself free of all cares for his livelihood, he might still remain, in his own person, the object of the enfeebling tenderness of parents and friends. Benedict knew too well the habits of the nobility, to which he himself and his principal disciples belonged, not to redouble his precautions against the attempts made by parents to form a certain reserve or individual patrimony for the advantage of the child whom they gave to God by placing him in a monastery. By a special chapter of the rule, made out with the legal precision of a contemporary of Tribonius, every nobleman who destined his son for monastic life was required to swear that his child should receive nothing whatever of the paternal fortune, neither directly nor through a third party. The parents could only bestow on the monastery itself a donation which represented the fortune of their child, reserving the interest during their life if it so pleased them.

Even in the forms established by the new code to regulate the admission, try the vocation, and bind the consciences of these men who came to sacrifice their will and patrimony to God, everything shows the genius of organization possessed by Benedict. There were two classes of candidates for monastic life. First, the children confided in their youth by their parents to the monastery, or received by the charity of the monks; the rule prescribes their education with minute solicitude: then the young men and mature men who came out of the world to knock at the door of the cloister. Far from encouraging them, Benedict ordains that they should be left there for four or five days without opening to them, in order to try their perseverance.

If they persevered, they were introduced into the apartments provided for guests, and from thence, at the end of some days, into the novitiate. Here the novice was intrusted to an old monk, skillful in the art of gaining souls, who was charged to study closely his vocation and character, and to tell him the difficulties, the humiliations, and discomforts which he would meet in the hard path of obedience. If after two months he promised to persevere, the entire rule was read to him, and the reading concluded in these words : “Behold the law under which thou wouldst fight: if thou canst observe it, enter; if thou canst not, depart in freedom!”. Three times during the year of novitiate this trial was renewed. When the year had expired, if the novice persevered he was warned that shortly he should no longer have the power of leaving the monastery, and of laying aside the rule which he had only accepted after such mature deliberation. It was intimated to him that he was about to lose the power of disposing of himself. Introduced into the oratory in presence of all the community, he there, before God and his vow of saints, promised stability or perpetual residence, and stability, also reformation of his morals and obedience, under pain of eternal damnation. He made a declaration of this, written with his own hand, and placed it upon the altar, then threw himself at the feet of each of the brethren, begging them to pray for him. From that day he was considered a member of the community.

Almost all the ancient monks had adopted a sort of novitiate, and various vows, more or less formal. But no regular form had ever been adopted before this wise and imposing solemnity. Profession had even been often regarded as acknowledged by the sole fact of taking the monastic dress, and there were instances of this even after St. Benedict. But the *vow of stability* imposed by the new legislator, which no former rule



had prescribed, was a happy and productive innovation, and became one of the principal guarantees of the duration and strength of cenobitical life. Besides, no material or legal constraint at that time held the monk to his vow; even his secular dress was preserved with care, to be restored to him if he unfortunately desired to leave the monastery.

Now that we perceive the general spirit and foundation of the rule of St. Benedict, we may be permitted to pass rapidly over the details. The seventy-three chapters of which it is composed are divided as follows:—nine touch upon the general duties of the abbot and the monks; thirteen upon worship and the divine services; twenty-nine upon discipline, faults, and penalties; ten upon the internal administration of the monastery; twelve upon various subjects, such as the reception of guests, the conduct of the brethren while travelling, &c.

Thirteen hundred years have passed since the hand of Benedict traced all those minute regulations, and nothing has been found more fit to strengthen the religious spirit and monastic life. The most admired and effectual reforms have scarcely had any other aim than to lead back the regular clergy to a code of which time has only confirmed the wisdom and increased the authority.

Among all these details of the rule, the scrupulous care which the legislator has taken to bind the Religious to the careful celebration of divine worship, according to the liturgical usage of the Roman Church, is especially remarkable. They were to give themselves to prayer, chanted aloud by the community, first in the night, at vigils, which began about two in the morning and continued until dawn; then six times during the day—at prime, tierce, sexte, nones, vespers, and compline. The hundred and fifty psalms of David were divided among these seven services in such a manner that the whole psalter should be chanted every week; and this prayer in common was not to interrupt mental devotion, which, during the remaining time, was to be short and simple.

Then come these noble rules of sobriety, which, as Bossuet says, take everything superfluous from nature, and spare her all anxiety in respect to that which is necessary, and which are but a reproduction of the customs of the first Christians. To serve each other by turns in cooking and at the table to eat, in silence, listening to the reading of some pious book, of two cooked dishes and one uncooked, with a pound of bread and a *hemine* of wine, whether they made two meals in the day or only one : to abstain from all flesh of quadrupeds; and to increase the number and severity of the fasts appointed by the Church. To have for clothing only a tunic, with a cowl for the choir, and a scapulary for work: this was nothing else than the hooded frock of the ploughman and shepherds, borrowed from that of the slaves of pagan times, such as Columella has described. To sleep in one general dormitory; to sleep but little, and always in their clothes and shoes; and finally, to keep an almost continual silence during the whole day. Such were the minute and salutary regulations which authorized Benedict to declare that the life of a monk ought to be a perpetual Lent.

And there were other rules still better adapted to root out from the hearts of the Religious even the last allurements of pride, voluptuousness, and avarice. They could not receive either letter or present even from their nearest relatives, without the permission of the abbot. In accepting the rule, they pledged themselves beforehand to bear patiently public and humiliating penances for the smallest faults, and even



corporeal punishment, in case of murmuring or repetition of the offence, and this while still subject to temporary excommunication and final exclusion. But mercy appeared by the side of severity: the excluded brother who desired to return, promising amendment, was to be received anew, and three times in succession, before he was banished forever from the community.

However, in going back to the austerity of the ancient Fathers of the desert, Benedict does not hesitate to say, in the preamble of his rule, as has been seen, that he believed he had ordained nothing too hard or too difficult to be followed; and he ends by declaring that it was only a *little beginning*, a modest introduction to Christian perfection.

Such are the most remarkable features of this famous code, which has ruled so many souls for so many ages, and which, although it has lost almost all its subjects, remains, notwithstanding, one of the most imposing monuments of Christian genius. Compared to the previous Oriental rules, it bears that seal of Roman wisdom, and that adaptation to Western customs, which has made it, according to the idea of Gregory the Great, a masterpiece of clearness and discretion, in which judges who are above all suspicion have not hesitated to recognize a character of good sense and gentleness, humanity and moderation, superior to everything that could be found up to that time in either Roman or Barbarian laws, or in the habits of civil society.

No kind of praise has been wanting to this code of monastic life. St. Gregory, St. Thomas, St. Hildegard, and St. Antonius, believed it to be directly inspired by the Holy Spirit. Popes and Christian princes have vied with each other in celebrating it. The prince of Catholic eloquence has described it in these incomparable lines:

“This rule is an epitome of Christianity, a learned and mysterious abridgment of all the doctrines of the gospel, all the institutions of the Holy Fathers, and all the counsels of perfection. Here prudence and simplicity, humility and courage, severity and gentleness, freedom and dependence, eminently appear. Here, correction has all its firmness; condescension all its charm; command all its vigor, and subjection all its repose; silence its gravity, and words their grace; strength its exercise, and weakness its support; and yet always, my Fathers, he calls it *a beginning*, to keep you always in holy fear”.

But there is something which speaks with a still greater eloquence than that of Bossuet in honor of the Benedictine rule; it is the list of saints which it has produced; it is the tale of conquests which it has won and consolidated throughout the West, where for eight centuries it reigned alone; the irresistible attraction which it had for bright and generous minds, for upright and devoted hearts, for souls enamoured of solitude and sacrifice; the beneficent influence which it exercised upon the life of the secular clergy, warming them, by its rays, to such a point that, purified and strengthened, they seemed for a time to identify themselves with the children of Benedict. It is distinguished above all by the contrast between the exuberant life of faith and spirituality in the countries where it reigned, and the utter debasement into which the Oriental Church, dishonored by the marriage of its priests even before it became a prey to schism and Islamism, had fallen.

*Benedict's vision of the future fate of his work*

St. Gregory relates that the man of God whose the future life he writes, having one night anticipated the hour of matins, and gazing upon heaven from the window of his cell, saw all at once darkness dispelled by a light more dazzling than that of day; and, amid that ocean of light, the entire world appeared to him crowded into a ray of the sun, “so paltry does the creature appear”, adds the pontiff, “to the soul which contemplates the Creator!”. Tradition has interpreted that sight as a vision of the splendid future awaiting the order which Benedict was about to form, and which was to embrace the Christian universe, and fill it with light. A lively and faithful image, in fact, of the destiny of an institution, the future course of which, perhaps, its founder only foresaw under that mysterious form!

The admiration of Catholic doctors has signalized in Benedict the Moses of a new people, the Joshua of another promised land. Nothing that he has said or written permits us to believe that he had any such idea of himself. Historians have vied in praising his genius and clear-sightedness; they have supposed that he intended to regenerate Europe, to stop the dissolution of society, to prepare the reconstitution of political order, to reestablish public education, and to preserve literature and the arts. I know not whether he entertained such grand plans, but I can see no trace of them either in his rule or his life. If they ever penetrated into his soul, it was only to be eclipsed and replaced by a still higher and greater idea, by thought of salvation. I firmly believe that he never dreamt of regenerating anything but his own soul and those of his brethren the monks. All the rest has been given him over and above “the one thing needful”. What is most to be admired in his social and historical influence is, that he seems never to have dreamt of it. But is it not a sign of true greatness to achieve great things without any pompous commotion, without preconceived ideas, without premeditation, under the sole empire of a modest and pure design, which God exalts and multiplies a hundred-fold? Strange to say, nothing even in his rule itself indicates that it was written with the idea of governing other monasteries besides his own. He might have supposed that it would be adopted by communities in the neighborhood of those which he had collected round him; but nothing betrays any intention of establishing a common link of subordination between them, or of forming a bond between different religious houses, in order to originate an association of different and coordinate elements, like the great orders which have since arisen. The object of his rule, on the contrary, seems to have been the concentration in a single home of the greatness and strength of the monastic spirit. Everything is adapted to that single monastic family, which, by a wonderful arrangement of Providence, has been constituted the stem of such productive and innumerable branches. Like Romulus, who, tracing the primitive walls of Rome, never dreamt of that King-People, that greatest of nations, to which he was giving birth, Benedict did not foresee the gigantic work which was destined to issue from the grotto of Subiaco and the hillside of Monte Cassino. The masters of spiritual life have always remarked, that the man who begins a work blessed of God does it unawares. God loves to build upon nothing.

And what is truly serviceable to man is to see the greatness of God issuing out of his own nothingness, and to recognize in that spectacle the productive power given to himself when he triumphs over fallen nature, so as to become again the lieutenant, and instrument of God.

However it might be, the results of Benedict's work were immense. In his lifetime, as after his death, the sons of the noblest races in Italy, and the best of the converted Barbarians, came in multitudes to Monte Cassino. They came out again, and descended from it to spread themselves over all the West; missionaries and husbandmen, who were soon to become the doctors and pontiffs, the artists and legislators, the historians and poets of the new world. They went forth to spread peace and faith, light and life, freedom and charity, knowledge and art, the Word of God and the genius of man, the Holy Scriptures and the great works of classical literature, amid the despairing provinces of the destroyed empire, and even into the barbarous regions from which the destruction came forth. Less than a century after the death of Benedict, all that barbarism had won from civilization was reconquered; and more still, his children took in hand to carry the Gospel beyond those limits which had confined the first disciples of Christ. After Italy, Gaul, and Spain had been retaken from the enemy, Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia were in turn invaded, conquered, and incorporated into Christendom. The West was saved. A new empire was founded. A new world began.

Come now, O Barbarians! the Church no longer fears you. Reign where you will; civilization shall escape your hands. Or rather it is you who shall defend the Church, and confirm civilization. You have vanquished everything, conquered everything, overthrown everything; you shall now be in your turn vanquished, conquered, and transformed. Men are born who shall become your masters. They shall take your sons, and even the sons of your kings, to enroll them in their array. They shall take your daughters, your queens, your princesses, to fill their monasteries. They shall take your souls to inspire them; your imaginations to delight and purify them; your courage to temper it by sacrifice; your swords to consecrate them to the service of faith, weakness, and justice.

The work will be neither short nor easy; but they will accomplish it. They will govern the new nations by showing them the ideal of sanctity, of moral force, and greatness. They will make them monks, the instruments of goodness and truth. Aided by these victors of Rome, they will carry the sway and laws of a new Rome beyond the furthest limits ever fixed by the Senate, or dreamt of by the Caesars. They will conquer and bless lands which neither the Roman eagles nor even the apostles have reached. They will become the nursing fathers of all modern nations. They will be seen beside the thrones of Charlemagne, of Alfred, and of Otto the Great, forming with them Christian kingdoms and a new world. Finally, they will ascend the apostolic See with St. Gregory the Great and St. Gregory VII, from which they will preside, during ages of conflict and virtue, over the destinies of Catholic Europe and of the Church, gloriously assisted by races faithful, manful, and free.

## BOOK V

### ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

#### I.

#### Monastic Italy in the Sixth Century

Even before the death of Benedict, the most illustrious of his contemporaries had sought in monastic life an interval of repose and freedom between his public career and his grave. Cassiodorus, who had been for thirty years the honour and light of the Gothic monarchy, the minister and the friend of five kings, abandoned the court of Ravenna and all his offices and dignities, towards the year 538, to found, at the extremity of Italy, a monastery called Viviers (Vivaria), which at one time seemed destined to rival Monte Cassino itself in importance.

Cassiodorus belonged to the high Roman nobility: his ancestors had seats at once in the senates of Rome and Constantinople. His fortune was immense. Successively a senator, a quaestor, and prefect of the pretorium, he was the last of the great men who held the office of consul, which Justinian abolished. He obtained, finally, that title of patrician which Clovis and Charlemagne considered themselves honoured in receiving. His credit survived all the revolutions of that terrible age. He was successively the minister of Odoacer, of Theodoric, of his daughter Amalasontha, and of his grandson Athalaric, who made him prefect of the pretorium. He retained that office under the kings Theodatus and Vitiges. He allied in his own person the virtues of the old Romans to those of the new Christians, as in his titles the dignities of the republic were conjoined to those of the empire. Full of respect for the popes and bishops, he was also full of solicitude for the people. An intelligent and courageous mediator between the Barbarian conquerors and the conquered population, he was able to give to the Ostrogoth royalty that protecting and civilising character which it retained for some time.

To him must be attributed the finest portion of the great reign of Theodoric, who would have deserved to be the forerunner of Charlemagne, if he had contracted with the Church that alliance which alone could guarantee and fertilise the future. But, although an Arian, this great prince long protected the religious liberty of the Catholics; and during the greater part of his reign, the Church gained more by his benevolent indifference than by the oppressive and trifling intervention of the crowned theologians who reigned in Byzantium. Influenced by his pious and orthodox minister, he said, nobly and wisely, that to him, as king, nothing beyond reverence with regard to ecclesiastical affairs pertained. Cassiodorus, who filled the office of chancellor under him, showed in his official acts the great principles he held, and which most Christian doctors up to that time had appealed to. "We cannot," said he, in the name of Theodoric, "command religion, for no man can be forced to believe against his will"; and to one of his successors, "Since God suffers several religions, we dare not impose one alone. We

remember to have read, that a sacrifice to God must be made voluntarily, and not in obedience to a master. A man who attempts to act otherwise evidently opposes himself to the Divine commands". Two centuries after the peace of the Church, he continued thus faithful to the great apologists of the time of the imperial persecutions: to Tertullian, who said, "Religion forbids us to constrain any one to be religious; she would have consent, and not constraint;" and to Lactantius, according to whom, "To defend religion, one must know how to die, and not how to kill."

Afterwards, when, unfaithful to his earliest policy, Theodoric arrogated to himself the right of interfering in the election of the Roman pontiffs—when he had dishonoured the end of his career by cruelties of which Boethius, Symmachus, and the holy pope, John I, were victims—when his daughter Amalasontha, whose reign was so happy for Italy, had perished by assassination—Cassiodorus, who, amongst all those crimes, had devoted all his energies and perseverance to preserve authority from its own excesses, to soften the manners of the Goths, and guarantee the rights of the Romans, grew weary of that superhuman task. No danger nor disgrace threatened him, for all the sovereigns who, after Theodoric, succeeded each other on the bloody throne of Ravenna, seem to have vied in seeking or conciliating him; but he had experienced enough of it. He was nearly seventy years old; fifty years had been passed in the most elevated employments; he had wielded a power almost sovereign, but always tempered by reason and faith. He resolved to end his life in monastic solitude. With him disappeared the glory and prosperity of the kingdom of the Goths in Italy.

This was the first, after the downfall of the Roman empire, of these striking conversions, an innumerable series of which will pass before our eyes, which, even in the highest ranks of the new society, sought out the great ones of the world, to teach them how to expiate their grandeur, to rest from their power, and to put an interval between the agitations of the world and the judgment of God.

But in assuming the monastic frock, Cassiodorus seems to have recommenced to live. This religious profession offered as many attractions to his soul as employments to his activity. The monastery of Viviers, which he had built on the patrimonial estate where he was born, at the extremity of Calabria, on the shores of the Gulf of Squillace, took its name from numerous *vivaria*, or fish-ponds, which had been hollowed in the rock. It was a delightful dwelling, which he has described affectionately in terms worthy of that delicious region, where the azure sea bathes a shore clad with incomparable and perpetual verdure. The building was vast and magnificent; at a distance it appeared like an entire town. There were two monasteries for the numerous disciples who collected round the illustrious old man. Besides these, some who believed themselves called to a life more austere than that of the cenobites whose dwelling extended along the smiling shores of the sea, found, by ascending the mountain which overlooked them, isolated cells where they could taste in all its purity the delight of absolute solitude.

Cassiodorus himself, successively a monk and abbot, passed nearly thirty years in that retreat, occupied in governing his community, and uniting the study of literature and science with the pursuit of spiritual life. During his political career, he had made use of his power, with energy and solicitude, to maintain public education and intellectual life in that poor Italy, which was periodically overrun by floods of ignorant and rude

conquerors. He has been declared, not without reason, the hero and restorer of knowledge in the sixth century. As soon as he became a monk, he made his monastery a kind of Christian academy, and the principal centre of the literary activity of his time. He had there collected an immense library; he imposed upon his monks a complete and severe plan of study. His own example enforced his precepts; he instructed them with unwearied zeal in the Holy Scriptures, for the study of which he, in concert with Pope Agapetus, had attempted in vain to establish public professors in Rome. He added to this the study of the seven liberal arts, and profane literature in general. It was at Viviers that he composed most of his works, and especially his famous *Treatise upon the Teaching of Sacred Literature*, a kind of elementary encyclopaedia, which was the code of monastic education, and served long as a programme to the intellectual education of the new nations. At eighty-three he had the courage to commence a treatise upon orthography, in order to assist in the correction of ancient copies of the holy books.

Cassiodorus thus gave, amid his numerous community, one of the first and most illustrious models of that alliance of monastic and intellectual life which has distinguished the monastic order. The literary enthusiasm which inspired the noble old man served only to redouble his zeal for the strict observance of monastic regularity. "God grant to us grace," he wrote, "to be like the untiring oxen to cultivate the field of our Lord with the plough of observance and regular exercises." It is scarcely known what rule he adopted. Some have believed that it was that of St. Benedict; but he has made no special mention of it in recommending his monks to follow the rules of the Fathers generally, along with the orders of their own superior, and to consult the institutes of Cassianus. However, a strong analogy may at least be recognised between the usages practised at Viviers and the great example of St Benedict, in the directions given by Cassiodorus on the subject of manual labour. He desires that those who are not capable of study, or of transcribing manuscript, should apply themselves to agriculture and gardening, especially for the relief of guests and of the infirm. Like Benedict, he recommended them to bestow an affectionate solicitude upon travellers, and upon the poor and sick in the neighbourhood. Like Benedict, he desired that the cultivators of monastic lands should share in the temporal and spiritual wellbeing of monastic life. "Instruct your peasants in good morals; oppress them not with heavy or new burdens; call them often to your festivals, that they may not blush, if there is occasion for it, for belonging to you, and yet resembling you so little." In short, he seems to follow the rule of Benedict, even in its least details, in that which concerns the nocturnal and almost perpetual psalms which characterised monastic worship, and which he explains as follows to his numerous disciples: "During the silence of night, the voices of men bursting forth in chants and in words sung by art and measure brings us back to Him from whom the divine word came to us, for the salvation of the human race. All who sing form but a single voice, and we mingle our music with the praises of God, chanted by angels, although we cannot hear them".

Into the same region where the Roman minister of the Gothic kingdom completed his glorious career, but beyond these Straits of Faro, which doubtless exhibited then, as now, an enchanting scene of nature, other monks had likewise penetrated. The cherished disciple of St. Benedict, the son of the rich senator who had so generously endowed the new-born community of Subiaco, the young Placidus, had brought to Sicily the name



and rule of his master. He had been sent there to recover the eighteen estates situated in that island, which his father had given to the abbot of Monte Cassino, and the profits of which had been lost by unfaithful stewardship. He remained there, and established towards the year 534, at Messina, the first Benedictine monastery which was formed out of Italy. Placidus collected there thirty monks, but was too soon interrupted in his work of religious colonisation. He perished with two of his brethren and his young sister Flavia, tortured and slain by a band of Moorish pirates, still pagans, and who, like so many other ruffians, made the monks the principal victims of their fury. The children of St. Benedict inaugurated thus the long series of their struggles and victories. The blood of Placidus watered the seeds of the order in Sicily, where its harvest, even up to our own days, has been so abundant.

We have said that the monks came to replace the martyrs, but that often also they imitated and joined their band. It was thus during the rise of the Benedictine order in Italy. Its extension was rapid during the last years of Benedict's life, and especially after his death. The tomb where the holy remains of the great legislator rested, under the guardianship of a line of fervent disciples constantly renewed, became the spring from which a new life flowed forth upon the peninsula. Most of the ancient monasteries adopted the rule which flourished at Monte Cassino. It spread through Latium in the environs of Lake Fucino, where the holy abbot Equitius, shod with nailed shoes, made hay with his monks, and returned, after the hot and laborious day, with his scythe on his shoulder like any other labourer. It was carried to the summit of Mount Soracte, where more than one brave solitary, well worthy of practising it, waited its coming, and where the gentle prior Nonnosus laboured on the rocky sides of the mountain celebrated by Virgil and Horace, to make gardens and olive orchards for the use of his brethren. It prevailed in several of the twenty-two religious houses which already existed at Rome. It soon extended into the isles of the Mediterranean and Adriatic, which we have seen to be already occupied by monks, and especially into those which lay near the coast of Naples, whither, under the hideous tyranny of the first Caesars, men accused of high treason had been banished, and where the love of heavenly things and spiritual freedom retained many voluntary exiles. Thus, throughout the whole peninsula, numerous companies of monks laboriously struggled, amidst the general confusion, against the depravity of Roman manners, against the violence of the Barbarians. Their lives afforded these lessons of austere virtue and miraculous power, the memory of which St. Gregory the Great has associated in his *Dialogues* with that of their holy patriarch. They died as they had lived, and braved martyrdom in public places as well as in the depth of woods. Upon the faith of that great doctor, the faithful have related from generation to generation, how the monk Herculanius, Bishop of Perugia, when that city was besieged and destroyed by the Goths under Totila, was sacrificed amid tortures, as the principal author of the resistance; how, in the Roman Campagna, the abbot Suranus was slain by the Lombards, who found him hidden in the hollow of an oak; and how, elsewhere, the same Lombards hung the monks, two by two, to the same tree.

For the Lombards were already there. Scarcely had the Goths, who fell into their premature decay after Theodoric and Cassiodorus, disappeared, when a new race of Barbarians crossed the Alps and descended upon Italy. They were proud, intelligent, and warlike, Arian by name, but still, in fact, half-pagan, and a thousand times more cruel

and dreaded than the Goths. Under Alboin and his successors they ravaged the peninsula without pity, trampling under foot Greeks and Romans, Catholics and Arians, priests and laymen. Ruined cities, desecrated churches, murdered bishops and clergy, and exterminated nations, were everywhere seen in their track. These ferocious conquerors reaped everything, and left only a desert behind them. The end of the world was supposed to have come. They were especially furious against monks and monasteries. They burned and destroyed, among others, two considerable abbeys, the origin of which is unknown: Novalese, situated upon a plateau on the south side of the Piedmontese Alps; and Farfa, which imagined itself secure, hid among the fresh foliage of the Sabine woods, sung by Ovid—

“Et amcenae Farfaris umbrae.”

These names, destined to be so celebrated in religious history, yet the first appearance of which is marked by disaster, must be noted.

A great number of monks received martyrdom from the hands of these new persecutors; others, hunted from their first asylum, and wandering through the different parts of Italy, carried with them the seeds of monastic life into countries which, without that storm, they might never have reached.

Finally, the Lombards ascended Monte Cassino, and pillaged and burned that already famous sanctuary, according to the prediction of Benedict, forty years before; but, as he had also predicted, they could destroy nothing which had life, and did not take a single monk. Although the attack of the Lombards took place by night, and while the monks were asleep, they were all able to flee, bearing with them, as their entire fortune, the rule written by their founder, with the measure of wine and the pound of bread which he had prescribed. They took refuge at Rome; Pope Pelagius II gave them a paternal reception, and permitted them to build, near the Lateran palace, a monastery in which the children of Benedict were to await for a century and a half the happy day which was to witness their return to their holy mountain.

## II.

### Gregory the Great, Monk and Pope.

But ere long a monk ascended for the first time the apostolical See. This monk, the most illustrious of all those who have been reckoned among the sovereign pontiffs, was to shine there with a splendour which none of his predecessors had equalled, and which flowed back, like a supreme sanction, upon the institute from which he came. Gregory, who alone among men has received, by universal consent, the double surname of Saint and Great, will be an everlasting honour to the Benedictine order as to the papacy. By his genius, but especially by the charm and ascendancy of his virtue, he was destined to organise the temporal power of the popes, to develop and regulate their spiritual sovereignty, to found their paternal supremacy over the new-born crowns and races which were to become the great nations of the future, and to be called France, Spain,

and England. It was he, indeed, who inaugurated the middle ages, modern society, and Christian civilization.

Issued, like St. Benedict, from one of the most illustrious races of ancient Rome, the son of a rich senator, and descendant of Pope Felix III, of the Anicia family, Gregory was early called to filled a dignified place, which, in the midst of modern Rome, the vassal of Byzantium, and subject to the ceaseless insults of the Barbarians, retained some shadow of ancient Roman grandeur. He was praetor of Rome during the first invasions of the Lombards and the religious troubles stirred up by the fifth general council. In the exercise of this office he gained the hearts of the Romans, while habituating himself to the management of public business, and while acquiring a taste for luxury and display of earthly grandeur, in which he still believed he might serve God without reproach. But God required him elsewhere. Gregory hesitated long, inspired by the divine breath, but retained, led back and fascinated to the world, by the attractions and habits of secular life. At last he yielded to the influence of his intimate and close relations with the refugees of Monte Cassino, the successors and disciples of Benedict; and then, obeying the grace which enlightened him, he abruptly broke every tie, devoted his wealth to the endowment of six new monasteries in Sicily, and established in his own palace in Rome, upon the Coelian hill, a seventh, dedicated to St. Andrew, into which he introduced the Benedictine rule, and where he himself became a monk. He sold all that remained of his patrimony to distribute it to the poor; and Rome, which had seen the young and wealthy patrician traverse its streets in robes of silk covered with jewels, now saw him, with admiration, clothed like a beggar, serving, in his own person, the beggars lodged in the hospital which he had built at the gate of his paternal house, now changed into a monastery.

Once a monk, he would be nothing less than a model of monks, and practised with the utmost rigour all the austerities sanctioned by the rule, applying himself specially at the same time to the study of the Holy Scriptures. He ate only pulse which his mother, who had become a nun since her widowhood, sent him to his convent, already soaked, in a silver porringer. This porringer was the only remnant of his ancient splendour, and did not remain long in his hands, for one day a shipwrecked sailor came several times to beg from him while he was writing in his cell, and finding no money in his purse, he gave him that relic of his former wealth. Long after, Gregory saw the shipwrecked man, who appeared to him under the form of his guardian angel, and instructed him that from that day God had destined him to govern His Church, and to be the successor of Peter, whose charity he had imitated.

Continually engaged in prayer, reading, writing, or dictation, he persisted in pushing the severity of his fasts to such an extent that his health succumbed, and his life itself was in danger. He fell so often into fainting fits, that more than once, as he himself relates, he should have sunk under them, had not his brethren supported him with more substantial food. In consequence of having attempted to do more than others, he was soon obliged to relinquish even the most ordinary fasts, which everybody observed. He was in despair at not being able to fast even upon Easter eve, a day on which even the little children fast, says his biographer: and aided by the prayers of a holy abbot of Spoleto who had become a monk with him at St. Andrea, he obtained from God the

grace of strength to observe that fast at least. But he remained weak and sickly all his life, and when he left his monastery, it was with health irreparably ruined.

Pope Benedict I drew him first from the cloister in 577, to raise him to the dignity of one of the seven cardinal-deacons or *regionaries*, who presided over the seven principal divisions of Rome. He yielded, against his own will, to the authority of the pontiff. "When a ship," said he, "is not well moored in port, the storm seizes it, even on the most secure coast. Thus I am plunged again into the ocean of the world, under an ecclesiastical pretext. I learn to appreciate the peace of the monastery by losing it, though I have not been sufficiently careful of defending while I possessed it." It was still worse when Pope Pelagius II sent him, as *Apocrisiarius* or Nuncio, to the Emperor Tiberius. During this involuntary absence he was accompanied by several monks of the community, devoting himself with them to study and reading, and following, as much as possible, all the observances of the rule. "By their example," he wrote, "I attach myself to the coast of prayer, as with the cable of an anchor, while my soul is tossed upon the waves of public life."

He discharged the duties of his office, nevertheless, with reputation and success, re-established between the Holy See and the Byzantine court the friendly relations which had been interrupted by the Lombard invasion, and neglected no means to obtain from Tiberius and his successor, Maurice, the help demanded by Rome and Italy against the terrible invasions, and the more and more oppressive domination, of the Lombards. He also learnt to know the shifts and subterfuges which the Byzantine spirit already employed against Roman unity and authority. He brought the patriarch Eutychus, who denied the actual resurrection of the body, to an edifying retractation.

After six years of this honourable and laborious exile, he returned to Rome, and regained the peaceful shelter of his monastery of St. Andrea, the monks of which elected him abbot soon after his return. He enjoyed there for some time longer the delights of the life which he had chosen. Tenderly cherished by his brethren, he took a paternal share in their trials and spiritual crosses, provided for their temporal and spiritual necessities, and specially rejoiced in the holy death of several among them. He has related the details of these in his *Dialogues*, and seems to breathe in them the perfume of heaven. But the affectionate kindness which always inspired him did not prevent him from maintaining with scrupulous severity the requirements of the rule. He threw into a ditch the body of a monk, who had been a skilful physician, and in whose possession three pieces of gold were found, in contempt of the article of the rule which interdicted all individual property. The three pieces of gold were thrown upon the body, in presence of all the monks, whilst they repeated aloud the words of the verse, "*Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditionem*". When this act of justice was accomplished, mercy took its sway once more in the heart of the abbot, who caused mass to be celebrated for thirty days successively to deliver this poor soul from purgatory.

This tender solicitude for souls was on the point of separating him from his dear monastery and from Rome. Everybody knows how he saw exhibited in the market some poor pagan children, of extraordinary beauty and fairness, who were said to be of the country of the Angles, to which he answered, that they were made to become angels. On which occasion, hastening to the pope, he begged him to send missionaries into that

great island of Britain, where the pagans sold such slaves; failing others, offered himself for this work; surprised the pontiff into consent, and prepared instantly for his departure. But when they understood his intention, the love with which the Romans had formerly regarded him was re-awakened. They surrounded the pope as he went to St. Peter's; they cried to him, "You have offended St Peter; you have ruined Rome in allowing Gregory to leave us." The astonished pope yielded to the popular voice. He sent messengers after Gregory, who overtook him at three days' journey from Rome; they led him back forcibly to his monastery. It was not as a missionary, but as a pope, that he was to win England to the Church.

In 590, Pelagius II died of the plague, which then depopulated Rome. Gregory was immediately elected pope by the unanimous voice of the senate, the people, and the clergy. It was in vain that he refused, and appealed to the Emperor Maurice not to confirm his election. The Romans intercepted his letter; the imperial confirmation arrived. Then he disguised himself, and, fleeing from Rome to seek some unknown retreat, wandered three days in the woods. He was followed, discovered, and a second time led back to Rome, but this time to reign there. He bowed his head, weeping, under the yoke imposed upon him by the divine will, and the unanimity of his fellow-citizens.

It was during the interval between his election and the imperial confirmation that, in the hope of turning back the scourge of the plague, he caused the famous procession of three days (in which, for the first time, all the abbots of the Roman monasteries appeared with their monks, and all the abbesses with their nuns) to be celebrated. Whilst these communities defiled before Gregory, he saw an angel appear upon the summit of the Hadrian Mole, putting back his sword into its sheath, the image of which, standing upon the colossal mausoleum, has given its name to the Castle of St. Angelo, and perpetuated to our own day the recollection of St. Gregory's vision.

The supreme pontificate, perhaps, never fell upon a soul more disturbed and afflicted than that of the monk who saw himself thus condemned to exchange the peace of the cloister for the cares of the government of the universal Church, and the special defence of the interests of Italy. Not only then, but during all his life, he did not cease to lament his fate. His sadness displayed itself first in his answers to the congratulations which reached him from all quarters: "I have lost", he wrote to the sister of the emperor, "the profound joys of repose. I seem to have been elevated in external things, but in spiritual I have fallen ... I endeavour daily to withdraw from the world and from the flesh, to see heavenly joys in the spirit ... Neither desiring nor fearing anything in this world, I felt myself above everything. But the storm of temptation has cast me all at once among alarms and terrors; for, though still I fear nothing for myself, I fear much for those of whom I have the charge." To the patrician Narses: "I am so overcome with melancholy, that I can scarcely speak; the darkness of grief assails the eyes of my soul; I see nothing that is not sad, and everything which is supposed to please me appears to me lamentable. For I cannot cease to see from what a height of tranquillity I have fallen, and to what a height of embarrassment I have ascended." To Andrew, of the rank called Illustrious: "When you hear of my promotion to the episcopate, weep, if you love me; for there are so many temporal occupations here, that I find myself by this dignity almost separated from the love of God." To the patrician John, who had contributed to his election: "I complain of your love, which has drawn me from the repose which you



know I sought. God reward you with eternal gifts for your good intention, but I pray Him deliver me, as He shall please, from so many perils; for, as my sins deserve, I have become bishop, not only of the Romans, but of these Lombards who acknowledge only the right of the sword, and whose favour is torture. See how much your patronage has brought me.” Then, taking up once more these images which he loved to borrow from maritime life, he said to his intimate friend Leander, Bishop of Toledo, whom he had met at Constantinople: “ I am here so beaten by the waves of this world, that I despair of being able to guide to port this rotten old vessel with which God has charged me ... I must hold the helm amid a thousand difficulties ... I already hear the bell of shipwreck ringing. ... I weep when I recall the peaceful shore which I have left, and sigh in perceiving afar that which I cannot attain.”

One day, long after, when, more than ever overwhelmed by the burden of secular affairs, he had withdrawn into a secret place, to give himself up to silence and sadness, he was joined there by the deacon Peter, his pupil, the friend of his youth and companion of his beloved studies. “Has some new trouble happened to you,” said the young man, “that you are thus sadder than usual?” “My grief,” answered the pontiff, “ is that of all my days, always old by custom, and always new by its daily increase. My poor soul recalls what it was of old in our monastery, when it soared over everything changeable and transitory; when it dreamt only of heaven ; when by contemplation it escaped from the cloister of this body which enclosed it; when it loved death as the entrance of life. And now, because of my pastoral charge, it must bear the burdens of the men of the world, and soil itself in this dust. And when, after having exhausted itself without, it comes back to its internal retreat, it returns with diminished forces. I meditate on all I have suffered and lost. I see myself tossed by the ocean and broken by the tempest. When I think of my former life, I seem to look back towards the shore. And what is still more sad, when thus shaken by the storm, I can scarcely perceive the port which I have left.”

These exclamations of profound grief tell us all that we require to know of the influence of this cloistral life, which swayed to such an extent the holy soul of the greatest man of his age.

It is true that the condition of the world and the Church, at the advent of Gregory, exhibited only causes of grief and alarm. An obstinate, although restrained schism, which dated from the fifth general council, and which had lasted forty years, consumed the powers of the clergy. The papacy, always dependent on the Byzantine emperors, and unceasingly humiliated by them, did not even find, in the arm of these distrustful and incapable masters, the support which it needed against its enemies from within and without. Within the shadow of their throne flourished those patriarchs of Constantinople, whose ambition already aspired to the title of universal, and who were to end by rending the Church in twain. Africa was a prey to the Donatists; Spain was entirely Arian; England had fallen back into idolatry; in Gaul, despite the Catholic faith professed by the successors of Clovis, simony polluted the Church, and the struggles of Fredegond and Brunehaut distressed all Christians; in the East, the Avars and Persians threatened or ravaged the empire. But nothing was more lamentable than the state of Italy. As if the scourge of God, floods, plague, and famine, were not enough, men rent each other with contentions, and disorders of all kind invaded the Church, following in



the steps of persecution and war. The Lombards, who from being pagans had become Arians, believed that by persecuting furiously the Roman Church they would secure their power against the Greeks; they regarded the papacy as the servant of the Byzantine court, and consequently as their own habitual enemy. The Greek emperors, on their side, accused the popes of treason, because they did not sacrifice everything to the necessities of imperial policy, or of usurpation, because they took upon themselves the task of providing for the public necessities when the inaction or powerlessness of the lieutenants of Caesar became too evident. In reality, the successors of Constantine, with an instinctive perception of the future, perceived already, in the successors of St Peter, the power which God had destined to replace their decrepit sovereignty, in Italy and over that city in which the imagination of Christendom still placed the centre of the empire and the cause of its existence. Thence came their tortuous, oppressive, and inconsistent policy. They would be obeyed as masters, by nations whom they knew not how to defend; and as, amid the ruins which despotism had everywhere accumulated, the papacy alone was seen standing, they willingly made the popes responsible for the consequences of their own weakness.

The poor monk who showed so much despair when he was thrown into that whirlpool by the unanimous voice of the Romans, could yet perceive with a bold and clear glance the dangers of the situation, and adopt a line of conduct which was a manifest realisation of the infallible promises of Jesus Christ. He founded the temporal greatness of the Holy See, and the progress of its spiritual authority, upon the basis, long immovable, of the gratitude and admiration of nations.

First of all, and especially, he concerned himself with the Lombards. Although he has perhaps judged too severely in his writings this proud and intelligent race, whose courage and legislative powers have attracted the attention of posterity, and who were a hundred times more worthy than the degenerate Greco-Romans, whose authority he loyally endeavoured to re-establish in Italy, Gregory used in his intercourse with them no means that were not legitimate and honourable. He had a right, after long and laborious negotiations with them, to bear this testimony to himself, "Had I been willing to lend myself to the destruction of the Lombards, that nation would have had today neither kings, dukes, nor counts, and would have been a prey to irremediable confusion; but because I fear God I would not assist in the ruin of any." He doubtless alluded to the treacheries planned by the exarchs of Ravenna, who were the emperor's viceroys in Italy, by which they attempted to make up for their military inferiority before the Lombards. The Roman exarch was, by his animosity and cowardice, one of the principal afflictions of Gregory's life. After having broken the peace with the Lombards, and thus justified the renewed hostilities of their dukes Ariulf and Arigis in Central and Southern Italy, he abandoned Rome and Naples without defence, and notwithstanding interdicted the pope from treating with the invaders. It was then that Gregory displayed all the resolution of a valiant captain, with all the authority of a sovereign. He did not content himself with complaining bitterly to the Emperor Maurice of the desertion of Italy, and that, in order to guard Perugia, Rome had been left defenceless. "I was obliged," he wrote to him, "to see with my own eyes the Romans led into France with ropes round their necks, like dogs, to be sold in the market." But he himself provided what was most urgent, wrote to the military leaders to encourage them in resistance, pointed out to the

soldiers assembled at Naples the leader whom they should follow, fed the people, paid the troops their wages and the Barbarians their contributions of war, all at the expense of the ecclesiastical treasury. “The emperor,” he wrote to the empress, “has a treasurer for his troops at Ravenna, but as for me, I am the treasurer of the Lombards at Rome.”

At a later period, the king of the Lombards, Agilulf, disgusted by the renewed treachery of the imperial exarch, laid siege to Rome itself. Gregory, who was, above everything else, a bishop, and watched over the spiritual interests of the Romans with still more care than he exerted for their material defence, was then expounding the prophet Ezekiel in his sermons. He interrupted his discourses more than once to breathe out his grief, and to deplore the misfortunes of the eternal city. “Two things specially trouble me,” he said, when he was asked at least to explain the last chapters of the prophet upon the re-establishment of the temple: “the obscurity of the text, and the news that King Agilulf has passed the Po on his way to besiege us. Judge, my brethren, how a poor soul, thus troubled and distracted, can penetrate into such mysteries.” And again, “What does the world contain which can please us? ... We see nothing but sadness, we hear only groans ... Rome, once mistress of the world, how do we see her fallen! Where is the senate? where is the people? But why speak I of men? The very buildings are destroyed and the walls crumble down ... Once her princes and chiefs spread themselves over all the earth to possess it. The sons of worldly men hastened hither to advance themselves in the world. Now that she is deserted and ruined, no man comes here to seek his fortune: there is no power remaining to oppress the poor.” After a time he announced that he should stop his preaching: “Let no one blame me if I put an end to this discourse. You all perceive how our tribulations increase. The sword and death are everywhere. Some return to us with their hands cut off, with the news that others are taken or killed. I must be silent, because my soul is weary of life.”

Agilulf, however, for some unknown reason, did not succeed in taking Rome. All the surrounding country was once more devastated, and the incurable desolation and unwholesome barrenness of the Roman Campagna dates from this period; but the city was spared. Gregory could verify the prophecy of St. Benedict, who had predicted that Rome, condemned to the most cruel trials, should sink back upon herself, but should not be destroyed. He could still continue to watch over these crumbling walls, these overthrown palaces, these buildings worn out with extreme old age. But, as a reward for his generous and useful efforts, he received only new denunciations from the exarch, and a reprimand from the emperor, who reproached him in insulting terms with his simplicity. “I understand,” the pope replied to him, “what the language of your serene missives means: you find that I have acted like a fool, and you are right. If I had not acted like a fool I should not have borne all that I have borne for you among the swords of the Lombards.” He succeeded at last, after nine years’ exertions, in overcoming the Byzantine repugnance to acknowledge any right whatever on the side of the Lombards, and concluded a peace between the two powers which made Italy, exhausted by thirty years of war and brigandage, thrill with joy. It was of short duration; but when hostilities recommenced, he entered into direct negotiation with King Agilulf, and obtained from that prince a special truce for Rome and its surrounding territory. He had besides found a powerful advocate with the Lombard king in the person of the illustrious Queen Theodelinda, who was the Clotilde of these last conquerors of Italy.

This princess, a Bavarian and Catholic by birth, the widow of King Autharis by her first marriage, had so gained the heart of the Lombards, that they conferred upon her the right of designating his successor by marrying whomsoever she thought most worthy of reigning with her. In this way she had given her hand and crown to Duke Agilulf, in the same year as that in which Gregory ascended the Holy See. These two noble hearts soon understood each other. The queen was always the faithful friend of the pope; she served as a medium of communication between him and her husband. It is not certain whether she succeeded in converting the latter, but her gentle influence led the entire Lombard nation, little by little, from Arianism to the Catholic faith. Gregory, from the very beginning of his pontificate, had exhorted the Italian bishops to make special exertions for the conversion of these formidable enemies of orthodoxy. It is believed that the queen was powerfully aided in this work by the *Dialogues* which Gregory had compiled from the narratives of the first disciples and successors of St. Benedict, and in which he related the life of that patriarch of the monastic order, and the marvels of fervour and penitence exhibited by the monks who were imbued with his spirit. This work was dedicated to the Lombard queen, as if to enable her to show to the devastators of Italy proofs of the sanctity and moral greatness with which the orthodox faith alone could endow the vanquished.

It was thus that Gregory snatched Rome from the yoke of conquest. He not only preserved her from the Lombards, but sheltered her from the violence of all the petty tyrants of the neighbourhood, who rose amidst the universal confusion. But his soul was consumed, says one of his historians, by the fire of perpetual alarms concerning the fate of his children, and that consecrated soil which he regarded as their inheritance. We can understand now how the patriotism of popes, such as Gregory, created their temporal power, and how, “sole guardians of Rome, they remained its masters.”

However, he required still more constancy and courage to contend with the Greeks, with that Eastern Empire which was represented by functionaries whose odious exactions had quite as great a share in the despair of the people as the ravages of the Barbarians, and whose malice was more dreadful, as he wrote, than the sword of the Lombards: “They can only kill our bodies, while the imperial judges devour our souls by their rapine and fraud.” Elsewhere he denounces to the empress the officers who, in Sardinia, sold to the pagans for money the permission to sacrifice to their idols, and continued to collect that impost from those who had been baptized, and who, in Corsica, overwhelmed the inhabitants with such burdens that they were reduced to selling their children and fleeing to seek refuge among the Lombards. It was the same in Sicily, and the revenues provided by their extortions were to be employed in the defence of Italy. But, said Gregory to the empress, “it might be suggested to the emperor that it would be better to give up some expenses in Italy, in order to dry the tears of the oppressed in Sicily. I say this briefly, and only that the supreme Judge may not impute my silence to me as a crime.”

The entire life of Gregory was then a struggle with the Byzantine spirit, with the patriarch of Constantinople, who aimed at supplanting the Roman pontiff, as well as with the emperor, who would have dominated Italy without defending her, and ruled the Church as if she had been only a province of his empire. God had sent him, before his

pontificate, to Constantinople, that he might the better understand that field of battle in which he won for the Church more than one difficult victory.

Among so many conflicts—through which Gregory always maintained the rights and dignities of the Holy See, conciliating, at the same time, with extraordinary precautions, the arrogance of the Byzantine court—we shall dwell only on that one which arose between him and the patriarch of Constantinople, John, surnamed the Faster. Relying on the support of most of the Eastern bishops, faithful to the proud pretensions which for two centuries past had been entertained by the bishops of the imperial residence, and preluding thus the disastrous ambition of his successors, this monk, who had begun by a pretence of refusing the episcopate, took in his acts the title of ecumenical or universal patriarch. Gregory stood up with as much vigour as authority against this strange pretension. He did not draw back before the emperor, who openly sided with the bishop of his new capital, and although deserted in the struggle by the two other patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, who would have been equally wounded by the usurpation of him of Constantinople, Gregory persevered, during all his pontificate, in his resistance to that wretched assumption, in which he perceived less an attempt upon the unity and authority of the universal Church, than an excess of pride on one side and adulation on the other, which disgusted his humble and generous soul.

“What!” he wrote to the emperor, “St Peter, who received the keys of heaven and earth, the power of binding and loosing, the charge and primacy of the whole Church, was never called universal apostle; and yet my pious brother John would name himself universal bishop. I must needs exclaim, O tempora! O mores! All Europe is in the power of the Barbarians. The cities are overthrown, the castles are in ruins, the provinces are depopulated, the soil has no longer hands to cultivate it; idolaters pursue the faithful even to death. And priests who should prostrate themselves in the courts of the temple in dust and ashes, seek after titles of vanity!” He took care to explain to the emperor that he did not defend his own cause, but that of the whole Church, which was scandalised by such an unheard-of pretension. He reminded him that Nestorius and Macedonius, both bishops of Constantinople, had both been heretics and heresiarchs. He added: “For me, I am the servant of all the priests as long as they live in a manner becoming the priesthood: but if any one raises his head against God and against the laws of our fathers, I am confident that he shall not make me bow mine, even with the sword.”

Gregory was so much the more bold in combating the dangerous vanity of the Byzantine patriarch, that he himself had displayed on all occasions a sincere and practical humility. His vast correspondence and all the acts of his life furnish a thousand touching proofs of it. He had impressed the seal of this humility upon the papacy itself, by adopting, first of all the popes, in the preamble of his official documents, the fine title of Servant of the servants of God, which has become the distinctive title of his successors. He had expressly refused the same name of universal bishop or pope, which had been given him by the patriarch of Alexandria. His magnanimous humility displays itself fully in these noble words of his letter to this patriarch. “I desire to increase in virtue and not in words. I do not consider myself honoured in that which dishonours my brethren. It is the honour of the universal Church which honours me. It is the strength and greatness of my brethren in the episcopate which does me honour. I feel myself truly honoured only when I see that no man refuses to another the honour due to him.

Away with those words which inflate vanity and wound charity! ... The holy Council of Chalcedon and other Fathers have offered this title to my predecessors, but none of them has ever used it, that they might guard their own honour in the sight of God, by seeking here below the honour of all the priesthood.”

This weighty difference, another of which we shall speak regarding the prohibition addressed to soldiers to their becoming monks, and especially that which arose between the pope and the emperor touching the irregular election of the metropolitan of Salona, contributed to render almost permanent the misunderstanding between them. That Eastern world which was so soon to become the prey of Islam, was obstinate in ignoring its best chance of salvation, in alienating the nations and Churches of the West, and in weakening by a minute and vexatious despotism the Christian life which had blossomed with so much promise in its bosom. Gregory had to exercise an incessant vigilance, to prevent the immense army of lay officials, from the emperor down to the meanest agent of the treasury, from encroaching upon the rights and liberties of the Church, and especially from relaxing or attempting to break the ties of subordination which connected individual churches with the Holy See. And he had also to reconcile this permanent and universal resistance with the submission which he professed and practised, to the best of his power, towards the empire in temporal affairs. In claiming for the Church an almost absolute liberty and sovereignty in spiritual matters, he did not hesitate to declare himself the humble subject of Caesar. From thence came that singular medley of immovable resolution and humble protestations which appears in his correspondence with the Caesars. However, though he always spoke and often acted as a docile subject of the successors of Augustus and Constantine, they were not slow to understand that they had something else to deal with in this bishop, who was at once the direct successor of Peter, the patriarch of the entire West, and the greatest proprietor in Italy, and who had already occupied the place of mediator between the Barbarians and the Empire.

We find this mixture of extreme humility and energetic resistance in another struggle, which the constant and natural concern of Gregory for the rights and interests of monastic life had led him into, in the beginning of his pontificate. The Emperor Maurice had published an edict which interdicted public functionaries and soldiers from entering either into the ranks of the clergy or into a monastery. Gregory approved the first clause of this law, which interdicted public functionaries from holding ecclesiastical offices: “for,” said he, “these people prefer rather to change their occupation, than to leave the world”. But, always a monk in his heart, he protested against the measure relative to monastic life, in a letter celebrated for its eloquence and ability, and which must not be omitted here. He begins by declaring that he speaks not as pope, but as an individual, the obliged friend of the emperor, which explains the humble character of certain passages; but he soon rises to all the loftiness of spiritual power and the freedom of souls.

“The man who fails to be sincere in what he says or does to the serene emperors is responsible towards God. For myself, the unworthy servant of your piety, I speak neither as bishop nor as subject, but by the right which I find in my heart. For, serene lord, you were my master before you became master of all ... I confess to my masters that this law has filled me with terror, for it closes the way of heaven to many. ... There



are many who can lead a Christian life in the world. But there are also many who cannot be saved, but by forsaking all things. . . .

“And who am I but dust, and a worm of the earth, who venture to speak thus to my masters? However, when I see this law interfere with God, the Master of the world, I cannot keep silence. For this power over the human race has been bestowed from on high upon my masters, that they might help those who would do well to open up the way to heaven, and make the earthly kingdom serve the heavenly. Yet here it is forbidden to him who has once been enrolled in the terrestrial army to enter, unless when an invalid or in retirement, into the service of our Lord. ... It is thus that Christ answers by me, the last of His servants and yours: ‘I have made thee, from a secretary, count of the guards; from count, Caesar; from Caesar, emperor; if that was not enough, I have made thee also father of an emperor. I have put My priests under thy power, and thou withdrawest thy soldiers from My service!’ Sire, say to your servant what you can answer to Him who, at the Day of Judgment, shall speak to you thus.

“Perhaps it is supposed that none of these men are truly converted; but I, your unworthy servant, have known many soldiers converted in my lifetime, who have, in the monasteries, given an example of every virtue, and even worked miracles. Yet this law interdicts every similar conversion. Inquire, I beseech you, what emperor it was who made a similar law, and see whether it becomes you to imitate him. And consider besides that men would be prevented from leaving the world at a time when the end of the world approaches. For the time is not distant when, amidst the burning of heaven and earth, in the universal conflagration of the elements, surrounded by angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, and powers, the terrible Judge shall appear. When He would pardon all your sins, if He did not find this single law directed against Himself, what, I pray you, will be your excuse? I conjure you by that terrible Judge, not to make your tears, your fasts, your many prayers, useless before God, but to soften or abrogate this law, for the army of my masters shall increase so much the more against the army of the enemy, as the army of God shall increase in prayer.

“In submission, however, to your command, I have forwarded this same law into the different provinces, and because it is not in accordance with the will of God Almighty, I warn you of it by this supplication. I have thus fulfilled my duty on both sides—have rendered obedience to the emperor, and have not been silent concerning that which seemed to me in opposition to God.”

Modest and humble as this letter was, he did not venture to send it to the emperor by his resident representative, but confided it to one of Maurice’s physicians, who was a private friend of his own, that it might be presented privately, and at a favourable moment. The immediate effect of this protest is not known, but it was listened to, for a subsequent letter of the pope to the metropolitans of Italy and Illyria enjoins them not to receive soldiers into monasteries till after a three years’ novitiate, and adds, that the emperor consented to these conditions.

These perpetual contests with the Byzantine court may explain, without excusing, the conduct of Gregory at the death of the Emperor Maurice. This prince, infected, like all his predecessors, with a mania for interfering in ecclesiastical affairs, and interfering with all the weight of absolute power, was very superior to most of them. Gregory



himself has more than once done justice to his faith and piety, to his zeal for the Church and respect for her canons. He acknowledged that in his reign no heretic dared open his mouth. Almost the only thing with which the emperor could be reproached, was his avarice. After twenty years of an undistinguished reign, he unfortunately abandoned twelve thousand captives of his army to the sword of the Avars, who massacred the whole on his refusal to ransom them. From this circumstance arose a military revolt, which placed Phocas upon the throne. This wretch not only murdered the Emperor Maurice, gouty, and incapable of defending himself, but also his six sons, whom he caused to be put to death under the eyes of their father, without even sparing the youngest, who was still at the breast, and whom his nurse would have saved by putting her own child in his place; but Maurice, who would not have his child preserved at such a cost, disclosed that pious deception to the murderers. He died like a Christian hero, repeating the words of the psalm, "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right." He had before entreated God to expiate his sins by a violent death in this world, that he might be spared from suffering in the other. This massacre did not satisfy Phocas, who sacrificed the empress and her three daughters, the brother of Maurice, and a multitude of others in his train. The monster then sent his own image and that of his wife to Rome, where the senate and people received them with acclamation.

Gregory unfortunately joined in these mean acclamations. He carried these images of his new masters, bathed in innocent blood, into the oratory of the Lateran palace. Afterwards he addressed extraordinary congratulations to Phocas, not in the surprise of the first moment, but seven months after the crime. "God," said he, "the sovereign arbiter of the life of man, sometimes raises up one to punish the crimes of many, as we have experienced in our long affliction; and sometimes to console the afflicted hearts of many, He raises another whose mercy fills them with joy, as we hope from your piety. Therefore we feel strengthened by the abundance of our joy, congratulating ourselves that your goodness has attained the imperial dignity. Let heaven and earth rejoice with us! "He also wrote to the new empress: "No tongue can express, nor mind conceive, the gratitude which we owe to God, that your Serenity has attained the empire, and that we are delivered from the hard burden we have so long endured, and to which has succeeded a gentle yoke which we can bear. Let choirs of angels and voices of men unite with us to thank the Creator!" It is true, that in this same letter to Phocas, and in a subsequent one, he points out to him the duties of his charge, exhorts him to amend the errors of past reigns, and supplicates him so to rule, that under him all may enjoy their possessions and his freedom in peace. "For," says he, "there is this difference between the barbarous kings and the emperors of the republic, that the former rule over slaves, and the latter over free men." This was precisely the reverse of the truth : it was, besides, a melancholy and guilty homage rendered to a man who was to become one of the most odious tyrants of his age, and who had gained the empire by a crime without parallel even in the annals of that infamous history.

This is the only stain upon the life of Gregory. We do not attempt either to conceal or excuse it. It can scarcely be explained by recalling all the vexations he had suffered from Maurice and his agents, annoyances of which he always complained energetically, though he did not fail to do justice to the undeniable piety of the old emperor, who, like all his predecessors, imagined himself entitled to judge and direct the affairs of the

Church, but was in no respect a persecutor. Perhaps, too, Gregory adopted this means to secure the help which he implored from Phocas against the new incursions of the Lombards, or to mollify beforehand the already threatening intentions of the tyrant. We have seen that he mingled advice and indirect lessons with his congratulations. It must also be remembered that these flatteries, which we find so repugnant from the pen of our holy and great pope, were in some sort the official language of those times; they resulted from the general debasement of public manners, and from the tone of the language invariably used then at each change of reign. His motives were undoubtedly pure. Notwithstanding, a stain remains upon his memory, and a shadow upon the history of the Church, which is so consoling and full of light in this age of storms and darkness. But among the greatest and holiest of mortals, virtue, like human wisdom, always falls short in some respect.

Gregory, who died sixteen months after the advent of Phocas, had no time either to expiate or repair that weakness. No doubt he would have done it, if occasion had been given him. His life demonstrated nothing more clearly than his boldness in presence of danger, and his immovable perseverance in the pursuit of right and truth, whenever he perceived them. All his career justifies the noble words which he wrote to his *apocrisarius* or nuncio at Constantinople: "You ought to know how I feel, I who have resolved to die rather than see the chair of St. Peter degenerate in my lifetime. You know my disposition; I bear long, but when I have once resolved to endure no longer, I face all dangers with joy." Save in the deplorable instance which we have pointed out, he always showed himself faithful to the instructions which he gave to an Illyrian bishop who lamented over the iniquity of the imperial judges: "Your duty is to assist for the cause of the poor and oppressed. If you do not succeed, God will remember the intention; seek above all things to gain Him who reads hearts. As for human terrors and favours, they are but a smoke which vanishes before the lightest breath. Be assured that it is impossible to please God and the wicked at the same time; consider yourself most agreeable to God when you perceive yourself odious to perverse men. However, even in defending the poor, be grave and moderate."

But to perceive in all their purity the greatness of his soul and the influence of his genius upon the doctrines of the Church, it is necessary to turn from that Lower Empire which was condemned to irremediable decay, and where the seeds of schism budded in the bosom of abject servitude. Life and honour were elsewhere. Gregory was aware of it.

He did not content himself with the imposing position of defender of Rome, protector of Italy, and mediator between the Greeks and Lombards. He did more. In turning towards the Germanic nations, he showed the way by which the Roman Church, and with her the mind and future fate of the West, could be emancipated from the dishonouring yoke of Byzantium.

The Roman Empire existed no longer in its first form. That climax of disgrace had come to an end. The civilised world was escaping from that absolute dominion exercised by monsters or adventurers, which has been admired in our own days by some base souls worthy of having lived under Caracalla or Arcadius. The human race had at last perceived its own shame. The yoke of a free nation, however cruel and iniquitous,

may be borne without blushing; but to obey a nation itself enslaved by the most repellent despotism, is to ask too much of human baseness. The whole world was then in insurrection against Rome, and the insurrection had everywhere triumphed.

It was necessary that the victorious Barbarians, and those countries which had been revived by the rude experience of conquest, should be kept from identifying in a common reprobation the odious phantom of old imperial Rome, and that young Church, the sovereign see of which God, by a secret miracle of His providence, had established in the very centre of the empire which had persecuted her so cruelly, which she had in vain attempted to regenerate after having converted it, but which she was shortly to eclipse and replace in the world. It was necessary to keep Constantinople from imagining itself the heir of Rome, and planting its degrading and egotistical dominion beside the protecting, and up to this time irreproachable, authority of the popes. The Franks, the Visigoths, the Lombards, and the Anglo-Saxons, entered on the scene; they inaugurated the destiny of races which, after the course of thirteen centuries, are still at the head of humanity; they would willingly bow their youthful and unsubdued force before the pure and new-born majesty of the Church, but not before the decrepit servitude of the Byzantine empire.

Gregory was the man predestined to the salutary and decisive work of transition. The spiritual and temporal independence of the West manifested itself in him. He was the first pope who paid special attention to the Western races, and associated himself, by directing it, with the progress of the German conquerors. He was their friend, their educator, and their master. To assimilate them to the Church, to adapt her to their instincts and reason, without compromising the traditional element and sovereign authority, the immovable centre of which was to remain standing in the midst of desolated Rome, nothing less would suffice than the tender and patient genius of Gregory and his successors.

Long crushed between the Lombards and Byzantines, between the unsoftened ferocity of the Barbarians and the vexatious decrepitude of despotism, Gregory, with that instinctive perception of future events which God sometimes grants to pure souls, sought elsewhere a support for the Roman Church. His eyes were directed to the new races, who were scarcely less ferocious than the Lombards, but who did not, like them, weigh upon Italy and Rome, and who already exhibited elements of strength and continuance.

The West separated itself more and more from the East. The patriarch of Constantinople, despite the proud titles with which he concealed his servitude, gradually fell into the first rank of the imperial household. The patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, were about to be swept away by Islamism. Rome alone remained standing, incessantly insulted, but not yet enslaved. Africa and Illyria, which were still attached to the patriarchate of the West, of which Rome was the see, were soon to fall, one under the sword of the Arabs, the other, to identify itself with the domains of the Caesar of Constantinople. But the great Churches of the new northern kingdom could make up, and more than make up, for that loss.

The rupture of all political ties between the Roman Empire and Gaul, Spain, and Britain, had naturally loosened the links which attached the Churches of these countries

to Rome. To renew these links, and to preserve the Church from sinking under the feudal institutions which were to prevail in the new order of social affairs, the best thing that could be done was to form alliances with the Germanic races which had replaced Roman dominion. Gregory took that glorious and salutary initiative. We shall see further on what he did for Spain and Great Britain. Let us first exhibit his choice of Gaul, the Church and kingdom of the Franks, to become the nucleus of the great Germanic Christendom. He thus attached to himself the only nation among the Barbarians which, while Arianism prevailed everywhere, remained orthodox. He founded the alliance which, two centuries after, finally freed the Holy See from every foreign yoke, from Byzantine dominion, as well as from the violence of the Lombards.

It does not appear that he called the Franks to the help of Italy against the Lombards, like his predecessor, Pelagius II; they had come already, and three Frank invasions had produced only an increase of calamity to the inhabitants of the northern part of the peninsula. He took another way, and entered, in the first place, into the closest relations with the Church of Gaul, on account of lands which the Roman Church possessed in Provence, and which had been long deserted, like all the other vast territories which already constituted the patrimony of St. Peter. A holy monk of the isle of Lerins, Virgilius, was then bishop of Arles, and metropolitan of Provence. Gregory gave him the *pallium*, without prejudice to the rights of the metropolitan, and made him his vicar in the domains of King Childebert, enjoining him specially to devote himself to the work of rooting out the radical vices of the Gallo-Frank Church, which were simony, and the election of laymen to bishoprics. He took occasion from this to address himself directly to the young king, Childebert II, who reigned in Burgundy and Austrasia, and to his mother Brunehaut, is much to recommend Virgilius to their support in the execution of the apostolical decrees, as to ask their protection for the priest Candidus, whom he had charged with the administration of the pontifical possessions in Gaul. It is in one of these letters to Brunehaut that we find, on the subject of the education which she had given to her descendants, and other virtues supposed to belong to her, those emphatic compliments with which he has been so often reproached, and which agree so little with all that we know of the life of that too notorious princess. But it cannot be denied, that along with these praises, borrowed from the adulatory style of the Byzantine court, the forms of which he had too much accustomed himself to imitate, Gregory addressed to the young king Childebert the noblest language which had ever been addressed by a pontiff to a king. He began, in the words which follow, to make audible that great papal voice which, for a thousand years, was to be the supreme organ of justice and humanity to princes and nations:—"As much as the royal dignity is above common men, your throne elevates you above the other thrones of nations. It is a small thing to be a king when others are so, but it is a great thing to be a Catholic, when others do not share the same honour. As a great lamp shines with all the brilliancy of its light in the deepest darkness of night, so the splendour of your faith shines amid the voluntary obscurity of other nations ... In order, then, to surpass other men in works as well as in faith, let not your Excellency cease to show yourself merciful to your subjects. If there are things which offend you, punish none without discussion. You shall please the King of kings best when, restraining your authority, you believe yourself to have less privilege than power."

After the premature death of Childebert II in 596, and during the minority of his heirs, Brunehaut, who was regent of his two kingdoms, the east and south-east of Gaul, continued an increasingly close and frequent intercourse with Gregory. She asked the pallium for the Bishop of Autun, and he accorded that envied distinction to the Burgundian prelate, only while insisting anew upon the necessity of extirpating simony, destroying the remnants of idolatry, which still mingled with the Christianity of the Franks and Burgundies, reforming the scandalous life of some priests who lived with women, and lastly, putting an end to that invasion of unprepared laymen into the priesthood, and even into the episcopate, which he energetically called the *heresy of neophytes*,

He sent to her, in the quality of legate, and in order to hold a council for the cure of these irregularities, Cyriac, the abbot of his own monastery of St. Andrea at Rome. This council was never assembled; but Brunehaut, and her grandson Thierry, king of Burgundy, sent an embassy to Gregory in 602, to negotiate, by his mediation, a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Byzantine emperor, against the Avars, who threatened the empire and the Frank kingdoms equally. The political and social part played by the papacy developed itself thus gradually and naturally under the pontificate of the first monk who had occupied the chair of St. Peter. The murder of Maurice, it is true, prevented the success of this negotiation; but the Burgundian ambassador was charged, besides, to obtain from the pope the confirmation of two monasteries and an hospital, which Brunehaut had founded at Autun.

It was then, and at the express request of the Frankish crown, that Gregory issued that famous charter, in which, for the first time, the direct subordination of temporal power to spiritual is clearly set forth and recognised. The inviolability of persons and property, and the electoral freedom of the three new monastic communities of Autun, were placed under the safeguard of papal authority, and of a penalty which is thus declared: "If any king, bishop, judge, or other secular person, knowing this constitution, shall venture to infringe it, let him be deprived of the dignity of his power and honour, and let him know that he has rendered himself guilty before the tribunal of God. And if he does not restore that which he has wickedly taken away, or lament with fit penitence the unlawful acts he has done, let him be debarred from the holy body and blood of our God and Saviour, and remain subject in the eternal judgment to a severe retribution."

Thus the hand of the Church began to write, but with the consent of the elective and limited royalty of conquering races, that new law of the West which, five centuries later than the monk Gregory I, was to be appealed to and applied in its full extent by the monk Gregory VII and his successors. Nothing can better depict the difference of sentiment and attitude displayed by the papacy towards the kings of the Germanic nations and the Byzantine emperors, than the contrast between this document and the almost passive obedience which St. Gregory professed to the imperial court, even in his most energetic protests against certain of its acts. And nothing contradicts more entirely the chimerical distinction between the Roman emperors and the Barbarian kings, which he attempts to establish in his letter to Phocas.

Gregory did not confine himself to these relations with the princes and bishops of Austrasia and Burgundy. He wrote to Clotharius II, king of Neustria, and to the



principal bishops of that portion of Gaul, recommending them to undertake the work of converting the Anglo-Saxons, the object of his special predilection, which he had never lost sight of amid the most serious troubles, and in which Brunehaut cooperated zealously. On this account he also entered into correspondence with the principal bishops of the north and west of Gaul: he enjoined them, as he had urged the bishops of Burgundy and Austrasia, with the most earnest entreaties, to combat the various ecclesiastical abuses, unlawful ordinations, and specially simony, which he everywhere calls heresy, and which made frightful progress every day, disguising itself under a thousand different forms, infecting already all the grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in all Christian countries, and threatening to consume like a cancer the vigour and beauty of the Church, thanks to the connivance and complicity of too many bishops.

In all his relations with the bishops, not only of Gaul, but of entire Christendom, he always manifested the affectionate respect with which the episcopal character and form inspired him, and which he had so eloquently expressed in the contest touching the title of universal patriarch. "God forbid," he wrote, "that I should desire to infringe the decrees of our ancestors in any Church, to the prejudice of my colleagues in the priesthood; for I should thus injure myself by interfering with the rights of my brethren." And, elsewhere, "Receive this as certain in matters of ecclesiastical privilege, that we will preserve its rights to each individual Church, as we defend our own ... I desire to honour by every means my brethren in the episcopate." At the same time he gave to the jurisdiction of the Holy See a range and authority which had never been better established. He extended it even to Jerusalem, and beyond the extremities of the Roman world, to Ireland and Iberia. He replied to applications for advice from Caucasus, and encouraged the attempts made to convert Persia. He reduced to due limits the power of the metropolitans, who seemed disposed to assume an authority superior to that of the other bishops, and independent of the Holy See; he settled that none of them should be ordained without the confirmation of the pope. His struggles with the metropolitans of Cagliari, of Ravenna, and, above all, of Salona, were among the greatest trials of his pontificate; but he overcame all resistance. His vigilant eye and eloquent voice everywhere stimulated the re-establishment and exact observance of the canons, and especially the freedom of episcopal elections, which were then in the hands of the clergy and people of each diocese. Very urgent motives were necessary to induce him to limit that liberty, or even indirectly to interfere in that choice. During the vacancy of the see of Milan, when it was announced to him that one of his most intimate friends would be elected, he answered, "I have long resolved never to meddle, for the advantage of any one whatsoever, in the collation of spiritual charges: I shall confine myself to following with my prayers the election which you are about to make, in order that God may grant you a pastor who will lead you in the pastures of the divine word."

But the less he was disposed to interfere in the designation of those elected, the more he required that they should rigidly fulfil the conditions of canonical laws. He did not simply refuse to recognise a person elected contrary to the canons; he excluded him from all ecclesiastical dignities, and sometimes went so far as to subject him to a penitentiary detention in some monastery, in company with the bishops who had consecrated him. He did not hesitate to depose the bishops who showed themselves unworthy of their charge. Upon those whom he judged worthy he exercised an attentive



and indefatigable watchfulness, to constrain them to residence, to pastoral visits, and to that great art of preaching which he himself practised with so much eloquence and assiduity even amid the harassments of the supreme pontificate. He recommended them to make their internal life in harmony with the external solemnity of their functions and pious demonstrations; for, said he, prayer is vain if conduct is evil. He was not content with regular morals and irreproachable faith; he would have them besides sufficiently endowed with energy and capacity; for “in our times,” he said, “we must confide power into the hands of those who will not be solely engrossed by the salvation of souls, but will also be mindful of the defence and temporal interests of their inferiors.” His truly paternal authority disdained puerile and troublesome homage. He turned away with repugnance from the exaggerated demonstrations of respect towards himself in which certain bishops took pleasure. “I love not,” he said, “these vain and foolish exaggerations”. He fixed for every five years, instead of every three, the term of the periodical and obligatory visit of the bishops to Rome. The priests and all the orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were objects of the same solicitude and severe vigilance.

His vast correspondence testifies at once to the unwearied activity of his administration, his ardent zeal for justice and discipline, and the increasing development of questions of canonical law and discipline which began to replace, especially in the West, the dogmatic questions which had been sufficiently elaborated in the five general councils held up to that time.

Those eyes which incessantly superintended the Christian world did not pass over the vast domains of the Church which, under the name of the patrimony of St. Peter, were already formed, not only in Gaul, as has been already seen, but in Africa, Corsica, Dalmatia, Sicily, and especially in the south of Italy. Before Gregory, negligence and confusion reigned everywhere in these lands. He neglected no means of re-establishing order and restoring them to their just value. His letters show that he considered no detail beneath him to attain that end, and that it was his special endeavour to rule them with the most exact justice. The spirit of the disciple of St. Benedict, the monk who, careful, attentive, and just, appreciated so highly the rights of labour, is evident at every step. He wrote to Peter, the administrator of the Roman Church in Sicily, that letter which deserves to be inscribed by the side of the noblest titles of the papacy : “We understand that the price paid for corn to the peasant subjects of the Church is lowered in times of abundance: we desire that they shall always be paid according to the current price. ... We forbid that the farmers shall pay more than the rate fixed in their lease; and we shall withdraw all the disgraceful exactions which shall exceed the sums prescribed in proportion to their ability. And in order that no one after our death may be able to impose these burdens anew, let them be invested in their lands by a written form which shall state the sum which each one has to pay. ... We would not have the coffers of the Church soiled with sordid gains.”

The devoted friend of the peasants, who had scarcely escaped from the deadly pressure of Roman taxation when they fell into the hands of the Barbarian conquerors, less skilfully rapacious but more brutal, he especially employed his power in reducing their burdens, guaranteeing the freedom of their marriages, the security of their possessions, and the inviolability of their inheritances. He placed at the head of his domains, in each province, no longer laymen, but ecclesiastics imbued with his own

spirit, from whom he exacted a promise before the tomb of St Peter, that they would manage the patrimony of the Church as the treasury of labourers and the poor. He extended this solicitude even beyond the limits of his own possessions; and it is pleasant to see the head of the universal Church turn from his struggles with Byzantium and the Lombards to take in hand the interest of some obscure husbandmen of the island of Sardinia. "I have learned", he wrote to the Bishop of Cagliari, "that certain laymen, charged with the administration of your patrimony, have committed depredations to the detriment of your peasants, and refused to render an account: it becomes you, after having examined into this with the utmost rigour, to decide, according to the justice of the case, between your peasants and these men, in order to make them if possible disgorge their prey." He was everywhere the man of justice and freedom. It was not alone the interests of the Church, its possessions and vassals, which inspired his zeal. He endeavoured to defend the rights and liberty of all, by the influence of his spiritual authority and the freedom of his pontifical language, against the exactions, the arbitrary violence, and cruelty of the imperial magistrates; and, addressing himself to the ex-consul Leontius, the envoy of the Emperor Maurice, he set down this great principle of Christian policy, always ignored, but always undeniable : "You should watch over the liberty of those whom you judge as over your own; and if you would hinder your superiors from trampling your freedom under foot, know how to honour and guard that of your inferiors."

All who were oppressed, all the victims of power or wickedness, found in him a champion. He interfered indignantly concerning "the atrocious and unheard-of crime" committed by a vassal of the diocese of Messina, in carrying away his godson's young wife to sell her to another: and threatened with canonical punishment not the guilty person only, but the bishop of the diocese who left such attempts unpunished.

It might be said that he anticipated the abolition of slavery in this preamble to an act of enfranchisement. "Since the Redeemer and Creator of the world made Himself incarnate in the form of humanity, in order to break the chain of our slavery by the grace of freedom, and to restore us to our pristine liberty, it is well and wise to restore the benefit of original liberty to men whom nature has made free, and whom the laws of men have bowed under the yoke of servitude. For this reason we make you, Montanus and Thomas, servants of the holy Roman Church, which we also serve with the help of God, free from this day, and Roman citizens, and we make over to you all your stock of money". Even in his theological expositions, in his commentaries on Job, this image of slavery still pursues him : "The penitent sinner here below," says he, "is like a slave who has fled from his master, but who is not yet free: he has deserted his sins by contrition, but he must still fear the chastisement. He will be truly enfranchised, truly free, only in heaven, where he can no longer doubt his pardon, where he shall lose even the recollection of his fault, and where he shall taste the serenity and joy of freedom."

Until this terrible stain of slavery could be entirely effaced in the full light of Christianity, Gregory ordained that every pagan or Jewish slave who desired to become a Christian should be freed at the cost of the Church: above all, he would not suffer Christians to remain the slaves of Jews. When he could not free them otherwise by legal means, he caused them to be redeemed out of the ecclesiastical treasury. However, he checked energetically the rigorous measures and popular violence to which the Jews, in

the midst of newborn Christendom, were already exposed. His conduct and precepts on this subject formed a striking contrast to the odious persecution then inflicted by the intolerant zeal of the new Christians in Gaul and Spain upon the children of Israel. He strictly interdicted the bishops of Arles and Marseilles from baptizing them by force. He obliged the bishops of Terracina, of Palermo, and Cagliari to restore to them the synagogues from which they had been expelled. "It is by gentleness," he wrote to these prelates, "by benevolence and exhortations that we must lead the unbelievers back to unity, lest we alienate by terrors and menaces those whom charitable preaching and the fear of the last judgment shall not have established in the faith. We must use such moderation with them that they will not resist us; but we must never constrain them against their will, since it is written, 'Offer yourselves a willing sacrifice'."

It may be affirmed that this sentiment of intelligent and liberal charity was the leading principle of his generous efforts to root out the remains of paganism, as well as those of heresy and schism, from the countries where his authority transcended every other. And if he sometimes appears to derogate from this by rigorous measures, which we lament to find in the history of so noble a life, it must be acknowledged that these fell always far short of the severity authorised by the laws and manners of his time. Thus it is lamentable to see him lend his authority to the corporal punishment of the Barbariclaus, a pagan tribe from Africa, whom the Vandals had left in the island of Sardinia; and elsewhere to enjoin, now that a higher rate of taxes should be exacted from the pagans who refused to be converted, and now that the Jews should be allured to baptism by the bait of taking off a third from the rent of their farms.

For this proceeding he gave the melancholy reason which has since served other proselytisers : "If they are not sincerely converted themselves, their children at least will be baptized with better will." But even this was an improvement upon the custom of judges and even bishops, who made the peasants pay for permission to worship their gods, and even continued to extort that tribute after these pagans had been converted. He was careful to interdict all vexatious taxes imposed upon old or new Catholics under pretence of heresy, and every kind of violence against schismatics, however obstinate. He succeeded, notwithstanding, in destroying in Africa the heresy of the Donatists, which had lasted nearly two centuries, and which had consumed the strength of St. Augustine: he proceeded in this matter with as much prudence as energy, respecting the ancient customs which were not contrary to the Catholic faith, and refusing to approve of the too rigorous measures decreed by the Council of Carthage against all bishops who did not pursue the heretics with sufficient ardour. After this council, held in 594, the Donatists disappear from history.

He had also the good fortune to terminate the schism of Aquileia, which had for half a century separated from the body of the Church the bishops of Venetia and Istria, obstinate defenders of the three chapters condemned at the fifth general council; and although this schism was founded upon a sort of insurrection of Latin or Italian feeling against the intemperate interference of the Eastern emperors on theological questions, Gregory had specially to contend with the artifices used by Byzantine agents to keep up that division.

The services which he rendered to the Liturgy are well known. In that particular, no pope has equalled him. Completing and putting in order the work of his predecessors, he gave its definitive form to the holy sacrifice of the mass, and the worship of the Roman Church, in that celebrated Sacramentary which, retouched and added to during following ages, remains the most august monument of liturgical science. It may also be said that he created, and by anticipation saved, Christian art, by fixing, long before the persecution of the iconoclasts made that the duty of the Church, the true doctrine respecting the worship of images, in that fine letter to the Bishop of Marseilles, in which he reproves him for having, in the excess of his zeal against idolatry, broken the statues of the saints, and reminds him that through all antiquity the history of the saints has been represented in pictures; that painting is to the ignorant what writing is to those who can read, and that images are principally useful to the poor.

But his name is specially associated, in the history of Catholic worship, with that branch of religious art which is identified with worship itself, and which is of the utmost moment to the piety as to the innocent joy of the Christian people.

The name of the Gregorian Chant reminds us of his solicitude for collecting the ancient melodies of the Church, in order to subject them to the rules of harmony, and to arrange them according to the requirements of divine worship. He had the glory of giving to ecclesiastical music that sweet and solemn, and, at the same time, popular and durable character, which has descended through ages, and to which we must always return after the most prolonged aberrations of frivolity and innovation. He made out himself, in his Antiphonary, the collection of ancient and new chants; he composed the texts and music of several hymns which are still used by the Church; he established at Rome the celebrated school of religious music, to which Gaul, Germany, England, all the Christian nations, came in turn, trying with more or less success to assimilate their voices to the purity of Italian modulations. A pleasant legend, much esteemed in the middle ages, shows the great effect which the services of Gregory had produced on all nations. According to this tale, it was in considering the fascination exercised by profane music, that he was led to inquire whether he could not, like David, consecrate music to the service of God. And as he dreamt of this subject one night, he had a vision in which the Church appeared to him under the form of a muse, magnificently adorned, who, while she wrote her songs, gathered all her children under the folds of her mantle; and upon this mantle was written the whole art of music, with all the forms of its tones, notes, and names, and various measures and symphonies. The pope prayed God to give him the power of recollecting all that he saw; and after he awoke, a dove appeared, who dictated to him the musical compositions with which he has enriched the Church.

A more authentic memorial is that of the little chamber which he occupied in the school of music, which he had established near the Lateran, and where, three centuries after his death, the bed upon which he reclined while singing was still to be seen, and the whip with which he corrected the children, whose musical education he thus watched over.

Must we now condescend to refute, after the example of many other writers, the calumnious accusations brought against Gregory by blind enemies, and sometimes by imprudent admirers, on the subject of his supposed contempt for literature and science?

He is accused of having destroyed the ancient monuments of Rome, burnt the Palatine library, destroyed the writings of Cicero and Titus Livius, expelled the mathematicians from Rome, and reprimanded Bishop Didier of Vienne for teaching grammar to children. None of these imputations, except the last, is founded upon any authority earlier than the twelfth century. The most authentic evidence, on the contrary, exhibits him to us as educated in the schools, as nourished by the wise discipline of ancient Rome, and surrounded by the most learned priests and monks of his time, making the seven liberal arts, as his biographer says, noble pillars of the portico of the apostolical chair.

His contemporary, Gregory of Tours, who visited him in Rome, says of him, that he was unequalled for grammar, dialectics, and rhetoric. He had, doubtless, made many efforts to root out paganism, which perpetuated itself in the literary tastes and popular habits of that Italy, where a short time before St. Benedict had found a temple of Apollo upon the summit of Monte Cassino. He disapproved of bestowing exclusive attention upon mythological subjects, but never either wrote or commanded anything against the study of humane or classical literature. He has, on the contrary, proved at length that this study was a useful preparation and indispensable help to the understanding of sacred literature. He regarded the disgust of certain Christians for literary studies as a temptation of the devil, and added: "The devils know well that the knowledge of profane literature helps us to understand sacred literature. In dissuading us from this study, they act as the Philistines did, when they interdicted the Israelites from making swords or lances, and obliged that nation to come to them for the sharpening of their axes and ploughshares."

He reproved the Bishop of Vienne only for devoting himself to reading and teaching the profane poets, to the prejudice of the dignity of his charge, and represented to him that the praises of Jupiter did not come fitly from the same lips which uttered those of Jesus Christ. It is by an exaggeration of humility that, in the dedication of his book upon Job, he shows a scorn of grammar and barbarity of language which is nowhere to be found in his writings. He certainly did not write the Latin of Cicero or even of Tacitus, but he contributed as much as St. Augustine to form the new Latin, the Christian Latin, destined to become the language of the pulpit and the school, and from which all our modern languages have proceeded.

It cannot be expected that we should examine, even passingly, the writings of St. Gregory the Great. They largely contributed to procure him this surname; which implies that they are equal to his glory, and have largely contributed to the happy influence of his genius upon the destinies of the Church.

In an age when everything seemed giving way, and in which it was necessary to struggle, not only against the quibbles of heresy, but especially against exhausted courage, the despair of the vanquished, and the savage pride of the conquerors, he concerns himself less with the necessities of the intellect than with the purification and elevation of the human will. Many of the Fathers of the Church have surpassed him in style and eloquence; his style is too redundant, too evidently marked by the rhetorical habits of a declining age; but no man ever understood the human soul better, analysed more closely its miseries and necessities, or indicated with greater clearness and energy



the remedy for these evils. No one has spoken or written with an austerity greater or better acknowledged by posterity; no one has so completely set forth the constitution and doctrine of the Church. We have already spoken of his Sacramentary, which determined the chants, the language and the form of the liturgy, and also of his *Dialogues*, which have been the model of the hagiography of the middle ages. Let us further refer to his Pastoral, in which he has collected the rules which should regulate the vocation, life, and doctrine of pastors, and where he mingles his instructions with touching and noble reflections upon his own infirmity. It has been said with justice that this book gave form and life to the entire hierarchical body, and made the bishops who have made modern nations. Then came his admirable works upon Holy Scripture ; and above all, the thirty-five books of *Moralia*, or commentaries on the Book of Job, begun at Constantinople before his election, and continued during his pontificate, which popularised the secrets of asceticism by developing the loftiest traditions of Biblical interpretation, and were worthy of becoming, through all the middle ages, the text-book of moral theology. In our own days, the portion of his works which is read with greatest interest are his thirteen volumes of Epistles, the collection of that immense correspondence by which he conducted, day by day, and according to the necessities of the time, the usual legislation of the Church, in which his unwearied eye visited from Ireland to Caucasus the furthest corners of the Christian world, and in which he has traced at the same time a living picture of his own age, and the annals of that great government of souls, and even of temporal interests, which he exercised with so much justice, prudence, activity, wisdom, and compassion.

He was, besides, an eloquent and unwearied preacher, and esteemed it of the highest importance that this duty should be fulfilled by other bishops as it was by himself. He devoted himself to this without intermission, even in the most serious difficulties of his charge. He was prone to deride those sacred orators who sometimes did not speak enough, and sometimes spoke too much ; wordy in superfluous matters, mute in things necessary. His twenty-two homilies on Ezekiel were delivered by him before the people, as has been formerly mentioned, during the siege of Rome by the Lombards. Of his forty homilies upon the Gospel, twenty were preached by himself, and the other twenty were read to the people by a notary, in consequence of the personal sufferings which prevented him from ascending the pulpit.

A theologian, a philosopher, and an orator, he is worthy of taking his place by that triple title, in the veneration of Christendom, beside Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome, to be ranked with them among the four great doctors of the Western Church, and to take his place thus in the first rank of that order of which he himself has said: "In Ecclesia ordo doctorum quasi rex praesidet, quem fidelium suorum turba circumstat."

He would never have judged himself worthy of such an honour, for he despised his own works. He composed his *Morals* only at the entreaty of his friend St. Leander, and before sending him the work which was dedicated to him, desired to submit it to the judgment of the various monasteries in Rome. He did not suppose it adapted to become a means of instruction to the Christian world, and was distressed that, in his lifetime, a bishop had read it in public. "So long as I live, I desire, if I succeed in saying something that is good, that men should not know of it." We recognise the humility of the pontiff in



the tale which informs us how, seeing a Persian abbot prostrate himself at his feet, he himself knelt before the Oriental to prevent such a homage.

His humility as a monk should be also acknowledged here; which reminds us that it is our special business to show the monk in the great pope, of whom we have, perhaps, spoken at too great length. In his public life, in his immortal reign, and especially in his writings, everything bears the ineffaceable impression of his monastic education and spirit. It only remains for us to tell what he did to regulate and increase the progress of the order of which he was, after St. Benedict, the principal ornament, the second legislator, and, according to some, the true founder in the West.

Of the services rendered to his order by the first monk who was raised to the papacy, that biography of the holy patriarch which is contained in the second book of the Dialogues, and which no one since then has ever undertaken to do over again, must hold the highest place. But he did still more in completing and sanctioning the rule of Benedict by the supreme authority of the apostolical see. In the Council of Rome in 595, he solemnly approved and confirmed this rule. In the Council of 601, he gave a constitution destined to establish and guarantee the freedom of the monks. This decree commences thus : “The charge which we formerly filled as head of a monastery, has taught us how necessary it is to provide for the tranquillity and security of the monks; and as we know that most of them have had to suffer much oppression and injustice at the hands of the bishops, it concerns our fraternal feeling to provide for their future repose.” Then, in the name of Jesus Christ and St. Peter, he interdicts bishops as well as secular persons from diminishing the property, revenues, or titles of monasteries. He ordains that disputes relative to the land claimed in the name of episcopal churches should be decided by the abbots or other arbitrators fearing God. He arranges that after the death of every abbot, his successor should be chosen by the free and unanimous consent of the community, and drawn from its own bosom; that once elected and ordained without fraud or bribery, the abbot could only be deprived of the government of the monastery for crimes provided for by the canons. No monk could be taken from his monastery to be employed in the duties of the secular clergy. Monks ordained priests by the consent of the abbot must leave the monastery. The bishops are further forbidden to proceed with inventories of monastic goods after the death of the abbot, to celebrate public masses in the churches of the monks, drawing the crowd and women there, as also from erecting their own pulpit, or exercising the slightest authority there, except at the desire of the abbot. We desire, said the pope in concluding the proclamation of his decree, that this passage written by us should be always and inviolably observed by the bishops, in order that the monks may not be turned aside from divine service by any trouble or vexation on the part of ecclesiastics or secular persons. All the bishops present at the council answered: “We rejoice in the freedom of the monks, and confirm all that your holiness ordains.” And all signed, to the number of twenty, with fourteen cardinal priests, and four deacons of the Roman Church.

Amid the disorders and conflicts which agitated the Church and wasted Christendom, the work of St. Benedict was thus invested with the highest sanction existing upon earth. The free choice of its chiefs, and the inviolability of its property, the two fundamental principles of every independent and regular society, were guaranteed

to the monastic order by the most solemn act, emanating from a pope who remembered, and considered himself honoured in remembering, that he had been a monk.

Along with this general liberty assured to the entire order, Gregory had conceded analogous and special privileges to several monasteries. He may be regarded as the principal author of what has since been called *exemptions*. In releasing the great communities of Gaul and Italy in various essential points from episcopal jurisdiction, he evidently had in view only to fortify them in spiritual life, and to form so many centres of energetic resistance against the disorders which the different invasions and struggles of diverse races among themselves had made frequent in the ranks of the secular clergy. He said expressly to a community at Rimini, in conferring upon it the exemption it solicited: “You must now all the more be occupied with the work of God, all the more assiduous in prayer, for otherwise you should appear not to have sought greater security for your orisons, but only, which God forbid! to secure your laxness from episcopal severity”.

It was also with this aim that he endeavoured to enforce a rigorous distinction between the ecclesiastical condition and monastic life, a distinction which completely disappeared in after times. He would not suffer either a priest or a deacon to become an abbot, or even a mere monk, unless he gave up his clerical functions; for, said he, “there are some who, feigning to live as monks, are ambitious of being placed at the head of monasteries, which they destroy by their manner of life.” He was very willing that there should be monks in the priesthood to celebrate mass in the communities; above all, he had no intention of interdicting the elevation of monks to sacerdotal or episcopal dignity, of which there were several instances under his pontificate. But every monk called to an ecclesiastical office or benefice was to leave his monastery, never to return. They had to choose between the clerical office and monastic life; for, according to Gregory, each of these vocations is so great in itself, that no man can acquit himself in it worthily; and far from being able to exercise them together, they mutually injure each other. The experience of Catholic ages has corrected upon that point the pious foresight of Gregory : and even in his own lifetime the new sees established in England by his disciples were filled only by monks.

If the experience of monastic life which he had acquired as an abbot helped him to use his authority as pope to promote the peace and freedom of the monks—if he everywhere displayed a constant and efficient solicitude for the consolidation of the order—he always insisted at the same time upon the maintenance and establishment of the strictest discipline. At the time of his advent to the Holy See that discipline was already much relaxed. Monks wandered here and there, some expelled from their asylums by the Lombards, some voluntary deserters from a retirement which they had left in consequence of the too severe authority of one abbot, or the contagious laxness of another. The spirit of the world, the desire of property, the habit of rebellion or license, penetrated into the cloisters which still remained standing and inhabited. Gregory devoted himself to the work of monastic reform, and succeeded in it. He invited the assistance sometimes of the abbots themselves, sometimes of the bishops, and still more frequently of the de/en- sores, procurators or syndics of the Roman Church, whom he maintained in every province. He deposed without pity all the abbots who lived an irregular life. He forbade the bishops to afford shelter to rebellious or vagabond monks,

or those who were excommunicated by their abbots. He would not have the Religious wander over the country or from one house to another. To deprive both abbots and monks of all pretext for leaving their monastery, he ordained that each should have a secular and paid procurator. He watched especially over the strict observance of monastic continence, to such an extent that monasteries of the two sexes were withdrawn to a distance from each other, and women were rigorously forbidden to enter, upon any pretext whatever, into communities of men. In the islands of the Italian coast, already peopled with monks, and to which the inhabitants of Campania fleeing from the Barbarians had found a refuge, he commanded the rector of the pontifical patrimony to remove all the women.

He was specially desirous to seek out and shut up those monks who had left their communities in order to marry, and against whom the Council of Chalcedon had pronounced excommunication. But even in applying these austere laws, the tender charity and amiable cordiality which distinguished his character always reappeared. A patrician of Syracuse, named Venantius, a great friend of Gregory, became a monk like him; but was afterwards disgusted with monastic life, and married. When Gregory became pope, one of his first cares was to recall himself to the recollection of his old friend, in order to enlighten him upon the seriousness of his condition. "Many fools believed," he wrote to him, "that when I became a bishop I should cease to see you or address you by letter: but it shall not be so, for my charge itself forbids me to be silent ... I will speak to you whether it pleases you or not, ... because I desire above all either to save you, or at least not to be responsible for your loss. You know what habit you have worn, and into what an abyss you have fallen ... If Ananias merited the death you know of, for having stolen from God the pieces of money which he had offered to Him, think what you should merit who have stolen away from God not money, but yourself, after having dedicated yourself to Him under the monastic habit. I know well that as soon as my letter arrives, you will assemble your friends and literary clients, and consult upon this vital question those who have abetted your death. These people, like those who led you to crime, tell you only what will please you, because they love not yourself but what you have. If you need a counsellor take me, I beseech you. No one could be more faithful, for it is you I love, and not your fortune. May Almighty God teach your heart to understand how much my heart loves and embraces you in everything that does not offend divine grace. And if you believe that I love you, come to the threshold of the apostles, and make use of me as your adviser. If you distrust the excess of my zeal, I offer you the advice of the whole Church, and I will willingly subscribe to whatever they decide by common accord." Venantius was deaf to the voice of the pontiff Gregory notwithstanding remained his friend; he continued to write to him and also to his wife. Ten years later, when they were both old and sick, he returned to the affectionate eloquence of his first exhortations. He entreated the Bishop of Syracuse to neglect no means of leading Venantius, now a widower, to take again, if only on his deathbed, the monastic habit; and after the death of his friend he took under his special protection the two daughters whom he had left exposed to all kinds of dangers. The pope interested himself with his usual zeal in their fate and fortune; he wrote to them himself, engaged them to come to Rome to be near him, and was as a father to these orphans, whom he always called his dearest *daughters*.

He took an equal interest in the discipline and prosperity of female convents. The three sisters of his father had been nuns, and this domestic tie naturally increased his interest and enlightened his vigilance in respect to communities of virgins consecrated to God. A decree of his predecessor, Leo I, in conformity with several ancient councils, and confirmed by a law of the Emperor Majorian in 458, had ordained that nuns should not receive the veil and the solemn benediction without a novitiate which lasted up to their fortieth year. Gregory ordained that the abbesses, chosen by the communities, should be at least sixty, and should possess an irreproachable reputation. His paternal generosity provided for the necessities of the nuns who had taken refuge at Rome from the ruined monasteries of Italy, to the number of three thousand, and who suffered much from the cold during the hard winter of 597, leading all the while a most edifying life. "Rome owes to their prayers, their tears, and fasts," he wrote to the sister of the Emperor Maurice, "its deliverance from the swords of the Lombards."

It has been already seen with what rigour he pursued, as abbot, among the Religious, that offence which monastic phraseology called *péculiarité*, or the vice of personal property. As pope, he displayed the same severity. He refused to confirm the election of an abbot whom he knew to be stained with this vice. "I know that he loves property," he wrote, "which shows that he has not the heart of a monk. If this love existed among us, there would be neither concord nor charity. What is monastic life, if not contempt of the world? and how can we say that we despise the world if we seek it again?". The monks were debarred from making wills, as well as from possessing property of their own. In a council held at Rome in 600, the abbot Probus, who had succeeded Gregory as superior of the monastery of St. Andrea, obtained, by special grace, the power of making his will in favour of his son, and that only in consequence of the pope's declaration that, being a mere recluse, he had been, in spite of himself, made abbot of a monastery in which he was not even a monk, without time being given him to dispose of his possessions before entering.

The legitimacy and sincerity of religious vocations was still further the object of Gregory's special vigilance. It is evident from his writings that he had particularly studied the conditions proper to enlighten and decide Christians upon their spiritual vocation. In religious life itself, he would have none give himself up to a life of contemplation until he had been long and seriously tried in active life. "In order," he said, "to attain the citadel of contemplation, you must begin by exercising yourself in the field of labour." He insists at length upon the dangers of contemplative life for unquiet and presumptuous minds, who run the risk, by pride, of aspiring to surpass the powers of intellect, and of leading the weak astray, while they wandered astray themselves. "Whoever," he adds, "would devote himself to contemplation ought necessarily to examine himself thoroughly, to ascertain to what point he can love. For it is love which is the lever of the soul. This alone can raise it up, and, snatching it from the world, give it full power of wing, and make it soar into the skies."

This intelligent study of the moral and internal life of the Religious rendered him only more attentive to the means by which the always increasing population of the monasteries was kept up. He enjoined a married man, who had become a monk in a Sicilian convent without the consent and simultaneous conversion of his wife, to return to her, marking thus, in his letter, the difference between divine and human laws

concerning the indissolubility of marriage. He forbade the superiors to give the monks the tonsure—that is, to receive them finally into the monastic order—before they had proved their conversion by a two years' novitiate: this was a year more than St. Benedict had fixed. He was especially desirous that this serious novitiate, during which the lay dress was still worn, should try the disposition of the multitude of laymen, and above all, of slaves, belonging either to the Church or to secular masters, who sought an asylum in the monasteries, in order to change human servitude for the service of God. In the preamble of the decree which dealt with this matter in the Council at Rome in 595, it is said, "If we allow this to go on, all the lands of the Church will be abandoned; and if we repulse them without examination, we take away something from God who has given us all. It is necessary, then, that he who would give himself to God should first be tried in his secular dress, in order that, if his conduct shows the sincerity of his desire, he may be freed from the servitude of man to embrace a more rigorous service." Slaves could become monks, according to a law of Justinian, without the consent of their masters, but had to be enfranchised by payment of their value: the slave who had become a monk, and showed himself unfaithful to his new vocation, ran the risk of being sent back to his former master.

In all this vast correspondence, by which Gregory in a manner took possession of the West for the papacy, I know not a more touching letter than one which he addressed to the sub-deacon of the Roman Church in Campania, on the subject of a young slave who was desirous of becoming a nun. "I understand that the *defensor* Felix possesses a young woman called Catella, who seeks with tears and vehement desire to take the veil, but whose master will not permit her to assume it. Now, I desire that you go to Felix and demand of him the soul of this girl: you shall pay him the price he wants, and send her here under the charge of competent persons, who will conduct her to a monastery. And do it speedily, that your delay may not put this soul in danger."

His exertions for the propagation of the Benedictine order were powerful and perpetual. He devoted a portion of the patrimony of the Church to found new monasteries in Italy. He erected the earliest religious houses in the island of Corsica. He confided to the monks the guardianship and service of several ancient churches, like that of St. Pancratius at Rome, and especially that of St. Apollinaris or Clause, near Ravenna, a celebrated and sumptuous basilica, built by Justinian at the capital of the Byzantine and Ostrogoth government in Italy, upon the site chosen by Augustus as a port for his fleets in the Adriatic. This new monastery, destined to become one of the principal centres of monastic life in Italy, received from Gregory the most extended privileges, to protect it against the encroachments of the clergy of Ravenna, who were noted for their readiness to invade the neighbouring monasteries. The Archbishop of Ravenna, Marinian, although he had himself been a monk with Gregory, and was his old friend, saw with displeasure that great community exempted from his full jurisdiction, and this was the occasion of one of the disputes which disturbed their old friendship.

These new foundations did not make him forget the old homes of monastic fervour. He congratulated the abbot of Lerins on the satisfactory account which he had transmitted by his legate Augustine, of the regularity and unanimity which still reigned in that famous isle. It is touching to see the apostle of England acting thus as intermediary between the great pope who had issued from the new Benedictine order,



and the most illustrious monastery of ancient Gaul; and we love to learn, by the letter of St. Gregory, that his paternal heart appreciated the alms which came from Lerins in the shape of dishes and spoons sent by the abbot for the service of the poor in Rome.

He extended his protection to the monks in the East as well as in the West. In the beginning of his pontificate, he interfered with energy and perseverance between the patriarch of Constantinople and the abbot of the mountains of Isauria, in Asia Minor, who was accused of heresy, and whom the patriarch had caused to be beaten in one of the churches of the imperial city. Through this prolonged contest, he maintained, with his usual constancy, the observance of canons and the rights of innocence, which were equally outraged by the haughty rival of Roman supremacy. He gave to another abbot of Isauria a grant from the revenues of the Roman Church more considerable than he asked, to relieve the necessities of his distant monastery. He sent beds and clothing to St. John Climachus, abbot of Mount Sinai, for the pilgrims who sought that sanctuary. He sent monks from his own convent in Rome to Jerusalem, to found an hospital there. The rule of St. Benedict, carried thus upon the wings of charity, penetrated into the East, and established itself amid the sons of Basil to await the Crusaders.

In his great correspondence he never ceased to extol and regret monastic life. Overwhelmed with cares, labours, and struggles, his thoughts always returned to the happy days which he had passed under the Benedictine frock. “I sailed before the wind,” he wrote to his friend St. Leander, bishop of Seville, “when I led a tranquil life in the cloister : now the tempest has seized me; I have lost my course; my mind has made shipwreck. Beaten by the waves, I seek the plank of your intercession for me, in order that, not being worthy to return rich with my ship safe and sound into port, I may at least struggle to shore by that plank”. He indemnified himself as he best could, by surrounding himself with his former brethren; and procured a decree for that purpose from the council held at Rome in 595, that the lay and secular officers who rendered private service to the popes should be replaced by clerical attendants, and even by monks chosen with care, to be witnesses of his entire life. With those whom he had thus procured to be the familiar companions of his privacy, he applied himself to follow as far as possible, in his studies, occupations, and daily and nightly prayers, the customs of a monastery; so that the pontifical palace offered a picture of that church of the apostolical times of which monastic life was the most faithful image.

Most of the monks whom he thus associated with his daily labours were drawn from his old monastery of St. Andrea, in the inhabitants of which he had always an affectionate confidence. He promoted several to the episcopate, the most notable of whom were Maximin and Marinian, whom he made archbishops—one in Sicily, the other at Ravenna; and afterwards Augustine, who was the apostle and first metropolitan of England. He loved to employ them as his legates, and to make them his representatives with princes whose alliance he sought in the interests of the Church. Probus, whom we have already mentioned, and who succeeded him as abbot of St. Andrea, established peace between the king of the Lombards and the exarch of Ravenna; and Cyriac, who succeeded Probus in the government of the same abbey, was successively sent, as legate in Sardinia, to preach the faith to the unbelievers, and to Queen Brunehaut in Burgundy, and King Recarede in Spain, to root out simony, and the intrusion of laymen into the episcopate. The pope was not always equally fortunate in



the bestowal of his confidence: witness that Greek monk, Andrew, who served as his interpreter in his correspondence with the Eastern bishops (for Gregory knew no Greek), and who had to be punished for falsifying his translations, and attributing to the pontiff expressions which he had never used.

Surrounded and assisted by his dear companions of old, Gregory brought from his monastery into the exercise of the sovereign pontificate that prodigality of alms and unwearied solicitude for the poor which he had learned and long practised at St. Andrea. He invited twelve poor pilgrims to his table every day, and served them, after having washed their hands or their feet, as he was accustomed to do while an abbot. Every month he distributed to his poor, according to the season, com, wine, cheese, vegetables, fish, and oil; adding perfumes and other more delicate presents for the considerable people of the town, so as to make them regard the Church as the storehouse of the world. He organised the regular service of charity in Rome with wise zeal; and carriages traversed the various quarters and streets daily, carrying help to the sick poor and those who were ashamed to beg; to the latter he sent dishes from his own table, which he blessed for the use of his poor friends, before he touched his own repast. Two centuries after his death, the voluminous list of the poor who shared his alms in Rome, and also in the surrounding towns and on the coast, was still preserved. A beggar having been found dead in a distant quarter of the town, he feared that the unfortunate man had died of famine, and, reproaching himself with having been his murderer, he abstained for several days from celebrating mass.

This spirit, so sensitive to the grief of others, was itself a prey to the most painful infirmities. The gout made the last years of his life a kind of martyrdom. The cry of pain appears in many of his letters. "For nearly two years," he wrote to the patriarch of Alexandria, "I have been imprisoned to my bed by such pangs of gout that I can scarcely rise for two or three hours on great holidays to celebrate solemn mass. And the intensity of the pain compels me immediately to lie down again, that I may be able to endure my torture, by giving free course to my groans ... My illness will neither leave me nor kill me. I entreat your holiness to pray for me, that I may be soon delivered, and receive that freedom which you know, and which is the glory of the children of God". To a pious patrician lady, whom he forbade to call herself his servant, and who suffered from the same malady: "My body," he said, "is wasted as if it was already in the coffin; I cannot leave my bed. If gout can reduce to such a point the corpulent mass you have known me, how shall it fare with your always attenuated frame?" And finally, to his former brother, the Archbishop of Ravenna: "For a long time I have ceased to get up; sometimes I am tortured by the gout, sometimes a kind of burning pain spreads over all my body, and takes all courage from me. I say, in a word, I am infected with this pernicious humour to such an extent, that life is a burden to me, and that I wait for and desire death as the sole remedy. Provided only that my sins, which these pangs ought to purify, be not aggravated by my murmurs!"

His own suffering did not render him less attentive to the misery of his neighbour. From his bed of pain he wrote to the same Marinian, his old friend and companion in monastic life: "A man from Ravenna has plunged me into grief by telling me that you were attacked by blood-spitting. We have consulted all the physicians with the greatest care upon your case, and transmit to you what they say. Silence and repose are

necessary to you above everything; you will scarcely find them in your metropolis. You must come to me before the summer, in order that I, helpless though I am, may specially watch your illness, and be the guardian of your repose, for the doctors say that the danger is specially great in summer. It is very important that you should return to your church cured. And then for myself, who am so near death, if God call me before thee, I would die in thine arms, thou comest, come with few servants, for thou shalt lodge in my palace, and the people of this church will serve thee". "It is fine," says one of our contemporaries who knows the secrets of sanctity and charity, "to see an existence so short and troubled suffice for such works. We love to find human weakness in great men. Antique heroism is made of marble and bronze; we admire, but we do not imitate it. But Christianity has put the souls of heroes in hearts of flesh. It destroys nothing of the innocent weakness of nature; it finds its strength there. We are not made of stone." Amid these insupportable sufferings, and up to his last moments, he continued with unwearied activity to dictate his correspondence, and to concern himself with the interests of the Church and of monasteries. One of his last epistles was to solicit the punishment of a soldier who had seduced a nun. He died on the 12th March 604, aged nearly fifty-five, in the thirteenth year of his pontificate. He was buried in St. Peter's; and in the epitaph engraved on his tomb, it is said, that "after having conformed all his actions to his doctrine, the consul of God went to enjoy eternal triumph."

He had, like so many other great hearts, to struggle with ingratitude, not only during his life, but after his death. If we may believe his biographer, Rome was afflicted with a great famine under his successor Sabinian, who put an end to the charities which Gregory had granted to the poor, on the plea that there was nothing remaining in the treasury of the Church. The enemies of the deceased pope then excited the people against him, calling him the prodigal and waster of Roman patrimony; and that ungrateful people, whom he had loved and helped so much, began to burn his writings, as if to annihilate or dishonour his memory. But one of the monks who had followed him from the monastery to the pontifical palace, his friend, the deacon Peter, interposed. He represented to the incendiaries that these writings were already spread through the entire world, and that it was, besides, sacrilege to burn the work of a holy doctor, upon whom he swore he had himself seen the Holy Spirit hovering under the form of a dove. And as if to confirm his oath, after having ended his address, he breathed forth his last sigh, a valiant witness of truth and friendship.

Posterity has sufficiently avenged Gregory of that wrong. In him it has recognised a man whose name stands out like a pharos in the night of the past. The highest personification of that papacy which neglected no exertions to save the East, and which vivified the West by delivering it from the Byzantine yoke, is found in him. The judgment of St. Ildefonso, who was almost his contemporary, and who declared that he was greater than Anthony in sanctity, Cyprian in eloquence, and Augustine in knowledge, has been repeated by posterity.

Bossuet has summed up his life with that terseness which includes everything, and which belongs only to himself. "This great pope subdued the Lombards; saved Rome and Italy, though the emperors could give him no assistance; repressed the new-born pride of the patriarchs of Constantinople; enlightened the whole Church by his doctrine;

governed the East and the West with as much vigour as humility; and gave to the world a perfect model of ecclesiastical government”

Let us, however, add and repeat, to justify ourselves for lingering thus upon his pontificate, that he was the restorer of monastic discipline, the protector, propagator, and legislator of the monks of the West; that he had nothing more at heart than the interests of monastic life; finally, that it was the Benedictine order which gave to the Church him whom no one would have hesitated to call the greatest of the popes, had not the same order, five centuries later, produced St. Gregory VII.

The human race, in its weakness and folly, has always decreed the highest place in its admiration to conquerors, governors of nations, and masters of the world, who have done great things, but who have done them only by great means, with a frightful expense of men, money, and falsehood, trampling laws, morality, and sworn faith under foot. A detestable error, which renders the ignorant and innocent involuntary accomplices of all these startling crimes, the applauses of which they echo from one to the other. The merit of success is small when the conqueror shrinks at nothing, and recoils from no sacrifice of life, virtue, or truth. Even in its human aspect, supreme greatness is not there. That consists in working great results by small means, in triumphing over strength by weakness, and specially in surmounting obstacles and vanquishing adversaries with a respect for law, virtue, and truth. This is what Gregory desired and what he accomplished. He is truly Gregory the Great, because he issued irreproachable from numberless and boundless difficulties; because he gave as a foundation to the increasing grandeur of the Holy See, the renown of his virtue, the candour of his innocence, the humble and inexhaustible tenderness of his heart.

### III.

#### The Monks in Spain.

We shall shortly be called upon to exhibit the all-powerful influence of St. Gregory, as pope and monk, upon the great and celebrated island which owes to him its final conversion to the Christian faith; but at present it is fit that we should cast a glance upon another country, the destinies of the Church and monastic order in which are also connected, though less directly, with his memory. Let us cross Spain before we reach England.

During the time of his residence as nuncio at Constantinople, towards the year 580, Gregory, as has been seen, met with a Spanish monk called Leander, who was honoured by the double consecration of the bishopric and exile,

Spain, from the time of the great invasion of the Roman empire by the Germanic races, had been shared among the Sueves, Alans, and Vandals, and had finally fallen into the hands of the Visigoths, who had for two centuries established themselves there, and who were now, by union with the kingdom of the Sueves in 585, its sole masters. These Visigoths were considered the least barbarous of the Barbarians. They certainly could appreciate and respect better than the others the work of Roman and Christian

civilisation, in those regions from whence Seneca and Lucan, Quintillian and Silius, had thrown so much lustre on the decline of Roman literature, and from whence, succeeding many illustrious martyrs, the Fathers of the Council of Elvira, such as the great Bishop Osius, who presided at the Council of Nicaea, had honoured and consoled the Church in her decisive struggles against imperial persecution. But like all the Gothic race, like Theodoric and the other successors of Alaric, the Visigoths had received Christianity only through the channel of Arianism; through their means Spain was now overrun by it. This was the scourge from which she was delivered by the monk of Seville, the friend of Gregory.

However, before the time of Gregory and Leander, and even before St. Benedict, Christian Spain had already become acquainted with the monastic order, and found in it a precious succour against the Arianism of her conquerors. Authorities are not agreed upon the precise date of its introduction into the Iberian peninsula. According to some, it was the African St. Donatus who, flying with seventy monks from the Barbarians, was received in Valentia by a noble lady called Minicea, and founded, with her help, the monastery of Servitanum, the most ancient in Spain. It is certain that every province and canton had soon its monastery. The mountains which stretched from the Pyrenees towards the Ebro, in Biscay and Navarre, were peopled with hermits who gradually adopted a life in common, conforming generally to the rule of St. Benedict. It was professed by St. Emilian, who was one of the most celebrated and popular monks of Spain. At first a shepherd in the mountains of La Rioja, in Aragon, he led his flocks to the wildest gorges, and, charming the solitude by the sounds of his guitar, learned to open his soul to celestial harmonies. He became a hermit, and lived thus for forty years; then he became a monk and abbot, and died a centenarian in 574, after having startled by his miracles and austerities the two nations, the Sueves and Visigoths, who still disputed the possession of the country.

The Sueves, who occupied the entire north-east of Spain, and who were much attached to Arianism, had for their apostle, at the same period, a monk named Martin, born in Hungary, like his famous namesake, St. Martin of Tours. He introduced the rule of St. Benedict into the regions which are now Galicia and the northern part of Portugal. He was himself the abbot of Dumes, at the gates of the metropolitan city of Braga, of which he became bishop, remaining at the same time abbot of his monastery. By his writings, his virtues, and his influence, he led back the greater part of the Sueve nation to Catholic unity, at least for a time, and until the new persecution which preceded the great defeat of Arianism.

But the victory of orthodoxy was final, and the extension of the Benedictine order became a great fact for the Church and Spain, only under the pontificate of Gregory, and by the preponderating influence of an illustrious and holy family, the first glory of which was the monk-bishop Leander.

Born in that Andalusia where the Vandals had fortunately left only their name, Leander was the son of a duke, probably of Greco-Roman race, but whose eldest daughter married Leuvigild, the king of the Visigoths. He embraced monastic life early, and drew from it that spirit of self-devotion and discipline which gained him the honour of exercising supreme influence over the future destiny of his country. He was a monk

at Seville itself, which had been up to that time the capital of the Visigoth kings, and of which he became metropolitan bishop in 579. In that city which was considered the holy city, the Jerusalem of the south of Spain, he formed, under the shadow of his see, a school, which was designed to extend at once the orthodox faith and the study of all the arts and sciences. He himself presided over the exercises of the learned masters and numerous pupils whom he attracted to it. Among these pupils were the two sons of the king, his own nephews, Hermenegild and Recarede. He succeeded in winning over from Arianism the elder of the two, and his example was followed by many others. Hermenegild was confirmed in the faith of Nicaea by his wife Ingonde, a French princess of the orthodox race of Clovis, the daughter of King Sigebert, and of the celebrated Brunehaut, who was herself the daughter of a king of the Visigoths. The young Ingonde resisted heroically the brutal violence which her mother-in-law employed to make her embrace Arianism, and gave thus to her husband an example of that constancy which was afterwards to lead him to martyrdom.

Leuvigild, in transferring the capital of the kingdom of the Visigoths from Seville to Toledo, had associated his eldest son with himself in the government, and assigned him Seville for his residence. But soon persecution arose, and with it civil war. Leuvigild shrank from no means of extending heresy; he gained over even some bishops, and condemned to prison or exile those who, like Leander, resisted his violence. He won about the same time the crown of the Sueves, a nation then scarcely restored to the orthodox faith, and carried persecution and all its terrors among them. The holy abbot Vincent was sacrificed, with twelve of his monks, before the door of his own monastery at Leon, for refusing to deny the divinity of the Son of God, as set forth in the Nicæan creed. His tyranny respected civil liberty no more than liberty of conscience, and the Visigoth nobility no more than the conquered nations; he attacked by persecution, exile, and torture, all the most considerable persons in his kingdom.

Leander, describing the state of his country under the yoke of the persecutor, says, that a man truly free was no longer to be seen, and that, by a just judgment of God, the soil itself, taken from its lawful proprietors, had lost its former fertility. The unnatural father ended by besieging his son in Seville. The young king, made prisoner after a long resistance, and obliged to receive the communion from the hands of an Arian bishop, preferred to die, and was slain in his prison, on Easter eve of the year 586.

The monasteries which already existed in Spain naturally suffered much in that war. In one of these, dedicated to St. Martin, and situated between Sagunto and Carthagera, the monks, on the approach of the royal army, abandoned their old abbot and took flight, with the intention of concealing themselves in an island of the sea. The Goths arrived, and sacked the defenceless monastery, where they found the abbot alone, bowed down by age, but kept erect by virtue, as says Gregory of Tours, to whom we owe the tale. One of them drew his sword to kill the abbot, but, as he was about to strike, fell back and died. At this sight the others fled. Leuvigild himself, when informed of the fact, was touched by it, and ordered the restitution of everything that had been taken from the monastery, thus saved by the courage and sanctity of the old abbot.

It was during this struggle between father and son, which lasted several years, and before he was himself exiled, that Leander was sent by Hermenegild to Constantinople,



to claim the aid of the Byzantine emperors, who had still retained some possessions in Spain, with their garrisons. It was there that the monk-bishop, the envoy of a princely martyr to orthodoxy, met that other monk set apart for the highest destiny, and that one of these tender and strong friendships of which it is pleasant to find so many examples in the lives of the saints, was formed between Gregory and Leander. The brotherly entreaties of Leander induced the holy doctor to undertake the greatest of his works, the Commentary upon Job, which is also called the Moralia of St. Gregory. The intimate and lasting tenderness which united these two great men, and which continued through the premature infirmities of which both were victims, shines through various portions of the correspondence of Gregory, and dictated to him those accents which breathe across so many intervening centuries the immortal perfume of real love. "Absent in the body," wrote the pope to his friend, "you are always present to my eyes, for I bear your lineaments graven on my heart. You can read in your own heart what an ardent thirst I have to see you, for you love me sufficiently for that. What a cruel distance separates us! I send you my books. Read them with care, and then weep over my sins, since I appear to know so well that which I do so ill. My letter is very short; it will show you how much I am overwhelmed by the business and storms of my Church since I write so briefly to him I love most in the world." And later, "I have received your letter, written with the pen of charity. It is in your heart that you have dipped your pen. The wise and worthy men who have heard it read, have been at once moved to the depth of their hearts. Each of them offered you the hand of love; they seemed not only to have heard you, but to see you with the gentleness of your soul. They were all inspired with admiration, and that flame lighted in your hearers demonstrated your own; for no man can light the sacred fire in others without being himself consumed by it."

However, the excess of evil hastened its end, and the Church was about to attain a sudden and complete triumph. The tyrant Leuvigild, the parricide-king, struck by a mortal sickness, was seized with remorse; upon his deathbed he ordained the recall of Leander, and gave him as a guide to his son and successor Recarede, recommending the latter to embrace the Catholic faith. The new king, who had been, like his brother, the pupil of Leander, hastened to obey. He became a Catholic immediately, and undertook the conversion of his people. After long controversies with the Arian clergy, he succeeded in overcoming all resistance, but by discussion, and not by force. Four years after his accession to the throne, having confirmed his reign by brilliant victories over the Franks, he proclaimed, at the third Council of Toledo, the abjuration of Arianism by the united nation of Goths and Sueves. The king there declared that the illustrious nation of Goths, separated up to that time by the perversity of its doctors from the universal Church, returned to unity, and demanded to be instructed in orthodox Catholic doctrine. He placed in the hands of the bishops his profession of faith, written by his own hand, along with that of eight Arian bishops, of his nobility, and of all his people.

Leander, in his capacity of pope's legate, naturally presided at this great assembly, in which sat seventy-eight bishops, and the deliberations of which were eminently assisted by another monk, Eutropius, abbot of that monastery of Servitanum, which was considered the most ancient in Spain. A third monk, John, who had been exiled like Leander, and had consoled his exile by founding a great monastery under the rule of St.

Benedict in Catalonia, recorded the great transformation of which he was witness in a chronicle by which the series of monastic historians was begun in Spain.

Thus was accomplished in the Peninsula, under the auspices of a great pope and a great bishop, both monks and close friends, the triumph of that orthodoxy which found for ten centuries a true champion in the Spanish nation, where, even amid decay and downfall, its instinct and tradition are still preserved.

Leander hastened to announce the triumph of truth, and the thorough conversion of the king, his nephew, to Gregory, who showed himself always affectionately interested in the new conquests of the Church. He recommended Leander to watch attentively over the soul of the prince, lest pride and impurity should come to stain his young orthodoxy. Recarede entered into direct correspondence with the pope. In order to render himself more agreeable to a pontiff who had learnt in the cloister how to govern the Church, he took for his representatives abbots chosen with care from the Spanish monasteries, to whom he intrusted the presents which he intended for Gregory. But they were shipwrecked, and lost everything upon rocks near Marseilles. Recarede was not discouraged, and afterwards sent a golden chalice to the pope, with a letter in semi-barbarous Latin, but full of heart. He entreated the pope, who wrote to so many, to write to him also, and added, "Those who are divided by earth and sea, the grace of Jesus Christ seems often to attract to each other; those who have never seen you rejoice in your fame. Never forget to recommend us to God, I and my people, whom you have seen in your own time gained to Christ: the breadth of the world separates us, but may charity unite us!". Like the Frank kings, Recarede afterwards desired the good offices of the pope with the Byzantine court, in which all the Barbarian princes always saw a reflection of ancient Roman grandeur. Gregory on his side responded to him with affection and in detail: he insisted upon the conditions of eternal salvation, warned him especially against temptations to pride and anger, and proved that the conversion of his people could not have a better guarantee than the humility of his soul and the purity of his life. He sent this answer by his friend the abbot Cyriac, whom he calls the "father of our monastery," and whom he made his legate in Spain, confiding to him the care of proceeding against simony and the intrusion of laymen into the episcopate, as he had already done in France. He sent the pallium on the same occasion to Leander, who preceded his friend to the tomb by some years, dying at the same time as King Recarede in 601. Spain has always honoured in him her doctor and apostle, the principal instrument of her return to Catholic unity.

All his family were associated in this work. His father and mother had been, like himself, exiled for the faith, and died in that exile. His brother Fulgentius, a bishop like himself, shared his combats and his victory. His sister Florentine, embracing monastic life, became the superior of forty convents and a thousand nuns, and by her knowledge, her virtue, and even by her sacred songs, was worthy of taking her place at the head of all the illustrious nuns whom the country of St. Theresa has given to the Church. Leander, who loved her tenderly, wrote for her use a special rule.

"I have considered", he says to her in the preamble of this rule, "dearest sister, what wealth or patrimony I could leave to thee; many fallacious things have occurred to my mind, which I have driven away as troublesome flies are brushed away by the hand.

Of all that I have seen under the sun, there is nothing worthy of thee. It is above the skies that we must seek the true wealth, the gift of holy virginity. ... I am not capable, beloved sister, of extolling it enough. It is an ineffable and hidden gift. What all the saints hope one day to be, what the entire Church expects to become after the resurrection, you are already. You are the fine flour of the body of the Church, and her purest leaven; you are the offering already accepted by God, and consecrated upon His celestial altars. Christ is already thy spouse, thy father, thy friend, thy inheritance, thy ransom, thy Lord, and thy God."

He warns her against all intimacy with lay women, whom he calls syrens and instruments of Satan. He condemns the error of those who believed they could consecrate their virginity to God without shutting themselves up in a monastery, by remaining in their families or in isolated cells, in the midst of cities, among all the cares of domestic life. He affirms that regular monastic life is identically conformed to that which was led by the Apostles. He reminds that daughter of a noble race, that sister and aunt of Visigoth kings, of the obligations imposed upon her by Christian equality, and directs her to regard as her equals even the slaves who, like her, had assumed the veil. "Their birth made them slaves, their profession has made them thy sisters. Let nothing remind them of their ancient servitude. She who combats by thy side for Christ under the banner of virginity should enjoy a liberty equal to thine. In accepting them for thy sisters, thou shalt have them so much the more for servants, that they will obey thee not by the obligation of servitude, but by the freedom of charity. Not that your humility should tempt them to pride. Charity tempers everything, and will conduct you all to the frontier of the same peace, without exalting her who has sacrificed power, and without humiliating her who was born poor or enslaved." It is pleasant to find in that great mind the indications of fraternal affection and domestic recollections. "Seek not," said he, playing upon the name of their mother Turtur, who had also ended her days in the cloister, "to steal away from the roof where the turtle lays her little ones. Thou art the daughter of innocence and candour, thou who hast had the turtle-dove for thy mother. But love still more the Church, that other mystic turtledove, who travails with thee every day for Jesus Christ. Repose thy old age on her bosom, as thou slept of old upon the heart of her who cared for thy infancy. Ah, well-beloved sister, understand the ardent desire which inspires the heart of thy brother to see thee with Christ. Thou art the better part of myself. Woe to me if another take thy crown! Thou art my bulwark with Christ, my cherished pledge, my holy Host, through whom I shall be worthy to issue out of the abyss of my sins".

Florentine had yet another brother younger, but not less illustrious than Leander, who loved her as much, since he has dedicated to her one of the greatest monuments of his genius. Isidore was the last born of that high-destined family. Before succeeding Leander upon the metropolitan see of Seville, he was the pupil of his elder brother, who loved him like a son, but who used him with so much severity that the young Isidore, fearing the energetic and frequent corrections of his brother, fled one day from the school at Seville. After having wandered for some time through the country, exhausted by thirst and fatigue, the child seated himself near a well, and looked with curiosity at the hollows worn in its edge. He asked himself who had done that, when a woman who came to draw water from the well, and who was greatly struck with the beauty and

humble innocence of the scholar, explained to him that the drops of water falling incessantly on the same spot had hollowed the stone. Then the child returned into himself, and thought, that if the hard stone was hollowed thus drop by drop by the water, his mind would also yield to the print of instruction.<sup>4</sup> He returned accordingly to his brother, and completed his education so well, that he was shortly master of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and became the active fellow-labourer of Leander in the work of Arian conversion.

He lived long in a cell where his brother kept him shut up to prevent him from wandering, giving him the most learned masters of the time. It is not absolutely proved that he was a monk, though many have maintained it. But it is difficult to doubt it when we read the Rule which he wrote, in twenty-three chapters, for the use of the Religious of his own country, and which is little more than an extract of the Benedictine Rule, with which his brother Leander had made him familiar.

Curious details upon the means by which the order recruited its ranks from the most various classes, and the lowest conditions of life, are to be found here, as in another of his works upon the *Duty of the Monks*. This information is communicated to us in wise and noble words, which breathe, with more precision and eloquence than anywhere else, the doctrine of the equality of souls before God and the Church, but where we also perceive the curb imposed by justice and reason on the pride of the newly emancipated. "Our holy army," says Isidore, "fills up its ranks not only with freemen, but especially with those of servile condition, who come to seek freedom in the cloister. Men come also from rustic life, from laborious professions, from plebeian labours, and with so much more advantage as they are better inured to labour. It would be a serious fault not to admit them." "We must not inquire", he adds, "whether the novice be rich or poor, bond or free, young or old; neither age nor condition matters among monks; for God has made no difference between the soul of the slave and that of the free man. Many plebeians have exhibited brilliant virtues, and are worthy to be raised above nobles. But let not those who come out of poverty to enter the cloister swell with pride to see themselves the equals of those who appeared to be something in the world. It would be an unworthy thing if, where the rich, giving up all worldly splendour, descend to humility, the poor should allow themselves to rise into arrogance. They ought, on the contrary, to put aside all vanity, to understand humbly their new position, and never to forget their former poverty."

Monk or not, Isidore distinguished himself by his zeal for monastic interests when on the death of Leander he became Bishop of Seville, and the oracle of the Spanish Church. He presided at that Council of Seville which, in 619, pronounced the anathema against bishops or priests who should attempt to disturb or despoil the monasteries.

During the forty years of his episcopate, his knowledge, zeal, and authority consolidated the happy revolution and religious and literary revival of which his brother had been the chief author. He completed the destruction of Arianism, stifled the new heresy of the Acephales, continued, strengthened, and enriched the vast educational work of which Seville was the centre, and which, by means of the fourth Council of Toledo, he extended to all the Episcopal Churches of Spain, prescribing everywhere the study of Greek and Hebrew. He was, besides, the compiler of that Spanish liturgy so

poetic and imposing, which, under the name of Mozarabic, survived the ruin of the Visigoth Church, and was worthy of being resuscitated by the great Ximenes.

A fertile writer, unwearied and profoundly learned, he wrote, among many other works, a history of the Goths, their conquests and government in Spain. He made Aristotle known to the new nations of the West long before the Arabs came to bring him again into fashion. He has preserved to us a multitude of classical fragments which without his care would have perished for ever, by condensing all the knowledge of antiquity and of his own time, the seven liberal arts, philological tradition, medicine, law, natural history, geography, and even the mechanical arts, in that vast encyclopedia which, under the name of a treatise on *Etymology or on The Origin of Things*, was, with the analogous work of the monk Cassiodorus, the school manual of the middle ages. It has been said of him with justice that he was the last philosopher of the ancient world, and the first Christian who arranged for Christians the knowledge of antiquity.

Isidore died in 636; but the light which he had thrown in floods upon Spain and the Church was not extinguished with him. He had numerous disciples, of whom St. Ildefonso was the most illustrious, but among whom we must name, in passing, Braulius, Bishop of Saragossa, who has been characterised as the most eloquent writer of Gothic Spain; and King Sisebut, a learned prince, who had a double merit, according to a Benedictine historian, in his love for literature, as being at once a king and a Goth. Most of the Visigoth kings distinguished themselves by their liberality towards monasteries. The only authentic charter which remains of the Visigothic period, is a donation made in 646, by King Chindaswinde, to the monastery of Compludo. This charter is signed by the king, by the queen Recibergera, by St. Eugene, Archbishop of Toledo, and two other bishops, by five counts, and four abbots, among whom we remark the name of Ildefonso, destined to the highest honour. But the great number of similar donations is proved by the general and official formula on which these acts were modelled, and which French erudition has lately brought to light. The king who would found or endow a community addressed himself to the saint whose relics were to be placed in the new church, and spoke a language which seems to make even these legal forms palpitate with the ardent breath of Spanish faith. "Glorious lord and happy conqueror," he is made to say, "we have decreed that henceforth, in the place where the treasure of your sacred body reposes, there should be a congregation of monks, destined to serve God and honour your memory, according to the custom of the Fathers, who have established the rule of monastic life. We offer to your glorious memory such and such a portion of our patrimony to support the church and its light, its incense and its sacrifices, to supply the regulated food and clothing of the monks, the help of the poor, and that travellers may be received there. We will that this donation, made to efface our sins, should be perpetual; that neither priest nor prelate may have power to alienate it. We warn future abbots, in centuries to come, not to dissolve, by carelessness or irregularity, the bond which we here form. And you who shall reign after us, we adjure you by the empire of the eternal God (and may God deign to preserve the nation and kingdom of the Goths to the end of the world!) take heed that nothing is taken away or mutilated in these oblations, by which we would propitiate God for our own salvation, and that of all the Goths! Glorious martyr, accept this gift, and present it before God." In this formula, as in the Charter of Compludo, appear already those formidable



imprecations, so universal during the middle ages, against the violators and robbers of holy things, which threaten them with the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, and which assign them a place in hell beside Dathan, Abiram, and Judas Iscariot.

The development of the monastic institution kept pace with that of literature and Christian piety, under the influence of the great doctors produced by monastic life in Spain. St. Ildefonso, who signed the Charter of Compludo, in whom Leander and Isidore seemed to live again, and who was the most popular of the Spanish saints, issued like them from the famous school of Seville: but he was also connected with another centre of knowledge and ecclesiastical education created by the monastic spirit. At the gates of Toledo, which, since the union of the whole territory of Spain under the sceptre of the Visigoth kings, had replaced Seville as the capital of the Visigoth kingdom, rose the monastery of Agali, founded in the sixth century. In the following age, it was a nursery of saints and doctors, and the most celebrated abbey of the Peninsula. Six metropolitan bishops of Toledo came from it in succession, and among them Helladius, a young lord of the first nobility, the friend and fellow-student of Leander, who, like him, early renounced the world, and had lived long at Agali, in companionship with the Religious, and was pleased to be employed in carrying faggots to the abbatial oven, a before he himself became a monk. When he became bishop after having been abbot of the monastery, he instituted the great school which his successors vied with each other in developing.

Ildefonso, born at Toledo, of a family allied to the blood-royal, received at first in Seville, for twelve years, the instructions of Isidore, and then, returning to his own birth-place, despite the violent opposition of his family, became a monk at Agali. Another kind of violence, that of the unanimous voice of the people and clergy of Toledo, was needed to draw him from thence, and place him upon the metropolitan see. He too cultivated history and poetry with success; his ascetic writings take an honourable place in the religious literature of the time. But it was his ardent devotion to the holy Virgin, whose perpetual virginity he defended against the heresy of the Helvidians, which gained him the first place in the love and memory of the Spanish people. The miraculous visions which testified the gratitude of Mary for the efforts of his defending zeal, and the relics of them which he left to the church of Toledo, after having warmed the devotion of the Spaniards for their great saint Alonzo, received, a thousand years after his death, a new consecration from the genius of Calderon.

Leander, Isidore, and Ildefonso were the illustrious representatives of intellectual life in a time from which it had almost everywhere disappeared. These laborious, learned, and eloquent ecclesiastics, full of zeal for knowledge and study, as well as for religion, secured in Spain the future existence of Christian literature and literary traditions, which were everywhere else interrupted, or threatened by the storms of invasion, and the establishment of the Barbarians. They made their country the intellectual light of the Christian world in the seventh century.

After them come all the admirable bishops and monks, issued from the blood or spiritual family of these three great men, who were, as they themselves had been, the soul of the famous Councils of Toledo. It is well known that these councils were the strength and glory of Gothic Spain; and that out of their bosom came, purified by the

sacerdotal spirit, that Visigothic legislation which modern knowledge has nobly vindicated, and placed in the first rank of the laws of ancient Christendom, for the boldness, depth, and equity of its views.

Leander and Isidore, the two illustrious brothers, gave to these assemblies the political and legislative character which they retained for a century, and which has fixed upon them the special attention of historians. Doubtless, in the eighteen assemblies held at Toledo, from the conversion of the Visigoths to the conquest of Spain by the Moors, religious matters always occupied the first place. Questions touching doctrine, ecclesiastical hierarchy, and discipline, the independence and regularity of monasteries, the general and detailed aspect of spiritual interests, formed the subject of most of the decisions issued by these Councils. Doubtless, also, the bishops played a preponderating part, by number as by authority. But lords and lay dignitaries figured there also: entering the first time with the king, who almost always took the initiative as regards questions which were to be dealt with, these laymen withdrew with him; but after having left the bishops three days to discuss spiritual affairs alone, they returned to take part in the final deliberations. They were there by virtue of a recognised right: they signed the decrees like the bishops. Besides, the consent of what was then called the people—that is, of all the military nobility of the Gothic nation—seems to have been often asked and expressed to give validity to the decisions of the king, the bishops, and the *proceres*.

Thus constituted, these memorable assemblies exercised power, spiritual and temporal, political and civil, legislative and judiciary, in all its fullness: all the great affairs of the kingdom were discussed there; and this kingdom embraced not only the whole of Spain, which the Visigoths had succeeded in purging from the last vestiges of Greco-Roman power, but also the Narbonnaise, the bishops of which took their places at Toledo with those of the Peninsula. They made laws and kings. They regulated the conditions of the elective monarchy, too often ignored in practice by the sanguinary violence of pretenders, or of successors designated to the throne. And although the accomplished acts which they found it best to sanction had too often substituted violence for right, they always condemned in principle every candidate whose claims were not founded on an election by the nobility and clergy, upon the purity of his Gothic origin, and the uprightness of his character.

After having established that the king was only the representative and delegate of the people, they seem to have accorded to him a kind of counter-advantage, by attributing to his authority a fullness which contrasts with the limitations imposed upon their princes by the traditional freedom of the Germanic races, who were best acquainted with the means of recognising at once the rights of blood, and restraining the exercise of power. But never, it must be acknowledged, has the sovereign power been addressed in language more noble than that of the fourth Council of Toledo, speaking by the mouth of Isidore and his colleagues to King Sisenand and his successors. “You who are actually king, and all you, the princes of the future, we humbly adjure you to be gentle and moderate towards your subjects, to govern with justice and piety the nations which God has confided to you, and thus to pay your debt to Christ who has made you kings. Let none among you decide by himself in causes which concern life or property, but let the crime of the accused be proved in a public sitting with the chiefs of the people, and by an open judgment. Be gentle even in your severity: by means of such

moderation the kings will be content with the people, the people with the kings, and God with both. As for the future kings, this is the sentence we publish concerning them. If anyone among them, in opposition to the laws, for pride or royal pomp, or covetousness, oppresses or vexes his people, may he be accursed by the Lord Christ, and for ever separated from God!"

But the kings, who listened humbly to such lessons, practised them little. The councils were not the less obliged to interfere energetically in order to repress the rapacity of the kings, and the subaltern insolence of certain officers drawn by them from the servile classes. "When," said the Fathers of the eighth council, held in 653, at which the monk Eugenius presided as Bishop of Toledo, and where Ildefonso already sat as abbot of Agali, "when in time past the frightful avidity of the princes has thrown itself upon the goods of the people, and wildly sought to increase its wealth by the tears of its subjects, we have been inspired by a breath from on high, after having granted to the subjects laws of respectful obedience, to put a check also upon the excesses of the princes." And the Fathers of the thirteenth council, in 683, decreed as follows: "We know that many slaves and freedmen, raised by order of the king to palatine offices, and affecting to arrogate to themselves a power which the baseness of their origin interdicts, having become by their new dignity the equals of their lords, have made themselves the murderers of their former masters, even of those who gave them their freedom. Therefore, from this time, we debar any serf or freedman (except those of the treasury) from admission into a palatine office."

Unhappily, the efforts of these assemblies to restrain the excesses of the princes and their servants lacked, like those of the nobles and clergy, a lasting guarantee and sanction. The Goths of Spain, permitting the Roman spirit and manners to gain too rapid a sway over them, gradually lost the traditions of Germanic institutions and liberties. Unaccustomed to those assemblies of free men and that practice of military virtue which were always kept up among the Franks, they knew no way of establishing the necessary counterpoise to the violence of the kings, which ended by overthrowing the monarchy of the Visigoths under the sword of the Arabs.

We can still recognise in their ceaseless but always impotent decrees against the Jews, whom they baptized by force, and furiously pursued even into private and domestic life, that implacable character of Spanish religion which, two centuries before, had disgusted the great soul of St. Martin against the persecutors of the Priscillianists, and which has almost always failed of its aim by exceeding it, as is proved by the important part, more important here than anywhere else, played by Jews, and even by Jewesses, in the history of the middle ages in Spain. By a deplorable inconsistency, these pitiless measures had been preceded by the example of the persuasions employed unaided by King Recarede in the conversion of the Arian priests, by the formal censure of St. Isidore against the proselytising fanaticism of the Visigoth kings, and by that deliverance of the Council of 633, which breathes the intelligent toleration of victorious Christianity: "None can be saved who do not desire it. As man fell by listening of his own will to the serpent, so, upon the call of divine grace, man is saved, and believes only by the voluntary conversion of his own soul. It is not by force but by free will that they can be persuaded to conversion."

It is well known, besides, that most of the laws passed by the Council of Toledo concerning political affairs are embodied in that celebrated code, which, under the name of *Liber* or *Forum Judicum* (in the Castilian language, *Fuero Jueazgo*), is the principal basis of Spanish legislation, and one of the most curious monuments of the legislative history of Christian nations. St. Isidore is believed to have been the first compiler of this record, in which the kings and bishops successively entered, along with the decrees of the councils, the ancient Gothic customs, and some fragments of Roman law. It was reviewed and arranged by order of King Egica in the sixteenth Council of Toledo, in 693. This code survived Gothic Spain; through all the wretchedness of the Arab conquest, and the heroic struggle of the Spanish race against Islamism, its spirit continued to animate the princes and assemblies, and its luminous trace through history has always aided Spanish patriotism in recalling its Christian origin.

The influence of the clergy is visible in the didactic style of its language, and still more in the general spirit of equity which has dictated its principal regulations, in the guarantees granted to slaves, but especially in the penalties, which, different from all other Barbarian codes, attempt to proportion punishment, not to the material injury done or to the rank of the culprit, but to the morality of the act. The fusion of the two races, conquering and conquered, is also made apparent by the absence of all those distinctions of right or penalty which, in the laws of other Germanic nations, marked the different origin of races which inhabited the same country. There is good reason for regretting that this celebrated code was written during an age in which the primitive genius of the Goths was weakened, and in which Roman civilisation had too much effaced the strong individuality of Germanic institutions and national customs. But the old law of the Germans may yet be found in the theory of royal rights, which recognises no other legitimate title of power than that which results from the morality and justice of its possessors. We shall see that theory retain all its force amid the great struggles between the priesthood and the empire, and shall hear, even in the times of Gregory VII, the voice of the bishops and monks apply against the emperors the axiom which the Visigothic code had set forth so energetically: "*Rex eris, si recte fads : si aulem non fads, rex non eris.*"

In 680 the bishops made a singular use of this right of deposition, in the case of the old king Wamba, who, after a glorious reign, being sick and poisoned by a Greek, had received the monastic habit and tonsure from the hands of the archbishop while he was supposed to be in extremity, according to a pious custom of the time, habitual to those who desired to make a public repentance before dying. When he came to himself, he thought himself obliged to ratify the vow which he had appeared to make, and named as his successor Count Erwig, the son of the man who had poisoned him. He entered into a monastery, and lived there seven years, in holy obedience to his new duties; in the meantime, the bishops, met in the twelfth Council of Toledo, relieved his subjects from their oaths of fidelity, and anathematised the enemies of the new king. They afterwards decreed a canon which took into consideration the case of those who, having desired the penitence (that is, the tonsure and monastic habit) while they were in good health, and having received it without asking it during their illness, were desirous of returning to military life under pretence that they could not be bound by a vow which they had not made; their return is formally interdicted, because they are regarded as pledged, like

children who have received baptism without being conscious of it. But the same canon forbids bishops to give the penitence to those who do not ask it, under pain of a year's excommunication. Everything is obscure and strange in this history, which, nevertheless, is too closely connected with monastic annals to be passed in silence. This, however, was not the first time that kings had been obliged to become monks in Spain; a century before, one of the last kings of the Sueves had been made a monk against his will by a usurper: and the latter had been immediately after attacked and overcome by Leovigild, who forced him, in his turn, to enter the cloister, and added the kingdom of the Sueves to that of the Visigoths. But Leovigild was an Arian persecutor, and an orthodox council might have found better examples.

In this very country of the Sueves, during the greater part of the seventh century, the true monastic spirit shed all its lustre in the person of St. Fructuosus. "God created at this time," says a contemporary monk, "two great suns to light these western shores with the rays of that flaming truth which shone from the Apostolic See: the one, Isidore of Seville, relighted among us, by his eloquence, his writings, his wisdom, and active industry, the great light of dogmatic truth issued by the supreme chair of Rome; the other, Fructuosus, by the immaculate innocence of his life, by the spiritual fire of his contemplations, made the virtues of the first Fathers of the desert, and the prodigies of the Thebaid, shine into our hearts". Issued from the blood-royal, and son of a general of the Gothic army, the young Fructuosus, when taken by his father into one of his estates upon the frontiers of Galicia to take account of his flocks, secretly noted in his soul a site for a future monastery in that wild country. His parents being dead, he withdrew, after having studied humane and sacred literature at Palencia, into the desert which he had chosen as a child, and built a monastery, which he endowed with all he had, and where he was shortly joined by a numerous band of monks. But he himself, flying from the renown of his virtue, took refuge in the woods and most precipitous rocks, that he might be forgotten by all. One day while praying in a secluded spot in a forest, a labourer who passed by took him for a fugitive slave, questioned him, and, dissatisfied with his answers, overwhelmed him with blows, and led him by a rope round his neck to a place where he was recognised. Another time, like St. Benedict, he was taken for a wild beast. A hunter, seeing him covered merely with a goat-skin, and prostrated upon the summit of a rock, had aimed an arrow at him, when he perceived, by seeing him lift his hands to heaven, that it was a man occupied in prayer.

On another occasion, a hind, pursued by the huntsman and almost hunted down, threw herself into the folds of the solitary's tunic. He saved her, and took her with him to the monastery; and the story runs that the monk and the wild creature loved each other tenderly. The hind followed him everywhere, slept at the foot of his bed, and bleated incessantly when he was absent. He sent her back more than once into the wood; but she always again found the road to his cell, or the footsteps of her liberator. One day at last she was killed by a young man who had no goodwill to the monks. Fructuosus was absent some days on a journey; on his return he was astonished not to see his hind running to meet him, and when he heard of her death, he was seized with grief, his knees trembled under him, and he threw himself upon the floor of the church. Whether he did this to ask of God the punishment of the cruel man, is not told; but the latter fell sick soon after, and begged the abbot to come to his aid. Fructuosus avenged himself



nobly, and like a Christian : he went to heal the murderer of his hind, and restored him to health of soul as well as to health of body.

It is pleasant to see such gracious and innocent tenderness in times so rude, as well as in those strong souls, born to reign and draw nations after their footsteps. The example of the young Gothic noble, whom love of penitence had driven into solitude, became so contagious, that he had to build other monasteries to receive the immense choir of converts who pressed upon his steps. The number became so great, that the duke of one of the provinces wrote to the king to warn him that if some obstacle was not interposed, the country would be so entirely depopulated, that there would remain nobody to fill up the ranks of the army. The women imitated the men; Fructuosus received one day a letter from a young girl of noble family, named Benedicta, betrothed to a *garding*—that is, to one of the principal officers of the Visigothic court—telling him that she had escaped from her father's house, that she was wandering in the woods not far from the monastery, and begging him to have pity on her as upon a sheep which he must snatch from the fangs of the wolf. He received her, and built for her a little cell in the forest, which shortly became the centre of a community of eighty nuns, where mothers often came with their daughters to consecrate themselves to God. The *garding* endeavoured in vain to recover his betrothed : he compelled the superior of the new monastery to bring to him her who had fled from him : she came, but refused to look at him, and he remained mute in her presence. Then the royal judge said, "Leave her to serve the Lord, and find for yourself another wife."

We cannot record all the marvellous incidents in the life of the monastic patriarch of Lusitania. We can only say that his austerities and endless journeys did not prevent him from cultivating literature, from recommending its study to his monks, nor even from giving himself to poetry; for some of his verses are still extant. In the regulations which he composed for his different houses, we find that they kept great flocks of sheep, the profit of which furnished them with means for the assistance of the poor, for redeeming captives, and exercising hospitality. One monk was specially charged with the superintendence of the shepherds.

Some years before his death Fructuosus was, against his will, elevated to the archiepiscopal see of Braga, by the unanimous suffrages of the tenth Council of Toledo. But he did not cease to practise the rule of monastic life, and to build new monasteries. And soon, thanks to his unwearied activity, he had covered Cantabria and Lusitania with communities of both sexes. He had surveyed all the coasts of Spain from Cape Finisterre to Cape St. Vincent, crossing the embouchure of the rivers which were to be named Douro and Guadalquivir, reaching the promontories, the gulfs, and the islands, even to the spot where Cadiz was to be, and seeking everywhere asylums for prayer and solitude. Thanks to him, the extreme frontier of the West will be guarded by a line of monastic garrisons. The great waves of the ocean rushing from the shores of another hemisphere, from that half of the world still unknown to Christians, will be met by the gaze and the prayers of the monks from the lofty cliffs of the Iberian peninsula. There they shall stand firm, awaiting the Mohammedan invasion; there they shall endure and survive it; there they shall preserve a nucleus of faith and Christian virtue, for those incomparable days when, from those shores freed by unwearied heroism, Spain and

Portugal shall spring forth to discover a new world, and to plant the cross in Africa, in Asia, and in America.

## BOOK VI

### THE MONKS UNDER THE FIRST MEROVINGIANS

#### I.

#### Gaul Conquered by the Franks

We have overstepped the course of time to indicate all that monastic institutions owe to the greatest of popes, and what they became in the Iberian Peninsula under leaders imbued with his spirit. We must now go back a century and cross the Alps and Pyrenees, to concentrate our narrative in Gaul, in that country where Marmoutier, Lerins, Condat, and other great foundations had not exhausted the monastic impulse, and where Providence destined the Benedictine tree to shoot out its most vigorous and productive branches.

In the year of St. Benedict's birth, Clovis began to reign over the Salian Franks, and during the whole lifetime of the patriarch, Gaul, disputed by the Franks against the Goths and Burgundians, gradually yielded to the powerful pressure of the Merovingians and their conquering bands. The evils which accompanied that conquest are known. But the condition to which the rule of Rome had reduced Gaul when the Franks, coming last after so many other Barbarians, took it for their prey, should not be forgotten. Under the emperors, Rome had carried corruption into all the provinces of the world which under the republic she had conquered. Tacitus shows us that every seat of Roman administration was a permanent school of oppression and depravity, where avarice and sensuality reigned always insatiable and unpunished. Of the old Gauls who had overrun Spain, Italy, Greece, and even Asia Minor; who had filled the world with the din of their arms and the terror of their name; who had conquered Rome; whom Rome had afterwards vanquished and enslaved, but whom she had never surpassed nor even equalled in heroism and greatness of soul,—of these men none remained. The tyranny of the Caesars had annihilated them. In vain their sons rose under Augustus, Tiberius, Nero, and Vespasian, protesting thus against the pretended amelioration in the fate of the Roman provinces under the empire. Vainly, from age to age, had Gaul, in despair of regaining her independence, attempted to cheat her misery by imposing Gaulish emperors on Rome. In vain the insurgent and half-Christian Bagaudes had meditated the substitution of a kind of Gaulish Empire in place of the Roman. Ground down by the merciless millstone of the imperial government and taxation, Gaul had lost its nationality, its civil and municipal institutions, its territorial wealth, its ancient Celtic tongue, and even its name, one after the other; its inhabitants were known only under

the name of Romans, a name which for them was the symbol of decrepitude and shame. In place of their ancient national worship—Druidical sacrifices, which were interdicted under pain of death—the hideous idolatry of the Caesars, whom a vile senate declared divine, was imposed upon them. That dauntless courage, which had hitherto pointed them out to the admiration of the world, had disappeared with their liberty. The ruling classes were enslaved and degraded, while the lower ranks of the people had gained nothing: on the contrary, in proportion to the extension of great estates, the husbandmen found their lot aggravated, and the universal servitude weighed upon them with a crushing yoke. The free clients of whom Caesar speaks had disappeared. The Gaulish chiefs, transformed into degenerate patricians, had the vast estates on which they scarcely ever lived cultivated by slaves, like the plantations of our colonies before the emancipation of the negroes. It has been calculated that there scarcely remained, in the time of Constantine, a million of freemen in all that immense region.

The Church alone remained erect, the sole asylum of human dignity and freedom, under this frightful oppression. She alone put some check upon injustice and tyranny, mitigated the overwhelming poverty of the people, encouraged agriculture in her own lands, retained in her bosom the memory and practice of popular election, and assured *Defenders*, in the persons of her bishops, to cities abandoned or ransomed by their magistrates. But her influence, far from being preponderant, could only struggle imperfectly against the universal decay, and had no power to reproduce those civic virtues which were stifled like the free cities under the cosmopolitan despotism of the emperors. Four centuries of Roman government had been enough to divest Gaul of all law and order in civil affairs, as well as of all national and personal independence. How could such a population, debased and exhausted by a rule, the very weakness of which increased its minute and imbecile tyranny, resist the repeated inroads of the Barbarians? The Arverne aristocracy alone, which seemed to be animated still by the spirit of the great Vercingetorix, and which had retained popular sympathy by some unknown means, struggled with the obstinacy of despair against the Visigoths in the first place, and then against the sons of Clovis. Everywhere else the Barbarian domination was accepted as a kind of deliverance.

And indeed it actually was such, for the German nations brought with them that manly energy which the serfs of the empire lacked. Life had everywhere ebbed away; the conquerors brought a new life to the soil which they invaded, as well as to the men whom they incorporated under their victorious sway. All that remained of the nobility of Gaul saw them appear with terror; but what had the rural colonists and humble townspeople to lose by this change of masters? On the contrary, they could only gain by the destruction of that Roman system of taxation, the most rapacious that was ever dreamed of. To take for themselves a portion, the half or a third, of landed property and slaves, as did the Burgundians and Visigoths, but at the same time to exempt the remainder from all those exactions which under the Romans compelled the landowners to abandon all they possessed to the treasury, was to bring an evident and real relief to an insupportable state of things.

As for the Franks, there is no evidence that they ever decreed general confiscations. The discoveries of modern study have proved, on the contrary, that they generally respected the private property of the Gallo-Romans. According to all

appearance, they contented themselves with the lands which were at first conceded to them by the emperors, and with the vast stretches of uncultivated soil abandoned in consequence of the universal impoverishment, which they shared among themselves by lot, and which were called *allodia*, while their kings appropriated the immense estates of the imperial treasury. Let us add, that in expelling the Roman magistrates, they seem to have interfered little with municipal government, but to have left the principal part of it in the hands of the bishops, and we shall be able to conceive how, as the latest of our historians affirms, the mass of the people had more horror for the pedantic and systematic oppression of the empire, than for the brutal and capricious sway of the Barbarians.

Besides, the Romans of the empire, as has been often remarked, carried into Gaul a principle proper to themselves, the fatal principle of the supremacy of cities. The Germans, on the contrary, in their primitive state, knew no life but that of the fields, a rural and sylvan existence. The village was, as it may still be seen in India, the foundations of their national life. In conquering Gaul, they restored life to its plains; they created there the village, the free and rural community, and emancipated them from the sway of towns; they constituted there the most influential element in the new nationality. This preponderance was only more and more manifested and consolidated in proportion as the feudal system developed itself and struck root in the soil.

The Franks conferred, besides, a crowning service on Gaul, which she had looked for in vain from the last emperors. St. Jerome has left us a formidable list of the Barbarian nations which had invaded her lands under imperial rule. "The countries that lie between the Alps and Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the sea, have been devastated by the Quade, the Vandal, the Sarmate, the Alain, the Gepid, the Herule, the Burgonde, the Aleman, and oh supreme calamity! by the Hun." Coming after all these ferocious predecessors, each of whom, except the Burgondes, had only passed through Gaul like a tempest, the Franks debarred from entrance the other pagan nations who pressed upon their steps. They turned against the current by which they had themselves been brought. They made vigorous head against the Alemans, the Saxons, the Slaves, and the Avars, who, but for them, would have crossed the Rhine and invaded Gaul. Becoming Christians, not in a body or all at once in the train of Clovis, as has been erroneously supposed, but very gradually and slowly, they set their face against the enemies of Christendom. They remained, long after their conversion, as wild, fierce, and cruel as before. They were not transformed in a day. Two centuries of fratricidal wars between the Merovingian kings demonstrate this only too clearly, while they also prove the superstitious veneration, the pagan idolatry, which the Franks entertained for that long-haired dynasty, the scions of which they deposed and murdered one by one, but apart from which no one among them had yet dreamt of seeking chiefs of a different race.

Their barbarism cannot be denied; we must not only believe all that historians have said of them, but add that here, as throughout all antiquity, these narratives are far from reaching the full extent of unknown tyranny, unpunished rapine, and unavenged destruction. But we must not believe that the Franks were, as has been assumed, less civilised, less human, and greater oppressors than the other Barbarians. In no point of view do they deserve a lower place than the Visigoths or Burgundians. They had evidently as much inclination and attraction towards the cultivation of the mind and



literature. The chapel which the Merovingian kings instituted in the earliest times of their conversion, with the school which was immediately attached to it, as an inseparable appendage to the royal residence, became soon a nursery of zealous and learned clerks, where the young Frank and Gallo-Roman nobility drew such instruction as was best adapted to their time and habits. The important charges of the Church and court were given to those who had distinguished themselves there. All the biographies of the saints are unanimous in stating this fact; and Gregory of Tours confirms it, by speaking of the palatine erudition as of a kind of ecclesiastical and political novitiate which was in active operation under the grandsons of Clovis.

It is still more certain that the oppression of the Gallo-Romans by the Franks was never systematic, nor so specially cruel and complete, as a theory cleverly upheld in our own days, but contradicted by all contemporary writers, would have it to be. Doubtless, in the north-east district of Gaul, which was the first occupied by the Franks, who were then entirely pagan, the Roman population was cruelly spoiled and maltreated, if not entirely exterminated. But after their conversion, in proportion as they approached the Loire, and especially when they spread themselves to the south of that river, the Gallo-Romans are seen to have preserved all their property, and to have enjoyed absolutely the same rights as their conquerors. Among the Franks, as among the Gauls, poor men, artisans and slaves, are to be seen, as well as rich men and nobles. The nobles of Gaul, and members of those families called senatorial, occupied the same rank as under the Roman Empire, and were associated in the court and military retinue of the Merovingian kings with the *leudes* and *antrustions* of Frankish race. The Gallo-Romans are everywhere found in the highest ranks, not only in the Church, where they had, up to the end of the sixth century, almost exclusive possession of the bishoprics, but among the companions of the king, among the dukes and counts, at the head of armies, and even in the offices of the royal household, which might well have been exclusively reserved for the companions and compatriots of the prince.

It is at the same time necessary to remark the difference established by the Salic law in the rate of compensation due for murders committed upon the Franks and upon the Romans, from which we perceive that the life of a Roman is estimated at half the value only of that of a Frank. Except that single particular, in which the natural pride of the victor manifests itself, no trace of radical distinction is to be found between the conquering and conquered races. The Gallo-Roman retained his private rights, but was subject to the same laws and obtained the same guarantees as the Frank. As for public rights, he was exposed, like the Frank, but not more than he, to the atrocious violences which daily broke out in that society, and which were as often originated by himself as by the Frank or Burgundian. For there were Gallo-Romans as deeply imbued as the Barbarians with that ferocity which is inspired by the possession of uncontrolled wealth and strength. They had their share in almost all the crimes and treacheries which appear in the annals of this unhappy period. It has been said with justice, "The greatest evil of Barbarian government was perhaps the influence of the greedy and corrupt Romans, who insinuated themselves into the confidence of their new masters". It is to them especially that those refinements of debauchery and perfidy, which it is so surprising to find amid the savage brutality of the German tribes, should be attributed. They instructed their conquerors in the art of oppression, and taught them how to degrade

their compatriots, by means which the natural obtuseness of the Goths and Teutons could never have suggested. The Barbarians derived no advantage from their contact with the Roman world, depraved as it was under the empire. They brought with them manly virtues, of which the conquered race had lost even the recollection; but they borrowed, at the same time, abject and contagious vices, of which the Germanic world had no conception. They found Christianity there; but before they yielded to its beneficent influence, they had time to plunge into all the baseness and debauchery of a civilisation corrupted long before it was vanquished. The patriarchal system of government which characterised the ancient Germans, in their relations with their children and slaves as well as with their chiefs, fell into ruin in contact with that contagious depravity.

At a later period, when the Christian spirit had established its empire, and when all the old Roman remains had been absorbed and transformed by the German element under the first Carolingians, the evil lessened, and if it did not disappear completely, all the nations of Christendom at least could constitute themselves under laws and manners which they needed neither to blush for nor to complain of.

But at the period of which we treat nothing could be more sad than the first fusion of Germanic barbarism and Roman corruption. All the excesses of a savage condition were then combined with the vices of a civilisation learnedly depraved. From this perverse and fatal origin flow these revolting abuses of seigniorial right, which, continued and developed by the course of time, debased the feudal system and made it so unpopular. And here we must seek the secret of these monstrous examples of treason and ferocity which appear on almost every page of the narrative of Gregory of Tours, and throw a sanguinary light upon the early pages of our history.

Thence, also, came the attempts of the Merovingian kings to re-establish and aggravate the Roman system of taxation. Sometimes it was the churches from which they exacted the payment of a third of their revenues; sometimes it was the poll-tax which they tried to establish, not, as among the Romans, upon the plebeians without landed property, but upon all, and first on the Franks themselves. But here the old Germanic law took the upper hand. Even in the absence of the national assemblies, which seem to have been suspended during the reign of Clovis and his immediate successors, the resistance was energetic and triumphant. The Merovingian kings had vainly manifested an inclination to imitate the despotism of the Roman emperors, for they had always to reckon with the Frank nobles, who would not renounce the freedom of their ancestors upon soil conquered by themselves, and who, reinforced by the descendants of the old chivalrous races of Gaul, soon formed around the throne an aristocracy at once civil and warlike, free and powerful, as proud of its origin as of its rights, and resolved not to be reduced to the vile level of the Roman senate. According to the old privilege of German freedom, they assumed the right of speaking out on every subject, interfering actively in all public interests, resisting all usurpations, and striking down the guilty. Their superstitious regard for the Merovingian blood, their traditional devotion to the person of the chief, led them to fill domestic offices about the persons of their kings, which among the ancient Romans were reserved for slaves, but which bore no servile character among the German races, and were, on the contrary, the privilege of the principal men of the nation, who were called trusty. But this loyalty did not prevent

them from opposing to the violence of their master other outbreaks of violence not less dreadful, and often not less illegitimate. “Farewell,” said a deputation of Austrasian lords to King Gontran of Burgundy, grandson of Clovis—“farewell, oh king! we take leave of thee, reminding thee that the axe which has broken the head of thy brethren is still bright; and it shall be thy brains next which it will dash out.”

By what prodigious change did these scarcely-baptized Barbarians become the cherished nation of the Church, and the chosen race of Christendom? This will be seen by the following narrative. In the meantime, it must be acknowledged that, by a singular privilege, they were never Arians. They alone, among all the Barbarian conquerors of the empire, never permitted their energy and simplicity to become the victims of that heresy, which exercised an inexplicable ascendancy over all the Germanic tribes, and which, overcome among the old Christians, formed for itself a triumphant asylum among their conquerors. Closing Gaul against the other Barbarians, and assuring Catholic unity within her by pursuing heresy without open persecution, was to render two crowning services to new-born Christendom. South of the Loire, the Catholic population, which was too well aware of the persecutions raised against the orthodox clergy in Spain and Africa by the Arian Barbarians, passionately longed for the government of the Franks. It was for this reason that St. Remy said to the detractors of Clovis, “Much must be pardoned to him who has been the propagator of the faith, and the saviour of provinces.” This explains without justifying those terms of adulation which most of the ecclesiastical writers have addressed to princes whose public and private life was stained with atrocious crimes. Different from the Byzantine emperors, who interposed the authority of the state in spiritual affairs on all occasions, and who believed themselves better theologians than the bishops, they meddled little in theology, and, except in the too numerous cases where they tampered with the freedom of episcopal elections in favour of their domestics or followers, they left the Church entirely independent in matters of faith and discipline. They displayed, also, great liberality to the bishops and monks: they did not content themselves with restoring to the Church all that had been taken from her; they selected from the immense possessions which had become crown-lands by conquest, at the same time as they divided the land into *benefices* for their *trusty* laymen, other vast territories, mostly uncultivated, desert, or covered with inaccessible forests, with which they endowed the principal monasteries erected during the Merovingian period. The great farms, or *towns*, where the Frankish kings held their court, in the centre of agricultural labours, were repeatedly transformed into religious establishments.

And yet they were sad Christians. While they respected the freedom of the Catholic faith, and made external profession of it, they violated without scruple all its precepts, and at the same time the simplest laws of humanity. After having prostrated themselves before the tomb of some holy martyr or confessor, after having distinguished themselves by the choice of an irreproachable bishop, after having listened respectfully to the voice of a pontiff or monk, we see them, sometimes in outbreaks of fury, sometimes by cold-blooded cruelties, give full course to the evil instincts of their savage nature. Their incredible perversity was most apparent in the domestic tragedies, the fratricidal executions and assassinations, of which Clovis gave the first example, and which marked the history of his son and grandson with an ineffaceable stain. Polygamy

and perjury mingled in their daily life with a semi-pagan superstition; and in reading these bloody biographies, scarcely lightened by some transient gleams of faith or humility, it is difficult to believe that, in embracing Christianity, they gave up a single pagan vice or adopted a single Christian virtue.

It was against this barbarity of the soul, far more alarming than grossness and violence of manners, that the Church triumphantly struggled. From the midst of these frightful disorders, of this double current of corruption and ferocity, the pure and resplendent light of Christian sanctity was about to rise. But the secular clergy, itself tainted by the general demoralisation of the two races, was not sufficient for this task. They needed the powerful and soon preponderating assistance of the monastic army. It did not fail: the Church and France owe to it the decisive victory of Christian civilisation over a race much more difficult to subdue than the degenerate subjects of Rome or Byzantium. While the Franks, coming from the north, completed the subjugation of Gaul, the Benedictines were about to approach from the south, and superimpose a pacific and beneficent dominion upon the Germanic Barbarian conquest. The junction and union of these forces, so unequal in their civilising power, were destined to exercise a sovereign influence over the future of our country.

## II.

### Arrival of the Benedictines in Gaul.

The fame of Benedict and his work had not been slow to cross the frontiers of Italy; it resounded specially into Gaul. A year before the death of the patriarch, two envoys arrived at Monte Cassino from the Gallo-Roman prelate, Innocent, Bishop of Mans, who, not content with forty monasteries which had arisen during his episcopacy in the country of the Cenomans, still desired to see his diocese enriched by a colony formed by the disciples of the new legislator of cenobites in Italy. Benedict confided this mission to the dearest and most fervent of his disciples, a young deacon named Maurus, of patrician origin like himself, who had worthily prepared himself for these distant labours by outdoing the austerities of the Rule, and who seemed to be regarded by the whole community as the natural successor of their founder. He gave him four companions (one of whom has written the history of the mission, and bestowed upon him a copy of the Rule, written with his own hand, together with the weights for the bread and the measure for the wine which should be allotted to each monk every day, to serve as unchanging types of that abstinence which was to be one of the strongest points of the new institution.

At the head of this handful of missionaries, who went to sow afar the seed destined to produce so great a harvest, Maurus came down from Monte Cassino, crossed Italy and the Alps, paused at Agaune, the sanctuary which the Burgundian monarch had just raised over the relics of the Theban legion, then went into the Jura to visit the colonies of Condat, and doubtless to make the rule of his master known there. Arrived upon the banks of the Loire, and repulsed by the successor of the bishop who had called him, he stopped in Anjou, which was then governed by a viscount called Floras, in the

name and under the authority of the king of Austrasia, Theodebert, the grandson of Clovis. This viscount offered one of his estates to the disciple of Benedict, that he might establish his colony there, besides giving one of his sons to become a monk, and announcing his own intention of consecrating himself to God. Maurus accepted the gift, but only by a formal donation, and before witnesses; “for,” he said to the Frank lord, “our observances require peace and security above all.” In this estate, bathed by the waters of the Loire, he founded the monastery of Glanfeuil, which afterwards took his own name. The site of this monastery, now lost among the vineyards of Anjou, merits the grateful glance of every traveller who is not insensible to the advantages which flowed from that first Benedictine colony over entire France.

With a touching and legitimate reminiscence of ancient monastic glory, Maurus consecrated one of the four churches or chapels of his new abbey to St. Martin, who had founded, at no great distance and on the banks of the same river, the still celebrated sanctuary of Marmoutier, and another to St. Severin, that Roman monk who, on the banks of the Danube, subdued the ferocity of the Barbarians while he blessed the future of Odoacer. The beloved son of St. Benedict spent forty years at the head of his French colony: he saw as many as a hundred and forty monks officiate there; and when he died, after having lived apart for two years in an isolated cell, to prepare himself in silence for appearing before God, he had dropped into the soil of Gaul a germ which could neither perish nor be exhausted; and which, a thousand years after, was to produce under the very name of the modest founder of Glanfeuil a new efflorescence of monastic genius, destined to become the synonym of laborious learning, and one of the most undisputed glories of France.

A certain obscurity bangs over the early progress of the Benedictine rule in Gaul after the first foundation of St. Maur. We have already pointed out the progress of cenobitical life due to the great schools of Marmoutier, Lerins, and Condat, before the age of St. Benedict. This progress did not diminish after him, since eighty new establishments can be reckoned during the course of the sixth century alone in the valleys of the Saone and Rhone, ninety-four between the Pyrenees and the Loire, fifty-four from the Loire to the Vosges, and ten from the Vosges to the Rhine. This was a renewed and more complete conversion of that great country. Each province by degrees received for its apostles holy monks, who were also often bishops, and who founded at the same time dioceses and monasteries, the latter destined to be citadels and nurseries of the diocesan clergy.

The councils of the Gauls were more and more frequently occupied with questions of monastic discipline, without, however, noting any special congregation. They showed themselves animated by the spirit which dictated the famous canon of the General Council of Chalcedon in 451, in virtue of which monks were placed under the control of bishops. That of Agde, in 511, renewed the prohibition against founding new monasteries without the knowledge of the bishop. Those of Orleans (511, and especially 533), of Epaone (517), and of Arles (558), completely subjected monasteries to the authority and superintendence of the bishops. The abbots could neither be absent nor dispose of any of the property of the community without episcopal permission; once a year they were to wait upon their bishop to receive his advice, and if need were his corrections. The Council held in the Basilica of St. Martin at Tours, in 567, which



quotes Seneca in its fourteenth Canon in favour of the precautions to be taken against the scandal of incontinence, pronounces the penalty of excommunication in Canon XV. against every monk who should marry, and against every judge who should refuse to declare the dissolution of such a marriage. But by the great number of different rules and successive reforms, and still more by the narratives of violence and abuse which Gregory of Tours has honestly transmitted to us, the resistance met with by the Christian ideal of monastic life may well be understood.

How did all these communities, so numerous and diverse, come to recognise the Benedictine Rule as that which was to ensure their existence and prosperity? This can only be discovered in some houses more or less celebrated. It was not the work of one of those sudden, radical, and ephemeral transformations to which modern history has accustomed us; it was the slow and instinctive progress of an institution which sought the conditions of permanent durability. The conquest was made gradually and imperceptibly. But it is undeniable that this progress was universal, despite the formidable rivalry of the Rule of St. Columba; and not less undeniable is the fact, that the mission of St Maurus was the channel by which the sovereign paternity of the Italian legislator extended by degrees to all the monasteries of Gaul.

This mission marks out besides, in history, the first encounter of the Benedictine order with that French monarchy, then only dawning under the shield of Clovis and his descendants, but which we shall see through many centuries the faithful and grateful ally of the sons of St. Benedict. The district of Anjou in which Glanfeuil was situated fell to the lot of that grandson of Clovis, named Theodebert, who reigned at Metz and over Austrasia. It was he from whom the Viscount Florus, according to tradition, had to obtain, first the necessary authority for the establishment of the foreign monks, and then permission to enrol himself among them. This king, celebrated in the history of the Merovingians for his exploits in Aquitaine against the Visigoths, and in Italy against the imperial forces, consented very reluctantly to part with one of his principal officers, and only after having himself visited the new colony. He came with all the pomp which the race of Clovis were so prompt to borrow from the fallen empire; but, clothed in his purple as he was, as soon as he perceived Maur, the Frank king prostrated himself before the Roman monk, as Totila prostrated himself before Benedict, entreating the abbot to pray for him, and to inscribe his name among those of the brethren. He presented his young son to the community, desired that the monks who had come from Monte Cassino with the abbot might be specially pointed out to him, asked their names, and embraced them and also their brethren. Then he surveyed the monastic precincts, ate with the monks in the refectory, and before he went away, desired that the chief of his scribes should make out on the spot, and seal with his ring, the donation of an estate belonging to the crown, which he intended to bestow on the monastery. Florus afterwards obtained the king's consent to witness his profession as a monk. After having added new gifts to his first donation, the viscount freed and portioned twenty of his slaves; then, having laid his military sword-belt on the altar, he knelt before the king, who, at the request of the abbot, cut the first lock of his hair; the tonsure was then completed by the other nobles present. Before leaving the monastery the king desired to see his old friend in the monastic dress; he exhorted him to do honour to that new habit,



as he had done honour to secular life, then threw himself into the arms of Floras and wept there before he withdrew, carrying with him the benediction of the abbot.

Thus the Frank king and the Benedictine became acquainted with each other, and these two forces which were to found France, to direct and represent her during long centuries, stood face to face for the first time.

Admitting even that this tale may have been embellished, in its minute details, by the imagination of after ages, it is worthy of being remembered as a sort of type of those intimate and cordial relations which began to exist from that time between the princes of Germanic race and the monks, and which are to be found almost on every page of their double history.

### III.

#### Previous Relations between the Merovingians and the Monks.

God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.—2 Tin. I. 7.

This was not, however, the first time that the Merovingians had met the monks on their way. By the side of bishops, who personified the gentle and strong majesty of the Church, and whose children the Franks had just declared themselves to be, they had everywhere discovered, sometimes, isolated recluses, sometimes monks living in a community whose strange privations, painful labours, and irreproachable virtues bore eloquent witness to the moral grandeur of Christian doctrines. The life of these kings, divided between war and the chase, brought them perpetually in contact with those whom all the world agreed in calling men of God, whether in the towns and rural districts ravaged by their soldiers, or in the forests haunted by their hounds. In spite of all we have said regarding the strange and hateful mixture of deceit and ferocity, wild incontinence and savage pride, which characterised the Merovingian princes, in spite of the fatal alloy which Gallo-Roman corruption, immediately after their conversion and conquest, added to the traditional barbarity of the race, it is impossible to deny the sincerity of their faith, and the influence which Christian virtue and penitence almost always exercised upon them. They passed with a rapidity which now seems incomprehensible from the atrocious excesses of their native cruelty to passionate demonstrations of contrition and humility. After having directed massacres or executions which rank among the most odious recollections of history, we see them listening with respect, and pardoning without difficulty the warning of a bold chief, or still more frequently of a pontiff or monk. For it was almost always monks or bishops who had been trained in cloistral life, who drew from them, in the name of God, a tardy and incomplete homage to justice and humanity.

Clovis himself paid repeated tribute to these virtues. The foundation of several abbeys has been attributed to him, though without sufficient proof. But one charter of his is received as authentic, in which a profession of his faith in the indivisible and

cosubstantial Trinity, which proves his title to be considered the sole Catholic king existing in Christendom, which was then wasted by Arianism, precedes a grant of land and an exemption from imposts in favour of a monastery near Orleans, which soon became celebrated under the name of Micy, and then of St. Mesmin. This last name was derived from Maximin, one of the leaders of the little colony of Arverne monks, whom Clovis established there under the direction of the holy priest Euspicius, who had gained his heart at the siege of Verdun, by his mission into the besieging camp itself to implore mercy for the Gallo-Roman insurgents in that town. He had given them an estate belonging to the royal fiscus or treasury, situated at the point of the peninsula formed by the Loire and Loiret at the junction of their waters, in order, as his charter states, that these Religious should be no longer strangers and travellers among the Franks.

A legend long popular in Touraine declares the fine abbatial Church of St. Julian, near Tours, to mark the spot where the conqueror of the Visigoths stopped to bestow his alms, when, on horseback and with the crown on his head, he came to offer thanksgivings to St. Martin for his victory at Vouillé.

Another tradition, recorded by Gregory of Tours, shows still better the feeling which consoled and animated the inhabitants of Gaul, when they saw their dreaded conquerors bow before the sanctity of monks of their own race. This tradition relates that, during the march of the army of Clovis across Poitou to encounter Alaric, a band of Franks attacked a monastery, governed by a holy monk named Maxentius, from Agde in Septimania; one of the Barbarians had raised his sword to kill the abbot, when his arm was suddenly paralysed, and his companions were struck with blindness around him. Clovis, when he heard of the miracle, hastened to the monk, and, on his knees, begged mercy for the assassins. The spot where the victor of Syagrius and Alaric knelt before a Gallo-Roman monk, and acknowledged a force more invincible than all the Roman or Barbarian arms, was shown for several centuries in the church of the monastery.

But it was not always with such impunity that the monks were exposed to contact with their ferocious conquerors, and evil often fell upon them while representing religion, with all the benefits and progress that flowed from it, to the eyes of the sanguinary and covetous hordes, whose fury might sometimes be repressed by the power of a Clovis, but whose chiefs were ordinarily the first to give the example of violence. These Franks who were so zealous for orthodoxy, and who boasted of fighting for the Church against the Burgundians and Arian Visigoths, did not hesitate when their passions were inflamed to subject the most orthodox priests and monks to barbarous usage. Thus we see, in one of their invasions of Burgundy, a solitary of the famous monastery of the island Barbe, on the Saone near Lyons, given up to the most cruel tortures by a detachment of Franks who had invaded that sanctuary, called by some the most ancient in Gaul. His name was Leobin, and he had been a shepherd before he became a monk. All the other Religious had fled except himself and another old monk, who, urged by the invaders to show them where the wealth of the monastery was hidden, answered that he did not know, but that Leobin was acquainted with everything. The Franks, finding that Leobin would not answer their questions, put him to the torture with an ingenious cruelty which seems to have been borrowed rather from Oriental than Germanic habits. They tied cords tightly round his head, beat him upon the soles of his feet, plunged him over and over again into the water, drawing him out only when he

was almost suffocated. The courageous monk resisted all these agonies without speaking. Then they left him more dead than alive. He recovered, however, and was called some years after to the episcopal see of Chartres, by Childebert, one of the sons of Clovis, who had himself led the attack to which the pious bishop had all but fallen victim.

Clovis had a sister named Albofled, who, baptized at the same time as himself, had embraced conventual life. She died soon after, and Clovis lamented her so deeply that St Remy had to remind him of the duties of his royal charge. "There is no room," wrote the apostle of the Franks, "for lamenting that sister whose virginal flower spreads forth its perfume in the presence of God, and who has received a celestial crown as the reward of her virginity. My lord, chase this grief from your heart, your kingdom remains to you to be governed. You are the head of nations, and the weight of their government lies upon you."

He had also a daughter called Theodechild, who also, as it is supposed, consecrated her virginity to God. Her existence can be traced only by some scanty lines in the works of Gregory of Tours and the other chronicles of the time. They permit us to salute her in passing as a sweet and consoling apparition amid the horrors and violence of the age in which she lived. She founded near the Gallo-Roman cathedral city of Sens a monastery in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul, in imitation of that which her father and mother had built near Paris, to the south of the Seine, and where St. Genevieve was buried. Theodechild established monks in this foundation, which since took the name of St. Pierre-le-Vif; she chose her burial-place there, after having made a grant to them of all that she had possessed or acquired in France and Aquitaine—that is, on both sides of the Loire. An act of generous pity on the part of the royal foundress worthily inaugurated the annals of this famous monastery. Basolus, who had been named duke of Aquitaine by Gessalic, king of Aquitaine and the Visigoths, was made prisoner by Clovis in a last combat, and was conducted chained to Sens. While his guards led him to the dungeon where he expected to be put to death, he met Theodechild, the daughter of his conqueror, upon his way. She immediately resolved to beg the life and liberty of the captive. Clovis long resisted her entreaties, but yielded at length on condition that the vanquished chief should be sent to the monastery which his daughter had just established, and should have his head shaven and become a monk. Basolus appears to have adopted his new profession willingly, for he gave to St. Peter all the estates he possessed in Auvergne, and thus founded the monastery and town of Hauriac in the mountains of Cantal.

These monasteries of Auvergne and elsewhere where the victors and vanquished often met, were already an asylum for all kinds of unfortunate persons. Gregory of Tours has preserved to us the memory of a young Arverne slave, Portianus, who, flying from the severity of his master, took refuge in a monastery: the Barbarian pursued and seized him, but, being suddenly struck with blindness, restored the fugitive to the sanctuary in order to obtain the cure he desired. The slave became a monk and then abbot, and governed the monastery, from which he came forth one day to confront and reprimand the French king Thierry, son of Clovis, in his destroying march through Auvergne. After his death, the abbey, which his sanctity had made illustrious, took his name, and transmitted it to the existing town of St. Pourçain.

It is to Gregory of Tours again that we owe the knowledge how Thierry, king of Metz, the first-born of Clovis, and chief of these Ripuarian Franks who formed the kingdom of Austrasia, father of that Theodebert who was the protector of St. Maurus, received humbly the free remonstrances which the abbot Nizier addressed to him publicly against the immorality of his life. Far from having any grudge against him, this king elevated him to the episcopal see of Treves. He sent several of his principal officers to the monastery to bring the abbot to Treves. At the last stage from the town, these lords turned their horses loose in the midst of the harvest. At this sight the abbot Nizier said to them indignantly, "Withdraw your horses immediately from the harvest of the poor, or I will excommunicate you." "What!" said the Franks, amazed at the boldness of the monk, "thou art not yet a bishop, and already thou threatenest us with excommunication?" "The king," said the monk, "has brought me from my monastery to make me a bishop: let the will of God be done; but as for the will of the king, it shall not be done when it is set upon evil, at least while I can hinder it." And thereupon he himself drove the horses out of the field which they were destroying. During all his episcopate, King Thierry and his son Theodebert, who were of dissolute habits, like all the Merovingians, had to bear the apostolical zeal of Nizier. He always said, "I am ready to die for justice." He also braved the terrible Clotaire, to whom he refused the sacraments, and whose death alone delivered him from the exile to which he had been sentenced.

Clodimir, king of Orleans, the second of the sons of Clovis, was similarly confronted by the noble form of a monk, Avitus, abbot of that monastery of Micy, in the Orleannais, which his father had founded, who appeared before him when, on the eve of undertaking his second campaign against the Burgundians, he desired to disembarass himself of his prisoner, King Sigismund, who had vainly sought a refuge in his beloved cloister of Agaune. The monk came to remind him of the rights of pity, and to predict the sentence of divine justice. "O king!" said the abbot, "think of God: if thou givest up thy project, if thou art merciful to these captives, God will be with thee, and thou shalt conquer again; but if thou slayest them, thou and thine shall meet the same fate". Clodimir answered, "It is a fool's advice to bid a man leave his enemy behind him". He killed Sigismund, his wife, and two children, and threw them into a well. But the prediction of Avitus was accomplished. Clodimir was vanquished and slain; his head, fixed at the end of a spear, was carried in triumph along the Burgundian ranks. The fate of his children is known; how his brothers Childebert and Clotaire, fortifying themselves by an expression which escaped from their mother Clotilde, who had said that she would rather see her grandchildren dead than *shaven*, massacred the two eldest; and how the third escaped their knife only by receiving the monastic tonsure and the name of St. Cloud, one of the best-known monastic names in our history.

These ferocious assassins nevertheless yielded in their turn to the influence of the lessons and examples given by the monks. Childebert especially would have been the monastic king *par excellence* could we believe all the legends, which probably concentrate in him various anecdotes relative to other princes of the same name or race. Some of these are worthy of recollection from their authentic individual characteristics, or from the light they throw on contemporary history. Such a tale is that which informs us how the first king of Paris, when crossing Berry to meet the Visigoths, paused at the

door of the cell occupied by the monk Eusice, and offered to him fifty pieces of gold. "Why do you give this to me?" said the old recluse; "give it to the poor; it is enough for me to be able to pray to God for my sins. However, march on, you will be victorious, and then you can do all you would." Childebert bent his heavy locks under the hand of the solitary to receive his blessing, and promised, if his prophecy was fulfilled, to return and build him a church. The prediction was fulfilled, and the king kept his promise. After he had defeated the Visigoths and taken Narbonne their capital, he built upon the banks of the Cher, a monastery and church, in which the solitary was buried. This donation was increased by the offering made by the noble Vulfin, one of the principal Franks of the army, who, in the distribution of rewards made by Childebert at the end of his campaign, having asked and obtained a grant of crown lands, or what was already called an honour, upon the same banks of the Cher, hastened to pay this tribute to the holy monk by whose fame he had been fascinated.

This Eusice or Eusitius must have been, according to the evidence of his name, of Roman or Gallo-Roman origin, like all the other monks whom we have noted up to this point; but Childebert entertained friendly relations of the same kind with another monk whose name, Marculph, points him out as a Frank, and who was the first of all the holy monks whose name betrayed that origin. He was of a rich and powerful race established in the country of Bayeux, and the union of the proud independence of the Frank with the rigorous austerity of the monk is everywhere apparent in the narrative of his life. He had devoted the first half of his existence to preaching the faith to the inhabitants of Cotentin; from thence we see him set out, mounted on his ass, to meet King Childebert on the day of a great festival, in the midst of his feudal lords, and asking of him a grant of land on which to build a monastery where the king and the commonwealth of the Franks might be prayed for. It was not the habitual adulation of the Romans of the Lower Empire which he used to gain the monarch's ear. "Mercy and peace to thee, from Jesus Christ," he said, "illustrious prince: thou art seated on the throne of royal majesty, but thou shouldest not forget that thou art mortal, and that pride must not make thee despise thy fellow-creatures. Recall to thy mind that text of the wise man: 'Men have made thee a prince; be not exalted, but be as one of them in the midst of them.' Be just even in thy clemency, and mix pity even with thy justice." Childebert granted his request. But scarcely had he accomplished this first foundation, when, for the better enjoyment of the charms of solitude, Marculph took refuge in an island on the coast of Brittany, inhabited only by a handful of fishers. A numerous band of Saxon pirates having made a descent upon this island, the poor Bretons came trembling and kneeling to the Frank monk. "Be of good courage," he said to them; "if you trust my counsel, take your weapons, march against your enemy, and the God who overthrew Pharaoh will fight for you." They listened to him, put the Saxons to flight, and a second foundation marks the spot of that victory achieved over the piratical pagans by innocence and faith, inspired by the courage of a monk.

These Saxons who troubled the solitude of the holy Marculph in his island had long invaded and sacked Great Britain. To escape from their bloody yoke an army of British monks, guiding an entire tribe of men and women, freemen and slaves, embarked in vessels not made of wood, but of skins sewn together, singing or rather howling, under their full sails, the lamentations of the Psalmist, and came to seek an



asylum in Armorica, and make for themselves another country. This emigration lasted more than a century; and threw a new, but equally Celtic population into that portion of Gaul which Roman taxation and Barbarian invasion had injured least, and where the ancient Celtic worship had retained most vitality.

With the exception of three or four episcopal cities, almost all the Armorican peninsula was still pagan in the sixth century. All the symbols and rites, the myths and arcanas of paganism seemed to be concentrated in that wild and misty country, where the avenues and circles of erect stones, the *dolmens* and *menhirs*, rose, sometimes amid immense forests of oak and holly, or moors covered by impenetrable thickets of furze, sometimes upon the high granite rocks of that coast, rent and hollowed out by the unwearied ocean tides which beat upon it from the north, south, and west. In one of the isles of this extremity of Gaul, Homer and Plutarch have placed the prison where Saturn was held captive by his son Jupiter, under the guard of the giant Briareus. Here too, according to most of the poets, was the dwelling-place of the genii and the heroes, the garden of the Hesperides and the Elysian fields. Elsewhere, but still in the same archipelago of almost inaccessible islands, the Druidesses celebrated at night, and by torchlight, those mysteries, which, like those of Eleusis and Samothrace, were shut out from the approach of man, and filled with terror the soul of the boatman who beheld them from afar. Human sacrifices, and especially those of children, were practised here, as among the Carthaginians, in honour of Saturn. Other priestesses, vowed like the Roman Vestals to perpetual virginity, and, like the German Velleda, invested with the gift of prophecy, raised and calmed the sea at their pleasure, cured diseases, and foretold future events to those who were bold enough to consult them in their island of Sein, situated at the furthest point of Armorica, upon that frightful coast of Cornouaille, bristling with rocks, in that bay which is still called the *Bay of the Dead*, and where popular tradition sees the skeletons of the shipwrecked wandering by night asking a shroud and a grave.

Tradition has never failed to people the coasts of Armorica with phantoms. It was there, according to Claudian, that Ulysses offered libations of blood to the manes of his fathers, troubling the repose of the dead; there that the husbandman hears incessantly the plaintive accents and faint sound made by the manes whose flight agitates the air, and where pale phantoms wander before his terrified eyes.

This tradition lasted till the end of the sixth century, and extended to the extremities of the Roman world. Procopius, the contemporary of the sons of Clovis, narrates that the fishermen who inhabited these coasts had been exempted by the conquering Franks from the payment of tribute, because they were obliged to convey the souls of the defunct to Great Britain. "Towards midnight," says the Byzantine historian, "some one knocks at their door; they are called in a low voice; they rise and hasten to the shore; they find there strange boats, in which they see no one, but which they must row across the sea; and these boats are so full of invisible passengers that they seem ready to sink, and are scarcely a finger-breadth above the level of the water. In less than an hour the journey is accomplished, though in their own boats they could scarcely do it in a night. Arrived at the end, the vessels are so entirely emptied that you can see their keel. All remain invisible; but the sailors hear a voice which calls the

travelling souls one by one, addressing each by the title which it has borne, and adding to this the name of its father, or, if a woman, of her husband.”

Upon this soil, long adopted by legendary poetry as its special possession, a swarm of monastic missionaries descended at the head of a population already Christian. They came to ask shelter from their brethren, issued from the same race and speaking the same language. The leaders of the British monks who disembarked with their army of disciples upon the Armorican shore, undertook to pay for the hospitality they received by the gift of the true faith, and they succeeded. They gave their name and worship to their new country. They preached Christianity in the language common to all the Celtic races, and resembling that which is still spoken by the peasants of Lower Brittany. They implanted in the Armorican Britain, in this Brittany of ours, that faith which remains so firmly rooted there. “The sun”, says a Breton monk of the seventeenth century, apostrophising one of these prophets from beyond the sea, “has never lighted a country where, since you banished idolatry, the true faith has been held with more constant and unchanging faithfulness. For thirteen centuries no kind of infidelity has stained the language by means of which you preached Jesus Christ, and the man has yet to be born who has heard a Breton preach in the Breton tongue any other than the Catholic faith.”

This peaceful conquest was not made without resistance. The British monks encountered enemies upon the soil of Gaul almost as terrible as those from whose persecution they fled. Celtic paganism defended itself desperately. The bards attempted to rouse the people against the strangers who audaciously brought a new religion into the inviolable sanctuary of Druidism. The prophetic menaces launched by one of these poets of the old religion against the new apostles has often been quoted: “A day comes when the men of Christ shall be pursued, when they shall be hunted like deer. They shall die by bands and battalions. Then the mill-wheel shall grind small; the blood of the monks shall serve as water to turn it.”

Thirteen centuries passed before new pagans, a thousand times more atrocious and less excusable than the compatriots of the bard Gwenchlan, appeared to verify that prophecy. But in olden time it seemed to die out under the success and blessings with which the British monks had covered Armorica.

They also carried with them their poetry, which shortly superseded the Druidical poetry, purifying without effacing it. For they also, faithful to the immemorial traditions of the Celtic race, had bards in their ranks. The famous Taliesin, who took the title of prince of the bards, prophets, and Druids of the West, and who is supposed to have been converted by the monk Gildas, accompanied them into Armorica. But bards who have since taken their place among the Saints were pointed out among this number. Such was Sulio, or Ysulio, who, while still a child playing in the gardens of his father, the Lord of Powys, heard monks passing harp in hand, singing the praises of God, and was so fascinated with the beauty of their hymns that he followed them to learn how to compose and sing these noble songs. His brothers hastened to announce his flight to their father, who sent thirty armed men, with orders to slay the abbot and bring back his son. But the child had already gone to Armorica and found refuge in the monastery of which, at a later period, he was prior.

Such was also Herve, whose name ought to take place among the sweetest recollections of Christian poetry. He was the son of the bard Hyvernion, who had appeared among the numerous minstrels whom the Merovingian kings loved to collect round their table. This island bard had charmed King Childebert; “he was,” says the old Breton legend, “so perfect a musician and composer of ballads and songs.” He had come to Armorica to marry a young orphan of Leon, whom an angel had showed him in a dream, saying to him, “You shall meet her tomorrow, upon your way, near the fountain; her name is Kivanonn”. He met her accordingly; she was of the same profession as himself, and sang, “Although I am but a poor flower on the waterside, it is I who am called the Little Queen of the Fountain.” He married her, and of this marriage was born a blind child, whom his parents named Herve (that is, bitter), and who, from the age of seven, went about the country seeking alms and singing the hymns composed by his mother. The blind orphan was afterwards initiated by his uncle into cenobitical life, and was placed at the head of the school adjoining his monastery, where he could put in practice the aphorism which Breton tradition ascribes to him, “It is better to instruct a little child than to gather wealth for him”: and where he taught his pupils songs, of which the modern Breton still retains some trace in the following childish version:—

“Approach, my little children; come and hear a new song which I have composed expressly for you; take pains to remember it entirely”.

“When you awake in your bed, offer your heart to the good God, make the sign of the cross, and say with faith, hope, and love:

“Say: My God, I give thee my heart, my body, and my soul; make me to be a good man, or else to die before my time.

“When you see a raven fly, think that the devil is as black and as wicked; when you see a little white dove fly, think that your angel is as sweet and as white.”

After the conversion of the country, the missionary bishops, compatriots of the father of Herve, would have drawn him from his retreat to confer the priesthood upon him, and to give him a seat in their synods. But he always preferred his little monastery hidden in the woods. Although blind, he had himself been the architect of his little church, the care of which he intrusted to a very young girl, his niece and cousin, educated by his mother, and named Christina, “a Christian in name as in fact”, whom the Breton legend, placing her amid the disciples of the saint, compares to a little white dove among the crows. Three days before his death, when secluded in the church which he had built, he was thrown into an ecstasy. The eyes of the poor blind man opened to contemplate the heaven over his head, and he began to sing a last song, which is still repeated in his country:—

“I see heaven opened; heaven, my country, I would fly to it ... I see there my father and mother in glory and beauty; I see my brethren, the men of my own country. Choirs of angels, supported by wings, float round their heads like so many bees in a flowery field.”

The third day after this vision, he told Christina to make his bed, not as usually, but with a stone for the pillow and ashes for the couch. “When the black angel shall

come to seek me, let him find me lying upon ashes.” Christina, while she obeyed, said to him, “My uncle, if you love me, ask God that I may follow you without delay, as the boat follows the current” Her prayer was granted. At the moment when Herve expired, the little Christina, “throwing herself at his feet, died there also”. Herve, the blind monk, continues to our own day the patron of mendicant singers, who still chant his legend in Breton verse; and there has long been shown, in a little church in Lower Brittany, a worm-eaten oaken cradle, in which the bard and his poet- wife, whom God made the parents of Herve, put him to sleep with their songs. This poetry is surely of as much value as that of Claudian and the Druids.

But we must leave the too attractive regions of poetry to return to the domain of history, which is often, and here especially, to be distinguished with difficulty from that of the legend. Without entering into details of the immigration of these Bretons into Armorica, it is enough to say that fifty years after their appearance the Gospel reigned in the peninsula. Monks, either cenobites or solitary, held the place of all the other clergy for several centuries, and exercised over the soul and imagination of the Armorican people a priestly empire which still continues. Innumerable monasteries rose on all the principal points of the territory, especially on the sea-coast. Among those which date back to this age, we must note Rhuys, which was afterwards made illustrious by becoming the retreat of Abelard. It was founded at that time upon the peninsula of Morbihan, by one of the most distinguished British emigrants, the abbot Gildas, called the *Wise*, and this abbey reckoned among its monks the Saxon Dunstan, who had been carried away from his native island by pirates, and became, under the name of Goustan, the special patron of sailors, as is shown by the verses still sung by the sailors’ wives of Croisic:—

“St. Goustan Notre ami,  
Ramenez nos mans :  
St. Goustan Notre amant,  
Ramenez nos parents.”

At the extreme point of the peninsula and of Gaul, on the height of the promontory so fitly named Finisterre, rose an abbey in honour of St. Matthew the Evangelist, whose head had been stolen from Egypt by the Armorican navigators, and which long bore the name of St. Matthew of the Land’s End. The terrible rocks at its feet are still called the Monks, and an archipelago of neighbouring islands has received the Breton name of Aber-Beniguet (or Benedict), in memory, perhaps, of the patriarch of the monks of the West. Those of St. Matthew kept up a lighthouse for the safety of mariners in these dangerous seas, opposite that terrible strait of the Raz, which no man, according to the Breton saying, ever passed without fear or grief, and which has inspired the well-known distich: “My God, help me to cross the Raz, for my boat is so little, and the sea is so great.”

But the most ancient and celebrated of all these sanctuaries was that of Landevenec, which became the most active centre for the extension of Christianity, as well as of manual and literary labour, in Western Gaul. Its founder was Guennold, born in Armorica of an emigrant father, who, after having passed three years upon a rock beaten by the waves, chose for his disciples a wooded site hidden in a creek of the road of Brest, with an exposure towards the rising sun, sheltered from the terrible west wind, where the sea sighed at the feet of delicious gardens. His biographer has preserved to us the impression made upon the Breton monks by this dwelling-place, which appeared a paradise to them after the bleak and cold coasts where they had been hitherto established. "One could not die there", he says ; and, in order that the Religious might see the end of their pilgrimage, Guennolé had to change their habitation to a site further off, but still to the east, where death was restored to its rights, but where, for long, the monks died only according to their age.

The name of Guennolé continues popular in Brittany, like that of many other holy abbots, come from beyond seas, or born in Armorica of emigrant parents. It is impossible to enumerate their works. Let us only state that the principal communities formed by these monastic missionaries were soon transformed into bishoprics. Such, especially, was Dol, destined to become the ecclesiastical metropolis of Armorica, and founded by Samson, perhaps the most illustrious among the numerous apostles of the British emigration. Samson of Dol, and his six suffragans, all monks, missionaries, and bishops like himself—namely, Paul of Leon, Tugdual of Treguier, Corentin of Quimper, Paterne of Vannes, Briec and Malo, of the two dioceses which have taken and retained their names—have been sometimes called the Seven Saints of Brittany. An anecdote, told of the Bishop Paterne, may be quoted as a curious example of the subordination of the suffragans to their metropolitan: Having received at Vannes the letter of St. Samson, convoking a provincial synod, "as he was taking off his boots, having still a boot upon one foot, he read it on the moment, and, incontinently getting to horse, followed the messengers, and presented himself at the synod with one boot!" Paterne, as his name indicates, was the only one of these saints who was not of insular British race, as Vannes was the only diocese among the seven which did not owe its origin to a monastery of British emigrants.

Although Armorica, thus converted and repopled by British emigrants, had never been entirely conquered by the Franks, and was governed by the native and independent Counts of Vannes, Cornouaille Leon, and Treguier, it recognised in some degree the supremacy of Childebert, whose share of the territories of Clovis extended farthest to the west.

This incomplete and ephemeral supremacy of the Frank kings, which was afterwards re-established with difficulty by Dagobert and Louis the Debonnaire, seems to have been specially recognised and appealed to by the British missionaries. Tugdual, abbot and founder of Treguier, was raised to the episcopate only with the consent of Childebert, in whose court he was at the time of his election. The same was the case in respect to Paul Aurelian, first bishop of Leon, and recognised as such by Childebert, upon the express request of the count of the province. Finally, the metropolitan Samson, being still only abbot of Dol, had to interfere in his own person with Childebert to obtain the deliverance of one of the native princes, who had been robbed of his



inheritance and imprisoned by a tyrannical lieutenant of the Frank king. Childebert, in spite of the violent resistance of the queen, whose *antrusion* this officer was, granted the prayer of the British missionary, and overwhelmed him with gifts and honours. He had even, according to tradition, placed in perpetuity, under the sway of the monastery of Dol, various of the Channel islands, among others that of Jersey, then deserted, and which has since, thanks to monastic culture, become a marvel of fertility and agricultural wealth, with a population six times more dense than that of France.

By one of these contrasts so frequent in the history of the Merovingians, the Queen Ultrogoth, whom the legend of St Samson represents as furious against the monastic missionary, is extolled by others as the faithful coadjutrice of the monks. She is always associated by the gratitude of monks and believers with the memory of her husband, for having joined with him in founding, at the gates of Paris, the great monastery, afterwards so celebrated under the name of St. Germain-des-Prés. This church, which appears to have been one of the finest monuments of the Merovingian age, the organs and painted glass of which, two beautiful creations of Catholic art, were even then admired, had first been built by Childebert in honour of the martyr St. Vincent, whose tunic he had carried off from the Arian Visigoths at the time of his victorious invasion of Spain. He bestowed it upon the monks with the consent of the Bishop of Paris, Germain, himself a monk, and formerly abbot of St. Symphorian of Autun.

“One day,” says the Breton legend, “the abbot of Dol and the Bishop of Paris talked together about their monasteries ... St. Samson said that his monks were such good managers, and so careful of their beehives, that besides the honey, of which they had an abundant supply, they had more wax than they could use in the church during the whole year; but that the country not being fit for the growth of vines, they had a great dearth of wine. And we, on the contrary, said St. Germain, have vineyards in abundance, and a much greater quantity of wine than is wanted for the supply of the monastery; but we are obliged to buy wax for the church. If it pleases you, we will give you every year the tenth part of our wine, and you shall furnish us with wax to light our church. Samson accepted the offer, and the two monasteries mutually accommodated each other during the life of the saints.”

The Parisian abbey afterwards received the name of St. Germain, who continued always a monk in the exercise of his episcopal charge, and who himself exempted the new monastery from episcopal jurisdiction. As long as he lived he exercised the most salutary influence over the Merovingian kings. He consequently became one of the most popular saints that the monastic order has given to the Church; and the Parisians long narrated, among other tales of his inexhaustible charity, how, “esteeming the voice of the poor more than the gift of the king,” he had sold, in order to buy back a slave, the costly horse which the king had given him, charging him to keep it for himself.

Childebert died in his arms, and was buried in the church of the monastery which he had endowed so richly, with the consent of all the Frankish and Neustrian chiefs. At his death his brother Clotaire became the sole king of the Frank monarchy. He too, despite his too certain ferocity, had known and loved the monks: he also desired to be buried in the church of the monastery which he had founded in his capital of Soissons

under the name of St. Medard, which was that of a great bishop (the son of a Frank and a Roman woman) whose virtues he had admired, and whose words he had sometimes listened to. He testified his faith and his too just errors, when dying, in these words, which Gregory of Tours has preserved to us: “What must be the power of that King of heaven, who makes the most powerful kings of the earth die thus as He pleases?”

The great figure of St. Gregory of Tours overshadows all the second generation of the descendants of Clovis and those bloody struggles between the sons of Clotaire, of which he has left an undying picture in his famous narrative, restored and sometimes altered by the pen of the greatest historian of our day. Some have looked on him as a monk, and we would fain feel ourselves entitled to claim his pure glory for the monastic order; what is certain is, that he was by far the most honest and illustrious person of the times which he has described. Saddened and sometimes deeply discouraged by those horrors of which he was the witness and annalist, his soul was always superior to his fortune, and even to his talents. Without losing sight of that profound respect for the sovereign power with which the traditions of his family and his Roman predilections inspired him, he never hesitated to make a stand when it was necessary against the grandsons of Clovis, and especially against Chilperic, whom he called the Herod and Nero of his age; an atrocious and ridiculous tyrant, who dreamt, among all his crimes, of increasing the number of the letters of the alphabet, and of reducing that of the persons of the Trinity.

Gregory laboured with all his might, not for monarchical unity, which no one dreamt of in these days, but for the union of the Merovingian race as the sole means of consolidating and justifying the sway of the Franks in Gaul. The history of France has inspired few finer pages than this preamble to his fifth book, in which, addressing himself to all those princes unbridled alike in ferocity and profligacy, he exclaims:—

“I am weary of narrating all the changes of these civil wars, which waste the kingdom and nation of the Franks ... What are you doing, O kings ? What would you? What seek you? What is wanting to you? You inhabit delightful houses, your cellars overflow with wine, corn, and oil, and your coffers with gold and silver. One thing alone you lack, the grace of God, because you will not have peace. Why will you always take or covet the goods of others? ... If civil war is sweet to thee, O king! give thyself to that which the Apostle has revealed to us in the heart of man, to the war of the Spirit against the flesh; overcome thy vices by thy virtues: and then, enfranchised, thou shalt freely serve Christ, who is thy chief, after having been the bond-slave of evil.”

Amid the lifelike and varied narratives of the father of our history, it would be easy to glean facts which belong to our subject, and to show, among the grandsons of Clovis, some who, like Gontran of Burgundy and Sigebert of Austrasia, were the friends of the monks and founders of new monasteries; and some who, like Chilperic and his son during their incursions south of the Loire, abandoned the monastic sanctuaries to the flames, the monks to death or exile, and the nuns to the brutal insults of their soldiers. It will be better worth our while to suspend that arid nomenclature, and pause a moment upon the noble attitude of a Gallo-Roman monk whom Gregory knew well, whose history he has related to us, and in whom monastic life seems to have developed a lively and tender solicitude for the misery of his fellow-citizens.

Aredius, born at Limoges of an exalted family, had been recommended or given as a hostage, in his childhood, to the Frank king Theodebert, the same whom we have seen giving so cordial a welcome to the sons of St Benedict at Glanfeuil. Aredius soon brought himself into so much favour with this prince that he became his secretary, or, as it was already called, his chancellor. This was an office which then began to acquire great importance, and the holders of which repeatedly entered the ranks of the monastic order. That monk, called Nizier, who had become Bishop of Treves, and whose courage and humanity we have already recorded, imagined that he saw the stamp of celestial grace in the face of the young courtier whom he met in the palace. He led him to his cell, where he spoke to him of God, and, in bringing him to a knowledge of religious truth, inspired him with an inclination for cloister life. A dove which, during these confidential interviews, came incessantly to the young and gentle Aredius to perch on his head or shoulder, still further convinced the prelate that the Holy Spirit was to inspire his pupil. He permitted him, however, to return to his own country, to his mother Pelagia, who had no children but himself. But when he returned to his native Limousin, Aredius took no thought of his fields or his vineyards, which he gave up to his mother, charging her to provide for the subsistence of the little community which he formed on one of his estates, filling up its numbers principally from the people of his house, and which became the origin of a town, named after him St. Yrieix.

He had first intended to seclude himself in a cavern, but, at the prayer of his mother, he transferred his monastery to a more agreeable site. He divided his time between agricultural labour and study; he specially transcribed with his own hand copies of the Holy Scriptures and liturgical books, which he took pleasure in distributing among the churches of the neighbouring dioceses. The poor and the sick crowded to him like bees to the hive. He helped the one and cured the other. He went to Tours every year out of his cloister to celebrate the feast of St. Martin, and, with many prayers, to kiss the tomb of the great bishop; then crossing the Loire, went to Marmoutier, to rebaptize himself in the monastic spirit, by visiting all the spots where Martin had knelt in prayer, or which he had sanctified by song; he carried back with him, as a medicine for his sick, the water of the well which Martin had opened by his own labour. There he met the bishop Gregory, whose intimate friend he became, and who has preserved to us all these details.

He continued in the meantime to keep up his intercourse with the Merovingian princes, and by this means interfered on behalf of the oppressed population. More than once, when the tributes and villain-tax were applied with too much severity to the cities of the Gauls, according to lists which the kings had made out, he hastened to ask a diminution of that intolerable burden. One day when, going through Paris, he had travelled secretly and in haste as far as Braine, where King Chilperic then was, the latter, who was sick of a fever, when informed of his arrival, immediately ordered him to be brought, in hope to obtain a cure by the prayers of the servant of God. But Aredius, while feeling his pulse, could speak of nothing but the object of his journey. The king, touched or terrified by his remonstrances, delivered up to him the lists of the contributions which weighed so cruelly upon the poor people. Then the abbot lighted a great fire and burned the fatal registers with his own hands, in the presence of a

numerous crowd. He had before announced that the king would be healed, but that his sons should die in his stead, which happened as he said.

On another occasion, having heard that there were several persons condemned to death at Limoges, he went from his monastery to the town, to consult upon the means of saving them. Here popular tradition is carried away by the memory of that compassion for all kinds of misfortunes with which the heart of the holy abbot overflowed. It records, that as soon as he approached the prison, the doors turned on their hinges of themselves, and all the locks were broken, as well as the chains of the captives, who were thus enabled to escape, and seek an inviolable asylum at the tomb of St. Martial, the first apostle of Limousin.

A still more authentic memorial of his solicitude for his inferiors remains to us in his will, written twenty years before his death, and confirmed on the eve of that day when, full of years and labours, he appeared before God. By this document he places his monastery and monks, his villa of Excideuil with all the serfs or *mancipia* who cultivated his vineyards, and whose names and families he enumerates carefully, under the protection of the church of St. Martin of Tours, which was then the most venerated sanctuary in Gaul. He stipulates expressly that certain female vassals, whom he names, should pay only a *triens* each, yearly, to the monks of his monastery. Finally, he mentions, name by name, fifty men and women, among whom was a certain Lucy, whom he had ransomed from captivity; he intrusted their freedom to the guardianship of St Martin. "These are," he says, "my freed men and women, some of whom have been confided to me by my father of blessed memory, and the others I have myself enfranchised for the good of my brother's soul; I give them to thy charge, my lord St. Martin. And if any man assumes to exact from them what they do not owe, or to disturb and oppress them for any reason whatever, it shall be thy part, St. Martin, to defend them."

During the last sufferings of this benefactor of the unfortunate and the slaves, a poor sick woman, one possessed with a devil, whom the holy abbot had not been able to heal, escaped from the prison where she had been confined, and ran to the monastery, crying—"Come, friends and neighbours, make haste; come, let us hasten to meet the martyrs and confessors who are coming to celebrate the obsequies of our holy abbot. Behold Julian approaching from Brives, Martin from Tours, Martial from our city of Limoges, Saturnin from Toulouse, Denis from Paris, and many others who are in heaven, and to whom you appeal as martyrs and confessors of God." Aredius some time before had predicted his own death to his friend Gregory of Toots, and taken leave of him while kissing the tomb of St. Martin for the last time; he died above eighty years old; and the poor possessed woman was cured by his intercession.

That faith which opened heaven to the eyes of that poor woman, and showed her the apostles whose martyrdom had worked the first conversion of Gaul, standing closer in their ranks to admit the new confessors produced by the monastic order,—that ardent and tender faith naturally inspired the hearts of the Christian women of Gaul, and rendered the cloisters from which issued so many alms, and at the same time so many examples of virtue, more and more dear to them. Those who did not adopt religious life in their own person had brothers or sisters in it, or, dearer still, sons and daughters; and

maternal love thus redoubled their attachment to an institution in which all the blessings and duties of Christianity were to them embodied. The same Gregory of Tours whose invaluable narrative enlightens us in the history, not of the early times of our country alone, but also of the human heart, relates a touching incident in connection with the famous abbey of Agaune (which we have already mentioned), which was built in honour of St. Maurice and the martyrs of the Theban legion, on a site near the outlet of the Rhone into the Lake of Geneva, and became the monastic metropolis of the kingdom of Burgundy. A mother had taken her only son to this monastery, where he became a monk, especially instructed and skilful in chanting the liturgical service; he fell sick and died; his mother, in despair, came to bury him, and returned every day to weep and lament over his tomb. One night she saw St. Maurice in a dream attempting to console her, but answered him, "No, no; as long as I live I shall always weep my son, my sole child." "But," answered the saint, "he must not be wept for as if he were dead: he is with us, he rejoices in eternal life, and tomorrow at matins, in the monastery, thou shalt hear his voice among the choir of the monks; and not tomorrow only, but every day as long as thou livest." The mother immediately rose and waited with impatience the first sound of the bell for matins, to hasten to the church of the monks. The precentor having intoned the response, when the monks in full choir took up the anthem, the mother immediately recognised the voice of her dear child. She gave thanks to God; and every day for the rest of her life, thus deluding her grief and maternal tenderness, the moment she approached the choir, she heard the voice of her well-beloved son mingle in the sweet and holy harmony of the liturgical chant. And to us too it seeras to echo across the ages, that voice of the child, *vocem infantuli*, the purest, the dearest, the most heaven-like melody that the human ear can receive.

The Armorican legend also stirs that same chord of maternal love. It tells us how the mother of the Christian bard, the blind Herve, having consented to place him for seven years apart from her in a cloister, where he was taught to excel in song, went to see him, and said, as she was approaching: "I see a procession of monks advancing, and I hear the voice of my son; if there should be a thousand singing together, I could still distinguish the voice of my Herve. I see my son in a grey habit, with a girdle of rope. God be with you, my son, the clerk! when, with the help of God, I get to heaven, you shall be warned of it, you shall hear the angels sing." The same evening, after she had so happily seen him, she died ; and her son, the precentor and monastic bard, heard the angels who celebrated her obsequies in heaven.

The noble Aredius, whose death has carried us back into legendary ground, did not leave his cloister only to pray at the tomb of St. Martin, or to seek favour for an oppressed people from the Merovingian kings. He also went every year to visit in a monastery of Poitiers the most illustrious nun of that age, Queen Radegund.

#### IV.

St. Radegund.



We have now to contemplate at greater length a sweet and noble figure which appears before us: it is that of the holy queen who gave the first example, so often followed since, of a crowned head bowed under the common discipline of monastic laws. Her holy but troubled life, as fit a subject for the poet as for the historian, was contemporary with all the crimes which soiled the annals of the descendants of Clovis. It inaugurates worthily that wonderful action of monastic life upon the women and queens of barbarous nations, which placed a Radegund and a Bathilde upon the throne and the altar, in an age which seemed to be given up as a prey to the Fredegunds and Brunehauts.

During the expedition of the kings Thierry I and Clotaire I beyond the Rhine, and the war of extermination which they waged against the Thuringians in 529, the daughter of a king of Thuringia fell into the hands of the victors. Her name was Radegund; and, despite her extreme youth, her precocious beauty fascinated the two brothers to such a point that they had almost come to blows to dispute the possession of her. She fell to Clotaire, the most cruel and debauched of all the sons of Clovis. The young and royal captive, snatched from her family by the right of conquest, amid the carnage and devastation of her country, was taken into one of the villas of Clotaire, where he gave her a careful, and even literary, education, with the intention of one day making her his wife. She had a great taste for study, but, above everything, for piety; and, far from aspiring to share the bed and throne of her ferocious conqueror, she told her young companions that she desired nothing so much as martyrdom.

When she was eighteen, and knew that the king was preparing everything for their marriage, she escaped by night in a boat, from the house, situated on the Somme, where she had been kept. But she was soon retaken, and Clotaire shortly afterwards added his prisoner to the number of his queens—that is, of the wives whom he elevated above the rank of concubines. He is known to have had six of this degree, two of whom were the widows of his brothers, and two sisters whom he had married at the same time. As for Radegund, he loved her passionately, and more than all the others, at least for a time, even while chafing at her coldness, and the strange contrast which he did not fail to perceive between her and himself. “It is not a queen that I have here”, he said—“it is a true nun.” The young and beautiful captive naturally sought in religion the only grace which could console her for her marriage, and the only strength which could be respected, though scarcely understood, by the master to whom she was obliged to submit. When the king called her to sup with him, she made him wait till she had finished her pious readings, which enraged Clotaire. But the amorous Barbarian soon attempted to make amends by presents for his angry words. During the night she rose from his side to stretch herself upon haircloth until she was half frozen, and could scarcely be restored to warmth by her bed. Her days were devoted to the study of sacred literature, to prolonged interviews with the students and bishops who came to the court of Soissons, and, above all, to almsgiving, and the management of an hospital which she had founded in that estate of Athies, where she had passed the first years of her captivity, and where she herself waited on the sick women with the most devoted care.

Everything in her life reveals the absolute dominion of the faith of Christ upon her soul, and her passionate desire to serve that faith without reservation or delay. At one time, when her servants had praised the new attraction added to her beauty by a sort of

head-dress, ornamented with jewels, which was worn by Barbarian queens, she hastened to lay that diadem upon the altar of the nearest church. And at another, indignant to see in her path a pagan temple, a vestige of that which she regarded as a diabolical superstition, she paused in the midst of her military retinue to order its destruction; and, in spite of the furious outcries and desperate resistance of the surrounding population, composed of Franks who were still idolaters, and defended the sanctuary of their national worship with swords and clubs, she remained on horseback in the middle of her train till the building had disappeared in the flames.

Six years after her marriage, Clotaire killed, without any reason, a young brother of Radegund, the companion of her captivity, whom she loved tenderly. This was the signal of her deliverance. With the permission of her husband, how obtained it is not known, she left Soissons and went to Noyon to the bishop Medard, who had great influence over the king and all the nation.

She found him at the altar where he was celebrating mass, and besought him to consecrate her to God by giving her the veil. The bishop hesitated and resisted; the Frank lords who were present surrounded him, brought him down from the altar with violence, and forbade him to consecrate to God a woman whom the king had made a queen by public marriage. Radegund then took from the sacristy the dress of a nun, in which she clothed herself, and, returning to the altar, said to the bishop, “ If thou delayest to consecrate me, if thou fearest man more than God, the Good Shepherd will demand an account from thee of the soul of one of His sheep.” Medard was thunderstruck by these words, and immediately laid his hands on her, and consecrated her a deaconess. Clotaire himself did not venture at first to interfere with what had been done. The new nun, using her recognised freedom, went from sanctuary to sanctuary, dropping everywhere, in the form of offerings, her ornaments and queenly robes. Crossing the Loire, she arrived first at Tours, at the tomb of St. Martin, to which pilgrims and the unfortunate resorted from all parts of Christendom, and where she perhaps found her illustrious mother-in-law Clotilda, who had come to await death near the holy tomb. She afterwards established herself in the lands of Saix, in Poitou, which her husband had granted her; and there, living a truly recluse life, she began to practise the most rigorous austerities, and especially lavished her cares upon the poor and sick, and rendered them the most repulsive services. After having bathed the lepers with her own hands, she kissed their disgusting sores. “Holy lady,” said one of her servants, one day, “who will kiss you, if you thus kiss the lepers?” “Well,” said she, smiling, “if thou dost never kiss me again, that is nothing to me.”

However, her fame so spread that Clotaire, whose love was revived by absence, set out to reclaim her. She then took refuge at the tomb of St. Hilary, in Poitiers; and he, again overcome by religious fear, gave her permission to build a monastery for women at Poitiers, and to seclude herself in it. When this cloister was completed, she entered it triumphantly amid popular rejoicings, making her way through crowds of spectators, who, after filling all the streets and squares, covered even the roofs of houses from which they could see her pass.

But she was soon assailed by new terrors. She heard that under pretext of devotion Clotaire had arrived at Tours, and that he had arranged to come to Poitiers to seek her

whom he called his dear queen. The holy bishop Medard could no longer use his influence to defend her: he was just dead. But the illustrious Bishop of Paris, Germain, was still living: she wrote to him, adjuring him to persuade the king to respect her vow. The bishop sought the king before the tomb of St. Martin, and supplicated him on his knees, weeping, not to go to Poitiers. Clotaire recognised the voice of Radegund through the words of Germain, but recognised at the same time how unworthy he himself was to have for his queen a woman who had always preferred God's will to her own. He knelt in his turn before the bishop, and begged him to go and ask pardon of that saint for all the wrong which evil counsels had made him undertake against her. And from this time he left her in peace.

Radegund then employed herself in constituting upon a solid foundation the community in which she was to pass the last forty years of her life. This community was very numerous: the queen's presence attracted to it nearly two hundred young girls of various races and conditions, and amongst these Gauls of senatorial family, and Frank princesses of Merovingian blood. But she would not govern them herself, and caused a young girl named Agnes, whom she had herself trained, to be elected abbess. Restricting herself severely to the rank and obligations of a simple nun, she took her turn in cooking, in carrying wood and water, and in cleaning away the filth; while, notwithstanding, she pursued her studies of the Fathers and the Holy Scriptures, and especially continued with the most courageous perseverance her care of the poor. But this sincere and active humility did not prevent her from being considered by all the nuns, as well as by the whole Church, the true superior of the monastery which she had founded. At her petition, the bishops of the second Council of Tours sanctioned the irrevocable vows of virgins consecrated to God, according to the rule of St. Caesarius, for she went as far as Arles to study and bring back the wise and severe rule which that great bishop had instituted there, a century before, for the monastery governed by his sister. She had need of that protection from without, for the Bishop of Poitiers, Merovée, showed an inveterate hostility to her all her life.

On the other hand, to adorn still better her dear sanctuary, she sent to the Emperor Justin at Constantinople to ask for a fragment of the true cross, which he granted to her. A new Helena, she received with transports of joy the holy relic which gave its name to her monastery; and the sublime accents of the *Vexilla regis* and of the *Pange lingua* echoed for the first time in the ears of the faithful upon the occasion of its arrival—new hymns with which that solemnity inspired the poet Venantius Fortunatus, and which all the Church has sung since then.

This Fortunatus was an Italian, who, coming to visit the sanctuaries of Gaul, had established himself at Poitiers. He became, long after, the bishop of that city, and the biographer of Radegund, but then was only famed for his poetical talents. The cloistered queen made him her secretary, and the intendant of the goods of the monastery. In verses where classic recollections and literary graces mingle perhaps too often with the inspirations of the Catholic faith, he enters into many curious and valuable details of the touching intimacy which existed between himself, the abbess Agnes, and Radegund. He often speaks in the name of the latter, especially in one celebrated passage, where he supposes the queen to retain, after having reached the age of fifty, a poignant and impassioned recollection of her ravaged country, her murdered family, and of a cousin

who had by that time found a refuge at Constantinople, and who had perhaps shared the first days of her captivity, when she herself, led into bondage, had left her Germanic fatherland for ever.

As it has been said that Radegund herself had dictated these verses, which breathe the sentiment of true poetry, we shall quote some passages, literally translated:—

“When the wind murmurs, I listen if it brings me some news, but of all my kindred not even a shadow presents itself to me ... And thou, Amalafried, gentle son of my father’s brother, does no anxiety for me consume thy heart? Hast thou forgotten what Radegund was to thee in thy earliest years, and how much thou lovedst me, and how thou heldst the place of the father, mother, brother, and sister whom I had lost? An hour absent from thee seemed to me eternal: now ages pass, and I never hear a word from thee. A whole world now lies betwixt those who loved each other, and who of old were never separate. If others, for pity alone, cross the Alps to seek their lost slaves, wherefore am I forgotten, I who am bound to thee by blood? Where art thou? I ask the wind as it sighs, the clouds as they pass; at least some bird might bring me news of thee. If the holy enclosure of this monastery did not restrain me, thou shouldst see me suddenly appear beside thee. I could cross the stormy seas, in winter, if it was necessary. The tempest that alarms the sailors should cause no fear to me who love thee. If my vessel were dashed to pieces by the tempest, I should cling to a plank to reach thee; and if I could find nothing to cling to, I should go to thee swimming, exhausted! If I could but see thee once more, I should deny all the perils of the journey; and if I died by the way, thou shouldst make me a grave in the sand, and in burying me shouldst weep for her, dead, whose tears, when living, thou disdainedst.”

But if the holy recluse permitted the Italian poet to invoke, in her name, those passionate images of the past, of her country, and her young affections, no trace of them appeared in her life. On the contrary, she had concentrated all the warmth of her tenderness upon her monastic family. When she saw all her young and numerous brood collected round her, she constantly addressed them thus: “I love you so much, that I remember no longer that I have had relations and married a king. I no longer love anything but you, young girls whom I have chosen, young flowers whom I have planted—you, my eyes and my life, my rest and my happiness!” Thus surrounded, she could forget all the outer world. One evening, as Fortunatus himself relates, towards the close of day, some musicians passed the walls of the monastery dancing and singing loudly. The saint was at prayers with two of her sisters; one of them said to her gaily, “Madam, these dancers are singing one of the airs which I used to sing myself in old times”. “Truly” said the queen, “I wonder that, belonging to the Lord, you can take pleasure in listening to these worldly sounds.” “But, indeed,” answered the sister, “it is because I hear two or three of my own songs.” “Well, well! as for me,” said the queen, “I take God to witness that I have not heard a single note of that profane music.”

However, governed by these affections of the cloister and thoughts of heaven as she was, she retained, notwithstanding, an anxious solicitude for the interests of the royal house and the country of her marriage. At the height of the struggles between her daughters-in-law, the atrocious Fredegund and Brunehault, she perpetually interposed to preach peace and reconciliation. The salvation of the country, says the faithful

companion of her life, was always in her mind; she trembled through all her frame when she heard of some new rupture. Although she, perhaps, inclined towards the side of Brunehault and her children, she included all the Merovingian princes in her love. She wrote to all the kings, one after the other, and then to the principal lords, adjuring them to watch over the true interests of the people and the country. "Peace between the kings is my victory," she said; and to obtain this from the celestial King, she engaged the prayers of all her community, and redoubled, for her own part, her fasts, penances, and charity.

For this woman, who is represented to us as "seeking assort of compromise between monastic austerity and the elegant habits of civilised society," was not only the first to practise what she taught to others, but actually inflicted tortures upon herself to reduce her flesh completely into servitude. It is true that, full of indulgence for her companions, she permitted them frequent intercourse with their friends outside, repasts in common, and even dramatic entertainments, the custom of which was then introduced, and long maintained in the learned communities of the Middle Ages. But she refused for herself every recreation or softening of the rule. She went so far as to heat a metal cross in the fire and stamp it upon her flesh, which was still too delicate to satisfy her, as the sacred stigmata of her love for the crucified Saviour.

Till the time of her death she wore upon her naked flesh an iron chain, which she had received as a gift from a lord of Poitou, named Junian, who had, like herself, quitted the world for a life of solitude, and who kept together by the bond of charity a numerous body of monks under the rule which the beloved disciple of Benedict had just brought into Gaul. A worthy rival of the charity of Radegund, he supported, at great expense, herds of cattle and rich poultry yards, in order to give the poor peasants oxen for ploughing, clothes, eggs, and cheese, and even fowls for the sick. He wore no other dress than the woollen robes which the queen span for him. They had agreed to pray for each other after their death; they died on the same day, at the same hour, and the messengers, who left at once the St. Croix of Poitiers and the cloister inhabited by Junian, met half-way with the same melancholy news.

Gregory of Tours celebrated the funeral of the holy queen, and tells us that even in her coffin her beauty was still dazzling. Around this coffin the two hundred nuns whom she had drawn from the world to give them to God, chanted a kind of plaintive eclogue, in which they celebrated the virtues of their abbess and the love with which she inspired them. Then when Gregory conducted the body to the grave, where the seclusion prescribed by the rule of St. Caesarius debarred the nuns from following, he saw them press to the windows, and to the towers and battlements of the monastery, where their lamentations, tears, and the wringing of their hands, rendered a last homage to their royal foundress. Before her death she had made a kind of will, in which she took no title but that of Radegund, sinner, and in which she put her dear monastery under the charge of St. Martin and St. Hilary, adjuring the bishops and kings to treat as spoilers and persecutors of the poor all who should attempt to disturb the community, to change its rule, or dispossess its abbess.

But it was rather from internal disorders than outside enemies that her work required to be preserved. Even in her own lifetime one of the nuns had escaped over the



wall of the abbey, and taking refuge in the church of St Hilary, had poured forth a hundred calumnies against the abbess. She had been made to re-enter the monastery, hoisted up by ropes, at the same part of the rampart by which she descended, and had acknowledged the falsehood of her accusations against Agnes and Radegund.

After their death matters were still worse. Among the Frank princesses whom she had led or received into the shadow of the sanctuary of St. Croix, there were two who retained all the Barbarian vehemence, and who, far from profiting by the example of the widow of Clotaire, showed themselves only too faithful to the blood of their grandsire. These were Chrodiel, daughter of King Caribert, and the unfortunate Basine, daughter of King Chilperic and Queen Audover, whom Fredegund, her infamous mother-in-law, had cast into the cloister, after having had her dishonoured by her valets. At the death of the abbess Agnes, who soon followed her benefactress to the grave, Chrodiel, irritated at not having been elected in her place, formed a plot against the new abbess Leubovere, and left the monastery with her cousin and forty other nuns, saying, "I go to the kings my relations to let them know the ignominy which has been inflicted on us, for we have been treated here not like the daughters of kings but like the daughters of miserable slaves." Without listening to the remonstrances of the bishops they broke the locks and doors, and went on foot from Poitiers to Tours, where they arrived panting, worn, and exhausted, by roads flooded by the great rains, and without having eaten anything on the road. Chrodiel presented herself to Gregory of Tours, who read to the party the sentence of excommunication pronounced by the Council of Tours against nuns guilty of breaking their seclusion, entreated them not to destroy thus the work of the holy queen Radegund, and offered to conduct them back to Poitiers. "No, no," said Chrodiel; "we are going to the kings."

Gregory succeeded in persuading them to wait at least for the summer. The fine weather having come, Chrodiel left her cousin and her companions at Tours, and went to her uncle Gontran, king of Burgundy, who received her well, and named certain bishops to investigate the quarrel. Returning to Tours, she found that several of the fugitives had allowed themselves to be seduced and married. With those that remained she returned to Poitiers, and they installed themselves in the Church of St. Hilary with a troop of robbers and bandits to defend them, saying always, "We are queens, and we will only return to the monastery when the abbess is expelled from it." The metropolitan of Bordeaux then appeared with the Bishop of Poitiers and two others of his suffragans, and, upon their obstinate refusal to return to their monastery, excommunicated them. But the bandits whom they had hired for their defence attacked the bishops, threw them down upon the pavement of the church, and broke the heads of several deacons in their suite. A panic seized the episcopal train: every man saved himself as he could. Chrodiel afterwards sent her followers to seize the lands of the monastery, made the vassals obey her by dint of blows, and threatened always, if she returned to the monastery, to throw the abbess over the walls. King Childebert, the Count of Poitou, and the bishops of the province of Lyons, interfered in turn without any better success. This lasted for a whole year. The cold of winter constrained the rebels to separate, for they had no other shelter than the church, where they could not make a sufficient fire to keep themselves warm

Discords, however, arose between the two cousins, who each assumed to be leader, by her right as a princess of the royal blood. But Chrodiel maintained her supremacy; she took advantage of it to adopt still more violent measures, and sent her troop of bandits against the monastery. They made their way into it by night, with arms in their hands, forcing the doors with axes, and seized the abbess, who, helpless with gout, and scarcely able to walk, was roused by the noise to go and prostrate herself before the shrine which enclosed the true cross. They dragged her, half naked, to the Church of St. Hilary, and shut her up there in the portion inhabited by Basine. Chrodiel gave orders to poniard her upon the spot, if the bishop or any other person endeavoured to set her at liberty. After this she pillaged her ancient monastery from top to bottom; many nuns were wounded, and the servants faithful to the abbess were killed upon the very sepulchre of Radegund. Basine, wounded by the pride of her cousin, took advantage of the neighbourhood of the captive abbess to attempt a reconciliation with her; but it was without result.

These battles and murders continued at a still greater rate, until finally the kings Gontran of Burgundy, and Childebert of Austrasia, uncle and cousin of the two principal culprits, resolved to put an end to this disgraceful scandal. They convoked the bishops anew; but Gregory of Tours declared that they could on no account assemble till sedition had been suppressed by the secular arm. Then the Count of Poitiers, supported apparently by the entire population of the town, made a formal attack upon the basilica built by Radegund, which had been transformed into a citadel. It was in vain that Chrodiel ordered a sortie of her satellites, and that, seeing them repulsed, she advanced to meet the besiegers, the cross in her hand, crying, "Do nothing to me, for I am a queen, daughter of a king, cousin and niece of your kings: do nothing to me, or the time will come when I shall avenge myself." Her person was respected. But her bravoës were seized and executed in various ways. Then the bishops proceeded, in the very church which had been thus delivered, to sit in judgment on the contest. Chrodiel, who was not cast down by her defeat, constituted herself the accuser of the abbess; she reproached this poor bedridden gouty woman with having a man in her service dressed like a woman, with playing dice, eating with secular persons, and other still less serious imputations. She complained at the same time that she and her companions had neither food nor clothing, and that they had been beaten. The abbess defended herself without difficulty; the two princesses were obliged to confess that they had no capital crime, such as homicide or adultery, to allege against her; whilst the bishops reminded them that some of the nuns of their own party had fallen into sin, in consequence of the disorder into which their leaders had plunged them. Notwithstanding, they refused to ask pardon of the abbess—threatened loudly, on the contrary, to kill her. The bishops then declared them excommunicated, and re-established the abbess in the monastery of which she had been deprived. Even then the rebel princesses did not submit: they went to their cousin, King Childebert, and denounced the abbess to him as sending daily messages to his enemy Fredegund. He was weak enough to recommend his cousins to the bishops who were about to meet for a new council at Metz. But there Basine finally separated from her cousin; she threw herself at the feet of the bishops, asked their pardon, and promised to return to St. Croix of Poitiers, to live there according to the rule. Chrodiel, on the contrary, declared that she would never set foot in it while the

abbess remained there; and the result was, that they permitted her to live near Poitiers on an estate given her by the king.

This confused contrast of so many crimes and so many virtues; these monks, whose charity to their neighbour was only equalled by their severity to themselves, and these bandits commanded by debauched nuns; these daughters of Frank and German kings, some transfigured by faith and poetry, while others were suffering or inflicting the most infamous outrages; these kings by turns ferocious and amiable; this great bishop standing near the tomb of his immortal predecessor, and preaching order and peace to all; these murders and sacrileges face to face with the impassioned worship of the most venerable relic; the boldness and long impunity of crime side by side with so many prodigies of fervour and austerity; in a word, this mingled crowd of saints and villains, offers the most faithful picture of the long combat waged by Christian dignity and Christian virtue against the violence of the Barbarians, and the vices of the Gallo-Romans enervated by long subjection to despotism. Monks and nuns were the heroes and instruments of that struggle. It lasted for two centuries longer before it gave way to the luminous and powerful age of the first Carolingians, and was renewed at a later period under new forms and against new assailants.

In the same year which saw all Gaul south of the Loire disturbed by this scandal, the famous monastery of Luxeuil, founded by a Celtic missionary, St. Columba, and destined to become for a time the monastic metropolis of the Frank dominions, came into being at the other extremity of the country, at the foot of the Vosges, between the Rhone and the Rhine. Here we must hereafter seek the centre of monastic life in Gaul, and study the action of the monks upon the kingdom and people of the Franks.

## V.

### The Monks and Nature.

But before we study the action of the great Celtic missionary upon the kingdom and people of the Franks, it is important to observe one of the distinct characteristics of the monastic occupation of Gaul. We should greatly deceive ourselves did we suppose that the monks chose the Gallo-Roman cities or populous towns for their principal establishments. Episcopal cities like Poitiers, Arles, or Paris, were not the places which they preferred, nor in which they abounded most. They were almost always to be found there, thanks to the zeal of the bishops who sought and drew them to their neighbourhood. But their own proper impulse, their natural instinct, I know not what current of ideas always swaying them, led them far from towns, and even from the fertile and inhabited rural districts, towards the forests and deserts which then covered the greater part of the soil of our country.

They took special delight in such situations, where we behold them in close conflict with nature with all her obstacles and dangers; and where we find all that exuberant vigour and life which everywhere distinguishes the springtime of monastic

institutions, and which for two centuries renewed a kind of Thebaid in the forests of Gaul.

However, between that sombre and wild nature of Europe, transferred from the oppressing grasp of Rome to that of the Barbarians, and the unwearied activity of the solitaries and religious communities, there was less a laborious struggle than an intimate and instinctive alliance, the warm and poetic reflection of which animates many a page of the monastic annals. Nothing can be more attractive than this moral and material sympathy between monastic life and the life of nature. To him who would devote sufficient leisure and attention to it, there is here a delightful field of study which might fill a whole life. We may be pardoned for lingering a moment on this fascinating subject, confining ourselves, however, to so much only as concerns the monks of Gaul in the sixth and seventh centuries.

When the disciples of St. Benedict and St Columba came to settle in Gaul, most of its provinces bore an aspect sadly similar. Roman tyranny and taxation in the first place, and then the ravages of the Barbarian invasions, had changed entire countries into desert and solitary places. That *pagus* which, in the time of Caesar, had furnished thousands of soldiers against the common enemy, now showed only some few inhabitants scattered over a country allowed to run waste, where a spontaneous and savage vegetation disputed all attempts at culture, and gradually transformed the land into forests. These new forests extended by degrees to the immense clumps of dark and impenetrable wood, which had always covered an important part of the soil of Gaul. One example, among a thousand, will prove the advance of desolation. Upon the right bank of the Loire, five leagues below Orleans, in that district which is now the garden of France, the Gallo-Roman *castrum* of Magdunum, which occupied the site of the existing town of Meung, had completely disappeared under the woods, when the monk Liephard directed his steps there, accompanied by a single disciple, in the sixth century; in place of the numerous inhabitants of former times, there stood only trees, the interlaced branches and trunks of which formed a sort of impenetrable barrier.

And thus also Columba found nothing but idols abandoned in the midst of the wood, upon that site of Luxeuil which had formerly been occupied by the temples and the baths of the Romans.

These famous Druidical forests, in which the sacrifices of the ancient Gauls were celebrated, and which were consecrated by the worship of old trees, so universally practised by all pagan antiquity from the banks of the Ganges to those of the Tiber; these eternal shades, which inspired the Romans with superstitious terror, had not only preserved, but even extended, their formidable empire. The fidelity of the picture drawn by the singer of Pharsalia was more than ever apparent after six centuries had passed:—

“Lucus erat longo nunquatn violatus ab aevo,  
Obscurum cingens connexis aera ramis,  
Et gelidas ulte submotis solibus umbras.  
Hunc non ruricolre Panes, nemorumque potentes

Silvani, Nymphaeque tenent, sed barbara ritu

Sacra Deum, structae diris altaribus arae

Arboribus suua horror inest.”

Where there had not been sufficient time to produce these immense forest-trees whose tops seem to reach the clouds, or these woodland giants which testified to the antiquity of primitive forests, cultivation and population had not the less disappeared before a lower growth of wood. Certainly magnificent pines, such as those that crown the heights of the Vosges and the sides of the Alps, or oaks, the fallen trunks of which could scarcely be moved by forty men, like that which the abbot Launomar cut down in the vast forest of Perche, were not to be seen everywhere; but the fertile soil was everywhere usurped by copsewood, where the maple, the birch, the aspen, and the witch-elm prepared the ground for a more imposing growth of trees, and, still worse, by thickets of thorn and brambles of formidable extent and depth, which arrested the steps and tortured the limbs of the unfortunates who ventured there. These intermediate regions between the great forests and the fields, between the mountains and the cultivated plains, were with too much justice entitled deserts, because the population had abandoned them till the monks brought back fertility and life. In the northern part of the country, occupied by the Burgundians, on the north of the Rhone alone, six great deserts existed at the end of the sixth century,—the desert of Reome, between Tonnerre and Montbard; the desert of Morvan; the desert of Jura; the desert of the Vosges, where Luxeuil and Lure were about to have birth; the desert of Switzerland, between Bienne and Lucerne; and the desert of Gruyere, between the Savine and the Aar. Indeed, the whole extent of Switzerland and Savoy was little else than a vast forest, the name of which alone remains, applied in French to the canton of Vaud (*Pagus Waldensis*), and in German to the four primitive cantons of Lucerne, Schwitz, Uri, and Unterwald (*Die Waldstatten*), where a border of impenetrable wood surrounded the beautiful lake which unites them. Advancing towards the north, the wooded regions became more and more profound and extensive. Even in the provinces least depopulated and best cultivated, through the most favourable soils and climates, long wooded lines extended from north to south, and from the rising to the setting sun, connecting the great masses of forests with each other, surrounding and enveloping Gaul as in a vast network of shade and silence.

We must then imagine Gaul and all the neighbouring countries, the whole extent of France, Switzerland, Belgium, and both banks of the Rhine—that is to say, the richest and most populous countries of modern Europe—covered with forests such as are scarcely to be seen in America, and of which there does not remain the slightest trace in the ancient world. We must figure to ourselves these masses of sombre and impenetrable wood, covering hills and valleys, the high table-land as well as the marshy bottoms; descending to the banks of the great rivers, and even to the sea; broken here and there by water-courses which laboriously forced a way for themselves across the roots and fallen trees; perpetually divided by bogs and marshes, which swallowed up the animals or men who were so ill-advised as to risk themselves there; and inhabited by innumerable wild beasts, whose ferocity had scarcely been accustomed to fly before



man, and of which many different species have since almost completely disappeared from our country.

To plunge into these terrible forests, to encounter these monstrous animals, the tradition of which remains everywhere, and whose bones are still sometimes exhumed, required a courage of which nothing in the existing world can give us an idea. In all that now remains to be conquered of American forests and deserts, the modern adventurer penetrates armed with all the inventions of industry and mechanical art, provided with all the resources of modern life, sustained by the certainty of success, by the consciousness of progress, and urged forward by the immense pressure of civilisation which follows and sustains him. But at that time no such help came to the monk, who attacked these gloomy woods without arms, without sufficient implements, and often without a single companion. He came out of a desolated, decrepit, and powerless old world, to plunge into the unknown. But he bore with him a strength which nothing has ever surpassed or equalled, the strength conferred by faith in a living God, the protector and rewarder of innocence, by contempt of all material joy, and by an exclusive devotion to the spiritual and future life. He thus advanced, undaunted and serene; and, often without thinking what he did, opened a road to all the benefits of agriculture, labour, and Christian civilisation.

See, then, these men of prayer and penitence, who were at the same time the bold pioneers of Christian civilisation and the modern world; behold them taming that world of wild and savage nature in a thousand different places. They plunged into the darkness carrying light with them, a light which was never more to be extinguished; and this light, advancing step by step, lighted everywhere those home-fires which were so many beacons upon the way to heaven,—“from glory to glory”,—and which were to be centres of life and blessing for the people whom they instructed and edified: “In thy light shall we see light.”

They entered there, sometimes axe in hand, at the head of a troop of believers scarcely converted, or of pagans surprised and indignant, to cut down the sacred trees, and thus root out the popular superstition. But still more frequently they reached these solitudes with one or two disciples at the most, seeking some distant and solitary retreat, out of the way of men, where they might be allowed to devote themselves entirely to God.

No obstacle nor danger arrested them. The more awful the profound darkness of the forest, the more were they attracted to it. When the only paths were so tortuous, narrow, and bristling with thorns, that it was impossible to move without tearing their clothes, and they could scarcely plant one foot after another in the same line, they ventured on without hesitation. If they had to creep under the interlaced branches to discover some narrow and gloomy cavern obstructed by stones and briers, they were ready to do it. It was when approaching, on his knees, such a retreat, which the beasts of the forests themselves feared to enter, that the Burgundian priest Sequanus addressed this prayer to God: “Lord, who hast made heaven and earth, who hearest the prayers of him who comes to Thee, from whom everything good proceeds, and without whom all the efforts of human weakness are vain, if Thou ordainest me to establish myself in this solitude, make it known to me, and lead to a good issue the beginning which Thou hast

already granted to my devotion”. Then, feeling himself inspired and consoled by his prayer, he commenced at that very spot the cell in which originated the abbey and existing town of St. Seine.

Where a natural cavern was wanting, they constructed some shelter, a hut of branches or reeds; and if there were several, an oratory with a little cloister. Sometimes they hollowed out a cell in the rock, where the bed, the seat, and the table were all cut out of the living stone. Sometimes (like St. Calais in a desert of Maine) meeting in the depth of the wood the remains of some ancient forsaken buildings, they transformed them into cells and chapels, by means of branches woven between the fragments of ruined wall.

When the course of the liturgy led them to that magnificent enumeration of the victories of patriarchal faith, made by St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, in which he represents Abraham waiting with confidence in the tents of exile for the eternal city, whose maker and builder was God, they might have applied to themselves that sacred text, “Dwelling in tabernacles”. They might well say that their dwelling-places were the tabernacles, that is to say, the tents, the cells of exile. At night, lying upon their stone pallets, and during the day protected against every interruption by the thick foliage and inaccessible passes, they gave themselves up to the delights of prayer and contemplation, to visions of a future life in heaven.

Sometimes, also, the future destiny of those great works, of which, unawares, they sowed the seed, was instinctively revealed to their thoughts. St. Imier heard the bells of the monastery which was one day to replace his hermitage, echoing through the night. “Dear brother”, he said to his only companion, “dost thou hear that distant bell that has already waked me three times?” “No,” said the servant. But Imier rose, and allowed himself to be guided by this mysterious sound across the high plateau and narrow gorges of the valley of Doubs, as far as the gushing fountain, where he established himself, and which has retained his name to the present time. Elsewhere in that Limousin, which was so celebrated for the number and austerity of its solitaries, Junian, the son of a companion of Clovis, abandoned everything at the age of fifteen to take shelter in an unknown cell on the banks of the Vienne; he left it only to pray in the depths of the wood in the shade of a great hawthorn-tree. Under this blossom tree they buried him after forty years of that holy and wild life, and the hawthorn disappeared only to make room for a monastery, which was the origin of the existing town of St. Junian.

The principal aim of all these monks was not to form communities in the forests. They sought only solitude there; they would rather have lived as anchorites than as cenobites. Some, and a great number, after having founded or lived in monasteries, according to the rule of the life in common, aspired to a more perfect existence, and to end their career as St. Benedict had begun his, in some cavern unknown to men. St. Benedict himself had inscribed at the head of his Rule that, to be a good anchorite, it was necessary first to have learned how to strive against the devil under the common rule and with the help of the brethren : this was, according to him, an apprenticeship necessary before engaging in what he calls single combat against the temptations of the flesh and the thoughts. Others still more numerous yielded to the overpowering

attraction which led them to the depths of the forests, not only to escape from the discussions, violences, and cruel wars, of which every Christian of that period was the witness and too often the victim, but to flee from contact with other men, and to enjoy silence, peace, and freedom.

This, however, was a vain hope. Their solitude soon inspired too much envy, and their austerity too much admiration, to be long respected. Happy were they who heard only the cries of the wild beasts echoing round their cells: —

“Nunc exoriri gemitus iraeque leonum  
Vincla recusantum, et sera sub nocte rudentum  
Saevire, ac formae magnorum ululare luporum”

Often, in fact, when they celebrated the nocturnal service in their chapels, thatched with green leaves or rushes, the howls of the wolves accompanied their voices, and served as a response to the psalmody of their matins. But they feared much more the step and voice of men. Sometimes in the middle of the night, the voluntary exile, who has hid himself here in the hope of remaining for ever forgotten or unknown, hears some one knock at the door of his hut. It is at first only a reverential and timid tap; he is silent, thinking it a temptation of the devil. It continues: he opens and asks, “What would you with me? Why do you pursue me into my solitary dwelling? Who are you?” He is answered, “A poor sinner, or a young Christian, or an old priest weary of the world.” “But what would you with me?” “Be saved like you, and with you: learn from you the way of peace and of the kingdom of God.” This unexpected and undesired guest must be admitted. The next morning, or the next again, comes another; and they are followed by others still. The anchorites saw themselves thus changed into cenobites, and monastic life established itself involuntarily and unexpectedly amid the most distant forest.

Besides, it was vain to flee from solitude to solitude; they were pursued, seized upon, surrounded, and importuned incessantly, not only by disciples ambitious of living, like them, in silence and prayer, but by the surrounding populations themselves. Reassured and trustful, growing familiar in their turn with the gloomy arches, where these men of peace and blessing, of labour and charity, had gone before them, they followed in their track; and when they had discovered the hermits, kept up a continued assault, some bringing offerings, others asking alms, prayers, or advice, all seeking the cure of all the troubles both of soul and body. The rich came like the poor, whenever they were afflicted by the hand of God or man. The widows and orphans, the lame and blind, the paralytic and epileptic, the lepers, and, above all, the possessed, appeared in a crowd, in quest of a virtue and knowledge equally supernatural to their eyes.

The solitaries withdrew with modesty from the exercise of the supernatural power attributed to them. When the abbot Launomar, who being at first a shepherd, had become a student, then the cellarer of a monastery of Chartres, and lastly, an anchorite in the great desert of Perche, which then attracted many lovers of solitude, was

discovered, and approached by a crowd of petitioners, among whom was a distressed father who brought his crippled son to be cured—"You ask too much," said he, "of a sinful man." The same sentiment animated the noble Maglorius, one of the Breton missionaries, and the successor of Samson at Dol. After having abdicated his bishopric to live as a hermit in the isle of Jersey, which Childebert, as has been already seen, bestowed upon a Breton monastery, the lord of a neighbouring isle, rich in a hundred ploughs, as says the legend, and possessing innumerable fishing-boats, came to ask this saint to restore her speech to his only daughter, who, despite her rich inheritance and rare beauty, could not find a husband because she was dumb. "My son," answered Maglorius, "torment me not: that which you ask is beyond the power of our weakness. When I am sick, I know not whether I am to die or be cured. How, then, having no power over my own life, should I be able to take away any of the other calamities permitted by God? Return to your house, and offer abundant alms to God, that you may obtain from Him the cure of your daughter." He ended, however, by yielding to the entreaties of the father, who gave him a third part of all his possessions, and by obtaining this miracle from God.

The same Maglorius, in leaving his bishopric for solitude, found himself pursued by a crowd so numerous and eager for instruction and consolation, and at the same time so lavish of gifts and alms, that he was in despair. He told his grief with his face bathed in tears, to his successor in the see of Dol. "No," said he, "I can no longer remain within reach of all these people: I will fly and seek some inaccessible place, where men have never penetrated, nor can penetrate, where no human steps can follow me". The copal church, was forced to leave his diocese and emigrate a second time, before the outcries of those who denounced him as an invader who intended to bewitch the whole province, and leave no inheritance to the inhabitants or their descendants.

Recruits, or importunate followers of another kind, often came to trouble their solitude. The condition of Gaul was but too well adapted to encourage the formation and prolonged existence of the habits of brigandage, which have kept their ground in many modern countries through all the progress of civilisation, and which are still to be found in our own day in Spain and Italy. Some contented themselves with stealing the tools of the solitary who had no other wealth, or depriving him of the single cow which he had taken with him; but, more frequently, they aimed even at the life of the intruders. The forests were the natural resort of these bands of brigands, who lived by theft, and who did not recoil from murder when they could thus rob their victims more completely. They could not without rage see the monks disputing the possession of their hitherto uncontested domain, penetrating farther than they themselves could do, and in such a way as always to defeat their greediness, by entangling those who followed them in bewildering complications of the way.<sup>1</sup> And they were always tempted to believe that these strange guests went either to bury or to seek hidden treasure. The abbot Launomar, whose legend unites so many incidents of the forest-life of the monastic founders, found himself one morning surrounded by a troop of bandits, who had spent all the night in seeking for him. But when they saw him appear upon the threshold of his hut of branches, they were afraid, and fell at his feet, praying his pardon. "My children," he said, "what do you ask of me? What came you to seek here?" And when they had confessed their murderous intention, he said to them, "God have pity on you! Go in

peace. Give up war brigandage, that you may merit the mercy of God. As for me, I have no treasure here below. Christ is my only treasure”.

The monks almost always thus disarmed the brigands by their goodness, gentleness, and venerable aspect; they led them to repentance, and often even to monastic life, taking them for companions and disciples.

Sequanos, whose tranquil courage and fervent piety we have already narrated, had been warned that the borders of the impenetrable forest into which he was about to venture were occupied by bands of assassins, who were even called anthropophagi. “No matter”, he said to one of his relatives, who imagined himself the owner of this region, and who gave him this information; “show me only the road by which to reach it; for if my desires are dictated by a divine instinct, all the ferocity of these men will change into the mildness of the dove.” And, in fact, when they understood that he had established himself near their caverns, and when they had seen him, the wolves became lambs; they even became labourers to serve and aid him and his, to cut down the neighbouring trees, to dig the foundations and build the walls of his monastery.

Whilst this occurred near the sources of the Seine, similar events were taking place not far from its mouth. Ebrulph, a noble Neustrian lord, had given up conjugal life and the favour of kings to betake himself to the wild solitudes of the forest of Ouche, in the *Pagus Oximensis*, which was the hiding-place of numerous brigands. One of these met him: “Oh, monk!” he said, “what can bring you into this place? Do you not see that it is made for bandits and not for hermits? To dwell here you must live by robbery and the wealth of others. We will not tolerate those who would live by their own labour; and besides, the soil is barren; you may take pains to cultivate it, but it will give you back nothing.” “I come,” answered the saint, “to weep for my sins; under the protection of God I fear the menaces of no man, nor yet the hardships of any labour. The Lord knoweth how to spread a table for His servants in the wilderness; and thou thyself, if thou wilt, mayst seat thyself at it with me”. The brigand said nothing, but returned next day to join Ebrulph with three loaves baked under the ashes, and a honeycomb: he and his companions became the first monks of the new monastery, afterwards celebrated under the name of its holy founder. The place from which all men fled soon became the refuge of the poor; alms took the place of robbery, and to such an extent, that one day when a beggar had been sent away because the new-born community had only half a loaf remaining, Ebrulph sent after him to give him that half, trusting for himself and his brethren to the alms of heaven. They wanted so little from him that he was able to found and govern fifteen other monasteries.

These were not, however, the only encounters or the sole intercourse which their voluntary exile in the woods procured to the monks of the Merovingian age. At the other extremity of the social scale they excited the same feelings of surprise and sympathy. They were perpetually found out and disturbed by kings and nobles, who passed in the chase all the time which was not occupied in war. All the Franks of high rank and their trusty followers gave themselves up to that exercise with a passion which nothing else in their life surpassed. In the vast forests which covered Gaul they found, not only an inexhaustible supply of game, but, above all, animals of size and force so formidable as to offer them all the perils and emotions of war. The elan, the buffalo, the



bison, and especially the *urus* (*Auërochs*), so famous for its ferocity, were adversaries worthy of the boldest combatant or the most warlike prince. But there, in the midst of the forest, religion awaited them; and while they thought only of sport, and of pursuing the deer, she raised before them imposing and unexpected sights which filled them with emotion and respect. Sometimes the spectacle of these solitaires, vowed to the service of God, was enough to convert to monastic life the cavalier who came upon them suddenly when he reckoned upon striking his prey with spear or javelin. Such was the case with Bracchio, a young Thuringian huntsman, attached to the person of the Frank Duke of Auvergne, and perhaps brought, like Radegund, from his native land, after the conquest of Thuringia by that same son of Clovis who had listened to and honoured the slave Portianus. This Bracchio, still savage like his name, which signifies a bear's cub, passed his life hunting in the vast oak woods which still covered the north of Auvergne. In hot pursuit of an enormous boar, he was led one day to the threshold of the hermitage in which a noble Auvergnat, named Emilian, whom even the wild animals had learned to respect, lived as an anchorite. The dogs stopped short and dared not attack the boar; the young hunter alighted from his horse, saluted the old man, and sat down to rest by his side. The Gallo-Roman opened his arms to the German, and spoke to him of the infinite sweetness of solitude with God. The Bear's cub listened, and left him without replying, but already decided in his heart. Soon after he applied himself to learn reading and writing, seeking instruction for that purpose from the priests and monks whom he met on his road. At the end of three years he could read the Psalter. Then, his master having died, he went to join Emilian, who bequeathed to him his hermitage, from which he was taken to re-establish relaxed discipline at Menat, in that ancient monastery, the mutilated church of which is still admired on the picturesque banks of the Sioule.

But the most frequent results of these encounters were gifts and foundations suggested to the munificence of princes and great men by recollection of the various and deep impressions left upon their souls by the language and aspect of these men of peace and prayer, buried in the depths of the woods. Their intervention in favour of the animals pursued by these powerful hunters, and the right of asylum, so to speak, which they had established for the game in their neighborhood, almost always led to incidents which, told long after, were transformed and embellished at pleasure, and which, engraved upon the popular memory, associated themselves by an indissoluble link with the fame and greatness of numerous monasteries whose origin is traced back to sylvan traditions.

While the chiefs and dependants of the Gallo-Frank aristocracy visited only by intervals, and for the mere pleasure of destruction, the shades under which the entire life of the monks was passed, these recluses naturally lived in a kind familiarity with the animals which they saw bounding around them, whose instincts and habits they studied at their leisure, and which, in course of time, they easily managed to tame. It might be said that, by a kind of instinctive agreement, they respected each other. In the numberless legends which depict monastic life in the forest, there is not a single example of a monk who was devoured or even threatened by the most ferocious animals; nor do we ever see that they betook themselves to the chase, even when urged by hunger, by which they sometimes suffered to extremity. How, then, can we wonder that, seeing themselves pursued and struck by pitiless strangers, these animals should

seek refuge with the peaceful guests of that solitude which they inhabited together? and how can we fail to understand why Christian nations, accustomed for ages to find shelter and protection with the monks from every violence, should love to recall these touching legends which consecrate, under a poetical and popular form, the thought, that the dwelling of the saints is the inviolable refuge of weakness pursued by strength?

One of the first and most curious examples of these relations between the king and the monks, in which the wood and animals served as intermediary influences, is that of Childebert and the holy abbot Karileff. Karileff was a noble Auvergnat, who, having first been led to Menat, and then become the companion of St. Avitus and St. Mesmin at Micy, in the Orleannaise, had ended by taking refuge with two companions in a fertile glade in the woods of Maine. Cultivating this unknown corner of the earth, he lived surrounded by all kinds of animals, and, among others, by a wild buffalo, an animal already rare in that country, and which he had succeeded in taming completely. It was a pleasure, says the legend, to see the old man standing by the side of this monster, occupied in caressing him, gently rubbing him between his horns or along his enormous dewlaps and the folds of flesh round his strong neck; after which the animal, grateful, but faithful to its instinct, regained at a gallop the depths of the forest.

Childebert, the son of Clovis, is, as we have already said, the great hero of monastic legends. He must have loved the chase as passionately as any of his ancestors or successors, for in almost all the legends which mention him he is occupied in this pursuit. Arriving in Maine, with Queen Ultrogoth, to pursue his ordinary sport, he heard with joy that a buffalo, an animal almost unknown by that time, had been seen in the neighbourhood. All is arranged next day that this extraordinary chase may have full success; the bows and arrows are prepared in haste, the trail of the beast sought at break of day, the dogs first held in leash, then slipped, and giving voice with full mouth; the historian of the solitary gives us all the details with the gusto of a practised hunter. The terrified buffalo fled to take refuge near the cell of his friend, and when the huntsmen approached they saw the man of God standing beside the beast to protect it. The king was told of it, and, hastening forward indignant, cried in a furious tone, when he saw Karileff in prayer and the buffalo tranquil beside him, "How are you so bold, unknown wretches, as to invade thus an unconceded forest of my domain, and to trouble the greatness of my hunting?" The monk attempted to calm him, and protested that he had come there only to serve God apart from men, and not to despise the sovereign authority or disturb the royal game. "I order thee," answered the king, "thee and thine, to leave this place instantly; woe to thee if thou art found here again!" Having said this he went away scornfully; but had scarcely taken a few steps when his courser stopped short; in vain he struck his spurs deep into the bleeding flanks of the horse; he could not advance a step. A faithful servant warned him to calm himself. Childebert listened to him, returned towards the saint, and alighting, received his blessing, drank of the wine of a little vineyard which the solitary had planted near his cell, and, though he found the wine bad enough, kissed the venerable hand that offered it, and ended by bestowing all the lands of the royal treasury in that neighbourhood upon him, that he might build a monastery there. The saint at first refused the donation, but at length accepted as much ground as he could ride round in a day, mounted on his ass; and in this enclosure rose the abbey from which has come the existing city of St. Calais.

Returning to the queen, Childebert told her his adventure. Ultrogoth, already much interested in the monks, was eager in her turn to see the holy recluse. She sent to ask his permission to visit him, promising, if he consented, to give him full possession of the entire domain of which he occupied only a part. But Karileff obstinately refused her request. "As long as I live," he said to the envoy of the queen, "I shall never see the face of a woman, and no woman shall ever enter my monastery. And why should this queen be so desirous of seeing a man disfigured by fasts and rural labours, soiled and covered with stains like a chameleon? Besides, I know the deceptions of the old enemy: we must needs defy, even in the horror of the desert, temptations which made Adam lose Paradise, with the happiness of life and his intercourse with God. Say then to the queen that I will pray for her, but that it does not become a monk to sell the sight of his face to a woman, and that, as for her lands, she must give them to whom she will. Say to her that the monks have no need of great possessions, nor she of my blessing; all that she can hope to have from us, her servants, she will have, remaining in her own house."

The same Childebert, softened and reconciled to the habits of the monks, appears in the legend of St Marculph, that brave abbot of Cotentin, whose exploits against the Saxon pirates, and friendship with the king of Paris, we have already seen. Before his death, the abbot of Nanteuil went to ask from the king a confirmation of all the numerous gifts which the monasteries founded by him had already received. As he approached Compiègne, where Childebert then resided, and while he rested from the fatigues of his journey in a field upon the bank of the Oise, the king's huntsmen passed him, pursuing a hare. The animal, after many doubles, took refuge under the robe of the abbot. At this sight one of the hunters addressed him rudely: "How darest thou, priest, lay hands upon the king's game? Restore the hare, or I will cut thy throat." Marculph released the hare; but the dogs all at once became motionless, the brutal huntsman fell from his horse, and in falling was seriously injured. At the prayer of his companions in the chase, the saint raised him up and healed him. Then the king, who was hunting in another direction, having heard what had occurred, went to meet his friend, alighted whenever he perceived him, asked his blessing, embraced him tenderly, led him to the castle of Compiègne, to spend the night, and granted him all that he asked, in an act of which Queen Ultrogoth and all the royal vassals present were the witnesses and sureties.

The name of a certain Childebert is also connected in some versions of a famous legend with the memory of one of those holy abbots who were so popular in the middle ages, not only in France, but everywhere, and especially in England and Germany. A young Greek of illustrious birth, named Egidius, had come, following the steps of Lazarus and of the Magdalene, to the shores of the Mediterranean, and, landing near the mouth of the Rhone, had grown old in solitude, hidden in the depths of a vast forest, without any other nourishment than the milk of a doe which lay in his grotto. But one day as the king of the country, named, according to some, Childebert, king of the Franks, and to others, Flavian, king of the Goths, was following the chase in this forest, the doe was started and pursued into the cavern by the hunters; one of them drew an arrow upon her, which struck the hand which the solitary raised to protect his companion. The king, touched, as these wild but simple natures almost always were, by the sight of this grand old man, almost naked, caused the wound to be dressed, returned often to see him, and at last made him consent to the erection of a monastery upon the

site of his grotto, of which he became abbot, and where he died in great sanctity. Such was, according to popular tradition, the origin of that celebrated and powerful abbey of St. Gilles, which became one of the great pilgrim shrines of the middle ages, and gave birth to a town, the capital of a district whose name was borne with pride by one of the most powerful feudal races, and which retains still a venerable church, classed among our most remarkable monuments of architecture and sculpture.

We meet the same incident in the legend of St. Nennok, the young and beautiful daughter of a British king, who gave up a husband whom her father wished to bestow her upon, in order to emigrate to Armorica, and devote herself to monastic life. The prince of the country, pursuing a stag in the neighbourhood of her monastery, saw the animal, half dead with fatigue, take refuge within the holy enclosure, upon which the hounds stopped short, not daring to go farther. Alighting from his horse and entering the church, he found the stag couched at the feet of the young abbess, amid the choir of nuns who were singing the service. He not only granted the animal its life, but himself remained in the community for a whole week, and at the end of that time laid upon the altar an act of donation, granting the surrounding lands to the monastery, with the addition of three hundred horses and mares, and three hundred head of cattle. It is easy to perceive in this history the popular translation of a more natural incident, of the asylum offered by the abbess Nennok to another daughter of a British king, whom her husband, out of love for monastic life, had forsaken, and who, setting out to seek him through Armorica, had been pursued by a licentious noble, and had found shelter only in the cell of her husband, from whence she passed to the monastery of Lan-Nennok in Plemeur.

It will be seen hereafter how Clotaire II, when he became master of the Frank monarchy, and was hunting in one of the royal forests of Sequania, pursued an enormous boar into the oratory inhabited by an old Irish monk, Deicolus, who had come to Gaul with St Columba; and, touched by seeing this ferocious beast lying before the little altar where the recluse stranger was at prayer, the king made a donation to him of all the land belonging to the royal treasury in the neighbourhood of his cell. When the donation was made and accepted, the man of God, who had stipulated that the life of the boar should be saved, took care to let him go free, and to protect his flight into the wood.

The great feudal vassals, as passionately fond of the chase as were the kings, and as much occupied with it, yielded, like them, to the influence of the monks when the latter appeared before them to protect the companions of their solitude. Basolus, born of a noble race in Limousin, and founder of the monastery of Viergy, in the hill country of Reims, having built a cell in the depth of the forest, sheltered by a stone cross, and where his whole furniture consisted of a little lectern admirably sculptured, to bear the Holy Scriptures on which he meditated unceasingly, was one day disturbed in his devotions by a great boar, which laid itself at his feet, as if to ask mercy for its life. Following the animal, came on horseback one of the most powerful lords of the neighbourhood, Attila, whom the mere glance of the solitary brought to a standstill, and rendered motionless. He was a good man at bottom, says the legend, though a great hunter: he evidenced this by making a gift to the abbot of all he possessed round the cell. Four centuries after, this tradition remained so fresh, that by an agreement,

scrupulously observed, the game hunted in the forest of Reims was always spared, both by the dogs and hunters, when it could reach the little wood over which the cross of St. Basle rose.

And it was not only from man, but from other animals that the compassionate solitaries protected the creatures whom they had accepted as guests of their solitude.

Launomar, of whom we have already quoted several anecdotes, was wandering in his forest of Perche, chanting psalms, when he encountered a doe flying from some wolves. He saw in this the symbol of a Christian soul pursued by devils: he wept for pity, and then cried to the wolves,

“Cruel wretches, return to your dens, and leave this poor little animal; the Lord wills that she should be snatched from your bloody fangs.” The wolves stopped at his voice, and turned back upon the road. “See, then,” said he to his companion, “how the devil, the most ferocious of wolves, is always seeking some one to devour in the Church of Christ” However, the doe followed him, and he passed two hours in caressing her before he sent her away.

The ancient authors who record these incidents, and many others of the same kind, are unanimous in asserting that this supernatural empire of the old monks over the animal creation, is explained by the primitive innocence which these heroes of penitence and purity had won back, and which placed them once more on a level with Adam and Eve in the terrestrial Paradise. The rage of the ferocious beasts, says one, is subdued into obedience to him who lives the life of the angels, as it was to our first parents before the Fall. The dignity, says another, which we had lost by the transgression of Adam was regained by the obedience of the saints, although the world was no more an Eden to them, and they had to bear the weight of all its distresses. Our first father received from the Creator the right of naming every living creature and subduing them to his will. “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Was it not by the same right that the beasts of the forest obeyed and attached themselves to these holy men like humble disciples? Is it wonderful, says Bede, that he who faithfully and loyally obeys the Creator of the universe should, in his turn, see all the creatures obedient to his orders and his wishes? Two thousand years before Redemption, in the solitudes of Idumea, it had been predicted of the just man reconciled to God that he should live in peace with the wild beasts. “And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.”

The dignity of history loses nothing by pausing upon these tales, and the pious trust supported by them. Written by a Christian, and for Christians, history would lie to herself if she affected to deny or ignore the supernatural intervention of Providence in the life of the saints chosen by God to guide, console, and edify His faithful people, and, by a holy example, to elevate them above the bonds and necessities of terrestrial life. Certainly fables are sometimes mixed with truth; imagination has allied itself to authentic tradition to alter or supersede it; and there have even been guilty frauds which have abused the faith and piety of our ancestors. But justice had been done on these by the jealous and learned criticism of those great masters of historic science whom the religious orders have furnished to the world, long before the systematic disdain and adventurous theories of our contemporary authorities had profited by some inexactitudes



and exaggerations, to throw back the whole of Catholic tradition into the rank of those semi-historic, semi-poetic mythologies, which precede every incomplete civilisation. There is not a writer of authority among us who would hesitate to repeat these fine expressions of a true Christian philosopher: "Some men have supposed it a mark of great piety to tell little lies in favour of the articles of religion. That is as dangerous as it is useless: they thus run the risk of making men doubt what is true out of hatred for that which is false; and besides, our piety has so many truths to nourish it, that lies exist at their expense, like cowardly soldiers in an army of brave men".

All Christian writers have spoken and thought thus; but their minds have been no less influenced by the sentiment which dictated to Titus Livius, a pagan of the age of Augustus, these noble words, which no Christian pen would disavow : "I am not ignorant that the vulgar spirit which does not desire the interference of the gods in present affairs is opposed to the publication of the wonders of the past; but whilst I narrate the things of old, it appears to me that my heart itself enters into the period of which I write ; I feel that religious respect constrains me to reproduce in my annals what so many wise men have thought it their duty to collect for posterity."

I may be permitted to quote here a fine passage, which has not been sufficiently admired, from Count de Maistre:—

"With regard to mythology, hear us still further. Without doubt, all religion gives rise to a mythology; but do not forget, dear Count, what I add to that statement, that the mythology of the Christian religion is always chaste, always useful, and often sublime without it being possible, by a particular privilege, to confound it with religion itself.... Hear, I pray you, a single example; it is taken from I know not what ascetic book, the name of which has escaped me:—

"A saint, whose very name I have forgotten, had a vision, in which he saw Satan standing before the throne of God, and, listening, he heard the evil spirit say, 'Why hast Thou condemned me, who have offended Thee but once, whilst Thou savest thousands of men who have offended Thee many times?' God answered him, 'Hast thou ONCE asked pardon of Me?'"

The Church, however, could not be answerable for those errors or falsehoods which have crept into some legends. She obliges no one to believe any of these prodigies, even the best verified which we find related in them. But when such events are recorded by serious authors, and especially by contemporaries, the Church, herself founded upon miracles, acknowledges and commends them to the admiration of Christians, as a proof of the faithfulness of His promises, who has said of Himself, that "He will be glorified in His saints," and that "he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do."

It is, then, both just and natural to register these pious traditions, without pretending to assign the degree of certainty which belongs to them, or, on the other hand, to put limits to the omnipotence of God. They will not disturb the minds of those who know the legitimate necessities of nations accustomed to live specially by faith, and what are the riches of divine mercy towards humble and faithful hearts. Touching and sincere echoes of the faith of our fathers, they have nourished, charmed, and consoled twenty generations of energetic and fervent Christians during the most

productive and brilliant ages of Christendom. Authentic or not, there is not one which does not do honour to human nature, and which does not establish some victory of weakness over strength, or good over evil.

It is certain, besides, that to our forefathers, to the Gallo-Franks, from whom we have the honour of being descended, the miracle seemed one of the most ordinary and simple conditions of the action of God upon the world. The marvels which we have related were received by them as the natural result of innocence restored by sacrifice. To the eyes of recently-converted nations, dazzled by so many great and holy examples, even when their faith remained dull and their manners ferocious, a man completely master of himself became once more master of nature. And the animals who approached these marvellous men were themselves transformed, and attained to a clearer intelligence and more lasting gentleness. All kinds of attaching qualities, and natural relations with the existence of men who isolated themselves from their fellow-creatures to live in community with nature, were found in them. Whilst the monastic doctors found pleasure in seeking subjects of instruction, or analogies with the conditions and trials of religious life, in the peculiarities of their instincts and habits, more or less faithfully observed, the faithful united in attributing to the holy monks, as companions, servants, and almost friends, familiar animals whose society peopled their solitude, and whose docility lightened their labours. This intelligence and sympathy with the animals, as with all animate nature, is a distinctive characteristic of the monastic legend. Antique fables may sometimes reappear there, but always to be transfigured to the advantage of a holy belief or a difficult virtue.

And the most authentic narratives confirmed these pious traditions. In that history of the Fathers of the Desert which was commenced by St. Athanasius and St. Jerome, there are a thousand incidents, more or less well established, which show us the most ferocious animals at the feet of Anthony, Pacome, Macarius, Hilarion, and their emulators. At each page are to be seen the wild asses, the crocodiles, the hippopotami, the hyaenas, and especially the lions, transformed into respectful companions, and docile servants of these prodigies of sanctity; and the conclusion drawn is, not that the animals had reasonable souls, but that God glorified those who devoted themselves to His glory by showing thus how all nature obeyed man before he was shut out from Paradise for his disobedience. Let us confine ourselves to the touching history of Gerasimus, the Christian Androcles, abbot of a monastery on the banks of the Jordan, who had drawn a thorn out of the foot of a lion, and whom the grateful animal would never abandon. The terrible beast was, after a fashion, received as a member of the community: he lived upon milk and boiled herbs like the monks; he drew water from the Jordan for the wants of the monastery; and when the old abbot died the lion followed him to the grave and died there, howling with grief.

The Gaul, Sulpicius Severus, who must be regarded as the most ancient of our religious annalists, and who had studied monastic institutions in the East, confirms in his *Dialogues* all that Eastern writers have said on this subject. He relates the facts of which he himself had been witness in the Thebaid: how, in traversing the desert, he had seen the monk who accompanied him offer the fruit of the palm to a lion whom they met, which he ate quietly and peacefully like any domestic animal; and how, in the hut of another solitary, a she-wolf appeared regularly every evening at the supper-hour, and

waited at the door till she was called to eat the remains of the little repast, after which she licked the hand of her host, who caressed her familiarly.

Sulpicius Severus wrote, when he had returned into his own country, the life of St. Martin, the first apostle of cenobitical life in Gaul. He there relates that the great bishop, visiting his diocese and walking along the banks of the Loire, followed by a numerous crowd, perceived the aquatic birds named plungeons pursuing and devouring the fish. "Behold," said he, "the image of the devil: see how he lays his snares for the imprudent, how he devours them, and how he is never satisfied." And immediately he commanded these aquatic birds to leave the waters in which they swam, and to dwell henceforth in the desert. At his voice, says the historian, and to the great admiration of the multitude, the birds, obeying him, came out of the river, and flew in a body to the skirts of the neighbouring forests.

Who does not remember the raven who, according to St. Jerome, carried a half-loaf every day to the hermit Paul, and who brought him a whole one the day that Anthony went to visit him? Like his great brethren in the East, the patriarch of the Western monks had also his familiar bird, which, however, came to receive its food instead of bringing food to him. St. Gregory the Great, in his biography of Benedict, records that, while still at his first monastery of Subiaco, a raven from the neighbouring forest came to the saint at every meal and was fed out of his own hand.

These tales, piously recorded by the highest genius which the Church has possessed, prepare us to listen without surprise to many other traits of the familiar intimacy of the monks with the inferior creatures.

Sometimes wild sparrows, as the legend goes, came down from the trees to gather grains of corn or crumbs of bread from the hand of that abbot Maixent before whom Clovis knelt, on his return from his victory over Alaric; and the nations thus learned how great was his humility and gentleness. Sometimes other little woodland birds came to seek their food and to be caressed by that Walaric who will shortly appear before us as one of the most illustrious disciples of St. Columba, the apostle of Ponthieu, and the founder of the great monastery of Leuconaus. Charmed with this gentle company, when his disciples approached, and when the larks fluttered terrified round him, he stopped the monks while still at a distance, and signed to them to draw back. "My sons", he said, "do not frighten my little friends, do them no harm: let them satisfy themselves with what we have left." On another occasion Karileff, when binding up and pruning his little vineyard, the poor produce of which he had offered to King Childebert, stifled by the heat, had taken off his frock and hung it upon an oak; and when, at the end of the hard day's labour, he took down his monastic habit, he found that a wren, the smallest and most curious bird in our climate, had nestled there and laid an egg. The holy man was so touched with joy and admiration, that he passed the whole night in praising God. A similar anecdote is related of St. Malo, one of the great monastic apostles who has left his name to a diocese in the northern part of Armorica; but with this difference, that the latter permitted the bird to continue in his mantle till her brood was hatched. Tradition becomes more and more blended with the dreams of imagination in proportion as it penetrates back into Celtic legends; one of which records that when Keivin, another Breton monk, prayed with his hands extended, the birds laid their eggs there.

The animals naturally sought and preferred to dwell in the domains of masters who were so gentle and paternal; from which arises the amusing story of the monk Maglorius and Count Loiescon. This rich Armorican count, whom Maglorius had cured of leprosy, made him a gift of the half of a great estate, bathed by the sea Maglorius having come to take possession, all the birds which filled the woods on the estate, and all the fishes which inhabited its shore, precipitated themselves in a troop towards the portion which came to the monk, as if declaring that they would have no other lord but him. When the count, and particularly his wife, saw the half of the estate which they retained thus depopulated, they were dismayed, and insisted that Maglorius should exchange with them. But when the exchange was made, the birds and fishes immediately followed Maglorius, going and coming, so as always to keep in the portion of the monks.

And it was the animals who spontaneously indicated the predestined sites of great monastic foundations. In relating the history of the martyr monk, St. Leger, we shall see the position of Fecamp, on the Neustrian coast, which served him both as a prison and asylum, pointed out to the Duke Ansegise by a stag which he was hunting.

It was told in Champagne, that when Theodoric, the son of a famous bandit, but himself almoner and secretary to St. Remy, the great apostle of the Franks, desired to found a house which he might himself retire to, and was seeking a site for it, he saw a white eagle hovering in the air, which seemed to mark out by its slow and circular motion the enclosure of the future monastery; after the erection of the famous abbey, which took the name of St. Thierry, this miraculous eagle appeared in the same place every year.

In the following century, St. Nivard, Archbishop of Reims, visiting his diocese on foot, arrived in the fine country which overlooks the course of the Marne, opposite Eprenay; and finding himself fatigued, slept under the shade of a great beech, on the knees of his companion, Berchaire. During his sleep he saw a dove descend from heaven upon the tree, and, after marking the same circuit three times by flying round it, reascend to the skies. Berchaire, who had not slept, saw the same vision. They agreed to build an abbey there, which was called Hautvillers. Berchaire was its first abbot; and the high altar rose upon the same spot where the tree had stood when the dove alighted, a sweet symbol of the tranquil innocence which was to reign there.

But a still closer degree of intercourse between the monks and animated nature appears in the annals of these early ages. Innumerable are the legends which show these wild animals obedient to the voice of the monks, reduced to a kind of domestic condition by the men of God, obliged to serve and follow them. We shall have to tell, from contemporary narratives, how the illustrious founder of Luxeuil, St. Columba, in traversing the forests of the southern Vosges, saw the squirrels descend from the trees, to leap upon his hand and hide themselves in the folds of his cowl; how he made the bears obey him; and how he passed with safety through troops of wolves, who rubbed against his dress without daring to touch him.

The same legends are to be found on the coast of Armorica as on the banks of the Danube. Now it is Corbinian, the Frank monk who founded the bishopric of Freysingen, and who, crossing the Tyrol to go to Rome, obliged the bear who had killed one of his

baggage-horses to take upon his own back the burden of his victim, and thus to accompany him to Rome. Now it is Samson, the metropolitan of Dol, who, seeing his monks disturbed by the cries of the wild birds, collected them all together one night in the court of the monastery, imposing silence upon them, and the next morning dismissed them, forbidding them to recommence their cry, an interdiction which “they observed inviolably”.

Now it is Renan, the anchorite of Cornouaille, who commanded a wolf to give up the sheep of a poor peasant, which it was carrying away, and who was obeyed on the instant. Or, again, the blind Herve, patron of the popular singers of Armorica, whose dog had been devoured by a wolf, and who compelled this wolf humbly to take the dog’s place, and, secured in a leash, to accompany him in his wanderings.

The wolves are everywhere to be met with, and appear again in the legend of St. Malo. Forced by his persecutors to hide himself in a solitude of Saintonge, he was discovered by the crowd attracted there to see a tame wolf, which, having devoured the ass of the solitary, came every day to seek the ass’s panniers, in order to fill them with the wood which he had to collect in the forest.

But none of the monastic apostles of our little Brittany ever surpassed, in this respect, that Paul who has left his name to the city and diocese of St. Pol-de-Leon, and whose empire over the most ferocious animals was absolute, and of great advantage to the population. Once he compelled a buffalo, who had overthrown and broken in pieces with his horns a cell which a monk had built near the fountain where the animal came to drink, to disappear permanently in the depths of the forest. Another time, he tamed and reduced to a state of domestication a ferocious she-bear and her cubs, whose race was long marked and preserved by the country people. Here it was an enormous bear, who drew back before him, till she fell into a ditch and broke her neck. There it was a crocodile or sea-serpent, who had put the count of the canton to flight with all his soldiers, whom Paul compelled to throw itself into the sea, upon that point of the coast of Cornouaille where a whirlpool called *l’Abîme du Serpent* is still shown.

The legend does not stop mid-way: it adds that, seeing the monastery inhabited by his sister upon the sea-shore threatened by the high tides, he made the sea draw back four thousand paces, and commanded the nuns to mark the new boundary of the waters with stones, “which, on the instant, increased into great and high rocks, to bridle the fury of the waves.” It is easy to understand how, under the thatched roof of the Celtic peasant’s hut, the works of embankment, which were doubtless superintended by the Breton emigrant who was the first bishop of the diocese, should be interpreted thus.

Traditions relative to the influence exercised by the monks over the wild animals, not only for their personal service, but for the advancement of their labours in the clearance and cultivation of the country, abound especially in Armorica, and the other Celtic countries. Thegonnec, another Breton abbot, had the materials for his church carried by a wolf. And Herve, whom we have just quoted, made a wolf labour like an ox. “It was wonderful,” says the legend, “to see this wolf live in the same stable with the sheep without harming them, draw the plough, bear burdens, and do everything else like a domestic animal.”



In this dramatic struggle of the monks with nature, the wolves, as has been seen, played the most habitual part; but the stags sometimes disputed with them the first place in these wonderful transformations. In Ireland two stags drew to its last dwelling-place the body of Kellac, hermit and bishop, assassinated by his four disciples, who, before murdering him, had kept him shut up for a whole night in the hollow of an oak which was as large as a cavern. The abbey of Lancarvan, in Cambria, drew its name and origin from the memory of two stags which the Irish disciples of St. Cadok had yoked to a cart laden with wood for the monastery. Colodocus, hermit and bishop, having refused to give up a stag which had taken refuge in his hermitage to the noble who pursued it, the furious hunter took away seven oxen and a cow which the solitary and his disciples used in their labours. The next morning eight stags came out of the wood, and offered themselves to the yoke to replace the cattle carried off from him who had saved the life of their companion.

The legend of St. Leonor follows, one of the finest pearls from the precious casket of Celtic tradition. Leonor was one of those monk-bishops who came from the British Islands in the sixth century, like Samson, Maglorius, and Brieuc, to evangelise the Celts of Armorica. Having established himself in a desert position, at the mouth of the Rauce, where he and his sixty disciples could live only on the produce of the chase and fisheries, he saw one day, when praying, a little white bird settle at his feet, which carried in its beak an ear of corn. "There was, then, upon this wild waste some spot where corn could grow, where even some ears of corn were growing." The saint thanked God, and directed one of his monks to follow the bird, who led him to a glade in the neighbouring forest, where some plants of wheat had been preserved by resowing themselves—the last remnant, perhaps, of a rich cultivation which had disappeared from these regions with the inhabitants who brought it there. At this news the saint intoned the *Te Deum*; and the next morning, at break of day, having first sung matins, all the community took the road, with Leonor at their head, towards the forest, to cut it down. This work lasted long: the monks, overcome by fatigue, entreated their father to abandon that overwhelming task, aid to seek other soil less hard to labour. He refused to listen to them, telling them it was the devil who sent to them that temptation to idleness. But it was still worse when, the forest cut down, the cleared soil had to be cultivated. Then the monks resolved to leave their leader there, and fly during the night. But they were reassured and consoled by seeing twelve noble stags coming of themselves to be yoked to the ploughs, like so many pairs of oxen. After having ploughed all day, when they were loosed in the evening, they returned to their lair in the depth of the wood, but only to return on the morning of the next day. This lasted for five weeks and three days, until the new fields were prepared to yield an abundant harvest. After which the twelve stags disappeared, carrying with them the blessing of the bishop emigrant.

The Bollandists, with their habitual prudence, take care to make a protest of their incredulity with respect to these travesties of historic truth. An ingenious and learned man of our own times has pointed out their true and legitimate origin. According to him, after the gradual disappearance of the Gallo-Roman population, the oxen, horses, and dogs had returned to a savage state, and it was in the forests that, the British missionaries had to seek these animals to employ them anew for domestic uses. The miracle consisted in restoring to man the empire and use of the creatures which God has

given him for instruments. This redomestication of animals which had relapsed into a savage condition, is one of the most interesting episodes in the civilising mission of the ancient cenobites.

However, their whole existence in the forests was a series of painful and persevering labours, of which posterity and the neighbouring populations were to reap the benefit. The mere clearance of the forests, undertaken successively in all quarters of Gaul, and pursued with unwearied constancy by the spade and axe of the monk, was of the greatest service to future generations. The destruction of the woods, which has now become alarming, and even in some cases a real calamity, was then the first of necessities. It was, besides, carried on with prudence and moderation. Ages passed before the scarcity of wood was felt, even in the sad southern provinces from which woodland growth seems to have disappeared for ever; and during these ages the monks continued without intermission to cut down the great masses of forest—to pierce them, to divide them, to open them up, and even to make great clearings here and there, which continually increased, and were put into regular cultivation. They carried labour, fertility, human strength and intelligence into those solitudes which till then had been abandoned to wild beasts, and to the disorder of spontaneous vegetation. They devoted their entire life to transforming into rich pastures, and fields carefully sown and ploughed, a soil which was bristling with woods and thickets.

It was not a pleasant, short, or easy task: to accomplish it, all the energy of wills freely submitted to faith, all the perseverance produced by the spirit of association, joined to a severe discipline, was needed. This persevering energy never failed them. Nowhere did they draw back, or restore voluntarily to the desert that which they had once undertaken to reclaim. On the contrary, we see them reach the extreme limit of human power in their field labours and the standing-ground they gained; disputing with the ice, the sand, and the rocks, the last fragments of soil that could be cultivated; installing themselves sometimes in marshes, up to that time supposed inaccessible; sometimes among fir-woods laden with hoar-frost the whole year through. Sometimes it was necessary to have recourse to fire as the means of opening a road through the wood, and getting rid of the old trunks which would have rendered all cultivation impossible. But most generally it was spade in hand that they went before to clear a space of soil sufficient to be sown or to become a meadow. They began in the immediate neighbourhood of the primitive cell, generally placed near a water-course, which helped in the formation of meadows. By degrees the clearing extended further, and even into the thickest shades. Great oaks fell, to be replaced by harvests. These monks, most of whom had studied literature, were doubtless reminded then of the fine verses of Lucan—

“Tunc omnia late

Procumbunt nemora et spoliantur robore silvae ...

Sed fortes tremuere man us, motique verenda

Majestate loci ...

Procumbunt orni, nodosa impellitur ilex ...

Tunc primurn posuere comas, et fronde carentes  
Admisere diem, propulsaque robore denso  
Sustinuit se silva cadens.”

The humble prose of our monastic annals reproduces this picture a hundred times in Latin less pure and less magnificent, but which has, nevertheless, the powerful charm of reality and simplicity. When St. Brieuc and his eighty monks from Great Britain landed in Armorica, and marked the site on which the town which afterwards bore his name was erected, they proceeded, like the soldiers of Caesar, into the forests sacred to the Druids. They surveyed the ancient woods at first with curiosity, says the chronicle; they searched on all sides through these immemorial shades. They reached at last a valley branching out to either hand, the sides of which were everywhere clothed with fresh foliage, and divided by a transparent stream. Immediately they all set to work: they overthrew the great trees, they rooted out the copse, they cut down the brushwood and undergrowth; in a short time they had converted the impenetrable thicket into an open plain. This done, they had recourse to the spade and hoe; they dug and weeded the soil, and wrought it with minute care, thus putting it into a condition to produce abundant harvests.

Frequently they replaced the forest trees with fruit-trees; like that Telio, a British monk, who planted with his own hands, aided by St. Samson, an immense orchard, or, as the legend says, a true forest of fruit-trees, three miles in extent, in the neighbourhood of Dol. To him is attributed the introduction of the apple-tree into Armorica, where cider continues the national beverage. Others planted vines in a favourable exposure, and succeeded in acclimatising it in those northern districts of Gaul afterwards known as Brittany, Normandy, and Picardy, where the inhabitants have not succeeded in preserving it. They also gave particular attention to the care of bees, as has been already testified by the agreement between the abbot of Dol and the Bishop of Paris. No trade seemed too hard for them, those of the carpenter and mason being as readily adopted as those of the wood-cutter and gardener. One ground, in the mill which he had himself made, the wheat which he was to eat; another hollowed out a reservoir of stone round the fountain which he had discovered, or which had sprung up in answer to his prayers, that others might enjoy it after him; and grateful posterity has taken care not to forget either the benefit or the benefactor.

All these men had the text of the Apostle always on their lips, “If any will not work, neither let him eat”; and that of the psalmist, “Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands”. These texts are perpetually appealed to in their legends, and justly, for they are an epitome of their doctrine and life.

The influence of such labours and examples rapidly made itself felt upon the rustic populations who lived in the neighbourhood of this new cultivation, or who followed the solitaries into the forest to see their works, and to find in them guides and protectors. From admiration the peasants gladly passed to imitation. Often they became the voluntary coadjutors of the monks, and, without embracing monastic life, aided them to clear the ground and build their dwellings. Sometimes the brigands themselves, who at

first had sought their lives, or attempted to interdict them from entering the forest, ended by becoming agriculturists after their example. The rapid increase of rural population in the neighbourhood of monastic establishments is thus explained, and also the immense amount of labour which the cenobites could undertake, the results of which exist and astonish us still.

The richest districts of France trace their prosperity to this origin: witness, amongst a thousand other places, that portion of La Brie between Meaux and Jouarre, once covered by a vast forest, the first inhabitant of which was the Irish monk Fiacre, whose name still continues popular, and whom our gardeners honour as their patron saint, probably without knowing anything whatever of his history. He had obtained from the Bishop of Meaux, who was the holder of this forest, permission to cut the wood which covered so much soil as he could surround with a ditch by one day's labour, in order to make a garden of it, and cultivate roots for poor travellers. Long after, the peasants of the environs showed this ditch, six times longer than was expected, and told how the Irish saint had taken his stick and traced a line upon the soil which sank into a ditch under the point, while the great forest trees fell right and left, as if to save him the trouble of cutting them down. Thus was interpreted the profound impression produced by the labours of these monastic pioneers upon the minds of the people.

The same occurrence is attributed to St. Goëznou, a British emigrant, and Bishop of Leon, who, having received from a count of the country the gift "of as much land to build a monastery as he could enclose with ditches in one day, took a fork, and, trailing it along the earth, walked for nearly two hours of Brittany, forming a square; and as he trailed this fork, the earth divided one part from the other, and formed a great ditch, separating the lands given from those of the giver, which enclosure has always been held in such reverence that of old it served as an asylum and place of refuge to malefactors."

In addition to these legends, born of the popular imagination and the grateful memory of ancient generations, it is pleasant to appeal to more certain witnesses by following upon our modern maps the traces of monastic labour through the forests of ancient France, and by observing a multitude of localities, the mere names of which indicate wooded districts evidently transformed into fields and plains by the monks.

Is it the authentic narrative of a real incident that we should see in that chapter of the life of the abbot Karilef, where it is said that this saint, moving with his spade the ground he dug round his cell in the forest of Perche, discovered a treasure there, over which he rejoiced ardently with his brethren, because it gave him the means at once of helping exiles and pilgrims, and of rewarding the poor peasants who had helped to build his oratory? Or is it not rather the symbolical form in which the admiration of the people at the sight of so many works, undertaken on such feeble resources, followed by results so excellent, and elevated by a charity so generous, has found expression? It is added that the abbot and his disciples laboured with the spade because they had no means of working the plough.

But the plough was not long wanting to them anywhere. It was natural that it should be the principal instrument of monastic culture; and it maybe said, without exaggeration, that it formed, along with the cross of the Redeemer, the ensign and

emblazonry of the entire history of the monks during these early ages. *Cruce et aratro!* In it is summed up the life of one of the great monks of the sixth century, of whom we have yet to speak. Theodulph, born in Aquitaine, had issued from a long line of ancestors illustrious for nobility as well as for piety. Having become a monk at St. Thierry, near Reims, he was specially desirous to be employed in the agricultural labours of the monastery : two oxen were intrusted to him, whom he led in the plough for twenty-two years. With this yoke he did as much work as other teams accomplished with two, three, or even four of the brethren. There might be some who doubted the good sense of a man so foolish as to employ his life in such labours, and to brave all the intemperance of the seasons like a simple peasant, instead of living like his ancestors on the fruit of his subjects' labour. But all admired such a labourer, still more unwearied than his oxen; for while they rested he replaced the plough by the mattock, the harrow, or the spade; and when he returned to the monastery after days so well occupied he was always first in the services and psalmody of the night. After these twenty-two years of ploughing he was elected abbot of his community. Then the inhabitants of the nearest village took his plough, and hung it up in their church as a relic. It was so, in fact; a noble and holy relic of one of those lives of perpetual labour and superhuman virtue, whose example has happily exercised a more fruitful and lasting influence than that of the proudest conquerors. It seems to me that we should all contemplate with emotion, if it still existed, that monk's plough, doubly sacred, by religion and by labour, by history and by virtue. For myself, I feel that I should kiss it as willingly as the sword of Charlemagne or the pen of Bossuet.

The same peasants of the neighbourhood of Reims also admired in their simplicity a great old tree: it was said to have grown from the goad which the abbot Theodulph used to prick on his oxen, and which he had one day stuck into the ground, when, leading them from the monastery, he paused on the roadside to mend his damaged plough.

When he became abbot, Theodulph redoubled his activity in his devotion to all the duties of his charge, and to those which he imposed upon himself in addition, in building a new church in honour of St. Hilary. He was specially assiduous in the services of the monastery, and exacted the same diligence from all the monks. The latter were not all animated by a zeal so impatient of repose. As both abbot and monks cherished the recollections of classic antiquity, one of the Religious once brought forward to him this verse of Horace:—

“Quod caret alterna requie durabile non est”;

to whom Theodulph answered that it was very well for pagans, too careful of their own comfort, but that as for him, he preferred that other, and equally classic text:—

“Nil sine magno  
Vita labore dedit mortalibus”.



Labour and prayer formed the double sphere in which the existence of the monastic colonisers always flowed, and the double end of their long and unwearied efforts. But they certainly did not think it sufficient to initiate the rustic population of Frankish Gaul in the laborious habits and best processes of agriculture. They had still more at heart the cultivation of so many souls infinitely precious in the eyes of God and of the servants of God. By their example and exhortations, by their vigilant charity, and at the same time by their oral instruction, they dug in those rude hearts the deep furrows where they sowed abundantly the seeds of virtue and eternal life. To their example, and above all to their influence, the beneficent solicitude of the provincial Councils of Gaul for the spiritual instruction of the rural population must be attributed. "The priests", says the Council of Rouen, "must warn their parishioners that they ought to permit or cause their neatherds, swineherds, and other herdsmen, their ploughmen, and those who are continually in the fields or woods, and live there like the animals, to attend mass, on Sundays and holidays at least. Those who neglect this shall have to answer for their souls, and shall have to render a severe account. For the Lord when He came upon the earth did not choose orators or nobles for His disciples, but fishers and men of the humblest class; and it was not to high intelligences, but to the poor shepherds, that the angel announced in the first place the nativity of our Lord."

But how could they have supplied the spiritual necessities of all that population of shepherds and labourers, not numerous, and spread over immense regions not more than half inhabited, if the monks had not come to second and succeed the secular clergy, establishing among them at a thousand different points, and precisely in the quarters least accessible, their cells and oratories? These oratories in time became churches; the cottages of the peasants gathered round them; the latter were henceforth sure of sharing in all the benefits of spiritual paternity, conferred upon them by men often issuing from the noblest and most powerful races among the masters and conquerors of the country, who voluntarily shared their fatigues and privations, who led a life as hard as, and even harder than, theirs, and who asked of them, in exchange for such services and examples, only that they should join them in praising the Lord,

Our solitaries, thus becoming, often against their will, the fathers and leaders of a numerous progeny, saw themselves surrounded by a double family, that of their disciples and that of their dependants, the monastic and the rustic community, both united by faith, labour, and common prayer. From the midst of forests so long unapproachable, and deserts henceforward repeopled, arose everywhere the hymn of joy, gratitude, and adoration. The prophecy of Isaiah was verified under their very eyes for them and by them:—"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

And are not we tempted sometimes to give ear and listen whether some faint echo of that delightful harmony does not float across the ocean of time? Certainly earth has never raised to heaven a sweeter concert than that of so many pure and pious voices full

of faith and enthusiasm, rising from the glades of the ancient forests, from the sides of rocks, and from the banks of waterfalls or torrents, to celebrate their new-born happiness, like the birds under the leaves, or like our dear little children in their charming lisplings, when they greet with joyful and innocent confidence the dawn of a day in which they foresee neither storms nor decline.

The Church has known days more resplendent and more solemn, days better calculated to raise the admiration of sages, the fervour of pious souls, and the unshaken confidence of her children; but I know not if she has ever breathed forth a charm more touching and pure than in the spring-time of monastic life.

In that Gaul which had borne for five centuries the ignominious yoke of the Caesars, which had groaned under Barbarian invasions, and where everything still breathed blood, fire, and carnage, Christian virtue, watered by the spirit of penitence and sacrifice, began to bud everywhere. Everywhere faith seemed to blossom like flowers after the winter; everywhere moral life revived and budded like the verdure of the woods; everywhere under the ancient arches of the Druidical forests was celebrated the fresh betrothal of the Church with the Frankish people.

## BOOK VII

### ST. COLUMBANUS.

#### THE IRISH IN GAUL AND THE COLONIES OF LUXEUIL

While the missionaries of Monte Cassino planted slowly and obscurely in the new kingdom of the Franks that Order, the observance of which St. Gregory the Great, by his example and by his disciples, regulated and extended everywhere, a man had appeared in the Church and in Gaul as the type of a distinct race and spirit. A monk and monastic legislator, like St. Benedict, he at one moment threatened to eclipse and replace the Benedictine institution in the Catholic world. This was St. Columbanus.

He came from the north, as St. Maur had come from the south. He was born in Ireland: he brought with him a colony of Irish monks; and his name leads us back to consider that race and country of which he has been the most illustrious representative among us.

Ireland, that virgin island on which proconsul never set foot, which never knew either the orgies or the exactions of Rome, was also the only place in the world of which the Gospel took possession without bloodshed. It is thus spoken of by Ozanam; and certainly no one has described it better, though allowance must be made for the excessive admiration which disposes him to exalt above measure the part played by the Irish from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, attributing to them exclusively that impulse of diffusion and expansion, and that thirst for instructing and converting, which characterised the entire Church and monastic order during that long and glorious period. The preponderance of the Irish race in the work of preaching and in the conversion of pagan or semi-Christian nations was only temporary, and did not last longer than the seventh century; but their exertions at that time were so undeniable as to leave France, Switzerland, and Belgium under a debt of everlasting gratitude. This branch of the great family of Celtic nations, known under the name of *Hibernians*, *Scots*, or *Gaels*, and whose descendants and language have survived to our own days in Ireland, in the Highlands of Scotland, in Wales, and in Lower Brittany, had adopted the faith of Christ with enthusiasm; and, at the moment when Celtic vitality seemed about to perish in Gaul and Great Britain, under the double pressure of Roman decay and Germanic invasion, appeared among all the Christian races as the one most devoted to the Catholic faith, and most zealous for the spread of the Gospel. From the moment that this *Green Erin*, situated at the extremity of the known world, had seen the sun of faith rise upon her, she had vowed herself to it with an ardent and tender devotion which became her very life. The course of ages has not interrupted this; the most bloody and implacable of persecutions has not shaken it; the defection of all northern Europe has not led her astray; and she maintains still, amid the splendours and miseries of modern civilisation

and Anglo-Saxon supremacy, an inextinguishable centre of faith, where survives, along with the completest orthodoxy, that admirable purity of manners which no conqueror and no adversary has ever been able to dispute, to equal, or to diminish.

The ecclesiastical antiquity and hagiography of Ireland constitute in themselves an entire world of inquiry. We shall be pardoned for not desiring to enter into their interminable and somewhat confused perspectives. It will suffice us to detach from this mass of legendary narratives, which modern erudition has not yet been able to clear away, as much as is indispensable to our subject, and will prove the development of the monastic principle, contemporaneous with, but entirely independent of, the diffusion of cenobitical institutions in all the Roman empire and through all the Barbarian races.

Two slaves brought the faith to Ireland, and at the same time founded monastic life there. Such is at least the popular belief, confirmed by the most credible narratives.

The Gallo-Roman Patrick, son of a relative of the great St. Martin of Tours, had been seized at sixteen by pirates, and sold as a slave into Ireland, where he kept the flocks of his master, and where hunger, cold, nakedness, and the pitiless severity of his master, initiated him into all the horrors of slavery. Restored to liberty after six years of servitude, and returned to Gaul, he saw always in his dreams the children of the poor Irish pagans whose yoke he had known, holding out to him their little arms. His sleep and his studies were equally disturbed by these visions. It seemed to him that he heard the voice of these innocents asking baptism of him, and crying—"Dear Christian child, return among us! return to save us!". After having studied in the great monastic sanctuaries of Marmoutier and Lerins, after having accompanied St. Germain of Auxerre in the mission undertaken by that great champion of orthodoxy to root out the Pelagian heresy so dear to the Celtic races from Great Britain, he went to Rome, obtained there a mission from the Pope St. Celestin, and returned to Ireland as a bishop to preach the faith. The kings, the chiefs, the warlike and impressionable people of Green Erin listened to him, followed him, and testified towards him that impassioned veneration which has become the most popular tradition of the Irish, and which thirteen centuries had not lessened. After thirty-three years of apostleship he died, leaving Ireland almost entirely converted, and, moreover, filled with schools and communities destined to become a nursery of missionaries for the West.

Legend and history have vied in taking possession of the life of St. Patrick.

There is nothing in his legend more poetic than the meeting between the Gallo-Roman apostle and the Irish bards, who formed a hereditary and sacerdotal class. Among them he found his most faithful disciples. Ossian himself, the blind Homer of Ireland, allowed himself to be converted by him, and Patrick listened in his turn as he sang the long epic of Celtic kings and heroes. Harmony was not established between these two without being preceded by some storms. Patrick threatened with hell the profane warriors whose glory Ossian vaunted, and the bard replied to the apostle, "If thy God was in hell, my heroes would draw him from it." But triumphant truth made peace between poetry and faith. The monasteries founded by Patrick became the asylum and centre of Celtic poetry. When once blessed and transformed, says an old author, the songs of the bards became so sweet that the angels of God leant down from heaven to

listen to them; and this explains the reason why the harp of the bards has continued the symbol and emblazonry of Catholic Ireland.

Nothing is better established in the history of St. Patrick, than his zeal to preserve the country where he had himself borne the yoke, from the abuses of slavery, and especially from the incursions of the pirates, Britons and Scots, robbers and traffickers in men, who made it a sort of store from which they took their human cattle. The most authentic memorial of the saint which remains to us is his eloquent protest against the king of a British horde, who, landing in the midst of a tribe baptized the evening before, massacred several, and carried off the others to sell them. “Patrick, an ignorant sinner, but constituted bishop in Hibernia, and dwelling among the barbarous nations, because of my love for God, I write these letters with my own hand to be transmitted to the soldiers of the tyrant, I say not to my fellow-citizens, nor to the fellow-citizens of the saints of Rome, but to the compatriots of the devil, to the apostate Scots and Picts who live in death, and fatten themselves with the blood of the innocent Christians with whom I have travailed for my God. Does not the divine mercy which I love oblige me to act thus, to defend even those who of old made myself captive and massacred the slaves and servants of my father?” Elsewhere he praises the courage of the enslaved girls whom he had converted, and who defended their modesty and faith heroically, against their unworthy masters. (The slave trade was in full activity in the tenth century between England and Ireland, and the port of Bristol was its principal centre).

Men and women were treated then among all the Celtic nations as they were during the last century on the coasts of Africa. Slavery, and the trade in slaves, was still more difficult to root out among them than paganism. And yet the Christian faith dawned upon Ireland by means of two slaves! The name of Patrick is associated by an undying link with that of Bridget, the daughter, according to the legend, of a bard and a beautiful captive, whom her master had sent away, like Hagar, at the suggestion of his wife. Born in grief and shame, she was received and baptized, along with her mother, by the disciples of St. Patrick. In vain would her father have taken her back and bestowed her in marriage when her beauty and wisdom became apparent. She devoted herself to God and the poor, and went to live in an oak-wood formerly consecrated to the false gods. The miraculous cures she wrought attracted the crowd, and she soon founded the first female monastery which Ireland had known, under the name of Kildare, the *Cell of the Oak*. She died there at seventy, after an entire life of love and labour. Upon her tomb immediately rose the inextinguishable flame called the *Light of St. Bridget*, which her nuns kept always burning, which the faith and love of an unfortunate people watched over for a thousand years as the signal light of the country, until the triumph of a sacrilegious reform, and which in our own days has been relighted by the muse of a patriot poet. Innumerable convents of women trace their origin to the abbess of Kildare: wherever the Irish monks have penetrated, from Cologne to Seville, churches have been raised in her honour; and wherever, in our own time, British emigration spreads, the name of Bridget points out the woman of Irish race. Deprived by persecution and poverty of the means of erecting monuments of stone, they testify their unshaken devotion to that dear memory by giving her name to their daughters—a noble and touching homage made by a race, always unfortunate and always faithful, to a saint who



was like itself, a slave, and like itself, a Catholic. There are glories more noisy and splendid, but are there many which do more honour to human nature?

The productiveness of the monastic germ planted by Patrick and Bridget was prodigious. In his own lifetime, the apostle of Ireland was astonished to find that he could no longer number the sons and daughters of chieftains who had embraced cloistral life at his bidding. The rude and simple architecture of these primitive monasteries has left a visible trace in the celebrated *round towers*, spread over the soil of Ireland, which had so long exercised the ingenuity of archeologists, until contemporary science demonstrated that these monuments were nothing else than the belfries of cathedrals and abbeys erected between the time of the conversion of the island and its conquest by the English. Among so many saints who were the successors and emulators of St Patrick, we shall name only one, Luan, whose memory St. Bernard consecrated six centuries afterwards, by affirming that he had himself founded in his own person a hundred monasteries. This Luan was a little shepherd who had been educated by the monks of the immense abbey of Bangor. For shortly the monasteries at Bangor, Clonfert, and elsewhere, became entire towns, each of which enclosed more than three thousand cenobites. The Thebaid reappeared in Ireland, and the West had no longer anything to envy in the history of the East.

There was besides an intellectual development, which the Eremites of Egypt had not known. The Irish communities, joined by the monks from Gaul and Rome, whom the example of Patrick had drawn upon his steps, entered into rivalry with the great monastic schools of Gaul. They explained Ovid there; they copied Virgil; they devoted themselves especially to Greek literature; they drew back from no inquiry, from no discussion; they gloried in placing boldness on a level with faith. The young Luan answered the abbot of Bangor, who warned him against the dangers of too engrossing a study of the liberal arts: "If I have the knowledge of God, I shall never offend God; for they who disobey Him are they who know Him not." Upon which the abbot left him, saying, "My son, thou art firm in the faith, and true knowledge will put thee in the right road for heaven."

A characteristic still more distinctive of the Irish monks, as of all their nation, was the imperious necessity of spreading themselves without, of seeking or carrying knowledge and faith afar, and of penetrating into the most distant regions to watch or combat paganism. This monastic nation, therefore, became the missionary nation par excellence. While some came to Ireland to procure religious instruction, the Irish missionaries launched forth from their island. They covered the land and seas of the West. Unwearied navigators, they landed on the most desert islands; they overflowed the Continent with their successive immigrations. They saw in incessant visions a world known and unknown to be conquered for Christ. The poem of the Pilgrimage of St. Brandan, that monkish Odyssey so celebrated in the Middle Ages, that popular prelude of the *Divina Commedia*, shows us the Irish monks in close contact with all the dreams and wonders of the Celtic ideal. Hereafter we shall see them struggling against the reality; we shall speak of their metropolis upon the rock of Iona, in the Hebrides; we shall tell what they did for the conversion of Great Britain. But we must follow them first into Gaul, that country from which the Gospel had been carried to them by Patrick. Several had already reached Armorica with that invasion of Celtic refugees which we

have described in the preceding Book. But it was only in the end of the sixth century that the action of Ireland upon the countries directly subjected to Frank dominion became decisive. She thus generously repaid her debt to Gaul. She had received Patrick from Gaul; in return, she sent Columbanus.

The rival of St. Benedict was born the same year in which the patriarch of Monte Cassino died. Instructed from his infancy in literature and the liberal arts, he had also to struggle early with the temptations of the flesh. His beauty, which attracted all eyes, exposed him, says the monk who has written his life, to the shameless temptations of the beautiful Irish women. It was in vain that he plunged into the study of grammar, rhetoric, geometry, and Holy Scripture. The goad of voluptuousness pricked him perpetually. He went to the cell inhabited by a pious recluse to consult her. "Twelve years ago," she answered him, "I myself left my own house to enter into a war against sin. Inflamed by the fires of youth, thou shalt attempt in vain to escape from thy frailty while thou remainest upon thy native soil. Hast thou forgotten Adam, Samson, David, and Solomon, all lost by the seductions of beauty and love? Young man, to save thyself, thou must flee." He listened, believed her, and decided on going away. His mother attempted to deter him, prostrating herself before him upon the threshold of the door; he crossed that dear obstacle, left the province of Leinster, where he was born, and, after spending some time with a learned doctor, who made him compose a commentary on the Psalms, he found refuge at Bangor, among the many monks still imbued with the primitive fervour which had assembled them there under the cross of the holy abbot Comgall.

But this first apprenticeship of the holy war was not enough. The adventurous temper of his race, the passion for pilgrimage and preaching, drew him beyond the seas. He heard incessantly the voice which had spoken to Abraham echoing in his ears, "Go out of thine own country, and from thy father's house, into the land which I shall show thee." That land was ours. The abbot attempted in vain to retain him. Columbanus, then thirty, left Bangor with twelve other monks, crossed Great Britain, and reached Gaul. He found the Catholic faith in existence there, but Christian virtue and ecclesiastical discipline unknown or outraged—thanks to the fury of the wars and the negligence of the bishops. He devoted himself during several years to traversing the country, preaching the Gospel, and especially to giving an example of the humility and charity which he taught to all. Arriving in the course of his apostolical wanderings in Burgundy, he was received there by King Gontran, of all the grandsons of Clovis the one whose life appears to have been least blamable, and who had most sympathy for the monks. His eloquence delighted the king and his lords. Fearing that he would leave them, Gontran offered him whatever he chose if he would remain; and as the Irishman answered that he had not left his own country to seek wealth, but to follow Christ and bear His cross, the king persisted, and told him that there were in his kingdoms many savage and solitary places where he might find the cross and win heaven, but that he must on no account leave Gaul, nor dream of converting other nations, till he had assured the salvation of the Franks and Burgundians.

Columbanus yielded to his desire, and chose for his dwelling-place the ancient Roman castle of Annegray. He led the simplest life there with his companions. He lived for entire weeks without any other food than the grass of the fields, the bark of the trees,

and the bilberries which are to be found in our fir-woods; he received other provisions only from the charity of the neighbours. Often he separated himself from his disciples to plunge alone into the woods, and live in common with the animals. There, as afterwards, in his long and close communion with the bare and savage nature of these desert places, nothing alarmed him, nor did he cause fear to any creature. Everything obeyed his voice. The birds, as has been already mentioned, came to receive his caresses, and the squirrels descended from the tree-tops to hide themselves in the folds of his cowl. He expelled a bear from the cavern which became his cell; he took from another bear a dead stag, whose skin served to make shoes for his brethren. One day, while he wandered in the depths of the wood, bearing a volume of Holy Scripture on his shoulder, and meditating whether the ferocity of the beasts, who could not sin, was not better than the rage of men, which destroyed their souls, he saw a dozen wolves approach and surround him on both sides. He remained motionless, repeating these words, "Deus in adjutorium." The wolves, after having touched his garments with their mouths, seeing him without fear, passed upon their way. He pursued his, and a few steps farther on heard a noise of human voices, which he recognised as those of a band of German brigands, of the Sueve nation, who then wasted that country. He did not see them; but he thanked God for having preserved him from this double danger, in which may be seen a double symbol of the constant struggle which the monks had to maintain in their laborious warfare against the wild forces of nature, and the still more savage barbarity of men.

At the end of some years, the increasing number of his disciples obliged him to seek another residence, and by the help of one of the principal ministers of the Frank king, Agnoald, whose wife was a Burgundian of very high family, he obtained from Gontran the site of another strong castle named Luxeuil, where there had been Roman baths, magnificently ornamented, and where the idols formerly worshipped by the Gauls were still found in the neighbouring forests. Upon the ruins of these two civilisations the great monastic metropolis of Austrasia and Burgundy was to be planted.

Luxeuil was situated upon the confines of these two kingdoms, at the foot of the Vosges, and north of that Sequania, the southern part of which had already been for more than a century lighted up by the abbey of Condat. The district which extends over the sides of the Vosges and Jura, since so illustrious and prosperous under the name of Franche-Comté, then consisted, for a range of sixty leagues and a breadth of ten or fifteen, of nothing but parallel chains of inaccessible defiles, divided by impenetrable forests, and bristling with immense pine-woods, which descended from the heights of the highest mountains to overshadow the course of the rapid and pure streams of the Doubs, Dessoubre, and Loue. The Barbarian invasions, and especially that of Attila, had reduced the Roman towns into ashes, and annihilated all agriculture and population. The forest and the wild beasts had taken possession of that solitude which it was reserved for the disciples of Columbanus and Benedict to transform into fields and pastures.

Disciples collected abundantly round the Irish coloniser. He could soon count several hundreds of them in the three monasteries which he had built in succession, and which he himself governed. The noble Franks and Burgundians, overawed by the sight of these great creations of work and prayer, brought their sons to him, lavished gifts upon him, and often came to ask him to cut their long hair, the sign of nobility and

freedom, and admit them into the ranks of his army. Labour and prayer attained here, under the strong arm of Columbanus, to proportions up to that time unheard of. The multitude of poor serfs and rich lords became so great that he could organise that perpetual service, called *Laus perennis*, which already existed at Agaune, on the other side of the Jura and Lake Lemman, where, night and day, the voices of the monks, “unwearied as those of angels,” arose to celebrate the praises of God in an unending song.

Rich and poor were equally bound to the agricultural labours, which Columbanus himself directed. In the narrative of the wonders which mingle with every page of his life, they are all to be seen employed successively in ploughing, and mowing, in reaping, and in cutting wood. With the impetuosity natural to him, he made no allowance for any weakness. He required even the sick to thrash the wheat. An article of his rule ordained the monk to go to rest so fatigued that he should fall asleep on the way, and to get up before he had slept sufficiently. It is at the cost of this excessive and perpetual labour that the half of our own country and of ungrateful Europe has been restored to cultivation and Ufa

Twenty years passed thus, during which the reputation of Columbanus increased and extended afar. But his influence was not undisputed. He displeased one portion of the Gallo-Frank clergy, in the first place, by the Irish peculiarities of his costume and tonsure, perhaps also by the intemperate zeal with which he attempted, in his epistles, to remind the bishops of their duties, and certainly by his obstinate perseverance in celebrating Easter according to Irish usage, on the fourteenth day of the moon, when that day happened on a Sunday, instead of celebrating it, with all the rest of the Church, on the Sunday after the fourteenth day. This peculiarity, at once trifling and oppressive, disturbed his whole life, and weakened his authority; for his pertinacity on this point reached so far that he actually attempted more than once to bring the Holy See itself to his side.

The details of his struggle with the bishops of Gaul remain unknown; but the resolution he displayed may be understood by some passage of his letter to the synod or council which met to examine this question. The singular mixture of humility and pride, and the manly and original eloquence with which this epistle is stamped, does not conceal what was strange and irregular in the part which he arrogated to himself in the Church. Though he calls himself Columbanus the sinner, it is very apparent that he felt himself the guide and instructor of those to whom he spoke.

He begins by thanking God that, owing to His grace, so many holy bishops now assemble to consider the interests of faith and morality. He exhorts them to assemble more frequently, despite the dangers and difficulties which they might meet on the road, and wishes them to occupy themselves, under the presidency of Jesus Christ, not only with the question of Easter, but with other canonical observances cruelly neglected. He prides himself on his own trials, and what he calls the persecution of which he has been the victim. He blames the diversity of customs and variety of traditions in the Church, condemning himself thus by his own mouth, and not perceiving the wisdom of ecclesiastical authority, which seems to have long tolerated, in himself and his compatriots, the individual and local observance which he would fain have inflicted as a

yoke upon all Christendom. He also advocates union between the secular and regular clergy; and his language then becomes more touching and solemn. "I am not the author of this difference : I have come into these parts, a poor stranger, for the cause of the Christ Saviour, our common God and Lord; I ask of your holinesses but a single grace: that you will permit me to live in silence in the depth of these forests, near the bones of seventeen brethren whom I have already seen die : I shall pray for you with those who remain to me, as I ought, and as I have always done for twelve years. Ah! let us live with you in this Gaul, where we now are, since we are destined to live with each other in heaven, if we are found worthy to enter there. Despite our lukewarmness, we will follow, the best we can, the doctrines and precepts of our Lord and the apostles.

These are our weapons, our shield, and our glory. To remain faithful to them we have left our country, and are come among you. It is yours, holy fathers, to determine what must be done with some poor veterans, some old pilgrims, and if it would not be better to console than to disturb them. I dare not go to you for fear of entering into some contention with you, but I confess to you the secrets of my conscience, and how I believe, above all, in the traditions of my country, which is, besides, that of St. Jerome."

All this is mingled with troublesome calculations about the celebration of Easter, and a great array of Scripture texts. It ends thus: "God forbid that we should delight our enemies—namely, the Jew, heretics, and pagans—by strife among Christians ... If God guides you to expel me from the desert which I have sought here beyond the seas, I should only say with Jonah, 'Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm'. But before you throw me overboard, it is your duty to follow the example of the sailors, and to try first to come to land; perhaps even it might not be excess of presumption to suggest to you that many men follow the broad way, and that when there are a few who direct themselves to the narrow gate that leads to life, it would be better for you to encourage than to hinder them, lest you fall under the condemnation of that text which says, ' Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.' The harder the struggle, the more glorious is the crown. They, says St. Gregory, who do not avoid the visible evil can scarcely believe in the hidden good. For this reason St. Jerome enjoins the bishops to imitate the apostles, and the monks to follow the fathers, who have been perfect. The rules of the priests and those of the monks are very different; let each keep faithfully the profession which he has embraced, but let all follow the Gospel and Christ their head.... Yet pray for us, as we, despite our lowliness, pray for you. Regard us not as strangers to you; for all of us, whether Gauls or Britons, Spaniards or others, are members of the same body. I pray you all, my holy and patient fathers and brethren, to forgive the loquacity and boldness of a man whose task is above his strength."

When we think that neither in the life of Columbanus himself, which is written in minute detail, nor in the history of his age, is there any trace of repression or even of serious censure, directed against the foreign monk who thus set himself forth as a master and judge of the bishops, we cannot but admire this proof of the liberty then enjoyed by Christians, even where the rights of authority might have been most jealously preserved.



It is, however, doubtful whether this attitude had not shaken the influence which the virtues and sanctity of Columbanus had won for him among the Gallo-Franks. But he soon recovered it entirely in the conflict for the honour of Christian morals, which he undertook against Queen Brunehault and her grandson, and which we must relate in some details, because this struggle was the first, and not the least remarkable, of those which arose on various occasions between the monks and Christian kings, who had been so long and naturally allied.

The Frank government in Gaul was, as is known, naturally divided into three distinct kingdoms, Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy. The ancient kingdom of the Burgondes or of Burgundy, finally conquered by the sons of Clovis, had been reconstituted by his grandson Gontran, the same who gave so good a reception to Columbanus, and it was at the northern extremity of this kingdom that Luxeuil was founded. Gontran having died without issue, Burgundy passed to his nephew, the young Childebert II, already king of Austrasia, the son of the celebrated Brunehault. He died shortly after, leaving two sons under age, Theodebert II and Thierry II. The succession was divided between them: Theodebert had Austrasia, and Thierry, Burgundy; but their grandmother Brunehault immediately constituted herself their guardian, and took possession of the power royal in the two kingdoms, whilst her terrible enemy, Fredegund, whom Gontran had so justly named the enemy of God and man, governed Neustria in the name of her son Clotaire II, who was also a minor. The whole of Frankish Gaul was thus in the hands of two women, who governed it in the name of three kings, all minors. But shortly the great feudal lords of Austrasia, among whom the indomitable independence of the Franks had been preserved more unbroken than among the Neustrians, disgusted by the violent and arbitrary bearing of Brunehault, obliged the eldest of her grandsons to expel her from his kingdom. She consoled herself by establishing her residence with the young king Thierry in Burgundy, where she continued to exercise over the Burgundian nobles and bishops that haughty and often cruel sway which had made her presence intolerable in Austrasia.

To identify Brunehault in any degree with her impure and sinister rival, who was at once much more guilty and more prosperous than she, would be to judge her too severely. Gregory of Tours has praised her beauty, her good manners, her prudence and affability; and Gregory the Great, in congratulating the Franks on having so good a queen, honoured her with public eulogiums, especially in his celebrated diploma relative to St. Martin of Autun, which she had built and endowed richly upon the spot where the holy Bishop of Tours, going into the country of the Eduens, had destroyed the last sanctuary of vanquished paganism at the peril of his life. This abbey, long celebrated for its wealth and for its flourishing schools, became afterwards the sepulchre of Brunehault; and, nine centuries after her cruel death, a daily distribution to the poor, called the alms of Brunehault, kept her memory popular still.

But Brunehault, as she grew old, retained only the dauntless warmth of her early years; she preserved neither the generosity nor the uprightness. She sacrificed everything to a passion for rule, and to the temptation of re-establishing a kind of Roman monarchy. This thirst for sovereignty led her so far—she, whose youth had been without reproach—as to encourage her grandsons in that polygamy which seems to have been the melancholy privilege of the Germanic and especially of the Merovingian

princes. From the fear of having a rival in power and honour near the throne of Thierry, she opposed with all her might every attempt to replace his concubines by a legitimate queen, and when, finally, he determined on espousing a Visigoth princess, Brunehault, though herself the daughter of a Visigoth king, succeeded in disgusting her grandson with his bride, and made him repudiate her at the end of a year. The Bishop of Vienne, St. Didier, who had advised the king to marry, was murdered by the ruffians whom the queen-mother had laid in wait for him.

However, the young Thierry had religious instincts. He was rejoiced to possess in his kingdom a holy man like Columbanus. He went often to visit him. Irish zeal took advantage of this to reprove him for his disorderly life, and to exhort him to seek the sweetness of a legitimate spouse, that the royal race might flow from an honourable queen and not from prostitution. The young king promised amendment, but Brunehault easily turned him away from these good resolutions. Columbanus having gone to visit her at the manor of Bourcheresse, she presented to him the four sons whom Thierry already had by his concubines. "What would these children with me?" said the monk. "They are the sons of the king," said the queen; "strengthen them by thy blessing." "No!" answered Columbanus, "they shall not reign, for they are of bad origin." From that moment Brunehault swore war to the death against him. She began by debarring the monks of the monastery governed by Columbanus from leaving their convent, and the people from receiving them or giving them the slightest help. Columbanus endeavoured to enlighten Thierry and lead him back to a better way. He went to visit him at his royal seat of Epoisses. Hearing that the abbot had arrived, but would not enter the palace, the king sent him a sumptuous repast Columbanus refused to accept anything from the hand of him who forbade the servants of God to have access to the homes of other men, and at the sound of his curse, all the vessels which contained the various meats were miraculously broken in pieces. The king, alarmed by that wonder, came with his grandmother to ask his pardon, and to promise amendment. Columbanus, mollified, returned to his monastery, where he soon learned that Thierry had fallen back into his habitual debauchery. Then he wrote to the king a letter full of vehement reproaches, in which he threatened him with excommunication.

Thus, this stranger, this Irish missionary, the obliged guest of King Gontran, would venture to go the length of excommunicating the king of Burgundy, the heir of his benefactor! Brunehault had no difficulty in raising the principal leudes of the court of Thierry against that unaccustomed boldness; she even undertook to persuade the bishops to interfere in order to censure the rule of the new institution. Excited by all that he heard going on around him, Thierry resolved to take the offensive, and presented himself at Luxeuil to demand a reckoning with the abbot, why he went against the customs of the country, and why the interior of the convent was not open to all Christians, and even to women; for it was one of the grievances of Brunehault, that Columbanus had interdicted even her, although queen, from crossing the threshold of the monastery. The young king went as far as the refectory, saying that he would have the entrance free to all, or that they must give up all royal gifts. Columbanus, with his accustomed boldness, said to the king, "If you would violate the severity of our rules, we have no need of your gifts: and if you would come here to destroy our monastery, know that your kingdom shall be destroyed, with all your race."

The king was afraid and went out; but he soon replied: "Thou art in hopes perhaps that I will procure thee the crown of martyrdom; but I am not fool enough for that; only, since it pleases thee to live apart from all relation with the secular people, thou hast but to return whence thou earnest, even to thy own country." All the nobles of the royal suite exclaimed that they would no longer tolerate in their land men who thus isolated themselves from the world. Columbanus replied that he would leave his monastery only when taken from it by force. He was then taken and conducted to Besançon, to wait there the ultimate orders of the king. After which a sort of blockade was established round Luxeuil to prevent anyone from leaving it.

The monks then recollected that they had among them a young man called Agilus, son of that Agnoald, prime minister of Gontran, who, twenty years before, had obtained for Columbanus the gift of Luxeuil, and who afterwards entrusted his son, then a child, to the Irish abbot to be trained in monastic life. They charged Agilus with the mission of obtaining the abolition of this interdict from the king and queen. The young monk fell into the hands of a nephew of the duke of Sequania, who, under pretence of hunting, guarded the avenues of the monastery; but by the sign of the cross, he made the sword fall, and withered the arm which was raised to strike him, and was permitted to proceed on his way. By one of those sudden and transitory compunctions so frequent in the life of the Merovingians, Thierry and his grandmother received the envoy of the monks with demonstrations of humility, prostrated themselves before him, raised the blockade of the monastery, and even made him costly presents.

But their hearts were not softened in respect to Columbanus. He, surrounded at Besançon by the respect of all, and left at freedom in the town, took advantage of it to ascend one morning to the height of a rock, on which the citadel is now situated, and which is encircled by the tortuous stream of the Doubs. From this height he surveyed the road which led to Luxeuil; he seemed to investigate there the obstacles which prevented his return. His resolution was taken; he descended, left the town, and directed his steps towards his monastery. At the news of his return, Thierry and Brunehault sent a count with a cohort of soldiers to lead him back into exile. Then ensued a scene which, during twelve centuries, and even in our own days, has been often repeated between the persecutors and their victims. The messengers of the royal will found him in the choir, chanting the service with all his community. "Man of God," they said, "we pray you to obey the king's orders and ours, and to return from whence you came." "No," answered Columbanus, "after having left my country for the service of Jesus Christ, I cannot think that my Creator means me to return." At these words the count withdrew, leaving the most ferocious of his soldiers to accomplish the rest. Subdued by the firmness of the abbot, who repeated that he would yield only to force, they threw themselves on their knees before him, weeping and entreating him to pardon them, and not to oblige them to use the violence which they were compelled to employ, on pain of their life. At the thought of a danger which was no longer personal to himself, the intrepid Irishman yielded, and left the sanctuary which he had founded and inhabited for twenty years, but which he was never to see again.

His monks surrounded him with lamentations as if they were following his funeral. He consoled them by telling them that this persecution, far from being ruinous to them, would only promote the increase of "the monastic nation." They would all have

followed him into exile; but a royal order forbade that consolation to any but the monks of Irish or Britannic origin. Bruneault was anxious to free herself from these audacious and independent islanders as well as from their leader, but she had no desire to ruin the great establishment of which Burgundy was already proud. The saint, accompanied by his Irish brethren, departed into exile.

The history of his journey, carefully recorded by his disciples, is full of information respecting the places and customs of Frankish Gaul. He was taken through Besançon a second time, then through Autun, Avallon, along the Cure and the Yonne to Auxerre, and from thence to Nevers, where he embarked upon the Loire. He marked each stage of his journey by miraculous cures and other wonders, which, nevertheless, did not diminish the rancour which he had excited. On the road to Avallon, he met an equerry of King Thierry, who attempted to pierce him with his lance. At Nevers, at the moment of embarking, a cruel hanger-on of the escort took an oar and struck Lua, one of the most pious of Columbanus's companions, to quicken his entrance into the boat. The saint cried, "Cruel wretch, what right hast thou to aggravate my trouble? How darest thou to strike the weary members of Christ? Remember that the divine vengeance shall await thee on this spot where thou hast struck the servant of God." And in fact, on his return, this wretch fell into the water and was drowned on the very spot where he had struck Lua.

Arrived at Orleans, he sent two of his brethren into the town to buy provisions ; but no one would either sell or give them anything in opposition to the royal orders. They were treated as outlaws—enemies of the king, whom the Salic law forbade his subjects to receive, under the penalty (enormous in those days) of six hundred deniers. Even the churches were closed against them by the king's orders.

But, in retracing their steps, they met a Syrian woman, one of that Oriental colony whose presence in Gaul has been already remarked under Childebert I. She asked them whence they came, and, on hearing, offered them hospitality, and gave them all that they needed. "I am a stranger like you," she said, "and I come from the distant sun of the East." She had a blind husband, to whom Columbanus restored sight. The people of Orleans were touched by this incident; but they dared only testify their veneration for the exile in secret.

Passing before the town of Tours, Columbanus begged to be permitted to pray at the tomb of the great St Martin, who was equally venerated by the Celts, Romans, and Franks; but his savage guardians ordered the boatmen to increase the speed of their oars, and keep in the middle of the stream. However, an invisible force stayed the boat; it directed itself towards the port Columbanus landed, and spent the night near the holy tomb. The Bishop of Tours found him there, and took him to dine in his house. At table he was asked why he was returning to his own country. He answered, "This dog of a Thierry has hunted me from the home of my brethren." Then one of the company, who was a leude or trusty vassal of the king, said in a low voice, "Would it not be better to give men milk to drink rather than wormwood ? " "I see", answered Columbanus, "that thou wouldst keep thy oath to King Thierry. Well! say to thy friend and thy lord, that three years from this time he and his children will be destroyed, and that his whole race

shall be rooted out by God.” “Why do you speak thus, servant of God?” said the leude. “I cannot keep silent,” answered the saint, “what God has charged me to speak.”

Arrived at Nantes, and on the eve of leaving the soil of Gaul, his thoughts turned towards Luxeuil, and he wrote a letter, which begins thus: “To his dearest sons, his dearest pupils, to his brethren in abstinence, to all the monks, Columbanus the sinner.” In this he pours out his heart. Obscure, confused, passionate, interrupted by a thousand different recollections and emotions, this letter is, notwithstanding, the most complete monument of his genius and character which Columbanus has left to us. With these personal sentiments his concern for the present and future destiny of his beloved community of Luxeuil is always mingled. He sets forth the arrangements most likely, as he believes, to guarantee its existence, by purity of elections and internal harmony. He seems even to foresee the immense development of monastic colonies which was to proceed from Luxeuil, in a passage where he says, “Wherever sites are suitable, wherever God will build with you, go and multiply, you and the myriads of souls which shall be born of you.”

It is especially delightful to see how, in that austere and proud soul, friendship and paternal affection preserve all their rights. He recalls to mind with tender solicitude a brother who was not present at the moment of his farewell; “Always take care,” he says, “of Waldolenus, if he is still with you. May God give him everything that is good: may he become humble: and give him for me the kiss which I could not give him myself.” He exhorts his monks to confidence, spiritual strength, patience, but, above all, to peace and union. He foresees in that perpetual question about Easter a cause of division; and he desires that those who would disturb the peace of the house should be dismissed from it. Confessions, counsels, and exhortations crowd upon his pen. He sometimes addresses the whole community, sometimes a monk called Attalus, whom he had named as his successor.

“Thou knowest, my well-beloved Attalus, how little advantage it is to form only one body if there is not also one heart. ... As for me, my soul is rent asunder. I have desired to serve everybody, I have trusted everybody, and it has made me almost mad. Be thou wiser than I: I would not see thee taking up the burden under which I have sweated. To bind all in the enclosure of the Rule I have attempted to attach again to the root of our tree all those branches whose frailty had separated them from mine. ... However, thou art already better acquainted with it than I. Thou wilt know how to adapt its precepts to each. Thou wilt take into account the great diversity of character among men. Thou wilt then diversify thyself, thou wilt multiply thyself for the good of those who shall obey thee with faith and love, and yet must still fear lest that very love should become for thee a danger. But what is this that I do? Behold how I persuade thee to undertake the immense labour from which I myself have stolen away!”

Further on, grief carries him away, and bursts forth only to yield immediately to invincible courage: and the recollections of classic antiquity mingle with evangelical instructions to dictate to our Irishman some of the finest and proudest words which Christian genius has ever produced. “I had at first meant to write thee a letter of sorrow and tears, but knowing well that thy heart is overwhelmed with cares and labours, I have changed my style, I have sought to dry thy tears rather than to call them forth. I have



permitted only gentleness to be seen outside, and chained down grief in the depths of my soul. But my own tears begin to flow! I must drive them back; for it does not become a good soldier to weep in front of the battle. After all, this that has happened to us is nothing new. Is it not what we have preached every day? Was there not of old a philosopher wiser than the others, who was thrown into prison for maintaining, against the opinion of all, that there was but one God? The Gospels also are full of all that is necessary to encourage us. They were written for that purpose, to teach the true Disciples of Christ crucified to follow Him, bearing their cross. Our perils are many: the struggle which threatens us is severe, and the enemy terrible; but the recompense is glorious, and the freedom of our choice is manifest. Without adversaries, no conflict; and without conflict, no crown. Where the struggle is, there is courage, vigilance, fervour, patience, fidelity, wisdom, firmness, prudence; out of the fight, misery and disaster. Thus, then, without war, no crown! And I add, without freedom, no honour!" However, he had to come to a conclusion, and knew not how to do it; for he always begins again, and often repeats himself. But others interrupted and put an end to the outpouring of his heart. "While I write," says he, "they come to tell me that the ship is ready—the ship which is to carry me back against my will to my country. ... The end of my parchment obliges me to finish my letter. Love is not orderly: it is this which has made it confused. I would have abridged everything that I might say everything: I have not succeeded. Adieu, dear hearts: pray for me that I may live in God."

The bishop and count of Nantes hastened the departure; but the Irish vessel in which the property and companions of Columbanus were embarked, and to which he was to go in a boat, being then at the mouth of the Loire, was cast back by the waves, and remained three days ashore upon the beach. Then the captain landed the monks and all that belonged to them, and continued his voyage. Columbanus was permitted to go where he would.

He directed his stops towards the court of the king of Soissons and Neustria, Clotaire II, who, after an unfortunate war with the kings of Austrasia and Burgundy, had been despoiled of the greater part of Neustria, and reduced to the possession of twelve counties between the right bank of the Seine and the Channel. This son of Fredegund, faithful to his mother's hatred for Brunehault and her family, gave a cordial reception to the victim of his enemy, endeavoured to retain him in his court, received with a good grace the remonstrances which the undaunted apostle, always faithful to his part of public censor, addressed to him upon the disorders of his court, and promised amendment. He consulted Columbanus about the quarrel which had broken out between the two brothers, Theodebert and Thierry, both of whom asked his assistance. Columbanus advised him to have nothing to do with it, since in three years both their kingdoms would fall into his power. He afterwards asked an escort to conduct him to Theodebert, king of Metz, or Austrasia, whose states he desired to cross on his way to Italy. Passing through Paris, Means, and Champagne, the chief of the Frank nobility brought their children to him, and he blessed many, destined, as shall be seen, to inherit his spirit and extend his work. Theodebert, now at war with his brother Thierry, gave the exiled abbot the same reception as Clotaire II had done, but was equally unsuccessful in retaining him.

At the court of the king of Austrasia, which was not far from Burgundy, he had the consolation of seeing several of his brethren of Luxeuil, who escaped to rejoin him. At their head, and encouraged by the promises and eager protection of Theodebert, he made up his mind to preach the faith among the still pagan nations who were subject to the Austrasian government, and inhabited the countries about the Rhine. This had always been his ambition, his inclination, and the work he preferred. After sixty years of labour devoted to the reform of kings and nations already Christian, he began the second phase of his life—that of preaching to the infidels.

He consequently embarked upon the Rhine, below Mayence, and ascending this river and its tributaries as far as the Lake of Zurich, remained for some time at Tuggen, and at Arbon, finding here and there some traces of Christianity sown under the Roman or Frank government, and established himself finally at Bregentz, upon the Lake of Constance, amid the ruins of an ancient Roman town. The Sueves and Alamans (Alamanni), subject to the Franks since the victory of Clovis at Tolbiac, who then occupied all Eastern Helvetia, were, with all the country between the Aar, the Alps, and the Lech, idolaters, worshippers of the god Woden, and of violent and cruel disposition. In announcing the Gospel to them, Columbanus displayed all the impetuosity of his temper, which age had not lessened. His principal assistant was another Irishman named Gall, who was not less daring than himself, but who was well educated, and had the gift of preaching in the German language as well as in the Latin. Sometimes they broke the boilers in which the pagans prepared beer, to offer as a sacrifice to Woden; sometimes they burned the temples, and threw into the lake the gilded idols whom the inhabitants showed them as the tutelary gods of their country. Such proceedings naturally excited against them the fury of the natives, and exposed them to great dangers. They had to flee to Zug, from which they were expelled with blows. At Bregentz they had more success, and made some conversions, but without appeasing the rage, or conciliating the liking, of the mass of the people. The little colony, however, remained there for three years. They resumed cenobitical life. They had at first to contend against hunger: for the inhabitants would give them nothing. They had to live upon wild birds, which came to them like the manna to the children of Israel, or upon woodland fruits, which they had to dispute with the beasts of the forests. But they had soon a garden of vegetables and fruit-trees. Fish was also a resource; Columbanus himself made the nets; Gall, the learned and eloquent preacher, threw them into the lake, and had considerable draughts. One night, while he watched in silence in his boat among his nets, he heard the demon of the mountain call to the demon of the waters, “Here I am,” answered the latter. “Arise, then,” said the first, “and help me to chase away the strangers who have expelled me from my temple; it will require us both to drive them away.” “What good should we do?” answered the demon of the waters; “here is one of them upon the waterside whose nets I have tried to break, but I have never succeeded. He prays continually, and never sleeps. It will be labour in vain; we shall make nothing of it.” Then Gall made the sign of the cross, and said to them, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave these regions without daring to injure any one.” Then he hastened to land and awoke the abbot, who immediately rang the bells for nocturnal service; but before the first psalm had been intoned, they heard the yells of the demons echoing from the top of the surrounding hills, at first with fury, then losing themselves in the distance, and dying away like the confused voices of a routed army.

To this fine legend, which depicts so well all that could move the soul of these intrepid missionaries upon a coast so long inhospitable, we must add the vision which deterred Columbanus from undertaking a still more distant and difficult mission. He was pursued by the thought of bearing the light of the Gospel among the Slave nations, and especially among the Wendes, whose country extended into the midst of the Germanic races, and to the south of the Danube. Like St. Patrick, the remembrance of the nations who knew not Christ pursued him into his sleep. One night he saw in a dream an angel, who said to him, "The world is before thee; take the right hand or the left hand, but turn not aside from thy road, if thou wouldst eat the fruit of thy labours." He interpreted this dream into a sign that he should have no success in the enterprise of which he dreamed, and accordingly abandoned it.

The Slaves formed, as is well known, with the Celts and Germans, the third of the great races which occupied Central Europe. If Columbanus, a Celt by origin and education, but a monk and missionary for almost all his life among the Germans, had entered the countries already invaded by Slavonian tribes, his influence would have been brought to bear upon all the families of nations who have predominated in modern Christendom. This glory was denied to him: it was enough for him to have been one of the most illustrious of those intermediary agents who have laboured under the impulse of Christianity for the fusion of the two greatest races of the West.

During this sojourn at Bregentz, our saint went, it is not known on what occasion, to see King Theodebert, who was still at war with his brother, the king of Burgundy. Enlightened by a presentiment, and inspired by gratitude to this young prince, he counselled him to yield, and take refuge in the bosom of the Church by becoming a monk, instead of risking at once his kingdom and his salvation. Theodebert had, besides, great need of expiating his sins: very profligate, like all the Merovingians, he had just killed Queen Bilichild, a young slave whom his grandmother Brunehault had made him marry in his youth, in order to be able to take another wife. The advice of Columbanus caused great laughter to the king and all the Franks who surrounded him. "Such a thing has never been heard of," said they, "as that a Frank king should become a monk of his own free will." "Well," said Columbanus, in the middle of their exclamations, "if he will not be a monk of free will, he will be one by force." Saying this, the saint returned to his cell on the banks of Lake Constance. He learned soon after that his persecutor, Thierry, had again invaded the states of his protector Theodebert, and had routed and pursued the latter to the gates of Cologne. The decisive battle between the two brothers took place on the plains of Tolbiac, where their great-grandfather Clovis had founded, by victory, the Christian kingdom of the Franks. Theodebert was vanquished and taken. Thierry sent him to the implacable Brunehault, who had long disowned him as her grandson, and who, still furious at her expulsion from the kingdom of Austrasia, had his head shaved, made him assume the monastic dross, and shortly after put him to death.

At the time when the second battle of Tolbiac was going on, Columbanus was wandering in a wood near his retreat with his favourite disciple Cagnoald, a young and noble Frank, son of one of the principal leudes of Theodebert, whom he had brought with him from the neighbourhood of Meaux. As he was reading, seated upon the fallen trunk of an old oak, he slept, and saw in a dream the two brothers coming to blows. At

his waking he told his companion of this vision, sighing over all that bloodshed. The son of Theodebert's minister answered him, "But, dear father, help Theodebert with your prayers, that he may overcome Thierry, your common enemy." Columbanus answered him, "Thou givest me a foolish counsel; not such was the will of our Lord, who commands us to pray for our enemies."

However, the whole of Austrasia had fallen by the death of Theodebert into the hands of Brunehault and Thierry, and the banks of the upper Rhine, where their victim had found a refuge, was a dependency of the Austrasian kingdom. Besides, the inhabitants of the environs of Bregentz, always irritated by the violent destruction of their idols, complained to the duke of the province that these strangers scared the game of the royal chase, by infesting the forests with their presence. Their cows were stolen, two of the monks were even slain in an ambushade. It was necessary to depart. Columbanus said, "We have found a golden cup, but it is full of serpents. The God whom we serve will lead us elsewhere". He had long desired to go to Italy, and reckoned on a good reception from the king of the Lombards. At the moment of departure, the fiery Gall, seized with fever, asked leave to remain. Columbanus was irritated by this weakness. "Ah, my brother," said he, "art thou already disgusted with the labours I have made thee endure? But since thou wilt separate thyself from me, I debar thee, as long as I live, from saying mass." Poor Gall did not deserve these reproaches: he remained in Helvetia, as will be seen, only to redouble the zeal of his apostolic labours, and to found there one of the most celebrated monasteries in Christendom.

Columbanus kept with him only a single disciple, Attains, and, notwithstanding, pursued his journey across the Alps. When we picture to ourselves the fatigues and dangers of such an undertaking in the days of Columbanus, we imagine that it was the image and recollection of this course which inspired the beginning of one of the instructions addressed to his monks, in which the unwearied traveller compares life to a journey.

"Oh mortal life! how many hast thou deceived, seduced, and blinded! Thou fliest and art nothing; thou appearest and art but a shade; thou risest and art but a vapour; thou fliest every day, and every day thou comest; thou fliest in coming, and comest in flying, the same at the point of departure, different at the end; sweet to the foolish, bitter to the wise; those who love thee know thee not, and those only know thee who despise thee. What art thou, then, oh human life ? Thou art the way of mortals and not their life; thou beginnest in sin and endest in death. Thou art then the way of life and not life itself. Thou art only a road, and an unequal road, long for some, short for others; wide for these, narrow for those; joyous for some, sad for others, but for all equally rapid and without return. It is necessary, then, oh miserable human life! to fathom thee, to question thee, but not to trust in thee. We must traverse thee without dwelling in thee—no one dwells upon a great road : we but march on through it, to reach the country beyond."

The king of the Lombards was that Agilulf, of whom we have already had occasion to speak in connection with St. Gregory the Great; his wife was Theodelind, the noble rival of Clotilde. He received the venerable exile with respect and confidence;

and Columbanus had scarcely arrived in Milan when he immediately began to write against the Arians, for this fatal heresy still predominated among the Lombards; those who had not remained pagan, especially among the nobles, had fallen victims to Arianism. The Irish apostle thus found a new occupation for his missionary zeal, which he could pursue successfully without giving up his love for solitude. Agilulf bestowed upon him a territory called Bobbio, situated in a retired gorge of the Apennines between Genoa and Milan, not far from the famous shores of Trebbia, where Hannibal encamped and vanquished the Romans. An old church, dedicated to St. Peter, was in existence there. Columbanus undertook to restore it, and to add to it a monastery. Despite his age, he shared in the workmen's labours, and bent his old shoulders under the weight of enormous beams of fir-wood, which it seemed impossible to transport across the precipices and perpendicular paths of these mountains. This abbey of Bobbio was his last stage. He made it the citadel of orthodoxy against the Arians, and lighted there a focus of knowledge and instruction which was long the light of northern Italy.

There, as everywhere, and throughout all his life, our saint continued to cultivate those literary studies which had charmed his youth. At sixty-eight he addressed to a friend an epistle in Adonic verse, which everywhere bears the impression of those classic recollections which the monks of that period cultivated. He prays him not to despise "these little verses by which Sappho, the illustrious muse, loved to charm her contemporaries, and to prefer for a moment these frivolous trifles to the most learned productions." He appeals to the recollections of the Golden Fleece, of the judgment of Paris, of Danae's shower of gold, and of the collar of Amphiaraus. Then his thoughts grew sober as they rose. "Thus I wrote, overwhelmed by the cruel pains of my weak body, and by age, for, while the times hasten their course, I have reached the eighteenth olympiad of my life. Everything passes, and the irreparable days fly away. Live, be strong, be happy, and remind yourself of sad old age."

To this last period of his life also belongs that letter, so differently interpreted, which he wrote to Pope Boniface IV in the name of King Agilulf, who had scarcely escaped from the bonds of Arianism, when he unluckily undertook to protect the partisans of the Three Chapters, who called in question the orthodoxy of the Holy See, which, according to their view, had placed itself in opposition to a General Council. Columbanus wrote from the midst of a mixed population of orthodox and schismatics, of heretics and even of pagans. Evidently little acquainted in his own person with the point at issue, he made himself the organ of the restlessness and defiance of the party which assumed to be the only one faithful to the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon against the error of Eutychus. While he appeals, in a series of extravagant and obscure apostrophes, to the indulgence of the pope for a foolish Scot, charged to write on account of a Lombard, a king of the Gentiles, he acquaints the pontiff with the imputations brought against him, and entreats him to prove his orthodoxy and excommunicate his detractors. Doubtless some of the expressions which he employs would be now regarded as disrespectful and justly rejected. But in these young and vigorous times, faith and austerity could be more indulgent. If his letter is impressed with all the frankness and independence of the Celt, of the Briton, a little too biting, as he says himself, it breathes also the tender and filial devotion of a Roman, impassioned in his anxiety for the honour of the Holy See. Let it be judged by this fragment: "I



confess that I lament over the bad reputation of the chair of St. Peter in this country. I speak to you not as a stranger, but as a disciple, as a friend, as a servant. I speak freely to our masters, to the pilots of the vessel of the Church, and I say to them, Watch! and despise not the humble advice of the stranger. We Irish, who inhabit the extremities of the world, are the disciples of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of the other apostles who have written under dictation of the Holy Spirit. We receive nothing more than the apostolic and evangelical doctrine. There has never been either a heretic, a Jew, or a schismatic among us. The people whom I see here, who bear the burden of many heretics, are jealous; they disturb themselves like a frightened flock. Pardon me then, if, swimming among these rocks, I have said some words offensive to pious ears. The native liberty of my race has given me that boldness. With us it is not the person, it is the right which prevails. The love of evangelical peace makes me say everything. We are bound to the chair of St. Peter; for however great and glorious Rome may be, it is this chair which makes her great and glorious among us. Although the name of the ancient city, the glory of Ausonia, has been spread throughout the world as something supremely august, by the too great admiration of the nations, for us you are only august and great since the incarnation of God, since the Spirit of God has breathed upon us, and since the Son of God, in His car drawn by these two ardent coursers of God, Peter and Paul, has crossed the oceans of nations to come to us. Still more, because of the two great apostles of Christ, you are almost celestial, and Rome is the head of the Churches of the whole world, excepting only the prerogative of the place of divine resurrection”.

The generous fervour of that Irish race, justly proud of having never known the yoke of pagan Rome, and of having waited, before recognising her supremacy, till she had become the Rome of the apostles and martyrs, has never been expressed with more poetic energy.

But whilst the unwearied missionary had thus recommenced in Italy his career as a preacher and monastic founder, everything was changed among the Franks to whom he had devoted the half of his life. At the moment when the victorious persecutor of Columbanus seemed at the climax of his fortune, when he had joined the immense domains of the Austrasian kingdom to his own kingdom of Orleans and Burgundy, and when he had only the little state of Clotaire left to conquer, in order to reign over all Gaul and Frankish Germany, King Thierry suddenly died at the age of twenty- six. In vain did Brunehault essay to renew her reign in the name of her great-grandson, the young Sigebert, the eldest of Thierry’s children: the leudes of Austrasia, who could never tolerate her haughty rule, and first among them the powerful chief Pepin, from whom the Carolingian race proceeded, declared themselves against her. They leagued themselves on one side with the leudes of Burgundy, on the other with Clotaire and his Neustrians, and called the latter to reign over them. Brunehault and the four sons of Thierry were delivered up to him. He slaughtered the two eldest, and showed himself the worthy son of Fredegund by the atrocious sufferings which he inflicted upon her septuagenarian rival. Clotaire II, when he had become by all these crimes the sole king of the Franks and master of Austrasia and Burgundy as well as Neustria, remembered the prediction of Columbanus, and desired to see once more the saint who had prophesied so truly. He charged Eustace, who had succeeded him as abbot at Luxeuil, to go and seek his spiritual father, and sent with him a deputation of nobles, as a security

for the good intentions of the king. Columbanus received Eustace gladly, and kept his visitor with him for some time that he might make him thoroughly acquainted with the spirit of the rule, which he was to establish among the “monastic nation” at Luxeuil. But he declined to answer the call of Clotaire: we would fain believe that all the innocent blood which that king had spilt had something to do with this refusal; but there is nothing to prove it. The abbot confined himself to writing him a letter full of good advice, which, it must be allowed, he had great need of, and recommending to him his beloved abbey of Luxeuil, which Clotaire indeed overwhelmed with gifts and favours.

As for Columbanus, he ended as he had begun, by seeking a solitude still more complete than that of the monastery which he had founded at Bobbio. He had found upon the opposite shore of Trebbia, in the side of a great rock, a cavern, which he transformed into a chapel, dedicated to the Holy Virgin: there he passed his last days in fasting and prayer, returning to the monastery only for the Sundays and holidays. After his death this chapel was long venerated and much frequented by afflicted souls; and three centuries later, the annals of the monastery record, that those who had entered there sad and downcast had left it rejoicing, consoled by the sweet protection of Mary and of Columbanus.

Such was the life of the illustrious founder of Luxeuil; less forgotten, we are bound to say, than others as worthy of recollection as himself, his memory has been brought to light anew in our own days, only to be made use of in a spirit hostile to the truth and authority of the Holy See.

What, then, is there in this life which can justify the assumption which has attempted to raise the founder of Luxeuil into the chief of a political party, an enemy to royalty in his time, and, more than that, a schismatic, a condemner, or at least a rival of the papacy? Columbanus had neither the virtues nor the vices which make political men; he contended, not against royalty, but against a single king, and he waged this warfare solely in defence of the purity and dignity of Christian marriage. It is impossible to discover in his biography, so full of minute details, the least trace of a political tendency. Far from being an enemy to royalty, he was, without controversy, of all the great monks of his time, the one who had the most frequent and cordial intercourse with contemporary kings: with Clotaire, king of the Neustrians; Theodebert, king of the Austrasians; Agilulf, king of the Lombards, But he knew that virtue and truth are made for kings as well as for nations. History should admire in him monastic integrity struggling with the retrograde paganism of Merovingian polygamy, and the foreign missionary and solitary taking up at once, in face of the conquerors of Gaul, the freedom of the prophets of the ancient law against the crowned profligate: “I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.” This was the case, and nothing else; this is sufficient for his glory.

In respect to the Holy See, if some traces of the harsh independence of his race and the frank boldness of his character are to be found in his language—if he must be blamed for defending and imposing on others, with wearisome obstinacy, the local and special observances of his own country—if he made himself ridiculous by offering advice to Pope Boniface IV on a theological question, which he himself confesses he had not studied—it must be added that, even in his most vehement words, nothing

implied the slightest doubt of the supreme authority of the Roman See. He says expressly that the pillar of the Church stands always firm at Rome; he expressly entitles the pope the pastor of pastors, and the prince of the chiefs, whose duty it is to protect the army of the Lord in its perils, to organise everything, to regulate the order of war, to stimulate the captains, and, finally, to engage in the combat, marching himself at the head of the soldiers of God.

This pretended Luther of the seventh century has then no right to any of those sympathies which have been recently bestowed on him. They have been addressed to the wrong individual. He was never the enemy of either kings or bishops. He was a formidable rival only to St. Benedict. Neither in his writings nor his life is there anything to indicate that this rivalry was intentional: it sprang naturally from his independent mind, strongly individual and even eccentric, from the passionate attachment with which he inspired so large a number of disciples, from the missionary impulse which he evidently possessed, but, above all, from the Rule which he believed it his duty to write for the use of the monastic nation which he had collected under his crosier. He never mentions the Rule of St. Benedict, though it was impossible that he could be ignorant of its existence, especially after he had gone to Lombardy. But he desired to introduce into Gaul a durable monument of the religious spirit of his country, of that powerful impulse which had fertilised monastic Ireland, and formed those immense collections of monks where, if he is to be believed, such a discipline reigned, that as many as a thousand abbots recognised the laws of a single superior, and such a union that, in certain houses, since their first foundation, there had never been a single dispute.

This Rule, at once shorter, less distinct, and more severe than that of St. Benedict, agrees with it, notwithstanding, in its essential particulars, as the Benedictine Rule approaches, in many points, to the rules of the great solitaries of the East. It is not given to man, not even to the man of genius, to isolate himself from the efforts and experience of his predecessors, and no truly practical genius has attempted or even desired it. The first of the ten chapters which form the Rule of Columbanus treats of obedience; it was to be absolute and passive; there is no reservation, as in that of Benedict, of a judicious exercise of power on the part of the abbot or of the advisers by whom he was to be surrounded. The second imposes perpetual silence upon the monks, except for useful or necessary causes. The third reduces their food to the lowest rate possible: Benedict had granted meat to the weak and ailing and a hemine of wine; Columbanus allowed only pulse, meal moistened with water, and a small loaf to all alike. They were to eat only in the evening; fasting was to be a daily exercise, like work, prayer, or reading. Except Chapter VII, which establishes a very complicated and tediously prolonged order of services for the psalmody of the choir (seventy-five psalms and twenty-five anthems for the great feasts, thirty-six psalms and twelve anthems for the lesser), the other chapters treat of poverty, humility, chastity, discretion or prudence, and mortification, all virtues essential to the monastic condition, but which the author deals with rather as a preacher than a legislator. The tenth, and last, which is as long as all the others put together, forms, under the title of Penitentiary, a sort of criminal code, in which a new contrast may be remarked with the Benedictine code, in the extreme severity of the penalties prescribed for the least irregularities. The rigid discipline used in the monasteries of

Scotland and Ireland is here manifest by the prodigal use of beating, which is reserved in the Benedictine code for incorrigible criminals, and prescribed in the Penitentiary for the most insignificant omissions. The number of strokes inflicted on delinquents varied from six to two hundred. This penalty, however, must have appeared much less hard and less humiliating at that period, even to the sons of the great, of whom so large a number were reckoned among the disciples of Columbanus, than it would seem to the most obscure Christian of our own time, since the maximum of two hundred blows was regarded as the equivalent of two days' fasting on bread and water, and the choice of these penalties was allotted to the monk who should have spoken, without the presence of a third person, to a woman. He who, on a journey, should have slept under the same roof with a woman, had to fast three days on bread and water.

These excessive severities discouraged no one. Columbanus saw an army of disciples collect around him, in the sanctuaries which he had founded, up to the last day of his life. They were more numerous and more illustrious than those of Benedict. Inspired by the spirit of this great saint, pervaded by the vigorous life which flowed from him, like him self-willed, dauntless, and unwearied, they gave to the monastic spirit the most powerful, rapid, and active impulse which it had yet received in the West. They extended it especially over those regions where that Franco-Germanic race, which hid in its skirts the future life of Christian civilisation, was laboriously forming itself. By their means the genius and memory of Columbanus hover over the whole of the seventh century, of all the centuries the most fertile and illustrious in the number and fervour of the monastic establishments which it produced. However, we shall see, before the century was completed, the rule and institution of the great Irishman everywhere replaced by the spirit and laws of his immortal predecessor. Columbanus had more of that fascination which attracts for a day, or for a generation, than of that depth of genius which creates for ages.

Let us endeavour, then, if we can, to trace a brief picture of this monastic mission of the sons of Columbanus, at once so laborious and so productive, the fruits of which, if they must not be exclusively attributed to the glory or authority of the Celtic missionary, did not the less enrich for a thousand years and more the treasures of the Church.

One word, in the first place, upon the Lombard abbey where Columbanus completed his career. His successor was Attalus, a noble Burgundian. He had first been a monk at Lerins, but, cast back by the decay of that renowned sanctuary, had been drawn to Luxeuil by the fame of Columbanus, and was named by the latter as his successor after his expulsion from Burgundy. But he preferred to join him in exile. After the death of the founder, the new abbot was troubled by an insurrection of the Italian monks, who declared themselves incapable of bearing so many austerities and so hard a discipline. He permitted them to go; they went to seek another resting-place, some among the neighbouring mountains, some on the shores of the Mediterranean; several returned afterwards to the fold where Attalus continued the work of his master, struggling bravely against Arianism, which had found its last citadel among the conquering Lombards of northern Italy. He died at the foot of a crucifix which he had placed at the door of his cell that he might kiss the feet every time he went out or in, and was buried by the side of Columbanus.

Another stranger governed the monastery after him, Bertulph, a noble Austrasian, and near relative of the famous Arnulf, Bishop of Metz, the earliest known ancestor of that Carolingian race which was soon to unite Gaul and Italy under its laws. Bertulph was born a pagan; the example of his cousin had converted him and led him to Luxeuil, from whence he followed Attalus to Bobbio. He was scarcely elected when he had to struggle with the Bishop of Tortona, who wished to bring the abbey under his jurisdiction, and attempted to arm himself with the authority of Ariowald, king of the Lombards.

This Ariowald, son-in-law and successor of Agilulf, did not promise to be a very zealous protector of the Irish abbey. Before he became king he had met one day in the streets of Pavia one of the monks of Bobbio, charged by the abbot Attalus with a mission for the capital of the Lombards. Seeing him from a distance, he said, "There is one of Columbanus's monks, who refuse to salute us." After which he himself saluted the monk derisively. The latter, whose name was Blidulf, answered that he would have saluted him willingly had he been irreproachable in matters of faith, and took advantage of the occasion to preach him a sermon upon the equality of the three persons of the Trinity. Ariowald, furious at this, posted two of his satellites to await the monk's return, and beat him to death. Blidulf, who had supped with an orthodox citizen of Pavia, was attacked in a remote place by these assassins, who beat him unmercifully, and left him on the ground for dead. At the end of some hours he was found by his host lying in his blood, but he raised himself up, despite his cruel wounds, saying that he had never slept a sweeter sleep. This wonder roused popular opinion in favour of the monks of Bobbio, and their orthodox doctrine. Ariowald, confused and penitent, sent to the abbey to ask pardon, and offered gifts, which were refused. But we must believe that this adventure had a salutary impression on his soul; for after his accession to the throne, though still an Arian, he not only abstained from persecuting the orthodox monastery, but even from condemning it in its struggles with the bishop. "It is not my part," he said, "to know these priestly contentions: let them be judged by their synods."

Bertulph, however, went to Rome to appeal to Pope Honorius, made him acquainted with the rule and the customs followed in the new foundation, obtained his sovereign approbation, and returned furnished with a privilege which exempted from episcopal jurisdiction the monastery in which Columbanus had completed his course.

Whilst the Franks of Burgundy and Austrasia, called to follow the great Irish monk into Lombardy, formed in a gorge of the Apennines a centre of energetic reaction against Arian heresy, against the effeminacy of the Italian monks, and the efforts of that paganism which still existed among the peasants, the Irish monks, who had been expelled from Luxeuil with their illustrious compatriot, but who had followed him only to the foot of the Alps, sowed the seed amid the semi-pagan populations of Eastern Helvetia and of Rhaetia. One of them, Sigisbert, separated from his master at the foot of the hill which has since been called St. Gothard, and crossing the glaciers and peaks of Crispalt, directing his steps to the east, arrived at the source of the Rhine, and from thence descended into a vast solitude, where he built a cell of branches near a fountain. The few inhabitants of these wild regions, who were still idolaters, surrounded him, admired him, and listened to him; but when he attempted to cut down the sacred oak, the object of their traditional worship, one of the pagans aimed an axe at his head. The



sign of the cross disarmed this assailant; the work of conversion proceeded painfully, but with the support, of a neighbouring noble, who became a Christian and then a monk under the teachings of the Irish missionary, and who endowed with all his possessions the new-born monastery, which still exists under the name of Dissentis. Thus was won and sanctified, from its very source, that Rhine whose waters were to bathe so many illustrious monastic sanctuaries.

Not far from the spot where the Rhine falls into Lake Constance, and a little to the south of the lake, Gall, cured of his fever, but deeply saddened by the departure of his master, chose a retreat which his name was to make immortal. A deacon, much given to hunting and fishing, pointed out to him a wild solitude enclosed within wooded heights, with abundant streams, but inhabited by bears, boars, and wolves. "If the Lord is with us, who can be against us?" said Gall; and he set out with some provisions in his wallet, and a small net for fishing. Towards evening they arrived at the spot where the torrent of Steinach hollows a bed for itself in the rocks. As he walked on praying, his foot caught in the brushwood and he fell. The deacon ran to raise him up. "No," said Gall: "here is my chosen habitation; here is my resting-place for ever." There he arranged two hazel-boughs into the form of a cross, attached to it the relics which he carried round his neck, and passed the night in prayer. Before his devotions were concluded, a bear descended from the mountain to collect the remains of the traveller's meal. Gall threw him a loaf, and said to him, "In the name of Christ, withdraw from this valley; the neighbouring mountains shall be common to us and thee, but on condition that thou shalt do no more harm either to man or beast." The next day the deacon went to fish in the torrent, and, as he threw his net, two demons appeared to him under the form of two naked women about to bathe, who threw stones at him, and accused him of having led into the desert the cruel man who had always overcome them. Gall, when he came, exorcised these phantoms; they fled, ascending the course of the torrent, and could be heard on the mountain, weeping and crying as with the voices of women: "Where shall we go? this stranger hunts us from the midst of men, and even from the depths of the desert"; while other voices asked, "whether the Christian was still there, and if he would not soon depart."

These poetic traditions, transmitted from lip to lip among the first Christians of Helvetia, gave a natural picture of the effect produced upon the souls of the inhabitants by the double struggle of the Irish missionaries against the gods of paganism and the forces of nature. The entire life of the celebrated apostle of German Switzerland is thus taken possession of by legends, which have interwoven with it many tales, the charm of which detains us in spite of ourselves. One of these shows him to us appealed to by the same duke of Alamannia who wished to expel Colubanus and his companions out of his province, but who now claimed the help of the holy solitary whose fame already extended afar, to heal his daughter, possessed by a devil, who resisted all exorcisms, crying out that he would yield only to Gall, who had already banished him and his fellows from the banks of the Lakes of Zurich and Constance. Gall refused to go, and disappeared into the mountains of Rhaetia; he was found there in a cavern, and led to the ducal castle at Uberlingen. He found the young princess lying, as if dead, upon the knees of her mother, her eyes shut, and her mouth open. He knelt down by her side, and, after a fervent prayer, commanded the demon to come out of her. The young girl opened

her eyes, and the demon, speaking by her voice, said, before it obeyed him, “Art thou, then, that Gall who hast already chased me away everywhere? Ingrate! it is to avenge thee that I have entered into the daughter of thy persecutor, and thou comest now to expel me again!” When the cure was complete, Gall advised the daughter of the duke to consecrate her virginity to God, who had delivered her. But this princess, whose name was Friedeburga (castle of peace), and who was, like all princesses canonised by legends, of singular beauty, had been affianced to Sigebert, the eldest son of Thierry II, who had just succeeded his father, and was soon to perish under the sword of Clotaire II. She was sent to him at Metz. When he learned how and by whom she had been cured, the young prince made a gift and concession to the Irish saint of all the territory which he should desire in the public or royal possessions between the Rhaetian Alps and the Lake of Constance. Then he wished to proceed with his marriage. Friedeburga asked some days’ respite to recover her strength; she took advantage of this to flee to a church dedicated to St. Stephen. There she covered herself with a nun’s veil, and, taking hold of the corner of the altar, prayed to the saint who had first shed his blood for Christ to help her. The young king, when he was told of this, came to the church with the nuptial robe and crown which had been intended for his bride. On seeing him, she held closer and closer to the altar. But he reassured her, and said, “I come here only to do thy will.” He commanded the priests to bring her from the altar to him; when she approached, he had her clothed in the nuptial robe, and placed the crown over her veil. Then, after looking at her for some time, he said to her, “Such as thou art there, adorned for my bridal, I yield thee to the bridegroom whom thou preferrest to me—to my Lord Jesus Christ.” Then taking her hand, he placed her at the altar, and left the church, to mourn in secret over his lost love.

However, the zealous solitary whose influence inspired from afar these touching and generous sacrifices, refused the bishopric of Constance, which the duke of Alamannia would have conferred upon him, alleging as his reason the kind of interdict which his master had pronounced at the moment of separation, and returned into his dear solitude, which ten or twelve native Christians soon shared with him. He selected one of these to send across the Alps to make inquiries concerning the fate of Columbanus, who brought back from Bobbio the news of his death, and the crosier of the illustrious exile, which he had bequeathed to his compatriot and friend as a sign of absolution. Ten years later, Gall received a deputation of six monks, Irish like himself, from Luxeuil, who came in the name of the community to pray his acceptance of the government of the great abbey, vacant by the death of Eustace. But he again refused to leave that asylum which he had formed for himself, and where he continued to preach and edify the surrounding population, receiving disciples and visitors in always increasing numbers, whom he supported by the produce of his fishing. When he died, the entire country of the Alamans had become a Christian province, and around his cell were already collected the rudiments of the great monastery which, under the same name of St. Gall, was to become one of the most celebrated schools of Christendom, and one of the principal centres of intellectual life in the Germanic world.

Several generations passed before St. Gall could accomplish its glorious destinies, whilst the principal foundation of Columbanus immediately attained the climax of its greatness and popularity. No monastery of the West had yet shone with so much lustre,

or attracted so many disciples, as Luxeuil, since the exile of its illustrious founder fixed upon it the attention and sympathy of Christian Gaul. It may be remembered that, at the time of Columbanus's exile, none of his monks who were not Irish were allowed to follow him. One of these, named Eustace, born of a noble family in Burgundy, and who had been a soldier before entering Luxeuil, had to be torn from the arms of his spiritual father. After a time, he followed him to Bregentz, from whence he returned to Luxeuil to govern the community deprived of its natural head, and to dispute possession with the secular persons who invaded it on all sides, and who had even established their shepherds in the enclosure inhabited by the monks. Eustace was entrusted by Clotaire II, when he became sole master of the three Frank kingdoms, with the mission of recalling Columbanus, as we have already seen. Upon the refusal of the latter, Eustace remained at the head of the great abbey, which attracted an increasing number of monks, and the veneration of the nations. However, the missionary spirit and desire to preach exercised an overwhelming influence over Eustace, as over all the disciples of the great Irish missionary. The bishops, assembled in the Council of Bonneuil-sur-Marne by Clotaire II, nominated him to preach the faith to unconverted nations. He began with the Varasques, who inhabited, not far from Luxeuil, the banks of the Doubs, near Baume, some of whom were still idolaters, and worshipped the genii of the woods, the fauns and dryads of classic antiquity, whilst the others had fallen victims to heresy. He afterwards travelled beyond the countries which Columbanus had visited, to the extremity of northern Gaul, among the Bolens or Bavarians. His mission was not without success; but Luxeuil, which could not remain thus without a head, Boon recalled him.

During the ten years of his rule, a worthy successor of Columbanus, he succeeded in securing the energetic support of the Frank nobility, as well as the favour of Clotaire II. Under his active and intelligent administration, the abbey founded by St. Columbanus attained its highest point of splendour, and was recognised as the monastic capital of all the countries under Frank government. The other monasteries, into which laxness and the secular spirit had but too rapidly found their way, yielded one after another to the happy influence of Luxeuil, and gradually renewed themselves by its example. Abbots animated by sincere zeal did not hesitate to draw from that new fountain the strength and light with which they found themselves unprovided in their ancient sanctuaries. Among them was Conon, the abbot of the famous monastery of Lerins, which had been, two centuries before, the most illustrious community of the West, but which had since come through all the vicissitudes of a slow decay.

The great abbey of Sequania became thus a nursery of bishops and abbots—preachers and reformers for the whole Church of these vast countries, and principally for the two kingdoms of Austrasia and Burgundy. It owed this preponderating influence not only to the monastic regularity which was severely observed there, but especially to the flourishing school established by Columbanus, which he had entrusted, while he remained there, to the special charge of Eustace, and whose progress the latter, when he himself became abbot, promoted with unwearied zeal. Luxeuil was the most celebrated school of Christendom during the seventh century, and the most frequented. The monks and clerks of other monasteries, and, more numerous still, the children of the noblest Frank and Burgundian races, crowded to it. Lyons, Autun, Langres, and Strasbourg, the most famous cities of Gaul, sent their youth thither. The fathers came to study with their

children; some aspiring to the honour of counting themselves one day among the sons of St. Columbanus; others to re-enter into secular life with the credit of having drawn their knowledge of divine and human learning from so famous a seat of learning. As it always happens, when a great centre of Christian virtues is formed in the world, light and life shine forth from it, and brighten all around with irresistible energy.

From the banks of the Lake of Geneva to the coast of the North Sea, every year saw the rise of some monastery peopled and founded by the children of Luxeuil, whilst the episcopal cities sought as bishops men trained to the government of souls by the regenerating influence of this great monastery. Besançon, Noyon, Laon, Verdun, and the diocesan capitals of the country of the Rauragues and Morins, were so fortunate as to obtain such bishops almost at the same time. Their good fortune was envied by all, and all vied in seeking superiors whom they concluded beforehand to be saints. And it was with reason; for perhaps so great a number of men, honoured by the Church after their death with public worship, has never been collected on one point, or into so short a space as twenty years.

This remarkable prosperity was threatened with a sudden interruption by means of the intrigues of a false brother who had stolen into the monastic family of Columbanus. A man named Agrestin, who had been notary or secretary to King Thierry, the persecutor of Columbanus, came one day to give himself and all his property to Luxeuil. Being admitted among the monks, he soon showed a desire to go, like Eustace, to preach the faith to the pagans. In vain the abbot, who could see no evangelical quality in him, attempted to restrain that false zeal. He was obliged to let him go. Agrestin followed the footsteps of Eustace into Bavaria, but made nothing of it, and passed from thence into Istria and Lombardy, where he embraced the schism of the Three Chapters, which had already put Columbanus in danger of compromising himself with the Holy See. But the authority of the sovereign pontiff had not been slow in exercising its legitimate influence upon the Italian disciples of the great Irish monk: and when Agrestin attempted to involve the second abbot of Bobbio, Attalus, in the schism, he was so badly received that he imagined himself entitled to address the successor of Columbanus in an epistle full of invectives and calumnies. He returned from thence to Luxeuil, where he tried to corrupt his former brethren. Eustace then remembered what the exiled Columbanus had written to them, in his letter from Nantes, just before his embarkation: "If there is one among you who holds different sentiments from the others, send him away"; and he commanded Agrestin to leave the community. To avenge himself, the schismatic began to snarl, says the contemporary annalist, hawking here and there injurious imputations against that same rule of St. Columbanus which he himself had professed, and the success of which could not fail to have excited some jealousy and hostility. One of the bishops, Abellinus of Geneva, listened to his denunciations, and exerted himself to make the neighbouring prelates share his dislike. King Clotaire, who heard of it, and who was always full of solicitude for Luxeuil, assembled most of the bishops of the kingdom of Burgundy in council at Macon. To this council Eustace was called, and the accuser invited to state his complaints against the rule of Luxeuil. He says nothing of the celebration of Easter according to the Irish custom, which proves that Columbanus or his disciples had finally given up that assumption; nor were the severe penalties of the Penitentiary touched upon. All his

complaints were directed against certain insignificant peculiarities, which he called superfluous, contrary to the canons, or showing a personal spirit. "I have discovered," said he, "that Columbanus has established usages which are not those of the whole Church." And thereupon he accused his former brethren, as with so many heresies, of making the sign of the cross upon their spoons, when eating; of asking a blessing in entering or leaving any monastic building; and of multiplying prayers at mass. He insisted especially against the Irish tonsure, which Columbanus had introduced into France, and which consisted solely in shaving the front of the head from one ear to the other, without touching the hair of the back part, while the Greeks shaved the entire head, and the Romans only the crown, leaving the hair in the form of a crown round the lower part of the head. This last custom, as is well known, became the prevalent one in all the religious orders of the West.

Eustace had no difficulty in justifying the customs of Luxeuil, and in discomfiting the violence of his accuser. But as Agrestin always returned to the charge, the abbot said to him : "In presence of these bishops, I, the disciple and successor of him whose institute thou condemnest, cite thee to appear with him, within a year, at the tribunal of God, to plead thy cause against him, and to learn and know the justice of Him whose servant thou hast attempted to calumniate." The solemnity of this appeal had an effect even upon the prelates who leant to Agrestin's side: they urged him to be reconciled to his former abbot, and the latter, who was gentleness itself, consented to give him the kiss of peace. But this goodness did not benefit Agrestin. Hopeless of succeeding at Luxeuil itself, he sowed revolt and calumny in the other monasteries which had proceeded, like Luxeuil, from the colonising genius of Columbanus, at Remiremont and Faremoutier. But, before the end of the year, he was slain with a blow of an axe by a slave, whose wife, it is believed, he had intended to dishonour.

The bishops of the Council of Macon, and the Bishop of Geneva above all others, became from that time the champions and protectors of the institute of St. Columbanus. Like them, many other prelates of Gaul distinguished themselves by their eagerness in founding or protecting new monasteries destined to extend or practise the Irish rule. The glory of Columbanus and Luxeuil came forth uninjured, and indeed increased, from this trial. However, although no contemporary document expressly says as much, it is evident that from that time the heads of the institution perceived the necessity of softening the intense individuality of their founder's spirit. Through the passionate and exaggerated accusations of Agrestin, their eyes were opened to the dangers of isolation, even in what were apparently unimportant details of observance and regular discipline. They perceived, with profound Christian sagacity, that they must give up the thought of extending the Rule of their master everywhere, and as the only monastic code. They knew that by their side a Rule more ancient than their own, and fortified by the formal approbation of the Roman pontiff, lived and flourished, without brilliant success it is true, up to that time, but not without fruit or honour. By what means was the abbey of Luxeuil brought into contact with the Rule of St. Benedict? By what argument did this powerful and celebrated house open her doors to another glory and authority than that of her founder? There is no answer to this question: but it is certain that, under the successor of Eustace, who died a year after the Council of Macon, and after that time, in the numerous foundations of which we have still to speak, the two Rules almost always



appear together, as the joint bases of communities originated by the disciples of Columbanus. The monastic republic of Gaul, which apparently ought to have recognised only one dictator, henceforth was to have two consuls, like the Roman republic of old.

The successor of Eustace was Walbert, also a pupil and companion of Columbanus. Born of Sicambrian race, of a noble and wealthy family, he had been remarked for his bravery in war, before he enrolled himself in the army of the Irish missionary. But the attraction of the cloister overcame the warlike inclinations of the Frank. When his mind was made up, he went to Luxeuil, taking with him not only a gift of all his vast domains, but also his military dress, of which he would only divest himself in the monastery itself: he offered also the arms with which he had won his fame, which were suspended from the arches of the church, and remained there during the course of ages, as a monument of the noblest victory which a man can achieve here below. He obtained permission from Eustace to live alone in the hollow of a rock, near a fountain in the midst of the wood, three miles from the abbey. It was here that, after the death of Columbanus's first successor Eustace, and the refusal of Gall to accept the office, the monks of Luxeuil sought Walbert to make him their third abbot. He ruled them for forty years with honour and success. We shall see hereafter the sympathy which existed between Walbert and Bathild, the holy regent of the three Frank kingdoms, and the power he was supposed to have over her. His name remains, in the surrounding countries, the most popular of all those who have done honour to the great abbey of Sequania. He maintained discipline and encouraged profound study, while he increased the property of the community, by his own donations in the first place, and then by those which the reputation of the monastery attracted from all sides.

To the temporal independence thus secured, was soon added a sort of spiritual independence eagerly sought by all the great monasteries, and which they spared no pains in soliciting either from the popes or provincial councils. Their object was to protect themselves, by a solemn privilege, from the vexatious abuses of authority, which the diocesan bishop, by right of his spiritual authority, could subject them to, by taking up his abode among them against their will, with a numerous retinue, by making them pay a very high price for the holy chrism and the ordination of their brethren, or, above all, by obstructing the freedom of their elections. Lerins had obtained this privilege from the Council of Arles in 451, and Agaune from the Council of Chalon in 579. Luxeuil could not fail to feel the importance of the same rights and the same necessities.

Under the abbacy of Walbert, and upon a petition made in the name of King Clovis II, then a minor, Pope John IV accorded the privilege of exemption from episcopal authority "to the monastery of St. Peter founded," says the pontifical act, "by the venerable Columbanus, a Scot, who came a stranger, but fervent in zeal and sanctity in the kingdom of the Franks. ... If, which God forbid, the monks of the said monastery should become lukewarm in the love of God and observance of the institutes of their father, they shall be punished by the abbot, that is, by the father of the monastery; and if he himself should fall into indifference, and contempt of the paternal rule, the Holy See shall provide for that."

Six hundred monks formed, under the cross of Walbert, the permanent garrison of this monastic citadel, from whence missionaries, solitary or in parties, issued daily to found new monastic colonies at a distance. There even came a time when the throng of monks seeking entrance seems to have embarrassed Walbert, and when he sought means of placing them elsewhere and at a distance. For under him, even more than under his predecessors, the productiveness of Luxeuil became prodigious. It was at this period particularly, as says a contemporary, that, throughout the whole of Gaul, in the castles and cities, in plains and in deserts, armies of monks and colonies of nuns abounded everywhere, carrying with them the glory and the laws of Benedict and Columbanus.

It would be a hard task to trace the faithful picture of that monastic colonisation of Gaul, which had, during the whole of the seventh century, its centre in Luxeuil. A single glance must suffice here. To find our way through this labyrinth, it is necessary to survey rapidly the principal provinces which received, one after another, the benefits of this pacific conquest. This rapid course will permit us to breathe the perfume of some of those flowers of exquisite charity and sweet humbleness, which blossomed amid the savage violence and brutal cruelty of which Christendom was then the theatre. It will show us also how many obstacles and dangers these men of peace and prayer had to surmount, and how, subdued under the yoke of the monastic rule, in solitude or in the community of the cloister, the Franks who gave themselves to God under the laws of Columbanus or Benedict, allowed neither the generous courage nor the proud independence of their fathers to degenerate in them; how they displayed, above all, in every encounter, that individual energy and initiative force which was characteristic of the Germanic races, and which alone could regenerate the West, so long sunk under the ignoble burden of Roman decrepitude.

But before studying the action of Columbanus and his followers upon the Frank and Burgundian nobility at a distance, we find, not far from Luxeuil, a great foundation due to one of those Irish monks who were the faithful companions of him who, four centuries after his death, was still called “the king of monks and conductor of the chariot of God.” It will be recollected that, at his expulsion from Luxeuil, the Irish monks alone were permitted to follow him. One of them, then advanced in years, and believed to have been a brother of St. Gall, whose Celtic name has disappeared under the Latin appellation of Deicolus or Desle (servant of God), when he had reached with Columbanus a place covered with brushwood, some miles distant from Luxeuil, upon the road to Besançon, felt his limbs fail, and perceived that he could go no farther. Throwing himself at the feet of his abbot, he asked and obtained permission, with the blessing of Columbanus, to accomplish his pilgrimage in this desert. After a tearful separation, when he found himself alone, he set out to find a place of rest in the forest. Searching through the thicket, he met a flock of swine, the herdsman of which was thunderstruck at sight of this stranger of great height, and clad in a costume unknown to him. “Who are you?” asked the swineherd, “whence come you? what seek you? what are you doing in this wild country without guide or companion?” “Be not afraid, my brother,” said the old Irishman, “I am a traveller and a monk; and I beg you for charity to show me hereabouts a place where a man may live.” The swineherd answered him, that in this neighbourhood the only place he knew was marshy, but still habitable, because of the abundance of water, and belonged to a powerful vassal called Werfair. He

refused, however, to guide him to it, lest his flock should stray in his absence; but Desle insisted, and said, with that daring gaiety which we still find among the Irish, "If thou do me this little favour, I answer for it that thou shalt not lose the very least of thy herd; my staff shall replace thee, and be swineherd in thy absence." And thereupon he stuck his traveller's staff into the ground, round which the swine collected and lay down; upon which the two set out through the wood, the Irish monk and the Burgundian swineherd, and thus was discovered and taken possession of the Bite of the existing town of Lure, and of that great monastery of the same name, the abbot of which, eleven centuries after this adventure, was reckoned among the princes of the holy Roman empire.

But Desle was not at the end of his difficulties. Near his new retreat was a little church, frequented by the shepherds and peasants of the neighbourhood, and served by a secular priest, who saw the arrival of the disciple of Columbanus in these regions with an evil eye: "This monk," he said, "will interfere with my living." And he told his hearers that this stranger was a magician, who hid himself in the wood that he might give himself up to his incantations, "and that he had come at midnight, under pretence of praying, to my chapel, the doors of which I had closed in vain : a single word from him sufficed to open them." The priest afterwards denounced him to Werfair, the lord of the place, asking him if he was disposed to allow a certain foreign monk to take possession of his chapel, without any one being able to put him out of it. With that brutal ferocity which constantly reappeared among these baptized Barbarians, Werfair commanded that the stranger should be seized if possible, and that the punishment of castration should be inflicted on him. But before that impious order could be obeyed, he was himself suddenly seized with shameful and mortal sickness. His pious widow, in the hope of softening divine justice towards the soul of her husband, made a gift of all the land which surrounded the site of Lure to the monk who called himself the traveller of Christ, and numerous disciples soon came to live by his side a life of peace and prayer. Their pious solitude was one day disturbed, as has already been mentioned, by King Clotaire II, whose name perpetually recurs in the history of Columbanus and his disciples. As the king was one day hunting in a royal domain near Lure, a boar, pursued by the nobles of his train, took refuge in the cell of Desle. The saint laid his hand upon its head, saying, "Since thou come at to ask charity, thy life shall be saved." The king, when told of it by the hunters who had followed the animal, desired to see that wonder for himself. When he knew that the old recluse was a disciple of that Columbanus whom he had always honoured and protected, he inquired affectionately what means of subsistence the abbot and his companions could find in that solitude. "It is written," said the Irishman, "that nothing shall be wanting to those who fear God; we lead a poor life, but with the fear of God it suffices for us." Clotaire bestowed upon the new community all the forests, pasturage, and fisheries possessed by the public treasury in the neighbourhood of Lure, which became from that time, and always remained, one of the richest monasteries in Christendom.

Lure and Luxeuil were situated in the north of ancient Sequania, then included in the kingdom of Burgundy, of which, as well as Austrasia, Clotaire II had become the master. The whole of that wide and beautiful district of Burgundy which retains its name, and which, to the west and east of the river Saone, has since formed the duchy, and particularly the county of Burgundy, was naturally the first to yield to the influence

of Luxeuil. This district was, from the time of Columbanus, governed, or rather possessed, by a powerful family of Burgonde origin, whose connection with Columbanus and his disciples demonstrated once more the powerful influence exercised upon the Frank nobility by the great Irish monk. This house was represented by two brothers, who both bore the title of duke: the one, Amalgar, was duke of Burgundy to the west and north of the Doubs; the other, Waldelen or Wandelin, lived at Besançon, and his duchy extended to the other side of Jura, and as far as the Alps. Waldelen and his wife suffered much from having no children to whom to leave their immense possessions. The renown of the first miracles and great sanctity of the Irish monk, who had established himself not far from Besançon, drew them to Luxeuil. They went to ask him to pray for them, and to obtain them a son from the Lord. "I will do it willingly", said the saint; "and I will ask not only one, but several, on condition that you give me the first-born, that I may baptize him with my own hands, and dedicate him to the Lord." The promise was made, and the mercy obtained. The duchess herself carried her first-born to Luxeuil, where Columbanus baptized him, giving him the name of Donat (Donatus) in testimony of the gift which his parents had made of him to God. He was restored to his mother to be nursed, and then brought back to be trained in the monastery, where the child grew up, and remained until, thirty years after, he was taken from it to be made Bishop of Besançon. In that metropolitan city, where the exile of Columbanus had doubtless left popular recollections, Donatus, out of love for his spiritual father, established a monastery of men under the rule of Columbanus, and dedicated to St Paul, as Luxeuil was to St. Peter. He added, however, to the observance of the rule of the founder of Luxeuil, that of the rule of St. Benedict, which was introduced about the same period at Luxeuil itself. He himself lived there as a monk, always wearing the monastic dress. Afterwards, with the help of his mother, and also in his episcopal city of Besançon, he originated the monastery of Jussamoutier for nuns, giving them a rule in which that of St. Caesarius, which we have already seen adopted by Radigund at Poitiers, was combined with various arrangements borrowed from the rules of Columbanus and Benedict. The Latin of the preamble, which was written by Donatus himself, does honour to the school of Luxeuil. The daughters of Jussamoutier rivalled the monks of Luxeuil in zeal and fervour, but they asked expressly that the laws of the two patriarchs should be modified so as to suit the difference of sex. They do not seem, however, to have objected to any of the severities of Irish tradition, for we see with surprise, in that version of the three rules adapted to their use, the penalty of fifty or even a hundred lashes inflicted upon these virgins for certain faults against discipline. The wiser and gentler rule of Benedict gained ground, notwithstanding, at each new manifestation of religious life.

The younger brother of Donatus, Ramelen, who succeeded his father as duke of Transjuran Burgundy, signalised his reverence for the memory of Columbanus by the foundation or reconstruction of the abbey of Romain-Moutier, in a pass on the southern side of Jura, consecrated to prayer, two centuries before, by the founder of Condat. He introduced a colony from Luxeuil there: the ancient church, often rebuilt, exists still: it has served as a model to an entire order of primitive churches, and the basis of an ingenious and new system, which characterises the date and style of the principal Christian monuments between Jura and the Alps.

We have said that the father of St. Donatus had a brother, another lord, Amalgaire, whose duchy extended to the gates of Besançon. This last had two children, who, like their cousins, are connected with Luxeuil. The son, named Waldelen, like his uncle, was also entrusted to the care of Columbanus, and became a monk at Luxeuil, from whence his father took him to put him at the head of the abbey of Bèze, which he had founded in honour of God, St. Peter, and St. Paul, between the Satin and the Tille, near a fountain still known and admired for the immense sheet of water which gushes from it, and to the east of a forest called the *Velvet Forest*, a name which preserves to our own days a trace of the impression produced by its thick verdure upon the admiring popular mind, at a time when a common mind seems to have been more observant than now of certain beauties. The new abbot carried the rule of Columbanus to Bèze, and maintained it for fifty years in that sanctuary, which was long to hold its place in the first rank of French monasteries. When his eldest brother, who had succeeded to the duchy of his father, compromised in the civil wars of the time of Ebroin, had to flee into Austrasia, Waldelen collected his property and joined it to that of the monastery. He offered an asylum there to his sister, Adalsind, for whom their father, Duke Amalgar, had also founded an abbey at Bregille, opposite Besançon on the right bank of the Doubs. But she could not long remain there; the annoyances she met with from the inhabitants of the surrounding country obliged her to leave a place in which neither the ancient authority of her father, nor her character of abbess, nor the proximity of an important city governed by her family, could protect her. This forced exile is a proof, among many others, of the obstacles and hostilities too often encountered by the Religions of both sexes, despite the protection of kings and nobles, amid the unsubdued races who had invaded the West.

While the various members of the most powerful family of the two Burgundies testified thus their devotion to the memory and institute of Columbanus, the young and noble Ermenfried obeyed the same impulse upon a more modest scale, amid the half-pagan tribe of the Varasques, who, following the Burgonde invasion from the banks of the Rhine, occupied, a little above Besançon, a district watered by the Doubs, where the second abbot of Luxeuil, Eustace, had already attempted their conversion. Ermenfried, according to the custom of the Germanic races, had been recommended in his youth, along with his brother, to King Clotaire II, the friend and protector of Columbanus, who had received him into his house. His noble bearing, his varied knowledge, and modest piety gained him the favour of this prince. Clotaire had, besides, entrusted his brother with the care of the ring which was his seal-royal, and had thus constituted him chancellor of his court. Ermenfried, recalled into his own country to receive the inheritance of a wealthy noble of his family, had found, in surveying his new possessions, a narrow little valley where two clear streams, uniting at the foot of a little hill, formed into a tributary of the Doubs, called the Cusancin, and where there had formerly existed, under the name of Cusance, a monastery of women. Contemplating this site, he was filled with a desire to raise the ruins of the abandoned sanctuary, and to consecrate himself there to the Lord. When he returned to the court of Clotaire, the new spirit which animated him soon became apparent. One day, when he appeared before the king with his silken tunic in disorder and falling to his feet, Clotaire said to him, "What is the matter, Ermenfried? What is this fashion of wearing thy tunic? Wouldst thou really become a clerk?" "Yes," answered the Varasque, "a clerk, and even a monk; and I



entreat yon to grant me your permission.” The king consented, and the two brothers immediately set out for their solitude. In vain their mother urged them to marry and perpetuate their race. Ermenfried went to Luxeuil to be trained for monastic life under Walbert, received there the monastic frock and the priesthood, and returned to Cusance, where he soon became the head of a community of thirty monks, which he subordinated completely to Luxeuil, and directed with gentle and active authority, while his brother, with whom he always lived in the closest anion, provided for their temporal necessities. Ermenfried reserved the humbler labours for himself; he spent whole days in sifting the grain which the others thrashed in the bars. For he loved work and workers. On Sundays, in celebrating mass, he distributed to the people the eulogies or unconsecrated wafers, which then served for consecrated bread. When he perceived the hard hands of the ploughmen, he bent down to kiss with tender respect these noble marks of the week’s labour. I have surveyed the annals of all nations, ancient and modern, but I have found nothing which has moved me more, or better explained the true causes of the victory of Christianity over the ancient world, than the image of this German, this son of the victors of Rome and conquerors of Gaul, become a monk, and kissing, before the altar of Christ, the hard hands of the Gaulish husbandmen, in that forgotten comer of Jura, without even suspecting that an obscure witness took note of it for forgetful posterity.

Before we leave Sequania, let us ascend into the country of the Rauragues (the ancient bishopric of Bale). There, on the banks of that deep and narrow gorge, hollowed by the Doubs in the very heart of the Jura, upon the existing boundary of Switzerland and Franche-Comté, at the spot where that river, having run since its source from south to north, makes a sudden turn towards the west, before doubling back to the south, and forms thus a sort of peninsula still called the dose of the Doubs, we shall find the little town of St. Ursanne. It originated in the choice which another disciple of Columbanus made of that wild country in order to live there in solitude. Ursicinus, which has been transformed into Ursanne, was probably Irish, since he left Luxeuil with Columbanus; but, like Gall and Sigisbert, he did not follow him into Italy; and, after having founded a little Christendom upon the fertile shores of the Lake of Bienne, he preferred to establish himself among the scarped rocks covered with firs which overlook the upper course of the Doubs. Climbing into the most inaccessible comers of these wild gorges, in search of their strayed cattle, the herdsmen one day discovered him, and told, on descending, that they had found at the top of the mountain a wan and emaciated man, like another St. John Baptist, who most surely lived in community with the bears, and was supported by them. Thence, doubtless, arose the name of Ursicinus or Urson, which has replaced this monk’s Celtic name. In this instance, as invariably through the annals of monastic extension, the great examples of mortification and spiritual courage, which excited the admiration and sympathy of some, raised the derision and hostility of others. A rich inhabitant of the neighbourhood drew the solitary to his house on pretence of hearing him preach; and having made him drink wine, to which he was not accustomed, the poor saint soon became uncomfortable and asked leave to withdraw. Then the perfidious host, with all his family, began to mock the monk with bursts of laughter, calling him glutton, drunkard, and hypocrite, and accusing him as such to the surrounding population. Urson cursed the house of the traitor, and returned to his solitude. This adventure brought no discredit upon him: far from that, he had many

disciples, and the increasing number of those who would live like him, and with him, obliged him to leave the huts which he had raised upon the heights, and to build his convent at the bottom of the pass and on the bank of the river. It is to be remarked that he had here an hospital for the sick poor, and kept baggage-cattle to bring them from a distance and through the steep paths of these mountains.

The little monastery which our Irishman had founded was taken up and occupied after his death by another colony from Luxeuil, led by Germain, a young noble of Treves, who, at seventeen, in spite of king and bishop, had left all to flee into solitude. He was of the number of those recruits whose coming to enrol themselves at Luxeuil alarmed abbot Walbert by their multitude. The latter, recognising the piety and ability of the young neophyte, entrusted to him the direction of the monks whom he sent into a valley of Raurasia, of which Gondoin, the first known duke of Alsatia, had just made him a gift. This valley, though fertile and well watered, was almost unapproachable: Germain, either by a miracle, or by labours in which he himself took the principal share, had to open a passage through the rocks which formed the approach of the defile. The valley took the name of Moustier-Grandval, after the monastery, which he long ruled, in conjunction with that of St. Ursanne. The abbot of Luxeuil, with the consent of his brethren, had expressly freed the monks whom he intended, under the authority of Germain, to people the new sanctuary, from all obedience to himself. In the surrounding country, the benevolent stranger, who died a victim to his zeal for his neighbour, was everywhere beloved. A new duke of Alsatia, Adalric, set himself to oppress the population, and to trouble the monks of Grandval in every possible way, treating them as rebels to the authority of his predecessor and to his own. He approached the monastery at the head of a band of Alamans, who were as much robbers as soldiers. Germain, accompanied by the librarian of the community, went to meet the enemy. At the sight of the burning houses, and his poor neighbours pursued and slaughtered by the soldiers, he burst forth into tears and reproaches. "Enemy of God and truth," he said to the duke, "is it thus that you treat a Christian country? and do you not fear to ruin this monastery which I have myself built?" The duke listened without anger, and promised him peace. But as the abbot returned to Grandval, he met some soldiers upon his way, to whom he addressed similar remonstrances: "Dear sons, do not commit so many crimes against the people of God!" Instead of appeasing, his words exasperated them; they divested him of his robes, and slew him as well as his companion.

The body of this martyr of justice and charity was carried to the church which he had built at St Ursanne. In the interval between the death of the founder of the abbey, and that of the first martyr of the illustrious line of Columbanus, this remote monastery had already felt the influence of a third saint, who, without passing through Luxeuil, had nevertheless yielded to the power of Columbanus's genius and rule.

Vandregisil was born near Verdun, of noble and rich parents, allied to the two mayors of the palace, Erchinoald and Pepin of Landen, who governed Neustria and Austrasia under the authority of King Dagobert I., son and successor of that Clotaire II who had been always so favourable to Columbanus and his disciples. This relationship had procured the young noble a favourable position in the court of the king, to whom he had been recommended in his youth. He became count of the palace, that is to say, judge of the causes referred to the king, and collector of the returns of the royal revenue.

But power and ambition held no place in a heart which had already felt the contagion of the many great examples furnished by the Frank nobility. Refusing a marriage which his parents had arranged, he went to take refuge with a solitary upon the banks of the Meuse. Now the Merovingian kings had then interdicted the Frank nobles from taking the clerical or monastic habit without their permission, an interdict founded upon the military service due to the prince, which was the soul of the social organisation of the Germanic races. Dagobert therefore saw with great displeasure that a Frank, brought up in the royal court, and invested with a public charge, had thus fled, without the consent of his sovereign, from the duties of his rank. He ordered him to return. As Vandregisil very reluctantly approached the palace, he saw a poor man who had been thrown from his cart into the mud before the king's gates. The passers-by took no notice of him, and several even trampled on his body. The count of the palace immediately alighted from his horse, extended his hand to the poor driver, and the two together raised up the cart. Afterwards he went to Dagobert, amid the derisive shouts of the spectators, with his dress stained with mud; but it appeared resplendent with the light of charity in the eyes of the king, who, touched by his humble self-devotion, permitted him to follow his vocation, and forbade any one to interfere with him.

When he was freed from this anxiety, Vandregisil went to the tomb of St. Ursanne, which was situated on an estate belonging to his house, with which he enriched the monastery. He applied himself there by excessive austerities to the subdual of his flesh; struggling, for example, against the temptations of his youth, by plunging during the winter into the snow, or the frozen waters of the Doubs, and remaining there whilst he sang the psalms. Here also he found the trace of Columbanus's example and instructions, which led him from the side of Jura across the Alps to Bobbio, where he admired the fervour of the disciples whom the great Irish missionary had left there. It was there, doubtless, that he conceived so great an admiration for the memory and observances of Columbanus, that he determined on going to Ireland to seek in the country of the founder of Luxeuil and Bobbio, the secrets of penitential life and the narrow way. But God, says one of his biographers, reserved him for the Gauls. After another long sojourn in Romain-Moutier, which had just been restored under the influence of the spirit of Columbanus, he went to Rouen, where Ouen, a holy and celebrated bishop, who had known him at the court of Dagobert, and whose youth had also felt the influence, so fertile even after his death, of Columbanus, then presided. The metropolitan of Rouen would not permit a man distinguished at once by his tried virtue and illustrious birth, to steal out of sight. It is thus that the biographer of St. Germain describes to us how the abbot of Luxeuil had long sought a monk who was at once learned, holy, and of noble extraction, to preside over the colony of Grandval. For it is evident that birth was a quality infinitely valuable to the founders of monastic institutions in these days, doubtless because it gave the heads of community the prestige necessary to hold out, even in material matters, against the usurpation and violence of the nobles and great men whose possessions surrounded the new monasteries. Bishop Ouen, therefore, bestowed holy orders upon his old friend and companion, but without being able to prevent him from again seeking monastic life. He succeeded only in establishing Vandregisil in his own diocese, thanks to the munificence of the minister Erchinoald, who gave up a great uncultivated estate not from the Seine to his kinsman,

where the remains of ancient city, destroyed in the Frank invasion, were still to be seen under the briars and thorns.

But the time of ruins was past: the hour of revival and reconstruction had come. In that desert place, Vandregisil built the abbey of Fontenelle, which was destined to occupy, under its proper name of St. Vandrille, so important a place in the ecclesiastical history of France and Normandy. The holy queen Bathilde, her son King Clovis II, and many noble Neustrians, added rich donations to that of Erchinoald, whilst a great number of others came to share cenobitical life under the authority of Vandregisil. He had to build four churches, amid their cells, to make room for their devotions. He was particularly zealous in imposing upon them, along with the exercise of manual labour, the absolute renunciation of all individual property, which was the thing of all others most likely to clash with the inclinations of the sons of soldiers and rich men. And, says the hagiographer, it was admirable to see him instruct those who heretofore had taken away the possessions of others, in the art of sacrificing their own. Aided by their labours, he planted on a neighbouring slope of good exposure the first vineyard which Normandy had known.

His task was not always without danger; one day when he was labouring with his pious legion, the keeper of the royal forest, a portion of which had been given to Vandregisil, furious to see his charge thus lessened, approached the abbot to strike him with his lance; but, as happened so often, just as he was about to strike, his arm became paralysed, the weapon fell from his hands, and he remained as if possessed, till the prayer of the saint whom he would have slain restored his faculties. The royal foresters were naturally disposed to appropriate into personal estates the forests committed to their care, and which the kings only used occasionally for hunting. This was the cause of their animosity, which we shall often have to refer to, against the strangers endowed with such gifts who came to establish themselves there.

Vandregisil, however, did not confine his activity to the foundation and government of his abbey. Fontenelle was situated in the country of Caux, that is, the land of the Caletes, who had been distinguished by the energy of their resistance to Caesar, and who had figured among the other tribes of Belgian Gaul in the last struggle against the proconsul, even after the fall of Alise and the heroic Vercingetorix. The land of Caux was then Christian only in name; the inhabitants had fallen back into complete and brutal barbarism. The abbot of Fontenelle went throughout the whole country, preached the Gospel everywhere, procured the destruction of the idols whom the peasants persisted in worshipping, and transformed the land to such an extent that the country people never met a priest or monk without throwing themselves at his feet as before an image of Christ

Vandregisil, when he died, left three hundred monks in his monastery, and a memory so popular that, four centuries after his death, his name was still celebrated by a grateful posterity in rhymes translated from the Latin into the vulgar tongue. In one of the chapels of that abbey which attracted and charmed all travellers on the Seine from Rouen to the sea, rode seats were shown which had been used by the founder and his two most intimate friends, the Archbishop Ouen, and Philibert, the founder of Jumièges, when they came to Fontenelle, where these three converted nobles met in long and

pleasant conferences, in which their expectations of heavenly joy, and terrors of divine judgment, were mingled with a noble solicitude for the triumph of justice and peace in the country of the Franks.

Nothing, or almost nothing, remains of the architectural splendours of St. Vandrille; but the ruined towers of Jumiéges still testify to the few travellers upon the Seine the magnificence of another abbey, still more celebrated, which was long the noblest ornament of that portion of Neustria to which the Normans have given their name, and which, like Fontenelle, is connected by means of its founder, St. Philibert, with the work and lineage of Columbanus. The lives of these two founders show many analogies. Like Wandregisil, the young Philibert was recommended by his father to King Dagobert, and at twenty left the court and military life for the cloister. Like him, and still more directly than he, he was imbued with the spirit of Columbanus, having been a monk and abbot in the monastery of Rebais, which had its immediate origin from Luxeuil, before he went on pilgrimage to Luxeuil itself, to Bobbio, and the other communities which followed the Irish rule. He also had ties of friendship from his youth with St. Ouen, the powerful Archbishop of Rouen, and it was in the same diocese that he finally established himself, to build the great abbey which, like Fontenelle, was endowed by the gifts of Clovis II. and the holy queen Bathilde.

Philibert often visited his neighbour Wandregisil; he imitated him in working with his monks at the clearing of the conceded lands, which became fields and meadows of wonderful fertility, and like him he had to brave the animosity of the royal foresters, who stole his work-horses. Like Fontenelle, Jumiéges was built upon the site of an ancient Gallo-Roman castle, which was thus replaced by what contemporaries called "the noble castle of God". But situated upon the same banks of the Seine, and on a peninsula formed by the winding of the river, the abbey of Philibert was more accessible by water, and soon became a great centre of commerce. British and Irish Bailleurs brought materials for clothing and shoes to the Religions there in exchange for their corn and cattle. Philibert required that, in all these barterings with neighbours or strangers, the bargain should be more profitable to the purchasers than if they were dealing with laymen. The monks had great success in the fishing of some species of porpoise (*cetacea*) which ascended the Seine, and which produced oil to lighten their vigils. They also fitted out vessels in which they sailed to great distances to redeem slaves and captives.

Doubtless a portion of these captives contributed to increase the number of the monks of Jumiéges, which rose to nine hundred, without reckoning the fifteen hundred servants who filled the office of lay-brothers. They were under a rule composed by Philibert after attentive observation of numerous monasteries of France, Italy, and Burgundy, which he had visited for that end. This was adopted by most of the communities which were then formed in Neustria in imitation of his, and of which Jumiéges became the centre where abbots and monks vied in seeking education or revival. It combined the instructions of the fathers of the desert, such as St. Basil and St. Macarius, with the precepts of the two great monastic patriarchs of the West, Benedict and Columbanus. But the influence of Columbanus naturally predominated, in consequence of the early monastic education of Philibert and his long residence at Luxeuil and Bobbio. In the great church which he built for his abbey, the magnificence



of which, attested by a contemporary narrative, amazes us, he raised an altar in honour of Columbanus, and of him alone among all the saints whose rules he had studied and practised.

Philibert survived his friend, neighbour, and emulator, Wandregisil, nearly twenty years. He was succeeded by Alchadre, a noble of Poitou, to whom belongs a legend written two centuries later, but which must be repeated here as a proof of the great numbers and angelical piety of the monks of the great Neustrian abbey. According to this tale, Alchadre, who governed the nine hundred monks of whom we have before spoken, feeling himself on the eve of death, and fearing that after his death his monks might fall into the snares of sin, prayed the Lord to provide against it. The following night he saw an angel going round the dormitory of the Religious: this angel touched four hundred and fifty of them with the rod he held, and promised the abbot that in four days they should leave this life, and that when his turn was come, they should all come to meet him in heaven. The abbot, having acquainted his brethren, prepared them for this happy journey. They took the viaticum together, and afterwards held a chapter with those of the community whom the angel had not marked. Each of the elect placed himself between two of these last, and all together chanted songs of triumph. The faces of those who were to die soon began to shine, and, without giving the least sign of pain, the four hundred and fifty passed from this life to the other ; the first hundred at the boor of tierce, the second at sexte, the third at none, the fourth at vespers, and the last at compline. Their obsequies were celebrated for eight days; and those who survived them wept that they were not judged worthy to follow. The mind of the ages of faith was so formed that such narratives increased the number of religious vocations, and contributed to root the great monastic foundations deeply in the heart, of the nations.

Bishop Ouen, whose influence and help had endowed the diocese of Rouen with the two powerful abbeys of Fontenelle and Jumiéges, was connected with Columbanus by a recollection of his earliest years. The great Irish monk was everywhere remarked by his love for children, and the paternal kindness he showed them. During his exile and journey from the court of the king of Neustria to that of Anstrasia, he paused in a chateau situated upon the Marne, which belonged to a Frank noble, the father of three sons named Adon, Radon, and Dadon, two of whom were still under age. Their mother led them to the holy exile that he might bless them; this benediction brought them happiness and governed their life. The whole three were, in the first place, like all the young Frank nobility, sent to the court of the king Clotaire II, and to that of his son Dagobert, who for some time reigned alone over the three Frank kingdoms. The eldest of the three brothers, Adon, was the first to break with the grandeurs and pleasures of secular life; he founded upon the soil of his own patrimony, and upon a height which overlooked the Marne, the monastery of Jouarre, which he put under the rule of Columbanus, and where he himself became a monk. Almost immediately after there was formed by the side of this first foundation another community of virgins, destined to become much more illustrious, and associated, a thousand years later, with the immortal memory of Bossuet.

Radon, the second of the brothers, who had become the treasurer of Dagobert, imitated the elder, and consecrated his portion of the paternal inheritance to the foundation of another monastery, also upon the Marne, and which was called after

himself Reuil (*Radolium*). There now remained only the third, Dadon, who afterwards took the name of Ouen (*Audoenus*), and who, having become the dearest among all the leudes of Dagobert and his principal confidant, received from him the office of referendary, or keeper of the seal by which, according to the custom of the Frank kings, all the edicts and acts of public authority were sealed. He, notwithstanding, followed the example of his brothers, and the inspiration which the blessing of Columbanus had left in their young hearts. He sought among the forests which then covered La Brie a suitable site for the foundation which he desired to form and endow. He found it at last near a torrent called Rebais, a little to the south of the positions chosen by his brothers; it was a glade which was revealed to him for three successive nights by a resplendent cloud in the form of a cross. He built a monastery there which has retained the name of the torrent, although Ouen had at first given it that of Jerusalem, as a symbol of the fraternal peace and contemplative life which he had intended should reign there. He also desired, like his brothers, to end his life in that retreat; but neither the king nor the other leudes would consent to it, and he had to remain for some time longer at the Merovingian court, until he was elected bishop (at the same time as his friend Eloysius) by the unanimous consent of the clergy and people.

He exercised a sort of sovereignty at once spiritual and temporal throughout the whole province of Rouen; for he had obtained from the king of Neustria a privilege by the terms of which neither bishop, abbot, count, nor any other judge could be established there without his consent. During the forty-three years of his rule, he changed the whole aspect of his diocese, covering it with monastic foundations, one of which, situated at Rouen itself, has retained his name, consecrated to art and history by that wonderful basilica which is still the most popular monument of Normandy.

But Ouen had not left his beloved foundation of Rebais without a head worthy of presiding over its future progress. He desired to choose a ruler imbued with the spirit of that great saint whose memory remained always so dear to him. He brought from Luxeuil the monk who seemed to him the best personification of the institute of Columbanus. It was Agilus, the son of that noble who had obtained the gift of Luxeuil for the Irish missionary from the Burgundian king. Like Ouen and his brothers, Agilus had been brought as a child to receive the blessing of Columbanus in his father's house, and was afterwards entrusted to the saint to be educated in the monastery, where he had adopted monastic life, and gained the affection and confidence of the whole community. Associated with the mission of the successor of Columbanus among the pagan Warasques and Bavarians, his fame was great in all the countries under Frank dominion, and wherever he had been, at Metz, at Langres, and Besançon, he had excited universal admiration by his eloquence and the miraculous cures which were owing to his prayers. All these cities desired him for their bishop; but the monks of Luxeuil, above all, saw in him their future abbot. To bring him forth from that cloister which was his true mother-country, a written order of Dagobert was necessary, who made him first go to Compiègne, where he received him pompously in the midst of his court, and bestowed on him, with the consent of the bishops and leudes assembled at the palace, the government of the new abbey. Twelve monks from Luxeuil entered with him, and were soon joined by a great number of nobles, from the royal retinue and the surrounding country, to such an extent that Agilus had as many as eighty disciples, among whom

was the young Philibert, who was to bear the traditions of Columbanus from Rebais to Jumièges. All devoted themselves to the labours of cultivation and the duties of hospitality with that zeal which made the new monasteries so many agricultural colonies and assured shelters for travellers in these vast provinces of Gaul, which were thus finally raised from the double ruin into which Roman oppression and Barbarian invasion had thrown them.

The Irish who then flocked into Gaul on the steps of Columbanus, and who traversed it to carry the tribute of their ardent devotion to Rome, willingly halted at the door of the monastery where they were sure of meeting a pupil or admirer of their great countryman; and Agilus refreshed them plentifully with the good wine of the banks of Marne, till he sometimes almost exhausted the provisions of the monastery. But a pleasant narrative shows us his watchful charity in a still more attractive light. It was evening, a winter evening; the abbot, after having passed the day in receiving guests of an elevated rank, was going over the various offices of the monastery; when he reached the *xenodochium*, that is, the almonry or hospice, specially destined for the reception of the poor, he heard outside a feeble and plaintive voice, as of a man who wept. Through the wicket of the door, and by the half light, he saw a poor man, covered with sores, lying upon the ground and asking admittance. Turning immediately to the monk who accompanied him, he cried, "See how we have neglected our first duty for these other cares. Make haste and have something prepared for him to eat." Then, as he had with him all the keys of the house, which the porter took to him every evening after the stroke of compline, he opened the postern of the great door. "Come, my brother", he said, "we will do all for thee that thou needest". The sufferings of the leper prevented him from walking, and the abbot himself carried him in upon his shoulders and placed him upon a seat by the side of the fire. Then he hastened to seek water and linen to wash his hands; but when he returned the poor man had disappeared, leaving behind him a delicious perfume which filled the whole house, as if all the spices of the or all the flowers of spring had distilled their odours there.

These sweet expansions of charity were allied, under the influence of the Rule of Columbanus, to the most masculine virtues, among the women as well as among the men. During that same journey from Neustria to Austrasia, the illustrious exile, before he reached the house of the father of St. Ouen, had visited another family connected with theirs, which dwelt near Meaux, and the head of which was a powerful noble called Agneric, whose son Cagnoald had been a monk at Luxeuil from his childhood, and had accompanied the holy abbot in his exile. Agneric was invested with that dignity which has been translated by the title of companion of the king; and this king was Theodebert, to whose court Columbanus was bound. He received the glorious outlaw with transports of joy, and desired to be his guide for the rest of the journey. But, before leaving, he begged Columbanus to bless all his house, and presented to him on that occasion his little daughter, who is known to us only under the name of Burgundofara, which indicates at once the exalted birth and Burgundian origin of her family, as it were, the noble baroness of Burgundy. The saint gave her his blessing, but at the same time dedicated her to the Lord. History says nothing about the consent of her parents, but the noble young girl herself, when she had reached a marriageable age, considered herself bound by that engagement, and resolutely opposed the marriage which her brother

wished her to contract. She became ill, and was at the point of death. In the meantime the abbot Eustace, the successor of Columbanus at Luxeuil, returning from Italy to give an account to Clotaire II. of the mission to his spiritual father with which the king had charged him, passed by the villa of Agneric. At sight of the dying girl, he reproached her father with having violated the engagement taken towards God by the saint whose blessing he had asked. Agneric promised to leave his daughter to God if she recovered. Eustace procured that recovery. But scarcely had he departed for Soissons, when the father, unfaithful to his promise, attempted again to constrain his daughter to a marriage which she resisted. She then escaped and took refuge in the Cathedral of St. Peter. Her father's retainers followed her there, with orders to bring her away from the sanctuary, and threaten her with death. "Do you believe, then," she said to them, "that I fear death? make the trial upon the pavement of this church. Ah! how happy should I be to give my life in so just a cause to Him who has given His life for me!" She held out until the return of abbot Eustace, who finally delivered her from her father, and obtained from him a grant of land on which Burgundofara might found the monastery of Faremoutier, which was called by her name. Her example drew as many followers, among the wives and daughters of the Frank nobility, as her cousins had gained of their own sex, for their monasteries of Rebais and Jouarre. This corner of La Brie became thus a sort of monastic province dependent upon Luxeuil. Burgundofara lived there forty years, faithfully observing the Rule of St. Columbanus, and maintaining it manfully against the perfidious suggestions of the false brother Agrestin, who attempted to engage her in his revolt against Eustace and the traditions of their common master. "I will have none of thy novelties," she said to him; "and as for those whose detractor thou art, I know them, I know their virtues, I have received the doctrine of salvation from them, and I know that their instructions have opened the gates of heaven to many. Leave me quickly, and give up thy foolish thoughts."

The eldest brother of Burgundofara, Cagnoald, was, as has been said, a monk at Luxeuil, and the faithful companion of Columbanus during his mission among the Alamans: he afterwards became Bishop of Laon. His other brother, who, like his sister, has only retained for posterity the name of his rank—that of Faron, or Baron—was also a bishop at Meaux, the centre of the family domains. But before he adopted the ecclesiastical condition, he had distinguished himself in war, and taken a notable part in the victorious campaign of Clotaire II against the Saxons. It is known how, according to the ordinarily received tradition, Clotaire disgraced his victory by massacring all his Saxon prisoners who were higher in stature than his sword. All that Faron could do was to save from the cruelty of his king the Saxon envoys, charged with an insolent mission to the king of the Franks, whom Clotaire had ordered to be put to death. Faron had them baptized, and said to the king, "These are no longer Saxons; they are Christians", upon which Clotaire spared them. If one of his successors upon the see of Meaux, who two centuries later wrote his biography, may be believed, the glory of Faron eclipsed that of Clotaire himself in the popular songs which peasants and women vied in repeating, as happened to David in the time of Saul. The generous Faron had again, according to the same author, to struggle with Clotaire on an occasion which should have left a lasting recollection in the grateful hearts of the poor. One day, when the "knight of God" accompanied the king to the chase, a poor woman came out of the wood, and pursued the king with her complaints, explaining her great distress to him. Clotaire, annoyed,

went off at a gallop. Faron, while escorting him, held a language in which we shall see the noble freedom of German manners employed in the service of charity and truth. "It is not for herself that this poor woman entreats you, but for you. Her wretchedness weighs heavily on her; but the responsibility of the royalty, which is entrusted to you, weighs still more heavily on you. She trusts her concerns to you, as you trust yours to God. She asks little of you compared to what you ask every day of God. How can you expect that He will listen to you, when you turn away your ear from this poor creature whom He has committed to your keeping?" The king answered: "I am pursued by such cries every day, and in all quarters; my ears are deafened by them; I am disgusted and worn out." Upon which he plunged into the wood and sounded his horn with all his might, to encourage the dogs. But some minutes after his horse stumbled, and the king hurt his foot seriously. Then he perceived that he had been wrong. The leude who spoke to him with so much Christian boldness was well qualified to be a bishop. He shortly after gave up his wife and the world, and becoming Bishop of Meaux, devoted his patrimony to found monasteries for the reception of those Anglo-Saxons who, recently converted, began to appear among the Franks, and whose daughters came in great numbers to take the veil at Faremoutier. He did the same for the Scots and Irish, for whom he had a particular regard, and in whom he doubtless honoured, by a domestic tradition, the memory of their compatriot Columbanus".

To any who desire to study more closely the double action of the Irish emigrants and the colonies of Luxeuil in that portion of Frankish Gaul which has since been called l'Ile de France and Champagne, St. Fiacre, whom we have already seen occupied in transforming the wooded glades given by the Bishop of Means into gardens, and cultivating for the poor those vegetables which have procured for him down to our own day, the title of patron of the gardeners should be pointed out as one of the Hibernians received by St. Faron. Not far from him would be found a Irishman, St. Fursy, who came to seek repose, as first of Lagny-sur-Marne, from the fatigues of a life worn preaching, as well as troubled by that famous visions of heaven and hell, which appears with justice among the numerous legends of the middle ages which were forerunners of the *Divina Commedia*, and from which he emerge the special mission of denouncing, as the principal causes of the loss of souls, the negligence of pastors, and the bad example of princes. Moutier-la-Celle, at the gates of Troyes, built upon a marshy island, more suitable for reptile men, by the abbot Frobert, who was so simple and childish as to rouse the derision of his brethren at Luxeuil, but who was intelligent and generous enough to consecrate all his patrimony to found the sanctuary built near his native should also be visited. Farther off, to the east, we should see Hautvilliers and Montier-en-Der, both sprung from the unwearied activity and fervent charity of Berchaire, an Aquitain noble, trained to monastic life under Walbert at Luxeuil, from whence he issued to become the fellow-labourer metropolitan of Rheims, and to gain for his work the generous and permanent assistance of the kings and all high nobility of Austrasia. He died, assassinated by a monk who was his godson, and whose insubordination he had repressed.

Finally, upon the mountain which overlooks the episcopal city of Laon, celebrated for having up to that time resisted all the Barbarians who had successively besieged it, we should see the vast monastery erected by an illustrious widow, St. Salaberga, whose



father was lord of the villa of Meuse, situated near the source of the river which bears that name, and very near Luxeuil. While still young, but blind, she had owed the recovery of her sight to Eustace, the first successor of Columbanus at Luxeuil. She was married the first time because of her extreme beauty, but, becoming a widow almost immediately, and desirous of becoming a nun, was obliged to marry again to escape the jealous intervention of Dagobert, who, like all the Merovingian kings, was as slow to consent to the monastic vocation of the daughters and heiresses of his leudes as to that of their sons, and who insisted upon their speedy marriage to nobles of the same rank. But, at a later period, owing to the influence of Walbert, the successor of Eustace, she was enabled, at the same time as her husband, to embrace monastic life, and for ten years ruled the three hundred handmaids of Christ who collected under her wing, most of whom came like herself from the noble race of the Sicambrians, as the hagiographers of the seventh century delight to prove, in speaking of the male and female saints whose lives they relate.

It would, however, be a grave error to believe that the nobility alone were called, among the Franks and Gallo-Romans, to fill up the monastic ranks, and preside over the new foundations which distinguished every year of the Merovingian period. Luxeuil and its colonies furnished more than one proof to the contrary. A little shepherd of Auvergne, named Walaric, which has been softened into Valery, roused by the example of the noble children of the neighborhood who went to schools, asked one of their teachers to make him out an alphabet, and found means, as he kept his father's sheep, to learn not only his letters, but the entire Psalter. From thence to the cloister the transition was easy. But after having lived in two different monasteries, he felt himself drawn towards the great abbey from which the fame of Columbanus shone over all Gaul. He was received there, and entrusted with the care of the novices' garden. He succeeded so well in driving away the insects and worms, his vegetables were so wholesome and well-flavoured, his flowers so fresh and sweet, that Columbanus saw in this a mark of divine favour; and as the fervent gardener carried everywhere with him the perfume of these flowers, which followed him even into the hall where the abbot explained the Scriptures, Columbanus, delighted, said to him one day, "It is thou, my well-beloved, who art the true abbot and lord of this monastery." After the exile of the great Celt, Valery aided the new abbot Eustace to defend, by means of persuasion, the patrimony and buildings of the monastery against the invasions of the neighbouring population. But soon the missionary fever seized him. He obtained permission from Eustace to go and preach, following the example of their spiritual master, among the nations where idolatry still struggled with Christianity. He directed his steps to the environs of Amiens, upon the shores of the Britannic sea, in that portion of Neustria where the Salian Franks had chiefly established themselves. Guided by zeal and charity, he penetrated everywhere, even to the *mals*, or judicial assizes, held, according to the custom of the Germans, by the count of the district. According to the unfailing habit of the monks and abbots of that time, he appeared there to endeavour to save the unfortunate, who were condemned, from execution. The king of Neustria, Clotaire II, always favourable to those who came from Luxeuil, permitted him to establish himself at Leuconaus, a place situated at the mouth of the Somme, where the high cliffs, bathed by the sea, seemed to the monks collected around him to be immense edifices, whose summits reached the sky. He made it a sort of maritime Luxeuil. He went out unceasingly to sow his

missionary discourses, which exposed him to a thousand insults and dangers. Sometimes the idolaters, seeing the fall of their sacred oaks, threw themselves upon him with their axes and sticks, then stopped, disarmed by his calm intrepidity! Sometimes even the judges and priests of the country made him pay for their hospitality by rude and obscene jokes. To escape from their impure talk, he had to leave their roof and fireside. "I wished to warm my frame a little by your fire, because of the great cold," he said; "but your odious conversation forces me, still frozen, out of your house." He was, however, of extreme gentleness, and softened the observance of the rule, so far as concerned penances, with an indulgence which scarcely consisted with Celtic tradition. But his unpopularity lasted even after his death among a portion of the people whom he had undertaken to convert, as is proved by a little dialogue recorded by his historian. On the spot where he had cut down a tree venerated by the idolaters, at Aoust or Ault, upon the road to Eu, the Christian peasants raised an oratory consecrated to his memory; but the women of the old Frank races, passing before that modest sanctuary, still testified their repugnance and scorn for the monastic apostle. "Dear mother," said a daughter to her mother, "would these people have us to venerate the man whom we used to see going about the country mounted on an ass, and miserably clad?" "Yes," answered the mother; "it is so; these peasants erect a temple in honour of him who did among us only vile and contemptible things."

The memory of Valery, thus scorned by his contemporaries, was nevertheless to grow more and more brilliant during the course of ages; and we shall see him on two solemn occasions receive the homage of the great princes who have founded the two greatest monarchies of Christendom, Hugh Capet and William the Conqueror.

The inhabitants of Ponthieu (a name which from that period was borne by the country bordering the Somme, where Valery had established himself) seem to have had a decided objection to monks of the Irish school. Two of the first companions of Columbanus, arriving from Ireland along with him, and coming to preach in these regions, were overwhelmed with insults and ill usage. At the moment when they were about to be violently expelled from the place, a noble named Riquier came to their assistance, and received them into his house. In return for his hospitality they inspired him with love for all the Christian virtues, and even for monastic life; and that conquest indemnified them for their rebuff. Riquier became a priest and a monk, and himself began to preach to the populations who had given so bad a reception to his Irish guests. He succeeded beyond all his expectations, and made himself heard not only by the poor, whose miseries he consoled, but also by the rich and powerful, whose excesses he censured severely. The greatest nobles of the country were favourable to him, including even the keepers of the royal forests, whose colleagues showed so much hostility to the monastic apostles on the banks of the Seine. The success of his eloquence was also a triumph for charity; he devoted the numerous alms which were brought him to redeem captives, to relieve the lepers and other unfortunates who were attacked by contagious and disgusting diseases. After having extended his apostolic labours as far as the Britannic Isles, he returned to found in his own domains at Centule, north of the Somme, a monastery which was afterwards to take his own name, and become one of the most considerable monasteries of the Carolingian period. In the meantime Dagobert, who had succeeded his father Clotaire II. in Neustria, went to visit him in his retreat,

and invited him to come and take a place at his own table, among those companions of the Icing who formed, as is well known, the highest aristocracy among the Franks. Riquier accepted without hesitation; he took advantage of these occasions to tell the king the same truth which the other Franks had received so well at his hands. He reproved him with priestly freedom and authority, exhorted him not to pride himself on his honour or wealth, and to discourage the adulation of his courtiers; and asked him how he expected to stand at the day of judgment to answer for the many thousands of men who were entrusted to him, he who would have difficulty enough in rendering an account for his own soul? The young Dagobert received his instructions so well that he made the abbot Riquier a special donation for the purpose of keeping up the lights of his church, in memory of that invisible light of Christian truth with which the voice of the monk had enlightened his soul. Despite their incessantly renewed cruelties and unchristian manners, all the Merovingian kings at least listened to the truth, and even honoured those who did them the honour of speaking it to them boldly.

At no great distance from Ponthieu, and still in the country occupied by the Salian Franks, but higher up towards the north, upon the confines of the two Gaulish tribes of the Atrebates and Morins, we find another Luxeuil colony, reserved for a more brilliant destiny than any of those we have yet mentioned. Audomar, since called Omer, was the son of a noble from the neighbourhood of Constance, a city of Alamannia, which was subject, as has been already said, to the Austrasian royalty. Perhaps, in passing through this country, Columbanus had already instructed and won him : history gives us no information on this point, but proves that a little after the sojourn of the Irish apostle upon the banks of the Lake of Constance, the young Omer presented himself at Luxeuil, bringing his father with him, a very rare junction in monastic annals. Abbot Eustace admitted both among the number of his monks. The father remained there until the end of his life; the son left Luxeuil twenty years after to become Bishop of Therouanne; he had been suggested to the choice of Dagobert and the Frank nobles by the Bishop of Laon, himself formerly a monk of Luxeuil. The country of the Morins, of which Therouanne was the capital, had been in vain evangelised by martyrs, from the first introduction of the faith into Gaul: it had fallen back into idolatry; the few Christians who had been trained there, since the conquest and conversion of Clovis, were bowed down with coarse superstitions. The new bishop perceived that he needed assistance to accomplish such a task. Some years after his consecration, he begged abbot Walbert of Luxeuil to send him three of his former brethren, who had, like himself, come to Luxeuil from the banks of Lake Constance. He installed them in an estate situated on the banks of the Aa, and called Sithiu, which he had just received as a gift from a rich and powerful pagan noble whom he had baptized with all his family. This estate was a sort of island amid a vast marsh, which could scarcely be approached, save in a boat. There rose, at the same time, the celebrated abbey which at a later period took the name of St. Bertin, after the youngest of the three monks sent from Luxeuil, and upon a neighbouring height a little church, which has become the cathedral of the episcopal town, and is still known by the name of the apostle of Morinia. His body was deposited there after thirty years of apostolical labours and heroic charity, which changed the aspect of the entire province. It is round the cemetery intended for the reception of the monks of St. Bertin that the existing town of St. Omer has been formed.

Bertin, the countryman and relation of Omer, vied with him in his zeal for preaching and the conversion of the diocese which had adopted him. The rule of St. Columbanus and the customs of Luxeuil were observed in his monastery, where there were now two hundred monks, in all their severity; he exercised, like Columbanus himself, an irresistible influence over the nobles who surrounded him. Aided by their gifts, and the unwearied diligence of his monks, he at last succeeded, by successive elevations of the soil, in transforming the vast marsh in which he had established himself into a fertile plain. When he gave up the dignity of abbot, which he had held for fifty years, in order, according to the custom of most of the holy founders of those days, to prepare himself better for death, the great monastery which has immortalised his name, and produced twenty-two saints venerated by the Church, had attained the height of its moral and material prosperity. Of all the swarms from the inexhaustible hive of Luxeuil, none were more productive or brilliant than that with which these four Alamans, brought from the frontiers of Helvetia to the shores of the North Sea, enriched the wild Morinian country. The heirs of Columbanus found themselves thus established upon the soil of Belgium, the Christian conquest of which was half to do over again, and half to begin. A noble part was reserved to them in this work, which they were careful not to fall short of.

The necessities of our narrative have led us far from Luxeuil to seek her distant colonies or scions: we must now return to her neighbourhood to point out the house which was perhaps the most illustrious of her daughters. Let us then re-enter that southern cluster of the Vosges which marks the boundaries of Austrasia and Burgundy, and where rise, not far from each other, the Moselle and the Meurthe, the Meuse and the Saone. Upon a mountain whose base is bathed by the clear and limpid waters of the Moselle, very near its source, amid forests which, a century ago, were still inhabited by bears, and at a distance of some leagues north from Luxeuil, rose a castle belonging to the noble Romaric. This wealthy leude had seen his property confiscated and his father slain during the fratricidal struggle between the two grandsons of Brunehault, Theodebert and Thierry; but after the death of the latter, he had recovered his vast patrimony, and occupied a high position at the court of Clotaire II, then sole master of the three Frank kingdoms.

While tiring as a layman, this nobleman already practised all the virtues, when God willed, as the contemporary narrator tells, to recompense His knight for the valour which he had displayed in the struggles of the world, and to conduct him to the fields of celestial light. Amatus, a monk of Luxeuil, noble like himself, but of Roman race, came to preach in Austrasia. This Amatus, or Amé, had been almost from his cradle offered by his father to the monastery of Agaune, which, situated near the source of the Rhine, attracted the veneration and confidence of all the faithful of the provinces bordering that river. He had lived thirty years either at Agaune itself or in an isolated cell upon the top of a rock, which still overhangs the celebrated monastery, as if about to crush it. There this noble Gallo-Roman, always barefooted and clad in a sheep's skin, lived upon water and barley-bread alone; the water gushing from a limpid fountain, which he had obtained by his prayers, was received in a little basin which he had hollowed and covered with lead; the barley was the produce of a little field which he cultivated with his own hands, and ground by turning a millstone with his arms, like the slaves of

antiquity. This fatiguing labour was to him a preservative against sleep and the temptations of the flesh. Abbot Eustace of Luxeuil, returning from Lombardy after his fruitless mission to Columbanus, stopped at Agaune, and decided Amatus upon following him to Luxeuil. The gentleness of the anchorite, his eloquence, and even the noble and serene beauty of his features, won all hearts.

Amatus was nominated by the monks of Luxeuil, on account of his eloquence, to bear the word of God into the Austrasian cities. Romaric received him at his table, and, during the repast, inquired of him the best way of working out his salvation. "Thou seest this silver dish," said the monk; "how many masters, or rather slaves, has it already had, and how many more shall it have still? And thou, whether thou wilt or not, thou art its serf; for thou possessest it only to preserve it. But an account will be demanded of thee; for it is written, 'Your silver and gold shall rust, and that rust shall bear witness against you.' I am astonished that a man of great birth, very rich, and intelligent like thyself, should not remember the answer of the Saviour to him who asked Him how he should attain eternal life: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and follow Me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven'." From that moment Romaric was vanquished by the love of God and the desire of heaven. He distributed all his lands to the poor, with the exception of his castle of Habend, freed a multitude of serfs of both sexes, and went to Luxeuil, taking with him all that remained of his wealth, to become a monk. When he presented himself to the abbot to have his hair cut, according to the rite of admission into the order, several of the serfs whom he had liberated appeared at the monastery for the same purpose. He gladly recognised his old servants, not only as brethren, but as superiors; for he sought the lowest occupations in the monastery, and surpassed all the brethren in his care for the cultivation of the gardens, where he learned the Psalter by heart as he laboured.

After some years' residence there, during which time his friendship with Amatus became intimate and affectionate, the two friends left Luxeuil, where, for some unknown reason, they had incurred the animadversion of abbot Eustace. With his consent, however, they went together to the estate which Romaric had reserved to himself. The *Castrum Habendi*, as it was called, had been once a Roman fortress; the remains of a temple, statues, and some tombs, were still visible, as at Luxeuil, upon the height of a steep hill, situated between two valleys, the base of which was watered by two tributaries of the Moselle. They built a church there, placed as many as seven chapels upon the sides of the hill, and afterwards founded there the greatest female monastery which had been seen in Gaul. Amatus took the government of it, but soon devolved it upon Romaric, and the house was called, after the latter, Remiremont.

In this celebrated abbey, which was immediately put under the rule of St. Columbanus by its two founders, everything was established on a magnificent scale, owing to the influx of the nuns and the liberality of the Austrasian kings and nobles. Clotaire II. gave, at one time, the enormous sum of two hundred pieces of gold to the foundation of his ancient leude. Remiremont soon became for women what Luxeuil already was for men. The number of nuns permitted the *Laus perennis* to be organised by means of seven choirs, who alternately sang the praises of God in seven different churches or chapels. The fervour and regularity of all these virgins procured to the site



occupied by their community the name of the *Holy Mount*, which it retained for some centuries.

Romarc directed it for thirty years. Before entering Luxeuil he had been married, and had three daughters; the two younger took the veil in the monastery of their father. The eldest, who had married without the consent of Romarc, and without a fortune, attempted to reclaim a portion of her paternal inheritance. She sent to her father her first child, a girl, hoping that the heart of Romarc would soften, and that he would bestow on his grandchild what he had refused to his daughter. The grandfather received her with joy, but did not send her back, and had her trained by the nuns, whose abbess she afterwards became. Then the mother, having had a son, sent him, before he was even baptized, to his grandfather, still in the hope that he would make him his heir. But Romarc acted with him as with his sister; he kept the child, and left him no other inheritance than that of the abbatial dignity with which it was invested.

For there were two monasteries at Remiremont, one for monks and the other for nuns, connected with each other, but with a special superior for each of the communities. This was also the case at Jouarre, at Faremoutier, and wherever there were great foundations for women. Sometimes, as at Remiremont, the abbot had the supreme government; sometimes, as we shall see in Belgium, it was the abbess. The prohibition of the Council of Agde, in 506, had, by necessity of things, fallen into disuse. The ranks of that feminine clergy, whose sacrifice the Church praises in the liturgy, increased every day. It was necessary at once to protect and guide the weakness of these spouses of Christ who had taken refuge in forests and deserts, surrounded by wild beasts or barbarous and semi-pagan tribes. In the seventh century, and still later, the Church did nothing but encourage that custom which disappeared in due time, and even before any scandal had pointed out the unsuitable nature of the arrangement, in those monastic annals where everything is spoken out with bold and minute frankness. To systematic enemies of Catholic discipline, and to sceptics who may be tempted to smile, let us recall the touching and noble spectacle, so much admired and praised a thousand years after the foundation of Remiremont, given by the solitaries of Port-Royal during their sojourn near the nans of that celebrated valley. And a voice, which cannot be suspected, elsewhere bears witness thus: “The vicinity of the monasteries,” says M. Michelet, “the abuses of which have certainly been exaggerated, created between the brethren and sisters a happy emulation of study as well as of piety. The men tempered their seriousness by sharing in the moral graces of the women. They, on their side, took from the austere asceticism of the men a noble flight towards divine things. Both, according to the noble expression of Bossuet, helped each other *to climb the rugged path*”.

This monastery of men, also placed under the rule of Columbanus by its two founders, was not the less on that account unfavourable to the spirit of the Irish rule. When Agrestinus attempted to organise among the numerous disciples of Columbanus an insurrection against the traditions of their master and the discipline of Luxeuil, he fell back upon Remiremont after he had been overcome by Eustace at the Council of Macon and repulsed by Burgundofara at Faremoutier. He was well received by Amatus and Romarc, who were already biassed against the abbot of Luxeuil, and still better by their monks, who showed themselves unanimous in their repugnance to the institutions of Columbanus. Fatal and numerous accidents, of which more than fifty of the religious

were victims, some torn by mad wolves or struck by lightning, others urged to suicide or violent deaths, were necessary to lead them back. All these misfortunes, happening in such rapid succession, appeared warnings from on high, and the disgraceful death of Agrestinus himself opened their eyes completely. Amatus and Romaric returned into communion with Eustace. The former continued to watch over the administration of the two houses, though he had given up their immediate direction. He was especially solicitous to root out from among these spiritual children the sin of individual property. "My dear and gentle brother", he said one day to a monk who passed near him, "I much fear that the cunning of the enemy has persuaded thee to something against the rule." And as the monk protested against this, Amatus took between his fingers the edge of the delinquent's cowl precisely at the spot where he had sewn in a piece of money with the intention of reserving it for his personal use. "What have you here, dear brother" The monk, falling on his knees, cried, "Woe is me! I confess that I have stolen the third part of a denier of gold." According to the monastic spirit, it was a theft made from the community; but Amatus pardoned the culprit, saying to him, "Let him that stole steal no more." He condemned himself to make a public confession before his death, no doubt in recollection of his weakness towards the schismatic Agrestinus, and his struggles against his abbot at Luxeuil. However, Amatus himself had retired into a grotto, closed up by a projecting rock, so low and so narrow that it could scarcely contain him. As in the case of St. Benedict at Subiaco, a monk lowered down to him, by a cord from the top of the rock, the morsel of bread and glass of water on which he lived. This severe penance was not enough for him. When he was dying upon a bed of ashes, he had the letter of the Pope St. Leo to St. Flavian, which contains a clear and complete exposition of Catholic doctrine upon the Trinity and Incarnation, read to him, as a last and solemn protest against every germ of schism.

As for Romaric, who long survived both him and the pious Mactefleda, the first ruler of the sisters, he took all necessary precautions to ensure the election of the abbess of his beloved monastery exclusively by her own community, and that this entire foundation should rely in temporal matters only on the king, and in spiritual affairs only on the pope. At the end of his life the old warrior regained his courage and the political part he had played of old. He had known, in the palace of the kings of Austrasia, the great and pious Pepin de Landen, whose son, Grimoald, had become all-powerful, as minister under King Sigisbert, and threatened beforehand the rights and even the life of the young heir of this prince. Prophetically warned of the projects entertained by the son of his old friend, Romaric, despite his age and presentiment of approaching death, descended from his mountain and took his way to the palace, which he had not seen for thirty years, to intimate the perils of the country to the king and nobles. He arrived in the middle of the night: Grimoald, on being informed of his approach, went to meet him with lighted torches. At sight of his father's friend, of this old man of God, with his elevated and imposing height and solemn aspect, he thought he saw, says the historian, a supernatural apparition, and trembled. However, he embraced him with great respect. What passed between them has not been recorded. It is only known that Grimoald overwhelmed the old abbot with presents, and promised to do all that he wished. Three days after, Romaric, who had returned to the monastery, visiting for the last time, on his way, the cultivated lands which belonged to it, was dead, and buried beside Amatus, the master and friend who had led him to God by *the rugged path*.

To complete this rapid glance over the extension of the great institute of Columbanus in Frankish Gaul in the seventh century, it has yet to be shown how, after having spread through both the Burgundies and Austrasia, gaining Armorica, where the British Celts naturally adopted with cordiality the work of the Irish Celt, it extended over Neustria, beyond the Loire, and as far as Aquitaine; and for that purpose the foundation of Solignac, in Limousin, by St. Eligius, must be specially told. It took place soon after the council of Macon. Its illustrious founder, who had visited the principal monasteries in Gaul and had perceived that monastic order was nowhere else observed as it was in Luxeuil declared his desire to conform it absolutely to the plan and rule of the model abbey which he had found in the Vosges, and to which he placed it in direct subordination. But this great man belongs still more to the history of France than to that of the rule of Luxeuil. With him we touch open a new phase of the Merovingian royalty, as the apostles of Morinia we are brought in contact with the conversion of Belgium, and with the founder of Remiremont approach the accession and preponderance of the Pepins. New scenes open before us. To enter them, we must leave Luxeuil and Columbanus, of whom, however, we shall find elsewhere many a luminous and important trace.

But before closing this chapter of our narrative, it is necessary to establish a result as unforeseen as undeniable. It seems that everything in the history we have just related ought to have secured the lasting preponderance of the rule and institute of Columbanus in the countries governed by the Franks. A popularity so great and legitimate, the constant favour of the Merovingian kings, the generous sympathy of the Burgundian and Austrasian nobility, the virtues and miracles of so many saints, the immense and perpetually renewed ramifications of Luxeuil and its offspring, all should have contributed to establish the ascendancy of a monastic law originated upon the soil of Gaul, and extended by representatives so illustrious;—all ought to have procured it a preference over that Italian rule, which was older, it is true, but the modest beginnings and obscure progress of which in Gaul have escaped the notice of history. This, however, was not the case. On the contrary, the rule of Columbanus was gradually eclipsed, and the rule of Benedict was introduced and triumphed everywhere, while still we cannot instance a single man above the ordinary mark, a single celebrated saint, who could have contributed to that surprising victory, by his personal influence, throughout the whole period which we have surveyed. This victory was complete half a century after the death of the founder of Luxeuil, and amid the daily successes and increasing popularity of his disciples. Among those disciples themselves, some of the first and nearest to his heart, such as his godson Donatus, had begun to combine the Benedictine precepts with his. The two monasteries which he had himself originated and dwelt in, Luxeuil and Bobbio, under his own immediate successors, suffered or accepted its sway, and extended it through their colonies. The illustrious Eligius, while he formed his Limousin foundation in exact imitation of Luxeuil, took care to specify in its charter that the monks were to follow at the same time the rules of both the blessed fathers Benedict and Columbanus. The same stipulation is found of more and more frequent recurrence in deciding what order was to be adopted in the colonies of Luxeuil. In this great monastic enlistment, which was carried on among the flower of the Gallo-Frank population during the whole of the seventh century, it was Columbanus who raised the recruits and set them out on the march; but it was Benedict who disciplined them, and

gave them the flag and the watchword. Where Columbanus sowed, it was Benedict who reaped. The Benedictine rule was gradually and everywhere placed side by side with that of Columbanus, then substituted for his, until at length the latter dwindled further and further into distance, like an antique and respectable memory, from which life had ebbed away.

At Autun, in 670, in the heart of that Burgundy of which Columbanus seemed destined to be the monastic legislator, in a council of fifty-four bishops, held by St Leger, who had himself lived at Luxeuil, six canons were given forth exclusively relative to monastic discipline; in which the observation and fulfilment, in all their fulness, of the precepts of the canons of the Church and the rule of St Benedict are enjoined upon all the Religious; and the Council adds : “If these are legitimately and fully observed by the abbots and monasteries, the number of the monks will always increase by the grace of God, and the whole world will be saved from the contagion of sin by their incessant prayers”. The Gallo-Frank Church thus proclaimed its unqualified adherence to the rule which St Maur had brought from Latium a hundred and twenty years before: the great Irish monk had scarcely been fifty years dead, and already no mention is made either of his rule or his person.

How can we explain this complete and universal substitution of Benedictine influence for that of the Hibernian legislator, even in his own foundations; and that, we repeat, without the appearance of any mind of the highest stamp exclusively devoted to the traditions of Monte Cassino? Must it be attributed to the individual and national spirit, from which Columbanus either could not or would not completely separate himself? Was this the hidden vice which consumed the vitality of his work? No, certainly; for if this powerful individuality had inspired the least dislike, he could not have attracted, during his life, nor after his death, that myriad of disciples, more numerous, and especially more illustrious, than all those of Benedict.

We must then seek the reason of his failure elsewhere, and it is to be found, in our opinion, in the much closer and more intimate union of the Benedictine Rule with the authority of the Roman See. We have proved that neither in Columbanus nor among his disciples and offspring, was there any hostility to the Holy See, and we have quoted proofs of the respect of the popes for his memory. Nor had Benedict, any more than Columbanus, either sought or obtained during his lifetime the sovereign sanction of the papacy for his institution. But long after his death, and at the very time when Columbanus was busied in planting his work in Gaul, the saint and the man of genius who occupied the chair of St. Peter, Gregory the Great, had spontaneously impressed the seal of supreme approbation upon the Benedictine Rule. This adoption of the work Gregory had preluded by the celebration of its author in those famous Dialogues, the popularity of which was to be so great in all Catholic communities. The third successor of Gregory, Boniface IV, in a council held at Rome in 610, and by a famous decree which we reproach ourselves for not having mentioned before, had condemned those who, moved more by jealousy than charity, held that the monks, being dead to the world and living only for God, were by that reason rendered unworthy and incapable of exercising the priesthood and administering the sacraments. The decree of this Council recognises the power of binding and loosing in monks lawfully ordained, and to confound the foolish assumptions of their adversaries, quotes the example of St.

Gregory the Great, who had not been kept back from the Supreme See by his monastic profession, and of many others who under the monastic frock had already worn the pontifical ring. But it especially appeals to the authority of Benedict, whom it describes as “the venerable legislator of the monks”, and who had interdicted them only from interference in secular affairs. It proclaims anew, and on the most solemn occasion, that the Rule of Benedict was the supreme monastic law. It impresses a new sanction upon all the prescriptions of him whom another pope, John IV, the same who exempted Luxeuil from episcopal authority, called, thirty years later, the *abbot of the city of Rome*.

Thus adopted and honoured by the papacy, and identified in some sort with the authority of Rome itself, the influence of the Rule of St. Benedict progressed with the progress of the Roman Church. I am aware that up to the seventh century, the intervention of the popes in the affairs of the Church in France was much less sought and less efficacious than in after ages; but it was already undoubtedly sovereign, and more than sufficient to win the assent of all to a especially Roman institution.

Without weakening the foregoing argument, another explanation might be admitted for the strange course of things which, in the space of a single century, eclipsed the Rule and name of Columbanus, and changed into Benedictine monasteries all the foundations due to the powerful missionary impulse of the Irish Apostle. The cause which produced in Western Christendom the supremacy of St. Benedict’s institute over that of his illustrious rival, was most likely the same which made the Rule of St. Basil to prevail over all the other monastic Rules of the East—namely, its moderation, its prudence, and the more liberal spirit of its government. When the two legislatures of Monte Cassino and of Luxeuil met together, it must have been manifest that the latter exceeded the natural strength of man, in its regulations relating to prayer, to food, and to penal discipline, and above all, in its mode of government. St. Benedict had conquered by the strength of practical sense, which in the end always wins the day.

One of those great rivers, which, like the Moselle or the Saone, have their source near Luxeuil itself, offers a meet symbol of the fate which awaited the work of St. Columbanus. We see it first spring up, obscure and unknown, from the foot of the hills; we see it then increase, extend, grow into a broad and fertilising current, watering and flowing through vast and numerous provinces. We expect it to continue indefinitely its independent and beneficent course. But, vain delusion! Lo, another stream comes pouring onward from the other extremity of the horizon, to attract and to absorb its rival, to draw it along, to swallow up even its name, and, replenishing its own strength and life by these



## BOOK VIII

### CHRISTIAN ORIGIN OF THE BRITISH ISLES

Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations : spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes : for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. — Isaiah liv. 2, 3.

## CHAPTER I

### GREAT BRITAIN BEFORE THE CONVERSION OF THE SAXONS

In modern Europe, at a distance of seven leagues from France, within sight of our northern shores, there exists a nation whose empire is more vast than that of Alexander or the Caesars, and which is at once the freest and most powerful, the richest and most manful, the boldest and best regulated in the world. No other nation offers so instructive a study, so original an aspect, or contrasts so remarkable. At once liberal and intolerant, pious and inhuman, loving order and serenity as much as noise and commotion, it unites a superstitious respect for the letter of the law with the most unlimited practice of individual freedom. Busied more than any other in all the arts of peace, yet nevertheless invincible in war, and sometimes rushing into it with frantic passion — too often destitute of enthusiasm, but incapable of failure — it ignores the very idea of discouragement or effeminacy. Sometimes it measures its profits and caprices as by the yard, sometimes it takes fire for a disinterested idea or passion. More changeable than any in its affections and judgements, but almost always capable of restraining and stopping itself in time, it is endowed at once with an originating power which falters at nothing, and with a perseverance which nothing can overthrow. Greedy of conquests and discoveries, it rushes to the extremities of the earth, yet returns more enamoured than ever of the domestic hearth, more jealous of securing its dignity and everlasting duration. The implacable enemy of bondage, it is the voluntary slave of tradition, of discipline freely accepted, or of a prejudice transmitted from its fathers. No nation has been more frequently conquered; none has succeeded better in absorbing and transforming its conquerors. In no other country has Catholicism been persecuted with more sanguinary zeal; at the present moment none seems more hostile to the Church, and at the same time none has greater need of her care; no other influence has been so greatly wanting to its progress; nothing has left within its breast a void so irreparable;

and nowhere has a more generous hospitality been lavished upon our bishops and priests and religious exiles. Inaccessible to modern storms, this island has been an inviolable asylum for our exiled fathers and princes, not less than for our most violent enemies.

The sometimes savage egotism of these islanders, and their too often cynical indifference to the sufferings and bondage of others, ought not to make us forget that there, more than anywhere else, man belongs to himself and governs himself. It is there that the nobility of our nature has developed all its splendour and attained its highest level. It is there that the generous passion of independence, united to the genius of association and the constant practice of self-government, have produced those miracles of fierce energy, of dauntless vigour, and obstinate heroism, which have triumphed over seas and climates, time and distance, nature and tyranny, exciting the perpetual envy of all nations, and among the English themselves a proud enthusiasm.

This enthusiasm has never been better expressed than in those lines which Johnson, the great English moralist of last century, repeated with animation on his return from his visit to the monastic island of Iona, the cradle of British Christianity, whither we are shortly to conduct our readers:

“Stern o’er each bosom Reason holds her state,  
With daring aims irregularly great ;  
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,  
I see the lords of human kind pass by ;  
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,  
By forms unfashioned, fresh from nature’s hand,  
Fierce in their native hardness of soul.  
True to imagined right, above control ;  
While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,  
And learns to venerate himself as man”.

—*Goldsmith, The Traveller.*

Loving freedom for itself, and loving nothing without freedom, this nation owes nothing to her kings, who have been of importance only by her and for her. Upon herself alone weighs the formidable responsibility of her history. After enduring, as much or more than any European nation, the horrors of political and religious despotism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she has been the first and the only one among them to free herself from oppression for ever. Re-established in her ancient rights, her proud and steadfast nature has forbidden her since then to give up into any hands whatsoever, her rights and destinies, her interests and free will. She is able to decide and act for herself, governing, elevating, and inspiring her great men, instead of being seduced or led astray by them, or worked upon for their advantage. This English race has inherited the pride as well as the grandeur of that Roman people of which it is the rival and the heir; I mean the true Romans of the Republic, not the base Romans subjugated by Augustus. Like the Romans towards their tributaries, it has shown itself ferocious and rapacious to Ireland, inflicting upon its victim, even up to recent times,

that bondage and degradation which it repudiates with horror for itself. Like ancient Rome, often hated, and too often worthy of hate, it inspires its most favourable judges rather with admiration than with love. But, happier than Rome, after a thousand years and more, it is still young and fruitful. A slow, obscure, but uninterrupted progress has created for England an inexhaustible reservoir of strength and life. In her veins the sap swells high today, and will swell to-morrow. Happier than Rome, in spite of a thousand false conclusions, a thousand excesses, a thousand stains, she is of all the modern races, and of all Christian nations, the one which has best preserved the three fundamental bases of every society which is worthy of man — the spirit of freedom, the domestic character, and the religious mind.

How, then, has this nation, in which a perfectly pagan pride survives and triumphs, and which has nevertheless remained, even in the bosom of error, the most religious of all European nations, become Christian? How and by what means has Christianity struck root so indestructibly in her soil? This is surely a question of radical interest among all the great questions of history, and one which takes new importance and interest when it is considered that upon the conversion of England there has depended, and still depends, the conversion of so many millions of souls. English Christianity has been the cradle of Christianity in Germany; from the depths of Germany, missionaries formed by the Anglo-Saxons have carried the faith into Scandinavia and among the Slaves; and even at the present time, either by the fruitful expansion of Irish orthodoxy, or by the obstinate zeal of the Protestant propaganda, Christian societies, which speak English and live like Englishmen, come into being every day throughout North America, in the two Indies, in immense Australia, and in the Isles of the Pacific. The Christianity of nearly half of the world flows, or will flow, from the fountain which first burst forth upon British soil.

It is possible to answer this fundamental question with the closest precision. No country in the world has received the Christian faith more directly from the Church of Rome, or more exclusively by the ministration of monks.

If France has been made by bishops, as has been said by a great enemy of Jesus Christ, it is still more true that Christian England has been made by monks. Of all the countries of Europe it is this that has been the most deeply furrowed by the monastic plough. The monks, and the monks alone, have introduced, sowed, and cultivated Christian civilisation in this famous island.

From whence came these monks? From two very distinct sources — from Rome and Ireland. British Christianity was produced by the rivalry, and sometimes by the conflict, of the monastic missionaries of the Roman and of the Celtic Church.

But before its final conversion, which was due, above all, to a pope and to monks produced by the Benedictine order, Great Britain possessed a primitive Christianity, obscure yet incontestable, the career and downfall of which are worthy of a rapid survey.

Of all the nations conquered by Rome, the Britons were those who resisted her arms the longest, and borrowed the least from her laws and manners. Vanquished for a moment, but not subdued, by the invincible Csesar, they forced the executioner of the Gauls, and the destroyer of Roman freedom, to leave their shores, without having

established slavery there. Less happy under his unworthy successors, reduced to a province, and given up as a prey to avarice and luxury, to the ferocity of usurers, of procurators, and of imperial lieutenants, they long maintained a proud and noble attitude, which contrasted with the universal bondage. *Jam domiti ut pareant, nondum ut serviant*. To be subjects and not to be slaves — it is the first and the last word of British history. Even under Nero, the Britons laughed at the vile freedmen whom the Caesars imposed upon the dishonoured universe as administrators and magistrates. Long before it was beaten down and revived by the successive invasions of three Teutonic races — the Saxons, Danes, and Normans — the noble Celtic race had produced a succession of remarkable personages who, thanks to Tacitus, shine with an imperishable light amidst the degradation of the world: the glorious prisoner Caractacus, the British Vercingetorix, who spoke to the emperor in language worthy of the finest days of the Republic — “Because it is your will to enslave us, does it follow that all the world desires your yoke?”. and Boadicea, the heroic queen, exhibiting her scourged body and her outraged daughters to excite the indignant patriotism of the Britons, betrayed by fortune but saved by history; and, last of all, Galgacus, whose name Tacitus has made immortal, by investing him with all the eloquence which conscience and justice could bestow upon an honest and indignant man, in that speech which we all know by heart, and which sounded the onset for that fight in which the most distant descendants of Celtic liberty were to cement with their blood the insurmountable rampart of their mountain independence.

It was thus that Britain gave a prelude to the glorious future which freedom has created for herself, through so many tempests and eclipses, in the island which has finally become her sanctuary and indestructible shelter.

The civil code of Rome, which weighs heavily still, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, upon France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, reigned without doubt in Britain during the period of Roman occupation; but it disappeared with the reign of the Caesars. Its unwholesome roots never wound around, stifled, or poisoned the vigorous shoots of civil, political, and domestic freedom. The same thing may be said of all other similar influences. Neither in the institutions nor in the monuments of Britain has imperial Rome left any trace of her hideous domination. Its language and its habits have escaped her influence as well as its laws. There, all that is not Celtic is Teutonic. It was reserved for Catholic Rome, the Rome of the popes, to leave an ineffaceable impression upon this famous island, and there to reclaim, for the immortal majesty of the Gospel, that social influence which everywhere else has been disputed or diverted from it by the fatal inheritance which the Rome of the Caesars left to the world.

At the same time, after having been the last of the Western nations to yield to the Roman yoke, Britain was the first to free herself from it; she was the first capable of throwing off the imperial authority, and showing the world that it was possible to do without an emperor. When the powerlessness of the empire against barbaric incursions had been demonstrated in Britain as elsewhere, the Britons were not false to themselves. The little national monarchies, the clans aristocratically organised, whose divisions had occasioned the triumph of the Roman invasion, reappeared under native chiefs. A kind of federation was constituted, and its leaders signified to the Emperor Honorius, in 410,

by an embassy received at Ravenna, that henceforward Britain reckoned upon defending and governing herself. A great writer has already remarked, that of all the nations subdued by the Roman Empire it is the Britons alone whose struggle with the barbarians had a history — and the history of that resistance lasted two centuries. Nothing similar occurred at the same period, under the same circumstances, among the Italians, the Gauls, or the Spaniards, who all allowed themselves to be crushed and overthrown without resistance.

At the same time, Britain herself had not passed with impunity through three centuries and a half of imperial bondage. As in Gaul, as in all the countries subjugated by the Roman Empire, dependence and corruption had ended by enervating, softening, and ruining the vigorous population. The sons of those whom Caesar could not conquer, and who had struggled heroically under Claudius and Nero, soon began to think themselves incapable of making head against the barbarians, *amissa virtute pariter ac libertate*. They sought in vain the intervention of the Roman legions, which returned to the island on two different occasions, without succeeding in delivering or protecting it. At the same time, the barbarians who came to shake and overthrow the sway of the Caesars in Britain were not foreigners, as were the Goths in Italy and the Franks in Gaul. Those Caledonians who, under Galgacus, victoriously resisted Agricola, and who, under the new names of Scots and Picts, breached the famous ramparts erected against them by Antoninus and Severus, and resumed year after year their sanguinary devastations, wringing from Britain, overwhelmed and desolated by half a century of ravage, that cry of distress which is known to all — “The barbarians have driven us to the sea, the sea drives us back upon the barbarians. We have only the choice of being murdered or drowned”; were nothing more than unsubdued tribes belonging to Britain herself.

Everybody knows also how imprudently the Britons accepted the assistance against the Picts, of the warlike and maritime race of Anglo-Saxons, and how, themselves not less cruel nor less formidable than the Picts, those allies, becoming the conquerors of the country, founded there a new power, or, to speak more justly, a new nationality, which has victoriously maintained its existence through all subsequent conquests and revolutions. These warriors were an offshoot from the great Germanic family — as were also, according to general opinion, the Britons themselves — and resembled the latter closely in their institutions and habits; which did not, however, prevent the native population from maintaining against them, during nearly two centuries, a heroic, although in the end useless resistance. The Anglo-Saxons, who were entirely strangers to Roman civilisation, took no pains to preserve or re-establish the remains of the imperial rule. But in destroying the dawning independence of the Britons, in driving back into the hilly regions of the west that part of the population which was beyond the reach of the long knives from which they derived their name, the pagan invaders overthrew, and for a time annihilated, upon the blood-stained soil of Great Britain an edifice of a majesty very different from that of the Roman Empire, and of endurance more steadfast than that of Celtic nationality — the edifice of the Christian religion.

It is known with certainty that Christianity existed in Britain from the second century of the Christian era, but nothing is positively known as to the origin or



organisation of the primitive Church; according to Tertullian, however, she had penetrated into Caledonia beyond the limits of the Roman province. She furnished her contingent of martyrs to the persecution of Diocletian, in the foremost rank among whom stood Alban, a young deacon, whose tomb, at a later date, was consecrated by one of the principal Anglo-Saxon monasteries. She appeared, immediately after the peace of the Church, in the persons of her bishops, at the first Western councils. And she survived the Roman domination, but only to fight for her footing inch by inch, and finally to fall back, with the last tribes of the Britons, before the Saxon invaders, after an entire century of efforts and sufferings, of massacres and profanations. During all this period, from one end of the isle to the other, the Saxons carried fire and sword and sacrilege, pulling down public buildings and private dwellings, devastating the churches, breaking the sacred stones of the altars, and murdering the pastors along with their flocks. Trials so cruel and prolonged necessarily disturbed the habitual communication between the Christians of Britain and the Roman Church; and this absence of intercourse occasioned in its turn the diversities of rites and usages, especially in respect to the celebration of Easter, which will be discussed further on. At present it is enough to state that the most attentive study of authentic documents reveals no doctrinal strife, no diversity of belief, between the British bishops and the Bishop of bishops at Rome. Besides, the Rome of the popes was lavishing its lights and consolations upon its daughter beyond sea, at the very moment when the Rome of the Caesars abandoned her to disasters which could never be repaired.

The British Church had become acquainted with the dangerous agitations of heresy even before she was condemned to her mortal struggle against Germanic paganism, Pelagius, the great heresiarch of the fifth century, the great enemy of grace, was born in her bosom. To defend herself from the contagion of his doctrines, she called to her aid the orthodox bishops of Gaul. Pope Celestine, who, about the same period, had sent the Roman deacon Palladius to be the first bishop of the Scots of Ireland, or of the Hebrides, warned by the same Palladius of the great dangers which threatened the faith in Britain, charged our great Bishop of Auxerre, St. Germain, to go and combat there the Pelagian heresy. This prelate paid two visits to Britain, fortifying her in the orthodox faith and the love of celestial grace. Germain, who was accompanied the first time by the Bishop of Troyes, and the second by the Bishop of Treves, employed at first against the heretics only the arms of persuasion. He preached to the faithful not only in the churches, but at cross-roads and in the fields. He argued publicly against the Pelagian doctors in presence of the entire population, assembled with their wives and children, who gave him the most absorbed attention. The illustrious bishop, who had been a soldier in his youth, showed once more the bold ardour of his early profession in defence of the people whom he came to evangelise. At the head of his disarmed converts he marched against a horde of Saxons and Picts, who were leagued together against the Britons, and put them to flight by making his band repeat three times the cry Hallelujah, which the neighbouring mountains threw back in echoes. This is the day known as the Victory of the Hallelujah. It would have been well could he have preserved the victors from the steel of the barbarians as he succeeded in curing them of the poison of heresy; for after his visit Pelagianism appeared in Britain only to receive its deathblow at the synod of 519. By means of the disciples whom he trained, and who

became the founders of the principal monasteries of Wales, it is to our great Gallican saint that Britain owes her first splendours of cenobitical life.

The celebrated Bishop of Auxerre and his brethren were not the only dignified ecclesiastics to whom the Roman Church committed the care of preserving and propagating the faith in Britain. Towards the end of the fourth century, at the height of the Caledonian invasions, the son of a Breton chief, Ninias or Ninian, went to Rome to refresh his spirit in the fountains of orthodoxy and discipline, and, after having lived, prayed, and studied there in the school of Jerome and Damasus, he received from Pope Siricius episcopal ordination. He conceived the bold thought, in returning to Britain, of meeting the waves of northern barbarians, who continued to approach ever nearer and more terrible, by the only bulwark which could subdue, by transforming them. He undertook to convert them to the Christian faith. The first thing he did was to establish the seat of his diocese in a distant corner of that midland district which lies between the two isthmuses that divide Great Britain into three unequal parts. This region, the possession of which had been incessantly disputed by the Picts, the Britons, and the Romans, had been reduced into a province, under the name of Valentia, only in the time of the Emperor Valentinianus, and comprehended all the land between the wall of Antoninus on the north, and the wall of Severus to the south. Its western extremity, the part of the British coast which lay nearest to Ireland, bore at that time the name of Galwidia or Galloway. It forms a sort of peninsula, cut by the sea into several vast and broad promontories. It was on the banks of one of the bays thus formed, upon a headland from which the distant heights of Cumberland and the Isle of Man may be distinguished, that Ninian established his ecclesiastical headquarters by building a stone church. This kind of edifice, till then unknown in Britain, gained for the new cathedral and its adjoining monastery the name of Candida Casa, or Whitehouse, which is still its title. He consecrated the church to St. Martin, the illustrious apostle of the Gauls, to visit whom he had stopped at Tours, on his way back from Rome, and who, according to tradition, gave him masons capable of building a church in the Roman manner. The image of this holy man, who died at about the same time as Ninian established himself in his White (horn)House, the recollection of his courage, his laborious efforts against idolatry and heresy, his charity, full of generous indignation against all persecutors, were well worthy to preside over the apostolic career of the new British bishop, and to inspire him with the self-devotion necessary for beginning the conversion of the Picts.

What traveller ever dreams in our days, while surveying western Scotland from the banks of the Solway to those of the Forth and Tay, passing from the gigantic capitals of industry to the fields fertilised by all the modern improvements of agriculture, meeting everywhere the proofs and productions of the most elaborate civilisation, — who dreams nowadays of the obstacles which had to be surmounted before this very country could be snatched from barbarism? It is but too easy to forget what its state must have been when Ninian became its first missionary and bishop. Notwithstanding many authors, both sacred and profane — Dion and Strabonius, St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome — have emulated each other in painting the horrible cruelty, the savage and brutal habits, of those inhabitants of North Britain, who, successively known under the name of Caledonians, *Meatae*, *Attacoti*, Scots, or Picts, were most probably nothing more than the descendants of the British tribes whom Rome had not been able to

subdue. All agree in denouncing the incestuous intercourse of their domestic existence, and they have even been accused of cannibalism. All express the horror with which the subjects of the Empire regarded those monsters in human form, who owed their final name of Picts to their habit of marching to battle naked, disclosing bodies tattooed, like those of the savage islanders of the Pacific, with strange devices and many colours. Notwithstanding, Ninian did not hesitate to trust himself in the midst of those enemies of faith and civilisation. He, the son and representative of that British race which they had been accustomed for more than a century to massacre, spoil, and scorn, spent the twenty years that remained of his life in unwearied efforts to bring them into the light from on high, to lead them back from cannibalism to Christianity, and that at the very moment when the Roman Empire, as represented by Honorius, had abandoned Britain to its implacable destroyers.

Unfortunately there remain no authentic details of his mission, no incident which recalls even distantly the clearly characterised mission of his successor, St. Columba, who became, a century and a half later, the apostle of the Northern Picts. We only know that he succeeded in founding, in the midst of the Pictish race, a nucleus of Christianity which was never altogether destroyed; after which, crossing the limits which Agricola and Antoninus had set to the Roman sway at the time of its greatest splendour, he went, preaching the faith, to the foot of those Grampians where the father-in-law of Tacitus gained his last unfruitful victory. We know that his memory remains as a blessing among the descendants of the Picts and Scots, and that many churches consecrated under his invocation still preserve the recollection of that worship which was vowed to him by a grateful posterity; and, finally, we know that, when above seventy, he returned to die in his monastery of the White House, after having passed the latter portion of his life, preparing himself for the judgement of God, in a cave still pointed out half-way up a white and lofty cliff on the Galloway shore, upon which beat, without cease, the impetuous waves of the Irish Sea.

But in the primitive British Church, which was so cruelly afflicted by the heathens of the north and of the east, by the Picts and the Saxons, there were many other monasteries than that of Ninian at Whitehorn. All the Christian churches of the period were accompanied by cenobitical institutions, and Gildas, the most trustworthy of British annalists, leaves no doubt as to their existence in Britain. But history has retained no detailed recollection of them. Out of Cambria, which will be spoken of hereafter, the only great monastic institution whose name has triumphed over oblivion belongs to legend rather than to history; but it has held too important a place in the religious traditions of the English people to be altogether omitted here. It was an age in which Catholic nations loved to dispute among themselves their priority and antiquity in the profession of the Christian faith, and to seek their direct ancestors among the privileged beings who had known, cherished, and served the Son of God during His passage through this life. They aspired by these legendary genealogies to draw themselves somehow closer to Calvary, and to be represented at the mysteries of the Passion. For this reason Spain has victoriously claimed as her apostle the son of Zebedee, the brother of St. John — that James whom Jesus led with Him to the splendours of Tabor and to the anguish of the Garden of Olives. For this reason the south of France glories in tracing back its Christian origin to that family whose sorrows

and love are inscribed in the Gospel — to Martha, who was the hostess of Jesus; to Lazarus, whom He raised up; to Mary Magdalene, who was the first witness of His own resurrection; to their miraculous journey from Judea to Provence; to the martyrdom of one, to the retreat of another in the Grotto of St. Baume; — admirable traditions, which the most solid learning of our own day has justified and consecrated. England in other days, with much less foundation, loved to persuade herself that she owed the first seed of faith to Joseph of Arimathea, the noble and rich disciple who laid the body of the Lord in the sepulchre where the Magdalene came to embalm it. The Britons, and after them the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans, handed down from father to son the tradition that Joseph, flying the persecutions of the Jews, and carrying with him for all his treasure some drops of the blood of Jesus Christ, landed on the western coast of England with twelve companions; that he there found an asylum in a desert place surrounded by water, and that he built and consecrated to the blessed Virgin a chapel, the walls of which were formed by entwined branches of willow, and the dedication of which Jesus Christ Himself did not disdain to celebrate. The same legend has been told since then of two great and famous monastic churches — that of St. Denis in France, and of Notre Dame des Ermites in Switzerland. This spot, destined to become the first Christian sanctuary of the British Isles, was situated upon a tributary of the gulf into which the Severn falls. It afterwards received the name of Glastonbury; and such was, according to the unchangeable popular conviction, the origin of the great abbey of that name, which was afterwards occupied by monks of Irish origin. This sanctuary of the primitive legends and national traditions of the Celtic race was besides supposed to enclose the tomb of King Arthur, who was, as is well known, the personification of the long and bloody resistance of the Britons to the Saxon invasion, the heroic champion of their liberty, of their language, and of their faith, and the first type of that chivalrous ideal of the middle ages in which warlike virtues were identified with the service of God and of our Lady. Mortally wounded in one of these combats against the Saxons, which lasted three successive days and nights, he was carried to Glastonbury, died there, and was buried in secret, leaving to his nation the vain hope of seeing him one day reappear, and to the whole of Christian Europe a legendary glory, a memory destined to emulate that of Charlemagne.

Thus poetry, history, and faith found a common home in the old monastery, which was for more than a thousand years one of the wonders of England, and which still remained erect, flourishing, and extensive as an entire town, up to the day when Henry VIII. hung and quartered the last abbot before the great portal of the confiscated and profaned sanctuary.

But we return to the reality of history, and to the period which must now occupy our attention, that which extends from the middle of the fifth to that of the sixth century, the same age in which the Merovingians founded in Gaul the Frankish kingdom, so beloved by the monks; and St. Benedict planted upon Monte Cassino the cradle of the greatest of monastic orders. Great Britain, destined to become the most precious conquest of the Benedictines, offered at that moment the spectacle of four different races desperately struggling against each other for the mastery.

In the north were the Picts and Scots, still strangers and enemies to the faith of Christ, intrenched behind those mountains and gulfs, which gained for them the

character of transmarine foreigners, people from beyond seas; continually threatening the southern districts, which they had crushed or stupefied for a century by the intermitting recurrence of their *infestations*; and from which they were driven only by other barbarians as heathen and as savage as themselves.

Further down, in that region which the gulfs of Clyde, Forth, and Solway constitute the central peninsula of the three which compose Great Britain, were other Picts permanently established, since 448, in the land which they had torn from the Britons, and among whom the apostle Ninian had sown the seeds of Christianity.

To the south-west, and upon all the coast which faces Ireland remained a native and still independent population. It was here that the unhappy Britons— abandoned by the Romans, decimated, ravaged, and trodden down for a century by the Picts; then for another century spoiled, enslaved, driven from their towns and fields by the Saxons; then driven back again, some to the mountains of Wales, others to that tongue or horn of land which is called Cornwall *Cornu walliae*, others to the maritime district which extends from the banks of the Clyde to those of the Mersey—still found an asylum.

Finally, in the south-east, all the country which is now England had fallen a prey to the Anglo-Saxons, who were occupied in laying, under the federative form of the seven or eight kingdoms of the Heptarchy, the immovable foundations of the most powerful nation of the modern world.

But, like the Picts of the north, the Anglo-Saxons were still heathens. From whence shall come to them the light of the Gospel and the bond of Christian civilisation, which are indispensable to their future grandeur and virtue? Shall it be from those mountains of Cambria, from Wales, where the vanquished race maintains the sacred fire of faith and the traditions of the British Church, with its native clergy and monastic institutions? It is a question impossible to solve, without having thrown a rapid glance over the religious condition of that picturesque and attractive country during the sixth century.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SAINTS AND MONKS OF WALES

During the long struggle maintained by the Britons in defence of their lands and their independence with the Saxons, whom a succession of invading expeditions brought like waves of the sea upon the eastern and southern shores of the island, a certain number of those who repudiated the foreign rule had sought an asylum in the western peninsulas of their native land, and especially in that great peninsular basin which the Latins called Cambria, and which is now called Wales, the land of the Gael. This district seems intended by nature to be the citadel of England. Bathed on three



sides by the sea, defended on the fourth by the Severn and other rivers, this quadrilateral, moreover, contains the highest mountains in the southern part of the island, and a crowd of gorges and defiles inaccessible to the military operations of old. After having served as a refuge to the Britons oppressed by the Roman conquest, Cambria resisted the efforts of the Anglo-Saxons for five centuries, and even remained long inaccessible to the Anglo-Normans, whom it took more than two hundred years to complete in this region the work of William the Conqueror.

Like Ireland and Scotland, and our own Armorica, this fine country has at all times been the object of lively sympathy, not only among learned Celtomaniacs, but among all men whose hearts are moved by the sight of a race which makes defeat honourable by the tenacity of its resistance to the victor — and still more among all lovers of that inimitable poetry which springs spontaneously from the traditions and instincts of a generous and unfortunate people.

The unquestionable signs of a race entirely distinct from that which inhabits the other parts of England may still be distinguished there; — and there, too, may be found a language evidently the sister language of the three other Celtic dialects which are still in existence — the Breton Armorican, the Irish, and the Gaelic of the Scottish Highlands.

But it is, above all, in the sudden vicissitudes of the history of Wales, from King Arthur to Llewellyn, and in the institutions which enabled it to resist the foreign invasion for seven centuries, that we recognise the true characteristics and rich nature of the ancient British race. Everywhere else the native population had either been killed, enslaved, or absorbed. But in this spot, where it had sufficient strength to survive and flourish along with the other nationalities of the West, it has displayed all its native worth, bequeathing to us historical, juridical, and poetical remains, which prove the powerful and original vitality with which it was endowed. By its soul, by its tongue, and by its blood, the race has thus protested against the exaggerated statements made by the Briton Gildas, and the Saxon Bede, of the corruption of the victims of the Saxon invasion. In all times there have been found men, and even the best of men, who thus wrong the vanquished, and make history conspire with fortune to absolve and crown the victors. The turn of the Anglo-Saxons was to come; they also, when the Norman invasion had crushed them, found a crowd of pious detractors to prove that they had merited their fate, and to absolve and mitigate the crimes of the Conquest.

The most striking, and, at the same time, the most attractive feature in the characteristic history of the Welsh is, without doubt, the ardour of patriotism, the invincible love of liberty and national independence, which they evidenced throughout seven centuries, and which no other race has surpassed. We are specially informed of these qualities, even by the servile chroniclers of their conquerors, by the Anglo-Norman writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from whom truth extorts the most unequivocal eulogiums. These writers certainly point out certain vices, and especially certain customs, which are in opposition to the rules of civilised nations, such as that of fighting naked, like the Britons of Caesar's day or the Picts of a later date, against adversaries armed from head to foot. But they rival each other in celebrating the heroic and unwearied devotion of the Gael to their country, and to general and

individual freedom; their reverence for the achievements and memory of their ancestors ; their love of war; their contempt of life; their charity to the poor; their exemplary temperance, which was combined with inexhaustible hospitality; and, above all, their extraordinary valour in fight, and their obstinate constancy through all their reverses and disasters.

Nothing can give a better picture of this people than that decree of their ancient laws which interdicted the seizure by justice, in the house of any Gael whatsoever, of three specified things — his sword, his harp, and one of his books; the harp and the book, because in time of peace they regarded music and poetry as the best occupation of an honest and free man. Thus from infancy every Gael cultivated these two arts, and especially music, with passionate and unanimous eagerness. It was the favourite form, the gracious accompaniment of hospitality. The traveller was everywhere received by choirs of singers. From morning to evening every house rang with the sound of the harp and other instruments, played with a perfection which delighted the foreign hearers, who were at the same time always struck, amid all the skilful turns of musical art, by the constant repetition of sweet and melancholy chords, which seemed to reflect, as in the music of Ireland, the candid genius and cruel destiny of the Celtic race. The bards themselves, singers and poets, sometimes even princes and warriors, presided over the musical education of the country as well as over its intellectual development. But they did not confine themselves to song; they also fought and died for national independence; the harp in their hands was often only the auxiliary of the sword, and one weapon the more against the Saxon.

This powerful corporation, which was constituted in a hierarchical form, had survived the ruin of the Druids, and appeared in the sixth century in its fullest splendour in the centre of those poetic assemblies, presided over by the kings and chiefs of the country, which were a truly national institution, and continued to exist until the latest days of Welsh independence. In the numerous relics of their fertile activity recently brought to light by efforts which are as patriotic as intelligent, but still insufficiently elucidated — in those triads which, under the comparatively recent form known to us, disguise but faintly the highest antiquity — are to be found treasures of true poetry, in which the savage grandeur of a primitive race, tempered and purified by the teachings and mysteries of the Gospel, seems to play in a thousand limpid currents which sparkle in the morning sunlight of history, before running into and identifying themselves with the great river of Christian tradition in the West.

For the Christian religion was adopted, cherished, and defended amidst the mountains of Cambria with not less fervour and passion than national independence. Kings and chiefs there were not more blameless than elsewhere. There, too, as everywhere else, the abuse of strength and the exercise of power engendered every kind of crime : too often perjury, adultery, and murder appear in their annals. But at the same time faith and repentance often reclaimed their rights over souls not so much corrupt as gone astray. In imitation of the great Arthur, who was crowned, according to Celtic tradition, in 516, by a holy archbishop called Dubricius, they almost all showed themselves zealous for the service of God and generous to the Church; and the people, separated from Rome by the waves of blood in which the Saxon invasion had drowned British Christianity, soon displayed again that natural tendency which marked them out

to the Norman conquerors as the most zealous of all the pilgrims who made their eager way to the tombs of the apostles.

The bards, though they had existed before Christianity, far from being hostile to it, lived in an intimate and cordial alliance with the clergy, and especially with the monks. Each monastery had its bard — at once poet and historian — who chronicled the wars, alliances, and other events of the age. Every three years these national annalists, like the pontiffs of ancient Rome, assembled to compare their narratives, and to register them at the foot of the code of Good customs and ancient liberties of the country, of which they were the guardians. It was in these monastic schools also that the bards were trained to poetry and to music. The best known among them, Taliesin, was educated, like the historian Gildas, in the monastery of Llancarvan.

Let us here quote one incident out of a hundred which throws light upon the singularly intimate connection existing between the poetry of the Welsh bards and the legends of the monastic orders, while it shows at the same time the proud intrepidity of the Celtic character. The father of the founder of the monastery of Llancarvan having become a hermit, as will be narrated further on, died in the odour of sanctity, and was buried in a church, to which crowds were soon attracted by the miraculous cures accomplished. Among those crowds came a bard with the intention of making a poem in honour of the new saint. While he composed his lines a sudden flood ravaged the surrounding country, and penetrated even to the church itself. All the neighbouring population and their cattle had already perished, and the waters continued to rise. The bard, while composing his poem, took refuge in the higher story of the church, and then upon the roof; he mounted from rafter to rafter pursued by the flood, but still continuing to improvise his lines, and drawing from danger the inspiration which had been previously wanting. When the water subsided, from the tomb of the hermit to the Severn, there remained no living creature except the bard, and no other edifice standing except the church upon which he had put together his heroic strains.

In this sea of Celtic legend, where neither fables nor anachronisms are sufficient to obscure the vigorous and constant affirmation of Catholic faith and British patriotism, a few names of monastic founders and missionaries still survive. They have been rescued from forgetfulness not only by the revived learning of Cambrian archaeologists, but also by faithful popular tradition, even after the complete and lamentable extinction of Catholicism in Wales. While surveying their lives, and examining the general scope of the monastic legends and institutions connected with them, the existence of a double influence which attracts the looks and steps of the Gael from their native mountains to Armorica in the south, and to Ireland in the west, becomes immediately apparent; as is also the constant reflux of these two countries back upon Great Britain, from whence had come their first missionaries, and the religious and national life of which had concentrated itself more and more in Cambria.

The Saxon invasion, as has been already seen, had thrown upon the shores of Gaul a crowd of fugitives, who, transformed into missionaries, had created a new Britain, invincibly Christian and Catholic, at the gates of Merovingian France. The most celebrated among these missionaries, Tugdual, Samson, Malo, and Paul Aurelian, had been educated in the Cambrian monasteries, from whence also the historian Gildas and

the bard Taliesin accompanied them beyond the seas. From the earliest days of her conversion Ireland had received a similar emigration. The greater part of these pious and brave missionaries came back once at least in their lives to visit the country which they had left, leading with them disciples, born in other Celtic lands, but eager to carry back to the dear and much-threatened homes of insular Britain the light and fervour which had first been received from them.' Thence arises the singular uniformity of proper names, traditions, miracles, and anecdotes, among the legends of the three countries, a uniformity which has often degenerated into inextricable confusion.

One particular, however, which imprints a uniform and very distinct character upon all the holy monks of Celtic origin, is their extraordinary love for distant and frequent journeys — and it is one of the points in which the modern English resemble them most. At that distant age, in the midst of barbarian invasions, and of the local disorganisation of the Roman world, and consequently in the face of obstacles which nothing in Europe as it now exists can give the slightest idea of, they are visible, traversing immense distances, and scarcely done with one laborious pilgrimage before they begin again or undertake another. The journey to Rome, or even to Jerusalem, which finds a place in the legend of almost every Cambrian or Irish saint, seems to have been sport to them. St. Kentigern, for example, went seven times in succession to Rome. This same Kentigern, whom we shall meet again hereafter as the missionary bishop of the southern Scots and Picts, is said to have been born of one of those irregular unions which evidence either domestic derangement or the abuse of power among the chiefs and great men of the country, and which are so often referred to in the annals of Celtic hagiography. He was none the less one of the principal monastic personages in Cambria, where he founded, at the junction of the Clwyd and Elwy, an immense monastery, inhabited by nine hundred and sixty-five monks, three hundred of whom, being illiterate, cultivated the fields; three hundred worked in the interior of the monastery; and the three hundred and sixty-five others celebrated divine worship without interruption. This monastery became at the same time an episcopal see, which still exists under the name of St. Asaph, the successor of Kentigern.

This was not, however, either the oldest or most important monastic colony of Cambria, where, as in Saxon England, every bishopric was cradled in a monastery. More than a century before Kentigern, Dubricius, whose long life, if tradition is to be believed, made him the contemporary of Patrick and Palladius as well as of King Arthur, is instanced as the first founder of a great monastic centre in Cambria, from which religious colonies swarmed off continually to Armorica and to Ireland. Dubricius was ordained bishop at Llandaff in the south of Wales by St. Germain of Auxerre, and ended his career in the north as a hermit, after having assembled at one period more than a thousand auditors round his pulpit. Among these the most illustrious were Iltud and David.

Iltud, or Eltut, who was also a disciple of St. Germain, founded the great monastery of Bangor upon the banks of the Dee, which became a centre of missionary enterprise, as well as of political resistance to the foreign conquerors; it was reckoned to consist of seven divisions, each of three hundred monks, who all lived by the labour of their hands. It was a veritable army, yet still a half less than that of the four thousand monks of the other Bangor, on the other side of the Channel, in Ireland, which was

destined to be the cradle of St. Columbanus and St. Gall, the monastic apostles of eastern France and of Switzerland. Iltud was born in Armorica, but his curious legend, some touching details of which our readers will thank us for quoting, records that he was attracted to Wales by the fame of his cousin, King Arthur. He began his life there as a man of war and of rapine; but he was converted while hawking by the sight of a catastrophe which befell his companions, who, at the moment when they had extorted from the holy abbot Cadoc, the founder of Llancarvan, fifty loaves, a measure of beer, and a fat pig, to satisfy their hunger, were swallowed up by the earth, which opened under their feet. Iltud, terrified by this lesson, and counselled by the abbot Cadoc, consecrated himself to the service of God in solitude, even although he was married and dearly loved his young and beautiful wife. At first, she desired to accompany him and share with him the hut of branches which he had built on the banks of the Tave, in Gloucestershire. "What!" said an angel who appeared to him in a dream; "thou also art enthralled by the love of a woman? Certainly thy wife is beautiful, but chastity is more beautiful still". Obedient to that voice, he abandoned his wife, and at the same time his horses and followers, buried himself in a deep wood, and there built an oratory which the number of his disciples soon changed into a convent. He divided his life between great agricultural labours and frequent struggles with the robber-kings and chiefs of the neighbourhood. He distinguished himself specially by constructing immense dykes against the floods from which Wales seems to have suffered so much. His wife pursued him even into this new solitude; but when she discovered him at the bottom of a ditch which he was him-self digging, with his body and face covered with mud, she saw that it was no longer her fair knight of other days, and thenceforward gave up visiting him, lest she should displease God and the friend of God. Later in his life he shut himself up in a cave where he had only the cold stones for his bed. He took delight in this solitary lair for four long years, and left it only twice, to protect his monastery against violence and robbery. He died at Dol, in that Armorica which he had always loved, and where he took pleasure in sending in times of famine, to help his Breton countrymen beyond seas, shiploads of grain which were provided by the labours of his Welsh community.

David is much more generally known than his co-disciple, Iltut. He has always continued popular among the inhabitants of Wales; and Shakespeare informs us that, even since the Reformation, the Welsh have retained the custom of wearing a leek in their hats upon his feast-day. His history has been often written, and through the transformation of the legend it is still easy to recognise in it the salutary sway of a great monk and bishop over souls which were faithful to religion, but yet in full conflict with those savage and sensual impulses which are to be found only too universally among all men and all nations, in the centre of civilisation as on the verge of barbarism. The origin, indeed, of the holy patron of Cambria himself, like that of St. Bridget, the patroness of Ireland, affords a startling proof of a state of affairs both corrupt and violent. He was the son of a nun whom the king of the country — a nephew of the great Arthur — met upon the public road, and whom, struck by her beauty, he instantly made the victim of his passion. This crime is told by all the biographers of David, generally so lavish of praise and blame, without the least expression of surprise or indignation. The scribe Paulinus, whose name indicates a Roman origin, and who is known to have been a disciple of St. Germain of Auxerre, was charged with the education of the young David, which was as long and complete as possible. He issued from his tutor's hands



clothed with the priesthood, and devoted to a kind of monastic existence which did not exclude him either from Continental travel, nor from exercising a great influence over men and external affairs. He exercised a double power over his countrymen, by directing one part to cenobitical life, and arming the other with the knowledge and virtue which enabled them to triumph over the dangers of a secular career. It is on this latter point that he differs from his illustrious contemporary, St. Benedict, whom he resembles in so many other features. Like Benedict, he founded, almost at one time, twelve monasteries; like Benedict, he saw his young disciples tempted to their fall by the voluptuous wiles of shameless women; like Benedict, he was exposed to the danger of being poisoned by traitors in the very bosom of his own community; and, finally, like Benedict, he imposed upon his monks a rule which severely prohibited all individual property, and made manual and intellectual labour obligatory. The agricultural labour thus prescribed was so severe, that the Welsh monks had not only to saw the wood and delve the soil, but even to yoke themselves to the plough, and work without the aid of oxen. As soon as this toil came to an end they returned to their cells to pass the rest of the day in reading and writing; and when thus engaged it was sometimes necessary to stop in the midst of a letter or paragraph, to answer to the first sound of the bell, by which divine service was announced.

In the midst of these severe labours the abbot David had continual struggles with the *satraps* and *magicians*, which, no doubt, means the chiefs of the clan and the Druids, who had not been destroyed in Britain, as in Gaul, by the Roman conquest, and whose last surviving representatives could not see, without violent dislike, the progress of monastic institutions. But the sphere of David's influence and activity was to extend far beyond that of his early work. Having made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he returned thence invested with the office of archbishop, which had been conferred upon him by the patriarch of Jerusalem. On his return he was acknowledged metropolitan of all that part of the island not yet invaded by the Saxons, by two very numerous attended councils, in which he had the honour of striking a deathblow at the Pelagian heresy, which had come to life again since the mission of St. Germain.

One of these councils recognised in his honour a right of asylum, pointed out by ancient authors as the most respected and the most complete which existed in Britain, and which created for all pursued culprits an inviolable refuge wherever there was a field which had been given to David. This is one of the first examples, as conferred upon a monastic establishment, of that right of asylum, afterwards too much extended, and disgracefully abused towards the end of the middle ages, but which, at that far-distant period, was a most important protection to the weak. Who does not understand how irregular and brutal was at that time the pursuit of a criminal; how many vile and violent passions usurped the office of the law; and how justice herself and humanity had reason to rejoice when religion stretched her maternal hands over a fugitive unjustly accused, or even over a culprit who might be worthy of excuse or indulgence!

David immediately resumed his monastic and ecclesiastical foundations and restored for the first time from its ruins the Church of Glastonbury, so that it might consecrate the tomb of his cousin King Arthur. He himself died more than a hundred years old, surrounded by the reverence of all, and in reality the chief of the British nation. He was buried in the monastery of Menevia, which he had built at the southern

extremity of Wales, facing Ireland, on a site which had been indicated thirty years before by St. Patrick, the apostle of that island. It was of all his foundations the one most dear to him, and he had made it the seat of a diocese which has retained his name.

After his death the monastic tomb of the great bishop and British chief became a much-frequented place of pilgrimage. Not only the Welsh, Bretons, and Irish came to it in crowds, but three Anglo-Norman kings — William the Conqueror, Henry II., and Edward I. — appeared there in their turn. David was canonised by Pope Calistus II in 1120, at a period when Wales still retained its independence. He became from that moment, and has remained until the present time, the patron of Cambria, A group of half-ruined religious buildings, forming altogether one of the most solemn and least visited relics of Europe, still surrounds the ancient cathedral which bears his name, and crowns the imposing promontory, thrust out into the sea like an eagle's beak, from the south-eastern corner of the principality of Wales, which is still more deserving than the two analogous headlands of Cornwall and Armorica, of the name of Finisterre.

Immediately after the period occupied in the annals of Cambria by King Arthur and the monk-bishop David, another monastic and patriotic saint becomes visible, who, like his predecessor, remained long popular among the Britons of Wales, and is so still among the Bretons of Armorica. This was St. Cadoc or Kadok, a personage regarding whom it will be very difficult to make an exact distinction between history and legend, but whose life has left so profound an impression upon the Celtic races, that we may be permitted to borrow from it certain details, which will set in a clear light the faith and manners of these races and of that age. His father, Gundliw or Guen-Liou, surnamed the Warrior, one of the petty kings of southern Cambria, having heard much of the beauty of the daughter of a neighbouring chief, had her carried off, by a band of three hundred vassals, from the midst of her sisters, and from the door of her own chamber, in her father's castle. The father hastened to the rescue of his daughter with all his vassals and allies, and soon overtook Guen-Liou, who rode with the young princess at the croup, going softly not to fatigue her. It was not an encounter favourable for the lover : two hundred of his followers perished, but he himself succeeded in escaping safely with the lady, whose attractions he had afterwards to conceal from the passion of King Arthur; for that great king is far from playing in all the monastic legends the chivalric and disinterested part afterwards attributed to him by the host of national and European traditions of which he is the hero. Of this rude warrior and his beautiful princess was to be born the saint who has been called the Doctor of the Cambrian race, and who founded the great monastic establishment which has been already mentioned here. The very night of his birth the soldiers, or, to speak more justly, the robber-followers (*latrones*), of the king his father, who had been sent to pillage the neighbours right and left, stole the milch cow of a holy Irish monk, who had no sustenance, he nor his twelve disciples, except the abundant milk of this cow. When informed of this nocturnal theft, the monk got up, put on his shoes in all haste, and hurried to reclaim his cow from the king, who was still asleep. The latter took advantage of the occasion to have his new-born son baptized by the pious solitary, and made him promise to undertake the education and future vocation of the infant. The Irish-man gave him the name of Cadoc, which in Celtic means warlike;

and then, having recovered his cow, went back to his cell to await the king's son, who was sent to him at the age of seven, having already learned to hunt and to fight.

The young prince passed twelve years with the Irish monk, whom he served, lighting his fire and cooking his food, and who taught him grammar according to Priscian and Donatus. Preferring the life of a recluse to the throne of his father, he went to Ireland for three years, to carry on his education at Lismore, a celebrated monastic school, after which he returned to Cambria, and continued his studies under a famous British rhetorician, newly arrived from Italy, who taught Latin and the liberal arts after the best Roman system. This doctor had more pupils than money : famine reigned in his school. One day poor Cadoc, who fasted continually, was learning his lesson in his cell, seated before a little table, and leaning his head on his hands, when suddenly a white mouse, coming out of a hole in the wall, jumped on the table, and put down a grain of corn; but being unable to attract the attention of the student, she returned with a second and third grain, and continued until seven grains lay before his eyes. Then Cadoc rising, followed the mouse into a cellar, where he found deposited an enormous heap of corn. This wheat, a gift of Providence, gave sustenance to the master and his pupils; and, according to the wish of Cadoc, was shared with all who were in want like themselves.

Having early decided to embrace monastic life, he hid himself in a wood, where, after making a narrow escape from assassination by the armed swine-herd of a neighbouring chief, he saw, near a forgotten fountain, an enormous wild boar, white with age, come out of his den, and make three bounds, one after the other, stopping each time, and turning round to stare furiously at the stranger who had disturbed him in his resting-place. Cadoc marked with three branches the three bounds of the wild boar, which afterwards became the site of the church, dormitories, and refectory of the great abbey of Llancarvan, of which he was the founder. The abbey took its name (*Ecclesia Cervorum*) from the celebrated legend, according to which, two deer from the neighbouring wood came one day to replace two idle and disobedient monks who had refused to perform the necessary labour for the construction of the monastery, saying, “Are we oxen, that we should be yoked to carts, and compelled to drag timber?”

Llancarvan, however, was not only a great workshop, where numerous monks, subject to a very severe rule, bowed their bodies under a yoke of continual fatigue, clearing the forests, and cultivating the fields when cleared; it was, besides, a great religious and literary school, in which the study and transcription of the Holy Scriptures held the van, and was followed by that of the ancient authors and their more recent commentators.

Among the numerous pupils whom it received — some to follow the monastic life for the rest of their days, some only to carry on their ordinary education — were many chiefs' and kings' sons like Cadoc himself. To these he addressed special instructions, which may be summed up in the two sentences which a prince of North Wales remembered long after to have heard from his own lips — “Remember that thou art a man”; “There is no king like him who is king of himself”.

Cadoc loved to sum up, chiefly under the form of sentences in verse and poetical aphorisms, the instructions given to the pupils of the Llancarvan cloister. A great number of such poetical utterances, which have been preserved in the memory of the

Gael and brought to light by modern erudition, are attributed to him. We instance some, which are not the least interesting and touching, for having been produced in a British cloister in the sixth century, under the disturbing influences of Saxon invasion, and far from all the fountains of classic wisdom and beauty : —

Truth is the elder daughter of God.  
Without light nothing is good.  
Without light there is no piety.  
Without light there is no religion.  
Without light there is no faith.  
There is no light without the sight of God.

The same thought is afterwards reproduced under another form : —

Without knowledge, no power.  
Without knowledge, no wisdom.  
Without knowledge, no freedom.  
Without knowledge, no beauty.  
Without knowledge, no nobleness.  
Without knowledge, no victory.  
Without knowledge, no honour.  
Without knowledge, no God.  
The best of attitudes is humility.  
The best of occupations, work.  
The best of sentiments, pity.  
The best of cares, justice.  
The best of pains, that which a man takes to make peace between two enemies.  
The best of sorrows, sorrow for sin.  
The best of characters, generosity.

The poet then makes his appearance by the side of the theologian and moralist :

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No man is the son of knowledge if he is not the son of poetry.

No man loves poetry without loving the light;  
Nor the light without loving the truth;  
Nor the truth without loving justice;  
Nor justice without loving God.  
And he who loves God cannot fail to be happy.

The love of God was, then, the supreme aim of his teaching, as of his life. When one of his disciples asked him to define it, he answered : —

Love, it is Heaven.  
And hate? asked the disciple.  
Hate is Hell.  
And conscience?  
It is the eye of God in the soul of man.

Cadoc asked nothing from the postulants who came to take the cowl in his monastery. On the contrary, in order to gain admission it was necessary to lay aside everything, even to the last article of dress, and to be received naked as a ship-wrecked man, according to the expression of the rule. This was the easier to him that he was himself rich by means of the gifts of land given him by his father and maternal grandfather.

Cadoc had the happiness of assisting in the conversion of his father before he became his heir. In the depths of his cloister he groaned over the rapines and sins of the old robber from whom he derived his life and his monastic possessions. Accordingly he sent to his father's house three of his monks, who, after having consulted with the elders and lords of the country, undertook to preach repentance to the father of their abbot. His mother, the beautiful Gladusa, carried off of old by King Guen-Liou, was the first to be touched. "Let us believe", she said, "in our son, and let him be our father for heaven". And it was not long before she persuaded her husband to agree with her. They called their son to make to him public confession of their sins, after which the king said, "Let all my race obey Cadoc with true piety, and after death let all the kings, earls, and chiefs, and all the servants of the kings, be buried in his cemetery". Then the father and son chanted together the psalm, "Exaudiat te Dominus in die tribulationis". When this was ended the king and queen retired into solitude, establishing themselves in the first place at a short distance from each other, in two cabins on the bank of a river. They lived there by the work of their hands, without other food than barley bread, in which there was a mingling of ashes, and cresses, the bitterness of which was sweet to them as a foretaste of heaven. One of their principal austerities, which is also to be found in the history of various other Celtic and Anglo-Saxon saints, was to bathe, in winter as in summer, in cold water in the middle of the night, and to pass its remaining hours in



prayer. Cadoc visited them often and exhorted them to perseverance; he ended even by persuading them to give up the comparative sweetness of their life together. His mother was still the first to obey him. She sought out a more profound solitude, and disappeared there. Guen-Liou followed her example. He died soon after in his son's arms, leaving him all his lands. One would fain hope that the same consolation was accorded to a mother so generous, but the legend is silent as to her death. These patrimonial gifts conferred upon Cadoc great territorial wealth, and an external power which he used to secure around his monastery the safety and well-being which were nowhere else to be found. "To know the country of Cadoc", it was said, "it is only necessary to discover where the cattle feed in freedom, where the men fear nothing, and where everything breathes peace". His wealth permitted him to accomplish with success and energy the noble mission which is the most interesting part of his life, in which he appeared as the protector of his dependants and neighbours, the guardian of the goods of the poor, of the honour of women, of the weakness of the humble, and of all the lower classes of the Cambrian people, against the oppression, pillage, violence, and extortions of the princes and the powerful. His personal character, courageous and compassionate, is better evidenced thus than in the position, half of austere solitary, half of feudal chief, which was held by so great a number of monastic superiors in mediaeval times.

We are expressly told that he was at once abbot and prince. "Are you fools", said the steward of one of his domains to the squires of a Cambrian prince who would have taken from him by force the milk of his cows — "are you unaware that our master is a man of great honour and dignity — that he has a family of three hundred men, maintained at his cost, a hundred priests, a hundred knights, and a hundred workmen, without counting women and children?" It is not, however, apparent that he ever fought for his rights by force of arms, as did more than one abbot of later times. But at the head of fifty monks chanting psalms, and with a harp in his hand, he went out to meet the exactors, the robbers, the tyrants, and their followers; and if he did not succeed in arresting their steps and turning them from their evil intentions, he called down upon their heads a supernatural and exemplary chastisement. Sometimes the aggressors were swallowed up in a quagmire, which opened all at once under their feet — and the abyss remained open and gaping, as a warning to future tyrants. Sometimes they were struck with blindness, and wandered groping through the district which they had come to ravage. Such was the fate of the prince whose messengers had carried off the daughter of one of Cadoc's stewards, whose fresh beauty had gained for her the name of Aval-Kain, or Fresh as an apple. Her relations mounted their horses, and, giving the alarm everywhere by sound of trumpet, pursued the ravishers and killed them all except one, who escaped to tell the tale to his master. The latter returned with a more numerous following to put the neighbourhood to fire and sword; but Cadoc reassured the people, who surrounded him with groans and cries. "Be at rest", he said; "courage and confidence; the Lord will bring our enemies to nothing". And, in fact, the invader and his followers were soon seen groping their way like the blind. "Why comest thou here in arms to pillage and ravage the country?" Cadoc asked of their leader; and he restored him his sight and the means of returning to his country only after having made him swear to maintain perpetual peace. "It is thou whom I will take for my confessor before all other", said the contrite and comforted prince. On another occasion the smoking of a burning barn blinded the leader whose men had set it on fire. He too was healed by the

holy-abbot, and presented to Cadoc his sword, his lance, his buckler, and war-horse completely equipped for battle.

By such services, constantly and everywhere renewed, the power of the monastic order was founded, in Britain as elsewhere, in the souls of the Christian people. Such recollections, transmitted from father to son at the domestic hearth, explain the long existence of a fame so nobly acquired. And it is the desire not only to reward, but, above all, to guarantee and perpetuate an intervention at once so powerful and so blessed, which justifies the vast donations lavished, not less by wise foresight than by the gratitude of nations, upon the men who alone showed themselves always ready to combat the greedy and sensual instincts of the kings and the great, and to punish the odious abuses of wealth and force.

The petty robber princes of North Wales were all constrained to recognise the right of asylum and immunity which had been granted to the noble abbot and his monastery by King Arthur, whose states extended to the west and south of Cadoc's domain. For, without any fear of anachronism, the legend takes pains to connect the popular saint with the great Briton king who was once enamoured of his mother; and in connection with this, gives one more instance of the brave and liberal charity of Cadoc, who, not content with protecting his own oppressed countrymen, opened the gates of Llancarvan to exiles and outlaws, and even received there a prince pursued by the hate of Arthur. A long contest followed between the king and the abbot, which was ended by the solemn recognition of a right of asylum similar to that which had been granted to St. David. By the side of this protection guaranteed to fugitives, the principle of composition — that is to say, of a ransom for murder, payable in money or in cattle to the relations of the victim — makes its appearance in the abbot's agreements with his rapacious and violent neighbours.

It was thus that the glorious abbot acquired the surname of Cadoc the Wise — a name which still appears at the head of the many poems attributed to him. For, like all the Gaels, he continued faithful to poetry, and often, among his disciples, sang, to the accompaniment of his harp, verses in which he gave full utterance to the religious and patriotic emotions of his heart, as in the poem which has been preserved under the name of the *Hate of Cadoc*.

“I hate the judge who loves money, and the bard who loves war, and the chiefs who do not guard their subjects, and the nations without vigour; I hate houses without dwellers, lands untilled, fields that bear no harvest, landless clans, the agents of error, the oppressors of truth; I hate him who respects not father and mother, those who make strife among friends, a country in anarchy, lost learning, and uncertain boundaries; I hate journeys without safety, families without virtue, lawsuits without reason, ambushes and treasons, falsehood in council, justice unhonoured; I hate a man without a trade, a labourer without freedom, a house without a teacher, a false witness before a judge, the miserable exalted, fables in place of teaching, knowledge without inspiration, sermons without eloquence, and a man without conscience”.

The invasion of the Saxon idolaters, however, with all its accompanying horrors and profanations, reached in succession the banks of the Severn and the Usk, which bounded the monastic domains of Cadoc. He found himself compelled to leave Wales

and make sail for Armorica, where so many illustrious exiles, who have since become the apostles and legendary patrons of that glorious province, had preceded him. He founded there a new monastery on a little desert island of the archipelago of Morbihan, which is still shown from the peninsula of Rhuy; and to make his school accessible to the children of the district, who had to cross to the isle and back again in a boat, he threw a stone bridge four hundred and fifty feet long across this arm of the sea. In this modest retreat the Cambrian prince resumed his monastic life, adapting it especially to his ancient scholarly habits. He made his scholars learn Virgil by heart; and one day, while walking with his friend and companion, the famous historian Gildas, with his Virgil under his arm, the abbot began to weep at the thought that the poet whom he loved so much might be even then perhaps in hell. At the moment when Gildas reprimanded him severely for that *perhaps*, protesting that without any doubt Virgil must be damned, a sudden gust of wind tossed Cadoc's book into the sea. He was much moved by this accident, and returning to his cell, said to himself, "I will not eat a mouthful of bread nor drink a drop of water before I know truly what fate God has allotted to those who sang upon earth as the angels sing in heaven". After this he fell asleep, and soon after, dreaming, heard a soft voice addressing him. "Pray for me, pray for me", said the voice — "never be weary of praying; I shall yet sing eternally the mercy of the Lord".

The next morning a fisherman of Belz brought him a salmon, and the saint found in the fish the book which the wind had snatched out of his hands.

After a sojourn of several years in Armorica, Cadoc left his new community flourishing under the government of another pastor, and to put in practice that maxim which he loved to repeat to his followers — "Wouldst thou find glory? — march to the grave!" — he returned to Britain, not to find again the ancient peace and prosperity of his beloved retreat of Llancarvan, but to establish himself in the very centre of the Saxon settlements, and console the numerous Christians who had survived the massacres of the conquest, and lived under the yoke of a foreign and heathen race. He settled at Weedon, in the county of Northampton; and it was there that he awaited his martyrdom.

One morning when, vested with the ornaments of his ecclesiastical rank, he was celebrating the divine sacrifice, a furious band of Saxon cavalry, chasing the Christians before them, entered pell-mell into the church, and crowded towards the altar. The saint continued the sacrifice as calmly as he had begun it. A Saxon chief, urging on his horse, and brandishing his lance, went up to him and struck him to the heart. Cadoc fell on his knees; and his last desire, his last thought, were still for his dear countrymen: "Lord", he said, while dying, "invisible King, Saviour Jesus, grant me one grace — protect the Christians of my country; let their trees still bear fruit, their fields give corn; fill them with goods and blessings; and, above all, be merciful to them, that, after having honoured Thee on earth, they may glorify Thee in heaven!"

The Britons of Cambria and of Armorica long disputed the glory and privilege of paying to Cadoc those honours which were due to him at once in a religious and national point of view. But the latter have remained the most faithful; and eight centuries after his death the great Celtic monk and patriot was still invoked as their

special patron by the Breton knights in the famous battle of the Thirty, where Beaumanoir drank his own blood. On their way to the field they went into a chapel dedicated to St. Cadoc, and appealed to him for aid, and returned victorious, singing a Breton ballad, which ends thus —

“He is not the friend of the Bretons who does not cry for joy to see our warriors return with the yellow broom in their casques;

“He is no friend of the Bretons, nor of the Breton saints, who does not bless St. Cadoc, the patron of our warriors;

“He who does not shout, and bless, and worship, and sing, 'In heaven, as on earth, Cadoc has no peer'.”

The long popularity of this Cambrian Briton upon the two shores of that sea which separates the Celtic countries is, however, eclipsed by that of a young girl, whose history is unknown, and her faith unpractised, by the Welsh population of the present day, but whose memory has nevertheless been preserved among them with superstitious fidelity. This is Winifred, the young and beautiful daughter of one of the lords of Wales. Flying from the brutality of a certain King Caradoc, who had found her alone in her father's house, she fled to the church where her parents were praying, but was pursued by the king, who struck off her head on the very threshold of the church. At the spot where the head of this martyr of modesty struck the soil, there sprang up an abundant fountain, which is still frequented, and even venerated, by a population divided into twenty different sects, but animated by one common hatred for Catholic truth. This fountain has given its name to the town of Holywell. Its source is covered by a fine Gothic porch of three arches, under which it forms a vast basin, where, from morning to evening, the sick and infirm of a region ravaged by heresy come to bathe, with a strange confidence in the miraculous virtue of those icy waters.

According to the legend, this virgin martyr was restored to life by a holy monk called Beino, who, like all the monks of the time, had founded many convents, and received from the princes many contributions for his foundations. Notwithstanding, he exercised a conscientious reserve as to accepting anything which the donor had not a full title to bestow. One day he superintended, in his own person, the building of a church upon an estate which had just been granted to him by King Cadwallon, the conqueror of the Northumbrian Saxons, or rather, had been given in exchange for a golden sceptre, of the value of sixty cows. While there, a woman came to him, bringing a new-born child to be baptized. The cries of the child were deafening. “What ails the child, that he cries so much?” Beino at length asked. “He has a very good reason”, said the woman. “What is the reason?” asked the monk. “This land which you have in your possession, and on which you are building a church, belonged to his father”.

At that moment Beino called out to his workmen, “Stop; let nothing more be done till I have baptized the child, and spoken to the king”. Then he hastened to Caernarvon to the monarch : “Why”, cried the monk, “hast thou given me these lands which belong justly to another? The child in this woman's arms is the heir: let them be restored to him”.

Nothing can be more noble and touching than this evidence of the respect of the cenobites for that sacred right of property which has been so constantly and vilely, and with such impunity, violated to their hurt!

The life of this monk, which was originally written only in the Welsh language, contains other details not less curious. It was he who planted beside his father's grave an acorn, which grew into a great oak, and which, according to the legend, no Englishman could approach without instant death, though the Welsh took no harm. He, too, it was who was driven to abandon a favourite spot on the banks of the Severn, by the sound of an English voice which he heard with horror, from the other side of the river, cheering on the hounds with Saxon cries. "Take up your frocks and your shoes", he said to his companions, "and quick, let us depart; this man's nation speaks a language abominable to me: they come to invade us, and take away our goods for ever".

These familiar anecdotes of the monk Beino, as well as the martyrdom of Cadoc, the patriot monk and sage, by the hand of the Anglo-Saxons, prove the insurmountable dislike which rose like a wall between the souls of the Britons and those of the Saxons, more than a century and a half after the arrival of the heathen invaders in Britain. The fertile and generous genius of the Celtic race, overmastered by this patriotic hatred, and by a too just resentment of the violence and sacrilege of the conquest, was thus made powerless to aid in the great work of converting the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Not only is it impossible to record a single effort, made by any British monk or prelate, to preach the faith to the conquerors; but even the great historian of the Anglo-Saxons expressly states, that the British inhabitants of the great island had come under a mutual engagement never to reveal the truths of religion to those whose power and neighbourhood they were obliged to endure — and, at the same time, had taken a vindictive resolution, even when they became Christians, to treat them as incurable heathens. St. Gregory the Great makes the same accusation against them in still more severe terms. "The priests", he said, "who dwell on the borders of the English neglect them, and, putting aside all pastoral solicitude, refuse to answer to any desire which that people might have to be converted to the faith of Christ".

The idea of seeking among the Britons the instruments of that conversion which was to give another great nation to the Church, must then be relinquished. But in a neighbouring island, in Hibernia, there existed, in the midst of a population of Celts, like the Britons, a flourishing and fertile Church, the spectator, and not the victim, of the Saxon invasion. Let us see if, from that Island of Saints, and from its brave and adventurous race, there may not issue a more generous and expansive impulse than could be hoped for amid the bleeding remnants of British Christianity.

### CHAPTER III

#### MONASTIC IRELAND AFTER ST. PATRICK



Ireland, happier of old than Great Britain, escaped the Roman conquest. Agricola had dreamt of invading it, and even of holding it with a single legion; by such a means he would, according to the words of his son-in-law, have riveted the irons of Britain by depriving her of the dangerous sight and contagious neighbourhood of freedom. But this intention proved happily abortive. Saved from imperial proconsuls and praetors, the genius of the Celtic race found there a full development: it created for itself a language, a distinctive poetry, worship, and cultivation, and a social hierarchy; in one word, a system of civilisation equal and even superior to that of most other heathen nations. In the middle of the fifth century, Rome, Christian and Apostolic, extended its sceptre over the land which the Caesars had not been able to reach, and St. Patrick carried to it the laws of Christianity. Of British origin, but imbued, like his contemporaries Ninian and Palladius, the apostles of the southern Picts and Scots, with the doctrines and usages of Rome, the great apostle of the Celts of Ireland left the shores of Cambria to convert the neighbouring island. He was accompanied and followed by a crowd of Welsh or British monks, who hurried after him, driven to Ireland, as their brothers had been to Armorica, either by terror of the Saxon invasion or by the thirst of conquering souls to the truth.

These British missionaries furnished Patrick with the thirty first bishops of the Church of Ireland, who, in the exercise of their office, substituted or added certain rites and usages, purely British, to those which Patrick had brought from Rome. Ireland was converted, but she was converted according to the model of Britain — profoundly and unchangeably Catholic in doctrine, but separated from Rome by various points of discipline and liturgy, without any real importance, which, from the narratives that remain to us of the life of St. Patrick, it would be impossible to define. Even in the lifetime of Patrick, might there not have been differences between him and his British fellow-labourers on these points? This seems probable, from certain particulars in his history and writings, — as, for example, that passage in his Confession where he says that he had brought the Gospel to Ireland in spite of his seniors — that is to say, according to Tillemont, in spite of the British priests. In the obscure and perhaps altered texts of the two Canons of Council which are attributed to him, certain acts which show a violent hostility to the British clergy and monks will be remarked with surprise. The Cambrian legend, on the other hand, expressly points out, among the companions of Patrick, a Welsh monk, Carantoc or Carranog, whom it describes as “a strong knight under the sun”, and a “herald of the celestial kingdom”; but takes care to add that, in consequence of the multitude of clerks who accompanied them, the two agreed to separate, and turned one to the right and the other to the left. A still more curious passage of the *Amhra*, or panegyric in Irish verse, addressed to St. Patrick by a monastic bard, may throw a ray of light upon the sentiments which separated that truly apostolic leader from the Welsh monks, who were too often distinguished by their exclusive and jealous spirit. Always faithful to the prevailing sentiment of the Roman Church, which regarded the conversion of a sinner as a greater miracle than resurrection from the dead, the saint is applauded by his panegyrist for having taught the Gospel always without distinction, without difference of caste, even to strangers, barbarians, and Picts.

Whatever these discussions were, however, they did no hurt either to the Catholic faith — for Pelagianism, the leading heresy in Britain, never had any ground to stand on in Ireland — nor to the influence of the great Roman missionary, who has continued the first and most popular saint in Catholic Ireland. The gratitude of the kings and people whom he had converted showed itself in such lavish generosity, that, according to the Irish saying, had he accepted all that was offered him, he would not have left for the saints that came after as much as would have fed two horses. Nothing is more certainly proved than the subordination of the new-born Irish Church to the Roman See — a subordination which was decided and regulated by Patrick. But it is not less certain that Welsh and Breton monks were the fellow-workers, and, above all, the successors of Patrick in Ireland; that they completed his work, and that the Church of the island was organised and developed under their influence, thanks to the continual emigration which took place from Wales to Ireland and from Ireland to Wales, proofs of which are to be found on every page of the annals of those times.

It is to the influence of St. David, the great monk-bishop of Wales, that the history of the two Churches attributes the principal share in the close union of Irish and Welsh monasticism. We have already said that the episcopal monastery which has retained his name is situated on a promontory which projects from the coast of Great Britain as if to throw itself towards Ireland. The legend narrates that Patrick, while standing on this promontory at a despondent moment, overwhelmed by vexation and discouragement, was consoled by a vision in which there was revealed to him, at one glance, the whole extent of the great island which God had reserved for him to convert and save. David, born of an Irish mother, died in the arms of one of his Irish disciples. Another of his disciples was long celebrated for the service he rendered to Ireland by introducing there the culture of bees. For there, as everywhere, the monastic missionaries brought with them not only faith, truth, and virtue, but, at the same time, the inferior but essential benefits of cultivation, labour, and the arts.

Modonnoc, the monk in question, was a rough labourer, so rugged and intent upon keeping all at work, that he escaped narrowly on one occasion from having his head broken by the axe of a comrade whom he had reproached for his idleness when the two were working together to soften the slope of a road excavated near St. David's monastery. Towards the end of his days, after a long life of obedience and humility, he embarked for Ireland. All the bees of St. David's followed him. It was vain that he turned back his boat, on the prow of which they had settled, to the shore, and denounced the fugitives to his superior. Three times in succession he attempted to free himself from his strange companions, and had at last to resign himself to the necessity of carrying them with him into Ireland, where up to this time they were unknown. By this graceful little story the legend enshrines in Christian gratitude the recollection of the laborious disciple who was the first to introduce the culture of bees into Ireland, where it spread rapidly, and became a source of wealth to the country. It is pleasant to find, in the same legend, that the aged emigrant took special pains, in gathering his honey, to procure a more delicate food than their ordinary coarse fare, for the poor.

Thanks to this incessant emigration, Ireland, from the fifth to the eighth century, became one of the principal centres of Christianity in the world; and not only of Christian holiness and virtue, but also of knowledge, literature, and that intellectual

civilisation with which the new faith was about to endow Europe, then delivered from heathenism and from the Roman empire. This golden age presented two remarkable phenomena : the temporary predominance for one or two centuries of certain rites and customs proper to the British Church, and the extraordinary development of monastic institutions. As to the British peculiarities in proportion as they become apparent under Patrick's successors, it becomes clear that they differ from Roman usages only upon a few points of no real importance, although at that moment they seemed weighty enough. They vary from Catholic rule only in respect to the right day for the feast of Easter, the form and size of the monastic tonsure, and the ceremonies of baptism — questions which in no way involve any point of doctrine. Nor do they impugn the authority of the Holy See in respect to matters of faith; and it is impossible to support, by facts of authentic documents, those doubts as to the orthodoxy of the Irish, which have been borrowed from the unsatisfactory and partial learning of English writers of the past century by various authors of our own day — such as Rettberg and Augustin Thierry : that orthodoxy was then, what it has always continued, irreproachable.

The Catholic — the Roman — faith reigned thus without limitation in the great and numberless communities which constituted the chief strength of the Church founded by Patrick and his British fellow-labourers. This Church had been at its very origin clothed with an almost exclusively monastic character. Episcopal succession remained long unknown or confused; the authority of bishops, deprived of all local jurisdiction, was subordinated to that of the abbots, even when the latter did not share the episcopal rank. Patrick had converted a crowd of petty princes, chiefs of tribes or clans; indeed, all the primitive saints of Ireland were connected with reigning families, and almost all the converted chiefs embraced monastic life. Their families, their clansmen, their dependants, followed their example. A prince, in becoming a monk, naturally became also an abbot, and in his monastic life continued, as he had been in his worldly existence, the chief of his race and of his clan.

The first great monasteries of Ireland were then nothing else, to speak simply, than clans reorganised under a religious form. From this cause resulted the extraordinary number of their inhabitants, who were counted by hundreds and thousands; from this also came their influence and productiveness, which were still more wonderful. In these vast monastic cities, that fidelity to the Church which Ireland has maintained with heroic constancy for fourteen centuries, in face of all the excesses, as well as all the refinements, of persecution, took permanent root. There also were trained an entire population of philosophers, of writers, of architects, of carvers, of painters, of calligraphers, of musicians, poets, and historians; but, above all, of missionaries and preachers, destined to spread the light of the Gospel and of Christian education, not only in all the Celtic countries, of which Ireland was always the nursing mother, but throughout Europe, among all the Teutonic races — among the Franks and Burgundians, who were already masters of Gaul, as well as amid the dwellers by the Rhine and Danube, and up to the frontiers of Italy. Thus sprang up also those armies of saints, who were more numerous, more national, more popular, and, it must be added, more extraordinary, in Ireland, than in any other Christian land.

It is well known that the unanimous testimony of Christendom conferred upon Ireland at this period the name of Isle of Saints ; but it is much less known that these

saints were all, or almost all, attached to monastic institutions, which retained a discipline and regularity, steady but strangely allied to the violence and eccentricity of the national character. The ancient relics of Irish tradition show them to us classified, and as if ranged in line of battle, in three orders or battalions, by the poetic and warlike imagination of the Celt : the first, commanded by St. Patrick, was composed exclusively of bishops — Roman, Briton, Frankish, or Scotie — and shone like the sun ; the second, commanded by St. Columba, and composed of priests, shone like the moon ; and the third, under the orders of Colman and Aidan, was composed at once of bishops, priests, and hermits, and shone like the stars. Let us point out, in passing, in this beatific crowd the famous travellers and the sailor-monks. Such was Brendan, whose fantastic pilgrimages into the great ocean, in search of the earthly Paradise, and of souls to convert, and unknown lands to discover, have been preserved under the form of visions, which are always wonderfully penetrated by the Spirit of God and of theological truth. In thus putting imagination, as well as the spirit of adventure, at the service of the faith and ideal Christian virtue, these visions are worthy of being reckoned among the poetic sources of the Divina Commedia. They exercised a lively influence upon the Christian imagination during all the middle ages, and even up to the time of Christopher Columbus himself, to whom the salt-water epic of St. Brendan seems to have pointed out the way to America.

By the side of this monkish traveller, let us instance as a type of the religious who remained in Ireland to fertilise it by their labours, a monk-bishop called Dega or Dagan, who passed his nights in transcribing manuscripts, and his days in reading, and carving in iron and copper. He was so laborious that the construction of three hundred bells and three hundred crosiers of bishops or abbots, is attributed to him, and the transcription of three hundred copies of the Gospels. “I thank my God”, he said, while preaching to the monks of Bangor, “that He has made me recognise among you the three orders of monks which I have already seen elsewhere — those who are angels for purity, those who are apostles for activity, and those who would be martyrs, were it needed, by their readiness to shed their blood for Christ”.

At that period, as ever since, the love and practice of music was a national passion with the Irish, The missionaries and the monks, their successors, were also inspired by this passion, and knew how to use it for the government and consolation of souls. Another pleasant legend depicts to us its influence, in the form of ecclesiastical chants, upon an Irish youth. Mochuda, the son of a great lord of Kerry, kept, like David, his father's flocks in the great forests which then covered a district now almost altogether without wood. He attracted, by his piety and grace, the regard of the duke or prince of the province, who called him often in the evening to his presence, to converse with him, while his wife, who was the daughter of the King of Munster, showed the same affection for the young shepherd. In the wood where his swine fed, there passed one day a bishop with his suite, chanting psalms in alternate strophes as they continued their course. The young Mochuda was so rapt by this psalmody that he abandoned his flock, and followed the choir of singers to the gates of the monastery where they were to pass the night. He did not venture to enter with them, but remained outside, close to the place where they lay, and where he could hear them continue their song till the hour of repose, the bishop chanting longest of all after the others were asleep. The shepherd thus

passed the entire night. The chief who loved him sought him everywhere, and when at last the young man was brought to him, asked why he had not come, as usual, on the previous evening. "My lord", said the shepherd, "I did not come because I was ravished by the divine song which I have heard sung by the holy clergy; please Heaven, lord duke, that I was but with them, that I might learn to sing as they do". The chief in vain admitted him to his table, offered him his sword, his buckler, his lance, all the tokens of a stirring and prosperous life. "I want none of your gifts", the shepherd always replied; "I want but one thing — to learn the chant which I have heard sung by the saints of God". In the end he prevailed, and was sent to the bishop to be made a monk. The legend adds that thirty beautiful young girls loved him openly; for he was handsome and agreeable : but the servant of God having prayed that their love should become spiritual love, they were all, like himself, converted, and consecrated themselves to God in isolated cells, which remained under his authority, when he had in his turn become a bishop, and founder of the great monastic city of Lismore.

This preponderance of the monastic element in the Irish Church — which was due to the fact that the first apostles of the isle were monks, and was at the same time thoroughly justified by the adventurous zeal of their successors — maintained itself not only during all the flourishing period of the Church's history, but even as long as the nation continued independent. Even the Anglo-Norman conquerors of the twelfth century, though they too came from a country where most of the bishops had been monks, and where almost all the sees had begun by being monasteries, were struck by this distinguishing characteristic of Irish Christianity.

Of all these celebrated communities of the sixth century, which were the most numerous ever seen in Christendom, there remain only vague associations connected with certain sites, whose names betray their monastic origin — or a few ruins visited by unfrequent travellers. Let us instance, for example, Monasterevan, founded in 504, upon the banks of the Barrow; Monasterboyce, a great lay and ecclesiastical school in the valley of the Boyne; Innisfallen, in the picturesque Lake of Killarney; and, above all, Glendalough, in the valley of the two lakes, with its nine ruined churches, its round tower, and its vast cemetery, a sort of pontifical and monastic necropolis, founded in the midst of a wild and desolate landscape, by St. Kevin, one of the first successors of Patrick, and one of those who, to quote the Irish hagiographers, counted by millions the souls whom they led to heaven. Among these sanctuaries there are two which must be pointed out to the attention of the reader, less because of their population and celebrity, than because they have produced the two most remarkable Celtic monks of whom we have to speak.

These are Clonard and Bangor, both of which reckoned three thousand monks. The one was founded by St. Finnian, who was also venerated as the celestial guide of innumerable souls. He was born in Ireland, but educated by David and other monks in Britain, where he spent thirty years. He then returned to his native country to create the great monastic school of Clonard, from which, says the historian, saints came out in as great number as Greeks of old from the sides of the horse of Troy.

The other, the third Bangor — glorious rival of the two monasteries of the same name in Cambria — was founded upon the shores of the Irish Sea facing Britain, by



Comgall, who was descended from a reigning family of Irish Picts, but who had, like Patrick, Finnian, and so many others, lived in Britain. He gave a rule, written in Irish verse, to this community, the fame of which was to eclipse that of all other Irish monasteries in the estimation of Europe, and whose three thousand friars, divided into seven alternate choirs, each composed of three hundred singers, chanted the praises of God day and night, to call down His grace upon their Church and their country.

It was Bangor that produced, as we have already seen, the great St. Columbanus, whose glorious life was passed far from Ireland, who sowed the seed of so many great and holy deeds between the Vosges and the Alps, between the banks of the Loire and those of the Danube, and whose bold genius having by turns startled the Franks, the Burgundians, and the Lombards, disputed the future supremacy over the monastic world for half a century with the rule of St. Benedict. And it is from Clonard that we now await another great saint of the same name, who, restoring and extending the work of Ninian and Palladius, was to conquer Caledonia to the Christian faith, and whose sons at the destined moment were, if not to begin, at least to accomplish and complete the difficult conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.

## BOOK IX

### ST. COLUMBA, THE APOSTLE OF CALEDONIA,

521-597

I send thee unto the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified. — Acts XXVI. 18.

## CHAPTER I

### THE YOUTH OF COLUMBA AND HIS MONASTIC LIFE IN IRELAND

St. Columba, the apostle and monastic hero of Caledonia, has had the good fortune to have his history written by another monk, almost a contemporary of his own, whose biography of him is as delightful as it is edifying. This biographer, Adamnan, was the ninth successor of Columba as abbot of his principal establishment at Iona, and in addition was related to him. Born only a quarter of a century later, he had seen in his childhood the actual companions of Columba and those who had received his last breath. He wrote at the very fountainhead, on the spot where his glorious predecessor had dictated his last words, surrounded by scenes and recollections which still bore the trace of his presence, or were connected with the incidents of his life. A still earlier narrative, written by another abbot of Iona, and reproduced almost word for word by Adamnan, forms the basis of his work, which he has completed by a multitude of anecdotes and testimonies collected with scrupulous care, and which altogether, though unfortunately without chronological order, forms one of the most living, attractive, and authentic relics of Christian history.

Adamnan, who was born in 624, must have written the biography of St. Columba between 690 and 703, a period at which he gave up the liturgical traditions of the Scots and the direction of the monastery of Iona to settle near the Anglo-Saxon king of Northumbria, Aldfrid. Adamnan's work was first published by Canisius in his *Thesaurus Antiquitatum* in 1604

Like twenty other saints of the Irish calendar, Columba bore a symbolical name borrowed from the Latin, a name which signified the dove of the Holy Ghost, and which was soon to be rendered illustrious by his countryman Columbanus, the celebrated founder of Luxeuil, with whom many modern historians have confounded him. To distinguish the one from the other, and to indicate specially the greatest Celtic missionary of the British Isles, we shall adopt, from the different versions of his name, that of Columba. His country-men have almost always named him Columb-Kill or Cille, that is to say, the dove of the cell, thus adding to his primitive name a special designation, intended to recall either the essentially monastic character of the saint, or the great number of communities founded and governed by him. He was a scion of one of those great Irish races, of whom it is literally true to say that they lose themselves in the night of ages, but which have retained to our own day, thanks to the tenacious attachment of the Irish people to their national recollections, through all the vicissitudes of conquest, persecution, and exile, a rank more patriotic and popular than that of mere nobility or aristocratic lineage. This was the great race of the Nialls or O'Donnells (clan Domhnaill), which, native to and master of all the north-western part of the island (the modern counties of Tyrconnell, Tyrone, and Donegal), held sovereign sway in Hibernia and Caledonia, over the two shores of the Scottish sea, during the sixth century. Almost without interruption, up to 1168, kings, springing from its different branches, exercised in Ireland the supreme monarchy — that is to say, a sort of primacy over the provincial kings, which has been compared to that of metropolitan over bishops, but which rather recalls the feudal sovereignty of the Salic emperors, or of the kings of the family of Capet over the great vassals of Germany and France, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Nothing could be more unsettled or stormy than the exercise of this sovereignty. It was incessantly disputed by some vassal king, who generally succeeded by force of arms in robbing the supreme monarch of his crown and his life, and replacing him upon the throne of Tara, with a tolerable certainty of being himself similarly treated by the son of the dethroned prince. Besides, the right of succession in Ireland was not regulated by the law of primogeniture. According to the custom known under the name of *Tanistry*, the eldest blood-relation succeeded every deceased prince or chief, and the brother in consequence preceded the son in the order of succession.

After the English conquest, the warlike and powerful race of Nialls was able to maintain, by dint of dauntless perseverance, a sort of independent sovereignty in the north-west of Ireland. The names of the O'Neills and O'Donnells, chiefs of its two principal branches, and too often at war with each other, are to be found on every page of the annals of unhappy Ireland. After the Reformation, when religious persecution had come in to aggravate all the evils of the conquest, these two houses supplied their indignant and unsubdued country with a succession of heroic soldiers who struggled to the death against the perfidious and sanguinary despotism of the Tudors and Stuarts. Ten centuries passed in such desperate struggles have not weakened the traditions which link the saint whose history we are about to tell to those champions of an ancient faith and an outraged country. Even under the reign of Elizabeth, the vassals of young Hugh O'Donnell, called Red Hugh, so renowned in the poetical records and popular traditions of Erin, and the most dangerous antagonist of English tyranny, recognised in him the hero indicated in the prophetic songs of Columb-Kill, and thus placed his glory and that

of his ancestors under the wing of the *dove of the cells*, as under a patronage at once domestic and celestial.

The father of Columba was descended from one of the eight sons of the great king Niall of the Nine Hostages, who was supreme monarch of all Ireland from 379 to 405, at the period when Patrick was brought to the island of slave. Consequently he sprang from a race which had reigned in Ireland for six centuries ; and in virtue of the ordinary law of succession, might himself have been called to the throne. His mother belonged to a reigning family in Leinster, one of the four subordinate kingdoms of the island. He was born at Gartan, in one of the wildest districts of the present county of Donegal — where the slab of stone upon which his mother lay at the moment of his birth is still shown. He who passes a night upon that stone is cured for ever from the pangs of nostalgia, and will never be consumed, while absent or in exile, by a too passionate love for his country. Such at least is the belief of the poor Irish emigrants, who flock thither at the moment when they are about to abandon the confiscated and ravaged soil of their country to seek their living in America, moved by a touching recollection of the great missionary who gave up his native land for the love of God and human souls.

Before his birth, his mother had a dream, which posterity has accepted as a graceful and poetical symbol of her son's career. An angel appeared to her, bringing her a veil covered with flowers of wonderful beauty, and the sweetest variety of colours ; immediately after she saw the veil carried away by the wind, and rolling out as it fled over plains, woods, and mountains : then the angel said to her, "Thou art about to become the mother of a son, who shall blossom for heaven, who shall be reckoned among the prophets of God, and who shall lead numberless souls to the heavenly country". This spiritual power, this privilege of leading souls to heaven, was recognised by the Irish people, converted by St. Patrick, as the greatest glory which its princes and great men could gain.

The Irish legends, which are always distinguished, even amidst the wildest vagaries of fancy, by a high and pure morality, linger lovingly upon the childhood and youth of the predestined saint. They tell us how, confided in the first place to the care of the priest who had baptized him, and who gave him the first rudiments of literary education, he was accustomed from his earliest years to the heavenly visions which were to occupy so large a place in his life. His guardian angel often appeared to him ; and the child asked if all the angels in heaven were as young and shining as he. A little later Columba was invited by the same angel to choose among all the virtues those which he would like best to possess. "I choose", said the youth, "chastity and wisdom"; and immediately three young girls of wonderful beauty, but foreign air, appeared to him, and threw themselves on his neck to embrace him. The pious youth frowned, and repulsed them with indignation. "What!" they said; "then thou dost not know us?" "No, not the least in the world". "We are three sisters whom our father gives to thee to be thy brides." "Who, then, is your father?" "Our father is God, He is Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of the world." "Ah, you have indeed an illustrious father. But what are your names?" "Our names are Virginity, Wisdom, and Prophecy ; and we come to leave thee no more, to love thee with an incorruptible love."

From the house of the priest, Columba passed into the great monastic schools, which were not only a nursery for the clergy of the Irish Church, but where also young laymen of all conditions were educated. Columba, like many others, there learned to make his first steps in that monastic life to which he had been drawn by the call of God. He devoted himself not only to study and prayer, but also to the manual toil then inseparable, in Ireland and everywhere else, from a religious profession. Like all his young companions, he had to grind overnight the corn for the next day's food : but when his turn came, it was so well and quickly done that his companions suspected him of having been assisted by an angel. 1 The royal birth of Columba procured him several distinctions in the schools which were not always to the satisfaction of his comrades. One of the latter, named Kieran, who was also destined to fill a great place in Scotian legend, became indignant at the ascendancy of Columba : but while the two students disputed, a celestial messenger came to Kieran and placed before him an auger, a plane, and an axe, saying, "Look at these tools, and recollect that these are all thou hast sacrificed for God, since thy father was only a carpenter; but Columba has sacrificed the sceptre of Ireland, which might have come to him by right of his birth and the grandeur of his race."

We learn from authentic documents that Columba completed his monastic life under the direction of two holy abbots, both bearing the name of Finnian. The first, who was also a bishop, ordained him deacon, but seems to have had him for a shorter time under his authority than the second Finnian, who, himself trained by a disciple of St. Patrick, had long lived in Cambria, near St. David. Columba's first steps in life are thus connected with the two great monastic apostles of Ireland and Cambria, the patriarchs of the two Celtic races which up to this time had shown the most entire fidelity to the Christian faith, and the greatest predilection for monastic life. The abbot Finnian who ordained Columba priest, ruled at Clonard the monastery which he had founded, and of which we have already spoken — one of those immense conventual establishments which were to be found nowhere but among the Celts, and which recalled to recollection the monastic towns of the Thebaid. He had made of his monastery one great school, which was filled with the Irish youth, then, as always, consumed by a thirst for religious instruction; and we again find here the favourite number, so often repeated by Celtic tradition, of three thousand pupils, all eager to receive the instructions of him who was called the Master of Saints.

While Columba studied at Clonard, being still only a deacon, an incident took place which has been proved by authentic testimony, and which fixed the general attention upon him by giving a first evidence of his supernatural and prophetic intuition. An old Christian bard (the bards were not all Christians), named Gemmain, had come to live near the abbot Finnian, asking from him, in exchange for his poetry, the secret of fertilising the soil. Columba, who continued all his life a passionate admirer of the traditional poetry of his nation, determined to join the school of the bard, and to share his labours and studies. The two were reading together out of doors, at a little distance from each other, when a young girl appeared in the distance pursued by a robber. At the sight of the old man the young fugitive made for him with all her remaining strength, hoping, no doubt, to find safety in the authority exercised throughout Ireland by the national poets. Gemmain, in great trouble, called his pupil to his aid to defend the



unfortunate child, who was trying to hide herself under their long robes, when her pursuer reached the spot. Without taking any notice of her defenders, he struck her in the neck with his lance, and was making off, leaving her dead at their feet. The horrified old man turned to Columba. "How long," he said, "will God leave unpunished this crime which dishonours us?" "For this moment only", said Columba, "not longer; at this very hour, when the soul of this innocent creature ascends to heaven, the soul of the murderer shall go down to hell." At the instant, like Ananias at the words of Peter, the assassin fell dead. The news of this sudden punishment, the story goes, went over all Ireland, and spread the fame of the young Columba far and wide.

It is easy to perceive, by the importance of the monastic establishments which he had brought into being even before he had attained the age of manhood, that his influence must have been as precocious as it was considerable. Apart from the virtues of which his after life afforded so many examples, it may be supposed that his royal birth gave him an irresistible ascendancy in a country where, since the introduction of Christianity, all the early saints, like the principal abbots, belonged to reigning families, and where the influence of blood and the worship of genealogy continue, even to this day, to a degree unknown in other lands. Springing, as has been said, from the same race as the monarch of all Ireland, and consequently himself eligible for the same high office, which was more frequently obtained by election or usurpation than inheritance — nephew or near cousin of the seven monarchs who successively wielded the supreme authority during his life — he was also related by ties of blood to almost all the provincial kings. Thus we see him, during his own career, treated on a footing of perfect intimacy and equality by all the princes of Ireland and of Caledonia, and exercising a sort of spiritual sway equal or superior to the authority of secular sovereigns.

Before he had reached the age of twenty-five he had presided over the creation of a crowd of monasteries. As many as thirty-seven in Ireland alone recognised him as their founder. The most ancient and important of these foundations were situated, as was formerly that of St. Bridget at Kildare, in vast oak-forests, from which they took their name. The first, Durrow (*Dair-mach, Roborcti campus*), where a cross and well bearing the name of Columba are still to be seen, was erected in the central region called the umbilical, or sacred middle of Ireland. The other, Derry (*Doire-chalgaich, Roboretum Calgachi*), is situated in the northern part of the island, in Columba's native province, in the hollow of a bay of that sea which separates Ireland from Scotland. After having long been the seat of a great and rich Catholic bishopric, it became, under its modern name of Londonderry, one of the principal centres of English colonisation, and was, in 1690, the bulwark of the Protestant conquest against the powerless efforts of the last of the Stuart kings. But nothing then indicated the possibility of those lamentable changes, nor of the miserable triumphs of inhuman force and wicked persecution.

The young Columba was specially attached to Deny, where he habitually lived. He superintended with care not only the discipline and studies of his community, but external matters, even so far as to watch over the preservation of the neighbouring forest. He would never permit an oak to be cut down. Those which fell by natural decay, or were struck down by the wind, were alone made use of for the fire which was lighted on the arrival of strangers, or distributed to the neighbouring poor. The poor had a first

right, in Ireland as everywhere else, to the goods of the monks; and the monastery of Derry fed a hundred applicants every day with methodical regularity.

At a more advanced age our saint gave vent to his tenderness for his monastic creations in songs, an echo of which has come down to us. The text of these songs, such as has been preserved, is probably later than Columba ; but it is written in the oldest Irish dialect, and it expresses, naturally enough, the sentiments of the founder and his disciples : —

"Were all the tribute of Scotia mine,  
From its midland to its borders,  
I would give all for one little cell  
In my beautiful Derry.  
For its peace and for its purity,  
For the white angels that go  
In crowds from one end to the other,  
I love my beautiful Derry.  
For its quietness and its purity,  
For heaven's angels that come and go  
Under every leaf of the oaks,  
I love my beautiful Derry.

My Derry, my fair oak grove,  
My dear little cell and dwelling,  
God in the heavens above!  
Let him who profanes it be cursed.  
Beloved are Durrow and Derry,  
Beloved is Raphoe the pure,  
Beloved the fertile Drumhome,  
Beloved are Sords and Kells!  
But sweeter and fairer to me  
The salt sea where the sea-gulls cry

When I come to Derry from far,

It is sweeter and dearer to me —

Sweeter to me."

Nor was it only his own foundations which he thus celebrated : another poem has been preserved which is attributed to him, and which is dedicated to the glory of the monastic isle of Arran, situated upon the western coast of Ireland, where he had gone to venerate the inhabitants and the sanctuaries.

"O Arran, my sun; my heart is in the west with thee. To sleep on thy pure soil is as good as to be buried in the land of St. Peter and St. Paul. To live within the sound of thy bells is to live in joy. Arran, my sun, my love is in the west with thee".

These poetic effusions reveal Columba to us under one of his most attractive aspects, as one of the minstrels of the national poetry of Ireland, the intimate union of which with the Catholic faith, and its unconquerable empire over the souls of that generous people, can scarcely be exaggerated. Columba was not only himself a poet, but lived always in great and affectionate sympathy with the bards who, at that time, occupied so high a place in the social and political institutions of Ireland, and who were to be met with everywhere, in the palaces and monasteries, as on the public roads. What he did for this powerful corporation, and how, after having been their brother and friend, he became their protector and saviour, will be seen further on. Let us merely state at present that, himself a great traveller, he received the travelling bards in the different communities where he lived ; among others, in that which he had built upon an islet of the lake which the Boyle traverses before it throws itself into the Shannon. He confided to them the care of arranging the monastic and provincial annals, which were to be afterwards deposited in the charter-chest of the community; but, above all, he made them sing for his own pleasure and that of his monks; and the latter reproached him energetically if he permitted one of those wandering poets to depart without having asked to hear some of his chants, accompanied by his harp.

The monk Columba was, then, a poet. After Ossian and his glorious compeer of the Vosges, he opens the series of two hundred Irish poets, whose memories and names, in default of their works, have remained dear to Ireland. He wrote his verses not only in Latin, but also and more frequently in Irish. Only three of his Latin poems survive ; but two centuries ago eleven of his Irish poems were still in existence, which have not all perished, and the most authentic of which is dedicated to the glory of St. Bridget, the virgin slave, patroness of Ireland and foundress of female religious life in the Isle of Saints. She was still living when Columba was born. Through the obscure and halting efforts of this infantine poetry, some tones of sincere and original feeling may yet be disentangled : —

"Bridget, the good and the virgin,  
Bridget, our torch and our sun,  
Bridget, radiant and unseen,

May she lead us to the eternal kingdom !  
May Bridget defend us  
Against all the troops of hell,  
And all the adversities of life ;  
May she heat them down before us.  
All the ill movements of the flesh,  
This pure virgin whom we love,  
Worthy of honour without end,  
May she extinguish in us.  
Yes, she shall always be our safeguard,  
Dear saint of Lagenia ;  
After Patrick she comes the first,  
The pillar of the land,  
Glorious among all glories,  
Queen among all queens.  
When old age comes upon us,  
May she be to us as the shirt of hair,  
May she fill us with her grace,  
May Bridget protect us."

It seems thus apparent that Columba was as much a bard as a monk during the first part of his life ; he had the vagabond inclination, the ardent, agitated, even quarrelsome character of the race. Like most Irish saints and even monks whom history has kept in mind, he had a passionate love for travelling ; and to that passion he added another which brought him more than one misadventure. Books, which were less rare in Ireland than everywhere else, were nevertheless much sought after, and guarded with jealous care in the monastic libraries, which were their sole depositories. Not only an excessive value was put upon them, but they were even supposed to possess the emotions and almost the passions of living beings. Columba had a passion for fine manuscripts, and one of his biographers attributes to him the laborious feat of having transcribed with his own hand three hundred copies of the Gospel or of the Psalter. He went everywhere in search of volumes which he could borrow or copy, often experiencing refusals which he resented bitterly. There was then in Ossory, in the south-west, a holy recluse, very learned, doctor in laws and in philosophy, named Longarad with the white legs, because in walking barefoot his legs, which were covered with white hair, were visible. Columba, having gone to visit him, asked leave to examine his books. The old man gave a direct refusal ; then Columba burst forth in denunciations —

"May thy books no longer do thee any good, neither to thee nor to those who come after thee, since thou takest occasion by them to show thy inhospitality." This curse was heard, according to the legend. As soon as old Longarad died his books became unintelligible. They still exist, says an author of the ninth century, but no man can read them. The legend adds that in all the schools of Ireland, and even in Columba's own cell, the leathern satchels in which the monks and students carried their books, unhooked themselves from the wall and fell to the ground on the day of the old philosopher's death.

A similar narrative, more authentic but not less singular, serves as an introduction to the decisive event which changed the destiny of Columba, and transformed him from a wandering poet and ardent bookworm into a missionary and apostle. While visiting his ancient master, Finnian, our saint found means to make a clandestine and hurried copy of the abbot's Psalter, by shutting himself up at night in the church where the Psalter was deposited, lighting his nocturnal work, as happened to I know not what Spanish saint, by the light which escaped from his left hand while he wrote with the right. The abbot Finnian discovered what was going on by means of a curious wanderer, who, attracted by that singular light, looked in through the keyhole, and, while his face was pressed against the door, had his eye suddenly torn out by a crane, one of those familiar birds who were permitted by the Irish monks to seek a home in their churches. Indignant at what he thought a theft, Finnian claimed the copy when it was finished, on the ground that a copy made without permission ought to belong to the master of the original, seeing that the transcription is the son of the original book. Columba refused to give up his work, and the question was referred to the king in his palace at Tara.

King Diarmid, or Dermott, supreme monarch of Ireland, was, like Columba, descended from the great king Niall, but by another son than he whose great-grandson Columba was. He lived, like all the princes of his country, in a close union with the Church, which was represented in Ireland, more completely than anywhere else, by the monastic order. Exiled and persecuted in his youth, he had found refuge in an island, situated in one of those lakes which interrupt the course of the Shannon, the chief river of Ireland, and had there formed a friendship with a holy monk called Kieran, who was no other than the son of the carpenter, the jealous comrade of Columba at the monastic school of Clonard, but since that time his generous rival in knowledge and in austerity. Upon the still solitary bank of the river the two friends had planned the foundation of a monastery, which, owing to the marshy nature of the soil, had to be built upon piles. "Plant with me the first stake," the monk said to the exiled prince, "putting your hand under mine ; and soon that hand shall be over all the men of Erin"; and it happened that Diarmid was very shortly after called to the throne. He immediately used his new power to endow richly the monastery which was rendered doubly dear to him by the recollection of his exile and of his friend. This sanctuary became, under the name of Clonmacnoise, one of the greatest monasteries and most frequented schools of Ireland, and even of Western Europe. It was so rich in possessions and even in dependent communities, daughters or vassals of its hierarchical authority, that, according to a popular saying, half of Ireland was contained within the enclosure of Clonmacnoise. This enclosure actually contained nine churches, with two round towers; the kings and lords of the two banks of the Shannon had their burying-place there for a thousand



years, upon a green height which overlooks the marshy banks of the river. The sadly picturesque ruins may still be seen, and among them a stone cross, over which the prince and the abbot, holding between them the stake consecrated by the legend, are roughly sculptured.

This king might accordingly be regarded as a competent judge in a contest at once monastic and literary; he might even have been suspected of partiality for Columba, his kinsman — and yet he pronounced against him. His judgment was given in a rustic phrase which has passed into a proverb in Ireland — To every cow her calf- and, consequently, to every book its copy. Columba protested loudly. “It is an unjust sentence”, he said, “and I will revenge myself”. After this incident a young prince, son of the provincial king of Connaught, who was pursued for having committed an involuntary murder, took refuge with Columba, but was seized and put to death by the king. The irritation of the poet-monk knew no bounds. The ecclesiastical immunity which he enjoyed in his quality of superior and founder of several monasteries ought to have, in his opinion, created a sort of sanctuary around his person, and this immunity had been scandalously violated by the execution of the youth whom he protected. He threatened the king with prompt vengeance. “I will denounce,” he said, “to my brethren and my kindred thy wicked judgment, and the violation in my person of the immunity of the Church; they will listen to my complaint, and punish thee sword in hand. Bad king, thou shalt no more see my face in thy province until God, the just Judge, has subdued thy pride. As thou hast humbled me to-day before thy lords and thy friends, God will humble thee on the battle day before thine enemies.” Diarmid attempted to retain him by force in the neighbourhood; but, evading the vigilance of his guards, he escaped by night from the court of Tara, and directed his steps to his native province of Tyrconnell. His first stage was Monasterboyce, where he heard from the monks that the king had planted guards on all the ordinary roads to intercept him. He then continued his course by a solitary pathway over the desert hills which lay between him and the north of Ireland; and as he went upon his lonely way, his soul found utterance in a pious song. He fled, chanting the Song of Trust, which has been preserved to us, and which may be reckoned among the most authentic relics of the ancient Irish tongue. We quote from it the following verses : —

"Alone am I on the mountain,  
O royal Sun ; prosper my path,  
And then I shall have nothing to fear.  
Were I guarded by six thousand,  
Though they might defend my skin,  
When the hour of death is fixed,  
Were I guarded by six thousand,  
In no fortress could I be safe.  
Even in a church the wicked are slain,

Even in an isle amidst a lake ;  
But God's elect are safe  
Even in the front of battle.  
No man can kill me before my day,  
Even had we closed in combat ;  
And no man can save my life  
When the hour of death is come.  
My life!  
As God pleases let it be ;  
Nought can be taken from it,  
Nought can be added to it :  
The lot which God has given  
Ere a man dies must be lived out.  
He who seeks more, were he a prince,  
Shall not a mite obtain.  
A guard!  
A guard may guide him on his way;  
But can they, can they, guard  
Against the touch of death? ...  
Forget thy poverty awhile;  
Let us think of the world's hospitality.  
The Son of Mary will prosper thee,  
And every guest shall have his share.  
Many a time  
What is spent returns to the bounteous hand,  
And that which is kept back  
Not the less has passed away.  
living God !  
Alas for him who evil works !  
That which he thinks not of comes to him,  
That which he hopes vanishes out of his hand.  
There is no Sreod that can tell our fate,

Nor bird upon the branch,  
Nor trunk of gnarled oak. . . .  
Better is He in whom we trust,  
The King who has made us all,  
Who will not leave me to-night without refuge.  
I adore not the voice of birds,  
Nor chance, nor the love of a son or a wife.  
My Druid is Christ, the Son of God,  
The Son of Mary, the great Abbot,  
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
My lands are with the King of kings ;  
My order at Kells and at Moone."

"Thus sang Columba", says the preface to this *Song of Trust*, "on his lonely journey ; and this song will protect him who repeats it while he travels".

Columba arrived safely in his province, and immediately set to work to excite against King Diarmid the numerous and powerful clans of his relatives and friends, who belonged to a branch of the house of Niall distinct from and hostile to that of the reigning monarch. His efforts were crowned with success. The Hy-Nialls of the North armed eagerly against the Hy-Nialls of the South, of whom Diarmid was the special chief. They naturally obtained the aid of the king of Connaught, father of the young prince who had been executed. According to other narratives, the struggle was one between the Nialls of the North and the Picts established in the centre of Ireland. But in any case, it was the north and west of Ireland which took arms against the supreme king. Diarmid marched to meet them, and they met in battle at Cool-Drewny, or Cul-Dreimhne, upon the borders of Ultonia and Connacia. He was completely beaten, and obliged to take refuge at Tara. The victory was due, according to the annalist Tighernach, to the prayers and songs of Columba, who had fasted and prayed with all his might to obtain from Heaven the punishment of the royal insolence, and who, besides, was present at the battle, and took upon himself before all men the responsibility of the bloodshed.

As for the manuscript which had been the object of this strange conflict of copyright elevated into a civil war, it was afterwards venerated as a kind of national, military, and religious palladium. Under the name of *Cathac*, or *Fighter*, the Latin Psalter transcribed by Columba, enshrined in a sort of portable altar, became the national relic of the O'Donnell clan. For more than a thousand years it was carried with them to battle as a pledge of victory, on the condition of being supported upon the breast of a clerk pure from all mortal sin. It has escaped as by miracle from the ravages of which Ireland has been the victim, and exists still, to the great joy of all learned Irish patriots.

Columba, though victor, had soon to undergo the double reaction of personal remorse and the condemnation of many pious souls. The latter punishment was the first to be felt. He was accused, by a synod convoked in the centre of the royal domain at Teilde, of having occasioned the shedding of Christian blood, and sentence of excommunication was in his absence pronounced against him. Perhaps this accusation was not entirely confined to the war which had been raised on account of the copied Psalter. His excitable and vindictive character, and, above all, his passionate attachment to his relatives, and the violent part which he took in their domestic disputes and in their continually recurring rivalries, had engaged him in other struggles, the date of which is perhaps later than that of his first departure from Ireland, but the responsibility of which is formally imputed to him by various authorities, and which also ended in bloody battles.

Columba was not a man to draw back before his accusers and judges. He presented himself before the synod which had struck without hearing him. He found a defender there in the famous abbot Brendan, the founder of the monastery of Birr. When Columba made his appearance, this abbot rose, went up to him, and embraced him. "How can you give the kiss of peace to an excommunicated man?" said some of the other members of the synod. "You would do as I have done," he answered, "and you never would have excommunicated him, had you seen what I see — a pillar of fire which goes before him, and the angels that accompany him. I dare not disdain a man predestined by God to be the guide of an entire people to eternal life". Thanks to the intervention of Brendan, or to some other motive not mentioned, the sentence of excommunication was withdrawn; but Columba was charged to win to Christ by his preaching as many pagan souls as the number of Christians who had fallen in the battle of Cool-Drewny.

It was then that his soul seems first to have been troubled, and that remorse planted in it the germs at once of a startling conversion and of his future apostolic mission. Sheltered as he was from all vengeance or secular penalties, he must have felt himself struck so much the more by the ecclesiastical judgment pronounced against him. Various legends reveal him to us at this crisis of his life, wandering along from solitude to solitude, and from monastery to monastery, seeking out holy monks, masters of penitence and Christian virtue, and asking them anxiously what he should do to obtain the pardon of God for the murder of so many victims. One of these, Froech, who had long been his friend, reproached him with affectionate severity for having been the instigator of that murderous fight. "It was not I who caused it", said Columba with animation; "it was the unjust judgment of King Diarmid — it was his violation of ecclesiastical immunity which did it all". "A monk," answered the solitary, "would have done better to bear the injury with patience than to avenge it with arms in his hands". "Be it so", said Columba; "but it is hard for a man unjustly provoked to restrain his heart and to sacrifice justice."

He was more humble with Abban, another famous monk of the time, founder of many religious houses, one of which was called the *Cell of Tears*, because the special grace of weeping for sin was obtained there. This gentle and courageous soldier of Christ was specially distinguished by his zeal against the fighting men and disturbers of the public peace. He had been seen to throw himself between two chiefs at the moment

when their lances were crossed at each other's breasts; and on another occasion had gone alone and unarmed to meet one of the most formidable rievvers of the island, who was still a pagan and a member of a sovereign family, had made his arms drop from his hands, and had changed first into a Christian and then into a monk the royal robber, whose great-grandson has recorded this incident. When Columba went to Abban, he said, "I come to beseech thee to pray for the souls of all those who have perished in the late war, which I raised for the honour of the Church. I know they will obtain grace by thy intercession, and I conjure thee to ask what is the will of God in respect to them from the angel who talks with thee every day". The aged solitary, without reproaching Columba, resisted his entreaties for some time, by reason of his great modesty, but ended by consenting; and after having prayed, gave him the assurance that these souls enjoyed eternal repose.

Columba, thus reassured as to the fate of the victims of his rage, had still to be enlightened in respect to his own duty. He found the light which he sought from a holy monk called Molaise, famed for his studies of Holy Scripture, who had already been his confessor, and whose ruined monastery is still visible in one of the isles of the Atlantic. This severe hermit confirmed the decision of the synod; but to the obligation of converting to the Christian faith an equal number of pagans as there were of Christians killed in the civil war he added a new condition, which bore cruelly upon a soul so passionately attached to country and kindred. The confessor condemned his penitent to perpetual exile from Ireland. Columba bowed to this sentence with sad resignation — "What you have commanded", he said, "shall be done".

He announced his future fate in the first place to his relations, the warlike Nialls of Tyrconnell. "An angel has taught me that I must leave Ireland and remain in exile as long as I live, because of all those whom you slew in the last battle, which you fought on my account, and also in others which you know of". It is not recorded that any among his kindred attempted to hold him back ; but when he acquainted his disciples with his intended emigration, twelve among them decided to follow him. The most ardent of all was a young monk called Mochonna, son of the provincial king of Ulster. In vain Columba represented to him that he ought not to abandon his parents and native soil. "It is thou", answered the young man, "who art my father, the Church is my mother, and my country is where I can gather the largest harvest for Christ." Then, in order to render all resistance impossible, he made a solemn vow aloud to leave his country and follow Columba — "I swear to follow thee wherever thou goest, until thou hast led me to Christ, to whom thou hast consecrated me". It was thus, says his historian, that he forced himself rather than offered himself as a companion to the great exile in the course of his apostolical career among the Picts — and he had no more active or devoted auxiliary. Columba accepted, though not without sadness, as has been seen, the sentence of his friend. He dedicated the rest of his life to the expiation of his faults by a voluntary exile, and by preaching the faith to the heathen. Up to this time we have had difficulty in disentangling the principal events of the first forty years of his life from a maze of confused and contradictory narratives. We have followed what has seemed to us the most probable account, and one most calculated to throw light upon the character of the saint, his people, and his country. Henceforward we shall find a surer guide in Adamnan, who only touches very slightly upon the first half of his hero's



life, and who, with an apparent contempt for the unanimous testimony of Irish witnesses, while agreeing that the departure of the saint took place after the battle in which the king of Ireland had been beaten by Columba's kindred, attributes his departure solely to his desire for the conversion of the heathens of the great neighbouring isle.

## CHAPTER II

### COLUMBA AN EMIGRANT IN CALEDONIA — THE HOLY ISLE OF IONA

He who has not seen the islands and gulfs of the western coast of Scotland, and who has not been tossed upon the sombre sea of the Hebrides, can scarcely form any image of it to himself. Nothing can be less seductive at the first glance than that austere and solemn nature, which is picturesque without charm, and grand without grace. The traveller passes sadly through an archipelago of naked and desert islands, sowed, like so many extinct volcanoes, upon the dull and sullen waters, which are sometimes broken by rapid currents and dangerous whirlpools. Except on rare days, when the sun — that pale sun of the North — gives life to these shores, the eye wanders over a vast surface of gloomy sea, broken at intervals by the whitening crest of waves, or by the foamy line of the tide, which dashes here against long reefs of rock, there against immense cliffs, with a forlorn roar which fills the air. Through the continual fogs and rains of that rude climate may be seen by times the summits of chains of mountains, whose abrupt and naked sides slope to the sea, and whose base is bathed by those cold waves which are kept in constant agitation by the shock of contrary currents, and the tempests of wind which burst from the lakes and narrow ravines farther inland. The melancholy of the landscape is relieved only by that peculiar configuration of the coast, which has been remarked by the ancient authors, and especially by Tacitus — a configuration which exists besides only in Greece and Scandinavia. As in the fiords of Norway, the sea cuts and hollows out the shores of the islands into a host of bays and gulfs, of strange depth, and as narrow as profound. These gulfs take the most varied forms, penetrating by a thousand tortuous folds into the middle of the land, as if to identify themselves with the long and winding lakes of the Highland interior. Numberless peninsulas, terminating in pointed headlands, or summits covered with clouds ; isthmuses so narrow as to leave the sea visible at both sides ; straits so closely shut between two walls of rock that the eye hesitates to plunge into that gloom ; enormous cliffs of basalt or of granite, their sides perforated with rents ; caverns, as at Staffa, lofty as churches, flanked through all their length by prismatic columns, through which the waves of the ocean dash with groans ; and here and there, in contrast with that wild majesty, perhaps in an island, perhaps upon the shore of the mainland, a sandy beach, a little plain covered with scanty

prickling grass ; a natural port, capable of sheltering a few frail boats ; everywhere, in short, a strangely varied combination of land and sea, but where the sea carries the day, penetrates and dominates everything, as if to affirm her empire, and, as Tacitus has said, "*inseri velut in suo*".

Such is the present aspect — such must have been, with the addition of the forests which have disappeared, the aspect of those shores when Columba sought them to continue and end his life there. It was from this point that he was to assail the Land of Woods, that unconquerable Caledonia, where the Romans had been obliged to relinquish the idea of establishing themselves, where Christianity hitherto had appeared only to vanish, and which for long seemed to Europe almost outside the boundaries of the world. To Columba was to fall the honour of introducing civilisation into the stony, sterile, and icy *Escosse la Sauvage*, which the imagination of our fathers made the dwelling-place of hunger, and of the prince of demons. Sailing by these distant shores, who could refrain from evoking the holy memory and forgotten glory of the great missionary? It is from him that Scotland has derived that religious spirit which, led astray as it has been since the Reformation, and in spite of its own rigid narrowness, remains still so powerful, so popular, so fruitful, and so free. Half veiled by the misty distance, Columba stands first among those original and touching historical figures to whom Scotland owes the great place she has occupied in the memory and imagination of modern nations, from the noble chivalry of the feudal and Catholic kingdom of the Bruces and Douglasses, down to the unparalleled misfortunes of Mary Stuart and Charles Edward, and all the poetic and romantic recollections which the pure and upright genius of Walter Scott has endowed with European fame.

A voluntary exile, at the age of forty-two, from his native island, Columba embarked with his twelve companions in one of those great barks of osier covered with hide which the Celtic nations employed for their navigation. He landed upon a desert island situated on the north of the opening of that series of gulf and lakes which, extending from the south-west to the north-east, cuts the Caledonian peninsula in two, and which at that period separated the still heathen Picts from the district occupied by the Irish Scots, who were partially Christianised. This isle, which he has made immortal, took from him the name of I-Colm-Kill (the island of Columb-Kill), but is better known under that of Iona. A legend, suggested by one of our saint's most marked characteristics, asserts that he first landed upon another islet called Oronsay, but that, having climbed a hill near the shore immediately on landing, he found that he could still see Ireland, his beloved country. To see far off that dear soil which he had left for ever, was too hard a trial. He came down from the hill, and immediately took to his boat to seek, farther off, a shore from which he could not see his native land. When he had reached Iona he climbed the highest point in the island, and, gazing into the distance, found no longer any trace of Ireland upon the horizon. He decided, accordingly, to remain upon this unknown rock. One of those heaps of stones, which are called cairns in the Celtic dialect, still marks the spot where Columba made this desiredly unfruitful examination, and has long borne the name of the Cairn of Farewell. (Cam cul ri Erin — literally, the back turned on Ireland. Many historians are of opinion that the isle had been formerly inhabited by Druids, whose burying-place is still shown — they resisted the landing of the Irish emigrants)

Nothing could be more sullen and sad than the aspect of this celebrated isle, where not a single tree has been able to resist either the blighting wind or the destroying hand of man. Only three miles in length by two in breadth, flat and low, bordered by grey rocks which scarcely rise above the level of the sea, and overshadowed by the high and sombre peaks of the great island of Mull, it has not even the wild beauty which is conferred upon the neighbouring isles and shores by their basalt cliffs, which are often of prodigious height — or which belongs to the hills, often green and rounded at the summit, whose perpendicular sides are beaten incessantly by those Atlantic waves, which bury themselves in resounding caverns hollowed by the everlasting labours of that tumultuous sea. Upon the narrow surface of the island white stretches of sand alternate with scanty pastures, a few poor crops, and the turf-moors where the inhabitants find their fuel. Poor as the culture is, it seems everywhere resisted and disputed by the gneiss rocks, which continually crop out, and in some places form an almost inextricable labyrinth. The only attraction possessed by this sombre dwelling-place is the view of the sea, and of the mountains of Mull and the other islands, to the number of twenty or thirty, which may be distinguished from the top of the northern hills of Iona. Among these is Staffa, celebrated for the grotto of Fingal, which has been known only for about a century, and which, in the time of Columba, moaned and murmured in its solitary and unknown majesty, in the midst of that Hebridean archipelago which is at present haunted by so many curious admirers of the Highland shores and ruined feudal castles, which the great bard of our century has enshrined in the glory of his verse.

The bay where Columba landed is still called *the Bay of the osier bark, Port' a Churraich*; and a long mound is pointed out to strangers as representing the exact size of his boat, which was sixty feet long. The emigrant did not remain in this bay, which is situated in the middle of the isle; he went higher up, and, to find a little shelter from the great sea winds, chose for his habitation the eastern shore, opposite the large island of Mull, which is separated from Iona only by a narrow channel of a mile in breadth, and whose highest mountains, situated more to the east, approach and almost identify themselves with the mountain tops of Morven, which are continually veiled with clouds. It was there that the emigrants built their huts of branches, for the island was not then, as now, destitute of wood. When Columba had made up his mind to construct for himself and his people a settled establishment, the buildings of the new-born monastery were of the greatest simplicity. As in all Celtic constructions, walls of withes or branches, supported upon long wooden props, formed the principal element in their architecture. Climbing plants, especially ivy, interlacing itself in the interstices of the branches, at once ornamented and consolidated the modest shelter of the missionaries. The Irish built scarcely any churches of stone, and retained, up to the twelfth century, as St. Bernard testifies, the habit of building their churches of wood. But it was not for some years after their first establishment that the monks of Iona permitted themselves the luxury of a wooden church; and when they did so, great oaks, such as the sterile and wind-beaten soil of their islet could not produce, had to be brought for its construction from the neighbouring shore.

Thus the monastic capital of Scotland, and the centre of Christian civilisation in the north of Great Britain, came into being thirteen centuries ago. Some ruins of a much

later date than the days of Columba, though still very ancient, mingled among a few cottages scattered on the shore, still point out the site.

"We were now treading," said, in the eighteenth century, the celebrated Johnson, who was the first to recall the attention of the British public to this profaned sanctuary — "we were now treading that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!"

Columba, who had been initiated into classic recollections, like all the monks of his time, had no doubt heard of Marathon; but certainly it could never have occurred to him that a day would come in which a descendant of the race he came to save should place his humble shelter in the same rank with the most glorious battlefield of Hellenic history.

Far from having any prevision of the glory of Iona, his soul was still swayed by a sentiment which never abandoned him — regret for his lost country. All his life he retained for Ireland the passionate tenderness of an exile, a love which displayed itself in the songs which have been preserved to us, and which date perhaps from the first moments of his exile. It is possible that their authenticity is not altogether beyond dispute; and that, like the poetic lamentations given forth by Fortunatus in the name of St. Radegund, they were composed by his disciples and contemporaries. But they have been too long repeated as his, and depict too well what must have passed in his heart, to permit us to neglect them. "Death in faultless Ireland is better than life without end in Albyn." After this cry of despair follow strains more plaintive and submissive. In one of his elegies he laments that he can no longer sail on the lakes and bays of his native island, nor hear the song of the swans, with his friend Comgall. He laments above all to have been driven from Erin by his own fault, and because of the blood shed in his battles. He envies his friend Cormac, who can go back to his dear monastery at Durrow, and hear the wind sigh among the oaks, and the song of the blackbird and cuckoo. As for Columba, all is dear to him in Ireland *except the princes who reign there*. This last particular shows the persistence of his political rancour. No trace of this feeling, however, remains in a still more characteristic poem, which must have been confided to some traveller as a message from the exile of Iona to his country. In this he celebrates, as always, the delight of voyaging round the coast of Ireland, and the beauty of its cliffs and beach. But, above all, he mourns over his exile:

"What joy to fly upon the white-crested sea, and to watch the waves break upon the Irish shore ! what joy to row the little bark, and land among the whitening foam upon the Irish shore! Ah! how my boat would fly if its prow were turned to my Irish

oak-grove! But the noble sea now carries me only to Albyn, the land of ravens. My foot is in my little boat, but my sad heart ever bleeds. There is a grey eye which ever turns to Erin; but never in this life shall it see Erin, nor her sons, nor her daughters. From the high prow I look over the sea, and great tears are in my grey eye when I turn to Erin — to Erin, where the songs of the birds are so sweet, and where the clerks sing like the birds ; where the young are so gentle, and the old so wise ; where the great men are so noble to look at, and the women so fair to wed. Young traveller, carry my sorrows with thee, carry them to Comgall of eternal life. Noble youth, take my prayer with thee, and my blessing; one part for Ireland — seven times may she be blessed! and the other for Albyn. Carry my blessing across the sea — carry it to the west. My heart is broken in my breast : if death comes to me suddenly, it will be because of the great love I bear to the Gael."

But it was not only in these elegies, repeated and perhaps retouched by Irish bards and monks, but at each instant of his life, in season and out of season, that this love and passionate longing for his native country burst forth in words and in musings; the narratives of his most trustworthy biographers are full of it. The most severe penance which he could imagine for the guiltiest sinners who came to confess to him, was to impose upon them the same fate which he had voluntarily inflicted upon himself — never to set foot again upon Irish soil. But when, instead of forbidding to sinners all access to that beloved isle, he had to smother his envy of those who had the right and happiness to go there at their pleasure, he dared scarcely trust himself to name its name; and when speaking to his guests, or to the monks who were to return to Ireland, he could only say to them, "You will return to the country that you love."

This melancholy patriotism never faded out of his heart, and was evidenced much later in his life by an incident which shows an obstinate regret for his lost Ireland, along with a tender and careful solicitude for all the creatures of God. One morning he called one of the monks and said to him, "Go and seat thyself by the sea, upon the western bank of the island; there thou wilt see arrive from the north of Ireland and fall at thy feet a poor travelling stork, long beaten by the winds and exhausted by fatigue. Take her up with pity, feed her and watch her for three days; after three days' rest, when she is refreshed and strengthened, she will no longer wish to prolong her exile among us — she will fly to sweet Ireland, her dear country where she was born. I bid thee care for her thus, because she comes from the land where I, too, was born." Everything happened as he had said and ordered. The evening of the day on which the monk had received the poor traveller, as he returned to the monastery, Columba, asking him no questions, said to him, "God bless thee, my dear child, thou hast cared for the exile; in three days thou shalt see her return to her country."

And, in fact, at the time mentioned the stork rose from the ground in her host's presence, and, after having sought her way for a moment in the air, directed her flight across the sea, straight upon Ireland. The sailors of the Hebrides all know and tell this tale ; and I love to think that among all my readers there is not one who would not fain have repeated or deserved Columba's blessing.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE APOSTOLATE OF COLUMBA AMONG THE SCOTS AND PICTS

However bitter the sadness might be with which exile filled the heart of Columba, it did not for a moment turn him from his work of expiation. As soon as he had installed himself with his companions in that desert isle, from whence the Christian faith and monastic life were about to radiate over the north of Great Britain, a gradual and almost complete transformation became apparent in him. Without giving up the lovable peculiarities of his character and race, he gradually became a model for penitents, and at the same time for confessors and preachers. Without ceasing to maintain an authority which was to increase with years, and which does not seem ever to have been disputed, over the monasteries which he had founded in Ireland, he applied himself at once to establish, on the double basis of manual and intellectual labour, the new insular community which was to be the centre of his future activity. Then he proceeded to unite himself in friendly relations with the inhabitants of the neighbouring districts, whom it was needful to evangelise or confirm in the faith, before thinking of carrying the light of the Gospel further off to the north. He prepared himself for this grand mission by miracles of fervour and austerity, as well as humble charity, to the great profit in the first place of his own monks, and afterwards of the many visitors who came, whether from Ireland or from the Caledonian shores, to seek at his side the healing or the consolation of penitence.

This man, whom we have seen so passionate, so irritable, so warlike and vindictive, became little by little the most gentle, the humblest, the most tender of friends and fathers. It was he, the great head of the Caledonian Church, who, kneeling before the strangers who came to Iona, or before the monks returning from their work, took off their shoes, washed their feet, and after having washed them respectfully kissed them. But charity was still stronger than humility in that transfigured soul. No necessity, spiritual or temporal, found him indifferent. He devoted himself to the solace of all infirmities, all misery, and pain, weeping often over those who did not weep for themselves. These tears became the most eloquent part of his preaching, the means which he employed most willingly to subdue inveterate sinners, to arrest the criminal on the brink of the abyss, to appease and soften and change those wild and savage but simple and straightforward souls, whom God had given him to subdue. In the midst of the new community Columba inhabited, instead of a cell, a sort of hut built of planks, and placed upon the most elevated spot within the monastic enclosure. Up to the age of seventy-six he slept there upon the hard floor, with no pillow but a stone. This hut was at once his study and his oratory. It was there that he gave himself up to those prolonged prayers which excited the admiration and almost the alarm of his disciples. It was there that he returned after sharing the outdoor labour of his monks, like the least among them, to consecrate the rest of his time to the study of Holy Scripture and the

transcription of the sacred text. The work of transcription remained until his last day the occupation of his old age as it had been the passion of his youth; it had such an attraction for him, and seemed to him so essential to a knowledge of the truth, that, as we have already said, three hundred copies of the Holy Gospels, copied by his own hand, have been attributed to him. It was in the same hut that he received with unwearied patience the numerous and sometimes importunate visitors who soon flowed to him, and of whom sometimes he complained gently — as of that indiscreet stranger, who, desirous of embracing him, awkwardly overturned his ink upon the border of his robe. These importunate guests did not come out of simple curiosity; they were most commonly penitent or fervid Christians, who, informed by the fishermen and inhabitants of the neighbouring isles of the establishment of the Irish monk, who was already famous in his own country, and attracted by the growing renown of his virtues, came from Ireland, from the north and south of Britain, and even from the midst of the still heathen Saxons, to save their souls and gain heaven under the direction of a man of God. (Adamnan has among the list of the first companions of the holy abbot the names of two Saxons, one of whom was a baker, and also that of a Briton, who died first of all the Iona monks. This was that Odhran or Orain who has left his name to the burying-ground, which is still called *Reilig Orain*")

Far from making efforts to attract or lightly admitting these neophytes, nothing in his life is more clearly established than the scrupulous severity with which he examined into all vocations, and into the admission of penitents. He feared nothing so much as that the monastic frock might serve as a shelter for criminals who sought in the cloister not only a place of penitence and expiation, but a shelter from human justice. On occasion he even blamed the too great facility of his friends and disciples. One of the latter, Finchan, had founded upon Eigg, another Hebridean island, a community resembling that of Iona, and possibly dependent upon it : he had there admitted to clerical orders, and even to the priesthood, a prince of the clan of Picts established in Ireland, Aedh or Aldus, called the Black, a violent and bloodthirsty man, who had assassinated Diarmid, the king of Ireland. It was this king, as will be remembered, who pronounced the unjust sentence which drove Columba frantic, and was the occasion of all his faults and misfortunes. The abbot of Iona was not the less on this account indignant at the weakness of his friend. "The hand which Finchan has laid, in the face of all justice and ecclesiastical law, upon the head of this son of perdition," said Columba, "shall rot and fall off, and be buried before the body to which it is attached. As for the false priest, the assassin, he shall himself be assassinated." This double prophecy was accomplished.

Let us lend an ear to the following dialogue which Columba held with one of those who sought shelter under his discipline. It will explain the moral and spiritual condition of that age better than many commentaries, and will, besides, show the wonderful influence which Columba, penitent and exiled in the depths of his distant island, exercised over all Ireland. It was one day announced to him that a stranger had just landed from Ireland, and Columba went to meet him in the house reserved for guests, to talk to him in private, and question him as to his dwelling-place, his family, and the cause of his journey. The stranger told him that he had undertaken this painful

voyage in order, under the monastic habit and in exile, to expiate his sins. Columba, desirous of trying the reality of his penitence, drew a most repulsive picture of the hardship and difficult obligations of the new life. "I am ready", said the stranger, "to submit to the most cruel and humiliating conditions that thou canst command me." And after having made confession, he swore, still upon his knees, to accomplish all the requirements of penitence. "It is well," said the abbot; "now rise from thy knees, seat thyself and listen : you must first do penance for seven years in the neighbouring island of Tiree, after which I will see you again". "But," said the penitent, still agitated by remorse, "how can I expiate a perjury of which I have not yet spoken? Before I left my own country I killed a poor man. I was about to suffer the punishment of death for that crime, and I was already in irons, when one of my relations, who is very rich, delivered me by paying the composition demanded. I swore that I would serve him all the rest of my life; but after some days of service I abandoned him, and here I am, notwithstanding my oath." Upon this the saint added that he would only be admitted to the paschal communion after seven years of penitence. When these were completed, Columba, after having given him the communion with his own hand, sent him back to Ireland to his patron, carrying a sword with an ivory handle for his ransom. The patron, however, moved by the entreaties of his wife, gave the penitent his pardon without ransom. "Why should we accept the price sent to us by the holy Columba? We are not worthy of it. The request of such an intercessor should be granted freely. His blessing will do more for us than any ransom." And immediately he detached the girdle from his waist, which was the ordinary formula in Ireland for the manumission of captives or slaves. Columba had besides commanded his penitent to remain with his old father and mother until he had rendered to them the last services. This accomplished, his brothers let him go, saying, "Far be it from us to detain a man who has laboured for seven years for the salvation of his soul with the holy Columba." He then returned to Iona, bringing with him the sword which was to have been his ransom. "Henceforward thou shalt be called Libran, for thou art free, and emancipated from all ties," said Columba; and he immediately admitted him to take the monastic vows. But when he was commanded to return to Tiree, to end his life at a distance from Columba, poor Libran, who up to this moment had been so docile, fell on his knees and wept bitterly. Columba, touched by his despair, comforted him as best he could, without, however, altering his sentence. "Thou shalt live far from me, but thou shalt die in one of my monasteries, and thou shalt rise again with my monks, and have part with them in heaven," said the abbot. Such was the history of Libran, called Libran of the Rushes, because he had passed many years in gathering rushes — the years probably of his penitence.

This doctor, learned in penitence, became day by day more gifted in the great art of ruling souls; and, with a hand as prudent as vigorous, raised up on one side the wounded and troubled conscience — while, on the other, he unveiled the false monks and false penitents. To a certain monk, who, in despair at having yielded during a journey to the temptations of a woman, rushed from confessor to confessor without ever finding himself sufficiently repentant or sufficiently punished, he restored peace and confidence, by showing him that his despair was nothing but an infernal hallucination, and by inflicting upon him a penance hard enough to convince him of the remission of his sin. To another sinner from Ireland, who, guilty of incest and fratricide, had insisted, whether Columba pleased or not, on taking refuge in Iona, he imposed perpetual exile

from his native country, and twelve years of penance among the savages of Caledonia, predicting at the same time that the false penitent would perish in consequence of refusing this expiation. Arriving one day in a little community formed by himself in one of the neighbouring islets, and intended to receive the penitents during their time of probation, he gave orders that certain delicacies should be added to their usual repast, and that even the penitents should be permitted to enjoy them. One of the latter, however, more scrupulous than needful, refused to accept the improved fare, even from the hand of the abbot. "Ah!" said Columba, "thou refusest the solace which is offered thee by thy superior and myself. A day will come when thou shalt again be a robber as thou hast been, and shalt steal, and eat the venison in the forests wherever thou goest." And this prophecy too was fulfilled.

Notwithstanding these precautions, and his apparent severity, the number of neophytes who sought the privilege of living under the rule of Columba increased more and more. Every day, and every minute of the day, the abbot and his companions, in the retirement of their cells, or at their outdoor labours, heard great cries addressed to them from the other side of the narrow strait which separates Iona from the neighbouring island of Mull. These shouts were the understood signal by which those who sought admission to Iona gave notice of their presence, that the boat of the monastery might be sent to carry them over. Among the crowds who crossed in that boat some sought only material help, alms, or medicines; but the greater part sought permission to do penance, and to pass a shorter or longer time in the new monastery, where Columba put their vocation to so many trials. Once only was he known to have at the very moment of their arrival imposed, so to speak, the monastic vows upon two pilgrims, whose virtues and approaching death had been by a supernatural instinct revealed to him.

The narrow enclosure of Iona was soon too small for the increasing crowd, and from this little monastic colony issued in succession a swarm of similar colonies, which went forth to plant new communities, daughters of Iona, in the neighbouring isles, and on the mainland of Caledonia, all of which were under the authority of Columba. Ancient traditions attribute to him the foundation of three hundred monasteries or churches, as many in Caledonia as in Hibernia, a hundred of which were in the islands or upon the sea-shore of the two countries. Modern learning has discovered and registered the existence of ninety churches, whose origin goes back to Columba, and to all or almost all of which, according to the custom of the time, monastic communities must have been attached. Traces of fifty-three of these churches remain still in modern Scotland, unequally divided among the districts inhabited by the two races which then shared Caledonia between them. Thirty-two are in the western isles, and the country occupied by the Irish-Scots, and the twenty-one others mark the principal stations of the great missionary in the land of the Picts. The most enlightened judges among the Scotch Protestants agree in attributing to the teachings of Columba — to his foundations and his disciples — all the primitive churches, and the very ancient parochial division of Scotland.

But it is time to tell what the population was whose confidence Columba had thus gained, and from which the communities of his monastic family were recruited. The portion of Great Britain which received the name of Caledonia did not include the whole of modern Scotland; it embraced only the districts to the north of the isthmus

which separates the Clyde from the Forth, or Glasgow from Edinburgh. All this region to the north and to the east was in the hands of those terrible Picts whom the Romans had been unable to conquer, and who were the terror of the Britons. But to the west and south-west, on the side where Columba landed, he found a colony of his own country and race — that is to say, the Scots of Ireland, who were destined to become the sole masters of Caledonia, and to bestow upon it the name of Scotland. More than half a century before, following in the train of many similar invasions or emigrations, a colony of Irish, or, according to the name then in use, of Scots, belonging to the tribe of Dalriadians, had crossed the sea which separates the north-east coast of Ireland from the north-west of Great Britain, and had established itself — between the Picts of the north and the Britons of the south — in the islands and upon the western coast of Caledonia, north of the mouth of the Clyde, and in the district which has since taken the name of Argyll. The chiefs or kings of this Dalriadian colony, who were destined to become the parent stock of those famous and unfortunate Stuarts who once reigned over both Scotland and England, had at that time strengthened their growing power by the aid of the Niall princes who reigned in the north of Ireland, and to whose family Columba belonged. Columba had also a very close tie of kindred with the Dalriadians themselves, his paternal grandmother having been the daughter of Lorn, the first, or one of the first kings of the colony. He was thus a relation of King Connal, the sixth successor of Lorn, who, at the moment of Columba's arrival, had been for three years the chief of the Scotie emigrants in Caledonia. Iona, where the abbot established himself, was at the northern extremity of the then very limited domain of the Dalriadians, and might be regarded as a dependency of their new state, not less than of that of the Picts, who occupied all the rest of Caledonia. Columba immediately entered into alliance with this prince. He visited him in his residence on the mainland, and obtained from him, in his double title of cousin and countryman, a gift of the uninhabited island where he had just established his community.

These Scots who had left Ireland after the conversion of the island by St. Patrick were probably Christians, like all the Irish, at least in name ; but no certain trace of ecclesiastical organisation or of monastic institutions is visible among them before Columba's arrival at Iona. The apostolate of Ninian and of Palladius does not seem to have produced a durable impression upon them any more than upon the southern Picts. A new apostolical enterprise by Celtic monks was necessary to renew the work at which the Roman missionaries had laboured a century before. Columba and his disciples neglected no means of fortifying and spreading religion among their countrymen, who were emigrants like themselves. We see him in the narratives of Adamnan administering baptism and the other rites of religion to the people of Scotie race, through whose lands he passed, planting there the first foundations of monastic communities. Many narratives, more or less legendary, indicate that this people, even when Christian, had great need to be instructed, directed, and established in the good way; while at the same time the Dalriadians showed a certain suspicion and doubt of the new apostle of their race, which only yielded to the prolonged influence of his self-devotion and unquestionable virtue.

Columba was still in the flower of his age when he established himself at Iona; he was not more at the most than forty-two. All testimonies agree in celebrating his manly



beauty, his remarkable height, his sweet and sonorous voice, the cordiality of his manner, the gracious dignity of his deportment and person. These external advantages, added to the fame of his austerities and the inviolable purity of his life, made a singular and varied impression upon the pagans and the very imperfect Christians of Caledonia. The Dalriadan king put his virtue to the proof by presenting to him his daughter, who was remarkably beautiful, and clothed in the richest ornaments. He asked if the sight of a creature so beautiful and so adorned did not excite some inclination in him. "Without doubt," answered the missionary, "the inclination of the flesh and of nature; but understand well, lord king, that not for all the empire of the world, even could its honours and pleasures be secured to me to the end of time, would I yield to my natural weakness." About the same time, a woman who lived not far from Iona spread for him a more dangerous and subtle snare. The celebrated and handsome exile having inspired her with a violent and guilty passion, she conceived the idea of seducing him, and succeeded in drawing him to her house. But as soon as he understood her design, he addressed to her an exhortation upon death and the last judgment, which he ended by blessing her, and making the sign of the cross. The temptress was thus delivered even from her own temptations. She continued to love him, but with a religious respect. It is added that she herself became a model of holiness.

But it was towards another race, very different from his Scotie countrymen and much less accessible, that Columba felt himself drawn as much by the penance imposed upon him as by the necessities of the Church and of Christendom. While the Irish Scots occupied the islands and part of the western coast of Caledonia, all the north and east — that is to say, by far the greater part of the country — was inhabited by the Picts, who were still heathens. Originally from Sarmatia, according to Tacitus — according to Bede, descendants of the Scythians — these primitive inhabitants of Great Britain, who had remained untouched by Roman or Christian influences, owed their name to their custom of fighting naked, and of painting their bodies in various colours, which had been the wont of all the ancient Britons at the time of Caesar's invasion. We have already seen that the holy bishop Ninian more than a century before had preached the Christian faith to the Southern Picts — that is to say, to those who lived on the banks of the Forth or scattered among the Britons in the districts south of that river. But while even the traces of Ninian's apostolic work seemed at that moment effaced, although destined afterwards to reappear, the great majority of the Picts — those who inhabited the vast tracts to the north of the Grampians, into which no missionary before Columba had ever dared to penetrate — had always continued heathen. The thirty-four years of life which Columba had still before him were chiefly spent in missions, undertaken for the purpose of carrying the faith to the hilly straths, and into the deep glens and numerous islands of northern Caledonia. There dwelt a race, warlike, grasping, and bold, as inaccessible to softness as to fear, only half clothed notwithstanding the severity of the climate, and obstinately attached to their customs, belief, and chiefs. The missionary had to preach, to convert, and even at need to brave those formidable tribes, in whom Tacitus recognised the farthest off of the earth's inhabitants, and the last champions of freedom — "*terrarum ac libertatis extremos*"; those barbarians who, having gloriously resisted Agricola, drove the frightened Romans from Britain, and devastated and desolated the entire island up to the arrival of the Saxons; and whose descendants, after filling the history of Scotland with their feats of arms, have given,

under the name of *Highlanders*, to the fallen Stuarts their most dauntless defenders, and to modern England her most glorious soldiers.

Columba crossed again and again that central mountain-range in which rise those waters which flow, some north and west to fall into the Atlantic Ocean, and some to the south to swell the North Sea — a range which the biographer of the saint calls the backbone of Britain (*dorsum Britanniae*), and which separates the counties of Inverness and Argyll, as now existing, from the county of Perth, and includes the districts so well known to travellers under the names of Breadalbane, Atholl, and the Grampians. This was the recognised boundary between the Scots and Picts, and it was here that the ancestors of the latter, the heroic soldiers of Galgacus, had held their ground against the father-in-law of Tacitus, who even when victorious did not venture to cross that barrier. Often, too, Columba followed the course of that long valley of waters which, to the north of these mountains, traverses Scotland diagonally from the south-west, near Iona, to the north-east beyond Inverness. This valley is formed by a series of long gulfs and of inland lakes which modern industry has linked together, making it possible for boats to pass from one sea to the other without making the long round by the Orcadian Isles. Thirteen centuries ago religion alone could undertake the conquest of those wild and picturesque regions, which a scanty but fierce and suspicious population disputed with the fir-forests and vast tracts of fern and heather, which are still to be encountered there.

The first glance thrown by history upon this watery highway discovers there the preaching and miracles of Columba. He was the first to traverse in his little skiff Loch Ness and the river which issues from it; he penetrated thus, after a long and painful journey, to the principal fortress of the Pictish king, the site of which is still shown upon a rock north of the town of Inverness. This powerful and redoubtable monarch, whose name was Bruidh, or Brude, son of Malcolm, gave at first a very inhospitable reception to the Irish missionary. The companions of the saint relate that, priding himself upon the royal magnificence of his fortress, he gave orders that the gates should not be opened to the unwelcome visitor; but this was not a command to alarm Columba. He went up to the gateway, made the sign of the cross upon the two gates, and then knocked with his hand. Immediately the bars and bolts drew back, the gates rolled upon their hinges and were thrown wide open, and Columba entered like a conqueror. The king, though surrounded by his council, among whom no doubt were his heathen priests, was struck with panic; he hastened to meet the missionary, addressed to him pacific and encouraging words, and from that moment gave him every honour. It is not recorded whether Bruidh himself became a Christian, but during all the rest of his life he remained the friend and protector of Columba. He confirmed to him the possession of Iona, the sovereignty of which he seems to have disputed with his rival the king of the Dalriadan Scots, and our exile thus saw his establishment placed under the double protection of the two powers which shared Caledonia between them.

But the favour of the king did not bring with it that of the heathen priests, who are indicated by the Christian historians under the name of Druids or Magi, and who made an energetic and persevering resistance to the new apostle. These priests do not seem either to have taught or practised the worship of idols, but rather that of natural forces, and especially of the sun and other celestial bodies. They followed or met the Irish preacher in his apostolic journeys, less to refute his arguments than to hold back and

intimidate those whom his preaching gained to Christ. The religious and supernatural character which was attributed by the Druids of Gaul to the woods and ancient trees, was attached by those of Caledonia to the streams and fountains, some of which were, according to their belief, salutary and beneficial, while others were deadly to man. Columba made special efforts to forbid among the new Christians the worship of sacred fountains, and, braving the threats of the Druids, drank in their presence the water which they affirmed would kill any man who dared to put it to his lips. But they used no actual violence against the stranger whom their prince had taken under his protection. One day, when Columba and his monks came out of the enclosure of the fort in which the king resided, to chant vespers according to the monastic custom, the Druids attempted to prevent them from singing, lest the sound of the religious chants should reach the people; but the abbot instantly intoned the sixty-fourth psalm, "*Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum : dico opera mea regi*" with so formidable a voice, that he reduced his adversaries to silence, and made the surrounding spectators, and even the king himself, tremble before him.

But he did not confine himself to chanting in Latin; he preached. The dialect of the Picts, however, being different from that of the Scots, and unknown to him, it was necessary to employ the services of an interpreter. But his words were not the less efficacious on this account, though everywhere he was met by the rival exhortations or derisions of the pagan priests. His impassioned nature, as ready to love as to hate, made itself as apparent in his apostolic preachings as formerly in the struggles of his youth; and ties of tender intimacy, active and never appealed to in vain, were soon formed between himself and his converts. One of the Picts, who, having heard him preach by his interpreter, was converted with his wife and all his family, became his friend, and received many visits from him. One of the sons of this new convert fell dangerously ill; the Druids profited by the misfortune to reproach the anxious parents, making it appear that the sickness of their child was the punishment of their apostasy, and boasting the power of the ancient gods of the country, as superior to that of the Christians' God. Columba having been informed hastened to his friend's aid : when he arrived the child had just expired. As soon as he had done all that in him lay to console the father and mother, he asked to be allowed to enter alone into the place where the body of the child was. There he kneeled down and prayed long, bathed in tears; then rising, he said, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, return to life and arise!" At the same moment the soul came back to the child's body. Columba helped him to rise, supported him, let him out of the cabin, and restored him to his parents. The power of prayer was thus as great, says Adamnan, in our saint as in Elijah and Elisha under the old law, or in St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John under the new.

While thus preaching faith and the grace of God by the voice of an interpreter, he at the same time recognised, admired, and proclaimed among those savage tribes the lights and virtues of the law of nature. He discovered the rays of its radiance in many an unknown hearer, by the help of that supernatural gift which enabled him to read the secrets of the heart, and to penetrate the darkness of the future; a gift which developed itself more and more in him as his apostolical career went on. One day while labouring in his evangelical work in the principal island of the Hebrides, the one which lies nearest to the mainland, he cried out all at once, "My sons, today you will see an ancient

Pictish chief, who has kept faithfully all his life the precepts of the natural law, arrive in this island; he comes to be baptized and to die". Immediately after, a boat was seen to approach the shore with a feeble old man seated in the prow, who was recognised as the chief of one of the neighbouring tribes. Two of his companions took him up in their arms and brought him before the missionary, to whose words, as repeated by the interpreter, he listened attentively. When the discourse was ended the old man asked to be baptized; and immediately after breathed his last breath, and was buried in the very spot where he had just been brought to shore.

At a later date, in one of his last missions, when, himself an old man, he travelled along the banks of Loch Ness, always in the district to the north of the mountain-range of the *dorsum Britanniae*, he said to the disciples who accompanied him, "Let us make haste and meet the angels who have come down from heaven, and who await for us beside a Pict who has done well according to the natural law during his whole life to extreme old age : we must baptize him before he dies." Then hastening his steps and outstripping his disciples, as much as was possible at his great age, he reached a retired valley, now called Glen Urquhart, where he found the old man who awaited him. Here there was no longer any need of an interpreter, which makes it probable that Columba in his old age had learned the Pictish dialect. The old Pict heard him preach, was baptized, and with joyful serenity gave up to God the soul which was awaited by those angels whom Columba saw.

In this generous heart humanity claimed its rights no less than justice. It was in the name of humanity, his biographer expressly tells us, that he begged the freedom of a young female slave, born in Ireland, and the captive of one of the principal Druids or Magi. This Druid was named Broichan, and lived with the king, whose foster-father he was, a tie of singular force and authority among the Celtic nations. Either from a savage pride, or out of enmity to the new religion, the Druid obstinately and cruelly refused the prayer of Columba. "Be it so," said the apostle; "but learn, Broichan, that if thou refusest to set free this foreign captive, thou shalt die before I leave the province." When he had said this he left the castle, directing his steps towards that river Ness which appears so often in his history. But he was soon overtaken by two horsemen who came from the king to tell him that Broichan, the victim of an accident, was dying, and fully disposed to set the young Irish girl free. The saint took up from the river bank a pebble, which he blessed, and gave to two of his monks, with the assurance that the sick man would be healed by drinking water in which this stone had been steeped, but only on the express condition that the captive should be delivered. She was immediately put under the charge of Columba's companions, and was thus restored at the same moment to her country and her freedom.

The Druid, though healed, was not thereby rendered less hostile to the apostle. Like the magicians of Pharaoh, he attempted to raise nature and her forces against the new Moses. On the day fixed for his departure, Columba found, on reaching, followed by a numerous crowd, the banks of the long and narrow lake from which the Ness issues, and by which he meant to travel, a strong contrary wind and thick fog, as Broichan had threatened, which the Druids exulted to see. But Columba, entering his boat, bade the frightened rowers set the sail against the wind, and the assembled people saw him proceed rapidly on his course, as if borne by favourable breezes, towards the

south end of the lake, by which he returned to Iona. But he left only to make a speedy return, and came so often as to accomplish the conversion of the Pictish nation, by destroying for ever the authority of the Druids in this last refuge of Celtic paganism. This sanguinary and untamable race was finally conquered by the Irish missionary. Before he ended his glorious career he had sown their forests, their defiles, their inaccessible mountains, their savage moors, and scarcely inhabited islands, with churches and monasteries.

Columba's assistants, in his numerous missions among the Picts, were the monks who had come with him, or who had followed him from Ireland. The fame of the obscure benefactors and civilisers of so distant a region has still more completely disappeared than that of Columba : it is with difficulty that some lingering trace of them is to be disentangled from the traditions of some churches whose sites may yet be found upon the ancient maps of Scotland. Such was Malruve (642—722 ), a kinsman of Columba, and like him descended from the royal race of Niall, but educated in the great monastery of Bangor, which he left to follow his illustrious cousin into Albyn, passing by Iona. He must have long survived Columba, for he was for fifty-one years abbot of a community at Apercrossan, upon the north-west coast of Caledonia, opposite the large island of Skye, before he met his death, which was, according to local tradition, by the sword of Norwegian pirates.

Upon the opposite shore, in that striking promontory which forms the eastern extremity of Scotland, a district now known as Buchan, various churches trace their origin to Columba, and to one of his Irish disciples called Drostan. The *mor-maer* or chief of the country had at first refused them his permission to settle there, but his son fell dangerously ill, and he hastened after the missionaries, offering them the land necessary for their foundation, and begging them to pray for the dying boy. They prayed, and the child was saved. After having blessed the new church, and predicted that none who profaned it should ever conquer their enemies or enjoy long life, Columba installed his companions in their new home, and himself turned to continue his journey. When Drostan saw himself thus condemned to live at a distance from his master, he could not restrain his tears ; for these old saints, in their wild and laborious career, loved each other with a passionate tenderness, which is certainly not the least touching feature in their character, and which places an inextinguishable light upon their heads amid the darkness of the legends. "Then," Columba said, "let us call this place the *Monastery of Tears*"; and the great abbey which lasted a thousand years upon that spot always retained the name. "He who sows in tears shall reap in joy."



## CHAPTER IV

### COLUMBA CONSECRATES THE KING OF THE SCOTS. — HE GOES TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF IRELAND, DEFENDS THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE HIBERNO-SCOTIC COLONY, AND SAVES THE CORPORATION OF BARDS.

It would not, however, be natural to suppose that the mission of Columba among the Picts could entirely absorb his life and soul. That faithful love for his race and country which had moved him with compassion for the young Irish girl in captivity among the Picts did not permit him to remain indifferent to the wars and revolutions which were at the bottom of all national life among the Irish Scots as well as the Irish colony in Scotland. There was not a more marked feature in his character than his constant solicitude, his compassionate sympathy, as well after as before his removal to Iona, for the bloody struggles in which his companions and relatives in Ireland were so often engaged. Nothing was nearer to his heart than the claim of kindred; for that reason alone he occupied himself without cease with the affairs of individual relatives. "This man," he said to himself, "is of my race; I must help him. It is my duty to pray for him, because he is of the same stock as myself. This other is of kin to my mother," &c. And then he would add, "My friends and kindred, who are descended like me from the Nialls, see how they fight!" And from the far distance of his desert isle he fought with them in heart and thought, as of old he had aided them in person. He breathed from afar the air of battle; he divined the issue by what his companions considered a prophetic instinct, and told it to his monks, to his Irish countrymen, and to the Caledonian Scots who sought him in his new dwelling. With better reason still his soul kindled within him when he foresaw any struggle in which his new neighbours the Dalriadan colonists were to be engaged, either with the Picts, whom they were one day to conquer, or with the Anglo-Saxons. One day towards the end of his life, being alone with Diarmid his minister (as the monk attached to his personal service was called), he cried out all at once, "The bell! let the bell be rung instantly!" The bell of the modest monastery was nothing better than one of the little square bells made of beaten iron, which are still shown in Irish museums, exactly similar to those which are worn by the cattle in Spain and the Jura. It was enough for the necessities of the little insular community. At its sound the monks hastened to throw themselves on their knees around their father. "Now," said he, "let us pray — let us pray with intense fervour for our people, and for King Aidan; for at this very moment the battle has begun between them and the barbarians." When their prayers had lasted some time, he said, "Behold, the barbarians flee! Aidan is victorious!"

Aidan married a British wife, a daughter of those Britons who occupied the banks of the Clyde, and were neighbours of the Scots. With them for his allies, he made war vigorously, though unfortunately, as will be afterwards seen, upon the Anglo-Saxons. He survived Columba, and died in 606, after a reign of thirty-two years. His direct descendants reigned up to 689. They were then replaced by the house of Lorn, another

branch of the first Dalriadan colony, whose most illustrious prince, Kenneth Macalpine, reduced the Picts to recognise him as their king in 842. The famous Macbeth and his conqueror Malcolm Canmore, the husband of St. Margaret, were both descended from Aidan, or of the lineage of Fergus. The male line of these Scottish kings of Celtic race ended only with Alexander III in 1283. The dynasties of Bruce and Stuart were of the female line. According to local and domestic traditions, the great modern clans of Macquarie, Mackinnon, Mackenzie, Mackintosh, Macgregor, Maclean, Macnab, and Macnaughten, are descended from the primitive Dalriadians.

The barbarians, against whom Columba rang his bells and called for the prayers of his monks, were the Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria, who were still pagans, and whose descendants were destined to owe the inestimable blessings of Christianity to the monks of Iona and the spiritual posterity of Columba. But at that time the invaders thought only of taking a terrible revenge for the evils which Britain, before they conquered it, had endured from Scoto-Pictish incursions, and of extending their power ever farther and farther on the Caledonian side. As for King Aidan, he had replaced his cousin-german, King Connall, who had guaranteed to Columba the possession of Iona, as chief of the Dalriadan colony in Argyll. His accession to the throne took place in 574, eleven years after the arrival of Columba ; and nothing proves more fully the influence acquired by the Irish missionary during this short interval than Aidan's resolution to have his coronation blessed by the abbot of Iona. Columba, though his friend, did not wish him to be king, preferring his brother ; but an angel appeared to him three times in succession, and commanded him to consecrate Aidan according to the ceremony prescribed in a book covered with crystal which was left with him for that purpose. Columba, who was then in a neighbouring island, went back to Iona, where he was met by the new king. The abbot, obedient to the celestial vision, laid his hands upon the head of Aidan, blessed him, and ordained him king. He inaugurated thus not only a new kingdom, but a new rite, which became at a later date the most august solemnity of Christian national life. The coronation of Aidan is the first authentic instance known in the West. Columba thus assumed, in respect to the Scotie or Dalriadan kingdom, the same authority with which the abbots of Armagh, successors of St. Patrick, were already invested in respect to the kings of Ireland. That this supreme authority and these august functions were conferred upon abbots instead of bishops, has been the cause of much surprise. But at that period of the ecclesiastical history of Celtic nations the episcopate was entirely in the shade; the abbots and monks alone appear to have been great and influential, and the successors of St. Columba long retained this singular supremacy over the bishops.

According to Scotch national tradition, the new king Aidan was consecrated by Columba upon a great stone called the *Stone of Fate*. This stone was afterwards transferred to Dunstaffnage Castle, the ruins of which may be seen upon the coast of Argyll, not far from Iona; then to the abbey of Scone, near Perth; and was finally carried away by Edward I, the cruel conqueror of Scotland, to Westminster, where it still serves as a pedestal for the throne of the kings of England on the day of their coronation. The solemn inauguration of the kingdom of Aidan marks the historical beginning of the Scotch monarchy, which before that period was more or less fabulous. Aidan was the first prince of the Scots who passed from the rank of territorial chief to that of

independent king, and head of a dynasty whose descendants were one day to reign over the three kingdoms of Great Britain.

But to secure the independence of the new Scottish royalty, or rather of the young nation whose stormy and poetic history was thus budding under the breath and blessing of Columba, it was necessary to break the link of subjugation or vassalage which bound the Dalriadian colony to the Irish kings. All this time it had remained tributary to the monarchs of the island which it had left nearly a century before to establish itself in Caledonia. To obtain by peaceable means the abolition of this tribute, Columba — who was Irish by heart as well as by birth, yet who at the same time was, like the Dalriadians, his kinsmen, an emigrant in Caledonia, and, like the new king, descended from the monarchs of Ireland — must have seemed the mediator indicated by nature. He accepted the mission, and returned to Ireland, which he had thought never to see again, in company with the king whom he had just crowned, to endeavour to come to an agreement with the Irish monarch and the other princes and chiefs assembled at Drumkeath. His impartiality was above all suspicion; for the very day of the coronation of Aidan he had announced to him, in the name of God, that the prosperity of the new Scotie kingdom depended upon peace with Ireland, its cradle. In the midst of the ceremony he had said aloud to the king whom he had crowned, "Charge your sons, and let them charge their grandchildren, never to expose their kingdom to be lost by their fault. The moment that they attempt any fraudulent enterprise against my spiritual descendants here, or against my countrymen and kindred in Ireland, the hand of God will weigh heavily upon them, the heart of men will be raised against them, and the victory of their enemies will be assured"

The king of Ireland, Diarmid, who was, like Columba, of the race of Niall, but of the Nialls of the North, and whom our saint had so violently resisted, had died immediately after the voluntary exile of Columba. He perished, as has been mentioned, by the hand of a prince called Black Aedh, chief of the Antrim Dalriadians, who remained in Ireland when a part of their clan emigrated to Scotland. Some time afterwards the supreme throne of Ireland fell to another Aedh, of the Southern branch of the race of Niall, and consequently of the same stock as Columba. He was also the friend and benefactor of his emigrant cousin, to whom he had given before his exile the site of Derry, the most important of his Irish foundations. The first synod or parliament of Aedh's reign had been convoked in a place called Drumceitt, the Whale's Back, situated in his special patrimony, not far from the sea and the gulf of Lough Foyle, where Columba had embarked, and at the further end of which was his dear monastery of Derry. It was there that he returned with his royal client, the new king of the Caledonian Scots, whose confessor, or, as the Irish termed it, friend of his soul, he had become. The two kings, Aedh and Aidan, presided at this assembly, which sat for fourteen months, and the recollection of which has been preserved among the Irish people, the most faithful nation in the world, for more than a thousand years.

The Irish lords and clergy encamped under tents like soldiers during the entire duration of this parliament. The most important question discussed among them was no doubt that of the tribute exacted from the king of the Dalriadians. It does not appear that the Irish king demanded tribute on account of the new kingdom founded by his ancient subjects, but rather on account of that part of Ireland itself, at present the county of

Antrim, from whence the Dalriadan colonists had gone, and which was the hereditary patrimony of their new king. This was precisely the position in which the Norman princes, who had become kings of England, while still dukes of Normandy, found themselves, five centuries later, in respect to the kings of France. Columba, the friend of both kings, was commissioned to solve the difficulty. According to some Irish authors, the abbot of Iona, when the decisive moment arrived, refused to decide, and transferred to another monk, St. Colman, the responsibility of pronouncing the judgment. At all events, the Irish king renounced all suzerainty over the king of the Dalriadians of *Albania*, as Scotland was then called. Independence and freedom from all tribute were granted to the Albanian Scots, who, on their side, promised perpetual alliance and hospitality to their Irish countrymen.

Columba had another cause to plead at the parliament of Drumceitt, which was almost as dear to his heart as the independence of the Scotie kingdom and colony of which he was the spiritual head. The question in this case was nothing less than that of the existence of a corporation as powerful as, and more ancient and national than, the clergy itself: it concerned the bards, who were at once poets and genealogists, historians and musicians, and whose high position and popular ascendancy form one of the most characteristic features of Irish history. The entire nation, always enamoured of its traditions, its fabulous antiquity, and local and domestic glory, surrounded with ardent and respectful sympathy the men who could clothe in a poetic dress all the lore and superstitions of the past, as well as the passions and interests of the present. In the annals of Ireland, as far back as they can be traced, the bards or *ollambh*, who were regarded as oracles of knowledge, of poetry, history, and music, are always to be found. They were trained from their infancy with the greatest care in special communities, and so greatly honoured that the first place at the royal table, after that of the king himself, was reserved for them. Since the introduction of Christianity, the bards, like the Druids of earlier times, whose successors they are supposed to have been, continued to form a powerful and popular band. They were then divided into three orders : the *Fileas*, who sang of religion and of war; the *Brehons*, whose name is associated with the ancient laws of the country, which they versified and recited; the *Seanachies*, who enshrined in verse the national history and antiquities, and, above all, the genealogies and prerogatives of the ancient families who were specially dear to the national and warlike passions of the Irish people. They carried this guardianship of historical recollections and relics so far as to watch over the boundaries of each province and family domain. They took part, like the clergy, in all the assemblies, and with still greater reason in all the fights. They were overwhelmed with favours and privileges by the kings and petty princes, on whom their songs and their harps could alone bestow a place in history, or even a good name among their contemporaries. But naturally this great power had produced many abuses, and at the moment of which we speak, the popularity of the bards had suffered an eclipse. A violent opposition had been raised against them. Their great number, their insolence, their insatiable greed, had all been made subjects of reproach; and, above all, they were censured for having made traffic and a trade of their poetry — of lavishing praises upon the nobles and princes who were liberal to them, and making others the subject of satirical invectives, which the charm of their verse spread but too readily, to the great injury of the honour of families. The enmities raised against them had come to such a point, that King Aedh felt himself in sufficient force to

propose to the assembly of Drumceitt the radical abolition of this dangerous order, and the banishment, and even outlawry, if not, as some say, the massacre, of all the bards.

It is not apparent that the clergy took any part whatever in this persecution of a body which they might well have regarded as their rivals. The introduction of Christianity into the country of Ossian, under St. Patrick, seems scarcely, if at all, to have affected the position of the bards. They became Christians without either inflicting or suffering any violence, and they were in general the auxiliaries and friends of the bishops, monks, and saints. Each monastery, like each prince and lord, possessed a bard, whose office it was to sing the glory, and often to write the annals, of the community. Notwithstanding, it is apparent, through many of the legends of the period, that the bards represented a pagan power, in the eyes of many ecclesiastical writers, and that they were willingly identified with those Druids or Magi who had been the principal enemies of the evangelical mission of Patrick in Ireland and of Columba in Scotland. Even in the legend of Columba it is noted that some among them had determined to make him pay for his ransom according to their custom, and had for this end addressed to him importunate solicitations, threatening, if he refused, to abuse him in their verse.

Notwithstanding, it was Columba who saved them. He who was born a poet, and remained a poet to the last day of his life, interceded for them, and gained their cause. His success was not without difficulty, for King Aedh was eager in their pursuit; but Columba, as stubborn as bold, made head against all. He represented that care must be taken not to pull up the good corn with the tares; that the general exile of the poets would be the death of a venerable antiquity and of that poetry which was so dear to the country and so useful to those who knew how to employ it. The ripe corn must not be burned, he said, because of the weeds that mingle with it. The king and the assembly yielded at length, under condition that the number of bards should be henceforward limited, and that their profession should be put under certain rules determined by Columba himself. It was his eloquence alone which turned aside the blow by which they were threatened; and knowing themselves to be saved by him, they showed their gratitude by exalting his glory in their songs and by leaving to their successors the charge of continuing his praise.

Columba himself had a profound pleasure in this poetical popularity. The corporation of bards had a chief, Dalian Fergall, who was blind, and whose violent death (he was murdered by pirates) has given him a place among the holy martyrs, of whom there are so few in Ireland. Immediately after the favourable decision of the assembly, Dalian composed a song in honour of Columba, and came to sing it before him. At the flattering sounds of this song of gratitude the abbot of Iona could not defend himself from a human sentiment of self-satisfaction. But he was immediately reprovved by one of his monks, Baithen, one of his twelve original companions in exile, and who was destined to be his successor. This faithful friend was not afraid to accuse Columba of pride, nor to tell him that he saw a sombre cloud of demons flying and playing round his head. Columba profited by the warning. He imposed silence upon Dalian, reminding him that it was only the dead who should be praised, and absolutely forbade him to repeat his song. Dalian obeyed reluctantly, and awaited the death of the saint to make known his poem, which became celebrated in Irish literature under the name of *Ambhra*, or *the Praise of St. Columbcille*. It was still sung a century after his death throughout all



Ireland and Scotland, and even the least devout of men repeated it with tenderness and fervour, as a safeguard against the dangers of war and every other accident. It even came to be believed that every one who knew this *Ambhra* by heart and sang it piously would die a good death. But when the unenlightened people came so far as to believe that even great sinners, without either conversion or penitence, had only to sing the *Ambhra* of Columbcille every day in order to be saved, a wonder happened, says the historian and grand-nephew of the saints, which opened the eyes of the faithful, by showing to them how they ought to understand the privileges accorded by God to His saints. An ecclesiastic of the metropolitan church of Armagh, who was a man of corrupt life, and desired to be saved without making any change in his conduct, succeeded in learning the half of the famous *Ambhra*, but never could remember the other half. It was in vain that he made a pilgrimage to the tomb of the saint, fasted, prayed, and spent the entire night in efforts to impress it upon his memory — the next morning he found that, though he had at length succeeded in learning the latter half, he had completely forgotten the first.

The gratitude of the bards to him who had preserved them from exile and outlawry, has certainly had some share in the wonderful and lasting popularity of Columba's name. Shrined in the national and religious poetry of the two islands, his fame has not only lasted in full brilliancy in Ireland, but it has survived even the Reformation — which has destroyed almost all other traces of their past history as Christians — in the memory of the Celts of Scotland.

On the other hand, the protection of Columba certainly confirmed the popularity of the bards in the heart of the Irish nation. All opposition between the religious spirit and the bardic influence disappeared from his time. Music and poetry after that period identified themselves more and more with ecclesiastical life. Among the relics of the saints the harps on which they had played found a place. At the first English conquest, the bishops and abbots excited the surprise of the invaders by their love of music, and by accompanying themselves on the harp. Irish poetry, which was in the days of Patrick and Columba so powerful and so popular, has long undergone in the country of Ossian the same fate as the religion of which these great saints were the apostles. Rooted like it in the heart of a conquered people, and like it proscribed and persecuted with unwearying vehemence, it has come ever forth anew from the bloody furrow in which it was supposed to be buried. The bards became the most powerful allies of patriotism, the most dauntless prophets of national independence, and also the favourite victims of the cruelty of spoilers and conquerors. They made music and poetry weapons and bulwarks against foreign oppression, and the oppressors used them as they had used the priests and the nobles. A price was set upon their heads. But while the last scions of the royal and noble races, decimated or ruined in Ireland, departed, to die out under a foreign sky amid the miseries of exile, the successor of the bards, the minstrel, whom nothing could tear from his native soil, was pursued, tracked, and taken like a wild beast, or chained and slaughtered like the most dangerous of rebels.

In the annals of the atrocious legislation directed by the English against the Irish people, as well before as after the Reformation, special penalties against the *minstrels*, *lards*, *rhymers*, and *genealogists*, who sustained the lords and gentlemen in their love of rebellion and of other crimes, are to be met at every step. An attempt was made, under

the sanguinary Elizabeth, to give pecuniary recompense to those who would celebrate "her Majesty's most worthy praise." The bargain was accepted by none. All preferred flight or death to this salary of lies. Wandering over hill and dale, hidden in the depths of the devastated country, they perpetuated there the poetic traditions of their condemned race, and sang the glory of ancient heroes and new martyrs, the shame of apostates, and the crimes of the sacrilegious stranger.

In order the better to brave tyranny in the midst of a subdued and silent people, they had recourse to allegory and the elegies of love. Under the figure of an enslaved queen — or of a woman loved with an everlasting love and fought for with despairing faithfulness, in face of the jealous fury of a step-mother — they celebrated again and again the Irish Fatherland, the country in mourning and tears, once queen and now a slave. The Irish, says a great historian of our own day, loved to make of their country a real being whom they loved, and who loved them. They loved to address her without naming her name, and to identify the austere and perilous devotion which they had vowed to her with all that is sweetest and most fortunate in the affections of the heart, like those Spartans who crowned themselves with flowers when about to perish at Thermopylae.

Up to the time of the ungrateful Stuarts, this proscription of the national poets was permanent, increasing in force with every change of reign and every new parliament. The rage of the Cromwellian Protestants carried them so far as to break, wherever they met with them, the minstrels' harps which were still to be found in the miserable cottages of the starving Irish, as they were eleven centuries before, at the time when the courageous and charitable Bridget saw them suspended on the wall of the king's palace. Nevertheless the harp has remained the emblem of Ireland even in the official arms of the British Empire; and during all last century the travelling harper, last and pitiful successor of the bards protected by Columba, was always to be found at the side of the priest to celebrate the holy mysteries of the proscribed worship. He never ceased to be received with tender respect under the thatched roof of the poor Irish peasant, whom he consoled in his misery and oppression by the plaintive tenderness and solemn sweetness of the music of his fathers.

The continuance of these distinctive features of Irish character through so many centuries is so striking, and the misfortunes of that noble race touch us so nearly, that it is difficult to resist the temptation of leaving behind us those distant ages, and of following through later generations the melancholy relics of all that has been discovered or admired in the most ancient days. We may be pardoned for adding that, if the text of those poetic and generously obstinate protests against the enslavement of Ireland have perished, the life and spirit of them has survived in the pure and penetrating beauty of the ancient Irish airs. Their harmonies and their refrains, which are inimitably natural, original, and pathetic, move the depths of the soul, and send a thrill through all the fibres of human sensibility. Thomas Moore, in adapting to them words which are marked with the impression of a passionate fidelity to the proscribed faith and oppressed country, has given to the Irish Melodies popularity which was not the least powerful among those pleas which determined the great contest of Catholic Emancipation.

The genius of Celtic poetry has, however, survived not only in Ireland, in the country of Columba and of Moore, but has found a refuge in the glens of the Scottish Highlands, among those vast moors and rugged mountains, and beside the deep and narrow lakes, which Columba, bearing the light of the faith to the Caledonian Picts, had so often traversed. In those districts where, as in a great part of Ireland, the Erse or Gaelic language is still spoken, the Celtic muse, always sad and always attached to the cause of the people, has been found in recent times, at the most prosaic moment of modern civilisation, in the eighteenth century itself, inspiring the warlike songs and laments which the Highlanders have consecrated to the conquered Pretender and his followers slain. And if we may believe a competent and impartial judge, the last effusions of the soul of the Gaelic race surpass, in plaintive beauty and in passionate feeling, even those delicious Anglo-Scottish songs which no traveller can hear without emotion, and which have assured the palm, at least of poetry, to the cause of the Stuarts, which has been so sadly represented by its princes, and so ill served by events, but which the popular and national muse has thus avenged, even for the irremediable defeat of Culloden.

Charles Mackay, *The Jacobite Songs and Ballads of Scotland from 1688 to 1746*,

## CHAPTER V

### COLUMBA'S RELATIONS WITH IRELAND (continued)

In the national parliament of Drumceitt which saved the bards, and where all the ecclesiastical chiefs of the Irish nation, along with their princes and provincial kings, were assembled, Columba, already invested by his apostolical labours with great power and authority, found himself surrounded by public homage, and tokens of universal confidence. To all the kings, whose kinsman and friend he was, he preached peace, concord, the pardon of affronts, and the recall of exiles, many of whom had found shelter in the island monastery which owed its existence to his own exile. Nevertheless, it was not without trouble that he obtained from the supreme monarch the freedom of a young prince, named Scandlan, son of the chief of Ossory, whom Aedh detained in prison, in contempt of his sworn faith, and of an agreement to which Columba himself had been a witness. The noble abbot went to the prisoner in his dungeon, blessed him, and predicted to him that he should be twice exiled, but that he should survive his oppressor, and reign for thirty years in his paternal domain. The king yielded on this point, but with a bad grace; he feared the influence of the illustrious exile, and had seen him return to Ireland with dissatisfaction. His eldest son had publicly ridiculed the monks of Iona, and had thus drawn upon himself the curse of Columba, which brought misfortune, for he was afterwards dethroned and assassinated. But the king's second son

Domnall, who was still young, took openly the part of the abbot of Iona, who predicted for him not only a long and glorious reign, but the rare privilege of dying in his bed, on the condition of receiving the Holy Communion every eight days, and of keeping at least one in seven of his promises — a somewhat satirical limit, which betrays either the old contradictory spirit of the converted Niall, or the recollection of his own legitimate resentment against certain princes. His prophecy, extremely improbable as it was, in a country where all the princes perished on the battlefield or by a violent death, was nevertheless fulfilled. Domnall, who was the third successor of his father, following after two other kings who were destroyed by their enemies, had a long and prosperous reign ; he gained numerous victories, marching to battle under a banner blessed by St. Columba, and died, after an illness of eighteen months, in his bed, or, as Columba specified, with a precision which marks the rareness of the occurrence, on his down-bed. His father, although reconciled to Columba, did not escape the common law. The great abbot bestowed upon him his monastic cowl, promising that it should always be to him as an impenetrable cuirass. After this, he never went into battle without putting on his friend's cowl above his armour. But one day when he had forgotten it, he was killed in a combat with the king of Lagenia or Leinster. Columba had previously warned him against waging war with the people of Leinster, which was the country of his mother, and which he loved with that impassioned clan or family affection which is so distinctive a feature in his character. The Lagenians had not lost the opportunity of working upon this sentiment : for one day, when he was at his abbey of Durrow, upon their boundary, a numerous assembly of all ages, from children to old men, came to him, and, surrounding him, pleaded with such animation their kindred with his mother, that they obtained from him the promise, or prophecy, that no king should ever be able to overcome them, so long as they fought for a just cause.

There is no doubt that, after the assembly of Drumceitt, Columba made many journeys to Ireland. The direction of the various monasteries which he had founded there before his voluntary exile, and of which he had kept the government in his own hands, must have led him often back; but after that assembly, his visits were always made notable by miracles of healing, prophecy, or revelation, and still more by the tender solicitude of his paternal heart. Sometimes, towards the decline of his life, while traversing a hilly or marshy country, he travelled in a car, as St. Patrick had done; but the care with which his biographers note this fact, proves that formerly the greater part of his journeys had been made on foot. He did not limit himself to communities of which he was the superior or founder; he loved to visit other monastic sanctuaries also, such as that of Clonmacnoise, whose importance has already been pointed out. And on such occasions the crowding and eagerness of the monks to pay their homage to the holy and beloved old man was redoubled ; they left their outdoor work, and, crossing the earthen intrenchment, which, like the vallum of Roman camps, enclosed the Celtic monasteries, came to meet him, chanting hymns. When they came up to him, they prostrated themselves on the ground at his feet, ere they embraced him ; and in order to shelter him from the crowd during the solemn processions which were made in his honour, a rampart of branches was carried like a *daïs* by four men, who surrounded him, treading with equal steps. An ancient author even goes so far as to say, that on the occasion of his return and prolonged stay in his native country, he was invested with a sort of general supremacy over all the religious of Ireland, both monks and nuns.

During the journey from Durrow to Clonmacnoise, Columba made a halt at one of his own monasteries, where a poor little scholar, "of thick speech, and still more heavy aspect", whom his superiors employed in the meanest services, glided into the crowd, and, stealthily approaching the great abbot, touched the end of his robe behind him, as the Canaanitish woman touched the robe of our Lord. Columba, perceiving it, stopped, turned round, and, taking the child by the neck, kissed him. "Away, away, little fool!" cried all the spectators. "Patience, my brethren," said Columba : then turning to the boy, who trembled with fear, "My son," he said, "open thy mouth, and show me thy tongue." The child obeyed, with increasing timidity. The abbot made the sign of the cross upon his tongue, and added, "This child, who appears to you so contemptible, let no one henceforward despise him. He shall grow every day in wisdom and virtue ; he shall be reckoned with the greatest among you; God will give to this tongue, which I have just blessed, the gift of eloquence and true doctrine." The boy grew to manhood, and became celebrated in the churches of Scotland and Ireland, where he was venerated under the name of St. Ernan. He himself told this prophecy, so well justified by the event, to a contemporary of Adamnan, who has preserved all the details for us.

These journeys, however, were not necessary to prove Columba's solicitude for the monks who filled his monasteries. He showed the same care when distant as when at hand, by the help of that miraculous foresight which came to the assistance of his paternal anxiety in all their spiritual and temporal necessities. One day, after his return from Ireland, he was heard to stop suddenly short in the correspondence or transcription in which he had been engaged in his little cell in Iona, and cry with all his strength, "Help, help!" This cry was addressed to the guardian angel of the community, and the appeal was made on behalf of a man who had fallen from the top of the round tower which was then being built at Durrow, in the centre of Ireland — so great was his confidence in what he himself called the indescribable and lightning speed of the flight of angels ; and greater still was his trust in their protection. Another time, at Iona, in a day of chilly fog, such as occurs often in that sombre climate, he was suddenly seen to burst into tears. When asked the reason of his distress, he answered, "Dear son, it is not without reason that I weep. At this very hour I see my dear monks of Durrow condemned by their abbot to exhaust themselves in this dreary weather, building the great round tower of the monastery, and the sight overwhelms me." The same day, and at the same hour, as was afterwards ascertained, Laisran, the abbot of Durrow, felt within himself something like an internal flame, which reawakened in his heart a sentiment of pity for his monks. He immediately commanded them to leave their work, to warm themselves, and take some food, and even forbade them to resume their building until the weather had improved. This same Laisran afterwards came to deserve the name of Consoler of the Monks, so much had he been imbued by Columba with that supernatural charity which, in monastic life, as in every other Christian existence, is at once a light and a flame, *ardens et lucens*.

Columba not only retained his superior jurisdiction over the monasteries which he had founded in Ireland, or which had been admitted to the privileges of his foundations, but he also exercised a spiritual authority, which it is difficult to explain, over various laymen of his native island. On one occasion, he is known to have sent his cousin, friend, and principal disciple to the centre of Ireland, to Drum-Cuill, to pronounce



sentence of excommunication against a certain family, whose crime, however, is not specified. This disciple was Baithen, whom we have seen to be one of Columba's companions from the moment of his exile, and who warned his superior against the fumes of pride, at the time when the bards began to express their enthusiastic gratitude. The gentle Baithen, when he had arrived at the appointed place, after having passed the whole night in prayer under an oak, said to his companions, "No, I will not excommunicate this family before making sure that it will not repent. I give it a year's respite, and during the year, the fate of this tree shall be a warning to it." Some time after the tree was struck by lightning ; but we are not informed if the family thus warned was brought to repentance.

Baithen was a man of tender soul, of whom we would fain speak at greater length, if it were not needful to circumscribe the wide and confused records of Celtic hagiography. Columba compared him to St. John the Evangelist ; he said that his beloved disciple resembled him who was the beloved disciple of Christ, by his exquisite purity, his penetrating simplicity, and his love of perfection. And Columba was not alone in doing justice to the man who, after having been his chief lieutenant in his work, was to become his first successor. One day, in an assembly of learned monks, probably held in Ireland, Fintan, a very learned and very wise man, and also one of the twelve companions of Columba's exile, was questioned upon the qualities of Baithen. "Know," he answered, "that there is no one on this side of the Alps who is equal to him in knowledge of the Scriptures, and in the greatness of his learning." "What!" said his questioners — "not even his master, Columba?" "I do not compare the disciple with the master," answered Fintan. "Columba is not to be compared with philosophers and learned men, but with patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. The Holy Ghost reigns in him; he has been chosen by God for the good of all. He is a sage among all sages, a king among kings, an anchorite with anchorites, a monk of monks; and in order to bring himself to the level even of laymen, he knows how to be poor of heart among the poor; thanks to the apostolic charity which inspires him, he can rejoice with the joyful, and weep with the unfortunate. And amid all the gifts which God's generosity has lavished on him, the true humility of Christ is so royally rooted in his soul, that it seems to have been born with him". It is added that all the learned hearers assented unanimously to this enthusiastic eulogium.

## CHAPTER VI

### COLUMBA THE PROTECTOR OF SAILORS AND AGRICULTURISTS, THE FRIEND OF LAYMEN, AND THE AVENGER OF THE OPPRESSED

During all the rest of his life, which was to pass in his island of Iona, or in the neighbouring districts of Scotland which had been evangelised by his unwearied zeal, nothing strikes and attracts the historian so much as the generous ardour of Columba's charity. The history of his whole life proves that he was born with a violent and even vindictive temper; but he had succeeded in subduing and transforming himself to such a point that he was ready to sacrifice all things to the love of his neighbour. It is not merely an apostle or a monastic founder whom we have before us — beyond and besides this it is a friend, a brother, a benefactor of men, a brave and untiring defender of the labourer, the feeble, and the poor : it is a man occupied not only with the salvation but also with the happiness, the rights, and the interests of all his fellow-creatures, and in whom the instinct of pity showed itself in a bold and continual interposition against all oppression and wickedness.

Without losing the imposing and solemn character which always accompanied his popular fame, he will now be revealed to us under a still more touching aspect, through all the long succession of his apostolic labours, and in the two principal occupations — agriculture and navigation — which gave variety to his missionary life.

For navigation alternated with agriculture in the labours of the cenobites of Iona. The same monks who cultivated the scanty fields of the holy island, and who reaped and threshed the corn, accompanied Columba in his voyages to the neighbouring isles, and followed the sailor's trade, then, it would seem, more general than now among the Irish race. Communication was then frequent, not only between Ireland and Great Britain, but between Ireland and Gaul. We have already seen in the port of Nantes an Irish boat ready to carry away the founder of Luxeuil. The Gaulish merchants came to sell or offer their wines as far as to the centre of the island, to the abbey of Clonmacnoise. In the life of our saint, seafaring populations are constantly spoken of as surrounding him, and receiving his continual visits; and exercises and excursions are also mentioned, which associate his disciples with all the incidents of a seafaring life. As a proof of this we quote four lines, in very ancient Irish, which may be thus translated : —

"Honour to the soldiers who live at Iona ;  
There are three times fifty under the monastic rule,  
Seventy of whom are appointed to row,  
And cross the sea in their leathern barks."

These boats were sometimes hollowed out of the trunks of trees, like those which are still found buried in the bogs or turf-mosses of Ireland; but most generally they were made of osier, and covered with buffalo-skins, like those described by Caesar. Their size was estimated by the number of skins which had been used to cover them. They were generally small, and those made of one or two skins were portable. The abbot of Iona had one of this description for the inland waters when he travelled beyond the northern hills (*dorsum Britanniae*), which he crossed so often to preach among the Picts. At a later period the community possessed many of a much larger size, to convey the materials for the reconstruction of the primitive monastery at Iona, and the timber which the sons of Columba cut down and fashioned in the vast oak forests which then covered the whole country, now so sadly deprived of wood. They went like galleys, with sail or oar, and were furnished with masts and rigging like modern boats. The holy island had at last an entire fleet at its disposal, manned and navigated by the monks.

In these frail skiffs Columba and his monks ploughed the dangerous and stormy sea which dashes on the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, and penetrated boldly into the numberless gulfs and straits of the sombre Hebridean archipelago. They knew the perils to which their insular existence exposed them; but they braved those dangers without fear, accustomed as they were to live in the midst of storms, upon an isle which the great waves of ocean threatened continually to swallow up. Not less alarming was their position when the winds carried them towards the terrible whirlpool, named after a prince of the Niall family, who had been drowned there, the Caldron of Brechan, and which there was always a risk of being driven upon while crossing from Ireland to Scotland. The winds, when blowing from certain directions, hollow out in their whirl such terrible abysses about this spot, that even to our own time it has continued the terror of sailors. The holiest of Columba's guests passed it by with trembling, raising their hands towards heaven to implore the miracle which alone could save them. But he himself, who one day was almost swallowed up in it, and whose mind was continually preoccupied by the recollection of his kindred, imagined that he saw in this whirlpool a symbol of the torments endured in purgatory by the soul of his relative who had perished at that spot, and of the duty of praying for the repose of that soul at the same time as he prayed for the safety of the companions of his voyage. Columba's prayers, his special and ardently desired blessing, and his constant and passionate intercession for his brethren and disciples, were the grand safeguard of the navigators of Iona, not only against wind and shipwrecks, but against other dangers which have now disappeared from these coasts. Great fishes of the cetaceous order swarmed at that time in the Hebridean sea. The sharks ascended even into the Highland rivers, and one of the companions of Columba, swimming across the Ness, was saved only by the prayer of the saint, at the moment when he was but an oar's length from the odious monster, which had before swallowed one of the natives. The entire crew of a boat manned by monks took fright and turned back one day on meeting a whale, or perhaps only a shark more formidable than its neighbours ; but on another occasion, the same Baithen who was the friend and successor of Columba, encouraged by the holy abbot's blessing, had more courage, continued his course, and saw the monster bury itself in the waves. "After all," said the monk, "we are both in the hands of God, both this monster and I."

Other monks, sailing in the high northern sea, were panic-struck by the appearance of hosts of unknown shell-fish, who, attaching themselves to the oars and sides of the boat, made holes in the hide with which the framework was covered.

It was neither curiosity nor love of gain, nor even a desire to convert the pagans, which stimulated Columba's disciples to dare all the dangers of navigation in one of the most perilous seas of the world; it was the longing for solitude, the irresistible wish to find a more distant retreat, an asylum still further off than that of Iona, upon some unknown rock amid the loneliness of the sea, where no one could join them, and from which they never could be brought back. They returned to Iona without having discovered what they were in search of, sad yet not discouraged; and after an interval of rest always took to sea again, to begin once more their anxious search. It was thus that the steep and almost inaccessible island of St. Kilda, made famous by the daring of its bird-hunters, was first discovered ; then far to the north of the Hebrides and even of the Orcades, they reached the Shetland Isles, and even, according to some, Iceland itself, which is only at the distance of a six days' voyage from Ireland, and where the first Christian church bore the name of St. Columba. Another of their discoveries was the Faroe Islands, where the Norwegians at a later date found traces of the sojourn of the Irish monks, Celtic books, crosses, and bells. Cormac, the boldest of these bold explorers, made three long, laborious, and dangerous voyages with the hope, always disappointed, of finding the wilderness of which he dreamed. The first time on landing at Orkney he escaped death, with which the savage inhabitants of that archipelago threatened all strangers, only by means of the recommendations which Columba had procured from the Pictish king, himself converted, to the still pagan king of the northern islanders. On another occasion the south wind drove him for fourteen successive days and nights almost into the depths of the icy ocean, far beyond anything that the imagination of man had dreamed of in those days.

Columba, the father and head of those bold and pious mariners, followed and guided them by his ever vigilant and prevailing prayers. He was in some respects present with them, notwithstanding the distance which separated them from the sanctuary and from the island harbours which they had left. Prayer gave him an intuitive knowledge of the dangers they ran. He saw them, he suffered and trembled for them ; and immediately assembling the brethren who remained in the monastery by the sound of the bell, offered for them the prayers of the community. He implored the Lord with tears to grant the change of wind which was necessary for those at sea, and did not rise from his knees until he had a certainty that his prayers were granted. This happened often, and the saved monks, on returning from their dangerous voyages, hastened to him to thank and bless him for his prophetic and beneficent aid.

Often he himself accompanied them in their voyages of circumnavigation or exploration, and paid many visits to the isles of the Hebridean archipelago discovered or frequented by the sailors of his community, and where cells or little colonies from the great island monastery seem to have existed. This was specially the case at Eigg, where a colony of fifty-two monks, founded and ruled by a disciple of the abbot of Iona, were killed by pirates twenty years after his death. This was a favourite spot which he loved to visit, no doubt to enjoy the solitude which was no longer to be found at Iona, where the crowds of penitents, pilgrims, and petitioners increased from day to day. And he

took special pleasure also in Skye, the largest of the Hebridean isles, which, after the lapse of twelve centuries, was recalled to the attention of the world by the dangerous and romantic adventures of Prince Charles-Edward and Flora Macdonald. It was then scarcely inhabited, though very large and covered by forests, in which he could bury himself and pray, leaving even his brethren far behind him. One day he met an immense wild boar pursued by dogs; with a single word he killed the ferocious brute, instead of protecting it, as in similar cases the saints of the Merovingian legends were so ready to do. He continued during all the middle ages the patron of Skye, where a little lake still bears his name, as well as several spots, and monuments in the neighbouring isles.

Storms often disturbed these excursions by sea, and then Columba showed himself as laborious and bold as the most tried of his monastic mariners. When all were engaged in rowing, he would not remain idle, but rowed with them. We have seen him brave the frequent storms of the narrow and dangerous lakes in the north of Scotland. At sea he retained the same courageous composure in the most tempestuous weather, and took part in all the sailors' toils. During the voyage which he made from Iona to Ireland, to attend with King A'idan the parliament of Drumceitt, his vessel was in great danger ; the waves dashed into the boat till it was full of water, and Columba took his part with the sailors in baling it out. But his companions stopped him. "What you are doing at present is of little service to us," they said to him; "you would do better to pray for those who are about to perish." He did so, and the sea grew calm from the moment when, mounting on the prow, he raised his arms in prayer.

With these examples before them, his companions naturally appealed to his intercession whenever storms arose during any of his voyages. On one occasion he answered them, "It is not my turn; it is the holy abbot Kenneth who must pray for us." Kenneth was the abbot of a monastery in Ireland, and a friend of Columba's who came often to Iona to visit him. At the very same hour he heard the voice of his friend echo in his heart, and, warned by an internal voice, left the refectory where he was, and hastened to the church to pray for the shipwrecked, crying, "We have something else to do than to dine when Columba is in danger of perishing at sea." He did not even take the time to put on both his shoes before he went to the church, for which he received the special thanks of his friend at Iona; an incident which recalls another Celtic legend — that of the bishop St. Paternus, who obeyed the call of his metropolitan with a boot upon one foot only.

Under all these legendary digressions it is evident that the monastic apostle of Caledonia, apart from the prevailing efficacy of his prayers, had made an attentive study of the winds and of all the phenomena of nature which affected the lives of the insular and maritime people whom he sought to lead into Christianity. A hundred different narratives represent him to us as the Eolus of those fabulous times and dangerous seas. He was continually entreated to grant a favourable wind for such or such an expedition ; it even happened one day that two of his monks, on the eve of setting out in two different directions, came to him to ask, the one a north wind, and the other a south wind. He granted the prayer of both, but by delaying the departure of the one who was going to Ireland until after the arrival of the other, who went only to the neighbouring isle of Tiree.



Thus it happened that from far and near Columba was invoked or feared by the sailors as the master of all the winds that blew. Libran of the Rushes, the generous penitent, whose curious history has been already recorded, wishing to return from Ireland to Iona, was turned back by the crew of the boat which was leaving the port of Derry for Scotland, because he was not a member of the community of Iona. Upon which the disappointed traveller mentally invoked across the sea the help of his absent friend. The wind immediately changed, and the boat was driven back to land. The sailors saw poor Libran still lingering upon the shore, and called to him from the deck, "Perhaps it is because of thee that the wind has changed; if we take thee with us, art thou disposed to make it once more favourable?" "Yes," said the monk; "the holy abbot Columba, who imposed upon me seven years of penitence, whom I have obeyed, and to whom I wish to return, will obtain that grace for you." And the result was that he was taken on board, and the journey was happily accomplished.

These events took place in his lifetime; but during at least a century after his death he remained the patron, always popular and propitious, of sailors in danger. A tone of familiar confidence, and sometimes of filial objurgation, may be remarked in their prayers, such as may be found among the Celts of Armorica and the Catholic nations of the south of Europe. Adamnan confesses that he himself and some other monks of Iona, embarked in a flotilla of a dozen boats charged with oaken beams for the reconstruction of the monastery, were so detained by contrary winds in a neighbouring island, that they took to accusing their Columba. "Dear saint," they said to him, "what dost thou think of this delay? We thought up to this moment that thou hadst great favour with God." Another time, when they were detained by the same cause in a bay near the district of Lorn, precisely on the vigil of St. Columba's day, they said to him, "How canst thou leave us to pass thy feast tomorrow among laymen, and not in thine own church? It would be so easy for thee to obtain from the Lord that this contrary wind should become favourable, and permit us to sing mass in thy church!" On these two occasions their desires were granted; the wind changed suddenly, and permitted them to get to sea and make their way to Iona in those frail boats whose spars, crossing upon the mast, formed the august symbol of redemption. More than a hundred witnesses of these facts were still living when the biographer of our saint wrote his history.

This tender and vigilant charity, which lent itself to all the incidents of a sailor's and traveller's life, becomes still more strongly apparent during all the phases of his existence, in his relations with the agricultural population, whether of Ireland, which was his cradle, or of his adopted country Caledonia. Amid the fabulous legends and apocryphal and childish miracles with which Irish historians have filled out the glorious story of the great missionary, it is pleasant to be able to discover the unmistakable evidence of his intelligent and fruitful solicitude for the necessities, the labours, and the sufferings of the inhabitants of the rural districts, and his active intervention on their behalf. When the legend tells us how, with one stroke of his crosier, he made fountains of sweet waters spring in a hundred different corners of Ireland or Scotland, in arid and rocky districts, such as that of the peninsula of Ardnamurchan; when it shows him lowering, by his prayers, the cataracts of a river so that the salmon could ascend in the fishing season, as they have always done since, to the great benefit of the dwellers by the stream, we recognise in the tale the most touching expression of popular and

national gratitude for the services which the great monk rendered to the country, by teaching the peasants to search for the fountains, to regulate the irrigations, and to rectify the course of the rivers, as so many other holy monks have done in all European lands.

It is equally apparent that he had with zeal and success established the system of grafting and the culture of fruit-trees, when we read the legend which represents him to us, at the beginning of his monastic career in Durrow, the most ancient of his foundations, approaching, in autumn, a tree covered with sour and unwholesome fruit, to bless it, and saying, "In the name of Almighty God, let thy bitterness leave thee, bitter tree, and let thy apples be henceforward as sweet as up to this time they have been sour!" At other times he is said to have obtained for his friends quick and abundant harvests, enabling them, for example, to cut barley in August which they had sown in June — a thing which then seemed a miracle, but is not without parallel in Scotland at the present time. Thus almost invariably the recollection of a service rendered, or of a benefit asked or spontaneously conferred, weds itself in the legend to the story of miracles and outbursts of wonder-working prayer — which, in most cases, were for the benefit of the cultivators of the soil; it is evident that he studied their necessities and followed their vicissitudes with untiring sympathy.

In the same spirit he studied and sought remedies for the infectious diseases which threatened life, or which made ravages among the cattle of the country. Seated one day upon a hillock in his island, he said to the monk who was with him, and who belonged to the Dalriadan colony, "Look at that thick and rainy cloud which comes from the north; it has with it the germs of a deadly sickness; it is about to fall upon a large district of our Ireland, bringing ulcers and sores upon the body of man and beast. We must have pity on our brethren. Quick, let us go down, and tomorrow thou shalt embark and go to their aid." The monk obeyed, and furnished with bread which Columba had blessed, he went over all the district smitten by the pestilence, distributing to the first sick persons he met, water, in which the bread blessed by the exiled abbot, who concerned himself so anxiously about the lot of his country-men, had been steeped. The remedy worked so well, that from all parts both men and beasts crowded round the messenger of Iona, and the praises of Christ and His servant Columba resounded far and wide.

Thus we see the saint continually on the watch for those evils, losses, and accidents which struck the families or nations specially interesting to him, and which were revealed to him either by a supernatural intuition or by some plaintive appeal. Sometimes we find him sending the blessed bread, which was his favourite remedy, to a holy girl who had broken her leg in returning from mass : sometimes curing others of ophthalmia by means of salt also blessed; everywhere on his evangelical journeys, or other expeditions, we are witnesses of his desire, and the pains he took, to heal all the sick that were brought to him, or who awaited him on the roadside, eager, like the little idiot of Clonmacnoise, to touch the border of his robe — an accompaniment which had followed him during the whole course of his journey to the national assembly of Drumceitt.

His entire life bears the marks of his ardent sympathy for the labourers in the fields. From the time of his early travels as a young man in Ireland, when he furnished

the ploughmen with ploughshares, and had the young men trained to the trade of blacksmith, up to the days of his old age, when he could only follow far off the labour of his monks, his paternal tenderness never ceased to exercise on their account its salutary and beneficent influence. Seated in a little wooden hut which answered the purpose of a cell, he interrupted his studies, and put down his pen, to bless the monks as they came back from the fields, the pastures, or the barns. The younger brethren, after having milked the cows of the community, knelt down, with their pails full of new milk, to receive from a distance the abbot's blessing, sometimes accompanied by an exhortation useful to their souls. During one of the last summers of his life, the monks, returning in the evening from reaping the scanty harvest of their island, stopped short as they approached the monastery, suddenly touched with strange emotion. The steward of the monastery, Baithen, the friend and future successor of Columba, asked them, "Are you not sensible of something very unusual here?" "Yes," said the oldest of the monks, "every day, at this hour and place, I breathe a delicious odour, as if all the flowers in the world were collected here. I feel also something like the flame of the hearth, which does not burn but warms me gently; I experience, in short, in my heart a joy so unusual, so incomparable, that I am no longer sensible of either trouble or fatigue. The sheaves which I carry on my back, though heavy, weigh upon me no longer; and I know not how, from this spot to the monastery, they seem to be lifted from my shoulders. What, then, is this wonder?" All the others gave the same account of their sensations. "I will tell you what it is," said the steward; "it is our old master, Columba, always full of anxiety for us, who is disturbed to find us so late, who vexes himself with the thought of our fatigue, and who, not being able to come to meet us with his body, sends us his spirit to refresh, rejoice, and console us."

It must not be supposed, however, that he reserved his solicitude for his monastic labourers alone. Far from that, he knew how to appreciate the work of laymen when sanctified by Christian virtue. "See," he said one day to the elders of the monastery, "at this moment while I speak, such a one who was a blacksmith yonder in Ireland — see him, how he goes up to heaven! He dies an old man, and he has worked all his life; but he has not worked in vain. He has bought eternal life with the work of his hands; for he dispensed all his gains in alms ; and I see the angels who are going for his soul." It will be admitted that the praise of manual labour, carried to a silly length in our days, has been rarely expressed in a manner so solemn and touching.

It is also recorded that he took pleasure in the society of laymen during his journeys, and lived among them with a free and delightful familiarity. This is one of the most attractive and instructive phases of his history. He continually asked and received the hospitality not only of the rich, but also of the poor; and sometimes, indeed, received a more cordial reception from the poor than from the rich. To those who refused him a shelter he predicted prompt punishment. "That miser," he said, "who despises Christ in the person of a traveller, shall see his wealth diminish from day to day and come to nothing ; he will come to beggary, and his son shall go from door to door holding out his hand, which shall never be more than half filled." When the poor received him under their roof, he inquired with his ordinary thoughtfulness into their resources, their necessities, all their little possessions. At that period a man seems to have been considered very poor in Scotland who had only five cows. This was all the

fortune of a Lochaber peasant in whose house Columba, who continually traversed this district when going to visit the king of the Picts, passed a night, and found a very cordial welcome notwithstanding the poverty of the house. Next morning he had the five little cows brought into his presence and blessed them, predicting to his host that he should soon have five hundred, and that the blessing of the grateful missionary should go down to his children and grandchildren — a prophecy which was faithfully fulfilled.

In the same district of Lochaber, which is still the scene of those great deer-stalking expeditions in which the British aristocracy delight, our saint was one day accosted by an unfortunate poacher, who had not the means of maintaining his wife and children, and who asked alms from him. "Poor man," said Columba, "go and cut me a rod in the forest." When the rod was brought to him, the abbot of Iona himself sharpened it into the form of a spear. When he had done this he blessed the improvised javelin, and gave it to his suppliant, telling him that if he kept it carefully, and used it only against wild beasts, venison should never be wanting in his poor house. This prophecy also was fulfilled. The poacher planted his blessed spear in a distant corner of the forest, and no day passed that he did not find there a hart or doe, or other game, so that he soon had enough to sell to his neighbours as well as to provide for all the necessities of his own house.

Columba thus interested himself in all that he saw, in all that went on around him, and which he could turn to the profit of the poor or of his fellow-creatures; even in hunting or fishing he took pains to point out the happy moment and most favourable spot where the largest salmon or pike might be found. Wherever he found himself in contact with the poor or with strangers, he drew them to himself and comforted them even more by the warm sympathy of his generous heart than by material benefits. He identified himself with their fears, their dangers, and their vexations. Always a peacemaker and consoler, he took advantage here of the night's shelter given him by a rich mountaineer to end a dispute between two angry neighbours; and there made a chance meeting in a Highland gorge with a countryman an occasion for reassuring the peasant as to the consequences of the ravages made in his district by Pictish or Saxon invaders. "My good man," he said, "thy poor cattle and thy little all have fallen into the hands of the robbers; but thy dear little family is safe — go home and be comforted."

Such was this tender and gentle soul. His charity might sometimes seem to have degenerated into feebleness, so great was the pleasure he took in all the details of benevolence and Christian brotherhood; but let there appear an injustice to repair, an unfortunate individual to defend, an oppressor to punish, an outrage against humanity or misfortune to avenge, and Columba immediately awoke and displayed all the energy of his youth. The former man reappeared in a moment; his passionate temperament recovered the mastery — his distinctive character, vehement in expression and resolute in action, burst forth at every turn; and his natural boldness led him, in the face of all dangers, to lavish remonstrances, invectives, and threats, which the justice of God, too rarely visible in such cases, sometimes deigned to fulfil.

Among the many sufferers whom he found on his way, it is natural to suppose that the exiles, who were so numerous in consequence of the discords which rent the Celtic races, would most of all call forth his sympathy. Himself an exile, he was the natural

protector of all who were exiled. He took under his special guardianship a banished Pict, of noble family, probably one of those who had received him with kindness, and listened to his teachings at the time of his first missions in Northern Caledonia. Columba confided, or, as the historian says, recommended, assigned, in manum, according to the custom which came to be general in feudal times, his banished friend to a chief called Feradagh, who occupied the large island of Islay, south of Iona, praying him to conceal his guest for some months among his clan and dependents. A few days after he had solemnly accepted the trust, this villain had the noble exile treacherously murdered, no doubt for the sake of the articles of value he had with him. When he received the news, Columba cried, "It is not to me, it is to God, that this wretched man, whose name shall be effaced out of the book of life, has lied. It is summer now, but before autumn comes — before he can eat of the meat which he is fattening for his table — he shall die a sudden death, and be dragged to hell." The indignant old man's prophecy was reported to Feradagh, who pretended to laugh at it, but nevertheless kept it in his mind. Before the beginning of autumn, he ordered a fattened pig to be killed and roasted, and even before the animal was entirely cooked gave orders that part of it should be served to him in order to prove, at the earliest possible moment, the falsehood of the prophesied vengeance. But scarcely had he taken up the morsel, when, before he had carried it to his mouth, he fell back and died. Those who were present admired and trembled to see how the Lord God honoured and justified His prophet; and those who knew Columba's life as a young man recalled to each other how, at the very beginning of his monastic life, the murderer of the innocent maiden had fallen dead at the sound of his avenging voice. In his just wrath against the spoilers of the poor and the persecutors of the Church, he drew back before no danger, not even before the assassin's dagger. Among the reivers who infested Scottish Caledonia, making armed incursions into their neighbours' lands, and carrying on that system of pillage which, up to the eighteenth century, continued to characterise the existence of the Scottish clans, he had distinguished the sons of Donnell, who belonged to a branch of the family which ruled the Dalriadan colony. Columba did not hesitate to excommunicate them. Exasperated by this sentence, one of these powerful ill-doers, named or surnamed Lamm-Dess (Bight-hand), took advantage of a visit which the great abbot paid to a distant island, and undertook to murder him in his sleep. But Finn-Lugh, one of the saint's companions, having had some suspicion or instinctive presentiment of danger, and desiring to save his father's life by the sacrifice of his own, borrowed Columba's cowl, and wrapped himself in it. The assassin struck him whom he found clothed in the well-known costume of the abbot, and then fled. But the sacred vestment proved impenetrable armour to the generous disciple, who was not even wounded. Columba, when informed of the event, said nothing at the moment. But a year after, when he had returned to Iona, the abbot said to his community, "A year ago Lamm-Dess did his best to murder my dear Finn-Lugh in my place ; now at this moment it is he who is being killed." And, in fact, the news shortly arrived that the assassin had just died under the sword of a warrior, who struck the fatal blow while invoking the name of Columba, in a fight which brought the depredations of these reivers to an end.

Some time before, another criminal of the same family, called Joan, had chosen for his victim one of the hosts of Columba, one of those poor men whom the abbot had enriched by his blessing in exchange for the hospitality which even in their poverty they



had not refused. This poor man lived on the wild and barren peninsula of Ardnamurchan, a sombre mass which rises up out of the waves of the Atlantic, and forms the most western point of the Scottish mainland. The benediction of the missionary had brought him good fortune, as had been the case with the peasant of Lochaber, and his five cows, too, had multiplied, and were then more than a hundred in number. Columba was not satisfied with merely enriching his humble friend, but gave him also a place in his affections, and had even bestowed upon him his own name; so that all his neighbours called him Columbain, the friend of St. Columba. Three times in succession, Joan, the princely spoiler, had pillaged and ravaged the house of the enriched peasant, the friend of the abbot of Iona ; the third time, as he went back with his bravos, laden with booty, to the boat which awaited him on the beach, he met the great abbot, whom he had supposed far distant. Columba reproved him for his exactions and crimes, and entreated him to give up his prey ; but the reiver continued his course, and answered only by an immovable silence, until he had gained the beach and entered his boat. As soon as he was in his vessel, he began to answer the abbot's prayers by mockeries and insults. Then the noble old man plunged into the sea, up to his knees, as if to cling to the boat which contained the spoils of his friend; and when it went off he remained for some time with his two hands raised towards heaven, praying with ardour. When his prayer was ended, he came out of the water, and returned to his companions, who were seated on a neighbouring mound, to dry himself. After a pause, he said to them, "This miserable man, this evil-doer, who despises Christ in His servants, shall never more land upon the shore from which you have seen him depart — he shall never touch land again. Today a little cloud begins to rise in the north, and from that cloud comes a tempest that shall swallow him up, him and his ; not one single soul shall escape to tell the tale." The day was fine, the sea calm, and the sky perfectly serene. Notwithstanding, the cloud which Columba had announced soon appeared ; and the spectators, turning their eyes to the sea, saw the tempest gather, increase, and pursue the spoiler. The storm reached them between the islands of Mull and Colonsay, from whose shores their boat was seen to sink and perish, with all its crew and all its spoils.

We have all read in Caesar's Commentaries how, when he landed on the shores of Britain, the standard-bearer of the tenth legion threw himself into the sea, up to the knees in water, to encourage his comrades. Thanks to the perverse complaisance of history for all feats of force, this incident is immortal. Caesar, however, moved by depraved ambition, came but to oppress a free and innocent race, and to bring it under the odious yoke of Roman tyranny, of which, happily, it has retained no trace. How much grander and more worthy of recollection, I do not say to every Christian, but to every upright soul, is the sight offered to us at the other extremity of the great Britannic Isle, by this old monk, who also rushed into the sea, up to his knees — but to pursue a savage oppressor, in the interest of an obscure victim, thus claiming for himself, under his legendary aureole, the everlasting greatness of humanity, justice, and pity!

## CHAPTER VII

### COLUMBA'S LAST YEARS — HIS DEATH — HIS CHARACTER

By the side of the terrible acts of vengeance which have just been narrated, the student loves to find in this bold enemy of the wicked and the oppressor a gentle and familiar sympathy for all the affections as well as all the trials of domestic life. Rich and poor, kings and peasants, awoke in his breast the same kindly emotion, expressed with the same fulness. When King Aidan brought his children to him, and spoke of his anxiety about their future lives, he did not content himself with seeing the eldest. "Have you none younger?" said the abbot; "bring them all — let me hold them in my arms and on my heart!" And when the younger children were brought, one fair-haired boy, Hector (Eochaidh Buidhe), came forward running, and threw himself upon the saint's knees. Columba held him long pressed to his heart, then kissed his forehead, blessed him, and prophesied for him a long life, a prosperous reign, and a great posterity.

Let us listen while his biographer tells how he came to the aid of a woman in extremity, and how he made peace in a divided household. One day at Iona he suddenly stopped short while reading, and said with a smile to his monks, "I must now go and pray for a poor little woman who is in the pains of childbirth and suffers like a true daughter of Eve. She is down yonder in Ireland, and reckons upon my prayers, for she is my kinswoman, and of my mother's family." Upon this he hastened to the church, and when his prayer was ended returned to his brethren, saying — "She is delivered. The Lord Jesus, who deigned to be born of a woman, has come to her aid ; this time she will not die."

Another day, while he was visiting an island on the Irish coast, a pilot came to him to complain of his wife, who had taken an aversion for him. The abbot called her and reminded her of the duties imposed upon her by the law of the Lord. "I am ready to do everything," said the woman — "I will obey you in the hardest things you can command. I do not draw back from any of the cares of the house. I will go even, if it is desired, on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or I will shut myself up in a nunnery — in short, I will do everything except live with him."

The abbot answered that there could be no question of pilgrimage or of a convent so long as her husband lived; "but," he added, "let us try to pray God, all three, fasting — you, your husband, and myself". "Ah," said the woman, "I know that you can obtain even what is impossible from God." However, his proposal was carried out — the three fasted, and Columba passed the whole night in prayer without ever closing his eyes. Next morning he said to the woman, with the gentle irony which he so often employed, "Tell me to what convent are you bound after your yesterday's projects?" "To none," said the woman; "my heart has been changed tonight. I know not how I have passed

from hate to love." And from that day until the hour of her death she lived in a tender and faithful union with her husband.

But Columba fortunately was connected with other households more united, where he could admire the happiness of his friends without feeling himself compelled to make peace. From his sanctuary at Iona his habitual solicitude and watchful sympathy followed them to their last hour. One day he was alone with one of the Saxons whom he had converted and attached to his community, and who was the baker of the monks; while this stranger prepared his bread, he heard the abbot say, looking up to heaven — "Oh! happy, happy woman! She goes into heaven with a guard of angels." Exactly a year after, the abbot and the Saxon baker were again together. "I see the woman," said Columba, "of whom I spoke to thee last year coming down from heaven to meet the soul of her husband, who has just died. She contends with powerful enemies for that dear soul; by the help of the holy angels she gains the day, she triumphs, because her goodman has been a just man — and the two are united again in the home of everlasting consolation."

This vision was preceded and followed by many others of the same description, in which the blessed death of many bishops and monks, his friends and contemporaries, were announced to him. They seem to have been intended to give him a glimpse of that heaven into which God was shortly to call him. Nor was it only at Iona that these supernatural graces were accorded to him, for he did not limit his unwearied activity to the narrow enclosure of that island, any more in the decline of his life than in the earlier period of his emigration. Up to old age he continued to have sufficient strength and courage to return to the most northern regions where he had preached the faith to the Picts; and it was in one of his last missionary journeys, when upon the banks of Loch Ness, to the north of the great line of waters which cuts Caledonia in two, at a distance of fifty leagues from Iona, that he was permitted to see the angels come to meet the soul of the old Pict, who, faithful during all his life to the law of nature, received baptism, and with it eternal salvation, from the great missionary's hands.

At this period the angels, whom he saw carrying to heaven the soul of the just and penitent, and aiding the believing wife to make an entrance there for her husband, continually appeared to him and hovered about him. Making all possible allowance for the exaggerations and fables which the proverbial credulity of Celtic nations have added to the legends of their saints, no Christian will be tempted to deny the verified narratives which bear witness, in Columba's case as well as in that of the other saints, to supernatural appearances which enriched his life, and especially his old age. Those wonderful soldiers of virtue and Christian truth needed such miracles to help them to support the toils and live through the trials of their dangerous mission. They required to ascend from time to time into celestial regions to find strength there for their continual struggle against all obstacles and perils and continually renewed temptations — and to learn to brave the enmities, the savage manners, and blind hatreds of the nations whom it was the aim of their lives to set free.

"Let no one follow me today," Columba said one morning, with unusual severity, to the assembled community : "I would be alone in the little plain to the west of the isle." He was obeyed; but a brother, more curious and less obedient than the rest,

followed him far off, and saw him, erect and motionless, with his hands and his eyes raised to heaven, standing on a sandy hillock, where he was soon surrounded by a crowd of angels, who came to bear him company and to talk with him. The hill has to this day retained the name of the Angels' Hill. 1 And the citizens of the celestial country, as they were called at Iona, came often to console and strengthen their future companion during the long winter nights which he passed in prayer in some retired corner, voluntarily exposed to all the torments of sleeplessness and cold.

For as he approached the end of his career this great servant of God consumed his strength in vigils, fasts, and dangerous macerations. His life, which had been so full of generous struggles, hard trial, and toil in the service of God and his neighbour, seemed to him neither full enough nor pure enough. In proportion as the end drew near he redoubled his austerities and mortifications. Every night, according to one of his biographers, he plunged into cold water and remained there for the time necessary to recite an entire psalter. One day, when, bent by age, he sought, perhaps in a neighbouring island, a retirement still more profound than usual, in which to pray, he saw a poor woman gathering wild herbs and even nettles, who told him that her poverty was such as to forbid her all other food. Upon which the old abbot reproached himself bitterly that he had not yet come to that point. "See," he said, "this poor woman, who finds her miserable life worth the trouble of being thus prolonged; and we, who profess to deserve heaven by our austerities, we live in luxury!" When he went back to his monastery he gave orders that he should be served with no other food than the wild and bitter herbs with which the beggar supported her existence; and he severely reproved his minister, Diarmid, who had come from Ireland with him, when he, out of compassion for his master's old age and weakness, threw a little butter into the caldron in which this miserable fare was cooked.

The celestial light which was soon to receive him began already to surround him like a garment or a shroud. His monks told each other that the solitary cell in the isle of Himba, near Iona, which he had built for himself, was lighted up every night by a great light, which could be seen through the chinks of the door and keyhole, while the abbot chanted unknown canticles till daybreak. After having remained there three days and nights without food, he came out, full of joy at having discovered the mysterious meaning of several texts of Holy Scripture, which up to that time he had not understood. When he returned to Iona to die, continuing faithful to his custom of spending a great part of the night in prayer, he bore about with him everywhere the miraculous light which already surrounded him like the nimbus of his holiness. The entire community was involuntarily agitated by the enjoyment of that foretaste of paradise. One winter's night, a young man who was destined to succeed Columba as fourth abbot of Iona remained in the church while the others slept : all at once he saw the abbot come in preceded by a golden light which fell from the heights of the vaulted roof, and lighted all the corners of the building, even including the little lateral oratory where the young monk hid himself in alarm. All who passed during the night before the church, while their old abbot prayed, were startled by this light, which dazzled them like lightning. Another of the young monks, whose education was specially directed by the abbot himself, resolved to ascertain whether the same illumination existed in Columba's cell; and notwithstanding that he had been expressly forbidden to do so, he got up in the

night and went groping to the door of the cell to look in, but fled immediately, blinded by the light that filled it.

These signs, which were the forerunners of his deliverance, showed themselves for several years towards the end of his life, which he believed and hoped was nearer its termination than it proved to be. But this remnant of existence, from which he sighed to be liberated, was held fast by the filial love of his disciples, and the ardent prayers of so many new Christian communities founded or ministered to by his zealous care. Two of his monks, one Irish and one Saxon, of the number of those whom he admitted to his cell to help him in his labour or to execute his instructions, saw him one day change countenance, and perceived in his face a sudden expression of the most contrary emotions : first a beatific joy, which made him raise to heaven a look full of the sweetest and tenderest gratitude ; but a minute after this ray of supernatural joy gave place to an expression of heavy and profound sadness. The two spectators pressed him with questions which he refused to answer. At length they threw themselves at his knees and begged him, with tears, not to afflict them by hiding what had been revealed to him. "Dear children," he said to them, "I do not wish to afflict you. Know, then, that it is thirty years today since I began my pilgrimage in Caledonia. I have long prayed God to let my exile end with this thirtieth year, and to recall me to the heavenly country. When you saw me so joyous, it was because I could already see the angels who came to seek my soul. But all at once they stopped short, down there upon that rock at the farthest limit of the sea which surrounds our island, as if they would approach to take me, and could not. And, in truth, they could not, because the Lord has paid less regard to my ardent prayer than to that of the many churches which have prayed for me, and which have obtained, against my will, that I should still dwell in this body for four years. This is the reason of my sadness. But in four years I shall die without being sick; in four years, I know it and see it, they will come back, these holy angels, and I shall take my flight with them towards the Lord."

At the end of the four years thus fixed he arranged everything for his departure. It was the end of May, and it was his desire to take leave of the monks who worked in the fields in the only fertile part of Iona, the western side. His great age prevented him from walking, and he was drawn in a car by oxen. When he reached the labourers he said to them, "I greatly desired to die a month ago, on Easter-day, and it was granted to me; but I preferred to wait a little longer, in order that the festival might not be changed into a day of sadness for you." And when all wept he did all he could to console them. Then turning towards the east, from the top of his rustic chariot he blessed the island and all its inhabitants — a blessing which, according to local tradition, was like that of St. Patrick in Ireland, and drove, from that day, all vipers and venomous creatures out of the island.

On Saturday in the following week he went, leaning on his faithful attendant Diarmid, to bless the granary of the monastery. Seeing there two great heaps of corn, the fruit of the last harvest, he said, "I see with joy that my dear monastic family, if I must leave them this year, will not at least suffer from famine." "Dear father," said Diarmid, "why do you thus sadden us by talking of your death?" "Ah, well," said the abbot, "here is a little secret which I will tell thee if thou wilt swear on thy knees to tell no one before I am gone. Today is Saturday, the day which the Holy Scriptures call Sabbath or



rest. And it will be truly my day of rest, for it shall be the last of my laborious life. This very night I shall enter into the path of my fathers. Thou weepst, dear Diarmid, but console thyself; it is my Lord Jesus Christ who deigns to invite me to rejoin Him; it is He who has revealed to me that my summons will come to-night." Then he left the storehouse to return to the monastery, but when he had gone half-way stopped to rest at a spot which is still marked by one of the ancient crosses of Iona. At this moment an ancient and faithful servant, the old white horse which had been employed to carry milk from the dairy daily to the monastery, came towards him. He came and put his head upon his master's shoulder, as if to take leave of him. The eyes of the old horse had an expression so pathetic that they seemed to be bathed in tears. Diarmid would have sent the animal away, but the good old man forbade him. "The horse loves me," he said, "leave him with me; let him weep for my departure. The Creator has revealed to this poor animal what He has hidden from thee, a reasonable man." Upon which, still caressing the faithful brute, he gave him a last blessing. When this was done he used the remnants of his strength to climb to the top of a hillock from which he could see all the isle and the monastery, and there lifted up his hands to pronounce a prophetic benediction on the sanctuary he had created. "This little spot, so small and low, shall be greatly honoured, not only by the Scots kings and people, but also by foreign chiefs and barbarous nations ; and it shall be venerated even by the saints of other Churches."

After this he went down to the monastery, entered his cell, and began to work for the last time. He was then occupied in transcribing the Psalter. When he had come to the 33rd Psalm and the verse, *Inquirentes aitem Dominum, non deficient omni bono*, he stopped short. "I must stop here," he said. "Baithen will write the rest." Baithen, as has been seen, was the steward of Iona, and was to become its abbot. After this the aged saint was present at the vigil service before Sunday in the church. When he returned to his cell he seated himself upon the naked stones which served the septuagenarian for bed and pillow, and which were shown for nearly a century near his tomb. Then he entrusted to his only companion a last message for the community : "Dear children, this is what I command with my last words — let peace and charity, a charity mutual and sincere, reign always among you! If you act thus, following the example of the saints, God who strengthens the just will help you, and I, who shall be near Him, will intercede on your behalf, and you shall obtain of Him not only all the necessities of the present life in sufficient quantity, but still more the rewards of eternal life, reserved for those who keep His law."

These were his last words. As soon as the midnight bell had rung for the matins of the Sunday festival, he arose and hastened before the other monks to the church, where he knelt down before the altar. Diarmid followed him, but as the church was not yet lighted he could only find him by groping and crying in a plaintive voice, "Where art thou, my father?" He found Columba lying before the altar, and, placing himself at his side, raised the old abbot's venerable head upon his knees. The whole community soon arrived with lights, and wept as one man at the sight of their dying father. Columba opened his eyes once more, and turned them to his children on either side with a look full of serene and radiant joy. Then with the aid of Diarmid he raised, as best he might, his right hand to bless them all; his hand dropped, the last sigh came from his lips ; and

his face remained calm and sweet like that of a man who in his sleep had seen a vision of heaven.

Such was the life and death of the first great apostle of Great Britain. We have lingered, perhaps, too long on the grand form of this monk, rising up before us from the midst of the Hebridean sea, who, for the third part of a century, spread over those sterile isles, and gloomy distant shores, a pure and fertilising light. In a confused age and unknown region he displayed all that is greatest and purest, and, it must be added, most easily forgotten in human genius : the gift of ruling souls by ruling himself. To select the most marked and graphic incidents from the general tissue of his life, and those most fit to unfold that which attracts the modern reader — that is, his personal character and influence upon contemporary events — from a world of minute details having almost exclusive reference to matters supernatural or ascetical, has been no easy task. But when this is done, it becomes comparatively easy to represent to ourselves the tall old man, with his fine and regular features, his sweet and powerful voice, the Irish tonsure high on his shaven head, and his long locks falling behind, clothed with his monastic cowl, and seated at the prow of his coracle, steering through the misty archipelago and narrow lakes of the north of Scotland, and bearing from isle to isle, and from shore to shore, light, justice, and truth, the life of the conscience and of the soul.

One loves above all to study the depths of that soul, and the changes which had taken place in it since its youth. No more than his namesake of Luxeuil, the monastic apostle of Burgundy, was he of the Picts and Scots a Columba. Gentleness was of all qualities precisely the one in which he failed the most. At the beginning of his life the future abbot of Iona showed himself still more than the abbot of Luxeuil to be animated by all the vivacities of his age, associated with all the struggles and discords of his race and country. He was vindictive, passionate, bold, a man of strife, born a soldier rather than a monk, and known, praised, and blamed as a soldier — so that even in his lifetime he was invoked in fight; and continued a soldier, *insulaniis miles*, even upon the island rock from which he rushed forth to preach, convert, enlighten, reconcile, and reprimand both princes and nations, men and women, laymen and clerks.

He was at the same time full of contradictions and contrasts — at once tender and irritable, rude and courteous, ironical and compassionate, caressing and imperious, grateful and revengeful — led by pity as well as by wrath, ever moved by generous passions, and among all passions fired to the very end of his life by two which his countrymen understand the best, the love of poetry and the love of country. Little inclined to melancholy when he had once surmounted the great sorrow of his life, which was his exile; little disposed even, save towards the end, to contemplation or solitude, but trained by prayer and austerities to triumphs of evangelical exposition; despising rest, untiring in mental and manual toil; born for eloquence, and gifted with a voice so penetrating and sonorous that it was thought of afterwards as one of the most miraculous gifts that he had received of God; frank and loyal, original and powerful in his words as in his actions — in cloister and mission and parliament, on land and on sea, in Ireland as in Scotland, always swayed by the love of God and of his neighbour, whom it was his will and pleasure to serve with an impassioned uprightness. Such was Columba. Besides the monk and missionary there was in him the makings of a sailor, soldier, poet, and orator. To us, looking back, he appears a personage as singular as he is

lovable, in whom, through all the mists of the past and all the cross-lights of legend, the man may still be recognised under the saint — a man capable and worthy of the supreme honour of holiness, since he knew how to subdue his inclinations, his weakness, his instincts, and his passions, and to transform them into docile and invincible weapons for the salvation of souls and the glory of God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPIRITUAL DESCENDANTS OF ST. COLUMBA

The influence of Columba, as of all men really superior to their fellows, and especially of the saints, far from ceasing with his life, went on increasing after his death. The supernatural character of his virtues, the miracles which were attributed to his intercession with God, had for a long time left scarcely any doubt as to his sanctity. It was universally acknowledged after his death, and has since remained uncontested among all the Celtic races. The visions and miracles which went to prove it would fill a volume. On the night, and at the very hour, of his death, a holy old man in a distant monastery in Ireland, one of those whom the Celtic chroniclers call the victorious soldiers of Christ, saw with the eyes of his mind the isle of Iona, which he had never visited, flooded with miraculous light, and all the vault of heaven full of an innumerable army of shining angels, who went, singing celestial canticles, to bring away the holy soul of the great missionary. Upon the banks of a river, in Columba's native land, another holy monk, while occupied with several others in fishing, saw, as also did his companions, the sky lighted up by a pillar of fire, which rose from earth to the highest heaven, and disappeared only after lighting up the whole scene with a radiance as of the sun at noon.

Thus began the long succession of wonders by which the worship of Columba's holy memory is characterised among the Celtic races. This worship, which seemed at one time concentrated in one of the smallest islets of the Atlantic, extended in less than a century after his death, not only throughout all Ireland and Great Britain, but into Gaul, Spain, and Italy, and even to Rome, which some legends, insufficiently verified, describe him as having visited during the last years of his life, in order to renew the bonds of respectful affection and spiritual union which are supposed to have united him to the great pope St. Gregory, who ascended the pontifical throne seven years before the death of the Hebridean apostle.

It was expected that all the population of the neighbouring districts would hasten to Iona and fill the island during the funeral of the great abbot; and this had even been intimated to him before he died. But he had prophesied that the fact would be otherwise, and that his monastic family alone should perform the ceremonies of his burial. And it happened, accordingly, during the three days which were occupied with those rites, that a violent wind made it impossible for any boat to reach the island. Thus this friend and counsellor of princes and nations, this great traveller, this apostle of an entire nation which, during a thousand years, was to honour him as its patron saint, lay solitary upon his bier, in the little church of his island retirement; and his burial was witnessed only by his monks. But his grave, though it was not dug in presence of an enthusiastic crowd, as had been looked for, was not the less visited and surrounded by floods of successive generations, who for more than two hundred years crowded there to venerate the relics of the holy missionary, and to drink the pure waters of his doctrine and example at the fountainhead.

The remains of Columba rested here in peace up to the ninth century, until the moment when Iona, like all the British Isles, fell a prey to the ravages of the Danes. These cruel and insatiable pirates seem to have been attracted again and again by the wealth of the offerings that were lavished upon the tomb of the apostle of Caledonia. They burnt the monastery for the first time in 801 ; again in 805, when it contained only so small a number as sixty-four monks ; and finally, a third time, in 877. To save from their rapacity a treasure which no pious liberality could replace, the body of St. Columba was carried to Ireland. And it is the unvarying tradition of Irish annals that it was deposited finally at Down, in an episcopal monastery not far from the western shore of the island, between the great monastery of Bangor on the north, from which came Columbanus of Luxeuil, and Dublin, the future capital of Ireland, to the south. There already lay the relics of Patrick and of Bridget ; and thus was verified one of the prophecies in Irish verse attributed to Columba, in which he says —

"They shall bury me first at Iona ;  
But, by the will of the living God,  
It is at Dun that I shall rest in my grave,  
With Patrick and with Bridget the immaculate.  
Three bodies in one grave."

The three names have remained since that time inseparably united in the dauntless heart and fervent tenacious memory of the Irish people. It is to Columba that the oppressed and impoverished Irish seem to have appealed with the greatest confidence in the first English conquest in the twelfth century. The conquerors themselves feared him, not without reason, for they had learned to know his vengeance. John de Courcy, a warlike Anglo-Norman baron, he who was called the Conqueror of Ulster, as William of Normandy of England, carried always with him the volume of Columba's prophecies; and when the bodies of the three saints were found in his new possessions in 1180, he

prayed the Holy See to celebrate their translation by the appointment of a solemn festival. Richard Strongbow, the famous Earl of Pembroke, who had been the first chief of the invasion, died of an ulcer in the foot which had been inflicted upon him, according to the Irish narrative, at the prayer of St. Bridget, St. Columba, and other saints, whose churches he had destroyed. He himself said, when at the point of death, that he saw the sweet and noble Bridget lift her arm to pierce him to the heart. Hugh de Lacy, another Anglo-Norman chief of great lineage, perished at Durrow, "by the vengeance of Columb-cille", says a chronicler, while he was engaged in building a castle to the injury of the abbey which Columba had founded, and loved so much. A century after, this vengeance was still popularly dreaded; and some English pirates, who had pillaged his church in the island of Inchcolm, having sunk like lead in sight of land, their countrymen said that he should be called, not St. Columba, but *St. Quhalme* — that is to say, the saint of Sudden Death.

A nation has special need to believe in these vengeance of God, always so tardy and infrequent, and which, in Ireland, above all, have scarcely sufficed to light with a fugitive gleam the long night of the conquest, with all its iniquities and crimes. Happy are the people among whom the everlasting justice of the appeal against falsehood and evil is placed under the shadow of God and the saints; and blessed also the saints who have left to posterity the memory of their indignation against all injustice.

As long as the body of Columba remained in his island grave, Iona, consecrated henceforward by the life and death of so great a Christian, continued to be the most venerated sanctuary of the Celts. For two centuries she was the nursery of bishops, the centre of education, the asylum of religious knowledge, the point of union among the British isles, the capital and necropolis of the Celtic race. Seventy kings or princes were buried there at the feet of Columba, faithful to a kind of traditional law, the recollection of which has been consecrated by Shakespeare. During these two centuries, she retained an uncontested supremacy over all the monasteries and churches of Caledonia, as over those of half Ireland; and we shall hereafter see how she disputed with the Roman missionaries the authority over the Anglo-Saxons of the north. Later still, if we are permitted to follow this narrative so far, at the end of the eleventh century, we shall see her ruins raised up and restored to monastic life by one of the most noble and touching heroines of Scotland and Christendom, the holy Queen Margaret, the gentle and noble exile, so beautiful, so wise, so magnanimous and beloved, who used her influence over Malcolm her husband only for the regeneration of the Church in his kingdom, and whose dear memory is worthy of being associated in the heart of the Scottish people with that of Columba, since she obtained by his intercession that grace of maternity which has made her the origin of the dynasty which still reigns over the British Isles.

Let us here reconsider the privilege which gave to the abbots of Iona a sort of jurisdiction over the bishops of the neighbouring districts — a privilege unique, and which would even appear fabulous, if it were not attested by two of the most trustworthy historians of the time, the Venerable Bede and Notker of St. Gall. In order to explain this strange anomaly it must be understood that in Celtic countries, especially in Ireland and in Scotland, ecclesiastical organisation rested, in the first place, solely upon conventual life. Dioceses and parishes were regularly constituted only in the twelfth century. Bishops, it is true, existed from the beginning, but either without any clearly



fixed territorial jurisdiction, or incorporated as a necessary but subordinate part of the ecclesiastical machinery with the great monastic bodies ; and such was specially the case in Ireland. It is for this reason that the bishops of the Celtic Church, as has been often remarked, are so much overshadowed not only by great founders and superiors of monasteries, such as Columba, but even by simple abbots. Nevertheless, it is evident that during the life of Columba, far from assuming any superiority whatever over the bishops who were his contemporaries, he showed them the utmost respect, even to such a point that he would not celebrate mass in the presence of a bishop who had come, humbly disguised as a simple convert, to visit the community of Iona. At the same time the abbots scrupulously abstained from all usurpation of the rank, privileges, or functions reserved to bishops, to whom they had recourse for all the ordinations celebrated in the monasteries. But as most of the bishops had been educated in monastic schools, they retained an affectionate veneration for their cradle, which, in regard to Iona especially, from which we shall see so many bishops issue, might have translated itself into a sort of prolonged submission to the conventual authority of their former superior. Five centuries later the bishops who came from the great French abbeys of Cluny and Citeaux took pleasure in professing the same filial subordination to their monastic birthplace.

The uncontested primacy of Iona over the bishops who had there professed religion, or who came there to be consecrated after their election, may be besides explained by the influence exercised by Columba over both clergy and people of the districts evangelised by him — an influence which was only increased by his death.

Did the great abbot of Iona, like his namesake of Luxeuil, leave to his disciples a monastic rule of his own, distinct from that of other Celtic monasteries? This has been often asserted, but without positive proof — and in any case no authentic text of such a document exists. That which bears the name of the Rule of Columb-kill, and which has been sometimes attributed to him, has no reference in any way to the cenobites of Iona, and is only applicable to hermits or recluses, who lived perhaps under his authority, but isolated, and who were always very numerous in Ireland.

A conscientious and attentive examination of all the monastic peculiarities which can be discovered in his biography reveals absolutely nothing in respect to observances or obligations different from the rules borrowed by all the religious communities of the sixth century from the traditions of the Fathers of the Desert. Such an examination brings out distinctly, in the first place, the necessity for a vow or solemn profession to prove the final admission of the monk into the community after a probation more or less prolonged ; and, in the second place, the absolute conformity of the monastic life of Columba and his monks to the precepts and rites of the Catholic Church in all ages. Authorities unquestionable and unquestioned demonstrate the existence of auricular confession, the invocation of saints, the universal faith in their protection and intervention in temporal affairs, the celebration of the mass, the real presence in the Eucharist, ecclesiastical celibacy, fasts and abstinences, prayer for the dead, the sign of the cross, and, above all, the assiduous and profound study of the Holy Scriptures. Thus the assumption made by certain writers of having found in the Celtic Church some sort of primitive Christianity not Catholic, crumbles to the dust; and the ridiculous but

inveterate prejudice which accuses our fathers of having ignored or interdicted the study of the Bible is once again proved to be without foundation.

As to the customs peculiar to the Irish Church, and which were afterwards the cause of so many tedious struggles with the Roman and Anglo-Saxon missionaries, no trace of them is to be discovered in the acts or words of Columba. There is no mention of the tiresome disputes about the tonsure, or even of the irregular celebration of Easter, except perhaps in a prophecy vaguely made by him on the occasion of a visit to Clonmacnoise, upon the discords which this difference of opinion in respect to Easter would one day excite in the Scotie Church.

If Columba made no rule calculated, like that of St. Benedict, to last for centuries, he nevertheless left to his disciples a spirit of life, of union, and of discipline, which was sufficient to maintain in one great body, for several centuries after his death, not only the monks of Iona, but the numerous communities which had gathered round them. This monastic body bore a noble name ; it was long called the Order of the Fair Company, and still longer the Family of Columb-kill. It was governed by abbots, who succeeded Columba as superiors of the community of Iona. These abbots proved themselves worthy of, and obtained from Bede, one of the most competent of judges, who began to write a hundred years after the death of Columba, a tribute of admiration without reserve, and even more striking than that which he gave to their founder : — "Whatever he may have been," said the Venerable Bede, with a certain shadow of Anglo-Saxon suspicion in respect to Celtic virtue and sanctity, "it is undeniable that he has left successors illustrious by the purity of their life, their great love of God, and their zeal for monastic order; and, although separated from us as to the observance of Easter, which is caused by their distance from all the rest of the world, ardently and closely devoted to the observance of those laws of piety and chastity which they have learned in the Old and New Testaments." These praises are justified by the great number of saints who have issued from the spiritual lineage of Columba; but they should be specially applied to his successors in the abbatial see of Iona, and, in the first place, to his first successor, whom he had himself pointed out, the holy and amiable Baithen, who was so worthy to be his lieutenant and friend, and could so well replace him. He survived Columba only three years, and died on the anniversary of his master's death. The cruel sufferings of his last illness did not prevent him from praying, writing, and teaching to his last hour. Baithen was, as has been said, the cousin-german of Columba, and almost all the abbots of Iona who succeeded him were of the same race.

The family spirit, or, to speak more truly, the clan spirit, always so powerful and active in Ireland, and which was so striking a feature in the character of Columba, had become a predominating influence in the monastic life of the Celtic Church. It was not precisely hereditary succession, since marriage was absolutely unknown among the regular clergy; but great influence was given to blood in the election of abbots, as in that of princes or military leaders. The nephew or cousin of the founder or superior of a monastery seemed the candidate pointed out by nature for the vacant dignity. Special reasons were necessary for breaking through this rule. Thus it is apparent that the eleven first abbots of Iona after Columba, proceeded, with the exception of one individual, from the same stock as himself, from the race of Tyrconnel, and were all descended from the same son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, the famous king of all Ireland. Every

great monastery became thus the centre and appanage of a family, or, to speak more exactly, of a clan, and was alike the school and the asylum of all the founder's kindred. At a later period a kind of succession, purely laic and hereditary, developed itself by the side of the spiritual posterity, and was invested with the possession of most of the monastic domains. These two lines of descendants, simultaneous but distinct, from the principal monastic founders, are distinguished in the historical genealogies of Ireland under the names of *ecclesiastica progenies* and of *plebilis progenies*. After the ninth century, in consequence of the relaxation of discipline, the invasion of married clerks, and the increasing value of land, the line of spiritual descent confounded itself more and more with that of natural inheritance, and there arose a crowd of abbots purely lay and hereditary, as proud of being the collateral descendants of a holy founder, as they were happy to possess the vast domains with which the foundation had been gradually enriched. This fatal abuse made its appearance also in France and Germany, but was less inveterate than in Ireland, where it still existed in the time of St. Bernard ; and in Scotland, where it lasted even after the Reformation.

It was never thus at Iona, where the abbatical succession was always perfectly regular and uninterrupted up to the invasions and devastations of the Danes at the commencement of the ninth century. From the time of those invasions the abbots of Iona began to occupy an inferior position. The radiant centre from which Christian civilisation had shone upon the British Isles grew dim. The headquarters of the communities united under the title of the Family or Order of Columh-kill, were transferred from Iona to one of the other foundations of the saint at Kells, in the centre of Ireland, where a successor of Columba, superior-general of the order, titular abbot of Iona, Armagh, or some other great Irish monastery, and bearing the distinctive title of Coarh, resided for three centuries more.

We have lingered too long over the great and touching figure of the saint whose life we have just recorded. And it now remains to us to throw a rapid glance at the influence which he exercised on all around him, and even upon posterity.

This influence is especially evident in the Irish Church, which seems to have been entirely swayed by his spirit, his successors, and his disciples, during the time which is looked upon as the Golden Age in its history, and which extends up to the period of the Danish invasions, at the end of the eighth century. During all this time the Irish Church, which continued, as from its origin, entirely monastic, seems to have been governed by the recollections or institutions of Columba. The words *Lex Columbcille* are found on many pages of its confused annals, and indicate sometimes the mass of traditions preserved by its monasteries, sometimes the tributes which the kings levied for the defence of the Church and country, while carrying through all Ireland the shrine which contained his relics. The continued influence of the great abbot of Iona was so marked, even in temporal affairs, that more than two centuries after his death, in 817, the monks of his order went solemnly to Tara, the ancient capital of Druidical Ireland, to excommunicate there the supreme monarch of the island, who had assassinated a prince of the family of their holy chief.

It has been said, and cannot be sufficiently repeated, that Ireland was then regarded by all Christian Europe as the principal centre of knowledge and piety. In the

shelter of its numberless monasteries a crowd of missionaries, doctors, and preachers were educated for the service of the Church and the propagation of the faith in all Christian countries. A vast and continual development of literary and religious effort is there apparent, superior to anything that could be seen in any other country of Europe. Certain arts — those of architecture, carving, metallurgy, as applied to the decoration of churches — were successfully cultivated, without speaking of music, which continued to flourish both among the learned and among the people. The classic languages — not only Latin, but Greek — were cultivated, spoken, and written with a sort of passionate pedantry, which shows at least how powerful was the sway of intellectual influences over these ardent souls. Their mania for Greek was even carried so far that they wrote the Latin of the church books in Hellenic characters. And in Ireland, more than anywhere else, each monastery was a school, and each school a workshop of transcription, from which day by day issued new copies of the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the primitive Church — copies which were dispersed through all Europe, and which are still to be found in Continental libraries. They may easily be recognised by the original and elegant character of their Irish writing, as also by the use of the alphabet common to all the Celtic races, and afterwards employed by the Anglo-Saxons, but to which in our day the Irish alone have remained faithful. Columba, as has been seen, had given an example of this unwearied labour to the monastic scribes : his example was continually followed in the Irish cloisters, where the monks did not entirely limit themselves to the transcription of Holy Scripture, but reproduced also Greek and Latin authors, sometimes in Celtic character, with gloss and commentary in Irish, like that Horace which modern learning has discovered in the library of Berne. These marvellous manuscripts, illuminated with incomparable ability and patience by the monastic family of Columba, excited, five hundred years later, the declamatory enthusiasm of a great enemy of Ireland, the Anglo-Norman historian, Gerald de Barry; and they still attract the attention of archaeologists and philologists of the highest fame.

Exact annals of the events of the time were also made out in all the monasteries. These annals replaced the chronicles of the bards; and so far as they have been preserved and already published, or are yet to be so, they now form the principal source of Irish history. Ecclesiastical records have naturally a greater place in them than civil history. They celebrate especially the memory of the saints, who have always been so numerous in the Irish Church, where each of the great communities can count a circle of holy men, issued from its bosom or attached to its confraternity. Under the name of *festilogy* (for martyrs were too little known in Ireland to justify the usual term of martyrology), this circle of biographies was the spiritual reading of the monks, and the familiar instruction of the surrounding people. Several of these festilogies are in verse, one of which, the most famous of all, is attributed to Angus, called the Culdee, a simple brother, miller of the monastery of Tallach. In this the principal saints of other countries find a place along with three hundred and sixty-five Irish saints, one for each day of the year, who are all celebrated with that pious and patriotic enthusiasm, at once poetical and moral, which burns so naturally in every Irish heart.

The name of Culdee leads us to point out in passing the absurd and widespread error which has made the Culdees be looked upon as a kind of monkish order, married and indigenous to the soil, which existed before the introduction of Christianity into

Ireland and Scotland by the Roman missionaries, and of whom the great abbot of Iona was the founder or chief. This opinion, propagated by learned Anglicans, and blindly copied by various French writers, is now universally acknowledged as false by sincere and competent judges. The Culdees, a sort of third order, attached to the regular monasteries, appeared in Ireland, as elsewhere, only in the ninth century, and had never anything more than a tritling connection with the Columban communities.

Still more striking, than the intellectual development of which the Irish monasteries were at this period the centre, is the prodigious activity displayed by the Irish monks in extending, and multiplying themselves over all the countries of Europe — here to create new schools and sanctuaries among nations already evangelised — there to carry the light of the Gospel, at peril of their lives, to the countries that were still pagan. We should run the risk of forestalling our future task if we did not resist the temptations of the subject, which would lead us to go faster than time, and to follow those armies of brave and untiring Celts, always adventurous and often heroic, into the regions where we shall perhaps one day find them again. Let us content ourselves with a simple list, which has a certain eloquence even in the dryness of its figures. Here is the number, probably very incomplete, given by an ancient writer, of the monasteries founded out of Ireland by Irish monks, led far from their country by the love of souls, and, no doubt, a little also by that love of travel which has always been one of their special distinctions : —

Thirteen in Scotland,  
Twelve in England,  
Seven in France,  
Twelve in Armorica,  
Seven in Lorraine,  
Ten in Alsatia,  
Sixteen in Bavaria,  
Fifteen in Khetia, Helvetia, and Allemania;

without counting many in Thuringia and upon the left bank of the Lower Rhine ;  
and, finally, six in Italy.

And that it may be fully apparent how great was the zeal and virtue of which those monastic colonies were at once the product and the centre, let us place by its side an analogous list of saints of Irish origin, whom the gratitude of nations converted, edified, and civilised by them, have placed upon their altars as patrons and founders of those churches whose foundations they watered with their blood:

A hundred and fifty (of whom thirty-six were martyrs) in Germany,



Forty-five (of whom six were martyrs) in Gaul,  
Thirty in Belgium,  
Thirteen in Italy,  
Eight, all martyrs, in Norway and Iceland.

In the after part of this narrative we shall meet many of the most illustrious, especially in Germany. Let us confine ourselves here to pointing out, among the thirteen Irish saints honoured with public veneration in Italy, him who is still invoked at the extremity of the peninsula as the patron of Tarento under the name of San Cataldo.

His name in Ireland was Cathal, and before he left his country to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and to become a bishop at Tarento, he had presided over the great monastic school of Lismore, in the south of Ireland. Thanks to his zeal and knowledge, this school had become a sort of university, to which he attracted an immense crowd of students, not only Irish, but foreigners, from Wales, England, France, and even from Germany. When their education was concluded, a portion of them remained to increase the already numerous communities in the holy and lettered city of Lismore; the others carried back with them to their different countries a recollection of the advantages which they owed to Ireland and her monks. For it is important to prove that, while Ireland sent forth her sons into all the regions of the then known world, numberless strangers hastened there to seat themselves at the feet of her doctors, and to find in that vast centre of faith and knowledge all the remnants of ancient civilisation which her insular position had permitted her to save from the flood of barbarous invasions.

The monasteries which gradually covered the soil of Ireland were thus the hostleries of a foreign emigration. Unlike the ancient Druidical colleges, they were open to all. The poor and the rich, the slave as well as the freeman, the child and the old man, had free access and paid nothing. It was not, then, only to the natives of Ireland that the Irish monasteries, occupied and ruled by the sons of Columba, confined the benefits of knowledge and of literary and religious education. They opened their door with admirable generosity to strangers from every country and of every condition; above all, to those who came from the neighbouring island, England, some to end their lives in an Irish cloister, some to search from house to house for books, and masters capable of explaining those books. The Irish monks received with kindness guests so greedy of instruction, and gave them both books and masters, the food of the body and the food of the soul, without demanding any recompense. The Anglo-Saxons, who were afterwards to repay this teaching with ingratitude so cruel, were of all nations the one which derived most profit from it. From the seventh to the eleventh century English students flocked into Ireland, and for four hundred years the monastic schools of the island maintained the great reputation which brought so many successive generations to dip deeply there into the living waters of knowledge and of faith.

This devotion to knowledge and generous munificence towards strangers, this studious and intellectual life, nourished into being by the sheltering warmth of faith, shone with all the more brightness amid the horrible confusion and bloody

disasters which signalise, in so far as concerned temporal affairs, the Golden Age of ecclesiastical history in Ireland, even before the sanguinary invasions of the Danes at the end of the eighth century. It has been said with justice that war and religion have been in all ages the two great passions of Ireland, and it must be allowed that war seems almost always to have carried the day over religion, and that religion did not prevent war from degenerating too often into massacres and assassinations. It is true that after the eighth century there are fewer kings murdered by their successors than in the period between St. Patrick and St. Columba; it is true that three or four of these kings lived long enough to have the time to go and expiate their sins as monks at Armagh or Iona. But it is not less true that the annals of the monastic family of Columba present to us at each line with mournful laconism a spectacle which absolutely contradicts the flattering pictures which have been drawn of the peace which Ireland should have enjoyed. Almost every year, such words as the following are repeated with cruel brevity :

Bellum.

Bellum lacrymabile.

Belum magnum.

Vastatio

Spoliatio

Violatio.

Obsessio

Strages Magna.

Jugulatio.

And above all, *Jugulatio*. It is the word which returns oftenest, and in which seems to be summed up the destiny of those unhappy princes and people.

Such an enumeration should give rise to the reflection, what this wild tree of Celtic nature would have been without the monastic graft. We can thus perceive with what ferocious natures Columba and his disciples had to do. If, notwithstanding the preaching of the monks, a state of affairs so barbarous continued to exist, what might it have been had the Gospel never been preached to those savages, and if the monks had not been in the midst of them like a permanent incarnation of the Spirit of God?

The monks were at the same time neither less inactive nor more spared than the women, who fought and perished in the wars precisely like the men, up to the time when the most illustrious of Columba's successors delivered them from that terrible bondage. A single incident drawn from the sanguinary chaos of the period will suffice at once to paint the always atrocious habits of those Celtic Christians, and the always beneficent influence of monastic authority. A hundred years after the death of Columba, his biographer and ninth successor, Adamnan, was crossing a plain, carrying his old mother on his back, when they saw two bands fighting, and in the midst of the battle a

woman dragging another woman after her, whose breast she had pierced with an iron hook. At this horrible spectacle the abbot's mother seated herself on the ground, and said to him, "I will not leave this spot till thou hast promised me to have women exempted for ever from this horror, and from every battle and expedition." He gave her his word, and he kept it. At the next national assembly of Tara, he proposed and carried a law which is inscribed in the annals of Ireland as the Law of Adamnan, or *Law of the Innocents*, and which for ever freed the Irish women from the obligation of military service and all its homicidal consequences.

At the same time, nothing was more common in Ireland than the armed intervention of the monks in civil wars, or in the struggles between different communities. We may be permitted to believe that the spiritual descendants of Columba reckoned among them more than one monk of character as warlike as their great ancestor, and that there were as many monastic actors as victims in these desperate conflicts. Two centuries after Columba, two hundred monks of his abbey at Durrow perished in a battle with the neighbouring monks of Clonmacnoise; and the old annalists of Ireland speak of a battle which took place in 816, at which eight hundred monks of Ferns were killed. The Irish religious had not given up either the warlike humour or the dauntless courage of their race.

Nor is it less certain that the studious fervour and persevering patriotism which were such marked features in the character of Columba remained the inalienable inheritance of his monastic posterity — an inheritance which continued up to the middle ages, to the time of that famous statute of Kilkenny, which is an ineffaceable monument of the ferocious arrogance of the English conquerors, even before the Reformation. This statute, after having denounced every marriage between the two races as an act of high treason, went so far as to exclude all native Irish from the monasteries — from those same monasteries which Irishmen alone had founded and occupied for eight centuries, and where, before and after Columba, they had afforded a generous hospitality to the British fugitives and to the victorious Saxons.

But we must not permit ourselves to linger on the Irish coasts. We shall soon again meet her generous and intrepid sons, always the first in the field, and the most ready to expose themselves to danger, among the apostles and propagators of monastic institutions, upon the banks of the Scheldt, the Rhine, and the Danube, where also they were eclipsed and surpassed by the Anglo-Saxons, but where their names, forgotten in Ireland, still shine with a pure and beneficent light.

The influence of Columba, so universal, undeniable, and enduring in his native island, should not have been less so in his adopted country — in that Caledonia which became more and more an Irish or Scotie colony, and thus merited the name of Scotland, which it retained. Notwithstanding, his work has perhaps left fewer authentic traces there. All unite in attributing to him the conversion of the Northern Picts, and the introduction or re-establishment of the faith among the Picts of the South and the Scots of the West. It is also pretty generally agreed to date from his times — even though there is no evidence of their direct subordination to Iona — the great monasteries of Old Melrose, of Abercorn, Tynninghame, and Coldingham, situated between the Forth and the Tweed, and which afterwards became the centres of Christian extension among the

Saxons of Northumbria. Further north, but still upon the east coast, the round towers which are still to be seen at Brechin and Abernethy bear witness to their Irish origin, and consequently to the influence of Columba, who was the first and principal Irish missionary in these districts. The same may be said of those primitive and lowly constructions, built with long and large stones laid upon each other, without cement, which are to be found at St. Kilda and other Hebridean isles, and also upon certain points of the neighbouring shore, resembling exactly in form the deserted monasteries which are so numerous in the isles of western Ireland. Another relic of the primitive Church is found in the caves, hollowed out or enlarged by the hand of a man, in the cliffs or mountains of the interior, inhabited of old, as were the grotts of Subiaco and Marmoutier, and as the caves of Meteores in Albania are still, by hermits, or sometimes even by bishops (as St Woloc, St. Regulus'). Kentigern, the apostle of Strathclyde, appears to us in the legend at the mouth of his episcopal cave, which was hollowed out in the side of a cliff, and where the people looked at him from afar with respectful curiosity, while he studied the direction of the storms at sea, and breathed in with pleasure the first breezes of the spring. This bishop, Welsh by birth, has already been mentioned in connection with the principality of Wales, where, as we have already seen, he founded an immense monastery during an exile, the cause of which it is impossible to ascertain, but which was the occasion of a relapse into idolatry among his diocesans. The district of Strathclyde or Cumbria, on the west coasts of Britain, from the mouth of the Clyde to that of the Mersey — that is to say, from Glasgow to Liverpool — was occupied by a mingled race of Britons and Scots, whose capital was Al-Cluid, now Dumbarton. A prince called Roderick (Kydderch Haël), whose mother was Irish, and who had been baptized by an Irish monk, hastened, when the authority fell into his hands, to recall Kentigern, who returned, bringing with him a hive of Welsh monks, and established definitively the seat of his apostleship at Glasgow, where Ninian had preceded him nearly a century before without leaving any lasting traces of his passage. Kentigern, more fortunate, established upon the site of a burying-ground consecrated by Ninian the first foundation of the magnificent cathedral which still bears his name.

It was consecrated by an Irish bishop, brought from Ireland for the purpose, and who celebrated that ceremony without the assistance of other bishops, according to Celtic customs. Kentigern collected round him numerous disciples, all learned in holy literature, all working with their hands, and possessing nothing as individuals — a true monastic community. He distinguished himself during all his episcopate by his efforts to bring back to the faith the Picts of Galloway, which formed part of the kingdom of Strathclyde; and afterwards by numerous missions and monastic foundations throughout all Albyn — a name which was then given to midland Scotland. His disciples penetrated even to the Orkney Isles, where they must have met with the missionaries of Iona.

The salutary and laborious activity of Kentigern must often have encroached upon the regions which were specially within the sphere of Columba. But the generous heart of Columba was inaccessible to jealousy. He was besides the personal friend of Kentigern and of King Roderick. The fame of the Bishop of Strathclyde's apostolic labours drew him from his isle to do homage to his rival. He arrived from Iona with a great train of monks, whom he arranged in three companies at the moment of their entrance into Glasgow. Kentigern distributed in the same way the numerous monks who

surrounded him in his episcopal monastery, and whom he led out to meet the abbot of Iona. He divided them, according to their age, into three bands, the youngest of whom marched first; then those who had reached the age of manhood ; and, last of all, the old and grey-haired, among whom he himself took his place. They all chanted the anthem *In viis Domini magna est gloria Domini, et via pistomm facta est : et iter sanctorum praeparatum est*. The monks of Iona, on their side, chanted in choir the versicle, *Ibunt sancti de virtute in virtutem : videbitur Deus eorum in Sion*. From each side echoed the Alleluia; and it was to the sound of those words of Holy Scripture, chanted in Latin by the Celtic monks of Wales and Ireland, that the two apostles of the Picts and Scots met at what had been the extreme boundary of the Roman Empire and limit of the power of the Caesars, and upon a soil henceforth for ever freed from paganism and idolatry. They embraced each other tenderly, and passed several days in intimate and friendly intercourse.

The historian who has preserved for us the account of this interview does not conceal a less edifying incident. He confesses that some robbers had joined themselves to the following of the abbot of Iona, and that they took advantage of the general enthusiasm to steal a ram from the bishop's flock. They were soon taken; but Kentigern pardoned them. Columba and his fellow-apostle exchanged their pastoral cross before they parted, in token of mutual affection. Another annalist describes them as living together for six months in the monastery which Columba had just founded at Dunkeld, and together preaching the faith to the inhabitants of Athol and the mountainous regions inhabited by the Picts.

I know not how far we may put faith in another narrative of the same author, which seems rather borrowed from the Gallo-Breton epic of Tristan and Iseult than from monastic legend, but which has nevertheless remained Kentigern's most popular title to fame. The wife of King Koderick, led astray by a guilty passion for a knight of her husband's court, had the weakness to bestow upon him a ring which had been given to her by the king. When Roderick was out hunting with this knight, the two took refuge on the banks of the Clyde during the heat of the day, and the knight, falling asleep, unwittingly stretched out his hand, upon which the king saw the ring which he had given to the queen as a token of his love. It was with difficulty that he restrained himself from killing the knight on the spot; but he subdued his rage, and contented himself by taking the ring from his finger and throwing it into the river, without awakening the guilty sleeper. When he had returned to the town he demanded his ring from the queen, and, as she could not produce it, threw her into prison, and gave orders for her execution. She obtained, however, a delay of three days, and having in vain sought the ring from the knight to whom she had given it, she had recourse to the protection of St. Kentigern. The good pastor knew or divined all — the ring, found in a salmon which he had caught in the Clyde, was already in his hands. He sent it to the queen, who showed it to her husband, and thus escaped the punishment which awaited her. Roderick even asked her pardon on his knees, and offered to punish her accusers. From this, however, she dissuaded him, and, hastening to Kentigern, confessed her fault to him, and was commanded to pass the rest of her life in penitence. It is for this reason that the ancient effigies of the apostle of Strathclyde represent him as holding always the episcopal cross in one hand, and in the other a salmon with a ring in its mouth.



But neither Keutigern, whose labours can scarcely be said to have survived him, nor Columba, whose influence upon the Picts and Scots was so powerful and lasting, exercised any direct or efficacious action upon the Anglo-Saxons, who became stronger and more formidable from day to day, and whose ferocious incursions threatened the Caledonian tribes no less than the Britons. It is apparent, however, that the great abbot of Iona did not share the repugnance, which had hardened into a system of repulsion, of the Welsh clergy for the Saxon race : express mention, on the contrary, is made in the most authentic documents connected with his history, of Saxon monks, who had been admitted into the community of Iona. One of them, for instance, had the office of baker there, and was reckoned among Columba's intimates. But nothing indicates that these Saxons, who were enrolled under the authority of Columba, exercised any influence from thence upon their countrymen. On the contrary, while the Scotie-Briton missionaries spread over all the corners of Caledonia, and while Columba and his disciples carried the light of the Gospel into the northern districts where it had never penetrated, the Christian faith and the Catholic Church languished and gave up the ghost in the southern part of the island under the ruins heaped up everywhere by the Saxon conquest.

Paganism and barbarism, vanquished by the Gospel in the Highlands of the north, again arose and triumphed in the south — in the most populous, accessible, and flourishing districts — throughout all that country, which was destined hereafter to play so great a part in the world, and which already began to call itself England. From 569 to 586 — ten years before the death of Columba, and at the period when his authority was best established and most powerful in the north — the last champions of Christian Britain were finally cast out beyond the Severn, while at the same time new bands of Anglo-Saxons in the north, driving back the Picts to the other side of the Tweed, and crossing the Humber to the south, founded the future kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria. It is true that at a later period the sons of Columba carried the Gospel to those Northumbrians and Mercians. But at the end of the sixth century, after a hundred and fifty years of triumphant invasions and struggles, the Saxons had not yet encountered in any of the then Christian, or at least converted nations (Britons, Scots, and Picts), which they had assailed, fought, and vanquished, either missionaries disposed to announce the good news to them, nor priests capable of maintaining the precious nucleus of faith among the conquered races. In 586 the two last bishops of conquered Britain, those of London and York, abandoned their churches and took refuge in the mountains of Wales, carrying with them the sacred vessels and holy relics which they had been able to save from the rapacity of the idolaters. Other husbandmen were then necessary. From whence were they to come? From the same inextinguishable centre, whence light had been brought to the Irish by Patrick, and to the Britons and Scots by Palladius, Ninian, and Germain.

And already they are here! At the moment when Columba approached the term of his long career in his northern isle, a year before his death, the envoys of Gregory the Great left Rome, and landed, where Caesar had landed, upon the English shore.

**BOOK X**

**ST. AUGUSTIN OF CANTERBURY AND THE ROMAN MISSIONARIES  
IN ENGLAND, 597-633.**

**CHAPTER I**

**MISSION OF ST. AUGUSTIN**

Who then were the Anglo-Saxons, upon whom so many efforts were concentrated, and whose conquest is ranked, not without reason, among the most fruitful and most happy that the Church has ever accomplished? Of all the Germanic tribes, the most stubborn, intrepid, and independent, this people seem to have transplanted with themselves into the great island which owes to them its name, the genius of the Germanic race, in order that it might bear on this predestined soil its richest and most abundant fruits. The Saxons brought with them a language, a character, and institutions stamped with a strong and invincible originality. Language, character, institutions, have triumphed, in their essential features, over the vicissitudes of time and fortune — have outlived all ulterior conquests, as well as all foreign influences, and, plunging their vigorous roots into the primitive soil of Celtic Britain, still exist at the indestructible foundation of the social edifice of England. Different from the Franks and Goths, who suffered themselves to be speedily neutralised or absorbed in Gaul, Italy, and Spain by the native elements, and still more by the remains of the Roman Decadence, the Saxons had the good fortune to find in Britain a soil free from imperial pollution. Less alienated from the Celtic Britons by their traditions and institutions — perhaps even by their origin — than by the jealousies and resentments of conquest, they had not after their victory to struggle against a spirit radically opposed to their own. Keeping intact and untamable their old Germanic spirit, their old morals, their stern independence, they gave from that moment to the free and proud genius of their race a vigorous upward impulse which nothing has ever been able to bear down.

Starting in three distinct and successive emigrations from the peninsular region which separates the Baltic from the North Sea, they had found in the level shores of Britain a climate and an aspect like those of their native country. At the end of a century and a half of bloody contests they had made themselves masters of all that now bears

the name of England, except the coast and the hilly regions of the west. They had founded there, by fire and sword, the seven kingdoms so well known under the title of the Heptarchy, which have left their names to several of the existing divisions of that country, where nothing falls into irreparable ruin, because everything there, as in nature, takes a new form and a fresh life. The Jutes, the first and most numerous immigrants, had established in the angle of the island nearest to Germany, the kingdom of Kent, and occupied a part of the coast of the Channel (the Isle of Wight and Hampshire). Then the Saxons, properly so called, spreading out and consolidating themselves from the east to the south, and from the south to the west, had stamped their name and their authority on the kingdoms of Essex, Sussex, and Wessex. Finally, the Angles laid hold of the north and the east, and there planted, first, the kingdom of East Anglia on the coast of the North Sea, and next that of Mercia in the unoccupied territory between the Thames and the Humber; then, to the north of the latter river, the largest of all the Saxon kingdoms, Northumbria, almost always divided into two, Deira and Bernicia, the confines of which stretched away to join the Picts and Scots, beyond even the limits which the Roman domination had lately reached.

This race of pirates and plunderers, hunters and robbers of their kind, possessed nevertheless the essential elements of social order. They made this clearly apparent as soon as they were able to settle down, and to adjust their settlements on that insular soil which the Britons had not been able to defend against the Romans, nor the Romans against the barbarians of the north, nor these last against the hardy seamen from the east. The Anglo-Saxons alone have been able to establish there an immovable order of society, whose first foundations were laid when the missionary monks came to bring to them the lights of faith and of Christian virtue.

At the end of the sixth century the Anglo-Saxons already formed a great people, subject, as the Celtic races had been, to the patriarchal and federal rule, which so happily distinguished those brave and free nations from the rabble corrupted by the solitary despotism of Rome. But among them, as among all the Germanic races, this government was secured by the powerful guarantee of property. The wandering and disorderly clan, the primitive band of pirates and pillagers, disappears, or transforms itself, in order to make room for the family permanently established by the hereditary appropriation of the soil; and this soil was not only snatched from the vanquished race, but laboriously won from the forests, fens, and untilled moors. The chiefs and men of substance of these leading families formed a sovereign and warlike aristocracy, controlled by the kings, assemblies, and laws.

The kings all belonged to a kind of caste composed of the families which professed to trace their descent from Odin or Woden, the deified monarch of German mythology : their royalty was elective and limited : they could do nothing without the consent of those who accepted them as chiefs, but not as masters. The assemblies, which at first resembled those which Tacitus has recorded as existing among the Germans, and composed of the entire tribe (*volk-mot*), were speedily limited to the elders, to the wise men (*witena-gemot*), to the chiefs of the principal families of each tribe or kingdom, and to men endowed with the double prerogative of blood and property. They were held in the open air, under venerable oaks, and at stated periods;

they took part in all the affairs of the body-politic, and regulated with sovereign authority all rights that were established or defended by the laws.

The laws themselves were simply treaties of peace discussed and guaranteed by the grand council of each little nation, between the king and those on whom depended his security and his power; between the different parties in every process, civil and criminal; between different groups of free men, all armed and all possessors of lands, incessantly exposed to risk their life, their possessions, the honour and safety of their wives, children, kindred, dependants, and friends, in daily conflicts springing from that individual right of making war which is to be found at the root of all German liberty and legislation.

Disparity of rank, which was in ancient times the inseparable companion of freedom, existed among the Saxons, as it did everywhere. The class of freemen — *ceorls* — possessors of land and of political power, who constituted the vital strength of the nation, had under them not only slaves, the fruit of their wars and conquests, but in much greater number servitors, labourers, dependants, who had not the same rights as they possessed ; but they in their turn acknowledged as superiors the nobles, the eorls, who were born to command, and to fill the offices of priest, judge, and chief, under the primary authority of the king.

Thus that part of Great Britain which has since taken the name of England, was at this early period made up of an aggregation of tribes and independent communities, among which the exigencies of a common struggle against their warlike neighbours of the north and west helped to develop a gradual tendency towards union. It settled into an aristocratic federation, in which families of a reputedly divine origin presided over the social and military life of each tribe, but in which personal independence was at the base of the whole fabric. This independence was always able to reclaim its rights when a prince more than ordinarily dexterous and energetic encroached upon them. Its influence was everywhere felt in establishing and maintaining social life on the principle of free association for mutual benefit. All that the freemen had not expressly given over to the chiefs established by themselves, or to associates freely accepted by them, remained for ever their own inviolable possession. Such, at that obscure and remote epoch, as in our day, was the fundamental and gloriously unalterable principle of English public life.

The British population, which had survived the fury of the Saxon Conquest, and which had not been able or willing to seek for refuge in the mountains and peninsulas of Wales and Cornwall, seems to have accommodated itself to the new order of things. When the Conquest was fully achieved, in those districts where the indigenous race had not been completely exterminated, no traces of insurrection or of general discontent are to be found among the British; and the opinion of those who maintain that the condition of the mass of the British population remaining in the conquered regions was not worse under the Saxon invaders than it had been under the yoke of the Romans, or even under that of their native princes, so reviled by their compatriot the historian Gildas, may be admitted as probable. It may even be supposed that this fusion of the conquerors and the conquered was productive of great benefit to the former. It would be hard to say whether the heroic tenacity which has become the distinctive characteristic of the English may

not have been derived mainly from that vigorous race which, after having coped with Cassar, proved itself the only one among all the nations subjected to the Roman yoke capable of struggling for two centuries against the invasion of the barbarians. But this assimilation of the two races could not but operate to the prejudice of the Christian faith. Unlike the barbarian invaders of the Continent, the Saxons did not adopt the religion of the people they had subdued. In Gaul, Spain, and Italy, Christianity had flourished anew, and gained fresh strength under the dominion of the Franks and the Goths; it had conquered the conquerors. In Britain it disappeared under the pressure of the alien conquest. No traces of Christianity remained in the districts under Saxon sway when Rome sent thither her missionaries. Here and there a ruined church might be found, but not one living Christian amongst the natives; conquerors and conquered alike were lost in the darkness of paganism.

It is not necessary to inquire whether, along with this proud and vigorous independence, in which we have recognised a rare and singularly advanced condition of political intelligence and social vitality, the Anglo-Saxons exhibited moral virtues of an equally elevated order. Such an assertion no one would be disposed to believe. Certainly there existed under this native barbarism noble dispositions unknown to the Roman world. Under the brute the free man, and also the man of heart, might always be discovered. Even more, intermingled with daily outbursts of daring and of violence there might also be found miracles of heroic and simple devotion — of sincere and lofty enthusiasm — which emulated or forestalled Christianity. But alongside of these wonders of primitive virtue, what miracles of vice and crime, of avarice, lust, and ferocity! The religion of their Scandinavian forefathers, whose primitive myths concealed no small amount of traditional truth under symbols full of grace and majesty, was only too soon corrupted or obscured. It did not preserve them from any excess, superstition, or fetishism : perhaps not even from the human sacrifices which were known to all other pagan nations. What could be expected in point of morality from people accustomed to invoke and to worship Woden, the god of massacres, Freya, the Venus of the North, the goddess of sensuality, and all these bloody and obscene gods of whom one had for his emblem a naked sword, and another the hammer with which he broke the heads of his enemies?! The immortality which was promised to them in their Walhalla but reserved for them new days of slaughter and nights of debauch, spent in drinking deep from the skulls of their victims. And in this world their life was but too often only a prolonged orgie of carnage, rapine, and lechery. The traditional respect for woman which marked the Germanic tribes was limited among the Saxons, as elsewhere, by singular exceptions, and did not extend beyond the princesses or the daughters of the victorious and dominant race.

Such mercy as they ever showed to the vanquished consisted only in sparing their lives in order to reduce them to servitude, and sell them as slaves. That frightful slave-traffic which has disgraced successively all pagan and all Christian nations was among them carried on with a kind of inveterate passion. It needed, as we shall see, whole centuries of incessant efforts to extirpate it. Nor was it only captives and vanquished foes that they condemned to this extremity of misfortune and shame : it was their kindred, their fellow-countrymen; even, like Joseph's brethren, those of their own blood, their sons and daughters, that they set up to auction and sold to merchants who came



from the Continent to supply themselves in the Anglo-Saxon market with these human chattels. It was by this infamous commerce that Great Britain, having become almost as great a stranger to the rest of Europe as she was before the days of Caesar, re-entered the circle of the nations, making herself known once more, as in the time of Caesar, when Cicero anticipated no other profit to Rome from the expedition of the proconsul than the produce of the sale of British slaves.

Nevertheless, it was from the depth of this shameful abyss that God was about to evolve the opportunity of delivering England from the fetters of paganism, of introducing her by the hand of the greatest of the Popes into the bosom of the Church, and, at the same time, of bringing her within the pale of Christian civilisation.

Who will ever explain to us how these traffickers in men found a market for their merchandise at Rome? Yes, at Rome, in the full light of Christianity, six centuries after the birth of the Divine Deliverer, and three centuries after the peace of the Church; at Rome, governed since Constantine by Christian emperors, and in which was gradually developing the temporal sovereignty of the Popes. It was so, however, in the year of grace 586 or 587, under Pope Pelagius II. Slaves of both sexes and of all countries, and among them some children, young Saxons, were exposed for sale in the Roman Forum like any other commodity. Priests and monks mingled with the crowd that came to bid or to look on at the auction; and among the spectators appears the gentle, the generous, the immortal Gregory. He thus learned to detest this leprosy of slavery which it was afterwards given him to restrict and to contend against, though not to extirpate it.

This scene, which the father of English history found among the traditions of his Northumbrian ancestors, and the dialogue in which are portrayed with such touching and quaint originality the pious and compassionate spirit of Gregory, and at the same time his strange love of punning, has been a hundred times rehearsed. Every one knows how, at the sight of these young slaves, struck with the beauty of their countenances, the dazzling purity of their complexions, the length of their fair locks (probable index of aristocratic birth), he inquired what was their country and their religion. The slave-dealer informed him that they came from the island of Britain, where every one had the same beauty of complexion, and that they were heathens. Heaving a profound sigh, "What evil luck," cried Gregory, "that the Prince of Darkness should possess beings with an aspect so radiant, and that the grace of these countenances should reflect a soul void of the inward grace! But what nation are they of?" "They are Angles". "They are well named, for these Angles have the faces of angels; and they must become the brethren of the angels in heaven. From what province have they been brought?" "From Deira" (one of the two kingdoms of Northumbria). "Still good," answered he. "*De ira eruti* — they shall be snatched from the ire of God, and called to the mercy of Christ. And how name they the king of their country?" "Alle or Aella." "So be it; he is right well named, for they shall soon sing the Alleluia in his kingdom."

It is natural to believe that the rich and charitable abbot bought these captive children, and that he conveyed them at once to his own home — that is to say, to the palace of his father, where he was born, which he had changed into a monastery, and which was not far from the Forum where the young Britons were exposed for sale. The

purchase of these three or four slaves was thus the origin of the redemption of all England.

An Anglo-Saxon chronicler, a Christian but a layman, who wrote four centuries later, but who exemplifies the influence of domestic traditions among that people by giving to his own genealogy a very high rank in the history of his race, says expressly that Gregory lodged his guests in the triclinium, where he loved to serve with his own hand the table of the poor, and that after he had instructed and baptized them, it was his desire to take them with him as his companions, and to return to their native land in order to convert it to Christ.

All authors unanimously admit that from that moment he conceived the grand design of bringing over the Anglo-Saxons to the Catholic Church. To this design he consecrated a perseverance, a devotion, and a prudence which the greatest men have not surpassed. We have already seen how, after this scene in the slave market, he sought and obtained from the Pope permission to go as a missionary to the Anglo-Saxons, and how, at the tidings of his departure, the Romans, after overwhelming the Pope with reproaches, ran after their future pontiff, and, overtaking him three days' journey from Rome, brought him back by force to the Eternal City.

Scarcely had he been elected Pope, when his great and cherished design became the object of his constant thought. His intrepid soul dwells on it with an unflinching interest, and his vast correspondence everywhere testifies its existence. While waiting until he should discover the fit man to conduct this special mission, he never forgot the English slaves — the heathen children whose sad lot had been the means of revealing to him the conquest which God had in store for him, and whose brothers were to be found in the slave-markets of other Christian countries. He writes to the priest Candidius, who had the management of the patrimony of the Roman Church in Gaul, "We charge you to lay out the money which you have received, in the purchase of young English slaves, of seventeen or eighteen years of age, whom you shall train in the monastery for the service of God. In this way the coins of Gaul, which are not current here, will be put on the spot to a suitable use. If you can draw anything from the revenues which they say have been withheld from us, you must employ it equally either to procure clothing for the poor or to buy these young slaves. But as they will yet be heathens, they must be accompanied by a priest, who may baptize them if they fall sick by the way." At last, in the sixth year of his pontificate, he decided to select as the apostles of the distant island, whither his thoughts continually carried him, the monks of the Monastery of St. Andrew, on Mount Caelius, and to appoint as their leader Augustin, the prior of that beloved house.

This monastery is the one which now bears the name of St. Gregory, and is known to all who have visited Rome. That incomparable city contains few spots more attractive and more worthy of eternal remembrance. The sanctuary occupies the western angle of Mount Coelius, and the site of the hallowed grove and fountain which Roman mythology has consecrated by the graceful and touching fable of Numa and the nymph Egeria. It is at an equal distance from the Circus Maximus, the baths of Caracalla, and the Coliseum, and near to the church of the holy martyrs John and Paul. The cradle of English Christianity is thus planted on the soil steeped with the blood of many

thousands of martyrs. In front rises the Mons Palatinus, the cradle of heathen Rome, still covered with the vast remains of the palace of the Caesars. To the left of the grand staircase which leads to the existing monastery, three small buildings stand apart on a plot of grass. On the door of one you read these words — *Triclinium Pauperum*; and within is preserved the table at which every day were seated the twelve beggars whom Gregory fed and personally waited upon. The other is dedicated to the memory of his mother, Silvia, who had followed his example in devoting herself to a religious life, and whose portrait he had caused to be painted in the porch of his monastery.

Between these two small edifices stands the oratory dedicated by Gregory, while still a simple monk, to the apostle St. Andrew, at the time when he transformed his patrimonial mansion into the cloister whence were to issue the apostles of England. In the church of the monastery, which now belongs to the Camaldolites, is still shown the pulpit from which Gregory preached, the bed on which he took his brief repose, the altar before which he must have so often prayed for the conversion of his beloved English. On the facade of the church an inscription records that thence set out the first apostles of the Anglo-Saxons, and preserves their names. Under the porch are seen the tombs of some generous Englishmen who died in exile for their fidelity to the religion which these apostles taught them; and, among other sepulchral inscriptions, this which follows may be remarked and remembered : "Here lies Robert Pecham, an English Catholic, who, after the disruption of England and the Church, quitted his country, unable to endure life there without the faith, and who, coming to Rome, died, unable to endure life here without his country."

Where is the Englishman worthy of the name who, in looking from the Palatine to the Coliseum, could contemplate without emotion and without remorse this spot from whence have come to him the faith and name of Christian, the Bible of which he is so proud — the Church herself of which he has preserved but the shadow? Here were the enslaved children of his ancestors gathered together and saved. On these stones they knelt who made his country Christian. Under these roofs was the grand design conceived by a saintly mind, entrusted to God, blessed by Him, accepted and carried out by humble and generous Christians. By these steps descended the forty monks who bore to England the word of God and the light of the Gospel along with Catholic unity, the apostolical succession, and the rule of St. Benedict. No country ever received the gift of salvation more directly from popes and monks, and none, alas! so soon and so cruelly betrayed them.

Nothing could be more sad and sombre than the state of the Church at the epoch when Gregory resolved to put his project into execution. This great man — by turns soldier, general, statesman, administrator, and legislator, but always, and before all, pontiff and apostle — had need of more than human boldness to take in hand distant conquests, surrounded as he was by perils and disasters, and at a moment when Rome, devastated by plague, famine, and the inundations of the Tiber, mercilessly taxed and shamelessly abandoned by the Byzantine emperors, was struggling against the aggressions of the Lombards, which became every day more menacing. It is not without reason that a writer more learned than enthusiastic represents the expedition of Augustin as an act as heroic as Scipio's departure for Africa while Hannibal was at the gates of Rome.

Absolutely nothing is known of Augustin's history previous to the solemn days on which, in obedience to the commands of the pontiff, who had been his abbot, he and his forty comrades tore themselves from the motherly bosom of that community which was to them as their native land. He must, as prior of the monastery, have exhibited distinguished qualifications ere he could have been chosen by Gregory for such a mission. But there is nothing to show that his companions were at that time animated with the same zeal which inspired the Pope. They arrived without hindrance in Provence, and stopped for some time at Lerins, in that Mediterranean isle of the Saints, where, a century and a half before, Patrick, the monastic apostle of the western isle of Saints, had sojourned for nine years before he was sent by Pope Celestine to evangelise Ireland. But, there or elsewhere, the Roman monks received frightful accounts of the country which they were going to convert. They were told that the Anglo-Saxon people, of whose language they were ignorant, were a nation of wild beasts, thirsting for innocent blood — a race whom it was impossible to approach or conciliate, and to land on whose coast was to rush to certain destruction. They took fright at these tales; and in place of continuing their route, they persuaded Augustin to return to Rome to beseech the Pope to relieve them from a journey so toilsome, so perilous, and so useless. Instead of listening to their request, Gregory sent Augustin back to them with a letter in which they were ordered to recognise him henceforth as their abbot — to obey him in everything, and, above all, not to let themselves be terrified by the toils of the way or by the tongue of the detractor. "Better were it," wrote Gregory, "not to begin that good work at all, than to give it up after having commenced it. Forward, then, in God's name! The more you have to suffer, the brighter will your glory be in eternity. May the grace of the Almighty protect you, and grant to me to behold the fruit of your labours in the eternal country; if I cannot share your toil, I shall none the less rejoice in the harvest, for God knows that I lack not good will."

Augustin was the bearer of numerous letters of the same date, written by the Pope first of all to the Abbot of Lerins, to the Bishop of Aix, and to the Governor of Provence, thanking them for the hearty welcome they had given to his missionaries; and next to the Bishops of Tours, of Marseilles, of Vienne, and of Autun; and, above all, to Virgilius, Metropolitan of Arles, warmly recommending to them Augustin and his mission, but without explaining its nature or its aim. He acted differently in his letters to the two young kings of Austrasia and of Burgundy, and to their mother, Brunehaut, who reigned in their name over the whole of Eastern France. In appealing to the orthodoxy which distinguished beyond all others the Frank nation, he announces to them that he has learned that the English were disposed to receive the Christian faith, but that the priests of the neighbouring regions (that is, of Wales) took no pains to preach it to them; wherefore he asks that the missionaries sent by him to enlighten and save the English may obtain interpreters to go with them across the Straits, and a royal safe-conduct to guarantee their safety during their journey through France.

Thus stimulated and recommended, Augustin and his monks took courage and again set out upon their way. Their obedience won the victory which the magnanimous ardour of the great Gregory had failed to secure. They traversed the whole of France, ascending the Rhone and descending the Loire, protected by the princes and bishops to whom the Pope had recommended them, but not without suffering more than one insult

at the hands of the lower orders, especially in Anjou, where these forty men, in pilgrim garb, walking together, resting sometimes at night under no other shelter than that of a large tree, were regarded as were-wolves, and were assailed (by the women particularly) with yellings and abuse.

After having thus traversed the whole of Frankish Gaul, Augustin and his companions brought their journey to a close on the southern shore of Great Britain, at the point where it approaches nearest to the Continent, and where the previous conquerors of England had already landed : Julius Caesar, who revealed it to the Roman world; and Hengist with his Saxons, who brought to it with its new name the ineffaceable impress of the Germanic race. To these two conquests, a third — destined to be the last — was now about to succeed. For it is impossible to place in the same rank the victorious invasions of the Danes and the Normans, who, akin to the Saxons in blood and manners, have indeed cruelly troubled the life of the English people, but have effected no radical change in its social and moral order, and have not been able to touch either its language, its religion, or its national character.

The new conquerors, like Julius Caesar, arrived under the ensigns of Rome — but of Rome the Eternal, not the Imperial. They came to restore the law of the Gospel, which the Saxons had drowned in blood. But in setting, for ever, the seal of the Christian faith upon the soil of England, they struck no blow at the independent character and powerful originality of the people, whom, in converting them to the true faith, they succeeded in consolidating into a nation.

On the south side of the mouth of the river Thames, and at the north-east corner of the county of Kent, lies a district which is still called the Isle of Thanet, although the name of isle no longer befits it, as the arm of the sea which at one time separated it from the mainland is now little better than a brackish and marshy brook. There, where the steep white cliffs of the coast suddenly divide to make way for a sandy creek, near the ancient port of the Romans at Richborough, and between the modern towns of Sandwich and Ramsgate, the Roman monks set foot for the first time on British soil. The rock which received the first print of the footsteps of Augustin was long preserved and venerated, and was the object of many pilgrimages, in gratitude to the living God for having led thither the apostle of England.

Immediately on his arrival the envoy of Pope Gregory despatched the interpreters, with whom he had been provided in France, to the king of the country in which the missionaries had landed, to announce to him that they came from Rome, and that they brought to him the best of news — the true glad tidings — the promise of celestial joy, and of an eternal reign in the fellowship of the living and true God.

The king's name was Ethelbert, which means in Anglo-Saxon *noble* and *valiant*. Great-grandson of Hengist, the first of the Saxon conquerors, who himself was supposed to be a descendant of one of the three sons of Odin, he reigned for thirty-six years over the oldest kingdom of the Heptarchy — that of Kent — and had just gained over all the other Saxon kings and princes, even to the confines of Northumbria, that kind of military supremacy which was attached to the title of Bretwalda, or temporary chief of the Saxon Confederation.



It was to be supposed that he would have a natural prepossession in favour of the Christian religion. It was the faith of his wife Bertha, who was the daughter of Caribert, king of the Franks of Paris, and grandson of Clovis, and whose mother was that Ingoberga whose gentle virtues and domestic troubles have been recorded by Gregory of Tours. She had been affianced to the heathen king of the Saxons of Kent only on the condition that she should be free to observe the precepts and practices of her faith, under the care of a Gaulo-Frankish bishop, Liudhard of Senlis, who had remained with her until his death, which occurred immediately before the arrival of Augustin. Tradition records the gentle and lovable virtues of Queen Bertha, and her judicious zeal for the conversion of her husband and his subjects. It is believed to have been from her that Gregory received his information as to the desire of the English to be converted, with which he had enlisted the interest of Brunehaut and her sons. The great-granddaughter of St. Clotilda seemed thus destined to be herself the St. Clotilda of England. But too little is known of her life : she has left but a brief and uncertain illumination on those distant and dark horizons over which she rises like a star, the herald of the sun of truth.

Meanwhile King Ethelbert did not immediately permit the Roman monks to visit him in the Roman city of Canterbury where he dwelt. While providing for their maintenance, he forbade their leaving the island on which they had landed until he had deliberated on the course he should pursue. At the close of some days he himself went to visit them, but he would not meet them except in the open air. It is difficult to imagine what pagan superstition made him dread foul play if he allowed himself to be brought under the same roof with the strangers. At the sound of his approach they advanced to meet him in procession.

"The history of the Church," says Bossuet, "contains nothing finer than the entrance of the holy monk Augustin into the kingdom of Kent with forty of his companions, who, preceded by the cross and the image of the great King our Lord Jesus Christ, offered their solemn prayers for the conversion of England." At that solemn moment when, upon a soil once Christian, Christianity found itself once more face to face with idolatry, the strangers besought the true God to save, with their own souls, all those souls for whose love they had torn themselves from their peaceful cloister at home, and had taken this hard enterprise in hand. They chanted the litanies in use at Rome in the solemn and touching strains which they had learnt from Gregory, their spiritual father and the father of religious music. At their head marched Augustin, whose lofty stature and patrician presence attracted every eye, for, like Saul, "he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upwards."

The king, surrounded by a great number of his followers, received them seated under a great oak, and made them sit down before him. After having listened to the address which they delivered to him and to the assembly, he gave them a loyal, sincere, and, as we should say in these days, truly liberal answer. "You make fair speeches and promises," he said, "but all this is to me new and uncertain. I cannot all at once put faith in what you tell me, and abandon all that I, with my whole nation, have for so long a time held sacred. But since you have come from so far away to impart to us what you yourselves, by what I see, believe to be the truth and the supreme good, we shall do you

no hurt : on the contrary, we shall show you all hospitality, and shall take care to furnish you with the means of living. We shall not hinder you from preaching your religion, and you shall convert whom you can." By these words the king intimated to them his desire to reconcile fidelity to the national customs, with a respect for liberty of conscience too rarely found in history. The Catholic Church thus met, from her first entrance into England, that promise of liberty which has during so many ages been the first and most fundamental article of all English charters and constitutions.

Faithful to his engagement, Ethelbert allowed the missionaries to follow him to Canterbury, where he assigned them a dwelling, which still exists under the name of the Stable Gate. The forty missionaries made a solemn entry into the town, carrying their silver cross, along with a picture of Christ painted on wood, and chanting in unison the response of their litany, "We beseech Thee, Lord, by Thy pity, to spare in Thy wrath this city and Thy holy house, for we have sinned. Alleluia." It was thus, says a monastic historian, that the first fathers and teachers of the faith in England entered their future metropolis, and inaugurated the triumphant labours of the Cross of Jesus.

There was outside the town, to the east, a small church dedicated to St. Martin, dating from the time of the Romans, whither Queen Bertha was in the habit of going to pray, and to celebrate the offices of religion. Thither also went Augustin and his companions to chant their monastic office, to celebrate mass, to preach, and to baptize. Here, then, we behold them, provided, thanks to the royal munificence, with the necessities of life, endowed with the supreme blessing of liberty, and using that liberty in labouring to propagate the truth. They lived here, says the most truthful of their historians, the life of the apostles in the primitive Church — assiduous in prayer, in vigils, in fasts; they preached the word of life to all whom they could reach, and, despising this world's goods, accepting from their converts nothing beyond what was strictly necessary, lived in all harmony with their doctrine, and ever ready to suffer or to die for the truth they preached. The innocent simplicity of their life, and the heavenly sweetness of their doctrine, appeared to the Saxons arguments of an invincible eloquence; and every day the number of candidates for baptism increased.

Such fair days occur at the outset of all great undertakings. They do not last, thanks to the lamentable and incurable infirmity of all human things ; but yet they should never be forgotten, nor remembered without honour. They are the blossoming time of noble lives. History serves no more salutary purpose than in transmitting their perfume to us. The Church of Canterbury for a thousand years possessed unparalleled splendours; no Church in the world, after the Church of Rome, has been governed by greater men, or has waged more glorious conflicts. But nothing in her brilliant annals could eclipse the sweet and pure light of that humble beginning, where a handful of strangers, Italian monks, sheltered by the generous hospitality of an honest-hearted king, and guided by the inspiration of the greatest of the Popes, applied themselves in prayer, and abstinence, and toil, to the work of winning over the ancestors of a great people to God, to virtue, and to truth.

The good and loyal Ethelbert did not lose sight of them; soon, charmed like so many others by the purity of their life, and allured by their promises, the truth of which was attested by more than one miracle, he sought and obtained baptism at the hand of

Augustin. It was on Whit Sunday, in the year of grace 597, that this Anglo-Saxon king entered into the unity of the Holy Church of Christ. Since the baptism of Constantine, and excepting that of Clovis, there had not been any event of greater moment in the annals of Christendom.

A crowd of Saxons followed the example of their king, and the missionaries issued from their first asylum to preach in all quarters, building churches also here and there. The king, faithful to the last to that noble respect for the individual conscience of which he had given proof even before he was a Christian, was unwilling to constrain any one to change his religion. He allowed himself to show no preference, save a deeper love for those who, baptized like himself, became his fellow-citizens in the heavenly kingdom. The Saxon king had learned from the Italian monks that no constraint is compatible with the service of Christ. It was not to unite England to the Roman Church, it was in order to tear her from it, a thousand years after this, that another king and other apostles had to employ the torture and the stake.

In the meanwhile Augustin, perceiving that he should henceforward be at the head of an important Christian community, and in conformity to the Pope's instructions, returned to France in order to be there consecrated Arch-bishop of the English by the celebrated Metropolitan of Arles, Virgilius, the former abbot of Lerins, whom Gregory had appointed his vicar over all the churches of the Frankish kingdom.

On his return to Canterbury he found that the example of the king and the labours of his companions had borne fruit beyond all expectation; so much so, that at the festival of Christmas in the same year, 597, more than 10,000 Anglo-Saxons presented themselves for baptism; and that sacrament was administered to them in the Thames at the mouth of the Medway, opposite that Isle of Sheppey, where is now situated one of the principal stations of the British fleet, and one of the grand centres of the maritime power of Great Britain.

The first of the converts was also the first of the benefactors of the infant Church. Ethelbert, more and more imbued with respect and devotion for the faith which he had embraced, desired to give a notable pledge of his pious humility, by transferring to the new archbishop his own palace in the town of Canterbury, and establishing henceforth his royal residence at Reculver, an ancient Roman fortress on the adjacent shore of the island on which Augustin had landed. Besides the dwelling of the king thus transformed into a monastery for the archbishop and his monks, and on the site of an old church of the time of the Romans, a basilica which was hereafter to become, under the name of Christchurch, the metropolitan Church of England, was commenced. Of this church Augustin was at once the first archbishop and the first abbot.

The Pope had at first designed, as the seat of the new metropolis, the city of London, a Roman colony already famous from the time of the Emperors ; whereas he had, perhaps, never heard the name of the residence of the Saxon kings at Canterbury. But London was not within the kingdom of Ethelbert, and the selection of the Pope could not prevail against the motives which determined Augustin to choose, as the head and centre of the religious life of England, the capital of the king who had become his proselyte and his friend, standing, as it did, in the region where he had first landed on British soil, and whose inhabitants had welcomed him with such genial sympathy.

But the splendours and the influence of the official metropolis were for long ages to be eclipsed, in the opinion of the English people, and of the Christian world, by another foundation, equally owing its origin to Augustin and Ethelbert, the first archbishop and the first Christian king of England. To the west of the royal city, and half-way to that church of St. Martin whither the queen went to pray, and where the king had been baptized, Augustin, always on the outlook for any traces which the old faith had left in Britain, discovered the site of a church which had been transformed into a pagan temple, and encircled with a sacred wood. Ethelbert gave up to him the temple, with all the ground surrounding it. The archbishop forthwith restored it to its original use as a church, and dedicated it to St. Pancras, a young Roman martyr, whose memory was dear to the Italian monks, because the monastery of Mount Coelius, whence they had all come, and where their father Gregory was born, had been built upon lands formerly belonging to his family. Round this new sanctuary Augustin raised another monastery, of which Peter, one of his companions, was the first abbot, and which he intended to be the place of his own burial, after the Roman custom which placed the cemeteries out of the towns, and by the side of the highroads. He consecrated this new foundation in the names of the apostles of Rome, Peter and Paul; but it was under his own name that this famous abbey became one of the most opulent and most revered sanctuaries of Christendom. It was for several centuries the burying-place of the kings and primates of England, and at the same time the first and brightest centre of religious and intellectual life in the south of Great Britain.

Seven years were needed to complete the monastery, the church attached to which could not even be dedicated during the lifetime of him whose name it was to assume and preserve. But some months before his death, Augustin had the satisfaction of seeing the foundation of the first Benedictine monastery in England sanctioned by the solemn ratification of the king and the chiefs of the nation whom he had converted.

The charter of this monastery has been brought to light in our day as the oldest authentic record of the religious and political history of England. Our readers will thank us for quoting the text and the signatures of the witnesses. The Anglo-Saxon king appears in this transaction at once as a Christian prince and as the chief of the aristocratic assembly whose consent was necessary to the validity of all his deeds. He begins thus : —

"I, Ethelbert, king of Kent, with the consent of the venerable archbishop Augustin, and of my nobles, give and concede to God, in honour of St. Peter, a certain portion of the land which is mine by right, and which lies to the east of the town of Canterbury, to the end that a monastery may be built thereon, and that the properties hereinafter named may be in full possession of him who shall be appointed abbot thereof. Wherefore I swear and ordain, in the name of Almighty God, who is the just and sovereign judge, that the land thus given is given for ever — that it shall not be lawful either for me or for my successors to take any part of it whatsoever from its possessors ; and if any one attempt to lessen or to annul our gift, that he be in this life deprived of the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ, and at the day of judgment cut off from the company of the saints.

"I, Ethelbert, king of the English, have confirmed this gift, by my own hand, with the sign of the holy cross.

"I, Augustin, by the grace of God archbishop, have freely subscribed.

"I, Eadbald, son of the king, have adhered.

"I, Hamigisile, duke, have approved.

"I, Hocca, earl, have consented.

"I, Angemundus, referendary, have approved.

"I, Graphio, earl, have said it is well.

"I, Tangisile, regis optimas, have confirmed.

"I, Pinca, have consented.

"I, Geddi, have corroborated."

## CHAPTER II

### HOW POPE GREGORY AND BISHOP AUGUSTIN GOVERNED THE NEW CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Some time before this solemn national consecration of his work, and after the first year of his mission, Augustin had sent to Rome two of his companions — Lawrence, who was to succeed him as archbishop, and Peter, who was to be the first abbot of the new monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul — to announce to the Pope the great and good news of the conversion of the king, with his kingdom of Kent; next, to demand from him new assistants in the work, the harvest being great and the labourers but few ; and, lastly, to consult him on eleven important and delicate points touching the discipline and the management of the new Church.

The joy of Gregory when, in the midst of the perils and trials of the Church, and of his own sufferings, material and moral, he saw the realisation of his soul's most cherished dream, may be understood. The boldest of his projects was crowned with success. A new people had been brought into the fold of the Church through his gentle but persevering activity. Till the end of the world, innumerable souls would owe to him their admission to the great brotherhood of souls here below — to the eternal joys that are above. He could not foresee the great men, the famous saints, the immense resources, the dauntless champions, that England was to furnish to the Catholic Church;



but neither had he the sorrow of foreknowing the sad revolt which was yet to rob so much glory of its lustre, nor that base ingratitude which has dared to despise or to underrate, in his case as in that of his subordinates, the incomparable blessings which he conferred on the people of England by sending to them the light of the Gospel.

The joy of Gregory, as pure as it was natural, infused its spirit into that vast correspondence in which he has left us so faithful an image of his mind and of his life. To Augustin, as might have been expected, its first overflow was directed. "Glory be to God in the highest," he writes — "glory to that God who would not reign alone in heaven, whose death is our life, whose weakness is our strength, whose suffering cures our sufferings, whose love sends us to seek even in the island of Britain for brothers whom we knew not, whose goodness causes us to find those whom we sought for while yet we knew them not! Who can express the exultation of all faithful hearts, now that the English nation, through the grace of God and thy brotherly labour, is illumined by the Divine light, and tramples under foot the idols which it ignorantly worshipped, in order that it may now bow down before the true God?" He then hastened to re-echo into the East the happy news which had reached him from the extreme West. He writes to the patriarch of Alexandria : "The bearer of your letters found me sick and leaves me sick. But God grants to me gladness of heart to temper the bitterness of my bodily sufferings. The flock of the holy Church grows and multiplies; the spiritual harvests gather in the heavenly garner. You announced to me the conversion of your heretics — the concord of your faithful people. I make you a return in kind, because I know you will rejoice in my joy, and that you have aided me with your prayers. Know, then, that the nation of the Angles, situated at the extremest angle of the world, had till now continued in idolatry, worshipping stocks and stones. God inspired me to send thither a monk of my monastery here, to preach the gospel to them. This monk, whom I caused to be ordained bishop by the Frankish bishops, has penetrated to this nation at the uttermost ends of the earth ; and I have now received tidings of the happy success of his enterprise. He and his companions have wrought miracles that seem to come near to those of the apostles themselves, and more than 1 0,000 English have been baptized by them at one time."

After having thus quickened the zeal of the Egyptian patriarch by these tidings from England, he turns to the queen of the newly converted nation — Bertha, born a Christian, and the grand-daughter of a saint — to congratulate her on the conversion to her own faith of her husband and her people, and to encourage her to new efforts by telling her that she was remembered in the prayers of the faithful, not only at Rome, but at Constantinople, and that the fame of her good works had reached the ears of the most serene Emperor himself.

"Our very dear sons, Lawrence the priest and Peter the monk," he writes to her, "have rehearsed to me, on their arrival here, all that your Majesty has done for our reverend brother and co-bishop Augustin — all the comfort and the charity that you have so liberally bestowed on him. We bless the Almighty, who has seen meet to reserve for you the conversion of the English nation. Even as He found in the glorious Helena, mother of the most pious Constantine, an instrument to win over the hearts of the Romans to the Christian faith, so we feel assured will His mercy, through your agency, work out the salvation of the English. Already, for a long time, it must have been your endeavour to turn, with the prudence of a true Christian, the heart of your husband

towards the faith which you profess, for his own wellbeing and for that of his kingdom. Well-instructed and pious as you are, this duty should not have been to you either tedious or difficult. If you have in any wise neglected it, you must redeem the lost time. Strengthen in the mind of your noble husband his devotion to the Christian faith ; pour into his heart the love of God; inflame him with zeal for the complete conversion of his subjects, so that he may make an offering to Almighty God by your love and your devotion. I pray God that the completion of your work may make the angels in heaven feel the same joy which I already owe to you on earth."

About the same time, in revising his commentaries on the Scriptures, and his Exposition of the Book of Job, he cannot help adding then this cry of triumph : "Look at that Britain whose tongue has uttered only savage sounds, but now echoes the Hallelujah of the Hebrews! Behold that furious sea — it gently smoothes itself beneath the feet of the saints! These savage clans, that the princes of the earth could not subdue by the sword — see them enchained by the simple word of the priests! That people which, while yet pagan, defied undauntedly the arms and the renown of our soldiers, trembles at the speech of the humble and weak. It knows fear now, but it is the fear of sin ; and all its desires are centred on the glory everlasting."

Far, however, from resting indolently in this joy, he remained to his latest day faithful to the warm and active interest with which his beloved England had inspired him. He sent to Augustin a new monastic colony, provided with relics, sacred vessels, priestly robes, the ornaments of the altar, and all that was necessary to give effect to the pomp of religious service. He sent also books, which were intended to form the nucleus of an ecclesiastical library.

At the head of this new swarm of monks was a man of noble birth, by name Mellitus, and his companion Justus, who were to succeed each other on the metropolitan throne of Canterbury, and with them Paulinus, the future apostle of Northumbria. The Pope provided them with very urgent letters, all of the same date, for Queen Brunehaut, for her grandsons, kings Theodebert and Theodoric; for their rival king Clotaire of Neustria, who had treated Augustin with great kindness, and heartily seconded his enterprise; and for the bishops of Arles, Lyons, Gap, Toulon, Marseilles, Chalons, Paris, Rouen, and Angers — thus marking before-hand the possible halting-places of the new missionaries.

In a special letter to Virgilius, the legate at Arles, he recommends him most particularly to receive their common brother, Augustin, with, the greatest affection, in the event of his visiting him; and he adds : "As it often happens that those who are at a distance need to be made aware of disorders which require to be repressed, if he should inform you of faults on the part of his priests or others, examine everything along with him with the minutest care, and act with the greatest strictness, but ever be heedful that you do not let the innocent suffer with the guilty."

The passionate yet intelligent and impartial tenderness towards his friends, which is one of the most attractive features in Gregory's admirable character, is nowhere more beautifully displayed than in his relations with Augustin. We see him ever engaged in extending and consolidating the authority of his envoy ; but not the less anxious for the welfare of his soul, and resolute to give precedence before all else to the interests of the

newly Christianised country. He entrusted to the new missionaries a long letter addressed to king Ethelbert, in which, while congratulating him on his conversion, and comparing him to Constantine, as he had compared Bertha to St. Helena, he exhorted him to spread the faith among his subjects — to forbid the worship of idols, to overthrow their temples, and to establish good morals by- exhortations, kindnesses, and threats, but above all by his own example. He adds : "You have with you our very reverend brother, Bishop Augustin, trained according to the monastic rule, full of the knowledge of the Scriptures, abounding in good works in the sight of God. Hearken devoutly to him, and faithfully accomplish all that he tells you; for the more you listen to what he will tell you on the part of God, the more will God grant his prayers when he prays to Him on your behalf. Attach yourself, then, to him with all the strength of your mind, and all the fervour of faith ; and second his efforts with all the force that God has given you."

The same day, in a public letter, he confers on Augustin the right of bearing the *pallium* in celebrating mass, as a reward for having established the new English Church. This honour was to descend to all his successors on the archiepiscopal throne. He constitutes him metropolitan of twelve bishoprics, which he enjoins him to erect in southern England. He gives him authority to appoint whom he will metropolitan bishop in the ancient Roman and episcopal city of York, subordinating to the see of York twelve new bishoprics yet to be erected, but reserving to Augustin during his lifetime the supremacy over the northern metropolitan. Over and above all the bishops to be ordained by him or by the future bishop of York in the conquered territory, Gregory places under the jurisdiction of Augustin all the bishops of Britain, "in order," says the Pope, "that they may learn by your word and by your life how they must believe, and how they must live, in order to fulfil their office and gain an inheritance in heaven." He here treats of the bishops who were established in Wales, or who had fled thither for refuge — the prelates and teachers of the Christian Celtic populations which had escaped the Saxon yoke.

But while he thus openly evidenced the fulness of his confidence and the authority with which he invested Augustin, he addressed to him, in secret, advices meant to preserve him from the dangerous snare of pride. "In our joy," he wrote, "there is much to fear. I know, beloved brother, that God has by thee wrought great miracles in this nation. It is right to rejoice that the minds of the English are drawn by visible miracles to the invisible grace ; but we ought to fear lest these prodigies incline the weak mind to presumption, and make the inner man fall to a worse depth through vainglory than he is raised up outwardly. When the disciples said to their divine Master, 'Lord, in Thy name even the devils are subject unto us', He answered them, 'Rejoice not because the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven'. The names of all the elect are written there, and yet all the elect work not miracles. And while God thus acts outwardly by thee, thou oughtest, brother beloved, to judge thyself scrupulously within, and to know well what thou art. If thou rememberest that thou hast offended God by word or deed, have thy faults ever present to thy memory to repress the vainglory which may rise in thy heart. Reflect that this gift of miracles is not given to thee for thyself, but for those whose salvation is committed to thee. The reprobate have wrought miracles; and we, we know not even if we are among the elect. It is

needful, then, sternly to humble and subdue the mind in the midst of all these prodigies and signs, lest it should seek in them only its own glory and its private advantage. God has given us but one sign whereby we may know His elect; it is this, that we have love one to another."

Immediately after, to reassure the friend whom he had thus corrected, by a return to his wonted tenderness and sympathy, he continues in these terms : "I speak thus because I desire to subdue to humility the soul of my dear hearer. But let even thy humility have confidence. All sinful as I am, I have a sure hope that all thy sins will be remitted unto thee, inasmuch as thou hast been chosen to bring to others the remission of their sins. If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance, what joy must not there be over a great nation which, in coming to the true faith, repents of all the evil it has done! And it is thou who hast given this joy to heaven."

In one of Gregory's former letters, addressed, not to Augustin, but to his friend Eulogius, patriarch of Alexandria, the Pope also refers to the miracles which had signalled the mission of Augustin ; he does not hesitate even to compare them to the signs and wonders which accompanied the preaching of the apostles. Twelve centuries after Gregory, the greatest genius that modern England has produced, the immortal Burke, bows respectfully before that tradition, misunderstood by his frivolous contemporaries. The introduction of Christianity into any country whatsoever is, according to him, the most inestimable benefit that can be conferred on humanity. Why, then, in view of an end so worthy, should not Providence itself sometimes directly interpose? Miracles, of old time accepted with a blind credulity, have been since rejected with "as undistinguishing a disregard." "But," adds the great orator, "it is the reality or opinion of such miracles that was the principal cause of the early acceptance and rapid progress of Christianity in this island." It is singular that neither Bede nor any other historian gives the least detail of these wonders which awoke at once the admiration, the gratitude, and the prudent deprecations of St. Gregory the Great. But of all possible miracles, the greatest is assuredly "to have detached from paganism without violence a violent people ; to have introduced it into the Christian commonwealth, not man by man, and family by family, but at one stroke, with its kings, its warlike nobility, and all its institutions." This king, who believes himself descended from the gods of the Scandinavian paradise, yet who resigns his capital to the priests of the crucified God; this people, fierce and idolatrous, which by thousands prostrates itself at the feet of a few foreign monks, and by thousands plunges into the icy waters of the Thames, in mid winter, to receive baptism from these unknown strangers; this rapid and complete transformation of a proud and victorious, and at the same time sensual and rapacious race, by means of a doctrine preeminently fitted to quell lust, pride, and sensuality, and which, once received into these savage hearts, rests for ever implanted there, — is not this, of all miracles, the most marvellous, as it is the most indisputable?

Finally, after all these letters, Gregory wrote a very long and very detailed answer to the eleven questions which Augustin had put to him, as to the principal difficulties which he had encountered, or which he foresaw might still be met with in the course of his mission. To convey a just idea of this reply, which is an admirable monument of enlightenment, of conciliatory reason, of gentleness, wisdom, moderation, and

prudence, and which was destined to become, as has been most justly said, the rule and the code of Christian missions, it would have to be quoted entire; but besides its extreme length, it embraces certain details from which our modern prudery recoils. Here, however, is the substance of its most important passages.

The Pope, consulted as to the use and the division to be made of the offerings of the faithful, reminds Augustin that the revenues of the Church should be divided into four portions : the first for the bishop and his family, because of the hospitality which he ought to exercise; the second for the clergy; the third for the poor; the fourth for the maintenance and repair of churches. "But you," he says to the archbishop — "you who have been brought up in monastic discipline, ought not to live apart from your clergy, but to initiate in the new English Church the life in common which our fathers practised in the primitive Church."

Why, asked Augustin, are there divers customs in the Church, when the faith is one? and why does the liturgy according to which the mass is celebrated in the churches of Gaul (which Bertha probably followed in her oratory of St. Martin), differ from that of the Roman Church?

"You, my brother," replies the Pope, "know the usage of the Roman Church, in which you cannot forget that you were brought up. But if it should happen that you find in the Church of Rome, or in that of Gaul, or in any other, some usage which you believe to be more pleasing to God, I enjoin you to select it with care, and give it a place in the new Church of England. For institutions are not to be loved because of the places whence they are derived; but rather are places to be beloved for the sake of the good institutions that exist therein. Choose therefore among the Churches all that is pious and reasonable, and out of what you thus collect form the use of the English Church."

In these words it is easy to recognise the pontiff who had already braved the criticisms of some petty spirits, by introducing at Rome various usages that were believed to be borrowed from Constantinople, and who had said to his critics, "I shall be always ready to deter my subordinates from evil, but to imitate them in good, borrowing it from it matters not what Church. He is but a fool who could make his primacy a reason for disdaining to learn whatever good can be learnt."

Consulting as to the punishment to be inflicted on sacrilegious robbers, and as to the administration of the Roman law, which imposed on the robber a double or fourfold restitution, Gregory advises that, in the punishment, the poverty or the riches of the depredator be taken into account; and that it be administered always with a fatherly love and a moderation which shall keep the mind within the limits of reason. As to restitution — "God forbid," said he, "that the Church should seek to gain by what she has lost, and to draw a profit from the folly of men."

Augustin had further inquired what rule he should follow in regard to marriages within the forbidden degrees, to the duties of the married state, and how much ought to be retained of the purifications prescribed to women by the Mosaic law. Gregory, in reply, interdicts absolutely marriages between mothers-in-law and sons-in-law, which were common among the Saxons; as also between brothers and sisters-in-law. But, for the latter case, he does not require that converts, who had contracted such marriages before their conversion, should be deprived of the holy communion, "lest," he says,



"you should appear to punish them for what they have done in mere ignorance; for there are things which the Church corrects with strictness, and there are others which, for kindness' sake, she tolerates, or prudently overlooks; but always in such wise as to restrain the evil which she bears with, or winks at." He would, in general, treat the English as St. Paul treated his converts — nourishing them not on solid food, but with milk, as newborn babes. Further on "he prescribes to the marriage bed these severe laws which secure health and vigour and the fruitfulness of the Christian family." He does not permit that the woman who has just borne a child should be excluded from the Church, and that thus her suffering should be made a crime.

But he protests with energy against the unnatural custom of mothers who will not be nurses, and who disdain to suckle the children they have brought forth. He sought thus to impress upon the heart of the Saxon woman all a wife's duties, while at the same time he marked her proper place in the Christian family by exalting her dignity and protecting her modesty.

Reflection only served to confirm the Pope in this wise and generous indulgence towards the new converts, allied, as it was in him, with a zeal at once pure and ardent for the service and progress of the truth. Scarce had he addressed to Ethelbert the letter in which he exhorted him to destroy the temples of the ancient national worship, when he reconsidered the matter, and a few days later despatched entirely different instructions to Mellitus, the chief of the new mission, whom he had designated abbot, and to whom he had entrusted the letter for the king — hoping to overtake him on his journey. "Since your departure and that of your company," he writes, "I have been much disquieted, for I have learned nothing of the success of your journey. But when Almighty God shall have carried you in safety to our most reverend brother Augustin, say to him that, after having long revolved in my own mind the affairs of the English, I have come to the conclusion that it is not necessary to overthrow all the temples of the idols, but only the idols that are in them. After having sprinkled these temples with holy water, let altars and relics be placed in them; for if they are strongly built, it were well that they were made to pass from the worship of demons to the service of the true God — to the end that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may the more readily accept the religious change and come to adore God in the places familiar to them. And as it is their custom to slay many oxen in sacrifices to the demons, some solemnity which should take the place of this sacrifice must be established. On the day of the dedication, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics may be given to them, they may be permitted to make huts of leaves around the temples thus changed into churches, and celebrate the feast with social repasts. But in place of sacrificing beasts to a demon, they will kill them only to be eaten with thankfulness to God who provides their food; and thus, by leaving to them some of the enjoyments of the senses, they will be more easily led to desire the joys of the soul. For it is impossible to change all at once the whole habits of the savage mind: a mountain is not climbed by leaps and bounds, but step by step."

Among the enemies of the Roman Church, pedants and hypercritics are found to accuse St. Gregory of having compromised matters with his conscience in thus opening the entrance of the sanctuary to paganism. Far from sympathising with them, let us, on the contrary, learn to admire the great and wise teacher who could so well distinguish

the essential from the accidental, and who, repudiating the pretensions of minute and vexatious uniformity, and sacrificing the pettiness of prejudice to the majesty of a great design, could thus develop the worship of the truth even among the superstitions of Germanic paganism. Let us admire, above all, "a religion which penetrates thus to the depths of human nature — which knows what needful combats against his passions it demands from man, and which has no desire to impose unnecessary sacrifices upon him. The only way of knowing human nature is to love it, and it can be won only at this price."

In his last question Augustin had asked how he — as yet the only bishop among the English — should deal by the bishops of Gaul and Britain. Gregory admonishes him not to keep at a distance the bishops of Gaul who might wish to be present at his ordinations of new bishops in England, "for to conduct successfully spiritual affairs it is lawful to draw lessons from temporal affairs; and as, in the world, persons already married are invited together to take part in the festivities of a wedding, so nothing forbids the participation of bishops already ordained in that ordination which is the espousal of man with God." The Pope added : "We do not assign to you any authority over the bishops of Gaul, and you can reform them only through persuasion and good example, except at the risk of thrusting your sickle into another's harvest. As to the British bishops, we commit them entirely to your care, that you may instruct the ignorant, strengthen the feeble, and correct the evil."

Gregory, who knew so well how to read the hearts and win the minds of men, could have only a very imperfect knowledge of the geography as well as of the political condition of Great Britain. He seems to have held on that subject the antiquated notions which prevailed at Rome regarding an island which had been the first to escape from the imperial yoke. He evidently had no idea of the national and only too legitimate antipathy which inflamed the Christian Britons against the heathen Saxons, who had for a century and a half overrun, ravaged, and usurped their country. He imagined that those Christians, always faithfully united to the Roman Church, who had so energetically repudiated Pelagianism, and whose bishops had sat in the ancient councils presided over by the legates of Rome, would lend a cordial support to the mission of the Roman monks, commissioned by him to evangelise the Saxons. He did not know the implacable hate of the conquered for the conquerors ; and he forgot certain points of difference which, though they did not touch the great verities of the Christian faith, and were completely removed from all idea of a national or schismatic Church, raised, nevertheless, a formidable barrier between the British clergy and his Roman missionaries.

It is evident that Augustin always showed himself capable of understanding and applying the precepts of his friend and master. No incident of his life, recorded in his history, indicates any opposition to, or departure from, the rules laid down for him by the prudence and charity of Gregory. He was faithful to these rules in his relations with the British bishops placed by the Pope under his jurisdiction, as well as in all other respects. A rapid survey of this conflict will even lead the reader to protest against the unjust and calumnious accusations, of which it has been the object, and will prove that Augustin was exclusively guided by a natural desire to put an end to dissensions which impaired the unity of the efforts necessary for the conversion of the Saxons.

Wherein, then, consisted those differences between Rome and the Celtic Christianity of Wales, of Ireland, and of Caledonia, which occupy so prominent a place in the religious history of the sixth and seventh centuries, and which the irritable and haughty zeal of St. Columbanus carried over into France, and with which he tried the patience of St. Gregory; while Augustin, on his side, found in them the chief stumblingblock to his mission in Great Britain? It cannot be too often repeated, that they affected none of the essential doctrines of Christianity, no article of faith defined by the Church either before or since that period, no question of morals, and above all, that they did not offer any opposition to the supremacy of the Holy See, as it was then exercised or accepted by the rest of the Christian world.

Modern research has finally dispersed all the imaginary chimeras of certain English and German writers who attributed these differences to a pretended influence of Eastern Christianity on the British Churches, of which no authentic trace exists; or more readily still, to a traditional repugnance on the part of the Celtic population to the yoke of Rome — a repugnance belied by the history of the past, as well as by the living testimony of the races, the most tenacious and most illustrious members of which, the Irish and the Armoricans, have purchased, at the cost of the most generous and cruel sacrifices, the right of placing themselves in the foremost rank of the faithful children of the Church of Rome.

The principal difference turned on the question of the date of the festival of Easter. This nice question — the bugbear of all who embark on the study of the primitive annals of the Church — has already emerged in the course of our history, and will often again recur.

From the earliest Christian ages prolonged discussions were raised regarding the day on which the greatest festival of the Church should be celebrated. The Council of Nice fixed the date of the Paschal solemnities for the Sunday after the full moon of the vernal equinox, and that date, sanctioned by the Roman Church, had been received along with the Christian faith by all the Churches of Britain, and had been carried by St. Patrick to Ireland, and by St. Columba to Caledonia. But the Church of Alexandria, having discovered an astronomical error, originating in the employment of the ancient Jewish computation by the Christians, had introduced a more exact calculation, which was adopted by all the Eastern Churches; and the result was, that from the pontificate of St. Leo the Great (440—61) a difference of an entire month had arisen between Easter day at Rome and Easter day at Alexandria. Towards the middle of the sixth century, the difference ceased to exist; Rome adopted the calculation of Denys le Petit, which demonstrated clearly the error of the day fixed by the Council of Nice, and from this date uniformity was re-established in the Church. But the Saxon invasion had interrupted the ordinary intercourse between Rome and the British Churches; they retained the ancient Roman usage, and it was precisely their attachment to that usage which was their argument against the more exact computation which Augustin and the Italian monks brought with them, but which the British rejected as suspicious novelties, to receive which would be an insult to the traditions of their fathers. It was thus from their very fidelity to the early teachings of Rome that they resisted the new Roman missionaries.

This cause of dissension, by far the most important, was of a very recent date, and all the disputes that can be made out on other points (except that regarding the form of the tonsure) were equally new, without being at all more essential. If it had been otherwise — had there been the slightest difference touching doctrine or morals between the British and the Roman Church — Augustin would never have been guilty of the folly of soliciting the aid of the Celtic clergy in the conversion of the heathen Saxons. This would have been but to sow the seeds of confusion and discord in the new Church, which it was his business to organise by means of the energetic co-operation of the native Christians and the envoys of Rome.

There is nothing more painful than to meet in history with endless and passionate contentions upon questions and causes which, after some time has passed, are interesting or even intelligible to no human creature. But it is not Christian antiquity alone that offers us such a spectacle : we find it in all ages. And to those who profess to be scandalised at the overweening importance that the most pious minds of their time have attached to equal trifles, it should be enough to recall the determined obstinacy which prompted great nations, such as the English and the Russians, to resist the reform of the Gregorian calendar — the one for nearly two centuries, the other amidst the complete uniformity of the entire civilised world.

It is no less true that, by that obstinate fidelity to a venerable, though false, computation, the British set themselves at variance on this question of Easter, not only with Rome and the whole West, but also with the East, which that festival, like the Jews, on the precise day of the week on which it fell, while the British, in common with the whole Western Church, always held the celebration on Sunday. But this Sunday was, or might be, another day than that kept as Easter day at Rome.

Who could imagine that this pitiful and absurd difference should have kept the two Churches for two centuries on a footing of direct hostility ? Since the British Celts received their ancient custom from Rome itself, why could they not follow Rome in her perfected reckoning as all the rest of the West did? Why should they have positively decided to hold festival while the Romans fasted ; and to fast while at Rome they chanted the Hallelujah?

Was there not a more serious, a deeper cause for this dissension, of which the Paschal controversy was but the outward aspect? It is impossible to doubt it; and of all causes it was the most natural and excusable — the instinct of national preservation, exasperated by hatred of the triumphant enemy, and expressing itself in distrust of the stranger, who seemed to be an accomplice of that enemy.

Augustin knew well that he needed the aid of the Celtic Christians in order to carry on successfully the great work which the Papacy had entrusted to him. Trained in the conciliatory and moderate school of St. Gregory the Great, fresh from his recent instructions, he was very far from being exclusive in regard to local personages or customs; and in order to effect the conversion of the Saxons, he claimed in all good faith the co-operation of the numerous and powerful clergy who, for more than a century, had been the very soul of the resistance to the heathen, and who peopled those great cloisters of Wales, into which the sword of the invader had never penetrated.

But the British resisted him with a jealous and obstinate opposition. They would not join him in evangelising their enemies; they had no wish to open to them the gates of heaven.

Augustin, however, succeeded in obtaining the consent of the principal bishops and doctors of Wales to a conference with him. It was arranged that they should meet on the confines of Wessex, near the banks of the Severn, which separated the Saxons from the Britons. The interview, like that of Augustin with Ethelbert, after his landing in Kent, took place in the open air, and under an oak, which for a long time afterwards was known as Augustin's oak. He began, not by claiming the personal supremacy which the Pope had conceded to him, but by exhorting his hearers to live in Catholic peace with him, and to unite their efforts to his for the evangelisation of the pagans — that is to say, the Saxons. But neither his entreaties, nor his exhortations, nor his reproaches, nor the eloquence of his attendant monks joined to his own, availed to bend the Britons, who persisted in appealing to their own traditions in opposition to the new rules. After a long and laborious disputation, Augustin at last said, "Let us pray God, who maketh brethren to dwell together in unity, to show us by a sign from heaven what traditions we ought to follow. Let a sick man be brought hither, and he whose prayers shall cure him shall be the one whose faith is to be followed." The British consented reluctantly. An Anglo-Saxon blind man was brought, whom the British bishops could not cure. Then Augustin fell on his knees, and implored God to enlighten the conscience of many of the faithful, by giving sight to this man. Immediately the blind man recovered his vision. The British were touched : they acknowledged that Augustin's course was just and straightforward, but that they could not renounce their old customs without the consent of their people, and demanded a second assembly, in which their deputies should be more numerous.

The second conference was held soon after. Augustin there found himself in the presence of seven British bishops and of the most learned doctors of the great Monastery of Bangor, which contained more than 3000 monks, and which was, as we have seen, the centre of religious life in Wales. Before this new meeting, the Britons went to consult an anchorite, much famed among them for his wisdom and his sanctity, and asked him if they ought to give heed to Augustin, and abandon their traditions. "Yes," said the hermit, "if he is a man of God." "But how shall we know that?" "If he is meek and lowly of heart, as says the Gospel, it is probable that he carries the yoke of Jesus Christ, and that it is His yoke he offers you; but if he is hard and proud, he comes not from God, and you ought to give no heed to his discourse. In order to prove him, let him arrive the first at the place of council; and if he arises when you approach, you will know that he is a servant of Christ, and you will obey him ; but if he rises not to do you honour, then despise him, as he will have despised you."

The instructions of the anchorite were obeyed. Unfortunately, on arriving at the place of council they found Augustin already seated, *more Romano*, says an historian, and he did not rise to receive them. This was enough to set them against him. "If this man," said they, "deigns not to rise at our arrival now, how will he slight us when we shall have acknowledged his authority! "From that hour they became intractable, and studied to thwart him at every point. Neither then nor at the first conference did the archbishop make any effort to induce them to acknowledge his personal authority. Let it be added, to the honour of this headstrong race, and rebellious but earnest and generous



clergy, that Augustin did not reproach them with any of those infringements of the purity of the priestly life which some authors have imputed to them. With moderation, in scrupulous conformity to the instructions of the Pope, he reduced all his claims to three main points. "You have," said he, "many practices which are contrary to our usage, which is that of the universal Church ; we will admit them all without difficulty, if only you will believe me on three points : to celebrate Easter at the right time; to complete the sacrament of baptism according to the usage of the holy Roman Church; and to preach the word of God along with us to the English nation." To this threefold demand the Celtic bishops and monks offered a threefold refusal, and added that they would never acknowledge him as archbishop. In thus refusing to recognise the personal supremacy of Augustin, they in nowise rejected that of the Holy See. What they dreaded was not a pope at a distance from them, impartial and universally respected at Rome, but a kind of new pope at Canterbury, within the territory and under the influence of their hereditary foes, the Saxons. 1 And, above all else, they objected to be told of the duty of labouring for the conversion of the odious Saxons, who had slaughtered their forefathers and usurped their lands. "No," said the abbot of Bangor, "we will not preach the faith to this cruel race of strangers who have treacherously driven our ancestors from their country, and robbed their posterity of their heritage."

It is easy to see which of the three conditions Augustin had most at heart by the threatening prediction with which he met the refusal of the British monks. "Since you will not have peace with brethren, you shall have war with enemies : since you will not show to the English the way of life, you shall receive from their hands the punishment of death."

This prophecy was only too cruelly fulfilled some years later. The king of the northern English, Ethelfrid, still a pagan, invaded the district of Wales in which stood the great Monastery of Bangor. At the moment when the battle began between his numerous army and that of the Welsh, he saw at a distance, in an elevated position, a body of men, unarmed, and on their knees. "Who are these?" he asked. He was told they were the monks of the great Monastery of Bangor, who, after fasting for three days, had come to pray for their brethren during the battle. "If they pray to their God for my enemies," said the king, "they are fighting against us, unarmed though they be." And he directed the first onslaught to be made against them. The Welsh prince, who should have defended them, fled shamefully, and 1200 monks were massacred on the field of battle, martyrs of Christian faith and of Celtic patriotism. Thus ended, say the annals of Ireland, the day of the slaughter of the saints.

An old calumny, revived in our day, makes Augustin answerable for this invasion, and accuses him of having pointed out the Monastery of Bangor to the Northumbrian heathens. But the Venerable Bede expressly states that he had been for a long time a saint in heaven when this invasion took place. It is enough that Bede himself, much more Saxon than Christian whenever he treats of the British, applauds this massacre more than a century afterwards, and sees in it Heaven's just vengeance on what he calls the infamous army of the disloyal Welsh- — that is to say, on the heroic Christians who, in defence of their hearths and altars, fell beneath the sword of the pagan Anglo-Saxons, under the orders of a chief who, according to the testimony of Bede himself, slew more of the native population than any of his predecessors.

After such an explosion of his own national antipathies, he seems to be singularly little entitled to reproach the Celts of Wales with the steadfastness of their resentment, as he does in stating that even in his time they made no account of the religion of the Anglo-Saxons, and would hold no more communion with them than with pagans.

It is possible, as an ingenious critic has said, that Augustin and his companions did not treat with sufficient tact the national and insular pride of the British, heightened by a long warlike resistance, by the traditions of the monks, and the patriotic songs of the bards. But nothing, I repeat, indicates the slightest departure on his part from the counsel and example of the glorious pontiff whose disciple and emulator he was. Condemned by the obstinacy of the British to deprive himself of their assistance, he none the less continued his "hunt of men," as his biographer calls it, by evangelising the Saxons, who at least did not wear him out, like the Welsh, with their wordiness and their endless discussions. And yet, even among the former he sometimes encountered an opposition which expressed itself in insult and derision, especially when he passed beyond the bounds of Ethelbert's kingdom. On one occasion, while traversing that region of the country of the West Saxons which is now called Dorsetshire, he and his companions found themselves in the midst of a seafaring population, who heaped on them affronts and outrages. These heathen savages not only refused to hear them, but even drove them away with acts of violence, and in hunting them from their territory, with a rude derision truly Teutonic, fastened to the black robes of the poor Italian monks, as a mark of contempt, the tails of the fish which formed their livelihood. Augustin was not a man to be discouraged by such trifles. Besides, he found in other places crowds more attentive and more impressible. And thus he persevered for seven entire years, until his death, in his apostolic journeys — travelling after, as well as before, his archiepiscopal consecration, like a true missionary, always on foot, without carriage or baggage, and adding to his unwearied preaching good works and miracles — here making unknown springs gush from the ground, there healing by his touch the sick believed to be incurable or dying.

Meanwhile Ethelbert did not fail in solicitude for and generosity to the Church of which he had become the ardent disciple. Not content with the gifts which he had bestowed on the two great monasteries of Canterbury — on that which surrounded the metropolitan church, and on the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul without the walls — he seconded with all his might the introduction of Christianity into a kingdom adjacent to his own and placed under his suzerainty — that of the Saxons of the East, or of Essex, the king of which was the son of his sister, and which was only separated from Kent by the Thames. Augustin having sent thither as bishop the monk Mellitus, one of the new missionaries sent to him by Gregory, Ethelbert built at London, the chief city of the West Saxons, a church, dedicated to St. Paul, intended for a cathedral, which it still is. In his own kingdom of Kent he authorised the erection of a second bishopric, situated at Rochester, a Roman city, twenty miles west of Canterbury; Augustin placed there as bishop another of the new missionaries, Justus by name; and the king caused a cathedral to be built there, which he named after St. Andrew, in memory of the Roman monastery whence Pope Gregory had drawn all the apostles of the Anglo-Saxon race.

All these foundations, destined to last to our own times in spite of so many strange unhappy changes, invest him with an imperishable claim on the gratitude of Christian

posterity; and long afterwards, when the Norman nobility had in their turn seized upon the supreme power and changed the aspect of the Church of England, King Ethelbert became apparent to her as the first who had provided with seignorial strongholds, in the shape of bishops' seats and monasteries, the kingdom which he desired to hold in fee for the Lord God.

He did yet more for the Church of his country by securing for her property and her liberties what we may call, in modern rather than just terms, a legal and parliamentary sanction. In one of those periodical assemblies of the sages and chief men of the Saxon people, which bore the name of *Witena-gemot*, and which were the origin of the modern Parliament, he caused certain laws — the text of which is still preserved — to be committed to writing and published in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. They confirmed at once the old rights of the people, and the new rights conceded to the new Church. The first of the ninety articles of that legislative act enacts that those who should rob the goods of the Church, of the bishops, or other orders of the clergy, shall make restitution eleven or twelve times beyond the value of the robbery. The same article sanctioned implicitly what the English have since named the right of sanctuary — that is, the right of asylum and protection recognised as belonging to the precincts of churches and monasteries — by visiting the violation of that peace of the Church with a penalty the double of that incurred by violation of the public peace. The whole nation thus sanctioned and ratified the work of its king by placing under the safeguard of penal laws the property and safety of the ministers of the religion which it had adopted.

These laws, long known by the name of *Dooms or Judgments of Ethelbert*, are the first written laws known to us, not only of the English, but perhaps of any of the Germanic races. The best informed critics attribute to the influence of the Roman monks on the Anglo-Saxon king, this commencement of the national, or rather penal code. For its enactments were chiefly penal, and we cannot but admire the wisdom of those missionaries who, trained in the traditions of Roman jurisprudence, nevertheless established and sanctioned the principle of pecuniary compensation universally adopted by the Germanic races. In these laws of Ethelbert a classification of social position is clearly apparent from the minutely exact enumeration of crimes committed against the life or safety of men, the honour of women, religion, and public peace. Every trespass is punished by a penalty proportionate — first, to the gravity of the offence, and next, to the rank of the victim. In case of murder, the compensation is due not only to the family of the deceased, but also to the community of which he was a member, and to the king who was his sovereign. This system, applied for the first time to the defence of the Christian Church by the Saxons of Kent, and for the first time reduced to a written form under the guidance of the Roman monks, will be found in all the subsequent legislation of the Saxon kingdoms, which the bishops and monks, successors of Augustin, continued to guide with a strong yet gentle hand into the ways of Christian civilisation.

Great men, commissioned by God to begin works which are to be truly great and enduring, seldom live to old age; and when one of them disappears, it often happens that he carries with him on his way to a better world those who have been on earth his companions, servants, and friends. St. Gregory the Great, whose pontificate has left an ineffaceable impression upon the memory of Christendom, and a peerless example in the annals of the Church, reigned only fifteen years. He died in the early months of the

year 605, and two months after Augustin followed his father and friend to the tomb. The Roman missionary was interred, after the Roman custom, by the side of the public way, the great Roman road which led from Canterbury to the sea, and in the unfinished church of the famous monastery which was about to assume and to preserve his name.

The name of Gregory will remain always identified with that conversion of England which was the labour of love of his whole life, and the greatest glory of his pontificate. His large and tender heart had been the first to conceive the thought of that conquest. His patient and conciliating genius, at once ardent and gentle, prudent and resolute, revealed to him the conditions of success. It is to him that the English race — at this day the most numerous and powerful of all Christian races — owes the revelation of the light of the Gospel.

He was the true apostle, the conqueror of England for God, and, through England, of immense countries which she has subjected to her laws, to her language, and to her religion. It is, then, with good reason that the first English historian claims for him this title. "Called," says Bede, "to a supreme pontificate over all the nations already converted to the faith, to our nation which was in bondage to idols, and out of which he has formed a Christian Church, he has been something more. We may well say of Gregory what Paul said of himself to the Corinthians — that if he has not been the apostle of others, he has been our apostle. Yes, we are the seal of his apostleship in the Lord — we, the people whom he rescued from the fangs of the old enemy, to make us partakers of the eternal freedom."

The nature of the means that Gregory employed to accomplish his work, and the moral perfection of the arrangements which he brought to bear on it, are even more to be admired than the work itself; — zeal, devotion, wisdom, moderation, love of souls and respect for their freedom, pity, generosity, vigilance, indomitable perseverance, divine gentleness, intelligent patience — nothing was wanting in him. We leave the history of his pontificate, and especially of his intercourse with England, with no other regret than that inseparable from witnessing the end of so noble a life; and in losing sight of him, are left uncertain which should be the most admired — his good sense or his good heart, his genius or his virtue.

The figure of St. Augustin of Canterbury naturally pales beside that of St. Gregory the Great; his renown is, as it were, absorbed into the brilliant centre of the pontiff's glory. And recent English and German historians have taken delight in bringing out the inferiority of the man whom Gregory chose for his vicerent and his friend. They have vied with each other in decrying his character and services — accusing him by turns of hauteur and of feebleness, of irresolution and of obstinacy, of softness and of vanity, — trying, especially, to heighten and magnify the indications of hesitation and of self-seeking which they discover in his life. Let it be permitted to these strange precisians to reproach him with having stopped short of the ideal of which they pretend to dream, and which no hero of theirs has ever approached. To our judgment, the few shadows which fall on the noble career of this great saint are left there to touch the hearts and console the spirits of those who are, like him, infirm, and charged sometimes with a mission which, like him, they judge to be beyond their strength.

Among the workers of great works who have changed the history of the world and decided the fate of nations, one loves to meet with those infirmities, which give encouragement to the common average of men.

Let us, then, preserve intact our admiration and our gratitude for the first missionary — the first bishop and abbot of the English people. Let us give our meed of applause to that council which, a century and a half after his death, decreed that his name should be always invoked in the Litanies after that of Gregory, "because it is he who, sent by our father Gregory, first carried to the English nation the sacrament of baptism and the knowledge of the heavenly country."

### CHAPTER III

#### FIRST SUCCESSORS OF ST. AUGUSTIN - PAGAN REACTION

The preaching of the Gospel in England is marked by several characteristics altogether peculiar to itself, and distinguishing it from those revolutions which introduced Christianity into the western nations previously converted to the faith.

In Italy, Gaul, and Spain, the propagation of the Gospel and the extinction of paganism are surrounded with such obscurity that it is impossible to be sure of the date at which the first evangelists of most of the dioceses lived. In England, on the other hand, nothing is vague or uncertain. Year by year, and day by day, we witness the various phases of the grand event. We take part, as it were, in the very work — the conversion of a great country — which it is so rarely possible to study in detail. We can follow it in all its changes of fortune with the same certainty and precision as if it were an incident in our contemporary missions.

Moreover, in the great lands and illustrious churches which have just been named, the baptism of blood everywhere accompanied or preceded the conversion of the people. Like the apostles at Rome and in the East, the missionaries of the Gospel in the West had, for the most part, to water with their blood the first furrows that they were honoured to draw in the field of the divine Husbandman. Even after the great imperial persecutions had come to an end, martyrdom often crowned the apostolate of the first bishops or their auxiliaries.

In England there was nothing at all like this; from the first day of St. Augustin's preaching, and during the whole existence of the Anglo-Saxon Church, there was neither martyr nor persecutor there. When brought within the circle of the pure and radiant light of Christianity, and even before they acknowledged and worshipped it,



these fierce Saxons, pitiless as they were to their enemies, showed themselves very much more humanely disposed and accessible to the truth than the enlightened and civilised citizens of Imperial Rome. Not one drop of blood was shed for the sake of religion, or under any religious pretext ; and this wonder occurred at a time when blood flowed in torrents for the most frivolous motives, and in that island where afterwards so many piles were to be lighted, and so many scaffolds raised, to immolate the English who should remain true to the faith of Gregory and Augustin.

A third distinctive feature of the conversion of England is that it was exclusively the work of monks; first, of Benedictine monks sent from Rome — and afterwards, as we shall see, of Celtic monks, who seemed for a moment about to eclipse or supplant the Italian monks, but who soon suffered themselves to be absorbed by the influence of the Benedictines, and whose spiritual posterity is inseparably connected with that of the Roman missionaries in the common observance of the rule of the great legislator of the monks of the West.

The monastic profession of these first missionaries has been the subject of frequent and long dispute. While it has been admitted that many were of the order to which he himself belonged, it has been denied that all the monks sent by St. Gregory the Great were Benedictines. But the unerring and unrivalled learning of Mabillon has settled the question by irrefutable arguments. It is possible that some clerks or secular priests were to be found among the assistants of the first Archbishop of Canterbury; but it is distinctly proved, by the authority of Bede and of all the earliest records, that Augustin himself and his successors, as well as all the religious of his metropolitan church and the great abbey which bore his name, followed the rule of St. Benedict, like the great Pope whose mission they carried out. Gregory, as has been seen, was desirous of taking advantage of the new ecclesiastical organisation of England to introduce there that close alliance of the monastic and ecclesiastical life which, to his mind, realised the ideal of the apostolic church. For more than a century that alliance was universal and absolute. Wherever the pagan temples were transformed into churches — wherever the old churches of the time of the Romans and Britons rose from their ruins — there monastic life prevailed among the missionaries who served the cures. The converted country was thus, little by little, overspread by monasteries; the small ones for a long time held the place of rural parish churches; the large served for cathedrals, chapter-houses, and residences for bishops, who were all produced by the monastic orders.

The first thirty-eight archbishops of Canterbury were all monks; and the first four successors of St. Augustin were taken from among the monks of the Monastery of St. Andrew at Rome, whom Pope Gregory had appointed to be his fellow-workmen. During his life, Augustin had chosen as his successor in the primacy his companion Laurence, and had procured his consecration beforehand, thus meaning, with fatherly anxiety, to make the best provision for the frail fortunes of the new-born Church of the English. The new archbishop did honour to the choice which had honoured him. He devoted himself nobly to the consolidation of the Church which he had seen founded; he conciliated all hearts, and increased the number of the faithful by the unwearied activity of his preaching no less than by the saintly example of his life.

Laurence lived for ten years in an intimate union with the good king Ethelbert, and acted as the medium of communication between that prince and the Holy See. The third successor of Gregory, Boniface IV — he who consecrated the Roman Pantheon to Christian worship in memory of all the martyrs — exhibited towards the king and the missionary monks of the kingdom of Kent a goodwill and confidence worthy of his illustrious predecessor. Mellitus, the new bishop of the East Saxons, was sent by Laurence to Rome to consult the Pope upon different matters affecting the interests of the Church of England. He was one of the members of the Council of Rome, in which were promulgated the canons which confirmed the rule of St. Benedict, and accorded to the monks the right of administering the sacraments and of being admitted to all the grades of the priesthood. Mellitus brought back to England the decrees of this council, which he had himself signed along with the other bishops; he brought likewise very gracious letters from the Pope to the archbishop and to the king. "Glorious king," Boniface wrote to Ethelbert, "we accord to you with right good will that which you have demanded of the Apostolic See through our co-bishop Mellitus : to wit, that in the monastery which your holy teacher Augustin, the disciple of Gregory, of blessed memory, consecrated under the name of the Holy Saviour, in your city of Canterbury, and over which our very dear brother Laurence now presides, you should establish a dwelling for monks, living together in complete regularity; and we decree, by our apostolic authority, that the monks who have preached the faith to you may take this new monastic community into association with themselves, and teach its members to live a holy life."

Through the obscurity of this language it seems natural to conclude that the introduction of new monks, probably of Saxon origin, into the Italian community founded by Augustin, is here indicated. A century passed, however, ere an abbot born in England could be chosen to preside over it.

Like Augustin, Archbishop Laurence was not content to labour for the salvation of the Saxons with his monkish brethren only : his pastoral anxiety urged him to search for the means of bringing the Christians of the ancient British race into unity with Rome, so that he and they might work together for the conversion of the pagans. His experience of the conditions under which the Christian religion might be successfully extended made him bitterly deplore the hostile attitude of the Celtic monks, and the polemical rancour which broke out in them whenever they sought or consented to discuss the matters in dispute. It was at the same moment that the illustrious Columbanus impaired the effect of the admirable example which he set to France, Burgundy, and Switzerland, by his extraordinary eccentricities. The rumour of them had reached even Laurence, who could not forbear referring to it in an epistle which he addressed to the bishops and abbots of all Scotia; — that is to say, of Ireland — the chief centre of the Celtic Church. Having failed, like Augustin, in a direct advance which, with his two suffragans, he had made to the clergy of the Welsh Britons, he sought to ascend to the source of the evil by writing to their brethren in the neighbouring island to expostulate with them on their universal intolerance. His letter begins thus : —

"To our very dear brethren, the lords, bishops, and abbots of Ireland, — We, Laurence, Mellitus, and Justus, servants of the servants of God, greeting. The Holy See having directed us, as is its wont, to these western regions, there to preach the faith to

the heathen, we have entered this island of Britain, not knowing what we did. Believing that they all followed the rules of the universal Church, we held in great veneration the piety of the Britons and the Scots. When we came to know the Britons, we thought the Scots were better than they. But now, when the bishop Dagan has come to us from Ireland, and when the abbot Columbanus has betaken himself to Gaul, we know that the Scots differ in nothing from the Britons; for the bishop Dagan has not only refused to partake of our hospitality — he has not even deigned to eat in the place which serves as our dwelling." Dagan was a monk of the great Irish Monastery of Bangor : he had come to confer with the mission at Canterbury, and he had undoubtedly been offended by the firm determination of the Roman prelates to maintain the conditions of liturgical unity. No trace has survived of any overtures towards reconciliation on his part, or on that of any other representative of the Celtic Churches.

The Roman monks were for some time more successful among the Saxon settlements — neighbours or vassals of the monarchy of Ethelbert. The most eastern district of the island — that which, lying between the Thames and the sandy outlets of the Ouse, forms a sort of circular projection looking towards Scandinavia — was occupied, towards the north, by the tribe of East Angles, or English of the East. Their king, Redwald, who had paid a visit to the king of Kent, received baptism like him; and his conversion awakened hopes of the conversion of his people — a population much more numerous than that of the country already won for Christ, occupying as it did the large modern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, with a part of the shires of Cambridge, Huntingdon, Bedford, and Hertford. Between East Anglia and Kent lay the kingdom of Essex, or of the Saxons of the East, already converted during Augustin's life, thanks to its king Sebert, the nephew of the Bretwalda Ethelbert. This kingdom was particularly important on account of its capital, the ancient Roman colony of London, where Mellitus had been appointed bishop by Augustin.

He had founded there, as we have seen, on the ruins of an ancient temple of Diana, a monastic cathedral, dedicated to St. Paul. Soon after, to the west of the episcopal city, and on the site of a temple of Apollo, which had supplanted, after the Diocletian persecution, a church occupied by the first British Christians, the new Bishop of London built, with the concurrence of Sebert the king, another church and a monastery dedicated to St. Peter. Thus on the banks of the Thames, as on those of the Tiber, and in expressive and touching remembrance of Rome, the two princes of the apostles found in these two sanctuaries, separate yet near, a new consecration of their glorious brotherhood in the apostolate and martyrdom.

This modest monastic colony established itself on a frightful and almost inaccessible site, in the middle of a deep marsh, on an islet formed by an arm of the Thames, and so covered with briars and thorns that it was called Thorney Island. From its position to the west of London it took a new name, destined to rank among the most famous in the world — that of Westminster, or Monastery of the West.

As far as our history can extend, it will always find the national sanctuary of England encircled with growing splendour and celebrity. But at present our business is only to record the legend which brightens its humble cradle — a legend which we have already met with among the British at Glastonbury, and which we shall find among

other nations at the beginning of other great monastic foundations — in France as that of St. Denis, in Switzerland at Einsiedlen — and which has exercised on the imagination of the English people an influence more durable and powerful than is generally produced by the best-authenticated facts. Up to the sixteenth century it was still told from generation to generation that in the night preceding the day fixed for the consecration of the new church, and while Bishop Mellitus, within his tent, was preparing for the ceremony of the morrow, St. Peter, the great fisher of men, appeared under the form of an unknown traveller to a poor fisherman whose boat was moored on the bank of the Thames opposite the Isle of Thorns. The water was rough, and the river in flood. The stranger persuaded the fisherman to row him across to the opposite bank, and when he landed he made his way towards the new church. As he crossed its threshold, the fisherman with amazement saw the interior of the edifice lighted up. From floor to roof, within and without, a chorus of angelic voices filled the air with a music such as he had never heard, and with the sweetest odours. After a long interval the music ceased, and all disappeared except the stranger, who, returning, charged the fisherman to go and tell the bishop what he had seen, and how he, whom the Christians called St. Peter, had himself come to the consecration of the church which his friend King Sebert had raised to him.

This King Sebert and his wife were buried at Westminster; and subsequently, through many vicissitudes, the great abbey, becoming more and more dear to the Church, to the princes, nobles, and people, was the chosen burial-place of the kings and the royal family. It is still, in our time, as every one knows, the Pantheon of England, who has found no nobler consecration for the memory of her heroes, orators, and poets, her most glorious children, than to give them their last resting-place under the vaults of the old monastic sanctuary. Near that sanctuary the royalty of England long sojourned; in one of its dependent buildings the House of Commons held its first meeting; under its shadow the English Parliament, the most ancient, powerful, and glorious assembly in the world, has always flourished, and still remains. Never has a monument been more identified with the history of a people. Each of its stones represents a page of the country's annals!

Canterbury embodies the religious life of England, Westminster has been the centre of her political life and her real capital; and England owes Canterbury, as she owes Westminster, to the sons of St. Benedict.

Meanwhile a shadow was about to fall on the dawn of the faith in England. The noble granddaughter of Clotilda, the gentle and pious Queen Bertha, was dead. She preceded her husband in her death, as in her faith, and was buried beside the great Roman missionary who had given her the joy of seeing her husband's kingdom, and her husband himself, converted to Christianity.

When the first successor of Augustin celebrated the solemn consecration of the great monastic church which was to be the burying-place, or, as they said then, the bed of rest (thalamus) for Christian kings and primates, the remains of the queen, and of the first Archbishop of Canterbury, were transferred thither; those of the queen were laid in front of the altar sacred to St. Martin, the great wonder-worker of Gaul, and those of the primate before the altar of his father and friend, St. Gregory. Three years later, Ethelbert,

who had married again, also died, and was buried by Bertha's side in the church of St. Augustin. He reigned fifty-six years, twenty of which he had been a Christian. "He was," says Bede, "the first English king who ascended to heaven, and the Church numbered him among her saints."

Laurence thus remained the sole survivor of all who had taken part, twenty years before, in the famous conference in the Isle of Thanet, at which the Saxon king and Frankish queen met the Roman missionaries. His companion, Peter, the first abbot of the monastery of St. Augustin, was drowned on the French coast, some time before, while fulfilling a mission on which King Ethelbert had sent him. Laurence had thus to encounter all alone the storm which burst forth immediately after the death of Ethelbert. The conversion of that monarch had not ensured that of all his people; and Eadbald, his son, who succeeded to the throne, had not embraced Christianity along with his father. The looseness of his morals had helped to keep him in idolatry. When he became king he wished to marry his father's widow, the second wife whom Ethelbert had married after the death of Bertha. This kind of incest, with which St. Paul reproached the first Christians of Corinth, was only too consonant with the usages of several of the Teutonic races; but such a case had been anticipated, and formally forbidden, in Gregory's reply to Augustin, when consulted as to the matrimonial relations of the Saxons. This was not Eadbald's only crime. He gave himself up to such transports of fury that he was commonly regarded as beside himself, and possessed with a demon. But his example sufficed to draw into apostasy those who had embraced Christian faith and chastity only from motives of fear, or from a desire to stand well with King Ethelbert.

The tempest which threatened to engulf the recent Christianity of England, became more and more formidable when the death of Sebert, nephew of Ethelbert, and founder of Westminster, raised to the sovereignty of the kingdom of Essex his three sons, who, like the son of the king of Kent, had remained pagans. They immediately resumed the public practice of the idolatry which they had but for a short time foregone during the life of their father, and gave full liberty to all their subjects to worship idols. At the same time they still went occasionally to witness the ceremonies of the Christian worship; and one day, when the Bishop Mellitus was administering, in their presence, the communion to the faithful, they said to him, with the freedom of their barbarian pride, "Why do you not offer us that white bread which you gave to our father, and which you continue to give to the people in your church?" "If you will be washed," answered the bishop, "in the fountain of salvation, as your father was, you may, like him, have your share of the holy bread; otherwise, it is impossible."

"We have no desire," replied the princes, "to enter your fountain — we have no need of it; but we want to refresh ourselves with that bread"; and as they insisted on it, the bishop repeated again that it was needful that they should be cleansed from all sin before being admitted to the communion. Then they flew into a rage, and ordered him to quit their kingdom with all that belonged to him : "Since you will not gratify us in a matter so simple, you shall stay no longer in our country."

The Bishop of London thus driven away, crossed the Thames, and came into the kingdom of Kent, in order to confer with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rochester as to the course he should pursue. These were the only three bishops of the



Christian Church in England, and all three lost courage in presence of the new peril which threatened them. They decided that it was better that they should all return to their own country, there to serve God in freedom, than that they should remain uselessly among barbarians who had revolted from the faith. The two bishops were the first to fly, and crossed over to France. Laurence prepared to follow them, but in the night before his intended departure, wishing to pray and to weep without restraint over that English Church which he had helped to found a quarter of a century before, and which he was now obliged to abandon, he had his bed placed in the church of the monastery where reposed Augustin, Ethelbert, and Bertha. Scarcely had he fallen asleep when St. Peter appeared to him, as Jesus Christ had erewhile appeared to St. Peter himself when the prince of the apostles, flying from Nero's persecution, met on the Appian Way his divine Master coming towards Rome, there to be, in his default, a second time crucified. The prince of the apostles overwhelmed with reproaches, and even scourged till the blood came, the bishop who was ready to abandon Christ's flock to the wolves, instead of braving martyrdom to save it.

On the morrow Laurence showed his bruised and bleeding sides to the king, who, at the sight, asked who had dared thus to maltreat such a man as he. "It was St. Peter," said the bishop, "who inflicted on me all these blows and sufferings for your salvation." Eadbald, moved and terrified, renounced idolatry, gave up his incestuous marriage, and promised to do his best for the protection of the Church. He called the two bishops, Mellitus and Justus, back from France, and sent them back to their dioceses to re-establish the faith in all freedom. After his conversion he continued to serve God with his people; he even built a new church dedicated to the Holy Virgin, in the monastery founded by St. Augustin, where he reckoned upon being buried beside his father and mother.

But he had not the same authority over the other Saxon realms with which Ethelbert had been invested in his capacity of Bretwalda, or military chief of the Saxon federation. He could not succeed in restoring Mellitus to his diocese.

The princes of Essex who had expelled him had all perished in a war with the Saxons of the West; but their subjects persevered in idolatry, and the people of London offered the most determined resistance to the re-establishment of the Roman bishop, declaring that they greatly preferred their idolatrous priests.

The kingdom of Essex seemed thus altogether lost to the faith; and as to East Anglia, the conversion of its king, Redwald, had not been serious and permanent. No sooner had he returned from the visit to Ethelbert, during which he received baptism, than he allowed himself to be brought back to the worship of his fathers by the influence of his wife and his principal counsellors; but he made the same concession to the new religion which had been already accorded to it by a Roman emperor — a concession much more worthy of a Caesar of the Roman decadence than of the impetuous instincts of a barbarian king. He vouchsafed to assign to the Son of the only true God a place by the side of his Scandinavian deities, and established two altars in the same temple — the one for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the other for the victims offered to the idols.

Of all the conquests made by the envoys of Gregory, there remained now only a portion of the country and of the people of Kent surrounding the two great monastic sanctuaries of Canterbury, — the metropolitan church dedicated to Christ, and the abbey of St. Augustin, then bearing the names of St. Peter and St. Paul. Roman missionaries, one after another, succeeded to the government of these two monasteries, which were now the only centres in which the fire of Christian life still burned in England. During more than a century all the abbots of St. Augustin's monastery were chosen from among the Roman monks, and probably from those who came from Mount Caelius to follow or join him.

In the archiepiscopal see, Laurence, who died three years after his reconciliation to the new king, was succeeded by Mellitus, who thus finally renounced all idea of again settling among the Saxons of the east. After Mellitus, who, though tortured by the gout, showed an indefatigable devotion to his apostolic duties, Justus, the Bishop of Rochester, became archbishop. Like Augustin, he received the pallium, along with the privilege of ordaining bishops at his pleasure, a privilege conferred upon him by the Pope Boniface V, careful, as his predecessor Boniface IV. had been, to maintain the mission which Gregory had bequeathed to the special charge of the pontiff. The Pope had received letters from King Eadbald which filled him with comfort and hope; and in placing under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Justus the English not only of Kent but of all the neighbouring kingdoms, he exhorted him to persevere with commendable patience in the work of the redemption of the English people.

Justus occupied the archbishop's throne for three years only, and was succeeded by Honorius, also a disciple of St. Gregory and St. Augustin, and the last of the companions of the great missionary who was to fill his place in the primacy of the new Christian kingdom.

In the midst of these mistakes, perils, and difficulties, and while the third successor of Augustin maintained, as best he could, the remains of the Roman mission in the still modest and often menaced metropolis of Canterbury, the horizon suddenly brightened toward the north of England. An event occurred there which seemed to realise the first designs of St. Gregory, and to open new and vast fields for the propagation of the Gospel. It is in this northern region that the principal interest of the great drama which gave England to the Church is henceforth to be concentrated.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIRST MISSION IN NORTHUMBRIA — ITS SUCCESSES AND ITS DISASTER BISHOP PAULINUS AND KING EDWIN

Humber, which seems to divide into two parts the island of Great Britain, and from which is derived the name of Northumbria, was, beyond comparison, the most important. This kingdom occupied the whole eastern coast from the mouth of the Humber to the Firth of Forth, including the existing counties of York, Durham, and Northumberland, with all the south-eastern portion of modern Scotland. To the west it extended to the borders of the British territories of Cambria and Strathclyde, and even approached, on the frontiers of Caledonia, that new kingdom of the Scots of Ireland which the great missionary Columba had just inaugurated.

Northumbria was not merely the largest kingdom of the Saxon Heptarchy — it is also that whose history is the most animated, dramatic, and varied — the richest in interesting and original characters. It is that, in short, where the incidents of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors, and of the propagation of monastic institutions, appear to us in fullest light. This is naturally explained by the fact that it is the birthplace of the Venerable Bede. This great and honest historian — the English Gregory of Tours, and the father of British history — was born and always lived in Northumberland. Hence in his interesting narratives a natural prominence is given to the men and the affairs of his native region, along with an exact and detailed reproduction of the local traditions and personal recollections which he treasured up and repeated with such scrupulous care.

Bede informs us that about a century after the first landing of the Saxons, under Hengist, in the country of Kent, their neighbours, the Angles, crossing the North Sea, founded on the opposite coast of Britain two colonies, long distinct, sometimes united, but finally combined together under the name of Northumbria. The wall anciently raised by the Emperor Severus from the mouth of the Solway to that of the Tyne to check the Caledonian incursions, was their boundary. The oldest of the two kingdoms was that of the Bernicians to the north. Their chief, Ida — who, like Hengist, claimed to be a descendant of Odin — established his residence in a fortress which he called Bamborough, after his wife Bebba, with that conjugal reverence so often illustrated even among the most savage Germans. The British bards, in return, have named this queen the Fair Traitor, because she was of British origin, and fought in the foremost ranks on the field of battle against her countrymen. The imposing remains of this fortress, situated on a detached rock on the coast, still surprise and arrest the traveller. From this point the invasion of the Angles spread over the fertile valleys of the Tweed and Tyne.

The second colony, that of the Deirians, to the south, was concentrated principally in the valley of the Tees and in the extensive region which is now known as Yorkshire. The first chief of the Deirians of whom anything is known, was that Alla or Ella, whose name — pronounced by the young slaves exposed for sale in the forum — suggested to St. Gregory the hope of soon hearing the Hallelujah echo through his kingdom. This region, to the north of the Humber, was precisely that which had suffered most from the Caledonian incursions ; and, according to some authors, the Saxons of Hengist, called in the character of allies by the Britons to their aid, were already established before the arrival of the Deirian colony. But Ida and his Angles would not in any character hold tenure under their Germanic compatriots from the south of the island, and instead of fighting against the Picts or the Scots they leagued themselves with them to crush the ill-starred Britons.

Ida, who had twelve sons, and who reigned twelve years, used fire and sword against the natives with such animosity that the British bards surnamed him the Man of Fire, or the Great Burner. They withstood him to the last extremity, and he fell in battle against them. But his grandson, Ethelfrid, took a terrible revenge. He was Ella's son-in-law; and at the death of the latter, and to the prejudice of the rights of the chief's son, Ethelfrid reunited the two kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, and mustering to his own standard all the Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria, he subdued or massacred a greater multitude of the Britons than any other of the invading chiefs. He was, says Bede, the ravaging wolf of Holy Writ : in the morning he devoured his prey, and in the evening he divided his spoil. The vanquished, who had called his grandfather the Burner, had only too good cause to call Ethelfrid the Ravager.

He had not, however, like his predecessors, the Caledonians for auxiliaries. They had become Christians, thanks to the apostolic zeal of Columba and his Irish missionaries; and far from seconding the pagan invaders, the Dalriadan Scots, recently established in Great Britain, came to the succour of the Britons, who were their fellow-Christians. Their king, Aidan — the same who had been consecrated by Columba, the monastic apostle of Caledonia — marched against Ethelfrid at the head of a numerous army. But his friend, the holy monk of Iona, was no longer there, as of old, to protect him with his prayers, and aid him with his ardent sympathies. The Scots and the Saxons met at Degstane, near the existing frontier of England and Scotland. After a desperate struggle the Scots army was cut to pieces; and this defeat put an end for ever to any desire on the part of the northern Celts to undertake the defence of their brethren of the south against the Teutonic conquerors.

Having conquered the Scots, the formidable heathen threw himself on the Britons of Wales; and it was then that he fulfilled the prophecy of Augustin by exterminating the twelve hundred monks of Bangor. After this he completed the conquest of Northumbria, and fell, ten years later, in an encounter with his countrymen, the East Angles, under the command of that king Redwald whom we have seen professing Christianity for a time to please king Ethelbert.

East Anglia, as the name itself indicates, was occupied by a colony of the same race as the Angles of Northumbria. On the death of the first Christian king of Kent, Redwald inherited the title of Bretwalda, which gave him a certain military supremacy

over the whole Anglo-Saxon federation. He had given shelter to the son of Ella, who, while still a child, had been dethroned by his brother-in-law, the terrible Ethelfrid. This young prince, named Edwin, grew up at Redwald's court, and had even been married to the daughter of his protector. Ethelfrid, seeing in him a rival and a successor, employed by turns threats and bribes to induce Redwald to surrender the royal exile. The East Anglian prince was on the point of yielding, when one of the friends of Edwin came by night to apprise him of his danger, and offered to conduct him to a place of refuge, where neither Redwald nor Ethelfrid should be able to discover him. "No," replied the young and generous exile, "I thank you for your goodwill, but I shall do nothing. Why should I begin again to wander a vagabond through every part of the island, as I have too much done? If I must die, let it be rather by the hand of this great king than by that of a meaner man." Notwithstanding, moved and agitated by the news, he went out, and seated himself on a rock before the palace, where he remained for a long time alone and unnoticed, a prey to agonising uncertainty.

All at once he beheld before him, in the midst of the darkness, a man whose countenance and dress were unknown to him, who asked him what he did there alone in the night, and added, "What wilt thou promise to him who shall rid thee of thy grief, by dissuading Redwald from delivering thee up to thy enemies, or doing thee any harm?" "All that may ever be in my power," answered Edwin. "And if," continued the unknown, "he promised to make thee king, and a king more powerful than all your ancestors, and all the other kings in England?" Edwin promised anew that his gratitude would be commensurate with such a service. "Then," said the stranger, "if he who shall have exactly foretold to you such great fortunes, offers you counsels more useful for your welfare and your life than any of your fathers or kinsmen have ever received, do you consent to follow them?" The exile swore that he would implicitly obey him by whom he should be rescued from such great peril and made king.

Thereupon the unknown placed his right hand upon his head, saying, "When a like sign shall be shown thee, then recall this hour — thy words and thy promise." With this he disappeared so suddenly, that Edwin believed he had spoken not with a man but with a spirit. A moment after his friend came running to announce that he had no longer anything to fear, and that king Redwald, having confided his project to the queen, had been dissuaded by her from his breach of faith.

This princess, whose name has been unfortunately forgotten, had, like most of the Anglo-Saxon women, an all-powerful influence in the heart of her husband. More happily inspired than when she had induced him to renounce the baptism which he had received when with Ethelbert, she showed him how unworthy it would be to sell for gold his soul, and what is more, his honour, which she esteemed the most precious of all jewels.

Under the generous influence of the queen, Redwald not only refused to give up the exiled prince, but having sent back the ambassadors entrusted with the costly presents of Ethelfrid, he declared war against him. The result was that, Ethelfrid having been defeated and slain, Edwin was established as king in Northumbria by his protector Redwald, who was now the chief of the Anglo-Saxon federation. The sons of Ethelfrid, although, on the mother's side, nephews of the new king, were obliged to fly, like Edwin



himself in his youth. They went for refuge to the Dalriadan Scots, whose apostle Columba had been. We shall presently see what resulted from this exile, to Northumbria and the whole of England.

Like his brother-in-law Ethelfrid, Edwin reigned over the two united kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia; and, like him, he waged a vigorous war against the Britons of Wales. Having thus become the dreaded chief of the Angles of the North, he found himself esteemed and sought after by the East Angles, who on the death of their king, Redwald, offered him the sovereignty. But Edwin preferred to repay the protection which he had received from Redwald and his wife by leaving the kingdom of East Anglia to their son. He reserved, however, the military supremacy which Redwald had exercised, as well as the title of Bretwalda, which had passed from the king of Kent to the king of East Anglia, but which, after being held by Edwin, was to remain always attached to the Northumbrian monarchy.

We have no precise information regarding the origin or the nature of the authority with which the Bretwalda was invested. It is apparent only that this authority, at first of a temporary and exclusively military character, extended, after the conversion of the different kingdoms of the Heptarchy, to ecclesiastical affairs. It is evident also that it added to the royal dignity the prestige of a real supremacy, all the more sought after that it was probably conferred, not only by the vote of the other kings, but of all the chiefs of the Saxon nobility.

Thus then was accomplished the mysterious prediction of Edwin's nocturnal visitor; he was now a king, and more powerful than any of the English kings before him. For the supremacy of the Bretwalda, added to the vast extent of country occupied by the Angles of the North and East, secured to the king of Northumbria a preponderance altogether different from that of the petty kings of the South who had borne the title before him. Having reached this unhopèd-for elevation, and having lost his first wife, a daughter of the king of East Anglia, he sought a second bride, and asked in marriage the sister of the king of Kent, the daughter of Ethelbert and Bertha, a descendant of Hengist and Odin through her father, and of St. Clotilda through her mother. She was called Ethelburga — that is, noble protectress; for this word Ethel, which appears so often in Anglo-Saxon names, is simply, as has been already remarked, the German edel, noble. Her brother Eadbald, brought back by Archbishop Laurence to the Christian faith, at first refused the demand of the king of Northumbria. He answered that it was impossible for him to betroth a Christian virgin to a pagan, lest the faith and the sacraments of the true God should be profaned by making her live with a king who was a stranger to His worship. Far from being offended at this refusal, Edwin promised that, if the princess was granted to him, he would do nothing against the faith that she professed; but, on the contrary, she might freely observe all the rites of her religion, along with all who might accompany her to his kingdom — men or women, priests or laymen. He added that he would not himself refuse to embrace his wife's religion, if after having had it examined by the sages of his council he found it to be more holy and more worthy of God than his own.

It was on these conditions that her mother Bertha had left her country and her Merovingian family to cross the sea and wed the king of Kent. The conversion of that

kingdom had been the reward of her sacrifice. Ethelburga, destined, like her mother, and still more than she, to be the means of introducing a whole people to the knowledge of Christianity, followed the maternal example. She furnishes us with a new proof of the lofty part assigned to women in the history of the Germanic races, and of the noble and touching influence attributed to them. In England as in France, and everywhere, it is ever through the fervour and devotion of Christian women that the victories of the Church are attempted or achieved.

But the royal virgin was entrusted to the Northumbrians, only under the guardianship of a bishop charged to preserve her from all pagan pollution, by his exhortations, and also by the daily celebration of the heavenly mysteries. The king, according to Bede, had thus to espouse the bishop at the same time as the princess.

This bishop, by name Paulinus, was one of those still surviving Roman monks who had been sent by St. Gregory to the aid of Augustin. He had been twenty-five years a missionary in the south of Great Britain, before he was consecrated bishop of Northumbria by the third successor of Augustin at Canterbury. Having arrived with Ethelburga in Edwin's kingdom, and having married them, he longed to see the whole of the unknown nation amongst whom he had come to pitch his tent, espoused to Christ. Unlike Augustin, after his landing on the shores of Kent, it is expressly stated that Paulinus was disposed to act upon the Northumbrian people before attempting the conversion of the king. He laboured with all his might to add some Northumbrian converts to the small company of the faithful that had accompanied the queen. But his efforts were for a long time fruitless; he was permitted to preach, but no one was converted.

In the meantime the successors of St. Gregory watched over his work with that wonderful and unwearying perseverance which is characteristic of the Holy See. Boniface V, at the suggestion, no doubt, of Paulinus, addressed two letters to the king and queen of Northumbria, which recall those of Gregory to the king and queen of Kent. He exhorted the glorious king of the English, as he calls him, to follow the example of so many other emperors and kings, and especially of his brother-in-law Eadbald, in submitting himself to the true God, and not to let himself be separated, in the future, from that dear half of himself, who had already received in baptism the pledge of eternal bliss. He conjured the queen to neglect no effort to soften and inflame the hard and cold heart of her husband, to make him understand the beauty of the mysteries in which she believed, and the rich reward which she had found in her own regeneration, to the end that they twain whom human love had made one flesh here below, might dwell together in another life, united in an indissoluble union. To his letters he added some modest presents, which testified assuredly either his poverty or the simplicity of the times : for the king, a linen shirt embroidered with gold and a woollen cloak from the east; for the queen, a silver mirror and an ivory comb; for both, the blessing of their protector St. Peter.

But neither the letters of the Pope, nor the sermons of the bishop, nor the importunities of the queen, prevailed to triumph over the doubts of Edwin. A providential event, however, occurred to shake, without absolutely convincing him. On the Easter-day after his marriage an assassin, sent by the king of the West Saxons, made

his way to the king, and, under the pretext of communicating a message from his master, tried to stab him with a double-edged poisoned dagger, which he held hidden under his dress. Prompted by that heroic devotion for their princes, which among all the Germanic barbarians co-existed with continual revolts against them, a lord named Lilla, having no shield at hand, threw himself between his king and the assassin, who struck with such force that his weapon reached Edwin even through the body of his faithful friend. The same night, the night of the greatest of Christian festivals, the queen was delivered of a daughter. While Edwin was rendering thanks to his gods for the birth of his first-born, the Bishop Paulinus began, on his part, to thank the Lord Christ, assuring the king that it was He who by His prayers to the true God had obtained that the queen should bear her first child without mishap, and almost without pain. The king, less moved by the mortal danger that he had just escaped, than by the joy of being a father without peril or hurt to his beloved Ethelburga, was charmed by the words of Paulinus, and promised to renounce his idols for the service of Christ, if Christ granted him life and victory in the war which he was about to wage against the king who had tried to procure his assassination. As a pledge of his good faith, he gave the new-born child to the bishop, that he might consecrate her to Christ. This first child of the king, the first native Christian of the Northumbrian nation, was baptized on Whitsunday (Pentecost), along with eleven persons of the royal household. She was named Eanfleda, and was destined, like most of the Anglo-Saxon princesses, to exercise an influence over the destiny of her country.

Edwin came back victorious from his struggle with the guilty king. On his return to Northumbria, though since giving his promise he had ceased to worship idols, he would not at once, and without further reflection, receive the sacraments of the Christian faith. But he made Paulinus give him more fully, what Bede calls the reasons of his belief. He frequently conferred with the wisest and best instructed of his nobles upon the part which they would counsel him to take. Finally, being by nature a man sagacious and reflective, he passed long hours in solitude — his lips indeed closed, but discussing many things in the depths of his heart, and examining without intermission which religion he ought to prefer.

The history of the Church, if I mistake not, offers no other example of an equally long and conscientious hesitation on the part of a pagan, king. They all appear equally prompt alike for persecution or for conversion. Edwin, as the testimony of an incontestable authority reveals him to us, experienced all the humble efforts, the delicate scruples, of the modern conscience. A true priest has said with justice : "This intellectual travail of a barbarian moves and touches us. We follow with sympathy the searcher in his hesitations; we suffer in his perplexities; we feel that this soul is a sincere one, and we love it.

Meanwhile Paulinus saw time passing away without the word of God which he preached being listened to, and without Edwin being able to bow the pride of his intelligence before the divine humility of the cross. Being informed of the prophecy and the promise which had put an end to the exile of the king, he believed that the moment for recalling them to him had come. One day when Edwin was seated by himself, meditating in the secret of his own heart upon the religion which he ought to follow, the bishop entered suddenly and placed his right hand upon his head, as the unknown had

done in the vision, asking him if he recognised that sign. The king, trembling, would have thrown himself at the feet of Paulinus, but he raised him up and said gently, "You are now delivered by God's goodness from the enemies that you feared. He has given you the kingdom which you desired. Remember to accomplish your third promise, which binds you to receive the faith and to keep its commandments. It is thus only that after being enriched with the divine favour here, you will be able to enter with God into the fellowship of the eternal kingdom."

"Yes," answered Edwin at length, "I feel it; I ought to be, and I will be, a Christian." But, always true to his characteristic moderation, he stipulated only for himself. He said that he would confer with his great nobles, his friends, and his councillors, in order that, if they decided to believe as he did, they should be all together consecrated to Christ in the fountain of life.

Paulinus having expressed his approval of this proposal, the Northumbrian parliament, or, as it was then called, the council of sages (*witena-gemot*), was assembled near to a sanctuary of the national worship, already celebrated in the time of the Romans and Britons, at Godmundham, hard by the gates of York. Each member of this great national council was, in his turn, asked his opinion of the new doctrine and worship. The first who answered was the high priest of the idols, by name Coifi, a singular and somewhat cynical personage. "My opinion," said he, "is most certainly that the religion which we have hitherto followed is worth nothing; and this is my reason. Not one of your subjects has served our gods with more zeal than I have, and notwithstanding, there are many of your people who have received from you far greater gifts and dignities. But if our gods were not good for nothing, they would have done something for me who have served them so well. If then, after ripe examination, you have found this new religion which is preached to us more efficacious, let us hasten to adopt it."

One of the great chiefs held different language, in which are revealed to us that religious elevation and poetic melancholy wherewith the minds of these Germanic heathens were often imbued. "You remember, perhaps," said he to the king, "what sometimes happens in the winter evenings whilst you are at supper with your ealdormen and thanes; while the good fire burns within, and it rains and snows, and the wind howls without, a sparrow enters at the one door and flies out quickly at the other. During that rapid passage it is sheltered from the rain and cold; but after that brief and pleasant moment it disappears, and from winter returns to winter again. Such seems to me to be the life of man, and his career but a brief moment between that which goes before and that which follows after, and of which we know nothing. If, then, the new doctrine can teach us something certain, it deserves to be followed."

After much discourse of the same tendency, for the assembly seems to have been unanimous, the high priest Coifi spoke again with a loftier inspiration than that of his first words. He expressed the desire to hear Paulinus speak of the God whose envoy he professed to be. The bishop, with permission of the king, addressed the assembly. When he had finished, the high priest cried, "For a long time I have understood the nothingness of all that we worshipped, for the more I endeavoured to search for truth in it the less I found it; but now I declare without reserve that in this preaching I see the shining of the truth, which gives life and salvation and eternal blessedness. I vote, then,

that we give up at once to fire and to the curse the altars which we have so uselessly consecrated." The king immediately made a public declaration that he adhered to the gospel preached by Paulinus — that he renounced idolatry and adopted the faith of Christ. "But who," asked the king, "will be the first to overthrow the altars of the ancient gods, and to profane their sacred precincts?" "I," replied the high priest; whereupon he prayed the king to give him arms and a stallion, that he might the more thoroughly violate the rule of his order, which forbade him to carry arms and to mount aught but a mare. Mounted on the king's steed, girt with a sword, and lance in hand, he galloped towards the idols, and in the sight of all the people, who believed him to be beside himself, he dashed his lance into the interior of their temple. The profaning steel buried itself in the wall; to the surprise of the spectators, the gods were silent, and the sacrilege remained unpunished. Then the people, at the command of the high priest, proceeded to overthrow and burn the temple.

These things occurred in the eleventh year of Edwin's reign. The whole Northumbrian nobility and a large part of the people followed the example of the king, who was baptized with much solemnity on Easter-day (627) by Paulinus at York, in a wooden church, built in haste while the catechumens were prepared for baptism. Immediately afterwards he built around this improvised sanctuary a large church in stone, which he had not time to finish, but which has since become the splendid Minster of York, and the metropolitan church of the north of England. The town of York had been already celebrated in the times of the Romans. The Emperor Severus and the father of Constantine had died there. The Northumbrians had made it their capital, and Edwin there placed the seat of the episcopate filled by his teacher Paulinus. Thus was realised the grand design of Gregory, who, thirty years before, at the commencement of the English mission, had instructed Augustin to send a bishop to York, and to invest him with the jurisdiction of metropolitan over the twelve suffragan bishoprics which in imagination he already saw founded in the north of the country conquered by the Anglo-Saxons.

The king and the bishop laboured together for six years for the conversion of the Northumbrian people, and even of the English population of the neighbouring regions. The chiefs of the nobility and the principal servants of the king were the first to receive baptism, together with the sons of Edwin's first marriage. The example of a king was, however, far from being enough, among the Anglo-Saxons, to determine the conversion of a whole people; and the first Christian king and the first bishop of Northumbria did not, any more than Ethelbert and Augustin, think of employing undue constraint. Doubtless it required more than one effort on their part to overcome the roughness, the ignorance, the indifference of the heathen Saxons. But they had, at the same time, much encouragement, for the fervour of the people and their anxiety for baptism were often wonderful. Paulinus having gone with the king and queen, who several times accompanied him on his missions, to a royal villa far to the north, they remained there, all three, for thirty-six days together, and during the whole of that time the bishop did nothing else from morning till night than catechise the crowds that gathered from all the villages around, and afterwards baptize them in the river which flowed close by. At the opposite extremity of the country, to the south, the name of Jordan is still given to a portion of the course of the river Derwent, near the old Roman ford of Malton, in



memory of the numerous subjects of Edwin that were there baptized by the Roman missionary. Everywhere he baptized in the rivers or streams, for there was no time to build churches. However, he built, near Edwin's principal palace, a stone church, whose calcined ruins were still visible after the Reformation, as well as a large cross, with this inscription : *Paulinus hic praedicavit et celebravit*.

Passing the frontiers of the Northumbrian kingdom, Paulinus continued his evangelistic course among the Angles settled to the south of the Humber, in the maritime province of Lindsay. There also he baptized many people in the Trent; and long afterwards, old men, who had in their childhood received baptism at his hands, recalled with reverent tenderness the venerable and awe-inspiring stranger, whose lofty and stooping form, black hair, aquiline nose, and emaciated but imposing features, impressed themselves on every beholder, and proclaimed his southern origin. The beautiful monastic church of Southwell consecrates the memory of the scene of one of those multitudinous baptisms; and it is to the mission of Bishop Paulinus on this side the Humber that we trace the foundation of that magnificent Cathedral of Lincoln, which rivals our noble Cathedral of Laon in its position, and even surpasses it in grandeur, and perhaps in beauty. It was in the stone church (Bede always notes this detail most carefully) built by Paulinus at Lincoln, after the conversion of the chief Saxon of that town, with all his house, that the metropolitan Bishop of York had to proceed to the consecration of the fourth successor of Augustin in the metropolitan see of Canterbury. Honorius was, like Paulinus, a monk of Mount Coelius at Rome, and one of the first companions of St. Augustin in his mission to England. He was a disciple of St. Gregory, and had learned from the great pontiff the art of music, and it was he who led the choir of monks on the occasion of the first entrance of the missionaries, thirty years before, at Canterbury. The Pope then reigning was also named Honorius, first of that name. He sent the pallium to each of the two metropolitans, and ordained that when God should take to Himself one of the two, the other should appoint a successor, in order to avoid the delay of a reference to Rome, so difficult by reason of the great distance to be travelled by sea and land. In the eloquent letter which accompanied the pallium, he reminds the new archbishop that the great Pope Gregory had been his master, and should ever be his model, and that the whole work of the archbishops, his predecessors, had been but the fruit of the zeal of that incomparable pontiff.

The Pope wrote also to King Edwin to congratulate him on his conversion and on the ardour and sincerity of his faith, and to exhort him to read much in the works of St. Gregory, whom he calls the Preacher of the English, and whom he recommends the king to take for his perpetual intercessor with God. But when this letter reached England, Edwin was no more.

The six years which passed between his conversion and his death may certainly be reckoned among the most glorious and happy that it was ever given to any Anglo-Saxon prince to know. He speedily raised Northumbria to the head of the Heptarchy. On the south, his ardent zeal for the faith which he had embraced after such ripe reflection extended its influence even to the populations which, without being subjected to his direct authority, yet belonged to the same race as his subjects. The East Angles, as we have seen, had offered him their crown, and he had refused it. But he used his influence over the young king, who owed to him his elevation to the throne, to induce him to

embrace the Christian religion, with all his subjects. Eordwald thus expiated the apostasy of his father; and Edwin thus paid the ransom of the generous pity that the royalty of East Anglia had lavished on his youth and his exile.

On the north he extended and consolidated the Anglo-Saxon dominion as far as the isthmus which separated Caledonia from Britain. And he has left an ineffaceable record of his reign in the name of the fortress built upon the rock which commanded the entrance of the Forth, and which still lifts its sombre and alpine front — true Acropolis of the barbarous north — from the midst of the great and picturesque city of Edinburgh (*Edwin's burgh*).

On the west he continued, with less ferocity than Ethelfrid, but with no less valour and success, the contest with the Britons of Wales. He pursued them even into the islands of the channel which separates Great Britain from Ireland; and took possession of the Isle of Man and another isle which had been the last refuge of the Druids from the Roman dominion, and which, after its conquest by Edwin, took the name of the victorious race, *Angles-ey*.

Within his own kingdom he secured a peace and security so unknown both before and after his reign that it passed into a proverb; it was said that in the time of Edwin a woman with her new-born child might traverse England from the Irish Channel to the North Sea without meeting any one who would do her the least wrong. It is pleasant to trace his kindly and minute care of the well-being of his subjects in such a particular as that of the copper cups which he had suspended beside the fountains on the highways, that the passers-by might drink at their ease, and which no one attempted to steal, whether from fear or from love of the king. Neither did any one ever reproach him for the unwonted pomp which distinguished his train, not only when he went out to war, but when he rode peacefully through his towns and provinces, on which occasions the lance surmounted with a large tuft of feathers — which the Saxons had borrowed from the Roman legions, and which they had made the sacred standard of the Bretwalda and the ensign of the supreme sovereignty in their confederation — was always carried before him in the midst of his military banners.

But all this grandeur and prosperity were about to be engulfed in a sudden and great calamity.

There were other Angles than those who, in Northumbria and East Anglia, were already subdued and humanised by the influence of Christianity; there remained the Angles of Mercia — the great central region stretching from the Humber to the Thames. The kingdom of Mercia was the last state organised out of the Anglo-Saxon conquest. It had been founded by that portion of the invaders who, finding all the eastern and southern shores of the island already occupied, were compelled to advance into the interior. It became the centre of the pagan resistance to, and occasional assaults upon, the Christian Propaganda which was henceforth to have its headquarters in Northumbria. The pagans of Mercia found a formidable leader in the person of Penda, who was himself of royal extraction, or, as it was then believed, of the blood of Odin, and had reigned for twenty-two years, but who was inflamed by all the passions of a barbarian, and, above all, devoured with jealousy of the fortunes of Edwin and the power of the Northumbrians. Since Edwin's conversion these wild instincts were

intensified by fanaticism. Penda and the Mercians remained faithful to the worship of Odin, whose descendants all the Saxon kings believed themselves to be. Edwin and the Northumbrians were, therefore, in their eyes no better than traitors and apostates. But more surprising still, the original inhabitants of the island, the Christian Britons, who were more numerous in Mercia than in any other Anglo-Saxon kingdom, shared and excited the hatred of the pagan Saxons against the converts of the same race. These old Christians, it cannot be too often repeated, always exasperated against the invaders of their island, took no account of the faith of the converted Angles, and would not on any terms hold communion with them. The Welsh Britons, who maintained their independence, but who, for more than a century, had been constantly menaced, defeated, and humiliated by Ida, Ethelfrid, and Edwin, professed and nourished their antipathy with even greater bitterness. Their chief, Caedwalla or Cadwallon, the last hero of the Celtic race in Britain, at first overcome by Edwin and forced to seek refuge in Ireland and in Armorica, had returned thence with rage redoubled, and with auxiliaries from the other Celtic races, to recommence the struggle against the Northumbrians. He succeeded in forming an alliance with Penda against the common enemy. Under these two chiefs an immense army, in which the British Christians of Wales jostled the pagans of Mercia, invaded Northumbria. Edwin awaited them at Hatfield, on the southern frontier of his kingdom. He was there disastrously defeated, and perished gloriously, sword in hand, scarce forty-eight years of age, dying a death which entitled him to be ranked amongst the martyrs. His eldest son fell with him; the younger, taken prisoner by Penda, who swore to preserve his life, was infamously murdered. Northumbria was ravaged with fire and sword, and its recent Christianity completely obliterated. The most barbarous of the persecutors was not the idolatrous Penda, but the Christian Cadwallon, who, during a whole year, went up and down all the Northumbrian provinces massacring every man he met, and subjecting even the women and children to atrocious tortures before putting them to death. He was, says Bede, resolved to extirpate from the soil of Britain the English race, whose recent reception of Christianity only inspired this old Christian, intoxicated with blood and with a ferocious patriotism, with scorn and disgust.

It is not known why Northumbria, after the death of Edwin and his son, was not subjugated and shared among the conquerors; but it remained divided, enslaved, and plunged once more into paganism. Deira fell to Osric, cousin-german of Edwin; Bernicia to Eanfrid, one of the sons of Ethelfrid, who had returned from his exile in Scotland. Both had received baptism : the one with his cousin at York ; the other at the hands of the Celtic monks of Iona. But a pagan reaction was the inevitable consequence of the overthrow of the first Christian king of Northumbria. The two princes yielded to that reaction, and renounced their baptism, but without gaining anything thereby. The king of Deira was killed in battle with the Britons; and the king of Bernicia was murdered at an interview which he had sought with the savage Cadwallon.

Bishop Paulinus did not consider himself called upon to remain a witness of such horrors. His one thought was to place in safety the widow of King Edwin — that gentle Ethelburga who had been confided to him by her brother for a different destiny : he brought her back by sea to her brother's kingdom, with the daughter and the two youngest sons whom she had borne to Edwin. Even beside her brother, the king of Kent,

she was afraid to keep them in England; and, wishing to devote her own widowhood to God, she entrusted them to the king of the Franks, Dagobert, her cousin, at whose court they died at an early age. As to Paulinus, who had left in charge of his church at York only a brave Italian deacon, of whom we shall speak hereafter, he found the episcopal see of Rochester vacant in consequence of the death of the Roman monk who was the titular bishop, and who, sent by the primate to the Pope, had just been drowned in the Mediterranean. Paulinus was invested with this bishopric by the king and by the archbishop Honorius, whom he had himself consecrated at Lincoln; and there he died, far from his native land, after having laboured during forty-three years for the conversion of the English.

Thus appeared to crumble away in one day and for ever, along with the military and political pre-eminence of Northumbria, the edifice so laboriously raised in the north of England by the noble and true-hearted Edwin, the gentle and devoted Ethelburga, the patient and indefatigable Paulinus, and by so many efforts and sacrifices known to God alone. The last and most precious of Edwin's conquests was not destined to survive him long. His young kinsman, the king of the East Angles, was no sooner converted than he fell beneath the poignard of an assassin; and, like Northumbria, East Anglia relapsed altogether into the night of idolatry.

After thirty-six years of continual efforts, the monastic missionaries sent by St Gregory the Great had succeeded in establishing nothing, save in the petty kingdom of Kent. Everywhere else they had been baffled. Of the six other kingdoms of the Heptarchy, three — those of the Saxons of the South and of the West, and the Angles of the Centre — remained inaccessible to them. The three last — those of the Saxons of the East, of the Angles of the East and North — had successively escaped from them. And yet, except the supernatural courage which courts or braves martyrdom, no virtue seems to have been wanting to them. No accusation, no suspicion, impugns their all-prevailing charity, the fervent sincerity of their faith, the irreproachable purity of their morals, the unwearied activity, the constant self-denial, and austere piety of their whole life.

How, then, are we to explain their defeat, and the successive failure of their laborious efforts? Perhaps they were wrong in not sufficiently following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles — in not preaching enough to the humble and poor — in not defying with proper boldness the wrath of the great and powerful. Perhaps they were wrong in addressing themselves too exclusively to the kings and warlike chiefs, and in undertaking nothing, risking nothing, without the concurrence, or against the will, of the secular power. Hence, without doubt, these changes of fortune, these reactions, and sudden and complete relapses into idolatry, which followed the death of their first protectors; hence, also, these fits of timidity, of discouragement, and despair, into which we see them falling under the pressure of the sudden changes and mistakes of their career. Perhaps, in short, they had not at first understood the national character of the Anglo-Saxons, and did not know how to gain and to master their minds, by reconciling their own Italian customs and ideas with the roughness, the independence, and the manly energy of the populations of the German race.

At all events, it is evident that new blood was needed to infuse new life into the scattered and imperfect germs of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, and to continue and carry out the work of the missionary monks of Mount Coelius.

These monks will always have the glory of having first approached, broken, and thrown seed upon this fertile but rebellious soil. Others must water with the sweat of their toil the fields that they have prepared, and gather the harvest they have sown. But the sons of St. Gregory will none the less remain before God and man the first labourers in the conversion of the English people. And, at the same time, they did not desert their post. Like mariners entrenched in a fort built in haste on the shore that they would fain have conquered, they concentrated their strength in their first and indestructible foundations at Canterbury, in the metropolitan monastery of Christ Church and the monastery *extra muros* of St. Augustin, and there maintained the storehouse of Roman traditions and of the Benedictine rule, along with that citadel of apostolic authority which was for centuries the heart and head of Catholic England.



## BOOK XI

### THE CELTIC MONKS AND THE ANGLO-SAXONS

#### CHAPTER I

##### ST. OSWALD AND THE REVIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHUMBRIA

The work of conversion among the English, though interrupted in the south by a pagan reaction, and buried, in the north, on the overthrow of the first Christian king of Northumbria, was to undergo but a momentary eclipse — the providential prelude of a more sustained effort and decisive triumph. The spiritual conquest of the island, abandoned for a time by the Roman missionaries, was now about to be taken up by the Celtic monks. The Italians had made the first step, and the Irish now appeared to resume the uncompleted work. What the sons of St. Benedict could only begin, was to be completed by the sons of St. Columba. The great heart of the first abbot of Iona, inspiring his spiritual descendants, was thus to accomplish the noble design of the holy Gregory. The spirit of unity, submission, and discipline, was to be instilled into their minds, somewhat against their will, by Wilfrid, a Saxon convert; and their unwearied activity and invincible perseverance were destined to triumph over every obstacle, stimulating and seconding the zeal of the Italian missionaries and reviving the sacred fire amongst the Benedictine monks, into whose ranks they finally fell. Thus wrought upon, moulded and penetrated on every side by monastic influence, the whole nation of the Anglo-Saxons was soon to acknowledge the law of Christ. Its kings, its monks, its bishops and saints, were to take a foremost place among the children of the Church, the civilisers of Europe, the benefactors of mankind, and the soldiers of the Cross. The history of this transformation we shall attempt to set forth in the narrative which follows.

Forty-eight years after Augustin and his Roman monks landed on the shores of pagan England, an Anglo-Saxon prince invoked the aid of the monks of Iona in the conversion of the Saxons of the north.

This prince was Oswald, son of Ethelfrid the Eavager, and of the sister of the martyred King Edwin. After the defeat and death of his father, the son of the great enemy and conqueror of the Scots had, while yet a child, sought a refuge, along with his brothers and a numerous train of young nobles, among the Scots themselves. He there

found the same generous hospitality which, twelve centuries later, the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons showed to the French princes, descendants of a race continually and gloriously hostile to England. In that exile he passed the seventeen years of the reign of his uncle Edwin, as Edwin himself had lived in exile during the reign of his brother-in-law and persecutor Ethelfrid. But between these two representatives of the two dynasties which divided Northumbria, and succeeded each other in the sovereignty, there was this difference, that the young Edwin had sought and found an asylum among his pagan fellow-countrymen; while the banishment of Oswald led him into intercourse with a people of a race and religion differing from his own. Since the apostolate of Columba, the Scots and Picts had become entirely Christian; and among them Oswald and his companions in misfortune learned the truths of Christianity, and were all baptized, but according to the rite of the Celtic Church, which differed from the Roman.

After the overthrow of Edwin and the Deirian dynasty, of which he was the head, the princes of the Bernician family returned to Northumbria, from which they had been banished for seventeen years.

The elder, Eanfrid, as has been stated, fell by the sword of the Briton Cadwallon, after having renounced the Christian faith. But his younger brother Oswald was a man of a very different stamp. At the head of a small but resolute band, of whom a dozen at most were Christians like himself, he undertook to reconquer his country, and did not hesitate to carry on the struggle against the immense forces of the formidable Briton, nor even to attack him in pitched battle. The two armies, so unequal in numbers, met near that great wall which the Emperor Severus had erected from sea to sea to keep back the Picts, and which divided Northumbria into two nearly equal parts. This rampart, which had neither restrained the Picts in their invasions of the South, nor the Saxons in their conquests to the north, was then, though not intact, still standing; as indeed even now its vast remains may be traced on the steep hill-tops and uplands, covered with heath or strewn with basalt rocks, which give to that district of England an aspect so different from that of her ordinary landscapes. Flanked by a fragment of the Roman wall, the Anglo-Saxon prince occupied a height where his feeble forces could defy the attack of the numerous battalions of Cadwallon. On that height, which was afterwards called Heaven's Field, and which still bears the name of St. Oswald, on the eve of the day of decisive battle, the young and ardent warrior held erect with his own hands a large wooden cross, which had been hastily made by his orders, while his companions heaped the earth round it, to keep it firm in its position; then prostrating himself before it, he said to his brothers in arms, "Let us all fall on our knees, and together implore the living and true and Almighty God in His mercy to defend us against the pride and fierceness of our enemy; for that God knows our cause is just, and that we fight for the salvation of our nation. Yes, it is for our salvation and our freedom that we must fight today against those Britons, whom our fathers gloried in challenging, but who now prophesy the extirpation of our race."

The Britons themselves might seem to have an equal right to offer this prayer, for they had long been Christians, and after all had only retaken their native soil from the grasp of foreign invaders. But a century of possession had given the latter a conviction of their right; and the bloody cruelties of Cadwallon had dishonoured his patriotism.

Oswald, moreover, represented the cause of advancing Christianity; for the Britons did nothing to convert their enemies, and the cross which he planted was the first which had been as yet seen in Bernicia.

On the evening of the same day, and during the night which preceded the contest which was to fix his destiny, Oswald, asleep in his tent, saw in a dream the holy St. Columba, the apostle and patron of the country of his exile and of the Church in which he had received his baptism. The warlike abbot of Iona, who had been dead for thirty-six years, appeared to him, shining with an angelic beauty; erect, and with that lofty stature that distinguished him in life, he stood and stretched his resplendent robe over the whole of the small army of exiles as if to protect it; then addressing the prince, he said, as God said to Joshua before the passage of the Jordan, "Be of good courage and play the man. At the break of day march to the battle : I have obtained for thee from God the victory over thine enemies and the death of tyrants : thou shalt conquer, and reign." The prince, on awaking, told his vision to the Saxons who had joined him, and all promised to receive baptism, like himself and the twelve companions of his exile, if he should return a conqueror. Early on the morrow the battle began, and Oswald gained a victory as complete as it was unlikely. Cadwallon, the last hero of the British race — victor, according to the Welsh tradition, in forty battles and in sixty single combats — perished in this defeat. The Britons evacuated Northumbria never to return, and withdrew behind the Severn. Those who remained to the north of the Dee, in the territory which has since been divided into the counties of Chester, Lancaster, and Westmoreland, submitted to the Northumbrian sway, which henceforth extended from the Irish Channel to the North Sea, tracing the line of the east coast as far as Edinburgh. There still remained, however, out of Wales and to the south of the wall of Severus, in the region adjoining Caledonia, a district bathed by the waters of the Solway, full of lakes and hills like Caledonia itself, and then, as now, known by the name of Cumbria or Cumberland, where the Britons continued independent, relying on the support of the Scots, and in alliance with the people of their own race who dwelt on the banks of the Clyde. But they fell, and, though subdued, agreed in bestowing upon the son of the Ravager — the grandson of the Burner — the Saxon who had nobly vanquished them, the name of *Lamn-Gwinn*; which means, according to some, "the Shining Sword," according to others, "the Liberal Hand".

Nothing is known of the course of events which, after the defeat and death of the great British chief, confirmed Oswald in the undisputed sovereignty of the whole of Northumbria and the temporary supremacy of the entire Saxon Heptarchy; but we find him entitled Emperor of all Britain by a writer almost contemporary with himself. Not only, says Bede, had he learned to possess in hope the heavenly kingdom which his forefathers knew not; but in this world God gave him a kingdom vaster than that possessed by any of his ancestors. He reigned over the four races who shared Britain among them — the Britons, the Scots, the Picts, and the Angles. No doubt this supremacy was but partially acknowledged, especially beyond the limits of the Anglo-Saxon territory ; but Northumbria, when united under one king, could not fail to become at once the chief power of the confederation. Oswald, who was the great-grandson of Ina on his father's side, and grandson of Ella on his mother's, had a natural right to unite the two realms of Deira and Bernicia, while at the same time delivering them from the

humiliating and bloody yoke of the Britons and Mercians. He seems to have had a special affection for Bernicia, his lather's country, in which he lived, and whose ancient boundaries on the Caledonian side he extended or re-established. But he succeeded, we are told by the Northumbrian Bede, in reconciling and binding into one state the two tribes which, although of the same race, had lived in continual conliict. He made of the two a real nation.

Oswald was the sixth of the great chiefs or suzerains of the confederation who bore the title of Bretvxdda, before whom was carried the *tufa*, or tuft of feathers, which was the emblem of supreme authority, and which after this was used by none save by the Northumbrian kings. It is supposed that this dignity was conferred or ratified by the suffrage, not only of all the kings of the Heptarchy, but also of the principal chiefs or barons of each tribe. It was at first exclusively military ; but it became under Oswald and his successors, as it had already been with Ethelbert of Kent, a means of exercising great influence in religious matters. For Oswald was not only a true king and a gallant soldier, but also a good Christian, destined to become a saint ; and in the power with which he found himself invested he saw chiefly the means of defending and propagating the faith which he had received with his baptism from the hands of the sons of Columba.

- The list of the Bretwaldas as given by Bede may be quoted here : —

560. Ella, King of the South Saxons.

579. Peawlin, King of the West Saxons.

596. Ethelbert, King of the Jutes of Kent.

616. Redwald, King of the East Angles.

630. Edwin, King of the Northumbrians, or Northern Angles.

635. Oswald, King of the Northumbrians.

642. Oswy, King of the Northumbrians.

To this list Lappenberg thinks should be added the name of Wulphere, King of the Mercians, or Angles of the Middle, from 656 to 675.

As soon as Oswald was established on his father's throne, his first and dearest thought was to bring back and to procure the triumph in his own country of that religion which had been the consolation of his exile. For this end missionaries, ministers of the word of God, were necessary above all things. It did not occur to him to seek them in the Church of Canterbury, the monastic centre which already existed on English soil, and whence ten years before had come Paulinus, the first apostle of Northumbria. He

does not seem to have even thought of the noble and worthy Roman deacon, James, whom Paulinus, on abandoning his metropolitan see of York, had left alone behind him ; and who, remaining gallantly at his post during the storm of invasion and havoc, had continued to baptize and preach, and to snatch his prey from the old enemy. This deacon, however, was the lieutenant of a bishop to some extent identified with the Deirian dynasty, and the family of King Edwin, which had exiled, robbed, and supplanted the family of Oswald, and which he had just supplanted in his turn. Was it for this reason, as has been supposed, that Oswald sought no aid from the Roman missionaries? Is it not more natural to conclude that he was chiefly influenced by his remembrance of the generous hospitality which he had found among the Scots, and of the instructions of those from whom in early manhood he received baptism and the other sacraments of the Church? Be this as it may, it was to the Scotie Church that he addressed himself — that is to say, to the heads of monasteries ruled by the traditions and institutions of Columba, that great abbot of Iona who appeared to him in his dream the night before the decisive battle, to promise him a victory and a crown.

Under the influence of that Celtic patriotism which inflamed the Britons against the conquering strangers, and which was no less unwilling to concede to them a share in eternal salvation than in the British soil, the Scotie or Irish Church seems up to this time to have refrained from all effort to spread the Gospel among the Saxons. But the time had come to adopt a different course. As though it had only awaited the signal given by Oswald, the Celtic Church, aided by the brave missionaries who sprang from that monastic reformation of which Iona was the centre, immediately began to light up with its radiance the whole northern region of Saxon Britain, from whence it went on into the territory where it had been preceded by the Roman missionaries, and where the two apostolic agencies finally met.

The Scottish monks replied with heartiness to the appeal of the exile, now a conqueror and sovereign. But the first effort of their zeal was not fortunate. Their first representative seems to have been animated by that spirit of pedantic rigour, by that stubborn and intolerant austerity, which have often shown themselves in the national character of the Scots along with Christian devotion and self-denial, and which culminated in the too celebrated Puritans. This missionary, by name Corman, attempted in vain to preach the Gospel to the Northumbrians, who heard him with opposition and dislike. After some time he returned to Iona ; and in rendering an account of his mission to those who had sent him — that is to say, to the elders of the monastery — he declared that he could make nothing of the Angles, that they were a race of untamable savages, and of a stubborn and barbarous spirit. This report greatly disquieted and perplexed the fathers of the synod, who ardently desired to impart to the English people the gift of salvation which had been asked from them. They deliberated for a long time, until at length one of the assembly, Aidan, a monk of Iona, said to the discomfited preacher, "It seems to me, my brother, that you have been too hard upon these ignorant people : you have not, according to the apostolic counsel, offered them first the milk of gentle doctrine, to bring them by degrees, while nourishing them with the Divine Word, to the true understanding and practice of the more advanced precepts." At these words every eye was turned to Aidan : his opinion was thoughtfully discussed, and the debate ended in an acknowledgment that he was the man wanted for the mission, since he was

endowed with that discernment which is the source of all virtues. There was, as we have seen, a bishop in the monastery of Iona, so that Aidan was at once consecrated missionary and bishop of Northumbria.

He received his mission from the whole brotherhood and from the abbot of Iona, Seghen, the fourth successor of Columba in the monastic metropolis of the Hebrides, the fourth of these great monks to whom Bede himself, somewhat prejudiced as he was against their holy founder, could not refuse the testimony that they were as illustrious for their self-denial as for their love of God and of strict monastic order. The venerable historian could find but one grievance wherewith to charge them and their delegate Aidan — viz., their fidelity to Celtic observances as to the celebration of Easter, which the clergy of the south of Ireland had abandoned, to conform to the new usage of Rome, but which the Scots of the north of Ireland and of all Caledonia obstinately preserved as they had received it from their fathers.

Everything had to be done, or done over again, in the once Christian Northumbria. To the south, in Deira, the ravages of Cadwallon and Penda do not seem to have left any traces of the mission of Paulinus except the solitary church at York, where the deacon James had maintained the celebration of Christian worship, and which, begun by Edwin, was completed by Oswald. In Bernicia we must conclude that the Roman bishop restricted himself to itinerating missions, followed by those general baptisms of which we have spoken, but that he had not founded there any permanent station, since, until the cross was planted by Oswald on the eve of his victory over the Britons, it is said that no one had ever seen a church or an altar, or any emblem of the Christian faith.

It was thus a hard task, and one well worthy of a follower of Columba, which presented itself to the monk of Iona, trained in the school of that great missionary.

Aidan had brought with him several of his brethren, and the number of Celtic monks who came to help him increased from day to day. It became necessary to assign to them, or rather to create for them, a centre of operations. The king left to Aidan the choice of the seat of his bishopric. Although his diocese comprised the whole of Northumbria, he does not seem to have thought of occupying the vacant see of York. Whether he yielded in this to the prejudices and dislikes which separated the Scots from Roman usages, or whether he was unwilling to quit the northern district, where the mission of Paulinus had left the fewest traces, and where, consequently, he had most work to do, it is certain that he chose to place his episcopal monastery at a distance from the churches founded by the Roman monks in the southern part of the country. He preferred a position a little more central, near the royal residence of Oswald, and on the coast, but much nearer the Firth of Forth than the mouth of the Humber, which mark the two extreme limits of Oswald's kingdom to the north and south.

This choice of a residence shows that, as a monk of Iona, ambitious of following in every respect the example of the great apostle of his race, founder of the sanctuary whence he issued, Aidan took pleasure in imitating St. Columba even in local particulars. Like him he settled his community in an island near the shore, almost as small, as insignificant, and as barren as Iona was when the holy exile from Ireland landed there. Its position was even in some sort a repetition, in the North Sea, and to the



east of Great Britain, of the position of Iona upon the opposite coast, and on the shore of the Atlantic.

Amid the waves of the Northern Sea, opposite the green hills of Northumberland and the sandy beach which extends between the border town of Berwick on the north, and the imposing ruins of the feudal fortress of Bamborough on the south, lies a low island, flat and sombre, girt with basaltic

rocks, forming a kind of square block, which terminates to the north-west in a long point of land stretching towards the mouth of the Tweed and Scotland. This island bears the impress of melancholy and barrenness. It can never have produced anything but the sorriest crops and some meagre pasturage. There is not a tree, not an undulation, not one noticeable feature, save a small conical hill to the south-west, now crowned by a strong castle of picturesque form, but recent construction. In this poor islet was erected the first Christian church of the whole district, now so populous, rich, and industrious, which extends from Hull to Edinburgh. This was Lindisfarne — that is to say, the Mother Church, the religious capital of the north of England and south of Scotland, the residence of the first sixteen bishops of Northumbria, the sanctuary and monastic citadel of the whole country round — the Iona of the Anglo-Saxons. The resemblance of Lindisfarne to Iona, of the colony to the metropolis, the daughter to the mother, is striking. These two isles, once so celebrated, so renowned, so influential over two great and hostile races, have the same sombre and melancholy aspect, full of a wild and savage sadness. Religion only could people, fertilise, and tranquillise these arid and desolate shores.

The island chosen by Aidan is, however, an island during only a portion of each day. As at Mont St. Michel in France, twice in the twenty-four hours the ebbing tide leaves the sands uncovered, and the passage can be made on foot to the neighbouring shore, though not always without danger, for many stories are told of travellers drowned in attempting to cross to the holy isle at low water. From this new abode Aidan, looking southward, could descry far off the rock and stronghold of Bamborough, where Oswald, after the example of his grandfather Ida, had established his capital. His eye, like his heart, could there hail the young and glorious prince who was his friend, his helper, and his rival.

Nothing is known of the early history of St. Aidan. When he first appears to us he is already a monk at Iona, and clothed with a certain authority among his brethren. Even when raised to the episcopate, he remained always a monk, not only in heart, but in life. Almost all his Celtic fellow-workers, whether from Ireland or Scotland, were monks like himself, and followed the cenobitical rule of their order and country. A hundred years after Aidan, the system which he had established at Lindisfarne was still in full vigour; and, as in his day, the bishop was either himself the abbot of the insular community, or lived there as a monk, subject, like the other religious, to the authority of the abbot, elected with the consent of the brotherhood. The priests, deacons, choristers, and other officials of the cathedral church, were all monks. But this monastic discipline and order would have availed little if the missionary-head of the institution had not possessed the character common to great servants of the truth, and been endowed with those virtues which the apostolical office demands.

Bede, who was born twenty years after the death of the monk-bishop, and who lived all his life in the country which was fragrant with the memory of Aidan's virtues, has made his character and life the subject of one of the most eloquent and attractive pictures ever drawn by the pen of the venerable historian. The praise which he awards to him is not only more expressive and more distinct than that given to any other of the monastic apostles of England, but also so much the less to be suspected of partiality, that it is qualified by the most energetic protests against his Celtic peculiarities. "He was," Bede tells us, "a pontiff inspired with a passionate love of goodness ; but at the same time full of a surprising gentleness and moderation." Faithful to all the noble teachings of his monastic cradle, he appeared to the future clergy of Northumbria as a marvel of self-denial and austerity. He was the first to practise what he taught, and none could ever reproach him with having failed to fulfil, to his best ability, all the precepts of the gospels, of the apostles, or the prophets.

Indifferent to all worldly possessions, Aidan expended in alms all that he received from the kings and rich men. To the astonishment of the Saxons, who were, like the modern English, excellent horsemen, and valued nothing more highly than the horse, it was always on foot that the bishop went through town and country, penetrating everywhere — now among the rich, now among the poor — baptizing those who were still heathen, confirming in the faith those who were already Christians, and stimulating all to alms-giving and good works. All who accompanied him, monks or lay-men, had to devote a certain portion of each day to meditation — that is to say, to reading the Bible and learning the Psalter. Unwearied in study, humble and peaceful, charitable and sincere, he was especially distinguished by zeal against the sins of the rich. Far from sparing any of their vices or excesses, he rebuked them with the greatest sharpness; and, contrary to the received custom, he never made any present to the chiefs or nobles, restricting himself to simple hospitality when they came to visit him, and giving away to the first beggar whom he met the gifts which they heaped upon him. But the priestly courage which armed him against the pride of the powerful was transformed into tender and watchful solicitude when he had to defend the feeble, to relieve the needy, or to comfort the unfortunate. His, in a word, was the heart of a true priest and apostle, disdainful of all false grandeur and vain prosperity, and victorious over all the mean and perverse tendencies of his time, and of all times.

Aidan retained nothing for himself of all the gifts of land which the generosity of the Saxon kings and nobles bestowed upon the Church, whose doctrines they had just embraced. He was content with Lindisfarne and the scanty fields of his poor little isle. But he reserved for himself, wherever it was possible in the vast mlce of the kings and nobles, a site for a chapel, with a small chamber attached, where he prepared his sermons, and in which he lodged during his incessant and prolonged journeys.

Like St. Gregory the Great, whom, though not his disciple, he emulated in well-doing, he took an especial interest in the education of children and the emancipation of slaves. From the beginning of his mission he attached to himself twelve English youths, whom he educated with the greatest care for the service of Christ, and of whom one at least became a bishop. Every church and monastery founded by him became immediately a school where the children of the English received from Aidan's monks an education as complete as that to be had in any of the great Irish monasteries. As to

slaves, he devoted principally to their redemption the gifts which he owed to the munificence of the Anglo-Saxons, endeavouring especially to save such as, to use Bede's expression, had been "unjustly sold," — which means, probably, those who were not foreign prisoners, or who had not been condemned to slavery as the punishment of crime. For it has been already stated, and it must be kept in mind, that the Saxons, as well as the Celts, made no scruple of selling their brethren and their children like cattle. The freedmen were carefully instructed by Aidan, numbered among his disciples, and frequently raised to the priesthood. Heathen barbarism was thus assailed and undermined in its very citadel by monks, both from the north and from the south, and by slaves promoted to the rank of priests.

The king and the bishop rivalled each other in virtue, in piety, in ardent charity, and desire for the conversion of souls. Thanks to their mutual and unwearied efforts, every day saw the Christian religion spreading farther and taking deeper root ; every day joyous crowds hastened to feed on the bread of the Divine Word, and to plunge into the waters of baptism ; every day numerous churches, flanked by monasteries and schools, rose from the soil. Every day new gifts of land, due to the generosity of Oswald and the Northumbrian nobles, came to swell the patrimony of the monks and the poor. Every day, also, new missionaries, full of zeal and fervour, arrived from Ireland or Scotland to help on the work of Aidan and Oswald, preaching and baptizing converts. And at the same time James the Deacon, sole survivor of the former Roman mission, redoubled his efforts to help forward the regeneration of the country in which he had already seen the faith flourish and decay. He took advantage of the restoration of peace, and the increasing number of the faithful, to add, like a true disciple of St. Gregory, the teaching of music to the teaching of religion, and to familiarise the English of the north with the sweet and solemn melody of the Roman chant, as already in use among the Saxons of Canterbury.

Oswald did not content himself with giving his friend Aidan the obedience of a son and the support of a king in all that could aid in the extension and consolidation of Christianity. He himself gave a personal example of all the Christian virtues, and often passed whole nights in prayer, still more occupied with the concerns of the heavenly kingdom than with those of the earthly realm which he had so ably won, and for which he was so soon to die. He was not only lavish in alms, giving of his riches, with humble and tender charity, to the humble and the poor, to the sick, to travellers, and to needy strangers who came to the bishop to be nourished with the Word of Life. In addition, he constituted himself Aidan's interpreter; "and it was," says Bede, "a touching spectacle to see the king, who had, during his long exile, thoroughly learned the Celtic tongue, translating to the great chiefs and the principal officials of his court, the eorls and thanes, the sermons of the bishop, who as yet spoke but imperfectly the language of the Anglo-Saxons.

The tender friendship and apostolic brotherhood which thus united the king and the bishop of the Northumbrians has, perhaps more than anything else, contributed to exalt and hallow their memory in the annals of Catholic England.

Oswald was too active, too popular, too energetic, and too powerful not to make his actions and influence felt beyond the bounds of his own kingdom. Like Edwin,

whom he resembles in so many points, notwithstanding the rivalry of their two families, he turned his thoughts and his steps to the south of the Humber. Edwin had converted, for a time at least, his neighbours and vassals, the East Anglians. Oswald went further, and contributed largely to the conversion of the most powerful kingdom of the Heptarchy, next to Northumbria — that of the Saxons of the West, Wessex — a kingdom which was destined to absorb and supplant all the others. The kings of this nation also professed to be of the blood of Odin ; they were descended from a chief called Cerdic, perhaps the bravest of all the invaders of the British soil, and who had consolidated his conquests by forty years of craft and war. It was among this warlike race that Oswald sought a wife; but, contrary to ordinary precedent, it was, in this new union, the husband, and not the wife, who took the initiative in conversion. When he went for his bride, Kineburga, into the country of the West Saxons, the king of Northumbria met there an Italian bishop, who had undertaken their conversion, finding them entirely pagan. He did his best to second the laborious efforts of the foreign missionary, and the king, whose daughter he was about to wed, having consented to be baptized, Oswald stood sponsor for him, and thus became the spiritual father of him whose son-in-law he was about to become. He took back to Northumbria with him the young convert, who soon bore him a son little worthy of his sire, but yet destined at least to be the founder of a monastery which acted a part of some importance in the history of his people. All this prosperity was soon to end, as all that is good and beautiful ends here below. The terrible Penda was still alive, and, under the iron hand of that redoubtable warrior, Mercia remained the stronghold of Paganism, even as Northumbria had become under Edwin and Oswald the centre of Christian life in Great Britain. He had left unrevenge the death of his ally, the Briton Oadwallon ; he had done nothing to hinder the accession and establishment of a new Christian king in Northumbria. But when that king essayed to cross the river which formed the boundary of the two kingdoms, and to unite to his domains a province which had always belonged to the Mercians, Penda, notwithstanding his age, resumed his old inveteracy towards those whom he saw — again like Edwin — deserting the worship of their common ancestor Odin, and claiming an insupportable supremacy over all the Saxons, Pagan or Christian. He accordingly renewed with the Britons the alliance which had already been so disastrous to the Northumbrians, and, placing himself at the head of the two combined armies, waged for two years a sanguinary war against Oswald, which ended in a decisive battle at Maserfeld, on the western border of Mercia and Northumbria. The struggle was fierce ; the brother of Penda perished in the fight, but Oswald, the great and beloved Oswald, shared the same fate. He died on the field, in the flower of his years, at the age of thirty-eight. There he fell — the historian of the English Church says with emphasis — fighting for his country. But his last word, his last thought, was for heaven, and for the eternal welfare of his people. "My God," said he, on seeing himself encircled with enemies, overwhelmed by numbers, and already pierced by a forest of arrows and lances — "my God, save their souls!" The last cry of this saintly spirit, this young hero, remained long graven on the memory of the Saxon people, and passed into a proverb to denote those who prayed without ceasing in life and in death.

The ferocity of Penda was not even satisfied by the death of his young rival. When the dead body of the king of Northumbria was brought from the battlefield into his presence, the old savage caused the head and hands of the hero to be cut off, and set up

on stakes, to intimidate both conquerors and conquered. The noble remains were thus exposed for a whole year, till his brother and avenger, Oswy, carried them away. The hero's head was then taken to Lindisfarne, to the great monastery which he had so richly endowed, and where his holy friend Aidan awaited it ; but his hands were deposited in a chapel in the royal fortress of Bamborough, the cradle of that Northumbrian dominion which the arms of his ancestors had founded, and which his own had so valiantly restored.

Thus perished, at the age of thirty-eight, Oswald, ranked by the Church among her martyrs, and by the Anglo-Saxon people among its saints and heroes of most enduring fame. Through the obscurity of that thankless and confused age, the eye rests gratefully on this young prince, reared in exile among the hereditary enemies of his race, who was consoled for the loss of a throne by his conversion to Christianity : who regained the kingdom of his fathers at the point of the sword, and planted the first cross on his native soil, at the moment when he freed it from the usurper ; crowned by the love and devotion of the people on whom he bestowed the blessings of peace and of supreme truth, spending his very life for its sake ; united for a few short years to a wife whom, in marrying, he had made a Christian ; gentle and strong, serious and sincere, pious and intelligent, humble and bold, active and gracious, a soldier and a missionary, a king and a martyr, slain in the flower of his age on the field of battle, fighting for his country and praying for his subjects. Where shall we find in all history a hero more nearly approaching the ideal, more richly gifted, more worthy of eternal remembrance, and, it must be added, more completely forgotten?

It was long, however, before his name was forgotten. During the whole Anglo-Saxon period, and even after the Norman Conquest, under the Plantagenets, this gallant soldier, great king, and generous Christian, continued to be the object of popular veneration. The chroniclers and poets of the time vied with each other in celebrating his fame. "Who, then," said one of them, with that mingling of classic associations and Christian ideas so habitual to the monks and all the writers of the middle ages — "Who, then, is Hercules? who is Alexander the Great? who is Julius Caesar? We are taught that Hercules conquered himself, Alexander conquered the world, and Caesar the enemies of Rome ; but Oswald conquered at once the world, his enemies and himself."

The monks of the great and magnificent Church of Hexham went in procession every year to celebrate the day consecrated to him at the site of the cross which he had planted on the eve of his first victory. But the love and gratitude of the Christian people gave a still greater glory to the place of his defeat and death. Pilgrims came thither in crowds to seek relief from their sufferings, and had each a miraculous cure to relate on their return. The dust which his noble blood had watered was collected with care and conveyed to great distances as a remedy for disease, or a preservative from the evils of life. By dint of carrying away this dust a hollow was scooped out of a man's size, and which seemed the ever-open tomb of this martyr of his country. On seeing the turf around this hollow clothed with an unwonted verdure, more delicate and beautiful than elsewhere, travellers said that the man who had perished there must needs have been more holy and more pleasing in God's sight than all the other warriors who rested beneath that sward. The veneration of which his remains were the object spread not only among all the Saxons and Britons of Great Britain, but even beyond the seas, in Ireland,



and among the Greeks and the Germans. The very stake on which the head of the royal martyr had been fixed was cut up into relics, the fragments of which were regarded as of sovereign efficacy in the healing both of body or of mind. These things provoke a pitying smile from the wise and witty, who in times and countries enslaved by the ascendancy of numbers and physical force are not forbidden to philosophise. But no safer or sweeter asylum has ever been found for humiliated patriotism, violated justice, or vanquished freedom, than the pious tenderness with which Christian nations once surrounded the tomb and relics of those who died for the faith and their rights.

A kind of prophecy, that Oswald's bones would become relics, had been made to him by Aidan, on the following occasion : —

The bishop had made it a rule to accept very rarely those invitations to the royal table which were considered, among the Germanic races, as signs of the most marked distinction. When he did go he was present only at the beginning of the repast, after which he would hasten away to apply himself, with his monks, to reading or prayer. But on Easter-day the monk-bishop, being at dinner with the king, and seated beside him, had just raised his hand to bless a silver dish filled with delicacies which was placed before Oswald, when the officer to whom the charge of the poor was specially entrusted, suddenly entered to announce that there was a crowd of beggars in the street who besought alms of the king. Oswald immediately gave orders that the food, and the silver dish which contained it, the latter broken in pieces, should be divided among the beggars. As he stretched out his hand to give this order, the bishop seized it and cried, "May this hand never perish!" The following year it was severed from his body, and picked up on the battle-field where he gave his life for God and his people; and the hand of the royal martyr, enshrined in the sanctuary of the ancient Northumbrian capital, continued entire and incorruptible for centuries, was seen and kissed by innumerable Christians, and disappeared only in that abyss of spoliation and sacrilege in which Henry VIII engulfed all the monastic glories and treasures of England.

## CHAPTER II

### NORTHUMBRIA UNDER THE SUCCESSORS OF OSWALD THE CELTIC BISHOPS THE GREAT ABBESSES, HILDA AND EBBA

On the death of Oswald Northumbria fell a prey, first to the ravages of Mercian invasion, then to the complications and weakness of a divided succession. Like the Merovingian, and even the Carolingian Franks, although with a less fatal obstinacy, the Anglo-Saxons, and particularly the Angles of Northumbria, could not resist the



inclination which led them to accept or to incite the division of a kingdom among several princes as soon as there appeared several heirs of a deceased king. It must be supposed that these divisions answered in England, as in France, to certain distinctions of race, or to certain exigencies of local or provincial self-government, which could not be reconciled with the existence of one supreme authority. Oswald left a son in childhood, whose claims were not at that moment taken into consideration. His brother Oswy, still in the flower of his youth, and though much less saintly than Oswald, no less a good soldier and valiant captain, at once took his place in Bernicia — that is to say, in the northern part of Northumbria. As for Deira, it fell to a prince of the Deirian dynasty, grand-nephew to Ella, the founder of that race, and son of that ill-fated Osric who had reigned for a year only over Southern Northumbria after the downfall of his cousin Edwin in 633 — a short reign, which left him scarce time enough to renounce the baptism which he had received from the hands of Paulinus, and to perish under the sword of Cadwallon's Britons. His son, called Oswin, had been saved while yet a child by his friends, who sent him out of Northumbria, and had passed his youth in exile, like Edwin, and the two brothers Oswald and Oswy. Exile seems to have been the necessary and salutary apprenticeship of the Northumbrian kings.

On hearing of the death of Oswald he claimed his right of succession. The old subjects of his father and grand-uncle gladly received him. The principal nobles met in assembly, acknowledged his hereditary right, and proclaimed him king of the Deirians ; and for seven years he governed them to the satisfaction of all. He was still very young, of lofty stature, endowed with remarkable comeliness and grace — a matter of no small importance in an age and among a people extremely sensible to external advantages. But he had, in addition, all the virtues which were then regarded as proofs of sanctity. His extreme gentleness, his charity, and, above all, his humility, were universally extolled. He was, moreover, so accessible, so courteous and generous, that the noblest lords of all Northumbria vied with each other in seeking the honour of serving among those officers of his household whom the Latin historians designate in England, as elsewhere, by the name of *ministeriales*.

Although Oswin had been exiled among the Saxons of Wessex, and not in Scotland, like his cousins and rivals Oswald and Oswy, and had been thus entirely out of contact with the Celtic monks, he was already a Christian when he returned to Northumbria, and did not hesitate to recognise the episcopal authority of Aidan. During his who lereign the monk of Iona, now Bishop of Lindisfarne, continued to travel throughout the two kingdoms which formed his immense diocese — not confining himself to preaching in the new churches, but going from house to house to foster beside the domestic hearth the seeds of the new-sown faith. It was a special pleasure to him on such occasions to rest under the hospitable roof of the young king of Deira, with whom he always lived in as tender and thorough a union as that which had united him to Oswald.

An oft-repeated anecdote, which reveals at once the pleasant intimacy of their relations and the noble delicacy of their minds, has been left us by Bede. Aidan, as we have said, performed all his apostolic journeys on foot, but it was the king's wish that he should have at least a horse to cross the rivers, or for other special emergencies ; he gave him accordingly his best steed, splendidly caparisoned. The bishop accepted it, and

made use of it; but being, as Bede calls him, "the father and worshipper of the poor," it happened ere long that, meeting a man who asked alms, he leaped down from his royal courser, and gave it, harnessed as it was, to the beggar. The king, being informed of this, said to Aidan, as they were going to dinner together, "Lord bishop, what do you mean by giving my horse to that beggar? Had I not many other horses of less value, and property of every kind to give in alms, without the necessity of giving that horse that I had expressly chosen for your own special use?" "What is this you say?" replied Aidan. "king, the horse, which is the son of a mare, is it dearer to you than the man who is the son of God?" As he said this they entered the banqueting hall. Oswin, who had just returned from the chase, approached the fire with his officers, before sitting down at the table, and while he warmed himself, thought over the words of the bishop ; then all at once taking off his sword, he threw himself at the feet of the saint, and implored his pardon. "No more," said he, "shall I speak of it, and never more shall regret anything of mine that you give to the children of God." After which, reassured by the kind words of the bishop, he sat down joyously to dine. But the bishop, on the contrary, became very sad, and began to weep. One of his priests inquired the cause of his sadness ; upon which he replied, in the Celtic tongue, which neither Oswin nor his attendants understood, "I know now that the king will not live long; never until now have I seen a king so humble; and this nation is not worthy of such a prince."

This little tale, Ozanam truly says, forms a perfect picture ; it discloses in those barbarous times a sweetness of sentiment, a delicacy of conscience, a refinement of manners, which, more than knowledge, is the sign of Christian civilisation.

The sad foreboding of the saint was realised only too soon. But it was not, like his predecessors, under the assault of the fierce Penda and the coalition of Mercians and Britons that the amiable and conscientious Oswin was to perish. Penda, however, had resumed his devastating career, and continued for thirteen years longer to ravage Northumbria. But he seems to have entertained less unfriendly feelings to his neighbours the Deirians and their king, than to the Bernicians, and Oswy the brother of his last victim. It is in the north of the two kingdoms that we again find him carrying everywhere fire and sword, and attempting to give to the flames the royal fortress of Bamborough. There also we find Aidan, the benefactor and protector of the country. Penda, not having been able to reduce the fortress either by assault or by investment, caused an enormous pile to be erected all round the rampart. He heaped on it all the wood of the surrounding forests, the driftwood from the beach, the beams, and even the thatch of the cottages in all the neighbouring villages which he had destroyed ; then, as soon as the wind blew from the west, he set fire to the mass, with the hope of seeing the flames reach the town. Aidan was at the time in the islet of Fame, an isolated rock in the open sea, a little to the south of Lindisfarne, and nearly opposite Bamborough, to which he often went, quitting his episcopal monastery to devote himself in solitude and silence to prayer. While he prayed he saw a cloud of black smoke and jets of flame covering the sky above the town where his dear Oswald once dwelt. Lifting his eyes and hands to heaven, he cried, with tears, "My God, behold all the evil that Penda does us!" At the same moment the wind changed, the flames whirled round upon the besiegers, destroying many of them, and they speedily abandoned the siege of a place so evidently under Divine protection.

As if this formidable and pitiless enemy was not enough to desolate Northumbria, there arose in the heart of Oswy a jealous animosity which soon ripened into civil war. After seven years of union between the two kings of Bernicia and Deira, occasions of estrangement, ever increasing, began to arise between them. These were owing, it cannot be doubted, to the preference which, we have already remarked, was shown by so many of the Northumbrian lords for the pleasant and cordial service of King Oswin. Oswy marched against the Deirians. Oswin likewise put himself at the head of his army ; but it was much less numerous than that of the king of Bernicia, and when the moment of battle arrived, he said to the chiefs and lords of his country that he was reluctant to make them risk their lives for him whom they had raised from the position of a poor exile to be their king, and who now did not shrink either from renewed exile or death itself. He then disbanded his troops and sought refuge with an earl on whom he thought he could rely, having just conferred on him, after many other bounties, the very manor of Gilling where he reckoned on finding an asylum. This wretched traitor gave him up to Oswy, who had the cruelty to kill him. One companion, Tondhere by name, alone remained to him. Oswin, resigned to his own death, besought that his friend might be spared; but he refused to survive his prince, preferring to sacrifice himself to that sentiment of passionate devotion which, among the Saxons, had preceded Christianity, and which justifies the title of knight prematurely applied to this brave and loyal adherent by one of the martyr's biographers.

The king and his knight thus perished together ; and twelve days afterwards the glorious Bishop Aidan followed the king he loved to the tomb. He fell sick during one of his innumerable missionary expeditions, and died under a tent which had been pitched in haste to shelter him at the back of a modest church which he had just built. He expired with his head resting against one of the buttresses of the church. It was a death which became a soldier of the faith upon his own fit field of battle.

The body of Aidan was carried to his monastic cathedral of Lindisfarne. But that of his royal friend, Oswin, was deposited in a chapel dedicated to the blessed Virgin, and situated on a granite headland almost entirely surrounded by the sea, at the mouth of the Tyne, a river which was then the boundary line between the two Northumbrian states of Deira and Bernicia, and which is now one of the principal arteries of the maritime commerce of England. Ere long, over the sacred remains of this martyr, who was beloved and honoured by the Northumbrians of both kingdoms as their father and lord on earth, and their patron saint in heaven, there rose one of those double monasteries which included both monks and nuns within two separate enclosures, but under one government. The nuns whose office it was to pray upon his tomb came from Whitby, which was already governed with a splendour as great as her authority was absolute, by the abbess Hilda, herself sprung, like the martyred Oswin, from the Deirian dynasty and the race of Ella. The vicissitudes of this great monastery throughout the invasions of the Danes and Normans; the constant or ever- reviving veneration with which the remains of .St. Oswin were regarded, even after the remembrance of his friend Aidan was totally effaced; the protection which the poor, the afflicted, and oppressed long found under the shadow of his sanctuary, and under the shelter of what was called the Peace of St. Oswin, will possibly be related in the sequel of our narrative, or by other and more competent pens. We must content ourselves at present with merely

pointing out the beautiful remains of the conventual church which was rebuilt in the thirteenth century, and which is enclosed within the fortress which defends the entrance of the Tyne. The seven great arcades, whose time-worn relics rise majestically against the sky from the height of their rock, produce a vivid effect on the traveller who arrives by sea, and nobly announce England's adoration of the ruins she has made.

Some years later, on the very spot where Oswin had perished, at Gilling, near Richmond, a monastery was reared in expiation of so foul a crime, by the wife of his murderer. This was no other than Eanfleda, daughter of King Edwin, she whose birth had contributed to the conversion of her father, who had been the first-born of Christ in the Northumbrian kingdom, and who, after the overthrow of Edwin and the Roman mission in Northumbria, had been carried in her cradle by Bishop Paulinus into the country of her mother, Ethelburga, daughter of the first Christian king of Kent.

Oswy, who was as able as he was ambitious, readily perceived that it was not enough to murder a rival in order to secure himself in the exclusive sovereignty of Northumbria. He had previously wished to conciliate the opposing dynasty by a matrimonial alliance, as his father Ethelfrid had done. In pursuance of this purpose, he had despatched to Canterbury, with Aidan's approval and blessing, a priest respected for the gravity and sincerity of his character, and abbot of one of the new monasteries, to obtain from Queen Ethelburga, if she still lived, the hand of her daughter. His suit was granted, and the exiled princess returned to reign over the kingdom that she had quitted in her blood-stained cradle. In this double Northumbrian dynasty, the history of which is at once so dramatic and romantic, and so closely interwoven with the history of the conversion of the English, exile was almost always the forerunner of the kingly office, or of sainthood. Eanfleda, cousin-german of the murdered king, and wife of the king who killed him, obtained permission from her husband to build a monastery on the spot where the murder had been committed, that prayers might be offered there for ever for two souls, that of the victim and that of the murderer. The government of this new foundation was entrusted to Trumhere, himself a scion of the family of Deirian princes, and one of those Anglo-Saxons who, like the negotiator of Eanfleda's marriage, had been trained and raised to the priesthood by the Celtic monks.

Upon this noble daughter of Edwin, restored from exile to reign over the country of her ancestors as the wife of the cruel Oswy, the mind rests with emotion. A natural desire arises to attribute to her influence the happy change which appears to have been wrought in the character of Oswy from the day on which she induced him to expiate the crime with which he was stained, by founding this monastery. Forgetful of this crime, all the historians unite in extolling the virtues and exploits which distinguished the after portion of his prolonged and active reign. He did not continue at first, after the assassination of Oswin, the undisputed master of all Northumbria; he had to give up at least a part of Deira to the young son of his brother Oswald, Ethelwald by name. But he retained, notwithstanding, an evident preponderance, not only in Northumbria, but in all England, the dignity of Bretwalda having fallen to him uncontested. The great event of his reign is the overthrow of the fierce heathen, Penda of Mercia, an event which sealed the final victory of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons. But both before and after this culminating point of his prosperity, Oswy displayed so ardent and consistent a zeal for

the extension and establishment of the Christian religion, that he was finally admitted to a place, sometimes too easily accessible, in the English martyrology.

Nevertheless, neither the zeal of Oswy, nor the purer ardour of his illustrious predecessor, could have prevailed against the various and formidable obstacles which the Gospel had to encounter among the Anglo-Saxons, had they not been directed, enlightened, and sustained by the admirable clergy whom Aidan and his successors had trained in the cloisters of Lindisfarne and its dependent monasteries.

In regard to the succession of bishops in the new diocese of Lindisfarne, it is necessary to keep in mind the very significant difference between the usages followed by the Roman and those of the Celtic missionaries in the election of bishops. The first four successors of Augustine at Canterbury were all, as we have seen, chosen from among the Italian monks who had accompanied him to England : but they all belonged to that first mission, and were all freely chosen by their companions, old or new, in place of being successively sent from Rome, as the bishops of Lindisfarne were from Iona. In fact, at each vacancy in the see of Lindisfarne, the monks of Iona, who regarded that monastic cathedral, and perhaps the whole of christianised Northumbria, as their exclusive property, hastened to despatch a monk of their community to replace him who had rendered his soul to God. The Scottish monks, thus placed during thirty years at the head of the Church of the North of England, showed themselves thoroughly worthy of the saintly school whence they issued, and of the glorious mission to which they were consecrated. But it is, nevertheless, important to note that, either owing to distance or some other cause, Rome left to her missionary communities, her apostolic colonies, a liberty which was not possible under the harsh discipline of the Celtic Church.

The first monk sent from Iona to replace the noble Aidan, is known by the name of St. Finan. His episcopate was prosperous; it lasted ten years, and was not interrupted by any melancholy event, such as those which had troubled the life of Aidan by taking from him his two royal friends. Finan always lived on good terms with king Oswy, and before going to join his predecessor in heaven, he had the happiness of introducing to the Church the heads of the two great Saxon kingdoms, who came to seek baptism at the gates of Lindisfarne. In that island-sanctuary, where we must remember that the bishop was often in ecclesiastical subjection to the local abbot of the monastic community, Finan caused a cathedral to be built, not of stone, like that which Paulinus and Edwin had commenced at York, but according to the Celtic custom, and like the churches built by Columba and his Irish monks : it was made entirely of wood, and covered with rushes, or rather with that long rough sea-grass, whose pivot-like roots bind together the sands on the sea-shore, and which is still found in great abundance on the island, as well as on the sandy beach which has to be crossed before the traveller can reach Lindisfarne.

Vast as was his diocese, which embraced the two great Northumbrian kingdoms, and great as must have been his influence over the other Saxon provinces, Finan seems farther to have preserved and exercised an authority not less complete over the country of his origin, the kingdom of the Dairiadian Scots. The Scots annalists all speak of a certain King Fergus, who, by his violence and exactions, had raised the indignation of the Scottish clergy, and called down upon himself a sentence of excommunication from



the bishops of Lindisfarne, Finan and his successors. These Celtic bishops were at all times far from courtly. Finan left among the Anglo-Saxons the reputation of a man rough and intractable, and we shall see that his successor was no less difficult than himself.

He was succeeded by Colman, a monk of Iona, sent forth by that community, like Aidan and Finan, to govern the Northumbrian Church, and to evangelise the Northern Anglo-Saxons. He is believed to have been born in Ireland, and on this account he is held in honour there. It has even been supposed that in him might be recognised one of those young disciples of Columba, whose rustic labours the great abbot blessed and encouraged from the threshold of the cell in which he pursued his solitary studies. True or false, this tradition accords with history, which shows us in Colman a pontiff penetrated with the same spirit as his predecessors, and always worthy of the monastic sanctuary which, for more than a century, was rendered illustrious by the genius and memory of Columba.

Lindisfarne, as may easily be supposed, did not suffice for the training, or indeed for the shelter, of the army of monks employed by the Celtic bishops in the spiritual conquest of Northumbria. To the north of the Tweed, the present boundary between England and Scotland, and about half-way from Lindisfarne to the Scots frontier, they established a kind of branch or establishment for novices, where the monks destined for the labours and trials of the apostolate were received and trained. Some of these, like their bishops, came from Iona, Ireland, and the land of the Scots, while others were taken from the ranks of the Saxon converts. This outpost of Lindisfarne and Iona bore the name of Melrose — not the Cistercian Melrose, with the name of which Walter Scott has made us familiar, while its picturesque ruins attract all the visitors of the famous quadrilateral formed by the four most beautiful ruins in Scotland, Kelso, Jedburgh, Dryburgh, and Melrose — but a more ancient and more holy Melrose — whose memory has been too much effaced by its brilliant offspring. It was situated on a kind of rounded promontory almost completely encircled by the winding current of the Tweed, the banks of which at this part of its course are very abrupt and thickly wooded. The spot was one of profound solitude, as the very name indicates (Mail-ross or Mul-ross, desolate point); and here was raised a sanctuary, which was for many years the centre of light and life to all the surrounding country, long frequented by pilgrims, whose paths are still pointed out, and from whence issued many of the saints most venerated in the south of Scotland and north of England.

The first abbot of Melrose was Eata, one of the twelve young Saxons whom the first Celtic bishop chose for himself as the first-fruits of his episcopate. But neither the zeal of the pastors nor the fervour of the converts was satisfied with those fountains of life and knowledge which gushed forth in Northumbrian soil. Older and more abundant springs were necessary to them. A crowd of youths, some the sons of thanes or nobles, others of the lowest rank, left their country to cross the sea and visit the distant island which was the cradle of their bishops and missionaries — not the monastic isle of Iona, but the great island of Ireland, where Columba and most of his disciples were born. Of these young Anglo-Saxons, some, inflamed by the love of study or of penance, at once enrolled themselves in the crowded ranks of those great Irish communities where the monks were counted by hundreds and even by thousands ; others travelled from



monastery to monastery, from cell to cell, seeking the masters who suited them best, and giving themselves up under these masters to the delight of reading — that is to say, of study, without binding themselves by any other obligation. All were received with magnificent hospitality by the Scots of Ireland, who freely lavished on them not only food and clothing, but books and instruction. All the students who remained in Ireland, as well as those who returned to England, continued to retain a natural prepossession in favour of the ancient insular rites, and to be imbued with that peculiar spirit which so long characterised the Christianity of the Celtic races.

Thus began, under the most honourable conditions, and motives as pure as they were generous, the first historical relations between England and Ireland — between the two races, Saxon and Celtic, who were destined by an unhappy mystery to tear one another in pieces even before religion divided them ; one of whom, repaying those early benefits by the blackest ingratitude, has long tarnished the lustre of her glory by the perverse stubbornness of her despotism.

While so many young Northumbrians, as yet scarcely escaped from the darkness of idolatry, were thus rushing towards the very heights of ascetic life, or plunging with passionate enthusiasm into the studious and learned career of which Ireland was the great centre, and the Celtic cloisters the principal home, their sisters found asylums where peace and freedom were guaranteed to those whom the service of God and the vows of Christian virginity drew into them. Thanks to the solicitude of the missionary bishops of the line of Columba, the dignity, authority, and moral power which universal report from Tacitus downward agrees in according to the Germanic woman, assumes in the cloister a new, more durable, and universal form, without, however, lessening the duty and right which she was acknowledged to possess of occasional intervention in the gravest concerns and most solemn deliberations of the commonwealth.

The principal monasteries destined to afford a home and stronghold to the noble daughters of the conquering Saxons were established on the coast of Northumbria, where already Bamborough and Lindisfarne, the military and the religious capitals of the country, were planted, as if the waves of that sea which their warlike ancestors had crossed, and which flowed direct from the coasts of Germany to beat upon the shores of the conquered island, were to be their safeguard against the dangers of the future. The first of these monasteries was built on the borders of Deira and Bernicia, on a wooded promontory where the deer then found a covert, and which has since become, under the name of Hartlepool, one of the most frequented ports on the coast. It was founded by a Northumbrian, Heia by name, the first woman of her race who embraced conventual life, and who received the veil and religious consecration from the hands of Bishop Aidan. The life of a community, and especially the functions of superior, soon, however, became fatiguing to Heia, who betook herself to a solitary retreat in the interior of the country. Aidan replaced her by a descendant of Odin and of Ella, a princess of the blood-royal and of the Deirian dynasty. This was Hilda, grand-niece of Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumbria, and father of the queen who shared the throne and the bed of Oswy.

This illustrious lady seemed to be called by her genius and character even more than her rank to exercise a great and legitimate authority over her compatriots. Born in

exile, during the sovereignty of Ethelfrid, among the Saxons of the West, where her mother died a violent death, she had returned with her father on the restoration of his race in 617. In her early youth she had been baptized, with her uncle King Edwin, by the Roman missionary Paulinus, which did not, however, prevent her from leaning during her whole life to the side of the Celtic missionaries. Before consecrating her virginity to God, she had lived thirty-three years very nobly, says Bede, among her family and her fellow-citizens. When she understood that God called her, she desired to make to Him a complete sacrifice, and forsook at once the world, her family, and her country. She went into East Anglia, the king of which had married her sister, and whence she designed to cross over to France, in order to take the veil either at Chelles, where her widowed sister was one day to devote herself to God, or in some of the monasteries on the shores of the Marne, which sprang from the great Irish colony of Luxeuil, and whither the Saxon virgins already began to resort. She spent a whole year in preparations for her final exile, but she was not permitted to carry it out. Bishop Aidan authoritatively recalled her to her own country, and settled her there, obtaining for her a small estate sufficient to support a single family, and situated on the banks of the Wear, a little river which has now become, like the Tyne, one of the greatest arteries of English shipping. There she lived as a nun with a very few companions until Aidan summoned her to replace the foundress of the monastery of Hartlepool, where she was invested with the government of a large community.

Nine years later, when the peace and freedom of Northumbria had been secured by the final victory gained by king Oswy over the Mercians, Hilda took advantage of a gift of land sufficient for ten families, which that prince had granted her, to establish a new monastery at Streaneshalch, now Whitby, a little to the south of her ancient abbey, and on the same coast.

Of all the sites chosen by monastic architects, after that of Monte Cassino, I know none grander and more picturesque than that of Whitby. It is even, in certain aspects, still more imposing than the Benedictine capital, as being near the sea. The Esk, which flows through a hilly country, unlike the ordinary levels of England, forms at its mouth a circular bay, commanded on every side by lofty cliffs. On the summit of one of these rocks, 300 feet above the sea, Hilda placed her monastery, on a platform of green and short seaside turf, the sides of which slope abruptly to the northern ocean. From this spot the eye wanders now over the uplands, valleys, and vast heaths of this part of Yorkshire, now along the rough precipices which line the coast, now on the wide horizon of the sea, whose foaming waves break against the perpendicular sides of the great rocky wall which is crowned by the monastery. The dull roar of the tide accords with the sombre tints of the rocks, which are rent and hollowed out by its force; for it is not here as on the shores of the Channel, where the whiteness of the cliffs has gained the name of Albion for the island of Great Britain. The precipices of the Yorkshire coast are, on the contrary, as dark in colour as they are abrupt and rugged in outline. Nothing now remains of the Saxon monastery : but more than half of the abbey church, restored by the Percies in the time of the Normans, still stands, and enables the marvelling spectator to form to himself an idea of the solemn grandeur of the great edifice. The choir and the north transept are still complete, and offer one of the most beautiful models of English architecture. The two facades of the east and north, each with three rows of three-

pointed windows, are of unrivalled elegance and purity. The beautiful colour of the stone, half worn away by the sea-winds, adds to the charm of these ruins. A more picturesque effect could not be imagined than that of the distant horizon of the azure sea, viewed through the great hollow eyes of the ruinous arches. These majestic relics are now preserved with the respect habitually shown by the English to the monuments of the past ; but they cannot always withstand the destroying action of time and the elements. The great central tower fell in 1830. Let the intelligent traveller lose no time, therefore, in visiting one of the oldest and most beautifully situated ruins in Europe, and let him there accord a prayer, or at least a remembrance, to the noble daughter of the Northumbrian kings, who of old erected on this desert rock a pharos of light and peace for the souls of men, by the side of the lighthouse designed to guide the mariners on that stormy sea!

The original name, *Streaneshalch*, signified The Isle of the Beacon, and it was probably by this service conferred on the people of the coast that Hilda inaugurated her reign on this promontory ; for it was a true reign, temporal as well as spiritual. At Whitby, as at Hartlepool, and during the thirty years that she passed at the head of her two houses, she displayed a rare capacity for the government of souls, and for the consolidation of monastic institutions. This special aptitude, joined to her love of monastic regularity, and her zeal for knowledge and ecclesiastical discipline, gave her an important part to play, and great influence. Her society was sought by Bishop Aidan, and all the religious who knew her, that they might learn those secrets of divine love and natural wisdom which dwelt in her. The kings even, and princes of her blood, or of the adjacent provinces, often came to consult her, asking enlightenment which they afterwards joyfully acknowledged themselves to have received. But she did not reserve for the great ones of the earth the treasures of her judgment and charity. She scattered around her everywhere the benefits of justice, piety, peace, and temperance. She was ere long regarded and honoured as the mother of her country, and all who addressed her gave her the sweet name of mother, which she so well deserved. Not only in Northumbria, but in distant regions, to which the fame of her virtue and enlightenment had penetrated, she was to many the instrument of their salvation and conversion. And in her two communities especially she secured, during a rule of more than thirty years, the supremacy of order, union, charity, and equality, so much, that it became usual to say to the proud Northumbrians, that the image of the primitive Church, wherein was neither rich nor poor, and where all was common among the Christians, was realised at Whitby.

But the most touching particular of all in the enthusiastic narrative of the Venerable Bede, is that which proves the passionate tenderness felt for her by her daughters, especially by the young virgins whom she prepared for religious life in a separate house, by the discipline of a novitiate establishment regularly constituted and attentively superintended.

Nor did the royal abbess confine herself to the government of a numerous community of nuns. According to a usage then very general, but principally prevailing in Celtic countries, a monastery was joined to the nunnery. And Hilda inspired the monks subject to her authority with so great a devotion to their rule, so true a love of sacred literature, and so careful a study of the Scriptures, that this monastery, ruled by a

woman, became a true school of missionaries and even of bishops. Many ecclesiastical dignitaries, as remarkable for their virtue as for their learning, were sent forth by it; one of whom in particular, St. John of Beverley, attained a degree of popularity rare even in England, where the saints were of old so universally and so readily popular.

But neither the kings nor princes who consulted the great abbess on her sea-girt promontory, nor the bishops, nor even the saints nurtured in her school, occupy in the annals of the human mind, or in the learned researches of our contemporaries, a place comparable to that held by an old cowherd who lived on the lands belonging to Hilda's community, and whose memory is inseparably connected with hers. It is on the lips of this cowherd that the Anglo-Saxon speech first bursts into poetry, and nothing in the whole history of European literature is more original or more religious than this first utterance of the English muse. His name was Ceadmon. He had already reached an advanced age, having spent his life in his humble occupation, without even learning music, or being able to join in the joyous choruses which held such a high place at the feasts and social gatherings of all classes, both poor and rich, among the Anglo-Saxons as among the Celts. When it was his turn to sing at any of these festal meetings, and the harp was handed to him, his custom was to rise from table and go home. One evening, when he had thus withdrawn from his friends, he went back to his humble shed and went to sleep by the side of his cattle. During his slumber he heard a voice, which called him by name and said to him, "Sing me something"; to which he replied, "I cannot sing, and that is why I have left the supper and come here." "Sing, notwithstanding," said the voice. "But what, then, shall I sing?" "Sing the beginning of the world; the creation." Immediately on receiving this command, he began to sing verses, of which before he had no knowledge, but which celebrated the glory and power of the Creator, the eternal God, worker of all marvels, father of the human race, who had given to the sons of men the heavens for their roof, and the earth for their dwelling-place. On awaking, he recollected all that he had sung in his dream, and hastened to tell all that had happened to him to the farmer in whose service he was.

The Abbess Hilda, when the story was repeated to her, called for Ceadmon and questioned him in the presence of all the learned men whom she could assemble around her. He was made to relate his vision and repeat his songs, and then different passages of sacred history and various points of doctrine were explained to him, that he might put them into verse. The next morning he was again called, and immediately began to recite all that had been told him, in verses which were pronounced to be excellent. He was thus discovered all at once to possess the gift of improvisation in his mother tongue. Hilda and her learned assessors did not hesitate to recognise in this a special gift of God worthy of all respect and of the most tender care. She received Ceadmon and his whole family within the monastic community of Whitby, and afterwards admitted him to the number of monks who were under her rule, and made him carefully translate the whole Bible into Anglo-Saxon. As soon, accordingly, as the sacred history and the Gospel were narrated to him, he made himself master of the tale, ruminated it, as Bede said, as a clean animal ruminates its food, and transformed it into songs so beautiful that all who listened to him were delighted. He thus put into verse the whole of Genesis and Exodus, with other portions of the Old Testament, and afterwards the life and passion of our Lord and the Acts of the Apostles.

His talent and his poetic faculty thus went on day by day to fuller development, and he devoted numerous songs to such subjects as were best calculated to induce his companions to forsake evil and love and practise the good : the terrors of the last judgment, the pains of hell, the joys of paradise, the action of Divine Providence in the world — all these great and momentous subjects were in their turn woven into his verse. The fragments that remain enable us to estimate the earnest and impassioned inspiration, strongly Christian and profoundly original, which characterised these first efforts of genius, barbarous, but subdued and baptized.

The Northumbrian cowherd, transformed into a monk of Whitby, sang before the abbess Hilda the revolt of Satan and *Paradise Lost* a thousand years earlier than Milton, in verses which may still be admired even beside the immortal poem of the British Homer. Notwithstanding Bede's assertion that poetry cannot be translated from one language to another without losing its honour and dignity, we shall borrow from the nervous pen of one of our contemporaries a translation which conveys a just idea of the sombre and wild genius of this truly biblical poet. "Why," says Satan, speaking of God, "should I implore His favour, or bow myself before Him with obedience? I can be a god like Him. Up with me, brave companions who will not fail me in the struggle! brave-hearted warriors who have chosen me for your chief! illustrious soldiers! With such warriors, in truth, one can choose a side ; with such combatants one can seize a post. They are my zealous friends, faithful in the warmth of their hearts. I can, as their chief, govern in this kingdom; I have no need to natter any one; I will be His subject no more!"

He is vanquished, and hurled into the city of exile — into the abode of groans and hatred — into the hideous eternal night, the darkness of which is broken by smoke and crimson flames. "Is this," he says, "the narrow spot in which my master shuts me up? How different from the dwellings that we know on high in the kingdom of heaven! Oh! if I had the free power of my hands, and if I could issue forth for once, for one winter only, I and my army! But bands of iron surround me — chains bind me down helpless. I am without a kingdom. The fetters of hell shackle me so firmly, clasp me so tightly! Here are huge flames; above and below I have never seen so horrible a place. The fire never languishes — its heat ascends above hell. The rings that encircle me, the manacles that gnaw my flesh, keep me from advancing, and close the way before me ; my feet are tied, my hands imprisoned. Thus has God shut me in." Since nothing can be done against Him, it is against His own creature, man, that the enemy must turn. To him who has lost all, revenge is still left; and in securing that, the vanquished may yet be happy and rest placidly even under the weight of the chains with which he is laden.

It would, however, be a totally mistaken idea to recognise in the Abbess Hilda's dependant nothing but a poet or literary pioneer; he was above all a primitive Christian, a true monk, and, in one word, a saint. His mind was mild and humble, simple and pure ; he served God with tranquil devotion, grateful for the extraordinary grace that he had received from heaven. But he was so full of zeal for monastic regularity that he opposed with great vehemence the transgressors of the rule — an error for which he seems to have felt some compunctions at the very point of death. No frivolous or worldly subjects ever inspired his verse ; he composed his songs only that they might be useful to the soul, and their solemn beauty did even more for the conversion than for the



delight of his countrymen. Many were moved by them to despise this world, and to turn with ardent love to the divine life. Many Englishmen after him, says Bede, have tried to compose religious poems ; but no one has ever equalled the man who had only God for his master.

He died as poets seldom die. At the very beginning of his illness he desired his bed to be made in that part of the infirmary which was assigned to the dying, and while smiling and talking cheerfully with his brethren, asked for the viaticum. At the moment when he was about to administer the communion to himself, according to the usage of the period, and while holding in his hands the holy eucharist, he asked all those who were round him if anyone had any grudge against him, or any complaint to make. All answered, No. Then said he, "I too, my children, have a mind at peace with all God's servants." A little after he had made his communion, as they were about to awaken the monks for matins, he made the sign of the cross, laid his head on the pillow, and fell asleep in silence, to awake no more.

Apart from the interest which attaches to Ceadmon from a historical and literary point of view, his life discloses to us essential peculiarities in the outward organisation and intellectual life of those great communities which in the seventh century studded the coast of Northumbria, and which, with all their numerous dependants, found often a more complete development under the crosier of such a woman as Hilda than under superiors of the other sex. It is apparent that admission to the benefits of monastic protection and shelter was not confined to isolated monks, but was extended to whole families. And the example of Hilda also discloses how earnest was the desire of the superiors of monasteries to instruct the ignorant masses, and to familiarise them, by instruction in the vulgar tongue, or by poetic paraphrases, with Holy Scripture and Christian doctrine.

Whitby, with its lighthouse and its great monastery, was the most southerly place of refuge on that Northumbrian coast, still so formidable to sailors, which at that time was lined with so many sanctuaries. At the northern extremity of the same coast, beyond Lindisfarne, on what is now the frontier of Scotland, at Coldingham, rose also, as at Whitby, two monasteries — the one for men and the other for women — both founded and governed by one abbess. While Hilda, the Deirian princess, ruled her monasteries on the shores of her father's kingdom, Ebba, a princess of the rival dynasty, granddaughter of Ida the Burner, daughter of Ethelfrid the Ravager, but sister of the sainted King Oswald, and of Oswy the reigning king, formed on the sea-coast of Bernicia another monastic centre, which was yet to hold an important position, and to work out a stormy history. It had been the intention of her brother to give her in marriage to the king of Scots — a union meant undoubtedly to strengthen or to re-establish the alliance of the restored family of Ethelfrid with the Scottish dynasty which had offered the exiles such generous hospitality during the reign of Edwin, the chief of the race by which they had been exiled. Ebba, however, was obstinately opposed to this marriage. Her family had all embraced, during their banishment, the principles of the Christian faith, and it was now her desire to advance to the practice of the counsels of the Gospel. It was not from the hands of Aidan, but from those of Finan, his successor at Lindisfarne, that she received the veil : Oswy left her at liberty to devote herself to God, and gave her a piece of land on the banks of the Derwent where she might found her



first monastery, which received the name of Ebba's Castle. But the principal scene of her activities was Coldingham, in a situation which she seems to have chosen in emulation of that of Whitby. Her great and famous monastery was built, not on the spot now called by her name, but on the summit of an isolated promontory which still bears the title of St. Abb's Head, or Cape, and which abruptly terminates the range of the Lammermoors, thrusting itself out into the German Ocean. From this headland, or rather precipice, which rises perpendicularly for more than 500 feet from the level of the sea, the view embraces, on the north, the Scotch coast to the farther side of the Forth, and, on the south, the English coast as far as the holy isle of Lindisfarne and the royal acropolis of Bamborough. A small ruined chapel is all that remains to mark the site of the great sanctuary of Ebba, who was, like Hilda, placed at the head of a double community of men and of women, and presided over the religious life of northern Northumbria with no less success, and for an equal length of time, taking her part, also during nearly thirty years, with no less authority in the affairs of her country.

She did not always succeed, however, in maintaining amongst her daughters the fervour and the regularity of which she herself gave an example. That relaxation of discipline from which, by a mysterious and terrible judgment of God, the religious orders have never been able to preserve themselves, and which was destined to invade so speedily the Anglo-Saxon cloisters, made its way into Coldingham even during the lifetime of the foundress. She was warned of this by a holy priest of her community who had come from Ireland with the other Celtic missionaries, and who was called Adamnan, like the historian and successor of Columba at Iona. As he went with the abbess through the vast and lofty buildings which she had erected upon her promontory, he said to her with tears, "All that you see here, so beautiful and so grand, will soon be laid in ashes." And as the astonished princess exclaimed against his prophecy, "Yes," continued he; "I have seen in my vigils an unknown one who has revealed to me all the evil that is done in this house, and the punishment that is prepared for it. He has told me that he has visited each cell and each bed, and that everywhere he has found the monks and the nuns either wrapt in a shameful sleep, or awake to do evil. These cells, intended for prayer or for study, are made use of sometimes for irregular repasts, sometimes for senseless gossip and other frivolities. The virgins, consecrated to God, employ their leisure in weaving garments of excessive fineness, either to attire themselves as if they were the brides of men, or to bestow them on strangers. For this the vengeance of heaven will send fire to consume the place and chastise its inhabitants." It is evident that these scandals were not by any means so serious as many that occurred elsewhere and at a later period ; but in the midst of the general fervour of the new Christians of England they seemed to deserve fire from heaven. Ebba, thus warned, did what she could to amend the state of affairs, and the fire which devastated for the first time her great community did not break out till after her death.

It is right to give this incident with some minuteness, for it is the only symptom of decay which we have discovered in the period. With this one exception, no cloud, of which history has preserved any record, obscures the renown of the regular clergy of Northumbria. The universal admiration won for the monastic capital of Lindisfarne by the regularity, the fervour, and the extraordinary austerity of its numerous inhabitants, is proved by all witnesses as with one voice. Their fasts, which came to them by tradition

and obligation from Ireland, excited special wonder — fasts very much more meritorious in that raw, damp climate, than those of the fathers of the desert under the burning sky of the East, and which contrasted strangely with the habitual voracity of the Anglo-Saxons, whose sons began to people Lindisfarne and its dependencies. In Ireland the Cenobites, and especially the Anchorites, frequently lived on bread and water alone. Two centuries later, a German monk related to his wondering country-men that the usage of the Scotie monks who inhabited Ireland was to fast all the year round except on Sundays and feast-days, and never to eat before nones or vespers. Bishop Aidan induced all the communities of monks and nuns in Northumbria to adopt the fast which he observed himself — namely, to eat nothing before nones on the Wednesdays and Fridays of every week, except those between Easter and Pentecost. At Lindisfarne, for more than a century, wine and beer was totally unknown; and the first relaxation of this severity was introduced in favour of a king of Northumbria who became a monk there in 737.

Elsewhere these customs were improved upon by still more notable austerities. At Coldingham, the Adamnan of whom we recently spoke, expiated a youthful fault by taking food only twice a-week, on Sundays and Thursdays, while, at the same time, he often passed the whole night in vigils. He adopted this system from remorse and fear of God, but the love of God at last transformed it into a delight. At Melrose, a monk was held in veneration who, having fallen into a trance, had one of those visions of heaven and hell which made many of the Celtic monks precursors of Dante. It was his custom to plunge into the waters of the Tweed which flowed by the monastery, to pray there, and that even when the river was covered with ice, which he had to break before he could enter the stream. "Brother Drychthelme," some one called to him from the bank, "how can you bear such cold?" "I have seen it harder and colder," he quietly answered.

When a new monastery was to be founded, the Celtic missionaries and the monks trained in their school thought they could not better inaugurate it than by redoubling their fervour and austerity. The son of the sainted King Oswald, who held a kind of provincial royalty in Deira, determined to establish a monastery where he might hear the word of God, and, above all, where he might be buried, and be benefited after his death by the powerful help of the prayers of those who served God in that place. For this purpose he applied to a monk of Lindisfarne, who had become a missionary bishop among the Saxons of the East, persuading him to accept one of his estates as an endowment. This man of God — Cedd by name — chose a spot among the mountains as difficult of access as possible, and which seemed fit rather for the haunt of bandits or wild beasts than of men. He then proceeded to purify the spot he had selected by prayer and fasting, and asked leave from the king to remain there in prayer the whole of Lent. During this retreat he fasted every day except Sunday till evening, and then took only a little bread, an egg, and some milk and water. Such, said he, was the custom of those from whom he had learnt the rules of monastic discipline; and such was the beginning of the Monastery of Lastingham, between York and Whitby, which was established on the model of Lindisfarne. We shall hereafter see its abbots holding an honourable place in the annals of the Church of England.

Let us quote once more, in evidence of the virtues of the monks and bishops who converted the north of England, the unquestionable testimony of the celebrated historian, who was at once their adversary and their successor, but who, notwithstanding his dislike, and his strangely exaggerated description of their special peculiarities, yet rendered to the services and virtues of the Celtic missionaries that signal homage which generous hearts delight to accord to the vanquished whom they honour. "The greatness of their disinterestedness and self-denial was very apparent," says Bede, "after their retreat." At Lindisfarne and elsewhere they had only such buildings as were absolutely necessary for existence and decency. They had neither money nor cattle : what the rich gave them they immediately distributed to the poor. They did not consider themselves bound to receive with splendour the lords and nobles who came to their monasteries for the sole purposes of prayer and to hear the word of God. Kings themselves, when they came to Lindisfarne, brought no more than five or six attendants with them, and contented themselves with the ordinary fare of the brethren. These apostles desired to serve God only, and not the world — they sought to win men through the heart only, not through the stomach. Thus the monkish frock was held in great veneration. Wherever a clerk or a monk appeared he was received with welcome as a true servant of God. Those who met him by the way hastened to bow their heads before him and receive his benediction. Their discourses were listened to by attentive crowds. Every Sunday these crowds flowed into the churches of the monasteries, to gather there the seed of life. As soon as a priest appeared in a village, all the inhabitants clustered round him begging him to preach to them. The priests and clerks travelled through the country only to preach, to baptize, to visit the sick, to save souls. They were so entirely free from all desire of gain, that the princes and nobles had to force them to accept the lands and estates necessary for the founding of monasteries. It is not, however, to be supposed, that the conversion of Northumbria and of the six other kingdoms of the Heptarchy was carried through without hindrance and convulsions. The monastic historians have made the mistake of dwelling too lightly on the resistance and the revolts which their heroes had to encounter, and which added so much to the merit of what they achieved in the sight of God, as well as in that of man. But enough is visible to enable us easily to fill up what they have left untold. During the two centuries which separate the arrival of Augustine from the accession of Egbert, the perpetual conflict of the savage and uncontrollable nature of the Saxon kings with their new faith and the authority of the bishops and monks, is apparent. Changeable as Proteus, we see them constantly escaping by abrupt changes from all the efforts made to obtain a salutary influence over them. The king who to-day distinguished himself by the fervour of his devotions, and his munificence to the new establishments, would to-morrow abandon himself to all the debaucheries and excesses suggested, or pardoned, by heathen instinct. Others sought in the very monasteries, and among the virgins consecrated to God, a prey attractive beyond all other to their ungovernable sensuality. Intestine wars, usurpation, murder, pillage, abominable torture, violence, and spoliation of every kind, sully at every turn the pages which have preserved to us so many pious and touching incidents. And it was not the kings and chiefs only that were hard to win : the people presented the same difficulties, the same disappointments. In vain the holy bishops and monks, produced so rapidly and in such numbers by the Saxon race, endeavoured to win souls and purify them by an exhaustless charity, bestowing with free hands on the poor all the treasures

that they received from the rich. Frequently the revolt was open, and the apostle of a district found himself obliged to fly into solitude or exile, there to await the dawn of better days. Sometimes an unforeseen calamity, famine or pestilence, sufficed to convulse the minds of a people, who then in a body would abjure the faith of Christ, and return to their ancient gods. On one side the monks had to struggle without intermission against old customs, which all their zeal could not avail to extirpate, — against the inveterate belief in witchcraft, against the practice of the slave trade, with all its refinements of greed and debauchery; while, on the other, dull resistance, murmurs, and threats accompanied the work of salvation.

On the north-east coast of England, where the Celtic missionaries had just founded such illustrious monasteries, certain tribes of the coast took vows for their destruction. Bede himself, from whom we have just borrowed so striking a picture of the popularity which surrounded them in Northumbria, forgot, in that description, various particulars which he has recorded elsewhere. It is he who tells how, when the little vessels of the monks, abroad in foul weather, ran the risk of being swamped at the mouth of the Tyne, a crowd of spectators assembled on the shore exulting in their danger, mocking at their self-devotion, and crying with savage irony — "Well done! this will teach them to live differently from everybody else. Perish the fools who would take our ancient customs from us, imposing new ones, which God knows how we can observe!"

Nevertheless, truth and goodness conquered everything. In the long run the humble courage and generous perseverance of the missionaries triumphed over the fury, cunning, and opposition of fallen nature in these children of barbarism. The soldiers of Christ, as from that time the monks were called, remained masters of the field of battle.

### CHAPTER III

#### PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY BY THE KINGS AND MONKS OF NORTHUMBRIA. FINAL TRIUMPH OF NORTHUMBRIA UNDER OSWY

From the cloisters of Lindisfarne, and the heart of those districts in which the popularity of ascetic pontiffs such as Aidan, and martyr kings such as Oswald and Oswin, took day by day a deeper root, Northumbrian Christianity spread over the southern kingdoms. Whether this gradual invasion is to be attributed to the preponderating influence of the last three Bretwaldas, all Christians and Northumbrians, or simply to the expansive force of Celtic missionary labour, can never be

discriminated. But what is distinctly visible is the influence of Celtic priests and missionaries everywhere replacing or seconding the Roman missionaries, and reaching districts which their predecessors had never been able to enter. The stream of the divine word thus extended itself from north to south, and its slow but certain course reached in succession all the peoples of the Heptarchy. Life and light infused themselves through all, and everywhere, along with the immaculate sacrifice, the hymns of a people freed from the yoke of idolatry rose towards the living God. Let us state rapidly the progress of the pacific invasion made by the Celtic monks, trained in the school of the great Columba, into the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms south of the Humber.

## I.

### Conversion of East Anglia

We have seen how Edwin, the first Christian Bretwalda of Northumbria, employed his influence over the country where he had spent his exile to convert the king of East Anglia. Unfortunately this first conversion had not been more durable than that of Northumbria itself under Edwin. Eorpwald, the Christian king, had been assassinated soon after his conversion, and this important kingdom, which comprehended so large a part of eastern England, fell back into idolatry. The singular law which made exile the cradle of the faith and the apprenticeship of royalty to so many Anglo-Saxon princes, appears among the Angles of the East as well as among those of the North. Sigebert, the brother of the murdered king, exiled in France from his youth, was there baptized, and there too had come to admire and understand monastic life. Recalled to reign over his own country, he brought thither with him at once the true faith and the life of the cloister. He was accompanied by a Burgundian bishop of the name of Felix, who placed himself under the jurisdiction of Honorius, Archbishop of Canterbury, and was by him appointed missionary bishop of the East Angles. "For seventeen years this foreign bishop diligently sowed the seed of eternal life in his new diocese." As in Northumbria, the king and the bishop laboured in concert to extend religion and also Christian instruction, for they founded several schools for the literary education of the young English, in imitation of those that Sigebert had seen in France, and which Felix provided with masters obtained from the great monastic school of Canterbury. The origin of the celebrated University of Cambridge has been attributed by many to these monastic schools.

But they were not content to imitate Northumbria at a distance : they entered into close relations with the new Celtic mission of that kingdom. The holy bishop Aidan became the object of the respectful emulation of the Burgundian Felix, who, like him, had come from across the seas to evangelise the English, and who was encouraged in his respect for the Celtic abbot by the example of the Archbishop Honorius himself, notwithstanding Aidan's obstinate attachment to Celtic custom in respect to the celebration of Easter as opposed to the Eoman usage, of which the metropolitan church of Canterbury was the natural guardian in England.

Ere long a Celtic missionary appeared to assist in the joint work of the king and the bishop. This was an Irish monk, named Fursy, of very noble birth, and celebrated from his youth in his own country for his knowledge and his visions. It would be pleasant, to follow the example of Bede, to pause in the tale, and leave the vicissitudes of missionary history in England, to repose ourselves for a little amidst the wonderful revelations of this famed pre-cursor of Dante. Bede had his account of these visions from an old East Anglian monk of his community, as pious as he was truthful, who had heard the Irish saint himself recount his visions. Their character was such that this wonderful man, though but scarcely covered by a thin garment during the rude winters of that English coast, frozen by the east winds, was covered with perspiration at the bare recollection of the moving and frightful trances which his spirit had passed through.

In the chief of these visions, which Ampere and Ozanam agree in regarding as one of the poetic sources of the *Divina Commedia*, the Irish monk was permitted to contemplate the chastisements reserved for the most abominable sins of his times. "Look," said an angel to him — "look on these four fires that consume the world : the fire of falsehood, for those that renounce the promises of their baptism ; the fire of avarice, for those who prefer this world's riches to the love of Heaven ; the fire of discord, for those who fear not to injure souls for trifling cause ; the fire of impiety, for those who scruple not to spoil and defraud the lowly and the feeble."

This Irish monk came into East Anglia, as he had gone to other countries, to serve God in preaching the Gospel ; but one of his visions determined him to remain here longer than was usual to him. The eloquence of his words and the example of his virtues contributed much to the conversion of the heathen, and the confirmation of the Christians in their new faith. King Sigebert received him with great respect, and gave him a large estate surrounded with wood and near the sea, where he might found a monastery. The buildings and wealth of this foundation were afterwards much augmented by the kings and nobles of East Anglia.

At a later period, King Sigebert, who was not only a great Christian and a great philosopher for his time, but also a great warrior, harassed with the contests and troubles of his earthly royalty, resolved to occupy himself no longer with any occupation save the things of the kingdom of heaven, nor to fight except for the King Eternal. Accordingly he received the tonsure, and entered as a monk the monastery which he had bestowed on his Celtic friend, the Irish Fursy. He thus set the first example, among the Anglo-Saxons, of a king abandoning secular life and sovereignty to enter the cloister ; and, as we shall see, his example was not fruitless.

But he was not permitted to die as he hoped in the cloister. The terrible Penda, that scourge of the Saxon confederation, and unwearied leader of the heathen, hated his Christian neighbours in the east as well as those of the north. At the head of his numerous Mercians, reinforced by the implacable British, he invaded and ravaged East Anglia with as much fury and success as had attended him in Northumbria. The East Angles, terrified and very inferior in numbers, recollecting the exploits of their old king, sought Sigebert in his cell to place him at the head of their army, his valour and warlike appearance being well known to the soldiers. It was in vain to resist; he could not but yield to the solicitations of his former subjects : but that he might remain faithful to his



recent vows he armed himself only with a staff, not with a sword. His devotion was useless ; all that he could do was to die for his faith and his country. It was thus, with his staff in his hand, that the king-monk perished at the head of his troops under the sword of the enemy.

We may appropriately recall here an incident altogether analogous to this Saxon king's self-sacrifice, the hero of which was a British king fighting against the Saxons. Both had become monks, and were forced in their own despiteto leave the cloister and die on the battle-field. Both are too closely connected with our subject to be passed over in silence.

Thirty years before the sacrifice of the king of East Anglia — about the year 610 — Teudric, a valiant Welsh king, conqueror in all the battles waged during his reign, abdicated the throne in order to prepare by a period of penitence for death. He concealed himself in an islet formed by the picturesque course of the Wye, in the wild and solitary spot to which the more recent ruins of the Cistercian abbey of Tintern have attracted crowds of sightseers. But in the reign of his son, the Saxons of Wessex, under king Ceolwulf, crossed the Severn, which had formed their boundary for more than a century, and ravaged the country as far as the Wye. At his people's cry of distress the generous old man left the solitude where he had lived for ten years, and once more led the Christians of Wales to battle with the pagan Saxons. He awaited the latter at the ford by which they meant to cross the river which bathed the banks of his solitude. A brilliant victory was the reward of his generous devotion. At the mere sight of the old king, armed at all points and mounted on his war-horse, a panic spread among the Saxons, long accustomed to fly before him ; but in the flight one of them turned back and gave him a mortal blow. He perished thus in the arms of victory, his skull split open by a Saxon sword. A thousand years afterwards his heroic remains and venerated relics were identified by means of his shattered skull in the stone coffin wherein his faithful followers had buried him, at the confluence of the Severn and the Wye, six miles distant from the battle-field on which he gave up his life for the safety of his country.

Anna, Sigebert's successor, sprung like him from the race of Uffa, who founded the East Anglian kingdom, had a longer and less stormy reign. Like Sigebert, he was the zealous helper of Felix and Fursy, the Burgundian bishop and the Celtic monk, in the work of converting his kingdom. Like him, he founded numerous monasteries, and like him had the honour to die fighting for his people, invaded and decimated by the hateful Penda. Though he did not become a monk like Sigebert, he left a numerous offspring destined to adopt the life of the cloister, and thus to expiate the guilty weakness of his brother, who succeeded him, and who, although himself a Christian, became the ally of the heathen Penda in his attacks upon the Christians of Northumbria.

## II.

### Conversion of Wessex

What Edwin had been to the Angles of the East, his saintly and generous successor, Oswald, was to the Saxons of the West, who under Cerdic, one of those

bloodthirsty and warlike chiefs who were said to descend in a direct line from the great god Odin, had founded the most western colony of the Saxon immigration, a colony which had become a kingdom of much vaster extent than the kingdoms of the eastern or southern Saxons, or that of the Jutes of Kent. This realm, which extended from the Thames to the Severn, condemned by its position to endless struggles with the Britons of Wales and of Cornwall — a race always thrilling with patriotic hatred of the invader, and destined in the future to absorb the seven other kingdoms of the Heptarchy — was governed in the time of Oswald by two brothers, Cuichelm, from whose attempt at assassination Edwin had barely escaped, and Cynegils, the father of a princess whom Oswald had asked in marriage. When Oswald came in person for his bride, he met at the residence of the king of Wessex a missionary called Birinus. This bishop — who was perhaps not a monk, and whose origin is unknown — had acquired the Saxon language at Genoa, a port much frequented by the Anglo-Saxons, where the bishop of the place had consecrated him. He had been commissioned by Pope Honorius I to continue the work of the conversion of the Saxons, and had promised in return that he would sow the seed of life even beyond the territory of the Angles, where no preacher had yet penetrated. But landing on the coast of Wessex, he found the population there, which no doubt he supposed to be already Christianised, still plunged in the darkness of utter Paganism, and devoted himself to their conversion, believing this to be the best way of keeping his promise.

The influence of the pious and zealous Oswald came most fortunately to aid the missionary's arguments ; and when King Cynegils consented with all his people to be baptized, his son-in-law became his godfather. The baptism was performed at Dorchester, which was erected into a bishopric for Birinus by the twofold authority of Cynegils, as provincial king, and of Oswald, as Bretwalda, or supreme head of the Saxon confederation.

The success of the mission of Birinus was rapid and complete. He founded many churches and converted multitudes. Many years after the close of his long and fruitful pontificate, popular songs intended for choral singing still celebrated the memory of the Roman exile, who had come to emancipate the Saxons of the West from bondage to their idols, and blessed the day which had seen him land on their coasts.

The assassin Cuichelm himself was touched, and received baptism on his deathbed, with his son. But the son of Cynegils, Cenwalch, refused to renounce the religion of his ancestors; and when he succeeded to the throne, it might have been supposed that the work of Oswald and Birinus would be overturned by one of those pagan reactions which had already thrown back into idolatry the subjects of the first Christian king of Kent, as well as the Saxons and Angles of the East. But it does not appear that the new king originated any persecution, or indeed any change whatever; and, singular to say, it was the ferocious heathen Penda who was the instrument of Divine mercy in bringing the young unbeliever to the truth which he had refused to receive at his father's conversion. The terrible king of Mercia, whose sister Cenwalch had refused, avenged that injury by declaring war against him. The new converts of Wessex were no more able than those of Northumbria or East Anglia to resist the savage energy of the Mercian pagans; Cenwalch was defeated, dethroned, and exiled. But for him, as for Oswald and Oswy, exile was the cradle of the faith. He sought refuge with

the pious King Anna, and in that family of saints he learned to know and to love the faith of Christ. When he was reinstated in his kingdom, he and his people held to their new religion with inviolable fidelity, and during his reign of thirty years he lent active and intelligent assistance in the extension of the Christian faith and of the monastic order. On the death of Birinus, who, notwithstanding his quality of missionary and bishop sent from Rome, has left no trace of his relations with the Roman colony of Canterbury, the Celtic element reappeared among the Saxons of the West, in the person of a Frank, named Agilbert, who had long studied in the Irish monasteries, from which he had newly arrived when he offered himself to King Cenwalch to carry on the work of the deceased bishop. In this he acquitted himself so well that the king, delighted with his learning and activity, induced him to agree to become the bishop of the kingdom. But at the end of ten years, the same king, who understood nothing but Saxon, grew tired of listening to sermons delivered either in Latin or in that Celtic tongue which he considered barbarous. He does not, however, seem to have been animated by any systematic hostility against the British Celts, who formed a numerous class amongst his subjects; for while he fulfilled a promise made at his father's deathbed, and founded for his Saxons at Winchester the great monastery which has become one of the most important monuments of English architecture, he at the same time protected and favoured the national sanctuary of the Celts at Glastonbury. A deed of gift exists in which he engages the monks of that British sanctuary to pray for the Saxon king beside the tomb of Arthur. In his reign, it is true, a Saxon for the first time became abbot of the great Celtic monastery; but, on the other hand, it was also under him that the Celt Maidulphe, a professed monk, and at the same time a distinguished philosopher, came from Ireland or Scotland to lay the humble foundations of an abbey which preserves a trace of his name in the later splendours of Malmesbury.

Nevertheless King Cenwalch wanted a bishop who spoke Saxon, and found him in the person of a certain Vini, who had been ordained in France ; and for whom he constituted a new bishopric in connection with his recent monastic establishment of Winchester. Agilbert, however, instead of congratulating himself, as he ought to have done, on seeing the far too extensive field of his labours diminished, to the great profit of his flock, by the arrival of this fellow-work- man native to the soil, was so irritated that he threw up his episcopate and returned to France, where he became Bishop of Paris.

The need of and wish for native bishops increased, however, more and more among the Anglo-Saxons. The first who was invested with the episcopal dignity was Ithamar, a native of Kent, who was summoned to succeed the aged Paulinus in the see of Rochester, where the latter had found an honourable retreat after his flight from Northumbria. It was the Archbishop Honorius of Canterbury, himself a Roman monk, like his four predecessors, who chose Ithamar, acknowledging him to be a man fully capable of rivalling both in knowledge and virtue the Roman bishops who had hitherto occupied the two Kentish bishoprics.

The small kingdom of Kent, which owed its importance, and perhaps the maintenance of its independence, to the possession of the metropolis of Canterbury, was at this time governed by Ercombert, grandson of the first Christian king, who showed himself even more zealous than his grandsire for the new religion. He enforced the

observance of Lent by severe penalties, and gave orders for a general destruction of the idols and heathen temples which had been spared for the previous fifty years, notwithstanding the conversion to Christianity of the great majority of the inhabitants. It was in his reign that, on the death of the archbishop, the last survivor of Augustin's Italian mission, the rank of metropolitan was, after two years' hesitation and delay, conferred, for the first time, on an Anglo-Saxon. The newly converted realm of Wessex had the honour of furnishing to England her first native Primate. This fifth successor of Augustin was named Frithona, but thought fit to change that Teutonic name for the purely Roman one of Deusdedit. He was consecrated by the English Ithamar, and did not hesitate to remain in friendly relations, or rather to resume intercourse, with the Celtic bishops, who up to this time had scarcely recognised the supremacy of the Church of Canterbury.

### III.

#### Conversion of the Saxons of the East

Whatever may have been the influence of the saintly King Oswald on the conversion of the West Saxons, it was assuredly less direct and less effectual than that of his brother and successor Oswy upon the Saxons of the East and the midland Angles. It must, indeed, be acknowledged that, of all the Northumbrian kings, it is Oswy, stained as he was with the innocent blood of King Oswin, who did most for the extension and defence of Christianity in England.

Sigebert, named the Good — king of those West Saxons whom we recently saw driving Mellitus from his bishopric in London, and renouncing the faith which had been urged on them by the preachings of that companion of Augustin, and the influence of the Bretwalda Ethelbert — was Oswy's special friend. Sigebert the Good had dethroned the posterity of those three princes who demanded the communion from the hands of the Christian bishop without having been baptized. He frequently came into Northumbria to visit Oswy as a friend, but doubtless also as the Bretwalda, the sovereign of the confederation, who alone was able to protect the petty kingdom of Essex against its much more powerful neighbours of Wessex and Mercia. Oswy, on those occasions, spoke much to him on the subject of idolatry ; he took pains to make him understand that gods could not be made by the hand of man of stone or wood, the rest of which might be put to the vilest uses ; but that rather far he should believe in a God incomprehensible and invisible, but all-powerful and eternal, able to govern the world which He has created, and which He will judge, whose throne is in heaven, and not made of worthless metal, and who promises everlasting rewards to such as learn His will and do it on earth. Sigebert suffered himself to be won over by these brotherly and repeated exhortations. After long deliberation with his faithful counsellors, according to the invariable custom of the Saxon kings, and fortified by their unanimous assent, he received baptism, along with his whole court, at the hands of the Celtic bishop Finan, in a royal villa of the Northumbrian kings, called Ad Murum (on the wall), from its proximity to the famous rampart built by the Emperor Severus to restrain the incursions of the Caledonians.

The new Christian was unwilling to return to his kingdom without being accompanied by missionaries commissioned to preach to his people the faith which he had just embraced. For these instructors he applied, naturally, to his friend and brother the king, whom he regarded as the author of his own conversion. Oswy gave him a monk of the great Celtic Monastery of Lindisfarne, named Cedd, a Northumbrian by birth, who had already distinguished himself in a mission to the pagans of Mercia. Cedd accordingly went over the whole kingdom of Sigebert, and gathered in a first and ample harvest of souls ; after which he returned to Lindisfarne, to be there consecrated Bishop of the West Saxons, whose capital and episcopal see, formerly occupied by the Roman monk Mellitus, was at London. The monk of Lindisfarne succeeded where the monk of Mount Coelius had failed. He ordained numerous priests and deacons to assist him in preaching and baptizing, and founded many churches and monasteries, in which he endeavoured to induce the best of his converts to adopt the life of the cloister, as far at least as the rudeness of their habits would permit. He himself made continued journeys to Lindisfarne, in his native Northumbria, to renew his spirit, and to draw from the stern penances and bracing traditions of his order the energy he needed to cope with the difficulties of his task.

The end of King Sigebert the Good shows, with sufficient plainness, the nature of those difficulties, and the combination of firmness and sagacity which was required to overcome them. One of the earls, or principal lords of the country, a near kinsman of the king, having persevered in an illicit connection in spite of the repeated representations of the bishop, Cedd excommunicated him, forbidding any one to enter his house or to eat with him. The king took no notice of this prohibition, and at the invitation of the earl went to dine with him. As he left the house he met the bishop. Both were on horseback, and dismounted to greet each other. The king, affrighted, threw himself at the feet of the bishop, imploring pardon for his fault. The bishop, irritated, touched him with the staff which he carried in his hand, and said to him, "Since you have not chosen to abstain from entering the house of that reprobate, there you shall die." And, in fact, some time after, the same earl and his brother slew the king, whose kinsmen they were. When they were asked the reason of their crime, they assigned no other than the anger they felt at seeing the chief of their race pardon his enemies so readily — granting pardon as soon as it was asked, according to the precept of the Gospel. And certainly, adds honest Bede, we may believe that such a death sufficed, not only to expiate his disobedience to the bishop, but also to increase his merits in the sight of God.

This zealous prelate, whom we shall meet again farther on, survived his royal convert, whom he had so severely judged, and baptized Sigebert's successor. Afterwards, in one of his too frequent excursions to Northumbria, Cedd was seized with a contagious malady, and died at the Monastery of Lastingham, which he had founded, and of which one of his three brothers, like himself all priests and monks of Lindisfarne, was abbot. When the news of his death reached his diocese, thirty East Saxons, whom he had made monks, started in all haste for the north. They sought the monastery where lay the body of their father and founder, with the intention of living there near his remains, or dying and finding their last repose beside him, if such were the end of a few days they all died of the same disease that had cut short the bishop's life. How is it possible but to esteem, in spite of his severity, a bishop capable of inspiring such a rare



affection? And how, also, is it possible not to love those rough Saxons, scarce converted, but moved even in the cloister by that passionate self-devotion, by that necessity of giving life for the beloved which, in the midst of their natural fierceness, continued the distinctive feature of the Anglo-Saxon race?

Yet, notwithstanding, these same Saxons, so easily gained and attached by the light and the virtue of the Gospel, often fell back with a lamentable and surprising facility into the depths of Paganism. Bishop Cedd and his thirty friends were scarcely dead, when the people whose apostle and master he had been, apostatised almost in a body. The same disease which had taken from them their bishop, so terrified the East Saxons by its ravages that the king, nobles, and people rivalled each other in their eagerness to restore the temples and altars of offended Woden, hoping thus to ward off the contagion from themselves. Happily another king, named Sebbi, uncle and colleague of the apostate, stood firm, and succeeded in bringing back the whole nation to Christianity, with the aid of the bishop of the Mercians, a Saxon by birth, but, like so many other pontiffs and missionaries, trained by the Celtic monks of Iona and Lindisfarne. The narratives of Bede, which serve to guide us across the maze of the races and dynasties of the Heptarchy, were taken by him from the lips of a priest who had accompanied this very active and zealous bishop in his unwearied journeys throughout all the corners of the kingdom of Essex, to preach the faith and raise up again the altars of Christ.

According to his testimony, the inhabitants were turned back to idolatry less by hostility against Christianity than by indifference as to the future life, of which many denied the very existence. But as soon as the churches were re-opened, a multitude of Christians reappeared, who loudly declared they would rather die in the faith of the resurrection of our Lord than live under the impure shadow of their idols.

#### IV.

#### Conversion of the Mercians, or Midland English

The personal influence of King Oswy as a preacher of the Gospel, the royal villa at the foot of the old Roman wall, scene of the baptism of the first converts, and the intervention of the Celtic bishop Finan as administrator of the sacraments — all these details, which impress a special character on the conversion of the Eastern Saxons, are identically reproduced in the history of the conversion of the Mercians. But it will be understood how much more difficult and important this task must have been, when the fierceness of the bloody wars, waged during the thirty years of Penda's reign against Christian Northumbria, is considered, and especially when the vast extent of the kingdom of Mercia, almost as large as Northumbria itself, and embracing all the country that lies between the Thames, the Humber, and the Severn, is called to mind. The population of this kingdom was composed of very diverse elements, — first, of great numbers of the conquered Britons; then of Saxon settlers; and, finally, of Angles, especially concentrated on the south-west frontier of Northumbria. Towards the end of his long reign, the ferocious Penda had entrusted the government of the Angles of the

Middle to his eldest son Peada. It was through him that Christianity and the Northumbrian influence penetrated into Mercia, and succeeded in beginning operations upon this formidable remnant of darkness, encircled on all sides by newly Christianised states, which still offered a vast and inviolable asylum to Saxon paganism.

As elsewhere, love and marriage had a certain part to play in this revolution. During one of those truces which the sagacious policy of Oswy continued to obtain for ill-starred Northumbria, always bathed in blood or wrapt in flames by the implacable chief of the Mercians, the young Peada, who had all the virtues and all the external advantages which the Saxons prized most highly in their kings, came into Northumbria to ask the hand of Alchfleda, the daughter of Oswy. Oswy replied that he could not give his daughter to an idolater, and that, in order to win her, Peada and the nation of Angles governed by him must be converted and baptized. The young prince then put himself under instruction, most probably by Bishop Finan ; and from the moment when he understood the teachings, and especially the promises, of the Christian faith, the hope of the resurrection, and of that future and everlasting life which the Saxons of the East had been so unwilling to admit, he declared that he would become a Christian, even though the princess whom he sought to wed were refused to him." But Peada seems to have been drawn towards the light of truth even less by his love to Alchfleda than by his friendship for Alchfrid, the brother of the princess. Alchfrid was already his brother-in-law, having married the king of Mercia's daughter, in whom he had found not only a Christian, but a saint, destined to confirm by a new example the providential law, which, amidst the descendants of Odin, selected those who were most marked by the obstinacy and ferocity of their paganism as the progenitors of a race of saints, and especially of saintly women. It would be desirable to have fuller details of the circumstances which brought these two young princes together, and made them friends and brothers before they became related by marriage. We know only that it was Alchfrid who, of all the preachers of the truth, exercised the strongest influence upon the convictions of his friend. The future king of the Mercians received baptism from Bishop Finan at the villa near the Eoman wall, on the same spot, and almost at the same date, as the king of the West Saxons. The eorls, the thanes, and the men of war (called at a later period counts, lords, and knights) who had accompanied the young Peada to the Northumbrian court, were baptized along with him, as were also their servants.

When the Mercian prince, carrying back with him his young wife, returned a Christian from a country which had already been christianised for twenty years, his companions formed a most precious and effectual nucleus for the complete conversion of Mercia. Oswy had added to their party, in the capacity of missionaries, four monks trained at Lindisfarne, and endowed with the knowledge and virtues which seemed to him needful for the evangelising of the new province which was to be won over to Christianity. Three of them were Anglo-Saxons, and among these three was Cedd, whom Oswy almost immediately recalled, to entrust him with the mission to the Eastern Saxons. The fourth, named Diuma, was a Celt by birth, and it was he who became the first bishop of the Mercians. These missionaries obtained a rapid and un hoped-for success. The Middle Angles listened to them with manifest sympathy, and every day the nobles and the common people flocked in great numbers to be baptized.

The behaviour of the savage Penda to his newly converted son and his companions was as singular as it was unexpected. It was to have been looked for that this fierce and unwearied enemy of the Christian kings and nations near him would become the violent persecutor of his own Christian subjects. But it was not so ; and, indeed, the history of his frightful ravages in Northumbria and elsewhere records no special indication of enmity against the Christians : no doubt he did not spare them, but there is no proof of his having persecuted them with a peculiar hatred. As to his own kingdom, not only did he take no steps to punish his eldest son and the other converts, but he allowed the Northumbrian missionaries freely to preach the Gospel to all who wished to hear them in those districts, the exclusive sovereignty of which he had reserved to himself. This barbarian ravager and pagan gave thus an example of toleration by which many Christians in ages more enlightened than his might be profited. He confined himself to evincing haughtily his dislike and contempt for those who, after having received the faith of Christ, did not practise its works. "Those who despise," said he, "the laws of the God in whom they believe, must be despised as wretches."

Penda, however, continued none the less the pitiless foe of the princes and people of Northumbria. This bloodthirsty and stubborn hatred led him to his destruction.

It was only at the last extremity that Oswy resolved to engage in a final conflict with the terrible enemy who had conquered and slain his two predecessors, Edwin and Oswald. It has been seen that he married his son and his daughter to children of Penda ; and he gave him another of his sons as a hostage. But Penda would not consent to any durable peace. During the thirteen years that had elapsed since the overthrow of Oswald and the accession of Oswy, he had periodically subjected Northumbria to frightful devastations. In vain Oswy, driven to desperation, offered him all the jewels, ornaments, and treasures of which he could dispose, as a ransom for his desolated and hopeless provinces. The arrogant and fierce octogenarian refused everything, being resolute, as he said, to exterminate the whole Northumbrian race, from first to last. "Well, then," said Oswy, "since this heathen contemns our gifts, let us offer them to one who will accept them — to the Lord our God." He then made a vow to devote to God a daughter who had just been born to him, and at the same time to give twelve estates for the foundation of as many monasteries. After this he marched at the head of a small army against Penda, whose troops were, according to Northumbrian tradition, thirty times more numerous. Besides his Mercians, Penda led to battle a crowd of auxiliaries under the command of thirty chiefs who bore the title of king ; first of all, the implacable Britons, his constant allies against the Angles of the North ; then a body of East Anglians ; and finally, by an inexcusable treason against his country and his uncle, the nephew of Oswy, the son of his brother, who had been killed by Penda, the same Ethelwald who reigned over a portion of Deira.

Notwithstanding the enormous disparity of the forces, the battle, which was fought on the banks of a river near the site of the present town of Leeds, was lost by Penda. The traitor Ethelwald sought safety in flight as soon as the struggle commenced, but the other allies, Britons and East Anglians, were exterminated. The vanquished in their flight found the river in flood, so that a larger number perished in the waters than by the sword. Penda was slain fighting valiantly in the meUe. Thus perished at the age of

eighty years, after a reign of thirty, the conqueror and murderer of five Anglo-Saxon kings, the last and indefatigable champion of paganism among the Anglo-Saxons, the ally and too effective instrument of the vengeance of the old British Christians against their converted invaders.

This battle decided the fate of England : it not only ensured the emancipation and temporary preponderance of Northumbria ; but it put a period to the struggle which for 200 years the British had maintained against the Anglo- Saxons. Henceforth there might be partial resistance and local conflicts, but there was no general attempt, with any chance of success, to repel the progress of invasion. All the little British kingdoms which occupied the existing counties of Chester, Lancashire, and Westmoreland, on the coast of the Irish Channel, were finally swept away and taken possession of by the Saxons of Northumbria.

Farther, it sealed the political and military triumph of the new religion, in the very bosom of the Heptarchy, over that external and official paganism which was the religious tradition of the nation. But this triumph was far from being sufficient for the designs of God, and for the deliverance of the souls of men. There was an inner paganism, infinitely more difficult to overcome — the paganism of the savage morals and uncurbed passions of a conquering race. The valiant sword of the Northumbrians might well gain the mastery over oppressors and ravagers ; but the word, and above all, the virtue, of the monks was needed to propagate and consolidate the faith, and root it deeply in the heart and life of the victors.

Oswy faithfully kept his word to God and to the Christian people. He set apart the twelve estates to be thenceforth monastic property — six in the north and six in the south of his double kingdom — to form an endowment for monks who should substitute for the warlike service by which these domains were usually held an unceasing prayer for eternal peace. He then took his daughter Bifieda, who was but yet a year old, and consecrated her to God by the vow of perpetual virginity. Her mother, the daughter of Edwin, first Christian king of Northumbria, had been thus dedicated to God from her birth, but only by baptism, and as a token of the gratitude of a still pagan father for the protection of the Christians' God. The daughter of Oswy was to be the price of a yet greater gift of heaven — the conclusive victory of his race, and of the Christian faith in his country : the sacrifice thus imposed on her reminds us of that of Jephthah's daughter. It will be seen that, far from desiring to escape her vow, she showed herself, during a long life, always worthy of her heavenly bridegroom. The king took her from the caresses of her mother, to entrust her, not, as we might have supposed, to his sister the Abbess Ebba of Coldingham, but to Hilda, a princess of the rival dynasty, who nearly ten years before had been initiated into monastic life by Bishop Aidan.

After the overthrow of Penda, Oswy, now master of Mercia, in right of his victory, undertook with his accustomed zeal to effect the conversion of that kingdom. He left a portion of it to his son-in-law Peada, the son of his terrible opponent, whose ardour in the Christian cause seconded all his efforts for the extension of the true faith. The monk Diuma, born in Ireland, and one of the four missionaries whom Peada had brought from Northumbria at the time of his marriage, was consecrated by the Bishop of Lindisfarne, and appointed Bishop of all Mercia, including therein the nation of the Middle Angles

already converted under Peada. It was necessary that two distinct races should thus be united in one diocese, because of the small number of priests who were worthy of promotion to the episcopate. The pontificate of Diuma was short, but fruitful. At his death he was succeeded by another Irishman, Ceolach, who was reckoned among the disciples of Columba, the great Celtic missionary, as coming from the monastery of Iona, to which he returned after some years of a too laborious episcopate in Mercia, to seek the peace of cloistered life in that citadel of Celtic monachism. The third Bishop of Mercia, Trumhere, an abbot in Northumbria, and an Anglo-Saxon by birth, came, like his brethren, from the Celtic cloisters, and was, like them, consecrated by the Bishop of Lindisfarne. His two successors, Jaruman and Ceadda, had the same origin ; the one was born in Ireland, and the other, a Saxon by birth, had been ordained by the Scots.

It is thus evident that the extension of Christianity and the government of the Church among the Saxons of Mercia were entirely under the influence of Scotch or Anglo-Celtic monks, disciples and spiritual descendants of St. Columba. This state of matters was not at all altered when the Mercians, rising under three of their principal chiefs, shook off the yoke of Oswy, and took as their king a youthful son of Penda, whom these three earls had kept in concealment since the overthrow of his father. They drove out the officials of the Northumbrian king, but they kept, with the bishop, the faith which had come to them from Northumbria, and which was to them now no less dear than their freedom and their reconquered frontiers. They desired, they said, to be free, with a king of their own race, on earth, without ceasing to serve Christ, the true and eternal King, so as to gain His kingdom of heaven.

Twenty years later, this stubborn repugnance of the Mercians to the yoke of their Northumbrian neighbours manifested itself with painful distinctness among the monks of one of the principal monasteries of the country. It was at Bardeney, in that province of Lindsay (Lincolnshire), the conquest of which had already cost good King Oswald his life. His niece, the daughter of Oswy, had become queen of Mercia. It was her desire that this monastery, which was especially dear to her as well as to her husband, should receive the remains of her uncle. The bones of the sainted king arrived one evening, borne in a chariot, at the gate of the monastery, but the monks refused to receive them. "We know well," said they, "that he is holy ; but he is not of our country, and in other days he subdued us by force." It was necessary to yield to this explosion of patriotic rancour, and the sacred body had to remain all night in the open air. The next morning the monks were told that a luminous column had descended from heaven on the car which bore the corpse of the Northumbrian king, and had been seen by all the country round about. Upon this they thought better of it, and opened the door of their church to the uncle of their protectress.

His relics thenceforth remained there revered by all. A banner of purple and gold placed over his shrine betokened his twofold dignity as saint and king. But it is not the less necessary to note this first and instinctive outburst of a local and provincial patriotism, sometimes even more powerful than the popular devotion, a new explosion of which long after brought about the murder of the pious queen who had striven so anxiously to endow Mercia with the relics of the great Northumbrian saint. For the history of these times and races never allows us to forget that barbarism was always



ready to reclaim its ancient rights even amidst the blossoming of Christian virtues and monastic austerities.

The entire narrative is very confused, very obscure, in great measure unknown, and much forgotten. But across these darkling foundations of the primitive history of Christian races stirs everywhere a potent and heroic breath, the breath of life, of the true and noble life — that breath which has made out of the confused masses of barbarism those modern Christian nations, free and manly, among whom the place held by England is known to all.

In summing up the history of the efforts made during the sixty years between the landing of Augustin and the death of Penda to introduce Christianity into England, the results may be stated thus : Of the eight kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon Confederation, that of Kent alone was exclusively won and retained by the Roman monks, whose first attempts among the East Saxons and Northumbrians ended in failure. In Wessex and in East Anglia the Saxons of the West and the Angles of the East were converted by the combined action of Continental missionaries and Celtic monks. As to the two Northumbrian kingdoms, and those of Essex and Mercia, which comprehended in themselves more than two-thirds of the territory occupied by the German conquerors, these four countries owed their final conversion exclusively to the peaceful invasion of the Celtic monks, who not only rivalled the zeal of the Roman monks, but who, the first obstacles once surmounted, showed much more perseverance and gained much more success.

All the kingdoms of the Heptarchy have thus passed under our review except that of Sussex, or the Saxons of the South. It was the smallest of all, but one of the earliest founded; and the first German invaders of the southern coast of Great Britain were notorious among all the others for their ferocity and their invincible vigour. Although they were next neighbours to the kingdom of Kent, the Roman missionaries, Augustin's companions, have left no trace of their presence among them, if indeed they ever tried to penetrate there. The Celtic monks, more enterprising or more persevering, made their way thither to form a first station, an advanced post, as it were, of their future army. They founded the very small monastery of Bosham, protected on one side by the sea, on the other by forests, and here vegetated five or six monks who came from East Anglia, the nearest Northumbrian province, under the leadership of an Irishman, the compatriot and disciple of that Fursy whose strange visions were everywhere narrated. There they served God as they best could, humbly and poorly ; but not one of the Saxons of the country would listen to their preaching, still less adopt their manner of life. This is the only example known to us of a complete failure. And yet the people of Sussex, although the last of all the Saxons to receive the Gospel, owe, as we shall see, that blessing to a monk trained in the school of the Celtic missionaries. This monk, however, by forsaking the rule of his first masters, in order to connect himself more closely with Roman tradition and authority, produced in the new Church of England a revolution which it now remains for us to record.

## BOOK XII

### **ST. WILFRID ESTABLISHES ROMAN UNITY AND THE BENEDICTINE ORDER, 634-709.**

#### CHAPTER I

##### BEGINNING OF WILFRID'S CAREER — ASSEMBLY OF WHITBY

While the bishops and monks of Celtic origin were gradually- establishing their authority, together with that of the Christian faith, in the greater part of the land of the Heptarchy, protected by the Eegis of the Northumbrian kings, and without any ostensible relation either with Rome or with the Roman colony and its official metropolis of Canterbury, a young Anglo-Saxon, destined to transform the Church of England, was growing up unknown. More powerful than the missionaries sent from Rome, it was to be given to him, after many a struggle and many a defeat, to extend the authority of the Holy See over all Anglo-Saxon Christianity, to re-establish, even to his own prejudice, the supremacy of the metropolitan see instituted by Gregory, and to substitute everywhere the rule of St. Benedict for the observances and ascendancy of the sons of St. Columba.

This young man was named Wilfrid, and belonged by birth to the highest nobility of Northumbria. He was born in 634, the day after the death of King Edwin, the flight of Bishop Paulinus, and the apparently irreparable downfall of the Romish mission in the north of England.

Of him, as of all the greater saints, and especially of St. Columba and St. Bernard, it is related that his birth was accompanied by a prophecy of his future glory. The house where his mother lay appeared all at once enveloped in a flame which seemed to reach to heaven. The frightened neighbours rushed to extinguish the fire, when they were met by the attendants of the new mother, who said to them, "Be at ease, it is not a fire, but only this child who is just born." Such a prodigy naturally drew attention to the infant, and all the more because his father was one of the principal nobles of the country, and the boy himself, as he grew up, displayed a singularly gracious nature. While he was still in the cradle, he lost his pious mother, and his father having married a second time, he resolved at thirteen years of age to escape the persecutions of a harsh and haughty stepmother by leaving home and devoting himself to God. For this the consent, not only of his father, but also of King Oswy, as chief of the nation, was necessary. At his age a young Anglo-Saxon noble was already treated as a man; he asked and obtained

accordingly from his father a suit of armour, with horses and servants in sufficient number to enable him to appear at court in a manner worthy of his rank. Thus equipped he went to seek, not King Oswy, but his queen. He found her surrounded by the leaders of the nobility whom he was accustomed to see and to wait upon at his father's house, and who were already disposed in his favour on account of his intelligence and modesty. They presented him to the young queen, who was only seven or eight years older than himself, and whose heart he gained as much by his youthful grace as by the refinement and truthfulness of his intellect.

The queen herself was no other than that Eanfleda whose baptism, it may be remembered, had given the signal for the conversion of Northumbria, and who had been the first Christian of the kingdom. Her father was the martyr King Edwin, and her mother Ethelburga, daughter of the royal convert of Augustin, who still lived in the monastery of Lymington, where she had passed her widowhood in retirement. Eanfleda herself was destined to end her days in the cloister under the crosier of that daughter whom she dedicated to God in order to obtain the defeat of the tyrant Penda. The antecedents and the character of the queen of Northumbria naturally influenced her in favour of the young noble's desire. She granted him, or prevailed with her husband to grant him, authority to renounce all public and military service in order to enter upon a religious life, in which she promised to watch over him. She then confided him to the care of a favourite follower of the king, who himself afterwards retired from the world. This aged warrior conducted his young and noble charge to the great monastic sanctuary of Northumbria at Lindisfarne. There Wilfrid won all hearts as he had won the queen's. His humility and ardour for monastic rule, no less than his passion for study, marked him out for the affectionate admiration of the cenobites. He soon learned the whole Psalter in the version of St. Jerome, and made the contents of all the other books which he found in the library of the monastery, his own.

Thus the years of his youth flowed on at Lindisfarne; but before he yielded the half of his long hair to the scissors, which, cutting bare the upper part and front of his head, would have impressed on him the monastic tonsure according to the Irish fashion, he began to find out that all was not perfect in those Celtic rules and traditions of which Lindisfarne was the centre and stronghold in England. With a sagacity much admired by his historians, he determined to make a journey which no other Anglo-Saxon had yet undertaken, and to go to Rome, not merely to obtain the remission of his sins and the blessing of the Mother of the Churches, but also to study the monastic and ecclesiastical observances which were followed under the shadow of the See of St. Peter. The monks of Lindisfarne being informed by their pupil of this extraordinary project, not only used no attempts at dissuasion, but actually encouraged him to accomplish it ; nothing could better prove their good faith and implicit subordination to Catholic unity. Wilfrid then went to ask his father's blessing, and to confide his plans to his royal protectress. Queen Eanfleda, who, after the murder of her father, had taken refuge in the country of her mother at Canterbury, was too much the spiritual daughter of the Romish missionaries not to approve of Wilfrid's design. She sent him with warm recommendations to her cousin-german Ercombert, king of Kent, praying that prince to keep the young pilgrim with him until he should be able to find suitable companions for so long a journey.

On his arrival at Canterbury Wilfrid exercised the same fascination upon the king of Kent as upon all those who had known him from his childhood. Seeing the young and handsome Northumbrian wholly given up to prayer and study, Ercombert conceived for him the most ardent attachment, and kept him at his court for a whole year. Wilfrid took advantage of this interval to study and adopt the Romish usages as they could be learned in the Roman colony at Canterbury, which was still governed by a missionary brought over by St. Augustin, Archbishop Honorius, now his fourth successor. He took the trouble to substitute, in his happy and flexible memory, the fifth edition of the old version of the Psalter, which was then used in Rome, for the version corrected by St. Jerome, which he had learned by heart at Lindisfarne, and which was used in the Celtic Church as well as in the Churches of Gaul and Germany. Meantime the queen of Northumbria, impatient for the return of her favourite, urged upon King Ercombert that Wilfrid should commence his pilgrimage, and soon afterwards the monarch gave him leave to depart, sending with him another young Northumbrian noble, Biscop Baducing, equally distinguished by his zeal for study, equally inflamed with the desire of visiting Rome, and whom, under the name of Benedict Biscop, we shall afterwards see filling an important part in the monastic history of his own province.

Thus they started; and it is easy to imagine the joy and ardour of these young and brave Christians, when, after having rapidly crossed the Straits, they began their journey through France. Wilfrid especially, with all the enthusiasm of his age, pursued his way, strong and unwearied, with an affability and gaiety which nothing could alter. His companion, a little older, was of a more austere temper ; thus it was impossible that they should long agree. On their arrival at Lyons, Biscop proceeded immediately to Rome, while Wilfrid remained some months with the Archbishop Delphinus. Here also was displayed the marvellous empire which this youth obtained over the hearts of the most different persons, from the young queen of his own country and the warlike comrades of his father, to this Gallo-French prelate, who was so charmed with him, with the pure and candid soul which was well reflected in the serene beauty of his countenance, that he offered to adopt him as his son, giving him his niece in marriage, and the government of the whole of an adjoining province. But Wilfrid replied, "I have made a vow; I have left, like Abraham, my kindred and my father's house in order to visit the Apostolic See, and to study there the rules of ecclesiastical discipline, that my nation may profit by them. But if God gives me life I will return this way and see you again."

The archbishop, recognising the earnest sincerity of his vocation, let him depart for Rome with all his suite ; for the young and high-born Northumbrian did not travel as a simple pilgrim, but with all kinds of guides and baggage.

On entering Rome, his first thought was to hurry to the Church of St. Andrew, from whence Augustin and the first missionaries to England had set out. Kneeling before the altar, where there was a copy of the Gospels, he implored the Apostle St. Andrew, for the love of that God whom he had confessed by his martyrdom, to open his mind, and to atone for the rustic plainness of his Saxon tongue by giving him grace to study, to understand, and to teach the English nation the eloquence of the Gospel. After which, as he began to visit, one by one, all the sanctuaries of the Eternal City, he met with a wise and holy man, Archdeacon Boniface, one of the principal counsellors of the Pope, who took pleasure in instructing the young stranger as his own child, carefully

explaining to him the four Gospels, the ecclesiastical discipline, and the calculation of Easter, which the Celts of Britain and Ireland refused to admit. Finally, he presented him to the Pope, to whom he explained the object of the journey of this youthful servant of God : the Pontiff placed his hand upon the head of the young Englishman, blessed, and prayed for him. Thus Wilfrid left Rome, assuredly without suspecting the harsh and cruel trials which were fated to bring him back thither so often again.

In returning from Rome, Wilfrid, as he had promised, again stopped at Lyons to see the archbishop, who received him with all his former tenderness, still insisting upon making him his heir. He even remained three whole years with this prelate, occupied in completing his ecclesiastical education among the learned doctors whom he found at Lyons, as if his desire had been to arm himself completely against Celtic usages, by comparing the teaching received at Rome with the venerable traditions of the earliest Gallican Church. Here, too, he received from the hands of the archbishop the tonsure which he preferred, no longer that Celtic tonsure which shaved the top and front of the head, from one ear to the other, leaving the hair to hang down behind, which the Romans, it is not known why, called the tonsure of Simon the Magician ; nor the Oriental tonsure, which completely bared the head, and which was believed to be that of St. Paul ; but the Roman tonsure, that of St. Peter, which removed all the hair except a circle round the skull, representing the form of the crown of thorns.

The extreme importance attached to this difference of tonsure, puerile and insignificant as it is in our eyes, will no longer astonish us when we remember the great significance of long hair among all barbarous races, and above all among our Merovingians. Long hair in men was not only the mark of royal or very noble birth, but also a sign of power, daring, and pride. Apart even from the question of ritual unity, Wilfrid and the Romans, without doubt, saw in the persistence of the Celts in wearing long hair, at least at the back of their heads, a vestige of pride and want of discipline incompatible with the ecclesiastical profession, and especially with the life of the cloister.

Wilfrid's visit to Delphinus was cut short by the death of the archbishop, who perished a victim to the tyranny of Ebroin, then governor of Neustria and Burgundy in the name of the Regent Bathilda, the French queen, once an English slave, who was afterwards to become a nun and a saint. Delphinus was seized in his metropolitan city by the soldiers of Ebroin, who dragged him to Chalons, and there put him to death. Wilfrid followed him, in spite of the entreaties of the martyr ; with the incomparable enthusiasm and heroism of youth he hoped to partake the fate of his protector. "What could be better," he said, "than to die together, father and son, and to be with Christ?" After the murder of the archbishop, when Wilfrid, stripped of his vestments, waited his turn, the chiefs of the party asked who this handsome youth, so eager for death, might be? and when they were told that he was a foreigner, of the race of those famous conquerors of Great Britain who were feared all over the world, they resolved to spare him. After this, as soon as he had superintended the burial of his spiritual father, he returned to England.

These details may perhaps appear too minute ; but they will be pardoned on account of the interest which attaches to the early years of a man destined to exercise,



throughout half a century, a preponderating influence over his country, and, through her, over the power and freedom of the whole Church. Nor is it a matter without interest to seize in their very birth the manifestations of that mysterious and disinterested attraction which drew towards Rome, and towards Roman ideas and practices, this noble and daring scion of a barbarous race, this champion whose impassioned constancy contributed so powerfully in the future to link the destinies of England, and, by her means, of Germany and the whole west, to the foot of the apostolic throne.

On his return to England, Wilfrid, from the first, by the crown-like form of his tonsure, set up a visible and permanent protest against the ascendancy of Celtic customs. He thus signified his intention to enter upon the struggle as soon as the opportunity should present itself. It is not known whether he returned to Lindisfarne — at any rate he did not remain there. He was soon summoned to the court of the young Alchfrid, son of King Oswy, whom the latter had just associated in the kingdom. We have already noticed the touching friendship of Prince Alchfrid for the son of the cruel enemy of the Northumbrians, Penda of Mercia, and his influence on the conversion of the Mercians.

This young prince, the son of a father who had been instructed in the school of the Scottish monks, and of a mother baptized and educated by the Romish missionaries, had inclined from his cradle to the religious exercises of his mother. He had always loved and sought to follow the Roman rules. At the news that the favourite of his mother, the young and noble Wilfrid, already so well known by his piety at Lindisfarne, had arrived from Rome, and was teaching the true Easter with all the regulations of the Church of St. Peter, Alchfrid sent for him, received him like an angel come from God, and fell at his feet to demand his blessing. Then, after discussing thoroughly the usages of the Roman Church, he conjured him, in the name of God and St. Peter, to remain with him, and instruct both himself and his people. Wilfrid willingly obeyed. To the irresistible attraction which, in his earliest youth, he had exercised over all hearts, there was now joined the authority of a man who had travelled, studied, and seen death and martyrdom close at hand. This increase of influence did but increase the affection of Alchfrid. The young prince and the young monk, one in soul, became still more one in heart; they loved each other with a passionate tenderness, which every day increased. The friendship of David and Jonathan, so often quoted by monastic annalists, appeared to the Northumbrians to be reproduced in that which existed between the son of their king and his youthful countryman.

Wilfrid, with his Roman tonsure, and his ideas still more Roman, could not remain at Lindisfarne. Alchfrid therefore sought not merely to retain him near to himself, but also to create for him a great monastic establishment of which he should be the head, and from whence his influence might spread itself over the Northumbrian Church. The young king had already founded a new monastery at Ripon, in a fine situation, at the confluence of two rivers, and in the very heart of Deira; he had given it to monks of the Celtic ritual, all the religious communities in the country being composed either of monks of Scottish origin or of Northumbrians educated by the Scots. The first occupants of Ripon had come from Melrose, under the conduct of abbot Eata, one of the twelve young Saxons whom St. Aidan, the first Celtic missionary to Northumbria, chose for his future fellow-labourers ; and had among them, in the capacity of steward, a young monk

named Cuthbert, who was also destined to fill a great position, and to eclipse Wilfrid himself in the devotion of the northern English.

Alchfrid had endowed this foundation with a domain so large that it was inhabited by forty families. But soon, under the influence of those Roman predilections which the return of Wilfrid developed in his mind, he required the new community of Ripon to celebrate Easter at the date fixed by Rome, and to renounce the other customs in which the Celtic Church differed from that of Rome. They unanimously declared that they would rather go away and give up the sanctuary which had just been given them, than abandon their national traditions. Alchfrid took them at their word, and gave them their dismissal. Abbot Eata and the future St. Cuthbert returned to Melrose, and Wilfrid was installed in their place by his royal friend, with the express intention of thus giving him the means of propagating the rules and doctrines which he preferred. Thus the war commenced — a war of which Wilfrid did not live to see the end, although he carried it on for more than half a century.

Wilfrid was now at the brightest moment of his life. He employed the bounty of his friend to carry out the generous impulses of his heart, and scattered round him abundant alms : he saw the ideas so dear to him spreading and strengthening themselves; he rejoiced in the protection of a prince who was to him at once a brother and a son; and, to sum up all, he was almost as dear to the people of Deira as to their king. The nobles and other Northumbrians idolised him, and regarded him as a prophet.

The young abbot, however, was not yet a priest ; and it was the earnest desire of Alchfrid that his friend should be his confessor, and remain in some degree attached to his person. The whole of Northumbria was then under the rule of Colman, the Celtic Bishop of Lindisfarne; but it was not from him that Wilfrid could have willingly received the sacrament of ordination. However, at this juncture the king received a visit from Agilbert, a Frenchman by birth, educated in Ireland, who, having become Bishop of the kingdom of Wessex, had lost half of his diocese because the king of the country, weary of listening to sermons which were not in Saxon, had chosen to constitute another bishop without Agilbert's consent. He therefore, not willing to sanction this abuse of power, had renounced his see. Although the king of Wessex was the intimate friend of Alchfrid, it was to the Northumbrian court that the displaced bishop first came to seek a refuge before returning to his own country. Alchfrid made known to him the virtue and good repute of Wilfrid, enlarging upon his humility, his fervour in prayer, his prudence, goodness, and sobriety — the latter being a virtue always greatly admired by the Anglo-Saxons, who practised it very little — and last, and above all, the gift which he had of commanding with authority and preaching with clearness. "Such a man is made to be a bishop," said Agilbert, who did not hesitate to ordain him priest in his monastery at Ripon, and, as Alchfrid had requested, for the personal service of the prince and his court.

The influence of Wilfrid must have grown rapidly during the four or five years which followed his return to England, and he must have displayed great energy in his attack upon the Celtic spirit of the nation, to have brought about so promptly the decisive crisis which we are about to record. It must be remarked that he alone took the initiative and the responsibility. In this conflict, the object of which was to secure the

preponderance of Rome, we can find no trace of any mission or impulse whatever from Rome. The Roman colony of Canterbury, whose chief was an Anglo-Saxon, lent no direct assistance; and in Northumbria, as in the neighbouring kingdoms — converted to Christianity by Celtic apostles — Wilfrid found no aid except the recollection of the abortive efforts of the first Romish missionaries, or the limited influence possessed by priests who had accompanied princesses of the race of Hengist, when they entered by marriage other dynasties of the Anglo-Saxon descendants of Odin; unless it were the testimony of travellers who, arriving from Canterbury or France, might express their astonishment to see the northern Christians, converts of Scottish missionaries, celebrating Easter at a different time from the rest of Christendom.

There was indeed one fact which might encourage him to attempt again, in another region and under circumstances far less favourable, the enterprise in which Augustin had failed. Of the four countries in which the Celtic Church reigned, Ireland, Wales, Scotland proper, and Northumbria, with their four monastic citadels of Bangor on the sea, Bangor on the Dee, Iona, and Lindisfarne, Ireland, the cradle and chief home of Celtic traditions, had begun in heart to return to Roman unity. Thirty years before, a council had been held at Leighlin, in the south of the island, at the suggestion of Pope Honorius I, who had invited the Scots of Ireland to celebrate Easter according to the common practice of the Church. The fathers of this council, after much animated discussion, had decided that wise and humble men should be sent to Rome, as sons to their mother, to judge of the ceremonies there. These deputies declared, on their return, that they had seen the faithful from all parts of the world celebrating Easter on the same day at Rome. On their report the Romish cycle and rules relative to the Paschal calculations were adopted by all the south of Ireland. This decision had been chiefly brought about by the efforts of a disciple and spiritual descendant of Columba, a monk named Cummian, then abbot of one of the Columbian monasteries in Ireland. Abbot Cummian had been obliged to defend himself against the attacks which his partiality for Roman usages brought upon him, by an apologetic letter, still preserved, where his erudition displays itself in an innumerable throng of texts and calculations. He sums up in these decisive words : "Can there be imagined a pretension more perverse and ridiculous than that which says : Rome is mistaken, Jerusalem is mistaken, Alexandria is mistaken, Antioch is mistaken, the whole world is mistaken ; the Scots and the Britons alone make no mistake?" But the example of the south of Ireland did not affect the north of the island, and still less the Picts and Scots of Caledonia. The arguments of Cummian could not convince the direct successor of Columba, the abbot of Iona. He and all his community obstinately retained the Irish computation; and as it was precisely at this period that the missionaries sent from Ireland relighted in Northumbria the light of the faith, extinct since the death of King Edwin and the flight of Bishop Paulinus, it is easily apparent how it happened that the erroneous calculation of Easter, according to the Celts, took root everywhere together with the new doctrine. It is not even certain that Wilfrid was aware that anything favourable to his views had occurred in that part of Ireland which was farthest from Northumbria, for we do not find any mention of it in his acts or discourses. As long as St. Aidan, the first Celtic apostle of Northumbria, lived, the idea of finding fault with his method of celebrating the greatest feast of that religion which he taught and practised so well, had entered into no man's mind. Whether he himself was ignorant of the difference of ritual, or whether, knowing it, he did not

choose to withdraw himself from the usages of his race and of the parent monastery of Iona, he was not the less the object of universal confidence and veneration. Under his successor, Bishop Finan, the question had been raised, by one of the Lindisfarne monks, Irish by birth, who had travelled and studied in France and Italy. This monk, named Ronan, became involved in a violent quarrel with the Bishop of Northumbria upon the subject. He had led back a few to the Roman observance of Easter, and persuaded others to study the matter ; but the bishop, harsh and passionate as Columba himself had sometimes been, far from being convinced, was only embittered by the remonstrances of Ronan, which served chiefly to make him a declared adversary of the Roman cause.

When Finan died, leaving Bishop Colman — like himself, Irish by birth and a monk of Iona — as his successor at Lindisfarne, the dispute became at once open and general. Wilfrid had succeeded in sowing agitation and uncertainty in all minds ; and the Northumbrians had come so far as to ask themselves whether the religion which had been taught to them, and which they practised, was indeed the religion of that Christ whose name it bore.

The two Northumbrian kings mingled in the struggle on different sides. Oswy, the glorious vanquisher of Penda, the liberator of Northumbria, the conqueror and benefactor of Mercia, the Bretwalda or military and religious suzerain of the Anglo-Saxon confederacy, naturally exercised a much greater influence from that of his young son, whom he had associated with himself in the kingdom. And the mind of Oswy, who had been baptized and educated by Celtic monks, who spoke their language perfectly, and was probably desirous of conciliating the numerous Celtic populations who lived under his rule from the Irish Sea to the Firth of Forth, did not go beyond the instructions of his early masters. Notwithstanding he had to contend within the circle of his family, not only with his son Alchfrid, excited in behalf of the Romish doctrine by his master and friend Wilfrid, but also with his queen, Eanfleda, who did not need the influence of Wilfrid to make her entirely devoted to the Roman cause, since, on returning from exile to marry Oswy, she had brought with her a Canterbury priest — Romanus by name, and Roman in heart — who guided her religious exercises. Under the direction of Romanus, the queen and all her court followed Roman customs. Two Easter feasts were thus celebrated every year in the same house ; and as the Saxon kings had transferred to the chief festivals of the Christian year, and especially to the greatest of all, the meeting of their assemblies, and the occasion which those assemblies gave them of displaying all their pomp, it is easy to understand how painful it must have been for Oswy to sit, with his earls and thanes, at the great feast of Easter, at the end of a wearisome Lent, and to see the queen, with her maids of honour and her servants, persisting in fasting and penitence, it being with her still only Palm Sunday.

This discord, as Bede says, with regard to Easter, was the capital point of the quarrel which divided the Anglo-Saxons into two bodies according as they had received the faith from Roman or Celtic missionaries. The differences remarked by Augustin in his struggles with the British clergy appear henceforward reduced to this one. The great reproach addressed to the Celtic clergy by the envoy of Pope Gregory, that they despised the work of converting the Saxons, is no longer in question. Our Celts of the North had succeeded only too well, according to Wilfrid, in converting and even in ruling two-thirds of Saxon England. Nor at this phase of the quarrel is there any further

mention either of baptismal ceremonies, or of the customs contrary to ecclesiastical celibacy, or of any of the other points formerly contested. The difference of the two tonsures to which Wilfrid attached such great importance, and which must have struck from the first the eyes and attention of the Anglo-Saxon converts, is not even named in the long discussions of which we still possess a record. All turn exclusively on the celebration of Easter.

Nothing could be more fanciful and more complicated than this Paschal calculation ; nothing more difficult to understand, and especially to explain. Let us try, however, to draw forth some clear ideas from the depths of the endless dissertations of contemporary authors and even of more recent historians. Since the earliest days of Christianity a division had existed as to the proper date for the celebration of Easter. Some churches of Asia Minor followed the custom of the Jews by placing it on the fourteenth day of the first lunar month of the year. But all the churches of the West, of Palestine, and of Egypt, fixed upon the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the month nearest to the vernal equinox, so as not to keep the feast along with the Jews, and the general Council of Nice erected this custom into a law of the Church. Those who had not accepted this law, but persisted in celebrating the fourteenth day, were held as heretics and schismatics, under the name of “quartodecimans”. The imputation of complicity in this heresy made against the Celtic Church by the chiefs of the Roman clergy in a bull addressed in 640, during the vacancy of the Holy See, to the bishops and abbots of the north of Ireland, was most unjust. The only mistake made by the Celts was that of neglecting to keep themselves informed of the difficulties which arose as to the manner of determining the commencement of the first lunar month, which ought to be the Paschal month. As has been already said in respect to the dispute between St. Augustin and the Britons of Cambria, they had remained faithful to the custom which prevailed at Rome itself when Patrick and the other missionaries to the British Isles brought thence the light of the Gospel. At that period, in Rome and in all the West, the ancient Jewish cycle of eighty-four years was universally followed to fix this date. The Christians of Alexandria, however, better astronomers than those of Rome, and specially charged by the Council of Nice to inform the Pope of the date of Easter of each year, discovered in this ancient cycle some errors of calculation, and after two centuries of disputes they succeeded in making the Roman Church adopt a new Paschal cycle, that which is now universally received, and which limits the celebration of Easter to the interval between the 22nd of March and the 24th of April. The Celtic churches had no knowledge of this change, which dated from the year 525 — that is to say, from a time when the invasions of the Saxons probably intercepted their habitual communications with Rome ; they retained their old Jewish cycle of eighty-four years, and adhered obstinately to it. They celebrated Easter always on Sunday, but this Sunday was not always the one which had been appointed by the Romish Church after the new calculations. Thus it happened that King Oswy was eight days in advance of his wife, and complained of having to rejoice alone in the resurrection of Christ, while the queen was still commemorating the commencement of the passion in the services for Palm Sunday.

On this diversity, then, which was in appearance so slight and trifling, turned the great dispute between the Celtic and Roman monks, between those who had first began



the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, and those who had so happily completed it. It is amazing to note the vehemence and the duration of a dispute so bitter on a subject so insignificant. Certainly there was something painful in being unable to persuade the new believers to celebrate the greatest festival of their religion on the same day; but, on the other hand, it is evident that all these Catholics must have been profoundly agreed as to the important questions of faith and practice, since they could attach so much weight to a difference of astronomical calculation.

Let us at the same time remark that throughout this controversy the Roman Church displayed an exemplary moderation, and always acted in conformity with the paternal instructions given by St. Gregory the Great to St. Augustin. She did not impose upon Wilfrid the mission he had taken upon himself. It was not at Rome, but at Lyons, that he received that tonsure which the Romans themselves do not seem to have taken much pains about. Rome never treated as schismatics or heretics those Celtic dissidents, the most illustrious of whom, Columbanus of Luxeuil and Aidan of Lindisfarne, have always had a place in her martyrology. She never proceeded otherwise than by way of counsel and exhortation, without insisting on violent measures, and patiently awaiting the returning calm of excited spirits, giving to all an example of prudence, moderation, and charity.

On the other hand, it is clearly evident that under the veil of a question purely ritual, was hidden one of political and personal influence. The precocious greatness of Wilfrid and his ambitious fervour might well awaken hostility among the clergy and nobles of Northumbria ; his pretensions, which seemed so many audacious innovations, were of a kind to wound a people but recently converted, and instinctively inclined to attach great importance to the external forms of the new faith. But it was above all a struggle of race and influence. On one side the Celtic spirit, proud, independent, and passionate, of which the great abbot of Iona was the type, and of which his sons, the apostles of Northumbria, were the representatives ; on the other, the spirit of Rome, the spirit of discipline and authority, imperfectly personified by its first envoys, Augustin and Paulinus, but endowed with a very different degree of vigour and missionary energy, since the moment when an Anglo-Saxon of the type of Wilfrid had constituted himself its champion. England was the stake of this game. All the future of that Christianity which had been so laboriously planted in the island, depended on its issue.

It is this which gives a truly historical interest to the famous conference of Whitby, convoked by King Oswy, for the purpose of regulating and terminating the dispute which troubled his kingdom and the neighbouring countries. He desired that the question should be publicly debated in his presence, and in that of the Witenagemot, or parliament, composed not only of the principal ecclesiastics and laymen of the country, but of all those who had a right to sit in the national councils of the Anglo-Saxons. It is to be remarked that here, for the first time in the history of these assemblies, a sort of division into two chambers like that which has become the fundamental principle of parliamentary institutions is visible. Bede states that the king consulted the nobles and the commoners, those who were seated and those who stood round, precisely like the lords and commons of our own days.

The place chosen for the assembly was on the sea-coast, and in the centre of the two Northumbrian kingdoms, at Streaneshalch or Whitby, in the double monastery of monks and nuns governed by the illustrious Hilda, a princess of the Northumbrian blood-royal, who was now fifty years of age, and thus joined to the known sanctity of her life, maturity of age and experience sufficient for the government of souls. Although baptized by Bishop Paulinus at the time of the first Romish mission to the court of her grand-uncle King Edwin, she was completely devoted to Celtic traditions, doubtless from attachment to the sainted Bishop Aidan, from whom she had received the veil. Her whole community were of the same party which had been hitherto favoured by King Oswy, and was naturally represented by Colman, Bishop of Lindisfarne, at that time the only prelate in the vast kingdom of Northumbria. He, with all his Celtic clergy, attended the council, as well as Cedd, a monk of Lindisfarne, who had become Bishop of the East Saxons, among whom he had re-established the episcopal see of London, after the expulsion of the Romish missionaries. Bishop Cedd, Anglo-Saxon by birth, but educated in Ireland before he became a monk in the Hiberno- Scottish monastery of Lindisfarne, was to act as interpreter in the conference between the Celts on one side and those who spoke only Latin or English on the other, and he acquitted himself of these functions with a most watchful impartiality.

The side opposed to the Celts had at its head the young king Alchfrid and the Bishop Agilbert; the latter, though educated in Ireland, not having hesitated to embrace the cause of those Roman customs which prevailed in France, his native country. Wilfrid was the soul of the discussion he had so warmly desired, and its special orator : he appeared in the arena in all the glow of youth and talent, but supported by two venerable representatives of Roman missions to England — the priest Romanus, who had accompanied the queen from Canterbury ; and James, the aged, courageous, and modest deacon, sole relic and sole surviving witness of the first conversion of Northumbria under the father of Eanfleda, who had remained alone, after the flight of St. Paulinus, for nearly forty years, evangelising Northumbria and observing Easter according to the Roman custom, with all those whom he had preserved or restored to the faith.

All being assembled, perhaps in one of the halls of the great monastery of St. Hilda, but more likely, from the great numbers, in the open air on the green platform which then, as now, surmounted the abrupt cliffs of Whitby, and from whence the eye wanders far over those waves which bore the Saxons to the shores of Great Britain ; King Oswy opened the proceedings by saying that as they all served the same God and hoped for the same heaven, it was advisable that they should follow the same rule of life and the same observance of the holy sacraments, and that it would therefore be well to examine which was the true tradition they ought to follow. He then commanded his bishop, Colman, to speak first, to explain his ritual, and to justify its origin. "I have," said the Bishop of Lindisfarne, "received the Paschal usage which I follow from my predecessors who placed me here as bishop; all our fathers have observed the same custom ; these fathers and their predecessors, evidently inspired by the Holy Ghost, as was Columba of the Cell, followed the example of John the apostle and evangelist, who was called the friend of our Lord. We keep Easter as he did, as did Polycarp and all his disciples of old. In reverence for our ancestors we dare not, and we will not, change."

Then the king gave leave to Agilbert to speak, that he might describe the reasons of his different observance ; but the poor bishop, remembering that he had lost his vast diocese of Wessex through his imperfect knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, begged that his disciple Wilfrid might be allowed to speak in his place. "We think precisely alike," said Agilbert, "but he can better express our thoughts in English, than I could through an interpreter." Then Wilfrid began, "We keep Easter as we have seen it kept by all Christians at Rome, where the blessed apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, lived, taught, suffered, and are buried. We have seen the same rule observed in Italy and in Gaul, where we have studied ; we know that it is so in Africa, in Asia, in Egypt, in Greece, and throughout Christendom, in spite of all difference of language and of country. It is only the Picts and Britons who, occupying the two most remote islands of the ocean, nay, but a part even of those islands, foolishly persist in contradicting all the rest of the world."

Colman replied, "It is strange that you speak of our traditions as absurd, when we only follow the example of the great apostle who was thought worthy to lay his head upon the breast of our Saviour, and whom the whole world has judged to be so wise." The dialogue then continued in a less excited manner. In this discussion the bishop displayed the natural haughtiness of his race, and the abbot that persuasive eloquence already so dear to the Anglo-Saxons, who were charmed to hear their own barbarous language spoken perfectly by a man cultivated and formed by the learning of Italy and Gaul. As for the question itself, both had recourse to extremely poor arguments. Wilfrid quoted Scripture, where there is not a single word as to the Paschal cycle, and the decretals of the universal Church, of which only one relates to the matter, that of the Council of Nice, which contents itself with the decision that Easter should always be celebrated on Sunday, a particular which the Irish observed equally with the Romans. Instead of limiting himself to the statement that the rules established at Rome had been and ought to be adopted everywhere, he also affirmed that St. Peter had established the custom then followed at Rome, as if that custom had been always the same, and had not, in fact, been changed nearly a century before, to be brought into accordance with the best astronomical calculations. But Bishop Colman either knew nothing or understood nothing of this change, and was not able to cite it against his adversary. He perpetually recurred to the examples of St. John and the fathers of the Celtic Church, and with more vehemence still quoted Columba, whose life, so minutely described by the contemporaries of this very council of Whitby, contains no trace of peculiar attachment to the Celtic Easter, but shows that he merely followed with simplicity the ancient usage transmitted by St. Patrick to the Irish monks. Nothing gives us reason to suppose that the great abbot of Iona, if once informed of the universal prevalence of the Eoinan custom, would have been opposed to it.

"Can we admit," said Bishop Colman, "that our most venerable father Columba, and his successors, men beloved of God, have acted contrary to the Divine Word? Many of them have given proof of their sanctity by miracles; and as for me, who believe in that sanctity, I choose to follow for ever their teaching and their example." Here Wilfrid had the better of the argument. "As to your father Columba and his disciples, with their miracles, I might answer that, at the day of judgement, many will say to our Lord, that they have done miracles in His name, and He will answer that He never knew them. But God keep me from speaking thus of your father! it is better, when one is ignorant, to

believe good than evil. I do not therefore deny that they were servants of God, and beloved by Him : no doubt they loved Him in their rustic simplicity, with the most pious intentions. I do not think there was much harm in their observance of Easter, because no one had told them of more perfect rules. If a Catholic calculator had been presented to them, I believe they would have followed his counsel as they followed the commandments of God which they knew. But as for you, without doubt you sin, if, after having heard the decretals of the Apostolic See, and even of the universal Church, confirmed by Holy Scripture, you still despise them. Even admitting the sanctity of your fathers, how can you prefer, to the Church spread over the whole earth, this handful of saints in one corner of a remote island? Finally, for your Columba (and I would willingly say our Columba, so far as he was the servant of Christ), however holy or powerful by his virtues he may have been, can we place him before the chief of the apostles, to whom our Lord Himself said — 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven'?"

The Saxon king then addressed his bishop, "Is it true, Colman, that these words were said by our Lord to St. Peter?" "It is true, king," was the answer. "Can you then," rejoined the king, "show me a similar authority given to your Columba?" "No," said the bishop. "You are then," continued the king, both agreed that the keys of heaven were given to Peter by our Lord?" "Yes," answered the two adversaries together. "Then," said the king, "I say, like you, that he is the porter of heaven, and that I will not oppose him, but, on the contrary, obey him in all things, lest, when I reach the doors of the celestial kingdom, there be no one to open them for me if I am the adversary of him who carries the keys. In all my life I will neither do nor approve anything or any person that may be contrary to him."

The whole assembly approved this conclusion of the king by vote, holding up their hands, both the nobles who were seated, and the freemen who stood round, and all decided to adopt the Roman custom. The sitting ended without any discussion of the other contested points, which, no doubt, were regarded as settled by the first decision. Of the three bishops who had taken part in the deliberation, Agilbert, ex-Bishop of the Western Saxons, embarked for his own country, and Cedd, Bishop of the East Saxons, who had acted as interpreter to the two adverse parties, renounced the customs of Lindisfarne, in which he had been educated, and returned to his diocese of London to spread the Roman usages there. But Colman, Bishop of the Northern Anglo-Saxons, refused to recognise the decision of the council. He could not resign himself to see his doctrine despised, and his spiritual ancestors depreciated ; he feared, also, the anger of his countrymen, who would not have pardoned his defection. Notwithstanding the affection and veneration shown for him by King Oswy, he determined to abandon his diocese. Accordingly, taking with him all the Lindisfarne monks of Scottish origin, who would neither give up the Celtic Easter nor shave their heads in Roman fashion, he left Northumbria for ever, and went to Iona to consult the fathers of the order, or family of St. Columba. He carried with him the bones of his predecessor St. Aidan, the founder of Lindisfarne, and first Celtic evangelist of Northumbria, as if the ungrateful land had become unworthy to possess these relics of a betrayed saint, and witnesses of a despised apostleship. Undoubtedly this holy bishop, whose virtues, like those of his predecessors,

draw, in this supreme hour, an eloquent and generous homage from the Venerable Bede, would have done better to have yielded and remained in his diocese conforming to the customs of Rome. But what heart is so cold as not to understand, to sympathise, and to journey with him along the Northumbrian coast and over the Scottish mountains, where, bearing homewards the bones of his father, the proud but vanquished spirit returned to his northern mists, and buried in the sacred isle of Iona his defeat and his unconquerable fidelity to the traditions of his race?

## CHAPTER II

### WILFRID, BISHOP OF YORK, AND THE GREEK MONK THEODORE, PRIMATE OF ENGLAND

It was not only the priests of Celtic origin, Irish or Scotch, who refused to sanction by their presence the introduction of Roman practices at Lindisfarne; Colman was also accompanied by thirty Anglo-Saxon monks, perfectly versed in the study and offices of monastic life, who preferred the Celtic observances to those of Rome. After a short sojourn at Iona, he led these emigrants to his native country, and established himself with them in a desert island on the west coast of Ireland called Innisbowen, or the Isle of the White Heifer, a name it still retains. But when confined in this islet, beaten by the waves of the great ocean, the Anglo-Saxons, whose devotion to Celtic tradition had been strong enough to sever them from their country, were unable to live amicably with the Irish, their former companions at Lindisfarne. They quarrelled about a purely material matter, which manifests even thus early the natural incompatibility of the two races who were destined afterwards upon Irish soil to fight more cruel battles. The Irish monks wandered all the summer through about their favourite spots, probably in many instances their native places ; but on their return in winter they expected to share the harvest which their English brethren had painfully cultivated and gathered in. Colman was obliged to separate them; leaving the Irish in their island, he installed the Anglo-Saxons in a monastery which, under the name of Mayo, flourished greatly, and which a century later still continued to be occupied by English monks, fervent and laborious, who had, however, returned from Celtic usages to the orthodox rule, and probably to Benedictine discipline, which Wilfrid had established at the same time as he introduced conformity to the usages of Rome.

Colman, however, while withdrawing from Lindisfarne all his Celtic countrymen, and those of the Anglo-Saxons who sympathised with them, had no intention of handing over definitely to the enemy the sacred isle in which his predecessors had delighted to



recognise a new Iona. Before setting out on his voluntary exile, he begged his friend King Oswy to allow the remaining monks at Lindisfarne to take for their superior that Eata whom Aidan had chosen among his twelve first Northumbrian disciples, and who, out of love to Celtic traditions, had given up the monastery at Ripon, in which Wilfrid succeeded him, and had again become abbot of Melrose — that is to say, of the novitiate establishment of the Celtic monks in Northumbria. The king consented, and the confidant and friend of Colman became superior of Lindisfarne, with the title of prior, but the full authority of an abbot.

After this it became necessary to proceed immediately to replace Colman as Bishop of all Northumbria. His successor was one of his own countrymen, who resided in the diocese, and, indeed, during the pontificate of Colman, had been famed for his virtues and apostolical activity. This monk, named Tuda, had been educated in the monasteries of southern Ireland ; he had already conformed to the Roman ritual in the questions of the celebration of Easter and the form of the tonsure — these customs having been, it is said, adopted thirty years before by the district of Ireland to which he belonged. It was only, therefore, by his Celtic origin that he was attached to the ancient traditions of the diocese. He died some months afterwards of a terrible pestilence, which in this year, 664, made cruel ravages in the British Isles. He was the last of the Celtic bishops of Northumbria.

Before his death, however, there occurred a great religious and national solemnity, at which he was present, and which was celebrated in this same critical year of 664, so decisive, under more than one aspect, for England. This solemnity seems to have united in sincere and unanimous enthusiasm all the principal personages of the most important states of the Heptarchy, and it exhibits, in a special degree, the increasing ascendancy of that Roman influence of which Wilfrid was henceforward the victorious champion. Its object was the dedication of a new monastery in Mercia, the kingdom which had been so long the stronghold of Saxon paganism and the seat of an obstinate resistance to the missionary spirit of Northumbria.

By one of those transformations so frequent among the Germanic races at the period of their entrance into the Christian life, all the descendants of the fierce Penda, the most obstinate and invincible of pagans, were destined to become intrepid champions of Christianity, or models of monastic life. Of his eight children who are known to us, three sons who reigned successively distinguished themselves by their religious zeal, the third becoming a monk after a reign of thirty years ; while three daughters, two of whom are counted among the saints of the English calendar, ended their lives in the cloister. The eldest son, Peada, who was son-in-law of Oswy, brother-in-law and friend of Alchfrid, and the earliest Christian of Mercia, continued to reign over one part of the kingdom, even after the defeat and death of his father, who perished under the avenging sword of Oswy. The father-in-law and son-in-law, united more closely by their faith than the father and son had been by the ties of blood, determined to consecrate their alliance by founding a great monastery in honour of God and St. Peter, and chose for this purpose a retired situation in the east of Mercia. Such was the origin of the abbey of Peterborough, the burgh or castle of St. Peter, the most ancient of those famous houses destined to rise successively in the midst of the vast fens which

formed a sort of natural frontier between the eastern and central Saxons, between Mercia and East Anglia.

Peada died a violent death when the work was but beginning. But it was taken up, and continued by his young brother Wulphere, whom the Mercians, in revolt from Northumbrian domination, had chosen for their chief, who had been, like his elder brother, baptized by the second Celtic Bishop of Lindisfarne, and who always showed an ardent zeal for the extension and consolidation of Christianity in his kingdom. His younger brothers and his two sisters, one of them the wife of the young King Alchfrid of Northumbria, the friend of Peada and Wilfrid, and all the “witan” — that is to say, the wise men and nobles, whether lay or ecclesiastical, of his public council — encouraged him to the utmost in finishing the first great monastic foundation in their vast territory.

The abbot appointed from the beginning of the work was a monk named Sexwulf, descended from a great and noble family, devoted to the service of God, and much beloved by the Mercian Saxons. King Wulphere enjoined him to spare nothing to complete his brother's work magnificently, promising to be answerable for all the expense.

When the building was finished the king of Mercia invited, for the day of consecration, the king of Northumbria, who was his godfather, although he had become his political adversary, and whose dignity of Bretwalda entitled him to preside at the grand solemnities of the Saxon people ; and with him the two kings of the neighbouring states of Essex and East Anglia, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Rochester, who were the first Anglo-Saxon monks raised to the episcopate; Wini, who had taken the place of Agilbert as Bishop of the Saxons of the West ; the two bishops of Mercia and Northumbria, both educated in Celtic monasteries ; and, last of all, Wilfrid, on whom all eyes had been turned by his late victories. Around these distinguished guests, both lay and ecclesiastical, were ranged all the earls and thanes, or great landed proprietors of the kingdom. It was therefore really a great political assembly as well as a religious one. When the archbishop had ended the ceremony of dedication, and consecrated the monastery to St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Andrew, King Wulphere, placing himself in the midst of his family and his nobles, spoke thus : — "Thanks be to the most high and almighty God for the good deed which I do today in honour of Christ and St. Peter! All, as many as are here present, be witnesses and sureties of the donation which I make to St. Peter, to the abbot Sexwulf and his monks, of the land and water, the fens and brooks here mentioned. It is a trifling gift; but I will that they hold and possess it so royally and freely that no impost may be levied upon it, and that the monastery may be subject to no other power on earth, except the Holy See of Rome, for it is hither that those of us who cannot go to Rome will come to seek and to visit St. Peter. I implore you, my brother, and you, my sisters, be witnesses to this for the good of your souls, and sign it with your hands. I implore those who shall succeed me, whether my sons, my brothers, or others, to maintain this donation, as they wish to obtain eternal life, and to escape eternal torment. Whoever shall take away from it, or add to it, may the keeper of the celestial gates take away from, or add to, his part in heaven." The four kings, the five bishops, the two brothers and two sisters of the king, the earls and lords, successively signed the act of donation with the sign of the cross, repeating this formula, "I confirm it by my mouth and by the cross of Christ." The

document which contained the donation having been drawn up in accordance with the royal speech, the four kings and two princesses signed it first, then the bishops, and after them Wilfrid, who describes himself on this occasion as a "priest, servant of the Churches, and bearer of the Gospel among the nations."

Immediately following upon these events, came a terrible pestilence, which ravaged England, and chose its most illustrious victims among those prelates of whom we have been speaking. It carried off first Bishop Cedda, who had acted as interpreter at Whitby, and his thirty friends, of whose touching death at Lastingham we have already heard ; and after him the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Northumbria, both of whom had signed the deed of dedication of the new monastery of St. Peter. It became necessary, therefore, to provide for the see which the death of Tuda had left vacant, that of Northumbria, the largest and most important of all the English bishoprics. The Roman party believed itself so strong as to be able to disregard the tradition, not yet very venerable, which made that great see the right of the Celtic monks. They determined to go further back, to the recollections of the first mission sent from Rome, which, passing by Canterbury, was established at York by the Benedictine Paulinus. Besides this, the young king, Alchfrid, was impatient to see his friend Wilfrid master of spiritual authority in the kingdom which had been brought back by him to unity with Rome. He obtained the consent of his father, the Bretwalda Oswy, and both together reassembled the *Witenagemot*, to proceed to the election of a bishop, whose determination it should be to make Roman usages the law of his conduct. The Northumbrian thanes, consulted by the two kings, replied with one voice that no one in the whole country could be more worthy of the episcopate than Wilfrid, who was already priest and abbot. He himself was present at the assembly, and wished at first to decline the election. But he was commanded in the name of the Lord, and on the part of the kings and people of Northumbria, to submit his will to their unanimous choice.

This was a great victory for the Roman observances. It was never forgiven by the vanquished, and Wilfrid had to bear the penalty during all the remainder of his life. The Northumbrian dissenters submitted to the decision of Whitby, but they retained an implacable antipathy to the conqueror. The great abbess Hilda, the Celtic monks of Lindisfarne, all those who remained faithful to the sacred memory of St. Aidan, and to that still more venerated, of Columba, appeared to have taken against Wilfrid the oath of Hannibal. Reduced to powerlessness on the Paschal question, in respect to which they could not struggle against Rome with the whole Church at her back, they regained the advantage when only the person of Wilfrid was concerned, who, dear as he was to the king's son, was perhaps for that very reason less liked by Oswy, who, though he adopted the Roman Easter, could not destroy all traces of attachment to the ideas and customs of his youth.

Wilfrid, meantime, chose this occasion to exhibit, yet more than at Whitby, the bigoted and exclusive side of his character. He would not be consecrated by any of the bishops of his own country, not even by the metropolitan of Canterbury. Although they were all in communion with the Holy See, and though many of them are still venerated as saints, he took upon himself, on his own authority, to class them with schismatics. "My lord kings," he said, "I must first of all consider the best means of reaching the episcopate according to your election, without exposing myself to the reproaches of true

Catholics. There are in this island many bishops whom it is not my business to accuse, but they have ordained Britons and Scots whom the Apostolic See has not received into communion, because it does not receive those that hold communion with schismatics. I therefore humbly beseech you to send me into Gaul, where there are many Catholic bishops, so that I may receive the episcopal character without opposition to the Holy See." He thus confounded together the whole Celtic clergy of Great Britain and Ireland as schismatics, though his apologists have not left us the least trace of any papal decision which authorised him in taking this attitude. However, the two kings made no objection, but, on the contrary, gave him a numerous train and enough money to present himself to the Franks with the pomp he loved, and which suited the bishop of a great kingdom. He thus crossed the sea and went to Compiègne to seek his friend Agilbert, formerly Bishop of the West Saxons, who had just been made Bishop of Paris. Agilbert received him with all honour as a confessor of the faith. Wilfrid was consecrated with the greatest solemnity, and with the assistance of twelve other bishops. He was carried through the church, in the midst of the crowd, on a golden throne, by the hands of bishops, who chanted hymns, and who were alone admitted to the honour of supporting his throne. He was instituted bishop, not of Lindisfarne, like his four predecessors, but of York, like Paulinus, the first bishop sent from Canterbury and from Eome, as if by this means to efface all trace of the Celtic mission in Northumbria.

His stay in France was probably too much prolonged, and his return was not without disaster. While he was crossing the Channel, and the clergy who accompanied him, seated on deck, replaced the ordinary songs of the sailors by chanted psalms, a fearful storm arose, by which they were wrecked on the coast of Sussex — the smallest kingdom of the Heptarchy, inhabited, as its name indicates, by the Southern Saxons. The ebbing tide having left the ship aground, the people in the neighbourhood made a rush to avail themselves of that right to wreck and derelict always so dear to maritime populations, and which has been too long maintained even among the most Catholic, as in our own Bretagne. As the Southern Saxons were still pagans, we can scarcely admit, with one of Wilfrid's biographers, that they were excited against him by the malice of Celtic Christianity ; but they did not the less manifest their intention of taking possession of the vessel, and giving the shipwrecked strangers their choice between death and slavery. Wilfrid tried to pacify them, offering all he possessed for the liberty of himself and his followers. But the pagans were excited by one of their priests, who, standing on the cliffs, cursed, like Balaam, the people of God, and looked as if he meant to destroy them by sorcery. One of Wilfrid's followers, armed, like David, with a sling, flung a stone at the heathen pontiff, whose skull it shattered ; and his corpse fell upon the sands. At this sight the rage of the savages redoubled, and they prepared to take the vessel by storm. Wilfrid's Northumbrians, one hundred and twenty in number, resolved to defend themselves. They swore, according to Saxon custom, not to abandon each other, and to think of no alternative save a glorious death or victory. Wilfrid and his priests, kneeling on the deck, prayed while the others fought. Three times the ferocious wreckers mounted to the assault, and three times they were repulsed. They were preparing for a fourth attack, under the command of their king, who had been attracted by the hope of booty, when the tide suddenly turned, lifted the stranded vessel, and saved the travellers from their enemies. They landed peaceably at Sandwich, on the

same Kentish coast where Augustin and his companions had for the first time trodden the coast of England.

A painful surprise awaited them. During the prolonged absence of Wilfrid the mind of Oswy had changed. The victory of Whitby, like all other victories, was less complete than it at first seemed to be. The Celtic party, apparently destroyed by the unanimous vote of the assembly, had now revived, and regained its credit with the Bretwalda. The return of Oswy to his former predilections for the Celtic Church, in which he had been baptized and brought up, may probably be ascribed to the influence of the holy abbess Hilda of Whitby, princess of the Northumbrian blood-royal, to whom the king had confided his daughter when consecrating her to God as the price of his victory over the Mercians and the completed liberation of his country. As long as she lived Hilda remained faithful to the Celtic traditions, and her opposition to Wilfrid never relaxed. It has also been supposed that Oswy had begun to be jealous of his son Alchfrid, and of the influence procured for him with the Roman party by his close alliance with Wilfrid, although it was Oswy himself who had associated his son with him in the royalty, and although his position as Bretwalda or suzerain of the Anglo-Saxon Confederation might have reassured him on that score. But the confidant and biographer of Wilfrid affirms that the Celts (whom he most unjustly styles quartodecimans), with the aid of the devil, persuaded the king to take advantage of the absence of Wilfrid to appoint one of their party Bishop of York in his place.

It is unanimously allowed that the man whom Oswy substituted for Wilfrid was a saint. His name was Ceadda, a monk of Anglo-Saxon birth, but who had been a disciple of St. Aidan. He was a brother of Bishop Cedd or Cedda, who had acted as interpreter at Whitby, and whose death, followed by that of his thirty friends, we have already mentioned. Ceadda had succeeded his brother as abbot of Lastingham, the monastery which was, after Lindisfarne, the principal seat of the Celtic spirit in Northumbria, It was Oswy's desire, however, that the new bishop should be consecrated, not by the prelates of the Celtic ritual, but at Canterbury by the Saxon metropolitan, who had always preserved a good understanding with the people of the north. But when Ceadda arrived at Canterbury he found that the terrible pestilence of 664 had carried off the archbishop, whose successor was not yet appointed. He then went to the land of the Eastern Saxons to obtain consecration from Wini, of whom we have heard at Whitby and Peterborough, but who also appears to have been moved by a reactionary impulse against the vote of the Council, since he called to his aid, in the consecration of Ceadda, two British bishops who had remained faithful to the Paschal usage of the Celts. On his return to Northumbria, Ceadda peaceably took possession of his diocese, and displayed there the virtues which have for so long made his name popular among the English. Well versed in Holy Scripture, he drew from it rules of conduct which he never disregarded. His humility, his sincerity, the purity of his life, his love for study, excited the admiration of the Northumbrian people, to whose evangelisation he devoted himself, visiting the cities, villages, and castles, nay, even the most retired hamlets, not on horseback, according to the favourite custom of the Saxons, but on foot, like the apostles, and like his master and predecessor St. Aidan.

It does not appear, however, that Ceadda or any other of the Celtic adversaries of Wilfrid attempted to reverse the decision of the Council of Whitby, or to maintain or



reestablish either the Celtic observance of Easter or the tonsure from ear to ear. It is probable that the opposition which arose against Wilfrid, continually increasing in violence, was directed less against Roman doctrines or practices than against himself personally. His precocious influence, and still more his violent proceedings against the Irish and their disciples, roused the popular dislike ; for it is proved that, wherever he had the power, he allowed the Celts only the choice of giving up their own customs or returning to their native country.

Thus dispossessed of his see, Wilfrid regained all his influence by the moderation and dignity of his conduct. He was only thirty years of age. His youth might have excused some irritation, some warmth easy to be understood in the presence of so manifest an injustice. But far from yielding to this, he displayed the prudence and mature mind of a statesman, together with the humility and charity of a saint. He, so rigid an observer of the canon law, so scrupulous with regard to liturgical irregularities, had here to oppose an inexcusable abuse of power, a direct violation of the laws of the Church — he had to vindicate an evident right, solemnly conferred by the Northumbrian king and nation, and solemnly consecrated by the Church. And yet he preferred to be silent, to withdraw himself, and to trust to the justice of God and of the future. Thus the saint begins to be visible in his character ; and it must not be forgotten, as an additional claim upon our interest, that the pious usurper of the see was himself already accounted a saint, and placed by public veneration in the high rank which he has for nine hundred years maintained in the regard of English Catholics.

Wilfrid, whose episcopal character no one could despise, but who had no longer a diocese, retired calmly, and even joyfully, to the monastery of Ripon, which he held by the generosity of the young King Alchfrid, and there lived in study and seclusion. It may be supposed that his friend Alchfrid went thither to console him — if, indeed, he were living at the time of Wilfrid's return ; for from that moment he disappears from history, though there is no record of his death. But Wilfrid was not long permitted to remain in his monastery. Wulphere, king of Mercia, the founder of Peterborough, invited him to his kingdom, where at that time there was no bishop.

Although this kingdom had been converted and governed by Celtic monks, Wulphere was naturally drawn to favour the champion of the Roman ritual, by his marriage with Ermenilda, daughter of the king of Kent, and, consequently, sprung from that race which first received the teachings of Rome from the lips of St. Augustin. She was niece of Eanfleda, queen of Northumbria, who had been the first protectress of Wilfrid, and who had carried back from her exile and education at Canterbury so faithful an attachment to the Roman customs. King Wulphere, Queen Ermenilda, and the Abbot Wilfrid, therefore laboured together to extend and consolidate the Christian faith, in that vast kingdom of Mercia, which already began to rival Northumbria in importance.

Thanks to the great territorial donations made to him by the king, Wilfrid was able to found several monasteries, in one of which he was destined to end his life. He thus lent powerful aid in achieving the happy results which were chiefly due to Queen Ermenilda. This gentle and noble woman, who, like so many other princesses of the race of Hengist, ended her days in the cloister, and is inscribed in the list of saints, had

been chosen by God to complete the transformation into Christians of those terrible Mercians, who, more than all the other Anglo-Saxons, had remained faithful to their national paganism, and had been so long the terror of the new-born Christianity of England. She succeeded as much by her bounties and good example, as by her energetic perseverance. The unwearied activity of her self-devotion was only equalled by her angelic sweetness. She never ceased her exertions until, after a reign of seventeen years with Wulphere, idolatry had completely disappeared from Mercia. Then, on the death of her husband, she entered the monastery, where her mother awaited her, and which had been founded by her aunt.

In order to understand clearly the aspect of these earliest ages of the political and religious history of England, it is needful to remember the ties of blood which united all the kings and princesses of different dynasties who governed the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and claimed their descent from Odin. This relationship frequently serves to guide us through the maze of incidents which favoured or retarded the preaching of the Gospel. Thus the gentle and noble Ermenilda was the sister of Egbert, king of Kent, who, faithful, like her, to the traditions of his family, always showed himself full of zeal for religion such as Augustin had preached it to his ancestor Ethelbert, and full of affection for Wilfrid. Accordingly, after the death of Augustin's fifth successor, the metropolitan see having remained vacant for some years, Egbert invited the abbot of Eipon to pre- side over the spiritual government of his kingdom, and to provide for the ordinations.

Wilfrid exercised this provisional authority for three years ; dividing his time between his Northumbrian monastery and the diocese of Canterbury, where he made many friends, whose aid he secured for the benefit of his abbey of Ripon. One of his first acts was to bring to Ripon two monks of the monastery of St. Augustin, good musicians, who introduced among the Anglo-Saxons the Gregorian Chant, always used at Canterbury ; and it is to one of these, named Hedd, or Eddi, that we owe the extremely valuable and curious biography of his bishop. With these singers Wilfrid brought also masons, or rather architects, and other artists or workmen, all, no doubt, monks of the same monastery, whose talents he proposed to employ in the great building of which he already dreamed. Finally he brought from the first sanctuary created by the Benedictines in England, a gift yet more precious and more fruitful than music or architecture, the rule of St. Benedict, which no one had hitherto attempted to introduce into the Northumbrian monasteries. Wilfrid constituted himself its ardent and zealous missionary, advancing its adoption side by side with that of the Roman tonsure, the exact observance of Easter, and the harmonious and alternate chanting of the liturgy. He succeeded thoroughly; for it is to him and to him alone that we must attribute the gradual but rapid substitution of the Benedictine rule for Celtic traditions in the great and numerous communities which the sons of St. Columba had created in the north of England. It has been already made apparent in the life of St. Columba, that there was no fundamental difference between monastic life as regulated by the great legislator of Monte Cassino, and that practised at Iona and in the other communities of Ireland and Great Britain. The only difference that can be indicated as distinctly characteristic of monastic life among the Celts, is a certain increased austerity in fasts and other mortifications, and a more decided application to the copying of manuscripts. But in the

opinion of Wilfrid, as in the general interest of the Church, it was of great consequence that the powerful regular army of Saxon Christianity should march under the same flag, and answer to the same watchword. The watchword and the flag had been brought from Rome by the Benedictine missionaries of Mont-Coelius, and confided to the two great monastic foundations of Canterbury, from whence Wilfrid brought them to make of them the supreme, and henceforward ineffaceable, characteristics of English ecclesiastical organisation.

However, the aspect of affairs was about to undergo another change. It was needful to find a successor for Archbishop Deusdedit. For this purpose, the king of Northumbria, Oswy, made use of the superior authority in ecclesiastical affairs which seems to have been accorded to the Bretwalda ; he showed, at the same time, that though the Celtic party, by appealing to the recollections of his youth, had been able to persuade him to make Wilfrid the victim of an unjust exclusion, he remained, nevertheless, sincerely submissive to the primacy of the Holy See, which he had so solemnly recognised at Whitby. After consulting with the young King Egbert of Kent and the chiefs of the Anglo-Saxon clergy, he appointed a monk of Canterbury, named Wighard, universally known to be worthy of the episcopate, a Saxon by birth, but trained in the school of the first missionaries sent from Rome by St. Gregory, and thus uniting all the conditions necessary to satisfy at once the exigencies of the national spirit and those of the most severe orthodoxy. Then, still acting in conjunction with the king of Kent, he did what had never before been done by an English king, nor, indeed, so far as I know, by the king of any newly converted nation ; he sent the arch-bishop-elect to Rome to be consecrated by the Pope, so that he might be able to ordain perfectly orthodox bishops in all the churches of England.

Wighard had but just arrived at Rome, when he died there with nearly all his attendants. The two kings then resolved to leave to the Pope the choice of the new metropolitan of England.

But great as was Oswy's zeal and humility in yielding to Roman supremacy, the want of eagerness displayed by Vitalien, who was then Pope, in using the power thus given up to him, was equally remarkable. He replied to Oswy that he had not yet been able to find a person suited for so distant a mission, but promised to make further attempts to find one, and in the meantime congratulated the king on his faith, exhorting him to continue to conform, whether with regard to Easter, or to any other question, to the traditions of the Apostles Peter and Paul, whom God had given to the world as two great lights, to enlighten every day the hearts of the faithful by their doctrine ; and exhorted him to complete the work of the conversion and union of the whole island in the same apostolic faith. He sent him, at the same time, some relics of different martyrs, and a cross containing a portion of the chains of St. Peter for Queen Eanfleda, the friend of Wilfrid. "Your wife," said the Pope, "is our spiritual daughter ; her virtues and good works are our joy, and that of all the Roman Church, and they bloom before God like the perfumed flowers of spring."

After a new and long search the Pope fixed his choice on Adrian, an African by birth, and abbot of a monastery near Naples, equally versed in ecclesiastical and monastic discipline, and in the knowledge of Greek and Latin. Adrian made no

objection either to the distance or to his ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon language, but he declared himself unworthy of the episcopate, and pointed out to the Pope a monk whose age and qualifications accorded better with this difficult mission. This was a monk named Andrew, attached to a nunnery in Italy, and who was judged worthy to be chosen ; but his bodily infirmities obliged him to give up the appointment. Then Adrian, again urged by the Pope, proposed to him another of his friends, a Greek monk named Theodore, born, like St. Paul, at Tarsus, but then living at Rome, of good life and morals, of a knowledge so profound and various, that he was surnamed the Philosopher, and already of a venerable age, being sixty-six years old. This proposition was accepted by the Pope, but with the condition that the Abbot Adrian should accompany his friend to England, to watch over his proceedings, that nothing contrary to the orthodox faith might be introduced into the Church, as was too often done by the Greeks. This precaution was justified by the cruel and sanguinary dissensions which then disturbed the Eastern Church, occasioned by the heresy of the Monotheists, and the constant interference of the Byzantine emperors in questions of faith. The matter being thus arranged, Theodore, who had his head entirely shaved, after the custom of the Eastern monks, was obliged to defer his journey for four months, that his hair might grow, before he could receive the crown-shaped tonsure of the West. As soon as his hair had been properly shaved, he was consecrated by the Pope, and started with the Abbot Adrian for England.

But to the Asiatic and the African, so strangely chosen to rule the Anglo-Saxon Church, and who so well fulfilled their task, the Pope wisely determined to add a third, whose help, especially at the commencement of their mission, would be indispensable to them. This was the young Northumbrian noble, Benedict Biscop, whom we have seen start from England to make his pilgrimage to Rome with Wilfrid, parting from him at Lyons. After his first journey, Benedict returned to England, and gave his countrymen an ecstatic account of all that he had seen at Rome, every recollection of which he cherished. These recollections drew him a second time to Rome, where, after new studies and new enjoyments, he received the tonsure, and embraced a monastic life at the great sanctuary of Lerins, where Abbot Aygulphe had just introduced the Benedictine rule. After remaining two years in this still venerated isle, he was unable to resist his desire of returning to Rome out of devotion to St. Peter. He arrived there for the third time in a trading-vessel, and remained until Pope Vitalien commanded him to give up this pilgrimage in order to accomplish a much more meritorious one by returning to his own country as guide and interpreter to the new archbishop. Benedict obeyed ; and seventy years after the mission of St. Augustin, the three envoys started for England to take possession of it, as it were, a second time, in the name of the Church of Rome.

But their journey was not without hindrance; it took them more than a year to go from Rome to Canterbury. Instead of finding in France, as Augustin had done, the generous assistance of a queen like Brunehilde, the new missionaries became the prey of the tyrant Ebroin, mayor of the palace, the first of those great statesmen, too numerous in our history, whom posterity has so meanly admired or absolved, and who, to the misfortune of our country, sought the triumph of their personal greatness only in the universal abasement and servitude of others. The presence of these three personages,

a Greek, an African, and an Anglo-Saxon, all bearing recommendations from the Pope, appeared suspicious to the all-powerful minister. The Byzantine emperor, Constantine II, at that time still sovereign of Rome, which he had lately visited and pillaged, but where he talked of re-establishing the seat of empire, had excited the anxiety of Ebroin, who imagined that the Papal messengers might be charged with the management of some plot between the Emperor and the Anglo-Saxon kings against the Frankish kingdom of Neustria and Burgundy, of which he regarded himself as chief. The Abbot Adrian appeared to him the most dangerous, and he therefore detained him a prisoner for two years after the release of the others. Meanwhile, thanks to the direct intervention of King Egbert, the Archbishop Theodore was enabled to reach England, and solemnly take possession of his see. His first act was to confide to his pious companion, Benedict Biscop, the government of that great abbey near Canterbury which contained the sepulchres of the archbishops and kings, and which had been dedicated by St. Augustin to St. Peter, though it is now only known by the name of the Apostle of England. Benedict remained there as superior until the arrival of Adrian, to whom it was transferred by the new archbishop, according to the Pope's commands that the African abbot and the monks who accompanied him should be established in his diocese.

The arrival of St. Theodore marks a new era in the history of the Anglo-Saxons.

There must have been, indeed, a stern courage and a holy ambition in this grand old man to induce him, at sixty-seven years of age, to undertake so laborious a task as that of the spiritual government of England. The history of the Church presents few spectacles more imposing and more comforting than that of this Greek of Asia Minor, a countryman of St. Paul, a mitred philosopher and almost septuagenarian monk, journeying from the shores of the East to train a young nation of the West — disciplining, calming, and guiding all those discordant elements, the different races, rival dynasties, and new-born forces, whose union was destined to constitute one of the greatest nations of the earth.

Thanks to the assistance of the powerful king of Northumbria, the new Archbishop of Canterbury found himself invested, for the first time, with authority recognised by all the Anglo-Saxons. This supremacy, which the intelligent desire of the Bretwalda Oswy for union with Rome enabled him to exercise, was solemnly recognised by Pope Vitalien, who renewed in his favour all the prerogatives conferred by Gregory the Great on Augustin and the see of Canterbury, omitting all mention of the second see which Gregory had wished to establish at York. This supreme authority over all the Churches of Great Britain, whatever their antiquity or origin, had been, in the hands of Augustin and his successors, only a title and a right ; in those of the venerable Greek monk, it now became, for the first time, a powerful and incontestable reality.

The first use which he made of this supremacy was to repair the injustice of which Wilfrid had been the victim. Oswy seems to have made no opposition ; he yielded to the apostolic authority, whose decrees Theodore made known to him. He thus crowned his reign by an act of reparation and of repentance, in allowing the man whom he had unjustly expelled to be re-established in the episcopal see of the capital of his kingdom. The humble and pious Ceadda, who, by some strange forgetfulness of duty, had consented to replace Wilfrid, made no opposition to the application of canon law, which



deprived him of his usurped see. He said to the Archbishop, "If you are certain that my episcopate is not legitimate, I will abdicate it voluntarily; I have never thought myself worthy of it, and only accepted it in obedience." Upon which, as Wilfrid, when dispossessed by him, retired to the monastery of Ripon, he himself returned to that of Lastingham, founded by his brother, from whence he had been taken to be made bishop. He lived for some time peacefully in this retreat. But the generous Wilfrid, appreciating the virtues of the holy intruder, whose diocese he had continued to inhabit, was determined to bring them back again to the light. The bishopric of the kingdom of Mercia having become vacant, he persuaded his faithful friend Wulphere to summon Ceadda thither, and gave up to him for his residence a place called Lichfield, previously bestowed by the king on Wilfrid, that he might establish an episcopal see there, either for himself or for another. Theodore and Ceadda both consented to this plan. The only condition made by the archbishop was that the bishop should be consecrated anew, with the assistance of Wilfrid, on account of the irregularity caused by the presence of the two Britons who had assisted at his first consecration. In other respects, Theodore never ceased to do him all the honour which his holy life deserved ; and as, from love to his work, and according to the custom of the first Northumbrian bishops of Celtic race, Ceadda persisted in traversing on foot the immense extent of his new diocese, the primate commanded him to use a horse, and himself held the stirrup to oblige the humble bishop to mount. With admirable delicacy, Wilfrid assigned to this innocent usurper the care of continuing the task which had occupied and consoled himself during his disgrace. For three years Ceadda occupied the same position in Mercia which Wilfrid himself had occupied, aiding the noble efforts of the king, and the holy Queen Ermenilda, to destroy the last traces of idolatry. In the intervals of repose left him by his pastoral journeys, he inhabited a little monastery which he had built near his cathedral, that he might there continue his life of prayer and study with seven or eight monks, his friends. It was here that he died, leaving behind him a noble example of humility, wisdom, fervour, and voluntary poverty. The narrative of his last days was transmitted by the monk who attended him to the Venerable Bede, always so scrupulous in indicating the sources from which he drew the materials for his religious history of the English nation. "My father," said a disciple to the dying bishop, "dare I ask you a question?" "Ask what thou wilt." "I conjure you to tell me what are those sounds of celestial harmony which just now we heard, and which sometimes descend from heaven, and sometimes return thither ; are they not the ineffable strains of angels?" "Thou hast then heard and recognised the voice from on high which must not be spoken of before my death. Yes; it is they. The angels are come to call me to that heaven which I have always loved and desired; they have promised to return in seven days to take me with them." And when the day of deliverance and recompense arrived, the witness of this happy death saw not only heaven open and the angels appearing ; he seemed to see also the brother of the dying man, his inseparable companion in former days, and, like him, a bishop and monk, descending from the opening heaven to seek the soul of Ceadda and conduct it to eternal happiness. Many details of this nature, floating on the bosom of an ocean of forgotten ages and races, show us how, among these rude converts, so rapidly transformed into austere monks and saints, natural affection preserved all its empire, and mingled, in sweet and holy union, with the grandeur and beauty of their supernatural vocation.

Having thus regulated or re-arranged the government of souls in the two largest kingdoms of the Saxon confederation, Northumbria and Mercia, the venerable archbishop pursued, with an activity in no way relaxed by age, the task which the Holy See had assigned him. He successively traversed all the provinces of the island already occupied by Anglo-Saxons. With the aid of the former bishops, and of those whom he ordained wherever they were wanting, he applied himself, in all the kingdoms, to pacify the sanguinary feuds of princes and nobles, to re-establish canonical order and ecclesiastical discipline, to correct abuses, to spread good morals, and to regulate, according to Roman custom, the celebration of Easter. He is believed to have originated on this occasion that ecclesiastical law which commanded all fathers of families to repeat daily, and to teach to their children, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed in the vulgar tongue.

Abbot Adrian accompanied him everywhere, and seconded him in all things. These two aged monks, one Asian and the other African, were received, listened to, and obeyed by the Anglo-Saxons with that affectionate deference which in Christian hearts triumphs so easily over the prejudices and opposition of a narrow nationality. They repaid the popular attachment by their unwearied zeal for the souls and hearts of the people, preaching to them evangelical truth, with that intelligent and practical solicitude which makes true apostles.

The authentic monuments of their zeal are all preserved in the imposing collection of moral and penal institutes known as the *Liber Poenitentialis* of Archbishop Theodore, which has served as the model of so many other analogous collections. It is there apparent that if great excesses and shameful disorders had already appeared among the new Christians of England, these were kept in check by all the resources of spiritual fatherhood and priestly vigilance. It is surprising to find among these Germanic populations the traces of refined corruption mingled with the brutal vices of barbarians; but the art and authority which could inflict for every sin, even when confessed and pardoned, a penalty either public or secret, according to the circumstances, is all the more admirable. The punishments are generally of excessive severity, induced, it would seem, by the rudeness of barbarous manners, on which it was necessary first to act by means of intimidation. No doubt they were soon practically evaded by the equivalents of alms and other good works. At the same time, in this code set forth by a Greek prelate sent from Rome, there appears no trace of Roman or Byzantine law. On the contrary, it embodies the entire penal system of the Germanic laws, founded on the principle which required a punishment for every offence, or a compensation for every punishment. And as it is always pleasant to find a loving and tender heart among the masters and teachers of the people, it is delightful to read, at the end of one of the most ancient manuscripts of this formidable code, a few lines, in which the archbishop thus commends his work and his soul to a prelate, one of his friends : "I beseech thee, noble and pious bishop, to pour out at the feet of God the abundance of thy prayers for Theodore, the poor stranger whom thou lovest."

In the course of this apostolic journey, Theodore naturally visited Lindisfarne, as well as the chief seats of the other dioceses. The metropolis of Celtic resistance was obliged to acknowledge the authority of the Roman metropolitan, who imprinted upon it the seal of subordination and union by dedicating, under the name and in honour of St.

Peter, the monastic cathedral of the Celtic bishops which Bishop Aidan had commenced to build, in the Scottish mode, and entirely in wood, many years before.

It is to these pastoral visits of Archbishop Theodore that all agree in tracing back the commencement of parochial organisation, — above all, in the south of England. Until then, the monasteries had been almost the only permanent centres of faith and religious instruction. The bishops issued from their monasteries to preach and to baptize; they were constantly wayfaring. The monks, especially those of the Celtic monasteries, traversed the country, stopping at different stations previously indicated to administer the sacraments, just as is now done in lands under the charge of missionaries, and in certain districts of Ireland. But churches, regularly served by monks or secular priests, were speedily built on the continually increasing estates of the great abbeys and monastic cathedrals. The kings and nobles obtained from bishops and abbots the right of choosing in the monastery, or among the cathedral clergy, some priests who might, for the good of their souls, accompany them on their expeditions, or live with them in their rural residences. Theodore availed himself of this custom to lay the foundations of a parochial system, by persuading the princes and great proprietors to build churches on their domains, and to attach to them a resident priest, with an endowment in land or in fixed rents; in return for which they should have the right of choosing their priests. From this right has grown the system of church patronage, such as it now subsists in England, with the special impost, not yet abolished, called churchrate, levied on all the proprietors of a parish for the keeping of the church in repair : so true is it that everything bears the trace of solidity and permanence in the country which twelve centuries ago was constituted as a nation by that union of the Church with the Anglo-Saxon race, of which Italian and Greek monks such as Theodore and Augustin were the plenipotentiaries.

Nearly all the present names of counties date from this epoch. All the dioceses of that time exist still; everything has remained so unchanged, that a map of the country in the tenth century might serve for today ; while there remains not one single trace of the ancient territorial divisions of France and Germany.

After having thus laid the foundation of parishes, it was Theodore's desire to proceed to a new episcopal division. Hitherto, except in Kent, each kingdom of the Heptarchy had formed a diocese, each king choosing to have one bishop of his own, and only one. Northumbria, long divided into two kingdoms, had never formed more than one diocese, of which the seat was sometimes in the ancient Roman metropolis of York, sometimes in the sacred isle of Lindisfarne; and this diocese, even after a partial division, remained so vast that the Venerable Bede mentions a large number of districts which had never yet been visited by their bishop.

The extreme inequality of extent and population in the different Saxon kingdoms, which a single glance at the map will make apparent, had thus led to a similar difference between the dioceses ; those of the north and the centre being far too large for the administration of one man. But Theodore here met with the resistance which is almost always produced in similar cases. He convoked a council at Hertford in the fourth year of his pontificate, the first ever held in the Anglo-Saxon Church ; but was obliged to adjourn his proposition, as he himself relates in the official report of the deliberations of

this assembly, dictated by himself to his notary. At the same time, he reserved to himself the means of returning to the charge by decreeing that the national council should meet once a year at a place called Cloveshoe, according to Saxon fashion, in the open air. He was happier, however, in the two canons regarding monasteries which he proposed, and which were unanimously adopted by the bishops and numerous abbots attached to the Roman ritual who composed the council. Of these canons, naturally marked by the Benedictine spirit, since the greater part of the bishops in the council were sons of St. Benedict, the first forbade bishops to disturb monasteries in any way, or to despoil them of their goods ; the second forbade monks to pass from one monastery to another without the permission of the abbot. This was a consecration of the vow of stability, which, though often neglected, was not the less an essential distinction of the order of St. Benedict from the great monastic communities of the East or of Celtic countries.

The monasteries having been thus placed under the most imposing safeguard by the Greek metropolitan of England, there yet remained for him, as well as for his African assistant, Adrian, an intellectual and literary development as worthy of the admiration as of the gratitude of posterity. Both were profoundly attached to and imbued with, not only ecclesiastical knowledge, but secular learning, that double intellectual current of which the middle ages never ceased to give examples. Theodore had brought with him a copy of Homer, which he read perpetually, and which was long preserved and admired by his ecclesiastical descendants. They gathered round them, in the monasteries where they lived or which they visited, a crowd of young and ardent disciples, whom they led daily to the fountain of knowledge. While explaining Holy Scripture to them with particular care, they taught their scholars also ecclesiastical astronomy and arithmetic, which served to establish the Paschal computation, and afterwards the art of composing Latin verses. But it was chiefly the study of the two classic tongues which nourished under their care. These became so general that, sixty years after, there were still monks trained in the school of Adrian and Theodore who spoke Greek and Latin as readily as Anglo-Saxon. At the same time, music and chanting, hitherto cultivated only in the monasteries of Canterbury and by the deacon James at York, spread all over England. Monasteries thus transformed into schools and homes of scientific study could not but spread a taste and respect for intellectual life, not only among the clergy, but also among their lay-protectors, the friends and neighbours of each community. Under the powerful impulse given to it by the two Roman monks, England became almost as important a literary centre as Ireland or Italy.

While recalling this peaceful and luminous period of which Theodore and Adrian were the stars, the enthusiasm of the Venerable Bede breaks out into a kind of dithyramb : "Never," he says, "since the Anglo-Saxons landed in Britain, had more happy days been known. We had Christian kings, at whose bravery the barbarous nations trembled. All hearts were inflamed by the hope of those celestial joys which had just been preached to them ; and whosoever wished to be instructed in sacred learning found the masters that he needed close at hand."

Let us add, to characterise with more precision this pontificate of Theodore, that he was the last foreign missionary called to occupy the metropolitan dignity in England, and that the Greek monk succeeded, as has been justly remarked, in transforming into an indigenous and national establishment, into a public and social institution, that which

had hitherto been only a missionary church. This transformation could only have been made by that special and supreme authority with which, at the demand of the Anglo-Saxons themselves, the Oriental archbishop had been invested by the Holy See, and the result was to give to the Popes a whole nation as a lever for their future action both upon nations already Christian and upon those which still remained to be converted.

## APPENDIX

### IONA

#### NOTES OF A VISIT MADE IN AUGUST 1862

"To each voyager  
Some ragged child holds up for sale a store  
Of wave-worn pebbles. . . .  
How sad a welcome !

Where once came monk and nun with gentle stir  
Blessings to give, news ask, or suit prefer. . . .  
Think, proud philosopher !  
Fallen though she be, this Glory of the West,  
Still on her sons the beams of mercy shine ;  
And hopes, perhaps, more heavenly bright than thine,  
A grace by thee unsought, and unpossesst,  
A faith more fixed, a rapture more divine,  
Shall gild their passage to eternal rest."

— Wordsworth.

The traveller who visits Iona in the hope of finding imposing ruins or picturesque sites is singularly disappointed in his expectation. Nothing, as has been already stated,



can be less attractive than this island, at first sight at least. At view of its flat and naked surface a sense of that painful desolation which is so well expressed by the word bleak, untranslatable in French, strikes the traveller, and he involuntarily turns his eyes from that low and sandy shore to the lofty mountains of the neighbouring isles and coasts. After a time, however, a sweet and salutary impression is evolved from the grave, calm, and lonely aspect of a place so celebrated in spiritual history. The spirit is a little reassured, and the visitor takes his way through the poor hamlet, which is the only inhabited place on the island, towards the ruins of which so many learned and splendid descriptions have been written. Here again there is a fresh disappointment. These ruins have nothing about them that is imposing — nothing, above all, absolutely nothing, that recalls St. Columba, unless it be two or three inscriptions in the Irish tongue (*Eirech* or *Erse*), which was his language. But they are not the less of great interest to the Catholic archaeologist, since they are all connected with the cloistral and ecclesiastical foundations which succeeded to the monastery of Columba. Turning to the north, after passing through the village, you come first to the remains of a convent of canonesses, the last foundation of the twelfth century, but which, for a little, survived the Reformation. Transformed into a stable, then into a quarry, the roofless church still exists ; and in it is to be seen the tomb of the last prioress, Anna Macdonald, of the race of the *Lords of the Isles*, who died in 1543. Thence you pass to the famous cemetery, which was for so many centuries the last asylum of kings and princes, nobles and prelates, and of the chiefs of the clans and communities of all the neighbouring districts, and — as a report made in 1594 says — "of the best people of all the isles, and consequently the holiest and most honourable place in Scotland." At that epoch were still to be seen three great mausoleums with the following inscriptions : —

TUMULUS REGUM SCOTLE.

TUMULUS REGUM HIBEENIAE.

TUMULUS EEGUM NORWEGIAE.

There was even the tomb of a king of France, whose name is not given, but who must have abdicated before his death.

Nothing is now shown of these mausoleums except the site. A tradition, more or less authentic, decides that eight Norwegian kings or princes were interred at Iona, four kings of Ireland, and forty-eight Scottish kings. But all historians agree in stating that, from the fabulous times of Fergus until Macbeth, Iona was the ordinary burying-place of the kings and nobles of the Scottish race, and even of some Saxon princes, such as Egfrid, king of the Northumbrians, who died in 685. Shakespeare, with his customary fidelity to national tradition, has not failed to send the body of Macbeth's victim to be buried at Iona.

The burial-place of the kings was not transferred to the abbey of Dunfermline until the time of Malcolm Canmore, the conqueror and successor of Macbeth, and the husband of St. Margaret.

At present this cemetery contains eight or nine rows of flat tombs very close to each other. Most of these are of blue stone, and covered with figures sculptured in relief, with inscriptions and coats-of-arms. On many of them may be distinguished the galley which was the heraldic ensign of the Macdonalds, Lords of the Isles — the greatest house of the north of Scotland. Among them is shown the tomb of the contemporary of the great king Robert Bruce and the hero of the poem of Walter Scott, who died in 1387. And there are still to be seen tombs bearing the arms of the Macdougalls, Lords of Lorn, the Macleods, Mackinnons, Macquaries, and especially Macleans — that is to say, of all the chiefs of the clans of the adjacent districts, along with several tombs of bishops, priors, and other ecclesiastics of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In the centre of the burying-ground stands a ruined chapel, called St. Oran's, from the name of the first of the Irish monks who died after their landing on the island. It is 30 feet long by 15 broad, with a fine semicircular western door. It is the most interesting, and perhaps the oldest monument of the island, for it is held to have been built by the sainted Queen Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore (d.1093), mother of the King St. David, one of the most touching figures in the history of Scotland and of Christendom. She was the regeneratrix of faith and piety in Scotland, and was animated by a great devotion to St. Columba, by whose intervention she obtained her only son, after having long been without children.

Before reaching the burying-ground, and on leaving it, two large stone crosses are seen, each of a single block, and from 12 to 14 feet high — the one called Maclean's, and the other St. Martin's — the only two which remain of 360, which are said to have formerly existed on the island. Both, fixed on a pedestal of red granite, are long and slender in form, covered over with sculptured ornaments, in a style at once graceful and quaint, partially hidden by the moss. One of them, Maclean's cross, is said to be that of which Adamnan speaks in his Life of Columba. It is difficult to understand how, with the scanty means at their disposal in an age so remote, it was possible to quarry, sculpture, transport, and erect blocks of granite of such a size.

At last we reach the Cathedral, or rather the Abbey Church, a large oblong edifice, in red and grey granite, 166 feet in length, 70 in breadth at the transept, ruined and roofless, like all the others, but still retaining all its walls, and also several large cylindrical columns rudely sculptured, with the tombs of an abbot of the Clan Mackinnon, date 1500, and different chiefs of the Macleans. Over the cross of the transept rises a square tower, which is seen far off at sea, and is lighted by windows pierced in the stone, in unglazed lozenges and circles, such as are still found at Villers, in Brabant, and at St. Vincent and Anastasius, near Rome. The end of the choir is square, and cannot be older than the fourteenth century ; but other portions of the church are of the twelfth and thirteenth. It has, like the beautiful Abbey Church of Kelso, in the south of Scotland, this peculiarity, that the choir is twice as long as the nave.

The sombre and sad aspect of all these ruins is owing in part to the absence of all verdure, and of that ivy which, especially in the British Isles, adorns elsewhere the ruins of the past.

This church became, in the fourteenth century, the cathedral of the bishopric of the Isles, the titular bishop of which afterwards resided at *Man*, one of the *Sudereys* — that

is, the isles lying south of the point of Ardnamurchan, and distinct from the Norderneys, to the north of that cape, a division which dates from the times of the Norwegians. Hence the title of Episcopus Sodorensis, Bishop of Sodor and Man. Iona became the cathedral of the bishopric of the Scottish Isles after the union of Man to England under Edward I.

After the Reformation and the suppression of all the bishoprics and monasteries, decreed in 1561 by the Convention of Estates, the Calvinistic Synod of Argyll gave over all the sacred edifices of Iona to a horde of pillagers, who reduced them to the condition in which they are now seen. During the whole of the eighteenth century the ruins and the cemetery lay desert : the cathedral was made into a stable ; and thus was accomplished the prophecy in Irish verse ascribed to Columba, according to which a time was to come when the chants of the monks should give place to the lowing of oxen. The 360 crosses which covered the soil of the holy island disappeared during this period, most of them being thrown into the sea. Some were conveyed to Mull and to the adjacent islands, and one is shown at Campbeltown — a monolith of blue granite, incrustured with sculptures. In this same island of Mull is to be observed a line of isolated columns leading to the point of embarkation for Iona, and destined, according to local tradition, to guide the pilgrims of old to the sacred isle. (Note of the Rev. T. Maclauchlan, read before the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, February 1863.)

Since 1693 the island has belonged to the Dukes of Argyll, chiefs of the great clan Campbell, who watch over the preservation of the ruins. It brings them an annual revenue of about £300. It contains a population of 350 souls, all Presbyterians. This small population — which lives on the produce of the fisheries and of a few wretched fields manured with seaweed, where potatoes, barley, and rye are grown, but where even oats refuse to thrive — offers, notwithstanding, the curious spectacle which is found in many of even the pettiest villages in Scotland : it has two churches, and forms two congregations ; the one connected with the official or Established worship, whose ministers are nominated by the lay patrons, and supported by the ancient property of the Church ; and the other attached to the "Free Kirk" — that is, a body whose ministers are elected by the people and maintained by their voluntary offerings.

We cannot quit Iona without adding a word on the neighbouring isle of Staffa, which contains the famous grotto of Fingal. It was not really known to the world till the visit of Sir Joseph Banks in August 1772. There is no previous mention of it, not even in the journey of the great Johnson, although it lies within sight of Iona, which closes the horizon on the south, as seen from the cave — a juxtaposition which has inspired Walter Scott with these beautiful lines : —

"Where, as to shame the temples decked  
By skill of earthly architect,  
Nature herself, it seems, would raise  
A minster to her Maker's praise. . . .  
Nor doth its entrance front in vain

To old Iona's holy fane,  
That nature's voice might seem to say,  
'Well hast thou done, frail child of clay!  
Thy humble powers that stately shrine  
Tasked high and hard — but witness mine!"

The English, and travellers in general, profess a great enthusiasm for this cave, which, as every one knows, forms an immense vault, into which the sea penetrates, and which rests on rows of polygonal basaltic columns, ranged like the cells of a beehive. Sir Robert Peel, in a speech in 1837, compared the pulsations of the Atlantic which roll into this sanctuary to the majestic tones of the organ ; but he adds, "The solemn harmony of the waves chants the praises of the Lord in a note far more sublime than that of any human instrument." This sound is, in fact, the grandest tiling about this famous cave. The rest is a wonder of nature far inferior, it seems to us, to the wonders of art, and especially of Christian art. The grotto of Fingal is but 66 feet high by 42 broad, and 227 long. What is that beside our grand cathedrals and monastic churches, such as Cluny or Vezelay?

## II

### CONCLUSIONS OF THE TWO PAPERS OF M. VARIN ON THE CAUSES OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BRITISH CHURCH AND THE CHURCH OF ROME

#### FIRST ARTICLE

he struggle maintained by the three Celtic nations (Britons, Picts, and Scots) against the Roman apostles of the Saxon colony resulted, according to the opinion of the learned Anglicans of the last three centuries, from the fact that Britain had received the faith from Asia, and would thus have communicated anti-Roman doctrines to the Picts and Scots. The three populations, instructed by Asiatics, would naturally reject the religious yoke which Rome tried to lay on them (under the pretext of evangelising the Anglo-Saxons) no less than the political yoke of the new conquerors.

But,

1. There never was anything in common in the usages of Asia and those in which the three insular nations differed from the Roman Church.

2. The origin of these secondary differences, in as far as the Picts and Scots are concerned, is found in the subsequent substitution of British usages for those which, in the beginning, these same people received direct from Rome.

3. These usages, even among the Britons, did not extend back to the origin of Christianity in the British Isles. They had their sources in circumstances purely accidental, and completely opposed to any sentiment hostile to the Roman Church.

4. The Picts and Scots received the light of the Gospel originally from Rome, and not from Britain. They already occupied at that period the ground which a school of learned men believe them only to have attained at a later date.

## SECOND ARTICLE

1. The differences between Rome and Britain were less numerous, less important, and, above all, of later date than the recent writers represent.

2. They indicate no relation between Britain and Asia.

3. They prove nothing against Rome : of the three nations which composed the British Church, two had from the first adopted the Roman usages.

4. As to the six controverted customs,

Three had their origin in a national, and not at all in an Asiatic feeling — to wit,

A. The tonsure — a national and even Druidic way of dressing the hair — that of the wise men, who are discussed in the lives of the Irish saints as opposing great obstacles to any modifications of the faith ;

B. The national liturgy for the mass, such as existed in all the Churches evangelised by Rome, Gaul, Spain, &c. ;

G. Aversion for the Roman clergy, repelled by patriotic sentiment, as apostles of the Saxon race;

And three in mistaken adhesion to the very doctrines of Rome :

D. The ceremonies supplementary to baptism, of which Bede speaks; but which the islanders would not recognise because their first apostles, who had come from Rome, had told them nothing about them;

E. The paschal computation (Easter), which the Britons maintained as they had received it at first from Rome, without wishing to adopt the reform subsequently introduced by the Popes ;

F. The celibacy of the clergy, as severely observed by the Britons as by the Roman clergy — only they accepted the double monasteries known in the East : and this is the only way in which any of the traditions of the East got a footing in the extreme West.

On the three principal points — 1. The supremacy of Rome ; 2. The celebration of Easter ; 3. The marriage of the priests — the British Church in no way differs from other Western Churches, — at least, during the first five centuries. On the three secondary points — i. The tonsure; 2. The administration of baptism; 3. The liturgy — there were differences ; but they were as great between Britain and the East as between Britain and Italy.



### III

#### LINDISFARNE

Lindisfarne at present bears the name of *Holy Island*, which was given it in 1093 by the monks, then transferred to Durham, in memory of the number of monks who were massacred at the Danish invasion, and venerated as martyrs.

Except the dark and scarcely visible island, situated on the south-west, fifty fathoms from the shore, which is still called St. Cuthbert's Isle, and where it is said some remains of his cell are to be seen, the Holy Island of Lindisfarne retains no material trace either of the dwelling-place of the great and popular saint, or of the ancient monastic cathedral of Northumberland. But it possesses the important and very picturesque ruins of the church, rebuilt in 1093 by Bishop Carilef. This bishop immortalised himself by the construction of the magnificent cathedral of Durham, of which the church of Lindisfarne, built of fine red stone like the churches on the Rhine, is a dependence. It is in the Roman or purest Norman style, except the choir and its rectangular heading, which were added in the thirteenth century. Its architect was the monk Eadward, so much praised by Reginald in his *Libellus de Miraculis Cuthberti*, who brought from the neighbouring city, with the eager aid of the inhabitants, the good stone which was wanting at Lindisfarne, that of the island being too friable and apt to be destroyed by the sea-spray. A double diagonal arch, ornamented with rich toothed mouldings, is the only remaining relic of the central vault of the transept, between the nave and choir. This arch, thrown from the north-western to the south-eastern corner, with the appearance of being suspended in the air, traces its outline upon the sky with boldness and majesty. It is four-and-twenty English feet in diameter, and rises to a height of forty-four feet above the ground, which is itself heightened by ruins. The lower side of the north is still entire, as well as two bays of the same side of the nave, which was composed of six. The ancient choir ended in a circular apse ; the half of it remains, disfigured and mutilated by a square heading in materials different from the rest. The transept has two circular apses, in the same style as the choir. The reverse of the western front, in the interior of the church, has a fine effect. The entire ruin is very well rendered in the *Architectural Antiquities of Durham*, by Billings.

Some remains of the ancient monastery are still to be seen round the church. A fine fortress of the sixteenth century, built under Queen Elizabeth, occupies a conical mole at the southern extremity of the island.

A very minute description of Lindisfarne is to be found in the work of the learned James Raine, entitled *The History and Antiquities of North Durham, or the shires of Norham, Island, and Bedlington*, now united in the county of Northumberland : London, 1852. The article *Holy Island* is very long : it goes into minute details of the priory founded there in 1095, and is accompanied by an engraving made in 1728 by Buck, and which shows the state of the ruins at that period : they do not seem to have been more considerable then than at present.

Bamborough, the ancient residence of the kings of Northumbria, situated on the shore in sight of Lindisfarne, is placed on an immense rock, which commands the sea and all the surrounding country : the castle, much modernised, has been made by Lord Crewe into a charitable school and various establishments devoted to the work of salvage, which is so necessary and so energetically directed upon that dangerous coast.

I cannot resist the temptation of quoting here Walter Scott's fine lines, which will console the reader for the dryness of the preceding details, and which exactly depict the site of Lindisfarne, except in respect to the grandeur of the ruins : the English are disposed to exaggerate the effect of the size of their historical monuments, which are almost always less than our own.

"And now the vessel skirts the strand  
Of mountainous Northumberland.  
Thy tower, proud Bamborough, marked they there,  
King Ida's castle, huge and square,  
From its tall rock look grimly down,  
And on the swelling ocean frown ;  
Then from the coast they bore away,  
And reached the Holy Island's bay.  
The tide did now its flood-mark gain,  
And girdled in the Saint's domain :  
For, with the flow and ebb, its style  
Varies from continent to isle ;  
Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day,  
The pilgrims to the shrine find way ;  
Twice every day the waves efface  
Of staves and sandalled feet the trace.  
As to the port the galley flew,  
Higher and higher rose to view  
The castle with its battled walls,  
The ancient monastery's halls,  
A solemn, huge, and dark-red pile,  
Placed on the margin of the isle.  
In Saxon strength that Abbey frowned,  
With massive arches broad and round,  
That rose alternate, row and row,

On ponderous columns, short and low,  
Built ere the art was known,  
By pointed aisle, and shafted stalk,  
The arcades of an alley walk  
To emulate in stone.  
On the deep walls, the heathen Dane  
Had poured his impious rage in vain ;  
And needful was such strength to these,  
Exposed to the tempestuous seas,  
Scourged by the winds' eternal sway,  
Open to rovers fierce as they,  
Which could twelve hundred years withstand  
Winds, waves, and northern pirates' hand.  
Not but that portions of the pile,  
Rebuilt in a later style,  
Showed where the spoiler's hand had been ;  
Not but the wasting sea-breeze keen  
Had worn the pillar's carving quaint,  
And mouldered in his niche the saint,  
And rounded, with consuming power,  
The pointed angles of each tower ;  
Yet still entire the Abbey stood,  
Like veteran, worn, but unsubdued."

—Marmion, cant. ii.

#### IV

#### PETERBOROUGH

This celebrated monastery has been the origin of an important town in Northamptonshire, which sends two members to the House of Commons, and was made into a bishopric of the Anglican Church by Henry VIII. The last abbot became bishop in

1541, and the abbey church was transformed into the cathedral of the new bishopric — an arrangement which still continues.

Peterborough was built on an isle in the marshy district which, at the time of the Saxon occupation, included a considerable portion of the existing counties of Northampton, Cambridge, Lincoln, and Norfolk, and which is still known as the Fens. There existed in these marshes some spots more solid, which could even be made into pasturage, and the industry of the monks soon brought them under cultivation. From this is derived the primitive name of Peterborough, Medehamstede, or, in modern English, the Home in the Meadows. Such was also the origin of the still celebrated abbeys of Ely and Croyland, and of several others, Ramsey, Thorney, Kirkstead, &c. This district is now one of the most fertile parts of England.

There are no remains existing of the church of the monastery built in the seventh century by the kings of the Mercians. The Danes destroyed it at their great invasion in 870, after having slaughtered all the monks. It was rebuilt a century later, and again dedicated to St. Peter by the famous Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, but afterwards destroyed by accidental fires in 1067 and in 1116. It was in 1118, after the last of these fires, that the present building was commenced by the abbot John of Seez : the choir was consecrated in 1143, and the chapels, to the east of the transept, from 1133 to 1145, under a very distinguished abbot, Martin du Bec. The existing nave, begun in 1155, was not finished till towards 1190. The aisles of the nave date from 1117 and 1143.

Like all English cathedrals, Peterborough has preserved its vast dependencies, and stands in the midst of gardens, flowery lawns, and groves, which heighten its grandeur and beauty. The tranquil majesty of the close which surrounds it naturally recalls to mind its monastic origin ; the silence and serenity which reign there are scarcely disturbed, except by the flight or the song of birds, whose nests are built in the towers and buttresses of the immense church. The great and numerous buildings which shut in this close seem to reproduce, in part at least, the cloisters of the great abbey before its secularisation. The entrance from the town into the sacred enclosure is by a gateway, in the form of a square tower, pierced by an arched passage, and surmounted by a chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas, but used at present as a music school. To the left is another chapel dedicated to St. Thomas-a-Becket, which serves for the use of the choristers. Beyond this gateway is the spacious enclosure surrounding the church ; to the right and to the south is the old abbatial palace — now the bishop's — built in 1319, its grand entrance flanked by two statues, larger than life, of an abbot and a monk. To the left and north is the deanery, a fine building of the date of 1518. But the eyes of visitors are at once attracted and enchanted by the magnificent western facade of the abbey church. This facade, built between 1200 and 1227, in the early ogival style, called in England Early English, is equally original and splendid ; it is said, not without reason, to have no equal among the specimens of Christian architecture. It is composed of three porches or ogival doorways, equal in height, which occupy the whole elevation of the facade ; they are surmounted by three triangular gables or frontals, and flanked north and south by two square towers of great elegance, with spires. The depth of these doorways is as astonishing as their height ; the sides of the inner walls and the whole of the facade are lavishly enriched with sculpture, and decorated wherever it is possible with bays and roses in the finest style. The whole effect is truly wonderful, thanks to the immense

dimensions of this triple porch and the masses of light and shade caused by the depths of the arches.

The two façades of the grand transept, to the north and south, flanked by polygonal turrets, and of Roman or Norman architecture, are also extremely beautiful. Nothing can be finer than the north façade with its seven tiers of arches and vaulted bays. This façade is, externally, the best preserved and most interesting part of the ancient Norman church, which is there seen without the disfigurement of those additions in the perpendicular or flamboyant style which have been made to the aisles of the nave, the mullions of the triforium, the circumference of the choir, and even in certain parts of the great western façade.

The circular apse of the primitive church may also be seen rising above the quadrilateral oblong which was added in the sixteenth century, and in spite of the disparity caused by the flamboyant architecture of the great windows of this apse, its effect is still remarkable. Besides the great transept, situated between the choir and the nave, there is another of smaller dimensions situated between the nave and the western façade, and flanked by four turrets, two with battlemented terraces, and two with spires, already mentioned in reference to the principal façade. It has also a central tower, which is low and ungraceful, and which, moreover, is decorated at the four corners with those hideous bell towers which disfigure a large proportion of English steeples.

Peterborough Cathedral thus possesses a great number of towers and turrets, but their want of height diminishes their effect ; and this is the case also with the whole of the roof, which, as in most English cathedrals, is so low as to wound the eye by the absence of that perfect proportion between the height and length of the building to which we are accustomed in those of France and Germany.

But whatever may be wanting to the exterior of Peterborough is fully compensated by the majestic and solemn beauty of the interior. I remember no church in the world whose whole aspect is, at the first glance, more striking. Every detail appears to be of the purest Roman or Norman art. And it is so especially in the central nave, which is of extraordinary length, with eleven bays (Notre Dame in Paris has only seven) divided by huge columns alternately round and octangular. The roof, instead of being vaulted, has a ceiling of wood, believed to be of the same date as the edifice, and covered with old paintings, recalling those lately restored with such success in the Church of St. Godehard at Hildesheim. The triforium, of which each bay is composed only of a pointed arch, is of a grand simplicity, and neutralises the unfortunate effect of the flamboyant windows of the clerestory, the pointed bays of which are besides even lower than those of the triforium.

The aisles of the nave are in the same style, but with vaulted roofs in stone; their inner walls are entirely covered with vaulted and interlaced arches : unfortunately the windows of these aisles have been modernised in the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The grand transept is also in the finest Norman style, and rivals the nave in size and magnificence ; it has four bays in each arm, and six of these bays open on six chapels arranged parallel to the choir, in the manner of the Cistercian churches. The two façades of this transept, to the north and south, are pierced with three rows of vaulted bays, with mullions and trefoils.



The choir has four bays, and ends in an apse in four parts. But this apse itself is embedded in a vast oblong construction much lower than the rest of the church. Here we find again the unpleasing fashion of finishing the finest churches with a parallelogram, to which English architects have always had a leaning, and which gives to their buildings a character so inferior to ours. This addition, called the Lady Chapel, was built in 1496. It has a richly sculptured vault of the special form of the English buildings of that period, such as may be seen at King's College, Cambridge, and at Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster.

"Within the choir is the oldest monument in the church, that of Abbot Hedda, massacred by the Danes in 870. It is in the form of a shrine, with statues of our Lord and the twelve apostles in bas-relief. It is attributed to Goodric, who was abbot from 1099 to 1103.

A little further on may be seen the gravestone, scarcely visible, of Catherine of Arragon, the first wife of Henry VIII, and opposite the place where the body of Mary Stuart was buried after her execution at the neighbouring Castle of Fotheringay, and where it remained until her son James I removed it to Westminster. These two great victims to the Reformation thus slept together in the old abbatial church of Peterborough, while the wicked and sanguinary Elizabeth finished her triumphal reign in peace.

This beautiful church cannot give us an idea of the buildings of Anglo-Saxon times; but it represents in all their majesty the great constructions of one of the greatest epochs of monastic history, that of the twelfth century, the era of St. Bernard and Peter the Venerable.

I reserve for another volume my notes on the present state of two other monasteries, Croyland and Ely, which, from their commencement, were reckoned among the most celebrated in England, but the great splendour of which was later than the epoch of which I have hitherto spoken.

July 1862.

### CHAPTER III

#### BEGINNING OF THE TRIALS OF WILFRID : ST. ETHELDREDA.

669-678

While the Archbishop Theodore received everywhere the credit of the intellectual and moral prosperity of England Wilfrid, re-established in his see, but eclipsed by the popularity and authority of the primate, appears to have been thrown back into a subordinate position. Nevertheless it was he who had given the first signal for this renewal of Roman influence in England, who had gained the decisive battle of Whitby, who had begun, supported, and decided the struggle against the insular spirit and its exclusive tendencies, and who, in more than one trial, had paid the price of his spontaneous devotion. And it was a stranger from the depths of Asia Minor who came to reap what he had sown, while not one special mark of pontifical approbation or gratitude had honoured the first author and most intrepid champion of this happy revolution. In contemplating the triumphs of Theodore, there only remained for him to say, like the precursor of our Saviour, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and to prove the disinterestedness and sincerity of his soul, by lending all the assistance possible to his venerable rival.

This he did by sending deputies to the Council of Hertford. Enough occupation besides remained to him in dividing his life between the duties of the episcopate and those of his monastic profession. Reduced to a secondary rank, he could yet find ample satisfaction for his zeal for the good of souls and of the Church, above all, since his reconciliation with Oswy. This reconciliation was complete, and accompanied by such an adhesion to the opinions of Wilfrid on the part of the Bretwalda, that, having fallen ill, he conceived the project of going, if he recovered — he, the first of Saxon kings — to pass the remainder of his life near the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome. He implored Wilfrid to accompany him, promising him new gifts to keep up that pomp and magnificence of worship which was so dear to the bishop. But the death of Oswin put a stop to this project. He died at the age of fifty-eight, after a reign of twenty-eight years, which had been signalised by the deliverance of his country, and by the overthrow of the pagan domination of the Mercians, and which, had it not been stained by the murder of the pious Oswy, would have been the most glorious and happy in the Saxon annals. He was buried at Whitby, in the great maritime monastery to which he had given his daughter as the price of his decisive victory over the pagans. This daughter, Elfleda, on becoming abbess ten years after the death of her father, claimed his remains, and placed them beside those of her maternal grandfather Edwin, the first Christian king among the Northern English, so that the two greatest princes of the two rival Northumbrian dynasties reposed together in this monastic necropolis.

This famous Oswy, last and greatest Bretwalda of whom history keeps any record, had established in the north of his kingdom a supremacy still more extensive in some respects, and more durable, than in the south. Passing the frontiers which his predecessors Edwin and Oswald had given to Northumbria on the Caledonian side, he subjugated all the territory between the Forth and the Tay. But it was chiefly in the east of the central peninsula, in those districts which have since received the names of

Lothian and the Marches, that he impressed on the institutions, manners, and language, that Anglo-Saxon character which, throughout the history of Scotland, remains so visibly distinct from the manners and traditions of Caledonia. Hence arose that partition of Scotland during the whole of its independent existence between two influences, or rather between two races, nominally ruled by the same kings, but distinct by language, laws, cultivation, and all the habits of life, and almost always at bitter feud with each other.

Oswy's victories over the race which had formerly sheltered his youth and exile extended, out of all proportion, the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Northumbria, which had been originally established at Lindisfarne, in the centre of the kingdom, but which, since the restoration of Wilfrid, had been fixed at York, much further south. The crosier of Wilfrid thus extended not only over the two primitive kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, but also over three provinces inhabited by the vanquished races, the Picts of Lothian, the Britons of Cumberland, and the mingled population of Britons, Scots, and Picts in Galloway. His spiritual authority was recognised, at least nominally, by all the Celtic races, and it cannot be doubted that he used all his efforts to root out from among them, as from among the Northumbrians, the customs of their fathers. This also was, no doubt, one of the causes of that flood of resistance and discontent which was to sweep him away in the end.

Oswy was replaced on the Northumbrian throne by his son Egfrid. During the first years of the new reign, the concord between the king and the bishop was complete. The Picts, however, imagined that the youth of Egfrid would furnish them with an opportunity of regaining all that his father had taken from them. A general insurrection took place, seconded by all the auxiliaries which could be provided by the unconquered tribes of Caledonia. But Egfrid, a worthy successor of the valiant kings Oswy and Oswald, put himself at the head of a troop of cavalry, surprised his enemies, and exterminated them. We are not told whether religion had any part in this war, but it is plain that all the desires of Wilfrid were for the triumph of the Northumbrians by the language of his friend Eddi, who speaks of the Picts as brutes (though they were already Christians), describes as *bestial* their hatred of the Saxon yoke, and rejoices that two rivers were so choked with their corpses that it was almost possible to cross dryshod to attack the survivors and bring them again under the detested yoke which fifteen years later they succeeded in throwing off for ever.

Wilfrid must have been more embarrassed when Wulphere, his old and faithful friend, the protector of his disgrace, the husband of the gentle Ermenilda, too faithful to the traditions of his father Penda, tried in his turn to destroy the young Egfrid, and to render Northumbria again tributary to Mercia. But he soon decided for his hereditary chief, and joined his exhortations, in the name of the men of God, to those addressed by the Northumbrian Parliament to the king, to excite him to a most vigorous resistance, in which they triumphed. Thus it was not Northumbria, but Mercia, which became tributary. Egfrid even seized a whole province to increase his kingdom, already so vast, and never allowed the Mercians to regain their independence till after the accession of Ethelred, brother of Wulphere, who had married the sister of the victor.

Egfrid and Wilfrid were now both victorious : one over the enemies who had menaced his kingdom in the north and south; the other over the dissidents who occupied so large a portion of his diocese. During several years of a very temporary alliance, which was destined to end in the most bitter enmity, they combined all the power of their double authority to strengthen the edifice of Northumbrian royalty, and the just supremacy of Roman customs, over the vanquished Celts and the tributary Mercians. The young king showed great deference to the already celebrated prelate who had been the friend of his elder brother. Harvests of unusual abundance seemed to the people a pledge of celestial protection ; and, as in the other parts of England, the harmony of the priesthood and royalty, under the auspices of a great bishop, seemed about to bring in an era of general peace and prosperity.

The power of Wilfrid was used only for the good of souls, commencing with his own. He was surpassed by no one in those works of piety and mortification which the numerous temporal cares that oppressed him rendered yet more dear and yet more necessary. His nights passed in prayer, his days in studying the Holy Scriptures, perhaps edified and surprised his visitors and daily companions less than his fasts and abstinence. Saxon intemperance was confounded by the example of this powerful personage, the first in the country, except the king, who never permitted himself to drink more than the contents of a small phial, even when he was most exhausted, and after a long journey on foot under a burning sun. As to purity of body and soul, he believed that he preserved it by washing from head to foot in cold but consecrated water every night, summer and winter ; and he preserved this habit — borrowed, perhaps unconsciously, from the austerities of Celtic monachism — until he was forbidden to continue it by the Pope, on account of his age.

His zeal for good was tempered, at this time at least, by great moderation. We are told expressly in considering this epoch of his life, that he had made himself dear to all the different races of his immense diocese, from the Humber to the Clyde. He multiplied, as much as possible, the priests and deacons necessary for the new parishes which were everywhere formed; but he reserved to himself the principal part in the fatigues and obligations of an apostolic ministry. He travelled, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, in all weathers and all seasons, through his great province, to baptize, to preach even in the smallest hamlets, and, above all, to administer the rite of confirmation. Everywhere eager crowds pursued him and surrounded him, to obtain the benefit of the sacraments from his hands. It was in one of these journeys that an incident occurred, at the village of Tiddafrey, which ought to be recorded here. While the ceremony of confirmation was going on, a poor mother, agonised by the loss of her first-born, made her way, weeping, through the crowd, with the little body of her child clasped to her heart. Having reached the first rank among the mothers, who pressed forward with their children, she presented her dead son to the bishop among the living, as if to be confirmed with them. Wilfrid, leaning over the child, perceived that it was dead. Then, comprehending how it was, he paused beside the desolate mother, and watched her a while in silence ; upon which she threw herself at his feet, covering them with tears and kisses, and with a voice broken by sobs, adjured him to give her back her child. “Oh, holy man”, she cried, “beware how you destroy the faith of a desperate woman! Help me to believe; restore my child to life, and baptize it. To God and to you it

is still living. Courage! fear not to do it in the strength of Christ!”. Wilfrid remembered the Canaanite of the Gospel. He knelt in prayer. Then placing his right hand on the heart of the child, he felt that it beat, and so restored it to life. After having thus raised it up, and baptized it, he returned it to the mother, exacting a promise that at seven years old she should bring it to him to be trained as a servant of God. This miracle may or may not be believed; but who can refuse to be touched by the cry of the mother? and it is pleasant to find in Wilfrid that goodness of heart which God sometimes gives to great disputants and stern champions, and which alone renders them completely irresistible.

Let us add, to return to the dark reality of earthly things, that the mother, once in possession of her child, would not give him up, but fled with him to the Britons — that is to say, to the enemies of the saint, probably in Cumbria, which was also in the diocese of Wilfrid, and from whence it was necessary for an officer of the bishop to bring the child back by force to his benefactor. He afterwards became a monk at Ripon, where he was called the bishop's son.

It is not easy to understand how Wilfrid should have needed unwilling recruits to fill his monasteries, when the number of monks who thronged to them is one of the best established facts in his history. Besides, the Northumbrian monasteries, like others, were schools, and many of the children received there enrolled themselves among their masters. Some important details in the life of our saint prove that the education given in monasteries was a true public education, and fitted youths for the world as well as for the cloister. It is expressly said that the Anglo-Saxons of high rank, the earls and thanes, were eager to confide their children to Wilfrid, to be brought up in his monastic establishments; and that at the end of their education they chose between the service of God and that of the king. If they decided on a secular and military life, Wilfrid sent them to the king fully armed, as he himself at fourteen years of age had appeared before Queen Eanfleda.

During all the course of his laborious episcopate, Wilfrid was moved, by the love of God and the love of souls, to make great efforts for the consecration, to the service of the Church, of those inexhaustible treasures of art which at that time found refuge alone in the monastic order. Music, above all, appeared to him an indispensable auxiliary of the new faith. He was not content with establishing within his monasteries a course of musical instruction, the teachers of which he had brought from the great school of Gregorian song at Canterbury; but with the help of Stephen Eddi, who has left us the story of his life, he spread this instruction through all the churches of the north of England. Thanks to him, the Anglo-Saxon peasants mingled with their labours as well as with their prayers the sweet and solemn chanting of Psalms in the Gregorian tones. Thanks to him, Northumbria became a great centre of music, rivalling the school of Canterbury, in which the priests and the faithful renewed their musical education periodically, as at the fountainhead — a fact which must have associated the noble memory of Wilfrid with the solemn and consoling modulations of a popular and traditional liturgy.

But ecclesiastical architecture offered him a still wider field; and the results obtained by his exertions roused his contemporaries to an enthusiasm the echo of which has descended to us. Born with a taste for art and building, and also with a decided love



of pomp and magnificence, he devoted all these natural dispositions to the service of God. At the head of the monkish *coementarii*, whom he had brought from Canterbury, he began by thoroughly repairing the primitive cathedral of York, which had been founded by Paulinus, the first Roman missionary, and where Edwin, the first Christian king, with his daughter Eanfleda, had been baptized. Since the translation of the bishopric to Lindisfarne, this church had been like a place abandoned. The rain entered on all sides, and birds built their nests in it. Wilfrid, like a prudent architect, began his work by covering the roof with lead; he then put transparent glass in the windows; and finally caused the stones injured by damp to be washed and scraped. It seems even possible that he may have been the inventor of that white-washing which has since been so greatly abused; after which he provided the restored cathedral with rich ornaments and a territorial endowment.

But he was much more prodigal towards his beloved monastery of Ripon, which he held by the gift of his first friend Alchfrid, and which had been the first centre of his independent and missionary action. He built there a vast basilica, dedicated to St. Peter, which excited universal amazement. Nothing had ever been seen equal to its lofty porches and columns of polished stone, nor, above all, to its magnificent Book of the Gospels, covered with plates of gold set with precious stones, which Wilfrid, for the good of his soul, had caused to be transcribed in letters of gold on purple vellum, and which he placed on the altar the day that the church was dedicated. On the day of this ceremony, in presence of King Egfrid, his brother, the neighbouring abbots, the ealdormen, the earls, lords, and other principal Saxons, Wilfrid, standing before the altar, turned towards the people who filled the church, and solemnly declared his right to all the lands and churches, enumerating them by name, which had been conceded to him by the kings, with consent of the bishops and assembly of nobles of the country, and which were situated principally in that district which the British clergy had abandoned when flying before the swords of the Saxons. Thus his hostility against the Celtic Christians reappeared, even in the midst of this joyful solemnity, which ended in true Saxon fashion with a grand banquet, where the abbot of Ripon entertained all the guests, and which lasted three days and three nights.

The magnificence displayed by Wilfrid at Ripon was yet again surpassed in an entirely new foundation at Hexham, situated much further north, in the heart of Bernicia, not far from the place where the sainted King Oswald had planted, for the first time, the cross on the soil of Northumbria, and commenced that struggle which had secured the greatness and independence of his country. It was there — near to the blood-stained cradle of Northumbrian Christianity, at the foot of the lofty wall built as a defence against the Picts by the Emperor Severus, a little below the junction of the two branches of the Tyne, on a plain surrounded by undulating hills — that Wilfrid chose the site of a great monastery, destined, though he little suspected it, to be his own last asylum. As he had dedicated his first abbey to St. Peter, he dedicated this to St. Andrew, the patron of the church in which he had first prayed on arriving at Rome, and from whence the first apostles of England had been sent. The surprise and admiration which his previous works had awakened became indescribable at the sight of the deep foundations dug, and immense stones placed in them for the basement of a church which, when finished — with its porches and pillars, its numerous naves and

clerestories, its vast vaults underneath, its spiral staircases and galleries, and the imposing height of its spires — was regarded for two centuries as the most beautiful on this side the Alps, and as a kind of reproduction of Roman ambition.

From the pinnacle of one of these towers, which was of unheard-of height, a young monk upon one occasion fell to the ground, breaking his arms and legs on the pavement. The rest believed him dead, and were about to carry him away in a coffin, when Wilfrid, in tears, stopped the bearers, collected the whole community, and said to them : “Pray all of you to God, with lively faith, that He would grant us the grace, which He gave to St, Paul, that He would restore this child to life, and that the enemy may not have such occasion to rejoice in our work”. The general prayer was granted. The medical members of the community bound up the broken limbs of the young monk, who recovered slowly, and lived long. This incident proves that Wilfrid himself directed the works, and that the monks of the monastery mingled with the *coementarii* by profession whom Wilfrid had brought from Canterbury, or even attracted from Rome by the offer of large salaries.

A hundred years later, an illustrious Northumbrian monk, who has been adopted by France and received into the number of her distinguished men, the great Alcuin, begged the sons of Wilfrid to reckon him among the number of their familiar friends, referring at the same time to the admiration excited, even beyond the seas, by the magnificent dwelling left to them by their founder. “Oh, noble posterity of saints”, he wrote to them, “heirs of their honours and of their spotless life, inhabitants of that dwelling so marvellous in beauty, walk in the footsteps of your fathers, so that, passing from the splendour of your earthly home, you may be worthy, by the grace of God, to rejoin those from whom you are descended in the kingdom of eternal beauty”.

The land on which the new monastery of Hexham was built had been given to Bishop Wilfrid, not by the king, but by the queen, Etheldreda, whose personal estate it was, a part of her dowry. It was the residence he preferred to all others, as much on account of the calm which he enjoyed there as from his tender affection for the giver. It is now time to turn to this saint, whose life was so singular, whose influence over the destiny of Wilfrid was so marked, and in whom we must recognise the earliest, and for a long time the most popular, of all the English female saints.

Etheldreda no doubt, like all the princes and princesses of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, believed herself descended from Odin; but at least she was undoubtedly of the family of the Uffings, the royal race in East Anglia. Her father, King Anna, married a Northumbrian princess, sister of the abbess Hilda, and grandniece of Edwin, first Christian king of Northumbria. It was to avenge the death of this father, who had fallen under the sword of the sanguinary Penda, that King Oswy, her father-in-law, made war on the Mercians, and not only delivered East Anglia, but also conquered and occupied Mercia. Etheldreda was the sister of Ermenilda, queen of the Mercians, who had so well seconded Wilfrid in the work of converting her people. She had also another sister, married to that king of Kent who was so zealous for the destruction of idols. And she was niece, through her mother, of Hilda, the holy and powerful abbess of Whitby, whose authority, though no doubt weakened since the victory gained by Wilfrid over her friends at Whitby itself, was, notwithstanding, always great throughout Northumbria.

Like all princesses whose history has fallen into the region of legends, the chroniclers boast of her precocious piety, the fervour and stainless purity of her early years. Nevertheless, she loved ornament; and on her deathbed still remembered the weight of the necklaces and jewels with which her delicate throat had been loaded. These ornaments gave additional brilliancy to her great beauty, which excited, it is said, the passion of all the neighbouring princes. The most ardent of these, the prince of the Gyrwiens, a Saxon colony established in the marshy country which separates East Anglia from Mercia, asked her in marriage, and obtained her from her father, two years before the death of that king on the field of battle. Etheldreda, however, having resolved to follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to consecrate herself wholly to God, resisted to the utmost the will of her father, and succeeded in preventing the consummation of her marriage during the three years that she passed with the tender and generous Tombert. He died; and the young widow supposed herself for ever delivered from the matrimonial yoke, and free to give herself up to Christ. But it was not so. Egfrid, the son and heir of the great king of Northumbria, the most powerful prince of the Anglo-Saxon nation, became in his turn enamoured of her. Her resistance was as vain as in the first instance. The entreaties of her uncle, who had succeeded her father as king of East Anglia, and those of all her relations, compelled her to a second marriage, which no doubt seemed to them a new and precious pledge of alliance between the two kingdoms. The impassioned Egfrid bestowed on her, in full sovereignty, considerable possessions, of which the vast territory of Hexham, which she afterwards gave to Wilfrid, formed part.

When Wilfrid became bishop, he acquired at once, as has been seen, a great influence over the king, and the queen was not slow to show him still greater confidence and affection. But what must have been the surprise and irritation of the young king, whom the powerful testimony of his contemporary Bede represents to us as very pious and highly beloved by God, when he found that Etheldreda persisted, as in her former marriage, in keeping her virginity for God! Like the terrible Clotaire, the husband of St. Radegonde, a century previous, he found that he had married not a woman, but a nun. But although he loved not less than Clotaire the wife who refused to belong to him, he respected and feared her more. She seemed to him more his lady and mistress than his equal and queen. Several years thus passed; the refusals of Etheldreda serving only to increase his passion. He then determined to apply to Wilfrid, well knowing what was the empire of the bishop over the conscience of Etheldreda, as well as over her heart, since he was the man for whom she had the greatest affection. He offered him, as Wilfrid himself related to the Venerable Bede, large estates and much money as the price of the queen's consent to his wishes. Bede only sees in Wilfrid on this occasion a witness to the incorruptible virginity of the saint. But, if we are to believe the official panegyrist of Etheldreda, it was Wilfrid who encouraged her in her resistance, while at first pretending to second the views of the king, in order to preserve his favour. In his secret conferences with her, he showed her heaven as the reward of her perseverance. She made to him the vow of chastity, and he then counselled her to ask from the king a formal separation, that she might consecrate herself to God in a monastery. Egfrid at first refused this absolutely ; but after long disputes — after twelve years of so strange and stormy a union, vanquished by the prayers and tears of her whom he ever loved with so faithful a passion — he suffered a kind of consent to be torn from him to the

departure of his unconquerable wife. She was no sooner furnished with this tardy and painful acquiescence in her wishes, than she hastened to Coldingham, to the great seaside monastery governed by Ebba, aunt of the king, and sister of his predecessors Oswald and Oswy. Wilfrid very soon followed, to give her the veil and black robe, which should henceforward prove her new position as a nun. Soon after, however, Egfrid followed her to her retreat; unable to endure her absence and the sacrifice she had imposed on him, he came with the furious determination of reclaiming her, and asserting his rights. The Abbess Ebba saw that she could not resist the violence of her nephew; she advised the queen, therefore, to flee. Etheldreda accordingly left Coldingham on foot, disguised in the dress of a poor woman, and accompanied by two brave nuns of the monastery. It did not occur to her to seek an asylum at Whitby, though the Abbess Hilda was her aunt. She must have known too well that that holy princess would encourage no enterprise in which Wilfrid had a share. She turned southward, through a thousand difficulties and adventures, towards the river which separated Northumbria from the rest of England, and having happily crossed that stream, she paused on the confines of her own country, East Anglia, in an estate which her first husband had given to her as her jointure.

This long and fatiguing journey of the queen, disguised, and flying from her husband to bury herself in a cloister, touched deeply the imagination of the English people; and miraculous stories founded on it passed from mouth to mouth for ages, while they were also commemorated in the sculptured capitals and painted glass of the great monastic churches. Pious pilgrimages were made to the promontory washed by the sea, on which, in the first stage of her journey, pursued by Egfrid, she took refuge with her companions, and round which the tide rose so high as to render it inaccessible for seven consecutive days, until the king, discouraged, abandoned the pursuit. And the pilgrims pointed out to each other the spot where, travelling on foot on a day of great heat, she fell asleep from fatigue on the open plain. Its position was marked by a majestic ash, the largest tree in the district, which was believed to have been the travelling staff which the royal traveller had thrust into the ground while she slept, and which she found at her waking already covered with verdure; an emblem of the great monastery in the shade of which she was destined to pass the rest of her days, and to shelter, among many others, her friend and protector Wilfrid.

The lands she possessed in right of her first husband were very extensive, since they supported nearly six hundred families. Their position was almost that of an island, surrounded by fens, which could only be crossed in boats. This island was called Ely, or the Isle of Eels. It is a name to be found on every page of the political and religious history of England. Etheldreda built a monastery there, which grew into speedy greatness, and where many Anglo-Saxon virgins joined her, among whom were a number of princesses of her family, having at their head her sister, the queen of Kent. Mothers confided their daughters to her to educate. Even men, and among them many priests, selected her also for their guide and mistress in the spiritual life. Many of the officials of her household followed her example when she quitted the throne and the world to devote herself to God. The chief of these officials, who may be regarded as the queen's majordomo, was an East Anglian lord, named Owin, a man of faith and of amiable disposition, who had been attached to her from her cradle, had accompanied her

from East Anglia to Northumbria, and had no desire to remain in the world after her and without her. He abandoned his honours and possessions, and, putting on a poor man's dress, went with a mattock and axe on his shoulder, and knocked at the door of the monastery where Abbot Ceadda lived, at Lichfield in Mercia. "I come here", he said, "to seek, not rest, as some do, but work, I am not worth much for meditation or study, but I will do as much manual labour as you like; and while the bishop reads in his cell I will take care of the work outside". Others of her servants joined Etheldreda at Ely, where she soon found herself at the head of one of those double communities of men and women, or rather of brethren and sisters, which played so important a part in history at the epoch of which we are speaking.

She gave them, during the seven years she passed at their head, an example of all monastic virtues, and especially of zeal in fasting and prayer. Few details exist of this period of her existence, but the holiness of that life must have left deep traces in the memory of Anglo-Saxon Christians to have enabled it to triumph over time and human forgetfulness beyond that of any other woman of the race. Among her austerities, the greatest wonder was that so great a lady should wear nothing but woollen instead of linen garments, and that she took a bath only on the four great feasts of the year, and even then, after the rest of the community.

Wilfrid never gave up his care of Etheldreda. As soon as he knew of her arrival at Ely he hastened thither. It was he who instituted her abbess, who gave the veil to her nuns, and who regulated all that concerned the government and interests, temporal or spiritual, of the new community. He paid her frequent visits, and never ceased to give consolation and enlightenment to her for whom he must have felt more than ever responsible, since he had encouraged her to sacrifice the obligations of conjugal life to follow the path of supernatural virtue.

However touching and dramatic this history may be, it appears happily certain that no one in the Catholic Church would now authorise or approve the conduct of Wilfrid. It is not less certain that no one of his own time seems to have blamed him. Without any desire of judging him severely, it is evident that these events had no fortunate influence upon him. His life, hitherto agitated, but glorious and prosperous, became, after the consecration of Etheldreda, nothing but a tissue of trials and tempests. First of all, the intimate and fruitful union which had existed between him and the king of his country, was broken beyond remedy, Egfrid never pardoned him for his deceit, for having interfered in his domestic life, only to destroy its charm, and for having used his influence to encourage the wife whom he loved to desert him; and he long nourished his resentment in silence, waiting and preparing for the day when he might despoil him of his episcopal see. But the direct instrument of the rupture between them and of the disasters of Wilfrid, was the second wife of Egfrid, she who, thanks to Wilfrid, and to him alone, had taken the place of St. Etheldreda on the throne, and in the heart of the sovereign of Northumbria. This princess, Ermenburga, was a sister-in-law of the king of the West Saxons. It was she, if we may believe the companion and biographer of Wilfrid, by whom the perfidious enemy of the Christian flock chose to work, according to his custom of employing the weakness of women to corrupt the human race.



This wicked Jezebel, continues our ardent musician, drew from her quiver the most poisoned arrows to pierce the heart of the king, and to provoke him to a furious envy of the great bishop. With the eloquence of hatred she represented to him the shameless pomp and luxury displayed on every occasion by the Bishop of York; his immense riches, his services of gold and silver, the increasing number of his monasteries, the vast grandeur of his buildings, his innumerable army of dependants and vassals, better armed and better clothed perhaps than those of the king. She pointed out to him besides how many abbots and abbesses either gave up to him during their lives the government of their communities, or solemnly constituted him their heir; so that the moment might be foreseen when all those estates, given by the generosity of the Northumbrians to the sanctuaries of the new religion, would become the appanage of one man. Such arguments could not but aggravate the resentment of a heart wounded by the desertion of a wife passionately regretted, and to whom another wife pointed out the way of vengeance.

The husband and wife thus decided upon the destruction of Wilfrid; but not daring to attack him directly, they had the art to engage the Archbishop Theodore in their plans, and to strike their enemy, the great champion of Rome, by the hand of the direct and supreme representative of Roman authority in England. Eddi distinctly accuses the primate of having been bribed by the king and queen of Northumbria. It is repugnant to our minds to admit such an accusation against a saint placed in the Roman calendar side by side with St. Wilfrid. We can more easily believe that the archbishop suffered himself to be led away by an apprehension of the too great power of Wilfrid, and above all, by a perfectly legitimate desire to put in execution his project for augmenting and better dividing the English dioceses. It is also almost certain that he allowed himself to be influenced by a kind of Celtic reaction, the movers of which did not attempt to return to anti-Roman usages, but only to punish in Wilfrid the destroyer of their ancient ritual and their recent conqueror.

Accordingly, during one of Wilfrid's numerous absences, Theodore came to York, and using, or abusing, the supremacy with which the Pope had invested him, he deposed Wilfrid, and also divided the dioceses of York or Northumbria into three new dioceses. Nothing could be more significant of the spirit which animated him than his choice of bishops for these new dioceses, who were all monks taken from the ancient Celtic monasteries, who, while recognising Roman customs, had still repelled the Roman bishop. One of these new sees naturally remained at York ; there the archbishop placed Bosa, since venerated as a saint, whom he found in the community of Whitby, and consequently of the school of the Abbess Hilda, always so hostile to Wilfrid. By a refinement of animosity, the capital of the second diocese was placed at Hexham, precisely in that great monastery which Wilfrid had created with such magnificence. The bishop placed there was the abbot of the Celtic novitiate of Melrose, that very Eata who had been superior of the Scottish community, formerly displaced from Ripon to make room for Wilfrid. The third diocese, which comprehended that part of Mercia recently conquered by the Northumbrian king, was also confided to a Celtic monk, who had been the companion of Ceadda when he replaced Wilfrid after his first deposition by Oswy. Finally, as if to add a touch of derision to violence, a fourth diocese was carved out, according to several authors, in the vast territories of Northumbria, having



for its chief seat Lindisfarne, the sanctuary and asylum of the Celtic spirit. This miserable relic of his extinct greatness it was proposed to leave to Wilfrid, thus taking care to place him in the midst of his adversaries. All these measures bore the unmistakable mark of a Celtic reaction; but the archbishop gave as his reason that the diocese was large enough to give occupation to four bishops, and that its revenues furnished sufficient support for three instead of ministering to the luxury of one.

At the first report of this attempt on the rights of the Church and his own, Wilfrid hurried home, and summoned the king and the archbishop publicly to explain their motives for having thus despoiled him not only of his ecclesiastical authority, but also of the lands which he held as the gift of the reigning king, his father, and brother.

“It is”, he said to them, “mere robbery”.

The two potentates simply replied: “We have no crime with which to reproach you, but we will not change any part of the judgment we have delivered”.

“Then”, replied Wilfrid, “I appeal to the judgment of the Holy See”.

It was the first time that an appeal to Rome had been heard of in England; but Wilfrid recalled St. Paul’s “I appeal unto Caesar”. The step he thus took was a prelude to those great appeals and solemn struggles which, after the Norman Conquest, stirred all the West, and gave so much celebrity to the pontificates of St. Anselm and St. Thomas of Canterbury.

As he passed out of the royal assembly where he had thus signified his refusal to obey, he turned towards certain flatterers of the prince who were enjoying and laughing at his disgrace. “On this day next year”, he said to them, “you who now laugh at my expense shall weep bitterly at your own”. And in fact next year, on the very same day, all the people of York were tearing their hair and their garments in token of mourning, as the funeral procession of the young brother and heir of Egfrid passed through their city. This young prince, who was scarcely eighteen years of age, and already dear to the Anglo-Saxons, had been the guest of Wilfrid at the solemn dedication of Ripon: he perished in a war against the Mercians, the beginning of a series of defeats which lasted during all the remainder of the hitherto prosperous reign of Egfrid.

The cowardly animosity of these courtiers against the haughty and intrepid prelate is, however, much less surprising than the fact that, incontestably, Wilfrid met with no aid and no sympathy among the great and holy church- men who were his contemporaries. Not only did the illustrious Abbess Hilda, protectress of the Celtic ritual, remain always relentlessly, implacably hostile to him, but not one of the abbots whom his example had imbued with the Roman and Benedictine spirit came to his succour ; neither Benedict Biscop, who was as much Roman at heart, and by his numerous pilgrimages to Rome, as Wilfrid himself ; nor the pious, humble, and austere Cuthbert, whose sanctity was already known in the very country and diocese of Wilfrid, and nourished through many ages the popular devotion of northern England. Except his own personal followers, very numerous indeed, and warmly attached to him, all that Northumbria in which the Celtic apostles had wrought so many wonders, remained either hostile or profoundly indifferent. This indifference and hostility of the country, arising, no doubt, from an excessive susceptibility of national sentiment, is again

apparent at a later date in the histories of Anselm and Thomas a Becket. It is a point of resemblance between these illustrious men and the first great bishop of the English race which must strike every observer.

The modern reader will not be less astonished at the ignorance of the Anglo-Saxon Church in the most elementary rules of canonical law as to the institution and immovability of bishops. When St. Wilfrid was superseded at York for the first time, without trial, before he had even taken possession, St. Chad accepted his see without hesitation ; and other saints — Cuthbert, Bosa, and John of Beverley — afterwards followed his example, while the Metropolitan of Canterbury, himself inscribed in the Roman calendar, consecrated all these intruders. When the Holy See intervened on behalf of the law, its decrees met with but a tardy or equivocal acquiescence. But such causes of astonishment, too often awakened by the conscientious study of history, ought not to trouble sincere and serious minds. If the dogmas and morals taught by the Church have never varied, it has required many centuries to give to her discipline and government that form which now appears to us the only regular one. To expect in primitive times, and among young and restless nations, to find the monarchical concentration or uniform docility which, in our days, characterise the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, is to fall into the same error as those simple historians, lately so common among us, who mete out the royalty of Clovis or St. Louis by the measure of the monarchy of Louis XIV.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### JUSTICE DONE TO WILFRID AT ROME. IN ENGLAND HE IS DEPOSED, IMPRISONED, EXILED, AND RESTORED. — 678-686.

Having decided that he would himself carry his appeal to Rome, Wilfrid left Northumbria, accompanied by his friend the chorister Eddi, and by a numerous train of clergy and laymen, who never left him. He left behind thousands of monks, initiated by him into the rule of St. Benedict, and now in despair at finding themselves under the authority of new bishops strange to Benedictine traditions, and animated by a spirit totally opposed to that of their beloved superior. His route towards the Continent led him through the kingdoms of Mercia and East Anglia, the princes and people of which were always favourable to him; and when he stopped at the great monasteries, at Peterborough, of which he regarded himself as one of the founders, and, above all, at Ely, where he had often dwelt, and where Etheldreda always received him as her bishop, she commissioned him to obtain for her at Rome one of those acts of privilege which were earnestly sought by monastic establishments as their most efficient safeguard against the usurpations and violences which menaced them on all sides.

It was supposed by his enemies, who increased every day in number and bitterness, that he would take the ordinary route of pilgrims to Rome, landing in the neighbourhood of Boulogne at Etaples, and going through France. They therefore sent messages and gifts to the atrocious Ebroin, who, stained as he was by the blood of St. Leger and many other victims, still governed, as mayor of the palace, the provinces of Neustria and Burgundy. Knowing him to be capable of any crime, they begged him to lay hands on Wilfrid on his journey, rob him of all that he carried with him, and free them from the chance of his return. But whether Wilfrid was warned of his danger, or whether he was simply guided by the west wind which rose while he was at sea — this wind saved his life, carrying him, and with him the first seeds of the Christian faith, to the low and marshy shores of Friesland.

The Frisians then occupied all the north-east of Germany. They were a warlike, numerous, and formidable people, of whom mention will often be made in the after history of monastic missions. The Gospel was then unknown to them, and Wilfrid, who had been the beginner of so many things, had also the glory of opening the way to those Anglo-Saxon apostles of Germany whose long and glorious annals we have yet to unfold. Wilfrid, who was hospitably received by the king of the country and its inhabitants, had no sooner landed on the unknown coast than he took advantage of the kindness shown him to begin a new evangelical mission. With the self-devotion and enthusiasm natural to him, he forgot the grave personal interests which were leading him to Rome in his eagerness to give himself up to this new work. He remained there a whole winter, preaching daily, with the permission of the king, Adalgisus, and with a success which repaid his toil. The year proved more than usually abundant in fish and other provisions, and this the Frisians attributed to the new God who was preached to them. Nearly all their chiefs were baptized, with many thousands of the people.

Meantime Ebroin was on the watch, with no inclination to let the rich prey of which he had been informed escape from him. Having heard of Wilfrid's residence in Friesland, he sent messengers to the king with very friendly letters, in which he promised him by oath a bushel of gold coins if he would send him Bishop Wilfrid alive, or even his head. Adalgisus had all the repugnance to secrecy which had been noticed by Tacitus among the princes of Germanic race, who loved to discuss their affairs at feasts, since at such a moment the heart is most frank and open, most prone to generous impulses, and least apt to dissimulate. The king of the Frisians accordingly collected all his people at a great banquet, together with his different guests ; on the one side the emissaries of Ebroin, on the other Wilfrid and his followers, amongst whom was Eddi, who has described the scene. After the banquet, he caused the letter of the powerful minister of the Franks to be read aloud. When this was finished he took the letter, tore it up, and threw the pieces into the fire, saying to those who had brought it, "Go and tell your master what you have seen, and add that I have said: Thus may the Creator tear, destroy, and consume the perjurer and traitor!". It is evident that chivalry was just bursting from the bud among these new Christians. Wilfrid, however, could only stay to reap a first and rapid harvest. He had left in his monastery at Ripon a young Northumbrian, brought to him in infancy by his mother, whom he had carefully educated for thirteen years. And it was for this child, a faithful disciple of the great exile, since venerated by the Churches of England and Germany under the name of

Willebrord, that God reserved the glory of bringing permanently into the ranks of Christianity this warlike nation.

Wilfrid resumed his journey towards Rome in spring, crossing Austrasia, where the throne was occupied by a prince who had occasion to know the generous hospitality of the abbot of Ripon. This was Dagobert II, grandson of the first king of that name, who, dethroned in infancy by Grimoald, mayor of the palace, was sent secretly to Ireland, where he found refuge in a monastery; but when in 673 the Austrasian nobles determined to escape the yoke of Ebroin, who was already master of Neustria and Burgundy, they recalled the tonsured prince whose brilliant youth, according to travellers, blossomed in a Hibernian cloister. It was to Wilfrid that they addressed themselves for the restoration of the royal exile ; and it was Wilfrid who, after having magnificently received and entertained him at Ripon, sent him on his way to Austrasia with large presents and a great escort. Dagobert showed his gratitude not only by giving him an affectionate reception, but by his entreaties to Wilfrid to accept the bishopric of Strasbourg, then vacant, and the most important in the kingdom.

Wilfrid, however, refused, and pursuing his route, arrived in Lombardy, where he was most hospitably received by Berchtaire, king of that country. There, also, he had been anticipated by the enmity of his countrymen, and once more the great bishop owed his life to the honour and good faith of a barbarian, but already Christian, prince. He said to Wilfrid, “Your enemies have sent to me from England, with promises of great presents if I will prevent you by violence from proceeding to Rome; for they treat you as a fugitive bishop. I have replied to them thus : I was myself exiled from my country in my youth, and lived with a king of the Avars, who was a pagan, and who swore before his idol not to deliver me up to my enemies. Some time afterwards they sent to offer this pagan king a bushel of gold if he would give me up to them. He refused, saying that his gods would break the thread of his life if he broke his oath. With better reason I, who know the true God, will not lose my soul were it to gain the whole world”. Having said this he gave Wilfrid and his people an honourable escort which guarded them all the way to Rome.

Thus on the north and south of that mass of Germanic nations just touched by Christianity, there flashed out at Wilfrid's touch sparks of that generous loyalty which afterwards developed into Christian honour, and the lofty ideal, ever inaccessible yet ever desired and pursued, of chivalry. Wilfrid may be congratulated on having been one of the first to awaken in the history of our forefathers the premonitory signs of this magnificent dawn.

At the moment when Wilfrid arrived at Rome for the second time — returning persecuted but famous to the city which he had left twenty years before obscure and unknown — the chair of St. Peter was occupied by a Sicilian monk named Agathon : since the time of St. Gregory the Great, all the monasteries of Italy and Sicily followed the rule of St. Benedict, and consequently, we cannot doubt that he was a Benedictine. Accordingly it was natural that he should be favourably disposed towards the Bishop of York, in whom he found at once the propagator of Benedictine rule and the champion of Roman authority. But he also showed great consideration for Wilfrid's antagonist, Archbishop Theodore, whom he had just summoned to Rome by a special envoy, for the

council convoked against the Monothelite heresy. Theodore did not obey the summons of the Pope, but he sent a very exemplary monk named Coenwald with letters full of violent accusations against Wilfrid. Messengers charged with a similar commission arrived from the abbess of Whitby, St. Hilda, still embittered against him who had won the day in the great struggle carried on in the very bosom of her monastery fifteen years before. This singular intervention of the great abbess, which is recorded and proved by a pontifical rescript a quarter of a century after the event, shows at once the great place she held in the English Church, and the intensity of her resentment against Wilfrid.

The Pope confided the judgment of the affair to an assembly of fifty bishops and priests collected in the basilica of the Saviour, at which he himself presided. The companion of Wilfrid has left us a kind of official account of the last session of this assembly, which shows, under the profusion of superlatives then used in all the documents of the Roman Court, an indulgent sympathy for both the rivals, together with the moderation and impartiality natural to the Head of the Church.

The cardinal-bishops of Ostia and Porto made a report to this assembly, equally founded upon the memorials sent by Theodore and others, in which Wilfrid was spoken of as a fugitive bishop, and on those which Wilfrid himself produced for his defence. They concluded thus : — “All being considered, we do not find him convicted canonically of any crime which merits deposition; on the contrary, we perceive that he has preserved great moderation, and has excited no sedition by which to regain his position. He has contented himself with protesting in presence of the other bishops his brethren, and has then had recourse to the Holy See, where Christ, who purchased the Holy Church by His blood, has founded the primacy of the priesthood”. The Pope then said, “Wilfrid, Bishop of York, is at the door of the hall of our secret deliberations with his petition — let him enter”. The bishop being introduced, begged that his prayer should be again read in full assembly. It was expressed in terms equally able and touching: “I, Wilfrid, the humble and unworthy bishop of the Saxons, have taken refuge here as in an impregnable fortress. I have climbed, by the grace of God, to this apostolic summit, from whence flows to all the churches of Christ the rule of the holy canonical law; and I have a hope that justice will here be rendered to my humbleness. I have already explained, *viva voce* and in writing, how, without being convicted of any fault, I have been expelled from the diocese which I have governed for ten years; and how they have put in my place, not one bishop only, but three bishops, contrary to the canons. I do not dare to accuse the most holy Archbishop Theodore, because he has been sent by the Church, I submit myself here to your apostolic judgment. If you decide that I am no longer worthy to be a bishop, I humbly accept the sentence; if I am to reclaim my bishopric, I shall obey equally. I implore you only to expel, by the authority of this council, the usurpers of my diocese. If the archbishop, and the bishops my brethren, see fit to augment the number of bishops, let them choose such as I can live amicably with, and let them be elected with the consent of a council, and taken from the clergy of their future dioceses, so that the Church may not be ruled from without and by strangers. At the same time, confiding absolutely in apostolic justice, I shall obey implicitly its decrees”.

After this speech, the Pope congratulated Wilfrid on his moderation and humility. Then the council decreed that Wilfrid should be restored to his see; that those who had



replaced him should be expelled; but that the archbishop should ordain bishops with the title of coadjutors, bishops chosen by Wilfrid himself in a council assembled for that purpose. All this was commanded under pain of interdict, deposition, and anathema, against whosoever might oppose this decree, whether bishop, priest, deacon, monk, layman, or even king.

This sentence was a most wise and legitimate decision; for, while giving full satisfaction to that justice which had been outraged in the person of Wilfrid, it enforced, on the terms he had himself accepted, the evidently reasonable principle of the division of his overgrown diocese.

Besides this, the same assembly, probably in the same session, rendered full justice to the apostolic zeal of Archbishop Theodore, by prescribing a new arrangement of bishoprics, so that the metropolitan might have twelve suffragans, canonically elected and ordained, of whom none should interfere with the rights of his neighbour. It also sanctioned the prohibitions decreed by the archbishop, who forbade ecclesiastics to bear arms, and to mingle in secular amusements with female musicians and other profane persons. Finally, the Pope and the council charged Theodore to complete the work of St. Gregory and St. Augustin, by convoking an assembly, wherein the kings, princes, nobles, and leaders of the country might confer with the prelates, and where they could provide for the exact observance of apostolic rules. It was also recommended to him to hold assemblies of this kind as frequently as possible, in order to provide, in concert with the faithful and the wisest men of the kingdom, for those measures most advantageous to the Church and people of God.

Wilfrid made no haste to quit Rome, after having obtained justice. He remained there several months, and occupied himself among other matters in obtaining pontifical charters for two English monasteries which, though situated beyond the limits of his diocese, lay very near his heart — those of Peterborough and Ely. He had just succeeded in respect to Ely, and expected to carry back a deed of privilege such as the Abbess Etheldreda had requested of him, when he received news of the death of this sainted queen, whose friend and spiritual father he had been, and whose supernatural resolution had been the first cause of his pilgrimage as an exile and accused man to Rome. Probably of all the Christian souls of his own country, hers was the one most tenderly and closely united to his. All that he had suffered through her, and in her cause, must have rendered her peculiarly dear to his generous heart. Etheldreda died young, a victim to one of the contagious diseases which were then so frequent. She had predicted her own death, as well as the number of those brothers and sisters of her community who would follow her to the grave. Three days before her death she was obliged to submit to a painful operation in the throat; she rejoiced at it. “God”, she said, “has sent me this suffering to expiate the frivolity of my youth, the time when I remember to have worn with so much pleasure necklaces of pearls and gold on this neck now so swollen and burned by illness”. At the last moment, surrounded by the brothers and sisters of her numerous community in tears, she spoke to them at length, imploring them never to let their hearts rest on the earth, but to taste beforehand, by their earnest desires, that joy in the love of Christ which it would not be given to them to know perfectly here below. She carefully directed that they should bury her, not in a stone vault like a queen, but in a wooden coffin, and among the simple nuns.



The death of Etheldreda must have saddened Wilfrid's stay at Rome, where, however, he was still treated with confidence and distinction by the Pope. He was admitted to the council of one hundred and twenty-five bishops assembled under the presidency of Agathon, to name deputies for the sixth general council which was about to be held at Constantinople for the condemnation of the Monothelite heresy, a heresy which recognised but one single will in the Son of God made man. For half a century this heresy had troubled the Church; it had been adopted by various Byzantine emperors, and had thirty years before led the holy Pope, Martin I, to the most painful of martyrdoms. In the synodical letter which these hundred and twenty bishops, chiefly Italians, wrote to the emperors, in the name of all the provinces of the West, is found this passage: "You have ordered us to send you wise and virtuous ambassadors. There is no secular eloquence among us. Our lands are desolated by the fury of contending races; there is nothing but battles, inroads, and pillage. In the midst of these barbarians, our life is full of anguish; we live by the labour of our hands, for the ancient patrimony of the Church has been, little by little, devoured by various calamities. Our faith is the only patrimony which remains to us; to live for it is our glory; to die for it our eternal advantage". After having described the Catholic and Apostolic faith, held by all under the terms defined by the Holy See, they add: "We are late in replying to your appeal, because many of us live far away, and even on the coasts of the great Ocean. We had hoped that our colleague and co-servitor Theodore, archbishop and philosopher of the great island of Britain, would come with the bishops of his country, as well as of yours and of other places, so that we might write to you in the name of our whole council, and that all may be informed of what takes place, for many of our brethren are in the midst of barbarous nations, Lombards, Sclavonians, Goths, and Britons, all very curious touching the faith, and who being all agreed with us as to the faith, would become our enemies if we gave them any subject of scandal".

This letter, signed by the Pope and the hundred and twenty-five bishops, was signed also by Wilfrid as representative at the council of the British bishops, although those bishops had given him no commission on the subject; but he felt himself authorised to bear this witness to the faith of the British Church. His confidence was the better justified, since in the same year Archbishop Theodore held a national council at Hatfield, where all the bishops of England made their solemn profession of faith, and declared that they received the four general councils and the council of Pope Martin against the Monothelites. It seems even that Wilfrid undertook to guarantee not only the faith of the Anglo-Saxon bishops, but also of all the Churches scattered in the north of Great Britain and in Ireland, among the Scots and Picts. Thus the Celtic Christians, whom he had so persecuted and opposed as to peculiar rites, inspired him with no doubt as to their unity of belief on all points which related to the faith; and he did not hesitate to answer for them before the Pope and the universal Church.

When Wilfrid at last made up his mind to return to England, new dangers met him on the way. He expected to meet again his friend and host. King Dagobert, in Austrasia, but that prince had just fallen a victim to a plot fomented by Ebroin, one of whose creatures, an unhappy bishop, lay in wait for the great Anglo-Saxon with a band of armed men, with the intention of robbing him, killing or selling into slavery all his companions, and delivering him to the implacable Ebroin. This bishop reproached

Wilfrid with having sent back from exile the tyrant Dagobert, from whom they had just freed themselves. “I only did”, said Wilfrid, “what you yourselves would have done if an exile of our race and of royal blood had come to you to seek an asylum”. “You are more just than I am”, replied the bishop; “pass on your way, and may God and St. Peter be your aid!”

When Wilfrid arrived in England, his first step before proceeding to his diocese in Mercia was to give to King Ethelred the charter he had obtained from the Pope, with the sanction of the hundred and twenty-five bishops of the council at Rome, in favour of the great abbey of that kingdom and of central England at Peterborough, the foundation of which he had approved fifteen years before, and to which he now put the final crown. The deed of Pope Agathon, addressed to the king of Mercia, to Archbishop Theodore, and to Bishop Sexwulf, who had been the first abbot of the *Burg* of St. Peter, conferred on the monastery an exemption from all ordinary charges and jurisdiction. In this document the king was recommended to be the defender of the community, but never its tyrant; the diocesan bishop to regard the abbot as his assistant in the evangelical ministry; the metropolitan to ordain in his own person the abbot elected by the community. This charter was sanctioned and signed by the King, the Queen, Archbishop Theodore, and his friend Abbot Adrian; and finally by Wilfrid himself, with this formula, “I, Wilfrid, on my way to reclaim, by apostolical favour, my see of York, being witness and bearer of this decree, I agree to it”.

But the confidence which Wilfrid thus expressed was singularly misplaced. We now reach the most strange incident of all his stormy life. Having returned to Northumbria, conformably to the instructions of the Pope and the bishop, he humbly presented to King Egfrid, who had expelled him, that which he regarded as the standard of victory, namely, the decree of the Holy See and Council of Rome, with the seals and signatures of all the bishops. The king convoked the assembly of nobles and clergy, and caused the pontifical letters to be read in their presence. Upon this there arose an ardent opposition. The authority of the Pope or the Council was not disputed, but there were cries on all sides that the judgment had been bought. By the advice of the whole council, and with the express consent of the intruded bishops, the king condemned Wilfrid to an ignominious imprisonment of nine months. He was at once taken prisoner; nothing was left to him but the clothing he wore; his servants and adherents were dispersed, and his friends strictly forbidden to visit him. Queen Ermenburga, his old and pitiless enemy, took from him his *Chrismarium* or reliquary which he wore round his neck, and took possession of it, having it always hung in her chamber or in her carriage when she travelled, either as a trophy of her victory or from that sincere but savage devotion which at times took such strange forms, and was the cause of such dishonest actions. This done, the noble bishop was confided to one of the king's officers. Count Osfrid, who removed him so that none of his friends might know where he was, and shut him up in a cell which during the day was scarcely penetrated by a few feeble rays of light, and where at night he was not permitted to have a lamp.

It is comprehensible that a barbarous Saxon king, full of pride and cupidity, and a passionate and angry woman, should give themselves up to such excesses against a bishop whose wealth, power, moral influence, and fearless character, excited their jealousy. But what was St. Theodore doing meanwhile? He, so eager, three years before,

to make himself the instrument of the king of Northumbria's violent deeds, where was he now when the repairing of his error was in question? He, the metropolitan and chief of the Anglo-Saxon bishops, how could he suffer the episcopal dignity to be outraged in the person of the most illustrious of his brethren? He, the veteran monk, so zealous for the traditions and privileges of his order, how could he yield to the violence of laymen or to the jealousy of the Celts the most ardent propagator of the Benedictine rule? He, the envoy and direct representative of the Holy See in England, how dared he condemn that pontifical decision which Wilfrid had been charged to signify to him? Above all, how dared he brave the anathemas which the decree of the council directed against all traitors, whatever their rank? On these questions, history, so abundant in other details, keeps entire silence; she leaves us no other resource than to look for future repentance and expiation for so shameful a connivance at sin.

After a while King Egfrid resolved to treat with his captive. He offered to restore to him a part of his bishopric, with many gifts added to it, if Wilfrid would acquiesce in his will, and acknowledge the falsity of the apostolic decree. Wilfrid replied that it would be easier to take his head than to tear such a confession from him. When he was cast back into his cell, he there gave an example of patience and courage truly episcopal. The guards heard him chanting the psalms as if he were in his monastic stall at Ripon or Hexham; at night they saw his prison illumined by a light which terrified them. The wife of Earl Osfrid having fallen dangerously ill, her husband had recourse to the holy man whom he had been appointed to guard; he took him out of prison and led him to the bedside of the invalid. The latter, at an after period and when she had herself become an abbess, often related to her new family, with tears of gratitude, that the prisoner found her in the last stupor of departing life, yet that a few drops of holy water cast on her face, with prayer, were sufficient to cure her. Osfrid, penetrated with gratitude and admiration, quickly informed the king of what had happened. "I conjure you", said the brave Saxon, "both for your own welfare and for mine, no longer to persecute this holy and innocent bishop; as for me, I would rather die than continue this jailer's trade". Far from listening to him, the king took from him the guardianship of the captive, who was sent to a castle still more remote, near Dunbar, on the shore of the Scottish sea, where he was entrusted to another earl much more harsh than Osfrid, with orders to keep him strictly isolated in his prison, and to put him in irons. But they were never able, Eddi tells us, to make these of the right size; they were always either too large or too small to confine the hands and feet of the prisoner.

While Wilfrid thus paid the price of his glory and his courage, the king and queen made a triumphant progress through the very country where he was held prisoner. In the course of this tour, they arrived at the monastery of Coldingham, on the sea-shore, not far from Dunbar, and half-way between the prison and the holy island of Lindisfarne. In this great establishment, where Etheldreda had first taken refuge, two communities, one of men and one of women, obeyed the Abbess Ebba, sister of Oswy, and aunt of Egfrid. Like Hilda at Whitby, Ebba exercised at Coldingham, with great wisdom and authority, that sort of rule at once spiritual and temporal which was the inheritance of more than one Anglo-Saxon princess; but far from being, like Hilda, the enemy of Wilfrid, she became his liberator. During the night which the royal couple passed at the monastery, Queen Ermenburga was seized with an attack of delirium; in the morning the abbess

appeared, and as the queen, whose limbs were already contracted, seemed at the point of death, Ebba, with the double authority of a cloistered superior and of a princess of the race of Odin, said to her nephew, "I know all that you have done; you have superseded Bishop Wilfrid without having a crime to accuse him of; and when he returned from his exile with an apostolic verdict in his favour, you robbed and imprisoned him, foolishly despising the power of St. Peter to bind and to loose. My son, listen to the words of her who speaks to you as a mother. Break the bishop's chains; restore to him the relics which the queen has taken from his neck, and which she carries about with her to her own injury, as the Philistines did the ark of God; and if (as would be best) you will not restore him to his bishopric, at least let him be free to leave your kingdom and where he will. Then, upon my faith, the queen will recover; if not, I take God to witness, that He will punish you both".

Egfrid understood and obeyed: he sent the reliquary to Dunbar, with orders to set the bishop at liberty immediately. Ermenburga recovered, and Wilfrid, having speedily collected some of his numerous friends and disciples, took refuge in Mercia, the king of which country he supposed would be friendly towards him, in consequence of his having brought him from Rome the deed of privilege for Peterborough. But here also his expectations were vain. He had just founded a small monastery for the use of his troop of exiles when the hatred of his enemies discovered and pursued him. Ethelred, king of Mercia, had married a sister of Egfrid; and the queens, as we see in Saxon history, were often more powerful than the kings, for evil as well as for good. Ethelred, moved by the instigation of his wife, or by fear of displeasing his powerful brother-in-law, signified to his nephew, who had given one of his estates to the persecuted bishop, that he would endanger his head if he kept the enemy of King Egfrid another day in his territory. Wilfrid, therefore, was obliged to leave Mercia, and went into the neighbouring kingdom of Wessex. But here the hatred of another queen assailed him. The wife of Centwin, king of the Western Saxons, was the sister of that Ermenburga who had been the first cause of the poor exile's troubles: she had espoused her sister's quarrel; and again he was obliged to fly from a country in which there was no hospitality for him. These three brothers-in-law, kept by a common animosity in unwonted union, reigned over the three kingdoms which together occupied three-quarters at least of Saxon England.

Wherever the influence of the Northumbrian king could extend, there was no longer for Wilfrid either security or peace.

Thus pursued by the influence of Ermenburga, her husband, and brothers-in-law, from almost the whole territory of the Saxon Confederation; repelled from Canterbury and its environs by the hostility or indifference of Archbishop Theodore, he took refuge in the smallest and most obscure of the seven kingdoms, and the only one which had not yet been Christianised, the kingdom of the Southern Saxons. The asylum which Christian kings refused him he hoped to find among his pagan countrymen. It may perhaps be recollected that he had been in great danger fifteen years before, at the commencement of his episcopate, on his return from his consecration at Compiègne, when wrecked on this inhospitable coast. The king of Sussex himself, who was still a pagan like his subjects, had been then the leader of the wreckers. Now the king was a Christian, thanks to his wife, a Mercian princess; but the country continued almost

completely inaccessible to Catholic missionaries. This kingdom had furnished to the Heptarchy its first known Bretwalda, Aella, but since that time had fallen into obscurity, being defended at once against the invasions of its powerful neighbours, and against the efforts of the Canterbury monks, by its rocks and forests, which rendered it difficult of approach, a circumstance which is hardly comprehensible now in sight of that soft and fertile country. The inhabitants held sternly to their ancient faith; they reproached the other Saxons, who were already Christians, with their apostasy. At the same time, they had among them the beginnings from which, in ordinary cases, the conversion even of the most obstinate was produced — namely, a Christian princess and a monastery. This monastery, however, was occupied only by the small community of Celtic monks, of whom mention has already been made, and the people of Sussex gave no heed to their teaching. It was to this new soil that Wilfrid came: he might be driven from his country and from his diocese, but nothing could prevent his being, wherever he was, the minister of the living God, and the preacher of the truth. His first exile had made him the Apostle of the Frisians; his second gave him occasion to open the doors of the Church to the last pagans who remained to be converted in the British Isles. Like Aeneas at Carthage, he touched and gained the heart of the king and queen by his story of the cruel trials of his exile. He enlightened and roused their minds; he preached to them with infinite sweetness the greatness and goodness of God; and he obtained permission to address the mass of their people to whom no one had yet dared to carry the word of life.

Thus daily, for many successive months, the proscribed and fugitive bishop stood forth among those unconquered Saxons, and told them all the series of miracles worked by the Divine Power since the creation of the world; he taught them to condemn idols, to believe in a future judgment, to fear eternal punishment, and to desire eternal happiness. His persuasive eloquence triumphed over all obstacles. The chiefs of the nation, the earls and thanes, demanded baptism at his hands: four priests of his followers baptized the rest of the nation; a few, however, resisted; and the king thought himself authorised to compel them to follow the example of their countrymen. This melancholy fact must be confessed with regret, and forgiven, in consideration of the age and race, to which violence was so natural and so contagious; but it must be added that this is the sole instance in which force was employed in the whole history of the conversion of the Anglo- Saxons, a work which Wilfrid had the glory of completing by the noble labours of his exile.

The God whom he preached to these last pagans permitted his mission to be the channel of other blessings besides the gift of salvation. Before Wilfrid's arrival, a drought of three years' duration had desolated the country, and famine decimated the population. The poor famished creatures might be seen dragging themselves, by forty or fifty at a time, to the edge of the precipitous cliffs on the shore, and thence, holding each other by their emaciated hands, they would plunge together into the sea. But on the very day when Wilfrid administered baptism to the chiefs, a soft and abundant rain watered the desolate fields, and restored to all the hope of a plentiful harvest. While the cruel famine lasted the bishop had taught his future converts a new means of gaining their subsistence by fishing with nets. Until his arrival, although the waters of the sea and of their rivers abounded with fish, they had been able to catch nothing but eels. Wilfrid did



not disdain to teach them how to join all their little nets into one large enough to catch the biggest fish. By such services he gradually gained the hearts of those whose souls he wished to save. The king of Sussex was as grateful as his people. He proved it by giving to the apostle of his country, for a residence during his exile, the domain on which he himself lived, and which supported eighty-seven families — that is to say, was, according to Saxon calculations, capable of feeding that number of mouths, and consequently quite sufficient for the train of monks and other Northumbrians who followed the exile in his wanderings. This estate formed a peninsula, which was called Seal's Island. Here Wilfrid founded a monastery, which afterwards became the seat of the most southern diocese of England, and which he filled, half with monks who had come with him from the north, and half with novices taken from the converts of the south. These monks soon united in celebrating, among the other festivals of the Catholic liturgy, the feast of St. Oswald, the king who died fighting for the Christian faith and the independence of Northumbria, some years after the birth of Wilfrid; and this particular shows us how the unity of faith and associations consecrated by the new religion prepared the way for the social and political union of the different races of Great Britain.

Wilfrid found on his new possessions two hundred and fifty slaves of both sexes, whom he not only delivered from the yoke of Satan by baptizing them, but also from that of men by setting them free. It was thus that the monastic apostles sowed from a lull hand, in England as elsewhere, bread for the soul and for the body, salvation and freedom.

Five years thus passed over Wilfrid, in his laborious but fruitful exile, of which the conversion of the Southern Saxons was not the only consolation. While the proscribed bishop reconstituted a centre of monastic life and Christian evangelism in his peninsula of Selsey, the forests of Sussex gave asylum to a whole band of other exiles, of whom the chief was a young prince of the Western Saxons named Ceadwalla, who had been banished from Wessex by the same king who, acting on the suggestion of his wife, expelled Wilfrid. The similarity of their fortunes united the two fugitives, though the western prince was still a pagan. Wilfrid, who seems never to have feared a danger or refused to do a service, procured horses and money for Ceadwalla. The exiled prince, whose impetuosity and boldness were only surpassed by his cruelty, seized, one after the other, the two kingdoms of Wessex and Sussex, laid waste the kingdom of Kent, and ended by conquering the Isle of Wight. This picturesque island, so much admired by modern travellers, and which lies between the two districts occupied by the Saxons of the West and South, was inhabited by twelve hundred pagan families of the tribe of the Jutes, a race which first of all the German invaders had landed upon the coast of Kent. The ferocious Ceadwalla slaughtered them all, to avenge the wounds he had received in attacking them. But his mind was pervaded by a vague instinct of religion such as he had seen in Wilfrid, although he had not been moved to adopt it. Before he invaded the island he made a vow that, if victorious, he would give a quarter of his booty to the God of Wilfrid, and he kept his word by granting to the bishop a quarter of the conquered and depopulated island. He even carried his cruel condescension so far as to permit the monks to instruct and baptize two young brothers of the chief of the island before cutting them down in the general massacre. And the two young victims marched to



death with so joyous a confidence, that the popular veneration long counted them among the martyrs of the new faith. This savage, as soon as he returned to Wessex, summoned Wilfrid thither, treated him as his father and friend, and put himself definitely under instruction. But as soon as he understood, thanks to the teaching of Wilfrid, what religion and the Church meant, he found baptism by Bishop Wilfrid insufficient, and it will be hereafter seen that he went to Rome, as much to expiate his crimes by a laborious pilgrimage, as to receive baptism at the hands of the Pope.

Although the report of Wilfrid's fresh apostolic conquests, and of his relations with the kings of the provinces nearest the metropolis of Canterbury, must certainly have reached the ears of Archbishop Theodore, the conduct of that prelate towards him continued inexplicable. In spite of the decrees of the Holy See, he held at Twyford, in Northumbria, a council, where, with the consent of King Egfrid, he disposed of the episcopal sees of Hexham and Lindisfarne, exactly as if these dioceses had not been parts of that of York, or as if Wilfrid had been dead or canonically deposed. The first bishop thus placed by Theodore at Hexham, a see created in the very monastery built and endowed by Wilfrid, was an admirable monk, named Cuthbert, whose virtues and sanctity had long been celebrated in Northumbria; and, what is stranger still, nothing in the fully detailed life of this saint which has been preserved to us, shows that his repugnance to be made bishop had any connection with the manifest violation of the rights of him whose place he was called upon to usurp. All that he desired was to be transferred from Hexham to Lindisfarne — that is to say, to the episcopal monastery where he had been educated, and in which, or in one of its dependencies, he had always lived. He evidently believed that the metropolitan supremacy of Theodore was without limit, and dispensed him from following the canons of the Church. King Egfrid professed the most affectionate devotion to Cuthbert; but this need not astonish us. The persecutor of Wilfrid was far from being the enemy of the Church or of the monastic order. He was, on the contrary, the founder and benefactor of many of the great monasteries of the north of England, and the friend of all the saints of his time, except Wilfrid alone; and it seems to have been his wish to transfer to Cuthbert the confiding affection and respectful deference with which he had treated Wilfrid in the early part of his reign. Ermenburga, the cruel enemy of Wilfrid, was, like her husband, filled with the most ardent veneration for the holy monk, who had become one of the successors of her victim. But this devotion did not prevent Egfrid from giving himself up to ambition, and indulging in a thirst for war and conquest too much conformed to the traditions of his ancestors and pagan predecessors, “the Ravager”, and “the Man of Fire”. In 684, without any known motive, he sent an army against Ireland, which devastated that island with pitiless cruelty. This invasion is the first of the unexpiated national crimes of the Anglo-Saxons against Ireland. It excited the indignation, not only of the victims, but also of the witnesses of its barbarity. The Venerable Bede himself, though little to be suspected of partiality, or even of justice, as regards the Celts, points out the crime committed by the king of his nation against an innocent people, who, far from espousing the cause of the British Celts, had always been the friends and allies of the Anglo-Saxons. The soldiers of Egfrid did not even spare those great and holy monasteries where the Anglo-Saxon youth were in the habit of going to learn evangelical piety and knowledge, or where, as at Mayo, there lived a numerous community of Northumbrian monks who had preferred to forsake their country, and

remain faithful to the teachings of their first apostles, rather than to submit to the triumph of Wilfrid and the Roman rule. The poor Irish, after defending themselves to the utmost, were everywhere vanquished, and had no other resource left but that of seeking by constant and solemn imprecations to call down the vengeance of Heaven upon their unworthy assailants. This time at least their too legitimate curses were realised.

In vain the Northumbrian Egbert, an illustrious and most learned monk of Lindisfarne, who had voluntarily banished himself to Ireland for the love of Christ and the benefit of his soul, and who had great authority in both islands, supplicated the king of his native country to spare a people who had in no way provoked his anger. In vain the holy Bishop Cuthbert, together with the best friends of the king, endeavoured in the following year to dissuade him from commencing a war, not less cruel, and perhaps not less unjust, against the Picts. Egfrid would listen neither to one nor the other, but hurried to his ruin. He himself led his troops, and permitted them under his very eyes to devastate the invaded country with atrocious cruelty. The northern Celts retired before him, and thus succeeded in drawing him into a Highland pass, where he perished with his whole army, while still scarcely forty years of age, and after a reign of fifteen years. It was the counterpoise and return for the victory he had gained at the beginning of his reign in the days of his happy union with Wilfrid. This disaster was the signal for the liberation of the Celtic races whom Oswald, Oswy, and Egfrid had brought under the yoke of Northumbria, a yoke now broken for ever. The Picts, the Scots, and the Britons of Strathclyde, together rushed upon the Angles, and drove them from the whole conquered territory between the Firth of Forth and the Tweed. Since then the northern frontier of Northumbria and of all England has remained fixed at the line which runs from the mouth of the Tweed to the Solway Firth. And since then, also, the Angles who remained north of the Tweed have been subject to the Scots and Picts, forming with them the kingdom henceforward called Scotland. From that day the splendour of Northumbria was eclipsed.

Queen Ermenburga awaited the result of her husband's expedition in a monastery governed by one of her sisters at Carlisle, in the centre of the British population of Cumberland; and the holy bishop Cuthbert, to whom King Egbert had given this town with its environs, came to the same place to console her in case of a misfortune which he but too clearly foresaw. On the day after his arrival, as the governor of the town accompanied him towards the ancient ramparts of the Roman city, he made a sudden pause, and, leaning on his staff, said with a sigh, "Alas! I fear that all is over, and that the judgment of God has come upon our army". When he was urged to explain what he meant, he merely replied, "See how clear the sky is, and remember that the judgments of God are inscrutable". Upon this he immediately returned to the queen, and told her that he feared the king had perished, and that she ought to start not the next day, which was Sunday, a day on which it was unlawful to travel in a carriage, but on the Monday, to seek refuge in the royal fortress of Bamborough, where he promised to join her.

Two days afterwards a fugitive from the battle came to tell that at the very hour indicated by the saint, King Egfrid, whose guards had all perished in his defence, had been killed by the avenging sword of a Pict.

Ermenburga bowed to the Divine hand which struck her. She took the veil from the hands of Cuthbert in her sister's monastery at Carlisle. This Jezebel, as she is called by the friend of Wilfrid, changed suddenly from a wolf into a lamb and became the model of abbesses. The body of her husband was not buried at Whitby, as those of his father and grandfather had been, but carried, perhaps as a trophy of the victory, to the monastic island of Iona, which had been the asylum of his race in their exile, and which was still the national sanctuary of the victors.

Wilfrid, banished and deprived of his diocese, was thus but too well avenged. The Northumbrian kingdom, which had struck in his person at the independence and growing authority of the Church, paid the price of its fault by losing half its dominions, and by witnessing the downfall of that political and religious edifice which had been built upon the ruin of the Bishop of York.

One of the new bishops substituted for Wilfrid, a Saxon monk, named Trumwine, whose see had been placed at Abercorn, on the banks of the Forth, at the extreme limit of the Northumbrian territory, escaped with difficulty from death or slavery, the only alternative which the Celtic conquerors left to their defeated enemies. With him came all his monks, whom he dispersed, as he best could, among the Northumbrian communities, as it was necessary to do afterwards with the Saxon nuns of his diocese, who fled before the irritated Celts, whom they regarded as savages. He himself sought a refuge at Whitby, where he passed the rest of his days, rendering such services as were compatible with his episcopal character to the abbess, who was invested with the difficult mission of ruling a double community of monks and nuns. It was no longer Hilda the holy foundress who governed this great establishment; it was a daughter of Oswy, a sister of the three last Northumbrian kings, that Elfleda, whom her father had devoted to God as the price of his victory over the Mercians, and who, entrusted from infancy to Hilda, had grown up in the shadow of the great sea-side monastery. Her mother, Queen Eanfleda, the widow of Oswy, and first protectress of Wilfrid, had joined her there, to end her days in peace beside the tomb of her husband, and under the crosier of her daughter.

The adversaries of Wilfrid thus vanished one by one. Of the three principal authors of his ruin, Egfrid was now dead, and Ermenburga a veiled nun. There still remained Archbishop Theodore. Whether the death of Egfrid had acted as a warning to him, or whether the recollection of his apostolic mission, which, in respect to Wilfrid, he had so ill fulfilled, came back to his mind, with a remorse made keener by age and illness, at least it became apparent to him that the moment for confessing and expiating his fault had come, and he did so with the complete and generous frankness which belongs to great minds. He was an old man even at the moment when he was taken from his Eastern monastery to be placed at the head of the English Church, and he had now laboured nearly twenty years in that fruitful but rude and thorny field. He was thus more than eighty, and the day of his death could not be far distant. The archbishop perceived that if death overtook him before he was reconciled to Wilfrid, the great works he had accomplished in regulating, purifying, and consolidating the morals and Christian institutions of England would be in some degree contradicted before God and men, by the sight of the great bishop, who had been robbed and exiled solely for having defended his rights and obeyed the Holy See. Accordingly, he summoned Wilfrid to

him. Sussex, the residence of the exile, was near to Canterbury, or rather to London, where the interview took place, in presence of a holy monk, who was Bishop of London and of the East Saxons. In presence of these two bishops, the countryman and successor of St. Paul made his general confession. When he had ended, he said to Wilfrid, "My greatest remorse is for the crime I have committed against you, most holy bishop, in consenting to the will of the kings when they robbed you of your possessions and sent you into exile without any fault of yours. I confess it to God and St. Peter, and I take you both to witness that I will do what I can to make up for this sin, and to reconcile you with all the kings and nobles, among my friends, whether they wish it or not. God has revealed to me that I shall die within a year; therefore I conjure you, by the love of God and St. Peter, to consent that I establish you during my life as heir to ray archiepiscopal see, for I acknowledge that of all your nation you are the best instructed in all knowledge and in the discipline of Rome". Wilfrid answered, "May God and St. Peter pardon you all our controversy. I shall always pray for you as your friend. Send letters now to your friends that they may be made aware of our reconciliation, and the injustice of that robbery of which I have been the victim, and that they may restore to me at least a part of my goods, according to the command of the Holy See. After which we will examine with you in the great council of the country who is the most worthy to become your successor."

The old archbishop immediately set to work to repair as far as possible the injury he had done to Wilfrid. He wrote letters to all quarters, to plead his cause and to secure for him as many friends as he had once sought to make him enemies. Unfortunately only one of these letters has been preserved, but it is sufficient to do honour to his goodness of heart, and to show how the old Greek monk, transplanted into the midst of a Germanic population, could rule and train the souls under his authority, like a worthy successor and countryman of him who acknowledged himself, according to Scripture, "debtor both to the Greeks and barbarians". It is addressed to Ethelred, king of Mercia, who by his means had become the friend and brother-in-law of Wilfrid's chief persecutor. "My very dear son, — Let your holiness know that I am at peace with the venerable Bishop Wilfrid; therefore I beseech and enjoin you, by the love of Christ, to give him your protection as you formerly did, to the utmost of your power, and as long as you live; for all this time while robbed of his possessions, he has laboured for God among the heathen. It is I, Theodore, the humble and infirm bishop, who in my old age address to you this exhortation, according to the apostolic will, so that this holy man may forget the injuries of which he has been so unjustly the victim, and that amends may be made to him. I would ask you besides, if you still love me, although the length of the journey may make my request importunate, let me see once more your dear countenance, that I may bless you before I die. But above all, my son, my dear son, do what I conjure you to do for the holy Wilfrid. If you obey your father who will not be much longer in this world, obedience will bring you happiness. Adieu, peace be with you, live in Christ, abide in the Lord, and may the Lord abide in you". This letter had its due effect. Ethelred received Wilfrid with great honour, although six years before he would not suffer him to spend a single night in his kingdom ; he restored all the monasteries and domains which had formerly been his in Mercia, and to the end of his life remained faithfully attached to him.

But it was in Northumbria above all that it was important to obtain restitution for the robbed and humiliated bishop. For this purpose Theodore addressed himself to the new king Aldfrid and to the princess Elfleda, sister of the king, and abbess of Whitby, who had naturally inherited a dislike for Wilfrid from St. Hilda, from whom she had received her education, before becoming her successor, and whose vast buildings she was about to complete.

Hilda had been quickly followed to the grave by her illustrious rival Ebba, who was, like herself, a princess of the Northumbrian royal dynasty, and abbess of a double monastery at Coldingham. The young Elfleda, niece of Ebba and heiress of Hilda, was therefore the sole representative in Northumbria of that great and salutary authority which was so willingly yielded by the Anglo-Saxon kings and people to those princesses of their sovereign races who became the brides of Christ. The noble Elfleda, who was scarcely twenty-five years of age when she was called to succeed Hilda as abbess of Whitby, is described by Bede as a most pious mistress of spiritual life. But like all the Anglo-Saxon princesses whom we meet with in the cloister at this epoch, she did not cease to take a passionate interest in the affairs of her race and country. All the more strongly, in consequence, she felt the need of spiritual help to aid her virgin motherhood in ruling the many souls gathered together under her crosier. It was chiefly to Cuthbert that she had recourse. Before he had become bishop, while he lived on a desert rock near Lindisfarne, she had prevailed on him to grant her an interview on an island on the Northumbrian coast, called then, as now, Coquet Island, and which lies nearer Lindisfarne than Whitby. This was while her brother Egfrid still reigned. The hermit and the abbess went each to their meeting by sea; and when he had answered all her questions, she threw herself at his feet, and entreated him to tell her, by virtue of those prophetic powers with which he was known to be gifted, whether her brother Egfrid should have a long life and reign. "I am surprised", he answered, "that a woman well taught and versed as you are in the knowledge of Holy Scripture should speak to me of length with regard to human life, which lasts no longer than a spider's web, as the Psalmist has said, '*Quia anni nostri sicut aranca meditabuntur.*' How short then must life be for a man who has but a year to live, and who has death at his door!". At these words, she wept long; then, drying her tears, she continued, with feminine boldness, and inquired who should be the king's successor, since he had neither sons nor brothers.

"Do not say", he replied, "that he is without heirs; he shall have a successor whom you will love, as you love Egfrid, as a sister".

"Then tell me, I entreat you, where this successor is".

"You see", returned Cuthbert, directing the eyes of his companion towards the archipelago of islets which dots the Northumbrian coast around Lindisfarne, "how many isles are in the vast ocean; it is easy for God to bring from them some one to reign over the English".

Elfleda then perceived that he spoke of a young man supposed to be the son of her father Oswy, by an Irish mother, and who, since his infancy, had lived as an exile at Iona, where he gave himself up to study.

And it thus happened in reality that the cruel and war-like Egfrid was succeeded on the most important throne of the Anglo-Saxon confederation by a learned prince



who, during twenty years of a long and prosperous reign, sustained and restored to the utmost extent of his powers the ancient glory of the Northumbrian kingdom, within the new limits to which the victorious insurrection of the Picts had restricted it, but who specially distinguished himself by his love of letters and knowledge. Aldfrid had passed his early days at Iona, in that island retreat where his father Oswy and his uncle Oswald had both found refuge in their youth, and whither the bleeding body of the brother whose crown descended to him had just been carried. During his long, and perhaps voluntary, exile in the Scottish monasteries and schools, he had been trained in theology and dialectics, cosmography, and all the studies then cultivated by the Celtic monks. He brought back from his residence at Iona, and his visits to Melrose and other places, that passionate curiosity and lavish liberality which may be traced among the Irish of the seventh century, and which seems a kind of prelude to the revival of learning in the fifteenth century.

To this new king, as well as to his sister, the Abbess Elfleda, Archbishop Theodore wrote, to exhort them both to lay aside their enmity against Wilfrid, and to receive him with unreserved kindness. A prince so much given to letters could not remain deaf to the prayers of an archbishop who added to his authority as legate of the Holy See and primate of the Anglo-Saxon Church the fame of greater learning and zeal for intellectual culture than had ever before been seen in Britain. Accordingly, in the second year of his reign, Aldfrid recalled Wilfrid to Northumbria, and restored to him, first, the monastery of Hexham, with all the surrounding parishes, then the bishopric of York, and finally Ripon, which had been his chosen home, and the centre of his reforms. It is easy to understand the joy of the monks of those great communities, formed by Wilfrid, who had, no doubt, daily prayed for the restoration of their father. They went out to meet him in crowds, and led him back in triumph to the churches he had built for them. The bishops formerly placed by Theodore at Hexham, Ripon, and York, were dismissed; and the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne having voluntarily abdicated to return to his solitary rock of Fern, and there prepare for his approaching death, Wilfrid was charged to appoint his successor.

The four dioceses formed by the division of the great diocese of York, which comprehended all the country north of the Humber, were thus once more united under the crosier of Wilfrid. But a restoration so complete lasted only a year: the administration of Wilfrid met great opposition at Lindisfarne. On this subject the Venerable Bede, who was as prudent as sincere, speaks only by hints. It may be divined that Wilfrid took advantage of his re-establishment in his diocese to strike a last blow at Celtic traditions, and that spirit of independence which the first Scottish apostles of Northumbria had introduced into the holy island. The changes he attempted to introduce were so unbearable to the Anglo-Saxon monks of the school of Cuthbert and his masters, that they declared themselves ready to imitate their brethren who had left Ripon at the arrival of Wilfrid. They preferred to leave the first sanctuary of Christianity and the cradle of their order in Northumbria, rather than to yield to the tyranny of their new superior. He himself became aware that their resistance was insurmountable, and at the end of a year he gave up Lindisfarne to a new bishop who, being both wise and gentle, calmed all parties.



About this time the prediction of Archbishop Theodore was verified; he died at the age of eighty-eight, after a pontificate of twenty-two years. His conduct towards Wilfrid is open to the widest censure, and can scarcely be explained otherwise than by the jealousy inspired in the metropolitan of England by the splendour and power of the immense bishopric of York under a ruler such as Wilfrid. But an impartial posterity owes him at least the justice rendered him by his contemporaries, and is bound to recognise in him a man who did more than any of his six predecessors to organise and consolidate the Church of England, on the double basis of Roman supremacy and of the union of the Anglo-Saxon bishoprics among themselves by their subordination to the metropolitan see of Canterbury. No bishop before him had laboured so much for the intellectual development of the native clergy, or for the union of the different Anglo-Saxon dynasties. The Greek monk, therefore, may well be reckoned among the founders of the English Church and nationality; and when he was buried, wrapped in his monastic habit in place of a shroud, in the ecclesiastical burying-ground of Canterbury, it was but just that he should be laid on the right hand of St. Augustin, the Italian monk who a century earlier had cast the first seeds of faith and Christian civilisation into the soul of the Anglo-Saxon race.

## CHAPTER V

### SECOND EXILE OF WILFRID, AND SECOND APPEAL TO ROME. — 686-705

The following are the principal dates of the life of Wilfrid : —

664. Named Bishop of York and of all Northumbria.

665. Replaced by Ceadda, during his absence in France for his consecration. He retires to Ripon.

669. Recalled to York by the intervention of Theodore.

678. Dismemberment of the diocese; he is removed from York, and transferred to Lindisfarne; he refuses, and appeals to Rome.

679. On his return from Rome, with a judgment in his favour, he is imprisoned, and afterwards exiled.

686. After the death of Egfrid, he is a second time re-established.

691. Third expulsion by King Aldfrid, and second exile.

692. He is made Bishop of Lichfield.

703. Assembly of Nesterfield. Wilfrid refuses to sign his deposition. Second appeal to the Holy See; third voyage to Rome.

705. He returns to England. Assembly on the banks of the Nid; his two monasteries of Ripon and Hexham are restored to him.

709. He dies at Oundle.

Wilfrid was fifty-six when his great rival, thus tardily transformed into a repentant and faithful ally, died; and for more than a quarter of a century his life had been one continued conflict. He might therefore hope for a little repose, and even perhaps believe it possible. But God still had in reserve for him long years of renewed trials. The first half of his history is repeated in the second with a wearisome monotony as to the events, but with the same constancy and courage in the hero of the endless struggle.

The truce which was granted to him in the midst of his laborious career lasted but five years. It was more than once disturbed: calm and storm alternately characterised his relations with King Aldfrid, a monarch justly dear to the Northumbrians, whom his courage and ability preserved from the disastrous consequences of Egfrid's downfall. But in 691 the king, freed from the influence which Archbishop Theodore had exercised over him, as well as over all England, cast off all pretences towards the bishop, whose moral and material power was an offence to him, as it had been to his father and brother. Predisposed, also, by his education and his long residence in Ireland to favour Celtic tendencies, it may be supposed that he easily allowed himself to be influenced by the rancour and ill-will naturally entertained towards Wilfrid by the disciples and partisans of Scotie monks and bishops. Thus war was once more declared between the court of Northumbria and that exclusively Roman and Benedictine spirit, of which Wilfrid was the uncompromising champion.

Three complaints in chief were brought against the great bishop, two of which dated back to the origin of the struggle begun by Wilfrid between the Celts and Romanists. The matter in question was the monastery of Ripon, founded originally for a colony of Celtic novices from Melrose, but afterwards given to Wilfrid, to the injury of the first owners, and dedicated by him to St. Peter, as if with the intention of holding up the standard under which he intended to fight. His new adversaries at first proposed to deprive the Church of Ripon, the true capital of Wilfrid's spiritual kingdom, of a portion of its vast possessions, and to erect this into a new bishopric, dividing a second time the diocese of York, for the extension of Celtic influence, but in contempt of the Pontifical verdict and of the royal grant which had irrevocably guaranteed to Wilfrid and his monks the existence of this community free and exempt from all other jurisdiction. Wilfrid, with his usual firmness, refused to consent to this division; upon which his adversaries changed their tactics, and reproached him for not obeying all the decrees

issued by Archbishop Theodore as legate of the Holy See. This was in evident reference to the new bishoprics erected by Theodore in Wilfrid's diocese. With address worthy of a more civilised century, the theologians of the Northumbrian king thus taught him to transform the most devoted champion of Rome into an insurgent against the authority of the Holy See, and to make of the archbishop who had just died reconciled to Wilfrid, an adversary not less dangerous after his death than during his life. Wilfrid replied that he willingly recognised the statutes made by Theodore before their rupture, and after their reconciliation — that is to say, while all the churches were canonically united — but not those which dated from the interval in which division reigned. This was a sufficient pretence for his enemies to treat him as a rebel and consign him to a new exile.

Thus Wilfrid found himself, for the third time, deprived of the see to which he had been canonically appointed by the father and brother of King Aldfrid twenty years before; and sentenced to a second exile for refusing to lend himself to the schemes of the adversaries of law and of monastic and ecclesiastical freedom. He sought refuge in Mercia, the country which he had so often visited in the time of his sainted friend Etheldreda, where the great monastery of Peter's *Burg*, with its hitherto unquestioned independence, reminded him of ancient efforts happily accomplished, and where King Ethelred, who had been definitively won over to his side by the touching letter of the aged Archbishop Theodore, and who saw in him the representative of Roman authority, offered him effectual protection and an affection which never wavered in its fidelity. This king immediately called him to the vacant see of Lichfield, which, since the new episcopal division arranged by Theodore, no longer comprehended the whole of Mercia, but which still offered a sufficient field to the apostolic zeal of Wilfrid. It was the see which had been held by the gentle and pious Ceadda, who superseded Wilfrid at York, at the time of his first quarrel with King Oswy in 665. Wilfrid now succeeded his former supplanter, changing for the fourth time his episcopal residence. In this obscure and restricted sphere, he contented himself with fulfilling his duties as bishop, and awaiting better days with patience. Here he lived eleven years, and during that long interval one single trace of his active work is all that is visible — the consecration of a missionary bishop named Swidbert. This missionary, destined to be the apostle of Westphalia, had already visited that region of Friesland whither Wilfrid himself carried the first revelation of the Gospel, and whither his example had led several Anglo-Saxon monks, the traces of whose light-giving progress will be met with further on.

It is evident that no one thought of doing anything to carry out the intention, so clearly expressed by Theodore, of making Wilfrid his successor. On the contrary, after an interval of two years, a priest named Berchtwald, formerly a monk at Glastonbury, and afterwards abbot of a monastery built at Reculver, on the site of the palace to which the first Christian king had retired, after giving up his capital to Augustin, was elected to the vacant see. Berchtwald was descended from the dynasty which reigned in Mercia, and was the first of the race of Odin who took his place among the successors of the apostles. One Anglo-Saxon had already figured among the Archbishops of Canterbury; but as he had changed his name into the Roman appellation of Deusdedit, he has been reckoned among the foreign prelates, and the national historians, chronicling the promotion of Berchtwald, write proudly, "Hitherto our bishops had been Roman; from this time they were English". As there was no other metropolitan in England, he had to

go to Lyons to be consecrated. He presided over the English Church for nearly forty years. He was very learned, deeply imbued with the knowledge of Holy Scripture, and of monastic discipline; but the Saxon Bede acknowledges that he was far from equalling his predecessor, Theodore the Greek.

But from whence arose the hostility of the new archbishop to Wilfrid? Perhaps the seeds of it had been sown in the Celto-British monastery of Glastonbury. Except at the moment of the holy Archbishop Theodore's tardy confession and restitution, Wilfrid, from the beginning of his struggle with the Anglo-Saxon princes and prelates, seems never to have met with the least sympathy at Canterbury, the natural centre of Roman traditions and authority, and it was never thither that he went to seek a refuge in his troubles. Nothing more strongly proves to what a point national feeling already prevailed, not indeed over the power of love and respect for Catholic unity, but over all that would compromise, even in appearance, the interests or the self-love of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Abbot Adrian, the friend and companion of Theodore, like him charged by the Holy See to watch over the maintenance of English orthodoxy, and who survived the archbishop nearly twenty years, never extended a friendly hand to the man who, not without good cause, declared himself the dauntless champion and innocent victim of Roman unity. The case was the same, as we have already seen, with the illustrious and holy abbot Benedict Biscop, the founder of several new foundations, entirely Roman in spirit and heart, in the country, and even in the very diocese of Wilfrid. Is it not necessary to conclude that Wilfrid appeared, at least to his most illustrious contemporaries, to go much too far in his zeal, and to mistake the indispensable conditions of religious peace in England?

However this may have been, the new archbishop (who, we may say in passing, holds a place among the saints of the English and Benedictine calendars) soon formed an alliance with King Aldfrid. The resentment of this prince had not been disarmed, nor his resolution modified, either by the long exile of Wilfrid, or by the impunity with which Bishops Bosa and John had since occupied the usurped sees of Hexham and York. Twelve years after the last expulsion of Wilfrid, the king convoked an assembly in the plain of Nesterfield, near the monastery of Ripon, which was one of the principal causes of the struggle. Almost all the British bishops were present, the Archbishop Berchtwald himself presided, and Wilfrid was invited to take part in the proceedings, under a promise that justice would be done him, according to the canon law. He came; but the promise was so far from being kept, that his presence was only made an occasion for heaping recriminations and accusations upon him. Certain bishops probably those who occupied the sees into which his diocese had been partitioned, distinguished themselves by their bitterness; they were supported by the king, and, it must be added, by several abbots, who perhaps disliked the Benedictine rule. An attempt was made to force him into an entire acceptance of all the statutes of the deceased archbishop. Wilfrid replied that he would do all they wished, provided it was agreeable to the canon law. Then turning upon his adversaries, he reproached them vehemently for the obstinacy with which for twenty-two years they had opposed the apostolic authority; he demanded under what pretence they dared to prefer the laws made by the archbishop during the division of the Church of England to the decrees of three popes specially delivered for the salvation of souls in Britain? While his

adversaries deliberated over the wording of their minutes, a young man attached to the service of the king, but passionately devoted to Wilfrid, who had educated him along with many other young Saxon nobles, secretly left the royal tent, and, stealing in disguise through the crowd, warned Wilfrid that a treacherous attempt would be made to obtain his signature in approval of all the council might decree — a sort of blank resignation, by means of which he might be deprived of everything he had a lawful right to, whether bishoprics or monasteries, in Northumbria, Mercia, and all other places. “After which”, said this secret friend, “nothing would be left for you but to give yourself up, and lose even your episcopal character in virtue of your own signature”. The actual event to which this warning referred is made known to us by the account given later by Wilfrid himself to the Pope. “I sat”, he said, “in my place, with my abbots, priests, and deacons, when one of the bishops came to ask, in the name of the king and the archbishop, if I submitted to the archbishop’s judgment, and if I was ready to obey what should be decreed with the consent of all, yes or no? I replied that I preferred to know, in the first place, the nature of the judgment before making any engagement. The bishop insisted, saying that he himself knew nothing, that the archbishop would say nothing until I had declared in a document signed by my hand, that I would submit to his judgment, without deviating to the right or left. I replied that I never had heard of such a proceeding, and that it was unheard-of to attempt to bind the conscience by an oath before it was known what the oath implied. However, I promised before all the assembly that I would obey with all my heart the sentence of the archbishop in everything that was not contrary to the statutes of the holy Fathers, to the canons, or to the council of the holy Pope Agathon and his orthodox successors”. Then the excitement rose to its height; the king and archbishop took advantage of it by a proposal to deprive Wilfrid of all that he possessed on either bank of the Humber, leaving him no shelter whatsoever in England. This extreme severity provoked a reaction in his favour, notwithstanding the double force of the royal and archiepiscopal authority. At last it was agreed to leave him the monastery which he had built at Ripon, on condition that he should sign a promise to live there peaceably, not to leave it without the permission of the king, and to give up the exercise of all episcopal functions.

To this insulting proposal Wilfrid replied with an indignant eloquence, which his companion has well earned our gratitude by preserving for us. “By what right do you dare to abuse my weakness, force me to turn the murderer’s sword against myself, and sign my own condemnation? How shall I, whom you accuse of no fault, make myself a scandal in the sight of all who know that for nearly forty years I have borne, though unworthy, the name of bishop? Was not I the first, after the death of those great men sent by St. Gregory, to root out the poisonous seeds sown by Scottish missionaries? Was it not I who converted and brought back the whole nation of the Northumbrians to the true Easter and the Roman tonsure, according to the laws of the Holy See? Was it not I who taught them the sweet harmonies of the primitive Church, in the responses and chants of the two alternate choirs? Was it not I who constituted monastic life among them, after the order of St. Benedict, which no one had before introduced? And after all this, I am now to express with my own hand a sudden condemnation of myself, with no crime whatever upon my conscience! As for this new persecution, by which you try to violate the sacred character with which I am invested, I appeal boldly to the Holy See. I



invite any of you who desire my deposition to go there with me to receive the decision. The sages of Rome must learn the causes for which you would degrade me, before I bend to your sole will". At these words the king and the archbishop cried out, "He is guilty by his own acknowledgment. He is worthy to be condemned, if only because he prefers the judgment of Rome to ours — a foreign tribunal to that of his own country". And the king added, "If you desire it, my father, I will compel him to submit by force. At least for once let him accept our sentence". The archbishop said nothing against this proposal; but the other bishops reminded the king of the safe-conduct he had promised — "Let him go home quietly, as we shall all do". Such clumsy violence, addressed to objects of controversy so out of date, may no doubt cause the learned and the victorious of our days to smile; but the spirit manifested in the war made upon Wilfrid by the king and bishops is one which is never out of date. It is impossible not to be struck by the singular analogy between the means thus used and those that have been employed ever since to obtain the triumph of a bad cause. It is even astonishing to perceive the clear-sightedness with which the Anglo-Saxons, both laymen and ecclesiastics, divined and availed themselves of weapons which seemed reserved for a more advanced state of civilisation. Persecution and confiscation are of all ages; but it is a striking proof of the precocious intelligence of the Anglo-Saxons of the seventh century that they thus stigmatised as a crime and anti-national preference for foreigners that instinct and natural law which induces every victim of oppression or violence to seek justice where it is free and independent; and, above all, that they had recourse to that fine invention of a blank signature, a blind assent to the will of another, wrung from those who had been skilfully reduced to the formidable alternative of a Yes or a No. And yet the men who worked by such means were neither impious nor rascally. On the contrary, King Aldfrid ranks among the most enlightened and justly popular princes of his time. The archbishop, and most of the bishops who persecuted Wilfrid, have been, and still are, venerated among the saints. The only conclusion to which we can come is, that the instincts of despotism exist always and everywhere in the human heart, and that unless vigorously restrained and curbed by laws and institutions, they break out even in the best, choosing the same forms, laying the same snares, producing the same baseness, inspiring the same violences, perversities, and treacheries.

It was not without difficulty that, after the dispersion of the assembly of Nesterfield, the noble old man escaped from the violence of his enemies, and returned to Mercia to his faithful friend King Ethelred. When Wilfrid had repeated all the threats and insults with which the bishops had loaded him: "And you", said he to the king, "how do you intend to act towards me with regard to the lands and goods you have given me?". "I", replied the honest Ethelred, "I shall certainly do nothing to add to so great a wrong; nor, above all, to injure the monastic life which now flourishes in our great abbey of St. Mary; I shall on the contrary maintain it as long as I live, and will change nothing of what I have been able to do by the grace of God, until I have sent to Rome ambassadors who will accompany you, and take with them my deeds of gift. I hope they will there do me the justice deserved by a man who desires no other recompense".

But while the generous Ethelred thus promised and continued his protection to the persecuted bishop and to the monks of the *Burg* of St. Peter, who had always so deeply

interested him, the king of Northumbria and his adherents redoubled their violence and their anger. Sentence of excommunication was pronounced against the monks of Ripon, because of their fidelity to the cause of their founder, who was at the same time their abbot and bishop. Poor Eddi, who was one of them, relates with indignation how the spoilers, not content with invading the patrimony of Wilfrid, showed and excited everywhere, against his disciples and partisans, the horror which attached to excommunicated persons. Food or drink which had been blessed by a monk or priest of Wilfrid's party was thrown away as if it had been offered to idols; and every cup or other utensil touched by a Wilfridian had to be washed and purified before it could be used by these pretenders to orthodoxy.

The unfortunate excommunicated monks of Ripon, to whom the result of the Assembly of Nesterfield was communicated by the invectives and outrages of which they were the object, consoled themselves as they best could by redoubling their prayers and austerities, and praying night and day, in sorrowful union with all the other Wilfridian monasteries, for their aged and courageous father, who was again about to undertake the long and laborious journey to Rome. Thus Wilfrid again set out, as he had done three times before, to seek enlightenment and justice from the successor of St. Peter. A party of faithful monks accompanied him; but he had no longer the stately train of former days, and it was on foot that he crossed the immense space which divided him from Rome. And how many other changes were there since his first journey, when the young favourite of Queen Eanfleda travelled, with all the eagerness of a youth of twenty, towards the Eternal City! He was now seventy: he was a bishop, and had been so for forty years, but a bishop robbed of his possessions, expelled from his diocese for the third time, misunderstood, persecuted, calumniated, not only by the wicked and tyrants, but by his brethren in the episcopate, by his hierarchical superior, and by his countrymen. The old saints, the old kings, the good and holy queens, who had encouraged his first steps in the apostolic life, had disappeared, and with them how many friends, how many brothers in arms, how many disciples prematurely snatched from his paternal hopes! Not only the delightful illusions of youth, but also the generous persistence of manhood, had been compelled to give place in his soul to the consciousness of treason and ingratitude and failure — failure a hundred times proved of his efforts, yet a hundred times renewed in behalf of truth, justice, and honour. Nevertheless he went on and persevered; he held high his white head in the midst of the storm; he was as ardent, eloquent, resolute, and unconquerable in his old age as in the first days of his youth. Nothing in him betrayed fatigue, discouragement, vexation, nor even sadness.

Thus he pressed on, and, after a second stay in Friesland, crossed the countries of Neustria, Austrasia, and Lombardy, all agitated and eaten up, like other nations, by the struggles and passions of this world; all wasted, desolated, and ruled by the wild license of military and material force. He advanced into the midst of them, bearing in his heart and on his countenance the love of law, a law purely spiritual, which swayed souls, which addressed hearts, and which alone could overcome, regulate, and pacify all those new and different races — a law which can never perish, but which from age to age, even to the end of the world, will inspire in its champions the same courage, constancy, and fervour, which burned in the heart of the aged Wilfrid during his long and fatiguing

journey. He was going to Rome, but what might be his reception there? Would any recollection still remain of the brave young pilgrim of the time of St. Martin, the last martyr Pope? or of the victorious and admired bishop of the time of St. Agathon, the Benedictine Pope? Five other Popes had occupied the chair of St. Peter since Agathon. During this long interval, no mark of sympathy, no aid had come from Rome to Wilfrid in all his struggles and sufferings for the cause which he loved to regard as that of the Roman Church and its law, authority, and discipline. And the apostolic throne at this moment was occupied by John VI, a Greek, countryman of that Theodore who had cost Wilfrid so many contradictions and trials.

It was to this pontiff that he and his companion presented, on their knees, their memorial, declaring that they came to accuse no one, but to defend themselves against accusations, by flying to the foot of his glorious see as to the bosom of a mother, and submitting themselves before-hand to all that his authority might prescribe. Accusers could not have been wanting, for there soon arrived envoys from the holy Archbishop Berchtwald, with a written denunciation of Wilfrid. The Pope inquired into the matter in a council at which many bishops and all the Roman clergy were present. Eddi, who must have accompanied his bishop to Rome this time also, has preserved the details in full. Wilfrid perceived the necessity of being conciliatory and moderate in his pretensions, and restrained his ambition within the bounds of a humble prayer. He read before the assembly a paper, in which he recalled to its recollection the decrees given in his favour by Popes Agathon, Benedict, and Sergius, and demanded the execution of them in his own name and in that of the monks who had accompanied him to Rome. He then entreated the Pope to recommend King Ethelred to guarantee to him, against all covetousness or enmity, the monasteries and domains which he held from the Mercian kings for the redemption of their souls. Finally, in case the complete execution of the Pontifical decrees, which had ordained his reinstatement in his bishopric and in all his patrimony, should appear too hard to the king of Northumbria, the generous old man consented to give up his diocese of York, with all the monasteries depending on it, to be disposed of at the Pope's pleasure, except his two beloved foundations of Ripon and Hexham, which he asked to be allowed to retain, with all their possessions. In another sitting the messengers of Berchtwald were heard in their turn. They declared, as their chief accusation, that Bishop Wilfrid, in full council at Nesterfield, had cast contempt upon the decrees of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom the Holy See had placed at the head of all the churches of Great Britain. Then Wilfrid rose, and, with all the authority he derived from his venerable age, related what had really occurred. His tale gained the sympathies of the whole assembly; and the bishops, while showing the most amiable aspect to the friends of Wilfrid, began to talk Greek among themselves, so as not to be understood by the English. They then addressed the Canterbury envoys as follows: "You know, dear brethren, that those who do not prove their chief accusation ought not to be allowed to prove the rest; however, to do honour to the archbishop-legate, and to this holy bishop Wilfrid, we will examine the matter fundamentally in all its details".

And, in fact, they held, during four months, seventy sittings. This was certainly giving a scrupulous, and, it may be said, amazing attention to a cause which may have appeared to the Italian bishops as but of secondary and far-off interest; and nothing better proves the conscientious solicitude brought by the Church of Rome to bear on the

judgment of all causes submitted to her, as well as her unquestionable authority. Wilfrid appeared before his judges almost daily, and underwent a minute examination. In these debates the aged orator displayed all the vigour and energy of his youth. He overturned by a word the most unforeseen objections of his accusers; with a presence of mind, which God and the truth alone could have inspired, he swept away their arguments like spiders' webs: it was a true torrent of eloquence, as says a monastic historian who, many centuries after, was still proud of the effect produced by the words of the old Saxon bishop upon the astonished Romans. Nothing contributed more to the ultimate triumph of Wilfrid than the discovery, made in studying the precedents of the case, of his presence at the council held against the Monothelites twenty-four years before. In the course of reading the acts of the former council, which was done by order of the Pope, in presence not only of the clergy but also of the nobles and people of Home, when they came to a passage which proved the presence of Wilfrid, then as now accused, but triumphantly acquitted, and admitted to bear witness to the faith of the other bishops of Great Britain, the assembly was confounded, the reader stopped short, and each man asked himself who this other Wilfrid was. Then Boniface, an old counsellor of the Pope, who had lived in the time of Agathon, declared that the Wilfrid who was thus again brought to their bar was assuredly the same Wilfrid whom Pope Agathon had formerly acquitted and placed by his side as a man of irreproachable faith and life. When this was understood, the Pope and all the others declared that a man who had been forty years a bishop, instead of being persecuted in this manner, ought to be sent back with honour to his own country; and the sentence of absolution was unanimously pronounced.

The Pope summed up and terminated the entire discussion in a letter to the two kings of Northumbria and Mercia. After having reminded them of the sentence given by Pope Agathon, and described the regularity of the new trial over which he had himself presided, he enjoined Archbishop Berchtwald to convoke a council along with Bishop Wilfrid, to summon Bishops Bosa and John (who occupied the usurped sees of York and Hexham), and after having heard them, to end the differences between them, if he could; if not, to send them to the Holy See to be tried by a more numerous council, under pain, for the recalcitrants, of being deposed and rejected by all bishops and by all the faithful. "Let your royal and Christian majesties", said the Pope in conclusion, "for the fear of God, and for love of that peace which our Lord left to His disciples, lend us your help and assistance, that those matters into which, by the inspiration of God, we have fully examined, may have their due effect; and may the recompense of so religious a work avail you in heaven, when, after a prosperous reign on earth, you enter among the happy company of the eternal kingdom".

Wilfrid thus issued from what his friend calls the furnace in which God completed his purification. He and his followers thought themselves the victors; and although the sentence against his adversaries was neither severe nor definite, the sequel showed clearly that it was all the state of the English mind could endure. It was even Wilfrid's desire, instead of availing himself of the Pope's decision, to remain in Rome and end his days in penitence. He obeyed, however, when the Pope and council constrained him to set out, forbidding him, at the same time, to continue the cold baths which he had every night imposed upon himself as a mortification; and after visiting for the last time all the

sanctuaries which were so dear to him, he left Rome, carrying with him a new provision of relics and of rich sacerdotal vestments for the Saxon churches.

He made the return journey not on foot, but on horse-back; which, however, was too much for his old age; and this new journey through Italy, the Alps, and France, added to his many travels, affected him so much, that he fell dangerously ill before reaching his destination. After this he had to be carried in a litter, and arrived, apparently dying, at Meaux. There he lay for four days and nights, his eyes closed, neither speaking nor eating, and in a state of apparent unconsciousness; his breathing alone showed that he still lived. On the fifth day he raised himself in his bed, and seeing round him a crowd of monks, who chanted the psalms, weeping, he said, "Where is my priest Acca?" This was a monk of Lindisfarne, of great learning and fervour, and an excellent musician, who, though educated by one of the rivals of Wilfrid, the intruding Bishop of York, had left his first master to follow Wilfrid for love of Roman orthodoxy, and had accompanied him to Rome on this last and laborious journey. Seeing his master thus revived, Acca fell on his knees with all present to thank God. Then they talked together with holy awe of the last judgment. On which Wilfrid, having sent away all the rest of his attendants, said to Acca, "I have just had a vision which I will only confide to you, and of which I forbid you to speak until I know the will of God regarding it. A being clothed in white has appeared to me; he told me that he was the Archangel Michael, sent to tell me that God had spared my life in answer to the prayers and tears of my brethren and my children, as well as to the intervention of the Holy Virgin His Mother. He added that I should yet live several years, and should die in my own country, and in peace, after having regained the greater part of that which has been taken from me". And in fact he did recover, and pursued his journey without any further hindrance.

As soon as he landed in England, he caused his return to be announced to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, already informed by his envoys of Wilfrid's success at Rome, yielded to apostolic authority, was sincerely reconciled to him, and promised to pronounce the revocation of the decrees of the Assembly of Nesterfield. They had a friendly interview near London, in presence of a multitude of abbots from various monasteries of Wilfrid's party. From London Wilfrid went to Mercia, but not to find his friend Ethelred on the throne. The preceding year, in the very midst of Wilfrid's labours at Rome, his old friend had made up his mind to exchange the cares of royalty for the peace of the cloister, and had become a monk at Bardeney, in the monastery where his wife, Ostryda of Northumbria, assassinated seven years before by the Mercian lords, had, not without difficulty, succeeded in placing the relics of her uncle, the holy King Oswald.

Ethelred, who had as yet no saint in his own family, thus found a patron both powerful and popular in England and even elsewhere in the family of his wife; and it was beside the relics of this venerated uncle that he decided to end his life after a reign of nearly thirty-one years. There Wilfrid sought him; and finding his old friend, his generous host, and faithful protector, clad in the same monastic habit as himself, and weeping for joy at his return, Wilfrid threw himself into his arms; and the two clasped each other in this embrace in one of those moments of perfect union and sympathy



which God sometimes grants to two generous hearts which have together struggled and suffered in His cause.

The bishop then showed the king the Pope's letter addressed to him, which contained the apostolic judgment, with the bulls and seals all in order. Ethelred, having read it, cried, "I will neither infringe it nor allow it to be infringed in the smallest particular while I live; I will support it with all my power." He immediately sent for his nephew, who had succeeded him on the Mercian throne, told him of the Pope's decision, and conjured him to execute it fully in everything connected with the Wilfridian monasteries in their kingdom. The new king promised willingly, with all the eagerness of a man already inclined to that monastic life which he afterwards embraced in his own person.

But Wilfrid was not at the end of his troubles. Mercia had always been to him a friendly and hospitable country. It was a different matter in Northumbria. Ethelred advised him to send to Aldfrid two monks whom the king favoured, an abbot and the professor of theology at Ripon, to inquire whether he would receive Bishop Wilfrid with the verdict given at Rome. The king at first made an evasive answer, but on his second interview with these ambassadors, by the advice of his counsellors, he refused. "Dear and venerable brothers", he said to them, "ask what you will for yourselves, and I will give it you willingly; but do not ask anything in behalf of your master Wilfrid; he was judged in the first place by my predecessors in concert with Archbishop Theodore and their counsellors, and afterwards by myself, with the concurrence of another archbishop sent by the Holy See, and almost all the bishops of the country ; so long as I live I will change nothing out of regard to what you call a mandate of the Holy See". This speech sounds like an anticipation of the famous *Nolumus leges Angliae mutare* of the English barons in the days of the Plantagenets.

"As long as I live", said King Aldfrid; but he had not long to live. He soon after fell dangerously ill, and believed himself smitten by God, and punished for his contempt of apostolic authority. He openly confessed his sin against Wilfrid, expressed a desire to receive a visit from him before his death, and vowed, if he recovered, to conform to the desires of the bishop and the sentence of the Pope. "If it be the will of God", said he, "that I should die, I command my successor, whosoever he may be, in the name of the Lord, for the repose of my soul and his own, to make peace with Wilfrid". Many witnesses heard these words, and chief among them his sister, Princess Elfleda, abbess of Whitby, who, since the death of her other brother Egfrid, twenty years before, had been completely won to the interests of Wilfrid. Soon afterwards Aldfrid lost the power of speech and died. He left none but young children, and the Northumbrian crown descended to a prince named Eadwulf. Wilfrid, who had already returned to Ripon, and who, it is not known why, counted on the new king's favour, was preparing to go to him, when Eadwulf, by the advice of his counsellors, and perhaps of the Witena-Gemot, which had misled Aldfrid, gave him to understand that if he did not leave Northumbria within six days, all his followers who could be seized should be put to death.

But the prosperous days of Northumbria were over, and civil wars were about to destroy the order and prosperity which had reigned there since the establishment of national independence during the great reign of Oswy. Bernicia revolted in the name of

the eldest son of Aldfrid. This was a child of eight years old, named Osred, who was already considered as the adopted son of Wilfrid. By means of some mysterious influence, the nature of which is unknown, the aged exile Wilfrid, who had been expelled from the country for fourteen years, and was to all appearance forgotten, betrayed, and set aside, became all at once the master of the situation, and the arbiter of events.

He soon acquired a more powerful protector than the young sovereign in the person of an ealdorman named Bertfrid, who was considered the most powerful noble in the kingdom, and who was at the head of Osred's party. King Eadwulf marched against the insurgents, and obliged them to retreat to the fortress of Bamborough, capital of the first Northumbrian kings, near the holy isle of Lindisfarne. Bertfrid and his men, shut up in the narrow enclosure of this fortified rock, were reduced to the last extremity, and not knowing what saint to invoke, they made a vow that, if God would deliver them, and give to their young prince the throne of his father, they would fulfil exactly the judgment of the Holy See regarding their aged bishop. Scarcely had this vow been solemnly taken by the besieged when a change took place in the minds of their assailants. A number of Eadwulf's followers forsook him and came to an understanding with Bertfrid, who made a sally at the head of his garrison, by which Eadwulf was vanquished, dethroned, and himself exiled, after a short reign of two months over the kingdom from which he had brutally expelled the venerable bishop.

As soon as the royal child was placed on the throne, the Archbishop of Canterbury made his appearance, perceiving that the time was come for executing the apostolic judgment, and definitely settling Wilfrid's affairs in a general assembly. This was held in the open air on the banks of the Nid, a river which flows a little to the south of the fertile plain in which Wilfrid's abbey of Ripon was situated.

The council was composed of the three bishops who shared among them the diocese of Wilfrid, and of all the abbots and nobles of Northumbria; it was presided over by the archbishop, who had the king by his side. Wilfrid too was present, and met there his two powerful adherents, Bertfrid and the abbess Elfleda. This noble and sainted princess, sister of the three last kings of Northumbria, and sister-in-law of two neighbouring kings, those of East Anglia and Mercia, was yet more influential on account of her virtues than of her birth. All the Northumbrians regarded her as the consoler and best counsellor of the kingdom. The archbishop opened the sitting with these words, "Let us pray the Holy Spirit to send peace and concord into all our hearts. The blessed Wilfrid and myself have brought you the letter which the Holy See has addressed to me by his hands, and which shall now be read to you". He then read the pontifical decrees delivered in the different councils at Rome. A dead silence followed; on which Bertfrid, who was universally recognised as the first personage in the kingdom after the king, said, "We do not understand Latin, and we beg that you will translate to us the apostolic message". The archbishop undertook the necessary translation, and made all understand that the Pope ordered the bishops to restore to Wilfrid his churches, or that all parties should go to Rome to be judged there, under pain of excommunication and deposition to all opposers, lay or ecclesiastical, even including the king himself. Nevertheless the three bishops (all of whom have places among saints) did not hesitate to combat this decision, appealing to the decrees made by King Egfrid

and Archbishop Theodore, and to those of the Assembly of Nesterfield, under Aldfrid. At this point the holy abbess Elfleda interposed. : in a voice which all listened to as an utterance from heaven, she described the last illness and agony of the king her brother, and how he had vowed to God and St. Peter to accomplish all the decrees he had before rejected. “This”, she said, “is the last will of Aldfrid the king; I attest the truth of it before Christ”. Bertfrid afterwards spoke in the name of the king, commencing thus: “The desire of the king and nobles is, in all things, to obey the commandment of the Holy See and of King Aldfrid”. He then related the history of the siege of Bamborough, and the vow which bound the consciences of the victors.

Nevertheless the three bishops would not yield; they retired from the assembly to confer among themselves, and with Archbishop Berchtwald, but above all with the sagacious Elfleda. Thanks to her, and thanks also to the extreme moderation of Wilfrid, who required only the minimum of the conditions imposed at Rome, all ended in a general reconciliation. It was decreed that there should be perpetual peace and alliance between the Northumbrian bishops, the king, and the thanes on one side, and Bishop Wilfrid on the other; but that Wilfrid should content himself with his two best monasteries, and the large possessions attached to them — that is, with Ripon, where no new bishopric had been erected, and Hexham, into the see of which he entered; its late titular holder, John of Beverley, being, by a fresh concession made for the sake of peace, removed to York.

As soon as the treaty was concluded, the five bishops embraced, and received the holy communion together. The assembly dispersed amidst general rejoicing, which soon spread all over Northumbria. The most inveterate enemies of Wilfrid were glad of a peace which gave repose to their consciences. But the cloisters and arches of the Wilfridian monasteries echoed with the voice of a more enthusiastic gladness, receiving back again multitudes of disciples and monks, some of whom had been dispersed by persecution and exile, some enslaved by detested masters, who hastened with delight to find themselves once more under the sway of a father whom all the world henceforth considered as a saint, and who had always possessed the faculty of inspiring a passionate affection in his children.

This was the last act of Wilfrid's public life. It began in that famous assembly where the Celtic Church was bound by his youthful and vigorous influence to the feet of Roman tradition — an assembly which partook at once of the character of a council and a parliament, presided over by King Oswy, in presence of the Abbess St. Hilda, and held at her monastery. He ended his career, after forty years of unwearied struggles, in another assembly of the same kind, held in presence of the grandson of Oswy, and influenced in the highest degree by another abbess of Whitby, the gentle Elfleda, who was, like Hilda, a saint and a princess of that Northumbrian dynasty with the destinies of which those of Wilfrid were so intimately connected.

It is impossible not to be struck by the great and singular influence exercised over the destiny of Wilfrid by women, or, to speak more correctly, by the Anglo-Saxon princesses whose contemporary he was. It is a peculiarity found in the history of no other saint, and which few historic personages manifest to the same degree. Many, such as St. Paulinus, St. Jerome, St. Augustin, St. Francis d'Assisi, St. François de Sales, St.

Jean de la Croix, have owed to their wives, their mothers, their sisters, and their spiritual friends, a portion of their glory and some of their best inspirations; but we know none whose life has been so completely transformed or modified by the affection or the hatred of women. He was protected in his youth and seconded in his monastic vocation by the grand-daughter of St. Clotilda, who then shared the throne of Northumbria; and it was by encouraging another queen of that country, St. Etheldreda, to change her married life for that of the cloister, that he drew upon himself his first misfortune. A third queen of Northumbria, whom he had indirectly aided to take the place of his spiritual daughter, Etheldreda, persecuted him for two years with a bitterness which she communicated to her sister the queen of Wessex, and her sister-in-law the queen of Mercia; and the three together, uniting their efforts, used their influence with the kings their husbands to aggravate the distresses of the proscribed bishop, until the time when the queen of the pagan Saxons of the South, herself a Christian, secured him an asylum, and offered him a nation to convert.

Those princesses who had forsaken the life of the world to govern great monastic communities were not less mingled with his stormy career. The abbess-queen of Ely, St. Etheldreda, continued to follow his counsels in the cloister as on the throne. St. Hilda, the abbess of Whitby, pursued him with an enmity as constant as the affection of her niece; while St. Ebba, the abbess of Coldingham, interfered in his favour, and delivered him from a painful captivity. It has just been seen how St. Elfleda, the sister and daughter of the four Northumbrian kings under whom he had lived, after inheriting the crosier of St. Hilda, came forward as the advocate and protectress of the prelate, contributing more than any other to his last triumph. Finally, he himself, when more than seventy years old, and on his deathbed, left his last vestments to her whom he called "his abbess", to Cyndreda, who owes her place in the history of the Church and the history of souls to this latest homage of the aged champion of Rome and of spiritual independence.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LAST YEARS OF WILFRID. — 705-709

Wilfrid passed the four last years of his life in peace at his monastery of Hexham, which had, though not by his will, become a cathedral and the seat of a diocese, the last of those of which he had been successively bishop. As he travelled on one occasion from Hexham to Ripon, he was attacked by a sudden faint, even more serious than that which seized him at Meaux. He was carried into a house on the roadside, and there ensued a scene which proves the love with which he was regarded, and how it was at once a bishop, a king, and a father whom his great and powerful monastic family was about to lose. At the first report of his illness all the abbots of his numerous monasteries,

and even the anchorites who had gone out from his foundations, hurried to Hexham. Distance was no obstacle to them; they travelled day and night, questioning every passer-by, and continuing their course with hastened steps or saddened hearts according as the answer they received told them that their father was yet living, or that they would arrive too late. It was the desire of all to see once again their master and beloved father, and to join their prayers and tears to those of the community, that he might be permitted to regain consciousness, and to put his succession in order by dividing his property, and naming the future superiors of all his houses; for his influence was everywhere so great that the monks had given up their right to elect their own chiefs, which was, however, one of the constitutional principles of the Benedictine order. Their prayers were heard. Wilfrid recovered; but considering himself to have been thus warned that the time fixed by the archangel in his vision at Meaux would soon expire, he occupied himself in putting all his affairs in order, in preparation for his death. When he arrived at Ripon, he had the door of his treasury opened by the official who kept the keys, in presence of the two abbots of his monasteries in Mercia, and of eight of the most devout monks. It is curious to note the inexperience of the persecutors and spoilers of those remote times, which is shown by the fact that, after his two periods of exile, his condemnations, and his long absence, this treasury, left in the keeping of a few monks and often of unfriendly superiors, in the midst of a country whose government had been for thirty years at constant war with Wilfrid, still contained treasure enough to make up four large portions of gold, silver, and precious stones. "My dearest brothers", said Wilfrid to the ten witnesses of his last wishes, "I have thought for some time of returning yet once more to that see of Peter from which I received justice and freedom, to end my life there. I shall take with me the chief of these four portions for an offering to the basilicas of Santa Maria Maggiore and St. Paul the Apostle. But if, as often happens to the old, I should die before accomplishing my wishes, I enjoin you, my faithful friends, to send these gifts to the churches I mention. Of the other three parts, you must divide one among the poor of my people for the salvation of my soul. Another shall be for the use of the two future abbots of Hexham and Ripon, and will enable them to conciliate the king and the bishops by gifts; and the last is for those who shared with me the long fatigues of exile, and to whom I cannot leave lands, that they may still have the means of living after my death". Here he stopped, overcome perhaps by emotion or fatigue; but after a while he resumed : "Remember that I appoint the priest Tatbert, my cousin, who up to this day has never left me, to be prior of the monastery of Ripon, to take my place while I live, and to succeed me when I die. I do all this that the Archangel Michael may find me ready when my hour arrives; and I do not think it is far off".

When he had finished these arrangements, he caused the bell to be rung to summon his monastic family around him. When all the monks were assembled in the chapter-house, he entered, and sat down in the midst of them. "Your prior Celin", he said, "has for a long time laboured in all the duties of monastic life; I can no longer refuse him permission to return to the life of solitude and contemplation for which he thirsts. I exhort you to preserve scrupulously the regularity of your life until I return and bring you the person I judge worthy to be your superior. But if it please God that I do not return, take him who shall be pointed out to you by these my fellow-travellers: make him your abbot, and pay him the obedience you have promised to God and to me". At these words, in which they foreboded a last farewell, all the monks fell on their knees



weeping, and, bending their heads to the earth, promised to obey him. While they thus remained prostrate, Wilfrid blessed them, recommended them from the bottom of his tender heart to God, and departed, to see them no more.

The new king of Mercia, Ceonred, nephew of his old friend Ethelred, had invited him to visit and confer with him at once as to the state of the Mercian monasteries and of his own soul; for, drawn by the example of his uncle towards monastic life, he wished to consult Wilfrid before joining that uncle in the cloister. The aged saint obeyed this call, and, crossing the Humber for the last time, entered Mercia, where he visited one after another all the monasteries he had founded or adopted in that great kingdom, making everywhere arrangements similar to those he had made at Ripon to further the well-being and security of his different communities. He even went in this last effort of his old age to a district in which he had founded no monastic houses, into the country of the Wiccians, on the borders of the Welsh Celts and Western Saxons, to consecrate a Benedictine church just built at Evesham by the young king of the Mercians and Bishop Egwin.

The name of Egwin is worthy of a moment's pause in our narrative. He was a scion of the reigning dynasty of Mercia, and had been, in his youth, made bishop of one of the new bishoprics created by Theodore, at Worcester; but the post was a difficult one, and, notwithstanding his unwearied self-devotion, he did not succeed in purifying or regulating the morals of his flock. They would neither obey nor even listen to him. One day when he had preached against the habitual vices of the population, in a great forge situated in the depths of a wood, the smiths, far from ceasing their work, struck as hard as possible with their hammers on the anvils, so as to deafen him and drive him away. His zeal for the strict observance of the marriage vow among these new Christians had above all irritated them against him.

To put an end to the persecutions and calumnies with which he was loaded, he determined to go, following Wilfrid's example, to justify himself before the Holy See. Though he did not admit the truth of any of the accusations brought against him, he yet remembered with confusion certain sins of his youth, and to expiate them determined to undertake this long journey with his feet loaded with iron chains, and, thus voluntarily fettered, entered Rome, where Pope Constantine did him entire justice. Two years after his first pilgrimage he went again to Rome, from whence he brought back the papal charter for the monasteries which a singular circumstance had determined him to build in a forest given him by King Ethelred. A swine-herd, pushing his way through the tufted thickets of this wood, once came to a clearing where he saw three lovely girls seated, whose beauty appeared to him more brilliant than the sun; the one in the middle held a book, and all three were singing celestial harmonies. Modern learning has supposed the locality of this vision to have been a place consecrated by Saxon superstition to the worship of the three Goddess Mothers, a worship which had struck deep root among the rural population of all the northern provinces of the Roman Empire, and which resisted the anathemas of the Councils longer than most other vestiges of idolatry.

Egwin, when he was informed by the herdsman, went to pray humbly on the place of the vision. When his prayer was ended, he in turn saw the three virgins, one of whom,

taller and infinitely more beautiful than the others, held, besides her book, a cross, with which she blessed him before she disappeared. He recognised the Mother of the Saviour, and immediately resolved to build a monastery in her honour in that hitherto inaccessible spot. The new king of the country, godson and pupil of Egwin, seconded his master in this design, and gave him eighty-four *manses* or pieces of ground in the neighbourhood of the forest.

On the very site of the great forge where the workmen had deafened Egwin with the noise of their hammers, and quite near the new monastery at Alcester, the Mercian parliament was convoked to give validity to the donations and privileges conferred on Egwin; and Wilfrid, as the great champion of the Benedictine rule in England, was appointed to preside at this solemnity, and to place on the altar he was about to consecrate the charter of endowment and freedom which had just been voted. At the moment when he was about to accomplish, with his colleague Egwin, this solemn mission, in presence of all the people, he made the following prayer, which was immediately enrolled in the acts of the foundation: —

“Lord God, who dwellest in heaven, and who hast created all things, save him who shall give peace and security to this place, and shall confirm the inheritance of God in that liberty in which we offer it to Him. For this reason, in the name of Almighty God and of all heavenly virtue, we enjoin that neither king, nor prince, nor minister, nor any man of what rank soever, shall have the audacity to rob this holy place, or to appropriate any part of it whatever to his own profit; that this place may always remain as we will it, consecrated to the use of the flocks and shepherds of God, and under the sway of its own abbot, according to the rule of God and St. Benedict. But if — which God forbid! — any man, led astray by avarice, should contravene this institution, may he be judged before the tribunal of God, may he be forgotten by Christ, may his name be struck out of the book of life, and himself chained in the eternal pains of hell, unless at least in this life he does penance. As to him who shall respect and preserve this foundation, may God and all the saints have him in their holy keeping, and give joy to his soul in this life and happiness in the next”.

Egwin was buried in the monastery he had founded, the later annals of which are not without interest. Five hundred years afterwards it became one of the most venerated sanctuaries and most frequented places of pilgrimage in England, the bleeding remains of Simon de Montfort, the great Earl of Leicester, slain in the great battle fought under its walls, having been carried thither. This proud aristocrat retains a just eminence in history as having completed the establishment of the most famous political assembly of modern times — the British House of Commons — by calling together the representatives of the cities and boroughs, and seating them beside the knights of the shires. Although a victorious enemy of the throne, and condemned by the Pope, he won to his side the popular and religious sentiment of the nation. During his life, and long after his death, he was the idol of the English people, who gave expression to their passionate attachment for the champion of their rights in a mode adapted to the spirit of the time, by going to pray at his tomb, attributing to him numerous miracles, and by comparing this new St. Simon to Simon Peter and Simon Maccabeus.

The consecration of this church of Evesham, which was reserved for such memorable destinies, was the last episcopal function exercised by Wilfrid, the last act of that long life so entirely devoted to the extension of monastic life and the defence of the Roman Church. From the banks of the Avon he returned slowly to the neighbourhood of Ely and Peterborough, which had long been dear and familiar to him. During this last journey it occurred to him, as to the most illustrious monk of our own day shortly before his death, to tell the story of his life to a younger friend and faithful companion, who might be his witness to posterity. It was to his inseparable follower Tatbert, as he rode by his side, that Wilfrid thus gave, not a general confession, but a detailed narrative of his long life, with the certainty of having reached the eve of its last day. Death, indeed, arrested him on his journey, at Oundle, in one of his monastic foundations near Northampton, which he had dedicated to St. Andrew the Apostle, patron of that church at Rome from whence the first English apostles had proceeded, and where he himself, the first of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, had prayed on his first arrival. His last illness was short, and his death gentle and without pain. He had only time to remind his companions of his former instructions, and to designate as his successor at Hexham that Acca who stood by him in his trial at Rome and during his mortal illness at Meaux.

When he had given them a last blessing, his head fell back upon the pillow, and rested there in calm repose, without a single groan or sigh. The whole weeping community chanted prayers around his bed. As they reached Psalm cm. and the verse *Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur*, his breathing ceased, and he yielded up his soul to his Creator. The aged soldier of God died more gently than an infant in the cradle. He was seventy-six years of age, forty-four of which he had been a bishop.

His funeral was celebrated with a mingled pomp and grief which can readily be imagined. Tatbert, his disciple, confidant, and successor, was also his chief mourner. Before the burial, and in obedience to the last affectionate injunction of the dying, he sent the shirt of the saint, still moist with his last sweat, to an abbess named Oyndreda, who had been converted by Wilfrid, who now governed one of the monasteries of his congregation, and who had, doubtless, like the abbess of Coldingham and Whitby, distinguished herself by her fidelity to the exiled and persecuted pontiff. The body was carried to Ripon, and buried in the church which he had built and dedicated to St. Peter, the apostle whom, along with St. Andrew, he had most venerated. Tatbert ordained that a special mass should be said for him; and that every year, on the day of his anniversary, the tithe of his flocks should be distributed to the poor, besides the daily alms which were given also by Tatbert's orders, for the soul of his dear master and for his own.

As soon as he was dead, Wilfrid appeared to the eyes of all in his true light, as a great saint and a great man. The popular veneration, restrained or disturbed during his life by the struggles of race, party, and opinion in which he had been engaged, found expression beside his tomb. Miraculous cures on earth, luminous apparitions in the sky; a supernatural power which protected the cell where he died from profanation and from the ravages of fire, — such were the first wonders which awoke the enthusiastic confidence of the Anglo-Saxons in this saint of their own race, a confidence which, having once taken root, went on increasing, and shone out with redoubled intensity four centuries later under the first Norman kings. It was not only the blind, the infirm, the dying, and the shipwrecked who found occasion to rejoice that they had invoked the

powerful intercession of the sainted abbot of Hexham with God, but also many innocent victims of persecution, many outraged virgins, and whole populations desolated by the ravages of war or by the oppression of foreign conquerors.

At Hexham, in honour of the sanctuary which he had created, and for so long a time inhabited, the right of sanctuary was allowed to extend to a great circle round the monastery, the great enclosure — a sanctuary not only for ordinary criminals, but, especially in time of war, for the neighbouring population, who took refuge there with their cattle, and whom the sword of the most cruel invaders dared not follow thither. The limits of this sanctuary were marked only by crosses erected at certain distances. The town which was soon after built close to the great monastery had no walls; the universal veneration for the memory of Wilfrid served it instead of ramparts. Nearly four centuries after his death, this veneration, and the confidence it inspired in the surrounding people, were expressed in a touching and truly poetic legend. King Malcolm of Scotland, in one of his numerous and cruel incursions into England, irritated by the murder of his messengers near Hexham, ordered the sack of the town and a general massacre of its inhabitants. The Galloway Picts, the most ferocious of all the Scots, were charged with the execution of this atrocious order, which was but too much in accordance with the spirit of the time. The tears and supplications of the intended victims had been as vain as the entreaties of the clergy to move the king from his purpose. On the eve of the day fixed for the massacre, the whole population, disarmed and desperate, fled to the church of Wilfrid, which resounded with their cries. At this crisis one of the principal priests of the town fell asleep from fatigue, and had a dream, in which he saw two bishops arriving on horseback from the south. These Christian Dioscuri came at a gallop to announce to the unfortunate inhabitants of Hexham that they were saved. “I am Wilfrid”, said one, “and this is Cuthbert, whom I brought with me as I passed by Durham. We are come to deliver you. I have heard the weeping and cries of those who pray in my church. Fear nothing. At the dawn of day I will spread my net over the whole course of the Tyne, and no one shall be able to cross it to hurt you”. Accordingly, in the morning a thick fog covered the whole valley. The messengers of the king lost their way, and when the fog dispersed, the Tyne had risen so high that, there being no bridge, the Scots could not pass over. The husband of St. Margaret saw in this the finger of God, and gave up his cruel design, and the inhabitants of Hexham were more and more convinced that the arm of Wilfrid was ever ready to defend them.

But it was specially at Ripon, where his relics reposed, that the universal faith manifested itself. Crowds came thither from all quarters, as if they expected still to find in bodily presence the aged saint who had feared neither man nor obstacles, and whose protection they invoked and even exacted with blind trust and tender familiarity, against the iniquities of conquest, the abuse of power, and the unjust severity of the law.

Fifty years after the deliverance of Hexham, the Scots, under their sainted King David, reappeared in Northumbria, and committed horrors rarely equalled even in the barbarous wars of the period. The alarmed population took arms under the leadership of the Archbishop of York, and of those Anglo-Norman barons who were most celebrated for the munificence they displayed in the monastic restorations of the twelfth century — the Bruces, Mowbrays, Percies, and Estoutevilles. They marched against the cruel

invaders, and met them at some distance to the north of Ripon. The English were drawn up round a cart similar to that famous *carroccio* which the Lombards of the same period led into battle against the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa : on this humble pedestal, above a pyx containing the host, they had planted the banner of Wilfrid — *Wilfridi Ripensis vexillum* — between those of St. Peter and St. John. This cart, which they called the Standard, gave its name to the battle, in which the king of Scotland and his ferocious army were completely routed. After the victory, they brought back to Ripon in triumph the banner of the saint, who had thus protected and saved his former diocese. The banner often reappeared at the head of battalions armed for the defence of the country.

Of this enduring and touching popularity there now remains nothing but a shadow, a name, a meaningless word. In the modern town of Ripon, which has grown out of the great monastery founded by Wilfrid, the people have retained the habit of calling a certain Sunday in the year *Wilfrid's Sunday*; but when they are asked why, it becomes plain that they know nothing either of the saint to whom they owe their municipal existence, nor of the Church whose apostle and champion he was.

Happily for us, his work and his glory are inscribed in ineffaceable characters in the history of that Church, as well as of his country. His work was as varied as it was successful and lasting. Let us first remark its importance in respect to the monastic order. No one has done more for the extension and consolidation of that order in England, in the first place, by the introduction of the Benedictine rule, then established only at Canterbury; and afterwards by charters and exemptions obtained from Rome, and from the Saxon kings and parliaments, in behalf of the great foundations of his time, such as Hexham and Peterborough; but, above all, by the strongly woven links of intimate and active association between the numerous monasteries who regarded him as their head — a connection which gave them mutual security against the violence and usurpation of the princes and powers around them.

In the year which followed his death, the first anniversary of his funeral brought together at Ripon all the abbots of the numberless monasteries which he had either founded, adopted, or received among his own communities. They came from the four corners of England, disturbed and anxious as to the situation in which the death of their venerable chief had placed them. “While he lived”, they said, “we often had to suffer the violence of kings and nobles; but by his holiness, his wisdom, and the great number of his friends, he was always able to deliver us. We must now believe that he will be our protector in heaven, as are St. Peter and St. Andrew, whom he loved so much, and to whom he dedicated all his possessions, and all his followers”. On the evening of this anniversary, after supper, during the twilight of the long summer day, all the abbots, followed by the whole community of Ripon, went out to sing *complines* in the open air. There they saw the whole heaven lighted up by a great rainbow, the pale radiance of which proceeded from the tomb of the saint, and wrapt the whole enclosure of the monastery in light. Eddi, the faithful biographer of Wilfrid, was there, and saw with wonder this luminous circle. “We all understood”, he says, “that the intercession of the saint was to be, by the goodness of God, an impregnable rampart round the vine of the Lord and His family ; and the event has proved it, for since that time we have lived in safety, under abbots freely chosen by ourselves, and when some have been threatened,



others have come to their help, and that throughout all England, north as well as south of the Humber”.

Our musician thus indicates, as it seems, that Wilfrid had succeeded in making, at least for a time, a first attempt at that association of different monasteries among themselves which many great monastic saints had dreamed of as the completion of the rule of St. Benedict, and which is realised on so vast a scale in the orders of Cluny and Cîteaux.

To the Church of England Wilfrid did the immense service of securing the permanence of the episcopate. Proceeding in opposition to him, and by uncanonical methods, to partition the primitive bishoprics, Archbishop Theodore, his rival and enemy, established a new diocesan division, better adapted to the wants of the country. In addition to this, the same pontiff appointed the election of bishops to be conducted by popular assemblies presided over by the primate, at which deputies from the vacant church might be heard, and where the nominations of the king were discussed and controlled by the bishops and nobles; so that it might be truly said that, in principle, the choice of the bishops, as well as of the abbots, depended on the clergy. But the power of the episcopate became rapidly so great, and its dignity so much sought after, that the elections were soon interfered with in an injurious and oppressive manner by the throne. Wilfrid opposed a far more efficacious barrier to this lay influence by resisting to the utmost the claim made by the kings to nominate, depose, or remove bishops at their pleasure, and by consecrating the principle of permanence and immovability in the episcopate as much by the support of the Holy See as by the national synods. Thanks to him, until the Norman Conquest, four centuries later, no English king dared arbitrarily depose a bishop from his see.

To the whole Catholic Church he rendered the important service of fighting, overcoming, and destroying the exclusive spirit of Celtic Christianity. Without being in any way a revolt or protest against Catholic unity, without deserving at all that imputation of heresy or schism of which Wilfrid and his followers were too prodigal, this spirit might readily have degenerated into a sort of narrow and jealous provincialism. After having long repulsed the idea of communicating the benefits of the faith to the Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Britain, the Celtic Church reconsidered the matter, and the ice having been once broken by Roman missionaries, she took measures to supplant and eclipse them everywhere. But the Celtic apostles of England, no doubt without knowing it, by a series of pedantic details, isolated their new converts from the Church of Rome, the centre of Christian action, precisely at the moment when that Church, called by Providence to evangelise the immense family of Teutonic tribes beyond the Rhine and Danube, had the most imperative need of help from that Teutonic race whose mission St. Gregory the Great had prophetically pointed out, and whom God had made the most active, the hardest, and the most persevering of all barbarous races. England was about to become a mere ecclesiastical branch of Ireland, and her character in that case would have become doubly insular, to the detriment of Catholic unity and the common interest of the Christian world. Wilfrid appeared: by a fifty years' struggle, and at the cost of his peace, his safety, and even his personal freedom, he first neutralised, and finally annihilated, the Celtic spirit, without at any time being guilty of persecution, coercion, or violence towards the vanquished. He did more than check the

Celtic movement; he sent it back into chaos; he extirpated all the ritual and liturgic differences which served as a veil and pretext for the prejudices of race and opinion; he extirpated them not only in his immense diocese, the vast region of Northumbria, but throughout all England; and not in England only, but, by the contagion of his example and his influence, in Ireland, in Scotland, and finally in the very sanctuary of Celtic Christianity, at Iona.

Last of all, by himself converting the last of the conquering tribes which still remained pagan, that of the South Saxons, Wilfrid gloriously ended the conversion of England, which had been begun nearly a century before by missionaries from Rome. He did yet more. By his own pilgrimage, the first of his race to knock at the door of the Vatican, and to pray at the tomb of the Apostles — by thus instituting pilgrimages and appeals to Rome — by obliging Saxon kings and bishops to acknowledge, in law and in fact, the intervention and supremacy of the papacy, — he brought England into the orbit of that great movement of European civilisation of which the Holy See became gradually the pivot and the centre. It was he who completed and crowned the work of Gregory and Augustin. He placed the seal on the conquest of England by popes and monks. England owed it to him that she was not only Christian, but Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman. No other Anglo-Saxon exercised a more decisive and more sovereign influence on the destinies of his race.

In modern England, all that Wilfrid did is destroyed, all that he loved has perished. He no longer lives except in history, where he has left, for every attentive observer, an ineffaceable trace. By placing him upon her altars, the Church teaches us that by his devotion to justice, truth, and the good of souls, he has gained an eminent position among the saints. But in a purely historical point of view, his character and his career offer a study equally curious and interesting. We find in him no analogy with the great monks of the primitive Church, the solitaries of the Thebaid, nor even with the solemn and mystic ascetics of Celtic Christianity. Though he was not insensible to the consolations and aspirations of spiritual life, the predominating features in his character are not those of an exclusively spiritual being, of a man of prayer and solitude ; they are rather those of the man of action and movement, the soldier of religious life.

In Wilfrid begins that great line of prelates, by turns apostolic and political, eloquent and warlike, brave champions of Roman unity and ecclesiastical independence, magnanimous representatives of the rights of conscience, the liberties of the soul, the spiritual powers of man and the laws of God; a line to which history presents no equal out of the Catholic Church of England; a lineage of saints, heroes, confessors, and martyrs, which produced St. Dunstan, St. Lanfranc, St. Anselm, St. Thomas a Becket, Stephen Langton, St. Edmund, the exile of Pontigny, and which ended in Reginald Pole. By a strange and touching coincidence, it is beside the tomb of this last Roman Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, in the cathedral, sprinkled with the blood of St. Thomas the Martyr, that the relics of Wilfrid now rest, having been transferred to the church of the primacy in 959, to save them from the sacrilegious rapacity of the Danes.

In addition to all this, Wilfrid was the precursor of the great prelates, the great monks, the princely abbots of the middle ages, the heads and oracles of national councils, the ministers and lieutenants, and often the equals and rivals of kings. When

duty called, no suffering alarmed, no privation deterred, and no danger stopped his course; four times in his life he made the journey to Rome, then ten times more laborious and a hundred times more dangerous than the voyage to Australia is now. But, left to himself, he loved pomp, luxury, magnificence, and power. He could be humble and mild when it was necessary; but it was more congenial to him to confront kings, princes, nobles, bishops, councils, and lay assemblies, in harsh and inflexible defence of his patrimony, his power, his authority, and his cause.

He was never without adversaries, and, as it has been justly remarked, he seems to have foreseen and practised that axiom of Rancé, which says, “A Christian should spend his money in buying enemies”. But many of his enemies were saints; and of all the holy bishops and abbots of his time, so numerous in the Anglo-Saxon Church, not one was his ally, not one held out to him a friendly hand in his trials and combats. Many even showed a sort of inexplicable animosity against him. It must be concluded that he did not sufficiently consider the susceptibility of national sentiment, which was always so powerful among his countrymen, and which finally detached them from Catholicism. And in addition, while making the greatest possible allowance for provincial rancour and personal jealousy, it must be admitted that there was in him an unjust contempt for former generous services, a certain sickly irritability, a tiresome pertinacity in dispute, and a haughty and injurious violence of language; but of language alone, for in his acts he was always tolerant and generous.

On the other hand, he had many friends. The monks who came spontaneously to range themselves under his crosier were counted by thousands; among them he found bold and faithful companions in all his travels, shipwrecks, dangers, and exiles: and these lifelong followers were the same who prayed by his bedside with so many tears that his life might be spared. He inspired the most illustrious and most holy women of his race, Queen Etheldreda, the Abbess Ebba, and Elfleda, his last protectress, with an affection which vanquished all obstacles. He exercised over them, and over the most delicate and generous souls of his time, as well as over the savage Frisians and the dauntless Lombards, an irresistible influence; and this power lasted all his life from the time when, arriving at the Northumbrian court in the light armour of a boy, he gained the heart of Queen Eanfleda, until the last crisis, when the heroic Bertfrid, saviour of the Bernician dynasty, declared himself in favour of the aged exile.

This influence is explained by the rare qualities which more than redeemed all his faults. His was, before all else, a great soul, manly and resolute, ardent and enthusiastic, full of unconquerable energy, able to wait or to act, but incapable of discouragement or fear, born to live upon those heights which attract at once the thunderbolt and the eyes of the crowd. His eloquence, superior to anything yet known in England, his keen and penetrating intelligence, his eager zeal for literary studies and public education, his knowledge and love of those wonders of architecture which dazzled the Christian nation, and to which his voice attracted such crowds; his constancy in trial, his ardent love of justice, — all contributed to make of him one of those personages who sway and move the spirits of their contemporaries, and who master the attention and imagination even of those whom they cannot convince. Something generous, ardent, and magnanimous in his nature commended him always to the sympathy of lofty hearts; and when adverse fortune and triumphant violence and ingratitude came in, to put upon his

life the seal of adversity nobly and piously borne, the rising tide of emotion and sympathy carried all before it, sweeping away all traces of those errors of conduct which might have seemed to us less attractive or comprehensible.

He was the first Anglo-Saxon who secured the attention of other nations, and the first of whom a special biography has been preserved. In each detail, as well as in the general impression made by this biography, he appears to us a type of the qualities and singularities of his nation; of their obstinacy, courage, laborious and untiring energy, their dogged love of work and of conflict, their resolution to strive till death for their patrimony, honour, and rights. *Dieu et mon droit!* This proud English motto is written on every page of the life of Wilfrid. In the service of a cause which now, by the misfortune of the ages and the blindness of men, has become the most unpopular of all causes in the eyes of the English nation, Wilfrid displayed all the virtues which are most characteristic of his countrymen, and most fitted to attract them. All the passions and all the noble instincts of his people palpitated in him. That mind must indeed be besotted by hatred, a thousand times blinder than ignorance itself, which does not recognise in him the eldest son of an invincible race, the first of the English nation.

## BOOK XIII

### CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS OF ST. WILFRID, 650-735

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day.—

I Thessal. v. 5.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear ; but of power, and of  
love, and of a sound mind. — 2 Tim. i. 7.

## CHAPTER I

### ST. CUTHBERT. — 637-687

Beside the great figure of Wilfrid there appears in history an entire family of monastic saints, his contemporaries and countrymen, who should have found a place in the narrative we have just concluded, had it not been already too much prolonged. But although they were all inhabitants of Northumbria during the rule of Wilfrid, they form naturally into a group apart. This separation is due partly to the reserve, sometimes approaching enmity, which they manifested towards him, and still more to the essentially peaceful nature of their character and position. If in some cases they are found in contact with the struggles and agitations of their age and country, it is evidently against their inclinations. Their desire for peace, and ascetic and studious retirement, was as great as that of Wilfrid for the fatigues and hazards of the fight; and their history and aspect, retired as they were in their monasteries upon the coast of the Northumbrian kingdom, where the conflict between Wilfrid and the descendants of the Man of Fire was continually breaking out with fresh force, afford a pleasant and refreshing contrast to the stormy career of the great abbot.

In the first rank of these peaceful men stands the monk honoured by the Church under the name of St. Cuthbert, and whose glory soon eclipsed that of St. Wilfrid, though the place he holds in history is of much inferior importance. Yes, great as was the influence of Wilfrid—a great bishop, a great abbot, the offspring of a noble race—his popularity was surpassed among his contemporaries as well as with Catholic posterity by that of a shepherd boy, who also became a bishop, and whose diocese was



one of those produced by the division of that of Wilfrid. The Celts have claimed Cuthbert as belonging to them, at least by birth. They make him out to have been the son of an Irish princess, reduced to slavery, like Bridget the holy patroness of Ireland, but who fell, more miserably, victim to the lust of her savage master. They have also given him a place among the disciples of their great sanctuary in Iona. His Celtic origin would seem to be still more conclusively proved by his attitude towards Wilfrid than by the constant tradition of the Anglo-Saxon monks of Durham. But, to tell the truth, nothing is certainly known either of his place of birth or the rank of his family.

His first appearance in history is as a shepherd in Lauderdale, a valley watered by a river which flows into the Tweed near Melrose, upon the borders, as now defined, of England and Scotland. It was then a district annexed to the kingdom of Northumbria, which had just been delivered by the holy King Oswald from the yoke of the Mercians and Britons. As he is soon afterwards to be seen travelling on horseback, lance in hand and accompanied by a squire, it is not to be supposed that he was of poor extraction. At the same time it was not the flocks of his father which he kept, as did David in the plains of Bethlehem; it is expressly noted that the flocks confided to his care belonged to a master, or to several masters. His family must have been in the rank of those clients or vassals to whom the great Saxon lords gave the care and superintendence of their flocks upon the vast extent of pastures which, under the name of *folc-land* or commons, was left to their use, and where the cowherds and shepherds lived day and night in the open air, as is still done by the shepherds of Hungary in the *pustas* on both sides of the Danube.

Popular imagination in the north of England, of which Cuthbert was the hero before as well as after the Norman Conquest, had thus full scope in respect to the obscure childhood of its favourite saint, and delighted in weaving stories of his childish sports, representing him as walking on his hands, and turning somersaults with his little companions. A more authentic testimony, that of his contemporary Bede, informs us that our shepherd boy had not his equal among the children of his age for activity, dexterity, and boldness in the race and fight. In all sports and athletic exercises he was the first to challenge his companions, with the certainty of being the victor. The description reads like that of a little Anglo-Saxon of our own day — a scholar of Eton or Harrow. At the same time a precocious piety showed itself in him, even amid this exuberance of youth. One night, as he said his prayers, while keeping the sheep of his masters, he saw the sky, which had been very dark, broken by a tract of light, upon which a crowd of angels descended from heaven, returning afterwards with a resplendent soul which they had gone to meet on earth. Next morning he heard that Aidan, the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne, the apostle of the district, had died during the night. This vision determined his monastic vocation.

Some time afterwards we find him at the gates of the monastery of Melrose, the great Celtic establishment for novices in Northumbria. He was then only fifteen, yet nevertheless he arrived, like Wilfrid at the court of Queen Eanfleda, on horseback, lance in hand, attended by a squire; for he had already begun his career in the battlefield, and learned in the face of the enemy the first lessons of abstinence, which he now meant to practise in the cloister. He was received by two great doctors of the Celtic Church—the abbot Eata, one of the twelve Northumbrians first chosen by Aidan, and the prior

Boswell, who conceived a special affection for the new-comer, and undertook the charge of his monastic education. Five centuries later, the copy of the Gospels in which the master and pupil had read daily was still kissed with veneration in the cathedral of Durham.

The robust and energetic youth very soon showed the rarest aptitude for monastic life, not only for cenobitical exercises, but, above all, for the missionary work, which was the principal occupation of monks in that country and period. He was not content merely to surpass all the other monks in his devotion to the four principal occupations of monastic life — study, prayer, vigils, and manual labour — but specially applied himself to the work of casting out from the hearts of the surrounding population the last vestiges of pagan superstition. Not a village was so distant, not a mountain-side so steep, not a cottage so poor, that it escaped his zeal. He sometimes passed weeks and even months out of his monastery, preaching to and confessing the rustic population of these mountains.

The roads were very bad, or rather there were no roads; only now and then was it possible to travel on horseback; sometimes, when his course lay along the coast of the districts inhabited by the Picts, he would take the help of a boat. But generally it was on foot that he had to penetrate into the glens and distant valleys, crossing the heaths and vast table-lands uncultivated and uninhabited, where a few shepherds' huts, like that in which he himself had passed his childhood, and which were in winter abandoned even by the rude inhabitants, were thinly scattered. But neither the intemperance of the seasons, nor hunger, nor thirst, arrested the young and valiant missionary in his apostolic travels, to seek the scattered population, half Celts and half Anglo-Saxons, who, though already Christian in name and by baptism, retained an obstinate attachment to many of their ancient superstitions, and who were quickly led back by any great calamity, such as one of the great pestilences which were then so frequent, to use of magic, amulets, and other practices of idolatry.

The details which have been preserved of the wonders which often accompanied his wanderings show that his labours extended over all the hilly district between the two seas—from the Solway to the Forth. They explain to us how the monks administered the consolations and the teachings of religion, before the organisation of parishes, ordained by Archbishop Theodore, had been everywhere introduced or regulated. As soon as the arrival of one of these apostolic missionaries in a somewhat central locality was known, all the population of the neighbourhood hastened to hear him, endeavouring with fervour and simplicity to put in practice the instruction they received from him. Cuthbert especially was received among them with affectionate confidence: his eloquence was so persuasive that it brought the most rebellious to his feet to hear their sins revealed to them, and to accept the penance which he imposed upon them.

Cuthbert prepared himself for preaching and the administration of the sacraments by extraordinary penances and austerities. Stone bathing-places, in which he passed the entire night in prayer, lying in the frozen water, according to a custom common among the Celtic saints, and which Wilfrid himself, as has been seen, had borrowed from them, are still shown in several different places. When he was near the sea, he went to the shore, unknown to any one, at night, and, plunging into the waves up to his neck, sang

his vigils there. As soon as he came out of the water he resumed his prayers on the sand of the beach. On one occasion, one of his disciples, who had followed him secretly in order to discover the aim of this nocturnal expedition, saw two otters come out of the water, which, while the saint prayed on his knees, licked his frozen feet and wiped them with their hair until life and warmth returned to the benumbed members. By one of those strange caprices of human frivolity which disconcert the historian, this insignificant incident is the only recollection which now remains in the memory of the people. St. Cuthbert is known to the peasant of Northumberland and of the Scottish borders only by the legend of those compassionate otters, even as the name of Columba recalls to the mariners of the Hebrides only the history of the tired crane, which he sent back to Ireland, its native country.

He had been for some years at Melrose, when the abbot Eata took him along with him to join the community of Celtic monks established by King Alchfrid at Ripon. Cuthbert held the office of steward : and in this office showed the same zeal as in his missions. When travellers arrived through the snow, famished and nearly fainting with cold, he himself washed their feet and warmed them against his bosom, then hastened to the oven to order bread to be made ready if there was not enough. It may be perhaps remembered that the sons of Melrose had to give place to Wilfrid, when he, at the commencement of his campaign in favour of the Roman ritual and paschal unity, attempted to compel the Celtic colony of Ripon to give up their national customs. It was a great and sudden storm, said Bede, with the prudent reserve which he observes in all that relates to the struggles between Wilfrid and other saints. Cuthbert returned with his countrymen to Melrose, resumed his life of missionary preaching, and again met his friend and master, the prior Boswell, at whose death in the great pestilence of 664. Cuthbert was elected abbot in his place. He had been himself attacked by the disease; and all the monks prayed earnestly that his life might be preserved to them. When he knew that the community had spent the night in prayer for him, though he felt no better, he cried to himself, with a double impulse of his habitual energy, "What am I doing in bed? It is impossible that God should shut His ears to such men. Give me my staff and my shoes". And getting up, he immediately began to walk, leaning upon his staff. But this sudden cure left him subject to weakness which shortened his life.

However, he had not long to remain at Melrose. The triumph of Wilfrid and the Roman ritual at the Conference of Whitby brought about a revolution in the monastic metropolis of Northumbria, and in the mother monastery of Melrose at Lindisfarne. Bishop Colman, as has been seen, had returned to Iona, carrying with him the bones of his predecessor, the first apostle of the country, and followed by all the monks who would not consent to sacrifice their Celtic traditions to Roman unity. It was of importance to preserve the holy island, the special sanctuary of the country, for the religious family of which its foundress had been a member. Abbot Eata of Melrose undertook this difficult mission. He became abbot of Lindisfarne, and was invested with that kind of episcopal supremacy which has been already described, and which on Wilfrid's first downfall was to change into a full episcopate. He took with him the young Cuthbert, who was not yet thirty, but whom, however, he held alone capable of filling the important office of prior in the great insular community.

The struggle into which Eata and Cuthbert, in their proper persons, had entered against Wilfrid on the subject of Roman rites—a struggle to which they had themselves been victims at Ripon— did not point them out as the best men to introduce the novelties so passionately defended and insisted upon by the new Bishop of Northumbria. Notwithstanding, everything goes to prove that the new abbot and prior of Lindisfarne adopted without reserve the decisions of the Assembly of Whitby, and took serious pains to introduce them into the great Celtic community. Cuthbert, in whom the physical energy of a robust organisation was united to an unconquerable gentleness, employed in this task all the resources of his mind and heart. All the rebels had not left with Bishop Colman; some monks still remained who held obstinately by their ancient customs. Cuthbert reasoned with them daily in the meetings of the chapter ; his desire was to overcome their objections by patience and moderation alone : he bore their reproaches as long as that was possible ; and when his endurance was at an end, raised the sitting without changing countenance or tone, and resumed next morning the course of the debate without ever permitting himself to be moved to anger, or allowing anything to disturb the inestimable gift of kindness and lightheartedness which he had received from God.

It was not only the orthodox Eastern and other liturgical observances which he had to make acceptable to the monks of Lindisfarne. The difficulty of establishing in his monastery that regularity and uniformity which become monastic life was not less great. Was it the Benedictine rule in all its purity, such as Augustin had brought into Canterbury, and which Wilfrid at that very moment was labouring to communicate to Northumbria, which Cuthbert desired to introduce at Lindisfarne? The opinions of the most competent authorities are divided in respect to this. Everything leads us to believe that the young and holy prior was desirous of adding to the rule of St. Benedict certain special customs justified by the habits and necessities of the Northumbrian climate and people. But his great desire was the strict observance of the rule when once established; and his historian boasts as one of his most remarkable victories the obligation he imposed for ever upon the monks of Lindisfarne of wearing a simple and uniform dress, in undyed wool, and thus giving up the passionate liking of the Anglo- Saxons for varied and brilliant colours.

During the twelve years which he passed at Lindisfarne, the life of Cuthbert was identical with that which he had led at Melrose. Within doors, this life was spent in the severe practice of all the austerities of the cloister, in manual labour united to the punctual celebration of divine worship, and such fervour in prayer that he often slept only one night in the three or four, passing the others in prayer, and in singing the service alone while walking round the aisle to keep himself awake. Outside, the same zeal for preaching, the same solicitude for the salvation and well-being, temporal as well as spiritual, of the Northumbrian people, was apparent in him. He carried to them the word of life; he soothed their sufferings by curing miraculously a crowd of diseases which were beyond the power of the physicians — a class which does not seem to have been wanting among the Anglo-Saxons of this period, as they are mentioned almost at every page of their miraculous records. But the valiant missionary specially assailed the diseases of the soul, and made use of all the tenderness and all the ardour of his own spirit to reach them. When he celebrated mass before the assembled crowd, his visible

emotion, his inspired looks, his trembling voice, all contributed to penetrate and overpower the multitude. The Anglo-Saxon Christians who came in crowds to open their hearts to him in the confessional, were still more profoundly impressed: though he was a bold and inflexible judge of impenitent vice, he felt and expressed the tenderest compassion for the contrite sinner. He was the first to weep over the sins which he pardoned in the name of God; and he himself fulfilled the penances which he imposed as the condition of absolution, thus gaining by his humility the hearts which he longed to convert and cure.

But neither the life of a cenobite nor the labours of a missionary could satisfy the aspirations of his soul after perfection. When he was not quite forty, after holding his priorship at Lindisfarne for twelve years, he resolved to leave monastic life, and to live as a hermit in a sterile and desert island, visible from Lindisfarne, which lay in the centre of the archipelago, south of the holy isle, and almost opposite the fortified capital of the Northumbrian kings at Bamborough. No one dared to live on this island, which was called Fame, in consequence of its being supposed the haunt of demons. Cuthbert took possession of it as a soldier of Christ, victorious over the tyranny of evil, and built there a palace worthy of himself, hollowing out of the living rock a cell from which he could see nothing but the sky, that he might not be disturbed in his contemplations. The hide of an ox suspended before the entrance of his cavern, and which he turned according to the direction of the wind, afforded him a poor defence against the intemperance of that wild climate. His holy historian tells us that he exercised sway over the elements and brute creation as a true monarch of the land which he had conquered for Christ, and with that sovereign empire over nature which sin alone has taken from us. He lived on the produce of a little field of barley, sowed and cultivated by his own hands, but so small that the inhabitants of the coast reported among themselves that he was fed by angels with bread made in paradise.

The legends of Northumbria linger lovingly upon the solitary sojourn of their great national and popular saint in this basaltic isle. They attribute to him the extraordinary gentleness and familiarity of a particular species of aquatic birds which came when called, allowed themselves to be taken, stroked, and caressed, and whose down was of remarkable softness. In ancient times they swarmed about this rock, and they are still to be found there, though much diminished in number since curious visitors have come to steal their nests and shoot the birds. These sea-fowl are found nowhere else in the British Isles, and are called *the Birds of St. Cuthbert*. It was he, according to the narrative of a monk of the thirteenth century, who inspired them with a hereditary trust in man, by taking them as the companions of his solitude, and guaranteeing to them that they should never be disturbed in their homes.

It is he, too, according to the fishers of the surrounding islands, who makes certain little shells of the genus *Entrochus*, which are only to be found on this coast, and which have received the name of St. Cuthbert's Beads. They believe that he is still to be seen by night seated on a rock, and using another as an anvil for his work. This tradition, like many others, has been consecrated by Sir Walter Scott in the poetic picture which he has drawn of the Northumbrian coast, between the two great monasteries of Whitby and Lindisfarne.



The pious anchorite, however, in condemning himself to the trials of solitude, had no intention of withdrawing from the cares of fraternal charity. He continued to receive frequent visits, in the first place from his neighbours and brethren at Lindisfarne, and in addition from all who came to consult him upon the state of their souls, as well as to seek consolation from him in adversity. The number of these pilgrims of sorrow was countless. They came not only from the neighbouring- shores, but from the most distant provinces. Throughout all England the rumour spread that on a desert rock of the Northumbrian coast there lived a solitary who was the friend of God, and skilled in the healing of human suffering. In this expectation no one was deceived; no man carried back from the sea-beaten island the same burden of suffering, temptation, or remorse which he had taken there. Cuthbert had consolation for all troubles, light for all the sorrowful mysteries of life, counsel for all its perils, a helping hand to all the hopeless, a heart open to all who suffered. He could draw from terrestrial anguish a proof of the joys of heaven, deduce the certainty of these joys from the terrible evanescence of both good and evil in this world, and light up again in sick souls the fire of charity—the only defence, he said, against those ambushes of the old enemy which always take our hearts captive when they are emptied of divine and brotherly love.

To make his solitude more accessible to these visitors, and above all to his brethren from Lindisfarne, he had built at some distance from the cave which was his dwelling-place, at a point where the boats could land their passengers, a kind of *parloir* and refectory for the use of his guests. There he himself met, conversed, and ate with them, especially when, as he has himself told, the monks came to celebrate with him such a great feast as Christmas. At such moments he went freely into all their conversations and discussions, interrupting himself from time to time to remind them of the necessity of watchfulness and prayer. The monks answered him, “Nothing is more true; but we have so many days of vigil, of fasts and prayers! Let us at least today rejoice in the Lord”. The Venerable Bede, who has preserved to us the precious memory of this exchange of brotherly familiarity, has not disdained to tell us also of the reproaches addressed by Cuthbert to his brothers for not eating a fat goose which he had hung on the partition-wall of his guests’ refectory, in order that they might thoroughly fortify themselves before they embarked upon that stormy sea to return to their monastery.

This tender charity and courteous activity were united in him to treasures of humility. He would not allow any one to suspect him of ranking the life of an anchorite above that of a member of a community. “It must not be supposed”, he said, “because I prefer to live out of reach of every secular care, that my life is superior to that of others. The life of good cenobites, who obey their abbot in everything, and whose time is divided between prayer, work, and fasting, is much to be admired. I know many among them whose souls are more pure, and their graces more exalted than mine; especially, and in the first rank, my dear old Boswell, who received and trained me at Melrose in my youth”.

Thus passed, in that dear solitude, and among these friendly surroundings, eight pleasant years, the sweetest of his life, and precisely those during which all Northumberland was convulsed by the struggle between Wilfrid and the new king, Egfrid. All those important events, the expulsion of the great bishop from his see of

York, his first appeal to Rome, his return with a verdict in his favour, his fruitless application to Egfrid, his imprisonment and exile, have left no trace upon the life which Cuthbert, tranquil and happy, lived on his island rock, until a day arrived when the reverberation of this blow struck him in his turn.

This was the day upon which the king of the Northumbrians, accompanied by his principal nobles and almost all the community of Lindisfarne, landed upon the rock of Fame, to beg, kneeling and with tears, that he would accept the episcopal dignity to which he had just been promoted in the synod of Twyford, presided over by the Archbishop Theodore. He yielded only after a long resistance, himself weeping when he did so. It was, however, permitted to him to delay his consecration for six months, till Easter, which left him still a winter to pass in his dear solitude, before he went to York, where he was consecrated by the primate, Theodore, assisted by six bishops. He would not, however, accept the diocese of Hexham, to which he had been first appointed, but persuaded his friend Eata, the Bishop and Abbot of Lindisfarne, to give up to him the monastic bishopric where he had already lived so long, and to occupy in his place the diocese created to vex Wilfrid in his own monastery. There is, however, no evidence that he was influenced in this change by any reluctance to become an accomplice, even indirectly, in the spoliation of which Wilfrid had been the victim.

The diocese of Lindisfarne spread far to the west, much beyond Hexham. The Britons of Cumbria, who had come to be tributaries of the Northumbrian kings, were thus included in it. King Egfrid's deed of gift, in which he gives the district of Cartmell, with *all the Britons* who dwell in it, to Bishop Cuthbert, still exists. The Roman city of Carlisle, transformed into an Anglo-Saxon fortress, was also under his sway, with all the surrounding monasteries. It has been already told how the inhabitants were exhibiting to him the fine ruins, the walls and fountains of their city, at the moment when the mysterious intimation of Egfrid's downfall was given to him. It was at Carlisle that he offered the first consolation to Queen Ermenburga, whom that calamity made a widow ; and it was there also he returned to give to the queen the veil of the brides of Christ.

The episcopate of Cuthbert attaches itself to general history only by means of this dramatic episode of Carlisle, and by his connection with the enemy of Wilfrid, from this moment struck in her turn, and converted by adversity. But the history of his life receives an additional lustre from the virtues and good works which distinguished the brief course of this apostolical mission. His new dignity made no difference in his character, nor even in his mode of life. He retained his old habits as a cenobite, and even as a hermit. In the midst of his episcopal pomp he remained always the monk and missionary of old. His whole episcopate, indeed, seems to bear the character of a mission indefinitely prolonged. He went over his vast diocese, to administer confirmation to converts, traversing a crowd more attentive and respectful than ever, lavishing upon it all kinds of benefits, alms, clothing, sermons, miraculous cures—penetrating as of old into hamlets and distant corners, climbing the hills and downs, sleeping under a tent, and sometimes indeed finding no other shelter than in the huts of branches brought from the nearest wood to the desert, in which he had made the torrent of his eloquence and charity to gush forth.

Here also we find illustrations, as at all previous periods of his life, of the most delightful feature of his good and holy soul. In the obscure missionary of Melrose, in the already celebrated prior of Lindisfarne, and still more, if that is possible, in the powerful and venerated bishop, the same heart, overflowing with tenderness and compassion, is always to be found. The supernatural power given to him to cure the most cruel diseases was wonderful. But in his frequent and friendly intercourse with the great Anglo-Saxon earls, the *ealdormen*, as well as with the mixed populations of Britons, Picts, Scots, and English, whom he gathered under his crosier, the principal feature in the numerous and detailed narratives which remain to us, and which gives to them a beauty as of youth, always attractive, is his intense and active sympathy for those human sorrows which in all ages are the same, always so keen, and capable of so little consolation. The more familiar the details of these meetings between the heart of a saint and true priest and the simple and impetuous hearts of the first English Christians, the more attractive do they become; and we cannot resist the inclination of presenting to our readers some incidents which show at once the liveliness of domestic affections among those newly-baptized barbarians, and their filial and familiar confidence in their pastor. One of the *ealdormen* of King Egfrid arrived one day in breathless haste at Lindisfarne, overwhelmed with grief, his wife, a woman as pious and generous as himself, having been seized with a fit of violent madness. But he was ashamed to disclose the nature of the attack; it seemed to him a sort of chastisement from heaven, disgracing a creature hitherto so chaste and honoured : all that he said was that she was approaching death ; and he begged that a priest might be given him to carry to her the *viaticum*, and that when she died he might be permitted to bury her in the holy isle. Cuthbert heard his story, and said to him with much emotion, “This is my business; no one but myself can go with you”. As they rode on their way together, the husband wept, and Cuthbert, looking at him, and seeing the cheeks of the rough warrior wet with tears, divined the whole; and during all the rest of the journey consoled and encouraged him, explaining to him that madness was not a punishment of crime, but a trial which God inflicted sometimes upon the innocent. “Besides”, he added, “when we arrive we shall find her cured; she will come to meet us, and will help me to dismount from my horse, taking, according to her custom, the reins in her hand”. And so the event proved; for, says the historian, the demon did not dare to await the coming of the Holy Ghost, of which the man of God was full. The noble lady, delivered from her bondage, rose as if from a profound sleep, and stood on the threshold to greet the holy friend of the house, seizing the reins of his horse, and joyfully announcing her sudden cure.

On another occasion, a certain Count Heunna, from whom he sought hospitality during one of his pastoral journeys, received him on his knees, thanking him for his visit, but at the same time telling that his wife was at the point of death, and he himself in despair. “However”, said the count, “I firmly believe that were you to give her your blessing, she would be restored to health, or at least delivered by a speedy death from her long and cruel sufferings”. The saint immediately sent one of his priests, without entering into the sick-room himself, to sprinkle her with water which he had blessed. The patient was at once relieved; and herself came to act as cupbearer to the prelate, offering him, in name of all her family, that cup of wine which, under the name of the *loving cup*, has continued since the time of the Anglo-Saxons to form a part of all solemn public banquets.

A contagious disease at another time broke out in one part of his diocese, to which Cuthbert immediately betook himself. After having visited and consoled all the remaining inhabitants of one village, he turned to the priest who accompanied him, and asked, "Is there still any one sick in this poor place whom I can bless before I depart?". "Then", says the priest, who has preserved this story to us, "I showed him in the distance a poor woman bathed in tears, one of whose sons was already dead, and who held the other in her arms, just about to render his last breath. The bishop rushed to her, and taking the dying child from its mother's arms, kissed it first, then blessed it, and restored it to the mother, saying to her, as the Son of God said to the widow of Nain, 'Woman, weep not; have no more fear or sorrow ; your son is saved, and no more victims to this pestilence shall perish here'."

No saint of his time or country had more frequent or affectionate intercourse than Cuthbert with the nuns, whose numbers and influence were daily increasing among the Anglo-Saxons, and especially in Northumberland. The greater part of them lived together in the great monasteries, such as Whitby and Coldingham; but some, especially those who were widows or of advanced age, lived in their own houses or with their relatives. Such was a woman devoted to the service of God, who had watched over Cuthbert's childhood (for he seems to have been early left an orphan) while he kept his sheep on the hills near Melrose, from the eighth year of his age until his entrance into the convent at the age of fifteen. He was tenderly grateful to her for her maternal care, and, when he became a missionary, took advantage of every occasion furnished to him by his apostolic journeys to visit her whom he called his mother, in the village where she lived. On one occasion, when he was with her, a fire broke out in the village, and the flames, increased by a violent wind, threatened all the neighbouring roofs. "Fear nothing, dear mother", the young missionary said to her; "this fire will do you no harm"; and he began to pray. Suddenly the wind changed; the village was saved, and with it the thatched roof which sheltered the old age of her who had protected his infancy.

From the cottage of his foster-mother he went to the palaces of queens. The noble queen of Northumberland, Etheldreda, the saint and virgin, *regia virgo*, says the historian, before she left her throne and conjugal life to bury herself in the cloister, loved to surround herself with the religious of both sexes most renowned for their piety, and to converse familiarly with them for the good of her soul. She often called the young prior of Lindisfarne to her as well as Wilfrid, her guide and spiritual master, and this is the only occasion on which a meeting between these two contemporaries, so venerable yet so different, can be supposed to have taken place. The holy queen had a great friendship for Cuthbert. She overwhelmed him and his monastery with gifts from her own possessions, and wishing, besides, to offer him a personal token of her close affection, she embroidered for him, with her own hands (for she embroidered beautifully), a stole and maniple covered with gold and precious stones. She chose to give him such a present that he might wear this memorial of her only in the presence of God whom they both served, and accordingly would be obliged to keep her always in mind at the holy sacrifice.

Cuthbert was on still more intimate terms with the holy-princesses, who, placed at the head of great communities of nuns, and sometimes even of monks, exercised so

powerful an influence upon the Anglo-Saxon race, and particularly on Northumbria. While he was still at Melrose the increasing fame of his sanctity and eloquence brought him often into the presence of the sister of King Oswy, who then reigned over the two Northumbrian kingdoms. This princess, Ebba, was abbess of the double monastery of Coldingham, of which mention has already been made, the farthest north of all the religious establishments of Northumbria, and that in which Queen Etheldreda sought refuge first after leaving her husband. Cuthbert was the guest for several days of the royal abbess; but he did not intermit on this account his pious exercises, nor, above all, his austerities and long prayers by night on the sea-shore. During the day he preached to Ebba's two communities, edifying them by the wonderful harmony between his life and his doctrine. Perhaps he was not himself equally edified by all he saw, if we give faith to the assertions of later historians, who trace back to that visit the severe regulations attributed to him in respect to the intercourse of monks with women of whatsoever condition.

But the authority of this tradition, weakened as it is by the total silence of Cuthbert's biographers, is contradicted by his example. To the end of his life he maintained a very intimate and constant friendship with another abbess of the blood-royal of Northumbria, Elfleda, niece of St. Oswald and of King Oswy, who, though still quite young, exercised an influence much greater than that of Ebba upon the men and the events of her time. It has been seen that, out of consideration for her, the holy anchorite left his islet of Fame to hold a conference with her in another island nearer to Whitby, in respect to the anxieties by which she was assailed on account of her brother, King Egfrid. Cuthbert was heartily attached to all the royal family of Northumbria, the Bernician dynasty, which had been restored in his childhood under the great and saintly Oswald. He had a special devotion for that martyred king, whose head was represented on his seal. Oswald's niece, the Abbess Elfleda, before she became the generous and powerful protectress of Wilfrid, was thus the friend and client of St. Cuthbert, linking together these two illustrious personages as the holy Queen Etheldreda had done. She had the liveliest affection for the prior of Lindisfarne, and at the same time an absolute confidence in his sanctity. When she was assailed by an alarming illness, which fell into paralysis, and found no remedy from physicians, she cried, "Ah, had I but something which belonged to my dear Cuthbert, I am sure I should be cured". A short time after her friend sent her a linen girdle, which she hastened to put on, and in three days she was healed.

Shortly before his death, and during his last pastoral visitation, Cuthbert went to see Elfleda in the neighbourhood of the great Monastery of Whitby, to consecrate a church which she had built there, and to converse with her for the last time. They dined together, and during the meal, seeing his knife drop from his trembling hand in the abstraction of supernatural thoughts, she had a last opportunity of admiring his prophetic intuition, and his constant care for the salvation of souls. The fatigue of the holy bishop, who said, laughingly, "I cannot eat all day long; you must give me a little rest"—the eagerness and pious curiosity of the young abbess, anxious to know and do everything, who rushes up breathless during the ceremony of the dedication to ask from the bishop a memento for a monk whose death she had just heard of—all those details form a picture complete in its simplicity, upon which the charmed mind can repose amid



the savage habits and wild vicissitudes of the struggle, then more violent than ever, between the Northumbrians and Picts, the Saxons and the Celts.

But the last of all his visits was for another abbess, less illustrious and powerful than the two princesses of the blood of Ethelfrid, but also of high birth, and not less dear to his heart, if we may judge by the mark of affection which he gave her on his deathbed. This was Verca, abbess of one of that long line of monasteries which traced the shores of the Northern Sea, seated on the high promontories, or at the mouths of the Northumbrian rivers. Her convent was on the mouth of the Tyne, the river which divided the two Northumbrian kingdoms, Deira and Bernicia, and to it the body of the holy King Oswin had been carried after his murder. She gave Cuthbert a magnificent reception; but the bishop was ill, and after the midday meal which was usual in all the Benedictine monasteries, he became thirsty. Wine and beer were offered to him, yet he would take nothing but water; but this water, after it had touched his lips, seemed to the monks of Tynemouth, who drank the remainder, the best wine they had ever tasted. Cuthbert, who retained nothing of the robust health of his youth, already suffered from the first attacks of the disease which carried him off. His pious friend was no doubt struck by his feebleness, for she offered him, as the last pledge of spiritual union, a piece of very fine linen to be his shroud. Two short years of the episcopate had sufficed to consume his strength. After celebrating the feast of Christmas in 686 with the monks of Lindisfarne, the presentiment of approaching death determined him to abdicate, and to return to his isle of Fame, there to prepare for the last struggle. Here he lived but two months in the dear and pleasant solitude which was his supreme joy, tempering its sweetness by redoubled austerities. When his monks came to visit him in his isle, which storms often made inaccessible for weeks together, they found him thin, tremulous, and almost exhausted. One of them, who has given us a narrative of the end of his life, revived him a little by giving him warm wine to drink, then seating himself by the side of the worn-out bishop upon his bed of stone to sustain him, received from his beloved lips the last confidences and last exhortations of the venerated master. The visits of his monks were very sweet to him, and he lavished upon them to the last moment proofs of his paternal tenderness and of his minute care for their spiritual and temporal well-being. His last illness was long and painful. He fixed beforehand the place of his burial, near the oratory which he had hollowed in the rock, and at the foot of a cross which he had himself planted. "I would fain repose", said he, "in this spot, where I have fought my little battle for the Lord, where I desire to finish my course, and from whence I hope that my merciful Judge will call me to the crown of righteousness. You will bury me, wrapped in the linen which I have kept for my shroud, out of love for the Abbess Verca, the friend of God, who gave it to me".

He ended his holy life preaching peace, humility, and the love of that unity which he thought he had succeeded in establishing in the great Anglo-Celtic sanctuary, the new abbot of which, Herefrid, begged of him a last message as a legacy to his community. "Be unanimous in your councils", the dying bishop said to him, in his faint voice; "live in good accord with the other servants of Christ; despise none of the faithful who ask your hospitality; treat them with friendly familiarity, not esteeming yourself better than others who have the same faith and often the same life. But have no communion with those who withdraw from the unity of Catholic peace, either by the illegal celebration of

Easter or by practical ill-doing. Remember always, if you must make a choice, that I infinitely prefer that you should leave this place, carrying my bones with you, rather than that you should remain here bent under the yoke of wicked heresy. Learn and observe with diligence the Catholic decrees of the fathers, and also the rules of monastic life which God has deigned to give you by my hands. I know that many have despised me in my life, but after my death you will see that my doctrine has not been despicable". These energetic words, and the allusion to his predecessor Colman, who had left Lindisfarne, carrying with him the bones of the holy Bishop Aidan, rather than submit to ritualistic unity with Rome, shows that this unity had in the Celt Cuthbert a champion less impetuous and less rash than Wilfrid, but not less resolute and devoted.

This effort was the last. He lost the power of speech, received the last sacraments in silence, and died, raising his eyes and arms to heaven, at the hour when it was usual to sing matins, in the night of the 20th March 687. One of his attendants immediately mounted to the summit of the rock, where the lighthouse is now placed, and gave to the monks of Lindisfarne, by waving a lighted torch, the signal agreed upon to announce the death of the greatest saint who has given glory to that famous isle. He was but fifty, and had worn the monastic habit for thirty-five years.

Among many friends, he had one who was at once his oldest and most beloved—a priest called Herbert, who lived as an anchorite in an island of Lake Derwentwater, one of those fine lakes which make the district of Cumberland and Westmoreland the most picturesque part of England. Every year Herbert came from his peaceful lake to visit his friend in the other island, beaten and undermined continually by the great waves of the Northern Sea ; and upon that wild rock, to the accompaniment of winds and waves, they passed several days together in a tender solitude and intimacy, talking of the life to come. When Cuthbert, then a bishop, came for the last time to Carlisle, to give the veil to Queen Ermenburga, Herbert seized the opportunity, and hastened to refresh himself at that fountain of eternal benefits which flowed for him from the holy and tender heart of his friend. "My brother", the bishop said to him, "you must ask me now all that you want to know, for we shall never meet again in this world". At these words Herbert fell at his feet in tears. "I conjure you", he cried, "do not leave me on this earth behind you; remember my faithful friendship, and pray God that, after having served Him together in this world, we may pass into His glory together". Cuthbert threw himself on his knees at his friend's side, and after praying for some minutes, said to him, "Rise, my brother, and weep no more; God has granted to us that which we have both asked from Him." And in fact, though they never saw each other again here below, they died on the same day and at the same hour, the one in his isle bathed by the peaceable waters of a solitary lake, the other upon his granite rock fringed by the foam of the ocean; and their souls, says Bede, reunited by that blessed death, were carried together by the angels into the eternal kingdom. This coincidence deeply touched the Christians of Northumbria, and was long engraven in their memory. Seven centuries later, in 1374, the Bishop of Carlisle appointed that a mass should be said, on the anniversary of the two saints, in the island where the Cumbrian anchorite died, and granted an indulgence of forty days to all who crossed the water to pray there in honour of the two friends.

In all the histories of the saints, where shall we find a more complete contrast than that between Wilfrid and Cuthbert, though they were contemporaries, and devoted, from

the bottom of their hearts, to the same cause? The life of Cuthbert, much shorter and less afflicted than that of Wilfrid, affords rest to the observer in the midst of the disturbances of a conflict to which, at the same time, he was not a stranger; but his part seems always to have been that of mediator and consoler. He liked better to persuade and to heal than to fight and vanquish. Beside Wilfrid, who is the saint of active life, of polemics, of publicity, of the struggle with kings, princes, and prelates, Cuthbert appears to us as the saint of nature, of a life retired and humble, of popular preaching, of solitude, and of prayer.

Notwithstanding this, the popularity of Cuthbert was immense, infinitely more general and more lasting than that of Wilfrid, or indeed of any other saint of his country and century. The Northumbrians listened with delight to the story of the pontiff who lived their own rustic and seafaring life, a shepherd and a sailor by turns—who understood and had shared their occupations, their feelings, their necessities—who had taught them goodness by practising it himself, and truth by serving it without remission, but with a boundless charity.

While these recollections were engraved in the faithful memory of the labouring classes, kings, lords, and prelates rivalled each other in demonstrations of respect and munificence to his relics and his spiritual posterity. All these different but equally persevering kinds of admiration produced an incredible amount of offerings, and especially gifts of land, made in his honour to the churches of Lindisfarne and Durham, in which successively he found a tomb. The words of Scripture were never more completely verified—“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”.

It would require a volume to tell the history of the worship of St. Cuthbert and his relics, a history which, during many centuries, is mixed up with the history of the north of England, and sometimes takes the leading place in it. The history of the various journeys made by the monks of Lindisfarne, in the ninth and tenth centuries, to take back from the Danes the corpse of their beloved saint, along with the skull of the martyr-king Oswald, would make of itself an Odyssey full of varied and curious episodes. This treasure at last found an asylum upon a steep platform formed like a horseshoe, covered with wood, and surrounded on three sides by a rapid river, where was built, in 995, a chapel which took the name of Durham, and to which was afterwards transferred the episcopal and abbatial see. From this moment the name and memory of Cuthbert hovered over the magnificent Cathedral of Durham, one of the most beautiful in the world. This magnificent building, with its three storeys of arched windows, its two towers, its five naves and two transepts, forms, with the ancient castle of the bishop, built by William the Conqueror, a monument at once of religion and art as admirable as it is little known. It can be compared only to Pisa, to Toledo, to Nuremberg, or Marienburg. It has even a great advantage over all these celebrated places, in the beauty of the landscape which encloses it. It is the sole existing example of a splendid cathedral situated in the midst of an old wood, and on the height of a rock, the abrupt descent of which is bathed by a narrow and rapid river.

The extreme veneration with which the Saxon people surrounded the relics of St. Cuthbert made this church the best endowed in England. The humble anchorite, who

had lived on his rock by the modest produce of his manual labour alone, thus created the richest benefice, after Toledo, in Christendom.

Cuthbert had vainly asked his monks to bury him upon his rock of Fame, in order to spare them the trouble caused by the criminals who would come to take refuge at his tomb. The monks of Lindisfarne exposed themselves willingly to these importunate visitors, rather than deprive their church of what was to be its most precious treasure. After his translation to Durham, universal consent conferred in an ever-increasing degree upon the sanctuary where his relics reposed a universally respected right of asylum. The ring of sculptured bronze attached to the door of the cathedral, which any pursued criminal or persecuted innocent had but to grasp in order to have part in the inviolability of the sanctuary, is still shown. The few who ventured to disregard this inviolability incurred celestial punishment, which increased the fame of the sanctuary. But the good saint did not wait until they had sought the shelter of his tomb to extend the hand of tutelary protection over the unhappy and the oppressed. The records of his church are rich in narratives of his miraculous interposition in behalf of the unfortunate victims of feudal tyranny, or of the too often arbitrary and pitiless justice of the middle ages. The poor who invoked him saw the saint penetrate into the hideous dungeons where they were buried alive. At his voice their chains fell off, their instruments of torture were broken, and, like the angel who delivered St. Peter, Cuthbert led them to a safe place through the midst of sleeping jailers and closed doors.

But in this posthumous history of the holy abbot of Lindisfarne nothing is more singular or more touching than to see a man so humble, so modest, and so pacific, transformed into the patron saint, historical, warlike, and political, of all Northumbria, and that for six centuries at least after his death. It became a matter of pride to Northumbrian patriotism to sustain and demonstrate that Cuthbert was the most powerful intercessor produced by the Anglo-Saxon race, and that neither the glorious Queen Etheldreda nor the holy King St. Edmond, martyred by the Danes, nor St. Thomas of Canterbury himself, were so much listened to by God. The principal Anglo-Saxon kings emulated each other in seeking his protection. The great King Alfred, when hidden in the marsh of Glastonbury, at the most critical moment of his struggle with the Danes, saw St. Cuthbert in a vision, who encouraged him, and promised him victory and the deliverance of his country. Canute, the great king of the Danes, when he became master of England, went barefooted to the tomb of Cuthbert, to pray there for the protection of the saint most venerated by the people he had just subdued, William the Conqueror himself, when he hastened to Durham to avenge the death of those Normans whom the inhabitants, intrenched in their sacred peninsula, had repulsed and slain, experienced a sort of supernatural impression before the tomb of the Anglo-Saxon saint, and respected the immunities on which the vassals of the bishopric plumed themselves in honour of their patron.

In fact, the Norman Conquest did not in any way diminish the popularity of Cuthbert; Normans and Saxons were rivals for his protection. It is on record that an Anglo-Norman knight of the eleventh century returned from a pilgrimage to Rome, carrying the whole way, upon his bosom, a great piece of antique marble intended to decorate the altar of the holy bishop.

Under the Anglo-Saxon monarchy Durham thus inherited at once all the veneration which attached to Lindisfarne — the cradle of faith and of the national Church in Northumbria—and to the personal memory of St. Cuthbert. Under the feudal royalty of the Plantagenets, the bishops who took special honour to themselves as his successors, succeeded in some degree in identifying themselves and their domains with him. Devotion to St. Cuthbert became so respected and so officially efficacious, that all that was given to them and all they acquired was legally invested with what was called, in the middle ages, freedom—that is to say, exemption from all taxes and all jurisdiction except that of the possessor. All the vast bishopric was considered the patrimony of St. Cuthbert, and bore his name. By reason of this privilege the bishops of Durham acquired by degrees all the attributes of royalty. They had a chancery, an admiralty, an exchequer, civil and criminal judges, the right of coining money, and in addition, the defence and suzerainty of the English frontier against the Scotch. It was in consequence of having wasted the lands of St. Cuthbert that King David of Scotland drew upon himself the terrible defeat known as the Battle of the Standard; and it was upon a fief of the saint's patrimony, though enclosed by the diocese of York, that this decisive victory of the Anglo-Norman barons was gained.

Two centuries after that great day, Normans and Saxons, finally melted down into one nation, marched to battle against the Scots under the *vexillum Sancti Cuthberti*, which was no other than the corporal used by the prior of Lindisfarne to cover the chalice at mass, and which his pious admirers had taken the fancy of placing on the point of a lance, and carrying in place of a banner. Edward III was in France, where he had just won the battle of Crecy, and was besieging Calais, King David II of Scotland, son of the illustrious Robert Bruce, had taken advantage of his absence to make a new invasion of Northumberland. He came as far as the walls of Durham at the head of thirty thousand Scots, whose devastations recalled only too distinctly those of their ancestors the Picts. The Queen of England, the generous Philippa of Hainault, led in her own person, to meet the enemy, an army inferior in number, but inspired by the idea of punishing the sacrilegious cruelty of the invaders. The Scots had not even respected the possessions and vassals of the abbey, which was still called the patrimony of St. Cuthbert. At the moment when the fight was about to begin, the prior of the monastery planted the standard of the saint upon a height near the field of battle, around which all the monks assembled in prayer. Victory pronounced itself for the English: their formidable archers, drawn specially from among the vassals of St. Cuthbert, made short work with the Scottish men-at-arms. The Scottish army was annihilated, and King David wounded and made prisoner, along with his archbishop and the flower of his nobility. The next morning the victors, led by the chiefs of the two great chivalric houses of Norman Northumberland, the Nevilles and Percies, carried back to the monastic cathedral, along with the banners taken from the Scots, the precious relic they had borrowed. It reappeared in many battles, always assuring victory to the English, up to the reign of Henry VIII. The last time that this holy banner appeared on a field of battle was again in the hands of the Nevilles and Percies, in the glorious but ill-fated insurrection of the Northumbrians against the atrocious tyranny of Henry VIII in 1536. This insurrection, known under the name of the *pilgrimage of Grace*, in favour of the religion which the saints of Lindisfarne had brought into Northumbria, and which the miserable husband of Anne Boleyn wished to destroy, ended only in the massacre of the



rural population, and in the judicial murder of the principal nobles and priests of the country — among others, of the last successor of St. Wilfrid at Hexham. Under the reign of this *Defender of the Faith* the standard of St. Cuthbert had the same fate as his body, which up to that time had remained uncorrupted. These holy remains, along with the bones of the Venerable Bede, were torn from the shrine in which they had been venerated by so many grateful generations; and the noble banner was also torn from the sanctuary and thrown into the fire by the wife of an apostate priest.

Less dazzling and less universal, but not less lasting, was the popularity of the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne with the seafaring population of the Northumbrian shores. This is apparent through all the different narratives which remain to us concerning the worship of which he was the object during so many centuries, and which throw a precious light upon the ideas, manners, and belief of the ancient English people. But let us state, in the first place, that all the monks of that district were, like Cuthbert, bold and unwearied sailors. There are no more interesting recollections of their life than those which show them to us in constant conflict with the element on which England has established her dominion. In that point, as in all else, the monks show themselves in history the pioneers of the Anglo-Saxon race. It is pleasant to see them sounding a prelude, as it were, by their courage and address, to the exploits of the most maritime nation in the world.

*“Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!”*

The narratives of the seventh century are full of the cruel tempests which reigned upon the east coast of England, still one of the shores most abounding in shipwrecks. But no danger stopped the sons of those bold sailors who owed the conquest of Great Britain to their experience of the sea. The Anglo-Saxon monks, under the frock and scapular, wore hearts which did not yield either in vigour or activity to any of their ancestors or countrymen. They coasted continually between the different monasteries and their dependencies, which extended along that coast bristling with rocks and reefs. Sometimes the furious waves drove them out to sea, out of sight of land, sometimes held them shut up in some desert isle or solitary bay for whole days and weeks. Then, as soon as the wind fell, they put out again to encounter new dangers in their miserable barks, rocked on the crest of the waves like sea-gulls. They were compared to sea-birds by those who from the shore saw them struggling against the storm; and it was under this aspect that they appeared for the first time to Cuthbert, when in his youth, before he became a monk, he witnessed, in the midst of a mocking and hostile crowd, the fruitless efforts of the monks of Tynemouth to effect a landing, against wind and tide, with the wood for building, which they were carrying to their monastery in five little boats. The prayer of Cuthbert saved them, and brought them happily into port, where their brethren awaited them, all kneeling in a mass upon a point of rock which projected into the raging waves, to implore from heaven the safety of their companions.

When Cuthbert himself became a monk, his duties as missionary and prior, and afterward his prolonged sojourn upon the isle of Fame, familiarised him with all the dangers and habits of that seafaring existence which was so closely associated with

monastic life. This recollection, joined to the popular glory of his name, gave him the place of patron saint to the poor seamen condemned to gain their bread by braving daily that stormy sea. Late in the twelfth century it was still told among them how, in the midst of the hurricane, the sailors in extremity saw the holy Bishop of Lindisfarne appear in the midst of them, with his mitre on his head and his crosier in his hand, which he used sometimes as a helm, sometimes as an oar, sometimes as a grappling-iron, to save them from shipwreck, and bring them to a place of safety : no one dared to ask him his name, for all recognised, by the sheen of his beautiful and gentle countenance, the tender-hearted pontiff whom they had all been taught to venerate from their infancy as the protector of the country and of the coast. It occurred to no one in those days to doubt the reality of such an apparition. For all the nations of Christendom at this period there was nothing more natural than the supernatural. It was only a more frequent and more direct intervention of the omnipotence of God, which appalled them or consoled them, but did not surprise.

In this dangerous archipelago, and on the precipitous island where Cuthbert had his favourite dwelling and where he died, he had more than one successor ambitious of following his holy footsteps in the same spot where he had best known and served his God. The first of these was a monk of Ripon called Ethelwold, who, more effectually moved by the example of Cuthbert than by the lessons of Wilfrid, lived for twelve years in the cell of his holy predecessor, the opening of which he attempted to close against the wind and rain by clay, hay, and finally by a hide, that he might not be troubled in his contemplations. But when the moaning of the wind and the waves, which broke against the basaltic precipices of his isle, warned him of coming calamity, he issued from his shelter to hasten to the aid of the shipwrecked; and the sailors, driven in the midst of storm, saw him kneeling on the summit of his rock with his hands raised to heaven imploring from God the salvation of his brethren.

The Anglo-Saxon anchorite thus set up before God and man, on his unknown isle, and in the depths of an unknown age, a touching and glorious symbol of the everlasting part played by his fellow-monks, always ready to lavish upon Christians treasures of intercession, and to encounter public plagues and perils, as well as those temptations and tempests of the soul of which the waves in fury are but an imperfect image.

It is pleasant to connect with this old saint of the past a Christian heroine of our own days, the young and touching figure of Grace Darling, who came from the very isle of Cuthbert and Ethelwold to expose her life on behalf of the shipwrecked—as if that wild and threatening coast had been predestined by God up to our own time to be at once the locality and the witness of the noblest deeds of charity. Grace was the daughter of the keeper of one of those lighthouses which modern science has raised upon the group of isles between Lindisfarne and Bamborough. One night, in the midst of a terrible storm, she was awoke by the cries of the crew of a great ship which had gone ashore on a neighbouring reef. She awoke her father, and alone with him, oar in hand, in a frail boat, she rushed to the help of the perishing. The sea had never been more furious, nor the difficulty and danger of managing a boat greater. After desperate efforts, she at last reached the rock to which clung the last survivors of the crew. They were but nine in number, all of whom she took into her boat. The rage of the waves and violence of the wind were such that it took almost an entire day to row them back to the

lighthouse, where she harboured and cared for them for three days and nights. All England burst into an unanimous transport of enthusiasm on learning this heroic act; and from the royal palace to the smallest village all echoed her praise. She was only twenty, and was no doubt already attacked by the pulmonary disease of which she died four years afterwards. She died without any desire to leave her father and her island, leaving only a name, worthy of eternal recollection, worthy to be inscribed among the heroes and saints. In Anglo-Saxon times she would have been canonised by the popular voice, as were all the saints whose history we record; and her place would have been fixed between Hilda and Ebba, the two great abbesses of her race and country, whose profaned altars and forgotten fame still hallow in the north and south the historic region which Grace Darling has lighted up with a modern and touching glory.

(The ship wrecked upon the reefs of Longstone Island was a steam-boat called the *Forfarshire*. Grace Darling's lighthouse is situated upon the isle called Longstone or Outer Fame. See the fine notice of this incident given by M. Alphonse Esquires in one of his excellent articles upon England and English life (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1864), and for the localities Cruchley's excellent *Reduced Ordnance Map*, No. 62. Grace Darling's father died in May 1865. He is buried beside his daughter, who rests in the cemetery at Bamborough, upon the site of the ancient capital of those Northumbrian kings of whom we have spoken so much. The monument raised by a national subscription to this young heroine of Christian charity is visible at sea a great distance off.

## CHAPTER II

### ST. BENEDICT BISCOP, AND THE MONASTERIES OF WEARMOUTH AND YARROW

Chronological summary of the life of Benedict Biscop : —

628. Birth.

653. He gives up secular life, and goes to Rome for the first time.

665. His second journey to Rome : he becomes a monk at Lerins.

667. Third journey to Rome.

669. He returns with the Archbishop Theodore, and becomes abbot of St. Peter's, at Canterbury,

671. Fourth journey to Rome.

672. Return by Vienna, where he recovers his books,

674. Foundation of Wearmouth.

676. Journey to France in search of artists.

678. Fifth journey to Rome.

682. Foundation of Yarrow. He takes Easterwine as his coadjutor.

684. Sixth journey to Rome.

686. Death of Easterwine. Return of Benedict,

690. His death

A THIRD saint, whose name has been already mentioned in this record, comes in between Wilfrid and Cuthbert, Benedict Biscop, the companion of Wilfrid in his first journey to Rome, and during the last half of his life the neighbour of Cuthbert, whom he followed closely to the tomb. In the retirement of the cloister, and, so to speak, in private life, Benedict held the position which Wilfrid held in public life, as the champion of Roman unity and propagation of the Benedictine rule. He represents, besides, in the monastic constellation of the seventh century, intelligence, art, and science, as Cuthbert represents the gift of preaching and ascetic life. His fame was less than that of Wilfrid, and, with still greater reason, less than that of Cuthbert; but he has, notwithstanding, won a noble place in the annals of the Anglo-Saxon Church. We find various features in his life which do honour to his soul, and which are not without interest in the history of human intelligence.

Benedict was born, like Wilfrid, but several years before him, of the highest Anglo-Saxon nobility. While he was still very young, he held an office in the household of King Oswy, who, according to the customs of the new-born feudalism, invested him with a fief taken from the national property, and proportioned to the importance of his office. At twenty-five he gave up secular life, marriage, and his family, restored his lands to the king, and dedicated himself to the service of God. Before he settled in any community he went to Rome, where he had been long attracted by that desire of paying his vows at the tombs of the apostles which became so general among the Anglo-Saxons. It has been seen, in the history of Wilfrid, how, after beginning their journey together, the two young Northumbrian nobles separated at Lyons, and how Benedict, after his first visit to Rome, returned there a second and third time, having in the meantime assumed the monastic habit in the island of Lerins, a monastery which had just entered into the family of St. Benedict. It may also be remembered that Pope Vitalianus, struck with the piety and knowledge of so constant and zealous a pilgrim, assigned him as guide and interpreter to the Greek Theodore, who undertook, at the age

of sixty-seven, to take the place of St. Augustin, and who retained his Anglo-Saxon guide with him for two years, transforming him from a monk of Lerins into the abbot of the principal monastery in Canterbury.

After thus spending two years with the new archbishop, the abbot Benedict, instead of revisiting his native district, went for the fourth time to Rome. He was then in the prime of life; but when it is considered what were the difficulties and dangers of such a journey at such a time—when we remember that a journey from London to Rome was then twice as long as and a hundred times more dangerous than a journey from London to Australia is now—we are amazed at the resolution and energy which then, as ever since, has induced so many Christians, and especially so many Anglo-Saxon monks, not once only, but many times in their life, to cross the sea and the Alps on their way to Rome. His fourth expedition was undertaken in the interests of literature. He brought back from it a rich cargo of books, partly sold, partly given to him; and in passing by Vienne, the ancient capital of the Gauls, on his return, he brought with him many more, which he had deposited there in the charge of his friends. When he returned at length to his native Northumbria he sought King Egfrid, the son of his former master, then the reigning monarch, and told him all he had done during the twenty years which had passed since he left his country and the royal service. Then, endeavouring to communicate to him the religious ardour with which his own heart was filled, he explained to the king all he had learned, at Rome and elsewhere, of ecclesiastical and monastic discipline, showing him the books and relics which he had brought back. Egfrid, who had not yet begun his unfortunate struggle with Wilfrid, allowed himself to be won by the stories of the pilgrim, for whom he conceived a great affection; and in order that he might apply his experience to the government of a new community, he detached from his own possessions, and presented to Benedict, an estate large enough to feed seventy families, and give occupation to seventy ploughs, according to the mode of calculating the value of land among the Anglo-Saxons.

The estate was situated at the mouth of the Wear, a little stream which flows through Durham, and throws itself into the Northern Sea a little south of the Tyne. This gave the name of Wearmouth to the new monastery, which was consecrated to St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, according to the express wish of Egfrid, in agreement with that of Benedict as an evidence of his leanings towards Rome.

This foundation was no sooner assured than the unwearied Benedict took ship again, to seek in France *coementarii*, like those whom Wilfrid brought about the same time from Canterbury. As soon as they arrived he set them to work in building a stone church, in the Roman style, for everything that came from Rome was dear to him. It was in honour of St. Peter that he undertook this work, and it was carried on with so much energy that, a year after the first stone was laid, the church was roofed in and mass celebrated under one of those stone arches which excited the surprise and admiration of the English of the seventh century. He brought glassmakers also from France, for there were none in England; and these foreign workmen, after having put glass into the windows of the church and new monastery, taught their art to the Anglo-Saxons. Animated by a zeal which nothing could discourage, and inspired by intelligent patriotism, and a sort of passion for beauty in art, which shrank neither from fatigue nor care, he sent to seek beyond the seas all that he could not find in England—all that



seemed necessary to him for the ornamentation of his church ; and not finding even in France all he wanted, he went for the fifth time to Rome. Even this was not his last visit, for some years later he made a sixth pilgrimage. On both occasions he brought treasures back with him, chiefly books in countless quantities and of every kind. He was a passionate collector, as has been seen, from his youth. He desired each of his monasteries to possess a great library, which he considered indispensable to the instruction, discipline, and good organisation of the community; and reckoned upon the books as the best means of retaining his monks in their cloisters; for much as he loved travelling himself, he did not approve of other monks passing their time on the highways and byways, even under pretext of pilgrimages.

Along with the books he brought relics, not alone for his own community, but for other churches in England, and a great number of pictures and coloured images. By introducing these images from Rome into Northumberland, Benedict Biscop has written one of the most curious, and, at the same time, forgotten pages in the history of art. It is apparent that Rome was then the grand reservoir not only of tradition, but also of graphic or symbolic representations for the instruction and edification of the faithful, the first outlines of which, traced in the Catacombs by the tombs of the martyrs, began to reappear in the great mosaics which still decorate the apses of the primitive churches in Rome. The Venerable Bede, who speaks with enthusiasm of the expeditions of his master and friend, leads us to suppose that these were portable pictures, which could only have been painted on wood; but it may be supposed that the abbot of Wearmouth brought back with him both painters and mosaic-workers, to work on the spot at the decoration of his churches. How can it be otherwise explained how pictures on wood, brought even by water from Rome to England, should have been large enough to cover the walls and arches of the two or three churches of which Bede speaks? However this may be, the result was that the most ignorant of the Christians of Northumbria found, on entering these new monastic churches, under a material form, the attractive image of the instructions which the monastic missionaries lavished on them. Learned and unlearned could contemplate and study with delight, here the sweet and attractive figure of the new-born Saviour, there the twelve Apostles surrounding the Blessed Virgin; upon the northern wall all the parables of the Gospels, upon the southern the visions of the Apocalypse; elsewhere a series of pictures which marked the harmony between the Old and New Testaments ; Isaac carrying the wood for his sacrifice opposite to Jesus bearing His cross; the brazen serpent opposite Jesus crucified, and so on. When we discover these details in the decoration of the Northumbrian monasteries twelve hundred years ago, we cannot but bethink ourselves that our own century, in two memorable instances, has reproduced this sublime thought: at Spire, in the vast cathedral which the munificence of the king of Bavaria has raised out of its ruins ; and at Paris in the venerable Basilica of St. Germain des Pres, where our attention was attracted for the last time by the pencil of Flandrin, and from which a last lustre has been thrown upon talent so pure, so elevated, so serene, so naturally devoted to the service of the eternal truth. His name, though modern, like that of Ozanam, does not seem displaced amid the recollections of the saints and monuments of Christian antiquity!

After Latin and Greek books, after what was then called literature and philosophy, after architecture and art, it was the turn of music — of the art which above all others is

liturgic and monastic. On his return from his fifth voyage, Benedict brought back with him from Rome an eminent monk called John, precentor of St. Peter's, and abbot of St. Martin's at Rome, to establish at Wearmouth the music and Roman ceremonies with entire exactitude, and according to the practice of the Basilica of St. Peter at Rome. As soon as he had arrived at Wearmouth, this learned abbot set out in writing the order of the celebration of feasts for all the year, of which he soon circulated numerous copies. Then he opened classes, at which he taught, *viva voce*, the liturgy and ecclesiastical chants. The best singers of the Northumbrian monasteries came to listen to him, and invited him to visit their communities.

It was thus that Benedict Biscop drew from Rome, and spread throughout the soil of his country, by many different channels, the instructions and traditions of art consecrated by religion. History, it seems to us, offers few pages better adapted to refresh and console the soul than that on which the mother and sovereign Church is thus seen to open her protecting bosom to nations scarcely yet issued from the night of paganism, and to reveal to them, by the hands of her monastic ministers and missionaries, not only the mysteries of faith and the laws of morality, but also the pleasures of the mind and the beauties of art.

The passionate zeal of our abbot for the building and decoration of his monastic houses did not make him forget the more essential interests of his foundations. Before leaving Rome he took care to constitute his community upon the immovable basis of the rule of St. Benedict. He obtained from Pope Agathon a charter which guaranteed the liberty and security of the new monastery of Wearmouth, as Wilfrid did for his favourite abbey of Hexham, and perhaps at an even earlier date. But far from requiring this guarantee against the king of Northumbria, as his old friend did, Bede takes care to prove that the pontifical grant was asked and obtained with the consent, and even at the desire, of Egfrid, and was confirmed in a public assembly by the king and bishops. From the time of their first separation at Lyons, Benedict seems always to have kept at a distance from Wilfrid, and no appearance of sympathy for the trials of the great persecuted bishop appears in him. Notwithstanding, they served the same cause, and inspired the Pope at least with equal confidence. Agathon gave a wonderful mark of this confidence to Benedict Biscop, by making his monastery the centre of the mission with which he had charged the precentor of St. Peter's, the object of which was to establish the orthodoxy of the English bishops and clergy in respect to the heresy of the Monothelites.

King Egfrid, who was then at the height of his struggle with Wilfrid, seems to have been anxious to make up, to his own conscience and that of his Catholic people, for his violence towards the Bishop of York, by the intimacy of his relations with the two other great monks of his kingdom the anchorite Cuthbert and the abbot Benedict. In order to give the latter a new mark of sympathy and protection, he assigned to him another estate, not so great as that of Wearmouth, for it could support only forty families, but so near to the first that it seemed possible to unite the two gifts, and make of them one vast patrimony. This was the cradle of the monastery of Yarrow, the name of which is inseparably linked with that of the Venerable Bede. Yarrow was situated a little to the north of the monastery of Wearmouth, in a similar position, at the mouth of a river, the Tyne, which there falls into the Northern Sea, after following a course parallel

to that of the Wear, and was dedicated to the Apostle St. Paul, as Wearmouth was to the Apostle St. Peter. The thought which inspired Biscop of establishing the spirit and image of Rome upon this Northumbrian shore, already sweet with the perfume of monastic flowers, is everywhere apparent. He wanted a reproduction of St. Paul's outside the Walls, at a certain distance from his Saxon copy of St. Peter of the Vatican. Although he had appointed one of his most intimate friends and fellow-pilgrims, Ceolfrid, abbot of the new foundation, Benedict's intention was to make only one community of the two houses, in sign of the fraternal union which he longed to see reigning among them, and which should be suggested to them by the example of the two glorious apostles whom he had given to them as patrons.

In order to be more at liberty to devote his time to travel, as well as to be more at the disposal of the king, who continually sought his presence and counsels, Benedict took a coadjutor in the government of his first monastery of Wearmouth. This new abbot was his nephew, and, like Ceolfrid, one of his most devoted companions. His name was Easterwine. He was younger than Benedict by twenty-two years, and, like him, of high birth; for it was the descendants of the noblest races of Northumbria who filled the monasteries, giving themselves up to occupations the most unlike those of their ancestors—to manual or literary-work, to prayer and penitence. He had been, like Benedict, a soldier in the warlike household of King Egfrid. At twenty-one he had given up everything to enter into the community formed by his uncle at Wearmouth ; nor did the one dream of asking, nor the other of offering, any exemption from the charges and observances of religious life, on account of relationship or nobility. The noble youth took pride only in following minutely the rule and occupations of the house, like any other monk. Thanks to his illustrious biographer, we know what the occupations of a Saxon thane turned monk were in the seventh century. His duties were—to thrash and winnow the corn, to milk the goats and cows, to take his turn in the kitchen, the bakehouse, and the garden, always humble and joyous in his obedience. When he became coadjutor, and was invested, in Benedict's absence, with all his authority, the young abbot continued the course of communal life; and when his duties as superior led him out of doors to where the monks laboured in the fields, he set to work along with them, taking the plough or the fan in his own hands, or forging iron upon the anvil. He was robust as well as young and handsome; but his look was infinitely gentle, and his conversation full of amiability. When he was compelled to reprove a fault, it was done with such tender sadness that the culprit felt himself incapable of any new offence which should bring a cloud over the benign brightness of that beloved face. His table was served with the same provisions as that of the monks ; and he slept in the general dormitory, which he left only five days before his death, being then hopelessly ill, to prepare himself, in a more solitary place, for the last struggle. When he felt his end approaching, he had still strength enough left to go down to the garden, and, seating himself there, called to him all his brethren, who wept the anticipated loss of such a father. Then, with the tenderness which was natural to him, he gave to each of them a last kiss. The following night he died, aged thirty-six, while the monks were singing matins. Such happy deaths, which are common in the history of the time, seem to have been at once the privilege and the seal of all those generous vocations which filled the numerous monasteries of converted England.

When Benedict returned from his last expedition to Rome, he found his benefactor and protector, King Egfrid, and his nephew and coadjutor, Easterwine, both dead, along with a great number of his monks, carried off by one of the epidemics then so frequent. The only survivors at Yarrow were the abbot and one little scholar whom we shall find again further on, and whose fame was destined to eclipse that of all the Saxon saints and kings, who are scarcely known to posterity except by his pen. Benedict did not lose courage, but promptly collected new subjects under his sway, recommencing and pursuing, with his habitual energy, the decoration of his two churches of St. Peter and St. Paul. The monks had already chosen as successor to Easterwine a deacon named Sigfried, a learned and virtuous man, but affected by pulmonary disease, and the first of the English, I think, in whom history indicates a malady so general and so fatal to their race.

Benedict's own turn was, however, soon to come. God preserved his life to purify him, and put his patience to a long and cruel trial, before calling him to his eternal recompense. After having devoted the first thirteen years of his abbatiæ to the laborious and wandering life that was so dear to him, and to those distant expeditions that produced so many fruits for his order and his country, he was stricken by a cruel disease which lasted for three years, and paralysed all his members one after the other. Though kept to his bed by this infirmity, and unable to follow his brethren to the choir, he notwithstanding continued to celebrate each service, both day and night, with certain of the monks, mingling his feeble voice with theirs. At night his sleepless hours were consoled by the reading of the Gospels, which was kept up without interruption by a succession of priests. Often, too, he collected the monks and novices round his couch, addressing to them urgent and solemn counsels, and among other things begging them to preserve the great library which he had brought from Rome, and not to allow it to be spoiled or dispersed; but above all to keep faithfully the rules which, after a careful study of the seventeen principal monasteries which he had visited during his numerous journeys beyond seas, he had given to them. He also dwelt much upon the injunction he had already often repeated, that they should pay no regard to high birth in their choice of an abbot, but look simply to his life and doctrine. He prayed them to elect to this office the most worthy among themselves, in conformity to the rules of St. Benedict and the charter he had obtained for them. "If I had to choose between two evils, I should prefer", he said to them, "to see the spot on which I have established our dear monastery fall back into eternal solitude, rather than be succeeded here by my own brother, who, we all know, is not in the good way". Thus Benedict shows himself to have been moved by a presentiment of one of the most cruel dangers and fatal weaknesses with which the future of the monastic order could be threatened.

The strength of the holy abbot, and, at the same time, that of his poor coadjutor, was by this time so exhausted by their respective diseases, that they both perceived they were about to die, and desired to see each other for the last time before departing from this world. In order that the wish of these two tender friends should be accomplished, it was necessary to bring the dying coadjutor to the bed of the abbot. His head was placed on the same pillow; but they were both so feeble that they could not even embrace each other, and the help of brotherly hands was necessary to aid them. All the monks assembled in chapter round this bed of suffering and love; and the two aged saints,

having pointed out among them a successor approved by all, breathed together, with a short interval between, their last breath. Thus died, at the age of sixty-two, St. Benedict of England, a worthy rival of the great patriarch of the monks of the West, whose robe and name he bore, being, like him, a victor over sin and master of all virtue.

The monk proposed by the two dying saints to the choice of their brethren, to replace them as abbot of the two monasteries, was the same Ceolfrid who had accompanied Benedict to Rome and to Canterbury, and who was already abbot of Yarrow. Like all the chiefs of the great Northumbrian communities, with the exception of Cuthbert, he proceeded from the highest rank of Anglo-Saxon nobility. His father bore the dignity of *ealdorman*, the highest rank after the blood-royal, and was famed for his magnificence. On one occasion, when he expected a visit from the king, the news of the sudden incursion of some enemy obliged the prince to depart before beginning the magnificently prepared repast, upon which the earl assembled all the poor of the quarter, put them in the place of the king and his attendants, and, when they were all seated, served the men with his own hands, while his countess performed the same office for the women.

Ceolfrid, who became a monk at eighteen, had been trained at Ripon, in the school of Wilfrid, who ordained him priest after ten years of study. After this, in order to understand better the traditions and obligations of his profession, he visited the monastic metropolis of Canterbury, and on his way back spent some time with an old abbot named Botulph, whose virtues and knowledge were much renowned. Botulph, too, was of a noble family of East Anglia ; his parents were among the oldest Christians of England, and had sent him while quite young across the sea into a monastery in Gaul, to learn, says his biographer, the glories of the faith, and to train himself to apostolical life. When he returned some years after, furnished with recommendations from two young East Anglian princesses whom he had met in his Gaulish monastery, he gained the heart of the kings of his tribe. These princes offered him lands which were already under cultivation, and were even allotted, according to feudal law, to other proprietors; but Botulph refused to have any one impoverished for his advantage, and preferred an uncultivated estate, situated on a little river not far from the Northern Sea, where he founded the great monastery of Icanhoe, which has since grown into a town, and has borrowed its modern name, Boston, from that of its founder (Botulph's town). Botulph's chief aim was to build and regulate his monastery on the model of the communities where he had lived, or which he had visited on the continent—that is to say, in strict conformity with the rule of St. Benedict. He lived there for more than half a century, surrounded by the veneration and love of his countrymen, and working steadily to secure the complete observance of Benedictine laws in his community—a procedure which in the district where he had established himself did not fail to appear a grave innovation. The care which his biographer, a contemporary of his own, takes to set forth this distinctive feature, which ran through his whole life, makes it apparent that he had to contend with the resistance of his monks, and that he only succeeded by sometimes sacrificing his natural humility and his popularity to the austere duties of his abbatial charge. He repeated daily to his disciples the laws and lessons which he had brought from beyond sea; and even on his deathbed, during the attacks of sickness which



consumed his old age, he never ceased to recall the recollections of his monastic journeys, and to boast the gentleness and beauty of the true rule.

Imbued with the teaching of this great doctor of monastic life, Ceolfrid returned to Ripon, to redouble his zeal and fervour in the practice of his profession. When he became master of the novices at Ripon, the son of the ealdorman distinguished himself by his energy in all those manual labours which must have been so repugnant to the pride and habits of the Anglo-Saxon nobles. Without giving up his priestly functions, he took charge of the bakehouse, and was daily to be found at the furnace occupied in cleaning or heating it, and in baking bread for the use of the house. His fame reached the ears of Benedict Biscop, who, as soon as he began his enterprise, asked him from Wilfrid. His request was granted; and this is the sole evidence which exists in history of any link whatever between the celebrated Bishop of York and the great monasteries founded by the friend of his youth. After his transfer to Wearmouth, Ceolfrid was soon made the deputy, as prior, of Abbot Benedict, during his journeys. But he found among the new monks certain sons of nobles like himself, who refused to be controlled by the severe discipline which he enforced upon them both by precept and example, and who pursued him with their murmurs and calumnies. The effect of this upon him was such that, taking advantage of the absence of Benedict, he gave up his charge and returned to Ripon, to resume his former life there. Benedict hastened after him, and brought him back by dint of entreaties. After this he never relaxed his hold upon Ceolfrid, taking him with him in all his journeys up to the day when, as has been seen, he confided the government of the new monastery of Yarrow to him whom he wished to make his inseparable companion and fellow-labourer.

Ceolfrid took with him twenty-two monks from Wearmouth, to fill up the new foundation; but among these there were several who could not yet sing or even read aloud the service in the choir according to the requirements of the monastic ritual. Ceolfrid had to complete their musical and liturgical education, at the same time as he began that of the new-comers who soon thronged to Yarrow. By dint of entering himself into all the studies and exercises of his community, even in their minutest details, until the Benedictine observances took permanent root among them, he succeeded in his task. And he had to wield the trowel as well as the crosier, in order to direct and complete in less than two years the construction of the new abbey church, in which King Egfrid himself fixed the situation of the great altar.

Ceolfrid, when placed by the death of his friend at the head of the two monasteries of Wearmouth and Yarrow, which then formed one community of six hundred monks, displayed for twenty-seven years an unwearying activity and superior intelligence, as well as all the virtues of ascetic life. He was in every respect a worthy successor of Benedict: he took pains to enrich the two libraries, which were so great an object of care to his predecessor; and on occasion made use of his books for other purposes than the instruction of his monks. It is true that he had to deal with a learned king, trained at Iona, the enemy of Wilfrid and his Roman predilections, but as much a lover of books as any saint or monk, either Irish like Columba, or Anglo-Saxon like Biscop. The latter had brought from Rome a curious system of cosmography, which King Aldfrid burned to possess, and which he obtained from the Abbot Ceolfrid in exchange for land supporting eight families. The abbot afterwards found means of exchanging this estate,

with the addition of a sum of money, for another estate twice or three times as large, situated opposite the monastery of Yarrow, to which belonged the precious book which was the occasion of a traffic so lucrative. It must not be supposed from this that the great abbot was interested or mercenary ; he had, on the contrary, retained in the cloister the generous habits of his noble race; and Bede expressly tells that he never received a present or donation from neighbouring lords without giving them, as soon as possible, an equivalent.

Let us add, while speaking of books, that he had two complete copies made of the Bible, according to the version of St. Jerome, which he had brought from Rome, and placed them in his two churches, that they might be read and consulted by all who wished to do so — a new refutation, among so many others, of the stupid calumny which represents the Church as having in former times interdicted to her children the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures.

Ceolfrid's anxiety for the intellectual and material interests of his community did nowise diminish his zeal for the regular discipline and spiritual independence of his brethren. He took pains to have the charter of immunity obtained from Agathon renewed by the Pope St. Sergius, and confirmed in full synod by King Aldfrid. He devoted a considerable portion of each day, and his unwearying attention, to the prayers and sacred song of the choir; neither age nor sickness, nor even travel, seemed to him sufficient reasons for dispensing with this. Severe as it was his duty to be against the least irregularity, he lavished on the weak encouragements and consolations, and was hard only to himself, his living and clothing being of a temperance which seemed at that time surprising in the chief of so powerful an institution.

When he had passed his seventieth year, he no longer found himself strong enough to give to his monks an example of life conformed to the rule ; and he was anxious, besides, to return before he died to Rome, where he had in his youth accompanied his friend and master, there to prepare himself for death in silence. In vain the monks, when informed of his design, threw themselves on their knees to keep him back. Nothing could change his purpose. As soon as he had formed his resolution he put it in practice, fearing that if it were known he might be disturbed from without by entreaties, or even by the presents of the friends he had among the nobility of the neighbourhood, and indeed of all Northumbria. Three days after having declared his decision to the afflicted community, he said mass in the morning very early, gave the communion to all present, and, standing on the steps of the altar with the censer in his hand, blessed all his children. They began to sing litanies, which were interrupted by tears and sobs ; Ceolfrid then led them to an oratory, which he had dedicated to the martyr St. Lawrence, near the dormitory, and there addressed to them, as Benedict had done on his deathbed, a last exhortation. Its special subject was charity and mutual brotherly correction; and he entreated all those who might have found him too hard to pardon him and pray for him. From thence he descended to the bank of the river which bathes the walls of the monastery, followed by the six hundred monks of the two communities; after having received from their father a last kiss moistened with tears, they all knelt down. The old abbot then entered the ship that was to carry him away; and from the deck, on which the cross had been reared between two torches, he gave them his last benediction and disappeared from their sight. Ceolfrid himself could not contain his grief at this parting;

at the distant sound of the chants of his monks broken by their sobs, his tears flowed. Again and again he was heard to say, “Christ, my Lord and my God, have pity on this worthy and numerous company. Protect these dear children. I am sure that better or more obedient are nowhere to be found”.

When they re-entered the monastery, the monks proceeded on the spot to the election of the new abbot. At the end of three days the universal suffrage of the two communities fixed upon a young man, trained at Wearmouth from his infancy, and worthy of his illustrious predecessors, in his zeal for study, song, and teaching, as their united chief. As soon as he was elected, the new abbot rushed after Ceolfrid, and found him in the port waiting a favourable wind for crossing to the Continent. He gave him a letter to the Pope, from which we quote the following passages: —

“To the blessed Pope Gregory II, our dear lord in the Lord of lords, Huetberct, your humble servant, abbot of the monastery of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, among the Saxons, everlasting greeting. — In the name of all my brethren, united in this place with me to find rest for their souls and to bear the sweet yoke of Christ, we recommend to your dear and holy kindness the hoary hairs of our venerable and beloved father, the Abbot Ceolfrid, who has ruled, trained, fed, and defended us in monastic peace and freedom. He has torn himself from us in the midst of our lamentations, tears, and sorrow; but we thank the holy and invisible Trinity that it has been given him to attain to the blessed joy of rest which he has so long desired. He returns in his extreme old age to the tombs of the apostles, his visits to which in youth he has always remembered with enthusiasm. After forty years of work and care in his monastic government, he shows himself as much inspired by the love of virtue as though he were still in the first freshness of his conversion; and on the threshold of death, bent under the weight of age, he again becomes a pilgrim for Christ. We conjure your Paternity, render to this beloved father those last duties of filial piety which it will not be permitted to us to accomplish. Afterwards you will keep his body; but his soul will remain with us both — with us and with you ; and after his death, as during his life, we shall find in him a friend, a protector, and intercessor with God”.

The wishes of the double community of Wearmouth and Yarrow, thus expressed with so much filial affection, were not fulfilled. Ceolfrid never reached Rome; the fatigues of the journey aggravated the weakness of his old age. He took three months to travel from Northumbria to the frontiers of Burgundy. During these three months he did not cease for a single day to celebrate mass and sing the entire monastic service, even when his weakness prevented him from moving except in a litter. He was able to travel only as far as Langres, where he died at the age of seventy-four — forty-three years of his age having been consecrated to the work of training or governing souls in the cloister. He was buried in a monastery, afterwards known by the name of St. Geosmes, and which took that name from the twins who, along with their grandmother, St. Leonilla, were martyred there under the Caesars. His austere life did not prevent him from travelling with all the retinue of a great personage, as indeed the abbot of the greatest community of the Anglo-Saxons of the North already was. Of the eighty English who composed his suite some continued their pilgrimage to Rome, others returned to England, and some preferred to pass the rest of their lives in the midst of a

people whose language they did not understand, rather than separate themselves from the tomb of a father to whom they clung with an unchangeable love.

I beg my readers to make an effort to represent to themselves who these eighty companions of old Ceolfrid were, and who also were, and from whence came, the six hundred Anglo-Saxons whom we have just seen kneeling on the sandy beach, on the shore of the Northern Sea, to receive the blessing of our aged abbot, going forth to brave the danger and fatigues of a laborious journey, with the hope of dying near the tomb of St. Peter and St. Paul. I would fain see the coldest and most bitter of sceptics transported for an instant in thought to that far distant shore. I should accompany him willingly, with no intermediary between him and me except simple good faith. We should then find ourselves in the eighth century, in all its darkness, in all its barbarism, in an island destined to become again and again the prey of bloody and atrocious invasions. These are the sons of pirates, of incendiaries, of ravagers and murderers, who surround us. Yet see what they have become! Not all, certainly, but the first and most powerful, those in whom the abuse of strength, victory, and wealth would have produced most scandal and excess. See what the Christian religion has made of those wild hearts; look at the flowers which have blossomed by its means in that soil watered with blood and horror. Behold its fruits, its victories, its conquests, its chief spoil. Religion has established herself on that desolated land, amid these pitiless conquerors. She has shown them peace, gentleness, labour, virtue, truth, light, heaven; and after having thus strength, new food for their intelligence, and unknown resources for their social order, she has taught them to love, to love one another, to love souls — and to imprint the recollection of that love upon scenes and words which cannot deceive and will not be forgotten.

### CHAPTER III

#### END OF THE CELTIC HERESY. — ADAMNAN, EGBERT, ST. ALDHELM

The memory of Ceolfrid, along with that of his faithful English, has faded out of the country in which he died. But he belongs nevertheless to the general history of the Church by the direct influence which he exercised upon the conclusion of that great struggle between Celtic Christianity and Roman unity which had agitated the British Isles for more than a century, and which had cost so many holy monks, from Augustin to Wilfrid, so much anxious thought and effort. Ceolfrid, trained in the school of Wilfrid, had the glory of giving the last blow to that species of schism which Wilfrid to

his cost had conquered; and this supreme victory was won at the very time when Wilfrid concluded in obscurity his long and laborious career.

A year after the death of Wilfrid, Nechtan, the king of those Picts who occupied the north of Caledonia, the successor of that Bruith who received the great Celtic apostle Columba, wrote to Abbot Ceolfrid a memorable letter. This tributary king was not only a Christian, but greatly occupied by religious questions. He meditated much on the Holy Scriptures, and was thus led to understand, and to regret, the advantages of Catholic unity, from which his nation was to a certain extent separate by the paschal question. He resolved to lead back his people to the Roman rule, notwithstanding the obstinate resistance of the monks of Iona, the sons of St. Columba, who continued the apostolical work of their patriarch. To overcome their opposition, he determined, in one of the singular revolutions of mortal affairs, to address himself to that Northumbria which had been evangelised by Celtic missionaries from Iona, imbued with the traditional error of their race, but which he knew to have already conformed to the rules of the Roman Church. At the same time, in seeking the aid of the Anglo-Saxon Church, he did not apply either to the bishops who had divided among themselves Wilfrid's spoil, nor even to the great monastery of Lindisfarne, which had been so long the point of junction between the two races. Instead, he knocked at the door of the new sanctuaries on the banks of the Wear and Tyne, to which Benedict Biscop had given the highest place in public veneration; he asked the aid of Abbot Ceolfrid, who for twenty years had worthily occupied the place of the holy traveller. He sent to him a special embassy to ask of him good arguments, set forth in writing, with which to refute the partisans of Celtic ritualism in respect to Easter and the tonsure ; and at the same time prayed the abbot to send him architects to build him a church of stone, like the Romans, promising to dedicate the church, when built, to the honour of St. Peter, and to follow with all his people the observances of the Roman Church as much as the distance and difference of language permitted them to do.

Ceolfrid sent him architects, who were, without doubt, monks of his community, and whose mission thus gives us the exact date of the introduction of Christian architecture into Scotland, where up to that moment the churches were made of wood, or osiers, in the Irish fashion. He wrote at the same time to the Pictish king a long letter which Bede has preserved to us, and in which he begins by quoting, not the Scriptures or the Fathers, but Plato, in that well-known passage in the *Republic* where it is said that, for the happiness of the world, it is necessary that kings should be philosophers, or philosophers kings. In the legitimate glory of the greatest thinker of antiquity there is, perhaps, no ray purer or more precious than that invocation of his name and authority, more than a thousand years after his death, by a Saxon prelate to a Celtic king, both sprung from races totally unknown to Greece and her great men. "But", adds Ceolfrid, "if a man of the world was right in thinking and speaking thus, in what concerns the philosophy of this world, how much more ought the citizens of the celestial country, exiled here below, to desire that the great ones of this earth should apply themselves to know the laws of the Supreme Judge, and, by their example and authority, to make these laws observed. Thus we take it as a mark of heavenly favour bestowed on the Church each time that the masters of the world apply themselves to know, to teach, and to keep the truth". Thereupon he enters into a theological and astronomical discussion, in which,



passing in review the text of the Pentateuch, and the various cycles used from the time of Eusebius to that of Denis the Little, he proves that Easter ought to be celebrated, according to the usage of the Catholic Church, in the third week of the first lunar month, and always on Sunday. As for the tonsure, he admits that it is, in itself, an indifferent matter; but he insists upon the fabulous tradition, which all the orthodox then held as an article of faith, by which the Ramon tonsure, in the form of a crown, was attributed to St. Peter, and the Irish tonsure, in which the front of the head was shaven, to Simon the Magician.

The letter of the Northumbrian abbot, which appears to modern readers long and wearisome, was completely successful. It was read publicly to the Pictish king, in presence of all the wise men of the country, translated verbally into their language. As soon as he had heard it, he rose, and, in the midst of the nobles by whom he was surrounded, knelt down and thanked God to have been so fortunate as to have received such a present from England. "I knew well", he said, "that this was the true way of celebrating Easter. But now I see the reason so clearly that I seem to have understood nothing about it before. For this cause, I take you all to witness, all you who sit with me here, that I will henceforward keep Easter thus, with all my people, and I ordain that all the clerks in my kingdom assume this tonsure". The ordinance was immediately put in operation, and the messengers of the king carried into all the provinces copies of the paschal calculation, with orders to efface the ancient tables. The monks and other ecclesiastics had also to receive the tonsure according to the Roman custom. Bede affirms that the change was received with universal joy in the Pictish nation. Nevertheless, the monks who had come from Iona—those of the family of *Columb-kill*, the Columbites, as Ceolfrid calls them—acted as their brethren at Ripon and Lindisfarne had acted fifty years before. They preferred to leave their establishments, colonies founded more than a century before by their patriarch and his disciples, rather than to give up their insular tradition. A single line, short but expressive, in the annals of Ireland, bears witness to their fate. It is thus summed up — "King Nechtan expels the family of Iona from the country beyond the *dorsum Britanniae*".

The country now called Scotland was then divided, as has been seen, between the Picts in the north and east, the Scots in the west, the Britons in Strathclyde, and the Northumbrians in the south. The supremacy of the Northumbrian kings, up to the downfall of Egfrid, over all the districts south of the Clyde and Forth, had been sufficient to secure, in that part of the country, the observance of the Roman ritual, represented by such men as Wilfrid and Cuthbert. The conversion of the Picts, under king Nechtan, to the Roman rule, in respect to Easter, established liturgical and theological unity throughout the northern part of Great Britain, with the exception of the isle of Iona and the little kingdom of the Dalriadian Scots, which probably to the last extremity remained faithful to the ritual and traditions of their national sanctuary.

Yet, notwithstanding, a very eminent Irish monk—Adamnan, himself abbot of Iona, and the most illustrious of Columba's successors—had long attempted to lead back the mother community, mistress of all the Caledonian Church, and always influential in the Church of Ireland, to the unity of Rome. If our readers have retained in their recollection our narrative of St. Columba, they will pardon us for dwelling a little upon his biographer, of all the Irish monks the one to whom posterity is most indebted,

for his revelation to us, not only of that great man, the immortal honour of the Celtic Church—but also of the spirit, general and individual, and the private and local life of that whole Church. He was the countryman and near relative of his holy predecessor, sprung, like him, from the sovereign race of the Nialls. When he was but a scholar, having been dedicated from his childhood to monastic life, he had, according to the legend, gained the favour of a powerful chief—Finnachta *the Feaster or Banqueter*. While begging, according to the usage of the time, for himself and his five companions, each of whom took it in turn to seek the daily nourishment, he met the cavalcade of the chief, and in running out of the way struck against a stone, fell, and broke the milk-jar which he carried on his back, and which contained all he had collected. "Be not sad," said the chief, "I will protect thee". When Finnachta became monarch of all Ireland, Adamnan was his *Anmachara* or spiritual counsellor; and this fact explains the important part he played in Ireland during his whole life. After having been a monk at Iona under three abbots, he was himself elected abbot in 679. Aldfrid, the Northumbrian prince, brother and successor of Egfrid, then an exile in Ireland, had taken refuge in Iona, and had become the friend and the disciple of Adamnan; and when, after Egfrid's downfall, the exile became king of Northumberland, the abbot went to his former guest to reclaim the captives, men and women, whom the soldiers of Egfrid had carried away in the previous year, after their cruel and bloody invasion of Ireland. His mission was not entirely without success; for he obtained from his friend the restitution of sixty prisoners, whom he himself accompanied back to Ireland. He returned on more than one occasion to visit King Aldfrid, whose literary tastes resembled his own. He dedicated to him his description of the holy places, which he compiled from the narratives of a Gallo-Frankish bishop called Arculfe, who, returning from Palestine by sea, had been shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland, from whence he had gone to visit the still celebrated sanctuary of Iona. Thanks to the liberality of the learned King Aldfrid, whose taste for geographical studies we have already remarked, a great number of copies were made of this treatise, that it might be largely distributed and read even by the lower classes.

It was during these journeys to and fro that the cultivated and fervent abbot learned to understand the new customs introduced into the Anglo-Saxon Church by the efforts of Wilfrid, and although there is no trace in his life of any actual encounter between him and the great champion of Roman unity, it is certain that Adamnan, while in Northumbria, was so thoroughly moved by the spirit there diffused by Wilfrid, that he left the country with the resolution of henceforward preferring the rites of the universal Church to those of a little nation at the end of the world. Ceolfrid did much to enlighten him on this point; in his letter to the king of the Picts he relates the visit of Adamnan to Wearmouth, and their conferences on the subject of the tonsure. "Holy brother", said the Northumbrian abbot to the Irish prelate, "you aspire to an immortal crown, why do you wear on your head so imperfect an image of it? and if you desire the society of St. Peter, why do you bear the tonsure of him who anathematised St. Peter?". "Beloved brother", answered Adamnan, "if I bear the tonsure of Simon the Magician, according to the custom of my country, do not think that I detest the less the Simoniacal heresy. I desire to follow with my best powers the footsteps of the Prince of Apostles." "I believe it", said Ceolfrid, "but in that case it would be best to wear openly the mark of the Apostle Peter which you have in your heart". It is apparent by this that the leader of the Irish

Church did not even dispute the imputed origin, at once fabulous and injurious, of his national custom.

But when, on his return to Iona, he attempted to lead the children of St. Columba to his new conviction and to the Roman rule, he encountered an unconquerable resistance. To be treated as barbarians and rustics by the Northumbrian monks and doctors troubled them little; they were aware that their spiritual ancestors had been initiated into the Christian faith two centuries before the Anglo-Saxons, who for the most part had been drawn out of the darkness of paganism only by the apostolic self-devotion of those whom their descendants disdained. The Celts, accordingly, adhered obstinately to the traditional rites of their glorious ancestors. When they saw their chief return with the Roman tonsure, the surprise and indignation of the monks of Iona were such that they have found form in an Irish legend. The difference between the superior and the community became so painful that Adamnan, who was of a humble and peaceable character, could not hold head against it. Without abdicating, he yet ceased to live in his monastery, and passed a great part of the remainder of his life in Ireland. He dedicated himself with ardour to the work of reunion, meeting there with much greater success than in his own community. Southern Ireland, as has been seen, had already returned to Roman unity, even before Wilfrid undertook his great work in England. Adamnan was the means of bringing back central and northern Ireland to the same rule. He procured the triumph specially of the Roman Easter and the orthodox tonsure, except in the communities directly under the sway of his own monastery at Iona. This victory was not won without great difficulty, but his gentleness and modesty triumphed over all. He died the same year as his friend, the wise King Aldfrid. Before his death, and after having celebrated in Ireland the canonical Easter, he made a last attempt to win over the family of Columba, which he had governed for thirty years. It was in vain; all his entreaties were repulsed; but God graciously granted, says Bede, that this man, who loved unity and peace above everything, should attain to eternal life before the return of the paschal solemnity made the discord between himself and his disobedient monks notorious.

The victory which Adamnan, the countryman and successor of St. Columba, could not gain, was reserved for a man of another race but equal holiness—the Anglo-Saxon Egbert. The life of this monk is an example of the numerous and salutary relations which existed between the Irish Celts and the Anglo-Saxons, and which had been so odiously disturbed by the inexcusable invasion of the Northumbrian king Egfrid. It is in connection with this invasion that the name of Egbert has already appeared in this narrative. He was one of the many English who crossed the sea in numbers so considerable as to fill entire fleets, and who threw themselves upon the Irish shore like flights of bees, to enjoy the hospitality, both intellectual and material, of the Irish monasteries; while, on the other hand, the Greek Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of England, lived, by a happy exchange of brotherly kindness, surrounded by a crowd of young Irish monks. Some of the Anglo-Saxons, who sought a superior ascetic education in the Irish monasteries, returned to England, frequently filling places of the highest dignity there, and edifying their countrymen by their knowledge and virtue; while others remained, casting in their lot for ever with the monastic ranks of Ireland. Egbert stood in the first rank of those numerous scions of the Anglo-Saxon

nobility who in their youth became voluntary exiles for Christ, in order to devote themselves in Ireland, far from their relations and their possessions, to a life of penitence, and, above all, to the study of the Holy Scriptures. He was only twenty-five when the terrible pestilence broke out which, immediately after the first triumph of Wilfrid at the conference of Whitby, made such cruel ravages in the British Isles. He was then, with several of his countrymen, in a monastery, the site of which is at present represented by the picturesque ruins of Mellifont; he saw his companions dying around him daily, and when at last he was himself affected by the contagion, he had strength enough to leave the infirmary, and withdraw to a solitary place to review his life and weep over his sins. He had even the courage to pray God to spare his life until he had expiated the faults of his youth by good works, and made a vow if his prayer was granted to remain an exile for ever, and return to England no more. He then went in and lay down again, beside another young man, his closest and most intimate friend, who was mortally stricken, and lay in a sleep that was almost death. All at once the young sufferer awoke. "Ah, brother Egbert, what have you done?" he said, "I hoped so that we should have entered eternal life together; and now you let me die without you : know at least that your prayer is granted". The young man died that night; but Egbert survived for sixty-five years, and became a model of all monastic virtues. Not only did he call forth the affectionate admiration of his Anglo-Saxon countrymen, but even in Ireland, so fertile in marvels of holiness, he appeared an eminent saint. He emulated the most illustrious in his zeal for knowledge, in his eagerness to distribute to the poor the gifts lavished upon him by the rich, and in the austerities of his life. The great historian of the Christian glories of the Anglo-Saxon race has not disdained to inform us that during Lent, and even for forty days after Christmas, and fifty days after Whitsuntide, his entire nourishment consisted of a little bread, with milk from which the cream had been carefully removed. It was at this price that the right of speaking with authority to the nations, and of walking before them in the way of salvation, was purchased.

He employed his influence over the two races which rivalled each other in honouring his holiness, only for their good, their honour, and the general welfare of the Church. Though he did not succeed, notwithstanding his entreaties, in turning Egfrid, the king of his native Northumbria, from the crime of his abominable invasion of Ireland, he was more fortunate with others of his countrymen, whom he transformed into missionaries of the faith to the Germans. In his ascetic exile in Ireland he was the first of the Anglo-Saxons to conceive the generous, the divine idea of sending to the help of the mother-country, to Germany, which still belonged to Satan, the sons of her Britannic colony to show her the path of virtue and of life. He knew well whence it was that his Anglo-Saxon ancestors had come, and that they had left behind them in darkness a crowd of other tribes, of the same stock and language, whose image stole upon his imagination, as did that of the little Irish children whose plaintive voices St. Patrick heard in his dreams, and whose visionary appeals decided that saint, once a slave, to become the apostle of their country.

Faithful to the vow which forbade him to land, even in passing, upon the soil of his native island, Egbert chartered a ship to take him direct from Ireland to Friesland, on the northern coast of Germany. But as he was about to embark, one of his travelling companions, who had been a monk at Melrose, lying down to sleep after matins, saw in

a dream the prior Boswell, the tender friend of Cuthbert, and beloved master of the novices at Melrose, one of the great saints of the Celtic Church in Northumbria, who charged him to warn Egbert that the will of God ordained him to give up his Germanic mission, and to devote himself, willingly or unwillingly, to the instruction and conversion of the Columbite monasteries. “Their ploughs do not go straight”, said the prior to his former pupil; “they must be put back into the right furrow”. This dream, though twice repeated, made no impression upon Egbert; but his ship having been cast ashore, he acknowledged the will of God, and gave up his cherished project so far as related to himself. As many, however, of the fervent and zealous monks among his own countrymen whom he could move to such a determination he sent in his place; when any returned discouraged by their want of success, he sought and found others more capable or more fortunate; and it was thus the beginning made by Egbert that gave to Germany Vicbert, Willibrord, Swidbert, the two Ewalds, and other holy bishops or abbots, whose names are justly venerated by Germany as her apostles, and whom we shall find again in the history of that country if it is permitted to us to pursue our task so far.

It was in the year of Ceolfrid’s death, eleven years after the death of Adamnan, and seven years after that of Wilfrid, that the Anglo-Saxon Egbert succeeded in overcoming the most obstinate stronghold of Celtic dissidence, and procured the triumph of Roman unity in the monastic metropolis which had been founded by the most illustrious saint of the Celtic Church. A stranger of an alien and often hostile race thus accomplished the task in which Adamnan had failed. He was from the first received by the monks of Iona with the greatest respect; and, employing no means but those afforded him by the delightful suavity of his disposition, the soft and persevering influence of his conversation, and, above all, the example of a life so perfectly conformed to his doctrine, he triumphed over the inveterate dislike of the sons of St. Columba for that innovation which was to reunite them to the rest of Christendom. It is not probable that he succeeded at once, since he lived for the thirteen last years of his life at Iona, in the long famous island which he hoped to crown with a new glory by bringing it back into the orbit of Catholic unity. But his victory was complete and final. He died at the age of ninety on Easter-day, the regular celebration of which had preoccupied, excited, and agitated so many saints before him. It fell, in the year of his death, on the 24th April— that is to say, on a day when it had never been and never could be observed, according to the computation followed by the Irish. After having commenced, along with his brethren whom he had the joy to lead back to Catholic unity, to celebrate on earth the greatest solemnity of the liturgical year, he went to complete it in heaven with our Lord, the holy Apostles, and all the citizens of the celestial country, where the eternal celebration ceases no more.

All the monasteries subordinate to Iona followed the example of their metropolitan community in the adoption of the Roman Easter and the orthodox tonsure. There is ground for believing that they accepted at the same time the Benedictine rule, since none of the numerous monks and missionaries sent forth by them into France, and specially into Germany, carried any other rules with them than those of the order of St. Benedict.



Ireland thus found itself entirely brought under the laws of Roman discipline. It was by her action, and in her southern provinces, that the first movement of return to unity—a movement carried out by Adamnan with, except in Iona and its dependencies, universal success—had been begun by the Council of 634. The country most distant and least accessible to Roman influence, withdrawn behind Wales and the sea, which made a double rampart for her, was thus the first conquest of the principle of unity. Caledonia, the modern Scotland, represented by the Picts, the farthest north and most untamable of all the populations of the British Isles, soon followed. And, finally, Iona herself yielded, increasing, by all the numerous family of Columb-kill, the crowded ranks of faithful and obedient children in the Roman Church.

The Britons of Cambria alone resisted; they, the nearest of all, exposed every day to the example, efforts, and persuasions of the orthodox, alone persisted in the customs which they had refused to sacrifice to Augustin. Bede, the illustrious contemporary of those last struggles, grows indignant over this insurmountable obstinacy. He contrasts it with the docility of the Irish and Scotch, and attempts to explain the causes of the difference. “The Scottish nation”, he says, “communicated frankly and generously to the Anglo-Saxons by the ministrations of Aidan and other missionaries, the truth as far as she knew it; in return, she owes to the Anglo-Saxons the perfect order and regularity which were wanting to her. But the Britons, who had never wished to reveal the Christian religion to the Anglo-Saxons, bury themselves deeper and deeper in their error, now that the English are initiated into all the verities of the Catholic faith. They hold high their tonsured heads, but not in the form of a crown; and they profess to celebrate the Christian solemnities while separating themselves from the Church of Christ”.

A little reflection ought to have been sufficient to convince the honest Bede that some other motive than prejudice or religious passion had to do with the infatuated resistance of the Britons; it was the patriotic sentiment which the Anglo-Saxons had mortally wounded, and which Bede himself, like a true Englishman, does not seem to have been able to comprehend as existing in the victims of Saxon invasion. The Anglo-Saxons had never attacked Ireland before the passing incursion of Egfrid. They fought only by intervals, or held themselves upon the defensive against the Picts and Scots of Scotland; while against the Britons war and conflict were perpetual. This war dated from the first landing of the Saxons. It had begun long before the mission of Augustin, and had lasted for three centuries when Bede wrote. It was not then the doctrines or usages of Rome, it was the ecclesiastical supremacy and moral invasion of the Saxons, which the remnant of the British nation, withdrawn within its inaccessible stronghold of Cambria, repelled with the energy of desperation. For a century and a half, up to the moment of Augustin’s arrival, religion and patriotism had borne an equal part in their horror for the pagan barbarians who had come first to waste, and then to take possession of their native island. They had seen, with equal distrust and repugnance, these savage invaders, whose eternal damnation seemed to them a sort of consolatory justice, gradually introduced into the fold of the Church. By maintaining their ancient customs, by celebrating Easter at a different date, by seeing on the shaven brows of their clergy the distinctive sign of their independent origin and tradition, they testified their

incredulity of the Christianity of their enemies, and raised a supreme pro- test in favour of their own vanquished but not extirpated nationality before God and man.

While Wilfrid consumed his life in the north of England in a struggle against the enmities which probably fomented and aggravated the opposition of the Celts to his innovations, a celebrated monk named Aldhelm, about his own age, and who died in the same year, distinguished himself by his efforts to lead back the Britons who were subjects of the kingdom of Wessex, or lived on its borders, to Roman unity, as well as to extend and consolidate the Christian faith among the Western Saxons. His fame was too great in the middle ages, and he has been too often quoted in our own day among the pioneers of literature, to be passed over by us without remark. He was descended from that powerful race of Cerdic which traced its genealogy up to the god Woden or Odin, and which reigned over the Saxons of the West until the moment came when it united all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under its dominion. Aldhelm, who had been devoted from his youth to religious and literary studies, was soon attracted by a school which had just risen in his native kingdom, and of which he was destined to become the principal glory. A Scottish monk named Maidulf, moved by the same impulse which led so many Anglo-Saxons to the cloisters and hermitages of Ireland, had come to England to seek a solitude where he could pray and study in peace. He established himself in an immense forest upon the borders of Wessex and Mercia, and lived there as a hermit, sheltered by a hut which he had been allowed to build under the walls of an old castle, a place which had come into the possession of the Saxon kings after having been the dwelling of British chiefs, and was the sole remnant of a British town which the Teutonic conquerors had destroyed. The Celtic solitary, to provide himself with the means of living, opened a school. Any man in our day, in any country in the world except the Far West of America, who should open a school in a wood, would run great risk of dying there of hunger. But at that time such a thirst for instruction had arisen among the Anglo-Saxons, and the fountains at which they could satisfy it were so rare, that the speculation of Maidulf succeeded perfectly. Scholars came to him in sufficient numbers to enable him shortly to form a community, and among the rest came Aldhelm, first as a pupil and afterwards as a monk. He remained there for fifteen years, was elected abbot on the death of Maidulf, and by his exertions the foundation of the Celtic anchorite became one of the principal monasteries in England, still, however, bearing the name of the old and saintly stranger whom the Celts were always proud to remember they had given as a master to the great Aldhelm.

Before, however, he was called to rule his co-disciples, Aldhelm desired to have the advantage of other instructions than those of his Celtic master. He went repeatedly to Canterbury, where the great monastic schools had taken new life under that Abbot Adrian whom we have already so often referred to, and who had come from Africa with the Asiatic Archbishop Theodore, to preside over the Catholic education of the Anglo-Saxons. This eminent man, described by a monastic historian four centuries after his death as the master of masters, the fountain-head and centre of letters and arts, gained the heart of Aldhelm by developing the fullness of his intelligence. The young West Saxon came out of the hands of his African preceptor furnished with all which then constituted a course of literary and religious instruction. During his entire life he retained a grateful recollection of his teacher, and took pleasure in dating the true birth

of his mind from his residence at Canterbury. "It is you, my beloved", he wrote to Adrian, "who have been the venerable teacher of my rude infancy, it is you whom I embrace with the effusion of a pure tenderness, longing much to return to you".

It was thus at Canterbury that Aldhelm acquired that profound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, that love of Greek, Latin and Hebrew, these literary tastes and habits, which gained him the first place in the universal admiration of his countrymen. Not only contemporaries, such as Bede, but their distant descendants, offered him a homage which has attracted the unaccustomed attention of several modern writers. I am aware that he is the first Saxon whose writings have been preserved, the first man of Teutonic race who cultivated the Latin muse, as he boasts in applying to himself while still very young these lines of Virgil : —

Primus ego in patriam mecum, modo vita supersit,

Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musas.

Primus Idumaeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas."

But I cannot but think that his literary importance has been singularly exaggerated. Of all the Fathers of the Church, or even of ecclesiastical writers generally, I know none whose productions are more wearisome. He has neither the fiery originality of Ceadmon nor the eloquent and elegant simplicity of Bede. He is certainly well-informed for his time, and is not without a certain warmth of feeling when his mind is not frozen by pedantic formalism. Sometimes he applies happily texts from the Bible, and in his famous essays in prose and verse upon virgins and virginity he shows himself thoroughly instructed in sacred and ecclesiastical history. His verses, rhymed and unrhymed, are a little better than his prose, but still are destitute of any special charm or brilliancy, notwithstanding the pompous affectation of his images and metaphors. But in verse and in prose, this Teuton, in whom it would be pleasant to find something wild and primitive, delights in literary sleight-of-hand, in acrostics, in enigmas, in alliterations, in a play upon words, and a childish and grotesque redundancy of expression — in short, in all the paltry refinements of the Greek and Latin decadence.

We should judge him no doubt more leniently if we were acquainted with his Anglo-Saxon works, which must have contributed largely to his popular reputation. But of these there remains to us only a vague recollection, associated with the most curious and touching feature of his youth. What would not one give to have the actual text of those canticles and ballads which he sang upon the bridges and at the wayside corners, lying in wait for the Saxon peasants who left church in haste as soon as mass was over to avoid the sermon? Appearing before them as a musician, one of their ordinary bards, he attempted no doubt to teach them, under that popular and fascinating form of utterance, the same truths of religion which it wearied them to hear from the pulpit. These songs in the vernacular tongue retained their popularity for several centuries, and gained for Aldhelm the honour of being proclaimed prince of Anglo-Saxon poetry by the great King Alfred.

The most striking particular in the history and writings of Aldhelm is the view they afford us of the literary and intellectual life, developed as it were in a moment, in the Saxon cloisters, almost before their completion, by an inspiring breath, at once Catholic and classic, from Italy and the East. The same phenomenon had been apparent two centuries earlier in the Irish monasteries under an inspiration more original but less easy to study. This literary life had its clouds and its pettinesses, its pretentious and affected aspect. But such a blossoming of human thought, of study and knowledge, of poetry and eloquence, in the bosom of a barbarous and warlike race, still apparently absorbed by war, invasions, dynastic and domestic revolutions, and all the storms and blunders which characterise the childhood of society, is not the less a great and wonderful sight.

The good and evil sides of this development could not be better manifested than in the person of St. Aldhelm, and especially in the extent and variety of his information. He was an excellent musician, and studied eagerly all the instruments known in his day. What was still more rare, he had studied Roman law, happily ignored by all the other Anglo-Saxon monks and men of letters, even including the Venerable Bede, whose learning seemed universal. He was acquainted, as has been seen, with the three sacred languages, and knew enough of Hebrew to read the Bible in the original. He not only read Greek, but spoke and pronounced it like an ancient Greek, according to the two professors whom King Ina, cousin of Aldhelm, brought from Greece to aid him in his studies. As for Latin, it occupied him only too much. He makes wearisome dissertations upon the minute details of grammar, prosody, and metrical rules, and quotes to extremity Virgil and Lucan, Persius and Terence, Horace and Juvenal; he even quotes Juvenecus and the Priapeia!

At the same time, his literary or classical occupations never made him lose sight of the exigencies or perils of the soul. In a letter which has been often quoted, he warns one of his countrymen who was going to study in Ireland against the dangers of pagan philosophy, and, above all, of mythology. "What fruit", he asks, "can orthodox truth derive from the studies of a man who spends his strength in examining into the incests of the impure Proserpine, the adventures of the petulant Hermione, the bacchanals of Lupercus, or the parasites of Priapus? All that has vanished ; it has become as nothing before the Cross, victorious over death".

This anxiety for the salvation of souls, which he gives as the motive of all his works, reveals itself especially in his correspondence. For example, here are certain expressions in a letter which might have been addressed yesterday to the youth, half clerical, half noble, of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge—so unchanging is the Anglo-Saxon nature in its vices as in its virtues : "Dear Ethelwald, who are at once my son and my disciple, you are still very young; but, I entreat you, do not let yourself be too much in bondage to the vain pleasures of this world. Avoid carefully daily excesses in drinking, long and endless repasts, even riding-parties too much prolonged, and every other miserable sensual delight. I implore you also not to let yourself be overcome by the love of money or of vainglory, or by that secular boasting which is odious to God. Consecrate rather your time, my beloved, to the study of the Scriptures and to prayer ; and if you wish, in addition, to study secular literature, do it with the special intention of understanding better the sacred text, the meaning of which depends almost everywhere

on the understanding of the rules of grammar. Put this letter among your other books, that you may read it over and over again”.

In dedicating his voluminous treatise on Latin versification, after twenty years’ absence, to the chief of a Northumbrian or Scottish tribe who had been his companion in his studies, and had become his spiritual son, he insists warmly that the poor prince, whom he calls his “very reverend son”, should consider it a duty to read the wearisome volume from beginning to end. He expatiates at length upon the trouble which his production had cost him in the midst of his pastoral cares, and the convulsions of the age. “It would be absurd”, he says, “if you did not take the trouble to eat what I have taken so much pains to grind and make into bread. Then he invokes the example of the great Emperor Theodosius, who, while ruling the world, found time to copy the eighteen books of the grammarian Priscian”. But he adds : “Let not the sound of the trumpet of the last judgment depart from your ears; let it recall to you day and night the book of the law, which ought to be meditated day and night. You will never sin if you think always of your last end. What is our prosperity here below? a dream, a vapour, the foam on the sea. God grant that the possession of present good may not hold to us the place of future recompense, and that the abundance of that which perishes may not be followed by the dearth of that which endures, I ask this for you and for myself, from Him who for us has hung upon the cross”.

The rare fragments of his correspondence are at the same time the only evidence by which the heart of Aldhelm can be estimated; and his heart seems to us to have been much superior to his intelligence. A tenderness and kindness are here visible, which, in the person of a monk of barbarous race, are much more touching and attractive than all his rhetoric and learning. We perceive with pleasure that his soul was neither inflated nor disturbed by his great and increasing reputation, nor by the crowd of disciples and admirers who came to him, not only from the Britannic Isles, but also from Greece and Spain. He continued always the same mild and affectionate spirit which, while passionately studying prosody, astronomy, and Roman law, at Canterbury, wrote to his bishop lamenting that he could not celebrate Christmas in the joyous company of his brethren of Malmesbury, and charging him to salute tenderly in his name all the brethren, from the first to the last.

These features of his character explain the great popularity which he enjoyed in his own country. It was such that when he returned from his journeys, he was met not only by a long procession of monks with chants and incense, but also by a crowd of laymen, who formed themselves into a kind of rhythmic dance in his honour.

After this prolonged discussion of the literary position held by Aldhelm, it is necessary to recall to our readers that the great point of interest for us is his monastic life, and his connection with the Celtic dissidents.

This indifferent writer was a great monk. He divided his life between study and prayer, but study was for him only a succession of conversations with God. “When I read”, he said, “it is God who speaks to me; when I pray, it is to God that I speak”. Like his contemporaries, Wilfrid and the holy abbots of the Northumbrian coast, he professed and extended the rule of St, Benedict, whose praises he has written in his poem in honour of Virgins, and whom he does not hesitate to regard as the first author of the



conversion of England, his disciples having been its earliest missionaries. He thus substituted the teachings and traditions of Canterbury for the influence of his first Celtic master. This, however, was not prompted by self-indulgence, for he continued, as did Wilfrid himself, faithful to the great austerities which characterised Irish monastic life. Aldhelm imposed upon himself the same extraordinary penances as were habitual to the Celtic monks. To subdue the impulses of the flesh he would plunge during the night into a fountain near the monastery, and there remain immersed to the neck, till he had said the Psalter, and this in winter as in summer. The fountain long retained his name, and the memory of his wonderful austerities. I suppose he is the sole poet, the sole philosopher, of whom such recollections have been preserved.

But he was far from concentrating his zeal within the narrow enclosure of his monastery. It was he who, by his preaching, completed the conquest of Wessex, the kingdom which, a hundred years after his death, was to absorb the other seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy. This work was long and laborious. The people seem to have been Christian only in name: they neither listened to the priests nor attended the churches. Aldhelm employed all the resources of his eloquence to attract them. He even went to the fairs and market-places, mingled with the groups of buyers and sellers, and succeeded, by his persuasive addresses, in making them leave their merchandise for the moment, and follow him to the church, where he fed them with the bread of the divine Word.

His anxiety for the good of souls and the honour of the Church extended even beyond his native province. He was not indifferent, as were so many other holy bishops and abbots of his time, to the noble struggles of Wilfrid. One of his letters still exists, addressed to the numerous members of Wilfrid's clergy who had abandoned their pontiff in the midst of his trials, and who, during his exile, sought the favour of his persecutors. "I entreat you on my knees", wrote Aldhelm, "not to allow yourselves to be disturbed by the hurricane which has just shaken the foundations of your Church, the sound of which has echoed even to us. If it is needful, take courage to leave the country of your fathers with your bishop, and follow him into exile. What pain, what labour should ever be allowed to separate you from him who has fed you, trained you, carried you in his arms and on his breast, with so tender a charity? Look at the men of the world, who are strangers to all knowledge of divine things. What would be said of laymen who, after having loved and served their lord in his prosperity, should abandon him when he fell into misfortune and poverty? What would be said of those who should prefer the repose of their own hearths, instead of joining themselves to the misery and exile of their prince? By what a universal explosion of laughter, of contempt, and execration, would not they be overwhelmed? And you too, you priests, what will not be said of you if you allow the bishop who ordained you to go alone into banishment?". We are not informed what was the effect of this letter; but it is not the less curious to behold our Anglo-Saxon abbot, worthy descendant of Odin, invoking to the aid of episcopal authority, and endeavouring to awake in the breasts of his priestly brethren, that tradition of personal devotion, that passionate sentiment of fealty to prince and lord, of which the Anglo-Saxons have left us so many touching examples.

Aldhelm was the true founder of Malmesbury, of which he was abbot for thirty years. It was to him it owed the powerful and popular existence which lasted till an

advanced period in the middle ages; and he attracted to it an immense crowd of monks and students. By the grandeur and variety of his buildings, he made it the most magnificent edifice which then existed in England. The sympathy which existed between him and the kings and nobles of Wessex and Mercia procured vast territorial gifts to the monastery situated on the borders of the two kingdoms. The abbatial demesne, which contained only thirty dairies when he became abbot, included more than four hundred at his death. In order to protect the liberty and property of the community as much as possible from lay or ecclesiastical cupidity, he went to Rome, with the consent of the kings of Mercia and Wessex, and obtained from Pope Sergius I an act of privilege which placed the monastery of Malmesbury and its dependencies under the special protection of the Holy See, and guaranteed to them an absolute independence of all secular or episcopal authority. When he became a bishop, Aldhelm took pains to have this exemption confirmed, with all requisite solemnity, by his cousin King Ina. For he too became a bishop towards the end of his life, and in spite of all his efforts to be delivered from this burden. On the death of the bishop of the West Saxons, Hedda, the plan of Archbishop Theodore was brought into operation to divide his vast diocese into two. A new bishopric was created at Sherburne, which still, however, was of much too vast extent, since it included almost all the south-west of England to the point of Cornwall, which the West Saxons had not yet completely conquered. Aldhelm was called to this new diocese. After his promotion it was his desire that the monks of his different communities — or, as he said, his families — should proceed, in all freedom, to the election of a new abbot; but they obstinately refused to give him a successor. To his reiterated requests they answered, “As long as you live, we will live with you and under you. But one thing we ask of you unanimously. It is, to guarantee to us, by the Holy Scriptures and the consent of the powerful, that after your death neither king, nor bishop, nor any man whatsoever, ecclesiastic or layman, may exercise over us an authority which we are not willing to accept”. Aldhelm procured an acknowledgment of the perpetual freedom of the monastery, which he continued to rule, from his cousin King Ina, from his colleague the Bishop of Winchester, and from all the clergy of Wessex assembled in synod. He then went to Canterbury to be consecrated by the former companion of his studies, the Archbishop Brithwald, successor of the great Theodore.

A curious incident is associated with this journey. When Aldhelm was at Canterbury he learned that ships from France, from the land of the Morins, had touched at Dover. On receiving this news he went to Dover, hoping to find among their cargoes books or other articles of use to his church. And, in fact, he did discover among the merchandise displayed upon the shore many books, and one in particular, of which, after having carefully examined it, he asked the price. The sailors, seeing him so poorly clad, laughed at him, and pushed him roughly away. Soon after a storm broke out, endangering the anchored ship. Aldhelm threw himself into a boat (like the generous sailors in the lifeboats at the present day), to aid the crew of the threatened vessel. At his prayer the waves calmed down, and their lives were saved; the sailors, confused and deeply touched, then gave him the book he desired. It was a complete Bible, the Old and New Testaments, which he carried with him as a precious treasure to Malmesbury. This anecdote is not without interest in connection with the history of material and intellectual commerce in England; it shows, too, that so far from interdicting the study

of the Bible, as the modern English so blindly accuse her of doing, the Church, from the most primitive times, has neglected no occasion of spreading the knowledge of it.

The episcopate of Aldhelm lasted only four years, which he passed in continual journeys through his vast diocese, preaching day and night. He died in the same year as his master, the famous African abbot, Adrian of Canterbury, and his illustrious contemporary, Wilfrid of York. Death surprised him, as it did the holy apostle of Northumberland, in a village, during one of his apostolic journeys.

According to his own desire, he drew his last breath in the little wooden church to which he had come to preach the word of God; the stone on which he laid his dying head was shown long afterwards.

Such was the man to whom all agree in attributing the principal part in putting down what has been called the schism in the west and south of Great Britain. It is interesting to search out in his writings, as in his life, all the traces of his connection with the Celts. They are, however, few in number, and seem all connected either with his first education under the Celtic Maidulf, or his consequent literary studies. He receives pompous compliments from several Irishmen, one of whom requests from him the loan of a book, and afterwards that he would receive him as a disciple, sending him a specimen of Latin verses, and announcing that he could easily find horses and a servant for the journey if Aldhelm's answer was favourable. Another, exiled, as he describes it, in the most distant corner of the Frankish kingdom, beside the tomb of his holy countryman Fursy (at Lagny-sur-Marne), begs him, whom he calls the Archimandrite of the Saxons, to send him his Latin panegyrics. At another time, it is the son of a Scottish king, learned in the literature of his time, who sends all his works to Aldhelm, in order that the file of so accomplished a genius may rub off the Scottish rust from them. Then we find him, in his own person, congratulating one of his Anglo-Saxon friends on his return from foggy Ireland, after having studied there for six years. On this occasion he gives us an emphatic picture of the constant journeys of English students, who filled whole fleets going and coming to Ireland, in order to examine deeply, not only into the secrets of grammar, geometry, and physical science, but also into all the different interpretations of Scripture, "as if", he says, "there was a failure of Greek and Latin masters in green and fertile England to explain the obscurities of the celestial library to all who desire to know them". Then he instances his dear master Adrian, of ineffable urbanity, and the metropolitan Theodore, whom he represents surrounded by a troop of Irish disciples, like a wild boar surrounded by a crowd of furious dogs, holding them back, as by strokes of his tusks, by the nervous vigour of his dialectics, and the close ranks of his syllogisms.

In all this there is no allusion to the religious differences which separated the Celts from the Anglo-Saxons, an omission which is of itself a new proof of the reconciliation already effected between the Irish Celts and the Anglo-Saxon clergy, while the British Celts remained obstinate in their distinct and even hostile observances. Since the great victories of the Northumbrian kings it was specially the West Saxons who carried on the struggle against the Britons who had taken refuge in the mountainous peninsulas of Cambria and Cornwall, and whose unwearied resistance was no doubt seconded in an unforeseen and often dangerous way by the other Britons scattered through the districts

already conquered by the Saxons. After one of these wars or insurrections, more cruel than usual, the national assembly of the West Saxons deliberated long over the measures it would be best to take by way of getting rid of one of the principal obstacles to the fusion of the two races, by leading back the vanquished Britons to unity in respect to paschal observances. The discussion lasted several days. At last, starting from the principle that no force must be employed, but solely reason and persuasion, it was resolved that Abbot Aldhelm, who was as blameless in life as in doctrine, should be charged to teach them the true laws of the Church, and to end the schism, for the honour of his country, as well as for the common salvation. A national council (probably that of Becancelde), at which almost all the Anglo-Saxon clergy were represented, confirmed the mission which the abbot of Malmesbury had received from his countrymen. He accepted the task with his usual charity. Without adventuring his person in the midst of these refractory tribes, he addressed himself to their chiefs and clergy in writing. An unexpected success attended his efforts. Of all that he wrote on this subject there remains to us only one letter, addressed to a petty British king who still maintained his independence in Cornwall, at the extreme point of southern England. He draws in it a striking picture of the religious separation, of the moral repulsion, which still at the end of the seventh century rose like a wall between the two races—between the victors and the vanquished. “Beyond the mouth of the Severn”, he says, “the priests of Cambria, proud of the purity of their morals, have such a horror of communication with us that they refuse to pray with us in the churches, or to seat themselves at the same table; more than this, what is left from our meals is thrown to dogs and swine, the dishes and bottles we have used have to be rubbed with sand, or purified by fire, before they will condescend to touch them. The Britons give us neither the salutation nor the kiss of peace; and if one of us went to live in their country, the natives would hold no communication with him till after he had been made to endure a penance of forty days”.

Aldhelm then enlarges upon the cruel scandal of such struggles and hatreds in the Church of Christ. He discusses in succession the question of the tonsure and that of paschal observance. “We entreat you on our knees”, he says, “in view of our future and common country in heaven, and of the angels, our future fellow-countrymen—we adjure you not to persevere in your arrogant contempt of the decrees of St. Peter, and the traditions of the Roman Church, by a proud and tyrannical attachment to the statutes of your ancestors. Whatever may be the perfection of good works, they are unprofitable out of the Catholic church, alike to cenobites, however faithfully they may follow their rule, and to anchorites hidden in the wildest solitudes. To sum up everything in one word, it is vain for any man to take credit to himself for belonging to the Catholic faith so long as he rejects the doctrine and rule of St. Peter. For the foundation of the Church and the consolidation of the faith, placed first in Christ and secondly in St. Peter, wavers not before the assaults of any tempest. It is on Peter that the Truth Himself conferred the privilege of the Church, saying, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church’.”

It is generally admitted that the zeal and eloquence of Aldhelm led back to orthodox rule a great many Britons, especially those who lived under the daily extending sway of the kings of Wessex. But even the narratives most favourable to him make it apparent that all did not yield. The greater part of those who retained their

independence beyond the Severn remained, according to all appearance, inaccessible to his efforts.

When at length they yielded, it was not to the preaching or influence of a stranger. The victory which neither the learned Saxon abbot nor the great Roman missionary could win, was the work of a native prelate. Elbod, Bishop of Bangor, a Briton by birth, succeeded, not without much resistance, in introducing the Roman computation, first in North Cambria, and afterward in the southern part of the province, towards the end of the eighth century. From that date there is no longer any question of dissent between the two Churches. In everything belonging to worship and faith, the Cambrian Britons, while still defending their independence with jealous pride, were henceforward at one with the Anglo-Saxons. Like them, they went in crowds to Rome, their kings at their head, swelling the armies of pilgrims who mingled at the foot of the chair of Peter their aspirations, their enmities, their diversities of race, but who returned with the lawful assurance that the supreme advantage of catholic unity exacted no sacrifice of truly national independence, right, or tradition.

Thus the different centres of that Celtic dissidence which has been so unjustly called schism, were successively overcome; and thus finished, upon the ground of religion, though only to begin over again and perpetuate itself elsewhere, the long struggle between the Celts and the Saxons. According to the common fate of human conflicts and passions, all this tumult died away into silence and forgetfulness, as the Rhine disappears obscurely in the sand and marshes of Holland after its majestic and sometimes stormy waters have swept through so many famous lands proud of, and blessed by, its presence.

In casting a last glance upon these prolonged contests, so insignificant at bottom, yet so seriously affecting national influences and interests, and animated by the passions, talents, and virtues of their principal champions,—the wisdom, I may even add, the grave beauty, of the language used by him who was the greatest monk of the greatest age, will be profoundly admired.

“This dispute regarding the date of a day”, says our Mabillon, “occupied the Church for six centuries, and it required three of these centuries to restore union. Human nature takes back in this kind of controversy its downward inclination”. The heat of warfare and the passion of success take possession of the soul under the cover of religion; and as they know no limits, it often happens that the laws of Christian charity are sacrificed to questions of purely human invention. In such cases no one is permitted to disobey the judgment of the Church; but it is important that the pastors of the Church should use their authority with so much moderation as not imprudently to provoke feeble spirits too much attached to their own opinions into revolt, thus producing the greatest evils from an insignificant cause.

At the same time this generous son of St. Benedict congratulates himself with reason that the Benedictines had the honour of leading back to unity the Scots and Britons, so long separated for so small a matter from the Roman Church.

It must be recollected at the same time that, during all the seventh century, the Celtic or British Church was much more extensive than the British nation. The nation was concentrated in Cambria and in the neighbouring peninsulas; the Church embraced,



besides the western coast of England, all Ireland and Scotland, without mentioning the Irish colonies in Gaul and Belgium. Let us repeat that the opposition which rose in that Church against conformity to Roman rites and usages was exactly proportioned to the degree of patriotic resistance excited by the invasion of the Saxons, behind whom appeared the Roman missionaries. This resistance was desperate among the British Christians, who retained the memory or daily felt the weight of the terrible excesses of the conquest. It was less violent and less prolonged in Caledonia, and came to a conclusion there as soon as the struggle ceased between the Celts and the Saxons. And it was almost non-existent in Ireland, where, except in the incursion of Egfrid, which was universally blamed by the Northumbrian saints, the Saxons never penetrated by the strong hand, and where the two races lived peaceably together. Nothing could give more satisfactory proof how little the fundamental truths of Christianity and the infallible authority of the Church had to do with the matter, and how much in it was national rather than religious.

In all that concerns the special subject of these volumes, it will be remarked that the result of the struggle between the two great elements which disputed the empire of the monastic world was the same in the British Islands as in Gaul. This struggle was much longer and more serious in Great Britain, because it was complicated by national dislike, legitimate resistance, and an unappeasable resentment, which had no place in the influence exercised in France by Columbanus of Luxeuil and his Irish monks. The rule and order of St. Benedict were naturally associated, in the eyes of the vanquished and dispossessed Celts, with the ferocious foreigners who pursued them even to the mountain-glens and islands, in which they found a last asylum. Besides, the Columba of Iona, the great patriarch of the Celtic monks in Great Britain, was, it appears to us, a much more attractive personage than his illustrious namesake of Luxeuil; his sons, his heirs, Aidan, Adamnan, and so many others, had a greater fascination, a much greater influence upon the masses and upon events than the successors of Columbanus among the Gallo-Franks. At the same time the sons of St. Benedict, the victors of the struggle, from St. Augustin to Bede, were much more remarkable men than the greater part of the Gallo-Frankish Benedictines of their day. St. Eloysius and St. Leger, whose history we shall soon relate, were scarcely equal to Wilfrid, Cuthbert, Benedict Biscop, and the Venerable Bede. The latter, besides, are more entirely monks, more completely identified with the Benedictine institution. It is, however, evident on both sides of the Channel that the Celtic element fell, died away, and disappeared before the Roman element as personified in the order of St. Benedict. The Benedictine influence everywhere carried the day, and prepared for the Church those valiant legions which, after having edified and disciplined France, and conquered and civilised England, marched on to new victories, and extended beyond the Rhine and the Elbe the frontiers of Christendom.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE VENERABLE BEDE

"O Venerable Bede!

The saint, the scholar, from a circle freed

Of toil stupendous, in a hallowed seat

Of learning, where thou heardest the billows beat

On a wild coast, rough monitors to feed

Perpetual industry. Sublime Recluse!

The recreant soul, that dares to shun the debt

Imposed on human kind, must first forget

Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use

Of a long life ; and in the hour of death

The last dear service of thy passing breath."

— WORDSWORTH.

The period of history which we have just recorded is crowned by one of those great figures which stand out above the sea of ages, and triumph over the forgetfulness as well as over the systematic contempt of frivolous generations. The name of Bede, after having been one of the greatest and most popular in Christendom, still remains invested with an unchangeable fame. He is the type of that studious and learned life which, in the eyes of many, sums up the entire mission of the monk. He was the most cultivated man, the greatest intellectual personage of his country and age; but he holds a still greater position in the eyes of those to whom he has been a guide and master throughout a laborious and bewildering task. By the student who has passed several years almost entirely in his company, he is venerated as a saint and loved as a friend, and, without absolving him of his patriotic prejudices and partialities, the spirit does reverence to his character still more than to his glory.

Let us then examine his works, his spirit, and his life.

We turn to his works in the first place, which have made him the wonder and honour of his age, as well as a father and doctor of the Church. This Anglo-Saxon, born at the end of the Christian world, and of a race which half a century before his birth was still plunged in the darkness of idolatry, at once reveals himself clothed in the fullness of all enlightenment known to his time. Thanks to the unwearying activity of his mind, and

the universal extension of his researches, his fame became European, and lasted through all the middle ages. It was not only the great historian whom, during his lifetime, and for long centuries after his death, men admired, as we ourselves admire him — it was, in addition to this, the master whose vast erudition embraced all that was then studied and known in the world. The universal character of his genius is that which most astonished his contemporaries, and has even excited surprise among our own.

He was for England what Cassiodorus was for Italy and St. Isidore for Spain. But he had, in addition, an influence and echo beyond his own country which has been surpassed by none: his influence upon Christendom was as rapid as it was extensive, and his works, which soon found a place in all the monastic libraries of the West, brought down his fame to the period of the Renaissance. He wrote at his pleasure in prose or verse, in Anglo-Saxon and in Latin; and many of his writings prove that he was acquainted with Greek. The greater part of his works were devoted to theology and its cognate studies. In the list which he himself made out, three years before his death, of the forty-five works which he had written up to that time, he enumerates, in the first place, his commentaries and homilies upon Holy Scripture, specially drawn from the Fathers, so as to form a summary, for the use of his countrymen and of all Christians, of the traditional doctrines of the Church. These Biblical studies occupied him much during his whole life, and he professed a marked preference for that source of human knowledge which, to his eyes, surpassed all others, as much in its antiquity as by its divine origin and moral usefulness. He plunged into this study with an ardour so intelligent and persevering that it won him, in the eyes of the most illustrious of his countrymen, St. Boniface, the reputation of being one of the most sagacious investigators of the Holy Scriptures. In his Martyrology, his historical summaries, and his biographies of the saints, he added a demonstration of the government of God by facts and the lives of men to the theoretic exposition of the teachings of the faith.

But, far from confining himself to theology, he wrote with success upon astronomy and meteorology, physics and music, philosophy and geography, arithmetic and rhetoric, grammar and versification, without omitting medicine, and without disdaining to descend even to orthography and numeration. His treatises have almost always the form of abridgments or catechisms adapted to the education of his monastic disciples. He thus penetrated, with a bold and unwearying step, into all the paths then open to the human intelligence, with a clearness and extent of vision truly surprising for the age and circumstances under which he lived. He thus won the name of Father of English learning, given to him by the greatest of modern Englishmen. His scientific essays, *De Rerum Natura*, and *De Temporum Ratione*, contain a first essay towards a universal chronology, and afterwards sum up with method and precision the physical and astronomical sciences, which had, among our ancestors, survived the decay of the Roman Empire. Good judges have even acknowledged that he had gathered more actual truths and fewer errors than are to be found in any Roman books upon similar subjects. In this region, as elsewhere, our worthy Anglo-Saxon appeals with respectful confidence to the authority of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Pliny. Like all the scholars and writers of Christian ages, he shows a certain satisfaction in exhibiting his familiarity with classic authors. He has left to us, or at least there have been attributed to him, collections of sentences drawn from Plato, Seneca, and, above all, Cicero, of whom he

was an enthusiastic admirer. He often quotes Ovid and Lucan, Statius, Lucretius, and still oftener Virgil, whom he quotes even in the tales of the miracles of his Northumbrian saints. He has also attempted to imitate him in a pretty eclogue on the return of spring. He thus presents, in the eighth century, the type of that character of scholar—that is to say, of a man profoundly imbued with classic literature—which the English of the present day still prize so highly, and which the princes of public eloquence, not less than the chiefs of the episcopate, esteem one of their highest distinctions. It does not seem, however, that his familiarity with these illustrious heathens weakened him either in Christian feeling or in the monastic spirit; and nothing in his life contradicts the touching prayer with which he ends the list of his literary labours: “Oh, good Jesus, who hast deigned to refresh my soul with the sweet streams of knowledge, grant to me that I may one day mount to Thee, who art the source of all wisdom, and remain for ever in Thy divine presence”.

This constant thought of God, of the soul, and of eternal salvation which is evident in all the works of his laborious life, and manly intelligence, shows itself at the beginning of the great work which still wins for him the attention and gratitude of all friends of the truth. “I entreat”, he says in his Preface, “all those of our nation who read this History, or hear it read, to recommend often to the divine clemency the infirmities of my body and of my soul. Let each man in his province, seeing the care which I have taken to note down everything that is memorable or agreeable for the inhabitants of each district, pay me back by praying for me”. “Dear and good father”, he also writes when sending the first copy of his History to the friend who had suggested it to him, “beloved friend in Christ, remember, I beseech you, my weakness, you and all the servants of Christ who live with you; remember to intercede for me with the merciful Judge, and make all those who read my humble work do the same”.

This humble work—this *pamphlet*, as it is called by the great and modest writer—was nothing less than that *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* which has made Bede not only the father of English history, but the true founder of history in the middle ages. The most competent authorities have recognised in him a chronicler well informed and systematic, an able and penetrating critic, on whom the rigorous precision of his language, and the scrupulous accuracy of his narrative, bestow the full right of being heard and having his testimony weighed, even upon facts which could not come under his personal observation. Besides, all his narrative which is not founded upon what he himself saw or heard, is given on the authority of contemporaries always conscientiously quoted and carefully designated or described by him. “I have consulted individually”, he says, “in all that refers to Northumbria, innumerable writers in addition to all that I could answer for myself. But I pray my reader humbly, if he finds that I have written anything which is not the truth, not to blame me severely for it, since, according to the true law of history, I have sincerely laboured to put into writing for the instruction of posterity all that I could gather from common report”. The rare prudence with which he records those miracles which occupy so exaggerated a place in the annals, or, more strictly, in the habits and necessities of his time, is especially remarkable. He gives none upon his own personal authority, but always names the persons from whom they come, stating whether he has received them at first or second hand.

Thus the most sceptical reader is unable to turn over the pages of Bede without being convinced at once of his sincerity and of his historical discrimination; while the Christian, eager to know and admire the works of God still more in the history of spiritual life than in the history of nations, can never feel sufficient gratitude to the unwearied worker who has endowed us with a book unrivalled among the historical works of Christianity, and who has given to England and its specially historic race the finest monument of national history which any modern people has yet received from its fathers.

This historian of souls begins by making us acquainted with his own ; for who does not recognise, by the fashion in which a man tells the tale of the trials of virtue and truth here below, what he himself would have been capable of doing or suffering for them The soul which thus betrays itself in his narrative is holy and full of grace. Not only in his beautiful narrations of ceaseless self-devotion, and of all the wonders of which man regenerated by faith is capable, but in the person of Bede himself, we find a complete type of that humility, serenity, and generous fervour which have won him throughout all Christendom the surname of Venerable. The Christian virtues were united naturally in him to that thirst for knowledge, that love of study, that vivifying thirst for work, that noble thoughtfulness of things divine and human, which make our monk-historian so interesting a personage in the history of the human mind. An esteemed writer reproaches him with having been more Roman than English. I consider this reproach quite unfounded; no trace is to be found of the least sacrifice of his patriotism to his orthodoxy. He certainly preferred the Roman to the Celtic spirit; but it was his Anglo-Saxon patriotism, and not his Roman predilections, which dictated to him certain judgments inspired by national prejudice against the vanquished Britons in spiritual as well as temporal affairs. He had, like all other men, his preferences, his weaknesses, his blindness—but never has he willingly disguised, mutilated, or betrayed the truth; on the contrary, he served and loved with his best powers not only truth but justice, and, as it has been well said by an upright historian of our own day, impartiality consists in being just, not in being neuter.

His life may be regarded as a faithful mirror of the laborious and holy existence of those vast cloisters which continued to rise in England under the rule of St. Benedict, and which were not less numerous in the eighth than in the seventh century. It was entirely passed in the monastery which had sheltered his childhood. He was born in 673, in one of the seventy detached manors of public property (Folc-lands), which King Egfrid bestowed on Abbot Benedict Biscop on his fourth return from Rome. The little Bede, whose name in Anglo-Saxon means *prayer*, was intrusted by his relatives at the age of seven to Benedict, who had just completed his monastery of Wearmouth. But the holy and learned abbot soon transferred the charge and education of his young pupil to his coadjutor Ceolfrid, when, with his twenty monks, old and young, the latter removed a short distance off, to found at the mouth of the Tyne the colony of Yarrow. They were no sooner installed in their new home than a cruel epidemic seized the colony. It carried off all the monks who could sing in the choir, except the abbot alone and the young Bede, still a child, who was his favourite pupil. These two continued to celebrate as they best could, among their tears and regrets, the entire canonical service, with obstinate precision, until new brethren joined them. There are few who will not be touched by the



thought of these two representatives of Northumbrian Christianity and Anglo-Saxon monachism, the one already mature and illustrious, the other an obscure child predestined to fame, singing all alone the praises of God in their cloister depopulated by death, and awaiting the future with resigned yet unconquerable faith!

At the death of Benedict Biscop, when Ceolfrid was called to the head of the reunited monasteries, which now formed but one community, the young Bede remained at Yarrow, which he never left. There he received deacon's orders at nineteen, and at the age of thirty the priesthood from the hands of St. John, called of Beverley, who then occupied the see of Wilfrid at Hexham. And there he passed all the rest of his life, which was dedicated to study and meditation on Holy Scripture, without other amusement than the daily songs of the choir—without other pleasure, as he has himself said, than to learn, to teach, and to write.

At the same time, when Bede tells us that he passed all his life in the same monastery, it must not be supposed that he denied himself the expeditions which occupied so considerable a part in the lives of the principal monks. Notwithstanding the great authority which attached to Benedict Biscop's double foundation, and the number of monks who hastened to it, it is difficult to imagine how the young monk could follow, without leaving his monastery, the lessons of all those whom at various periods he calls his masters. For whether at Yarrow or elsewhere, he received an education both valuable and varied. Among those who introduced him into the study of the Bible, he indicates a monk trained by Ceadda, the humble and earnest rival of Wilfrid, and, in consequence, imbued with all that was purest and most irreproachable in Celtic tradition; while Greek was taught by monks of the school founded by Theodore in his metropolis of Canterbury, and ecclesiastical music by the precentor of St. Peter's in the Vatican, whom Pope Vitalianus sent to England with Benedict Biscop.

From pupil he soon became master, and that of the highest rank. It is evident from various passages of his works that his days and nights, of which a very moderate part was given to sleep, were divided between the studies and researches which he pursued to his last hour, the instructions which he gave to the six hundred monks of his double community, without reckoning the foreign monks whom he admitted to his lessons, and the composition of the books which have immortalised him. An existence more completely occupied it would be difficult to imagine. Except during the course of his last illness, he had no assistant in his work. "I am my own secretary", he said; "I dictate, I compose, I copy all myself". Though he was not unconscious of the obstacles which the yoke—or, as he himself says, the servitude of the rule—threw in the way of his work, he never withdrew himself from it; and long after his death his scrupulous exactness in fulfilling all its obligations, especially that of singing the common service, was told in his praise.

The laborious severity of this life in the cloister did not, however, put any obstacle in the way of his extensive and important intercourse with the world outside. His friendships were almost all produced or occasioned by the composition of his great historical work. He was urged to undertake it by Albinus, whom we have already remarked as the principal disciple of the Archbishop Theodore and the African Abbot Adrian, the first Anglo-Saxon ever called to govern the great monastery of St. Augustin

at Canterbury. Albinus furnished him with memoranda of all that had happened in Kent and the neighbouring counties in the time of the missionaries sent by St. Gregory; he even sent a priest of the adjoining diocese of London to Rome, to search in the archives of the Roman Church, with the permission of the reigning Pope, Gregory II, for the letters of his predecessors and other documents relative to the mission to England. All the bishops of England also assisted in the work by transmitting to the author what information they could collect concerning the origin of the faith in their dioceses, and the principal acts of the holy personages who had lived in them. The abbots and monks of the most important monasteries also furnished their contingent. The details given on this subject by Bede himself show that a constant communication was kept up between the principal centres of religious life, and that an amount of intellectual activity as surprising as admirable, when the difficulty of communication and the internal wars which ravaged England are taken into consideration, existed among their inhabitants.

In addition to his great historical work, his correspondence gives evidence of the number of visits he must have paid and received on the subjects of his studies and writings. There is no proof that he was ever at Rome, to which in his day so many Anglo-Saxon monks and princes crowded, though this was long believed. But it is known that he was on terms of friendship with the king of the Northumbrians, to whom he dedicated his *History of England*, and with the king of Kent, to whom he addressed a letter upon the celebration of Easter. Among the bishops of his time his most intimate friend was Acca, the companion and successor of Wilfrid at Hexham. This learned and magnificent prelate took the warmest interest in literature and the arts. After having ornamented with many great works the abbey church built by his master at Hexham, he added a very large and noble library, according to Bede, of which the latter made great use. They were in intimate and constant communication. Bede dedicated several of his works in prose and verse to the successor of Wilfrid; and Acca, who loved, like Bede, to quote from the classics, and who, like Gregory the Great, had a fancy for playing upon words, insisted that his laborious friend, who had given him a commentary upon the Gospel by St. Mark, should add to it a commentary on Luke. The correspondence between these two Anglo-Saxon monks, while doing no discredit to their ability, is specially honourable to their hearts, and shows to what a height prayer and study had developed in the Northumbrian cloisters the affectionate sentiments and tender feelings of friendship. In this correspondence Bede lavishes assurances of his regard on him, whom he calls the most loved and longed-for of all bishops. He shows himself to be, as he says, ruled and inspired by that trust and mutual tenderness which believes and hopes everything from the heart it loves. At the same time those pure and noble motives which guided him in his studies and commentaries on Holy Scripture, which held the greatest place in his life, and have so much contributed to the increase of his influence on Christendom, are fully apparent in his letters. Both here and elsewhere the reader perceives by what a pious and patriotic anxiety he was moved to combat the ignorance and lukewarmness of the new Catholics of England, by making them capable of reading and understanding the Bible. To bring to the level of all capacities the most approved explanations of obscure passages ; to seek out with scrupulous care the mystic sense and spiritual use of Biblical narratives ; at once to go deeply into and to simplify that study of the sacred words which is so dear and so necessary to real piety; to draw from it the lessons, and especially the consolations pointed out by the Apostle St. Paul, and of

which we have so much need in the sharp anguish of this sombre life, and during the prolonged delays of Divine justice ; to give thus an answer to the anxiety which filled the minds of the great monks who were the apostles of England, and of other ancient nations : such was the task of our Bede. He gave himself up to it with a fervour which never relaxed ; with a perseverance which consumed his nights and days ; with touching and sincere modesty ; with delicate precautions against the danger of being taken for a plagiarist; with a courage which sometimes failed him under the greatness of the task, and the multitude of obstacles in his way, but only to spring up again more unconquerable than ever ; and, in short, with a solidity and assurance of doctrine which have kept for him, till the present time, a place among the best authorised interpreters of the Catholic faith.

Another bishop with whom Bede had much intercourse was Egbert, bishop of York, a brother of the king of Northumbria, and a disciple of Bede himself. Sometimes the prince-bishop would visit his former master at Yarrow; sometimes Bede, in return, went to the episcopal monastery of York, where he occupied himself in superintending the school established by Egbert, or sought out recollections of Paulinus and of Wilfrid, and all the details of that religious history of Northumbria which without him would have fallen into forgetfulness for ever. The two friends studied together during these visits. A year before his death, not being able to accept an invitation from Egbert, Bede addressed to him a letter, which has been preserved, and which is a sort of treatise upon the spiritual and temporal government of Northumbria. It displays, in the first place, the manly independence of Bede's judgment and language, and the great authority which this simple monk possessed even in the eyes of the princes and pontiffs of his country. It throws, at the same time, a fresh and full light upon the abuses which had glided into the Anglo-Saxon Church, and specially into the administration of monastic possessions.

He begins by recommending the bishop to study and meditate the Holy Scriptures, especially the Epistles of St. Paul to Titus and Timothy, and the Pastoral of St. Gregory; and exhorts him to avoid idle and gossiping conversation and bad company—"for", he adds, "there are bishops who, instead of surrounding themselves with religious and chaste persons, are accompanied only by buffoons or drunkards, who take more thought how to fill their bellies than how to feed and sanctify their souls".

He then continues as follows: "Your diocese is too extensive to permit you to visit all the hamlets and out-of-the-way corners in it every year. You must then establish, as coadjutors in each village, priests who will preach the Word of God, celebrate the divine mysteries, and baptize. And, above all, let the priests teach all your diocesans to know the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer by heart. Those who do not understand Latin ought to be able to sing or say the *Pater* and the *Credo* in their own language; and I say this not only for the laity but also for the clerks and monks who do not understand Latin. It is especially for the use of those uninstructed priests that I have translated the Creed and the Pater into English. When you thus stir up the people of God by frequent and common prayer to understand, love, hope for, and seek heavenly gifts, your paternal solicitude will receive from the Pastor of pastors a reward so much the more noble that it is seldom merited by bishops of our nation". Bede entreats his friend, in continuation, to neglect no means of giving to the lay population pastors capable of teaching them the doctrines of salvation, the hatred of sins which are odious to the Lord, and the practice

of good works; he insists upon frequent and even daily Communion, according to the usage of the Church in Italy, Gaul, Africa, Greece, and throughout all the East. “Among us”, says Bede, “thanks to the carelessness of the pastors, the most religious laymen dare not communicate except at Christmas, the Epiphany, and Easter, although there are numberless Christians, young and old, of pure life, who might without scruple approach these holy mysteries on the Sundays and feasts of the apostles and martyrs, as you have yourself seen in the holy apostolic Church of Rome”.

Having said this, he does not hesitate to point out to the prelate an abuse which was destined to rise throughout all the Church to a lamentable height. “Beware, dear bishop, of the crime of those who think only of drawing earthly lucre from their ministry. It is said that there are many villages in our Northumberland, situated among inaccessible hills or woods, where the arrival of a bishop to baptize, and teach the faith and the distinction between good and evil, has never been witnessed, yet where no one is exempt from payment of the bishop’s dues. Thus there are bishops who, far from evangelising their flock without reward, as our Lord wills, receive, without preaching, the money which He has forbidden them, even while preaching, to accept”.

Bede’s idea was, that with the help of the good and pious King Ceolwulf, it would be very easy for the bishop of York, his relative and friend, to find a cure for these troubles by returning to the plan of St. Gregory the Great—re-establishing the metropolis of York, and dividing that diocese, which was still, notwithstanding the divisions which had been forced upon Wilfrid, much too large, among twelve suffragans. With his logical and practical spirit, our historian at once points out the means of arriving at this result without any fear of wounding the interests or exposing the infirmities of his order. “I know very well”, he says, “that by the carelessness of the old kings, and their foolish liberality, it is difficult to find unappropriated lands to endow the new bishoprics. For this reason it appears to me that, after having deliberated on it in the great council, with the advice of the pontiff and the king, some existing monastery should be taken to be erected into a bishopric. And in order that the abbot and monks may not be tempted to opposition, they must be permitted to elect the future bishop among themselves, to be at once the head of the monastery and of the new diocese, or to choose one according to the canons outside their community, if no one suitable can be found within. It would be so much the more easy to increase, if there is room for it, the endowment of new dioceses, that there exist, as we all know, numberless places which bear the name of monasteries without keeping up a shadow of monastic observance. To appropriate their possessions, according to the authority of public assemblies, for the endowment of new bishoprics, would be to substitute purity for incontinence, temperance for gluttony, and piety for vanity. Yes, there are vast and numerous establishments which are of use for nothing, neither for the service of God nor man. No monastic rule is observed among them; no advantage is drawn from them by the earls and knights who have the burden of defending our nation from the barbarians. He, then, who should make them into new bishoprics would be neither a usurper nor a prevaricator : he would do a work of salvation and an act of virtue”.

He then proceeds to forestall the objection which might be drawn from the sanction given by kings and national assemblies to the gifts which had endowed these pseudo-monasteries. “Would it, then, be a sin to correct the unjust decisions of old

chiefs by the revision of more enlightened men, and to abrogate the lying formulas of certain scribes by the authority of priests and sages, in imitation of these good kings of Jadah of whom Scripture speaks, who repaired the evil done by their impious predecessors? Let their example encourage you, in concert with our religious king, to destroy the unjust and irreligious decrees made by the former chiefs of our nation. You will thus provide at once for the spiritual and temporal necessities of our country. Otherwise we shall see at the same time the love and fear of Him who reads the heart disappear from among us, and the number of warriors diminish who are charged with the defence of our frontiers against the incursions of the barbarians; for you know better than I do, there are so many lands occupied by false monks that nothing remains to be given to the sons of nobles and old warriors; by which they are reduced either to cross the sea—deserting the country which they ought to have defended with their swords—or to consume their manhood in debauchery and idleness, for want of a suitable establishment on which to found a family”.

To these considerations of political and general interest, which throw so much light upon the military and territorial constitution of the Anglo-Saxon countries, Bede adds others which reveal not less pernicious abuses in the spiritual order.

“A still more serious crime”, he says, “is committed when laymen, without either experience of or love for monastic life, give money to the kings as the price of certain lands, under pretence of building monasteries there—and then claim to themselves a hereditary right over these lands by royal edicts which are afterwards confirmed by the signatures of bishops, abbots, and the great people of this world. In the estates and villages thus usurped they live according to their own pleasure, exempt from all subjection either to God or man ; sometimes, though laymen, ruling over monks, or rather gathering together under the guise of monks men who have been driven out of true monasteries for disobedience, or whom they can seduce out of such, or whom they have found wandering about the country; or even taking some of their vassals, whose heads they shave, and whom they bind to a kind of monastic obedience. What a monstrous spectacle is that of these pretended cells, filled with men having wives and children, who come from the conjugal bed to manage the internal affairs of a monastery! There are even some who have the effrontery to procure similar convents for their wives, where these secular women dare to undertake the government of the servants of Christ. Is there not room to say in this case, as says our proverb, that when the wasps make honeycombs it is to put poison inside instead of honey?”

He then proceeds to expose the disastrous consequences of these abuses, which, however, had begun only about thirty years before. “Since the death of Aldfrid and the end of Wilfrid’s pontificate”, he continues, “there was scarcely a great noble or ealdorman who had not taken advantage of his position to acquire such a monastery for himself, or even for his wife, and by degrees the officials and domestics of the kings had learned to do the same. They all professed to be abbots, while at the same time governors of provinces, or officers of the royal household, submitting to a kind of tonsure, in order, by their own authority, to raise themselves, though simple laymen, not only into monks but into abbots. “All these scandals”, says the venerable historian, “might have been avoided or repressed had not the bishops themselves been the principal offenders or accomplices, confirming by their signatures the concessions and



grants of monasteries, and selling their base indulgence for money to the false abbots ... I entreat you by the Lord, dearest bishop, preserve your flock from the irruption of these dishonest wolves. Remember, that if you are a true and not a mercenary pastor, your duty is to examine carefully into all that is ill or well in every monastery of your diocese, in order that abbots and abbesses instructed in and subject to the holy rules may be found everywhere, worthy of presiding over a family of Christ's servants, and not an insolent and undisciplined crowd, disdainful of all spiritual rule. They must be taught resolutely that kings and great men, unless in cases of crimes against the princes themselves, have nothing to do with the monasteries, which remain under the sole authority of the bishops. It is your duty to prevent the devil from usurping those places consecrated to God, and substituting discord for peace, drunkenness for abstinence, debauchery and murder for chastity and charity ... I know well that my exhortations will meet many gainsayers, especially among those who are the authors or accomplices of the excesses I complain of. But you must treat with apostolic vigour those miserable successors of Ananias and Sapphira, who were cut off by sudden death from the society of the first monks, not even for usurping the possessions of others, but for having dishonestly retained what was their own. When he describes avarice and cupidity as idolatry, the Apostle Paul manifestly justifies those who refuse their signature, even when exacted by the king, to these shameful bargains, and even those who strike through and erase all such fatal documents. Do not then allow yourself to be stopped by those who, to protect the work of their covetousness, present before you charters furnished with the signatures of great men and nobles. Answer them in the words of our Lord, 'All that My Father in heaven has not planted shall be rooted out'. In short, do not permit those who never attempt to struggle, even in the smallest particular, against bodily or spiritual carnality, to lull themselves to sleep by a vain confidence in their salvation ; dissipate the senseless illusion of those who believe that others will redeem them after their death by the celebration of holy mysteries of which their lives have made them unworthy, or that they will be absolved from their sins for the sake of some alms thrown to the poor in the midst of their daily indulgences and passions. The hand which gives to God must be, like the conscience, pure from all crime and soil. This is my judgment against the venom of avarice. I should never come to an end had I to speak at equal length of other vices, from which God give you grace, my dearest bishop, to deliver your flock".

The whole of this admirable letter is thus occupied with the indignant protest of a true monk against the false monks, who already began to infect the life of the cloister, and against the greedy and feeble bishops who sanctioned or tolerated these unworthy abuses. If the example of the Venerable Bede had always and everywhere found imitators; if pure and courageous voices like his had risen in the bosom of the Church, especially in recent ages, to warn her against the incoming of corruption, hypocrisy, and secular covetousness, it may well be believed that the homicidal hand of Protestant or revolutionary vandalism would never have succeeded in sweeping away from the entire surface of the Christian world the glorious establishments founded by the munificence and piety of our fathers.

One thing must be gladly admitted, which is, that the bold freedom and noble independence of Bede did him no harm, and lessened in no way the great and just

reputation which he enjoyed throughout England, a fame which soon spread into all Europe, and went on increasing after his death to such a point, that the council of Aix-la-Chapelle, held a hundred years afterwards, described him as an “admirable doctor”.

This pleasant and glorious life was not, however, without a cloud. He excited the criticism of violent and narrow spirits, like all other superior men. They even went so far as to treat him as a heretic, because he had in his *Chronology* combated the then general opinion that the world was to last only six thousand years, and because, in his division of the six ages of the world, he had appeared a little uncertain about the date ordinarily fixed as that of the Incarnation. This accusation of heresy made so much noise, that it was discussed even among the peasants, who scoffed at it in their drinking-songs; a fact which proves that if the great were then, as always, exposed to calumny, the popular masses of the day took a singular interest in their good fame. Bede, who took credit to himself for having always kept with scrupulous care within the limits of the strictest orthodoxy, was at once troubled and rendered indignant by this imputation. He grew pale with surprise and horror, as he says to one of his friends, a monk, in an apologetic letter—a letter full of pride and energy, which he charges his correspondent to read to Wilfrid, bishop of York, who seems to have given a certain encouragement to the slander by suffering it to be uttered at table in his presence.

If, however, he had some enemies, he had more friends. Among these, in the first rank, it is pleasant to find the monks of Lindisfarne. Their friendship with Bede maintains and proves the link, which, notwithstanding certain differences of origin and opinion, attaches the island-cradle of the Christian faith in Northumbria to the last of the great monastic foundations, and the last of the great monks who illustrated that glorious coast. Bede asked that his name should be inscribed on the roll of monks in the monastery founded by St. Aidan. He specially desired this favour in order that his soul after death might have a share in the masses and prayers of that numerous community as if he had been one of themselves.

This pious anxiety to assure himself of the help of prayer for his soul after his death is apparent at every step in his letters. It imprints the last seal of humble and true Christianity on the character of the great philosopher, whose life was so full of interest, and whose last days have been revealed to us in minute detail by an eyewitness. Although the narrative has been often republished, the reader does not tire of returning to it, and it must find a place here, for no historic document brings more clearly before our eyes the life, at once spiritual and literary, of the Anglo-Saxon cloisters. “You desire and expect of me”, writes a monk of Yarrow to one of his absent brethren, “to tell you how Bede, our father and master, the beloved of God, departed from this world ... Nearly a fortnight before Easter he was seized by an extreme weakness, in consequence of his difficulty of breathing, but without great pain. He continued thus until Ascension, always joyous and happy, giving thanks to God day and night, and even every hour of the night and day. He gave us our lessons daily, and employed the rest of his time in chanting psalms; and passed every night, after a short sleep, in joy and thanksgiving, but without closing his eyes. From the moment of awaking he resumed his prayers and praises to God, with his arms in the form of a cross, happy man! He sang sometimes texts from St. Paul and other scriptures, sometimes lines in our own language, for he was very able in English poetry”. Here the narrator interrupts himself to quote ten lines

in Anglo-Saxon received from the lips of the dying Bede, and expressed in that short, sharp, and striking rhythm which characterises the verses of the shepherd Ceadmon, with which Bede has made us acquainted. “Before our forced departure”, thus runs the song, “no man is more wise than he needs be; no man knows how much he ought to search, before leaving this world, what shall be the judgment of the soul for good or evil, after the day of death”. “He also sang”, continues the witness, “anthems according to his liturgy and ours—among others, the following : ‘King of Glory, who now hast mounted in triumph above the skies, leave us not like orphans, but send us the spirit of truth promised to our fathers’. At these words, *like orphans*, he burst into tears. An hour after, he repeated the same anthem, and we mingled our tears with his. Sometimes we wept, and sometimes we read, but we never read without weeping. Thus passed the forty days from Easter to Ascension. He was always at the height of joy, thanking God for his sickness. He said with St. Paul, ‘The Lord scourgeth every one that He receiveth’; and with St. Ambrose, ‘I have not lived so as to blush at the thought of living with you; but I do not fear to die, because we have a good master’.”

“During all these days, in addition to the lessons he gave us and the psalms he sang with us, he undertook two pieces of work : a translation of the Gospel according to John into our English tongue for the use of the Church of God, and some extracts from Isidore, bishop of Seville. ‘For’, said he, ‘I would not have my children read lies, nor that after my death they should give themselves up to fruitless work’. On the Tuesday before Ascension he found himself much worse; his breathing became difficult, and his feet were swollen. He continued, nevertheless, to dictate in good spirits, and sometimes added, ‘Make haste to learn, for I know not how long I may remain with you, or if my Creator may call me shortly’. On the eve of the feast, at the first dawn of morning, he desired that what had been commenced should be quickly finished, and we worked till the hour of tierce. Then we went to the procession with the relics of the saints, as the solemn occasion required. But one of us remained by him and said to him, ‘There is still a chapter wanting, beloved father; would it fatigue you to speak any more?’. Bede answered, ‘I am still able to speak; take your pen, make it, and write rapidly’. The other obeyed. At the hour of nones he sent for the priests of the monastery, and distributed to them incense, spices, and fine linen, which he had kept as precious things; then bade them farewell, praying each of them to say masses for him. Thus passed his last day till the evening. Then the disciple of whom I have spoken said to him, ‘Beloved master, there remains only one verse which is not written’. ‘Write it then quickly’, he answered. And the young man having completed it in a few minutes, cried, ‘Now it is finished’. ‘You say truly, it is finished’, he said. ‘Take my head in your arms and turn me, for I have great consolation in turning towards the holy place where I have prayed so much’. Thus, lying on the floor of his cell, he sang for the last time, ‘Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit’, and gave up the ghost as he pronounced the last of these divine names”.

The monastic sanctuary towards which the dying look of Bede was turned still remains in part, if we may believe the best archaeologists, and his memory has survived the changes of time. An old oaken chair is still shown which he is supposed to have used. It is the only existing relic of this great saint. For he was a saint by the same title and in the same rank as the most illustrious in the Anglo-Saxon calendar. The title of

Venerable, which was given to him only in the ninth century by a kind of universal consent, did not then as now imply an inferior position to that of saint or blessed in the celestial hierarchy. Like all the other saints of the period, without exception, he was canonised by popular veneration, tacitly approved by the Church. Various miracles established or confirmed the fame of his sanctity: altars were consecrated to his memory; many pilgrims came to Yarrow to visit his tomb; his relics were stolen in the eleventh century, as so often happened, by a priest inspired by too ardent devotion, and carried to Durham, where they were placed with those of St. Cuthbert. They were an object of worship to the faithful up to the general profanation under Henry VIII, who pulled down the shrine and threw the bones on a dunghill along with those of all the other holy apostles and martyrs of Northumberland.

It must, however, be admitted that his place in the worship of the faithful has not lasted so long as the glory attached to his name and the great fame which, rising in his native country, spread so rapidly over all Christendom. His fame did honour to monastic institutions in general. Bede appeared to the Catholic world a model of that virtue and knowledge which the cloister was to make the peculiar property of Christian society. In him the great Roman monachism which he had seen triumph over Celtic influences found its personification. The sword of his words, said his epitaph, was the safeguard of the fortresses occupied by his religious brethren.

But it was especially the English nation, the last newcomer among Catholic nations, which had occasion to take pride in the great man given by her to Christendom. All the kingdoms of the Heptarchy claimed a share in the glory which could not be allowed to remain the exclusive possession of the Northumbrians—and the Anglo-Saxon missionaries, scattered through Germany, rivalled the monks who remained in their native island in the faithfulness of their devotion to his noble memory.

The nations of Catholic Europe envied England the possession of so great a doctor, the first among the offspring of barbarous races who had won a place among the doctors of the Church. His illustrious successors, Boniface and Alcuin, emulated each other in celebrating his merits and services in the interest of souls, and in order to set him up as a permanent model to future generations. Alcuin insists specially upon this with a precision of details which gives us one proof the more how entirely the likings and manners of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors of England are reflected in the tastes of the modern English. “Remember”, he writes to the monks of the community of Yarrow which Bede had made famous — “remember the nobility of your fathers, and be not the unworthy sons of such great ancestors; look at your many books, at the beauty of your churches and monastic buildings. Let your young men learn to persevere in the praises of God, and not in driving foxes out of their holes, or wearing out their strength running after hares. What folly to leave the footsteps of Christ, and run after the trail of a fox! Look at the noblest doctor of our country, Bede; see what zeal he showed for knowledge from his youth, and the glory which he has received among men, though that is much less important and less dazzling than his reward before God. Stir up, then, the minds of your sleepers by his example; study his works, and you will be able to draw from them, both for yourselves and others, the secret of eternal beauty”.

The fame of Bede has derived a special and increasing lustre from the fact that he was not only the first and most remarkable of Anglo-Saxons, but that, were he set aside, everything else concerning them would fall into obscurity; thus it is not without reason that he has been compared to Homer, who rose like a resplendent meteor amid the night which precedes and the night which follows his appearance upon the horizon of Greek history.

The dark night of idolatry which covered Northumbria before the holy predecessors and contemporaries of Bede, has been replaced by the dark night of industry. The working of the coal-mines has transformed the face of the country. The light of day is positively darkened by thick volumes and heavy clouds of smoke belched out without intermission by the manufactories and workshops which are fed by the inexhaustible mineral wealth of the country. Newcastle, North and South Shields, Sunderland, Stockton, Darlington, Hull, all the centres of the coal-trade, have replaced in the attention and regard of men the old monastic cradles of Christian faith and civilisation, Lindisfarne and Yarrow, Tynningham and Coldingham, Tynemouth and Wearmouth, Hartlepool and Whitby. But what a contrast, even if we go no further than the surface, between the aspect of the country of old and that of today! The much-prized coal has covered this fine country with a veil of mourning. The verdure of the woods and fields is discoloured by it, the limpid waters soiled, the purity of the air infected, the light of the sun intercepted. Everything disposes us to believe that these are but material tokens of the internal and moral darkness, in the midst of which struggles the vast and formidable population which swarms in those craters of British commerce. The frightful density of these unknown and impenetrable masses conceals abysses of ignorance, vice, wretchedness, and resentment. There Paganism is restored. Notwithstanding many generous efforts, partial remedies, and honourable exceptions—notwithstanding the observance, still compulsory and respected, of the Sunday rest,—the love of lucre has created armies of slaves, tools without souls, but already longing, and with good reason, for a better fate, for a condition less painful than that, the duration and aggravation of which ought to fill with trembling every Christian and patriotic heart.

The light of faith and the moral law is still more wanting to them than daylight. Buried alive in their mines and manufactories, without pontiffs, without spiritual guides, a prey to all the disorders, excesses, and forgetfulness which ever accompany the labour of a crowd, strangers to the thought of God, to any hope in a future life, to habits of modesty, victims and instruments of the worship of mammon, they stand there like a perpetual menace to the blind egotism and formalism of the materialists of our age.

No man can admire more than I do the marvels of human intelligence and activity realised by the free genius of the English race; no man does more sincere homage to its natural and unconquerable instincts of religion. But who could behold without fear, in that district, once so fruitful in sanctuaries of prayer, virtue, and moral and intellectual life, the religious indifference and fierce thirst for gain which replace almost everywhere the tender and vigilant solicitude of the Church for souls? Who could be other than alarmed at sight of the deserted condition, the spiritual nullity, in which so many millions of our fellow-creatures are living? How can we cease to regret the days when the obedient fervour of the people answered so well to the zeal, knowledge, and disinterestedness of the clergy? and when, like the lighthouses which we now see



everywhere, on the head-lands, at the river's mouth, at the edge of rocky reefs, and along all the course of that dangerous and much frequented coast, offering their tutelary light to the sailor, there rose upon those shores, then desert, unknown, and inhabited only by a few savages, the sparkling lights, increasing from year to year, of Lindisfarne, Yarrow, Whitby, Coldingham, Wearmouth, and Tynemouth—centres of intellectual and moral life, as laborious as it was pure!

Perhaps the day may yet come—and may it not be far distant!—when as of old, amid the wonders and perils of modern activity, new centres of charity, enlightenment, and peace may light up one after the other, like so many celestial beacons to guide and warn souls in their pilgrimage towards eternal life.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROYAL MONKS

“Must lose

The name of king? O' God's name, let it go.

I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,

My gorgeous palace for a hermitage;

My gay apparel for an almsman's gown;

My figured goblets for a dish of wood ;

My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff ;

My subjects for a pair of carved saints ;

And my large kingdom for a little grave,

A little, little grave, an obscure grave”.

— Shakespeare, Richard II.

Bede dedicated his *History of the English* to the king of his dear Northumbria, Ceolwulf, whose tender solicitude for monastic interests made him hope for an approaching reform of the abuses of ecclesiastical government in the north of England. But two years after the death of the great monastic historian, Ceolwulf himself became a

monk. He was of the race of Ida the Burner, sprung, however, from another branch than that from which came all those descendants of Ethelfrid the Ravager, whose connection with Aidan and Wilfrid, Hilda and Ebba, Lindisfarne and Melrose, has already occupied us so long.

The line of Ethelfrid had come to a sad conclusion in that young Osred, who came to the throne during the last struggles of Wilfrid, and whom the people had taken pleasure in regarding as the adopted son of the great bishop. Far from walking in the footsteps of his father Aldfrid and his grandfather Oswy, he has left no trace of sympathy with the institutions and ideas represented among the Anglo-Saxons by the monks. From an early age he manifested all the inclinations of a tyrant, abandoning himself to frequent explosions of wild passion, which show only too clearly how hard was the task of the doctors and ministers of Christian purity among the Teutonic races. It was the delight of his precocious and impetuous libertinism to outrage virgins consecrated to the Lord, and he went from monastery to monastery to seek his sacrilegious prey. On the other hand, he obliged the nobles whom he oppressed, when he deigned to spare their lives in his massacres, to be shaven, and to bury themselves against their will in the cloisters. A violent death put a stop to his evil ways.

But already the star of Northumbria had paled beyond remedy. The final erection of the great northern bishopric of York into a metropolis, to which all the bishoprics north of the Humber were to be subject, was not sufficient to restore to Northumbria the power which she had exercised under kings like Oswald and Oswy and bishops like Aidan and Wilfrid. Egbert, the Bishop of York, the correspondent of Bede, and a prince of the reigning dynasty, obtained from Pope Gregory I, after repeated requests, the re-establishment of the metropolitan dignity, which had been at first bestowed upon the see of York by St. Gregory the Great, but which, since the flight of Paulinus, had fallen into disuse, and which the later decrees of Popes Vitalianus and Agathon had seemed to sacrifice to the supremacy of Canterbury. This restoration, however, was of advantage only to the splendour of the new metropolis, and in no way to the kingdom of which it was the capital, as indeed the authority of Canterbury, so long universal and always undisputed, had not given the slightest supremacy over the rest of the Heptarchy to the kings of Kent.

After two obscure reigns, Ceolwulf attempted in vain to struggle against the disorder and decadence of his country. He was vanquished, and made captive by enemies whose names are not recorded, and had to submit, as happened to more than one Merovingian prince, to receive the tonsure by compulsion, and was shut up in a convent. He escaped, however, regained the crown, and reigned for some time in a manner which gained the applause of Bede, and weighed with the Pope in his decision in respect to the metropolis of York. But, after a reign of eight years, a regret, or an unconquerable desire, for that monastic life which had been formerly forced upon him against his will, seized him. He made the best provisions possible for the security of his country, and for a good understanding between the spiritual and temporal authorities, nominating as his successor a worthy prince of his race, the brother of Archbishop Egbert. Then giving up the cares of power, and showing himself truly the master of the wealth he resigned, he cut his long beard, had his head shaved in the form of a crown, and retired to bury himself anew at Lindisfarne, in the chief monastic sanctuary of his

country. He there passed the last thirty years of his life in study and happiness. He had, while king, enriched this monastery with many great gifts, and obtained permission for the use of wine and beer for monks who, up to that time, according to the rigid rule of ancient Catholic discipline, had been allowed no beverage but water and milk.

His successor, Eadbert, followed his example. After having, during a reign of twenty-one years, victoriously contended against the Picts, Scots, Mercians, and Welsh—after having received presents and offers of alliance from the first of the Carolingians, Pepin the Short,—he became a monk at York, where he had already founded what was then called a very noble library, and where he enrolled himself among the monks who constituted the clergy of his brother the archbishop's metropolis. He lived there for two years, preferring, says an annalist, the service of God to all the kingdoms of the earth, and rapt by his violent love for the celestial country. Care has been taken to prove that he received the Roman tonsure, that of St. Peter, and not that of the Celts, which is the last mention in history of a difference which, a century earlier, had stirred up so many tempests.

These two kings of Northumbria were not the first or only ones who embraced monastic life. Eadbert, indeed, is the eighth pointed out by English chroniclers as having preferred the eight beatitudes of voluntary poverty to the grandeurs of this world. Certain annalists even go so far as to count more than thirty kings or queens of the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms who entered the new cloisters during the seventh and eighth centuries.

What transformation had thus passed upon those heathens, savage descendants of Odin, impetuous and bloody chieftains of a race which breathed only war and pillage, and knew no greater shame than to die a peaceful death! We see them penetrated by the spirit of gentleness and concord, seeking union, fraternity, even equality, and that sometimes with the humblest of their subjects, under the Benedictine habit, in the nightly chant of psalms, in the peaceful labours of agriculture or of the monastic library. They sought, they aspired to that retreat, as the crown of their warlike exploits and their political and military career. But it was little to the satisfaction of the Anglo-Saxons to see themselves thus abandoned by their kings. The spirit of proud independence which made them, like all the other Teutonic nations, so often rebellious and intractable, did not expel from their minds a passionate affection, or rather a mysterious worship, for the old blood of the first chiefs of the conquest. They made vain efforts to keep their kings back from the cloister, and reserved to themselves the right of reclaiming them by their own will or against it, in order to put them at the head of the army, and march against the enemy under their orders. Such was the fate, as has been seen, of King Sigebert of East Anglia, the first of the Anglo-Saxons who entered the cloister, and who, torn from his cell by his desperate subjects to lead them against the pitiless Penda, ended his life, like so many of his heathen ancestors, on the field of battle.

Each of the dynasties of the Heptarchy furnished in succession its contingent to the new army. Like the Uffinga of East Anglia, and the descendants of the Man of Fire in Northumberland, the children of the god Saxnote, whom the baptized Saxons were made to abjure along with the gods Thor and Woden, had also their tonsured king. This race reigned over the Saxons of the East, whom King Sebbi had the happiness of

bringing back to the faith, after their first defection. The same king, who had reigned for thirty years as a faithful soldier of the King of kings, obtained, not without difficulty, the consent of his wife to enable him to assume before he died the monastic dress for which he had long sighed. But though he thus believed himself to have become a monk indeed, this descendant of Scandinavian gods and heroes, with the heart of a king under his monastic robe, feared, according to Bede, that, dying in his bed, he might seem to be overcome by suffering. In the anguish of his last illness, he trembled lest, while struggling against the terrors of death, pain might tear from him cries or gestures unworthy of him. For this reason he would have no spectator of his last moments except the bishop of London. This prelate, who had invested him with the monk's black robe, had the consolation of seeing him give up his last sigh in perfect peace, and buried him in his own monastic cathedral of St. Paul, where, for a thousand years, until the time of the great fire which consumed that famous edifice under Charles II, was to be seen the immense stone coffin which contained the body of the monk-king, whose frame must have been as gigantic as his heart was manful.

Fifteen years after the death of Sebbi, his successor and grandnephew. King Offa, imitated his example while still in the fullness of youth and all delights. Though a man beloved and sought after by all, he gave up his betrothed bride, his family, country, and crown, and, resisting the passionate remonstrances of his subjects, went away to embrace monastic life, not even in an English cloister, but at Rome. The young Offa was accompanied in his pilgrimage and sacrifice by Coenred, the king of the Mercians, detached on his side from the world by witnessing the last moments of one of his best knights, who died in despair from having voluntarily kept back from confession. Before leaving England, they were both present at the last act of the great Wilfrid's apostolic life — the dedication of the new monastery of Evesham, which they had endowed and freed from all temporal jurisdiction. When they arrived at Rome, both these kings received the tonsure and cowl from the hands of Pope Constantinus, before the Confession of St. Peter, and, after some years of penitent life, they passed from the tomb of the apostles to celestial blessedness, to enjoy the society of the saints for ever.

Since the death of the last Northumbrian Bretwalda, Oswy, and especially since the overthrow of his son Egfrid in his struggle with the Picts, Mercia had acquired the ascendancy which was departing from Northumbria. The Mercians, under the warlike descendants of the terrible Penda, and thanks to the military spirit which inspired its people and race, swayed the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy for nearly a century. Coenred, who died a monk at Rome after having fought valiantly against the Britons, was Penda's grandson; and he was far from being the only recruit which the family of the dauntless champion of old paganism was to furnish to the monastic order. His own son, and second successor, Ethelred, the predecessor of Coenred upon the throne of Mercia, touched by divine grace, after a long and warlike reign, entered as a simple monk into the monastery of Bardeney, which he had founded, and ruled it for ten years as abbot before he died the death of a saint. This is the Ethelred with whom we have already made acquaintance, first as the enemy and then as the devoted friend of Wilfrid, whose cause he sustained with all the authority conferred on him by his double rank as monk and monarch.

These two kings, however, who were so entirely devoted to the Benedictine institution as to enrol themselves in it till the end of their worthy existence, were succeeded on the throne of Mercia by a prince of a very different stamp. Ceolred, like the young Northumbrian king of whom we recently spoke, did not content himself with despising the rights and liberties guaranteed to the monasteries by the charters of his predecessors; he took from them the young and beautiful virgins there consecrated to the Lord, for the gratification of his own passions. He died in one of his orgies among his earls, not only unrepentant, but calling upon the devil, and cursing the Christian priests with their Gospel. It was perhaps the last outbreak of conquered heathenism: not, certainly, that heathen morals and lusts were for ever extirpated from the bosom of these wild races, but since that time their ascendancy has never been so great as to lead an Anglo-Saxon prince to the point of making a public denial of the Gospel.

The line of Mercian kings after Penda is as follows : —

626-655. Penda.

656-675. Wulphere, son of Penda.

675-704. Ethelred, brother of Wulphere.

704-709. Coenred, son of Wulphere.

709-716. Coelred, son of Ethelred.

716-757. Ethelbald, called Clito, grandson of a brother of Penda.

757-797- A great-grandson of the same.

After this worthy grandson of the savage Penda, the Mercian throne fell to a collateral scion of the race, Ethelbald, known under the name of Clito or Childe, which was then used among the Anglo-Saxons, as that of *Infanto* in Spain at a later period, to designate the princes of the reigning dynasty. Ethelbald, who was savagely pursued by Ceolred, had a stormy and hard youth. He was not himself a monk, but his history is connected with that of one of the most holy and popular monks of the eighth century. In the course of his wanderings from province to province and from stronghold to stronghold, while flying with some devoted companions from the persecution of his pitiless enemy, he learned that a young and warlike chief called Guthlac, sprung, like himself, from the royal race of Mercia, had retired from the world to consecrate himself to study and prayer, in an island surrounded by the marshes which then covered a great district on the borders of Mercia and East Anglia. Ethelbald put himself under the guidance of a neighbouring abbot, who knew the country sufficiently to find his way through the black and stagnant waters and muddy soil of these inaccessible marshes, and the two reached Croyland in a fisher's boat. In this watery retreat abode the good and pious Guthlac, and there the fugitive found a hospitable welcome and a safe shelter. He did not continue long there: when rest had given him renewed confidence, he left the refuge in which Ceolred neither could nor dared reach him, to resume his life of adventure. But new dangers led him again and again to Croyland, where Guthlac always



received him with the same affection, and lavished upon him, in their long and frequent conversations, the spiritual consolations and varied instruction which he needed. He had a cell beside that of Guthlac, his sole friend and consoler. One day, returning from one of his dangerous journeys, during which he had found himself separated from all his followers, closely surrounded by enemies, and at the end of his strength and resources, he arrived exhausted and desperate, and threw himself into the arms of his protector and friend. “Dear child”, said Guthlac, “I know all your troubles and misfortunes; I have followed your laborious career from its beginning; for this reason I have prayed God much for you, and He has granted my prayer. I announce to you in His name that you shall one day reign over your native country. You shall see the defeat of your enemies; you shall overcome them sword in hand; you shall trample them under your feet, and become the master of all their possessions. Learn only to wait: the kingdom will come to you, not by rapine and violence, but from the hand of God, when that hand shall have demolished the wicked man who now reigns, and who shall pass away like a shadow”. From that moment Ethelbald placed his hope in God alone, and waited with trust and patience. The prophecy was accomplished two years after : Ceolred perished in his orgies, and the Childe was immediately recognised as king by all the Mercians.

The hermit who with so much confidence prophesied to the future king of Mercia, sprang himself from the dynasty which reigned over the greater part of the Heptarchy. His youth had been spent in fight and pillage, like that of all the princes and lords of his time. Excited by the recollection of the exploits of his ancestors, he dreamed only of battles and devastation, and at the head of a numerous band of friends and dependants he vanquished his enemies, sacked many towns and castles, and collected immense booty. But his companions observed with surprise that he had so much pity left as to restore to those whom he robbed a third part of their goods. He led this bandit life, which was supposed among his countrymen to be heroic, from the age of fifteen to that of twenty-four. But one night, while he camped with all his followers in a forest, his imagination suddenly presented before him the crimes, excesses, and miserable end of the kings of his race, then his own inevitable and perhaps approaching death, and the nothingness of the wealth and fame which he had sought. He felt himself as if burnt up by an internal flame—the flame of celestial desires. His decision was made on the spot. As soon as the first song of the birds announced the dawn he awoke his comrades, and told them to choose another chief, as he had just devoted himself, for his own part, to the service of Jesus Christ. Then, in spite of their remonstrances, cries, and lamentations, he instantly set out, carrying with him only a broad and short sword, such as was worn by labourers. Doubtless this was to defend himself during the long and solitary journey which he had before him; for he went alone, and far from his native district and his friends, to knock at the door of one of those double monasteries, governed by abbesses, several of which already existed in England, and where the humility of the monk was so much the more tried that he was subject to a woman as superior. He there assumed the monastic habit, having his long hair cut, according to the form of the Roman, not the Celtic, tonsure, as his biographer takes pains to tell us. There he passed two years, dedicated to the study of the Holy Scriptures, of cenobitic customs, and of liturgical music. At twenty-six his soul was illuminated by a new light while reading the life of the Fathers in the desert; he determined to plunge into a deeper and more austere solitude, and it was then that he betook himself to the marshy forests

of Croyland. He found there an ancient tumulus, already excavated by the greed of the neighbouring population, who expected to find treasure there. They had dug it into a sort of pit. The fierce young Mercian prince fitted it with a penthouse of straw, made it his home, and there ended his life.

There are various features in this life which are to be found in those of the most illustrious saints of the monastic order. Like St. Benedict, Guthlac excited by his austerities the ill-will of his brethren. With true Anglo-Saxon spirit, they reproached him specially for his unalterable resolution never to drink either beer or hydromel, nor wine, except in the Communion. Like St. Columba, his solitude was continually disturbed by crowds of the faithful, attracted by the increasing fame of his holiness, and who surmounted all the obstacles which Nature had heaped around his island retreat to seek light, consolation, and the healing of their infirmities; he was sought by all conditions of men from all quarters, abbots and earls, rich and poor, monks and laymen; and these not only from all parts of Mercia, but from the most distant corners of England.

Like the Fathers of the desert, he was exposed to a thousand temptations, a thousand diabolical visions, the most curious of which, in a historical point of view, is that which makes it apparent that the Cambrian or British marauders were not afraid of crossing the whole breadth of the island to disturb their conquerors even in East Anglia. It is told that Guthlac was much comforted by discovering that the enemies by whom he had felt his cell to be surrounded and threatened all the night through, were demons and not Welsh, as he had supposed them to be by their hoarse voices and guttural accents.

Like many holy monks of Celtic countries and of Merovingian Gaul he lived in a close and touching familiarity with all living creatures, and especially with the birds who inhabited the trees and great reeds of his island. The crows served him with docility as messengers, the swallows came twittering to seat themselves on his shoulders or knees, on his head or breast; and he, on his side, built them nests with his own hands, little baskets made of rushes and bits of straw, which he placed under the thatch of his cell, and to which his gentle guests returned yearly, seeking their accustomed dwelling-places. "My father", said an astonished visitor, "how have you managed to give those daughters of solitude so much trust in you?". "Know you not", answered Guthlac, "that he who is united to God in purity of heart, sees in his turn all created things unite themselves to him? The birds of heaven, like the angels, seek those who do not seek the society of men".

Like St. Romuald, he inspired the surrounding population with so much reverence for him, that speculations began to be made during his life on the price of his relics; the monk who came to him every twenty days to renew his tonsure thought seriously of using his razor to cut his throat, with the conviction that the place in which so great a saint perished would be enriched by the veneration of kings and princes.

And finally, like St. Cuthbert, he had a friend, a noble and pious abbess, daughter of the king of the East Anglians, who offered to him, in testimony of their mutual affection, a leaden coffin and a shroud. He accepted these presents; and although he had vowed to wear neither woollen nor linen, but to dress himself entirely in the skins of beasts, he consented, for the love of Edburga, that his body should be buried in the linen which she had woven for him. He died after a week of severe suffering, but having still

strength enough to rise and say mass on the day of his death, and afterwards to take the holy viaticum himself from the altar. He was still young; and during the fifteen years which he had passed in these marshes had yet retained, in the midst of his austere solitude, that grave kindness and lightheartedness which are the inalienable inheritance of true monks and saints.

On receiving news of the death of his friend, Ethelbald hastened to the body of him who so long protected his misfortune and consoled his misery. He threw himself, bathed in tears, on his knees before the coffin. "My father", he cried, "thou who hast known all my sufferings, and who hast sustained me in all dangers, as long as thou livedst I could never despair. Thanks to thee, I know how to call upon the Lord, who hast saved me up to this day. But if thou forsakest me, to whom can I have recourse? who will help, who will comfort me?"

The following night, in the midst of his tears and prayers, Guthlac appeared to him, resplendent with light, to confirm his ancient prediction, and to announce the end of his trials.

And in fact, two years after, Ethelbald succeeded to the throne of Mercia, which he occupied for forty years. The first use which he made of his power was to found a monastery at Croyland, in honour of him whom he continued to call his friend and consoler. Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in such a building, an immense abbey, richly endowed, and inhabited by a colony of monks brought from the new abbey of Evesham, rose upon the site of his cell. Ethelbald built it in the midst of these stagnant waters, upon piles driven into a little heap of earth which was brought from a distance in boats, to solidify the marsh which the industry of the monks was soon to render wholesome, and transform into fertile meadows. Croyland was specially distinguished for the knowledge of its monks, and occupied for several centuries the first rank among English monasteries. The coffin of Guthlac, taken from the earth in which it was to have been buried, by the tenderness of Ethelbald, and richly decorated, formed the principal ornament of the great church built in stone, which replaced the modest wooden oratory where Ethelbald and Guthlac had prayed together. This church, often destroyed, was always rebuilt with increased magnificence; and its great bell, known as the largest and most harmonious in England, retained to its last day the name and recollection of the hermit whom its royal founder had so much loved.

It would be pleasant to believe that Ethelbald showed himself always worthy of the tender sympathy with which his holy friend had honoured him in his youth. But this confidence is scarcely possible in presence of the famous and eloquent letter addressed to him by six English bishops, who were occupied during his whole reign in the work of evangelising Germany, and who had at their head the great Boniface. The holy apostle of the Germans went from England to the Continent the same year in which Ethelbald became king, and two years before the end of his reign he died the death of a martyr. The letter of the bishops informs us that the private conduct of the king awakened a religious and patriotic sorrow in those noble missionaries of Anglo-Saxon faith and glory. They accuse him, according to public report, of having sought in celibacy, not Christian mortification, but the satisfaction of his sensual instincts, and, in the effervescence of his passions, of respecting neither the domestic hearths of his fellow-

citizens nor even the sanctuaries of virgins consecrated to God. They remind him, in this respect, of the honour paid to chastity by their heathen ancestors, the Saxons of Germany, and the cruel penalties which were exacted for adultery. They entreat him not to dishonour his old age, not to encourage the English nation by his example to descend by debauchery to the level of the degenerate nations of Spain and the south of Europe, of whom the Saxons had already made a prey. They reproach him besides with having violated the charters and stolen the possessions of several monasteries, and with authorising the Mercian lords, by his example, to subject the monks and priests to violence and servitude, till then unknown in Christian England.

On the other hand, these witnesses of imposing authority congratulate him highly on his charity to the poor, as well as on his zeal for the administration of justice, the protection of the weak, and the repression of local quarrels and disorders.

Other testimony informs us that he was a just, generous, and brave king; that, by his frequent and fortunate wars, the friend of Guthlac raised Mercia to a degree of power which it had never before reached, and that he was regarded as the supreme monarch of England up to the day on which, after a long and prosperous reign, he fell fighting against the West Saxons, in a struggle, the picturesque and impassioned narrative of which has been enshrined by popular poetry amid the historic annals of the period.

The kingdom of the West Saxons, which was to inherit the power of the Mercians, as the latter had inherited that of the Northumbrians, was destined to absorb all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and thus to create that English unity which no dismemberment has ever broken up. The dynasty of the sons of Cerdic, reputed by tradition to be himself the ninth in descent from the god Odin, was to produce Egbert and the great Alfred. It prefaced these generous lives by giving three kings, one after another, to the monastic order, which already owed to it the holy and learned Abbot Aldhelm. He who opened the march in a career which was so novel to the sons of Odin, was Centwin, son of the first Christian king of Wessex, who, after a brilliant and warlike reign of nine years, interspersed with battles between the Mercians and Britons, determined to end his days in one of the monasteries which he had founded and endowed. After him it was the turn of Ceadwalla, the ferocious devastator of the Isle of Wight and the kingdoms of Kent and Sussex, who remained obstinately heathen, notwithstanding the conversion of his neighbours and his country, but who, all at once, at the age of thirty, recalling to his memory the instructions which he had received when himself in exile from the great exile Wilfrid, abdicated his crown, crossed the sea, the Alps, and Lombardy, and appeared at Rome, the first of the Anglo-Saxon kings, as Wilfrid, thirty years before, had been the first monastic pilgrim of the same race who had visited the Eternal City. He asked baptism from Pope Sergius, who conferred upon him the name of Peter, in memory of the great devotion which had brought him from so great a distance to the tomb of the prince of the apostles. Ten days later, before he had even laid aside the white robe of the catechumens, he died. The Pope gave orders that he should be buried in St. Peter's, and inscribed upon his tomb an epitaph in tolerable verse, intended to stir up the zeal of future generations by the example of the young and formidable victor, who had given up everything that he and his father had conquered or hoarded up, and abjured his barbarous religion to become the humble godson of St.

Peter, and who had gone clothed with the whiteness of baptism to increase in heaven the flock of Christ.

The crown of the West Saxons passed after him to Ina, the friend of St. Aldhelm, as Ceadwalla had been the friend of Wilfrid. His long and prosperous reign laid the foundations of the future ascendancy of his race over all England. Though very warlike and very fortunate in war, the conqueror of the Southern and Eastern Saxons, he owes his fame specially to the code of laws which he gave to his people, and which has been preserved in its integrity, like the laws given a century before by Ethelbert of Kent, with the help of the Roman missionaries. Ina drew out his under the inspiration, and with the aid, of the two monk-bishops of Winchester and of London, of his earls, and all the wise men who composed the parliament of his three kingdoms, and besides, according to his own declaration, with the help of many monks or servants of God, in order to provide for the salvation of souls and the prosperity of his people. Among these laws may be remarked some which guarantee the inviolability of marriage, and the sanctity of betrothal; consecrate the right of asylum in churches; improve the condition of the peasants, while maintaining their feudal thralldom to the soil of their lords ; provide for the support of their widows and orphans; forbid the exportation of slaves, and declare free of all bondage the slave who should be compelled by his master to work on Sunday.

He pursued with energy the struggle with the Britons of Wales, and finally succeeded in incorporating into his kingdom those of Cornwall, dethroning the king of that province, to whom Aldhelm had addressed his famous letter upon the Celtic Easter. But Ina, who was himself born of a Celtic mother, consulting at once the precepts of Christian morality and the well-understood interests of his nation, completed the pacification of the conquered population by guaranteeing the validity of marriages contracted between Saxons and Britons, and entered into relations with the Celts of Armorica. He rebuilt and endowed magnificently the national sanctuary of the Britons at Glastonbury, consecrating to this work of conciliation the thirty thousand pounds of silver which he had torn, sword in hand, from the Jutes of Kent, on account of were, or compensation for the life of a West Saxon prince whom they had burned alive. He thus testified the veneration of the Saxon conquerors for the celebrated monastery which, after having been the cradle of Celtic Christianity, and the tomb of King Arthur, was about to become one of the principal centres of Anglo-Saxon monachism, and one of the burying-places of English royalty. It is the sole example in Great Britain of a religious foundation which has become equally dear and sacred to the two races — to the victors as to the vanquished.

With the help of the princes and patricians of his own country, Ina founded or enriched many other monasteries, being specially guided in his good works by the most illustrious abbot in Wessex, his friend and cousin Aldhelm, whom he had drawn from the cloister of Malmesbury to make him a bishop, and whose counsels he followed with affectionate docility.

And, finally, thanks to Ina, at the moment when Aldhelm disappeared from the scene, one of the most illustrious of the saints whom England has given to the Church rises on our sight, the great Winefred, whose youth was spent in a monastery in Wessex, from which Ina took him to intrust him with certain delicate negotiations with the



Archbishop of Canterbury. This is the first appearance in history of him who was to be the victor over Teutonic heathenism, the true Christian conqueror of Germany, and whose name, latinised into Boniface, is inscribed in ineffaceable characters in history along with those of Charles Martel and of Charlemagne.

While Ina was still in full possession of his power and popularity, after thirty-seven years of a prosperous and glorious reign, his wife, Ethelburga, in whose veins, as in his own, ran the warlike blood of Cerdic, and who had shared all the cares of his life even to the point of victoriously leading his people to battle in his absence, persuaded him to give up his throne and the world. According to narratives which unfortunately are not given us by contemporaries, but which are in conformity with the characteristic conditions of Anglo-Saxon nature, the queen's device for deciding Ina to the sacrifice which she meant to make along with him, was after the following fashion: —A great banquet, accompanied by all the refinements of lordly luxury in these days, had been given in one of the royal *villas*. Next morning the princely pair set out on their journey, but after riding for an hour or two the queen begged her husband to return whence they came. He consented, and on returning to the castle he was struck with consternation to find the scene of the recent rejoicings not only silent and desert, but destroyed and desecrated. It was covered with ruins and filth, and the very bed on which they had slept was occupied by a sow with her litter. The astonished king looked at the queen, who had given secret orders to this effect to the steward of the villa, for an explanation. “Yes, my lord husband”, said Ethelburga, “where are now our yesterday's pleasures? where are our purple hangings, our gay parasites, our heavy silver dishes and delicate meats? All has passed away like smoke, and those who prize such pleasures shall pass away like them. Behold, then, I pray you, into what misery falls this flesh which we feed so delicately; and we who are fed still more daintily than other men, shall not we fall into a still more miserable corruption?”

This was enough, according to the legend, to determine the king to think only for the future of his soul. Authentic history proves his abdication, which was given in the midst of a Parliament of Witan, to whom he announced his resolution to pass the rest of his days in penitence. Then, accompanied by Ethelburga, he went to Rome. He arrived there after a long and painful journey, to end his life in penitence and obscurity. According to some accounts, he embraced monastic life according to the rule of St. Benedict; according to others, he preferred, for humility's sake, to remain lost in the crowds of poor pilgrims, with neither tonsure nor cowl, gaining his livelihood by the work of his hands.

Upon the left bank of the Tiber, then almost desert, and not far from the Vatican, the lawgiver and king founded, under the name of *Schola Saxonum*, an establishment for the orthodox education of young princes, and for the priests and clerks of his country who desired to complete their religious and literary education in the shadow of the basilica of St. Peter. He added to this a church and burying-ground specially intended for his countrymen, and in which he was himself buried, for he died in Rome in the obscurity he had voluntarily sought. His faithful Ethelburga remained with him till his death, and then returning, became a nun in England.

The great Benedictine Wilfrid had set the example of these pilgrimages to Rome, which nobody had thought of before his time. Some years after his death it became a kind of epidemic. During the seventh and eighth centuries Rome was the meeting-place of innumerable pilgrims, who came from all quarters of the West to see the holy city, and pray by the tombs of the saints and martyrs. By no nation was this pious duty accomplished with greater zeal and fervour than by the Anglo-Saxons. Their kings set them the example, differing in that point from the Merovingians, not a single individual of whom ever crossed the Alps to go to Rome.

An irresistible attraction to the Eternal City soon became apparent among Saxons of all ranks; princes and bishops, rich and poor, priests and laity, men and women, undertook the pilgrimage with eagerness, often going so far as to repeat the journey notwithstanding its difficulties and dangers. They were so numerous that, collecting round the foundation of King Ina, they gave their name to an entire quarter of the city, the *Vicus Saxonum* situated in the immediate neighbourhood of St. Peter's, and inhabited exclusively by them. They came, says their historian, to make acquaintance in their lifetime with the saints, by whom they hoped to be well received in heaven.

But as there were false monks who introduced even into the cloister the indolence and vices of worldly life, so there were also false pilgrims whom frivolous or guilty motives carried abroad; and the monastic writers have remarked the one as well as the other. The wandering inclination of the Teutonic races may well have contributed, after the first impulse of fervent and sincere piety, to increase the number of those undevout pilgrims who often scandalised by their conduct the Christian countries through which they travelled. Women especially, and even virgins consecrated to God, excited the just indignation of the priests and the faithful in France and Italy, by their licence and lamentable downfalls, during their journeys to Rome. The melancholy revelations transmitted by the great apostle of Germany on this point to his colleague and countryman, Bishop Cuthbert of Canterbury, which led the latter to request the English assemblies and princes to forbid absolutely the pilgrimages of women and nuns to Rome, will not bear repetition.

I shall have succeeded poorly in expounding the history of these times, and ill served the truth, if the reader has not been struck by the singular mixture of good and evil, peace and war, freedom and slavery, which, from the beginning of Anglo-Saxon Christianity, shows itself in all the relations between society and the Church. It is evident that goodness had the advantage over evil, but that the evil was formidable, the dangers continual and flagrant, the deceivers and ill-doers more numerous than the saints. This, notwithstanding, has been called the *Golden Age* of religion in England ; not without reason, if the name has been given by comparison with later periods, but wrongly if attributed solely to its real merits. The fact is, that in true history there is no golden age. All ages, without exception, are infected by the evil which proceeds from man's natural corruption. All bear witness to his incurable weakness, but at the same time all proclaim his greatness and freedom, as well as the justice and mercy of God, his Maker and Redeemer.

**BOOK XIV**

**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE MONKS AMONG THE  
ANGLO-SAXONS**

“Record we too, with just and faithful pen,  
That many hooded cenobites there are.  
Who in their private cells have yet a care  
Of public quiet; unambitious Men,  
Counsellors for the world, of piercing ken;  
Whose fervent exhortations from afar  
Move Princes to their duty, peace or war;  
And oft-times in the most forbidding den  
Of solitude, with love of science strong,  
How patiently the yoke of thought they bear.  
By such examples moved to unbought pains  
The people work like congregated bees;  
Eager to build the quiet fortresses,  
Where piety, as they believe, obtains  
From heaven a general blessing; timely rains  
And sunshine ; prosperous enterprise, and peace and equity”.

Wordsworth.

**I**

A CENTURY and a half passed between the establishment of St. Augustin at Canterbury and the final erection of a second metropolitan see at York—between the first written laws of the first Christian king of Kent, and those decrees of the Council of Cloveshove which established a sort of confederation among the Anglo-Saxon bishops,

and at the same time sanctioned and made general the parochial system, which is still the foundation of temporal and spiritual life in the country districts of England.

During this interval all the inhabitants of Great Britain had become Christian; and all Britons and Saxons had acknowledged the supremacy of the Holy See, substituting everywhere the observances of Rome in place of the ancient customs of Celtic Christianity.

This great victory was the exclusive work of the monks.

With no human aid—with, at the most, the protecting sympathy of a woman to help them—they entered all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, one by one, as missionaries, and remained there as bishops, as pastors, as permanent preachers. Little by little they thus conquered the British soil, and covered it with their establishments. Their work had been slow and difficult. Stormy incidents and melancholy changes had not been wanting in it. Sons did not always allow themselves to be led by the example of their fathers, nor nations by that of their neighbours. Let us recall the first defection of the Jutes in Kent immediately after the death of Ethelbert, the double apostacy of the Saxons of the East, the rage of the old British Christians against the Teutonic converts, the destruction by fire and sword of the new-born Christianity in Northumbria, the horrible ravages of the heathen Penda among all his Christian neighbours!

All these difficulties and trials they met only with an unconquerable perseverance and gentleness. A hundred and fifty years after the arrival of Augustin, a holy abbot, friend of St. Aldhelm, and, like him, trained at Malmesbury, revealed the secret of their power to his illustrious countryman St. Boniface, who was then occupied in carrying the light of the Gospel from England to Germany. “To overcome”, he said, “the obstinacy of heathen savages—to fertilise the stony and barren soil of their hearts—pains must be taken not to insult or irritate them, but to set our doctrines before them with unflinching moderation and gentleness, so as to make them blush at their foolish superstitions without exasperating them”.

Thus armed, the monks finally triumphed everywhere; and everywhere, with the free consent of the people, proved by the public deliberations of the national assemblies of each kingdom, where each had the freedom of giving an answer in his turn. Let us repeat, to the immortal glory of the monastic conquerors of England, that neither they, their disciples, nor their protectors, used violence or persecution for the aid of evangelical truth. The faith as preached by the monks was nowhere enforced by a master; nowhere was it admitted without examination and discussion; nowhere was it propagated or defended among our insular Saxons by the sanguinary means used by Charlemagne among the Saxons on the other side of the Rhine.

At a later period, it is true, in conformity with the general spirit of Christian nations, and in proportion as the ties between religion and society became closer, penal legislation often transformed itself into a helper of Christian morality and ecclesiastical discipline. The assemblies, in which bishops and abbots had a place beside kings and landowners, often decreed severe or shameful penalties for apostacy, for the violation of Sunday rest or the fasts of Lent, and especially for drunkenness and incontinence, which were the most common vices among the Anglo-Saxons. But these penalties never went the length of torture or bloodshed, as often happened where the Byzantine laws had

infected Catholic nations with its poison. Up to the present moment, thanks to God, in these distant centuries, in the midst of gross immorality, beside scandals which we have not attempted to conceal or deny, we have not met with one single bloody or cruel act which can be attributed to any Anglo-Saxon bishop, priest, or monk. Faithful to the precepts and example of their first and glorious master St. Gregory the Great, they gained hearts and governed souls by the irresistible might of kindness; and, though not above the reach of human infirmity, remained long strangers and superior to the bitterness, covetousness, and violence which are too often to be met with in the history of the Church, and which she has always had to pay for by a loss of souls.

Such apostles found neophytes worthy of them. “No nation”, says, with justice, Edmund Burke, the most illustrious of their descendants, “has embraced Christianity with more fervour and simplicity than the Anglo-Saxons”. The permanent and generous struggle, which shows itself everywhere from the moment of their conversion, between their new principles and their old instincts, their savage traditions of murder, vengeance, and debauchery, demonstrate at once the sincerity of their faith and the merit of their submission. For a long time they alternate between atrocious crimes and unbounded penances, between audacious rapine and a giving up of all earthly goods, between odious outrages upon modesty and vows of perpetual chastity. They were capable of every sin to satisfy their passions, and were not less capable of every sacrifice to expiate their excesses. But in the long-run, and sometimes very speedily, goodness carried the day, and, except for some terrible back-slidings which were inevitable, remained master of the field, thanks to the generous and unwearied efforts of the monastic apostles. Wherever the hand, the words, the spirit of the monk, bishop, or missionary can reach, a uniform tendency is evident, both in morals and laws, in word and deed, towards justice, humanity, the love of goodness, and neighbourly charity; subduing the native fierceness of their countrymen; struggling against the most popular vices and excesses; introducing intellectual culture; creating and maintaining social peace from religious motives. The great mission which devolved upon the Church after the ruin of the Empire, that of restraining and ennobling the barbarians, of purifying and transforming their souls, was never more completely fulfilled.

And perhaps also the alliance between the two societies temporal and spiritual, between Church and State, was never more completely and happily realised. It was the climax of this union, at least in England, a moment which had its stains and miseries like everything here below, but which was free on both sides from permanent and systematic excesses. No king of the period attempted to govern or use the Church for his own advantage; no pontiff, in these exclusively monastic times, claimed that deceitful ascendancy which precedes or produces decadence and rebellion.

Certainly the Anglo-Saxon monks, instruments of a revolution so fruitful, and creators of an organisation so brilliant and lasting, had nothing, except their name, their celibate condition, their faith in Jesus Christ and His Church, in common with the Fathers of the desert, or even with the rare and austere companions of St. Benedict. Far from flying the company of other Christians, they impersonated or created Christian society around them. Far from thinking of their own salvation alone, they laboured without intermission, first for the salvation of infidels, and afterwards for the maintenance of faith and morality in the new Christian communities formed by their



instructions. Far from confining themselves to prayer or manual labour, they cultivated and extended with enthusiasm all the knowledge and literature possessed by the world in their days. The distant places to which they had been first led by a love of solitude changed rapidly, and as if by force of circumstances into cathedrals, cities, towns, or rural colonies, and served as centres, schools, libraries, workshops, and citadels to the scarcely converted families, parties, and tribes. Around the monastic cathedrals and the principal communities, towns which are still in existence formed rapidly, and municipal liberties soon dawned into life among them, the vital guarantees of which still exist along with the very names of the magistrates charged with their defence and maintenance.

All the bishops of the Heptarchy, as our narrative must have proved, issued from monasteries; the clergy of the cathedrals were exclusively monks who lived in community with their diocesan prelate at their head. For a century at least they held the place of the secular or parochial clergy. The monasteries were centres from which missionaries went forth to the rural stations to baptize, preach, and celebrate all the ceremonies of worship, and into which they returned to revive themselves by study and prayer. Rural parishes were formed but slowly under the influence of Archbishop Theodore in the south, and of Archbishop Egbert and Bede in the north. The monasteries thus long supplied in Christian England the place not only of cathedrals but of parish churches. Most of the cathedrals preserved their monastic character until long after the Norman Conquest. The decrees of the council of Cloveshove, in 747, are the first authentic documents which treat as a general fact the distribution of lay lands into districts administered by priests under the control of bishops, in distinction from churches situated in the lands belonging to the monasteries and served by priests under the control of their abbots. The latter churches, in which the priest was always assisted by a deacon and several clerks, were sometimes called *monasteriuncula*.

When parishes were thus organised, most of the priests placed at the head of the new divisions of the country were naturally brought from the monasteries. All was to make or to make anew in that great work, for it must be repeated that every trace of ancient British Christianity had disappeared before the Saxons. Except at Glastonbury, which had been at all times one of the great centres of Celtic devotion, in the little Roman church at Canterbury, where Queen Bertha was wont to pray, and at Evesham, where the ruins of a little British church were found in the thicket which had to be cleared away for the foundation of the new abbey, no vestige of the Christianity of the Britons or Romans is to be found in the history of the conquest of England by the monks.

This extension of their office and influence had not been attained in any other Christian nation; but it did not banish from the mind of the Anglo-Saxon monks the necessity of maintaining and guaranteeing the fundamental conditions of their institution. The rule of St. Benedict, which had been brought into England along with the Gospel by the first envoys of the Benedictine pope, St. Gregory the Great, had followed step by step the progress of evangelisation and Roman supremacy, and finally supplanted all the monastic regulations of Celtic countries or times. From Wilfrid to Bede, all the popular saints, Cuthbert, Egwin, Benedict Biscop, Botolph, and Aldhelm, distinguished themselves by their zeal for the Benedictine rule, although giving to it

slight modifications and additions such as suited the country and age. There existed, however, no hierarchical connection among the different monasteries, no chapter general, and, except the tie formed by Wilfrid between the nine or ten houses founded by himself, no general congregation of different communities, such as has been so general since. The only link between the continually increasing monasteries which covered the British soil was in the code, already a thing of antiquity, which had come from Rome with the Christian faith, and which the second council of Cloveshove names simply the *Rule*, as if it had become the sole rule recognised and put in practice.

Most of the councils held in England from the end of the seventh century gave a place to monastic interests in their decrees, which was in keeping with the preponderance of monastic prelates in the assemblies where these decrees were discussed or promulgated. Let us note the council of Beccancelde, called, in 694, by Withred, king of Kent, the fifth descendant of Ethelbert, which was presided over by Archbishop Brithwald, and at which the learned Grecian, Tobie, bishop of Rochester, many abbots, priests, lords, and *five abbesses* were present.

The king summed up the deliberations of the assembly. "I desire", said he, "that the monasteries and churches which have been given or bequeathed for the glory of God, in the time of the faithful kings, my relatives and predecessors, may remain dedicated to him for ever. I, Withred, earthly king, moved by the celestial King, and inspired by the love of justice, have learned from our ancestors that no layman has a right to take possession of any church whatsoever, nor of anything that belongs to that church. For this reason we interdict all kings, our successors, all *eorls*, or other laymen, from exercising authority over churches or their possessions which I and my predecessors have given as a perpetual inheritance to Christ, to the Holy Virgin, and to the apostles. When an abbot or abbess dies, let notice be given to the archbishop, and let his successor be chosen only after the purity of his life has been acknowledged by the bishop. It is the king's duty to choose the *eorls* and ealdormen, the sheriffs and judges; but it is the office of the archbishop to rule the Church of God, to elect and constitute bishops, abbots, abbesses, priests, and deacons, and to confirm them by his good example".

Another decree of the same council exempts the monasteries of Kent from all secular bondage, and notably from maintaining the king and lords during their journeys, which is an evidence that monastic hospitality, always so generous and spontaneous, had been cruelly abused by the greed and rapacity of powerful laymen. Three years after, in a new assembly held at Berkhamstead, presided over by the same king and archbishop, and entitled a council, though many warriors occupied seats in it along with the clergy, the freedom of the Church was again guaranteed, along with that of its jurisdiction, its property, and its prayers. The decrees of these councils held in the kingdom of Kent, under the presidency of the metropolitan, were soon adopted over all England. They were solemnly confirmed at the first council of Cloveshove in 742 by Ethelbald, king of the Mercians, who was then the most powerful prince of the Heptarchy, and who, from his youthful friendship with the hermit Guthlac, had always been well disposed towards the monks. It was at the same time decided that the exemption from all contributions to the public treasury granted to the monks did not

extend to the taxes levied for the three principal necessities of the time, the preservation of roads and bridges, of national fortresses, and of military expeditions.

The second council of Cloveshove—which was the most important of the Anglo-Saxon assemblies of the eighth century, and was called in consequence of a celebrated letter from St. Boniface to the archbishop of Canterbury, and specially because of the severe orders of Pope Zacharius—added new guarantees and also new obligations to the already important mission of the monks, taking effectual measures against the abuses and oppressions which had been pointed out almost at the same moment by Boniface in his letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, and by Bede to the archbishop of York.

## II

It is then to the monks scattered as missionaries and preachers over the country, or united in the numerous communities of episcopal cities and other great monastic centres, that must be in justice attributed the initiation of the Anglo-Saxons into the truths of religion as well as into the consoling and readily adopted observances of Catholic worship. They were expressly commanded to teach and explain to their flocks, in the vernacular tongue, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the sacred words which were used in the celebration of mass and the administration of baptism; to expound to them every Sunday, in English, the epistle and gospel of the day, and to preach, or, instead of preaching, to read them something useful to their souls.

The zeal of the Anglo-Saxon kings and people for religious instruction in their own language has been already pointed out. From this spring those homilies in Anglo-Saxon which are so often to be met with among the manuscripts in our libraries, and which are by several centuries of an earlier date than the earliest religious documents of any other modern language. Thence also came those translations of Holy Scripture which abounded in the cloisters from the seventh century, and which probably were circulated outside their boundaries,—translations ascribed by certain historians to the pens of the most illustrious monks—to Aldhelm and the Venerable Bede, who are said to have completely translated, the one the Psalter, and the other the Old and New Testaments.

The Sunday rest, still more scrupulously observed in England than in any other Christian country, was, from the beginning of the monastic mission, the object of special precautions. The Penitentiary of Theodore records the most minute regulations for preserving labourers, vine-dressers, and gardeners, as well as needlewomen, spinners, and washer-women, from any infringement of that essential guarantee of freedom for both body and soul.

The solemn beauty of the worship celebrated in the monastic churches was increased by the liturgical uniformity in accordance with Roman rites which had been everywhere substituted for the Celtic, and were formally decreed by the council of Cloveshove. And it must have had a still greater effect upon the people, from the gradual introduction of organs, the powerful melody of which our Aldhelm had already celebrated. The first mention of them in England is connected with the abbey of

Malmesbury, which, being situated not far from Cambria, and founded by a Celt, might offer a new attraction by means of that touching and majestic harmony to the essentially musical Welsh.

In addition to the ceremonies celebrated within the churches, which were still too distant from each other to provide for all spiritual necessities, the solicitude of the monastic missionaries had extended the worship of the cross, for the instruction and consolation of the uncultured country people. The mysterious symbol of the redemption of the human race by the sufferings of the Son of God was raised from point to point on the hillsides and in the valleys of England, now ransomed from the heathen yoke. The crucifix which St. Augustin had presented for the first time to Ethelbert, on the morning after he landed on the banks of the Thames, and which the holy and pious Oswald had planted for the first time as a sign of hope and deliverance upon the soil of Northumbria on the eve of his first battle, stood in the place of an oratory and sanctuary in many districts scarcely yet cleared from the forest. A cross raised in the middle of a field was enough to satisfy the devotions of the thane, his ploughmen and shepherds. They gathered around it for public and daily prayer, and were inspired by it with a veneration not less affectionate than that which attached to the sanctuaries, daily increasing in number, which were almost all dedicated to the mother of Christ or St. Peter; for the prince of the apostles was then the saint most universally and frequently invoked by the Christians of England.

The unrivalled benefit of the faith was not the only service which the Benedictines lavished on converted England. It is at the risk of falling into repetition and commonplace that we dwell upon the immense services they rendered, there as everywhere, if not more there than anywhere else, to public instruction and to agriculture. We flatter ourselves that we have furnished, almost at every page of these volumes, evidence of what they have done for the intellectual nourishment of England. It has been seen that among the Anglo-Saxons, as well as among the Celts of Ireland, Caledonia, and Cambria, monasteries were the sole centres of a religious and liberal education, and that knowledge was there at once much sought, very varied, and very literary. This was not the case solely in the isolated cloisters which were devoted to monastic education. The bishops, all of whom came out of monasteries, changed the cloisters of their cathedrals into schools, and collected around them a numerous band of youths eager for work and for study.

One of those public benefactors who distinguished himself the most in this respect was John, whose name we have already met as one of the intruders who repeatedly divided between them the diocese of Wilfrid. We may justly be blamed for not dwelling longer on him, so great was his popularity among the English of his own day, and until the end of the middle ages. Though he was best known under the name of St. John of Beverley, from the place where he passed the last four years of his life in solitude, and which afterwards became one of the greatest monastic establishments of the north of England, he was in the first place a monk at Whitby under the great Abbess Hilda, and afterwards bishop, in succession, of Hexham and York. He was a disciple of Archbishop Theodore, and it was he who had the honour of conferring the orders of deacon and priest upon the Venerable Bede. Between these two great luminaries of the Anglo-Saxon Church, he himself shone during his thirty-two years' episcopate with a pure and gentle

light, thanks to his tender anxiety for all the spiritual and temporal necessities of his flock, and the supernatural help which he brought to them in their sicknesses and troubles. Bede has devoted several chapters full of interest to his history. He exhibits him to us employing the most minute and affectionate pains to heal a poor young cripple, who was dumb and afflicted with scurvy, of all his infirmities, but especially of his dumbness, teaching him by the aid of heaven to speak and read, and beginning with the alphabet like the humblest of teachers.

But another scene, which touches our subject more immediately, is that in which we behold him surrounded by a group of youths, some ecclesiastics, but the greater part laymen, whom the monk-bishop trained to the study of letters and music, without extinguishing in them the taste for athletic exercises, which was then, as now, inherent in the English race. These students followed their master on horseback through his pastoral visitations, and when they found themselves on level ground took advantage of the occasion to ride races with each other at the risk of breaking their heads, as happened to a young monk, afterwards abbot of Tynemouth, who related all these details to the Venerable Bede. The joyous impetuosity of the young horsemen, their entreaties to the bishop for permission to ride their races under his eyes, the consent which was finally wrested from him under the condition that his favourite among them should remain by his side, the impossibility which this favourite experienced of resisting the impulse and example of his comrades, his wild gallop to rejoin the others, his accident, his swoon, the tender anxiety of the good prelate, the cares which he lavished on the imprudent youth, passing the entire night in prayer by his side, until the dying young man opened his eyes and said, "I know you; you are my bishop, whom I love" — all this makes up one of the most complete and attractive pictures in the abundant stores of the great monastic historian.

We must stop short here in order not to begin over again, as we should be too often tempted to do, the edifying but monotonous tale which proves the studious fervour of both masters and pupils in the monastic schools.

But it is impossible to avoid a brief notice of what has been done by the monks in England for the improvement of agriculture. It is impossible to forget the use they made of so many vast districts, uncultivated and uninhabited, covered with forests or surrounded with marshes. Such was, it must not be forgotten, the true nature of the vast estates given to the monks, and which had thus the double advantage of offering to communities the most inaccessible retreat that could be found, and of imposing the least possible sacrifice upon the munificence of the givers. They surmounted all the difficulties which stared them in the face, of beginning the cultivation of a new country; the forests were cleared, the marshes made wholesome or dried up, the soil irrigated or drained, according to the requirements of each locality ; and bridges, roads, dykes, havens, and lighthouses were erected wherever their possessions or influence extended, in evidence of their unwearied and watchful fervour. The half at least of broad Northumberland was lost in sandy plains and barren heaths; the half of East Anglia and a considerable part of Mercia were covered with marshes difficult of access, in the midst of which the future king, Ethelbald, found refuge with the hermit Guthlac : yet in both regions the monks substituted for these uninhabited deserts fat pasturage and abundant harvests.



The latter district, the present name of which (the Fens) alone recalls the marshy and unwholesome nature of the original soil, became the principal theatre of the triumphs of agricultural industry performed by the monks. Medehamstede, Ely, Croyland, Thorney, Ramsey, were the first battlefields of these conquerors of nature, these monks who made of themselves ploughmen, breeders and keepers of stock, and who were the true fathers of English agriculture, which, thanks to their traditions and example, has become the first agriculture in the world.

The English word *improvement*, so frequently used, and so expressive in relation to everything that concerns bodily and mental labour, seems to have been invented expressly for their use. As much might be said for another word, more ancient still, but not less used—the word *landlord*, which expresses not only the sentiment of dominion and territorial possession, but also that kind of tutelary and almost parental solicitude which so happily combines the obligations and the rights of property. They were the best of landlords; such is the testimony given, by all attentive and conscientious observers of the past history of England, to the monks who were the originators of ecclesiastical property in that country, and who long remained its sole guardians. It was not only by their gifts, by their able and generous indulgence towards their direct dependants, that they exercised upon the inferior classes an influence always benevolent, and always gratefully acknowledged. It was by the effectual, enlightened, and unwearied protection which they extended to the poor and weak, who were under other laws and served other masters. “They were”, according to one of the great masters of modern learning, “permanent mediators between the rich and poor, between the strong and the weak; and it must be said to their eternal honour that they understood and fulfilled in a marvellous way the duties of this noble mission. They alone had the right and the means of arresting the rough hand of power, of mitigating the just severity of the law, of showing a gleam of hope to the eye of the slave, and of finding, even in this world, a place and means of existence for all those forsaken ones whose existence was ignored by the State”.

Thus, then, thanks to the Anglo-Saxon Benedictines, the maternal authority of the Church began to extend over all weakness and suffering. It grew visibly, interposing whenever it was necessary against all violence and tyranny.

### III

How, then, was this office, so godlike and glorious, given, from the very beginning of Christianity in England, to the abbots, the great monks, and the bishops, who were produced by the monastic order? The influence of Christian faith and morality, of which they were the interpreters and guardians, contributed to it more than any other reason. But it would be unjust to pass over another cause, almost as effectual—the close and lasting union between the monastic order and the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. This aristocracy, converted by the monks, promptly and cordially opened its ranks to them. History has not preserved the memory of any race which adopted, not only the belief, but the precepts and counsels of the Gospel with more enthusiasm than did the high nobility, which was composed of the dynasties and ruling families of the

Heptarchy. Never and nowhere have so many men of royal or patrician race devoted themselves to the hard discipline of the cloister, to the penitential life of anchorites, to the dangers inseparable from pilgrimages and missions in countries still pagan. This aristocracy, fond of fighting, of good cheer, of all sensual pleasures, and of pomp and magnificence which, both in their own persons and in those of their descendants, became proverbial, found itself all at once ripe for the noblest exploits of self - mortification, of Gospel humility, and chastity. After the first foreign masters, new apostles, issued from its own bosom, continued to show it the path of Christian virtue, marching resolutely at its head.

From thence sprang an alliance between the aristocracy and the clergy, between religion and the State, more characteristic, intimate, and cordial, as has been already said, than existed anywhere else in the Teutonic and Christian world. Anglo-Saxon princes and nobles became in rapid succession monks, abbots, and bishops; but these prelates and clergy, belonging to the sovereign races, retained, in their own country and among their neighbours, a place equal or superior to that which they occupied as laymen. They were instantly recognised or elevated to the most important rank in English society. On the other hand, this rank and those functions were often coveted by men inspired with passions very different from the sacred fire which burned in the heart of Wilfrid, Benedict Biscop, Guthlac, and the other saints who belonged to the highest ranks of Anglo-Saxon nobility.

In England, as elsewhere, and perhaps more than elsewhere, this intimate alliance between the heads of the two forms of society, spiritual and temporal, and the constant mutual action of the one on the other, produced results dear and salutary to the Church as well as to the State. The advantage, however, was almost always greater for the State than for the Church, and indeed sometimes became dangerous and compromised the latter. Abuses there, as everywhere, inevitably followed benefits. These will be evident but too soon. At the same time, before going on to consideration of the shadows which it is impossible to deny or suppress in a sincere historic picture, let us first contemplate the light which preceded them.

It was not certainly by any encroachment, either open or concealed, on the rights of others, nor by any secret or violent means, that the heads of the monastic order rose to the highest rank in the Anglo-Saxon nation. They were called to it by the natural course of things and the unanimous voice of men. Representatives of the most elevated social offices, initiated into all the necessities of elective government, of communal life, and voluntary subordination, they took their place naturally in a government based, in the first place, upon a social hierarchy consecrated by mutual service and hereditary or freely offered devotion; and in the second, upon the sovereign and permanent action of public assemblies. These envoys of Christianity brought an essentially important and much-desired sanction to the usages and institutions which substituted among those noble scions of the Teutonic race the proud independence of an often heroic, but sometimes exacting and troublesome, devotion, for the abject submission of the degraded serfs of the Roman Empire.

Not only the bishops, who all belonged to the monastic order, but abbots, and often abbesses, occupied the first place in those national or provincial assemblies which

have been so often referred to in this narrative, and which, under the name of *Witenagemot*, or assembly of wise men, were the cradle of the English Parliament; guaranteeing to the Anglo-Saxon people the benefit of a government sustained and controlled by the lay and ecclesiastical nobility, and making decisions which could not be violated or despised with impunity by any monarch.

At the period which we have now arrived at, each kingdom of the Heptarchy, and even each of the tribes comprised in or absorbed by the greatest of those kingdoms, had its special assembly, an institution retained at a later period, when England was united under the sceptre of one monarch, by each shire or province. But there also existed assemblies more or less general, the authority of which was recognised in differing degrees by all the divisions of the conquering race. To these conferences especially, which ecclesiastical historians have honoured with the name of councils, the presence of several monk-bishops, presided over by their metropolitan, a monk like themselves, had the power of giving a more august character. The Council of Hertford, presided over by the Greek Theodore, decreed that a general synod should be held twice a year at Cloveshove. But, besides that this assembly appears to have been exclusively ecclesiastical, there is no evidence that its decree was obeyed. A century passed before England possessed one sole, permanent, and regular assembly. At the same time, from the introduction of Christianity, local or national assemblies became visible, constituting a great council of the whole country, and meeting periodically at Christmas and at Easter.

The monastic prelates held their seats in these assemblies at once as the doctors and spiritual guides of the nation and as great landed proprietors, whose importance was daily increased by the extent of the new gifts which were lavished upon them, and by the increasing agricultural value of their old possessions. They sat in the first rank with the principal lords, the great chiefs of the nobility, the governors of provinces, called earls or *ealdormen*; and above the other proprietors who, under the name of thanes, composed the greater part of the assembly. According to the theory most generally received by modern learning, each *thane* or proprietor might reach the rank of earl by the choice of the king or nomination of the assembly. Every *ceorl*, or free man, whatever his origin might be, could be advanced to the rank of thane if he possessed lands of a certain extent. Every merchant who had made three journeys beyond seas rose into the same class. But no nobleman by birth could sit in the *Witenagemot* unless he were a landed proprietor.

Whatever uncertainty may exist as to the distinctive qualifications of the two principal elements of these assemblies, it is proved that, far from forming different castes, the *eorls* and *thanes* were only the first among the free men, the heads and representatives of a territorial aristocracy the ranks of which were open to all, like that which has constituted the strength, greatness, and freedom of England for so many centuries, and which, from the beginning, was a national force representing the vital strength of the people, and its interests, will, and immemorial liberties. The popular element also appears and increases slowly as we advance in history. All the inhabitants of the neighbourhood had a right to be present at the assemblies, which, for the most part, were held in the open air; they exercised at least the right of condemnation, which consisted in giving their public adherence to the decisions; they could also, according to

Palgrave, make complaints and disclose their injuries. Everything leads us to suppose that the crowd was swelled by a great number of monks, while their elective chiefs, bishops and abbots of the principal monasteries, took decisive part in the votes and deliberations.

In the temporal and spiritual government of the Anglo-Saxon nations, nothing escaped the action of these assemblies. They not only gave forth laws, they shared the actual government with the kings, and took part in all their acts, at least so far as to sanction them. No royal charter or document of state exists which does not prove at once the intervention of the assembly of wise men, and the presence of the monastic clergy in that assembly. The king could do nothing without their help or sanction.

No important affair was treated, no sovereign decision taken, without this help or sanction, from the nomination of a bishop to the foundation or exemption from national burdens of a new monastery. The spirit of association and the habits of independence which were the foundation of Teutonic liberties, absolutely excluded all idea of social or political abdication into the hands of a master, charged, along with his principal domestics, to think, speak, and act for the nation. Every Anglo-Saxon tribe, great or small, considered itself equal to the management of its own affairs, like the powerful and unconquerable England of our own day. We have seen these assemblies possessed not only of the consultative voice, but deciding with supreme authority as to the introduction of Christianity in the different kingdoms. No public act was valid, no new law could be established, except after discussion by them. Laws were issued by their authority, conjoined to that of the king, never by the crown alone. They decided alliances and treaties of peace, as well as the election and deposition of kings; for among the Anglo-Saxons, as among the Franks, the hereditary character of royalty was by no means absolute. The national assembly chose among the members of the national dynasty the candidate who suited them best. At each election the contract between the king and the people was renewed, often with new clauses, as has been seen even in modern history in the capitulations of the emperors of Germany and the kings of Hungary. As for the deposition of kings, the assemblies made little difficulty about it, when their government was unjust or unfortunate; and the monastic clergy, like all the other members of the body political, acquiesced without scruple. With still better reason they regulated everything that concerned the imposition of taxes for the public service, the levy of troops, the use to be made of fines or confiscations suffered by those who broke the penal law, the grants of territory made from the public lands either to monasteries or great captains. In short, they exercised the functions of a supreme court both in cases civil and criminal.

No trace is to be found in the Anglo-Saxon historians of any distinction between the assemblies which treated ecclesiastical affairs and those which regulated secular life. Both were managed by the same body and at the same sitting. It is, however, very probable that the clergy deliberated apart, at least in the first place, with the aid of the king alone, reserving only a power of ratification to the general assembly. The distinction between temporal and spiritual matters was not the less clearly maintained, decrees touching doctrine or discipline made out by the bishops alone being published at the head of the acts of the national assemblies, and apart from the other decisions submitted for the sanction of public authority.

There is, however, in the history of the first centuries of the Church in England no trace of the conflict between the two powers which afterwards became so frequent, so bitter, and prolonged. As for the encroachments of spiritual authority in temporal matters in the sphere of national life, of which these assemblies were the centre, nobody was tempted to complain of, or even to perceive, its existence. Yet the public of these days was much less able to appreciate the salutary and wonderful results of the influence of monastic prelates and missionaries upon the institutions and character of the Anglo-Saxons than we are. At present the most prejudiced critics are compelled to avow that the influence of the monastic clergy in the public and social life of the English was of the most benevolent and effectual character. To them must be attributed, from the time of the first laws made by the parliament of Ethelbert, under the influence of the Roman missionaries, the gradual progress of humanity and justice in the national legislation, which up to that period had been too feeble to struggle against the ferocious and covetous instincts of the barbarous conquerors.

To them belongs also the honour of that transformation of morals and souls which, notwithstanding a thousand backslidings and a thousand melancholy fallings back into ancient barbarism, showed itself in the generosity and piety of the laymen, in the obedience and fervour of a clergy drawn daily in greater numbers from the bosom of the native population. To them the credit of having introduced into the laws and customs a respect for property, and, above all, for human life, no trace of which had previously existed among the savage invaders of Great Britain. To them the honour of having contributed more than any other, by the uniformity of their wise counsels and good examples, by the unity of their doctrine and discipline, to introduce into the Anglo-Saxon nations a unity of legislation and of government which gradually led to national unity. They strengthened the throne by teaching and enforcing the practice of Christian virtues; they sanctioned and regulated the ancient Teutonic principles of the responsibility of kings, of their subordination to law, to their sworn faith and social contracts; they placed those principles under the safeguard of religion by the solemnity of consecration; they thus imprinted an august and sacred, and at the same time a limited and conditional, character upon the throne. In addition to this, while forearming it against the excesses and usurpations of princes and lords, they laboured energetically to give to it the force and authority necessary to triumph over the dismemberment of the Heptarchy, and to create that unity, not absolute and absorbing, like that which has wasted or enervated other illustrious nations, but sufficient, and in conformity with the genius and necessities of the English race, and which, when once fully established in the ninth century, has never more run the risk of attack or alteration.

To them above all belongs the honour of having introduced into morals and the laws that solicitude for the inferior classes which is too often absent from the hearts of the powerful. The discoveries of modern erudition have established without doubt the unexpected result that the material condition of the inferior and serf population was not universally a state of hardship. Their labours were not more severe nor their wages less than those of our own days. At the same time, it is impossible to doubt that the weak were often made victims of the violence and wickedness of the strong in the ancient English world, as everywhere else. How many oppressed innocents, how many violated rights, how many unknown or unpunished crimes existed in the midst of silence and



isolation, in the vast regions still so sparsely inhabited? But in proportion as religion penetrated by the influence of the monks, light arose and justice appeared. Little by little, voices which could not be stifled arose, powerful hands were elevated to protect and avenge the victims. The oppressor stopped trembling; he had to bow, to repent, to make restitution, to expiate ; and expiation almost always took the form of an act of fraternal charity, a service rendered to the community. As religious and monastic influence increased in the nation, the habit and duty of soothing suffering and remedying injustice became general. In every powerful family frequent acts of voluntary renunciation took the place of the brigandage, the robberies, and violence which had been up to that time their daily bread.

Every crime that was expiated, every penance that was accomplished by the efforts of the monks, thus contributed to public utility and happiness. The long-unpunished culprits from whom the new faith wrested a tardy confession, an act of contrition or restitution, were often exempted from bodily penances, but were always constrained to pay the ransom of that exemption by acts of charity, which not only eased actual misery, but provided for the necessities of the future.

The penances imposed by the monks upon these great sinners and penitents were not pious works and ecclesiastical foundations alone, but oftener still the deliverance of captives, the mending of a road, the rebuilding of a bridge or of cottages, the food and maintenance of peasants brought to want by intestine wars; they had a thousand devices, a thousand resources, all consecrated to the same charitable and sacred end.

The abundant gifts showered upon the churches and monasteries by the fervour of new Christians, and at the same time by the remorse of opulent sinners, were thus transformed into great and permanent benefits for the suffering members of society, for the poor and homeless, the sick, the widows, orphans, and poor travellers who were exposed to so many dangers and trials by the rudeness of the time. By this means an unfailing channel was established by which the munificence of the rich, the strong, and the happy of this world flowed forth upon the weak, the poor, and the unfortunate. It was a great public office which, without being regulated or imposed by law, took the place of all the complications with which modern legislation has invested public charity. In short, it was the realisation and application of that great law of mercy and brotherly compassion which is one of the most solid and necessary foundations of human society.

Among the services rendered by the Anglo-Saxon monks to suffering humanity, none is more touching or more continual than their solicitude for those who stood on the lowest step of the social hierarchy—the slaves. The famous incident of the English captives bought in the Roman market by St. Gregory shows us, at the beginning of this narrative, that even the sons of the conquering race were not safe from this climax of misery. But under the progressive power of the faith preached by the missionaries of Pope Gregory and their successors, the number of slaves gradually diminished. Notwithstanding that the trade was forbidden by decrees and councils, a hundred times repeated, and too often evaded, it continued to be carried on as a matter of commerce, but very few slaves were kept in the country itself. They did not, however, form a separate race, sprung either from the conquering Saxons or the vanquished Britons; they were recruited from the descendants of Roman slaves, from unransomed prisoners of

war, and delinquents condemned to penal servitude. The monks devoted their most strenuous exertions to the still further reduction of the number. The example of the noble Wilfrid, whose first act was to free the 250 serfs who were given him by the king of the South Saxons, along with the lands intended for his episcopal monastery, proves that they were capable of seeking the freedom of their fellow-creatures at their own expense.

Stern truth compels us to confess that this was not the case everywhere. The honest pen of monastic annalists has preserved the letter of a monk of royal Mercian blood, Brithwald, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, in which he insists upon the deliverance of a young slave who was held in bondage by the abbot of Glastonbury. "Since I have failed", he writes to the bishop of Sherborne, "in the first entreaty I addressed to him by word of mouth in your presence, I think it my duty to send you this letter from the girl's brother, and beseech you to make the abbot accept the three hundred *sol*s which the bearer will give you for her ransom, that she may be sent back to us, to pass the rest of her life among her own people, not in the sadness of slavery, but in the joy of freedom. He will thus lose nothing of the right he has over her".

This is the only example of monastic slave-holding which I have been able to discover, and fortunately the prompt and generous amendment of the evil is to be found by the side of the evil itself. If it had been otherwise, with what authority could the monks have laboured for the extinction of this plague? They neglected no means besides of diminishing the number of cases in which slavery could be legalised or tolerated. The emancipation or redemption of slaves was the work of charity which they most recommended and insisted on. Thanks to their presence in the political assemblies, provisions were introduced into the laws freeing the slaves who had been overworked by their masters, or who had been obliged to work on Sunday. And by their presence at the deathbed of so many penitent sinners they were able to introduce clauses into wills which provided for the salvation of the soul of the dying, by giving freedom to the survivors. Nothing was more frequent in the *Codex Diplomaticus of the Anglo-Saxon* period than acts of manumission, and all, or almost all, stated the religious motives which produced these acts, and the religious guarantees which sanctioned them. The freed slave was offered to God before the altar of the nearest church, and then declared free in presence of the monks and the congregation of the faithful. It was upon the fly-leaf of the book of the Gospels, or some other church-book, that the charter of enfranchisement was registered. The first vindications of individual freedom have thus come down to us inscribed on the margin of monastic missals, as the first indications of parliamentary government appear in the gifts given to monasteries with the sanction of assembled Witan.

These glorious and persevering apostles of the laws of God neither despised nor neglected any of the rights of men. Honour and justice, humanity and pity, knowledge and reason, were placed, along with the new faith and Christian morality, under the safeguard of their precepts and their unwearied watchfulness. All things fair and lovely and of good report which man has a right to love and desire, after as well as before his conversion, and more warmly still, being a Christian, than when he was not so—all the natural virtues, all the legitimate aspirations of the sons of Adam—were appreciated, claimed, and defended, under the forms accessible or possible in these far-distant days,

with an energy, watchfulness, and courage of which there are few examples in history by the monastic apostles of Great Britain.

I have sought out with laborious care, and related with scrupulous truthfulness, everything that could throw light on the influence of Christianity, as preached by the monks, upon the early history of the English people. I have acknowledged that here, as everywhere else, this divine religion has been too often powerless and ineffectual amid the coarse and perverse inclinations of fallen nature. But I have met at every step the brilliant victories of self-devotion and faith, of disinterestedness and purity, of true greatness, true courage, and the most magnanimous charity. And what is still more wonderful and more consoling is the total absence, not to be met with in the same degree in the most boasted ages and circumstances, of everything which degrades or compromises religion in those who teach and represent it. I assert joyfully that in the lives of so many apostles and ministers of celestial verity I have not come upon a single evidence of fanaticism, of egotism, of baseness, severity, or stupid indifference to human sufferings. The student will search in vain in the records of those forgotten lives for traces of anything narrow, sombre, or pitiless; he will find there nothing that could enslave or enervate the human heart—nothing which could wound good sense, reason, or justice—nothing which savours of that arrogant and cruel Pharisaism with which all priesthoods are attacked or threatened—nothing, in short, which does not breathe respect for the freedom of souls and the most exquisite sense of honour in all the things of God.

#### IV

But there is yet another result for which we owe them everlasting gratitude. The monastic missionaries, while they transformed the morals and faith of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors, did nothing to change the native genius of the Teutonic race.

They made of it a nation of Christians more fervent, more liberal, more docile, and attached to the Church, more magnificent in its gifts to monasteries, more fruitful in saintly men and women, than any other contemporary nation; but they deprived it of none of its public virtues, none of its bold and energetic instincts; they did not withdraw from it an atom of its manful nature, they diminished in nothing the boldness and independence which have remained up to our own day the distinguishing characteristics of the English people.

The influence of a new faith never respected more scrupulously the unity, independence, and powerful originality of the converted race, of its language, manners, institutions, its ancient laws, and its national spirit.

Augustin and Paulinus, Wilfrid and Theodore, emissaries of Rome, as they have been called by certain historians, and who were in reality the most direct agents, the most immediate envoys, from the Holy See which had been yet seen in Christendom, neither introduced nor attempted to introduce any essential change in the political and social institutions, so different from those of the Roman world, which the Anglo-Saxon nation had brought from the shores of Germany, or found in the smoking ruins of Great

Britain. Satisfied with having deposited in these brave hearts the secrets of eternity, the rules of moral life, and strength to struggle against the corruption natural to every man born of woman, they left intact the spirit of the race, so that underneath his Christian vestment the old Teuton still stood perfect and complete.

Many times already in this narrative, following the example of many other writers, we have remarked upon the singular unchangeableness of the Anglo-Saxon character. Manners, vices, virtues, laws, customs, rights, names, titles, tastes, language, spirit, even down to its sports and violent exercises, everything that the modern world admires or fears, is attracted or repelled by, in the England of today, all is to be found in germ or flower in the England of twelve centuries ago. No nation has been less changed by time or conquest.

All the towns and almost all the villages of modern England seem to have existed from the time of the Saxons; the names and actual boundaries of parishes, counties or shires, with their subdivisions, their judicial and political machinery, their religious and civil life, all date back into the period between the seventh and tenth centuries.

But the names and external forms are far from being all that have endured—it is the soul, the glorious and manful soul, of the converted Saxon which reveals itself in the modern Englishman. Civil virtues altogether unknown to the enslaved Christians of Rome and Byzantium, and, above all, that lofty sentiment of self-respect in certain men and certain classes which is the cradle of all liberty, developed themselves in the shadow of those wonders of humility, self-abnegation, charity, and piety, of which we have spoken at such length, and formed the foundation of that public spirit and those public rights which have never ceased to grow amid all storms and eclipses. Self-government—that is to say, the proud independence of the free man among his fellows in the general commonwealth—and parliamentary government—that is, the unequal division of supreme power between the crown and the national assemblies—already existed in their essential elements. When it was needful, by a natural, though too often momentary, outburst, public freedom stepped forth, armed and invincible in the collective force of individual and local freedom. The common law of England, that traditional and unwritten code, “the sources of which are as unknown as those of the Nile”, plunges its roots into old Saxon customs, recognised, sanctioned, and published in those assemblies which were inspired and filled up by our monks; and all charters, as well as all ulterior revolutions, have served only to define and confirm that ancient and immovable foundation of English freedom.

To hearts thus tempered, and a race thus ruled, the monastic institution, under the form which it had adopted in England, must have been in sympathy and accord, even independently of the religion of which it was the fruit and ornament. The monasteries were types of those great existences, at once individual and collective, founded on a great moral idea, but supported by great landed property, which are still distinctive features of the social machinery of England which have everywhere been one of the essential conditions of public freedom; and which seem as natural to the masculine and active genius of the ancient Teutonic races as they are alien to modern civilisation and incompatible with Caesarism. For this reason it was to be expected that a natural liking for monasteries, whose founders had brought from the heart of Roman slavery a system

of common security, spontaneous freedom, and elective functions entirely in conformity with the instincts and habits of the Teutonic races, should have arisen among the Anglo-Saxons.

Hence, no doubt, sprang that inexhaustible munificence, that prodigality, so long displayed by the Anglo-Saxon royalty and nobility in its relations with the monastic orders. The possessions of the Church, which then meant, almost exclusively, the possessions of monasteries, were increased daily by new foundations, or by fresh gifts added to previously existing establishments. We have already more than once pointed out the motives of these gifts, as they are expressed in the acts of the times, or as they are made evident by study of the circumstances and arrangements which accompanied them.

A profound feeling of the instability and decay of everything human, and, above all, of material wealth ; humble gratitude towards God, from whom every good gift is held, and to whom a portion of His own blessings are believed to be restored by improving the condition of His ministers; the desire and hope of expiating the faults of a troubled life, of redeeming the backslidings of human weakness, and of making restitution of ill-gotten wealth, either by guaranteeing the livelihood of a class of men exclusively devoted to the service of God and the practice of virtue, or by securing permanent help and supply for the poor, the sick, and the forsaken; in the lack of natural heirs, the hope of creating a kind of spiritual posterity, bound to pray always for the soul of their benefactor ; sometimes, as in the case of the *Childe* Ethelbald, who was an exile before he was a king, the recollection of and gratitude for benefits received, and shelter given in the monastic sanctuary ; oftener still the desire of securing for themselves and their friends a burial-place protected by holy places and holy men, and which should itself protect a religious community against the ingratitude and rapacity of the future ; and, in short, and always, the certainty of disposing of their lands for the advantage of the most industrious, useful, and charitable of men.

Such were the motives, legitimate and frankly confessed, which led so many Anglo-Saxon princes, lords, and rich men to despoil themselves for the benefit of monasteries. They may be all summed up in that fine text which the Church still offers yearly to our meditation : “*Concludemus eleemosynam in sinu pauperis et ipsa exorabit pro nobis*”.

But as has happened everywhere and at all times, in the history of the Church as well as in that of the world, evil rose by the side of the good, and abuses came in with a strong hand under the shelter of the most salutary customs. It is undeniable that these territorial grants made to monasteries exceeded the limits of justice and reason. “*Donationes stultissimae*”, says Bede, speaking of the gifts of the kings of Northumbria. Although made and sanctioned by royal authority, in concert with that of the parliaments or Witenagemot, they at last went so far as seriously to threaten the public peace.

This will be easily understood by recollecting the nature of landed property among the Anglo-Saxons. From the Conquest, or first establishment of laws of property, besides the *hlot* or *allods*, given to the first occupants, vast territories were reserved for the public service, or for future division, the liferent of which alone could be given to



free men under certain conditions. This was called *folc-land*, the land of the people, and has been justly compared to the *ager publicus* of the Romans. New *allods* were taken from this, on occasion, to reward or encourage new services. Thus Benedict Biscop, the young lord who afterwards became the founder of Wearmouth and Yarrow, received from the king lands suitable to his rank, which he did not hesitate to restore to the king when he became a monk. These territorial grants, whether given to laymen by hereditary right, or to religious communities, could only be granted by the king with the consent of his *witan*, and in virtue of a charter or deed resembling a book — from whence came the name of *boc-land*, or land given by book. Everything which did not continue part of the *folc-land* was thus designated. All donations of land made to the Church—that is to say, to monasteries—were made under this name and form. Subjects could make no other gifts, as the *boc-land* was the only thing in their power. Kings might detach a bit of their own *boc-land* to make a gift of it, as Egfrid did to Benedict Biscop but the consent of the *witan* was necessary in order to transform any portion of *folc-land* into a hereditary and perpetual patrimony.

Lands thus given to the monasteries were naturally withdrawn from those obligations relative to military service which weighed upon all landed proprietors, as is apparent from the expressions used by Bede in recording the donation made by King Oswy when he consecrated his daughter Elfleda to religious life. Besides his daughter, says the historian, he gave to the Church twelve estates of six families each, which were freed from earthly military service to furnish to the monks the means of devoting themselves to the celestial army, and praying for the eternal peace of the nation.

This substitution of the spiritual combats of the celestial army for the military obligations of other Anglo-Saxon landowners was followed or accompanied by a still more important privilege conferred on the new monastic proprietors. The *folc-land* or public domain, when transformed into *allods* or *boc-lands*—that is to say, into individual property—remained subject to all the public or private burdens which weighed upon the domain, and at the same time became subject to ordinary imposts when the grant was given to laymen. But it was exempt from those burdens when given to monasteries; and when this exemption had not been duly stipulated for in the original donations, deeds were afterwards drawn out, establishing them in the possession of privileges which the pious munificence of after generations made it a duty and pleasure to confer upon the monastic churches. It has been seen above that from the end of the seventh century a council had recognised this assumed exemption of monasteries from burdens and taxes—excepting only the three tributes or obligations from which no one was excused, and which regarded the expenses of military expeditions and the keeping up of bridges and of fortresses—as a general law.

The increasing number of monastic foundations, and the vast extent of territorial gifts lavished upon them, produced, at the end of about a century, an alarming result—the diminution of the military resources of the country. It was not, as has been said, that the nation became less warlike, or that a too exclusive regard for religious things had turned the kings and people of the Heptarchy from their public duties. But the number of proprietors bound to personal military service went on diminishing,—on one side, because of the change of lay lands into privileged monastic possessions; and on the other hand, by the many religious vocations which arose among the warlike nobility.

The prince of the Anglo-Saxon monks, the illustrious Bede, was the first to point out this danger, with the frankness which was habitual to him. "In the midst of the peace and security which we enjoy", he wrote in 731, "many Northumbrians, some noble, some humble, put aside their arms, cut their hair, and hasten to enrol themselves in the monastic ranks, instead of exercising themselves in their military duties. The future will tell what good will result from this".

Four years afterwards, in his famous letter to the archbishop of York, which we have quoted at length, he expresses a much more energetic disapproval. He unveils at the same time the true character of the evil; he declares without hesitation that the defence of the country is endangered by the want of soldiers, and also by the want of public lands disposable as fiefs to the nobles or veterans. Seduced by the exemption from taxes, and advantages of every kind with which monastic property was privileged, many of the nobles had obtained from the kings and witan vast grants of land in order to found monasteries upon them. Sometimes foundations were actually made, but without any monastic or even Christian charter; the donors collected around them a handful of their own vassals, or of irregular monks who had been expelled from true cloisters; they then called themselves abbots, and lived, together with their wives and children, on the land extorted from the nation, with no care but that of their household and material interest. Sometimes when the grant was obtained it was made use of without any further thought of its pretended purpose, and no pretence of a monastery, even under the ludicrous conditions just described, was made. For this reason the Venerable Bede implored the king and bishops to proceed, with the aid of the national assemblies, to the complete abolition of all these fraudulent and scandalous grants. Ten years after the death of Bede the second Council of Cloveshove acknowledged the justice of the great monk's complaint, but without proposing any effectual remedy for the unfortunate state of affairs which he had pointed out. This Council enjoined the bishops to visit the monasteries, "if indeed such a name can be given to houses which the tyranny of avarice, to the scandal of the Christian religion, retains in the hands of worldly persons, invested with them not by divine ordinance, but by an invention of human presumption". The object of these pastoral visits was to warn the inmates of the pretended communities of the risks run by their souls, and to provide for the presence of priests in case of any deadly sickness. But nothing indicates that vigorous measures were taken against the odious abuses which produced those so-called monasteries. Ill-considered grants of public lands to false monks, or, as was much more frequent, to powerful laymen, continued with impunity to the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, causing serious disturbances in the development of the population and the condition of free men, by which the Danish and Norman invasions were facilitated. But the Council of Cloveshove had other abuses to repress besides those of secular usurpation. The illustrious Boniface, then nearly at the end of his glorious career, and whose vehement remonstrances with King Ethelbald and the primate of England had specially procured the convocation of the Council, did not content himself with stigmatising as sacrilegious persons and homicides the laymen, were they kings or earls, who called themselves abbots of these usurped monasteries. He pointed out to the bishops their own failings, amongst others the national vice of drunkenness, from which even their episcopal dignity did not always protect the Anglo-Saxon bishops; he also pointed out in the very cloisters themselves a culpable luxury and ridiculous abundance of ornament in the

vestments of the monks; and represented to them that such childish trifles might be an introduction to excesses much more grave, to bad company, to the abandonment of reading and prayer, and even to debauchery and the loss of their souls.

In accordance with the advice of their illustrious countrymen, the twelve bishops assembled at Cloveshove, in council with the king of Mercia and his nobles, forbade monks, and especially nuns, to make any change in their dress, shoes, or head-dress, which would assimilate their costume to that of the lay members of society. The same Council forbade them to frequent the houses of secular persons, or to dwell in them; it commanded the abbots and abbesses to neglect no means of preserving in their communities, and the schools attached to them, the love of study and reading, as the best preservative against the vanities and lusts of the world, and to make of their monasteries an asylum for silence, study, prayer, and work. It reproved and forbade the introduction of poets, minstrels, musicians, and clowns into the religious houses; the prolonged visits of secular persons, who were allowed to penetrate into and wander about the interior of the cloister; the prolonged and luxurious meals, mingled with buffooneries ; and especially that fatal leaning towards drunkenness, which led not only themselves to drink to excess, but to force their lay companions to drink with them.

The Council concludes this humbling enumeration of the evils which luxury and wealth had introduced into the cloister by a sort of treatise, equally marked by its eloquence and its good sense, against the false ideas which began to be general on the subject of alms, or, in other words, on the moral value of those gifts which constituted the daily increasing wealth of the monasteries. An echo of the generous protest of Bede in his letter to the archbishop of York is to be found in it. Alms, says the Fathers of the Council, when joined to the appointed penance, help in obtaining from God a more prompt remission of sin, and bestowal of grace to prevent backsliding; to those who are not great sinners, it answers the purpose of ensuring in heaven the reward due to their innocence and charity. But alms are not given in order that those who receive them may give themselves up to excess in eating and drinking. Nor can any alms which are given with the intention of purchasing greater licence in the future be of any efficacy to redeem even the smallest of sins. Alms are a work of pity. He who has pity in his soul must do his alms at his own expense, and not by robbing his neighbour. To offer to God gifts stained with violence and cruelty is to irritate instead of appeasing divine justice. For the wise man has said, “To give alms at the expense of the poor is like killing the son in presence of his father”. Even to suppose that divine justice is venal is a means of provoking it to strike severely and promptly. The common saying that certain persons give daily offerings to God in order that they may give themselves up to sin with impunity is therefore a great mistake. Those who foolishly imagine that the celestial Judge will balance their gifts against their continued crimes are blind indeed. It will be of no use to them to give their goods to God, so long as they give themselves to the devil.

The Council insists at length upon the necessity of incessant preaching to all, that alms can never take the place of contrition, nor of the canonical penalties imposed for the expiation of sins. It energetically condemns those who hope to acquit themselves of their penances by the intervention of others who shall fast or sing psalms on their account—that is to say, the monks supported by their gifts. It is the flesh which has

sinned which ought to be punished. To allow sinners to believe the contrary would be to ruin them by corrupt adulation. For if a man could redeem his faults by money, and satisfy the justice of God by the deeds of another, then justice would indeed be venal, and the rich would be saved more easily than the poor, in defiance of the express words of Scripture. Let no man deceive himself thus, for God deceives no man; and, as has been said by His Apostle, we shall all appear on the same level before the tribunal of Christ.

It is thus evident that the chiefs of the Anglo-Saxon Church, who all came from the monastic order, were the first to protest against false interpretations and evil applications of the doctrine of alms. They protested at the same moment, and before the event, against the calumnies and exaggerations heaped by an unjust and ungrateful posterity upon the avarice and greed of ecclesiastical corporations, and the hypocrisies and evil influence of the cloister.

But the abuses which their watchful and paternal authority thus endeavoured to assail and repress were, without one single exception, to be attributed to the relaxation of rule which too much and too sudden wealth had introduced into the monasteries.

And all was not yet said. For this wealth brought with it other dangers besides that of internal laxity. It awakened universal covetousness. Sometimes the natural heirs of the lawful abbot of a monastery came after his death and violently seized the monastic lands, under pretence that the abbey had been the property of the deceased, and that they had a right to its inheritance, on the sole condition of supporting the monies. Sometimes kings and princes installed themselves in a great monastery as in a place of rest and recreation, with all their surroundings, their train of officials, huntsmen, footmen, and grooms, who, along with horses, hawks, and dogs, had to be lodged, fed, and provided with vehicles, as is proved by the charters, which, while exempting certain monasteries from this charge, prove how habitual and burdensome it had become. Again, there were other kings still more exacting and formidable, who revoked the gifts made by their predecessors, and reclaimed the lands given by them; setting forth their pretensions and the counter-plea of the monks before the Witenagemot, the decisions of which were not always in conformity with the rights of the weak. The nobles and great personages, too, often followed the example of the kings — they reclaimed the lands given to the monasteries by their fathers, or seized upon others which lay at hand, leaving traces of their depredations in the many acts which enforce restitution more or less tardy, but at the same time proving that violence and rapacity had too often the advantage over the pious munificence of former benefactors.

Sometimes the prelates themselves abused their authority by making over to their relatives a portion of the conventual patrimony. In short, the local and intestinal wars which were so frequent at this period were waged specially at the expense of the monastic lands, which were always the best cultivated and the most populous, and consequently offered a richer and more attractive prey to the spoiler. This fact explains the singular fluctuations of prosperity to which the monasteries were subject, though their perseverance, their laborious and economical system, their paternal care of the agricultural population, were almost always sufficient to restore their impaired fortunes. The twice-repeated accusation of St. Boniface, when, in his letters to King Ethelbald

and the archbishop of Canterbury, he distinguishes England as the country in which the monks were subjected to the harshest bondage, on account of the exactions and forced labour required from them by the royal officials for public buildings, is much less comprehensible. He speaks of these oppressions as of a novelty unknown under the ancient kings and in the other countries of Christendom; no trace of them is to be found in contemporary documents; but the evidence of the great Boniface, so attentive an observer of everything that concerned the Church in his native country, is too grave to be set altogether aside.

Property has been in England, as elsewhere, the condition and guarantee of freedom for the Church as well as for corporations and individuals. But the burdens, the abuses, the excesses, the privileges, which property brings with it, have been in England more than anywhere else, and at all periods, the great danger of the Church; and it is upon this rock that the monastic ark has perished, drawing with it in its shipwreck the whole Catholic Church of England. In this lies a terrible mystery, a problem of which our fathers did not sufficiently understand the gravity and difficulty. To solve it would have demanded from the heads of the Church, and especially of the religious orders, an amount of discernment, moderation, and prudence easier to dream of than to find. But the reaction which raised up the holy founders of mendicant orders, and which always burns in some souls, enamoured of the primitive but transitory simplicity of the great cenobitical foundations, is but too easily imaginable. “My brethren”, said the greatest monk of our century, preaching at the inauguration of one of his new establishments—“my brethren, if I knew that our house would grow rich, even by your savings, I should rise tonight and set fire to it at its four corners”.

Fatal wealth! let us repeat with this great man—fatal wealth, the daughter of charity, of faith, of a generous and spontaneous virtue, but the mother of covetousness, envy, robbery, and ruin! Scarcely a century had run since the modest and sober beginning of the Church and the monastic order in England—and already the honourable and undisputed voices of saints, such as Boniface and Bede, are raised to indicate the danger, though without perceiving its cause. The leprosy was already there. In the fullness of youth, at the height of health, the germ of mortality appeared. The day was to come when the poisonous fruit should be gathered by greedy and bloody hands. The day was to come when a monster, who resembled at once Caligula and Heliogabalus, a Henry VIII, with his cowardly courtiers and debased people, should arm himself with the pretext of the exorbitant wealth of religious corporations, in order to annihilate, and drown in blood and slavery, the work of Augustin, Wilfrid, and Bede.

I think I have a right to despise the insinuations of those who have dared to accuse me of desiring to absolve or mitigate the crime of those sacrilegious bandits—those cowardly spoilers who, in England as in all the rest of Europe, have made a prey of the patrimony of the Church. But who will not regret with me that the Church, which alone had the necessary discernment and authority, should not herself have set limits, at a suitable moment, to the unlimited increase of wealth in the monastic corporations? The increase was lawful, natural, often even involuntary, but dangerous and exorbitant. The Church could and ought to have understood this. The Church, with her supernatural insight, her divine authority, her maternal omnipotence, could and ought to have forestalled the danger by warning prohibitions, by a just division of the superfluities of



great orders and rich communities, either to the advantage of the poor, of public beneficence, of the inferior and neglected clergy, or any other social service or necessity.

No man can say from what evils and crimes the world might have been spared if the Church, which was destined to be the chief victim, had been beforehand with the spoilers ; had baffled their hatred and disarmed their treachery by taking from them this specious pretext ; arresting with a prudent and steady hand the rising tide of ecclesiastical wealth, and saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed".

Disinterestedness is, above all others, the virtue of a priest; voluntary poverty has always been the unfailing source of the influence and power of monks. In this they have always been able—they will always be able—to renew and revive their strength. It was this thought that comforted the great soul of Mabillon, the most illustrious of modern Benedictines, in those generous lamentations which dropped from his pen after the narrative of the conquest of England by the monks, and which may still be applied to so many other Catholic countries which the scythe of Vandalism had not yet assailed in his day: —

"Ah! if Gregory or Augustin could but live again, and see these lands today! What a sad glance would they throw upon the fruits of their wasted labours, the scattered stones of the sanctuary, the house of prayer changed into the abode of desolation! It is not that we weep the lost wealth of the Church; it is not our sacked and overthrown monasteries that the Benedictines regret. No; but we groan over the fate of our brethren, rent from the bosom of the Catholic Church and rooted in heresy. God grant that we might buy their return by the price of all that might once have been ours. What would not the Church give, what would not our order sacrifice, to gain the souls of our brethren, and enrich ourselves in the poverty of Christ!"

It was from the Benedictine ranks, purified by toil and a frugal life, or from the bosom of other orders given by God to the Church to defend and console her, that the new missionaries came who, in the age of Mabillon, returned upon English soil, a thousand years after the companions of Augustin and the disciples of Columba. Far from being received, as their predecessors had been by the Anglo-Saxon pagans, with magnanimous and intelligent tolerance, they had nothing to expect of the Protestant English but martyrdom, often preceded by the horrors of a lengthened captivity and by tortures unknown to savages. Nevertheless, daily some monk crossed the sea, and landed disguised and by night upon the soil where Augustin and the monks of Mont Coelius had planted in broad day the cross of Jesus Christ, now banished and denied by Christian England. Not far from the old wasted and confiscated monasteries he began, at the risk of his life, the clandestine practice of that worship which the envoys of Gregory the Great had openly celebrated; he distributed the bread of life and truth to some sheep of the little flock which had survived persecutions more atrocious and prolonged than those of Decius or Diocletian, to keep and transmit to our free and happier days the yet warm ashes of the truth. They came from France, they came from Belgium, Italy, and even from Spain, to gather these bloody laurels, striving for them with exiles of the English race. They were discovered, questioned, tortured, and then murdered, with all

the refinements of infernal cruelty. Among many others, let us name a Spaniard, George Gervaise, who, captured and questioned by the judges of Mary Stuart's miserable son upon his profession, answered, "I am a Benedictine monk of that order which of old converted England to the Christian faith". He renewed this profession at the foot of the gibbet on which he was hung, and from which he was taken down before he had yielded his last breath that his side might be opened, his heart torn out, and his feet cut off, in order to teach foreign monks who should venture to intrude on English soil, what sufferings should prevent their return to their native country. "But", says the Spanish Benedictine who has added this tale to the glorious annals of his order, "what heart among us does not feel itself inspired by this example to suffer for Christ, and to repeat the sacred text, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who carry good tidings, who publish peace'. Besides, continues the Castilian annalist, if there is any undertaking which belongs above others to the order of St. Benedict, it is the mission to England, for our fathers conquered that island to Christ by their preaching and by their blood. They possessed there a crowd of monasteries, illustrious among the most illustrious in Europe. When generals and captains in arms desire to animate their soldiers for the battle, they remind them of their past exploits, of their victories, of the glory of their nation, the safety and honour of their wives and children. It seems to me that our father Benedict, from the height of heaven, speaks thus to his monks. He reminds them that England was brought within the pale of the Church by St. Gregory and the monk-apostles of that island. He commands the monks of all his congregations to return there for the honour of religion, that the faith planted by the hands of his sons may not be brought to nothing; not to forget how many souls sigh after religious life; and to carry help to our mother, the holy Church, so cruelly persecuted by heresy".

But let us turn our saddened eyes away from that terrible future, so different, and still so distant, from the time of which we have just spoken. Notwithstanding the dangers and abuses which, in the interests of truth, must be acknowledged to have existed from the beginning of monastic missions, long centuries of faith and fervour, of union with the Roman Church and Catholic Christendom, succeeded the beautiful beginning of converted England. Abundant harvests were produced during these centuries in the furrows ploughed by the disciples of Augustin and Bede. Before it settled into the great nation which the world admires and envies, furnished with the noblest and wisest institutions that men have ever known, with a literature rich in unrivalled genius, and power greater than that of ancient Rome, England had to become the great base of operations for the spiritual conquests of the Papacy, the great centre of Christian missions. By her the Roman Church moved, enlightened, and subdued the centre and north of Europe; and it was by her means that the German and Scandinavian peoples, still plunged in the darkness of heathenism, were brought into the Christian faith.

The first-fruits of the monastic seed sown by the hand of the great monk Gregory in the bosom of the Anglo-Saxon race was the great apostle and martyr Winifrid, whose Latin name, Bonifacius, the benefactor, so exactly expressed his glorious career. It was he who was chosen by God to carry the light of truth, the flame of love, the spirit of martyrdom, into the cradle of his ancestors, the depths of those German forests, happily

impenetrable by the enslaved Romans, from whence came the freedom, thought, and life of Catholic nations, and with these the Christian civilisation of two worlds.

**BOOK XV**

**THE ANGLO-SAXON NUNS**

“Hark how I'll bribe you : ...  
Ay, with such gifts that heaven shall share with you ;  
... With true prayers  
That shall be up at heaven and enter there  
Ere sunrise — prayers from preserved souls,  
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate  
To nothing temporal”.

Shakespeare, Measure for Measure.

I HAD supposed my task at an end; but I hear the sound as of a choir of sweet and pure voices which seem to reproach me for having left in the shade one side of the great edifice which I have undertaken to reconstruct in thought. These voices have no plaintive sound. But they are full of a soft and overpowering harmony which has not been sufficiently celebrated before men. The souls whose sentiments they utter do not complain of being forgotten; it is their chosen condition and desire. They have made greater sacrifices than that of a place in the memory of men. Strength, veiled by gentleness, is in their very breath. Their appearance in history is characterised by something clear and firm, sober yet animated, as well as by that sacrifice of life in its flower, which is of all things in the world the most touching. These are the daughters of the Anglo-Saxon kings and lords, and with them, a true nation of virgins, voluntary prisoners of the love of God, and consecrated to monastic life in cloisters which rival in number and influence the monasteries of men, the most important centres of Christian life.

We have already seen how, outside their communities, and mingled in the current of the historical events of their time, several of those vigorous women, those wise virgins and spiritual warriors, have left their trace in the history of their country. But such isolated figures do not suffice for an attentive study of the state of souls and things in times so distant. Account must be made of other personages of the same order, and above all as much as is possible of the feminine army which is arrayed by the side of those queens and princesses. The crowd must be penetrated in any attempt to trace this fruitful and powerful branch of the monastic family, and in default of exact and precise

details, which are rarely to be found, an effort, at least, must be made to seize the salient points, and to bring out such features of their life as may touch or enlighten posterity.

And, in the first place, to give any exact representation of the Anglo-Saxon nuns as they appeared in their own consciousness and to the eyes of their countrymen, the important part played by women among the Teutonic races must be borne in mind. Nothing had more astonished the Romans than the austere chastity of the German women; the religious respect of the men for the partners of their labours and dangers, in peace as well as in war ; and the almost divine honours with which they surrounded the priestesses or prophetesses, who sometimes presided at their religious rites, and sometimes led them to combat against the violators of the national soil. When the Roman world, undermined by corruption and imperial despotism, fell to pieces like the arch of a *cloaca*, there is no better indication of the difference between the debased subjects of the Empire and their conquerors than that sanctity of conjugal and domestic ties, that energetic family feeling, that worship of pure blood, which are founded upon the dignity of woman, and respect for her modesty, no less than upon the proud independence of man and the consciousness of personal dignity. It is by this special quality that the barbarians showed themselves worthy of instilling a new life into the West, and becoming the forerunners of the new and Christian nations to which we all owe our birth.

Who does not recall those Cimbri whom Marius had so much trouble in conquering, and whose women rivalled the men in boldness and heroism? Those women, who had followed their husbands to the war, gave to the Romans a lesson in modesty and greatness of soul of which the future tools of the tyrants and the Caesars were not worthy. They would surrender only on the promise of the consul that their honour should be protected, and that they should be given as slaves to the vestals, thus putting themselves under the protection of those whom they believed virgins and priestesses. The great beginner of democratic Dictatorship refused: upon which they killed themselves and their children, generously preferring death to shame. The Anglo-Saxons came from the same districts, bathed by the waters of the Northern Sea, which had been inhabited by the Cimbri, and showed themselves worthy of descent from them, as much by the irresistible onslaught of their warriors as by the indisputable power of their women. No trace of the old Roman spirit which put a wife in the hand of her husband, that is to say, under his feet, is to be found among them. Woman is a person and not a thing. She lives, she speaks, she acts for herself, guaranteed against the least outrage by severe penalties, and protected by universal respect. She inherits, she disposes of her possessions—sometimes even she deliberates, she fights, she governs, like the most proud and powerful of men. The influence of women has been nowhere more effectual, more fully recognised, or more enduring than among the Anglo-Saxons, and nowhere was it more legitimate or more happy.

From the beginning of Christianity women everywhere became, as has been seen at every page of this narrative, the active and persevering, as well as daring and unwearied, assistants of the Christian apostles ; and when the conversion of the race was complete, no Fredigond appeared, as among the Gallo-Franks, to renew the evil behaviour of the Roman empresses. If there existed among these queens and princesses certain violent and cruel souls, there was not one who could be accused of loose morals



or immodest inclinations. The national legend is here in perfect accord with the monastic, and popular tradition with history. From the beautiful Rowena, sister of the first conqueror, Hengist, to the famous Countess Godiva—from the daughter of Ethelbert, who carried the faith into Northumbria, to the wife of Ina, who procured the conversion of her husband—we encounter, with few exceptions, only attractive and generous figures, in whom beauty and modesty meet together, and the gentleness natural to woman is allied with an energy which reaches heroism.

From this fact arises the extreme importance attached by the Anglo-Saxons to matrimonial alliances which united among themselves the various sovereign dynasties, and the nations or tribes whose local independence and glorious recollections were personified by them. These unions, by renewing periodically the ties of a common nationality, gave to the princesses of the race of Odin the office of mediatrix and peacemaker to a degree which justifies the touching surname given to woman in the primitive poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, where she is described as *freodowebbe*, she who weaves the links of peace.

Thence, too, arose the great position held by the queens in all the states of the Anglo-Saxon confederation. Possessing a court, legal jurisdiction, and territorial revenue on her own account, surrounded with the same homage, sometimes invested with the same rights and authority as the sovereign, his wife took her place by his side in the political and religious assemblies, and her signature appeared in acts of foundation, in the decrees of the councils and in the charters, sometimes followed by those of the king's sisters or other princesses of the royal house. Sometimes these royal ladies, associated, as they were among the Teutons of whom Tacitus speaks, in all their husbands' cares, labours, and dangers, gave all their efforts, like Ermenilda of Mercia, to the conversion of a still heathen kingdom ; sometimes, like Sexburga in Wessex, they exercised the regency with full royal authority and almost manly vigour. There is no instance of a woman reigning alone by hereditary right or by election. But the mysterious act which ended the days of the Northumbrian Osthryda, queen of the Mercians, reminds us that we are in the country where Mary Stuart, the first who ever lost a crowned head on a scaffold, was to prove that women were there destined to all the greatness and all the calamities of supreme power.

At the same time, it would be a strange delusion to suppose that the traditional respect shown by the Teutonic races to woman, or to certain women, was sufficiently strong or universal to restrain all the excesses of the most formidable passion and most imperious instinct of fallen humanity among the Anglo-Saxons. Of all the victories of Christianity there is none more salutary and more necessary, and at the same time none more hardly and painfully won, than that which it has gained, gained alone and everywhere, though with a daily renewed struggle, over the unregulated inclinations which stain and poison the fountains of life. Its divinity here shows itself by a triumph which no rival philosophy, no adverse doctrine, has ever equalled, or will ever aspire to equal. No doubt the barbarians, according to the testimony of the Fathers, were more chaste than the Romans of the Empire. To succeed in introducing a respect for modesty and priestly celibacy in the midst of the corruptions of Imperial Rome—to raise in the midst of the universal debasement the type of virginity consecrated to God—religion

needed an amount of strength, majesty, and constancy which the terrible wrestle maintained for three centuries could alone have given to it.

Neither was it a brief or easy enterprise to offer and place the yoke of continence upon the shoulders of a barbarous race, in proportion as they seized their prey and established themselves as masters of the future. It was a glorious and painful task to struggle day by day in that terrible confusion, in the desperate obscurity of the tempest, against an innumerable band of victors, inflamed by all the lusts of strength and conquest, and poisoned even by contact with their victims. The struggle was long, glorious, difficult, and triumphant. It was no longer the unnatural debauchery and monstrous orgies of the Roman Empire which had to be denounced; but there remained the vile and gross inclinations, the brutally disordered appetites of human and savage nature. There are excesses and crimes which, though not set forth in the pages of Petronius and Suetonius, though seen only in glimpses through the articles of a penitentiary, the canons of a council, the mutilated text of a legend or chronicle, reveal no less gulfs of shame and sorrow. The Teutons were more respectful than the Orientals or Romans to those women whom they considered their own equals or superiors; but who shall say what was the fate of those of inferior condition, and especially of the unfortunates hidden in the dreary darkness of slavery or serfdom? Who shall say what were the sublime and for ever unknown efforts which were made by the priests of a God of purity to wrest so many young captives, so many slave or serf girls, from the harems of princes, from the pitiless passion of victorious warriors, and the tyrannical caprices of their masters? God alone knows these efforts, God alone has rewarded them. Attentive and sincere history can but note the general result, which was immense and glorious.

Christian civilisation has triumphed, and its triumph rests, above all, upon respect for the wife, virgin, and mother—that transfigured woman of whom the mother of God has become the type and guardian in Christian nations.

It is Christianity which has armed woman with her own weakness, and made of it her strength — a strength more august and respected than any other : “When I am weak, then am I strong”. The Christian religion has been the true country of woman; the only one in which she has found her true freedom, her true destiny, coming out of Egyptian bondage, escaping from paganism, from savage life, or from the still more shameful debasement of civilised depravity. This also, and this alone, could give a free field to all the virtues which are characteristically her own, those which make her not only equal but often superior to man—generosity, the heroism of patience and self-devotion, suffering accepted for the help of others, victory over selfishness, and the sacrifice of pride to love. This work of atonement and salvation, which is the only true emancipation of woman, and, by her, of virtue and the soul, has been the work of the Church with the aid of the Teutonic race.

And the Church has done this work only by elevating above and beyond the level of virtue, which women in general can reach, that ideal of moral virtue and beauty which can be realised only by virginity consecrated to God. She has raised this ideal above the virtues most admired and most worthy to be admired among the ancient nations, even among the Jews, where fruitfulness was a woman's supreme glory. She has given embodiment, discipline, law, a soul, an inextinguishable light, to the confused

notions spread throughout antiquity; she has transformed into a splendid and immortal army those little groups of vestals, sibyls, and Druidesses which were scattered through the heathen world. Respect for modesty, which among the most generous nations was the privilege of a small and chosen number, she has brought to be the inviolable inheritance of every human creature : at the same time she has made the privileged state of virginity consecrated to God to be the common dowry of Christendom, the lawful and supreme ambition of the poorest child of the people, as well as of the daughter of kings ; and for eighteen centuries she has drawn from all countries and conditions myriads of chaste and radiant creatures, who have rushed to her altars, bringing their heart and life to God, who became man in order to redeem them.

Our Anglo-Saxons were neither the last nor the least instruments of this glorious transformation. Amid all the overflowings of their natural intemperance, they had preserved the instinct and a sense of the necessity of veneration for things above: they could, at least, honour the virtues which they would not or could not practise. The spectator stands amazed at the crowd of neophytes of both sexes who came from all the races of the Heptarchy, to vow themselves to perpetual continence. None of the new Christian nations seem to have furnished so great a number; and among none does Christian virginity seem to have exercised so prompt and so supreme an influence. The young Anglo-Saxon women who gave themselves to God—though they were initiated into the life of the cloister in the Gallo-Frankish monasteries, which had the advantage of being sooner established than those of England—had to return to their own island to realise their own value in the eyes of their countrymen.

The Anglo-Saxon conquerors regarded with tender and astonished respect the noble daughters of their race, who appeared to them surrounded by an unknown, a supernatural grandeur, and power at once human and divine—victorious over all the passions, all the weaknesses and lusts, of which victory had but developed the germs. This respect soon became apparent in the national laws, which agreed in placing under the safeguard of severe penalties the honour and freedom of those upon whom Anglo-Saxon legislation bestowed the title of *brides* of the Lord and spouses of God.

When one of these holy maidens found herself invested, by the choice of her companions or the nomination of a bishop, with the right of governing and representing a numerous community of her companions, the chiefs and people of the Heptarchy accorded her, without hesitation, all the liberties and attributes of the most elevated rank. The abbesses, as we have seen by the example of Hilda, Ebba, and Elfleda, had soon an influence and authority which rivalled that of the most venerated bishops and abbots. They had often the retinue and state of princesses, especially when they came of royal blood. They treated with kings, bishops, and the greatest lords on terms of perfect equality; and as the rule of the cloister does not seem to have existed for them, they are to be seen going where they please, present at all great religious and national solemnities, at the dedication of churches, and even, like the queens, taking part in the deliberations of the national assemblies, and affixing their signatures to the charters therein granted. The twenty-third article of the famous law or dooms of Ina sets, in certain points, not only abbots but abbesses on the same level with kings and the greatest personages of the country. In the Council of Beccancelde, held in 694 by the bishop and king of Kent, the signatures of five abbesses appear in the midst of those of

the bishops, affixed to decrees intended to guarantee the inviolability of the property and freedom of the Church.

How were the monasteries filled whose superiors occupied so elevated a rank in the spiritual and temporal hierarchy of the Anglo-Saxons, and what was their life? This question it will be both important and difficult to answer.

No contemporary writer has left us a complete authentic picture of the interior of the great Anglo-Saxon communities. No indisputable document is in existence which brings before us the system of rules and customs followed by thousands of nuns who wore the black robe and veil of the spouses of the Lord. We are reduced to the scanty incidents which are to be found in the history of the time, in that of the reigning families from which came most of the principal abbesses, and specially from the biographies of the most holy or most celebrated among these illustrious women. But by contrasting these incidents with those which reveal to us the origin and result of similar vocations among all the other Christian nations, by lighting them up with the light which shines in history, from the commencement of Christianity, we arrive at a point of comprehension perhaps satisfactory enough, but with which at least we must content ourselves.

In the absence of any existing record of their special rules and customs, the liturgical remains of the Anglo-Saxon Church reveal to us the spirit which animated both the pontiffs and the novices by whom these great and frequent sacrifices were made. There, as everywhere else, under the ancient discipline, it was the bishop, and he alone, who had the right of receiving the final vows of the virgin and of consecrating her solemnly to God. Although the Irish, with their habitual rashness, permitted girls to take the veil at the age of twelve, the Anglo-Saxon Church forbade the taking of the irrevocable vows until after the twenty-fifth year had been accomplished, in accordance with a custom which began to prevail in the whole Church, and which was a modification of the decrees of the Pope St. Leo and the Emperor Majorian, who had deferred to the age of forty the reception of the solemn benediction. On the day fixed for that ceremony, which took place only at the principal festivals of the year, and in presence of a numerous assemblage, the bishop began by blessing the black robe which was henceforward to be the sole adornment of the bride of God. The novice put it on in a private room, from which she came forth, thus clothed, and was led to the foot of the altar after the reading of the Gospel; the officiating bishop having already begun to say mass. There she listened to his exhortation; after which he asked for two public engagements which were indispensable to the validity of the act: in the first place, the consent of the parents and other guardians of the novice; and in the second place, her own promise of obedience to himself and his successors. When this had been done he laid his hands upon her to bless her and consecrate her to the God whom she had chosen. The Pontifical of Egbert, archbishop of York, and an Anglo-Saxon manuscript found in the Norman abbey of Jumieges, have preserved to us the prayers used by the bishop at this supreme moment. The maternal tenderness of the Church overflows in them with a fullness and majesty which recall the *Menées* of the Greek Church to such a degree that it might be supposed old Archbishop Theodore, the contemporary of Egbert's most illustrious predecessor, had brought from the depth of Asia Minor into the Northumbrian capital this ardent breath of Oriental inspiration.

“May God bless thee, God the creator of heaven and earth, the Father all-powerful, who has chosen thee as He chose St. Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, to preserve thy virginity entire and spotless, as thou hast promised before God and the angels. Persevere then in thy resolutions and keep thy chastity with patience, that thou mayest be worthy of the virgin’s crown.

“May God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless thee with all blessings, that thou mayest remain immaculate and perfect under the robe of St. Mary, the mother of Christ. May the Spirit of God, the Spirit of wisdom and strength, of knowledge and piety, rest upon thee and fill thee with the fear of God. May He deign to establish thy frailty, fortify thy weakness, confirm thy strength, govern thy soul, direct thy steps, inspire thy thoughts, approve thy acts, complete thy works; may He edify thee by His charity, illuminate thee by His knowledge, keep thee by His mercy, exalt thee by His holiness, strengthen thee by patience, bring thee to obedience, prostrate thee in humility, encourage thee in continence, teach thee frugality, visit thee in infirmity, relieve thee in sadness, reanimate thee in temptation, moderate thee in prosperity, soften thee in anger, protect thy modesty, correct thy sins, pardon thy backslidings, and teach the discipline which shall lead thee, strong in all virtue and resplendent in good works, to do everything in view of the eternal reward! Mayest thou always have for thy witness Him whom thou shalt one day have for thy judge, that when thou enterest into the bridal chamber with thy lamp lighted in thy hand, thy divine Spouse may find in thee nothing impure and sordid, a soul white as snow, and a body shining with purity ; so that at the terrible day of judgment the avenging flame may find nothing to consume in thee, and divine mercy find everything to crown! Mayest thou, purified in this world by monastic life, rise to the tribunal of the eternal King, to dwell in His celestial presence with the hundred and forty- four thousand innocents who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, singing the new song, and receiving the reward of thy labours here below in the dwelling-place of those who live for ever. Blessed be thou from the highest heaven by Him who came to die upon the cross to redeem the human race, Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns for ever with the Father and the Holy Spirit”.

The bishop then placed the veil on her head, saying, “Maiden, receive this veil, and mayest thou bear it stainless to the tribunal of Jesus Christ, before whom bends every knee that is in heaven and earth and hell”.

Then he continued : “God, who deignest to inhabit chaste forms, and lovest the virgin soul ; God who hast renewed humanity corrupted by the fraud of the devil, and re-established it by the creating Word, so as not only to restore it to primitive innocence, but to procure it everlasting possessions, and to raise it from the bosom of creatures still bound with the chains of this life, to a level with the angels:

“Look upon Thy servant here present, who, placing in Thy hand the resolution to live for ever in chastity, offers to Thee the devotion with which this vow has inspired her. Give to her. Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, a prudent modesty, a benevolent wisdom, a sweet gravity, a chaste freedom. How could a soul imprisoned in this mortal flesh have vanquished the law of nature, the liberty of licence, the strength of habit, the pricks of youth, hadst Thou not lighted in her the flame of virginity, didst Thou not Thyself nourish the flame by the courage which Thou deignest to inspire her with? Thy grace is



spread throughout all nations under the sun, which are as many as the stars in number ; and among all the virtues which Thou hast taught to the heirs of Thy New Testament, one gift flows from the inexhaustible fountain of Thy generosity upon certain persons which, without diminishing in anything the honour of marriage, and the blessing which Thou hast promised on the conjugal tie, enables those higher souls to disdain all mortal union, to aspire to the sacrament which unites Jesus Christ to His Church, to prefer the supernatural union of which marriage is the emblem to the natural reality of marriage. This blessed virgin has known her Creator, and, emulating the purity of the angels, desires to belong only to Him who is the Spouse and the Son of perpetual virginity. Protect then, Lord, her who implores Thy help, and who comes here to be consecrated by Thy blessing. Let not the ancient enemy, who is so skilful to turn aside the most excellent desires by the most insidious assaults, ever succeed in withering in her the palm of perfect maidenhood.

“Grant, Lord, by the gift of Thy Spirit, that she may keep the faith which she has sworn to Thee, that at the unknown day of Thy coming, far from being troubled, she may go forth to meet Thee in all security, and enter freely with the choir of wise virgins by the royal gates of Thy eternal dwelling-place”.

At the conclusion of the mass the pontiff pronounced upon the new nun a new benediction, which was turned by the acclamations of the people into a kind of dialogue.

“Send, Lord, Thy heavenly blessing upon Thy servant here present, upon our sister, who humbles herself under Thy hand, and cover her with Thy divine protection”.

And all the people answered, Amen.

*The Bishop.* — May she ever flee from sin, know and desire what is good, and win the sacred treasures of heaven.

*People.* — Amen.

*Bishop.* — May she always obey the divine precepts, escape with their aid from the violent rebellions of the flesh, vanquish depraved voluptuousness by the love of chastity, keep always in her lamp the oil of holiness, and delight herself in the radiance of eternal light.

*People.* — Amen .

*Bishop.* — May she ever carry in her hand the sacred fire, and thus enter at the royal gate of heaven, in the footsteps of Christ, to live for ever with wise and spotless souls.

*People.* — Amen.

*Bishop.* — May He whose empire is without end grant our prayers.

*People.* — Amen.

*Bishop.* — The blessing of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon thee, my sister, hereafter and for ever.

*People.* — Amen.

## II

The number of bishops being so small, and the ever-increasing multitude of nuns so great, it is doubtful whether these touching and solemn services could be used in the case of all the virgins consecrated to the Lord in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters. But it may be believed that they were never omitted when a maiden or widow of one of the reigning dynasties of the blood and race of Odin sought the veil of the spouses of the Lord.

For in England as elsewhere, and perhaps more than elsewhere, the nuns were at the same time of the highest and of the humblest classes. Some were born of those conquering and sovereign races whose exploits have been reviewed, in which the blood of the Merovingians sometimes mingled with that of the offspring of the Norse Olympus, and which, by intermarrying always among themselves, maintained in all its native purity the character of the descendants of Odin —

“Du sang de Jupiter issues des deux côtés”, —

they summed up in themselves all that their countrymen held in highest esteem as greatness and majesty.

But beside them, and sometimes above, when placed there by the election of communities, appears the daughter of the obscure Saxon, of the *ceorl*, perhaps even of the conquered Briton ; and others from a still greater distance and lower level, redeemed from slavery and withdrawn from outrage, from the stains which were the too frequent consequence of captivity. All marched under the same banner, that of sacrifice; all bore its glorious mark. Some gave up a crown, wealth, and greatness; others their family, their love, their freedom; all had to give up themselves. The meanest in birth were certainly not those to whom the sacrifice was the most costly. It is too probable that these Anglo-Saxon princesses and great ladies were naturally haughty and insolent, hard and unkindly to the rest of mankind—in some cases bloodthirsty and pitiless, like the heroines of the Teutonic epic, Chriemhild and Brunehild; and of all the miracles wrought by Christianity in England, there is scarcely any more wonderful than the transformation of so great a number of such women, in the new communities, into docile daughters, cordial sisters, mothers truly tender and devoted to their inferiors in age and blood.

It must be acknowledged that the observation of the chroniclers of those distant centuries rarely goes beyond the queens and princesses, whose religious vocation must have specially edified and touched the souls of their contemporaries; and who, beautiful, young, and sought in marriage by princes of rank equal to their own, gave up the world to keep their love entire for God, and to consecrate so many places of refuge at once peaceful and magnificent for future generations of God's servants.

In respect to the maidens of humbler origin, but of life as pure and self-devotion as dauntless, who surround the greater personages of our tale, we can but follow the ancient authors, taking advantage of every indication which throws light upon the life and soul of so great a multitude.

The queens and princesses range themselves into three principal classes. They were, in the first place, virgins devoted to God, sometimes from the cradle, like the abbesses Ebba of Coldingham and Elfleda of Whitby, who were the devoted friends and protectresses of Wilfrid. Then followed wives who separated themselves from their husbands, during their lifetime, and often much against their will, to embrace a religious life : of this class St. Etheldreda is the most celebrated example. And finally, widows who ended in the cloister a life mostly devoted on the throne to the active extension as well as the self-sacrificing practice of the new religion. We have seen more than one touching example of the last-named class — such as that of Queen Eanfleda, the first benefactress of Wilfrid, who, after the death of her husband King Oswy, found shelter for her widowhood at Whitby, and there ended her days under the crosier of her daughter.

By a privilege which does honour to France, it was among us, in the country of Queen Bertha, the first Christian queen of the Anglo-Saxons, that the first English nuns were trained. France was thus the cradle of the Anglo-Saxon communities. In the time of the first missionaries, when monasteries were few, many of the new Christians of England learned the rules of monastic life among the Gallo-Franks, to whom they had been taught, more than a century before, by the glorious St. Martin, and after him by St. Maur, the cherished disciple of St. Benedict, and by St. Columbanus, the illustrious propagator of Celtic monachism. The Anglo-Saxons sent or took their daughters into Gaul, and the first beginning, in particular, of the great Christianity which was about to burst the bud in Great Britain, seems to have been specially prepared and formed in the communities on the banks of the Marne and the Seine, at Jouarre, Faremoutier, les Andelys, and later at Chelles.

Jouarre, Faremoutier, and the neighbouring monasteries formed a sort of monastic province, dependent on Luxeuil, and occupied by the disciples of St. Columbanus. The pious and courageous Burgundofara, *la noble baronne de Bourgogne*, blessed from her infancy by the holy patriarch of Luxeuil, ruled at Faremoutier the great foundation which has made her name illustrious for twelve centuries. She had with her an entire colony of young Anglo-Saxons. It had been the intention of Hilda, the great abbess of Whitby, from the time when she made up her mind to leave the world, to lead a conventual life in one of the cloisters on the banks of the Marne, where her sister, Hereswida, the queen of East Anglia, even before she became a widow, had sought an asylum, and where she ended her life in the practice of the monastic rule.

However, it was not the Northumbrians alone—as might have been expected from the connection which linked to the great Catholic apostles of converted France a country itself converted to Christianity by Celtic missionaries—who thus sought the spiritual daughters of St. Columbanus. The young princesses and daughters of the great lords belonging to the kingdom of Kent, which was exclusively converted by Roman missionaries, showed as much or even greater eagerness. The great-granddaughter of

the first Christian king of the Anglo-Saxons, Earcongotha, added a new lustre to the community of Faremoutier by the holiness of her life and death. She was, says Bede, a virgin of great virtue, worthy in everything of her illustrious origin. East Anglia paid also its contribution to the powerful foundation of the noble Burgundofara. Two sisters of Etheldreda, whose strange story has been already recorded, governed in succession, notwithstanding their character of foreigners, the Gallo-Frankish abbey of Faremoutier, while their sister founded the greatest convent of nuns which had yet been seen in England. Ten centuries later, another foreign princess, who had been received at Faremoutier, and whose memory has been made immortal by the genius of Bossuet, gave him an occasion to sound the praises of this famous house in a language which was perhaps more applicable to the community of the seventh century than to that of the seventeenth. "In the solitude of Sainte-Fare—as much separated from all worldly ways as its blessed position now separates it from all traffic with the world ; in that holy mountain where the spouses of Jesus Christ revive the beauty of ancient days, where the joys of earth are unknown, where the traces of worldly men, of the curious and wandering, appear not—under the guidance of the holy abbess, who gave milk to babes as well as bread to the strong, the beginning of the Princess Anne was very happy".

The illustrious abbess whom Queen Bathilde, herself an Anglo-Saxon by birth, placed in the celebrated monastery of Chelles when she re-established it, saw her community increased by a crowd of nuns whom the fame of her great qualities and tender kindness attracted from the other side of the Channel. Christians of both sexes felt the power of this attraction, for there were at Chelles as many Anglo-Saxon monks as nuns. Everything prospered so well, everything breathed a piety so active, fervent, and charitable, that the kings of the Heptarchy, moved by the perfume of virtue and good fame that rose from the double monastery peopled by their country-folks, emulated each other in praying the Abbess Bertile to send them colonies from her great bee-hive to occupy new foundations in England.

In this way probably came Botulph, whom we have already mentioned, and who was the one of Wilfrid's contemporaries most actively engaged in the extension of monastic institutions. Before he was restored to his native soil, he had inspired with a lively and deep affection for himself two young Anglo-Saxon princesses who had been sent to France when scarcely more than infants to learn monastic life. They loved in him, we are told, not only a great master in holy and chaste living, but still more their countryman, a teacher of their own country and race. When they knew that he was about to return to England they were overwhelmed with sadness, their only consolation in which was to recommend him with all their might to their young brother, who was king, it is not known where, under the regency of his mother ; after which there is no mention of them in history. The touching image of these two young creatures appears in history only to bear witness to the faithfulness of their patriotism in the pious exile which was imposed upon them. It is a sentiment of which we shall find many traces among the Anglo-Saxon nuns.

But among the first nuns of the Heptarchy were there not, in the first place, virgins of Celtic origin, from Scotland or Ireland, like the monk-missionaries whose labours have been set forth? Nothing is more probable, though there is no positive proof of their existence. It would be impossible from this point of view to pass in silence a holy

princess whose name is still popular in the north of England, and who has been long concluded by the annalists to be of Irish origin, while, at the same time, they recognise in her the instructress of the women and maidens of Northumbria in monastic life. To the west of this district, in the county which we now call Cumberland, upon a promontory bathed by the waves of the Irish Sea, and from which in clear weather the southern shore of Scotland and the distant peaks of the Isle of Man may be seen, a religious edifice still bears the name and preserves the recollection of St. Bega. She was, according to the legend, the daughter of an Irish king, the most beautiful woman in the country, and already asked in marriage by the son of the king of Norway. But she had vowed herself, from her tenderest infancy, to the Spouse of virgins, and had received from an angel, as a seal of her celestial betrothal, a bracelet marked with the sign of the cross. On the night before her wedding day, while the guards of the king her father, instead of keeping watch as usual with sabres at their side and axes on their shoulders, were, like their guests, deep in the revel, she escaped alone, with nothing but the bracelet which the angel had given her, threw herself into a skiff, and landed on the opposite shore in Northumbria, where she lived long in a cell in the midst of the wood, uniting the care of the sick poor around with her prayers. Fear of the pirates who infested these coasts led her after a while farther inland. What then became of her? Here the confusion, which is so general in the debatable ground between legend and history, becomes nearly inextricable. Was it she who, under the name of Heiu, is pointed out to us by Bede as the woman to whom Bishop Aidan, the apostle of Northumbria, gave the veil, and whom he placed at the head of the first nunnery which had been seen in the north of England? Or was it she who, under the name of Begu, after having abdicated the dignity of abbess, lived for thirty years a humble and simple nun in one of the monasteries under the rule of the great abbess of Whitby, Hilda, whose intimate friend she became, as well as her daughter in religion? These are questions which have been long disputed by the learned, and which it seems impossible to bring to any satisfactory conclusion. What is certain, however, is, that a virgin of the name of Bega figures among the most well known and long venerated saints of the north-west of England. She was celebrated during her lifetime for her austerity, her fervour, and an anxiety for the poor which led her, during the building of her monastery, to prepare with her own hands the food of the masons and to wait upon them in their workshops, hastening from place to place like a bee laden with honey. She remained down to the middle ages the patroness of the laborious and often oppressed population of the district, in which tradition presents her to us as arriving alone and fearless on a foreign shore, flying from her royal bridegroom. In the twelfth century the famous bracelet which the angel had given her was regarded with tender veneration: the pious confidence of the faithful turned it into a relic upon which usurpers, prevaricators, and oppressors against whom there existed no other defence were made to swear, with the certainty that a perjury committed on so dear and sacred a pledge would not pass unpunished. It was also to Bega and her bracelet that the cultivators of the soil had recourse against the new and unjust taxes with which their lords burdened them. In vain the Scottish reavers treading down under their horses' feet the harvests of the Cumbrians made light of the complaints and threats of the votaries of St. Bega. "What is the good old woman to me, and what harm can she do me?" said one. "Let your Bega come!" said another — "let her come and do whatever she likes! She cannot make one of our horses cast their



shoes". Sooner or later divine vengeance struck these culprits; and the fame of the chastisements sent upon them confirmed the faith of the people in the powerful intercession of her who, six hundred years after her death, still gave a protection so effectual and energetic against feudal rudeness, to the captive and to the oppressed, to the chastity of women, and the rights of the lowly, upon the western shore of Northumbria, as did St. Cuthbert throughout the rest of that privileged district.

In proportion, however, as the details of the lives of holy nuns in England are investigated, the difficulty of tracing the line of demarcation between history and legend becomes more and more evident. But, after all, let us not lament too much over this confusion. True history—"that which modifies souls, and forms opinions and manners"—is not produced solely from dates and facts, but from the ideas and impressions which fill and sway the souls of contemporaries; translating into facts, anecdotes and scenes, the sentiments of admiration, gratitude, and love which inspire them for beings whom they believe to be of a superior nature to themselves, and whose benefits and example survive the ravages of time and human inconstancy.

We must, then, make up our minds to meet with this confusion through the entire series of our narratives, which are intended to give a picture of the faith and passions, the virtues and vices, of the new Christians of England, rather than to trace in methodical and chronological succession the course of uncertain or insignificant events. Let our readers be contented with our assurance that we will never permit ourselves to present to them, under the guise of truth, acts or words which are not of undisputed certainty.

To put some sort of order into the notes which we have gleaned on the subject of the Anglo-Saxon nuns, it will be well to arrange them according to the principal dynasties, or families and countries from which had issued all those noble women so devoted to God, St. Peter, and St. Benedict, who have gained a place on the altars of Catholic England.

I do not think I have anything to add to what has already been said in respect to the Northumbrian princesses, descendants of Ella and Ida, the Man of Fire and the Ravager. The holy and powerful abbesses, Hilda of Whitby, Ebba of Coldingham, Elfleda, the daughter of Oswy, who was dedicated to God from her birth as a ransom for the liberation of her country, her mother Eanfleda, who on becoming a widow entered the abbey of her daughter—these often-repeated names cannot have escaped the memory of our readers. Let us add only, according to a tradition, ancient and widely spread, though disputed by modern learning, that the three sons of Oswy who reigned over Northumberland in succession, and who have been so often mentioned in the life of Wilfrid, were all three forsaken by their wives, who determined to consecrate themselves to God ; though doubtless the two princesses married to the elder and younger of these princes neither occasioned the same struggle nor won the same fame as their sister-in-law St. Etheldreda, the wife of King Egfrid.

Let us then pass to the princesses of the most ancient Anglo-Saxon dynasty, the first converted to Christianity, that of the Ascings who reigned over the Jutes in the kingdom of Kent.

The first and most historical figure which we meet in the cloister among the descendants of Hengist is that of the gentle and devoted Ethelburga, whose life is linked so closely with the history of the beginning of Northumbrian Christianity. She was the daughter of the first Christian king of South Anglia, and married the first Christian king of the North, Edwin, whose conversion was so difficult, whose reign was so prosperous, and his end so glorious. After the rapid ruin of that first Northumbrian Christianity which she, along with Bishop Paulinus, had begun. Queen Ethelburga, received with tender sympathy by her brother, the king of Kent, cared for no other crown but that of holy poverty. She obtained from her brother the gift of an ancient Roman villa, situated between Canterbury and the sea on the coast opposite France, and there founded a monastery, where she herself took the veil. She was thus the first widow of Saxon race who consecrated herself to monastic life. The old church of her monastery, called Lyminge, still exists. The burying-place of the foundress, who passed there the fourteen last years of her life—and who, daughter of the founder of Canterbury and widow of the founder of York, was thus the first link between the two great centres of Catholic life among the Anglo-Saxons—is still shown.

We shall add nothing to what has been already said in respect to the daughter of Ethelburga, first queen of Northumberland, and then a nun like her mother, nor of her grand-daughter, the Abbess Elfleda, the amiable friend of St. Cuthbert, and generous protectress of St. Wilfrid. But she had a sister, named Eadburga, who was a nun with her at Lyminge, and who, buried by her side in the monastery, was venerated along with her among the saints of England. Her brother, who, like his father, married a Frankish princess, the great-granddaughter of Clovis and St. Clothilde, peopled with his descendants the Anglo-Saxon and even foreign monasteries. Without speaking of his grand-daughters, Earcongotha, who became, as has been formerly said, abbess of Faremoutier in France, and Ermenilda, queen of Mercia, whom we have already seen, and shall meet again further on among the abbesses of Ely, this second Christian king of the most ancient kingdom of the Heptarchy had a daughter called Eanswida, who, educated by the Roman missionaries at Canterbury, received from them the veil of the brides of God. She distinguished herself by the foundation of a monastery, which, with true Roman spirit, she dedicated to St. Peter, and of which she was the superior, at Folkestone, on the heights of those white cliffs crowned by green pasturage, which attract the first glance of the numberless travellers whom the rapid prows of our day deposit at that spot upon the English shore.

Legends of all kinds have accumulated round the name of this young and holy descendant of Hengist and Clovis; the gaps in her authentic history are filled by incidents which show the idea formed by the Anglo-Saxons of the supernatural power with which a monastic vocation invested a daughter of the sovereign race. Her father, it was told, proposed to marry her, like her aunt, to a Northumbrian prince who was still a heathen. She obstinately refused. King Eadbald did not attempt to force her; but her suitor came with his train to urge his suit in person at a time when she was herself superintending the building of her future cloister. She sent him away without pity, defying him to lengthen, by the aid of his false gods, a rafter which was too short, which she herself succeeded in doing by praying with all her might to the true Saviour of the world. As soon as she was installed in her monastery she made it, after the fashion of all

the religious foundations of the time, a great agricultural establishment as well as an ascetic sanctuary and a literary school. There, according to the popular tale, she tamed flocks of wild geese which spoiled her harvests, and which her servants stole from her poultry-yard and ate, to her great displeasure; with the tip of her crosier she dug a canal to bring to the monastery a stream of fresh water which was wanting. She died young, in 640 : her abbey, which was built too near the sea on an overhanging rock, was swallowed up by the waves ; but the memory of this daughter of the conquering race, herself conquered by the love of God and her neighbour, long survived in the prayers of the faithful. More than six hundred years after her death, a powerful Anglo-Norman baron renewed the Benedictine foundation of the Anglo-Saxon princess, dedicating the church to St. Peter and St. Eanswida.

Another branch of the posterity of Hengist, issued from a young brother of Eanswida, who died before his father, has also been taken possession of by legendary lore. This prince left two sons and four daughters; the latter were all nuns, and reckoned among the saints. His two sons were venerated as martyrs, according to the general idea of the time, which regarded as martyrdom every kind of violent death endured by the innocent. They were assassinated by a thane named Thunnor, who thus attempted to do a pleasure to King Egbert, the fourth successor of St. Ethelbert, by freeing him of young cousins, who might become dangerous competitors. The legend here rises to the rank of true poetry, and at the same time embodies true morality, as is almost always the case. In a vain attempt to hide, it says, the bones of his victims, the assassin buried them in the palace of the king, and even under the throne on which he sat on festive occasions; but a supernatural light came to denounce the crime, shining upon the unknown tomb, and revealing it to the devotion of the faithful. The king, amazed and abashed, had to expiate the crime which was committed, if not by his orders, at least to his advantage. Supported by the popular clamour, the two illustrious foreign monks, who were then the chief-justices and peacemakers of the country, Theodore, the archbishop of Canterbury, and the African Adrian, abbot of St. Augustin, intimated to him that he must pay the *price of blood* that is to say, the compensation ordained by all Teutonic laws—to a sister of the victims, and that all the more that this sister, called Domneva, was married to a Mercian prince, son of the savage and unconquerable Penda. This ransom of blood was to take the form of a territorial gift for the foundation of a monastery in which virgins consecrated to God should for ever supplicate divine pardon. Domneva asked for as much land as a tame doe which belonged to her could run round in one course. The spot was the island of Thanet, at the mouth of the Thames, where their ancestor, Hengist, and, two centuries later, St. Augustin, had landed; and which was doubly dear to the nation as the place at which the Saxon occupation began and Christianity first appeared among them. It was, besides, a very fertile spot, the flower and jewel of the country, a sort of terrestrial paradise. King Egbert consented to this arrangement, and the parties met on the ground. The doe was let loose, and the king and his court followed it with their eyes, when the villain Thunnor arrived, crying out that Domneva was a witch, who had bewitched the king to make him give up his fair lands to the instinct of a brute. Then, being on horseback, he pursued the doe to stop her; but in his wild career he came to a well, in which he was drowned, and which has ever since been called *Thunnor's leap*. The doe's course included forty-two ploughlands : she crossed the island in two different directions before returning to her mistress. The land thus marked out was given

over to Domneva and her spiritual posterity. Archbishop Theodore immediately consecrated the new foundation, which took the name of Minster, as who should say The Monastery.

Domneva became a widow, and taking then the name of Ermenberga, was the first abbess of the new community, which was soon occupied by seventy nuns. But she soon gave up the government to her daughter Mildred, whom she had sent into France, to Chelles, to receive a literary and a religious education. The abbess of Chelles, far from encouraging the young princess to embrace monastic life, employed every kind of threat and ill-usage to compel her to marry one of her relatives: thus at least says the legend, which is too singular, and too different in this point from all similar narratives, not to have a certain authenticity. But Mildred resisted the temptation victoriously. She returned to England to govern the abbey founded by her mother, and to give an example of all the monastic virtues to her seventy companions. Very few details of her life have been preserved : which makes the extraordinary and prolonged popularity which has attached to her name, her relics, and everything belonging to her all the more wonderful. Her popularity eclipsed that of St. Augustin, even in the district which he first won to the faith, and to such a point that the rock which had received the mark of his first footstep, and which lies a little to the east of Minster, took and retained up to the eighteenth century the name of St. Mildred's Rock.

An entire chapter would be necessary to narrate the violent struggles, the visions, and other incidents which are connected with the history of her relics, and what hagiographers call her posthumous fame. Her name, like that of many other Anglo-Saxon nuns, has once more become fashionable in our days, but it recalls to our ungrateful contemporaries nothing but the vague poetry of the past. It was mixed up with the real history of the Danes and Normans, of Canute the Great, of Edward the Confessor, of Lanfranc, of Edward I, the terrible victor of the Scots and Welsh. The worship of Mildred appears interspersed in the midst of all these personages with every kind of edifying and amusing anecdote, such as touch the most delicate and the most diverse chords of the human heart. By the side of the touching scene in which the persecuted wife of Edward the Confessor, forsaken by all, is consoled by the apparition of Mildred—and the story of the solemn translation of her relics by Archbishop Lanfranc—are found grotesque incidents, such as that of the bellringer who, while asleep before her shrine, was woke by a box on the ear, administered by the holy princess, who said to him, “This is the oratory and not the dormitory”. In that wonderful efflorescence of imagination quickened by faith, which for several centuries was interwoven with all Christian society, the legend had something for all—for crowned heads and common people, and could at the same time move its audience to laugh or to weep. Let us return to history by adding that William the Conqueror, when he became master of England, formally respected the right of asylum claimed by criminals at the place where the relics of Mildred lay; for, while destroying the Anglo-Saxon crown, he took great care to aim no blow at the persevering devotion shown by his new subjects for the saints of both sexes who had proceeded from their national dynasties.

Mildred had two sisters, whose names are connected with hers by that eccentric taste for alliteration which characterises the Anglo-Saxons. Their names were Milburga and Milgytha; they were both nuns like their sister, their mother, their three aunts, their

grandaunt Eanswida, and their great-grandaunts Ethelburga and Eadburga. We are now at the fourth generation of the descendants of the first Christian king, and we may well say with Mabillon : “*Puellarum regiarum, quibus idem animus fuit, numerus iniri vix potest*”. The three daughters of the foundress of Minster were compared to Faith, Hope, and Charity. Nothing is known of Milgytha except that she was a nun at Canterbury. As for Milburga, she was consecrated by the Archbishop Theodore abbess of a monastery founded beyond the Severn, upon the borders of Anglo-Saxon territory and the land still held by the Celts of Cambria. Like Mildred, she has furnished more than one expressive incident to monastic legends. The young abbess was exposed, like so many of her fellows, to the pursuit of a neighbouring prince, who, being determined to marry her, attempted to seize her person by force. As she fled before the sacrilegious band, a river which she had just crossed rose all at once into flood, so as to place an insurmountable barrier in the way of the too eager suitor, who thereupon gave up the pursuit. Another miracle, attributed to her, recalls the most touching of those which are mentioned in the life of Wilfrid. A poor widow came to her one day when she was alone in her oratory, and, throwing herself on her knees, besought her with tears to raise up her dead child, whose poor little body she had brought with her. Milburga asked if she were mad. “Go”, she said, “bury your son, and prepare to die, in your turn, like him ; for we are all born but to die”. “No, no”, said the widow, “I will not leave you till you have restored to me my son alive”. The abbess then prayed by the little corpse, and all at once she appeared to the poor mother surrounded by a flame which descended from heaven, the living emblem of the fervour of her prayer. An instant after, life came back to the child. When Milburga had reached the end of her own days, which were fragrant with charity and purity, she gathered all her community around her death-bed. “Beloved sisters”, she said, “I have always loved you as my own soul, and I have watched over you like a mother. I have now come to the end of my pilgrimage; I leave you to God and to the blessed Virgin Mary.” With which words she died. Four hundred years after her death her monastery, which had been destroyed by the Danes, was re-established by a colony of monks from Cluny. While they were building the church a heavenly fragrance betrayed the place of Milburga’s burial. Her relics were exposed to public veneration, and an innumerable crowd hastened to visit them—old and young, rich and poor, rivalling each other in the pilgrimage. All the surrounding country was covered by a tide of pilgrims: so great, notwithstanding the double invasion of Danes and Normans and the passage of centuries, was the fidelity of the English people to the memory of the first saints of their race.

In order not to separate the three sisters from their mother, we have introduced them after the holy nuns of the dynasty of Hengist and Ethelbert, from whom they were descended by the mother's side. But by their father, who belonged to the reigning family of Mercia, they were the granddaughters of Penda, the most terrible enemy of the Christian name.

In fact, a transformation far more sudden and not less complete than that which turned the granddaughters of the Ravager and Man of Fire into abbesses and saints was wrought upon the posterity of the ferocious Penda of Mercia, the warlike octogenarian, who had been the last and most formidable hero of Anglo-Saxon paganism. Of all the races descended from Odin who shared among them the sway of England, no one has



furnished a larger list of nuns and saints to be inscribed in the national calendar than the descendants of Penda, as if they thus meant to pay a generous ransom for the calamities inflicted upon the new Christians of England by their most cruel enemy. We will not return again to speak of his firstborn son, whose love for the daughter of Oswy made him the firstborn son of the Church in Mercia, the first Christian baptized in that country ; nor of his first successor, Wulphere, the generous founder of Peterborough ; nor of his other successor, Ethelred, the devoted friend of Wilfrid, who ended his thirty years' reign by ten years of life in a monastery. We treat only at this moment of the daughters and granddaughters of the sanguinary victor who had cut off so many Christian kings among the neighbouring nations.

An obstinate tradition found in the ancient English chronicles asserts that two of his daughters, Kyneburga and Kyneswitha, both gave up the thought of marriage to consecrate themselves to God. The eldest, who was married to the intimate friend of her brother Peada, the eldest son of King Oswy of Northumbria, the friend and first protector of Wilfrid, is said to have left him, with his consent, to end her life in the cloister. The youngest, sought in marriage by Offa, king of the East Saxons, used her connection with him only to persuade the young prince to embrace monastic life, as she herself wished to do. A more profound study, however, of the period has made the authenticity of this legend doubtful. But it has proved that the two daughters of the bloody Penda contributed, with their brothers, to the establishment of the great abbey of Medehamptstede or Peterborough; that their names appear in the lists of the national assembly which sanctioned this foundation, and that they spent their retired and virginal lives in some retreat near the new sanctuary. After their death they were buried at Peterborough; their relics, happily found after the burning of the monastery and the massacre of all the monks by the Danes, were carried back there on its restoration, and continued to be venerated there down to the twelfth century.

A third daughter of the terrible Penda, Eadburga, was also a nun, and became abbess at Dormuncester, according to the English martyrology. Her son Merwald, who did not reign, like his brothers, and never attained a higher rank than that of *sub-regulus* or ealdorman, married her who was afterwards abbess of Minster, a union from which sprung the three holy sisters Milburga, Mildred, and Milgytha, whom we have just spoken of. Another son, Wulphere, who succeeded Penda on the throne of Mercia, had a saint for his wife, and of this marriage proceeded another holy saint, Wereburga, who was the fourth of the granddaughters of Penda whom grateful England placed upon her altars.

The wife of Wulphere, the son and successor of Penda, was Ermenilda, daughter of the king of Kent, and granddaughter, by her mother, of Anna, the king of East Anglia, who perished upon the battlefield defending his country and religion against the attacks of Penda. This religion, henceforward triumphant, reconciled and united the posterity of the murderer and that of the victim. We thus come, through the essentially Christian and monastic dynasty of the Ascings of Kent, to that of the Uffings of East Anglia, which was equally remarkable for the crowd of saints which it produced. King Anna, who married the sister of Hilda, the celebrated abbess of Whitby, had a natural daughter, who was a nun in France, along with the daughter, by a former marriage, of her father's wife;

both, as has been already said, were abbesses of Faremoutier, and both are reckoned among the saints.

By his union with the sister of Hilda, King Anna had three daughters and a son. The son became in his turn the father of three daughters, two of whom were in succession abbesses of the monastery of Hackness, in Northumbria, founded by their grandaunt St. Hilda, and the last, Eadburga, was that abbess of Repton whom we have already encountered as the friend of the illustrious and generous hermit, Guthlac.

The three daughters of Anna—Etheldreda, Sexburga, and Withburga—are all counted among the saints. Let us speak, in the first place, of the latter, though she was the youngest of the three. She was sent to the country to be nursed, and remained there until she heard, while still quite young, the news of her father's death on the battlefield. She resolved immediately to seek a refuge for the rest of her life in cloistral virginity. She chose for her asylum a modest remnant of her father's lands at Dereham in Norfolk, and there built a little monastery. But she was so poor that she, her companions, and the masons who built her future dwelling had to live on dry bread alone. One day, after she had prayed long to the blessed Virgin, she saw two does come out of the neighbouring forest to drink at a stream whose pure current watered the secluded spot. Their udders were heavy with milk, and they permitted themselves to be milked by the virginal hands of Withburga's companions, returning every day to the same place, and thus furnishing a sufficient supply for the nourishment of the little community and its workmen. This lasted until the ranger of the royal domain, a savage and wicked man, who regarded with an evil eye the rising house of God, undertook to hunt down the two helpful animals. He pursued them with his dogs across the country, but, in attempting to leap a high hedge, with that bold impetuosity which still characterises English horsemen, his horse was impaled on a post, and the hunter broke his neck.

Withburga ended her life in this poor and humble solitude; but the fragrance of her gentle virtues spread far and wide. The fame of her holiness went through all the surrounding country. The worship given to her by the people of Norfolk was maintained with the pertinacity common to the Anglo-Saxon race, and went so far that, two centuries after her death, they armed themselves to defend her relics from the monks of Ely, who came, by the king's command, to unite them to those of her sisters at Ely.

To Ely, also, the monastic metropolis of East Anglia, and queen of English abbeys, we must transport ourselves to contemplate three generations of princesses issued from the blood of the Uffings and Ascings, and crowned by the nimbus of saints. There were, in the first place, the two queens of Mercia and Kent, Etheldreda, whom our readers already know, and her elder sister, Sexburga. This accomplished princess had married one of the kings of Kent, the one who, after Ethelbert, had showed himself most zealous for the extension of the Gospel. It was she especially who moved him to destroy the last idols which still remained in his kingdom. After twenty-four years of conjugal life, she became a widow, and was regent for four years of the kingdom of her son. As soon as he was old enough to reign, she abdicated, not only the crown, but secular life, took the veil from the hands of Archbishop Theodore, and founded a monastery in the Isle of Sheppy, situated at the mouth of the Thames, and separated from the mainland by that arm of the sea in which Augustin, on Christmas Day 579, baptized at once ten thousand

Saxons. This monastery took and kept the name of Minster, like that which was founded at the same time by her niece Domneva in the neighbouring Isle of Thanet. The church is still visible not far from the great roads of Sheerness, which has become one of the principal stations of the British navy. She there ruled a community of seventy-seven nuns, until she learned that her sister Etheldreda, having fled from the king her husband, according to the advice of Wilfrid, had taken refuge in the marshes of their native country, and had there formed a new asylum for souls resolute to serve God in solitude and virginity. Sexburga then resolved to return to her own country and become a simple nun under the crosier of her sister. "Farewell, my daughters", she said to her companions who were gathered round her, "I leave you Jesus for your protector, His holy angels for companions, and one of my daughters for your superior ... I go to East Anglia, where I was born, in order to have my glorious sister Etheldreda for my mistress, and to take part immediately in her labours here below, that I may share her recompense above".

She was received with enthusiasm at Ely : the entire community came out to welcome her : and the two sister-queens wept with joy when they met. They lived together afterwards in the most sweet and tender union, rivalling each other in zeal for the service of God and the salvation of souls, Sexburga compelling herself always to take lessons of humility and fervour from her sister. When Etheldreda died, Sexburga replaced her as abbess, and ruled the great East Anglian monastery for twenty years before she too found her rest near the tomb which she had erected to her sister.

Besides her two sons, who reigned over Kent in succession, Sexburga had two daughters, one of whom, Earcongotha, lived and died, as has been already seen, in a French monastery; the other, Ermenilda, married to the son and successor of Penda, became, along with the illustrious exile Wilfrid, the principal instrument of the final conversion of Mercia, the greatest kingdom of the Heptarchy. Like her mother, she used all the influence which the love of her husband gave her to extirpate the last vestiges of idolatry in the country which had been the centre and last bulwark of Anglo-Saxon heathenism. The example of her virtues was the most effectual of sermons; and it was, above all, by her incomparable sweetness, her pity for all misfortune, her unwearied kindness, that she touched the hearts of her subjects most. Like her mother, too, it was her desire to offer herself entirely to God, to whom she had finally led back her people: as soon as she became a widow she took the veil, like her mother, and under her mother—for it was to Ely that she went to live in humility and chastity, under a doubly maternal rule. The mother and daughter contended which should give the finest examples of humility and charity. At last, and still following in her mother's steps, Ermenilda, on the death of Sexburga, became abbess, and was thus the third princess of the blood of the Uffings who ruled the flourishing community of Ely. The local chronicle affirms that it was not her birth but her virtues, and even her love of holy poverty, which made her preferred to all others by the unanimous suffrages of her numerous companions. She showed herself worthy of their choice: she was less a superior than a mother. After a life full of holiness and justice, her soul went to receive its eternal reward in heaven, and her body was buried beside those of her mother and aunt in the church of the great abbey, which had thus the singular privilege of having for its three first abbesses a queen of Northumbria, a queen of Kent, and a queen of Mercia.

But this celebrated community was to be in addition the spiritual home of a fourth abbess and saint, in whom the blood of Penda and of Anna, the victor and the vanquished, was blended. This was Wereburga, the only daughter of Ermenilda, who had not followed but preceded her mother in the cloister.

These crowned Christians had learned in their palaces to despise wealth, luxury, and worldly pomp. They considered themselves prisoners of vanity. Notwithstanding her beauty, which, like that of Etheldreda, is boasted by the annalists, Wereburga repulsed all her suitors. A monastery seemed to her the most noble of palaces. Following this impulse, she went to her grandaunt Etheldreda at Ely, with the consent of her father, who himself took her there in state, accompanied by his royal suite. When her grandmother, Queen Sexburga, and her mother, Queen Ermenilda, followed her, three generations of princesses of the blood of Hengist and Odin were thus seen together, the grandmother, mother, and daughter, wearing the same monastic dress, and bound by the same rule for the service of God and man. Wereburga lived long as a humble and simple nun, fulfilling in her turn all the offices in the monastery, until the time when, after the death of her mother, she was called to take the place of abbess.

Her uncle Ethelred, who, after a reign of thirty years, was to end his days in the cloister, was so struck with the prudence and capacity that were apparent, combined with holiness, in the character of Wereburga, that he entrusted her with a sort of supremacy, or rather a general right of inspection over the various nunneries in his kingdom. It was in exercise of this office that, before entering on the government of Ely, she had been at the head of the communities of Weedon, Trentham, and Hanbury in turn, leaving everywhere a fragrance of virtue and kindness, and recollections of her constant solicitude for the benefit of all, which made her memory dear to the people, and of which, as usual, legendary lore has taken possession. Of all the incidents that adorn her biography we will quote one only, which explains better than any other the popularity of her memory. It happened one day that a shepherd on the monastic lands of Weedon, a man distinguished by his holy life, was treated by the steward with that savage brutality which the modern English too often borrow from their Anglo-Saxon ancestors. At this sight the niece of the sovereign of Mercia, the granddaughter of the terrible Penda, threw herself at the feet of the cruel steward. "For the love of God", she said, "spare this innocent man; he is more pleasing in the eyes of God, who from the heights of heaven regards all our actions, than either you or I". The wretch paid no attention to her, and she began to pray, continuing until the steward, paralysed and distorted by miraculous strength, had in his turn to appeal to the intervention of the saint that he might be restored to his natural condition.

At the death of Wereburga the population in the neighbourhood of the monastery where she died, and where she was to be buried, fought for the possession of her body, an event which began to be customary at the death of our holy nuns. Two centuries later, in order to save her dear remains from the Danes, the *ealdorman* of Mercia had them carried to Chester, a city already celebrated in the times of the Britons and Romans, and where a great abbey, with a church which is now admired among the fine cathedrals of England, rose over her tomb.

To complete this list of Anglo-Saxon princesses, whose cloistral education and vocation have been revealed to us by the worship of which they were the object, it now remains to say a few words of the nuns who proceeded from the race which a century later was to absorb all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and form the political unity of England. This race of Cerdic, the founder of the kingdom of Wessex, has already given us an essentially monastic figure in the person of the legislator King Ina, who, in the midst of a prosperous and glorious reign, gave up his crown and went to Rome to become a monk. It was his wife Ethelburga, as may be remembered, who, by a scene cleverly arranged, prepared him to leave his kingdom, his country, and the world. She alone never left him; she accompanied him in his voluntary exile, and at his death returned to become a nun at Barking, in England.

Beside the wife of Ina, and, like her, of the blood of Cerdic, the two sisters of the king, Coenburga and Cuthburga, take their place in monastic annals, both devoted to religious life, and reckoned among the English saints. The latter is much the most celebrated of the two. She was married young to the learned and peaceful Aldfrid, king of Northumbria, whose important influence on the life of Wilfrid has been already seen, and was, like her sister-in-law Etheldreda, struck upon the throne by the thunderbolt of divine love, and in the lifetime of her husband desired to give up conjugal life and her royal state to consecrate herself to the service of God in the cloister. Less tender or less violent than his brother Egfrid, King Aldfrid consented to the separation, and Cuthburga took the veil in the monastery of Barking, on the Thames, in the kingdom of East Anglia. This house, which had been founded some time before by a holy bishop of London for his sister, in whom he had recognised a soul destined to govern those who gave themselves to God, was already celebrated, not only for the fervour of its nuns, but by the zeal they displayed for the study of the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and even the classic tongues. The sister of Ina remained there only a few years. Her brother desired her to become the superior of a great foundation belonging to their race and country. He established her at Winbourne, in a very fertile country, near the royal residence of the kings of Wessex, and not far from the sea which washes the shores of the district now called Dorsetshire. The queen of Northumbria, when she became abbess of the new community, carried with her the spirit and habits of her first monastic dwelling-place, and Winbourne soon became still more celebrated than Barking for the great development of its literary studies.

But before we discuss briefly the singular birth of ecclesiastical and classical literature among the Anglo-Saxon nuns, and before we leave the country of Wessex, which gave to the English their first monarch, Egbert, and to the Teutonic world its most illustrious apostle, Boniface, a place must be reserved for the touching and popular story of Frideswida, foundress and patron of Oxford—that is to say, of one of the most celebrated literary and intellectual centres of the universe. She was the daughter of one of the great chiefs of the country, to whom the legend gives the title of king, or at least of *subregulus*, and was, like all the heroines of Anglo-Saxon legend, sought in marriage by another king or chief called Algar, more powerful than her father, whose alliance she obstinately refused in order to consecrate herself to religious life. The prince, carried away by his passion, resolved to seize on her by force. To escape from his pursuit she threw herself, like Bega, into a boat, not to cross the sea, like the Irish princess, but to



put the Thames between herself and her lover. After proceeding for ten miles on the river, she landed on the borders of a forest, where she hid herself in a sort of hut covered with ivy, but intended in the first place for the swine which, then as later, went to eat the acorns in the woods, and were one of the principal riches of the Anglo-Saxon proprietors. It was not a secure refuge for her, Algar, growing more and more in earnest, tracked her everywhere, with the intention of sacrificing her to the brutality of his companions as well as to his own. But at the moment when, exhausted with weariness, she was about to fall into his hands, she bethought herself of the great saints who, from the earliest days of the Church, had defended and saved their virginity at the price of their life. She invoked Catherine, the most illustrious martyr of the Eastern Church, and Cecilia, the sweet and heroic Roman whose name, inserted in the canon of the mass, was already familiar to all the new Christians. Her prayer was granted. God struck the savage Anglo-Saxon with sudden blindness, which put an end to his furious pursuit.

From this incident sprang a wild but obstinate tradition, according to which the kings of England for several centuries carefully avoided living or even passing by Oxford, for fear of losing their eyesight. Frideswida, thus miraculously saved, obtained by her prayers the restoration of sight to her persecutor; then, with her father's consent, and after some years passed in solitude, she founded near Oxford, at the spot of her deliverance, a monastery, where a crowd of Saxon virgins ranged themselves under her authority, and where she ended her life, dying in the same year as the Venerable Bede, and consoled during her last sufferings by the apparition of the two virgin martyrs, St. Catherine and St. Cecilia, to whom she had once so successfully appealed.

The tomb of Frideswida, the chapel she erected in the depth of the wood where she had hidden herself, the fountain which sprang at her prayer, attracted up to the thirteenth century a crowd of pilgrims, who were led thither by the fame of the miraculous cures there performed. But of all the miracles collected after her death, none is so touching as that which, told during her lifetime, contributed above everything else to increase the fame of sanctity with which she was soon surrounded. It happened one day that an unfortunate young man, struck with leprosy, met her on the road: from the moment that he perceived her he cried, "I conjure you, virgin Frideswida, by the Almighty God, to kiss me in the name of Jesus Christ, His only Son". The maiden, overcoming the horror felt by all of this fearful disease, approached him, and after having made the sign of the cross, she touched his lips with a sisterly kiss. Soon after the scales of his leprosy fell off, and his body became fresh and wholesome like that of a little child.

The church in which the body of Frideswida rests, and the monastery which she had founded, were the objects of public veneration and the gifts of many kings during the middle ages. It would occupy too much of our space to tell how this monastery passed into the hands of regular canons, and became one of the cradles of the celebrated University of Oxford. Unquestionably the first school which is proved to have existed on this spot, destined to so much literary fame, was attached to the sanctuary of our Anglo-Saxon princess. Oxford and Westminster, the two greatest names in the intellectual and social history of England, thus both date from the monastic origin, in which is rooted everything which was dear and sacred to Old England.

The monastery of St. Frideswida, transformed into a college by Cardinal Wolsey, is still, under the name of Christ Church, the most considerable college in the University of Oxford. Her church, rebuilt in the twelfth century, is the cathedral of that city. Her body, according to the common opinion, still rests there, and her shrine is shown; but it must be added that, under Elizabeth, and after the final triumph of Anglican reform, a commissioner of the Queen, who has himself related the fact in an official report, believed himself entitled to place beside the relics of Frideswida the body of a disveiled nun married to an apostate priest called Pietro Vermigli, who had been called to Oxford as a reformer and professor of the new doctrine. The commissioner mixed the bones of the saint and those of the concubine in such a manner that it was impossible to distinguish the one from the other, and placed them in a stone coffin, on which he engraved the words, now happily effaced, *Hic requiescit religio cum superstitione*.

### III

It may be a matter of surprise that there is nothing in the legend of St. Frideswida, nor in the recollections of the early days of her foundation, to connect them with the incontestable traditions which prove the intellectual and literary development of the great nunneries in England, of which something has already been said. We return to the subject, were it only in passing, reserving to ourselves the power of going back upon it when it becomes time to discuss the colonies of learned nuns who, issuing from their insular beehives, lent effectual aid to St. Boniface and the other Anglo-Saxon missionaries of Germany.

It is proved by numerous and undoubted witnesses that literary studies were cultivated during the seventh and eighth centuries in the female monasteries with no less care and perseverance than in the communities of men, and even perhaps with more enthusiasm. Was this, as has been supposed, a consequence of the new spirit which Archbishop Theodore had brought from Greece and Italy, and with which he had inspired all the monastic Church of England? or was it rather a tradition of Frankish Gaul, where the first Anglo-Saxon nuns had been educated, and where the example of Radegund and her companions shows us to what a degree classical habits and recollections found an echo in cloisters inhabited by women alone?

At all events, it is apparent that the Anglo-Saxon nuns interpreted the obligation to work which was imposed on them by their rule, to occupy the time which remained after the performance of their liturgical duties, as applying specially to study. They did not neglect the occupations proper to their sex, as is apparent by the example of the priestly vestments embroidered for Cuthbert by the abbess-queen Etheldreda. They even improved the art of embroidery in gold and silver stuffs, ornamented with pearls and jewels, for the use of the clergy and the Church, so much, that the term "English work" (*opus Anglicum*) was long consecrated to this kind of labour. But the work of the hand was far from satisfying them. They left the distaff and the needle, not only to copy manuscripts and ornament them with miniatures, according to the taste of their time, but above all to read and study the holy books, the Fathers of the Church, and even classic authors. All, or almost all, knew Latin. Convent corresponded with convent in that

language. Some of them became acquainted with Greek. Some were enthusiastic for poetry and grammar, and all that was then adorned with the name of science. Others devoted themselves more readily to the study of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the New Testament, taking for guides the commentaries of the ancient doctors, and seeking out historical, allegorical, or mystic interpretations for the most obscure texts. It has been made apparent by what was said in respect to the cowherd Ceadmon, transformed into a poet and translator of Holy Scripture, to what extent the study of the Bible had been cultivated at Whitby under the reign of the great Abbess Hilda.

Each community of women was thus at once a school and workshop, and no monastic foundation is to be met with which was not, for nuns as well as for monks, a house of education, in the first place for the adults, who formed its first nucleus, and afterwards for the young people who crowded around them. Thus were trained the cultivated nuns who quoted Virgil in writing to St. Boniface, and too often added Latin verses, of their own fashion, to their prose ; who copied for him the works he had need of, now the Epistles of St. Peter in gilded letters, now the Prophets writ large to suit weak sight ; who consoled and nourished him in his exile by the abundance and beauty of the books they sent him; and among whom he found those illustrious fellow-workers, whom one of his biographers declares to have been deeply versed in all liberal studies, and who lent so stout a hand in the conversion of the Germans.

But the example most frequently quoted is that of Barking, where we have seen the wife and sister of Ina, the queen of Northumbria and the queen of Wessex, take the veil in succession, the one during the lifetime, the other after the death, of her husband. The abbess of this convent was Hildelida, whose wise administration and holy life, prolonged to a very advanced age, have been celebrated by Bede, and to whom her friendship with St. Aldhelm and St. Boniface gave additional fame. It was to her and her community that the famous abbot of Malmesbury dedicated his Praise of Virginity, composed at first in prose, and which was rewritten in verse at a later period. In this dedication he names, besides the Abbess and Queen Cuthburga, eight other nuns, who were bound to him by ties of blood or of intimate friendship, whose holy fame seemed to him an honour to the Church, and whose many and affectionate letters filled him with joy.

This treatise, like all the other important writings of Aldhelm, is very uninviting to the reader, being full of pedantry and emphasis. But it is very interesting to all who desire to realise the ideas and images which one of the most holy and learned pontiffs of the Anglo-Saxon Church naturally appealed to, in addressing himself to the nuns of his own country and time. He quotes to them all the great examples of virginity which the Old and New Testaments could supply, or which were to be found in the lives of the Fathers and Doctors, and especially in the history of the martyrs of both sexes. But he also quotes to them Virgil and Ovid, and among others the well-known line —

“Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum”;

and that from the *Epithalamium* —

“Mellea tunc roseis herescunt labia labris”.

He does not confine himself to a commonplace image, by describing them as bees who seek their honey from the most different flowers. He compares them now to athletes in the circus, taking advantage of the metaphor to make an enumeration of all the Olympian games; now to warlike cohorts engaged in a desperate struggle against what he calls the eight great vices; and anon he borrows his images and exhortations from military life, always mixing, in his singular Latin, modes and turns of expression which are essentially Greek, and which presuppose among several at least of his correspondents a certain acquaintance with the Greek language. The last lines of his treatise breathe a touching humility and tenderness. He compares himself, a poor sinner—who, still plunged in the waves of corruption, shows to others the perfect shore of the perfect land—to a deformed painter who has undertaken to represent the features of beauty. “Help me, then, dear scholars of Christ”, he says; “let your prayers be the reward of my work, and, as you have so often promised me, may your community be my advocates before the Almighty. Farewell, you who are the flowers of the Church, the pearls of Christ, the jewels of Paradise, the heirs of the celestial country, but who are also my sisters according to monastic rule, and my pupils by the lessons I have given you”.

Nor were the nuns of Barking the only ones to whom Aldhelm addressed the effusions of his unwearied pen and his laboriously classic muse; and we are expressly told that the works he dedicated to them were very popular among all who followed the same career. Many of his letters and poems are addressed to nuns whose names are not given, but of whom he begs not only intercession with God, but protection against criticism here below. The communities who were honoured by his visits or by his correspondence took pleasure, no doubt, in his play on words, and in the Greco-Latin acrostics and verbal refinements with which the celebrated prelate adorned his prose and verse; and insignificant as this kind of production appears to us now, it implies nevertheless a certain degree of literary culture generally diffused throughout the Anglo-Saxon cloisters.

But the interest which attaches to this revelation of an intellectual movement among the Anglo-Saxon nuns is increased when it is remarked that intellectual pursuits, though intensely appreciated, were far from holding the first place in the heart and spirit of these new aspirants to literary glory. The salvation of souls and the tender union of hearts carried the day over all the rest. In a letter written to an abbess distinguished by birth as well as by knowledge and piety, enclosing to her a series of leonine verses he had made on a journey he had taken into Cornwall, Aldhelm takes pains to demonstrate that he is specially inspired by a tender gratitude towards her who of all women has shown him the most faithful affection. And another called Osgitha, whom he exhorts to a careful study of the Holy Scriptures, he addresses as his beloved sister, ten times, and even a hundred, a thousand times beloved.

Let us here take leave of Aldhelm and his learned correspondents, reminding our readers that one of his most important acts, that by which he consented to remain abbot of his three monasteries after his elevation to the episcopate, is dated from Winbourne, which was the great feminine community of Wessex, founded by King Ina, and ruled by his sister Cuthburga. It was at the same time the monastery most famed for literary activity. The education of the young novices was the object of the most active and

scrupulous care. Intellectual labour alternated with the works of the needle; but it is expressly said of Lioba, the nun whose name has thrown most lustre upon that community, the holy companion of Boniface in his German apostleship, that she devoted much more time to reading and studying the Holy Scriptures than to manual labour. Let us also not forget that the development of spiritual fervour by prayer and the continual celebration of the monastic liturgy occupied much the greatest place in the employment of the time and strength of all these young and generous souls.

There were five hundred nuns at Winbourne, who were all present at the nightly service. It is easy to imagine how much authority, intelligence and watchfulness were necessary to rule such a crowd of young souls, all, no doubt, inspired with the love of heaven, but all, at the same time, sprung from races too newly converted to have freed themselves from the characteristic features of Saxon pride and rudeness. This necessity explains why princesses of those ancient dynasties, whom the Anglo-Saxons were accustomed to follow even without always respecting them, were everywhere sought for as superiors of the great communities; and why, after the sister of King Ina, another sister of the king, Tetta, was called to the government of Winbourne, at the time when Lioba was being educated there. Among the crowd of minor authorities who lent their aid to this zealous and pious abbess was the provost, the deaconess, the portress, whose business it was to close the church after complines and to ring the bell for matins, and who was furnished with an immense collection of keys, some of silver, others of copper or iron, according to their different destinations. But neither the rank nor moral influence of the princess-abbess was always successful in restraining the barbarous impetuosity of that monastic youth. The nun who held the first rank among them after the abbess, and who was principally occupied with the care of the novices, made herself odious by her extreme severity: when she died, the hate which she inspired burst forth without pity: she was no sooner buried than the novices and young nuns rushed to the churchyard, and began to jump and dance upon her tomb, as if to tread underfoot her detested corpse. This went so far that the soil, freshly filled in, which covered the remains of their enemy, sank half a foot below the level of the surrounding ground. The abbess had great trouble to make them feel what she called the hardness and cruelty of their hearts, and which she punished by imposing upon them three days of fasting and prayers for the deceased.

#### IV

All that remains to be said of the strange but general institution of double monasteries—that is, two distinct communities of monks and nuns living together in the same place and under the same government—may be attached to the name of Winbourne. It is of all the establishments of this kind the one whose organisation is best known to us. We have already met with the institution in Frankish Gaul, with St. Radegund and St. Columbanus, at Poitiers, at Remiremont, and elsewhere. We shall find them again in Belgium and Germany as soon as the monastic missionaries shall have carried the light of the Gospel there. Their origin has been largely discussed, and we do not pretend to give any decision on the subject. Examples may be found among the Fathers of the desert in Egypt, and as far back as the times of St. Pacome, who, however, placed the Nile between the two communities under his government. We have already pointed out a remarkable attempt at the same institution in Spain caused by the



prodigious crowd of monastic neophytes of both sexes who gathered round St. Fructuosus. Notwithstanding the assertion of Muratori to the contrary, the unassailable testimony of Bede proves that there was at least one community of the same kind in Rome in the middle of the seventh century.

These establishments, however, were more popular in Ireland than anywhere else, where they sprang spontaneously from the beginning of the conversion of the island, to such a point that the apostle of the country, St. Patrick, saw himself obliged to forestall by wise precautions the disorders and scandals which might have arisen from the too close and frequent intercourse of the monks and nuns. At the same time, the first pontiffs and missionaries of Hibernia, strong in the exceptional purity of the Irish temperament, which has continued to our own day the glorious privilege of the race, and strong above all in their own fervour and exclusive passion for the salvation of souls, feared neither the society of the women they had converted, nor the charge of governing them when they wished to devote themselves to God. Less assured of themselves, if not more humble, their successors, those who are described as saints of the second order in the hagiographical annals of Ireland, declined the responsibility of administering the more or less numerous communities of virgins who grouped themselves around the older saints. They carried this restriction so far as to refuse access to their retreat even to recluses who came to seek the viaticum from them. However, the custom of combining the foundation, or at least the administration, of nunneries, along with that of similar communities of men, continued to prevail. But as the holy abbots declined to undertake the charge of nuns, the conditions had to be reversed. From this fact, no doubt, arose the singular custom universally established from the seventh century, not in Ireland, where I can find no example of it, but in all the Irish colonies, of two united communities, placed, not the nuns under the rule of an ecclesiastic, but the monks under that of the abbess of their neighbouring nuns.

Such was the state of things in the foundations which we have seen develop under the influence of St. Columbanus, the Irish apostle of the Gauls, in the Vosges, in the valley of the Marne and of the Seine; and such too are the conditions which we shall find in Belgium when we consider the monastic influence of the Irish and Britons there. The Anglo-Saxon princesses devoted to the cloister found this custom established in the houses where they received their monastic education in Gaul, at Faremoutier, les Andelys, Chelles, and Jouarre, and brought it into England, where it was immediately adopted; for of all the great nunneries of which we have spoken, not one was without a monastery of clerks or priests placed at the gates of the community of nuns, and ruled by their abbess. Let us recall only Whitby, where the Princess Hilda directed the monastery-school, the nursery of so many bishops and missionaries, but of which the cowherd-poet Ceadmon, so often quoted, remains the principal celebrity; and Ely, where Queen Etheldreda attracted by her example, and arrayed under her authority, not only holy priests, but even men of elevated rank in secular life. No doubt the necessity of providing for the spiritual wants, in the first place, of the numerous nuns who filled these monasteries, and of the lay population spread over the vast lands which the foundress, generally a princess of the reigning dynasty, conferred upon her community, contributed more than anything else to the extension of so singular a custom. The priests and clerks charged with this double mission found themselves naturally collected in a

sort of community under the authority of her who was at once the spiritual superior and the lady—the seigneuss, if such a word may be used—of the monastic lands. The whole together formed a sort of vast family, governed by a mother instead of a father, maternity being the natural form of authority—all the more so as the neophytes were often admitted with all their dependants, as was Ceadmon, who entered Whitby with all belonging to him, including a child of three years old, whom Bede describes as being nursed and cared for in the cell of the learned nuns of Barking.

The Greco-Asiatic Archbishop Theodore, when he came from Rome to complete the organisation of the Anglo-Saxon Church, does not appear to have relished this institution, which was not unknown to the Christian East, but which had probably left equivocal recollections behind it. In one of his charges he forbids all new foundations of this description, though respecting those which already existed. But, like so many other canons and decrees, his prohibition was disregarded; communities founded after his death, like Winbourne, were in full flower in the eighth century, and nothing indicates that double monasteries had ceased to flourish up to the general destruction of monasteries by the Danes at the end of the ninth century. They were swept away by that calamity, and no trace of them is to be found in the monastic revival of which King Alfred and the great Abbot Dunstan were the authors. It was a peculiarity belonging to the youth of the Church, which, like youth in all circumstances, went through all the difficulties, dangers, storms, and disorders of nature proper to that age, which disappear in maturer times.

This institution, however, is a new and very striking proof of the power of woman in the social order, a fact which we have already pointed out, following the example of Tacitus both among the Germans and Britons. Maintained, consolidated, and, in certain respects, sanctified by the Christian spirit among the Anglo-Saxons, it has remained very powerful in the race. It has produced that deference at once official and popular for the weaker sex, and, I willingly add, that public modesty of which the Anglo-Saxons of the present day in the United States give us so brilliant and honourable an example in their primary schools for boys, directed often in the midst of great cities by young girls, who are protected against all outrage, and even all sarcasm, by the universal respect of both fathers and sons.

Let us hasten to add that even at this primitive period no traces of the abuses or disorders which the suspicious spirit of modern criticism might summon into being are to be found. This is explained by the precautions everywhere to be met with when double monasteries existed, and which seem never to have been discontinued. The double family lived separate, in two buildings entirely distinct, though near. As a general rule the nuns did not leave their cloister, and the monks were strictly forbidden to enter the enclosure reserved to the nuns, without the permission of the abbess and the presence of several witnesses. At Winbourne, which must always be quoted as the type of establishments of this description, the two monasteries rose side by side, like two fortresses, each surrounded by battlemented walls. The austerity of primitive discipline existed in full vigour at the time when Lioba, who was destined, under the auspices of St. Boniface, to introduce conventual life among the women of Germany, resided there. The priests were bound to leave the church immediately after the celebration of mass, bishops themselves were not admitted into the nunnery, and the abbess communicated

with the external world, to give her orders to her spiritual and temporal subjects, only through a barred window.

Coldingham is the only great community of this kind mentioned in history, the memory of which is not irreproachable, a fact which has been already mentioned in treating of the historical position of the Northumbrian princess, Ebba, foundress of that house. It must, however, be fully granted that the scandals pointed out by the severe and sincere Bede are not such as we might be tempted to expect ; they are rather failures in obedience to the cloistral rule, than any infringements of Christian morality. These scandals, besides, whether small or great, were gloriously atoned for in the following century, when, under another Ebba, the nuns of Coldingham, to escape from the brutality of the Danish conquerors, cut off their noses and lips, and by their heroic self-mutilation added the palm of martyrdom to that of virginity.

With this single exception, the unanimous testimony of contemporary authors, as well as of more recent annalists, does full homage to the obedience to rule, the fervour, and even austerity of the double monasteries among the Anglo-Saxons. A great number of the most illustrious female saints, and prelates most distinguished by their virtues and knowledge, were educated in these communities, which were surrounded by universal veneration, and whose pure fame was never tarnished by the breath of calumny.

Is this to say that all was perfect in the monastic institutions of the country and time which I have undertaken to bring to the knowledge of the world? God forbid that I should thus attempt to deceive my readers. The more I advance in my laborious and thankless task — that is to say, the nearer I approach to my grave — the more do I feel mastered and overpowered by an ardent and respectful love of truth, the more do I feel myself incapable of betraying truth, even for the benefit of what I most love here below. The mere idea of adding a shadow to those which already shroud it fills me with horror. To veil the truth, to hide it, to forsake it under the pretence of serving the cause of religion, which is nothing but supreme truth, would be, in ray opinion, to aggravate a lie by a kind of sacrilege. Forgive me, all timid and scrupulous souls! But I hold that in history everything should be sacrificed to truth — that it must be always spoken, on every subject, and in its full integrity. The lying panegyric, where truth is sacrificed merely by leaving out what is true, is quite as repugnant to me as the invectives of calumny.

I have therefore sought with conscientious care for evidences of all the abuses and disorders which could exist in English monasteries, and especially in nunneries. If I have found almost nothing, it is not for want of having thoroughly searched through the historians and other writers of the time. I may then venture to conclude that evil, which is inseparable from everything human, has left fewer traces in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters than elsewhere.

I hesitate to insist with the same severity which was shown by the pontiffs and doctors of the time on the first of their complaints against the Anglo-Saxon communities, the excessive liking for rich and fine stuffs, in which certain nuns loved to dress themselves after having made them. These wonders of the distaff and broidery-needle, as they were used in the English cloisters, excited not only the anxiety but the indignation of the masters of spiritual life. Bede found nothing more serious to note in

the transgressions which were to draw down the wrath of Heaven upon Coldingham, Boniface, when he became archbishop and pontifical legate in Germany, did not hesitate to indicate this as one of the greatest dangers of monastic life. Aldhelm exerts all his rhetoric to preserve his friends at Barking from the revolting luxury displayed by the clergy of both sexes in their vestments, and especially by the abbesses and nuns, who wore scarlet and violet tunics, hoods and cuffs trimmed with furs and silk ; who curled their hair with a hot iron all round their foreheads ; who changed their veil into an ornament, arranging it in such a way as to make it fall to their feet ; and who, finally, sharpened and bent their nails so as to make them like the claws of falcons and other birds of prey, destined by nature to chase the vermin upon which they feed.

The Council of Cloveshove, however, justified these accusations by ordaining the monks and nuns to keep to the costume of their predecessors, and in particular to recall to their minds the simple and pure dress which they put on in the day of their profession, that they might no longer resemble by a too gay exterior the women of the world.

Let us pass on to facts of a graver nature. Do we not meet on our path some of those disorders which, in modern times, the religious orders have been accused of as unpardonable crimes? Has compulsion never been employed to impose monastic life upon the young Anglo-Saxons? I am led to suppose that such a thing must sometimes have occurred when I read in the Penitentiary of Archbishop Theodore that daughters whom their parents had compelled to become nuns should be exempted from all punishment, even spiritual, if they married afterwards.

Was the virginal modesty of these *brides of the Lord*, which the Anglo-Saxons, surrounded by so much national and popular veneration, always respected by those who occupied the first rank in the newly-converted nations, and for that reason ought to have shown them an example?

I am obliged to admit that this was not the case. Contemporary documents of unquestionable authority prove that more than one Anglo-Saxon king seems to have taken special pleasure in seeking his prey among the virgins consecrated to God. It is probable that the princes and nobles followed but too often the example of the kings. Besides divers instances which have retained a place in history, the many provisions of the penal laws under the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings, from Alfred to Henry I, against the rape of nuns—even when followed by subsequent marriage—and other outrages to their modesty, prove that such crimes were sufficiently well known to exact habitual and energetic repression. It is but too easy to imagine the fascination with which men still half barbarians must have been attracted towards the crowds of young girls, often beautiful and of high lineage, always pure, well educated, and trained in the utmost delicacy to which civilisation then reached, who were gathered together in the spiritual fortresses which might guard them against the temptations of secular life, but were ineffectual to protect them from the assaults of the great ones of this earth, traditionally accustomed to sacrifice everything to the gratification of their passions.

Still more surprising and afflicting are the decrees given by the principal spiritual legislators of the country, the great archbishops, Theodore of Canterbury and Egbert of York, which foresee and punish transgressions of cloistral continence in which violence

could have no part, and which lead us to suppose that such crimes might be committed even by those whose duty it was to watch over the purity of the sanctuary—those whose sacred character ought to have imposed upon them the strongest of all restraints—by priests and even bishops. Let us state, however, that, at least during the period of which we have spoken, history reports no known incident which gives support to the humiliating provisions of the law; and we may add that Archbishop Theodore might have brought from his Eastern home the fear or recollection of certain excesses and corruptions which were strange to the character and habits of the Northern nations, and have given them a place in his laws under the form of useful warnings. We should run the risk of falling into injustice and absurdity did we draw from such and such a provision of the penal code the conclusion that crimes thus stigmatised and punished were habitually committed by the nation which by its laws protested against them.

Impartiality, besides, requires us to remind our readers of all that has been already said in respect to the abuses that had crept into the monastic order from the time of lands worked to the profit of lay donors ridiculously tricked out in the title of abbot; and upon the false monks and nuns who inhabited these contraband monasteries, and lived there in every kind of disorder. To these pretenders, who, notwithstanding their known character, bore nevertheless the title of *monachi* or *sanctimoniales*, are no doubt to be most generally imputed the excesses assailed in the ordinances of the English metropolitans and by the letters of St. Boniface; and let us hope that the accusation conveyed in the terrible and untranslatable words of his letter to the king of Mercia, “*Illae meretrices, sive monasteriales sive saeculares*” may be referred to the same class. Finally, it may be added that the great apostle, who was inspired at once by love of religion and desire for the honour of his country, spoke only by hearsay; that his most violent accusations are tempered by expressions of doubt; and that he never himself complained on his own authority of anything he had personally known or seen before his departure for Germany, but only what had been carried to him by report, more or less well founded, during the course of his missions in Germany.

## V

The correspondence of St. Boniface, which is a precious and unique mine of information as to the ideas and institutions of the Teutonic races at their entrance into Christianity, reveals to us besides, in many aspects, the spirit which reigned in the cloisters inhabited by Anglo-Saxon nuns. Before as well as after his apostolic career in Germany, Winefred, the most illustrious monk in Essex, kept up frequent and intimate intercourse with the most distinguished nuns of his country. The letters which he wrote to them, and those which he received from them, acquired a double interest after his departure for the yet unexplored regions in which martyrdom awaited him. Only a very small number of them remains to us; but the few which have been preserved suffice to afford us a glimpse of what was passing in the souls of these generous, intelligent, and impassioned women, whose life was passed in the shadow of monasteries, and among whom the great missionary found not only devoted sympathy, but the most active and useful assistants.



It is evident, in the first place, from this picture, that all was not happiness and gentleness in the cloister. We are all apt to exaggerate both in the past and present the peace and serenity of religious life amid the storms either of the ancient world, so violent, warlike, and unsettled, or of modern society, so frivolous in its emotions, so servile, and so changeable in its servility. We are right to look upon the cloister as a nest suspended amid the branches of a great tree shaken by the winds, or like the inner chamber of a vessel beaten by the waves. It is in the midst of the storm, yet in it there is shelter; a refuge always threatened, always fragile, always perishable, but still a refuge. Outside is the noise of the waves, the rain, and the thunder; at every moment destruction is possible, or even near. But in the meantime the soul is safe; it is calm, protected, preserved, and sails on with humble confidence towards the port. Such a joy is sufficiently tempered by the sense of insecurity to be safe from becoming in itself a danger, a temptation to laxity or to pride.

But in this nest and in this bark, preserved from external tempests, how many storms and perils and sunken rocks are within! Even in the midst of the most peaceful and best regulated community, what a trial is there in the daily death of individual will! in the long hours of obscurity and silence which succeed to the effort and impulse of sacrifice! and in the perpetual sacrifice, continually borne, continually renewed! A modern master of spiritual life has said, with severe clear-sightedness, "The continuity alone of the exercises, which, although varied, have always something in them that goes against human inclinations, from the moment that they are done by rule and for the service of God, becomes very fatiguing". What a ray of pitiless light is thus thrown upon the weakness of the human heart! It accustoms itself to the rules, habits, and even to the most onerous obligations which have a purely earthly aim. But from the moment that it is a work for God, dislike appears. The difficulty must be met and surmounted day by day. This is the great exertion, and also the infinite merit, of cloistral life.

If this is the case even among our contemporaries, who have been so long fashioned by Christian education and discipline, what must have been the effect upon the Saxon maidens of the seventh and eighth centuries, sprung from a race still new and young in the ways of the Lord, and which was still so impetuous, so turbulent, so enamoured of its own strength, freedom, and untamed independence? To the material restraint, which, though voluntarily accepted, might well lie heavy upon them, were added other privations of which they had not perhaps calculated beforehand all the extent. Hence those restrained but incurable agitations, those cries of distress, those vague but ardent and impetuous desires, which break forth in the pages on which they poured out their hearts to the greatest and holiest of their countrymen.

It is to be regretted that these candid and eager souls had recourse to Latin to express their emotions and confidences. If they had employed their native idiom instead of a language which, though not dead, since it is the language of spiritual life, must have cost them many efforts ere they became familiar with it, we should no doubt have seen their thoughts flow forth more freely, precipitating themselves in tumultuous waves, in abrupt movements, bearing the characteristic mark of a powerful and impassioned originality, like the verse of Caedmon or the poem of Beowulf. Even under the artificial constraint imposed upon them by the use of Latin, the reader feels the swelling life and force of an original, sincere, and vehement nature.

The most striking peculiarity of these letters, in which unpractised hands reveal, in Latin more or less classical, and in superlatives more or less elegant, the agitations of their hearts, is the necessity they feel to express the tenderness, we might even say the passion, which animates them. The intensity of the affection which united some of them to each other may be imagined from the tender enthusiasm of language with which they address the monk who has gained their confidence. Here is an example taken from a letter written to Winefred, after the first success of his mission in Germany, by the Abbess Bugga, who is supposed to have been the daughter of a king of Wessex, and who was consequently of the same race as her illustrious correspondent : —

“I do not cease to thank God for all that I have learned by your blessed letter; that He has led you mercifully through so many unknown countries; that He has favourably inclined towards you the heart of the Pontiff of glorious Rome; that He has cast down before you the enemy of the Catholic Church, Radbod the Frisian. But I declare to you that no revolution of time, no human vicissitude, can change the state of my mind towards you, nor turn it from loving you as I am resolved. The fervour of love so inspires me, that I am profoundly convinced of arriving at certain repose by your prayers. I renew, then, my entreaties to you to intercede in favour of my lowliness with the Lord. I have not yet been able to obtain the Passions of the Martyrs, which you ask me for. I will get them as soon as I can. But you, dearest, send me, for my consolation, that collection of Extracts from the Holy Scriptures which you have promised me in your sweet letter. I beseech you to offer the oblation of the holy mass for one of my relations, called N., whom I loved above all. I send you by the bearer of these lines fifty sols and an altar-cloth; I have not been able to procure anything better. It is a little gift, but is offered you with great love”.

Boniface and the companions of his mission were not less affectionate and unreserved in their epistolary communications with their sisters in religion. He wrote to those whom he hoped to draw to his aid, and associate with himself in his apostolic work, as follows: “To my venerable, estimable, and dearest sisters, Leobgitha, Thekla, and Cynegilda, and to all the other sisters who dwell with you, and ought to be loved like you, in Jesus Christ, the salutations of an eternal affection. I conjure and enjoin you to continue to do what you have done in the past, and must do always — that is, pray God, who is the refuge of the poor and the hope of the humble, to deliver me from my necessities and temptations, I who am the last and least of all to whom the Church of Rome has intrusted the preaching of the Gospel. Implore for me the mercy of God that, at the day when the wolf comes, I may not fly like an hireling, but that I may follow the example of the Good Shepherd, and bravely defend the sheep and the lambs, that is to say, the Catholic Church with its sons and daughters, against heretics, schismatics, and hypocrites. On your side, in these evil days, be not imprudent. Seek with intelligence to know the will of God. Act manfully with the strength given you by faith, but do all with charity and patience. Remember the Apostles and Prophets who have suffered so much, and received an eternal recompense”.

A still more tender confidence seems to inspire him when he writes to the abbesses of the great English communities, and especially to Eadburga, who was to succeed St. Mildred in the government of the monastery founded by her mother upon the shore where St. Augustin landed. He calls her “blessed virgin and beloved lady,

accomplished mistress of the monastic rule”. He entreats her to pray for him while he is beaten about by all the storms which he must brave in the midst of heathens, false Christians, false priests, and licentious clerks. “Do not be displeased that I always ask the same thing. I must ask often for that which I desire incessantly. My troubles are daily, and each day thus warns me to seek the spiritual consolations of my brethren and sisters”.

As his task becomes more laborious his heart has more and more occasion to pour itself forth to his old friend. “To my beloved sister, the Abbess Eadburga, long interwoven with my soul by the ties of spiritual relationship. To my sister Eadburga, whom I clasp with the golden links of spiritual love, and whom I embrace with the divine and virgin kiss of charity, Boniface, bishop, legate of the Roman Church, servant of the servants of God ... Know that for my sins' sake the course of my pilgrimage is through storms; suffering and sadness are everywhere around me ; and the saddest of all is the snare laid by false brethren, which is worse than the malice of the unbelievers. Pray, then, to the Lamb of God, the only defender of my life, to protect me amidst all these wolves ... Pray, also, for these heathens who have been intrusted to us by the Apostolic See, that God, who desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, may deign to wrest them from idolatry and add them to our mother the Catholic Church. May the eternal rewarder of every good action make thee to triumph for ever in the glorious company of angels, my beloved sister, who by sending a copy of the Holy Scriptures has consoled the poor exile in Germany. The man who has to penetrate into the darkest corners of these nations cannot but fall into the snares of death, if he has not the word of God to light his steps. Pray, pray always, that He who from the highest heaven looks upon all that is humblest here below, may pardon me my sins, and grant to me when I open my mouth the eloquence that is needed to make the Gospel of the glory of Christ run and shine like a flame among the heathen nations”.

He wrote with not less effusion and tenderness to the Abbess Bugga, who, overwhelmed with trials in the government of her double monastery, had sought comfort from him, and who was anxious to complete her life by a pilgrimage to Rome. “To my beloved lady, the sister whom I love in the love of Christ, more than all other women, the humble Boniface, unworthy bishop ... Ah, dearest sister, since the fear of God and the love of travel have put between us so many lands and seas, I have learned from many what storms of trouble have assailed your old age. I am deeply grieved to hear it, and lament that, after having put aside the chief cares of the government of your monasteries, out of love for a life of contemplation, you should have met with crosses still more frequent and more painful. I write thus, venerable sister, full of compassion for your griefs, and full also of the recollections of your kindness and of our ancient friendship, to exhort and console you as a brother ... I would that you were always joyful and happy in that hope of which the Apostle speaks, which is born of trial and never deceives, I would that you should despise with all your strength these worldly troubles, as the soldiers of Christ of both sexes have always despised them ... In the spring-time of your youth, the father and lover of your chaste virginity called you to him with the irresistible accent of fatherly love; and it is He who, now that you are old, would increase the beauty of your soul by so many labours and trials. Meet, then, dearest friend, the sufferings of heart and body with the buckler of faith and patience,

that you may complete in your beautiful old age the work commenced in the flower of your youth. At the same time, I entreat you, remember your ancient promise, and do not cease to pray the Lord that He may deliver my soul from all peril ... Farewell, and be sure that the faith which we have sworn to each other will never fail”.

As to the project of the pilgrimage to Rome, he will not pronounce either for or against it, but he begs her to wait the advice sent to her from Rome by their common friend, an abbess named Wethburga, who had gone there to seek that peace of contemplative life for which Bugga sighed, but had found only storms, rebellions, and the threat of a Saracenic invasion.

The Anglo-Saxon monks who had accompanied the future martyr in his apostolic mission, rivalled their chief in the warmth of their expressions in their letters to their cloistered sisters. Lullius, who was to replace Boniface in the archiepiscopal see of Mayence, wrote, along with two of his companions, to the Abbess Cuneburga, a daughter of one of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, telling her that she occupied the first place above all other women in the innermost sanctuary of their hearts. The same Lullius wrote to the Abbess Eadburga, who was so dear to his master, begging her not to refuse him the sweetness of receiving letters from her, and to assure her that the spiritual brotherhood which united them made him capable of doing anything to please her. There still remains to be quoted a letter from an anonymous monk to a nun equally unknown, which has had the honour of being preserved through all these ages, along with the letters of St. Boniface; a fact at which we rejoice, for it throws a pleasing light upon the tender and simple emotions which filled those honest, humble, and fervent hearts by whom Germany was won to the faith of Jesus Christ : — “N., unworthy of a truly close affection, to N., greeting and happiness in the Lord : Beloved sister, though the vast extent of the seas separate us a little, I am daily your neighbour in my memory. I entreat you not to forget the words that we have exchanged, and what we promised each other the day of my departure. I salute you, dearest; live long, live happy, praying for me. I write you these lines not to impose my wishes arrogantly upon you, but humbly to ask for yours, as if you were my own sister, did I possess one”.

Tender and confidential as was the tone of the letters which arrived from Germany in the Anglo-Saxon cloisters, there seems to be something still more warm and intimate in the fragments which remain to us of those which were written in the cells of Winbourne, Minster, and many other monasteries, and which were sent from thence whenever a sure messenger presented himself, along with presents of books, vestments, spices, sacred linen, &c., to the monks engaged beyond the sea in the great work of the Teutonic missions.

One continually apparent feature in them, which we have already remarked, is an eager and unconquerable desire to travel, to go to Rome, notwithstanding the numerous and formidable obstacles which stood in the way of the pilgrimage, and the dangers of every kind to which women were exposed in undertaking it—dangers which Boniface and his companions had energetically pointed out. The last trace which remains to us of the exemplary activity of the illustrious Elfleda, abbess of Whitby, who died in 714, after sixty years of monastic life, is a letter of recommendation addressed to the daughter of the king of Austrasia, who was abbess of a monastery near Treves, in favour

of an English nun, whom she calls her daughter, as she had educated her from her youth ; she had detained her as long as she could for the good of souls, but at last had permitted her to satisfy her ardent desire of visiting the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul. One of the chief friends of St. Boniface, the Abbess Bugga, who must not be confounded with her whom we have just mentioned, had not only the strength and privilege of accomplishing that journey, but also the happiness of meeting him at Rome, from whence she returned safe to resume the government of her community.

A third Bugga, who is also called Eadburga, eagerly entertained the same desire, and expressed it in a long letter written to Boniface, jointly with her mother Eangytha, who was abbess of the monastery in which both lived. What was this monastery? Its situation is not ascertained, but it is probable that it was either Whitby or Hartlepool, or some other house situated on the rocks which overlook the Northern Sea: so entirely do the images employed both by the mother and daughter reveal a life accustomed to the emotions of a seashore. Both of them, while consulting him on their project, open their heart to him, and tell him of their trials ; and through their abrupt and incoherent style and faulty Latin thus afford us a glimpse of the agitations and miseries which too often trouble the peace and light of the cloister. “Loving brother”, they write, “brother in the spirit rather than in the flesh, and enriched by the gifts of the Spirit, in these pages, which you see bathed by our tears, we come to confide to you alone, and with God alone for a witness, that we are overwhelmed by the troubles accumulated upon us, and by the tumult of secular affairs. When the foaming and stormy waves of the sea break against the rocks on the shore, when the breath of the furious winds has roused the breadth of ocean, as the keel of the boats is seen in the air, and the masts under water, so the boat of our souls is driven about by a whirlwind of griefs and calamities. We are in the house which is spoken of in the Gospel : ‘The rain descended, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house’ (Matt. VIII. 25, 27). What afflicts us above all is the recollection of our innumerable sins, and the absence of any really complete good work. And besides the care of our own souls, we must bear, which is harder still, that of all the souls of every age and of both sexes which have been confided to us, and of which we must render an account before the judgment-seat of Christ, not only of their actions, but also of their thoughts, which are known to God alone! To which must be added the daily toil of our domestic affairs, the discussion of all the quarrels which the enemy of every good takes pleasure in sowing among men in general, and especially among monks and in monasteries. And besides, we are tormented by our poverty, by the small size of our cultivated lands, and more still by the enmity of the king, who listens to all the accusations made against us by the envious; by the taxes laid on us for the service of the king, his queen, the bishop, the earl, and their satellites and servants, — things which would take too much space to enumerate, and are more easily imagined than described. To all these distresses must be added the loss of our friends and relations, who formed almost a tribe, and of whom none remain. We have neither son, brother, father, nor uncle : we have no more than an only daughter, deprived of everything she loved in the world except her mother, who is very old, and a son of her brother, who is also unfortunate, though without any fault of his, because the king hates our family. There remains, therefore, not one person in whom we can put our trust. God has taken all from us by different means. Some are dead in their country, and wait in their dark graves the day of the resurrection and the last judgment, the day when envy shall be overcome and



consumed, and all mourning and pain shall disappear from the presence of the elect. Others have left their native shore to confide themselves to the plains of ocean, and to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs. For all these reasons, and for others which could not be told in a day, not even one of the long days of July or August, our life is a burden to us.

“Every being that is unhappy, and has lost confidence in himself, seeks a faithful friend to whom he can open his heart and pour forth all its secrets. Ah! how true is what they say, that nothing can be sweeter than to have some one to whom we can speak of everything as to ourselves! Now, we have sought for that faithful friend in whom we could have more confidence than in ourselves ; who should regard our pains and distresses as his own ; who should pity all our evils, and console them by his salutary counsels. Yes, we have sought him long. And at last we hope to have found in you this friend whom we have so long desired and eagerly hoped for.

“Oh that God would deign to carry us in the arms of His angel, as He did of old the prophet Habakkuk and the deacon Philip, into the far countries where you travel, and make us to hear the living word from your mouth, which would be sweeter to us than honey! But, since we do not deserve this, and that we are separated by land and sea, we will nevertheless use our confidence in you, brother Boniface, to tell you that for a long time we have desired, like so many of our kinsmen and friends, to visit that Rome which was once mistress of the world, to obtain the pardon of our sins. I, above all, Eangytha, who am old, and consequently have more sins than others, I have this desire. I confided my plan formerly to Wala, who was then my abbess and spiritual mother, and to my daughter, who was then very young. But we know that there are many who disapprove our intention, because the canons enjoin that each should remain where she has made her vow, and give account of that vow to God. Troubled by this doubt, we pray you, both of us, to be our Aaron, and to present our prayers to God, that by your mediation He may show us what will be most useful for us — to remain at home, or to go on this holy pilgrimage. We entreat you to answer what we have written to you in a style so rustic and unpolished. We have no trust in those who glorify themselves in the sight of man, but we have much trust in your faith and charity to God and your neighbours ... Farewell, spiritual brother, faithful, amiable, and beloved with a pure and sincere love. ... A friend is long sought, rarely found, and still more rarely preserved. Farewell; pray that our sins may not bring us misfortune”.

Let us now turn to the beautiful and learned Lioba (*die Liebe*, the beloved), and observe the means she took while still very young, from her convent at Winbourne, to make herself known to the great man who afterwards called her to his aid to introduce the light of the Gospel and monastic life among the German nations : —

“To the very reverend lord and bishop, Boniface, beloved in Christ, his kinswoman Leobgytha, the last of the servants of God, health and eternal salvation. I pray your clemency to deign to recollect the friendship which united you to my father Tinne, an inhabitant of Wessex, who departed from this world eight years ago, that you may pray for the repose of his soul. I also recommend to you my mother Ebba, your kinswoman, as you know better than me, who still lives in great suffering, and has been for long overwhelmed with her infirmities. I am their only daughter; and God grant,

unworthy as I am, that I might have the honour of having you for my brother, for no man of our kindred inspires me with the same confidence as you do. I have taken care to send you this little present, not that I think it worthy your attention, but that you may remember my humbleness, and that, notwithstanding the distance of our dwellings, the tie of true love may unite us for the rest of our days. Excellent brother, what I ask you with earnestness is, that the buckler of your prayers may defend me from the poisoned arrows of the enemy. I beg of you also to excuse the rusticity of this letter, and that your courtesy will not refuse the few words of answer which I so much desire. You will find below some lines which I have attempted to compose according to the rules of poetic art, not from self-confidence, but to exercise the mind which God has given me, and to ask your counsel. I have learned all that I know from Eadburga, my mistress, who gives herself to profound study of the divine law. Farewell : live a long and happy life ; intercede for me.

“May the Almighty Judge, who made the earth. And glorious in His Father’s kingdom reigns, Preserve your chaste fire warm as at its birth, Till time for you shall lose its rights and pains”.

Beside the celebrated Liobe, let us quote an unknown nun, who calls herself Cena the Unworthy—*Pontifici Bonifacio Christi amatori Cene indgna*—but who writes to the great apostle with a proud and original simplicity which goes to my heart, and which I thank the ancient compilers for having preserved along with the letters of the great apostle. “I confess, my dearest”, she says, “that, seeing you too seldom with the eyes of my body, I cease not to look at you with the eyes of my heart ... And this I declare, that to the end of my life I shall always recollect you in my prayers. I entreat you, by our affection and our mutual faith, to be faithful to my littleness, as I shall be faithful to your greatness, and to help me by your prayers, that the Almighty may dispose of my life according to His will. If one of your people ever comes to this land, let him not disdain to have recourse to my poverty ; and if I can render any service, either spiritual or temporal, to you or to others, I will do it with all my might, to the great profit of my soul”.

This letter was addressed to Boniface, then a bishop, very probably by one of those whom he had transplanted from England into Germany.

Let us now listen to another Anglo-Saxon maid, a contemporary of his youth, Egburga, whom some suppose to have been that daughter of an East Anglian king who was the abbess and friend of St. Guthlac. She wrote to Boniface while he was still abbot of an English monastery, to confide to him her private griefs— “To the holy abbot and true friend, Winifred, full of knowledge and religion, Egburga, the last of his pupils, eternal greeting in the Lord. Since I have known the blessing of your affection, it has remained in my soul like an odour of incomparable sweetness. And though I may be henceforward deprived of your temporal presence, I do not cease to embrace you as a sister. You were already my kind brother; you are now my father. Since death, bitter and cruel, has snatched from me my brother Oshere, whom I loved more than anybody in the world, I prefer you to all other men. Neither night nor day passes that I do not recall your lessons. Believe me, for God is my witness, I love you with a supreme love. I am sure that you will never forget the friendship which united you to my brother. I am good

for very little, and much inferior to him in worth and in knowledge; but I yield nothing to him in my affection for you. Time has passed since then; but the heavy cloud of sorrow has never left me. On the contrary, the longer I live the more I suffer. I have proved the truth of what is written, that the love of man brings grief, but the love of Christ lights the heart. My heart has received a new wound by the loss of my dearest sister Wethburga. She has suddenly disappeared from my side—she with whom I grew up, who has sucked the same milk, as I call Jesus to witness”.

Here the poor nun, no doubt desiring to show to her ancient master that she was not unworthy of his lessons, proceeds to quote Virgil : —

“Crudelis ubique

Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago”

But she quotes wrongly without perceiving it, as has been the case with two or three terrible solecisms which occur in the preceding part of her letter. After which she continues : —

“I should have wished to die had God permitted it. But it is not cruel death, it is a separation still more cruel which has withdrawn us from each other; she to happiness, as I believe, but I to misfortune, since she has left me as a sort of pledge to the service of the world, while she whom I love so much is now shut up, according to what I hear, in I know not what prison in Rome. But the love of Christ which blossoms in her heart is stronger than all bonds. She will ascend the strait and narrow way, but I am left lying in the depths, enchained by the law of the flesh. In the day of judgment she will sing joyously with the Lord, ‘I was in prison, and thou visitedst me’. You too, in that day, will sit where the twelve apostles sit, and will be proud, like a glorious chief, of having led before the tribunal of the eternal King so many souls won by your labours. But I in this valley of tears weep for my sins, which have made me unworthy of such company.

“For this reason the seaman, beaten by the tempest, does not long to enter the port, nor do the parched fields thirst for rain, nor the mother wandering along the winding shore in the agonies of suspense await her son, with more anxiety than that I feel in my desire once more to enjoy your presence. My sins prevent it, and I am in despair. But, sinner as I am, prostrated at your feet, I implore you from the bottom of my heart—I cry to you from the ends of the earth—blessed lord, that you will carry me to the height of the rock of your prayers, for you are my hope and my citadel against the enemy visible and invisible. To console my great grief, to calm the waves of my trouble, to give some support to my weakness, send me help, either in the form of holy relics or at least by words from your hand, however short, that I may always look at them as at yourself”.

Thus we see how warm still were the natural affections in these impetuous hearts, without wronging the new bonds of friendship and fraternity which religious life, with its active and extended connections in the spiritual order, developed in them. The invaluable collection of the Epistles of St. Boniface enclose several letters from Anglo-Saxon nuns to their brothers, always in Latin, and in very unclassical Latin, but all

bearing the marks of tender and sincere affection. "To my only and beloved brother", writes one of these, who describes herself as the least of the servants of Christ. "How, dearest brother, can you make me wait for your coming so long ? Do you never think that I am alone in the world? that no other brother, no other relation, comes to see me ? You do this, perhaps, because I have not been able to do all I wished for your service; but how can you so forget the rights of charity and kindred ? Oh, my brother, my dear brother, why do you thus by your absence fill with sadness my days and nights? Do you not know that no other living soul is more dear to me than you are? I cannot say in writing all that I would; and, besides, I feel that you have ceased to care for your poor little sister".

The name of the writer of these words is unknown; and the name, bat nothing more, is known of another nun whose only brother was among the companions of Boniface. She would not be comforted for his absence, and poured out her sadness in writing to her brother with a poetic and pathetic voice which recalls the wail of St, Radegund, two centuries earlier, in her convent at Poitiers, when thinking of the troubles of her youth. Our Anglo-Saxon nun also attempted to interpret in Latin verse the sorrows of her heart. But her verses are far from having the merit of those which Fortunatus placed at the service of the abbess-queen of St. Croix. Her prose is at once more correct and more touching. "To Balthard, my only brother, loved in the Lord, and more loved than any one in the world ... I have received with tender gratitude the message and gifts which you have sent me by your faithful messenger Aldred. I will do, with the help of God, everything you tell me, but on the condition that you will come back and see me. I cannot exhaust the fountain of my tears when I see or hear that others meet their friends again. Then I recall that I was forsaken in my youth by my parents, and left alone here. Nevertheless I have not been forsaken by God, and I bless His almighty mercy that He has preserved your life as well as mine. And now, dearest brother, I implore and beseech you, deliver my soul from this sadness, which is very hurtful to me, I declare to you that even if you only stayed with me one day and left me the next, grief would vanish from my heart. But if it is disagreeable to you to grant my request, I take God to witness that never at least shall our tenderness be betrayed by me. Perhaps you would prefer that I should go to you instead of awaiting you here. For myself, I should willingly go where the bodies of our parents rest, to end my life, and to rise from that spot to the country of those beings whose peace and joy are eternal ... Farewell, dear servant of the cross, beloved of your sister; keep your good fame for ever".

On other occasions she writes again : "My soul is weary of life, because of my love for you. I am here alone, forsaken, deprived of all kindred. My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord hath taken me up. Between you and me there is that gulf of great waters of which Scripture speaks ; but we are united by love, for true love is never overcome, neither by space nor time. At the same time I acknowledge that I am always sad. My soul is troubled even in sleep, for love is strong as death. Now I beseech you, my beloved brother, come to me, or let me go to you, that I may see you again before I die, for the love of you will never leave my heart. My brother, your only sister greets you in Christ. I pray for you as for myself day and night — every hour and

every minute ... I pray weeping and stretched on the earth, that you may live happy here below, and that you may become a saint”.

I pity those who, either from sceptical contempt for all religious tradition, or modern rigorism, can listen with indifference or contempt to the cries of love and grief which sprang more than a thousand years ago from the depth of those Anglo-Saxon cloisters, and which attest, before and after so many other witnesses, the immortal vitality of the affections and wants of the human heart, in all climates and all forms of society. What can be more touching than these outbursts of human tenderness amid the rude kindred of the Anglo-Saxons, and under the rugged bark of their wild nature ? What more interesting than the effort of these souls to interpret, in a language which they supposed more cultivated than their own, the emotions which moved them, and, above all, to renew themselves continually in the truths and precepts of the Christian faith, which had for so short a time taken the place of the worship of their fathers among them! For my own part, I listen, across past centuries, to these yearnings of the heart, to these voices of the soul, with interest a thousand times greater than to the victories and conquests which have absorbed the attention of historians; and I offer up my heartfelt thanksgivings to the biographers of the saints and the editors of their works for having infolded in their volumes, like flowers in an herbal, these early traces of human love and the storms that assail it.

“It would be singular”, says the austere and tender Lacordaire, “if Christianity, founded on the love of God and men, should end in withering up the soul in respect to everything which was not God ... Self-denial, far from diminishing love, nourishes and increases it. The ruin of love is self-love, not the love of God; and no one ever met on earth with affections stronger and purer, more ardent, more tender, and more lasting than those to which the saints gave up their hearts, at once emptied of themselves and filled with God”.

## VI

But the storms of the heart, like the storms of life, have an end, which is death—that death which delivers from everything—which crowns and sometimes explains everything. How did our Anglo-Saxon nuns die? As far as we can make out, they died happy and even joyous, without contradicting or giving up the tender affections which had agitated their hearts and animated their life. It would be a mistake to suppose that they only, or that even they the first, among the monastic classes of old, kept up those beautiful and holy friendships to their last days. St. Gregory the Great has preserved to us the recollection of the noble Roman, Galla, daughter of the patrician Symmachus, who became a nun in a monastery near the Basilica of St. Peter, and being attacked by a fatal illness had a vision three days before her death. The prince of the apostles appeared to her in a dream and announced to her that her sins were pardoned. She would not content herself with that supreme grace, but ventured to ask from her holy protector that another nun, Sister Benedicta, whom she loved most in the community, might die with her. The apostle answered that her friend should not die at the same time, but should follow her in thirty days. The next morning Galla told the superior what she had seen



and heard, and everything happened as she said. The two friends at the end of a month were united by death.

The great Abbess Hilda, of whom we have spoken so much, and who was for thirty years the light and oracle of Northumberland, had also in her community a favourite nun, or one, at least, who loved her, says Bede, with a great love. This nun had not the happiness of dying at the same time as her friend. But when the holy abbess, who had been consumed for seven years by a cruel fever, which did not for a single day interrupt the exercise of her spiritual maternity, came at last to the end of her trials—when she had given up her last breath in the midst of her daughters collected round her bed to hear the last exhortation, in which she besought them to keep the peace of the Gospel between them and all men,—her friend, who was at that moment detained in the novitiate, in a distant corner of the monastic lands, had the consolation of seeing in a dream the soul of Hilda led to heaven by a shining train of angels.

*Laeta mortem vidit* : she saw death with joy. These words, spoken by Bede of St. Hilda, seem to have been applicable to all the female saints, and even to all the nuns whose recollection he has preserved to us. There was one at Barking, who, after having been for long the humble and zealous assistant of the first abbess, Ethelburga, was warned of the death of that abbess, her friend, by a vision, in which she saw her dear Ethelburga wrapt in a shroud which shone like the sun, and raised to heaven by golden chains which represented her good works. Deprived of her spiritual mother, she lived for nine years in the most cruel sufferings, in order, says Bede, that the furnace of this daily tribulation might consume all the imperfection that remained among so many virtues. At last paralysis assailed all her members, and even her tongue. Three days before her death she recovered sight and speech: she was heard to exchange some words with an invisible visitor. It was her dearest Ethelburga, who came to announce to her her deliverance. “I can scarcely bear this joy”, said the sick woman; and the following night, freed at once from sickness and from the bondage of the flesh, she entered into everlasting joy”.

A monument which is called the Maidens’ Tomb is still shown in the fine church of Beverley; it is the grave of two daughters of an earl, a benefactor of the great abbey of St. John, who had taken the veil there. On Christmas night, according to the legend, they were the last to leave the midnight mass, and did not reappear in their stalls. After the service of the following night, the abbess, made anxious by their absence, went to look for them, and found them asleep in each other's arms. When they woke it was found that they supposed themselves to have slept only an hour, and had dreamt of paradise. They went down to the choir, and there, kneeling before the abbess, after having asked and received her benediction, died, still embracing each other.

One of the most celebrated heathens of our century, Goethe, died asking for light. “More light!” these were, it is said, his last words. They recur to the mind involuntarily, when we read of the happy and joyful death of these virgins, sweet and full of light, who prepared, in the depths of their cloisters now despised or forgotten, the conversion of the country of Goethe. Light above all, a heavenly and supernatural light, floods over their deathbeds and their tombs.

These visions full of light, and these happy deaths, seem to have been specially accorded to our Anglo-Saxons, and not only to those who died upon their native soil, but also to those who had passed their lives in foreign cloisters. At Faremoutier, in France, the daughter of a king of Kent, Earcongotha, of whom we have already spoken, had edified all the inhabitants by the miracles of her virtue. Being warned of her approaching end, she went from cell to cell in the infirmary of the monastery asking for the prayers of the sick nuns. She died during the following night at the first glimpse of dawn. At the same hour the monks who occupied another part of the double monastery heard a sound like the noise of a multitude, who to the sound of heavenly music invaded the monastery. When they went out to see what it was, they found themselves in a flood of miraculous light, in the midst of which the soul of the foreign princess ascended to heaven.

In the same cloister at Faremoutier, where the daughter of the kings of Kent, the grandchild of Clovis and Ethelbert, thus lived and died, a humble lay-sister, also an Anglo-Saxon, had, like her royal companion, a joyous presentiment of her death, and a shining train of angels to escort her to heaven. One day when Willesinda (as she was called) worked in the garden of the monastery with the other lay-sisters, she said to them, "One of those who cultivate this spot is about to die; let us then be ready, that our tardiness may not injure us in eternity". They asked her in vain which one of them it should be. Soon after, she fell ill, and during all her sickness she looked up to heaven with eyes shining with happiness, repeating long passages from Holy Scripture, though she had never learned them by heart. Like the cowherd-poet whom the Abbess Hilda brought into monastic life and to a knowledge of the Bible, she astonished all present by repeating to them the Old and New Testament in their order.

After this she began to sing with wonderful sweetness the services as she had heard them sung by the priests. Then all at once she said to her amazed companions, "Room, room, for those who are coming!". No one was seen to enter, but conversation was heard, which the sick woman kept up, bowing her head with an expression of respect and joy. "Welcome, my dear ladies, welcome", she said. "To whom are you speaking?" they asked her. "What!" she answered, "do you not recognise your sisters who have left this community for heaven? Look, Anstrude, there is Ansilda, your own sister, who has been long dead. She is clothed with the white robe of the elect". After this she breathed her last, and the choir of angels was immediately heard coming forth to meet the saved soul.

But it was especially among the learned ladies of Barking, in the monastery which had made so warm a response to the classical teachings of Aldhelm and Boniface, that death was sweet and radiant. During the great pestilence of 664, which so cruelly desolated the new-born Church of England, the nuns went out one night from their church, at the end of matins, to pray at the grave of the monks who had preceded them into the other world, when all at once they saw the entire sky lighted up and cover them all as with a radiant shroud. They were so terrified that the hymn they were singing died on their lips. This light, which was more brilliant than that of the sun, guided them to the burying-place in which they were themselves to rest, and then disappeared ; and they understood that it showed them at once the heaven which awaited their souls, and the spot of earth in which their bodies were to await the day of resurrection.

Among those who died in so great a number during this fatal year, there are two whose humble memory the Anglo-Saxon historian has not scorned to mingle with his narrative of the political and military events of Essex and East Anglia. One of them was still in perfect health, when she was told that a little child, who had been received and taken care of by the sisters, had just died, and with its last breath had called her thrice, "Edith! Edith! Edith!". Immediately she lay down on her bed, and died the same day, to follow her innocent forerunner to heaven.

Another, who was very young, but had been long ill, and was now in extremity, commanded those who watched her to carry away the lamp. "Put it out — put it out", she said, without ceasing, though she was not obeyed. "You suppose me mad, but I am not mad, and I tell you that I see this house full of such a light that your lamp troubles me with its obscure glimmer." Afterwards, when nobody would listen to her, she resumed : "Light your lamps then, and keep them as long as you please. But as for me, I have no need of your light; mine is elsewhere, and at dawn it will come for me". At dawn she was dead.

## VII

History has retained but these few names, and it is not without difficulty that even these can be gleaned from chronicles and legends. The veil of forgetfulness and indifference has fallen between us and the distant centuries. That great fire, lighted by faith and charity in the souls of so many new and fervent Christians, is now extinguished; a few feeble rays scarcely reach us through the night of ages. That great garden of fragrant flowers, of blessed and glorious fruit, is now seen and enjoyed only by God ; scarcely does a passing breath waft to us the faint lingerings of its perfume. Myriads of souls, candid and worthy, simple and delicate, sweet and fervent, which must have peopled these immense and numberless monasteries of old, will never be known to us! How many young and touching lives are thus buried in the darkness of forgetfulness, until the day when before the assembled universe they shall shine with the brightness of everlasting glory!

But in those distant ages they formed, for the honour and consolation of their country and the Church, a great army, numerous, hardy, and dauntless, bearing the glorious ensigns of sacrifice with magnanimous serenity and humble fervour. They confessed victoriously before the new-born Christianity and the beatenback barbarism of their age, as their sisters in the present time confess, in the face of our overproud civilisation, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the atonements of suffering, and the immortal empire of the soul over inferior nature.

In all these noble maids, betrothed to God, there appears a sort of courage and strength which is above their sex. It is the special attribute of monastic life to transfigure human nature, by giving to the soul that which is almost always wanting to it in ordinary existence. It inspires the young virgin with an element of manfulness which withdraws her from the weaknesses of nature, and makes her at the necessary moment a heroine; but a soft and tender heroine, rising from the depths of humility, obedience, and

love, to reach the height of the most generous flights, and to attain everything that is most powerful and light-giving in human courage. It fills the heart of the true monk and true priest with treasures of intelligent compassion, of unlimited tenderness, of gentleness unmingled with laxness, and of an unremitting patience such as the heart of woman alone seems capable of containing. And sometimes to both, to the bride of God and to His minister, to the heroine of charity and to the master of doctrine and preaching, it adds by a supernatural gift the incomparable charm of childhood, with its artless and endearing candour; then may be seen upon a living countenance that simplicity in beauty, and that serenity in strength, which are the most lovely array of genius and virtue. Thus it happens by times that all that is most grand and pure in the three different types of humanity, the man, the woman, and the child, is found combined in one single being, which accomplishes all that a soul can do here below to rise from its fall, and to render itself worthy of the God who has created and saved it.

I speak in the present tense, for all this exists still, and is found and repeated every day in the bosom of our modern civilisation.

Every trace of the ancient world of which we have been endeavouring to seize an impression, has disappeared—everything has perished or changed, except the army of sacrifice. The vast and magnificent edifice of the ancient Catholic world has crumbled hopelessly to pieces. There will rise, and already, indeed, there does rise, a new world, which, like the ancient, will have its own greatness and its own littleness. But that of which we have just told the history has lasted, still lasts, and will endure for ever.

Twelve centuries after the Anglo-Saxon maids whose devotion we have related, the same hand falls upon our homes, upon our desolate hearts, and tears away from us our daughters and sisters. Never since Christianity existed have such sacrifices been more numerous, more magnanimous, more spontaneous, than now. Every day since the commencement of this century, hundreds of beloved creatures have come forth from castles and cottages, from palaces and workshops, to offer unto God their heart, their soul, their virgin innocence, their love and their life. Every day among ourselves, maidens of high descent and high heart, and others with a soul higher than their fortune, have vowed themselves, in the morning of life, to an immortal husband.

They are the flower of the human race—a flower still sweet with the morning dew, which has reflected nothing but the rays of the rising sun, and which no earthly dust has tarnished—an exquisite blossom which, scented from far, fascinates with its pure fragrance, at least for a time, even the most vulgar souls. They are the flower, but they are also the fruit; the purest sap, the most generous blood of the stock of Adam; for daily these heroines win the most wonderful of victories, by the manliest effort which can raise a human creature above all earthly instincts and mortal ties.

Have you seen in March or April a child breathing in the first fresh breath of nature, the first gleam of admiration lightening in his bright eyes as they meet the gleam of awakening life in the woods and fields? There does the spring-time of life meet with the spring-time of nature, and to witness this meeting is a delight and a charm. But still more enchanting and more enrapturing by far, a rapture by which the soul is borne away to the utmost height of human emotion, is the sight of a virgin creature already budding

into womanhood, radiant with youth and beauty, who turns away from all the fragrance of life to breathe only the breath, and look only towards the glories, of heaven.

What a scene is this! And where can one be found which manifests more clearly the divine nature of the Church, or which throws more entirely into the shade the miseries and stains with which its heavenly splendour is sometimes veiled ?

But, let us again repeat, this sight is afforded to us everywhere, not only in our old and unhealthy Europe, but in that America which all generous spirits regard with hope and confidence. Wherever the Gospel is preached, wherever a crucifix is raised, everywhere does Christ, with His irresistible arm, pluck and uproot these earthly flowers to transplant them nearer to heaven.

Spoilers and oppressors may in vain resume their persecutions, which are daily predicted and provoked by the writers of revolutionary Caesarism. Devoted and outlawed chastity will resume its task. In the garrets or cellars of the palaces inhabited by the triumphant masters of the future, over their heads or under their feet, virgins will be found who shall swear to Jesus Christ to belong only to Him, and who will keep their vow, if necessary, at the cost of their life.

In this age of laxity and universal languidness, these gentle victors have kept the secret of strength, and in the weakness of their sex, let it once again be repeated, they exhibit the masculine and persevering energy which is wanting in us, to attack in front and to subdue the egotism, cowardice, and sensuality of our time and of all times. They accomplish this task with a chaste and triumphant hardihood. All that is noble and pure in human nature is led to the fight against all our baseness, and to the help of all our miseries. Speak not of the charms of a contemplative life, of the peaceful joys of meditation and solitude. These are but the lot of few. Nowadays the great self-devoted crowd throws itself into quite another path. They rush forth to the rescue of the most repulsive and tedious infirmities of poor human nature, lavishing upon them unwearied cares; they swarm wherever they are wanted to cultivate the deserts of ignorance and of childish stupidity, often so intractable and restive. Braving all disgusts, all repugnance, all denunciations and ingratitude, they come by thousands, with dauntless courage and patience, to win, caress, and soothe every form of suffering and of poverty.

And, along with their strength, they have light, prudence, and true insight. They understand life without having experienced it. Who has taught them all these sad secrets? Who has taught these beings, at once so pure and so impassioned, at an age when the heart begins to be consumed by an insatiable thirst for human sympathy and human love, that such a thirst will never be satisfied in this world? Who has revealed to them the disgraceful frailty of earthly affections, even of the noblest and sweetest, the fondest and most deeply rooted, even of those which believed themselves everlasting, and held the greatest place in the hearts out of which they have miserably perished? Nothing but a divine instinct which frees them by withdrawing them from us. They are delivered from that withering amazement of the soul which meets disappointment, betrayal, and scorn instead of love, and sometimes, after so many struggles and so many delusions, the silence of death in the fullness of life. They have forestalled their enemy, unmasked, baffled, and discomfited him. They have escaped for ever : “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the net of the fowlers : the snare is broken, and we are escaped”.



Thus they go bearing off to God, in the bloom of youth, their hearts, full of those treasures of deep love and complete self-renunciation which they refuse to man. They bury and consume their whole life in the hidden depths of voluntary renunciation, of unknown immolations.

When this is done, they assure us that they have found peace and joy, and in the sacrifice of themselves the perfection of love. They have kept their hearts for Him who never changes and never deceives; and in His service they find consolations which are worth all the price they have paid for them—joys which are not certainly unclouded, for then they would be without merit, but whose savour and fragrance will last to the grave.

It is not that they would forget or betray us whom they have loved, and who loved them. No; the arrow which has pierced our hearts, and remains there, has first struck through theirs. They share with us the weight and bitterness of the sacrifice. Isolation from the world is not insensibility. It is only a false spirituality which makes the soul hard, arrogant, and pitiless. When religion dries up or hardens the heart it is but a lying tyranny. Here, in true sacrifice, in supreme self-mortification, human affection loses none of its rights. They are all respected, but all purified, all transformed into an offering to God, who has promised to comfort us more than a mother — “So shalt thou be son of the Most High, and He shall love thee more than thy mother doeth”. The warmth of tenderness, afflicted yet so pure, so straightforward, and so sure of itself, glows forth in every word, in every look. The blessedness of belonging to God will never close a noble heart to the griefs of others, or deprive it of any generous emotion. That heart becomes, on the contrary, more tender and more closely entwined to those it loves in proportion as it is entwined into a closer bond with the heart of Jesus.

Is this a dream? — the page of a romance? Is it only history — the history of a past for ever ended? No; once more, it is what we behold and what happens amongst us every day.

This daily spectacle we who speak have seen and undergone. What we had perceived only across past centuries and through old books, suddenly rose one day before our eyes, full of the tears of paternal anguish. Who will not pardon us for having, under the spell of that everlasting recollection, lengthened, perhaps unreasonably, this page of a long uncompleted work? How many others have also, like ourselves, gone through this anguish, and beheld with feelings unspeakable the last worldly apparition of a beloved sister or child?

One morning she rises, she comes to her father and mother — “Farewell! all is over”, she says; “I am going to die—to die to you and to all. I shall never be either a wife or a mother; I am no more even your child—I am God’s alone”. Nothing can withhold her. “They immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him”. Lo! she comes already arrayed for the sacrifice, brilliant and lovely, with an angelic smile, fervent and serene, blooming and beaming, the crowning work of creation! Proud of her last beautiful attire, bright and brave, she ascends to the altar, or rather she rushes—she flies like a soldier to the breach, and, hardly able to keep down the impassioned ardour which consumes her, she bows her head under the veil which is to be a yoke upon her for the rest of her life, but which will also be her eternal crown.

It is done. She has crossed the gulf with that impetuous bound, that soaring impulse, that magnanimous self-forgetfulness, which is the glory of youth, with that pure and unconquerable enthusiasm which nothing here below will ever equal or extinguish.

Who, then, is this invisible Lover, dead upon a cross eighteen hundred years ago, who thus attracts to Him youth, beauty, and love? who appears to their souls clothed with a glory and a charm which they cannot withstand? who darts upon them at a stroke and carries them captive? who seizes on the living flesh of our flesh, and drains the purest blood of our blood? Is it a man? No: it is God. There lies the great secret, there the key of this sublime and sad mystery. God alone could win such victories and deserve such sacrifices. Jesus, whose godhead is amongst us daily insulted or denied, proves it daily, with a thousand other proofs, by those miracles of self-denial and self-devotion which are called vocations. Young and innocent hearts give themselves to Him, to reward Him for the gift He has given us of Himself; and this sacrifice by which we are crucified is but the answer of human love to the love of that God who was crucified for us.

