

# SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI: HER LIFE AND LEGISLATION

BY  
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UNIVERSITY OF  
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# SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI

AND

## THE FIRST POOR LADIES OF THE ORDER OF SAINT DAMIAN

### PART I

#### *THE LIFE OF SAINT CLARE*

#### CHAPTER I

Of Saint-Clare's kinsfolk : the testimony of contemporary witnesses—Celano, the author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*, Alexander IV, in the bull of canonization and in the primitive office, Cardinal Ugolino. What later mediæval writers say—the author of the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*, Marianus of Florence, Pietro Rodolfi of Tossignano. Concerning the fables of Wadding and of his disciples ancient and modern.

"THIS is that happy and holy place," says Thomas of Celano, referring to the convent of Saint Damian, "this is that holy and happy place wherein, not quite six years after the conversion of Blessed Francis and through his efforts, the glorious religion and most excellent order of poor ladies first began. The foundation stone is stronger and more precious than all the other stones of the pile—to wit, the Lady Clara, bright in name, more bright in life, most bright in conversation. She is a native of Assisi, of noble birth and by grace nobler, a virgin most pure in heart, young in years but hoary in resolution, very steadfast of purpose, but withal wise and meek and a marvellous lover of God."

The above passage occurs in the eighth chapter of Celano's first life of Saint Francis, a work which was in all probability written at Assisi and completed in the spring of the year 1229. At this time the Seraphic Mother was about five-and-thirty years of age, she was actually residing at Assisi, in the old convent

B

## ST. CLARE OF ASSISI

of St. Damian, just outside the city walls, and all the Assisi world was talking of her recent triumph over John Parenti, the general of the Franciscan order, of which later on.

"The admirable woman Clara, whose name signifieth brightness and the light of whose glorious life doth shine in every land, was the child of an illustrious house of the little town of Assisi; she was the fellow citizen of Blessed Francis on earth, and in Heaven they reign together. Her father was a knight and all her kinsmen of like rank—an influential clan, and rich in all those things that are accounted riches in the land wherein she dwelt." "Her mother's name was Ortolana, and she, destined to bring forth a most prolific little plant for Christ's garden, was herself fruitful in good works. For notwithstanding household cares and the marriage yoke, she found time for the service of God and to cherish Christ in His poor. Nay, she crossed the sea for the sake of devotion, and traversed the places which the footsteps of the God-Man had sanctified, and returning with joy to her native land must needs visit Saint Michael in his shrine on Mount Gargano and undertake a pilgrimage to the threshold of the Apostles. And when at last she was with child and her hour was almost at hand, whilst she was praying before the Cross in church to the Crucified to preserve her from the great pain and peril of childbirth, behold she heard a voice saying, 'Fear not, woman, for thou shalt bring forth a light in safety that shall enlighten the whole earth,' and thus it came to pass that when presently a maid-child was born she called the babe Clara, hoping that the words of the oracle would one day be fulfilled."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The complete passage in the original runs thus :—

*Admirabilis femina, Clara vocabulo et virtute, de civitate Asisii, claro satis genere traxit originem : beato Francisco primum concivis in terris, conregnans postmodum in excelsis. Pater ejus miles et tota utroque parente progenies militaris ; domus abundans, et copiosae, juxta morem patriae, facultates. Mater ejus nomine Ortulana, fructiferam in orto Ecclesiae plantulam paritura, fructibus bonis et ipsa non mediocriter abundabat. Nam quamvis maritali jugo subdita, quamvis curis familiaribus alligata, vacabat tamen proposse divinis obsequiis, insistebat operibus pietatis. Ultra mare siquidem cum peregrinantibus devota transivit, et loca illa perlustrans, quae Deus homo sacris vestigiis consecrarat, tandem cum gaudio remeavit. Iterum ad S. Michaëlem Archangelum causa orationis accessit, et Apostolorum limina devotius visitavit.*

*Quid plura ? Ex fructu arbor cognoscitur, et fructus ex arbore commendatur. Praecessit in radice divini copia muneris, ut in ramusculo sequeretur abundantia sanctitatis. Praegnans denique mulier, et partui jam vicina, cum ante crucem in ecclesia Crucifixum attente oraret ut eam de partus periculo salubriter expediret, vocem audivit dicentem sibi : ne paveas mulier, quia quoddam lumen salva parvities, quod ipsum mundum clarius illustrabit. Quo edocta oraculo, natam infan-*

Thus, in substance, Celano (if Celano be indeed the author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*) in the opening chapter of the legend. He adds later on that the Lady Ortolana, from whose lips Saint Clare had learned the rudiments of the Christian faith, in her old age herself became a nun and dwelt in her daughter's convent, a widow amongst virgins, renowned as a worker of miracles. He mentions too, once, a paternal uncle of Saint Clare's, the Lord Monaldo, a very violent man, and more than once a sister, Agnes, of whom he tells us many things, and this is all that he has to say concerning his heroine's family.

Pope Alexander IV is even more reticent: he informs us that Saint Clare was a native of Assisi, of noble birth but nobler conversation, that her mother's name was Ortolana, and that this most skilful gardener, who had set so excellent a graft in God's orchard, at last planted herself in the walled garden of St. Damian's where she happily ended her days. Also he refers briefly to the story which Celano has told us of the heavenly voice, but is sufficiently cautious not to vouch for the truth of it. The following is what he says: "His et quamplurimis aliis operibus et miraculis haec venerabilis Virgo resplenduit gloriosis, ut evidenter appareat adimpletum illud, quod de ipsa mater ejus, dum esset ex ea gravida, et oraret, dicitur audivisse: videlicet quod paritura erat quoddam lumen, quod orbem plurimum illustraret."

In the office of Saint Clare that was drawn up about the time of her canonization in 1255, and of which Salimbene says, writing some twenty years later, that Pope Alexander himself composed the collects and the hymns,<sup>1</sup> we find more than one allusion to the Seraphic Mother's family. Her sister Agnes's name is mentioned twice in the psalm antiphons of Lauds—

Ant. 2. Agnes ad Agni nuptias,  
Et aeternas delicias,  
Post Claram evocatur :  
Ubi per Sion filias  
Posttransitas miserias,  
Aeternae jubilatur.

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tulam sacro baptismate renascentem, Claram vocari jussit, sperans promissi luminis claritatem pro divinae beneplacito voluntatis aliquo qualiter fore complendam.

<sup>1</sup> See *Cronica Fratris Salimbene*, Holder-Egger edition. Hanover 1905, page 383: "Alexander papa canonizavit Sanctam Claram et fecit hymnos ejus et collectas," and again on page 453: "Hic beatam Claram cathologo sanctorum ascripsit, quam beatus Franciscus convertit ad Christum. Et fecit collectas ejus et hymnos."

Ant. 3. Sicut sorore praevia,  
Christi passi vestigia  
Sectatur, gaudens cruce :  
Sic, dum haec signis rutilat,  
Agnes post ipsam vigilat,  
Deus, ad te de luce.

Again, in the fourth stanza of the vesper hymn it is said that Clare was the scion of an illustrious stock—*Claris orta natalibus*—and in the third stanza of the sequence<sup>1</sup> that her glorious deeds were worthy of her glorious ancestors. Also in the same stanza the story of the miraculous voice is hinted at—

Clara stirpe generata  
Claris claret actibus.  
Nominata nec dum nata  
Et praeventa laudibus.

We have only one other contemporary witness—Cardinal Ugolino—better known as Pope Gregory IX. He was one of Saint Clare's most intimate friends, and doubtless he knew as much as she herself knew of her kinsfolk and their social standing, but the most that can be gathered from his writings on this score amounts to very little and adds nothing to what we have already learnt from the lips of Alexander and Celano. What follows is the gist of his evidence: Saint Clare and her sister Agnes were women of noble race, who for Christ's sake had exchanged ample means for abject poverty.

The above information is contained in two very curious and characteristic letters, one addressed to Honorius III and the other to Saint Clare herself. If these faded parchments tell us next to nothing of the Seraphic Mother's lineage, they are eloquent as to several things of greater moment, and in another chapter we shall have to examine them carefully.

In that delightful, but not always reliable, work, *The Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*, which seems to have been completed somewhere about the year 1379, we find, along with several other lives of Franciscan worthies, a life of Brother Rufino, one of the founder's first disciples,<sup>2</sup> which is thus headed—

<sup>1</sup> In this curious and beautiful sequence Pope Alexander epitomizes, and I think very cleverly, the entire legend of Saint Clare's life as contained in his bull of canonization.

<sup>2</sup> According to a note in the Kalendar of St. Francis's book of hours, which is still preserved in the convent of St. Clare at Assisi, Rufino was the second disciple of St. Francis.

*Vita fratris Rufini consanguinei Sanctae Clarae.* In the text of this life Rufino is called *Frater Rufinus Cipii*, and it contains the following passage in reference to him: *Qui cum esset de nobilioribus civibus Assisii, consanguineus Sanctae Clarae.* . . . Also in the chronicle itself we have: *Frater quoque Rufinus, nobilis consanguineus Sanctae Clarae.*

The above sentences from the life of Rufino were written by a scribe unknown many years after Rufino's death—at least fifty, may be a hundred or more;<sup>1</sup> and the assertions therein contained are not made by any earlier writer. Albeit they are not in themselves incredible, and no evidence has come down to us that tends either directly or indirectly to render them suspect. But even if it be true that Brother Rufino was a noble citizen of Assisi whose surname was Cipius, or something like it, and that he was a kinsman of Saint Clare, it does not follow, as some have too hastily concluded, that the Seraphic Mother's family name was Cipius, much less Scefi, or even that Cipius was Rufino's family name: *consanguineus* does not always signify a kinsman on the father's side—it is not unfrequently used to denote any kind of blood relation; and who shall say whether Cipius was Rufino's patronymic or whether it was a surname peculiar to himself?

Our next witness is Fra Mariano da Firenze, a devout son of Saint Francis and the writer of several books which have never been printed and for centuries have been ignored. He was born at Florence in the middle of the fourteen hundreds, and died of the plague whilst tending the sick in the pest-house of his native city, on the 20th of July, 1523. He seems to have been an honest man, and he was evidently a painstaking writer. He began to write about 1480, and he continued to do so almost till the day he died. He was no doubt well informed of the doings of his own day in his own neighbourhood, but, like most other historians, he is not always to be trusted concerning past events.

On the first page of the book which contains his evidence as to Saint Clare's parentage runs the following inscription: *Libro delle dignità et excellentie dell' ordine della Seraphica madre delle povere donne sancta Chiara da Asisij, composto per Frate Mariano da Firenze nel loco di sancto Gerolamo presso Volterra anno 1518.*

<sup>1</sup> Rufino died, according to Wadding (who is not always to be trusted), in 1230, and in the *Vita Fratris Rufini* Blessed Conrad's death is referred to, which took place, according to the same author, on December 12, 1306.

This book, then, was written in 1518 at the Franciscan monastery of Saint Jerome near Volterra.

Now on the 12th of June, 1256, Alexander IV ratified a privilege of exemption from episcopal control which had recently been granted by Raynerio, bishop-elect of Volterra, to the abbess and sisters of the Clare Convent of Saint Mary and Saint Francis in the same city; Sbaralea<sup>1</sup> gives the text of this brief according to the original, which, when he wrote (about 1759), was still in the hands of the Poor Ladies of Volterra. It follows, then, that in Mariano's day, not far from the place in which he dwelt, there was an old Clare convent that had been founded perhaps in St. Clare's lifetime, certainly within three years of her death, and I think it may be taken for granted that he gathered much of the material for his book on the Second Order from the venerable traditions and from the ancient parchments of this time-honoured house.

Was there in the nuns' library a Life of Saint Clare, which has not come down to us, by Saint Bonaventure or which Mariano believed to be by Saint Bonaventure? At all events he quotes him as his authority for saying that Saint Clare bade good-bye to the world four years after Saint Francis's conversion, and I cannot recall any passage in the Seraphic Doctor's writing in which such a statement is made. However this may be, our friend was acquainted with the contemporary life of Saint Clare, now generally attributed to Celano, and, what is more, he had no doubt whatever that it was written by Celano, for he alleges in favour of her great perfection *l'autorità del santo discipolo di S. Francesco Frate Tomaso da Celano, il quale per autorità d'Alessandro papa quarto scrisse la sua legenda*, etc. For the rest, it is likely enough that Mariano had access to various original documents which have not come down to us, or at all events have not yet been discovered. But too much weight must not be attached to his uncorroborated assertions on this account, because it is certain that he also had under his eyes papers we still possess, and that sometimes he misinterpreted them. Thus much for the witness and the sources of his information, now for what he has to say concerning Saint Clare's family.

He tells us what Celano has told us, and adds that her father's

<sup>1</sup> The reader will kindly note that unless otherwise indicated all diplomatic documents referred to in this book are to be found in full in Sbaralea's *Bullarium Franciscanum*. They are arranged in chronological order.

Christian name was Favorone, and that when Pope Celestine III was sitting on Saint Peter's throne, in the year of our Lord 1193, the Lady Ortolana brought forth her firstborn, the glorious virgin Saint Clare, that four years later she presented her lord with a second daughter, Agnes, and the following year with a third, who was called Beatrice.

Trifles these, if you will, but what follows is of moment, for it changes the received legend of Saint Clare's life materially—removes from it a stumbling-block which has more than once given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. For if what Mariano says be true, it was not on account of her father's opposition that Saint Clare was constrained to flee from home at midnight and by a back door and to take the veil in secret, and in refusing later on to return to the world she in no sense disobeyed him, for the worthy knight had been in his grave for many years when these things happened: he died when St. Clare was about nine years old, and when she became a nun she was already nineteen. Neither can she be blamed or praised (for some on this account have praised her) for disregarding her mother's wishes in the matter of her vocation, for, though he does not say so expressly, Mariano distinctly suggests that Ortolana did not disapprove of her daughter's choice of life.

What are we to think of these statements concerning Saint Clare's parentage, and, first of all, that which is the most important of all: that her father passed from this present life when she was still a child? There is this much in its favour. So far is it from clashing with anything set forth by St. Clare's first biographers, that several writers of our own day, who had no knowledge of Mariano's work, have deduced what he there affirms as to the death of Favorone from what is said and from what is left unsaid in the bull of canonization, and more especially in the legend attributed to Celano, and I myself, from studying these works, came to a like conclusion long before I had made Mariano's acquaintance.

As to his further statements—that Saint Clare had a second sister, Beatrice, and that her father's name was Favorone—no earlier writer mentions these things, and Pietro Rodolfi da Tossignano, who lived half a century later, tells us another tale, but after all it matters little whether they be false or true. Albeit Tossignano must not be left on the shelf, for he talks of other things as well as Christian names, and what he says is significant,

and so, too, is what he omits to say. This man, as he himself informs us in the work which contains his evidence as to Saint Clare's family, was born at Tossignano, a little town of no small fame at the foot of the Apennines in the plain of Imola, in 1537. He was the son of Pietro Rodolfi and Gallitia Pogia, his lawful wife, who were gentlefolk of moderate means, and he adds with manifest satisfaction that his paternal grandfather was a knight who for many years had been keeper of the Castle of Forli for Catherine Sforza. Fra Pietro joined the Franciscan Religion in his early youth, in due course he became warden of the convent of San Francesco at Bologna, and at the time when he wrote about Saint Clare he was acting in a like capacity at Venice. He was the author of numerous theological and devotional works, and later on he became Bishop of Senigallia on the Adriatic, in the March of Ancona. He used to occupy his leisure time in collecting all that he could find concerning the origin and growth of the Seraphic Religion; of his notes he made a book which he dedicated to Sixtus V, on the 12th of September, 1586, and printed and published at Venice in the same year in three volumes: "*Historiarum Seraphicæ Religionis libri tres*," and on page 132 B of the first of them, he tells us that Saint Clare's great-grandfather was one Paul, an Assisi man of good estate, that he had a son called Bernard, who in his turn begat three sons—Paul, Favorino (not Favorone) and Monaldo, warriors all of them without violence, without bluster, men of mild complexion; and that Favorino of his lawful wife, the Lady Ortolana, begat two daughters—Clare and Agnes.

In the original Latin this passage runs thus—

"Fuit B. Clare . . . proavus Paulus quidam bonæ conditionis Assisias, cujus filius Bernardus nomine tres filios suscepit, Paulum, Favorinum, Monaldum qui milites fuerunt sine vi, sine tumultu, studio, et voluntate humani. Favorinus ex domina Hortulana ejus conjugæ suscepit duas filias Claram et Agnetem."

The reader will note that whilst Favorino and his brethren are here described as knights and with emphasis, nothing whatever is said as to the state of life of their father Bernard, and that the words used to denote the social position of great-grandfather Paul could be applied, indeed, to a man of rank, but also, and no less aptly, to a plain citizen who had made his way in the world.

It would seem, then, if Tossignano was well informed, that

Saint Clare was not the descendant of a long line of noble ancestors, but the daughter of a man who had been ennobled, of a knight who had no doubt won his spurs on the field of battle. But was Tossignano well informed? Who shall say? All that can be said is that his testimony is the testimony of Celano, with certain supplementary details which cannot be verified, but are not incredible and are not in contradiction with anything that Celano says, save only in the case of Uncle Monaldo's temper.

Thus much for Fra Pietro's statements, now of the things he neglects to say. He says nothing of the fact, legend, fable—call it what you will—that the Seraphic Mother was a scion of the time-honoured race of Scefi. He keeps silence concerning the tradition that the Lady Ortolana belonged to the historic house of Fiumi; nor does he tell us that Saint Clare's father was Count of Sasso Rosso—a mighty feudal keep of which some fragments still remain perched on a crag not far from the summit of the great mountain which swells up gently from the plain of Spoleto.

Perhaps the good folk of Assisi had not yet begun to talk of these things in Tossignano's day.

There was a time when illustrious birth was so highly esteemed that the possession of it increased the glory even of the greatest saints; and when sanctity was likewise held in such repute that to be akin to one who had earned the honours of the altar added not a little to the credit even of princes. In those days at Assisi there were great folk who believed, and perhaps rightly believed, that they were of the same stock as Saint Clare; and also, genealogists who were not troubled with scruples. It was during this period that the legends above referred to concerning Saint Clare's family were for the first time committed to writing.

The Scefi story comes to us through Wadding, who had it, he says, from a certain citizen of Assisi—*ab cive Assisiato*—in 1625 or thereabout. Alas! there is reason to think that Assisi was never the home of any family, gentle or simple, with this patronymic. The Fiumi statement and the Sasso Rosso statement are from sources unknown, and reach us through later channels. All these things and many more which rest on no surer basis, which can neither be proved by documentary evidence nor the evidence of tradition, are repeated by writers to-day without so much as a hint that perhaps they may not be true; and not

only in pious manuals—wherein no man looks for historical exactitude—but also in the writings of men of letters who are critics of note and specialists in things Franciscan—men from whom one expects, even in trifles of this kind, something approaching to accuracy.

## CHAPTER II

Of certain noteworthy dates according to contemporary evidence : Saint Clare died on the 11th of August, 1253. She began to reside at Saint Damian's in the summer of 1211. She renounced the world earlier in the same year—on the night of Palm Sunday. She was in all probability born in 1193.

THE date of Saint Clare's death is known to us from the clear and precise testimony of a witness beyond suspicion, who was actually at Assisi when she died, and with her, most likely, a few hours before she breathed her last : that scrupulously punctilious lover of dates, Niccolò di Carbio (Calvi in Umbria), friar minor, friend, confessor and biographer of Pope Innocent IV, and, at the time we are now considering, Bishop of Assisi. This is what he says : "On the day of the octave of our Lord's Resurrection, Anno Domini 1253 [April 27], it being the tenth year of his pontificate, the Pope left Perugia and came to Assisi . . . and he sojourned there all that summer together with his whole household in the convent of the Blessed Confessor Francis, where the saint's most holy body rests . . . and twice like a kind father of much compassion and meekness he visited on her sick bed the illustrious Lady Clare, first Abbess of the cloistered nuns of the order of Saint Damian, who afterwards—on the feast of Saint Rufino—was happily called by the Lord to another life." The Latin text runs thus : "Recedens postmodum de Perusio ipse papa Dominica die octavarum resurrectionis Domini anno Domini MCCLIII pontificatus sui anno X venit Assisium . . . et moratus est tota illa aestate cum omni sua familia in loco beati confessoris Sancti Francisci, in quo loco corpus ejus sanctissimum requiescit . . . Dominam autem Claram, vita claram et nomine, primam abbatissam dominarum monialium inclusarum ordinis Sancti Damiani in infirmitatis suae lectulo decubantem bis tanquam pius pater et multae compassionis et mansuetudinis visitavit. Quae postmodum die festi beati Rufini a Domino feliciter ad vitam aliam est vocata."

Saint Rufino is the patron saint of the cathedral church of Assisi, and in the twelve hundreds his festival was celebrated throughout the diocese, as it is still on the eleventh day of August. Witness

the following note from the Kalendar of Saint Francis's famous book of hours in the convent of Santa Chiara, an undoubtedly genuine relic: "Aug. 11 (iii Idūs Augusti) S.S. Tiburtii et Susanne" (this in red ink, and added in black in another hand): "Eodem die S. Rufini epi. et m."

Bishop Carbio's testimony as to the day of the month on which Saint Clare died is confirmed by Celano, who, however, with his usual lack of precision, neglects to mention the year. "On the morrow of Blessed Lawrence," he says, "her most holy soul went forth." Saint Lawrence's Day, the reader will call to mind, is the 10th of August.

I think, then, that it is quite certain that the Seraphic Mother died on Aug. 11, 1253.

Now we learn from Celano that at the time of her death Saint Clare had spent forty-two years in the convent of Saint Damian's: "Here," he says, "she found shelter from the storm of the world, and here she remained as long as she lived, shut up, as it were, in a dungeon for love of Jesus Christ. Here, in a hole in the wall like a most fair dove, she made for herself a nest, and brooding over it with silver wings, presently hatched out the Order of Poor Ladies. Here in the way of penance she crushed the clod of the flesh, sowed the seed of righteousness, set a most excellent example for them that should come after her. In this little place for forty-two years she broke with the scourge of discipline the alabaster box of her body in order that the good odour of the spikenard might fill the whole house of God's Church."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if Celano is to be trusted, Saint Clare began to reside at Saint Damian's somewhere about the month of August 1211. Albeit, according to Alexander IV, she had dwelt in another convent, according to Celano in two other convents, before she came to St. Damian's. What, then, was the date of her dramatic flight from home?

In the thirty-ninth chapter of his *Legenda Sanctae Clarae* (De infirmitatibus ejus et languore diutino) Celano says: "For forty years Blessed Clara had run in the race of sublime poverty, when behold, by reason of her multiplied infirmities, at last she began to near the goal of her heavenly vocation." Now a few lines further on he makes it quite clear that the time to which he here refers

<sup>1</sup> In hoc arcto reclusorio per XLII annos disciplinae flagellis frangit sui corporis alabastrum, ut domus Ecclesiae repleatur fragrantia unguentorum.—*Legenda Sanctae Clarae* (ed. Pennacchi c. 10, p. 16).

was shortly before the papal court left Lyons for Perugia; the date of this event is made known to us by Bishop Niccolò di Carbio, who was in attendance on the Pope during his sojourn in France, and returned with him to Italy. "We set out from Lyons," he says, "on the evening of the Wednesday in Easter week 1251." Hence it follows that Saint Clare began her religious life some time during the spring of the year 1211. Thomas of Celano enables us to fix the exact date—almost the exact hour: it was during the night following Palm Sunday, he tells us, that this lowly virgin gave the world a bill of divorce and espoused herself to heaven. This is the first of the few dates in Saint Clare's life that can be fixed with anything like certainty.

That she was still young when she took the veil there can be no doubt, Celano says so explicitly over and over again; we have, too, the evidence of the primitive office and of the bull of canonization, but no contemporary writer tells us in what year she was born. Albeit we learn from Celano's story of her home-life that upon a certain occasion she refused the hand of a suitor whom her kinsfolk favoured, and it would seem, less from what he actually says than from his manner of telling the tale, that Saint Clare was at this time on the threshold of womanhood, and also that only a short while—an interval rather of weeks than of months—separated these events: her refusal of the unwelcome suitor and her farewell to the world. It is likely, then, that Fra Mariano was not far wrong in assigning the Seraphic Mother's birthday to the year 1193. In any case she can hardly have been born earlier than 1190 or later than 1196.

### CHAPTER III

Concerning the moral complexion of Christendom at the opening of the twelve hundreds. Of the cockle in God's field and of the wheat ; of the good work done by philanthropic associations—the Hospitalers of Saint Anthony, the Crutched Friars, the Noble Order of Fontevrault, Saint Norbert's White Canons, Beguines and Beghards, the Umiliati. Of the flourishing condition of the contemplative orders when Saint Francis began to preach, and of some great mystics who were likewise men of the world.

THE Seraphic Mother, as we have seen, was born somewhere about the year 1193, and since, as Celano has it, she touched "the mark of the prize of her high calling" on the 11th of August, 1253, the days of her life fulfilled a large half of that century which a writer has not inaptly called the twenty-first year of the middle age. The world of Europe was young in those days, and, like a youth on the verge of manhood, impulsive, sanguine, keen, inclined to be sentimental, imaginative enough to dream dreams, and sufficiently foolish to think it worth while to make violent efforts to realize them. The Church, we are told, was a veritable sink of corruption, the gates of hell had prevailed against her, and she stank in men's nostrils: "Le clergé avait des mœurs aussi corrompues que jamais et rendait impossible par là toute réforme sérieuse. Si parmi les hérésies, il y en avait de pures et d'honnêtes, il en était beaucoup d'absurdes et d'abominables. Quelques voix s'élevaient bien ça et là pour protester, mais les prophéties de Joachim de Flore pas plus que celles de Sainte Hildegarde n'avaient pu enrayer le mal. Luc Wadding, le pieux annaliste franciscain, a commencé son ouvrage par cet effrayant tableau. Le progrès de recherches historiques permet de le refaire avec plus de détails, mais la conclusion reste la même: sans François d'Assise, l'Eglise aurait peut-être sombré, et les Cathares auraient été vainqueurs. Le *petit pauvre*, chassé par la valetaille d'Innocent III, sauva la chrétienté."

And what are we to think of this delicately painted miniature? Consider the man who made it: it is the work of Paul Sabatier, and therein his individuality is impressed. He is a painstaking and resourceful historian, a brilliant and imaginative writer; full of poetry and enthusiasm, his touchstone of truth is intuition, and he

is a staunch believer and skilled master in stage effect. Nursed in the strait school of Calvin, for some time a Lutheran preacher, he now believes in Saint Francis, and has become the chief hierophant of his fashionable cultus outside the Church. Also, it would seem, he is firmly convinced of the infallibility of Wadding. In the introduction to his *Vie de Saint François* he has jotted down some instructive remarks on the writing of history; some of them he forgot as the work progressed, as we shall see, and some of them he did not forget, notably this: "Pour écrire l'histoire il faut la penser, et la penser, c'est la transformer." No comment is needed—and this: "L'amour est la véritable clef de l'histoire." If it be, no man can doubt that Monsieur Sabatier possesses it, at least in the case of Saint Francis, but I venture to think that, so far as concerns the question we are now considering, the state of the Church, that is, at the beginning of the twelve hundreds, *l'amour* has proved his *pietre d'achoppement*. For, prompted by the folly of love, carried away by an excess of devotion, he has thought to exalt the Seraphic Father by belittling his predecessors, to magnify his grand achievements by diminishing theirs, or by exaggerating the difficulties under which he laboured; and though Saint Francis needs no foil to emphasize the beauty of his holiness, though his halo would not be dimmed by a background of arch-angels, Monsieur Sabatier has deemed it expedient to depict him surrounded by fiends. And note, the above quotation from the *Vie de Saint François* is only the prelude to a treatise in which the author develops his ideas in detail and at length. He arraigns the Church at the bar of history and holds, or seems to hold, a brief for the prosecution. Perfectly convinced of the guilt of the accused, he desires at the same time to appear perfectly just—nay, it is pain and grief to him to show that she is such a poor polluted thing, and any little circumstance which can be alleged in her favour he is quite ready to admit. He summons many witnesses, examines them with acumen and skill, and the unfavourable conclusions which he draws from their evidence he presents to the jury with tears in his voice. This, however, is not the rôle which Monsieur Sabatier conceives himself to be playing: he is only a looker-on who has come into court by chance: "Il a rassemblé un dossier et voudrait dire tout simplement son opinion à ses voisins." It is a pity that his dossier is incomplete, strange that all his papers point in one direction, unfortunate that he should have been so oblivious of some of his own maxims on the

writing of history. This, for example: "Le premier devoir de l'historien est d'oublier son temps et son pays pour devenir le contemporain ému et bienveillant de ce qu'il raconte"; and this: "Dans une histoire comme celle-ci" (*La Vie de Saint François*) "il faut tenir grand compte du génie italien: il est évident que dans un pays où on appelle une chapelle *basilica*, une bicoque *palazzo*, où en s'adressant à un séminariste on lui dit Votre Révérence, les mots n'ont pas la même valeur que de ce côté-ci des Alpes."

The ethical standard of the twelve hundreds—an age emerging from barbarism—differed in several respects from the ethical standard of to-day: some things which are now universally regarded as grave transgressions were often then held to be of comparatively trivial account, and vice versa. Moreover, material sin is not necessarily formal sin, and only formal sin entails moral degradation.

Whatever may have been the custom in earlier days, it is certain that when Hildebrand began his campaign in favour of sacerdotal celibacy a large number of the clergy of the Western Church, bishops as well as priests, were openly living in wedlock; and it is also certain that the violent measures which he took against the married clergy, when presently he himself was seated in Peter's chair, raised throughout Europe a storm of opposition. And note this: amongst those who fought for milder measures were churchmen of repute, devout, conscientious, pure. They were for the most part in the ranks of the secular clergy, but some of them wore the cowl. More than one great provincial council held about this time suffered married priests to retain their wives: the Synod of Rouen, for example, in 1063, of Lisieux in 1064, of Rouen again in 1072, of Winchester, presided over by the saintly Lanfranc, himself a monk, as late as 1076, and there were others. And had it not been for Hildebrand and his iron will, and the untiring zeal of Cluny—in those days a power in Christendom—it is likely enough that the milder discipline of the Eastern Church in this respect—a discipline, be it borne in mind, which is still observed not only by the schismatic East but also by the Eastern Churches which are in union with the Holy See—would have prevailed also in the West permanently.

But though clerical celibacy at last became the recognized law of the Latin Church, some of the bishops for a long time were unable or unwilling to enforce it; and some of Saint Gregory VII's successors seem to have been less eager than he that they should

do so. At all events at the opening of the twelve hundreds, and for many years afterwards, there were still in Italy and elsewhere not a few married clergymen.<sup>1</sup>

Herein we have the explanation of many, perhaps most of the stories that have come down to us concerning the unclean lives of the secular clergy in the days when Saint Francis began to preach. And in the eyes of zealots and perhaps, too, in the eyes of the law, the married priest was a fornicator; for these same zealots, and perhaps, too, again, according to the strict letter of the law, the prelate who owed his appointment to the favour of some temporal prince was no less surely a simonist; and this, I suspect, is the origin of half the charges of simony made against the prelates of this period. It was a time of transition: the reins of ecclesiastical government were being gradually drawn tighter, and some were inclined to kick at it; in the opinion of these men the old ways were pleasanter.

What, then, are we to think of the historian who deems it his first duty to forget his own land and his own time and become the sympathetic and benevolent contemporary of the facts which he relates, and who, nevertheless, keeps silence concerning these things?

Of course, all the charges of corruption and laxity of life brought against the clergy of the eleven hundreds by contemporary scribes are not covered by the cases of the prelates who owed their preferment to outside influence, and of the parish priests who were married. "That there was much moral darkness in this period," as a recent writer has it, "no student of history will deny; but that darkness was its chief, if not only, characteristic, no student of history may assert." Albeit Monsieur Sabatier does not hesitate to say: "Pour se faire une idée de la dégradation de la plupart des moines, il faut lire, non pas les apostrophes souvent oratoires et exagérées des prédicateurs, obligés de frapper fort pour émouvoir, mais parcourir les recueils des bulles, où les appels en cour de Rome pour des assassinats, des viols, des incestes, des adultères reviennent presque à chaque page." Well, I suppose, from his long stay in Italy, our learned friend has himself become

<sup>1</sup> The bull *Pro salute procuranda fidelium* by which Pope Clement IV on the 12th of February, 1266, authorized the Franciscans of the German province to accept the hospitality of married priests, *clericorum concubinas tenentium*, when no more suitable shelter was available, is noteworthy in this connection. (See Eubel—*Bullarii Franciscani Epitome*, No. 1252, p. 125.)

Italianate. Evidences of corruption there certainly are in the volumes to which he refers, but it is not true to say that they are to be found on almost every page; and why is no count to be taken of the *génie Italien* in the case of official documents—letters of Italian Bishops, bulls of Italian Popes, Southerners, too, some of them, like Innocent III and that stalwart old Pontiff his nephew, Gregory IX, a man most easily moved to tears and to laughter, and who, whether he praised or whether he blamed, was always in the superlative, one who invariably used burnished gold for his high lights and lamp-black for his shadows. And was Salimbene not an Italian, and was he not, too, an inveterate gossip of the Saint Simon tribe, with as vivid an imagination and as sharp a tongue? Are this man's lickerish stories to be taken *au pied de la lettre*? For certain grave charges against parish priests he is Monsieur Sabatier's only witness; and mark this: Salimbene was born on the 9th of August, 1221; he wrote his reminiscences between the years 1282 and 1287, and the title of the chapter in which our friend quotes him is "*l'Église vers 1209.*"

"There was a man in the land of Vienne whose name was Gaston. He was a mighty man and rich, a warrior from his youth upwards, and he feared God. And the finger of God touched him, and he fell sick of Saint Anthony's fire, which at that time was raging in those parts; and in his anguish he cried to Saint Anthony, who delivered him from the jaws of death. Whereat, rejoicing in Christ, he set out with his son Guerin for the saint's shrine at Saint Didier de la Mothe to offer thanks. And as they journeyed thither the young man fell sick of the sacred fire; but Gaston vowed to the Lord that if his son should be spared he would henceforth spend himself and his substance in God's service; and at the same moment the fever left him. That night Gaston lay on his bed considering these things, and when sleep came to him there came, too, Saint Anthony with his tau-headed crutch in his hand and arrayed in his sheepskin. 'But why,' said the old man, 'why take thought for the body which to-day is and to-morrow shall be cast into the pit? Albeit, since thou wouldst have it so, I prayed to Christ for thy son, and Christ has vouchsafed to hear me. Wherefore make good thy promise.' Then, handing him his staff, 'plant it,' he said, 'in the soil.' Gaston did so, and forthwith it became a tree with spreading branches and leaves and fruit and most fair flowers; and soon crouching in the shade of it was a vast multitude afflicted with leprosy and other foul diseases;

and as Gaston gazed and wondered, all of them were made whole, such virtue was there in the fruit and in the flowers of that life-giving tree. 'Dost know the meaning of it?' said Saint Anthony, with a smile; 'the tree is the order which thou shalt found. Serve God in His sick.' On the morrow Gaston related the vision to his son, and soon they built a hospital at Saint Didier to which they devoted the whole of their substance, and wherein they spent the rest of their days in the service of the afflicted."

Thus, it is said, began the great order of the Hospitalers of Saint Anthony, an order which was at first composed exclusively of laymen who took no vows, and which obtained official recognition almost as soon as it was founded. The rule was confirmed by Urban II in 1096.

Fostered as it was by kings and prelates, this little plant took root and grew almost as fast as the tree in Gaston's dream; before the close of the eleven hundreds the Hospitalers had houses in all the chief towns of Europe, and they had lost nothing of their fervour when Saint Francis began to preach. He lodged in one of their convents when he came to Rome, in 1209, to beg Pope Innocent III to confirm his rule. Saint Bonaventure describes this place as the hospital of Saint Anthony near the Lateran; it was about a quarter of a mile from the Lateran, for the chapel is still standing, not a stone's throw from the old church of Santa Maria Maggiore.

"These men," says Jacques de Vitry of the Antonines, writing some thirty years later, "these men, by forcing themselves to it, endure amidst filth and foul smells such grievous hardship for Christ's sake that no kind of penance which the wit of man can devise can for a moment be compared with their holy martyrdom—most precious in God's sight."

When Saint John of Matha was saying his first Mass, so runs the legend, he saw an angel in white raiment with a cross on the breast in red and blue, who stretched out his arms, as it were, to protect two captives, one a white man and the other a Moor. And when he had come to himself, for the youth was rapt in ecstasy, he went forth alone and wandered in wild places, hoping that God would vouchsafe to reveal the meaning of the vision; and presently, in the forest of Meaux, he fell in with a man who had bartered glory and the prospect of a crown for a hidden life with nature and with God, one Felix, in the world Hugh of the great house of Valois. With this man John of Matha took up his

abode, and one evening, whilst they were sitting together beside a brook and refreshing themselves with spiritual converse, a white hart came forth from the thicket to drink, and there was this strange thing about him: a cross in red and blue was fixed between his antlers. And when the old hermit marvelled, for he, who knew all the beasts of the forest, was unacquainted with this stag, his guest told him for the first time what he had seen at his first Mass.

That night, three times, each of these men dreamed that an angel bade him go to Rome and learn the will of God from the lips of the Lord Pope, and on the morrow they went forth; and when they had reached the eternal city, Pope Innocent III, who had just been set in Peter's chair, received them with exultation, and lodged them in his own house, for they had brought with them papers from his friend the Bishop of Paris; but he was not then able to tell them what God willed they should do.

And it came to pass on the second feast of Saint Agnes (January 28th), when Mass was being celebrated in the Lateran basilica and the Sacred Host was lifted up and the Lord Pope raised his eyes to look upon his God, that he saw the same vision that Brother John had seen on the day of his first Mass, and at the same moment the will of God was revealed to him. And presently he sent for the hermits and bade them found a religion to ransom Christian slaves, and he gave them money and a rule of life and letters of recommendation to the King of Morocco. Thus began an order famous in the annals of the Church—the order of Crutched Friars, so called from the cross in red and blue embroidered on their white habits.

Saint Francis was about ten years old when these things happened.

Brother Felix, who was now some fourscore years of age, and too feeble to endure the hardships of life in a strange land, returned to the forest of Meaux and built near his old hermitage the famous abbey called Cerfroid, which became the mother-house of the order. Here for fifteen years he busied himself in training the recruits who from all parts of Europe flocked to his standard. He died on the 4th of November, 1212, and was canonized by Urban IV fifty years later.

As for John of Matha, he himself at first superintended the ransom work, and with such success that in less than two years the first company of ransomed captives arrived from Morocco; but

he was a man of feeble constitution, and soon, worn out with work and fever, he came back to Rome to die; on the 8th of February, 1213, he fell asleep, and they buried him in the old church of Saint Thomas on the Celian hill, which Innocent III some years before had given to his order.

The gateway of this ancient building still remains; in the tympanum of the arch there is a curious mosaic of Brother John's vision; it was in all probability executed not long after his death. The work which the two hermits had so successfully begun did not die with them: within fifty years of their decease their disciples had no less than six hundred great hospices for men in various parts of Europe, and hospices not a few for the female captives whom they had rescued, which were in charge of sisters affiliated to the order.

Blessed Robert of Arbrissel was a friend of publicans and sinners who, with a reckless disregard for his own good fame, devoted the best energies of his life to reclaiming dissolute women, and who founded a most successful order for carrying on this difficult and dangerous mission. He was a devout priest of good parts and of good birth; in his childhood he had taken Chastity for his bride, and he was true to her to the end.

We first hear of him soon after his ordination—in 1080 or thereabout—when he was studying, or perhaps teaching, theology in Paris. About this time he made the acquaintance of the reforming Bishop Balderic of Rennes, who was now vainly striving to enforce clerical celibacy throughout his diocese. This man in 1085 made Robert his coadjutor, but though he did his utmost to second the bishop's endeavours, his efforts met with little success, and when shortly afterwards Balderic died, he withdrew disheartened to the forest of Craon, determined to spend the rest of his life in "blessed solitude." Like the beasts of the forest—his only friends—he browsed on herbs and burrowed for roots; the bare earth was his bed, his shelter a hollow tree. Presently it was whispered about that this wild man was a saint, and soon he had disciples—they were so numerous, he himself tells us, that he was forced to make three companies of them and to distribute them in neighbouring woods. At last his fame as a teacher reached the ears of Urban II, who bade him come forth and preach. He did so, and with effect: crowds flocked to hear him, heretics renounced their errors, enemies embraced, sinners grown old in iniquity abandoned their evil ways.

It was probably about this time that it first came into his mind to found the fantastic order which saved his name from oblivion. Like all the great mystics of the Middle Age, the chief object of his devotion after God was the Mother of God, and in order to emphasize this, and considering, too, that the God-man with his last breath had committed his Church in the person of Saint John to her care, Robert determined that his religion, which was to embrace women as well as men, should have a woman for chief, and that all the chief officers should likewise be women. This determination he carried into effect, and the Holy See approved. The rule which he prescribed was the rule of Saint Benedict, with special constitutions which he himself drew up and which Paschal II confirmed in 1106 and again in 1113.

In accordance with these constitutions, to every community of women there was affiliated a community of men, who were ruled, indeed, by a superior of their own sex, but in every case he was only the delegate of the superior of the nunnery to which his house was attached, and he was not even held to be competent to deal with the crumbs that fell from his own board: the scraps of meat and broken bread were collected every day and handed over to the sisters, who distributed them to the poor.

The men ate their bread by the sweat of the face: they tilled the fields and tended the flocks, for "sublime poverty" did not enter into Robert's scheme of religion, and they went forth into the highways and hedges daily to preach repentance. The women's part was to watch and pray and to welcome the outcasts whom Christ, the Friend of outcasts, committed to their keeping. In case of necessity the nuns could come forth, but under no pretext whatsoever could they visit the houses of the monks, who in their turn were strictly forbidden to enter the nuns' enclosure: the Mother General and her lady lieutenants commanded through a grating.

The Abbey of Fontevrault near Candes in Poitou was the mother-house of the order; and the Abbess of Fontevrault was in spiritual things and in temporal things supreme head of the order. Exempt from episcopal control, and subject only to the Pope, she named her own officers, men as well as women, appointed her own chaplains, and herself chose the confessors of her daughters and her sons; no novice could be received without her sanction: every nun and every monk made profession in her hands, promising

solemnly to obey her, and Blessed Robert himself was the first to swear allegiance.

The Noble Order of Fontevrault was neither a large nor a widespread order: the number of communities never exceeded a hundred and twenty all told, a few of which were in Spain and in England, and the rest in France; but it was one of the best administered, the richest and the most aristocratic orders of the Western Church: the Abbess almost always belonged to some sovereign house, her subjects, both women and men, were all of them of illustrious birth, and they were renowned throughout Christendom for their culture, their learning, their piety, their good works, and the exactitude with which they observed their rule. During the Hundred Years War they suffered much, and again, later on, from the Calvinists; material decay and a general relaxation of discipline was the outcome, but they renewed their youth and vigour in the course of the sixteen hundreds, and this strange old-world garden was being carefully tilled and was yielding most excellent fruit when at last it was laid waste by the angels of the Revolution.

Robert of Arbrissel was born in the middle of the ten hundreds; he died in the odour of sanctity in 1117, and the grand order which he founded in 1105 was in the heyday of its magnificence when Saint Francis began to preach.

Norbert, of the great house of Genappe, was born at Xanten in the Rhineland in 1080 or thereabout. He was an ambitious youth, and he took orders because he thought that with the influence which his family could command, the Church would help him to glory, and the Church did something for him: she gave him the honours of the altar. That was not the kind of glory that Norbert had in those days dreamed of.

Shortly after his ordination he became court chaplain to the Emperor Henry V. Later on he obtained a canon's stall at Cologne; and then, one sultry afternoon in the summer of 1114, he took it into his head to ride over to a neighbouring village. A storm arose, a flash of lightning flung him from his saddle, and when he came to himself he was a new man: he resigned his prebend, bestowed his goods on the poor, and for two years, ragged and barefoot, wandered about preaching. He spoke well, had the gift of address, the charm of personal beauty; he was all things to all men, and all men were drawn to him; but though he reckoned his converts by thousands, Norbert was not contented.

Of the sheep he had brought to the fold most of them, he knew, would not have strayed if the shepherds had done their duty: the carelessness and incompetence of these hirelings was the crying ill of the day, and he determined to abate it.

To this end he withdrew to the forest of Coucy, near Laon, with a little band of disciples, and presently there rose up in a secluded vale—which Norbert called Prémontré, because the place had been pointed out to him by an angel in a dream—a rude habitation with a church beside it and a few outbuildings. It was the first home of the world-famed Premonstratensian Order, an order whose members, whilst leading the lives of monks, devoted themselves at the same time to pastoral work and to preaching. This was in the spring of the year 1120.

The rule was confirmed by Honorius II in 1126, and in the same year Norbert preached at the Diet of Spire, and was unanimously elected to the vacant See of Magdeburg; and soon, in strange contrast with the richly apparelled retinue that attended him, he entered his episcopal city in the garb of a beggar, very loath to undertake the burthen that had been imposed upon him, perhaps because he knew that his shoulders were not suited to it. At all events he was less successful as a bishop than as a missionary: his zeal in enforcing clerical celibacy drew down upon him the ill-will of his married priests, who, it would seem, were numerous, for at last he was constrained to save himself by flight. He died in exile on the 6th of June, 1134, and then these men acknowledged that their bishop was a saint.

Brabant was the scene of the first great triumph of Saint Norbert's White Canons. It came about in this fashion. Towards the close of the year 1114 one Tankhelm, a fanatic, of whose antecedents we know nothing, appeared in the market-place of Antwerp and proclaimed himself to be the incarnation of the Paraclete. Half the population believed in him; churches were consecrated in his honour; he lived like a prince, and when he came forth he was attended by a body-guard of armed men. Riot and bloodshed were the outcome, and Tankhelm escaped by the skin of his teeth. Some twelve months later he returned, and when Duke Godfrey of Brabant, fearing renewed disturbance, was meditating his arrest, the fanatic got wind of it, and again determined on flight, but as under cover of darkness he was making his way to the wharf, whence he would have set sail for England he was stabbed in the back "by a man full of zeal" as

an ancient writer has it. Thus died Tankhelm; but his death only increased the number of his disciples, and soon the religion that he had founded spread all over the Low Countries.

"The social and moral disturbance provoked by the Communal Movement," notes Pirenne, "sufficiently explains this state of things." Maybe, but the fewness of the parochial clergy and the indifferent lives of many of them must also be taken into account.

For six years the clergy of Antwerp called in vain after their wandering sheep, and then at last, at their wits' end, they bethought themselves of Norbert and his White Brethren, some of whom came to Antwerp, where the canons of Saint Michael ceded to them "their church and churchyard with the chapels and outbuildings thereon and an acre of land adjoining," and forthwith they began to preach by word and example. At first it was uphill work, for these northern heretics were as determined and as fierce as the heretics who a little later wrought havoc in the South—Albigenses, Patarini, Cathari, call them what you will, Manichæans all of them more or less, as too were the disciples of Tankhelm. But the sons of Saint Norbert did not lose courage, and before the close of the first half of the eleven hundreds the last straggler had come home. In a word, these men did for the Duchy of Brabant and the counties of Holland, and Zealand and Hainaut and Flanders what Saint Francis and his companions a little later did for Central Italy—delivered the land from error by the talisman of sweetness and self-effacement. But if in these things the White Canons and the Grey Friars resembled one another, for the rest, they differed widely.

The Franciscan evangelist was, at all events in Saint Francis's time, a wandering preacher, very often a layman, and not unfrequently without letters. A stranger and a wayfarer on the face of the earth, he lived from day to day by the sweat of his brow, if he could; and when no man would hire him, by begging. The Norbertine missionary was always a priest canonically invested with the cure of souls, and almost always a man of liberal education; his monastery was his home, the surrounding country his field of labour; he lived on tithes and on stole-fees and the produce of the land he tilled, for though individually he was as poor as the Franciscan, the order to which he belonged was not forbidden to hold property, and very soon became rich. Thus within ten years of their coming to Antwerp the White Canons obtained in addition to the little holding granted to them by the canons

of Saint Michael vast estates at Tongerlo in the Campine country, at Parcq, hard by Louvain, at Grimberghe and Jette in the neighbourhood of Brussels, and further afield at Tronchiennes near Ghent, and in the polders of Veurne in West Flanders; and before the end of the eleven hundreds they had settlements all over the Netherlands. Most of this property when they received it was heath or bog—land which had never been cultivated or for centuries had lain fallow; but they soon had it under corn or sweet pasture, for these men were no less skilful in the taming of wild soil than in the taming of wild souls. But if they realized large profits from their agricultural pursuits, they were not corrupted by their contact with filthy lucre, for they did not consider their wealth their own—they were only God's trustees for the orphan and the widow.

These men were still doing excellent work when Saint Francis began to preach, and not only in the Netherlands, but in France, in Spain, in England and in Italy. Moreover, the Beguinage—one of the most striking manifestations of the religious life of the Flemish burgher brought back to orthodoxy—was the offspring without doubt of Saint Norbert's disciples; so, too, a kindred institution for men: the confraternity of Beghards. We first hear of these half-way houses between the world and the cloister towards the close of the eleven hundreds; but their foundations at least were laid fifty years earlier.

The Beguines were recruited from all ranks of society; they had no common rule—every community fixed its own order of life and chose its own superior; they were not enclosed, they did not take vows, they neither asked nor accepted alms nor renounced individual ownership, but lived in their own homes on their own means, or, if need be, worked for their living. Hence, containing as they sometimes did several hundred habitations, these great sisterhoods resembled towns rather than nunneries. The Beghards were not in holy orders; in their ranks were a few professional men and perhaps, too, a few knights, but nearly all of them were worn-out artizans—fullers, dyers, weavers and such-like, and they earned their bread as best they could by practising their handicrafts. Like the Beguines, they made no vows, refused alms, had no common rule, and elected their own chiefs, to whom alone they owed obedience; but unlike them, they had all things in common, lived under one roof, and ate at the same board.

These semi-religious associations—ardent centres of mysticism—

which soon spread all over the Netherlands and reckoned their members by thousands—the men from their connection with the trade companies, the women through their intimacy with the burghers, whose children they taught, and from whose families they were chiefly recruited, to a great extent moulded the religious life and largely directed the religious thought of the cities of the Low Countries for more than two hundred years; and note this: if in the twelve and in the thirteen hundreds the cultus of the Mother of God was more pronounced in these parts than in any other quarter of Europe, it was the outcome of their influence.

Though these congregations never crossed the Alps, in Italy there arose about the same time, or perhaps a little earlier, a mixed congregation of women and men which occupied an intermediate place between the world and religion, and resembled them in several respects—the great industrial and commercial undertaking called the Order of Umiliati.

This order, famous in the annals of Christendom, had not yet reached the zenith of its exuberance when the Poor Man of Umbria began to lay the foundations of his own house; and, strange as it may seem, there is reason to think that this rich association of trading evangelists, who, in accordance with the Gospel precept made to themselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, was the model from which he built.

The Umiliati, according to the fifteenth-century chroniclers of the order, derived their origin from a group of noble Milanese families which Henry the Fowler had banished to Northern Germany in 1014. Strangers in a strange land, they consoled themselves as best they could by devotional exercises; in order to keep the wolf from the door they learned how to handle the spindle, and soon became such cunning workers in cloth that they were able to live, and to live well, on the profits of their trade. It was by these folk, we are told, that the woollen industry was first planted in their native soil, for when at last they came home they continued of choice to lead the lives which in exile they had led of necessity.

Recent research has cast discredit on these statements:<sup>1</sup> we now know that this Order dates from somewhere about the year 1150,

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Zanoni's *Gli Umiliati*. (Milan. Hoepli. 1911.) To this most interesting and reliable work I am indebted for most of the information concerning the Umiliati set down in these pages.

and that its founders were not men of high degree but of very humble condition. The first Brethren were all of them labourers and artizans connected with the local wool trade in various towns of Northern Italy—Milan, Pavia, Verona, Como—and the first Sisters were their women-folk. They clubbed their little savings together in order that they might have the wherewithal to set up in business in a small way for themselves, driven thereto by the harsh treatment and the starvation wages of their taskmasters; and they formed themselves into a religious association, partly because they were devotees in an age of religious upheaval, and partly because they knew that the Church, and the Church alone, was powerful enough to protect them from the machinations of the rich merchants and manufacturers whose slaves they had been and with whom they were now presuming to compete.

In the early days each community lived under one roof, men and women together, single folk and married couples and their little ones, and ate at the same table. Individual ownership was forbidden to them: personal property to any amount they could hold in common, but they were not allowed to hold real property, save only their houses and other buildings necessary for the exercise of their trade, and as much land as they themselves were able to till with their own hands; they were not allowed to beg, or even to accept unsolicited offerings, but were bound by their Rule to work for their living; and only the sick, the aged, and children of tender years were exempt from this obligation. They were industrious, thrifty, frugal, and the new undertaking threw; their own wants were few, and all their superfluous earnings they distributed to the poor.

Attracted by the good odour of their faith and charity, and perhaps, too, on account of the temporal advantages which they hoped to obtain by uniting themselves to a society of successful traders who had all things in common, not a few individuals, priests as well as laymen, and sometimes, too, whole families of good social standing, soon began to ask to be admitted to their ranks, and before the close of the eleven hundreds this little society of Christian socialists had settlements in all the chief towns of Northern and Central Italy.

About this time a change was made in the organization of the order, and it was divided into three branches. The first consisted of unmarried persons of both sexes, who dwelt under one roof but not in the same abode: for each of their monasteries contained

two cloisters, one for the women and the other for the men. In the wall of separation there was a little window with shutters and an iron grille through which they could communicate with one another in case of necessity, but no brother could cross the nuns' threshold unless he had first obtained the authorization of the head of the house. This individual, to whom all the inmates of the house were subject, women as well as men, was elected by the suffrages of all of them, and a sister was eligible for election. The rule which they observed has come down to us: it contains various passages from the Benedictine Rule, the Rule of Saint Basil, the Rule of the Augustinian Canons, and the writings of Saint Gregory the Great; and several special regulations concerning their own peculiar work and manner of life. For the rest they continued to busy themselves with the wool trade, and with no less success than of yore.

The Second Order resembled the first in all things save this: neither the Brethren nor the Sisters were bound by vows; they could return to the world when they would; it was an entirely voluntary association.

The Third Order consisted of married couples and single persons of both sexes who lived in their own homes. Their Rule has come down to us: it is drawn up on much the same lines as the Rule which Pope Nicholas IV, nearly a hundred years later (in 1289), gave to the Tertiaries of Saint Francis.

Towards the close of the eleven hundreds some of the Umiliati folk had become more or less infected by the errors of the Cathari, who were now sufficiently numerous in the diocese of Milan and in several of the neighbouring dioceses. Thus, the whole order fell into disrepute and was treated with considerable harshness by local ecclesiastical authorities. Wherefore in the last days of the last year of the century these persecuted folk brought their trouble to the feet of Pope Innocent III, who had just been set in Peter's Chair, and that great and wise Pontiff, having first assured himself of their orthodoxy, took the whole order under the special protection of the Apostolic See, confirmed their Rules, gave them faculties to preach, and invested them with various privileges. As for the Brethren and Sisters who had been the cause of all the trouble, they went forth from the order and, too, from the Church, and the heretical sect known as the Poor Men of Lombardy seems to have owed its origin to these misguided people.

It was at the time of this crisis, I suspect, and no doubt under

the auspices of Pope Innocent himself, that the changes above referred to in the organization of the Order were effected.

Jacques de Vitry, who passed through Lombardy on his way to Perugia in the spring of 1216, has some curious notes concerning the Umiliati of his day. The following is the gist of what he says—

“Just as we were entering Lombardy the devil seized the weapons with which I meant to shame him—in other words, my books—and flung them into a stream impetuous and terribly deep, vehemently and beyond measure swollen from the melting of the winter snow, and which was sweeping away bridges and carrying along with it great blocks of stone. One of my trunks, which was full of books, was borne away by the current, but the other, wherein I had placed the finger of my mother, Blessed Mary of Ognies, buoyed up, as I verily believe, the mule on which I was riding and saved us from being drowned; for whereas hardly one in a thousand escaped, we reached the bank in safety. As for the box of books, it drifted up against some trees, and its course being arrested by the branches, it was recovered, though with difficulty; and, marvellous to say, though the writing was a bit blurred it was still legible.

“After this adventure we came to a certain Milanese town which is a hotbed of heretics. There I tarried some days and preached the Word of God in several places. For hardly any one is found in that city to resist heretics but certain holy men and religious women who are called by worldly and malicious folk *Patroni*; but by the supreme pontiff (Innocent III), who confirmed their religion, and from whom they have faculties to preach and confute heretics, *Umiliati*. For Christ’s sake they have given up all; they are gathered together in divers places and live by the labour of their hands. They hear the Word of God gladly, and often preach themselves; steadfast in faith, sound in doctrine, they are fruitful in good works. This order has succeeded to such an extent that now they have a hundred and fifty convents of brethren and sisters in the diocese of Milan alone. Each of their monasteries is divided into two parts, whereof one is occupied by the men, and the other by the women. Moreover, not a few of them dwell in their own homes.”

Thus much—and much more might be said did space permit—concerning active orders in various parts of Christendom, which originated at a time when, we are told, the Church was in full decadence, and were still doing admirable work a hundred years

later, when she was *in extremis*, and Saint Francis stepped in and miraculously saved her from dissolution, according to the gospel of Sabatier.

And if we turn to the contemporary communities which had no external work peculiar to them—Benedictine, Cistercian, Cluniac, and, though later, the hermit orders of the Grande Chartreuse, of Camaldoli, of Valombrosa—we find the same phenomenon: thistles producing figs; thorns, grapes in abundance, and fruit of the finest quality. If the monasteries of the eleven hundreds were indeed hotbeds of vice, saints without number were nurtured in these dens of abomination, and if the monks of the same period were deserters from the battle of life, somehow or other they came to the fore in every branch of human activity, and when men wanted a leader they looked for him, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they found him, in the ranks of these wastrels. Amongst them were mystics like Adam of Saint Victor and Richard and Hugh of the same house, of whom Neale says that they were "three of the greatest men of that marvellous twelfth century," and of Adam, that "he was the greatest Latin poet not only of mediæval but of all ages." There were statesmen, too, and scholars, like Lanfranc, who made the Benedictine Abbey of Bec—a cluster of huts when he came there—the foremost school in Christendom; philosophers and men of letters like his pupil and successor in the See of Canterbury, Saint Anselm; men who knew how to fight, like that stalwart hermit Saint Hugh, who wore the cowl when he was eight years old, and when he was fifty exchanged a Carthusian cell for the See of Lincoln, and, says Dymock, "a more self-denying, earnest, energetic and fearless bishop has seldom, if ever, ruled this see or any other. He brought with him all his Carthusian simple devotedness to the service of Christ, all the Carthusian contempt for the things of this world; nowhere, perhaps, but in a Carthusian cell could such a man have been formed. He was consumed with zeal for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. He fought for the rights of his Church and for the rights of the poor, and he proved himself a match, and more than a match, for Henry II and Richard I and John. Once sure of the straight path of duty, no earthly influence or fear or power could stop him: he never bated an inch even to such opponents as these; and while fighting and beating them, still, all the while, won and retained their admiration and reverence."

The twelfth century was an age of great prelates and of great popes, and the greatest of them wore the cowl; in the course of the eleven hundreds the Church was governed by four monks at least—Paschal II (1098-1113) and Gelasius II (1118-19), Cluniacs; St. Eugene III, Cistercian (1145-53), the friend and disciple of St. Bernard; and Hadrian IV, Benedictine (1145-59), the only Englishman who has ever sat in Peter's chair. When this man was dying he said: "I have spent all the days of my life between the anvil and the hammer," and every one of these glorious pontiffs, when death came to him, might with equal truth have uttered the same complaint; and all of them could have justly added, including Hadrian himself: "but I have kept the faith, I have finished my course, I have fought a good fight for the sheep entrusted to my care, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

## CHAPTER IV

OF Saint Clare's home life. Dearth of evidence concerning her childhood : Celano the only contemporary witness ; what he says. His account of her conversion to religion, wherein he contradicts himself inadvertently. His second statement corroborated by Alexander IV, Fra Salimbene and Saint Bonaventure, viz. that Saint Clare determined to renounce the world not before, as he says in his first statement, but after she had met Saint Francis and at his suggestion. Of the cause of Celano's slip. Under what circumstances Saint Clare made the acquaintance of Saint Francis ; why she wished "to see and to hear him," and why he wished her to take the veil. Of the complexity of his character and of the motives which inspired him to found a community of cloistered nuns.

OF Saint Clare's childhood and upbringing hardly anything has come down to us. Her own writings are barren in this respect; Pope Alexander IV contents himself with mellifluous generalities : "O Clara multimode titulis praedita claritatis ! ante conversionem tuam utique clara, in conversione clarior, in claustrali conversatione praeclara. . . ." And again : "O admiranda Clarae beatae claritas ! . . . Emicuit haec, inquam, in hoc saeculo, in religione praefulsit : in domo illuxit ut radius, in claustro coruscavit ut fulgor." The writer of the primitive office is no less reticent : "Haec in paternis laribus puella sacris moribus agebat caelibatum quam praedocebat unctio sine magistro medio cor Christo dare gratum," and so forth; even the author of the *Legenda* has next to nothing to say of the child life of his heroine, and, in all probability, because he knew next to nothing which seemed to his puritanical mind to be worth noting down : there were no prodigies to relate, no acts of eccentric piety, no deeds of precocious asceticism wherewith to edify his readers. Saint Clare, I think, was not fortunate in her first biographer. He elaborates, however, with some skill the meagre details of this sort which he was able to find, and, strictly adhering to the traditions of his craft,<sup>1</sup> he begins his story, as we have seen, by relating a miracle, or what he deemed to be a miracle, which took place shortly before her birth. But, after all, the incident in question is a sufficiently ordinary one, nor is it necessary in order to explain it to have

<sup>1</sup> See *Les Légendes Hagiographiques*, par Hippolyte Delehaye, S.J., p. 110 ; Bruxelles : Bureau de la société des Bollandistes. 1905.

recourse to supernatural intervention: that a Christian woman about to endure the perils of childbirth should pray for a safe delivery is not an unusual thing, nor is it contrary to everyday experience that to such a one God should vouchsafe some measure of consolation. Ortolana received it in this way: she heard a voice saying: "*Ne parveas mulier, quia quoddam lumen salva parturies, quod ipsum mundum clarius illustrabit.*" Whence did our author learn this tale? From one of the nuns of Saint Damian's there can be no doubt (though, maybe, it was not told to him exactly as he tells it to us), who, in her turn, had learnt it, perhaps, from Saint Clare herself, perhaps—and this, I think, is more likely—from the lips of old Ortolana, who, we know, spent the last years of her life in the convent over which her daughter ruled. It must have been, too, from the Saint Damian's folk that he obtained the scraps of information which he deigns to give us concerning Saint Clare's childhood: how Ortolana taught her her catechism; how, when she was quite a little thing, childlike mingling her games and devotions, she used to reckon the number of Paters she had said with little stones; of her charity to the poor when she grew older, and how, in order that she might not give to God that which had cost her nothing, it was her wont to deny herself the delicacies of her mother's well-spread board, and with these choice viands to nourish the bowels of orphans.

One can hardly imagine a woman of Saint Clare's humility telling to her nuns or to any one else self-commendatory stories of this kind, but it is easy to believe that the Lady Ortolana took an old woman's delight in fondly recalling and in recounting to a sympathetic audience the child-life of a daughter whom she had always loved tenderly and of whom she was naturally proud, nor is it difficult to see this venerable matron in the common room of Saint Damian's with a group of sisters about her, eagerly drinking in her reiterated tales of the little happenings of their mother's baby days, banal enough, no doubt, but always fresh and always interesting to the woman who talked and to the women who listened.

When Saint Clare was about eighteen years of age she reached the turning-point of her existence, and gave the world a bill of divorce, as we have already seen.

"When this virgin began to feel the first stings of divine love, she deemed the fleeting picture of human love a thing to be despised, and, taught by the unction of the Spirit, she esteemed the vile things

of the world according to their vileness. She used to wear a hair shirt beneath her soft clothing: all radiant in glorious apparel she put on Christ within; and when at last her kinsfolk would have made for her a brilliant marriage, instead of acquiescing she gave them an evasive answer, and committed her virginity to God.<sup>1</sup> Thus Celano in the chapter concerning Saint Clare's home-life; he tells the rest of the story at considerable length in the succeeding chapter, the chapter wherein he treats "of her acquaintance and friendship with Blessed Francis." The following is the gist of what he says—

"At this time the most holy Father was preaching the way of perfection, and the fame of him reaching Saint Clare's ears she desired to see and to hear him, and Francis himself was no less eager to make her acquaintance, for all men were singing her praises, and he, God's huntsman, was minded to snatch this noble booty from the world and to offer it to his Master. And so he visited her, and many times she visited him, coming forth from her home in secret with an intimate female friend. Father Francis exhorted her to despise the world—said that its hopes were vain, its beauty false, and, acting deftly like a faithful bridegroom, instilled into her ears the sweet nuptials of Heaven. Nor did she for long resist his importunity, for, enlightened by the flaming torch of his speech, she caught, as it were, a glimpse of the beatific vision, and forthwith the world and the things of the world seemed to her but as dung, and, dreading the allurements of the flesh, she resolved to lay aside all thought of earthly marriage and to do her utmost to render herself worthy of the espousals of the Heavenly King; and henceforth she regarded Blessed Francis, after God, as the charioteer of her soul."

In this curious and unsatisfactory account of Saint Clare's conversion to religion, the only detailed account we possess from the pen of a contemporary writer, Celano, strangely enough, contradicts himself in a matter of importance, as the reader will have observed. He tells us in the second part of his story that it was the Seraphic Father who persuaded Saint Clare to take the veil; she

<sup>1</sup> Ubi ergo sancti amoris stimulos primitivos sentire coepit, mundani floris picturam instabilem iudicat contemnendam, Spiritus unctione perdocta, vilibus rebus pretium imponere vilitatis. Sub vestibis namque pretiosis ac molibus, cilicium gerebat absconditum, mundo exterius florens, Christum interius induens. Denique suis eam nobiliter maritare volentibus, nullatenus acquievit; sed dissimulato in posterum mortali conjugio, virginitatem suam Domino committebat.

hesitated a little at first,<sup>1</sup> hitherto she had looked forward without repugnance and without fear to being one day a wife;<sup>2</sup> and we learn from the first part of his story that before she met Saint Francis she had already come to the conclusion that earthly love was vain, inspired thereto by the Holy Ghost, and that on this account she had refused an advantageous offer of marriage and made a vow of perpetual virginity.

Now, Alexander IV was one of Saint Clare's most intimate friends, a very honest man, a writer most careful of his facts; and in the bull of canonization he tells us explicitly that Saint Clare's decision to forsake the world was inspired by Blessed Francis: "Beatus Franciscus, audito hujus famae praeconio, coepit confestim hortari eam, et ad Christi perfectam inducere servitutem. Quae sacris illius monitis mox adherens, et mundum cum terrenis omnibus penitus abdicare, ac soli Domino in paupertate voluntaria famulari desiderans, hoc suum fervens desiderium, quam cito potuit, adimplevit." Salimbene gives like testimony: "Hic (Alexander) beatam Claram cathalogo sanctorum ascripsit, *quam Beatus Franciscus convertit ad Christum.*" So, too, Saint Bonaventure: "Many virgins were also called to a life of perpetual chastity, amongst whom was Clare, that virgin most dear to God, the first flower amongst them all, who, like a sweet spring blossom, diffused a fragrant odour around her and shone like a brilliant star in the Church of God. She who is now glorified in Heaven, and worthily venerated by the Church on earth, was the daughter in Christ of the Holy Father Francis, the poor servant of God, and the mother of the Poor Ladies." I think, then, there can be no doubt that Celano spoke the truth in the second part of his story; but why does he contradict himself in this extraordinary fashion? What he says in his prefatory letter to Alexander IV will perhaps help us to guess the answer to the riddle. The passage referred to runs thus—

"Your Domination was pleased to command my humility to draw up a life of Saint Clare from the evidence that was collected concerning her at the time of her canonization. It was a task that I was loath to undertake, having little skill in letters; but urged thereto again and again by pontifical authority, at last I set to work;

<sup>1</sup> Instante patre sanctissimo, et more fidelissimi paranympbi sollerter agente, non trahit in longum virgo consensum.

<sup>2</sup> Carnis quoque illecebras perhorrescens jam torum in delicto se nescituram proponit.

and judging that it would not be prudent to rely on the official papers alone, and likewise calling to mind that of old it was not considered lawful for a man to write history unless he had seen with his own eyes or learned from eye witnesses, I deemed it expedient to seek out the surviving friends of Saint Francis and to have a little talk with the Poor Ladies at Saint Damian's. And when these folk, under the guidance of truth and in the fear<sup>o</sup> of the Lord, had more fully instructed me, I set down in simple style some of what I had learnt, and many things I omitted, in order that virgins might delight to read the mighty deeds of this virgin and that the minds of the ignorant might not be obscured by a superfluity of words."<sup>1</sup>

We have it, then, on the authority of Celano himself, that he knew much more of Saint Clare than he deemed it expedient to set down. Not that there was anything in the life of the Seraphic Mother over which it was in reality expedient to throw a veil, but the mind of this man was cast in a narrow mould, as all his writings show; he wrote his legend for Saint Clare's greater glory and for the edification of her children, and for him what savoured of human nature was not for her greater glory and not unto edification.

Bearing these things in mind, and Celano's incoherent account of Saint Clare's conversion, I venture to think that it has not come down to us as he originally wrote it; in his original version the beginning of the story did not clash with the end, on reading it over he had qualms of conscience, carefully revised the first part, and forgot to revise the second. Celano was a very old man, remember, when he wrote his *Life of Saint Clare*. What, then, was the incident in the child life of his heroine which this scrupulous old man was at such pains to conceal? Something of this sort, I suspect—

The Lord Monaldo had set his face against his niece's marriage

<sup>1</sup> Sane placuit Dominationi vestrae, meae parvitati iniungere, ut, recensitis actibus sanctae Clarae, Legendam eius formarem: opus certe, quod mea in literis ruditas formidabat, nisi pontificalis auctoritas verbum coram posito, iterum atque iterum repetisset. Igitur me colligens ad mandatum, nec tutum ratus per ea procedere quae defectiva legebam, ad socios beati Francisci, atque ad ipsum collegium virginum Christi perrexi, frequenter illud corde revolvens, non licuisse antiquitus historiam texere, nisi his, qui vidissent, aut a videntibus accepissent. His, inquam, veritate praevia, cum timore Domini me plenius insruentibus, aliqua colligens, et plura dimittens, plano stylo transcurri; ut quia magnalia Virginis, virgines legere delectabit, rudis intelligentia non inveniatur, ubi pro verborum ambitu tenebrescat.

with a suitor whom she favoured, having it in his mind to make for her a more advantageous alliance. Clare respected her uncle's wishes and, hoping to cure her heartache, set her affections on things above—did her utmost to convince herself of the vanity of earthly things. There was a struggle—the flesh wrestled against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and at last she took what in those days of violent medicines was held to be a most efficacious means of bringing the old enemy into subjection: she began to wear a hair shirt beneath her soft garments: “all radiant in glorious apparel she put on Christ within,” as Celano picturesquely has it.

Deceived by her outward bearing, for Clare was not the woman to wear her heart on her sleeve, her uncle thought that the time had come for urging his friend's suit with some chance of success. At first Clare temporized, and then, I think, there was a quarrel; Monaldo was hot-headed, and the Seraphic Mother in these days was far from being mild. Perhaps he threatened compulsion, at all events Clare feared a forced marriage, and, as Celano tells us, committed her virginity to Christ.

Such, it would seem, was the state of affairs in this worthy knight's household when his niece first made the acquaintance of Brother Francis.

This man, who had once been notorious for his wild life and mad frolics, and who afterwards, when he was converted, had been hooted in the streets as a fool and pelted with mud, was now beginning to be talked about all over Italy as a great religious teacher—a man after God's own heart. It is not to be wondered at, then, that Clare, set in such sorry straits, should have desired to see and to hear him. But if she wished to meet Saint Francis, he himself was no less eager to make her acquaintance—the fame of her good report had reached his ears, we are told, and he hoped to be able to induce her to take the veil. Albeit I suspect that not only the rumour of Clare's virtue had reached his ears, but likewise the rumour of her affliction, and that his desire to make her a nun was prompted to a certain extent by this knowledge; in a little place like Assisi, where every man would be sure to know all about his neighbour's affairs, a quarrel between two such notable folk as the Lord Monaldo and his beautiful niece must have been the talk of the town. Moreover, we must not forget that in those days, for a girl of Clare's condition the only escape from matrimony was through the cloister door.

That the Seraphic Mother was a woman of brilliant parts, a

woman of inflexible will, a woman possessed of a mysterious power of drawing to herself and subjecting persons of the most varied dispositions, and withal largely endowed with what is called common sense, these things are set forth in the numerous contemporary documents which treat of her directly or indirectly, in her own letters and other writings, and in the general trend of the history of the making of the great order which she founded. At the time which now concerns us she was, of course, little more than a child, but the child is the father of the man, and she must have already possessed the germs of these qualities, and, what is more, that she possessed them was publicly known: Celano's "rumor bonitatis ejus vulgabatur in populo" should include much. That she was rich, too, was common knowledge, and all who had eyes in Assisi could see that she was fair. Wealth, beauty, wisdom, a great worldly position along with the will and the courage to give up all for Christ, these things were essential in the heroine whom Francis at this time needed; for he had it in his mind to give to the world a mystery play on the breaking of "Brother Ass," and the opening scene must be sensational; he wished to create a college of virgins who, from behind the walls of their cloister, should silently proclaim to a people forgetful of these things the beauty of poverty and the beauty of chastity and the sweetness of self-denial. In Clare he descried the "mulier fortis" who should accomplish all this—the strong woman raised up by God for whom he had so long been waiting.

I know that some modern writers tell us that Saint Francis, when first he forsook the world, had no idea whatsoever of founding religious orders, and that the orders which he afterwards founded were rather the outcome of circumstances than of any deliberate intention on his part to found them. The evidence adduced in support of this view is not, however, to my mind convincing, especially in the case of the Poor Ladies; and, on the other hand, the fact that two of the churches which he restored immediately after his conversion—Saint Mary of the Angels and Saint Damian's—were later on respectively the first homes of his friars and his nuns is in itself significant, and so, too, is what Celano says in his second *Life of Saint Francis*: "With much zeal did the man of God stir up all to the work of restoring the Church of Saint Damian, and in the hearing of all he prophesied, crying aloud in the French tongue, that in that place there would presently be a convent of Christ's Holy Virgins. Now, when this man was

enkindled by the fire of the Holy Ghost, flaming words in French always burst from his lips, for he knew right well that the men of France would one day hold him in high esteem and give him unwonted worship." Which, I suppose, is Celano's poetical way of saying that in moments of excitement Saint Francis always spoke the language which he had first learnt: his mother, according to later writers, was a native of Provence or, at all events, of French extraction.

The above incident is also related, and at greater length, in that curious and, as some say, apocryphal document called the *Will of Saint Clare*, who, in the passage referred to, is made to speak thus—

"In considering, then, dear sisters, the inestimable blessings of God, we ought to give the first place to what he hath vouchsafed to work in us, not only after our conversion but when we were in the vanity of the world, through his beloved servant, our father Blessed Francis. For almost immediately after his own conversion, before he had any disciples or friends, he prophesied concerning us what God in due season brought to pass. It was when the man of God was restoring the church of Saint Damian—that church wherein, completely embraced by divine consolation, he had been compelled to quit the world and worldly things; at this time, I say, enlightened by the Holy Ghost and in a transport of holy joy, he leapt on to a wall and from thence addressed some peasant folk who were standing near, speaking in a high voice and in the French tongue: 'Come, help me,' he cried, 'in the work of this monastery, for here shall devout women one day dwell, and our heavenly Father shall be glorified throughout the length and breadth of his Church by the good odour of their conversation.'"

It would seem, then, that Saint Francis already had it in his mind to found an order of women when he was restoring Saint Damian's, and that the restoration work had been undertaken in view of this project.

To prepare habitations on other men's property on the chance that they would one day be given to him to shelter religious orders which at present had no existence save in his own brain, is not out of keeping with what we know of the character of this extraordinary man. He believed that all his ideas were inspired by the Father of lights or by the Prince of darkness, and when once he was convinced that he had received a divine intimation he never hesitated: He who had revealed his will to him, would assuredly enable him to fulfil it; he had only to go on step by step as God

should give him guidance. The first revelation, in this connection, had come to him whilst he was praying for light before the crucifix in Saint Damian's, when he heard a voice saying, "Francis, build up My tottering church." The old building was falling to ruins, and when, presently, he set about restoring it there can be no doubt whatever that he believed that he was busying himself with work which he had been divinely commissioned to do. Albeit he did not tie himself down to this literal interpretation, as Celano bears witness: he conceived that the words which he had heard embraced a far wider scope, he was thereby divinely commissioned to build up the mystical body of Christ. He had received, then, two distinct commissions, but they were not independent of one another: the fulfilment of the first was the first step towards the carrying out of the second: Saint Damian's was to be the mother-house of a great religious order whose members were to co-operate in the work of evangelization in the way we have already described.

Whence his conception of this scheme and when did he first conceive it? Consider the natural temperament of the man, the sort of life he had led in the world, and what from his childhood until he was twenty-five years of age had been his surroundings. By what strange irony of fate did a man like Peter Bernardone beget a child like Francis. The father was a worthy tradesman, whose one thought was gain and whose constant preoccupation was the current price of cloth. The son was a man of the widest sympathies and of interests the most varied, steeped to the lips in romance, with a character made up of contradictions—surely the most fantastic creature that ever drew breath. A man of transparent simplicity, like children at play, he was always pretending that something was something else. Throughout his life he was a sensationalist, and to the end of it he remained a child. If, when God had touched him, he became the most human of saints, in the days of his aberration he was the most unworldly of sinners; after ten years of riotous living he still had the freshness, the enthusiasm, the simplicity of the youth who has never eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and after twenty years of penance he could still laugh and sing. When he took part in his father's affairs he proved himself an excellent man of business, but there was nothing mean or sordid in his dealing; he was more prone to spend than to save,<sup>1</sup> he rarely scrupled to

<sup>1</sup> Celano, *Legenda Prima B. Francischi*, Chap. I, p. 7, edition d'Alençon.

gratify his own wayward fancies, and he never refused to open his purse for those who appealed to his generosity.

So tender-hearted was this man that if he chanced to see a worm in his path he used to move it aside, for "mercy," as Saint Bonaventure has it, "was born with him," yet his dearest wish before his conversion was to win fame on the battlefield. He loved the wild things of the countryside and a free life in the open air; but no less pleasing to him was the excitement of the city and the society of his fellow men, and as he was the spoilt child of rich parents he was able to give free rein to his inclinations. He delighted in poetry and music and dancing, and was himself a poet and a musician; he had a keen wit and a ready tongue, and was able to tell a good story; he was warm-hearted, genial, kind, and withal he had tact and refinement, and his boon companions loved him. From the time when he left his mother's apron-strings, till the night when he bade farewell to the world, he was the chosen leader of the pleasures and follies of the gilded youth of Assisi. Their fellowship was as the breath of his nostrils, but through it all he never forgot that God was his best friend, and he loved Him even as a froward child will sometimes love the fond parent whose behests he neglects and whose heart he wounds, and afterwards weeps for these things and then sins again. So did Francis of Assisi, until God in His pity touched him and made his strength perfect in weakness.

It is not conceivable that a man of this kind should ever have wilfully been the cause of any woman's ruin, but we may be sure that he held himself responsible for the shortcomings of those who had participated in the follies of his youth, whether or no the blame were in reality his or theirs. He was rich, impulsive, passionate; he had the gift of beauty, and in all probability he was more often sinned against than sinning; but to the end of his days he beat his breast and cried: "Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa."

To plant for the Queen of Heaven a bower of white roses in compensation for the faded flowers which he thought he had stolen from Her garden: some such fancy as this must have been in Francis's mind when first he conceived the project of founding an order of enclosed nuns; and I think the inspiration must have come to him very soon after his conversion.

## CHAPTER V

Of Saint Clare's farewell to the world, according to Celano. Abridged English version. The complete Latin text. Some notes on persons and places referred to therein : Guido of Assisi, the Porziuncola, the Church of Saint Paul and the Benedictine nuns who dwelt there. Celano's strange story concerning one of them. Pope Alexander IV, and Salimbene's appreciation of him. The Benedictine church and community of Saint Angelo di Panzo ; these nuns become Poor Ladies and amalgamate with the nuns of Santa Chiara. Concerning the incident of the closed door. The dramatic details of Saint Clare's farewell not fortuitous, but expressly devised by Saint Francis.

Now it came to pass when the solemn day of Palms was at hand that the virgin Clare betook herself for the last time to the man of God. She wished to confer with him concerning her conversion : when and how it was to take place. And Father Francis bade her array herself in her best and seek her palm on the festal day along with other folk, and at night go forth without the camp and exchange earthly joy for the mourning of God's passion ; and, when Sunday came, amongst the crowd of women who flocked to church not one was so daintily clad as this fair damsel ; but when the rest went up to receive their palms, the Lady Clare was too shy to move, and when the bishop espied her standing alone in her place, he came forth from the sanctuary and, approaching her, placed a palm in her hand.

That night, in accordance with the saint's behest, the maiden fled from home in honest company ; and because she was not minded to go forth by the ordinary door, with a strength by which she herself was astounded, with her own hands she burst open another that was blocked up with wood and stone.

Thus, having left her house, her town, her kinsfolk, she sped to the Church of Saint Mary of Porziuncola, where she found the brethren singing the night hours, and they came forth to greet her with flaming torches. In this place she cast aside the sordid things of Babylon ; here she gave to the world a bill of divorce ; here before the altar of Blessed Mary she left her hair and her jewels, and when she had put on the frock of repentance and plighted her troth to Christ, Saint Francis straightway led her to

the Church of St. Paul, there to remain until the Most High should provide for her another place.

When her kinsfolk knew that Clare had fled, cut to the quick, they condemned alike the project of the maiden and the means by which she had carried it out, and, banding together, they rushed to the place where she was lodged, determined to accomplish something that they were not able to perform. For fair speech and foul, threats, promises, sage advice, all failed in their purpose: she laid hold of the altar cloth and, uncovering her tanned head, boldly declared that no man should separate her from God; and although they persisted for many days, she remained steadfast, and at last her kinsfolk were constrained to hold their peace.

Soon afterwards she removed from St. Paul's to the Church of Sant' Angelo di Panzo, but her mind was not perfectly at rest, and so, by the advice of Blessed Francis, she went to Saint Damian's. There, undeterred by the straitness of the place or by the loneliness of the situation, she at last cast anchor, and there she remained till the end of her days without thought of changing—at peace from the storms of earth in these still waters.

Such, in brief, is Celano's account of Saint Clare's flight and veiling. His exact words run thus:—

"Instabat Palmarum dies sollemnis, cum ad virum Dei puella [Clara] fervido corde se confert, sciscitans de sua conversione, quando et qualiter sit agendum. Jubet pater Franciscus, ut in die festo compta et ornata procedat ad palmam cum frequentia populorum, ac nocte sequenti exiens extra castra, mundanum gaudium in luctum convertat dominicae passionis. Die itaque dominico veniente, in turba dominarum splendore festivo puella perradians, cum reliquis intrat ecclesiam. Ubi illo digno praesagio contigit, ut caeteris ad ramos currentibus, dum Clara prae verecundia suo in loco manet immota, pontifex per gradus descendens, usque ad eam accederet, et palmam suis in manibus poneret. Nocte sequenti ad sancti mandatum se praeparans, optatam fugam cum honesta societate aggreditur. Cumque ostio consueto exire non placuit, aliud ostium, quod lignorum et lapidum pondera obstruebant, miranda sibi fortitudine, propriis manibus reseravit.

"Igitur domo, civitate et consanguineis derelictis, ad Sanctam Mariam de Portiuncula festinavit: ubi fratres, qui in arula Dei sacras excubias observabant, virginem Claram cum luminaribus receperunt. Mox ibi rejectis sordibus Babylonis, mundo libellum repudii tradidit: ibi manu fratrum crines deponens, ornatus varios

dereliquit. Nec decuit alibi florigere virginitatis Ordinem ad vesperam temporum excitari, quam in ejus aula, quae prima omnium atque dignissima, sola extitit mater et virgo. Hic locus est ille, in quo nova militia pauperum, duce Francisco, felicia sumebat primordia, ut liquido videtur utramque religionem Mater Misericordiae in suo diversorio paturire. Cum autem coram altari beatæ Mariæ sanctæ poenitentiae suscepisset insignia, et quasi ante torum hujus Virginis, humilis ancilla Christo nupsisset, statim eam ad ecclesiam sancti Pauli sanctus Franciscus deduxit, donec aliud provideret Altissimus, in eodem loco mansuram.

“Ad consanguineos autem rumore volante, dilacerato corde, factum et propositum virginis damnant; et conglobati in unum, currunt ad locum, tentantes quod obtinere non possunt. Violentiae impetum, venena consiliorum, blanditias adhibent promissionum, suadentes ab hujusmodi vilitate discedere, quae nec genere congruat, nec exemplum habeat in contrata. At illa pannos apprehendens altaris, caput denudat attonsum, firmans se nullatenus a Christo servitio ulterius avellendam. Crescit animus, bello crescente suorum viresque ministrat amor injuriis lacessitus. Sic sic per plures dies cum in via Domini obicem pateretur, et sui se opponerent ejus proposito sanctitatis, non collapsus est animus, non fervor remissus: sed inter verba et odia ad spem animum tandiu reformat, donec propinqui, retrusa fronte, quiescunt.

“Paucis interjectis diebus, ad ecclesiam Sancti Angeli de Panso transivit: ubi cum non plene mens ejus quiesceret, tandem ad ecclesiam Sancti Damiani, beati Francisci consilio, commigravit. Ibi mentis anchoram quasi in certo figens, non jam pro loci mutatione ulterius fluctuat, non pro arctitudine dubitat, nec pro solitudine reformidat.”

The bishop referred to in the cathedral scene was undoubtedly Guido II, who ruled the Church of Assisi from 1204 to 1228, and who from the first had shown himself a good friend to Saint Francis: “This venerable prelate,” says Celano in the *Legenda Prima*, “honoured him and the brethren in all things, and held them in unwonted esteem”; and the same writer tells us that Guido was a man of much devotion, that he had taken Saint Francis’s part in the quarrel with his father at the opening of his religious career, that he had helped him at Rome in the matter of the confirmation of the rule in 1209, that he was in the habit of visiting him frequently in informal fashion, that he gave him hospitality in his own palace during his last sickness, and that on

the night on which Saint Francis died he appeared to Guido in a vision and said: "Behold, my father, I am leaving the world and going to Jesus Christ."

The Church of Saint Mary of the Porziuncola was originally a wayside shrine; it stands at the foot of that spur of Mount Subasio on which Assisi is situated, about a mile or a mile and a half beyond the city walls. It was one of the three churches that Saint Francis restored in the early days of his conversion, and in those days it is said to have been the property of the Benedictine monks of Subasio, who, we are told, made it over to the Friars Minor soon after Pope Innocent III confirmed their rule. Be this as it may, somewhere about the year 1210 the friars somehow or other obtained possession of this place, and it was their first permanent settlement. Wherefore Saint Francis loved it, and he used to call it his home; thither he caused himself to be carried in the last days of his last sickness; there he died, and, alas, the breath was hardly out of his body when the Porziuncola became a centre of disaffection, the place where those men met and plotted who said that they loved him most, and who, under the plea that they were carrying out the instruction which Saint Francis not long before his death had imparted to them secretly, justified to their consciences that which he most abhorred—disobedience.

These men, who alleged that it was the Founder's wish that the Porziuncola should always be what it had been in his lifetime—the chief house of the order, were cut to the quick when, on the 22nd of April, 1230, Pope Gregory IX ordained in a letter to the minister-general that the church which he himself had built at Assisi in honour of Blessed Francis and over his grave, in the place called Paradise Hill, erst the Hill of Hell, should henceforth be the Mother Church and the head of the Order of Friars Minor. This bull was renewed by Innocent IV on the 6th of March, 1245, and it has never been revoked. But for Brother Leo and his friends the little church in the plain was a far holier place; it became, as it were, the embodiment of their ideal, the standard under which they fought, and they did their utmost to enhance its prestige, not only in the eyes of the order but in the eyes of the whole world.

The Church of Saint Paul to which Celano refers is on the outskirts of the village of Bastia, some three miles from the Porziuncola. It stands on the left bank of the river Chiagio, in a

grove of ancient cypress trees, close to the spot where the tributary Tescio rushes in winter time and in summer dribbles into the main stream. It is a simple Romanesque structure, consisting only of a nave with a rounded apse, about eighty feet long, I suppose, and maybe twenty wide. Now the mortuary chapel of the local burying-ground, in Saint Clare's day this venerable building was the abbey church of a small community of Benedictine Dames which, it will be interesting to note, still exists, and is at present installed in the convent of Saint Benedict hard by Assisi Cathedral.

Towards the middle of the twelve hundreds, when all the rural communities of Umbria were flocking into the towns because, on account of the troubled times, the open country had ceased to be a safe place of abode, these women somehow or other acquired a little property at Assisi—a good-sized house with a garden and orchard in an angle of the city wall, between the bishop's palace and the old Benedictine Church of Saint Peter. To this place they presently came—hence the local tradition that Saint Clare sojourned here—and here their successors continued to dwell until the middle of last century, when their convent was confiscated by the Italian Government, and they removed to their present abode.

The author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*, in the chapter wherein he treats “of her long sickness and infirmities,” and in the following chapter, has a curious anecdote concerning one of the nuns of Saint Paul's, from which it is clear that the members of this community were on intimate terms with the Seraphic Mother and her children. The gist of it is as follows—

“Now when the Lord Pope and his cardinals were prolonging their stay at Lyons, the Lady Clare grew so much worse that all her children believed that she was even now entering the valley of the shadow of death, and a sharp sword of sorrow was thrust into their souls; but soon they found consolation in a dream vouchsafed to a certain devout virgin who served God under the rule of Saint Benedict in the cloister of Saint Paul. This woman dreamed that she and her sisters were at Saint Damian's nursing the Lady Clare, who lay on a costly bed, sick unto death. And whilst they were weeping and waiting for the passing of her soul, lo, at the head of the couch there appeared a beautiful lady, who said to them: ‘Grieve not my daughters for her who shall presently conquer, for she will not be able to die until the Lord and His disciples have come.’ And behold, after a little while

the papal court arrived at Perugia, and the Lord of Ostia, her father in office—nay, from the care he used to take of her he might well be called her nurse, one who in his pure affection had always shown himself her most devoted friend—this man, I say, as soon as he knew that the infirmities of his beloved daughter were increasing, sped forthwith to Assisi and fed her with the Word made Flesh and her children with words of consolation, and she begged him with tears in the name of Christ to be a father to them always and to all her other children, and above all else to obtain from the Pope and the Cardinals the confirmation of her Privilege of Poverty. These things he promised to do, and he kept his promise. And when the new year had come the court removed to Assisi, and then was the dream aforesaid realized, for Pope Innocent of holy memory made haste to visit the victorious hand-maid of Christ attended by all his cardinals, thus honouring by his apostolic presence the death of her who, during her life, as he often used to say, was the most valiant woman of her time. Now the Pope, who is higher than man and lower than God, himself represents the person of the Lord, and the cardinals who familiarly cling to him in the temple of the Church Militant represent the Lord's disciples."

The "Lord of Ostia" above referred to was Alexander IV, who before he became Pope was Bishop of Ostia and Velletri, and in this story he is called Saint Clare's "father in office"—*officio pater*—because during the greater part of the pontificate of his uncle, Gregory IX, and throughout the whole of the reign of Innocent IV he had been the official protector of the Poor Ladies. Alexander was a great lover of Franciscans and was himself deeply imbued with the Franciscan spirit: he was above all things a man of peace, of blameless life and unwonted piety there was nothing in him of the puritan or the fanatic; he was a large-hearted, large-minded, tolerant man, stern to himself maybe, very gentle to others; "he was placid, sanguine, kind, one who knew how to laugh," as the chronicler of Saint Bertin has it. I think, too, he must have been singularly free from those venial offences and imperfections to which all men are prone—the little failings and the little follies of everyday life; for sharp-tongued Salimbene, who knew every one and everything, a man who was no sycophant, and who did not spare even his best friends, could find nothing to criticize in the conduct of Alexander. "This Pope," he says, "was born at Anagni; he began in 1253, and sat

for seven years; he was Bishop of Ostia before they put him in Peter's chair, and in those days men used to call him the Lord Rainaldo. He was for many years the cardinal protector of our order, and it was at our petition that the Lord Pope Gregory had given him his red hat. He canonized Blessed Clare, whom Blessed Francis brought to Christ, and he wrote her collects and hymns. He had a nephew a friar and a sister a Poor Lady, but he did not make her an abbess nor his nephew a cardinal. Indeed, he created no cardinals, although in his time there were only eight in the sacred college. He was a man of letters, and loved the study of theology, and often and gladly he used to preach and sing Mass and consecrate churches.

"That he knew how to preserve friendship is clear from his treatment of Brother Rainaldo of Tocca, of our order, whom he loved so dearly that not even the friendship of Jonathan and David can be compared for a moment with his friendship with this man. If all the world had said ill of him Alexander would have closed his ears to it, and once he went barefoot to open to him when he knocked at the door of his chamber; another friar saw him do this thing who was alone with the Pope within: to wit, my friend Brother Mansueto, from whose mouth I heard all these things which I now set down. This Pope never embroiled himself in quarrels, but passed all his days in peace. He was stout and full-bodied, like Eglon, King of Moab, a very fat man. Just he was and merciful, in manner courteous and very kind; he had the fear of God in his heart, and he served Him faithfully."

The Church of Saint Angelo di Panzo, like the Church of Saint Paul at Bastia, was the community chapel of a convent of Benedictine nuns, who at the time of Saint Clare's profession were living in the open country on one of the southern slopes of Mount Subasio; their monastery was about three miles to the east of Assisi, just off the old Spello road, a little below Saint Francis's favourite hermitage, called the Carceri, and almost directly overlooking the village of San Vitale. What remains of it is now a farmhouse. Adjoining the stable of this establishment there is a little shrine which sometimes serves as a storehouse for forage, sometimes as a place of worship; according to an inscription on the wall facing the altar it was built in 1604 *cum lapidibus vetustissimi celeberrimi sed diruti templi Sancti Angeli in Panzo*.

The Benedictines of Panzo, like their sisters of Bastia, presently flitted to town, constrained thereto, like them, by the perils of the

countryside; on the 29th of May, 1270, they purchased from one Donna Testa and her daughter Francesca, for a hundred and twenty pounds and some odd pence, a house and a piece of land at Assisi in the parish of Saint Stephen in the old Strada Superba, which now, alas, is called the Via Principe di Napoli. To this place in due course they came, and here they continued to dwell for a hundred and fifty years or more, when they amalgamated with the nuns of Santa Chiara. In the early days of the Franciscan revival these Benedictine Dames had joined the Order of Poor Ladies, persuaded thereto, seemingly, by Pope Gregory IX, who on the 17th of December, 1238, addressed a letter to the Abbess and Convent of the monastery of Saint Angelo di Panzo in the diocese of Assisi, by which he confirmed them in the possession of all their property and took their monastery under the special protection of the Apostolic See. This Brief, I suspect, was the price of their acquiescence. The original document, and several others relating to the affairs of the Panzo folk, is still preserved in the archive chamber of the nuns of Santa Chiara. The old convent in the Strada Superba is now the diocesan seminary.

Celano's story of Saint Clare and the closed door is curious: no other contemporary writer relates it. As time went on this story grew: later writers tell us that the door was opened for her by angels. In the days of Saint Clare, and until a much later period, throughout Umbria, and also in some other parts of Italy, the belief was still current that it boded ill for the new owner of a house to enter it by the same threshold through which the dead body of his predecessor had been carried out: thus it was customary to construct separate doorways for the dead—many of them can still be seen in Assisi and elsewhere—which were only opened for the passage of a corpse, and immediately afterwards blocked up again. Now, bearing this in mind, Celano's description seems to suggest that on the night when St. Clare fled to the Porziuncola she went out by the death door.

It will be interesting to note in this connection the following verses from the vesper hymn of the primitive office of Saint Clare, which hymn, the reader will bear in mind, was composed by Alexander IV, according to Salimbene—

Spretis nativo genere  
Carnis et mundi foedere  
Clauditur velut carcere  
Dives superno munere.

Clauditur velut tumulo  
Nequam subducta saeculo  
Patet in hoc ergastulo  
Solum Dei spectaculo.

This and the other dramatic details of St. Clare's farewell to the world were not fortuitous: they were without doubt expressly prescribed by that great dramatist, Saint Francis. Palm Sunday, the first day of Christ's passion, should be the first day, too, of her long passion; she should put on her best clothes, for was it not meet that she should be arrayed gloriously on the day of her mystical marriage with Christ? She should go to the cathedral and receive her palm, the palm which she merited for her victory over self, and which should be to her the symbol of the palm which she should one day receive in heaven; she should leave her home by the door of death and be escorted to the place of sacrifice like a corpse with cross and candles, for was she not dead to the world, dead to human joy, dead to human affection, and was she not soon to be buried in the living tomb of the cloister? "Dead to the world and buried with Christ in the cloister": these words occur over and over again in pontifical bulls and episcopal letters addressed to the first Poor Ladies.

## CHAPTER VI

Of Pope Alexander's account of Saint Clare's farewell to the world : wherein it differs from Celano's. The Latin text. Concerning two facts therein related which are not mentioned by Celano. Reasons for thinking that Saint Clare's profession was perfectly regular. Alexander's story of the meeting of Saint Clare with her kinsfolk not the same as Celano's, and probably more trustworthy. Unlike Celano, Alexander says nothing of Saint Clare's migration to a second church. The testimony of Saint Clare's will concerning this matter. Alexander refrains from identifying alike the place of Saint Clare's profession and the place in which she afterwards took refuge. Wherefore.

POPE ALEXANDER'S account of Saint Clare's profession, and of the circumstances attending it, differs very considerably from the account contained in the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*. In the first place, Alexander omits much that Celano sets down, and this is not surprising, for we cannot expect in a legal document the details of a developed biography; in the second place, he adds to our little store of information two noteworthy facts, and lastly, and this is the most important point of all, Celano and Pope Alexander are not always agreed. But the reader shall judge for himself. Alexander's story is as follows: after relating how St. Clare, converted by Saint Francis, determined to renounce the world, he says—

“Quae tandem cuncta sua bona, ut una secum quidquid etiam habebat, Christi obsequio deputaret in eleemosynas, et pauperum subsidia distribuit et convertit.

“Cumque de saeculi streptitu fugiena ad quamdam campestram declinasset ecclesiam, et ab ipso beato Francisco sacra ibi recepta tonsura, processisset in aliam, consanguineis ejus ipsam exinde reducere molientibus, illa protinus amplectens altare, pannosque apprehendens ipsius, crinium sui capitis incisura detecta eisdem consanguineis, in hoc fortiter restitit, et constanter; quia cum jam esset mente integra juncta Deo, pati non poterat ab ejus servitio se divelli. Denique cum ad ecclesiam sancti Damiani extra civitatem Assisinatam unde traxit originem, per eundem beatum Franciscum adducta fuisset, ibi ei Dominus ad amorem et cultum assiduum sui nominis, plures socias aggregavit.”

In the above passage, then, Alexander relates two incidents, both

of them interesting, one of supreme importance, which, as the reader will call to mind, are not mentioned by Celano: he tells us that shortly before her flight Saint Clare disposed of her property and distributed the proceeds amongst the poor, and that it was Saint Francis himself who tonsured her. The first statement needs no comment, but one asks oneself, with regard to the second, by what authority did Saint Francis do this thing?—he, a simple clerk, certainly not in priest's orders, perhaps not even yet a deacon! Monsieur Sabatier thinks that he acted entirely on his own initiative and without any authority whatever, that he was thus guilty of a grave breach of ecclesiastical discipline, but owing to his ignorance of canon law he was unaware of the fact, and that the ecclesiastical authorities, on account of his success, deemed it prudent to close their eyes to it. But Bishop Guido, we know, was exceedingly jealous of his episcopal rights, not at all the kind of man to wink at the least infringement of his prerogatives, even in the case of a popular preacher who had violated them not out of contumely, but through ignorance; and if Saint Francis acted thus, I very much fear that he was not in a position to plead ignorance, for, although he was himself no canonist, there were people about him who were assuredly well acquainted with the law. Moreover, there is no evidence to prove that he acted without warrant in this business: nay, everything that we know of the case suggests a contrary conclusion. The Seraphic Father was one of the humblest and most submissive of men, and even if he had had the temperament of a rebel he would surely not have acted in an affair of this kind without having first obtained the requisite faculties, for it was essential to the success of his project that the tonsuring should be perfectly regular, otherwise it would have been open to Monaldo to make application in the Bishops' Court for a decree of nullity; nor, we may be very sure, would this man have hesitated to take advantage of it if there had been any kind of flaw in the proceeding, and Bishop Guido would have hardly dared to refuse justice to so mighty an applicant, even if he had desired to do so. Moreover, that Saint Clare should have uncovered her tonsured head when her kinsfolk endeavoured to persuade her to return home, this, I think, is significant, and so, too, is what happened in the cathedral on Palm Sunday: it is most improbable that Bishop Guido would have acted as he did upon this occasion, unless Brother Francis had previously taken him into his confidence.

The reader will not have failed to note that Alexander depicts

the first meeting of the Seraphic Mother with her relatives after she had taken the veil in much less vivid colours than does Celano. In Alexander's account there is no suggestion of violence or even anger on the part of Saint Clare's kinsmen; there is nothing to lead us to suppose that the interview lasted "for many days," as Celano has it; in truth it seems to have been a sufficiently tame affair according to the bull of canonization: her relatives entreated her to return home, and Saint Clare, with characteristic firmness, refused to do so; having uncovered her tonsured head she embraced the altar and laid hold of the altar cloth, not that furious men were striving, as Celano implies, to carry her off by main force, but as one who should say: "I swear by this altar and by the cloth of this altar that I am a virgin consecrated to Christ. Do you not see my tonsure?"

Herein, then, Pope Alexander and Celano are not at one, and Pope Alexander, it seems to me, is the more credible witness, for this honest man was a friend of Saint Clare's and in all probability had his account of this business from Saint Clare herself, and Friar Thomas acknowledges that he had his information at second hand. But, after all, whether Saint Clare's relatives endeavoured to gain their end by entreaties alone or by entreaties combined with threats and violence, whether they drew in their horns after the first encounter or, hoping against hope, persisted for many days, these things are not matters of moment; the important point of the story is this—and herein Alexander and Celano are agreed—at last they were convinced that they had attempted something which they were unable to perform.

In the course of her after life Saint Clare often found herself at issue with all sorts and conditions of men, armed with all kinds of weapons which they wielded in various ways, but none of them were ever able to bend or to break the iron of her inflexibility; in the end they were always convinced; they heard with her ears, saw with her eyes, and held their peace.

The next point in Alexander's narrative to which I should like to call the reader's attention is this: unlike Celano, he says nothing of Saint Clare's migration to a second church before she finally settled at Saint Damian's. Wherefore? In order to economize space, the incident in Alexander's opinion being one of trifling account, or because there was no such migration? Celano, indeed, later on recounts a most astounding prodigy which, he says, took place during Saint Clare's stay at Panzo; but he is the only

contemporary writer who tells us this tale, and Iacobili, who repeats it in his *Saints of Umbria in the Sixteen Hundreds*, makes Saint Damian's the scene of the miracle; also the Seraphic Mother herself bears testimony in her will (we must not, however, forget that the authenticity of this document has not yet been established) that before she came to Saint Damian's she had only sojourned in one other convent, and that for a short while. This is what she says—

“And thus by the will of God and of our most Blessed Father Francis we came to dwell in the Church of Saint Damian, where soon the Lord of His mercy and His grace multiplied us in order that that might be fulfilled which he had foretold by the mouth of His Holy One. For we had sojourned in another place but only for a short time”—“nam steteramus in alio loco, licet parum.” In documents of this period the word *locus* is frequently used to signify a religious house.

The reader will have no doubt observed that Alexander does not tell us the name of the church where Saint Clare was tonsured, nor the name of the convent in which she afterwards took refuge. He contents himself by saying that the first was “a certain church in the plain,” and the second, “another church”; and again one asks oneself wherefore? Not in this case, surely, from a desire to be brief: Celano's *ad sanctam Mariam de Portiuncula* and *ad ecclesiam Sancti Pauli* are no less concise than the vague terms which Alexander uses; and not, I think, because he was unable to identify the places to which he refers, nor yet from a mere whim nor from inadvertence.

Saint Clare took the veil on the Palm Sunday of the year 1211. The ceremony was performed secretly in a country church at dead of night, in the presence, perhaps, of five or six witnesses, for Saint Francis had not yet many disciples; they were wanderers and wayfarers on the face of the earth; they had only recently obtained possession of the Porziuncola, and it is not likely that more than two or three of them were dwelling there in those early days. The bull of canonization was published in the fall of the year 1255. Celano's *Legend* was completed after that date and before the 25th of May, 1261. Of those who had been present at Saint Clare's tonsuring, how many were in the flesh when Alexander began to write? Were any of them still alive when Celano took up his pen? I suspect that two versions of the story were current at this time—that some said the Porziuncola was the scene

of Clare's profession, some the Church of Saint Paul, that the question, hotly debated, had become a party one and that Alexander, perhaps not sure which tale was true, and in any case loath to commit himself in an official document to either of them, lest by so doing he should add fuel to the fire, deemed it expedient to write the ambiguous words above quoted; for Saint Paul's and the Porziuncola are both situated in the plain.

Pope Alexander, as we have seen, was above all things a man of peace; Thomas of Celano throughout his career was, in the first place, a partisan—keen, hard, narrow like the blade of a well-worn knife. Monsieur Sabatier and others think that he belonged to the party of large observance, and such may have been the case when he wrote his first life of Saint Francis, but he was surely of the Zelanti when he wrote the second life and the *Life of the Seraphic Mother*; how eager these men were to enhance the glory of the Porziuncola I have already pointed out, and we must not forget that at the time we are now considering the strife between the sons of Saint Francis was raging more fiercely than ever.

The story of this ancient quarrel is one of intense interest, but it is complicated by cross currents and side issues, bristles with controversy and covers more than a hundred years. It is not, then, possible to tell it at length in these pages, but some knowledge of at least the main outlines is indispensable to a right appreciation, not only of the obscure problems which now concern us, but of the life of Saint Clare generally and of the early history of the order which she founded. Therefore in the following chapters I have jotted down a few notes concerning this complicated trouble.

## CHAPTER VII

Of the quarrel about the making of the rule of the Friars Minor. Concerning the cause of the quarrel; and of the belligerents and their first leaders. How both sides endeavoured during Saint Francis's lifetime to obtain his support, and said after his death that their views had been his. How the Zelanti superiors, whom Saint Francis had left in charge during his absence in the East, increased the rigour of the rule and vexed the order throughout Italy with "insolent innovations," and how, warned by a secret messenger, Saint Francis returned in haste and arrived just in time to prevent a schism. How, broken in health and half blind, he named a coadjutor: one Peter Catani, a man of moderate views; and how with his help and the help of Elias and Brother Cæsar of Spire he set his house in order. Some biographical notes concerning these men. Of Brother Peter's death six months after his nomination, and how his mantle fell on Elias of Cortona. Of the opinion that this appointment was dictated by Ugolino. Concerning the rule that Saint Francis made on his return from the Levant, in what it differed from the old rule, and how the "spiritual brethren" groaned at the mildness of it. How Saint Francis fell under the influence of Brother Leo, and how this man compelled him to make a new rule so strict that all his officers with one accord repudiated it. How Saint Francis stiffened his neck and refused to change one jot or tittle, and how at last, through the good offices of Cardinal Ugolino, a compromise was effected: the rule as we have it to-day.

So fierce and so bitter was the strife in the ranks of the seraphic regiment during the first period of its existence, that in the natural order of things it must have gone to pieces long before Saint Francis died; but instead of breaking up, during this same period it increased rapidly, produced heroes without number, proved itself over and over again one of the most efficient corps in the army of the Church Militant.

The man whom God raised up to accomplish this thing, who, in spite of ill health and a naturally irritable temper, was able by the grace of God to work this miracle, nay, who made, as we know it, the great Seraphic Religion—sweetest, lowliest, most alluring of all religious orders which by charity and self-effacement draw souls to Christ—was Elias of Cortona.

The chief point at issue in this long battle was from first to last concerning the rule: at first concerning the making of the rule, and afterwards as to the meaning of the rule. On the one

side were the moderate men—the men who favoured mild measures and later on a large interpretation of the law, the “brethren of common observance,” as they were then called; on the other side were the Zelanti, or, as they called themselves, the “spiritual brethren”: men of zeal, whose zeal, their opponents said, was not according to discretion, men of poverty and penance, who in this respect were more Franciscan than Saint Francis. Their guiding spirit in the early days was Brother Leo, and the first leader of the moderate party was the aforesaid Elias of Cortona.

As long as the founder lived both sides did their utmost to obtain his approval, and when he was dead both sides maintained that their policy had been his; and though, perhaps, in each case the wish was, to a certain extent, the father to the thought, there is reason to believe that what each side averred was not altogether without foundation: Saint Francis's views on all points were not always the same: taught by experience as time went on, he seems to have become larger, milder, more practical. Elias and his followers travelled along the same road, but they went faster than the Seraphic Father, and perhaps further than he ever did. Nor were Leo and his friends standing still: they moved in the opposite direction, grew sterner, narrower, stiffened their backs, and, continually hugging the letter of the gospel, at last lost sight of the spirit. Moreover, towards the close of his life, the founder seems to have reverted from time to time to the opinion of his earlier days. All men are influenced by their surroundings; Saint Francis was of an impressionable nature, he was weak and ill, and his intellect was perhaps clouded by suffering. Leo and his henchmen, Angelo and Rufino, were his sick nurses. The first is said to have also acted as his secretary, and to have been his confessor. These things are significant. The violent outbursts recorded in Zelanti chronicles, if St. Francis ever uttered them, the pathetic document called his will, if it be genuine and has come down to us in its original form, the stringent poverty clauses inserted in the rule of 1223—all these things were directly or indirectly the outcome of Leo's influence. Albeit his influence was not paramount: the man whom St. Francis most trusted was the man whom he had set over his religion. Of others Leo could, and did at times, instil into his mind doubts, but to the end he never lost faith in Elias of Cortona.

We first hear of strife in the ranks of the Franciscans somewhere about the year 1220, when Saint Francis returned in haste from

the East, called home by the rumour that his children were at loggerheads. It was not to be wondered at: the order now consisted of several thousand members of divers nationalities, of every rank and calling in life, clerks and layfolk, monks and married men, all sorts and conditions of persons; they had been received without any kind of preparation, for in those days there was no novitiate, and it is almost certain that they were not bound by vows. This heterogeneous mass had been kept together by the magic influence of Saint Francis's personality, but when that personality was withdrawn, when he set sail for the East and was lost sight of, and when presently rumour had it that he was dead, the storm that had long been brewing burst, and he only arrived just in time to prevent his army from going to pieces. But Saint Francis was no longer the man that he had been: for years past Brother Ass had been beaten, overburthened, underfed, and ill treatment was beginning to tell. In other words, his health was broken; also during his travels in the Levant he had contracted a malady of the eyes which rendered him half blind. Wherefore, at the general chapter which met at the Porziuncola on Michaelmas Day, 1220, he appointed a vicar-general to assist him in the government of the order: Brother Peter Catani, a clerk of birth and learning, *vir literatus et nobilis*, as Jordan has it. He was one of St. Francis's first disciples, he had journeyed with him in the East, before he entered religion, he had held a canon's stall in the cathedral church of Assisi, and he was a jurisconsult of repute. A noteworthy appointment this, and one full of significance: it was almost a blow in the mouth to Brother Leo and his friends, for Peter's thoughts were not their thoughts, nor his ways their ways, and Saint Francis, who had been intimate with him for years, was surely well aware of the aims and aspirations of the man whom it had seemed good to him to set over his brethren. Nor was this all: he had brought with him from the East two other learned and capable men to assist him in the difficult task of setting his house in order: Brother Elias of Cortona and Brother Cæsar of Spire. Elias was a man of humble origin. "When he was in the world men called him Bombarone; his father was of the diocese of Bologna, his mother of Assisi; he began life as a mattress-maker; somehow or other he managed to pick up a little learning, and he used to teach Assisi youths to read the psalter"—so says Salimbene. Later on he studied at the university of Bologna, and with profit: "*vir adeo in sapientia etiam humana*

famosus ut raros in ea pares Ytalia putaretur habere," says the writer of *The Catalogue of the Fourteen Generals*,<sup>1</sup> and Eccleston: "Quis in universo Christianitatis orbe vel gratiosior vel famosior quam Helias?" When did he join the order? Before 1217. This much can be said with certainty, for in that year or thereabout Saint Francis sent him to the Holy Land at the head of a little band of missionaries. Monsieur Sabatier suggests that they had been friends in the world, and that together they had experienced the throes of conversion. The conjecture is, I think, a happy one; but, alas, it is only a conjecture.

Cæsar, according to his friend Jordan of Giano, who is generally to be trusted, was a subdeacon of the diocese of Spire, his native place, when he put on the frock and cord. He was a student of the university of Paris, deeply versed in Holy Writ. In theology he had sat at the feet of Master Conrad of Spire, the preacher of the Cross and afterwards Bishop of Hildesheim. Even before he became a Franciscan he was a "zealous propagator and imitator of evangelical perfection, and certain women of his native town who had listened to his discourses cast off their jewels and fine clothes and began to walk humbly, whereat their husbands, indignant, would fain have burnt him as a heretic; but Master Conrad befriended him, and he returned to Paris. Presently he set out for the Holy Land, where he fell in with Brother Elias, by whose preaching he was converted to our order."

But though all these men—Elias, Cæsar, Peter Catani—co-operated with the founder in the much-needed work of reform, and though each man set his mark on the work, as we shall presently see, Saint Francis was deprived of the assistance of two of them long before it was finished: death carried off Peter when he had been vicar-general not quite six months—on the 10th of March, 1221, and six months later Francis himself dispatched Cæsar to Germany at the head of a missionary undertaking; for Francis was firmly determined to make the work a success, and Cæsar at this time seems to have been the only man in the order who could speak the German language, and so it came about that Elias, on whose shoulders Peter's mantle had fallen, was left alone to face the fury of the fanatics.

Monsieur Sabatier is of opinion that Saint Francis was not

<sup>1</sup> The Latin text of this most valuable thirteenth-century work is given by Holder-Egger at the end of his *Salimbene*, with an excellent introduction, pp. 653-74.

a free agent when he made this man his vicar: he is quite certain that the appointment was dictated by Cardinal Ugolino—afterwards Pope Gregory IX—and he gives reason for the faith that is in him: “la preuve,” he says, “la plus décisive qu’on puisse imaginer, l’aveu du pontife lui-même . . . ‘Istum feceramus generalem,’ dit Grégoire IX, ‘credentes quod placeret toto ordini et propter familiaritatem quam habuit cum Beato Francisco sed videmus nunc quod turbat ordinem et destruit manifeste.’”<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to follow the learned writer’s train of thought: somehow or other the Latin quotation does not seem to fit in. Even his faithful disciple Lempp is constrained to make a mild protest: “La démonstration de Sabatier,” he says, “n’est cependant pas inattaquable, car les mots *istum feceramus generalem* doivent se rapporter à l’élection d’Élie en 1232.”<sup>2</sup>

A word of explanation is perhaps needed. Elias, who was vicar-general from 1221 until the founder’s death in 1226, in 1232 was elected minister-general in succession to John Parenti, the immediate successor of Saint Francis, and he continued to govern the order till 1239, when he was deposed by Pope Gregory IX (Ugolino). Now the words which Monsieur Sabatier quotes: “I made this man general,” in proof of his assertion that Ugolino compelled St. Francis to make Elias his vicar-general in 1221, occur in the *Speculum vite* account of Elias’s deposition from the minister-generalship in 1239, and hence it is quite clear that Gregory, if he ever uttered them, was referring not to Elias’s appointment in 1221, but to his nomination in 1232.

The *Speculum vite* is a late fifteenth-century or early sixteenth-century compilation by an unknown scribe; it was printed at Venice in 1504, at Metz in 1509, and at Antwerp in 1620, and it bristles with inaccuracies.

One of the first things that Saint Francis did on his return from the East was to recast the rule with the assistance of Cæsar and Peter certainly, of Elias most likely, and perhaps, too, of Cardinal Ugolino, whom Honorius III, at the founder’s request, had just appointed official protector of the order.

In the early days Saint Francis had composed for himself and his brethren a short form of life in simple words, as we learn from Celano and Saint Bonaventure. It had for its irremovable foundation the observance of the Holy Gospel, and he added

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction to *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. ciii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Frère Élie de Cortone*, p. 46, note 4.

thereto a few other things which seemed to him to be necessary for uniformity of life. This rule was confirmed by Innocent III, "without a bull"—that is, by word of mouth only—on the 23rd of April, 1209. As time went on "the few other things," little by little, became many, for it was the friars' custom "to meet every year, and with the help of good men to adopt and promulgate holy institutions approved by the Pope," as Jacques de Vitry informs us, writing somewhere about the year 1216. The original rule, be it borne in mind, was written for a handful of men—thirteen, according to Saint Bonaventure: the founder and twelve followers—who had banded together to observe the evangelical counsels, and by their word and example to preach penance—vagabonds with no fixed abode, who lived from hand to mouth, spent their days in the open air and their nights in caves, in barns, in church porches, and sometimes with no shelter but a haystack, and it is clear that some regulations well enough adapted for a little itinerant corps of this kind needed revision as the army increased and to a certain extent became settled, and that fresh regulations also were required if discipline was to be maintained. What happened, then, was this: the rule was added to and modified as circumstances demanded by the brethren assembled from time to time in general chapter, and by the year 1220 it had become a most cumbersome and unwieldy instrument. It was this rule that the Seraphic Father now threw into the melting-pot, and when it came forth and had been recast, it was a very different rule from what it had been before: the fasting clause was milder, the poverty clauses were larger, a novitiate was prescribed, and the brethren were strictly forbidden "to wander about beyond obedience," and there were other differences as well. The new rule was drafted by Cæsar of Spire, and we have the complete text: the text of the original rule has not come down to us, or has not been discovered, but from Jordan, Celano, and other contemporary writers we know at least the substance of the clauses referred to in the above paragraph.

"Once upon a time," says Thomas of Celano, with his usual lack of precision; "once upon a time, when the Porziuncola was crowded with foreign brethren, and the offerings of the faithful were not sufficient for their needs, Brother Peter Catani, his vicar, thus addressed Saint Francis: 'I know not, brother, what to do, for I have not the wherewithal to provide for the corporal necessities of these men who are flocking hither from all parts. Prithee suffer

me to reserve a portion of the property of novices entering the order, so that we have a little hoard on which to fall back when we are set in such straits as these.' 'Away with such piety,' said the holy man; 'away with such piety, dearest brother, as to impiously break the rule for the sake of any man's necessities'—*absit haec pietas, frater carissime, ut pro quovis homine impie agatur in regula.*"

This incident must have taken place when the brethren were coming together for the Michaelmas chapter of 1220, the same chapter at which Francis announced that he had made Peter his vicar-general, the only chapter celebrated during this man's term of office. But though the new vicar was not suffered to have his way upon this occasion, and the immediate difficulty seems to have been met by selling or pawning the altar plate, it was not long before he was able to bring Saint Francis over to his way of thinking, for in the second chapter of the new rule, the chapter concerning the reception and clothing of the brethren, we read the following words, and they reveal to us the kind of argument with which this wily old lawyer overcame the scruples of his spiritual chief: "Let him (the new brother) sell all his goods and endeavour to distribute them to the poor. But let the brothers and the ministers of the brothers take heed not to interfere in any way in his affairs, and let them not receive coin either themselves or through any person acting as intermediary; but if they should *be in want, the brethren may accept other necessities for the body, money excepted, by reason of their necessity, like other poor folk.*"

By this door, then, all kinds of goods and chattels could enter the citadel of the Lady Poverty, provided the inhabitants had need of them, and if it was not opened wide enough for filthy lucre to enter, licence was given to the unclean thing to creep in by another way: in Chapter VIII (that the brethren may not receive money) we find this clause: "Let none of the brethren . . . carry or receive money or coin in any manner, or cause it to be received . . . for any reason, *save only on account of the manifest necessity of the sick*; and again, a few lines further down: "and if, perchance, which God forbid, it should happen that any brother should collect or have coin, *save only because of the aforesaid necessity of the sick*, let him be held for a false brother," etc. Further, it does not seem to have been absolutely forbidden to receive or even to ask for money by way of alms for lepers, though the brethren are

warned to be very wary in doing so. The wording, however, of this clause is far from clear.

It goes without saying that in the matter of fasting and abstinence and in all other things the sons of Saint Francis have always been bound to observe the ordinary discipline of the Church like other folk. In addition to this they were bound by the original rule—the rule which Pope Innocent III confirmed in 1209—to fast on every Wednesday and Friday throughout the year.

During Saint Francis's absence in the East an extra day was added to the weekly fast—Monday—and every week-day throughout the year was to all intents and purposes made a day of abstinence from flesh meat, and every Monday and Saturday from all kinds of milk food as well; for although the brethren were still allowed to partake of these articles of diet on the days in question if they were offered spontaneously by charitable friends, they were no longer suffered to beg for them nor by any other means to procure them for themselves, save in the case of meat on Sundays and in the case of milk on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

These innovations, which were not in harmony with the general feeling of the order, were ordained by a chapter of Italian superiors, convoked and presided over by Brother Matthew of Narni, one of the two vicars to whose care Saint Francis had entrusted his flock before he set out for the East. All these things we learn from Jordan of Giano. The chapter in question assembled, certainly in 1220 and most likely on the Feast of Pentecost, in the Church of the Porziuncola, where Matthew was now residing.

We know nothing of this man's antecedents nor of his subsequent career, but that he was one of Brother Leo's friends I think may be taken for granted from his rigorism in the matter of fasting, and that Saint Francis disapproved of it there cannot be the least doubt, as we shall see.

"Now it came to pass," says honest old Jordan in his delightful gossiping way, "that a certain lay brother was so indignant at these presumptuous constitutions, that without asking the vicars' permission, he put a copy of them into his pocket and crossed the sea; and the first thing he did when he had found Blessed Francis was to beg pardon for the fault that he had committed in coming to see him without leave; 'but,' said he, excusing himself, 'I was induced thereto by this necessity: the vicars whom you have left in charge have presumed in the absence of your reverence to increase

the rigour of the rule and,' he added, 'these vicars and some other brethren are vexing the order throughout the whole of Italy with their insolent innovations.'

"Now it chanced when this brother arrived that Blessed Francis was at table with a dish of meat before him, just about to begin his dinner, and when he had read the new constitutions, 'Well, my Lord Peter,' said he, addressing Peter Catani, 'how think you, what shall we do?' Whereat Brother Peter: 'Ah ha, my Lord Francis, as you will; you are master.' (For they always called one another 'my Lord,' both in Italy and in foreign parts: Blessed Francis did so from courtesy, for Brother Peter was a learned man and a gentleman, and he in his turn deemed it fitting to address his spiritual father in like fashion.) For a while the seraphic man kept silence, considering the matter in his heart, and at last he said: 'Let us eat, then, what is set before us according to the gospel.'"

As soon as Saint Francis had finished his dinner, he set out for Italy. One of the first things he did on his arrival, as we have seen, was to draw up a new rule, and in that rule we find the following clause—

"Let all the brethren fast from All Saints until Christmas, and from the Epiphany, when our Lord began to fast, until Easter; but throughout the rest of the year they are only bound to fast, according to this life, on Fridays. And they may eat of every kind of food that is set before them according to the gospel."

Moreover, not only is it certain that the enactments contained in the second chapter of Cæsar's rule were not in the original rule, but we know the exact date when they became law. This chapter treats of the reception and clothing of the brothers, and ordains that only provincial ministers should have power to receive new members into the order, that no candidate should be professed until the manner of life had been diligently explained to him and he had made trial of it for a year, and that when once he had been received to obedience it should "not be lawful for him to pass to another order," nor "to wander about beyond obedience," and then follow these words: "*according to the commandment of the Lord Pope.*" On the 22nd of September, 1220, Honorius III had issued a bull in which the above provisions are contained.

The first Franciscans were all of them more or less free-lances; Saint Francis himself in the early days had countenanced this manner of warfare. It may have been necessary and even useful

when he counted his soldiers by units and all of them were known to him; but now that he reckoned them up by thousands it had become a source of danger. He recognized this on his return from the East, and, too, he was shrewd enough to foresee that some of his disciples would kick at it, if any attempt were made to draw in the reins of discipline. It was to strengthen his vicar's arm in dealing with these insubordinate folk that he obtained from Honorius III the injunction above referred to.

I know that some historians say that Saint Francis was forced by the Holy See to forbid his brethren to wander about beyond obedience, and I know, too, that Saint Francis himself says in his letter to all the friars—a letter of which the authenticity has never been contested: “I entreat my lord the vicar-general to see to it that the rule be observed inviolably by all . . . and if any man will not observe it, him I do not hold to be a Catholic or my brother, nor do I wish to speak with him or to see him until he shall have done penance. *I say this, too, of all those who, setting aside the discipline of the rule, go wandering about; for our Lord Jesus Christ gave His life that He might not lose the obedience of His most Holy Father.*”

Brother Cæsar's rule was in all probability promulgated by Saint Francis himself during the general chapter which met at Assisi at Whitsuntide in the year 1221. The last clause of this remarkable document runs thus: “In the name of Almighty God, of the Lord Pope and by obedience, I, Brother Francis, command and strictly enjoin that no man shall add to or take away from the things which are written in this form of life, and that the friars shall have no other rule.” Albeit whilst the ink was still wet Saint Francis himself cancelled it.

When Brother Leo and his friends had read and re-read this intricate piece of legislation and had thoroughly grasped the significance—no easy task—of Cæsar's obscure draftsmanship, they were neither edified nor consoled. It was a cruel humiliation for these zealous folk to find that Saint Francis had disavowed their rigorous enactments concerning fasting—nay, he had made the fasting clause easier than it had ever been before; they were scandalized at the laxity of the poverty clauses, dismayed at the institution of a novitiate, furious that they would no longer be able to wander about beyond obedience. This was the bitterest pill of all. For, like the Sarabites to whom Saint Benedict refers in the first chapter of his Rule, “they desired to be shut up not in our

Lord's sheepfolds but in their own; the pleasure of their whims and fancies was to them a law; whatever they liked or made choice of they held to be holy, and what they liked not they deemed unlawful." They determined, then, to do their utmost to restore the old order of things, and the current of events brought them very near to success.

Peter Catani was now in his grave; somewhere about Michaelmas Cæsar had set out for Germany; Elias, eager, restless, fretted with official cares, was always moving from place to place on the business of the order. Saint Francis, now too sick to travel much, rarely left Assisi, and here, too, Leo was stationed. Thus was the Seraphic Father deprived of his old friends and counsellors, thus was the field open for Leo's machinations, and, too, fortune favoured him in other ways. This man wrote a clear, neat hand—several specimens of his writing have come down to us—he was able, too, to express himself clearly and in simple language—as rare a gift in the twelve hundreds as it is to-day. Saint Francis had a large correspondence; he had never been a good penman, and he was now almost blind. What more natural, then, than that he should employ Leo as his secretary? Moreover, Leo was a priest, perhaps the only priest in the Porziuncola, for not many of the brethren in those days were in priest's orders. Again, what more natural than that Saint Francis should make him his confessor. Therefore it is not surprising that these men soon became friends, nor that Leo was at last able to induce his sick penitent to re-write the rule. And presently, with the aid of a confederate, one Brother Bonizo of Bologna, he carried him off to a certain mountain, under pretext, seemingly, of making a spiritual retreat; but the true reason of their journey somehow or other became known, and what happened Leo himself tells, if Leo be indeed the author of the *Speculum Perfectionis*. "Whereupon," we read in the first chapter of that fascinating book, "whereupon very many of the ministers came to Brother Elias, who was Blessed Francis's vicar, and thus addressed him: 'It has come to our ears that Brother Francis is writing another rule, and we fear that he will make it so stern that it will be impossible for us to observe it. Do you therefore tell him in our behalf that we refuse to be bound by this rule: let him make it for himself, but not for us.' But Brother Elias would not go alone, so they all set out together, and when they had reached the place where Blessed Francis was sojourning Brother Elias called to him, and he, coming forth and

seeing the minister, 'What,' he said, 'do these men want?' and Brother Elias made answer, 'They are the ministers of your religion; they have heard that you are making a new rule, and fear that it will be too stern; wherefore they say and protest that they will not bind themselves to observe it; make it for yourself, if you will, but not for them.'

But the new rule was already drafted: it justified all their fears, and Saint Francis refused to change one jot or tittle, firmly convinced that Christ had dictated the words that Leo had written down; and Leo adds that a heavenly voice was heard saying: *To the letter, to the letter, to the letter; without gloss, without gloss, without gloss. Let them that will not so observe them go forth from this religion.* "Whereat," he continues, "Brother Elias and his comrades returned to their place discomfited and ashamed." Albeit they presently received some consolation: "This rule," says Leo, "was confirmed by bull by Pope Honorius after these ministers, contrary to the will of Blessed Francis, had cut out many things."

Pope Honorius III confirmed one Franciscan rule, and one only: the rule which is still binding on all the sons of Saint Francis—black, brown and bearded. The deed of confirmation has come down to us, and it contains the text of the rule confirmed, in full, so there can be no doubt whatever about it. This document is in the possession of the Friars of the Sacro Convento at Assisi; it is addressed to Brother Francis and the other brethren of the order of Friars Minor, and is dated from the Lateran, November 29th, 1223. It is clear, then, that this time-honoured code, which is, and has been for nearly seven hundred years the only rule of the great "Seraphic Religion," is nothing more than Brother Leo's rule above referred to, revised. But who revised it? Leo says, "these ministers"—Elias, that is, and the other superiors who refused to be bound by his scruples—and that they did so in opposition to the wishes of Blessed Francis. Later on he tells a somewhat different tale: Saint Francis was exceedingly loth that anything should be changed, but at last yielded to the entreaties of the ministers in order to avoid scandal. On the other hand we have the testimony of Ugolino, and it is most important: he tells us in a letter which he addressed to the whole order on the 28th of September, 1230, that he himself had helped St. Francis to make the new rule, and also that he had helped him to obtain its confirmation. It is certain that Ugolino

was not on the mountain with Francis and Leo and Bonizo when they drew up this rule, but I think there can be no doubt whatever that he and Saint Francis later on revised it very carefully. Something of this kind, I suspect, happened: when the Seraphic Father had come to himself and had at last been able to break the spell which Brother Leo had cast over him, he willingly agreed with his provincial ministers to refer the points in dispute to the arbitration of his old friend Ugolino, "his pope," as he used to call him, "the governor, protector and corrector of my religion."

At the Whitsuntide chapter which met at Assisi in 1223, and over which Ugolino himself presided, this agreement was carried out, and through his good offices a compromise was effected. In the matter of diet Elias and his friends—the vast majority of the order—obtained complete satisfaction. Poor Leo's stringent fasting clause, when Ugolino had revised it, was even less strict than Cæsar's: the long fast from the Epiphany to Lent now ceased to be of obligation. "May the Lord bless them that keep it of their own free will; but those who do not wish to observe it shall not be constrained thereto": thus runs the passage referred to, and a little further on we read: "In time of manifest necessity the brethren shall not be bound to corporal fasting." But Leo scored in the matter of poverty; the carefully chosen phrases by which he had excluded coin and every other kind of possession, and had forbidden the brethren, notwithstanding their poverty, to participate with other poor folk in the possessions of neophytes: all these remained intact. In the matter which grieved him most, too, he received some crumbs of comfort, for though he had the mortification of finding the substance of Cæsar's novitiate clause inserted in his rule, these words were cut out from it: "nor to wander about beyond obedience." Albeit this concession was something less than it seemed to be. The obnoxious words were only cancelled to save Leo's face: the bull which was the cause of their original insertion still remained in force. I suspect that Leo at first thought otherwise, arguing with himself that Honorius's confirmation of the rule had to all intents and purposes cancelled the obnoxious words from the bull. If so, he was mistaken. Hardly was he seated in Peter's chair than Ugolino re-issued his predecessor's bull word for word as Honorius had written it.

## CHAPTER VIII

Ugolino's compromise in respect to the rule fails to give satisfaction to any of the parties concerned. The strife between the sons of Saint Francis breaks out more fiercely than ever immediately after his death. Wherefore. Of Brother Leo's rebellion and the whipping which Brother Elias caused to be administered to him in consequence. Of the three earliest accounts that have come down to us of this affair. Of Brother Elias's defence when later on he was accused of breaking the rule. His statement that he had the Pope's authority for all that he did in the matter of the *Sacro Convento* shown to be true by Pope Gregory's own letters. An examination of these documents and of another still more important. The complete Latin text of it. Some notes on the interesting information contained in these old papers.

I do not think that any of the parties concerned were rendered particularly comfortable by the compromise which Ugolino had effected in the matter of the rule; Elias and his friends must have been convinced from the first that the poverty clauses would prove impracticable; Leo and his comrades were surely not satisfied with the meagre concessions they had obtained; and as for the Seraphic Father, we learn from the *Speculum Perfectionis* that his last days were made wretched by the complaints, the scruples, the evil forebodings of these disappointed men; and the breath was hardly out of his body when the cauldron of strife, which had been so long simmering, boiled over.

Monsieur Sabatier tells us how it all happened, from a spiritual point of view, and very pleasantly, in the introduction to his *Speculum Perfectionis*. After informing us (on page li) that Brother Leo was the author of this work, that it was written at the Porziuncola and completed on the 11th of May, 1227, he thus continues in his usual picturesque style:—

“Cette oeuvre n'était en quelque sorte que la conséquence du grand acte de courage accompli par lui (Léon) peu de jours auparavant.”

“Lorsque, au moment où François n'était pas encore refroidi dans son tombeau, il avait vu Elie non seulement encourager un esprit contraire à celui de leur père spirituel, mais annoncer bruyamment son projet d'ériger une fastueuse basilique pour servir de tombeau au petit pauvre du bon Dieu, il ne sut pas contenir son

indignation. Frère Egide l'avertit bien des dangers qu'il courrait s'il levait l'étendard de la révolte, mais il avait trop vécu de l'âme de François pour permettre ce qu'il considérait comme la profanation de son tombeau, et aidé de quelques amis, il brisa le vase de marbre placé aux abords de l'emplacement de la future basilique pour recevoir les dons de visiteurs."

"Elie le fit bâtonner et expulser de la ville d'Assise."

And in the Appendix to the *Speculum* he tells us that this work was composed by Léon: "sous le coup de son indignation contre Elie et surtout dans le but de faire échouer la candidature de celui-ci au généralat."

Brother Leo, then, when Saint Francis's body was not yet cold, courageously raised the standard of revolt against the man whom Saint Francis himself had appointed his vicar-general and who, therefore, now that Saint Francis was dead and until such time as a new general should be elected, was legitimate head of the order; and, smarting under the stripes which Elias had caused to be administered to him for acting thus, he withdrew in dudgeon to the Porziuncola and set to work to write a book with this aim in view—to frustrate, if might be, the success of Elias's candidature for the generalship.

Although this story does not show poor Frate Pecorella in a very lamb-like mood, it clears away so many difficulties, fits in so well with the rest of the story—provided we ignore dates—and withal makes such good reading that one is tempted to regret that Monsieur Sabatier has not yet been able to establish it on a sound historical basis.

The three earliest accounts that have come down to us of this affair are to be found in *The Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*, to wit, in the Life of Brother Leo and in the Life of Brother Giles, both of which works are incorporated in the *Chronicle*, and in the *Chronicle* itself, under the year 1227. This work is a late-fourteenth-century compilation by a writer who has not yet been identified. Many of the statements which it contains are beyond suspicion, many, manifestly erroneous, of not a few it is impossible to say whether they be true or false. Our author does not pretend that all that he says is gospel—indeed, he not unfrequently warns us to be on our guard: "This is the only account I can find, and I will not vouch for its accuracy." "There must be some confusion here: this man was in his grave when the deeds attributed to him took place." "Some

tell us this, some that, what really happened, who shall say? ” and so forth. As a rule, however, he sets down his facts without note or comment. Now Salimbene informs us that Leo himself wrote a life of Brother Giles.<sup>1</sup> Is this the life incorporated in the *Twenty-four Generals*?<sup>2</sup> If so, we have here the evidence of the man who played the chief part in the little theatrical scene we are now considering. The following is the gist of it:—

“ Now Giles was a great zealot of poverty : he was content with one coat, lived in a wattle hut, and all superfluous things were abhorrent to him. And when he heard from Brother Leo that a vast and splendid church was being built at Assisi, and that a marble vase had been set up hard by to receive the contributions of the faithful to the building fund, he burst out crying, and said : ‘ If this place were so vast as to extend from Assisi to Perugia, one corner of it would suffice for me to dwell in.’ Then, turning to Leo, he added in a voice choking with tears : ‘ If you are tired of your life, go break that marble vase set up for the collection of coin contrary to Holy Poverty, but if you wish to live let it be, for you will not be able to endure the tribulation that Brother Elias will bring on you.’ Then Leo, understanding and strengthened in the Lord, with the help of some of his friends, overthrew that vase of porphyry and utterly destroyed it.”

Here the story breaks off, but in each of the other accounts we are told that Elias, when he knew what had happened, caused these men to be beaten and hunted out of the town; and also, it will be interesting to note, that the spot on which the basilica was built was originally called Hell Hill, but that when Pope Gregory IX laid the foundation-stone the name was changed to Paradise Hill.

<sup>1</sup> Fuit autem Frater Egidius, qui Perusii in archa saxea tumulatus est in ecclesia fratrum, quartus frater ordinis fratrum minorum computato beato Francisco; cujus vitam Frater Leo, qui fuit unus de tribus specialibus sociis beati Francisci, sufficienter descripsit. (Salimbene. Holder-Egger edition, p. 557.)

<sup>2</sup> Papini is quite sure of it, so too Sabatier, but he thinks that much is omitted. (See *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. xcvi.) Dr. Lempp is less confident : “ Il est improbable que la légende des *Analecta Franciscana*, (t. III, p. 74-114) soit bien la légende originale de Léon : l’auteur dit bien en commençant qu’il écrit *prout a suis sociis intellexi et ab eodem viro sancto, cui familiaris fui, experientia didici*, mais le rédacteur de la *Chronique des XXIV Généraux* doit avoir en tout cas rajeuni la légende : il parle, par exemple (p. 114) du cardinal Bonaventure (juin 1273) alors que Léon mourut en novembre 1271. (See Lempp: *Élie de Cortone*, p. 27, note 3). But did Brother Leo die in November 1271? Wadding says so, but Wadding is not always accurate.

There is no difficulty in accepting any of the above statements: none of them are out of harmony with the evidence of earlier witnesses, and some of them find support in documents which date from the time when the Church of Saint Francis was being built. Moreover, the story as it stands is altogether in keeping with the habits and customs of the age and with the characters of its heroes. Brother Leo, we know, was of an excitable and impetuous temperament, and Elias was not the man to brook insubordination. But the redactor of the *Chronicle* account does not stop here, and what he adds to the story throws the whole of it into confusion.

The reader will bear in mind that all these writers tell us that the events we are now considering took place when the basilica was being built. Now the site was only acquired (the deed of conveyance has come down to us) on the 29th of March, 1228, and the foundation-stone was not laid until more than three months later. The following is the embarrassing statement tacked on to the Chronicler's story: "And because Elias had done this thing, there was a great stir amongst the brethren, and meeting together in general chapter they deprived him of his government, and chose for minister-general Brother John of Florence, surnamed Parenti, who at this time was provincial minister in Spain."

Parenti was elected general on Whit Sunday, the 10th of June, 1227.

It is clear, then, that either all three writers are mistaken as to the time when the quarrel took place, or else—and this seems to be the more likely—that the *Chronicle* writer is mistaken in making this trouble the cause of Elias's failure to obtain the generalship when John Parenti was elected: what he himself says in another part of his book, what Eccleston says, Salimbene, the author of the *Catalogue of the Fourteen Generals*, points, I think, in this direction. They tell us that when Elias was deposed in 1239—not when the generalship escaped him in 1227—his opponents accused him amongst other things of having broken the rule by collecting himself and compelling his subordinates to collect money for the completion of the Sacro Convento.

Elias did not deny the fact, but he denied that he had broken the rule. His conscience, he said, was perfectly clear: he had never undertaken to observe the rule confirmed by the Lord Honorius; when he was professed another rule was in force, under which the brethren were not forbidden to receive offerings of

money: to wit, the rule which the Lord Innocent had confirmed by word of mouth. For the rest, from first to last in this business, he had acted under the Pope's instructions.

Although the text of the original rule has not come down to us, there is good reason to think that Elias spoke the truth when he said that it contained no prohibition against collecting money; and that he had the Pope's warrant for all that he did concerning the Sacro Convento can be proved up to the hilt by contemporary documents of undeniable authenticity.

Before examining these papers, I think it will be well, in order to avoid confusion, to remind the reader of the following facts: Saint Francis died on the evening of the 4th of October, 1226; the next day he was buried at Assisi in the Church of Saint George, and in the spring of the year 1230 his bones were translated to the place where they still lie in the Sacro Convento—immediately under the high altar of the middle church. On the 18th of March, 1227, Honoriu8 III was gathered to his fathers, an old man full of years—a hundred, Salimbene says—and on the morrow another old man was set in Peter's chair: Ugolino, now about eighty-five years of age, and henceforth men called him "the Lord Pope Gregory."

In his brief of the 29th of April, 1228 (*Recolentes qualiter sancta plantatio fratrum minorum*), this pontiff informed the faithful generally that he had decided to build a special church wherein to treasure the bones of Blessed Francis, and that as he deemed it opportune that every one should participate in this salutary work, by these presents he granted an indulgence of forty days to all who should contribute to the building fund. Was it about this time that Elias set up the marble vase? Gregory had acquired the site of the church a few weeks earlier, and a few weeks later he laid the foundation-stone, as we shall presently see.

On the 22nd of October in the same year, he addressed a letter (*Recolentes qualiter sancta plantatio vestri ordinis*) to the minister-general (John Parenti) and brethren of the Minorite Order, in which he said that whereas he deemed it a fitting thing that the church which was being erected as a burial-place for Blessed Francis, on land which had been offered to himself, should rejoice in unwonted freedom, he thereby took possession of the same in the name of the Apostolic See and declared the church and land alike to be exempt from any kind of jurisdiction save that of the aforesaid See.

In the bull *Is qui ecclesiam suam*, by which Gregory on the 22nd of April, 1230, declared the Sacro Convento to be the mother church and the mistress of the whole Franciscan order, we find the following words—

“Since, then, at Assisi, on land donated to us and to the Roman Church, to wit, on the spot which is called Paradise Hill, a temple is being built in honour of Blessed Francis, wherein a most precious treasure—his holy body—is to be hidden,” etc.

A few weeks after Gregory had written these words—towards the close of the month of May ensuing—“this most precious treasure” was hidden so successfully in the field called Paradise Hill, that for something like six hundred years no man was able to find it. For the holy body of Francis was not borne in triumph from the Church of Saint George to the new basilica, by John Parenti and his friars, in the broad daylight of Whit Sunday, as the Sovereign Pontiff had prescribed, but secretly and stealthily at dead of night on the vigil of the appointed day, or perhaps a few days earlier, by the civic authorities of Assisi, persuaded thereto by Elias, *ductus humano timore*, as our chronicler explains. But of what was Elias afraid? Of nothing less than this—that his master’s body would be torn to pieces by a fierce mob of relic-hunters. We know what happened at Saint Anthony’s funeral. We know, too, how the bosom of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary was wrenched off, and how the men of Bruges and the men of Ghent fought for the relics of Blessed Charles of Flanders. Gregory had granted large indulgences to all who should take part in Saint Francis’s translation. The town that night was thronged to overflowing, and great flocks of pilgrims were lying out in the open fields like sheep; the normal population of Assisi at this time is said to have been about thirty thousand.

Of course, Elias’s conduct caused no little commotion amongst the brethren, but somehow or other he succeeded in quieting them, and he was able, too, to appease Gregory, as after events show; but when first that fiery old pontiff heard that the sacred body of his friend had been touched by profane hands he was furious, and forthwith delivered his soul in a long and vigorous epistle addressed to his beloved brethren the bishops of Perugia and Spoleto.

This document, which is known as the rescript *Speravimus hactenus*, is dated Lateran, July 16, 1230, and it is one of the most delightful of Pope Gregory’s literary productions. Alas, on account of its great length it is impossible to give the complete

text or anything like an adequate description of it in this book, and we must content ourselves with considering the points which immediately concern us.

Our old friend began his letter by groaning a little at the ingratitude of the men of Assisi, whom he said he had always treated with very great kindness—not only since he had been Pope, but in the days when he occupied a less exalted position. He had hoped that these men would have appreciated his benevolence—alas, they had rendered him evil for good, and that, in a matter in which they ought to have shown him the utmost consideration. For what had he done? When he was sojourning with them to enrol one of their fellow citizens—Francis of glorious memory—in the catalogue of saints, desiring to build a church in his honour, he himself with his own hands had laid the foundation-stone, that church he had since adorned with all kinds of privileges, exemptions, immunities, desiring to make it famous for ever, a boon to the men of Assisi collectively and individually. And what had these vexatious citizens done? Unmindful of their spiritual welfare—aye, and of their temporal interests as well—spoilt everything, upset everything, put the whole business out of joint, by their damnable presumption.

Having told the story of his grievance in detail, and in many words, and with much scriptural illustration, Pope Gregory proceeded to deprive the Sacro Convento of all its privileges, submitted it to episcopal control, set the place under interdict, and forbade any chapter of the brethren to be held there, or any one of them to dwell within its walls until full satisfaction had been made for the sacrilege committed. Moreover, he enjoined the bishops of Perugia and Spoleto to place the city under interdict and to excommunicate the mayor and the members of the town council, unless within fifteen days they should have dispatched to Rome fitting delegates to apologize for what had happened and to give pledges for future good conduct.

At the risk of wearying the reader I will venture to bring yet another document under his notice: the deed of gift by which, on the 29th of March, 1228, one Simon Puzarelli bestowed on Brother Elias, the representative of the Lord Pope Gregory IX, a piece of land at the place called Hell Hill in the county of Assisi for ever, in order that an oratory or church might be built thereon for the most blessed body of Saint Francis.

The original parchment is at present in the municipal library

of Assisi. The text is perfectly clear and needs no comment. It runs thus—

“In Dei nomine Amen. Anno MCCXXVIII indictione prima, quarto kalendas aprilis Gregorio Papa Nono et Frederico imperatore existentibus dedit, tradidit, cessit, delegavit et donavit simpliciter et inrevocabiliter inter vivos Simon Puzarelli Fratri Helye recipienti pro Domino Gregorio Papa nono petiam unam terre positam in vocabulo Collis Inferni in comitatu Assisii, cui scilicet a duobus lateribus via; a tertio bona ecclesie S. Agathe; a quarto bona filiorum Bonomi, vel si qui alii sint confines cum introitu et exitu suo et cum omnibus que supra se et infra se habet in integrum et cum omni jure et actione et usu seu requisitione sibi de ipsa re competenti ad habendum tenendum possidendum faciendum omnes utilitates et usus fratrum in ea, videlicet locum oratorium vel ecclesiam pro beatissimo corpore Sancti Francisci vel quidquid ei de ipsa re placuerit in perpetuum, quam rem se suo nomine constituit possidere donec corporaliter intraverit possessionem, in quam intrandi licentiam sua auctoritate concessit promittens non dedisse jus vel actionem de ea alicui. Quod si apparuerit eum dedisse promisit defendere suis pignoribus et expensis renunciando juri patronatus omnique auxilio legum ipsi competenti vel competituro. Et promisit per se et suos heredes dicto fratri Helye recipienti pro Domino Papa nono Gregorio contra non facere vel fecisse sed defendere dictam rem ab omni litigante persona omni tempore suis pignoribus et expensis in curia vel extra sub pena dupli ipsius re habita compensatione meliorationis et extimationis.

Qua soluta vel non hoc totum semper sit firmum.

Factum in domo dicti Symonis presentibus et vocatis testibus.

DOMINO GUIDONE, iudice communis Assisiensis.

PETRO TEBALDI.

SOMO GREGORII.

PETRO CAPITANIE.

TIBERIO PETRI.

ANDREA AGRESTOLI.

JACOBO BARTOLI.

Ego Paulus Notarius rogatus his interfui, et scripsi et auctenticavi.”

Who, then, can doubt that Elias had the Pope's authority for all that he did in the matter of the Sacro Convento?

But very much more than this may be learnt from the testimony of these old parchments. In the first place, does not what Gregory

says in his letters of the 22nd of October, 1228, and of the 16th of June, 1230, distinctly suggest that not Elias, but he himself conceived the project of founding the famous basilica? At all events, in the passages referred to he takes all the credit of it to himself: in the first his exact words run thus—

“Recolentes qualiter sancta plantatio fratrum minorum ordinis sub beato Francisco bonae memoriae incipit et mirabiliter profecit . . . dignum providimus et conveniens ut pro ipsius patris reverentia specialis aedificetur ecclesia in qua ejus corpus debeat conservari;”

and in the second he expresses himself as follows—

“Quum enim beatum Franciscum glorificatum in coelis clarificantes in terris adscripserimus catalogo confessorum et in honorem ejus ecclesiam fundari volentes de manibus nostris lapide ibi primario posito ipsam duxerimus eximendam,” etc.

Again, the letters of Oct. 2nd, 1228, and of April 22nd, 1230, contain explicit evidence, as the reader will call to mind, that Gregory was the legal owner of the Sacro Convento and of the land on which it stood; a passage in the brief *Speravimus hactenus* no less clearly shows that his ownership of this property was not a mere legal fiction—in other words, that the title deeds were not registered in Gregory's name to enable the brethren of common observance to wriggle through the closely woven meshes of the Pecorella's poverty clause. That expedient they had recourse to later on, in the case of other convents; but the Sacro Convento was not only *de jure*, but *de facto* the property of the Holy See; the friars who dwelt there were only tenants, and tenants without any kind of fixity of tenure, and if Gregory had desired to leave it on record that such was the case, he could hardly have done so more effectually than by taking the course which for another reason he actually took—namely, by evicting them.

Moreover, these ancient parchments make known the motives which inspired Gregory to erect this vast conglomeration of buildings and the purposes he intended them to serve: he wished to do honour to the memory of a saint who, in his lifetime, had been his friend, by building a special church wherein to treasure his bones, and also to conciliate the goodwill of the men of Assisi, always a stiff-necked and rebellious people, and at the present juncture not quite sure, perhaps, whether they would cast in their lot with the Emperor or with the Pope; as to the domestic buildings, he intended them to shelter the friars who were to have the

care of the church and watch over the sacred remains. "If the place were so large," quoth Brother Giles, "as to extend from Assisi to Perugia, one corner of it would suffice for me to live in," and it may be safely said that one corner of it sufficed for these men to live in. Why, then, so much house-room? Consider what Gregory wrote in his haste to the Bishops of Perugia and Spoleto: "Let no assembly of the brethren be held there until full satisfaction shall have been made for the sacrilege that has been committed." This little sentence, I think, reveals the answer to the riddle: he wished to be able to give hospitality to the numerous foreign brethren who, in the early days, tramped to Assisi every year towards Whitsuntide for the general chapter. Hitherto, these assemblies had been held at the Porziuncola, and already in Saint Francis's lifetime "a great house of stone" had been erected there for the strangers who attended them, and sometimes it was thronged to overflowing: Eccleston mentions one chapter at which five thousand were present; so, too, the author of the *Speculum Perfectionis*, and Jordan tells us that the number of brethren who took part in the chapter of 1221, at which he himself assisted, was estimated at three thousand, and he adds that for the nine days during which the chapter lasted these men lived and slept and ate in booths which had been erected for the purpose in a neighbouring field. They dined at twenty-three tables, and there was no difficulty about food, for the good folk of Assisi provided bread and wine in abundance, but the sleeping arrangements seem to have been exceedingly defective.

Indeed, if we may trust Celano, they never troubled themselves about such trifles at the Porziuncola. "In the matter of beds and bedding," he says, "plenteous poverty so abounded in this place that he who lay on a heap of straw under a tattered sheet deemed his couch fit for a bride and bridegroom. Now it came to pass that the Lord of Ostia (Ugolino), with a crowd of knights and clerks, betook himself to the Porziuncola upon a certain occasion when a general chapter was being held there, and when he saw where the brethren lay, and had examined their beds, which in sooth resembled the lairs of wild beasts, he burst out crying, and said: 'See in what fashion these friars sleep, whilst we, miserable men that we are, wallow in superfluities.'"

But it was not only to provide decent lodgings for these wayworn mendicants that Gregory built so large a house:

he was thinking also of his own comfort, and the comfort of his successors: the papal apartments in the Sacro Convento occupy, and have always occupied, a very considerable portion of it,<sup>1</sup> albeit Gregory himself never seems to have sojourned in this abode; in all probability it was not completed in his lifetime, but Innocent IV spent the whole of the summer there in 1253, as Niccoló di Carbio bears witness. He set out for Rome towards the close of September, but the following spring saw him once more installed in the Sacro Convento: all his letters of the month of May, 1254, are dated from Assisi. Niccoló di Carbio was a Franciscan and Pope Innocent's secretary and confessor. Throughout his pontificate he was always with him. This is what he says—

"Recedens postmodum de Perusio ipse papa [Innocent IV] dominica die octavarum resurrectionis Domini, anno Domini MCCLIII [April 27], pontificatus sui anno x, venit Assisium . . . Et moratus est tota illa aestate cum omni sua familia in loco beati confessoris Sancti Francisci, in quo loco corpus ejus sanctissimum requiescit."

The pontifical palace by the grave of the Poor Man of Assisi was frequently occupied in the thirteen and in the fourteen hundreds by Saint Peter's successors. It was restored and practically rebuilt by Sixtus IV—himself a son of Saint Francis—somewhere about the year 1480, in the style then in vogue. The last pope who sojourned there was Pius IX.

<sup>1</sup> Salimbene calls this part of the Sacro Convento the Gregorian Palace, and he explains: "Fecerat enim papa Gregorius nonus magnum palatium fieri in loco fratrum Minorum de Assisio, tum propter honorem beati Francisci, tum etiam ut ibi habitaret, quando veniret Assisium. In illo ergo palatio plures erant camere et diverticula multa," etc. (Salimbene, p. 160.)

## CHAPTER IX

Of John Parenti's election. Some notes concerning him. Of his goodness and his unpopularity, and how he was forced to resign. How Elias, in spite of his reluctance, was compelled to take office. How he realized the good expectations of his friends and the evil forebodings of his enemies. Of his failure to convert the spiritual men and his success in coercing them. Of the Seraphic Mother's friendship for him, and her approval of his methods of government. Celano's story concerning her in this connection. Of the restiveness of the spiritual men after Elias's fall, and the ill-treatment which they experienced under some of his successors. How they at last obtained a general to their liking, although he was not of them; Brother John of Parma. Some notes concerning him and concerning the members of his council. Of his goodness, his brilliant abilities and his attractive personality. How Innocent IV loved him, and desired to make him a cardinal. How, accused of heresy, he was compelled to resign office, but saved from condemnation by his friend, Cardinal Fieschi. How, later on, he was offered a cardinal's hat. Of his friendship with John XXI, Nicholas IV and Cardinal Giacomo Colonna. Of two great birds who nested under his writing-table; and how an angel served his Mass when his acolyte overslept himself.

ALTHOUGH on the 10th of June, 1227, when the general chapter met to choose a successor to Saint Francis, the spiritual brethren were somehow or other able to prevent Elias's election, they were not strong enough to secure a general of their own way of thinking; for John Parenti, though he did not always see eye to eye with Elias, was not of the Zelanti clique.

This man had been in the world a jurisconsult of some standing; he entered religion late in life, and when he put on the grey habit threw himself heart and soul into the work of evangelization. He was an earnest lover of the Lady Poverty, a little scrupulous, perhaps, a little inclined to rigorism, but there was nothing of the heretic or the rebel in him: he was a humble and obedient friar, a true son of Saint Francis. He seems to have been a man, too, of considerable ability. Pope Gregory, no mean judge of men, held him in high esteem, and more than once entrusted to him delicate diplomatic errands which he brought to a happy issue; but he was not successful as a ruler. He was attached to neither party—hence, most likely, his election; hence, too, in great measure his difficulties: he was a man of individual opinions, too conscientious

to conceal them, not sufficiently strong to make others see as he did. He irritated Elias and his friends from the first by insisting that the obscure and difficult rule which Honorius III had confirmed was easy to be understood (had he had any hand in the drafting of it?) and easy to be observed—aye, and that it should be observed to the letter as long as he was general. Albeit, in deference to the wishes of the majority, he at last consented to head a deputation to the Pope to beg him to expound the rule, and when in due course the Pope expounded it he was not consoled: for Gregory's explanation of the poverty clause wounded alike his heart and his head: he considered it an insult to his master's memory, and the ambiguity of it offended his intelligence; but like a loyal son of the Church he submitted, though it cost him many tears.

As to the spiritual brethren, if they deemed him sound on the poverty question, they were scandalized at his conduct in regard to Saint Francis's will, for this shrewd old lawyer, firmly convinced that if the will were carried out the seraphic ship would sink, and perhaps, too, not quite sure that Brother Leo had taken down Saint Francis's words aright, availing himself of the liberty conferred by the bull "*Quo elongati*," with a quiet conscience ignored it himself, and suffered his subordinates to do likewise.

We have no direct evidence as to his attitude in respect to those who "wandered about beyond obedience," but Parenti was so zealous for the law that there will be no risk in assuming that he did his utmost to bring these men to reason, and in that case there can be no doubt that the Zelanti folk resented it. Nor was he more fortunate in his relations with the nuns: in the first days of his generalship he fell foul of the Seraphic Mother in the matter of her chaplains and, like all who crossed swords with that redoubtable woman, he soon found himself shamefully worsted.

This honest man had done his best for the sheep entrusted to his keeping, but by most of them he was not beloved; and when at the general chapter of 1232 he was greeted with shouts of "resign," though he burst into tears, I think he was not sorry to ease himself of a burthen for which his shoulders were manifestly unsuited: "I know," he said, "that I am not worthy to rule over this religion."

At this time there was only one man amongst Saint Francis's sons who had any chance of reducing the chaos into which things had drifted into something like order, and that man was Elias. Of

this the wisest and the best of them were now convinced; but Elias, in feeble health and occupied with work more congenial to him—the planning and building of Gregory's church, was loath to undertake what he foresaw would prove to be an irksome and thankless business. He could neither walk nor fast, he said, and it seemed to him an incongruous thing that one unable to keep the rule should have the charge of enforcing it. But the brethren thought otherwise. "If you are unable to walk," they said, "then keep a horse, and if your stomach rebels against coarse fare, eat gold, an it please you." In the end Elias yielded, and Gregory confirmed the appointment.

It is not possible within the limits of this book to give anything like a detailed account of Elias's career as general: let it suffice to say that he realized, and more than realized, the expectations of his friends and the evil forebodings of his enemies. He showed himself very keen in the matter of education; he attracted learned men to the order, he organized theological studies, he compelled the novices to read, he laid the foundation of that school of theology which later on became one of the chief glories of the Seraphic Religion, and it may be safely said that if it had not been for Elias, that Religion would have never had in its ranks such men as Adam Marsh, Alexander of Hales, Saint Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Roger Bacon.

"When I joined the order," says Fra Salimbene,<sup>1</sup> who, although he was not of Leo's following, had no love for Elias, "I found in it many brethren of great holiness of life: these men were not only pious, prayerful, given to contemplation, they were likewise well versed in letters, men of great learning. For Elias incited the order of Friars Minor to study theology: it was the one good thing he did." It was one of his capital offences in the eyes of the spiritual brethren; and this was another: the numerous convents which he founded were not, as had often hitherto been the case, especially in Italy, little hermitages perched up on inaccessible crags or buried in the depths of forests far from the habitations of men, but great asylums, large enough sometimes to shelter several hundred friars, in the meanest and most densely populated quarters of the towns: in the midst of those haunts of plague and fever which were the homes of the working men, and where the lepers rotted in squalid misery. For Elias remembered that it had been Saint Francis's wish, and, too, it was his own, that the Friars Minor

<sup>1</sup> On Feb. 4th, 1238, as he himself tells us.

should be above all things the apostles of "the lesser folk"; he thought that their first and noblest mission was to comfort Christ in His poor. Nor did he consider that they were to administer only spiritual consolation: he desired that they should be no less solicitous for the necessities of "Brother Ass," and in order that they might be the better able to tend the sick, he encouraged them to study medicine. Hence, I suspect, the rumour that he himself dabbled in alchemy.

It is noteworthy that throughout Elias's reign the sons of Saint Francis were able to carry on their work without incurring the odium of either the monks or the secular clergy, but we have a yet more striking example of the tact and the diplomatic skill of this extraordinary man: as long as he remained in office he was able to conciliate at the same time the good-will and the favour of two such implacable foes as Gregory IX and Frederick II.

"*Há Deus!*" moans Salimbene. "*Helya, multiplicasti gentem, non magnificasti letitiam.*" Perhaps Salimbene was right, perhaps Elias did not increase the happiness of the brethren, for during his reign and through his efforts their influence in the Church, their credit in the world, their popularity with all sorts and conditions of persons was magnified exceedingly. Pope Gregory employed them more and more often, not only in the Roman Curia, but also as his intermediaries with foreign potentates; they obtained positions of trust in the households of prelates, we find them all over Europe holding responsible appointments in local ecclesiastical courts; nor did the civil powers hesitate to avail themselves of their services. Disputes of all kinds, public and private, between the spiritual and the temporal authorities of cities, between the regular and the secular clergy, between town and town, and man and man were constantly being referred to their arbitration. In a word, these mendicants had become, or were rapidly becoming, a power to be reckoned with in Church and State; and it was as gall and wormwood to the Zelanti, who, alleging that Elias's methods of government and administration were contrary to the spirit of Saint Francis and in opposition to the letter of the rule, refused to acknowledge his authority, and openly defied him; and Elias, notwithstanding his powers of persuasion, was not able to convert these men. Albeit he succeeded in frustrating their efforts to provoke a schism—nay, he compelled them to silence: the silence, his enemies said, of sheer terror. But is it fair to condemn a man on the evidence of his enemies? When he was in the thick of

this trouble the Seraphic Mother wrote to Blessed Agnes of Prague, who had apparently asked her advice: "Sequarisque consilia reverendi patris nostri, Fratris Eliae ministri generalis totius ordinis, eaque super omnia consilia alia tibi sequenda propone, et pretiosiora aestima super omne aliud donum." But then the Seraphic Mother was one of Elias's friends: she had not been scandalized by his monetary transactions—she accepted offerings of money herself, as we shall presently see—nor had her peace of mind been troubled by the building of the basilica.

The author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae* has a story in this connection which is significant. It is, headed: "Of a truly marvellous consolation which the Lord vouchsafed to her in her sickness," and it runs thus—

"Now it came to pass upon a certain Christmas night, at that hour when men and angels rejoice together at the birth of the Divine Child, that the Poor Ladies of Saint Damian's betook themselves to choir to sing matins, and left Blessed Clare alone in her chamber weighed down by grievous sickness. And when she began to think of the Child Jesus and to grieve because she was not able to be present at His lauds, in her anguish she cried out: 'O Lord God! behold, they have left me in this place alone,' and at the same moment the marvellous music which at that time was being made in the Church of St. Francis suddenly pealed forth: she heard the jubilation of the friars who were chanting, the sweet harmonies of them that sang, even the notes of the organ broke upon her ears. Now she was by no means so near to the church that this could have happened naturally: either the volume of sound was increased for her by divine influence, or else God gave to her sense of hearing an acuteness beyond human measure. And what surpasses even this marvel: she was able, too, to see the Lord's crib; and when the sisters came to her on the morrow Blessed Clare said to them, 'Thanks be to Jesus Christ who consoled me when you deserted me, and caused me to hear the whole of the Mass which was celebrated last night in the Church of Saint Francis.'"

But to return to our "spiritual" friends. Elias found it the more difficult to cope with them from the fact that more than one of these men had acquired a great reputation for sanctity, and that all of them were sincere; but if they suffered during his reign and during the reigns of his immediate successors (for no sooner was the strong hand of Elias removed than they again

began to give trouble), presently they were consoled: in the general chapter that was held at Lyons in the month of August 1247 these men at last obtained, in the person of John of Parma, a general to their liking, albeit there is reason to think that, at all events at the time of his election, he was not one of them.

In all probability the spiritual brethren were not much stronger now than they had been when Elias was deposed ten years before; but Joachimism had invaded the order, and John of Parma was a Joachimist, and I suspect that many of those who voted for him did so not because he was the Zelanti candidate, but on account of his Joachimism, and if such were the case they very soon had reason to regret it, for though the new general was personally a man of mild complexion, there were those about him who were not mild, and under his rule the brethren of large observance were not suffered to live in peace. "I have heard so much good of this venerable man," said Elias, when John of Parma sent Brother Gerard to entreat him to return to the order "for the love of God and Saint Francis and the good of his own soul," "I have heard so much good of this venerable man that I would gladly cast myself at his feet, confident of his mercy, were it not for the provincial ministers whom I have offended, for these men would only scoff at me and put me in chains and a dungeon, with spare bread and short water."

Brother John of Parma was a native of that city; he was born somewhere about the year 1208; his father was one Albert, surnamed the Fowler, because he delighted in catching birds, which, indeed, was his trade, and not seemingly a very profitable one, for John was brought up in the hospice of Saint Lazaro at Parma by his paternal uncle, who was a priest and the warden of Saint Lazaro, and it was he who defrayed the cost of his education. "Now it came to pass," says Salimbene, "that the child fell sick unto death, as every one thought, but upon a certain day the Lord comforted him, and suddenly he cried out: 'I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord,' and forthwith he recovered, and then he began to strive with all his might to set his heart to walk in the footsteps of Christ, and at last he reached the order of Friars Minor." This, however, was not until very much later, for he had made his studies at Paris, and held a professor's chair there before he put on the Franciscan habit.

Long before he became general he was a man of considerable standing in the order: "Magnus theologus fuit," says Salimbene,

"et magnus disputator," and when he was at Rome, he tells us, the brethren used to make him preach before the College of Cardinals, who held him to be a great philosopher; for years he had been theological lecturer to the Franciscan novices of Bologna, and he was holding a like office at Naples at the time of his election. Moreover, Salimbene says: "In 1245 the Lord Pope Innocent IV summoned to the council of Lyons for the deposition of the Emperor Frederick II, Brother Crescentius, our general, I myself have seen the writ, but this man, pleading the weight of his years, sent in his place *fratrem Johannem de Parma virum sanctum et litteratum*."

This is one of the many indications that have come down to us that Brother John was not a member of the Zelanti faction, for Crescentius had no greater love for the "spiritual" men than had Elias himself; "these men," as he bitterly complains to Pope Innocent IV, "who in their temerity, like wild asses' colts, have presumed to kick off the burthen of obedience and desiring to pass the rest of their days with their necks free of the yoke, refuse to dwell in the convents of our Order and wander about at will, preaching and teaching and hearing confessions without any kind of authority, for the ruin of their own souls and to the scandal of not a few." And this, too, is significant: Pope Innocent IV accorded him full powers to root out these promoters of schism and scandal; and Pope Innocent IV "loved John of Parma as he loved his own soul; he always used to greet him with a kiss, and would have given him a cardinal's hat had not death prevented him." Moreover, Brother Mark of Montefeltro, who had been one of Crescentius's counsellors, and who held a like office in the time of Saint Bonaventure, whom the Zelanti hated no less cordially than they had hated Elias, was likewise a member and the first member of Brother John's council.

"This general had fourteen counsellors, and note," says Salimbene, "they were all of them my friends." If half that he tells us concerning them be true, they were certainly a most remarkable set of men, but hardly such as one would expect to find in the company of a "spiritual" general. They were all of them, or almost all of them, exceedingly learned men—masters of logic, masters of grammar, doctors of divinity, doctors of law—men who had made their studies, and several of whom had lectured at one or other of the great universities—Paris, Oxford, Bologna; almost all of them, too, were holding, or had held, positions of trust and

influence in the order—men like Anselm of Asti, who in the world had been a judge and in religion was provincial minister of Terra Laboris and afterwards of Venetia. “He was a fat man of honourable and holy life, with a sallow face and an episcopal presence. He greatly loved Brother John of Parma, and it was he who made him general, moved thereto by the brethren of Lombardy. He was acquainted with Pope Innocent IV.”

Three of John’s counsellors at least later on obtained high office in the Church: Andrew of Bologna, Walter the Englishman, and Bonajuncta of Fabriano. Andrew, who had been provincial minister of Palestine, “ended his days in peace in the Curia of the Lord Pope” (Salimbene does not say which pope); he held the responsible and influential post of penitentiary apostolic. Walter, *litteratus homo*, and an old pupil of John’s when he was at Naples, became chaplain penitentiary and nuncio to Pope Urban IV, and at last obtained a mitre. This man’s name is mentioned in several of Urban’s letters. Bonajuncta, who was a good preacher and a good writer and knew how to sing, was created Bishop of Recanato in 1256 by Alexander IV, and in 1264 Urban IV translated him to the more important see of Jesi. Salimbene describes him as a man of medium height with a bald head and a face like the face of Saint Paul.

There was a strong infusion of Joachimists in Parma’s council. Three members at least: Gherardino of Borgo San Donnino (the chief hierophant of this hallucination in Italy), Bartholomew Guisculus of Parma (who was at one time guardian of Capua), and Bonaventure of Jesi.

Salimbene says of Gerard and Bartholomew that they were *totaliter Joachite*, and of Bartholomew that he was a devout man and courteous but “*magnus prolocutor et magnus Joachita*,” and strangely enough—for the Franciscans as a body loathed Frederick II, and the Joachimists for the most part regarded him as Antichrist—that he loved the imperial party. “He was very swift,” he continues, “in all his works: he knew how to write and how to dictate, he was a cunning illuminator of manuscripts, and he busied himself, too, with many other things. He finished his days at Rome when a certain general chapter was being held there (on Feb. 2, 1257, seemingly notes Holder-Egger). In his lifetime he did wonders, and at his death he wrought miracles, for he beheld such things when his soul was going forth that the brethren who were standing by were all of them astounded.”

Brother Bonaventure of Jesi must not be confounded with his great namesake of Bagnoria. He differed from the Seraphic Doctor as darkness does from light. He seems to have been a man of most unsympathetic character—a self-righteous egoistical bully who by sheer impudence had pushed his way to the front. “He was a very old man,” says Salimbene, “when he entered the service of John of Parma, alike in years and in religion.” He had been in his time provincial of Provence, Genoa, Venetia and Bologna; he was held to be a great preacher, and he was certainly a Joachimist; for though Salimbene does not say so explicitly he gives a long extract from one of Bonaventure’s sermons wherein he quotes Abbot Joachim with approval. Moreover, he belonged to the party of large observance, for he represented Crescentius at the chapter of Lyons which gave John of Parma the generalship. Crescentius’s choice of a representative was certainly in this case a remarkable one, for Bonaventure can hardly have been a *persona grata* to the Pope (Innocent IV), who presided in person over this chapter if, as Salimbene intimates, he was a supporter of Innocent’s arch-enemy, Frederick II. That eccentric writer says: “Now Brother Bonaventure was a wise man of honourable and holy life and withal quick-witted and exceedingly sly, and Ezzeleno de Romano loved him. Albeit he used to lord it beyond measure, seeing that he was nothing more than the son of a certain woman who kept a wineshop, at least so people said. He wrote a great volume of sermons and made a good end; may his soul rest in peace.”

Ezzeleno, the reader will call to mind, was Frederick II’s vicar in upper Italy, the man whom Saint Anthony had denounced to his face for his oppression of the people of Padua, and of whom Salimbene himself says: “His cruelties exceeded the cruelties of Nero or of any other tyrant of whom I have ever heard; at sight of him folk trembled like rushes in the water: they feared him more than they feared the devil, and rightly, for he thought nothing of killing men and women and even little children. In one day he burnt five thousand Paduans alive in Saint George’s fields at Verona, and when they were burning in sight of him he played *hastiludium* with his soldiers, singing all the while. As Christ raised up one man on earth entirely conformed to His image—our holy father Saint Francis; so, it would seem, did Satan—to wit, this Ezzeleno.”

Though Bonaventure was very far from being a “spiritual”

man he had no love for Elias; he was no doubt one of those priests of the party of large observance who about 1237 grew dissatisfied with his methods of government, chiefly on account of the number of lay brethren to whom he gave responsible positions in the order, and who, joining forces with the Zelanti folk, had succeeded in compassing his overthrow in the spring of the following year, and he was surely one of those men whom Elias had in his mind when he told Brother Gerard of Modena that he feared the provincial ministers whom he had offended. Salimbene tells us in his *Liber de Prelato* that Elias, in the day of his might, had his provincials so well in hand that they trembled at sight of him, as the lark trembles when the merlin swoops down upon her; "and no wonder," he adds; "for Elias was such a son of Belial that no man could speak to him, and in truth only two of the brethren had sufficient courage to rebuke him—Brother Augustine of Recanato and Brother Bonaventure of Jesi." If Brother Bonaventure of Jesi was the same individual, as there is reason to think, as Brother Bonaventure of Forli, later on, when the merlin was trapped, he plucked up sufficient courage not only to rebuke but to insult him: "Then," said Elias, "thou art not my friend." "Thou hast spoken the truth," replied Bonaventure; "I am no friend of thine. The fool shall have no friend. What fellowship hath a righteous man with a dog? Go forth, go forth, thou son of Belial. Behold, thou art taken in thy mischief. The Lord hath returned upon thee all thy sins. O, thou bloody man of Belial."

All these things and many more Salimbene tells us concerning the counsellors or companions, as he calls them, of Brother John of Parma. They were all of them his friends, and as such, of course, they were all of them famous men, even poor John of Ravenna, although for some reason or other in his case Salimbene economizes his words and his admiration: "He was a friar," he says, "of swarthy countenance, gross and fat, but a good honest fellow. He was guardian of the convent at Naples when Brother John of Parma was there. I never saw any other man eat cheese fritters so voraciously."

Salimbene was intimately acquainted with John of Parma, and loved him as much as he was capable of loving any man. In the early days of his religious life he had read theology with him, and later on had acted for a time as his secretary; he tells us how he copied out for him the works of Abbot Joachim, which had been surreptitiously brought to the Franciscan convent of Pisa, in order

to preserve them from the emissaries of Frederick II, by a certain Cistercian monk—a little shrivelled-up old man of marvellous sanctity. Such being the case, it is not surprising that our friend's portrait of the great Joachimist general is a very pleasing one. "Brother John," he says, "was a man of moderate height, rather inclined to littleness than to too great length. He was beautiful in all his members, well knit together, sound, strong enough to endure without fatigue every kind of physical and mental labour. His face was like the face of an angel, gracious and full of joy. He was a large-hearted, large-minded, charitable man, long-suffering, meek, always courteous to all, compassionate, merciful, kind. To his God he was very devout: he said Mass every day, was much given to prayer; and he used to preach so well and so fervently that many of those who heard him, as I myself have often seen, were melted to tears. He had a most fluent tongue and never faltered. His whole life was so holy, and his morals so perfect that he was a mirror and an example to all who beheld him. Moreover, he was an exceedingly learned man: in the world a master in logic, and in religion a great theologian and a great controversialist. He was a good writer, too; his composition was polished, and he knew how to season his letters with pithy sayings. He was likewise skilled in the science of music, and sang well. In a word, he was a man most acceptable to his fellow men and to God."

It is significant that in this description of John of Parma there is not so much as a hint that he had anything in him of the rigorism, the stern asceticism, the fierce zeal of the "spiritual" men. Nor did he share their views in respect to Saint Francis's will, at all events in the later days of his generalship, as is proved by his conduct, in 1254, in the affair of the cancelled privileges.

At this time the relations between the friars and the secular clergy had become exceedingly strained: some of the sons of Saint Francis, by their abuse of certain privileges concerning preaching and the hearing of confessions and the burial of the dead, which from time to time had been granted to them by the Holy See, were occasioning considerable damage alike to the dignity and to the pockets of bishops and parish priests. These men, naturally enough annoyed, complained to Innocent IV, who, on the 21st of November, 1254, by the bull *Etsi animarum*,<sup>1</sup> annulled the obnoxious privileges. If Parma had been "a spiritual man" he would have rejoiced at

<sup>1</sup> Eubel gives the complete text of this bull: p. 259, No. XXVIII.

Innocent's letter: he did nothing of the kind; he strained every nerve to obtain its revocation. The task was not an easy one, for Innocent had fallen seriously ill—a judgment of Heaven, his enemies said—the day after he had signed the brief; his physicians had prescribed rest, and no outsider was suffered to approach him. But Brother John was a man of resource, and at last he contrived to hoodwink the papal chamberlains. Attached to the household of Innocent's nephew, Cardinal Ottobono Fieschi, was a famous Franciscan leech, Brother Hugo Zapoldus. This man, prompted thereto by Parma, proposed to attend the Pope. Ottobono fell in with the proposal, and soon Brother Hugo found himself by Innocent's bedside. Bending over the dying man, he whispered in his ear: "For the love of God and Blessed Francis—nay, for the love of your own soul, restore to us our privileges." But Innocent refused to listen, "for God," says Salimbene, "had determined to slay him: he had touched the apple of His eye, he had presumed to raise his hand against the order of Friars Minor."

Early in the morning of the 7th of December, just two weeks after he had signed the fatal brief, this resolute old pontiff was gathered to his fathers. He died in the arms of his secretary and confessor and most faithful friend, Fra Niccoló di Carbio, now Bishop of Assisi, who for nearly twenty years had been his constant companion. Bishop Carbio's *Life of Innocent IV* is an historical document of the first importance.

Like Fra Salimbene, some modern historians would have us believe that Innocent IV was almost a son of perdition, but by the members of his own household, by those who knew him best, by the poor whom he had always cherished he was held to be a saint, and in the numerous miracles which occurred at his tomb—for years a place of pilgrimage—these men found confirmation of the faith that was in them, as honest old Niccoló bears witness.

For John of Parma, and those who thought with him concerning Seraphic Privileges, the passing of Pope Innocent IV was a source of great consolation, for Alexander IV, who succeeded him, was such an ardent lover of Franciscans that he was not always able to hold the scales of justice evenly when their interests were at stake, and on the 22nd of December, just a month after his predecessor had issued it, he revoked the bull *Etsi animarum*.

If John of Parma owed his generalship in the main to his Joachimism—his attractive personality, I think, must likewise be taken into account—paradoxical as it may seem, his Joachimism

and his Joachimism alone was undoubtedly the cause of his losing it.

At the time of his appointment not only the greater part of the Franciscan order but half Christendom believed in the prophecies and perhaps, too, in the doctrine of the famous Cistercian seer. There was no sign of disapproval in high places—indeed, amongst the bishops and even amongst the cardinals there were not a few who coquetted with the fashionable craze. Grossetête of Lincoln, Adam Marsh, John, Archbishop of Vienna, and John of Parma were the four most intimate friends of the high priest of this hallucination—the Franciscan Ugo di Bariola—and Pope Innocent IV himself, when he heard that the mantle of Abbot Joachim had fallen on Ugo's shoulders, not only invited him to expound his doctrine to the sacred college in his own presence, but when he had done so was pleased to congratulate him on the way in which he had acquitted himself. "Son," said the Supreme Pontiff, "thou hast told us many salutary things. Go in peace, and may He bless thee who appeared to Moses in the flaming thorn."

The imaginations of Abbot Joachim, as the reader will recollect, were not heretical; but the interpretation which Brother Gherardino presently put on his prophecies, the development which little by little he gave to his theology, contained not a few heresies of a peculiarly subversive kind.

This man, Gherardino di Borgo San Donnino, once his pupil, later on his counsellor, was the author of all the trouble which presently came into John of Parma's life.

Blessed Joachim of Fiore, who died in the odour of sanctity on the 30th of March, 1202, had looked forward to the near approach of the millennium of the Apocalypse which, he thought, would be heralded by the angel whom Saint John had seen flying in the midst of the heavens to preach to them that dwelt on the earth, and having in his hands the scroll of the "everlasting gospel." "But first," he used to say, "Antichrist must come and a time of great sorrow, and the sacrifice shall fail, and joy shall wither away from the souls of men, and scarce one shall dare to invoke the name of Jesus."

Like many mystics and false mystics before and since, heretical and otherwise, he divided the time of man's sojourning on earth into three ages: the age of the Eternal Father, the age of the Divine Son, and the age of the Holy Ghost. In the first the Father had made himself known to mankind in the Old

Testament and through special manifestations of His power and majesty; in the second the Son had revealed Himself in the New Testament and through His Church, to which he had imparted the fulness of wisdom and truth; in the third the Holy Ghost would crown all that had gone before by infusing into the hearts of individuals the quintessence of Divine Love; thus the wills of all men being entirely conformed to the Divine Will, henceforth there would be perfect joy in the world and perfect liberty until the consummation of all things.

Such in outline, and in very meagre outline, was the teaching of Joachim of Fiore. Gherardino accepted it all, and added to it, and disfigured it. In the year 1200, he said, when Abbot Joachim had finished writing his three great exegetical works—the *Concordia Novi et Veteris Testamenti*, the *New Apocalypse* and the *Psalter of Ten Chords*—the Spirit of Life had come forth from the sacred scriptures of former days, and had entered into these works, which contained neither more nor less than the undiluted words of the Everlasting Gospel.

But this was not all: Gherardino maintained that the prophecies of Abbot Joachim were already half fulfilled; the Angel of the Everlasting Gospel had already come and gone—to wit, the Seraphic Francis; antichrist, too, had come, and he was still in the flesh—Alfonso II of Castile; the night of tribulation was very near at hand, the gloaming was already with them, and soon would come the darkness that could be felt; but let spiritual men take courage: at the close of the year 1260, at latest, the Holy Ghost would descend from heaven, and the day of perfect light and perfect love and perfect liberty would dawn, and then would there be no further need of popes or prelates, and the sacramental system would be wholly swept away.

This foolishness, as Salimbene styles it, he gave to the world in a book which he called *Introductorius in Evangelium aeternum*—a somewhat inadequate title, for it contained not only a doctrinal introduction to Joachim's three great works, but the complete text of the *Concordia* as well, with numerous explanatory notes.

This book was first put on sale at Paris (where our friend had completed his studies and was now lecturing on theology), in the porch of Notre Dame, and in the fall of the year 1254—just about the time when the affair of the cancelled privileges was brewing.

If Gherardino had desired to bring a swarm of hornets about his

own ears and also to put a most formidable weapon into the hands of the enemies of his order, he could not have chosen a more propitious place or moment for its publication: the doctors of the university of Paris, ever eager to thrash out and analyse every new thing in the shape of religious teaching, were more swift to detect error than any other theologians in Europe, and these men, who for the most part were secular priests, hated the Friars Minor with that bitterest of all hatreds—the hatred born of jealousy.

It was a fortunate thing for the sons of Saint Francis that at the time when this trouble came upon them they had a staunch friend in the man who was sitting in Peter's chair—Pope Alexander IV. Hardly had the book appeared than Guillaume de Saint Amour began to preach against it, and Guillaume de Saint Amour was held to be the first theologian in Paris. Whereat a committee was named to examine the accursed thing, and soon a long list of errors were scheduled and sent to Innocent IV by the hands of Renaud, Bishop of Paris (no less than thirty-two heretical propositions), together with an authentic copy of the incriminated volume.

But though all the propositions on the list were undoubtedly heretical, not all of them were to be found in Gherardino's treatise, Maître Guillaume and his colleagues had in more instances than one deliberately and maliciously falsified what he said; nor was this the end of their duplicity. These men desired to rid themselves of a set of rivals who were fast outstripping them, and to damn Gherardino alone would have helped them very little, for his disciples were comparatively few and for the most part of little standing; but Joachim's disciples were numerous and some of the best men in the order—as Salimbene has it, were *fortiter Joachite*; therefore in their schedule they attributed several of Gherardino's propositions, which were in reality heretical, not to Gherardino himself, but to Abbot Joachim. They seem to have taken it for granted that the easy-going prelates of the Curia would not put themselves to the trouble of verifying the quotations of such illustrious folk as themselves, for were they not amongst the first theologians of the first university in the world? And yet they must have known that Joachim's works had been examined and not condemned by the fathers of the Lateran Council in 1215, and Guillaume himself had said that these books had powerful friends at headquarters.

About the same time as Gherardino's book appeared, or perhaps

a little later, Guillaume himself had been sufficiently ill advised, urged thereto, as he said, by episcopal admonition, to publish an able and virulent attack against another set of dangerous rivals, the Black Friars of Saint Dominic. This little treatise was entitled *De periculis novissimorum temporum*, and for the publication of it he had to pay dearly, as we shall presently see.

When the *Introductorius* with the accompanying schedules reached the Eternal City Pope Innocent IV seems to have been very near his end, and for this, or some other reason, nothing was done in the matter until the following month of July, when Pope Alexander appointed a commission of three cardinals to examine it diligently: to wit, his venerable brethren Stefano, Bishop of Palestrina and Odo di Castro Rodolfo, Bishop of Tusculum; and his beloved son Hugo di Santo Charo, priest of the title of Santa Sabina. This man was undoubtedly the most distinguished of the three. He was the first biblical scholar of the day; he set his mark on the Vulgate by dividing it into chapters and verses, and he was the first man to make a biblical concordance; and note this: he was a Dominican; and this: Cardinal Odo was a Cistercian, a member of the same order as Abbot Joachim himself; and this: Cardinal Stefano, who later on became official Protector of the Poor Ladies, had always showed himself exceedingly friendly to Franciscans.

The result of their deliberations was just what might have been expected: Joachim came forth from the ordeal unscathed, and such doctrinal error as was really contained in the *Introductorius* was condemned. On the 23rd of October Alexander wrote to the Bishop of Paris, informing him of the fact, and bidding him seek out and destroy all copies of the *Introductorius* and also all copies of the schedule of errors drawn up by the doctors of Paris, because, as he explained, in this schedule, not a few things have been maliciously inserted which are not to be found in the aforesaid book.

A few days later—on November the 4th—the Pope again wrote to Bishop Renaud: he begged him to act very prudently and warily in the matter of the destruction of Gherardino's books, lest haply the Friars Minor should thereby be brought under reproach; for he had it, he said, very much at heart that their good report should always remain untarnished.<sup>1</sup> As for Gherardino himself,

<sup>1</sup> On the 8th of May, 1256, Alexander wrote once more to Renaud about this matter, *Licet super quodam libello*. Eubel gives all of these letters in his Supplement to Sbaralea's *Bullarium*, p. 263: Quaracchi, 1908.

Alexander treated him with very great leniency:—partly, no doubt, because he was loath to take extreme measures against one who wore the Franciscan habit, and partly, perhaps, because he was convinced that, when the year 1260 had passed, his heresy would die a natural death—he deprived him of his professorship and suspended him.<sup>1</sup>

Very different was the treatment meted out to Maître Guillaume: not only was his pamphlet condemned, Alexander ordained that it should be publicly denounced in every diocese of the kingdom; he was stripped of all his benefices, deprived for ever of the right to preach or teach, and both he and his colleagues were solemnly warned that if they did not at once desist from their nefarious campaign against the Franciscans and the Dominicans, sentence of perpetual exile would most assuredly be pronounced against them. Wherefore this unfortunate theologian deemed it expedient to return to his native village of Saint Amour, where he lay low until Pope Alexander had gone the way of all flesh.

As for John of Parma, though in all probability his Joachimism went no further than that of Abbot Joachim himself, Gherardino had been his pupil and later on his counsellor, and naturally enough not a few of the brethren looked askance at him; in the spring of 1257 he had to defend himself in general chapter against the charge of heresy, and though, thanks to the good offices of his friend, Cardinal Ottobono Fieschi, he was not condemned, his position had become untenable, and a few months later he was compelled to resign office.

It was customary in those days, as it still is, for an ex-general to choose his place of residence, and Brother John selected the convent of Greccio, a little hermitage in a mountain ravine above Rieti, the sacred spot where in days of yore Saint Francis had made his representation of the crib of Bethlehem.

In this "voluntary and consolatory" exile he passed the rest of his life—more than thirty years—with Joachim and Merlin and

<sup>1</sup> Some three years later, when he refused to submit, this unfortunate man experienced no little severity at the hands of his own superiors; Salimbene says:—"Et quia noluit rescipiscere et culpam suam humiliter recognoscere, sed perseveravit obstinatus procaciter in pertinacia et contumacia sua, posuerunt eum fratres Minores in compedibus et in carcere et sustentaverunt eum pane tribulationis et aqua angustie, dicentes: *Quia turbasti nos, exturbet te Dominus in die hac.* . . . Permisit itaque se mori in carcere et privatus fuit ecclesiastica sepultura, sepultus in angulo orti."

the Sibyl of Erythrae, always more or less under a cloud, a man apart, a man suspect, cut off by his own hand from the life of the order, a seer of visions, a dreamer of dreams, a humble, holy, credulous old man, one to whom, in spite of his brilliant abilities, the brethren feared to give any responsible employment.

Salimbene recounts the following conversation which took place many years after Parma's retirement, but whilst he was still in the flesh, at the convent of Ravenna, between himself and Brother Bartholomew of Milan, an ancient friar who had done good work in his time, but had now retired from active service: "I tell you, Salimbene, in the days when he was general, Brother John of Parma worried himself and worried his brethren. He might have reformed the Roman Curia: he was a man of such holiness of life and so wise that the cardinals would have listened to him; but when he gave ear to the prophecies of men who were half demented he brought himself into bad odour, and did much injury to his friends."

"So, too, it seems to me," I said; "and it grieves me the more, for I was one of his intimate friends." Whereat Brother Bartholomew: "and you too, Salimbene, you too, in those days were a Joachimist." To which I made answer, "Truly; but when the Emperor Frederick died and the last day of the year 1260 had passed I utterly discarded that doctrine, and determined henceforth to believe only what I saw." "Wise man," said Bartholomew; "if Brother John had acted thus he would have appeased the minds of his brethren."

There seem to have been very few Joachimists of large observance after 1260: such of them whose eyes were not then opened fell into the ranks of the "spiritual" men. A certain number of the spiritualists, too, at this time discarded their Joachimism, and along with it their spirituality, and in all probability the party's gains were balanced by their losses. For the rest these men as time went on grew more and more fanatical, and at last—but that was not till more than fifty years later—went forth from the Order and from Peter's fold; and though afterwards they purged themselves of their heresy and were reconciled to the Church, they were never again permitted to serve in Saint Francis's regiment. Henceforth they lived apart in little hermitages under the immediate jurisdiction of their Bishops, and were called Fraticelli. Several of these congregations continued to exist in Umbria and elsewhere until the days of Saint Pius V, but they served no useful purpose, and that pontiff suppressed them.

But to return to Blessed John of Parma: though he never again was offered any responsible position in the order, he was more than once within an ace of obtaining a very high position in the Church; "for although by reason of his Joachimism," as Salimbene remarks, "he had many backbiters, there were not a few who in spite of it clung to him, amongst whom was Master Peter Hispanus, for every creature loveth his like, and they were both of them very learned men, men of science and great philosophers. Wherefore, when presently Master Peter became Pope John XXI he sent for Brother John, desiring to have him always with him in the Curia and to give him a red hat; but what he had conceived in his mind he was not able to carry out, for the roof of his chamber overwhelmed him, and so he died. *Omnis potentatus brevis vita.*" Pope John's successor, Nicholas III, who, before he became pope, had for years been Cardinal Protector of the Franciscans, likewise desired to make Brother John a cardinal. He summoned him to Viterbo, "and taking him familiarly by the hand, for he loved him as he loved himself, led him through the courts of his palace"—that beautiful old Gothic palace which is still one of the chief glories of this glorious city. "'Seeing,' he said, 'that you are a man of great counsel, would it not be better for yourself and for your brethren to be with us here a cardinal in Curia than to follow the words of fools who prophesy out of their own hearts?'" But Brother John preferred his Joachimism and his hermitage. Pope Nicholas's nephew, Cardinal Giacomo Colonna, was another of Parma's friends, and in 1284 he asked him to pay him a visit, seemingly at Viterbo, "desiring to see him," Salimbene says, "and to hold familiar converse with him, because he was his intimate friend." I suspect, however, that this was not the only reason: the year 1284 was a year of earthquakes and inundations; never had there been within the memory of man so hard a frost as there was that winter; there was an eclipse of the sun, too, and an eclipse of the moon, and a plague of caterpillars. It is likely enough, then, that my Lord Giacomo desired to consult Joachim's disciple as to the signification of these portents. Be this as it may, "they were mutually rejoiced at meeting, and had some familiar talk concerning divine things."

Nor was Brother John without friends at home. Salimbene tells us how two large birds from the forest, as big as geese, nested under the desk at which it was his wont to study constantly. Aye,

and hatched out their brood, and were so tame that they did not take it amiss when he fondled them.

That little story of Salimbene's is altogether Franciscan, and so, too, is his story "Of Brother John whom an angel served at Mass," and not only what he says but the way in which he says it: "One morning very early, when Brother John of Parma was dwelling in his hermitage, he called his scholar to come and serve his Mass; and the youth cried out that he was coming, but because he was very heavy with sleep he turned in his bed and slept again. But presently he roused himself, and being ashamed of his sluggishness, hastened to the chapel, where he found Brother John saying Mass and a scholar with a surplice on ministering to him most devoutly, and when Mass was over they all departed in silence; but later on Brother John called his scholar to him and said, 'God bless you, my son, for having this day so reverently and carefully served me, for God gave me great consolation, for your sake I think, when I was saying Mass this morning.' Whereat the youth: 'Spare me, father, for when you called me I did not come at once; I was so heavy I slept again, and when at last I did come, I saw that another youth was serving, and I knew that no stranger was lodging with us, and I asked the brother if he had served, and he said "No."' And Brother John replied, 'I thought it was you; but whoever it was God bless him, and blessed be our Creator in all His gifts.'"

Notwithstanding his selfishness, his conceit, his wicked tongue, his risky stories, his snobbery, his sacerdotalism, his puritanical cant, poor Fra Salimbene was after all a Franciscan.

## CHAPTER X

A chapter of odds and ends. Celano's story of Saint Clare and the Saracens. Reasons for thinking that it is historical. The legend of the Porziuncola repast not related by Celano, nor by any other contemporary writer, and is in contradiction with his evidence and with the evidence of Alexander IV. Latin text of the earliest known version of this tale. It perhaps originally formed part of a polemical pamphlet in support of the nuns' contention that the friars were bound to serve them, and which they denied. The similar legend concerning Saint Benedict and his sister according to the flesh. Celano's account of the passing of Saint Clare.

CELANO tells us distinctly that during the whole time of her sojourn at Saint Damain's—that is to say, from the fall of the year 1211 to the 10th of August, 1253, the Seraphic Mother never once set foot beyond the monastic enclosure.<sup>1</sup> Alexander IV gives like testimony, though in less explicit terms, in the bull of canonization,<sup>2</sup> nor is the evidence of these two writers contradicted by any of their contemporaries.

It is not certain that the Poor Ladies were forbidden to go forth under the Primitive Rule,<sup>3</sup> but we know that under the Ugolino Rule, which Saint Clare and her daughters professed in 1218, or thereabout, and continued to observe for thirty years at least, no sister could leave the monastery even for a short while, save with the special authorization of the Holy See. Pope Innocent IV, it is true, in 1247 relaxed this stringent discipline to a certain extent, but in 1247 it was physically impossible for the Seraphic Mother to go forth: she was confined to her bed by grievous sickness, and in this pitiable state she continued till the end of her days. I think, then, that it is quite certain that Saint Clare never once left Saint Damian's from the day when she first took up her abode there to that noteworthy day when her dead body was carried out for burial. She was not, however, confined to the house all this while, as some would have us believe; attached to the monastery there is an old-world garden which covers several acres; it is surrounded by a high wall and includes a beautiful patch of

<sup>1</sup> See Celano: *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*, p. 15, c. 10. Edition Pennacchi. The reader will find an abbreviated version in English of the passage referred to on p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> The Latin text of Alexander's testimony is given on p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> See Part II, Chapter II: The Primitive Rule.

woodland. Nor is there any reason to think that this pleasance was acquired by the Saint Damian's folk after Saint Clare's day.

It may be well to add here a word about the famous terrace which the friars who now dwell in her old home always show to their visitors. This little terrace, balcony, belvedere—call it what you will—is of exceedingly narrow dimensions: it measures perhaps ten feet by five; it is on the same level as the upper floor of the monastery, and forms the roof of an outbuilding attached to it; it is approached from below by a stone staircase, and communicates through a small chamber called Saint Clare's chapel with the nuns' old dormitory, where, according to a local tradition, the Seraphic Mother died. If this tradition be true, and there is no evidence to invalidate it, it is likely enough that during the last years of her sickness, when, as we have seen, she was bedridden, the sisters from time to time carried her to this place, where, doubtless, there were a few pots of flowers for the invalid's refreshment, and that thus the name was given to it by which it is still known—Saint Clare's garden. Be this as it may, it would be a grievous error to think with Saint Clare's most recent biographer, that this little peep-hole was the only place where the first Poor Ladies could obtain a whiff of fresh air.

"Dead to the world," as she was, "and buried with Christ in the cloister," Saint Clare's life at Saint Damian's must have been a sufficiently monotonous one, and if her contemporary biographers tell us very little concerning it, it was for this and no other reason: there was very little to tell. They do, indeed, set down one or two incidents of a stirring and dramatic nature, but as they are for the most part connected directly or indirectly with the making or the observance of the rule, it will be more convenient to speak of them in the second part of this book. There is one story, however, the most dramatic of all, which has nothing whatever to do with legislative disputes, and therefore I think it will be well to include it in the present chapter of odds and ends.

The following is the story referred to as Celano relates it—

"By reason of that tempest by which the Church was buffeted at divers times and in divers places in the days of the Emperor Frederick, the Vale of Spoleto was made to drink, not unfrequently, of the chalice of affliction; for bands of soldiers and of Saracen archers, like swarms of bees, were stationed there by his command, in order that they might lay waste the fields and harass the towns and villages; and when at one time they had

it in their minds to vent their fury against Assisi, the peculiar city of God, and the army was now already drawing nigh to the gates; the Saracens—than whom no breed of man is more evil, for they thirst for Christian blood and perpetrate without shame every kind of naughtiness—these dogs, I say, would fain have violated Saint Damian's, and rushed with one accord to the cloister of Christ's holy virgins, whose hearts at sight of them melted like wax, and who, trembling and in tears, betook themselves to their mother. But Blessed Clare was not afraid, and although at the time she was grievously afflicted with sickness, she bade her daughters conduct her to the door of the monastery, and with a stout heart confronted these men of Belial. Before her was carried in a silver casket, encased with ivory, the Body of the Holy of Holies, and forthwith prostrating herself before Him, she said: 'Doth it please thee, O my God, to deliver the defenceless children whom I have nourished with Thy love into the hands of these beasts? Protect them, Good Lord, I beseech Thee, whom I at this hour am not able to protect.' And a voice was heard, saying, like the voice of a little child: 'I will always have them in My keeping.' Whereat the Lady Clare: 'May it please Thee, Dear Lord, to deliver likewise the city which nourishes us for love of Thee.' And the same voice made answer, saying: 'The men of Assisi shall be assailed, but through My grace their enemies shall not prevail against them.' Then Clare, turning to her weeping children: 'Fear not, little daughters; have confidence in Jesus,' and at the same moment the courage of those Saracen dogs was converted into terror, and with all speed they scrambled down the walls, which they had already scaled, routed by the might of a valiant woman's prayer.

"Now Vitale di Aversa was captain of the imperial host, a man eager for glory, a man mighty in battle, and upon a certain day it came to pass that he led his troops against Assisi, being minded to take the town. And having cleared the land of timber and laid waste the surrounding fields, he sat down before Assisi, and with a great oath he swore that he would not raise the siege until the city should have surrendered, and presently things came to such a pass that all men thought that the fall thereof was at hand. And when the evil news reached the ears of Blessed Clare, the servant of Jesus Christ, her spirit was disquieted within her, and summoning her sisters, she said: 'From the men of Assisi, dearest daughters, we receive every day innumerable benefits, and in sooth it were a

shameful thing to succour them not in the hour of their need to the utmost of ability.' And then she ordered ashes to be brought, and some of them she sprinkled copiously on her own uncovered head and some on the heads of her sisters. 'Beget yourselves to the Lord,' said she, 'and beg Him with all your hearts to deliver the town of Assisi.' And so these women prayed, and on the morrow God in His mercy so made issue with temptation that the beleaguering army melted away and their proud captain gat himself hence, notwithstanding the vow that he had made."

This story comes to us on the authority of Celano alone, neither Alexander IV in the bull of canonization, nor any other contemporary writer so much as hint at any of the incidents therein related; but in one of the hymns which he wrote for the office of Saint Clare, that in which he enumerates her mighty deeds, the above-mentioned pontiff tells us that her prayer saved the city and put to flight the profane race by which it was besieged—

"Orat, civis liberatur,  
Gens profana diffugatur,  
Pelluntur daemonia."

We know that during the trouble with Frederick in the days of Gregory IX and Innocent IV their territory was again and again overrun by his soldiers, who were recruited to a large extent from his Mahometan subjects in Sicily and Calabria, and that the inhabitants of the plain of Spoleto were among the chief sufferers from their depredations, especially in the summer of 1244, when Frederick himself was encamped at Terni, about fifteen miles south of the city of Spoleto. We know, too, that the Franciscans, women as well as men, were almost all of them Guelphs, and that after Elias's fall they experienced the full brunt of the Emperor's animosity, and Salimbene informs us that the Poor Ladies of Turin had to leave their monastery by reason of the plenitude of wars raging in those parts—this seems to have been somewhere about the year 1248—and that Brother Boniface, who at this time was Clare's visitor in the province of Lombardy, found homes for them in other convents.

It will be interesting to note in this regard that in the year 1240 the Poor Ladies of Vallegloria at Spello (about five miles from Assisi) obtained a letter of protection signed by the Emperor himself, probably through the good offices of Elias, who at this time was high in Frederick's favour, and who always showed himself

a good friend to the Seraphic Mother and her children. In a catalogue of Spello parchments, drawn up by order of Pier Carlo Benedetti, Bishop of Spoleto, and in accordance with a rescript issued by Pope Benedict XIII on the 20th of August, 1727, this letter is thus described—

“ 1240. Bolla di Federico Imperatore dei Romani, e Re di Gerusalemme e di Sicilia, nella quale dichiara di ricever sotto la sua Protezione le Monache e Monastero di S. M. di Vallegloria dell’ Orde di S. Damiano, e i di loro beni.”

The Poor Ladies of Spello were wise in their generation : four years before, they had obtained a similar letter from Pope Gregory IX.

Among the many marvellous stories which have been deliberately invented or which have gradually grown up about Saint Francis and Saint Clare, some of them “unto edification” and some “offensive to pious ears,” must be included, and, I think, in the second category, the famous anecdote of the Porziuncola repast. This legend, very dear to the hearts of Franciscan sentimentalists—I use the adjective in its largest sense—because they find in it some support for their cherished hallucination concerning a romantic friendship between the Seraphic Father and the Seraphic Mother, is altogether devoid of historical foundation, and no serious historian nowadays will venture to maintain otherwise, but it still finds a place in some pious manuals, and of course the morbid writers who provide prose-poems and word-paintings for the cultured admirers of Saint Francis who are not of the Household of the Faith gloat over it, as they do over other stories of the same kind, *ad nauseam*. I am loath to repeat this slanderous story concerning two of God’s greatest saints, but were I to refrain from doing so it would be exceedingly difficult to refute it, and, besides, some of those who have never heard it—there are not many, I think, but still there are some—would be sure to imagine that the tale was blacker than it really is. Briefly, then, it runs thus—

Saint Francis upon a certain occasion, in order to gratify a wish which she had more than once expressed to him, invited Saint Clare and one of her sisters to break bread with him at the Porziuncola. In due course the guests arrived, and Saint Francis and his companions entertained them at supper; and the seal of Divine

approval was set on this extraordinary proceeding by a miraculous manifestation, for it seemed that night to the men of Bettona and of the neighbouring hill villages that the friars' "Place" was in flames, and hastening thither with all speed in order, if might be, to extinguish the conflagration, they found Saint Francis and his companions rapt in ecstasy, and the light which these men had seen in the heavens proceeded from their glorified bodies.

The earliest known work in which this anecdote is related is the *Actus Beati Francisci et sociorum ejus*, a late fourteenth-century compilation of doubtful origin which contains not a few statements which are manifestly untrue, and the earliest known representation of it in art is to be found in a fifteenth-century MS., the Codex *Laurenziano Gaddiano*, c. xii, which once belonged to the Franciscan nuns of Foligno. I have not seen the illustration in question, but Fr. Paschal describes it as exceedingly quaint. "It shows," he says, "the saints and their companions at dinner on their knees, and the meal spread before them suggests a fast day, only one small fish being visible."<sup>1</sup>

The following is the Latin text of the legend as the author of the *Actus* relates it—

"Franciscus servus Dei Altissimi, vivente beatissima Clara, cum frequenter illam sacris suis exhortationibus consolaretur, illa rogavit beatum patrem Franciscum, quod faceret ei hanc consolationem, ut scilicet semel insimul manducarent. Beatus autem Franciscus semper hoc facere renuebat. Unde accidit quod socii Sancti patris, sanctae Clarae desiderium perpendentes, beato Francisco dixerunt: 'Pater, nobis videtur, quod rigor iste non sit secundum divinam caritatem, quod scilicet sororem Claram, virginem tam sanctam et Deo dilectam, non exaudis: praesertim cum ipsa ad tuam praedicationem pompas saeculi dereliquit. Propter quod nedum semel sumere cibum tecum admittis, sed si cum tanta instantia majorem gratiam postulasset, ipsi plantulae tuae facere debuisses!'

"Respondit sanctus Franciscus: 'Videtur vobis quod de hoc desiderio illam exaudiam?' Dixerunt: 'Ita, pater: nam digna est quod hanc consolationem sibi facias.' Respondit sanctus Franciscus: 'Ex quo vobis videtur, placet mihi etiam. Sed, ut plenius consoletur, volo quod fiat apud Sanctam Mariam de Angelis. Ipsa enim diu stetit in Sancto Damiano reclusa, unde laetificabitur aliquantulum revidendo locum Sanctae Mariae, ubi fuit tonsa et

<sup>1</sup> *A Conjectural Chapter in the Life of Saint Clare*, p. 8, note 1, by Fr. Paschal Robinson, O.F.M. Quaracchi, 1912.

facta sponsa Christi Domini Iesu, et ibi comedemus simul in nomine Domini."

"Ordinavit ergo diem qua cum una socia, comitantibus etiam sociis suis, veniret beatissima Clara. Et veniens et adorata primo reverenter et humiliter beatissima Virgine Maria matre Domini, ac loco circumquaque ex devotione lustrato, hora facta comedendi humilis et divinus Franciscus fecit mensam, sicut consueverat, in plana terra parari. Et sedit ipse et beata Clara et unus de sociis sancti patris cum socia sanctae Clarae et omnes alii socii ejus in mensa illa humili sunt locati. Pro primo autem ferculo incepit Sanctus Franciscus loqui de Deo tam suaviter et sancte et tam altissime et divine, quod ipse Sanctus Franciscus et Sancta Clara et socia, et omnes alii qui erant in mensa illa pauperula, fuerunt rapti nimia abundantia gratiae Altissimi quae eis supervenit.

"Ipsis autem sedentibus sic raptis et oculis ac manibus in coelum erectis hominibus de Assisio et de Bitonio et undique per totam viam videbatur quod ecclesia Sanctae Mariae de Angelis et totus locus et silva, quae tunc erat circa locum, omnia comburerentur, et unus magnus ignis praedicta omnia occuparet.

"Propterea, ut loco succurrerent, homines de Assisio cum festinatione cucurrerunt, credentes firmiter quod omnia ab igne comburerentur. Quando vero venerunt ad locum, viderunt cuncta pariter illaesa et intacta. Intrantes autem locum invenerunt beatum Franciscum cum Sancta Clara et cum omnibus sociis raptos ad Dominum, et ad mensam illam humillimam omnes sedentes, et virtute indutos ex alto.

"Et tunc certitudinaliter adverterunt quod ille erat ignis divinus qui praedictos sanctos et sanctas divini amoris copiosis consolationibus inflammabat. Unde recesserunt valde aedificati et consolati. Beatus autem Franciscus et Sancta Clara et ceteri refecti sunt tam copiosa consolatione divina in anima quod de cibo corporali parum aut nihil tetigerunt."

Such is the oldest version we have of this famous legend, the version contained in the *Actus Beati Francisci*, which was written, we must not forget, by an unknown and ill-informed writer toward the close of the thirteen hundreds: that is to say, a hundred and fifty years at least after Saint Francis's death.

Thomas of Celano, a contemporary of Saint Francis, who knew him well, who was himself a Franciscan, and who had held high office in the order, writing somewhere about the year 1247, informs us—I have quoted the passage in full in Latin and in English in

another part of this book<sup>1</sup>—that Saint Francis urged his disciples over and over again to be exceedingly circumspect in their dealings with the Poor Ladies, lest anything approaching to intimacy should spring up between the two orders, and that he inculcated this injunction with the utmost solicitude not only by word of mouth, but by his own example. Moreover, the same writer reiterates emphatically in a very striking passage in the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae* to which I have already called the reader's attention, that during her sojourn of forty-two years in the convent of Saint Damian the Seraphic Mother never once set foot across the threshold; and this testimony is confirmed by her friend Alexander IV, who, referring to Saint Clare in the bull of canonization, and playing on her name according to his wont, says—

“O quanta hujus vehementia luminis, et quam vehemens istius illuminatio claritatis! Manebat quidem haec lux secretis inclusa claustralibus, et foras micantes radios emittebat: colligebatur in arcto coenobio, et in amplo soeculo spargebatur. Servabatur intra, et extra manabat. Latebat namque Clara sed ejus vita patebat: silebat Clara, sed sua fama clamabat: celabatur in cella, et in urbibus docebatur. Nec mirum, quia lucerna tam accensa, tam lucens abscondi non poterat, quin splenderet, et clarum in domo Domini daret lumen: nec recondi poterat vas tot aromatum, quin fragraret, et suavi odore dominicam respergeret mansionem: imo cum in angusto solitudinis reclusorio alabastrum sui corporis haec dure contereret, tota omnino Ecclesiae aula sanctitatis ejus odoribus replebatur.”

Although the *Actus Beati Francisci* is the first known work in which the Porziuncola story occurs, in all probability it was not invented by the author of the *Actus*: I suspect that the tale was first told at least a hundred years before that book was written, and that it was the child of the long strife which presently arose between the sons and the daughters of Saint Francis, of which, later on, let it suffice to say here that the sisters maintained that the brethren had been bound by Saint Francis to assist them in their spiritual and temporal necessities to the end, and that the brethren refused to acknowledge any such obligation. Each side, of course, endeavoured to obtain the favour of the Holy See, and this strife seems to have been responsible for a certain amount of unscrupulous literature.

See Part II, Chapter VII, pp. 204, 205.

In his recent work <sup>1</sup> on Clare legislation Fr. Oliger quotes from an unedited fourteenth-century MS. in the convent of Sant' Antonio in Rome, containing miscellaneous Franciscan matter, a curious fragment which, I think, it will be interesting to consider in this connection and which may be rendered in English thus—

"Brother Thomas of Papia,<sup>2</sup> minister provincial of Tuscia, declareth that one Brother Stephen, who, he says, was a simple man and of such transparent honesty that one would hardly believe him to be capable of lying, related to him what follows: Blessed Francis, Brother Stephen used to say, had no hankering for the friendship of women, nor would he suffer any female to show him familiarity. Blessed Clare was the only woman for whom he seemed to have any kind of affection, but he never presumed to call even Blessed Clare by her own name: in speaking to her or of her he always said Christian woman. He was her spiritual director and had charge of her monastery, but he never ordered any other monasteries to be built, though in course of time some were founded by other folk, and when he heard that the women who dwelt in them were called sisters, he was troubled not a little, and it is said that he remarked: 'The Lord hath delivered us from wives, and now the Devil hath procured for us sisters.' The Lord Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia, who was cardinal-protector of the order of Friars Minor, cherished these sisters with tender care, and upon a certain occasion he commended them to Saint Francis, saying: 'Brother, I commend these ladies to ye,' whereat the blessed man, with a smiling countenance: 'Holy Father, let them not any longer be named *Sorores Minores*, but rather what you now call them—*Dominæ*,' and from that day forth they were called Ladies, not Sisters.

"Not long after this, Brother Ambrose, the Cistercian, to whom the Lord Ugolino had committed all the monasteries aforesaid save only the monastery of Saint Clare, went the way of all flesh, and Brother Philip the Long contrived that he himself should be appointed to succeed him, and he likewise obtained from the Supreme Pontiff full powers to name whom he would of the Friars Minor to serve the aforesaid monasteries. And when Blessed Francis heard what had happened, he cursed Brother Philip the Long, as one who had ruined his order; and Brother Stephen used

<sup>1</sup> *De Origine Regularum ordinis S. Clare* (Quaracchi, 1912).

<sup>2</sup> This man was one of the numerous friends of Fra Salimbene, who in his *Chronicle* (pp. 429-430) has a very pleasing portrait of him.

to say that he himself heard him utter these words: 'So long as the ulcer was only in the flesh it might perchance have been healed, but now that it hath attacked the bone there is no remedy.' Now Brother Stephen himself had upon a certain occasion visited one of these monasteries by order of Brother Philip, which thing he afterwards confessed to Blessed Francis when he was walking with him from Bevagna to another place, whereat Blessed Francis upbraided him harshly and bade him by way of penance cast himself into a stream by which they were passing, just as he was with all his clothes on, although it was in the month of December; and dripping wet and trembling from head to foot with cold he accompanied Blessed Francis to the home of the brethren, which was two long miles from the place where this thing happened. . . . All these things Brother Thomas declareth he had from the lips of the aforesaid Stephen."

Maybe Brother Stephen was the honest man he is said to have been in the above quotation, but in that case, like many other honest men, he was exceedingly muddle-headed, or else Brother Thomas of Papia grievously misrepresented him, for his evidence—which is the source of not a few of Wadding's errors—is in large measure contradicted by contemporary official papers of undoubted authenticity, by Thomas of Celano, by the Seraphic Mother and by the Seraphic Father himself. But, on the other hand, it is admirably adapted to support the friars' view that Saint Francis had never bound them to minister to the Poor Ladies, and it is likely enough that the Porziuncola tale formed part of a counterblast to some such mendacious declaration as that attributed in the Sant' Antonio codex to Brother Thomas of Papia. Thus much for the circumstances under which, as I venture to think, though of course it is a mere conjecture, this story was concocted; now as to the source from which the writer of it derived his inspiration.

In the *Dialogues of Saint Gregory* we read the following anecdote concerning Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica, who, it should be borne in mind, was not his spiritual sister, but his sister according to the flesh and who, when the incident related occurred, was between sixty and seventy years of age—

"*Peter.* Prythee tell me, Father Gregory, if the saints be able to obtain all that they ask for and everything they desire."

"*Gregory.* Which of the saints, Peter, was more sublime in this life than Blessed Paul, to whom was given a thorn in the flesh, who thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from him, and

who, nevertheless, was not able to obtain what he desired? And now will I tell thee a story concerning our venerable Father Benedict which showeth that there was something which he desired and, like Blessed Paul, was not able to obtain. It was the custom of his sister Scholastica, who from her youth upwards had most faithfully served the Lord, to visit him once a year, and at such times she used to lodge in a little house without the monastery gate, but within the monastic domain. To this little house, then, upon a certain day she betook herself, and Blessed Benedict, according to his wont, came forth to greet her, accompanied by his disciples, and the hours speeding whilst they praised God and conversed of the things of the spirit, it was not until the day was far spent that they broke bread together. And as they were lingering at table in the twilight and still talking of ghostly things, behold, the devout woman his sister thus entreated the man of God: 'Abide with me this night, brother, for I would fain talk with thee till morning of the happiness of Heaven.' To whom Blessed Benedict: 'What is this that thou sayest, sister? Far be it from me to pass the night without my cell.' Now at this time the sky was so clear that not a cloud was to be seen. But the Lady Scholastica, when she had heard what her brother had said, clasped her hands together, resting them on the table, and bowing her head over her hands appealed to the Lord Omnipotent. And as she raised her head from the table there began such vehemence of thunder and lightning with such abundance of water that neither Venerable Benedict nor his brothers were able to set foot that night without the threshold. For the holy woman, when she bowed her head on the table, had poured forth such floods of tears that the fair weather was changed into foul and wet: for immediately after her prayer great drops of rain began to fall, and the two did so coincide that as she lifted up her head the first muttering of the storm was heard, so that in one and the same moment her head was raised and the rain descended.

"And when the man of God perceived that by reason of the thunder and lightning and the continuous downpour of rain he would not be able to return that night to his monastery his spirit was troubled within him, and he began to murmur, saying: 'May God forgive thee, sister. What is this that thou hast done?' Whereat Scholastica: 'Lo, I besought thee, and thou wouldst not hear me; I besought the Lord, and He hath heard me. Now, therefore, if thou canst, go forth and leave me.' But he was not

able to go forth, and he, who had refused to stay of his own free will, was compelled to remain against his will. And thus it came to pass that all that night they kept vigil and received full content in discoursing of ghostly things.

"Whence it appeareth that our Father Benedict desired something which he was not able to obtain, for if we consider the mind of the blessed man it is impossible to doubt that he wished for the continuance of the fair weather which had favoured his excursion in the morning, but contrary to what he willed a miracle was wrought by the power of God Almighty and at the intercession of a woman. Nor is it matter for wonderment that that woman at that time was mighty enough to prevail against him, for she had long desired to see her brother, and as Blessed John saith: 'God is love,' with good reason, then, was she the more powerful, inasmuch as she loved the more."

"*Peter.* What thou tellest me, I protest, pleaseth me amazingly."

"*Gregory.* On the morrow, the man of God returned to his monastery and the venerable woman to her own abode. Three days afterwards Blessed Benedict, standing in his cell and with his eyes raised heavenwards, beheld the soul of his sister coming forth from her body and ascending in the form of a dove towards the hidden mansions of heaven. And rejoicing at the sight of her great glory, he gave thanks to God in hymns and lauds, and announced her death to his brethren, and bade them go fetch her body and bring it to the monastery for burial. They did so, and laid it in the sepulchre which the man of God had prepared for himself, and thus it came to pass that as in life they had always been of one mind in God, so also in death their bodies were not separated."<sup>1</sup>

Celano's account of the Seraphic Mother's "passing and of the things which took place or were seen at this time" is simply and touchingly told: it is one of the most pleasing passages in the *Legenda Sanctae Claræ*. "It seemed," he says, "that her agony was to be a long one, and during those last weary days of labour the faith and devotion of the people increased more and more. Nay, every day, and many times a day, prelates and cardinals came to visit her, for all men were firmly convinced that this dying woman was in sooth a great saint."<sup>2</sup> And strange to say, although

<sup>1</sup> Saint Scholastica died on the 10th of February, 543; Saint Benedict, on the 21st of March in the same year.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Innocent IV and his cardinals passed the summer of 1253 at Assisi in the Sacro Convento, as his secretary bears witness. See p. 11 and p. 80.

during the last seventeen days of her life she was unable to take any kind of food, the Lord comforted her with such fortitude that all who beheld her were strengthened in the service of Christ. For when that benevolent man, Brother Rainaldo,<sup>1</sup> seeing her set in the midst of so many and such great pains, exhorted her to patience, she made answer with a stout heart: 'From the day when I first knew the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ through his servant Francis no pain hath seemed grievous to me, dearest brother, no penance hard, no sickness difficult to bear.' And when the Lord took pity on her and was knocking, as it were, at the gate, she desired to have the assistance of priests and devout men, and that they should tell her the story of Jesus Christ's passion, and amongst them that came to console her was Brother Juniper, that mighty hurler before the Lord,<sup>2</sup> who used to hurl from his very heart the words of the Lord red hot, and filled with new joy at his coming, she asked him if the Lord had that day given him any new thing to utter; whereat Juniper, opening his mouth, shot forth like sparks from the fiery furnace of his soul such flaming parables that the virgin of Christ derived therefrom no little consolation.

"Presently she turned to her weeping daughters, and recounting

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Cardinal Rainaldo's friend, Rainaldo di Tocca, of whom Salimbene speaks, and who seems to have been attached to the cardinal's household.

<sup>2</sup> *Egregius Domini jaculator* (not *joculator*), this is the reading in the famous Assisi Codex (No. 338), which dates from the close of the twelve hundreds, and is the oldest copy we have of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*. So, too, of the six MSS. with which Professor Pennachi collated it when he was preparing his recent edition of this work ("*Legenda Sanctae Clarae Virginis tratta dal MS. 338 della Bibl. Comunale di Assisi*," Assisi, 1910). Does *joculator* occur in any MS. or in any printed edition of the Latin text? In his *Speculum Perfectionis* (p. 168, note 4), Monsieur Sabatier remarks—"Frère Junipère de joyeuse et sainte mémoire, *egregius Domini jaculator*" (A. S. S. Aug., t. II, p. 764), but when we turn to the 764th page of the second of the August volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* we find that he is mistaken: the Bollandists, too, have *jaculator*, not *joculator*.

The author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae* (Celano?) in the passage above quoted, and the author of the *Speculum Perfectionis* (Leo?) in a short passage wherein he makes Saint Francis commend the *patientiam fratris Juniperi qui usque ad statum perfectae patientiae pervenit propter perfectam expropriationem propriae voluntatis quam prae oculis habebat, et summum desiderium imitandi Christum per viam crucis* (edition Sabatier, pp. 168-169), are the only early Franciscan writers who mention Brother Juniper, and I venture to think that the author of the Fioretti Life of this Friar, who was the first to put on him the cap and bells which from that day to this he has been condemned to wear, never intended his work to be an historical account, but rather a pious farce, and that the idea of making the hero of it a buffoon came to him from misreading, like Monsieur Sabatier, Celano's *jaculator* for *joculator*.

to them all the benefits which Christ in His mercy had bestowed on them, besought them always to persevere in His life of poverty. Then she blessed all who had been kind to her, women as well as men, and she blessed, too, all the monasteries of Poor Ladies present and to come. The rest—who can tell it without weeping? There were present there two of the holy companions of Blessed Francis. One of them, Angelo, with his own eyes streaming with tears, was striving as best he could to comfort the weeping sisters; as for the other, Leo, he knelt down and kissed the couch on which the dying saint was laid. . . . But Blessed Clare was communing thus with her own soul softly: ‘Go forth, Christian soul, go forth without fear, for thou hast a good guide for thy journey. Go forth without fear, for He that created thee hath sanctified thee, always hath He protected thee, and He loveth thee with the love of a mother.’ And when one of the sisters asked her to whom she was talking: ‘I am talking to mine own soul,’ she said; and truly her Glorious Guide was not far off, for presently, turning to one of them, she said: ‘Can you see the King of Glory whom I see?’ And the hand of the Lord came upon one of them, and with her bodily eyes red with weeping, for a sword of bitter grief had pierced her soul, she beheld a most blissful vision: she saw a crowd of virgins entering by the door; they were arrayed in white robes and had crowns of gold on their heads, and one walked amongst them more beautiful than the rest, from whose crown, which in its uppermost part was fashioned like a windowed censer, such splendour irradiated that the darkness of that night within the house was changed to the clear light of morning. Then God’s Mother came to the bed where her Son’s handmaid lay, and bending over her lovingly She kissed her, and the other virgins brought a fair pall, marvellously wrought, wherewith they covered her body.

“Thus was the passing of Blessed Clare. It was on the morrow of Blessed Laurence that she obtained her laurel crown, for on that day the temple of her body being dissolved her most holy soul went forth and, exulting in its freedom, soared on the wings of gladness to the place which God had prepared for it.”

## PART II

### *OF THE RULES OBSERVED BY THE POOR LADIES OF THE ORDER OF SAINT DAMIAN DURING THE LIFETIME OF SAINT CLARE*

#### INTRODUCTION

FOUR rules were observed by the Poor Ladies during the lifetime of the Seraphic Mother, viz.—

(a) A rule given by Saint Francis in the early days of the order—probably in the spring of the year 1214.

(b) The Benedictine rule with special constitutions, edited by Cardinal Ugolino, with the assistance of Saint Francis, somewhere about the year 1218 and, I think, from notes which Saint Clare herself had supplied.

(c) The Franciscan rule with special constitutions, drawn up by order of Innocent IV, and first promulgated on the 6th of August, 1247.

(d) A rule composed by Saint Clare herself, which was first confirmed by Cardinal Rainaldo—but for her own convent only—acting for the Pope, on the 22nd of September, 1252, and afterwards by Innocent himself on the 9th of August, 1253.

It will be convenient to call these four rules respectively—

(a) The Primitive Rule; (b) the Ugolino Rule; (c) the Rule of Innocent IV, and (d) the Rule of Saint Clare.

The Primitive Rule has not come down to us, but a fragment of it is incorporated in the Rule of Saint Clare, and perhaps we have another fragment—the fasting clause—in one of her letters to Blessed Agnes of Bohemia. Albeit we know something of the kind of life it prescribed from various contemporary documents of unquestionable authenticity. Several complete copies of the Ugolino Rule have come down to us: the earliest is dated May 24, 1239. We have the original copy of the Rule of Innocent IV:

it is at present laid up in the Municipal Library of Assisi, and there is another copy in the Vatican Registers. We have likewise the original copy of the Rule of Saint Clare. This precious document, which for centuries was thought to have been lost, was discovered in her convent at Assisi by the Abbess just twenty years ago—in the spring of 1893—wrapped in an old habit which the saint is believed to have worn, and it is at present ensconced in a reliquary in the nuns' choir there.

The Primitive Rule was never confirmed by the Holy See: indeed, there is no reason to think that the Pope's approval was ever sought, for from the first it was held to be a tentative and provisional rule. Saint Clare and her sisters at Assisi discarded it in favour of the Ugolino Rule in the fall of the year 1218; little by little the other communities followed their example, and Gregory IX informs us in a letter which he wrote to Blessed Agnes of Bohemia on the 9th of May, 1238, that at this time every house in the order was observing the Ugolino Rule.

Albeit the Ugolino Rule was very far from being a satisfactory piece of legislation: in the first place, the constitutions were so ill drafted that there was much diversity of opinion as to the meaning of the text; and in the second, so severe were the austerities prescribed that it was found to be impossible to carry them out. Recourse, then, was had to the Holy See for explanations and dispensations, and the result was, as Pope Innocent IV notes in a letter which he addressed to all Clare houses on August 23, 1247, that not one form of life was observed by the order of poor cloistered nuns, but many.

It was to remedy this state of things that Innocent IV put forth his own rule and imposed its observance on the whole order. It is a model of clearness and precision, and the manner of life therein prescribed is comparatively mild; but for some reason or other it was not acceptable to all, and at last the Pope was constrained to declare that it was not his wish that the new rule should be forced on any community unwilling to receive it, and presently he himself sounded another discordant note by his solemn approbation for her own convent of the Rule of Saint Clare. In substance, it is true, it did not differ very greatly from his own—it was somewhat stricter in respect to poverty and a little larger as regards enclosure; but the Pope was loath to do this thing, and it may be safely said he would not have done it for any one but the Seraphic Mother. When at last the messenger from the Sacro Convento,

where Innocent and his court were lodged, brought the papal brief to St. Damian's, the brief for which she had so long been waiting, for Clare "the world of this darkness" was already passing away. She pressed the parchment to her lips and kissed it again and again. It was the fruit of her last victory: on the morrow at dawn God took her to the realm of perpetual light.

Such are the main outlines of the case as related in the various diplomatic documents which treat of it, and they can hardly be contradicted. But when we come to details, when we attempt to fill in the gaps, to draw inferences, to deduce conclusions, to appreciate motives, we are at once on such slippery ground that even those who are sure of foot cannot hope to escape tripping.

## CHAPTER I

Of the importance of the letter addressed by Gregory IX on the 9th of May, 1238, to Blessed Agnes of Prague, by reason of the information therein contained concerning the Primitive Rule and the Ugolino Rule. Some notes on Blessed Agnes: of her betrothal to Frederick II and how the contract was cancelled; how, moved thereto by the Friars Minor, she put on the Franciscan habit, and how not a few of her friends followed her example; of the convent of Poor Ladies which her brother, King Wenceslaus, founded at Prague. Of the Supreme Pontiff's approval, and how Agnes was named abbess. Of Brother John of Piano Carpine, the nuns' director. Of the hospital which Agnes founded before she entered religion, and how it was richly endowed by Constance, Queen of Bohemia and Premislaus, Lord of Moravia. How the Pope bestowed the whole of this wealth on Agnes and her sisters, and how they exchanged it three years later for a "Privilege of Poverty." How the Pope forthwith restored their estates to the hospital folk, and at their own request, and with Agnes's approval, gave them for spiritual guides Dominicans instead of Franciscans. An inquiry as to the motives which inspired this change of direction. How Blessed Agnes resigned office, but later on resumed the reins of government. Of the high esteem in which she was held within and without the cloister. Of her objection to the Ugolino Rule, and of two unsuccessful attempts she made to exchange it for a rule of her own making.

THE letter *Angelis gaudium*, which Gregory IX, erst Cardinal Ugolino, addressed to Blessed Agnes of Bohemia on the 9th of May, 1238,<sup>1</sup> is a document of the first importance, for not only is it the main source of the little we know for certain of the Primitive Rule, but it contains also a categorical account of the making of the Ugolino Rule; and since Gregory himself was the chief editor of this extraordinary piece of legislation, he must have been thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances under which it was drafted.

In order to grasp the full import of this letter, it will be necessary to know something of the man who wrote it, of the person to whom it was addressed, and of the events which caused it to be written.

Pope Gregory IX is a well-known figure in history, and his

<sup>1</sup> *Sbaralea*, May 11, 1238, No. 264. Eubel says that the correct date of this letter is May 9, not May 11.

acquaintance we have already made, but Blessed Agnes of Bohemia is to most of us only a name, and though she was much to the fore in the days of the Franciscan revival, no English writer, so far as I am aware, has thought it worth while to make her the subject of a biography: I have therefore jotted down in the following pages a few notes concerning her, collected for the most part from the diplomatic documents in which her name is mentioned.

Blessed Agnes was born at Prague somewhere about the year 1205. She was the daughter of Primislaus, King of Bohemia, and the sister of King Wenceslaus, who ascended the throne on the death of his father in 1229.

Not long before King Primislaus died, he had promised his daughter's hand to the Emperor Frederick II; but when Wenceslaus urged her to complete the contract, Agnes demurred: she had conceived the wish to become a nun, and appealed to Gregory IX. Through his good offices the engagement was cancelled, with the consent of all concerned; even Frederick agreed, and not with ill grace: "If," he said, "she had jilted me for a mere man, I would have run my sword through him; but since she prefers the King of Heaven, I will stand aside," and shortly afterwards Agnes, at the instance of the Friars Minor, who had settled in Prague during her father's lifetime, determined to join the Poor Ladies. Of this she made no secret, and it goes without saying that not a few women of fashion soon followed her example. Wenceslaus, so far from thwarting his sister, encouraged her in the step she proposed to take, and presently he established in his capital a convent of the order; in due course the Pope confirmed what had been done, and gave to the new community the Ugolino Rule.

It is uncertain at what date Agnes entered religion. Her contemporary, Albert of Stade,<sup>1</sup> says Pentecost, 1236; but so far as concerns the year he must be mistaken, because as early as the 31st of August, 1234, Pope Gregory had written to Brother John, Provincial of Saxony, and Brother T., warden of Prague, bidding them name her abbess of the new Franciscan nunnery there,<sup>2</sup> and on the 18th of May in the following year he addressed a letter to Agnes herself, in which he styles her abbess<sup>3</sup>: perhaps it was on the Whit Sunday of 1234 or of 1233 that this scion of the royal house of Bohemia first put on the Franciscan habit.

<sup>1</sup> This man was originally a Benedictine monk; he was named Abbot of Stade on the Elbe in 1232, and resigned office in 1241 in order to become a Franciscan.

<sup>2</sup> *Sincerum animi.*

<sup>3</sup> *Cum relicta sæculi vanitate.*

Wadding says that the Brother John above mentioned was an Englishman, one John of Reading; but we now know from the *Chronicle* of Jordan of Giano, who was himself at this time on the German mission, that John of Reading, who had been set over the province of Saxony by Parenti in 1230, at Jordan's own request,<sup>1</sup> resigned two years later; and that his successor, an Umbrian of Piano Carpine, a little town between Perugia and Lake Trasimene,<sup>2</sup> was also named John<sup>3</sup>; and since this man held office till 1239 it is clear that the Brother John to whom Pope Gregory wrote on the 31st of August, 1234, was not John of Reading, but John of Piano Carpine. Jordan describes him as so fat that he was unable to walk, and that hence his custom was to ride on an ass, for he was too humble to go on horseback. Albeit "he was a strenuous defender of his order, and did not hesitate to beard bishops and other potentates when the interests of the brethren demanded it; for as a mother her sons, or a hen her chicks, so did he rule and tend and cherish the flock committed to his keeping."<sup>4</sup> Sharp-tongued Salimbene, too, has left us a little character-sketch of this typical Franciscan. Salimbene met him for the first time at a convent near Lyons in the autumn of 1247, when Friar John had just returned from the East very full of his travels and the marvellous things he had heard and seen, for two years before Pope Innocent IV had dispatched him on a diplomatic errand to the Khan of Tartary, and he was now on his way to Lyons, where the papal court was at this time sojourning, to report himself to Innocent. "This John," says Salimbene, "was a familiar man, learned, witty, skilled in many things and a very great talker." Nevertheless he knew how to keep a secret, for Salimbene tells us a little further on that when, before the close of the same year, the Pope entrusted him with a confidential message to the King of France, no one could get anything out of him as to the nature of the business: when questioned he would only say: "*Secretum meum michi, secretum meum michi.*"

Whatever it may have been, Innocent was so pleased with the way in which he acquitted himself in this matter that on his return from France in the following year he named him Archbishop of Antivari. He died on the 1st of August, 1252. He was a

<sup>1</sup> See *Jordani Chronica*: Boehmer edition, p. 50. (Paris: Fischbacher. 1908.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. LXI, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. LV, pp. 48, 49.

notable man in his day, and to his energy, tact and good-humour the success of the German mission was chiefly due.

Before Blessed Agnes bade farewell to the world she had expended her whole fortune in founding a hospital for the poor of her native city;<sup>1</sup> though the building adjoined her own convent<sup>2</sup> the sick folk were not tended by the nuns, but by a community of brethren who observed the Augustinian Rule<sup>3</sup> with special constitutions drawn up for them by Brother John de Piano Carpine (who at this time was Franciscan Provincial of Saxony), commissioned thereto by the Pope,<sup>4</sup> and in virtue of a rescript from the Holy See, dated August 30, 1234, recited the divine office according to the Franciscan Rite.<sup>5</sup>

A strange arrangement this, and not the one, perhaps, which Agnes originally contemplated, but the sequel is stranger: while the building operations were still in progress Pope Gregory, at the request of Wenceslaus and of the bishop and canons of Prague, had taken both institutions under his protection, and declared that the land on which the buildings were being erected was the property of the Holy See; his letter of acceptance is dated Spoleto, August 30, 1234, and the institutions in question are therein described as the monastery and the hospital of Blessed Francis. A few months later we find the Pope again corresponding about this affair: on the 18th of May, 1235, he addressed a letter to his beloved daughters the abbess and poor cloistered nuns of St. Francis at Prague, by which he conceded to them, at their own request, as he expressly states, the hospital with all its possessions, including two large estates with which this institution had just been endowed by Agnes's mother, Queen Constance, and by her brother Prenizhl, Marquis of Moravia.<sup>6</sup> The first was a property which the Queen had purchased from the master and brethren of the hospital of Saint Mary of the Teutonic Order, and consisted of a church and three castles, with all the lands, serfs, manorial

<sup>1</sup> See *Sbaralea*, vol. i, p. 156, No. 166; Gregory IX to Rector and Brethren of Hospital of St. Francis, Prague; "Filius summi regis," etc. May 18, 1235.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 156; Gregory IX to Abbess Agnes: "Cum relicta sæculi vanitati," etc. May 18, 1235.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 216, No. 229; Gregory IX to Rector and Brethren of Hospital of St. Francis, Prague: "Omnipotens Deus qui alto," etc. April 14, 1237.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 237; Gregory IX to Dominican Provincial of Poland and Priors of Prague: "Votæ devotorum ecclesiae," etc. April 22, 1238.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 134; Gregory IX to Agnes of Bohemia: "Sincerum animi tu favorem," etc.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-9. Bulls 166-7. Vol. i.

rights and feudal dues appertaining to them; she retained, however, a life interest in the revenue. The second was a domain in Moravia called Rakscice, and seemingly it was of vast extent: in the deed of gift a castle, arable lands, pastures, woods, lakes, grazing rights in mountain ravines, etc., are mentioned.

Though Prenizhl distinctly states in his deed of gift, dated Oct. 2, 1233, that the revenue arising from this property was for the maintenance of the poor of the hospital, Gregory, in language no less clear, devotes it, in his brief to Agnes, to the convent for the nuns' own use; and, strangely enough, on the very day on which he did this thing, he dispatched a letter to the master and brethren to ratify what Prenizhl had done, with his deed of gift in their favour quoted therein at length.<sup>1</sup> It is certain that the hospital continued to exist, and there is no record of any other endowment having been conferred on it at this time, nor anything to suggest that either Prenizhl or the Master were aggrieved at the Pope's action; we must conclude, then, that the income of the Rakscice estate was large enough to supply the needs of the convent and of the hospital as well, and that Agnes had given some kind of undertaking which has not come down to us to provide for the latter institution from the funds which she had at her disposal.

The reason which Gregory gave for granting the nuns' request is worthy of note: he said that it had seemed good to him to do so because "they had elected to follow the poor Christ poor, and desired to serve the Lord in sublime poverty."<sup>2</sup> The irony of it may be unintentional, but Gregory had a grain of cynicism in his composition, and sometimes liked to dip his pen in pungent ink.

Perhaps these women were not free agents when they asked for the estates of the hospital folk. In any case, not quite three years afterwards they divested themselves of all their possessions in favour of the Holy See, and in order that they might be able to protect themselves in future from compulsory benefactions petitioned Gregory to give them a "privilege of poverty." In a letter dated from the Lateran on the 15th of April, 1238,<sup>3</sup> he not only granted their request, but congratulated them on the course they had taken. The "privilege of poverty" is contained in the last clause of this document. It runs thus—

<sup>1</sup> See *Sbaralea*, vol. i, p. 157, Letter 166: "Filius summi regis," etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156, No. 165: "Cum relicta saeculi vanitatis."

<sup>3</sup> "Pia credulitate tenentes."

“ . . . devicti precibus vestris, et lacrymis praesentium auctoritate te concedimus, ut invite cogi ad recipiendum de cetero possessiones aliquas non possitis. Nulli ergo omnino hominum,” etc.

Shortly afterwards Gregory made over all the property which he had received from the nuns to the master and brethren of the hospital of St. Francis; the deed of gift is dated April 27, 1238.<sup>1</sup> A few days earlier—on the 22nd of April—at the request of the brethren themselves, he had committed the spiritual direction of the community to the charge of the Dominicans for ten years.<sup>2</sup> Thus was all connection severed between the hospital of St. Francis and the Franciscan Order, at all events for the time being.

Some kind of friction there must have been between the friars and the hospital folk; for these men would hardly have asked for a change of directors if things had been running smoothly. Moreover, it would seem that Blessed Agnes approved of the proposed change, for at the very time that the Master of the hospital was busying himself about this affair in Rome, he was also acting as Agnes's agent there in a matter of some delicacy,<sup>3</sup> and it is not likely that she would have placed her affairs in his hands unless she had seen eye to eye with him.

All this is most perplexing. Possibly the key to the mystery is to be found in the fact that at this time the Franciscan Order was on the verge of a serious crisis: in the spring of the year 1238 the storm was gathering fast which some twelve months later swept Brother Elias from the high place he had so long held, and Elias's friends and Elias's foes were already biting their thumbs at one another.

From the first the Zelanti had been a thorn in his side: from the first they had done their utmost to thwart him. Saint Francis had urged his vicar, in the early days when these men were just beginning to give trouble, and Elias, for a moment cast down, was longing for nature and God and the quiet of a solitary life, to deal with them very tenderly. “Even,” he said, “if they should strike thee, esteem it a Divine favour, and love them no whit the less, nor wish, for the sake of thine own comfort, that they should show themselves better Christians, and let this be to thee of more account than an hermitage.”

<sup>1</sup> “Carissima in Christo filia Agnes.”

<sup>2</sup> “Vota devotorum ecclesiae.”

<sup>3</sup> See *Sbaralea*, vol. i, p. 242, Letter 264; “Angelis gaudium.” Gregory to Agnes of Bohemia.

But it was impossible for a man like Elias—capable, eager, highly strung, and withal in feeble health—to suffer fools gladly; and when St. Francis was dead and Elias had a free hand, and the Zelanti every day grew more and more truculent, and instead of submitting when called to order, gloried in what they had done, boldly alleging that they were carrying out the Founder's wishes, Elias lost patience, and the stern measures which he meted out to them alienated some who had as little liking for eccentricity and insubordination as he himself had.

Moreover, in his own party there were certain priests who presently found it a grievous thing to be ruled over by one who, though haply in holy orders, was not himself a priest; and who did not hesitate when it suited his purpose to subordinate clerks to laymen. For Elias was firmly determined to have none but capable officers: he was no respecter of persons; he knew how to choose, and chose where he would, consulting only his own judgment. But the rancour of a few incompetent priests disappointed of place, and the ill-will of a handful of zealots who, if the harsh treatment to which they had been subjected had gained for them some sympathy, were for the most part looked askance at, and had not a sufficient following to make their ill-will dangerous—these things would not have wrecked him if Elias, trusting less to the broken reed of Gregory's friendship and not presuming that the creed of yesterday—that he was the only possible general—was still the creed of the order, had refrained from wounding the self-respect of provincial ministers and local officers—all picked men and some of them men of renown—by lessening their sphere of influence and by curtailing their authority. "Like Blessed Francis and John Parenti," says Jordan, "he held the order in the palm of his hand. He did what seemed good in his own eyes, without consulting the brethren."<sup>1</sup> In other words, his rule was absolute, and his opponents desired an oligarchy; and these men were the innovators, for Elias, as Jordan owns, was only carrying on the traditions of his predecessors. But absolute power in their hands was a very different thing to absolute power in his. Saint Francis was Saint Francis: kind, courteous, sweet, a mighty contemner of

<sup>1</sup> *Helyas enim habuit totum ordinem in sua potestate, sicut ipsum habuerant beatus Franciscus et frater Johannes Parens qui ante ipsum fuerant. Unde et pro sua voluntate plurima ordini non convenientia disponebat. Infra septem enim annos capitulum generale secundum regulam non tenuit et fratres sibi resistentes hinc inde dispersit.* (*Jordani Chronica*, p. 54, § 61.)

self; once when he was asked to take stringent measures against some of the brethren who had grown lax: "they know," he said, "what I think; I have always preached to them by my example, and by God's grace I will do so to the end, but I am not going to play the executioner." Neither Blessed Francis nor John Parenti possessed *le don de commandement*, to quote the words of Lempp, but within the feeble frame of Elias there was what is called a will: he knew how to rule, and he ruled with a rod of iron. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and because he did his utmost to keep his garden free from weeds his brethren cast him forth.

"In the year 1237," notes Jordan, "Brother Elias sent visitors into all the province, men most apt for his purpose, by whose inordinate visitations the brethren were more exasperated against him than they had been before." The inquisitorial faculties with which these visitors were invested, if we may trust Eccleston, were exceedingly large: they were to listen to all complaints, and, if need be, coerce unwilling witnesses by threats of excommunication; they could modify or suppress local ordinances, even such as had been enacted by provincial ministers; they could stay in every house they visited a month or, if need be, longer; in a word, they had full powers to correct and amend whatever they found amiss in head or members. It was said that these men performed their task in high-handed fashion; complaints were made to Elias: he closed his ears to them. That was the last straw. Meetings were held in various places to consider the situation, and in every case it was decided to appeal to the Pope; in due course the delegates arrived in Rome; after some difficulty they obtained a hearing, and the result was the famous Chapter of Pentecost, 1239, and the downfall of the great general.

Amongst those who had appealed to Rome were the brethren of the vast Franciscan province of Saxony, which in those days included not only Saxony itself, but Poland and Bohemia as well. According to Glassberger, our old friend Brother John di Piano Carpine, provincial of Saxony, held a chapter in the city of Prague in 1238, and Jordan tells us that in the same year the brethren of Saxony, having complained in vain to Elias of the arbitrary conduct of his visitors, were constrained to appeal to the Pope, and that he himself and a comrade, whose name he does not mention, had acted for them in the Eternal City in this delicate affair. Hence Boehmer concludes that the resolution to

appeal was taken at the provincial chapter of Prague above referred to. Maybe, but neither Jordan nor Glassberger give exact dates, and there is nothing to show whether the chapter in question was held before or after the brethren determined to lay their grievance before the Pope; also Glassberger, who wrote towards the close of the fourteen hundreds, is not always to be relied on: it is possible that his "chapter" was nothing more than an unofficial gathering of Elias's opponents in which Brother John di Piano Carpine took no part: we know that he was named provincial of Saxony by Elias himself immediately after he had taken office, and that when Elias fell Brother John fell with him, and obtained no further preferment for something like six years. Indeed, during all this time he seems to have remained in hiding; at all events we hear nothing of him, and when at last he appears once more on the scene, it is as the Pope's diplomatic agent to the Khan of Tartary. Later on, as we have seen, Innocent IV sent him on a confidential errand to the King of France, and he died an archbishop; but so far as we know he never again obtained a place in the hierarchy of his order.

These things suggest that Brother John di Piano Carpine was among Elias's friends: on the other hand, Jordan praises him, and Jordan had no love for Elias.

But whether Brother John was for or against his superior, and though Saxony, like most of the northern provinces, was seething with disaffection, it is certain that here as elsewhere Elias had friends. I think, then, it may be safely assumed that the Franciscans of Prague were at loggerheads, and that those who hated their commander-in-chief outnumbered his adherents. And the Hospitalers may well have found it not for their souls' behoof that their consciences should be kept by directors who were quarrelling amongst themselves, especially if their sympathies lay with the minority, for in that case they must have regarded most of their spiritual guides as traitors and rebels.

Now there is reason to think that the hospital folk did sympathize with the minority: the request to Rome for a change of directors was made by the master and brethren acting together, as the bull *Vota devotorum* proves. We have already seen that the master and Agnes were in all probability of one mind; and she, like many of the Poor Ladies, we know was on Elias's side, unless, indeed, which is hardly conceivable, it seemed good to her to disregard an appeal which St. Clare about this time made to her in his behalf,

an appeal conceived in such earnest language that if the Seraphic Mother had been pleading the cause of St. Francis himself she could hardly have spoken more strongly. The passage in question occurs in one of her letters to Agnes, which, it is quite clear from the text, was written in answer to a request for advice. It runs thus: "Follow the counsels of our reverend father, Brother Elias, minister-general of the whole order; set them before you as meet to be observed above all other counsels; consider them to be more precious than any other kind of gift."

These words of the Seraphic Mother's were written at the close of Elias's public career in the Franciscan order: when he was hemmed in on all sides by enemies who were plotting his overthrow, and all kinds of evil tales were being spread abroad concerning him.

Some ten years earlier, before he had assumed office, not long after the trouble about the breaking of the alms bowl, and when men were already beginning to wag their tongues against him, Saint Agnes of Assisi, set over an alien convent against her will, and cut to the quick at parting with her sister, Saint Clare, had sent her a pathetic little letter, wherein she disburthens her soul in refreshingly human fashion, and of which the last words run thus: "Prithee, bid Brother Elias come often, very often, to console me in Jesus Christ."

There is reason to believe that at about the time that the Hospitallers changed their direction Blessed Agnes resigned her abbacy; because in his letters of May the 9th, 1238, and of May the 11th in the same year Gregory styles her not abbess, as had hitherto been his custom, but Handmaid of Christ; and though the first letter is of an intimate character and the changed style of address might be thus accounted for, the second deals with community affairs and of a no less momentous question than a proposed change of rule. Also in his letter to the Abbess of Prague of the 18th of December ensuing there is a passage which makes it clear that the abbess in question was not Agnes: "*Ex parte carissimae in Christo filiae Agnetis sororis monasterii vestri, et vestra fuit propositum coram nobis,*" etc. That, I think, is conclusive. According to Glassberger Blessed Agnes died on the 2nd of March, 1281,<sup>1</sup> and he adds this interesting piece of information: "She was buried in the chapel of Our Lady where, during

<sup>1</sup> See "Analecta Franciscana," vol. ii, p. 57.

the time of her sickness, she used to hear Mass in accordance with her petition."

I have not been able to discover under what circumstances Blessed Agnes resigned office. Be this as it may, her credit did not wane when she put off the mantle of official authority: she was as much revered when she was plain Sister Agnes as in the days when she was Abbess of Prague; the occupant of the papal chair still continued to correspond with her about community affairs, and Gregory IX and Innocent IV, each of them upon at least one occasion, bade her see to it that the other sisters faithfully observed the rule. She was, no doubt, naturally a woman of commanding personality, one who, in whatever station of life she had been born, and whatever had been her moral complexion, would be likely to make her influence felt; but the esteem in which she was held both within and without the cloister, even when she had no official rank, was also to some extent due to her reputation for holiness, for even during her lifetime she was held to be a saint, and to the fact that she was a king's daughter and the sister of the sovereign of the realm; the following entry in Jordan's *Chronicle* is significant in this respect: "In eodem capitulo" (the general chapter held in Rome in the spring of 1239) "frater Johannes de Plano Carpinis minister Saxonie est absolutus, et ei frater Conradus de Wormacia substitutus. Qui quia non receperat mandatum, non acceptavit officium. Quot soror Agnes de Praga audiens misit ad papam et sic institutionem fratris Conradi revocavit."<sup>1</sup>

From the first, Blessed Agnes of Bohemia seems to have looked askance at the Ugolino Rule, and the general trend of such evidence as has come down to us suggests that when at last she consented to receive it she did so under constraint. Unfortunately, of her correspondence with the Curia in this regard, and concerning the more or less successful efforts which she afterwards made to bring the rule into harmony with her own ideas, only the pontifical documents have as yet been discovered, and perhaps not all of these. We know also that she corresponded with Saint Clare about the rule, but in this case, too, her letters are wanting, and of those of the Seraphic Mother only four have come down to us, and they are not the originals, but copies of a much later date. Possibly the papers missing from each of these sets of correspondence will one day or other be found, and then, perhaps, we shall be able to learn something more than we know at present of

<sup>1</sup> See *Jordani Chronica*, Chap. LXVIII, pp. 58, 59, Boehmer edition.

Blessed Agnes's affairs, and to form a more accurate judgment of the motives which inspired her actions.

Meanwhile, from the evidence which we actually have this much seems to be established: it was not to the Benedictine rule that Blessed Agnes objected, but to Cardinal Ugolino's statutes, and her chief reason for doing so was a practical and not a sentimental one. True, she seems to have been at one time under the impression that Saint Francis had had no hand in drawing them up, and that may have possibly been a minor grievance; but this was the primary cause of her discontent: in compiling his careful and punctilious regulations concerning such matters as food and clothes and bedding, Cardinal Ugolino had taken no account of northern appetites and northern stomachs, and had altogether ignored the exigencies of northern climates, which, after all, is not to be wondered at, seeing that he, a southerner, was legislating for southern folk under southern skies; the marvel is that he should ever have sought to impose his statutes on the Clare communities which were afterwards founded on the other side of the Alps; for not only was the amount of food allowed insufficient to support life in anything like healthy conditions in cold countries, but the most nourishing item set down in his meagre bill of fare was only to be had, if at all, in such cities as Prague at exorbitant price, and the dearness of the Ugolino *régime* had, I think, something to do with Blessed Agnes's request for endowments: we know that when, later on, she resigned them, she at the same time exchanged the official rule for one of her own compiling which seems to have been, so far as concerns diet, a much easier rule to keep.

It must not be imagined, however, from what has been stated above, that the Ugolino Rule was an easy rule to observe in a suitable climate. On the contrary, it was an altogether impossible rule, even under the most favourable conditions. Indeed, it is exceedingly doubtful if it was ever anywhere literally carried out. At all events, Pope Clement IV says in a letter to the Clare visitor of the province of Umbria of the 11th of December, 1265,<sup>1</sup> after it had been nominally in force for almost half a century: "So dire and intolerable were the austerities prescribed by our predecessor of blessed memory, Pope Gregory IX, that even the youngest and lustiest sisters were seldom if ever able to practise them."

The negotiations which preceded Blessed Agnes's acceptance

<sup>1</sup> "Ut ordo beatae Clare."

of the Ugolino Rule were not altogether in vain : on the 31st of August, 1234, that is to say nearly a year before it was officially imposed, Gregory gave faculties to Brother John di Piano Carpine, provincial of Saxony, and to Brother Thomas, warden of Prague, to dispense the Poor Ladies of that city from the observance of the fasts on bread and water therein prescribed—three days a week from All Saints to Christmas, and three days a week during Lent; on the 18th of May, 1235, he made over to them, as we have seen, the Hospitalers' endowments, and when at last, on the 25th of July ensuing, he gave a definite order for the rule to be observed, he at the same time stated in exact terms that the Divine Office could be celebrated according to the use of the Friars Minor. A word of explanation is perhaps necessary. The Ugolino constitutions contain no directions whatsoever as to the rite to be followed in choir, but it must not be forgotten that they were complementary to the Benedictine Rule, which prescribes for "the Work of God" Saint Benedict's own rite.

Whether the use of the Franciscan breviary and the slight mitigation of the fast were the only concessions which Agnes asked for it is difficult to say; but it is not unlikely that she made some attempt to obtain a mitigation of the strictness of the enclosure : she would hardly have built the convent and the hospital adjoining one another unless it had been her original intention that she and her nuns should themselves tend the sick, or at least have free access to the hospital to visit and console them. Be this as it may, a little later she must have approached the Supreme Pontiff on the subject of enclosure, for on the 4th of April, 1237, he gave her permission to hear High Mass five times a year in the nave of the convent chapel before the altar, so that she could see the priest celebrating. The nuns' choir, be it borne in mind, was behind the high altar, and all the rest of the church was without the bounds of the cloister. This was a very small concession, and it was only granted to Agnes personally. In all probability she had asked for very much more; but though Gregory was ready to modify his constitutions, or rather to grant dispensations from the observance of them on almost every other point; on the subject of the cloister he was adamant: he seems to have attached as much importance to the strict observance of it as his friend Saint Francis did to the observance of corporate poverty. As to the austerity of the rule in other respects, Agnes gradually obtained all the mitigations she wanted. Thanks to

the changes which Gregory made on April the 9th, 1237, and in the following year—on the 5th of May and on the 18th of December, and to the very large dispensation which Innocent IV conferred on November the 13th, 1243, the rule became, for the Poor Ladies of Prague, not indeed a mild one, but a rule that it was quite possible for human beings to observe. Agnes had no one to blame but herself that these dispensations were not granted much earlier, for in a letter which Gregory addressed to her on the 11th of May, 1238, he said that he was ready to do anything she wished in the way of mitigating the austerities of the rule. It would seem that these devout women desired to follow the rule as literally as might be, and that they only relinquished the several austerities one after another as the practice of them was proved by experience to be impossible.

It is said by some writers that the Poor Ladies of Prague adopted the mitigated rule which Urban IV promulgated in 1263, and that afterwards, at the instigation of Blessed Agnes, they discarded it in favour of the Rule of St. Clare. I have not been able to find any indication whatever in contemporary diplomatic documents that such was the case. Agnes, indeed, made two unsuccessful attempts to throw off the Ugolino Rule: once during the pontificate of Gregory IX, and again in the days of his immediate successor, but in each case the rule which she desired to substitute for it was one of her own redaction.

The circumstances concerning each of these attempts are curious. It will be convenient to consider the second of them first. We learn the details of this case from a letter which Innocent IV addressed to Agnes on the 13th of November, 1243: *In divini timore nominis.*

The Ugolino Rule, be it borne in mind, consisted of the Benedictine Rule and special constitutions. The rule which Agnes wished to substitute for this consisted of the constitutions alone as modified by the various dispensations which from time to time had been granted to her by the Holy See. The reason which she gave for requesting that the obligation to observe the Benedictine Rule should be cancelled was that it was impossible to observe two contradictory rules. Innocent refused to modify the text of the rule in any way whatsoever, but at the same time he maintained all the dispensations, and declared that although the obligation to observe the Benedictine Rule must remain on paper, as a matter of fact the nuns were in no way bound to

observe it, save only so far as concerned poverty, chastity and obedience.

This strange refusal was no doubt satisfactory to Blessed Agnes, for it gave her to all intents and purposes everything that she had asked for. Moreover, on the same day (Nov. 13, 1243) Innocent wrote a letter (*Piis votis omnium*) to the Abbess and community generally, wherein he not only confirmed all the old dispensations, but considerably enlarged them.

Blessed Agnes's first attempt to throw off the Ugolino Rule must have been made somewhere about the close of the year 1237, or the opening of the year 1238. About this time she petitioned the Pope to sanction for her own convent a rule which she herself had drawn up, and which consisted of the Primitive Rule and "certain chapters" of the Ugolino constitutions. So sure was she that Gregory would give a favourable ear to her request that without waiting for his answer she put the new rule in force, and she herself and all her sisters solemnly vowed to observe it. In acting thus the Abbess of Prague had reckoned without her host. Gregory naturally preferred the rule which he himself had written, and which, indeed, he seems to have regarded with something of an author's pride, and presently he addressed a letter to his beloved daughter Agnes, in which, having absolved herself and her sisters from any obligation which they might be under to observe the rule which they had recently adopted, he bade them forthwith resume their former manner of life. This letter is dated Lateran, May 9, 1238. It is no other than the famous letter *Angelis gaudium*.

## CHAPTER II

Of the Primitive Rule. Ugolino's testimony in the bull "*Angelis gaudium*."

The testimony of Saint Clare in her own rule and in one of her letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague. When did the Seraphic Father give the Primitive Rule? What Saint Clare says in this connection, and Alexander IV and Celano. Did the Primitive Rule consist of the Benedictine rule with special constitutions? Reasons for thinking that such was the case. Some notes on Saint Francis's relations with the Black Order. Summary.

As we have seen in the last chapter the bull *Angelis gaudium* is the chief source of the little that is known for certain of the Primitive Rule. The following is the gist of what Gregory says concerning it in this letter to Blessed Agnes—

"When our beloved daughter in Christ, Clare, Abbess of Saint Damian's, and some other devout women determined to forsake the world and serve God in religion—it was in the days when we were still holding a less exalted place—Blessed Francis gave them a rule of life: it was not strong meat, but a diet admirably adapted to the children they were—to wit, a draught of milk. Now you have sent to us, under your seal, by the hands of our beloved son the prior of the Hospital of Saint Francis at Prague—a most discreet man—a rule made up of Blessed Francis's rule aforesaid and certain chapters of the official rule of the order of Saint Damian, and you have humbly petitioned us to sanction the observance of the same in your community. Upon due consideration it does not seem good to us to do so, and, moreover, we will tell you why."

Having set forth in order his reasons for refusing, and related the story of the Ugolino Rule, under what circumstances Saint Clare had professed it, and how she had observed it faithfully ever since, Pope Gregory thus proceeds:—

"And let not fear lay hold of your soul because, being ignorant of these things which we have now told you, you obliged yourself to observe Blessed Francis's formula, for in truth you are in no way bound to it, seeing that it was never authorized by the Apostolic See, and neither our beloved daughter Clare nor any other members of your order at the present time observe it.

"For the rest, a vow is not broken by exchanging it for a better, and therefore in virtue of the plenitude of authority com-

mitted to us by the Most High we absolve you from any obligation which you may be under to observe the aforesaid formula, and command you henceforth to observe the rule which we sent you under our seal, save only the chapters concerning fasting, abstinence and dress, from the observance of which on account of human frailty we have dispensed you. And if at any future time you should require any further mitigation of the rule you have only to ask and it will be granted."

We have it, then, on the testimony of Pope Gregory IX that Saint Francis gave the Poor Ladies of St. Damian's a rule of life soon after the foundation of the community, that it was an easy rule to observe, that it was never confirmed by the Holy See, that Saint Clare herself had discarded it when the order was still young, and that at the time when Gregory wrote his letter it had become altogether obsolete.

Moreover, it is clear, from Gregory's anxiety to persuade Blessed Agnes that her vow to observe the Primitive Rule was not binding, that an exact observance of this rule was incompatible with an exact observance of the Ugolino Rule. It is impossible to say with certainty wherein the discrepancy lay, but it is likely enough that Saint Francis had bound the Poor Ladies to perform some kind of active work out of harmony with that which was, so to speak, the keynote of the Ugolino constitutions—strict enclosure. It is significant that Saint Clare in her own rule, which is probably nothing more than an elaboration and extension of the Primitive Rule, suffers her children to go forth, "for some useful, reasonable, manifest and approved purpose."

Gregory's first piece of evidence is confirmed by another contemporary witness, one no less trustworthy and well informed—Saint Clare, and in terms still more explicit, and she adds, too, to our information. The sixth chapter of her rule opens thus: "When the Most High had vouchsafed to enlighten my heart to do penance, according to the example and teaching of Holy Francis, my sisters and I of our own free will promised to obey him, and when our blessed father saw that we feared neither poverty nor toil, nor sorrow nor shame, nor the world's scorn, but rather rejoiced in these things, he took pity on us and wrote for us a form of living, wherein he pledged himself to us in this fashion:—

"*Quia divina inspiratione fecistis vos filias et ancillas altissimi summi Regis Patris coelestis, et Spiritui sancto vos desponsatis*

eligendo vivere secundum perfectionem sancti Evangelii: volo et promitto per me et fratres meos semper habere de vobis tanquam de ipsis curam diligentem, et sollicitudinem specialem.' ”

The Primitive Rule, then, was a written rule, a complete form of living, not, as some have thought, a few precepts on poverty delivered by word of mouth; and it contained a clause—perhaps the opening clause—in which Saint Francis pledged himself and his successors, no doubt in order to leave the sisters no excuse for declining from the way of poverty, to provide for their spiritual and temporal needs for ever.

This clause Saint Clare has preserved for us by inserting it in her own rule. If she had not taken this precaution it would in all probability have disappeared like so many other inconvenient documents of this period, for when Saint Francis was dead the brethren denied their liability, and in consequence there was strife between the two orders, long and bitter, but of this later on. Saint Clare tells us something more about the Primitive Rule: we learn from one of her letters to Blessed Agnes of Bohemia how the first Poor Ladies were to eat, and how they were to abstain from eating; and, I think, there can be little doubt that in the passage referred to we have, almost word for word, the Fasting Clause of the Primitive Rule.

“I now come to that matter,” Saint Clare says, “concerning which you have asked me to enlighten you: to wit, on what feast days is it lawful for us to eat a variety of meats, and therefore, O Beloved, I will copy out our holy father’s admonitions as to the way in which each one of us should celebrate them. Blessed Francis, then, hath it thus:—Save to the weak and the sick (to whom he admonished and ordained that every kind of food should be given with all solicitude) it is not permitted to any of us who are sound in body and lusty ever to partake of any other than lenten fare, whether the day be a feast day or whether it be a *feria*.”

Saint Francis’s exact words, as Saint Clare quotes them, run thus:—

“Praeter debiles et infirmas (quibus quoscumque cibos cum omni sollicitudine dari admonuit ac imperavit) nemini licet ex nobis, quae corpore sana ac fortis est, aliis cibis, quam quadragesimalibus uti, tum feriatis, tum festo die.”

In writing this passage the Seraphic Father evidently experienced much difficulty in expressing himself as usual, but at all events he has succeeded in making his meaning perfectly clear: Daily

abstinence from animal food for those in robust health, for the weak, always, all they required: these things of obligation. But in the following passage, in which he treats of fasting, his efforts to render himself intelligible were not crowned with so large a measure of success, and, moreover, what Saint Clare adds makes confusion worse confounded. But let the reader judge for himself. Saint Francis thus continues:—"Sed jejunandum quotidie omnino, Dominicis tantum diebus exceptis, sicut et Nativitatis Domini in quibus bis in die comedendum est, similiter feria quinta consuetis temporibus, prout cui libuerit, ita ut cui videtur non jejunandum, ad id non cogatur."

Was it the fasting that was to be of obligation or the feasting, or both? Or were some of the fasts only binding in conscience and some of the feasts, or was each sister to be free on every day of the year to fast or feast as she would?

If this clause stood alone one would be inclined to think that Saint Francis intended to forbid the Poor Ladies to fast on Sundays and on Christmas Day, to leave them free on such Thursdays as were not fasts of the Church, and that all other days throughout the year should be for them fasting days of obligation. But, unfortunately, it does not stand alone, and I see no way of harmonizing the above interpretation with what Saint Clare says immediately afterwards as to the discipline in this respect of her own convent, which, she adds, was in accordance with the rule of our holy father Saint Francis: in other words, with the Primitive Rule: "Such of us as are in good health fast daily, save on Sundays, on the feast of our Lord's Nativity and in Paschal time, as the rule of our holy father Francis directs. Moreover, on the feasts of our Lady and of the Holy Apostles we are not bound to fast unless they should chance to fall on a Friday; and, as I have already said, all of us who are well and strong always eat Lenten fare." Her exact words are as follows—

"Nos autem bene valentes jejunamus quotidie, exceptis Dominicis, Nativitatis et omnibus Resurrectionis diebus, sicut Regula S. P. nostri Francisci nos edocet. Diebus etiam B. Virginis Mariæ et SS. Apostolorum jejunare non tenemur, nisi forte in feriam sextam inciderent; et ut supra dixi, quæ bene valemus ac fortes sumus, semper quadragesimalibus cibis utimur."

The only way, so it seems to me, to make the Saint Damian's discipline fit in with Saint Francis's instructions is to read his words from "Dominicis" to "temporibus," both included, in

parenthesis. If this be permissible, Saint Francis in the Primitive Rule forbids fasting on all Sundays throughout the year, on Christmas Day, and on such Thursdays as were not Church fasts; and he counsels, but does not oblige, the Poor Ladies to fast on all other days.

Saint Clare, then, availed herself of this liberty, electing not to fast in Paschal time and on the feasts of our Lady and of the Apostles. It is true that she makes no mention of the weekly Thursday feast, but in Saint Clare's day the art of writing precisely was almost unknown. She no doubt thought that the omission was covered by the words *sicut regula S. P. nostri Francisci edocet*, and what is more, Blessed Agnes divined her meaning, and presently obtained from Gregory IX a dispensation from fasting on all the days which Saint Clare had indicated to her, including Saint Francis's Thursdays. The papal brief containing it is dated May 5, 1238, and it is addressed to the Abbess and Convent of Enclosed Handmaids of Christ in the Monastery of Saint Francis at Prague.<sup>1</sup>

A word of further explanation is perhaps necessary. Saint Clare and her sisters were not living under the Primitive Rule when she sent the letter we are now considering to Blessed Agnes: it can hardly have been written earlier than 1235, it is most likely of later date, and before the close of the year 1218 the Poor Ladies of Assisi had already adopted the Ugolino Rule. This rule made fasting of obligation on all days of the year, but Gregory was never loath to dispense the nuns from the observance of these rigours, and Saint Clare and her folk, after trying in vain to carry them out, had no doubt obtained from him permission to observe the mitigated discipline which she described to Agnes.

It is true that no record of any such dispensation having been granted to Saint Clare has come down to us, but many documents have disappeared from the archive chamber of her monastery at Assisi, and it is certain that the papal registers were not always carefully kept.

We next come to the question, when did the Seraphic Father write the Primitive Rule? Saint Clare tells us, as we have seen, and in language so clear that it is impossible to mistake her meaning, that it was not until after he had tested his neophytes that Saint Francis gave them a rule of life. They had voluntarily promised him obedience, but, like the wise and prudent director

<sup>1</sup> "Pia meditatione pensantes," etc.

he was, he would impose no obligations until he had first seen of what stuff they were made.

It is most unlikely that these women during this time of trial were left to their own devices, or without any kind of direction but that which Saint Francis, a busy man, always flitting from place to place, was able himself to bestow upon the rare occasions when he could find a spare moment to visit them. Nor must it be supposed that the Seraphic Mother was left in charge of the young community: she was at this time a girl of some nineteen years of age, without any experience of religious life but that which she had been able to gain during her short stay with the Benedictine nuns of St. Paul, and of St. Angelo di Panzo, days, as we have seen, of excitement and stress. Indeed, we have it on the authority of Alexander IV that it was not until several years after her conversion that, pressed by Saint Francis, she at last consented to undertake the government of the sisters, and Celano tells us distinctly that the Seraphic Mother was not the first ruler of Saint Damian's.

"Post aliquos vero annos," says the former writer, in the bull of canonization, "ipsa beata Clara monasterii et sororum regimen, nimia ejusdem sancti Francisci devicta importunitate, recepit."

In all probability, following the custom usual in the foundation of religious houses, Saint Francis obtained for his nurselings a novice mistress from some old-established house, most likely from the Abbey of Saint Paul, or from the Abbey of Saint Angelo in Panzo, to instruct them in "the work of God," in Church Song, if need be to read Latin, and in all other things in which novices are wont to be instructed.

But though Saint Clare was not the first set over the little band of neophytes whom Saint Francis had gathered together in the old cloister of Saint Damian, she was the first to hold the reins of government when the order had been definitely organized; of this there can be no doubt. It follows, then, that Saint Francis wrote the Primitive Rule, or perhaps it would be more exact to say that he first gave the Poor Ladies the Primitive Rule, about the same time that he compelled the Seraphic Mother to take office. Now Celano, in his *Life of Saint Clare*, in the chapter wherein he treats of her poverty of spirit—*De sancta ipsius humilitate*—has the following statement:—

"Haec sui Ordinis lapis primarius ac nobile fundamentum, in fundamento sanctae humilitatis virtutum omnium fabricam ab ipso principio studuit collocare. Beato namque Francisco obedientiam

sanctam promisit, et a promisso nullatenus deviavit. Triennio vero post suam conversionem, nomen et officium Abbatissae declinans, humiliter subesse voluit potius quam praeesse, et inter Christi ancillas servire libentius quam servi. Cogente autem beato Francisco, suscepit tandem regimen dominarum."

Briefly, then, what Celano says amounts to this: For three years after her profession Saint Clare persistently declined the name and office of abbess, in her humility desiring to be subject rather than to be set over others, and to serve amongst the handmaids of Christ rather than to be served by them; but at last, urged thereto by Saint Francis, to whom she had made a vow of obedience—from which she never swerved—she undertook the government of these women.

In a word, his testimony is the same as Alexander's, but a little more precise, and since Celano, as a rule, is very careful about his figures—when we are able to test them they generally prove to be correct—there will be no great risk in taking his word for it that Saint Clare accepted the superiorship of Saint Damian's three years after her conversion—that is to say, in the spring of the year 1214. But did she at the same time assume the title of abbess? If so, it would seem that the Primitive Rule consisted of the Benedictine rule with special constitutions, for the title of abbess was in Saint Clare's day, at all events in the western Church, a title peculiar to Benedictine superiors.

Now, Celano is the only contemporary witness who so much as hints that Saint Clare was at this time called abbess, and Celano was not always well informed, and, too, he often talks for effect. "She refused the title and office of abbess" is a sufficiently striking phrase in a chapter which treats of Humility; moreover, in the case we are now considering, it was easy to make a mistake, for Saint Clare was certainly called abbess for some five-and-thirty years at least before her death, and during the greater part of this time the Benedictine rule was undoubtedly the rule of her house. But for all that, one feels by no means sure that what Celano says is not correct. Let us consider the matter a little more closely.

Saint Benedict, be it borne in mind, was not the founder of a religious order, but the writer of a rule of life, and the kind of life which his rule prescribes is "the common Christian life of the evangelical counsels." It is simply, as Taunton has it, the gospel put into practice. In other words, the ideal of the great

monastic law-giver was identical with the ideal of Saint Francis; and his rule—large, elastic, mild, leaving, as it does, so much to the discretion of local superiors—was admirably adapted to the kind of life which Saint Francis at first seems to have wished his sisters to lead, even if, as some have thought, his original project included some kind of active work in the world: the fourth chapter of Saint Benedict's rule contains a long list of good works which he desires his disciples to perform, and which he calls "the tools of their spiritual handicraft—*Ecce haec sunt instrumenta artis spiritalis*"; amongst them we find these: To relieve the poor, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to bury the dead, to help them that be in tribulation, and to comfort the afflicted.

It is true that Saint Benedict adds that the workshop wherein these tools were to be employed was the cloister, but it is quite clear from the context and from the general tenor of the rule that Saint Benedict does not mean by this that his followers were to limit their charity to their mutual relations with one another. The Benedictine convent was undoubtedly a home—a home in which the abbess was the mother and the nuns the daughters of the house, but strangers were not to be excluded: no one who asked for shelter was to be denied admittance, for Saint Benedict wished that his children should be given to hospitality, and the wayfarer's cry for help was to be answered at once by the porter in the lodge with a cheery "*Deo gratias*," even as though Christ Himself were calling, who should one day say, "I was a stranger and ye took me in." Hence, when they welcomed their guests and when they wished them Godspeed, they were bidden in the rule to bow down before them even to the earth, and thus to worship Christ in the stranger within their gates. All were to be treated alike with Christian courtesy and kindness, but those who were humble and poor were to be the chief objects of solicitude: for in such, Saint Benedict explains, Christ is more truly received, and he adds, with a touch of irony: "The awe which the rich inspire begetteth for them sufficient consideration."

But though Saint Benedict enjoined hospitality, he was most careful that the fulfilment of this precept should not interfere with the regular observance of the common life, or that discipline should be in any way relaxed in consequence. "Let a kitchen be arranged for the guests," he says, "in a place apart, so that the peace of the community be not troubled by late arrivals, and let there be two cooks, well skilled in their craft, to serve it; they shall

remain on duty for a year, and in busy times must have help so that there be no murmuring, but when there is little to do let them come forth and cheerfully perform whatever else be required of them. Over the guest-house let one be set whose soul the fear of God possesseth, let a sufficient number of beds be always kept in readiness, and in all things let the House of God be wisely ordered by wise and prudent servants. No other members of the community shall associate with or even speak to the guests save only, if peradventure they meet any of them, to make humble obeisance and ask a blessing, and, if need be, to courteously explain that conversation with outsiders is not suffered by the rule."

Nor was the active charity of the Benedictine nun reserved for those only who asked for alms at her door or begged a night's lodging. Though she had pledged herself for life by her vow of stability to the monastery of her profession, though "the cloister was the home where she loved to dwell in peace and retirement," though Saint Benedict set his face against unnecessary gadding about—"it was not expedient," he said, "for religious folk"—she could and did "go forth" when the service of God called her, and if father or mother were sick and needed consolation, she was even able to return for a while to the home of her childhood.

In a word, in the days of Saint Francis, and, too, till a much later period, the daughters of Saint Benedict to all intents and purposes enjoyed as much liberty as his sons. They "were, indeed, not of the world," says Abbot Gasquet, "but they were in it, actively and intelligently to do a good work to it—to elevate, to console, to purify, and to bless," and he adds, "Their gentle teaching was the first experience of the youthful poor; from them they derived their early knowledge of the elements of religion and of Catholic practice; to them they went in the troubles and cares of life as to a source of good advice; theirs was the most potent civilizing influence in the rough days of the Middle Ages; and theirs was the task of tending the sick and smoothing the passage of the Christian soul to eternity."

Gasquet, of course, is writing of English nuns, but what he says concerning them may be said with equal truth of their sisters all the world over. Throughout the Middle Age the daughters of Saint Benedict observed a mitigated form of cloister. There can be no doubt whatever about it: contemporary witnesses in this regard speak with one voice.

Efforts were, indeed, made from time to time to induce or

compel them to adopt a sterner form of discipline, but without any appreciable effect. Gregory IX, for example, laboured in vain to this end throughout the whole of his pontificate, and perhaps, too, before he put on the tiara: he entreated, scolded, showered favours on the few insignificant convents that were willing to comply with his wishes, not only to die to the world, as he himself says to one of them, but be buried with Christ in the tomb of the cloister; but he altogether failed to change the complexion of the order, for the nuns who closed their doors at the same time exchanged the monastic habit for the grey frock and Saint Francis's cord, and called themselves Poor Ladies, though they did not always live without property.

We have seen with what wise precautions Saint Benedict hedged in the entertainment of wayfarers, how careful he was that the fulfilment of the precept of hospitality should not entail relaxation of discipline, or be, as it were, a stumbling-block to any of his children, and in like manner he was most solicitous that those whom duty called beyond the cloister should be able to pass unscathed through the jostling crowd outside.

In the first place, no one was allowed to leave the precincts of the monastery even for a little while without first asking the abbess, who was free to give or withhold permission, for her will was law; but at the same time, Saint Benedict did not wish that his children should be tyrannized over, and he bade them choose for superior one who was not only a good, but a wise woman—"the best, the wisest, the most learned member of the community, even if she were the least."

He insists over and over again that the abbess must be very considerate of the flock committed to her charge: "*Sic omnia temperet ut et fortes sint quod cupiant, et infirmi non refugiant.*" Let her be always mindful that, however numerous her sheep may be, of every one she must give an account in the Day of Reckoning. Let her take heed to know her sheep, and having in her heart always an equal love for each one of them, to accommodate herself to their manifold humours and temperaments: for some will hasten at the first call, some she will have to entice, some to spur on with the goad, but not too sharply. Let her hate sin and love the sisters. Let her seek to inspire charity rather than fear. In her chastisements let her be careful always to avoid excess, lest in scouring off the rust too eagerly peradventure the vessel be broken. Let her cherish these words of scripture:

"The bruised reed He shall not break, the smoking flax He shall not quench"; and taking pity on her own weakness, let her temper justice with mercy, for only thus can she herself hope to obtain mercy. Not that the keeper of Christ's garden should suffer weeds to sprout, but let her pluck them up with tender fingers, discreetly adopting in each case the means most proper thereto. Let her take heed not to trouble herself nor her sisters about trifles: she must not be too exacting nor over suspicious, nor let zeal outrun discretion, for then she will have no peace. Let her rule be temperate and prudent as well in spiritual as in temporal things. Remembering the words of Holy Jacob: "If my sheep be overdriven, they will all die in one day." Let her show herself considerate in the tasks that she enjoins. Let all things be seasoned with the salt of discretion which is the mother of all virtues.

The wise woman whom Saint Benedict would have for abbess would assuredly never command nor suffer any of her children to traverse the world's slippery highways unless she had first satisfied herself that they were very sure of foot.

Also, the rule enjoins that the sister who shall be sent on a journey, or who shall have obtained leave to go forth, shall always before her departure commend herself to the prayers of her mother and of the other sisters, and that they in their turn shall be mindful of her every night at the last prayer of "the work of God," beseeching the Divine Pilot to guide her in the way of peace. In the course of her wandering she must close her eyes to evil sights, shut her ears to evil sounds, set a seal on her lips lest haply she sin with her tongue, never neglect the Work of God, and if possible always lodge in some Benedictine house.

On the very day of her home-coming she must prostrate herself in choir at all the canonical hours, and humbly beg her comrades to pray for her to Christ, that He in His mercy would wash away the travel stains from her soul; and lastly, she must take good care not to disturb the peace of the community by worldly tittle-tattle, "for such," Saint Benedict adds, "is a fruitful source of mischief, and whosoever shall presume to transgress this command must be dealt with as the rule directs."<sup>1</sup>

Sabatier, writing of the kind of life which the Seraphic Father

<sup>1</sup> Saint Benedict of course, as the reader will call to mind, wrote his Rule for men, but there is nothing in it which cannot be applied to women, and at a very early date there were communities of nuns living under the Benedictine Rule.

desired for his disciples, very justly notes: "L'accent dans la pensée de François devait porter principalement sur la pauvreté." Now, though poverty can hardly be said to be the dominant note in the written score of the Benedictine chant, this melody breathes the spirit of poverty from the first bar to the last. More than six centuries before the poet of Assisi took poverty for his bride the prophet of Norcia had proclaimed, with no uncertain voice, that this was the first step in the way of perfection, that he who would perfectly follow Christ must begin by divesting himself of all his earthly possessions, even to his own body. Thus in the fifty-eighth chapter, *De disciplina suscipiendorum fratrum*, he says: "And if he (the new brother) have any fortune he must first distribute it to the poor or else by deed of gift confer it on the convent, without any reservation in his own favour, for let him know that henceforth he shall have no power even over his own body; and for this reason they shall presently strip off his clothes and put on him the clothes of the convent." And in the thirty-third chapter, *Si quid debeant monachi proprium habere*: "Let none of these men whose bodies and whose very wills are not their own, presume to call anything else their own, no matter how trifling—neither book, nor pen, nor tablet, nor anything else whatsoever; but let them hold all things in common, as it is written: 'Neither did any man say or think that anything belonged to him.'" Saint Benedict, then, was no less emphatic than Saint Francis in denouncing the "vice, the heinous sin," as he calls it, of individual ownership, but he did not condemn the custom, universal in the monasteries of his day, of holding property in common, nor set any limit to the amount so held, nor discriminate as Saint Francis did, at all events in his later rules, between goods and money: he thought it sufficient to warn those who had the management of affairs against avarice, and to remind superiors that the spiritual and not the temporal welfare of their flocks should be their first solicitude. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that because Saint Benedict did not bind his disciples or even venture to urge them to live without possessions, his ideas differed widely from those of Saint Francis in this respect: for it is certain that he thought it a better thing, when circumstances permitted, that monasteries should be poor rather than rich, and also that for him the ideal community was one which depended for its support on the manual labour of its members. "If the poverty of the place," he says in the chapter concerning Strong Drink, "if the

poverty of the place do not allow of the appointed pint of wine, but much less, and perhaps even none at all, let not them that dwell there murmur, but rather give thanks to God." And again, in the chapter on Work (and this passage is even more emphatic): "If, then, poverty compel the brethren to reap their own corn, let them not therefore be sad, because then are we monks indeed, when we live by the labour of our hands, even as our fathers did and the apostles before them."

Saint Benedict seems to have regarded this question of corporate poverty from much the same point of view as he regarded another question, which perhaps in his day was a more pressing one, to wit: whether it was expedient for monks to take wine, and if so, how much they might lawfully drink. He devotes a whole chapter of the rule to this interesting problem, and, briefly, what he says is as follows: "Men are so differently constituted that I am loath to lay down any hard and fast rules concerning other folk's victuals. To every man God hath given his own peculiar gift: to one thus, to another thus. It is written, indeed, that wine is not a drink for monks, but since nowadays they will not have it so, at least let us agree to this: to partake of it in moderation. Now it seems to me that for the average man, under ordinary circumstances, a pint a day should be enough; but if now and again, for any good reason, more be required, let the prior add thereto discreetly as much as he deem fit, always having a care not to give place to excess, for wine moveth even the wise to foolishness. If any man, therefore, by the grace of God abstain from it altogether, let him be assured of this—he shall in nowise lose his reward."

Moreover, we must bear in mind that Saint Benedict himself tells us that the whole observance of righteousness—"omnis iustitie observatio"—is not contained in the rule. It was written, he says, for beginners: "Whosoever thou art who dost hasten to the heavenly fatherland, first learn by the help of Christ to keep this little rule which was written for beginners, and afterwards thou shalt climb under His guidance to those sublime peaks concerning which I have already spoken."

All, then, that was needed to render the old Benedictine Rule an ideal rule of life for Saint Francis's Poor Ladies was the addition of a short clause, making the observance of corporate poverty a precept of obligation. Now the sentiments expressed in the writings of the Seraphic Father and in the sayings attributed

to him are so Benedictine in spirit, they bear such a striking resemblance to the sentiments and the teaching contained in the Benedictine rule that it can hardly be doubted—if, indeed, they be genuine—that Saint Francis was not only acquainted with it, but before he set pen to paper had made a profound study of the text. He had ample opportunity for doing so, and, I think, every inducement, for the Black Order was largely represented in the little town of Assisi, and with some of these monks and nuns, we know, he was on terms of friendship. There was the Abbey of Saint Benedict on Mount Subasio, for example; the Abbey of San Verecondo di Vallingegno by Gubbio; the Abbey of Saint Paul at Bastia, and the little Convent of Sant' Angelo di Panzo at San Vitale, and there were others, but with these four communities his name is notably connected. He not only knew the monks of San Benedetto, but knew them well: indeed, in all probability he was intimate with them from childhood, for they had a Refuge in town not a stone's throw from his father's house, and in those days he must have often seen them in their little chapel—a relic of old Assisi still intact—busy at the “work of God”; he was indebted later on to their generosity for his beloved Porziuncola and, too, for the monastery of Saint Damian.

It was with the monks of Vallingegno that he sought shelter after the memorable scene with Bernardone when he stripped himself of his clothes; and, indeed, it is possible, nay, probable, that in those days he had it in his mind to become a monk himself: Celano's strange story of his sojourn there certainly points in this direction. “The monks,” says his biographer, “were so lacking in hospitality that they gave him barely enough to eat, set him to work in the kitchen, and, though he had nothing to cover his nakedness but the old cloak that had been given him by Bishop Guido's gardener, neglected to furnish him with clothes.” If Saint Francis came as a guest and was treated thus, the Benedictines of Vallingegno were strangely forgetful of their rule; but if, on the other hand, he came as a postulant their conduct was in no way out of harmony with Saint Benedict's injunctions, for he says: “Make not the way easy for them that would enter religion, but as the apostle saith, ‘Prove the spirits, whether they be of God.’ If, therefore, the postulant persist in his petition, and if he patiently suffer insult and ignominy, and make light of the obstacles set in his path, and in spite of it all, continue knocking for four or five days, then let the door of the guest-house be opened to him,

and he shall abide there for a while; afterwards he shall enter the cell of the novices, and there let him meditate and sleep and eat."

How cordial were Saint Francis's subsequent relations with these monks, an unknown scribe bears witness in a short *Life of Saint Verecondo*, who was buried in their monastery. It must have been written at some time in the course of the latter half of the twelve hundreds. The passage in question runs thus: "In these latter days Blessed Francis, the poor man of Assisi, very often used to lodge in the monastery of Blessed Verecondo, and the devout abbot and his monks were wont to treat him with much courtesy. It was here that he worked the miracle touching the sow that ate the lamb. In the neighbourhood of this monastery Blessed Francis held a chapter at which were present three hundred of his first brethren, and the abbot and monks very graciously did their utmost to minister to their necessities: they gave them barley bread in abundance, and likewise oat cake and loaves of rye and of millet. They saw to it that they had a sufficiency of pure drinking water, and for such as were sick there was cider. Dom Andrew, an aged monk who was living in the monastery at the time, vouched for these things, and he also told me that the friars were well supplied with beans and green stuff.

"Blessed Francis had so mortified the flesh by prayer, by vigils, by fasting, that at last all the strength of his body was turned into weakness, especially after he had been signed with the wounds of the Crucified, and now being no longer able to walk, it was his custom to ride on a little ass. Now it came to pass as he was thus riding one evening towards nightfall on the road to San Verecondo, with an old sack flung over his shoulders to keep out the cold, and one of his brethren walking by his side, that some peasants who were working in a field hard by, cried out: 'Tarry with us to-night, Brother Francis, for the day is far spent and yonder forest is full of fierce wolves, who will rend thee and thy comrade, and assuredly devour thine ass.' Whereat Brother Francis: 'What evil have I done to Brother Wolf that he should wish to sup on Brother Ass? Good-night, friends, and God bless ye,' and so he went on his way, and came unscathed to the place whither he was going. I had this from the lips of one of the peasants who had warned him."<sup>1</sup>

As for the Convent of Sant' Angelo di Panzo and the Convent

<sup>1</sup> Monsignor Faloci Pulignani gives the Latin text of this legend in his *Miscellanea Franciscana*, Vol. X, pp. 1-8. Foligno, 1906.

of Saint Paul, in the first and, perhaps, also in the second, as the reader will call to mind, Saint Clare received hospitality when she, in her turn, fled from home, and if Saint Francis was not previously acquainted with these Benedictine Dames, he must soon have learnt to know them when he came to visit his neophyte, as he often did, during the time that she was their guest, and he must have learnt something, too, of the working of the Benedictine Rule.

A place so mean and poor as the cloister called Panzo must have delighted Saint Francis's heart. If the women who dwelt there owned the traditional Benedictine acres they were still more largely endowed with the spirit of self-abnegation: their home was a mere hovel, their church a humble wayside shrine.

Benedictine convents of this sort were the rule rather than the exception in the Umbria of Saint Francis's day, and not a few of the first Franciscan homes were old Benedictine houses, whilst such of them as were newly constructed were planned on local Benedictine lines. The meanness of these buildings and the poverty of those who inhabited them was not, then, as some modern writers tell us, a new feature of monastic life, albeit this should be borne in mind—what the Benedictine did from necessity was the outcome in the case of the Franciscans of choice. With them it was a matter of principle, at all events in the days of their first fervour, to be ill-lodged and badly fed.

The above considerations will be sufficient to show that Celano's statement concerning the date of Saint Clare's assumption of the title of abbess, and what follows from it, is by no means so improbable as it at first sight appears. For the rest, that Saint Francis gave the Poor Ladies a rule in the year 1214 or thereabout, that it was based on the Evangelical Counsels, that it contained a clause enforcing the observance of corporate poverty, this much is certain; but whether it was the old Benedictine Rule with special constitutions, as Celano leads us to infer, or whether it was an entirely new rule of his own composition, as the words of Saint Clare and the general trend of Ugolino's testimony seem to imply, we shall not know until some more precise evidence is brought to light—an authentic copy of the rule itself, for example, or the original letters of Blessed Agnes of Bohemia.

## CHAPTER III

Of the making of the Ugolino Rule. Pope Gregory's evidence concerning this matter in the bull *Angelis gaudium*. Some notes on the same. Reasons for thinking that Saint Francis assisted him to draw up the rule. What Philip of Perugia says. Latin text of his evidence. Saint Francis accepts the rule, but is exceedingly loath to do so. Wherefore. Of the intolerable harshness of this unfortunate piece of legislation, and how Innocent IV and Clement IV denounced it in consequence. Neither Ugolino nor Saint Francis, but Saint Clare herself the cause of the severity complained of. A curious letter addressed to her by Ugolino. How she ruined her health by her excessive austerities, and afterwards counselled prudence. Of the successful attempt she made to remedy Ugolino's lack of precision in the matter of Sublime Poverty.

IF Pope Gregory's letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague of the 9th of May, 1238—the bull *Angelis gaudium*—be a document to be consulted by students of the Primitive Rule, it is of even greater importance to those who would know something of the Ugolino Rule; for no other contemporary witness tells us what Gregory in this letter tells us about his own rule, whilst what he says of the Primitive Rule is likewise said by Saint Clare.

His testimony concerning his own rule is contained in the three reasons which he gives for refusing to sanction Blessed Agnes's Rule, to wit—

“Primo, quia praedictam Regulam<sup>1</sup> studio compositam vigilantibus et acceptatam a praedicto Sancto,<sup>2</sup> nec non per felicis recordationis Honorium Papam Praedecessorem nostrum postmodum confirmatam dictae Clara et Sorores, concessio ipsis ab eodem intercedentibus nobis exemptionis privilegio, solemniter sunt professae.

Secundo, quia ipsae, formula praedicta<sup>3</sup> postposita, eandem Regulam<sup>4</sup> a Professionis tempore usque nunc laudabiliter observant.

Tertio, quia, cum sit ita statutum, ut ubique ab omnibus eandem profitentibus uniformiter observetur, ex praesumptione contrarii grave posset ac importabile scandalum exoriri. Praesertim quia ceterae Sorores praefati Ordinis,<sup>5</sup> dum integritatem regulae sic

<sup>1</sup> The Ugolino Rule.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Francis.

<sup>3</sup> The Primitive Rule.

<sup>4</sup> The Ugolino Rule.

<sup>5</sup> The order of Saint Damian.

violatam attentent, turbatis mentibus in ipsius observantia, quod avertat Dominus, titubarent."

The Ugolino Rule, then, when Gregory wrote this letter, was the official rule of the Order of Saint Damian: it was not only the rule which every Damianite house was bound in conscience to observe: it was actually being observed by every house save one, Blessed Agnes's house in Prague.

Moreover, Gregory affirms in the passage above quoted that the Ugolino Rule was drawn up with great care; it was accepted, he says, by Blessed Francis, confirmed by our predecessor of happy memory, Pope Honorius III, and when that pontiff, at our request, had granted them a privilege of exemption from episcopal control, this rule was professed in solemn fashion by the Lady Clare and her sisters. These women ever since have continued to observe it laudably, and they have altogether forsaken Saint Francis's first rule.

Had the Seraphic Father any share in the making of the Ugolino Rule? This question is one upon which writers on things Franciscan are much divided: Eubel, for example, is sure that he had, and amongst those who are no less sure that he had not are Sabatier and Lempp and a very careful and serious historian, Olliger, whose recent treatise on Clare legislation is the best work we have on this subject. Albeit it seems to me that the former opinion is the more probable: what Gregory says in the above-quoted passage, and the way in which he says it, what we know of this man's character and of the characters of Saint Clare and Saint Francis, the circumstances under which the rule was made, the confusion and incoherence of the text—these things, if duly considered, forbid us, I think, to dismiss the hearsay evidence of Philip of Perugia, late though it be, and although on one or two points he must have been misinformed, as wholly unworthy of credit. It is contained in his *Catalogus Protectorum*, which was written somewhere about the year 1306. Our first protector, Brother Philip here informs us, was the Lord Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia, afterwards Pope Gregory IX. How he came to be appointed I know not. This only have I heard from certain ancient friars: that he and Blessed Francis our father together ordained and wrote the rule of the sisters of the Order of Saint Damian (which is now called the Order of Saint Clare), after the example of the rule of the Friars Minor, and that on account

of the strictness thereof this cardinal, the while he was inditing it, partly from compassion and partly from devotion watered the parchment with many tears.

Philip's exact words run thus: "Habuit ergo ordo usque ad tempora domni Clementis pape quinti III<sup>or</sup> tantummodo cardinales. Quorum primus fuit domnus Ugolinus episcopus Ostiensis, qui postea fuit papa Gregorius nonus. De isto quomodo datus vel petitus fuerit, nescio. Hoc tantum audiui ab antiquis fratribus, quod ipse cum beato Francisco patre nostro ordinaverunt et scripserunt regulam sororum ordinis sancti Damiani, qui nunc vocatur ordo sancte Clare, ad instar regule fratrum Minorum. Propter cujus regule artitudinem partim devotione, partim compassione, cardinalis ipse perfundebatur multis lacrimis in scribendo."

Although in the above passage Brother Philip gives us to understand that at this time one rule only was being observed by the sisters of the order of Saint Clare, we know for certain from a host of contemporary official papers of incontestable authenticity that such was not the case. Nor is it matter for wonderment that Philip should have been ill informed as to the domestic discipline of these women, for in his day the sons and the daughters of Saint Francis had very little to do with one another.

At the opening of the thirteen hundreds four very different rules were in force: many houses, perhaps most, followed Pope Urban's rule; a few the customs of Longchamp; in her own convent at Assisi the Rule of Saint Clare was observed, and perhaps in one or two other places as well. When these three rules were written the Seraphic Father and Gregory IX were both of them in their graves; it goes without saying, then, that they had nothing to do with them. The fourth rule was the old Ugolino Rule, which was still in force in a very considerable number of houses. This rule, we know, was exceedingly strict; we know, too, that Ugolino wrote it, and that he wept while he did so is not unlikely, for he had the gift of tears, but it was certainly not modelled *ad instar regule fratrum minorum*: it has not the slightest shadow of resemblance to the rule of the Friars Minor.

Philip, then, was mistaken on this point, and it is not, I think, difficult to divine how he came to be mistaken.

The Ugolino Rule, which was written primarily for the sisters who dwelt in the convent of Saint Damian and first professed by them, and which for something like thirty years—from 1218

to 1247—was the official rule of the Order of Saint Damian, seems to have been commonly called during this period the Rule of Saint Damian's. At all events it is thus designated in several contemporary diplomatic papers;<sup>1</sup> and no doubt the title clung to it for years after it had ceased to be the official rule.

Although there is no documentary evidence to prove that Saint Clare's own rule was ever called "the Rule of the Sisters of Saint Damian," I think it may be taken for granted that such was the case. For consider: this rule, like the Ugolino Rule, was written for the sisters in the convent of Saint Damian and first professed by them,—in 1252 or thereabout—in the following year it was confirmed by the Holy See for this community alone, and whereas it is certain that these nuns and their successors have observed it continuously ever since, there is nothing to indicate that it was adopted by any other Clare community, at all events in Italy, until 1343, when Clement VI conceded it to a few houses which had been recently founded in southern Italy and in Sicily. What more likely, then, than that the rule peculiar to the sisters of Saint Damian's should have been called the Rule of Saint Damian's, to distinguish it from the other rules that were in force at the same time? It is true that this community migrated to Assisi in 1268 to a new convent which had been built for them there, and which was dedicated to the Seraphic Mother, but I do not think the old name of their rule was changed in consequence; at all events it can hardly have been called the Rule of the Sisters of Saint Clare; for this, or something like it, was the official title of Pope Urban's Rule (which was first promulgated in 1263), and of which the opening words run thus: "In nomine Domini incipit regula sororum Sanctae Clarae."

It would seem, then, that two rules were called "the Rule of the Sisters of Saint Damian"—the old Ugolino Rule, and later on the rule which Saint Clare herself made. Now this rule was undoubtedly drawn up *ad instar regule fratrum minorum*.

But to return to Ugolino and Saint Francis and the making of the Ugolino statutes. This much, I think, may be safely said: this ill-advised piece of legislation was the outcome of their joint labour; when Ugolino drew up these obscure sentences Saint Francis was at his elbow; he consulted him in every case, and after concessions on both sides—for friends though they were they

<sup>1</sup> Gregory IX, for example, in the bull *Angelis gaudium* calls it *Ordinis beati Damiani regula*.

did not always see eye to eye—the various articles were agreed upon.

It is noteworthy that Pope Gregory does not say that the Seraphic Father approved of the rule, but that he accepted it. He was, in all probability, exceedingly loath to do so, because though collective ownership was not formally authorized, as was the case in the rule of Innocent IV, it was not explicitly forbidden. Indeed, Ugolino altogether ignores the question of poverty in his constitutions, and the Benedictine rule to which these were complementary prescribes, as we have seen, only individual poverty; but, on the other hand, he says in the preamble to his rule that the object he had in view in writing it was to enable his beloved daughters in Christ to fulfil their divine calling: to walk in the strait and rugged way which leadeth to life eternal, and to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven by leading on earth a poor life: “Quapropter, dilectae in Domino filiae, quia divina vobis gratia inspirante per arduam viam et arctam, quae ad vitam ducit, incedere et vitam pauperem ducere pro aeternis lucrands divitiis elegistis, religionis ipsius observantiam atque formam vobis duximus breviter describendam,” etc.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that the original version of the rule has not come down to us, but bearing in mind Ugolino's subsequent attitude with regard to poverty, it is most improbable that it contained anything more definite than the above quotation.

Ugolino's wish seems to have been to leave the nuns a free hand in the matter of “sublime poverty”: it was perhaps the one point on which Saint Francis desired to bind them; and something of this kind, I suspect, happened. Each redactor at first refused to budge an inch, but in the end, after much wrangling, a compromise was arrived at in virtue of which the above-quoted ambiguous clause was placed at the head of the rule.

If only these men had been satisfied with the undiluted milk of the old Gospel Rule, which Saint Benedict six hundred years before had written for men and not for angels, and had altogether eschewed the nauseous decoction of bitter herbs with which it seemed good to them to adulterate it, they would have spared themselves some heartburning and many women much indigestion; for notwithstanding the vigilant study with which it had been redacted, the rule put forth in Cardinal Ugolino's name was not

<sup>1</sup> See *Sbaralea*, vol. i, No. 293; Gregory IX to Clares of Saint Angelo, Ascoli Piceno. May 24, 1239. Eubel also gives the full text of this bull, p. 234.

a successful piece of legislation, as more than one of his successors in Saint Peter's chair confessed. Thus, Innocent IV, in a circular letter to the whole order on the 23rd of August, 1247, by which he would fain have blotted out these intolerable and incomprehensible prescriptions: "By reason of the excessive difficulty of your rule your consciences were disquieted by doubts and perplexities, and havoc irreparable threatened your health";<sup>1</sup> and Clement IV, in a letter to the Clare visitor of the province of Umbria on December 11, 1265: "The rule which was given to these women by my predecessor of happy memory, Pope Gregory IX, prescribed such grievous and insupportable austerities that even the younger and more lusty sisters were seldom if ever able to practise them."<sup>2</sup>

But the rigorism which these pontiffs deplore in such outspoken fashion was in all probability not due to the initiative of their predecessor, of happy memory; and Brother Philip's tale, that Ugolino wept when he set down these ferocious clauses, grieved at the thought of giving a discipline so stern to delicate women, is likely enough to be true. Indeed, there is reason to think that the cardinal-protector objected to the excessive austerity of his rule, and only at last consented to it under very strong pressure. We know that later on, when he became pope, he did his utmost to mitigate it in practice by means of dispensations, some of which he granted unasked for, urging the Poor Ladies by every argument he could think of to make use of them;<sup>3</sup> we know, too, from the testimony of his nephew Rainaldo of Ostia—afterwards Pope Alexander IV, as the reader will call to mind—that it was not Ugolino's intention that the penitential clauses concerning "silence, fasting, beds and many other things" should be binding under penalty of mortal sin.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Cum igitur nuper regulam vestram, et vivendi formam, ob cuius difficultatem nimiam conscientiae veritatis ambiguitatis scrupulo premebantur, et intolerabile personis dispendium imminebat, considerato praecipue, quod multae jam, et diversae dispensationum formae factae fuerint circa ipsam, propter quod non una sed multiplex videbatur professio, duxerimus corrigendam"; etc. This passage occurs in the bull *Quoties a nobis petitur*.

<sup>2</sup> "Formula per fel. record. Gregorium PP. praedecessorem nostrum edita . . . graves adeo asperitates, atque importabiles indicabat, quod vix aut nunquam possent etiam a junioribus et robustioribus observari." This passage occurs in the bull *Ut ordo beatae Clarae*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Sbaralea*, vol. i, Letter 98: "Quia et Apostulus" addressed by Gregory IX on April 10, 1233, to all abbesses and convents of the order in Tuscany, Lombardy, and the Duchy of Spoleto. See also Eubel: Letter 105 and Note II, both on page 11.

<sup>4</sup> See Note I at end of chapter.

Are we, then, to conclude that these penances were inspired by Saint Francis, and that the weaker partner in this case was somehow or other able to coerce the stronger? No. Saint Clare herself was the cause of the severity complained of. Consider her resolution, her marvellous power of will, the magnetism of her personality. Consider, too, this letter which Ugolino addressed to her soon after he had made her acquaintance, and not very long before he began to write his rule—

“To his beloved Mother and Sister in Christ, the Lady Clare, Handmaid of Christ, Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia, a miserable man and a sinner, commends his whole being, his present and his future state.

“DEAREST SISTER IN CHRIST,

“When the necessity of returning home severed me from your holy discourses and tore me away from the joy of those heavenly treasures, such bitterness of heart overcame me, such cruel pangs, such floods of tears, that unless I had found at the feet of Jesus the consolation of His wonted pity, peradventure my spirit had failed me and my soul melted away; for when I celebrated Easter with you and the other handmaids of Christ, and we talked together concerning Christ’s most Holy Body, in very sooth I was rapt in a glorious ecstasy of gladness; and as the Lord’s disciples were filled with immense sorrow when He was taken from them and nailed to the tree, so am I now desolate, deprived of your presence. And although I always felt myself to be a poor sinful man, now that I have become acquainted with the pre-eminence of your merits, and with my own eyes have seen the austerity of your religion, now, I say, I know for sure that I am not in a state to die: I am so weighed down by the burthen of guilt and have offended so grievously against the Lord of the whole earth, that I can never hope to be gathered to the company of the elect unless by your prayers and tears you obtain for me the forgiveness of my sins. Wherefore to you I commit my soul, to you I commend my spirit, and in the day of judgment you will have to answer for me if you have not been solicitous concerning my salvation. For one of such earnest devotion, one of so many tears can certainly obtain from the Supreme Judge whatever she asks of Him.

“The Lord Pope is not coming to Assisi at present, but I long

to see you and your sisters, and somehow or other I shall contrive to pay you a visit.

"Salute the Virgin Agnes for me, and my sister and all your sisters in Jesus Christ. Farewell.

"ROME."

It must not be imagined, however, that the Seraphic Mother was naturally a stern woman, a cold-hearted, sour ascetic, hard to others and hard to herself, without pity on her own weakness or on the infirmities of those whom she governed. Her contemporaries tell us with one voice that such was not the case; it is certain that nature had endowed her copiously with the milk of human kindness, but at the time we are now considering she was still at the commencement of her religious career (as, too, were her comrades), and, as is the way with generous neophytes, her zeal at this time was not always according to wisdom. She had yet to learn what she afterwards learned from bitter experience: that discretion, as Saint Benedict has it, is "the mother of all virtues."

Twenty years later, when her strength was consumed and the vigour of her body broken by reason of the harsh treatment she had meted out to it, she was no advocate of the measures which had reduced her to such sorry straits; from that bed of sickness on which for the rest of her days she was condemned to lie, in the midst of that suffering which was never able to force from her lips one word of complaint, she wrote the following lines to her friend Agnes of Bohemia:—

"Seeing that our bodies are not of brass, and that our strength is not the strength of stone, but on the contrary that we are weak and subject to corporal infirmities, from that exceeding rigour of abstinence in which I know you indulge, I beseech you vehemently in the Lord to abstain, so that living and hoping in Christ you may offer Him a rational service and a holocaust duly seasoned with the salt of discretion."<sup>1</sup>

Albeit, however loath Saint Francis may have been to accept

<sup>1</sup> "Quia tamen corpus nostrum aereum non est, neque fortitudo nostra fortitudo lapidis; sed debiles et corporis infirmitatibus subjectae sumus, a nimio abstinentiae rigore, quem te sectari cognovi, abstinere te vehementer in Domino rogo: ut vivens et sperans in Domino, rationabile obsequium exhibeas ei, et holocaustum tuum sale prudentiae sit conditum.

"Vale in Domino prout ipsa desideras, meque et meas sorores tuis sanctis sororibus commenda."

the Ugolino Rule, either on account of its harshness, or for any other reason, at all events he did accept it, and in due course, as Gregory goes on to say, it was approved by Honorius III;<sup>1</sup> but in spite of Saint Francis's acceptance, and in spite of the Pope's approval, Saint Clare was not satisfied: she desired, no doubt, something more definite concerning poverty than the vague declaration in the Prologue, and it was not until Ugolino had obtained for them from the Holy See a privilege of exemption from episcopal control that this resolute woman and her disciples at last discarded the old rule and made solemn profession of the new.

This part of Gregory's narrative is perplexing: because, though a privilege of exemption was a boon to all religious houses on account of the enlarged liberty it gave them and the immunity thereby conferred from the payment of episcopal dues, which in some dioceses were high, and though in the case of the Poor Ladies it was not only a boon but almost a necessity, if the slender ties by which they were linked to the First Order were to remain unsevered, as we shall presently see, the Seraphic Mother was not the woman to sacrifice principle to expediency, and also there is no record of any such privilege having been granted to the convent of Saint Damian's during Saint Clare's lifetime. And yet Gregory can hardly have been mistaken, for he tells Blessed Agnes distinctly that it was at his own request that the Pope granted this privilege, and it is altogether inconceivable that in writing thus he deliberately and gratuitously deceived her.

At first sight, then, this affair is sufficiently disconcerting, but when we come to examine it more closely we find, on the one hand, that Gregory's statement is corroborated by unimpeachable testimony, and, on the other, that Saint Clare, in acting as she did, was in no way false to her principles. For she thereby obtained from the Holy See not only a written recognition and approval of the life of strict evangelical poverty which Saint Francis desired the Poor Ladies to lead—this was in itself a corrective to Ugolino's vague drafting of the Prologue; but also, owing to the unusual conditions attached to the general privilege of exemption which Honorius directed Ugolino to grant in his name to all Clare communities at that time in existence, the best guarantee which under the circumstances could well have been devised that that kind of life would be persevered in, for it was to hold good only so long as they continued to remain without possessions.

<sup>1</sup> See Note II at end of chapter, p. 160.

All this is clearly set forth in a letter which Honorius III addressed to "his Venerable Brother the Bishop of Ostia, Legate of the Apostolic See," on the 27th of August, 1218. The gist of it is as follows—

"A letter has reached me from your fraternity, by which I am informed that a multitude of women and maidens whose rank and station had promised them, with as much certainty as is compatible with the uncertainty of earthly things, a pleasant time in the world, have been given to drink of the wine of sorrow by Him who breatheth where He listeth, and warned by unmistakable signs to flee from the face of the bow; and that on this account the aforesaid females have determined to renounce the world with its pomps and riches, and desire that houses be provided for them wherein they may dwell, possessing nothing under the sun save those houses and the chapels which it is proposed to construct alongside of them. Moreover, you inform me that for this purpose land is being offered to you as the representative of the Roman Church by various persons, and that certain ecclesiastics desirous that the correction, institution, and destitution of the proposed establishments should be reserved to themselves, do not hesitate to impede their salutary project. Wherefore your fraternity petitions me, in the name of the aforesaid women and maidens, to settle this affair with fatherly solicitude.

"My desire is that their devout wishes be in such wise favoured by the Apostolic See, that whilst they obtain the effect of their petition no just cause of complaint be given to their diocesans or to their parish priests; and therefore I command you by the authority of these presents to take possession in the name of the Roman Church of the sites that are being offered to you by the aforesaid charitable persons with all rights of ownership and jurisdiction appertaining thereto, and furthermore to declare that the churches to be erected thereon shall be submitted only to the Holy See, so that no diocesan or other ecclesiastical or secular person shall be able to vindicate for himself any right whatsoever over them so long as they shall remain without endowments—glebe lands, tithes, mortuaries—which would be likely to be prejudicial to the interests of diocesans or parish priests. But if in the future it should happen that they hold such possession, then we by no means desire that under pretext of this exemption their diocesans or other ecclesiastical persons, as aforesaid, be defrauded of their canonical rights."

The original text of this most important letter runs thus—

“Honorius Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei Venerabili Fratri Hostiensi Episcopo Apostolicae Sedis Legato Salutem, et Apostolicam Benedictionem.

“Litterae tuae Nobis exhibitae continebant, quod quamplures Virgines, et aliae Mulieres, quibus secundum instabilitatem prosperitatis mundanae prosperum statum in seculo sua videtur nobilitas polliceri, eo qui, ubi vult spirat, potante vino compunctionis easdem, et manifestis revelationibus dante illis significationem, ut fugiant a facie arcus, desiderant fugere pompas, et divitias hujus mundi, et fabricari sibi aliqua domicilia, in quibus vivant nihil possidentes sub Coelo, exceptis Domiciliis ipsis et construendis Oratoriis in eisdem. Cum ad hoc tibi fundi a pluribus Ecclesiae Romanae nomine offerantur; quidam volentes sibi reservari correctionem, institutionem, et destitutionem in illis, non verentur salubre illarum propositum impedire; quare tua Fraternitas postulavit, ut super iis paterna providere sollicitudine curaremus.

“Volentes igitur piis dictarum mulierum desideriis sic favorem Apostolicum impertiri, ut et ipsae assequantur suae petitionis effectum; et Dioecesani locorum, et alii in quorum Parochiis loca ipsa consistunt, justam non habeant materiam murmurandi; praesentium tibi auctoritate mandamus, quatenus hujusmodi fundos in jus, et proprietatem Ecclesiae Romanae nomine ipsius recipias, et Ecclesias construendas in ipsis soli Apostolicae Sedi subesse decernas; ita quod nullus Dioecesanus, vel alia Ecclesiastica, Secularisve persona in eis possit sibi jus aliquod vendicare; quandiu quidem fuerint sine possessionibus, decimis, mortuariis, per quae solet locorum Dioecesanis, et aliis Ecclesiarum Praelatis praejudicium generari.

“Si vero eas in futurum habere contigerit possessiones vel alia supradicta, nolumus ipsos Dioecesanos, vel alios hujusmodi exemptionis praetextu jure Canonico defraudari.

“Datum Laterani VI Kal. Septembris Pontificatus nostri Anno Tertio.”

NOTE I.—Rainaldo de' Conti di Signa, created cardinal in September 1227, and elected Pope (Alexander IV) on December 12, 1254, was a nephew of Cardinal Ugolino (Gregory IX), and when this man put on the tiara on the 19th of March 1227, Rainaldo had succeeded him in the see of Ostia, and in the office of Cardinal-Protector of the Franciscan Order. His testimony above referred to is contained in the last clause of a circular letter addressed by him to all Clare houses on April 24,

1254, by which he mitigated considerably the rigour of his uncle's rule. This letter is incorporated in a letter of confirmation *Haberi percepimus*, given by Alexander IV to the nuns of Civita Nuova, on the 27th of August 1258 (see *Sbaralea*, vol. ii, p. 305, No. CDXL). He repeated it again at the close of a letter containing still larger mitigations which he addressed to the Abbess and Sisters of Brixen on June 22, 1254. See Eubel: *Supplementum*, No. xxvii, p. 258. The passage in question in each case runs thus—

“Et ut omnis conscientii vestris auferatur turbationis materia, notum vobis, dilectae in Domino filiae, facimus per praesentes, quod nos, qui mentem instituentis regulam eandem agnovimus, sentimus et scimus, quod fel. rec. domini Gregorii papae non fuit intentio nec est nostra, laqueum vobis injicere in silentio, in jejunio, lectis et aliis pluribus, quae continentur in forma vitae ab ipso data, cum vir piissimus et discretissimus fuerit et tanta vos dilectionis ac beneficiorum profusione persecutus extiterit, vel ad transgressionem mortalis peccati si vos contrarium contingeret facere, suis ordinationibus vos, sicut vobis ab aliquibus suggeritur, obligare,” etc.

Note the words *sicut vobis ab aliquibus suggeritur*. By whom? The passage which immediately precedes the above quotation throws light on this matter. “Ad haec penitus prohibemus, ne in monasterio vestro deinceps aliquis visitator auctoritate sua constitutiones faciat aliquas ultra formam vestram et regulam, quae vos ad aliquid culpae vel poenae obligent, sine consensu et voluntate omnium dominarum; quod si forte aliquas faceret, eas non teneamini aliquatenus observare.” (This is taken from the Brixen letter, but the reading of the circular letter differs very slightly, and the sense is the same.) Both of these letters, as we have seen, were written in 1254, therefore, during the generalship of John of Parma (1245-57). This is significant. In all probability the rigorist Clare visitors whom Rainaldo had in his mind belonged to the Zelanti faction.

NOTE II.—*Sbaralea* sets down Honorius's letter of approval in his list of bulls that are missing, but suggests on another page that possibly it is to be identified with the letter *Sacrosanta Romana ecclesia* of December 9, 1219, by which the same Pontiff confirmed the rule for the Florentine nuns of Monticelli (vol. i, p. 243, No. 3 note). So too, Eubel, who, referring to the version of the Ugolino Rule given to the nuns of Ascoli by Gregory IX on May 24, 1234, thus writes: “Haec est illa regula, quam, sicut Greg. IX die 11 maii, 1238, Agneti de Bohemia moniali mon. Pragen. ord. S. Dam. scripsit, ipse adhuc in minoribus constitutus (episcopus Ostien., a. 1217/19) composuit, S. Franciscus (qui ei in componenda ipsa regula assistebat) acceptavit, Honorius III postmodum (die 9 Dec. 1219, ut videtur) confirmavit et Clara ac sorores ejus solemniter sunt professae” (*Bullarii Franciscani Epitome*, Quaracchi, 1908, *Supplementum*, p. 234, footnote). Albeit Gregory's letter to Agnes of Prague (*Angelis gaudium*) suggests that Honorius confirmed the Ugolino Rule for Saint Clare and her sisters in the Convent of Saint Damian at Assisi, and this is borne out by G. Bishop of Tarazona, in Aragon, in a privilege of exemption granted by him on August 9, 1240, to his beloved daughters Susanna and her sisters who, he says “habitu

religionis digne Domino famulentur juxta formam religionis pauperum monialium Clausarum manentium in Valle Spoleti sive Tusciae per Dominum Papam Gregorium, qui nunc est, tunc in minori officio, constitutus, auctoritate Domini Papae Honorii eisdem sororibus traditam." This Privilege is inserted in Pope Innocent's confirmation of the same which is addressed to "the Abbess and Sisters of the Order of Saint Damian in the monastery of Saint Agnes in the diocese of Tarazona," and is dated May 4, 1244 (see *Sbaralea*, vol. ii, p. 328, letter 37, "Cum a nobis petitur").

I think, then, there can be little doubt that though Honorius confirmed the Ugolino Rule for the Monticelli nuns on December 9, 1219, he also confirmed it for the Assisi folk, and at an earlier date—probably during the first half of the year 1219—and that either the bull has disappeared, as *Sbaralea* suggests, or else that the confirmation was only verbal, like that of the "First Rule of the Friars Minor which Saint Francis made, and which Pope Innocent confirmed without a bull."

## CHAPTER IV

Concerning Sublime Poverty. Were the privileges of exemption, which Ugolino granted in virtue of the powers conferred on him by Honorius III in his letter, *Litterae tuae*, made conditional on the due observance of evangelical poverty? Some preliminary observations concerning this question. Of the kind of poverty which the Seraphic Mother desired her children to practise as shown by her own words in the sixth chapter of her rule. Of the poverty of the Poor Ladies of San Severino in the days when Saint Francis himself was their spiritual superior, as attested by certain contemporary documents at present laid up in the cathedral archive chamber of that city.

SOME would have us believe that the bull *Litterae tuae* proved in the issue to be so much waste paper. The Pope's instructions, we are told, were not carried out: Ugolino, instead of making the privileges of exemption conditional upon the observance of corporate poverty, stipulated only that his own rule should always be observed; and this, it is suggested, was the reason of Honorius's undoubted delay in ratifying some of them; and the writers referred to add that several of the communities exempted were actually in possession of property at the very time they obtained their exemptions, and in consequence had to pay the Holy See an annual tribute of a pound of gold.

And what are we to think of these stories, which are surely not to the credit of several people who are usually held to have been exceedingly honest folk—Honorius III, Ugolino, and the Seraphic Mother herself?

It is strange, if they be true, that the Pope should have not only condoned his legate's insubordination, but have deemed it consistent with dignity to declare, as he did, upon four separate occasions, that what Ugolino had done he had done by his orders. Honorius was a simple man, a man of meek disposition, but his meekness and simplicity, I think, would have hardly carried him thus far.

Again, if these things be true, it is strange that the bishops concerned made no kind of protest, and that three of them at least gave formal consent to the cardinal-protector's duplicity; bishops in those days were sometimes wont to withstand even Peter to the face, if haply he trod on their corns, and these men, as we have seen, had shown themselves very jealous of their canonical rights;

if, then, they were deprived of fees and authority in direct opposition to the Pope's wishes, without any compensation whatever, but "a pound of wax and no more," is it likely that they would have held their peace?

It is stranger still that the indomitable Clare should have been content to sit with folded hands, and that she and her Poor Ladies should have continued to live on terms of friendship with the man who had hoodwinked and deceived them, and to hold him in high esteem. One would have thought that some such thing would have happened as that which took place some forty years afterwards when Cardinal Orsini gave the sisters a rule that was not to their liking, and Clement IV, besieged in his palace at Viterbo by Clares from all parts of Christendom, at his wits' end, wrote to the cardinal-protector: "They will have nothing to say to your rule; instruct me as to your wishes, or deal with these women yourself."

But it is strangest of all that these interesting excogitations—"Pour écrire l'histoire il faut la penser"—evolved as they are by serious writers of very high repute, somehow or other hardly fit in with the facts of the case as revealed by the only contemporary documents which treat of it, documents whose authors bore witness to what they had seen and heard and taken an active part in, documents easy of access and which have actually been in print for over a hundred and fifty years<sup>1</sup>: read in the light of Saint Clare's evidence concerning the way she desired evangelical poverty to be observed in her own convent, these papers tell a very different tale.

"As I and my sisters," the Seraphic Mother says in the sixth chapter of her rule, "as I and my sisters have been ever solicitous to observe that holy poverty which we promised in the beginning to the Lord God and to Blessed Francis, so let the abbesses who shall succeed me in office and all the other sisters be bound to observe it inviolably to the end: that is to say, they shall neither accept nor hold property of any kind, nor possess any rights of ownership, or what might reasonably be held to be such, in anything whatsoever, either themselves directly or by means of an interposed person. Albeit they may hold as much land as may be required for the seclusion of their habitations, but such land shall not be tilled save only as a garden for their necessities."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sbaralea's famous Bullarium Franciscanum* appeared between 1759 and 1763.

<sup>2</sup> Et sicut ego semper sollicita fui una cum sororibus meis sanctam paupertatem

The last clause opens a wide door: corn, oil, wine, to say nothing of fruit and vegetables, all these things come under the head of necessities, and for an adequate provision of them in the case of large convents it is clear that a very considerable acreage would be required. Was it the intention of the Seraphic Mother to limit her children's holdings only to this extent: that they should not be so large as to produce for them more than they were able to consume? A document has recently been brought to light which enables us, I think, to answer this question: a deed executed on the 16th of June, 1223, by Atto, Bishop of Camerino in the March of Ancona, in virtue of which he conferred on the Clares of Saint Saviour at San Severino, in the same diocese, various favours, including a privilege of exemption from the payment of episcopal dues, which was to hold good only so long as they should continue to observe sublime poverty.

This is a most interesting and instructive document; the drafting of the text is unusually clear; there can be no doubt as to its signification, it should settle some much vexed questions; it is one of the few Clare papers that have come down to us (they can be counted on the fingers of one hand) in which Saint Francis's name is mentioned, and students of things Franciscan owe a large debt of gratitude to Canon Santoni of Camerino, who was the first to make it known;<sup>1</sup> and to Monsignor Faloci Pulignani, the vicar-general of Spoleto, who now republishes it and also gives us the text of no less than twenty-seven hitherto unedited thirteenth-century rolls, all of them relating to the affairs of the Poor Ladies of San Severino, and all of them at present laid up in the cathedral archive chamber of that city.<sup>2</sup>

Amongst these papers there are at least a dozen that treat either directly or indirectly of Saint Francis's favourite virtue, and it will be well to take a glance at them before we proceed to examine Bishop Atto's act. They may be divided into two classes: the first comprises a series of documents of a period covering some

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quam Domino Deo et beato Francisco promissimus custodire: sic teneantur Abbatissae, quae in officio mihi succedent et omnes sorores usque in finem inviolabiliter observare: videlicet in non recipiendo vel habendo possessionem vel proprietatem per se neque per interpositam personam, seu etiam aliquid quod rationabiliter proprietatis dici possit, nisi quantum terrae pro honestate et remotione monasterii necessitas requirit; et illa terra non laboretur nisi pro horto ad necessitatem ipsarum.

<sup>1</sup> See *Miscellanea Franciscana*, vol. x, p. 17. Foligno, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Documenti inediti del XIII secolo, vol. xi, pp. 97-111. Foligno, 1909.

five-and-thirty years (from 1223 to 1257), and these papers testify in precise terms that when they were severally written the nuns of San Severino were very faithfully carrying out the evangelical counsel of poverty. They are herein described as living on daily alms, as it were, by a miracle. They had placed, we are told, their sufficiency in God, for love of whom they had renounced all earthly possessions. They had placed their sufficiency in poverty, and were steadfastly determined to be fed by the charity of the faithful. Their shoulders were being wrung by the yoke of their self-imposed indigence, and so forth.

The second class comprises a series of papers which were likewise written at various times between the years 1223 and 1257, and they bear witness in language no less clear that these same nuns, on the dates on which they were drafted, were not without property.

We see them in this series, at the very outset of their career, in possession of a water-mill, and praying God for a vineyard; petitioning the Pope a little later on for the restitution of certain lands, linen goods, money and other things of which their monastery had been defrauded by one Robert, a layman, and sundry other individuals; confirmed in the possession of a certain piece of land—most likely the vineyard after which they had been hankering—which had been conferred on them by a charitable gentleman; exempted from the payment of taxes, notwithstanding the fact that they were landowners; and, at last, in possession of what sounds like a most desirable property, including amongst other things, fields, vineyards, pastures, woods, in no less than six different localities.

Some of these apparently contradictory letters were written within a few days of one another, and what, at first sight, seems stranger still, by the same individuals.

Thus, exactly two months after Pope Gregory IX had ratified the nobleman's gift of land (January 18, 1229), he commended the nuns for having renounced all their earthly possessions, and granted them a privilege of exemption for so long as they should remain poor (March 18, 1229). Again on the 18th of October, 1252, Pope Innocent IV made a public appeal to all Christians on behalf of these women, who, he said, were too much oppressed by the self-imposed burthen of poverty; and on the 25th of October, exactly one week afterwards, he wrote the letter which testifies that at that time the nuns owned land in six different parishes.

Were the Poor Ladies of San Severino even more fickle than the Poor Ladies of Prague, or must we assume that these venerable men were each of them laughing in their sleeves when they said that the nuns were poor?

With Bishop Atto's help I think we shall be able to find a more satisfactory explanation of these seemingly incongruous sayings.

In the first clause of his act, above referred to, of June 16, 1223, he exempts the nuns of San Severino from the payment of episcopal dues conditionally upon their continuing to live "in their present poverty and religion"; in the third clause of the same act, and subject to the same conditions, he gives them permission to hold a mill and to acquire a vineyard capable of yielding an average annual vintage of fifty loads of wine. It is clear, then, that he did not consider the holding of property of this kind to be incompatible with the observance of evangelical poverty as prescribed by their rule, and the reason is not far to seek: the vineyard was not to be held for profit, but to minister to the nuns' necessities in the matter of wine, and there can be no doubt that fifty loads was the estimated amount of their annual consumption of that beverage.

As for the little mill, we must not picture to ourselves a little mill such as we are accustomed to see in the well-watered plains of northern countries: a homestead set amid pasture with trees and hedges, a very pleasant place with a trim garden, and an air about it of old-world comfort and of old-world prosperity; a picturesque cluster of buildings—the miller's house, his granary, his cowshed and the little mill itself with its eager wheel—green, dripping, glossy, that breaks into laughter at the crushing of the corn, and whose voice is the voice of many waters.

The little mill of the Poor Ladies of San Severino in no way resembled a little mill of this kind: it was, we may be very sure, nothing more than a rude hutch just large enough to hold a couple of mill-stones about the size of a corn sieve, the old crone who fed them, and a sack or two of meal. There was a puddle behind, neither large nor deep, and by way of a mill-stream a trickling ditch such as a child could step over, which presently dribbled away into the leprous bed of a torrent. There are mills of this sort still in various parts of Italy. The one I have in my mind is not far from La Verna, and it is likely enough that some of them date from Saint Clare's time.

The little mill of San Severino, then, was so small an affair that Atto did not consider it necessary to take it into account: "*De minimis non curat lex.*" Besides, though it is not explicitly stated, there can be no reasonable doubt that it was only intended for the nuns' own use, and also from the wording of the act it is clear that they were only allowed to hold it on account of their straitened circumstances. Milling was evidently an episcopal monopoly in the diocese of Camerino as in many other places in the year 1223. These women were without means, and Bishop Atto, being a charitable man, desired to relieve them of the obligation of grinding their corn in his mills, but naturally enough he saw no reason why, in the event of their one day becoming solvent, they should not pay him his mill fees like other folk. Hence, when he gave them permission to have a mill of their own, he took good care to say: "So long as you persevere in your poverty of to-day." That is the reason why the opening words of Clause III are what they are.

Now the views of Gregory IX and of Innocent IV in respect to the observance of poverty were surely not less large than those of Bishop Atto, and hence their sayings which startle us did not seem contradictory to them, and are not in reality contradictory. The nobleman's gift of land, to which the former refers in his letter of January 18, 1229, was in all probability nothing more than Bishop Atto's vineyard; there is nothing to indicate the acreage, and for all we know it may not have been sufficiently large to yield even the authorized fifty measures of wine; but in any case, if Gregory believed, as he no doubt did, that the holding of it was permitted by the rule, his letter of two months later, in which he praises the nuns for their exact observance of poverty, in no way clashes with the letter in which he testified that they held land.

So, too, in the case of Innocent IV and his letters of the 18th of October, 1252, and of the 25th of October of the same year, though this must be borne in mind—much water had flowed beneath the bridge between 1229 and 1252.

In the early days, when the Clares were a puny folk who fasted thrice a week on stale crusts, and were content at other times to fare as best they could on pot-herbs and on broken victuals begged from door to door, they were able to minister to their necessities in the shape of garden stuff by tilling half a rood of the belt of waste land surrounding their habitations. But when,

later on, they had grown, as it were, into a great nation, and had learnt from experience that if Brother Ass was to do his work, he must be treated less harshly, they began to take a more liberal view of the meaning of the word necessities, and in those days an estate of many acres was sometimes required to yield them a bare sufficiency of the fruits of the earth. When land was not available in the immediate vicinity of their convent they had to look for it further afield, and take it where it was offered. One friend, perhaps, would give them an olive ground in a neighbouring parish, another a little vineyard half-a-mile away, a third a plot of arable land in the haze of the valley below them, and a fourth a patch of beech scrub high up in the mountain which overlooked their home.

And they did not think they were breaking the rule in accepting gifts of this kind, if the produce of all the land they held fell short of their actual needs, or, at all events, was not in excess of them.

Herein we have the explanation of the San Severino estate in six different localities, and of the many similar Clare estates, of which it is also said authoritatively that their owners were loyal handmaids of Saint Francis's mystical bride.

That Pope Innocent IV was of this opinion—namely, that the holding of outlying land was not necessarily inconsistent with the observance of sublime poverty, there is irrefutable evidence to show, for by the same bull in which he enumerates the various possessions of the San Severino folk he confirmed the exemption which Bishop Atto had given them years before, and which was only to hold good so long as they should continue to live “in their present poverty and religion.” And since Innocent quotes the bishop's act in full in his own brief, it is certain that he did not intend to make absolute what Atto had granted conditionally.

And this brings us back to Bishop Atto's act, which, so far as we are concerned, is the most important of the Camerino papers. For, after all, interesting as they undoubtedly are, the letters of Innocent and of Gregory afford us no indication as to what were Saint Clare's views on the subject we are now considering. Bishop Atto's act is in this respect most instructive.

From what is said and what is left unsaid in some of these papers, it would seem that when Bishop Atto exempted them (June 16, 1223), and for several years afterwards, Ugolino had nothing to do with the San Severino Clares. At all events Atto

ignores him. So, too, his successor Rainaldo<sup>1</sup> in his ratification of Atto's deed on the 24th of December, 1224; and when a few months earlier the nuns had obtained a reduction (from six soldi to twelve denari) of the tribute they were accustomed to pay to the neighbouring Benedictine Abbot of Domora it was not through Ugolino's good offices, but thanks to the intervention of Pandulph, the papal legate. It must have been some time between the 24th of December, 1224 (the date of Rainaldo's act), and the 19th of March, 1227, the date of Ugolino's election to the papacy that this restless and indefatigable old man, who was now nearly ninety years of age, first began to busy himself with the affairs of these women, for in a letter which he addressed to their superior, on the 18th of January, 1229, he recalls the fact that when he was in a less exalted position he had been able to induce the Abbot of Domora to free them altogether from the annual tribute which hitherto they had been bound to pay him.

I suspect that it was about the same time that they first began to observe the Ugolino Rule, and that the bait that its author had dangled before their eyes was the remission of this tribute. My reason for thinking so is not only because of Ugolino's well-known zeal in propagating his rule, but also because a very strict observance of enclosure being, as it were, the keynote of this piece of legislation, it was usual in official documents to describe the religious who observed it as Poor Enclosed Nuns, or Poor Enclosed Ladies, or sometimes simply as Enclosed Nuns. There are exceptions to this rule, but they are rare. Now in nearly all the documents issued after Ugolino's intervention the nuns of San Severino are thus described, but not so in the three letters preceding that event: Atto calls them—women dedicated to God: "*mulieribus Deo dicatis*," so, too, Rainaldo, whilst Pandulph addresses his letter to the Prioress and Convent of Saint Saviour in Compresseto. It would seem, then, that at first the nuns of San Severino observed the Primitive Rule, and that it was not till somewhere about 1225 or 1226 that they exchanged it for the Ugolino Rule.

That they did adopt the Ugolino Rule is certain, and that, before Ugolino became Pope, for in a letter which Innocent IV addressed to them on the 25th of October, 1252 we find the following clause: "*In primis siquidem statuantes, ut ordo monasticus, qui secundum Deum et B. Benedicti regulam, atque institutionem*

<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Camerino. This man must not be confused with Rainaldo, Bishop of Ostia, afterwards Pope Alexander IV.

monialium inclusarum S. Damiani Assisinati et formulam vite vestre a fel. rec. G. PP. predecessore nostro Ordini vestro traditam, *cum adhuc esset in minori officio constitutus* in eodem loco esse dinoscitur, perpetuis ibidem temporibus inviolabiliter observetur."

But this is not all. From what Bishop Atto says in the second clause of his act, it is clear that they were at this time (January 16, 1223) subject to the Seraphic Father himself, who, no doubt, continued to govern them till his death, three years later. The passage referred to runs thus—

"Item do, et concedo ipsis mulieribus licentiam habendi visitatores, et correctores de fratribus minoribus, illos videlicet quos Frater Franciscus vel ejus successores, vel capitulum ipsorum fratrum constituerint, et ordinaverint ad corrigendum et visitandum dictas mulieres."

From the opening words of the first clause of the act we learn that the nuns' agent in this affair was one Brother Paul, who no doubt had been commissioned by Saint Francis to act for them. Paul must have discussed the whole business with Bishop Atto before the act was drawn up, and he certainly approved of it, for when two years later Atto was gathered to his fathers and Bishop Rainaldo reigned in his stead we find Brother Paul petitioning the latter prelate to ratify his predecessor's exemptions, which he did on the 24th of December, 1224. The opening words of Atto's deed above referred to are as follows—

"In nomine Domini. Amen. Anno Domini millesimo ccxxiij indictione X. die quintadecima exeunte Junio tempore Friderici Imperatoris Camerin. factum est hoc in palatio Domini Episcopi in presentia fratris Martini et fratris Jacobi, et fratris Ambrosii testium de hoc.

"Ego quidem Acto Camerinen. Episcopus promitto tibi Fratri Paulo recipienti pro ecclesia S. Salvatoris de plebanatu plebis S. Severini, et pro mulieribus Deo dicatis permanentibus in dicta ecclesia, quod donec dicte mulieres in hodierna paupertate et religione permanserint nihil temporale ab eis, et dicta ecclesia exigam, nec accipiam, et omnes exactiones temporales mihi debitas ab eisdem, et dicta ecclesia, et mulieribus ibidem permanentibus, tibi pro eisdem mulieribus quieto, et remitto, donec, ut dictum est permanserint."

Of this man, Brother Paul, we know something: he was an intimate friend of the Founder's, who had named him minister

provincial of the March of Ancona in 1221; he was a Franciscan after Saint Francis's own heart, one with whom he saw eye to eye, and who in all things was in sympathy with him. How closely these two were united, and how highly each of them esteemed the Poor Ladies of San Severino, Thomas of Celano bears witness in a typical Franciscan story which he relates in this fashion:—

“Blessed Francis was so overflowing with charity that he loved not only his fellow-men, but all his fellow-creatures—birds, beasts, fishes and even creeping things, for in every one of them he descried the handiwork of his Father, and if he chanced to see anything suffering pain he, too, suffered with it. Now, of all God's beasts of the field, lambs he loved the best, for in them he beheld the likeness of ‘the Lamb that was slain.’

“Once when he was journeying in the March of Ancona along with Master Paul, whom he had appointed minister of all the brethren in those parts, as they were on the way to Osimo they fell in with a goat-herd feeding his flock on some pasture by the roadside, and amongst the crowd of goats there was one lamb walking about very meekly and plucking a little grass here and there. And when Blessed Francis saw it he stood still and sighed, and then, to his comrade: ‘Behold,’ quoth he, ‘that lamb, how like it is to Christ amid the proud Pharisees. For love of Him let us purchase it and so deliver the gentle beast from the fellowship of these goats.’ Whereat Master Paul began to weep, for they had no money nor anything else to offer the man, but their poor habits all patched and ragged. And as they were considering what to do, behold, they were overtaken by a huckster on his way to market, who, when he had learnt the cause of their grief, paid the goat-herd his price. And they, having received the lamb, and having given thanks to God and to the huckster, went on their way rejoicing, and presently came to Osimo, where they straightway sought out the Lord Bishop, who entertained them with much reverence and set before them of his best. But in sooth, the venerable man was somewhat taken aback when he saw the sheep and the man of God caressing it; and it was not until Saint Francis had expounded the parable in many words, that at last he was able to comprehend the signification thereof, and then, his heart being touched, he gave glory to God for the man of God's simplicity. On the morrow Blessed Francis sent the lamb, by the advice of Master Paul, to the Poor Ladies of San Severino, and they, receiving it from his hands, as from the hands of God

Himself, held it to be a most precious gift, and tended it with loving care. And presently with some of its wool they made a habit, which they sent to their father at Assisi when a general chapter of all the brethren was being held there. Whereat the seraphic man was filled with exultation: he pressed the habit to his lips and kissed it again and again, and called upon them that were standing by to rejoice with him."

To sum up, then, and to draw conclusions: when the order was not yet ten years old, in the year 1223, in the days of their first fervour, at a time when they were still, in all probability, observing the Primitive Rule, we find the Poor Ladies of San Severino in actual possession of a water-mill, and casting longing eyes on a neighbour's vineyard; and they did not think that by so doing they were showing themselves in any way disloyal to the Lady Poverty. Nor can the blame of it be thrown on the shoulders of Ugolino, for this venerable man had not yet begun to concern himself with their souls' welfare: Saint Francis was their spiritual chief; he exercised his authority over them through one with whom he saw eye to eye, Brother Paul, whom he himself had appointed provincial minister of the March of Ancona, and it was this same Brother Paul who enabled them to realize their wishes in respect to the mill and the vineyard.

But one conclusion is possible: Saint Francis was not of opinion that the possession of property of this kind was necessarily inconsistent with the due observance of poverty, and the views of Saint Clare on the poverty question were surely not stricter than his. If, then, in the sixth chapter of her rule she left a loophole through which property of a certain kind and under certain conditions could enter, it was not through inadvertence that she did so, but deliberately and of set purpose.

Moreover, Saint Clare did not forbid her children to accept offerings of money; on the contrary, she gave them explicit directions as to how such offerings should be dealt with: "If any money should be sent to a sister," she says, "by her kinsfolk or friends, let the abbess with the advice of her council procure for her therewith something of which she may be in need."—"Si vero ei aliqua pecunia transmissa fuerit, abbatissa de consilio discretarum in his, quae indiget, illi faciat provideri." These words occur in the eighth chapter of the rule.

Presents of this kind would usually be of small account, but in another passage the Seraphic Mother not only takes it for granted

that very considerable sums would sometimes be offered, but also indirectly authorizes their acceptance, for in the fourth chapter of her rule she says: "Let no heavy debt be incurred save with the consent of all the sisters and for some manifest necessity, and in such case the business must be transacted through a procurator."—"Nullum debitum grave fiat, nisi de communi consensu sororum et manifesta necessitate: et hoc per procuratorem."

In this passage Saint Clare distinctly authorizes her children under certain circumstances and subject to certain specified conditions to burthen themselves with heavy pecuniary obligations; and since, when debts are lawfully incurred, it is not unlawful to pay them, it follows that she did not consider the handling of even large sums of money to be necessarily an act of disloyalty to the Lady Poverty.

In a word, to live without any possessions under the sun but the houses wherein they dwelt and the churches in which they prayed, with a patch of cultivated land in the vicinity of their convent and a belt of waste ground surrounding it large enough to shield them from the impertinence of prying neighbours; not to consider even these things to be in reality their own, but regarding themselves as pilgrims and strangers to depend without shame on the alms of the faithful—not necessarily limited to offerings in kind—for everything that they were unable to grow on the land which they cultivated: this was the kind of poverty which Saint Clare desired for her disciples, and which, she said, if they faithfully observed it, would make them inheritors and queens of the kingdom of heaven; this was the kind of poverty which she herself and her first companions had "promised to the Lord God and to Blessed Francis."

It is important to bear in mind that the poverty which Saint Francis imposed on his sons towards the close of his life, and seemingly under the influence of Brother Leo, was a stricter form of poverty than that which, in his earlier days, he had given to the Poor Ladies, and which Saint Clare herself later on ordained that they should always follow.

Possibly the original rule of the Friars Minor, which has not come down to us, was identical in this respect with the Rule of Saint Clare, for it is certain that the rule of 1221, though harsher than Saint Clare's rule, was less harsh than the final rule of 1223.

Be this as it may, we have it from Saint Clare's own lips that Saint Francis never changed his mind as to the way in which he

wished the Poor Ladies to carry out the evangelical counsel of poverty.

We must not, then, expect to find in the convents exempted in virtue of Honorius's brief the strict observance prescribed in the rule of the Friars Minor, but the milder form of observance of Saint Clare's own rule. This obvious point must be underlined, for, strangely enough, it is sometimes lost sight of.

## CHAPTER V

Of the privileges of exemption conferred by Ugolino in virtue of the bull *Litterae tuas*. Four have come down to us—viz. those granted to Florence, Perugia, Siena and Lucca. A detailed account of these documents and of the property held by the convents exempted at the time that they obtained their exemptions. In no case did it exceed the limits prescribed by Saint Clare. Of the tribute of gold, why it was imposed and why it was afterwards remitted. How the Poor Ladies were compelled to abandon the observance of sublime poverty. Of the numerous mendicant orders founded in the middle of the twelve hundreds, and especially of the Friars Apostolic. Conclusions.

As to the exemptions conferred in virtue of the brief *Litterae tuas*, the conditions upon which they were granted, and the property held by the convents which were fortunate enough to obtain them, the following are the facts of the case as set forth in the official papers which treat of it—

Towards the close of the month of July 1219 Cardinal Ugolino took possession of four Clare houses in the name of the Holy See, granting them at the same time privileges of exemption—viz. Saint Mary's of Monticelli near Florence on the 27th; Saint Mary's of Monte Luce, Perugia, and Saint Mary's without the Gate of Camollia at Siena on the 29th, and on the 30th Saint Mary's of Gattaiola by Lucca.

It is certain that these communities were among those to which Honorius referred in his letter of August 27, 1218, and it is also certain that we have not here the complete list of all the houses which Ugolino exempted in virtue of that letter. Saint Damian's, we know, received a privilege of exemption shortly after it was written—that privilege has disappeared—and it is likely enough that other Clare communities were at the same time similarly favoured. Albeit the fact remains that the only Clare exemptions that have come down to us of the reign of Honorius III are those granted to the four houses above mentioned. All of them were ratified by Pope Honorius, and in every case he adds to his letter of ratification the complete text of the privilege. They are all drafted in like fashion, but not in identical terms, and all of them confer, in addition to the privilege of exemption from

episcopal control, various other privileges: exemption from the payment of episcopal dues, and of tithe on the produce of orchards, gardens and so forth, and in the case of Perugia and of Florence permission to have Mass celebrated during time of interdict. In every case the nuns had to pay a tribute of a pound of wax annually to their respective diocesans, and an annual tribute of one pound of gold to the Holy See, and in every case it was stipulated that the Benedictine rule and the Ugolino constitutions should always be observed. In the case of the Lucca, Siena and Perugia sisters the formula imposing this last obligation runs thus—

“*Formulam nihilominus vitae vestrae, quam a nobis humiliter recepistis cum B. Benedicti regula perpetuis temporibus manere decernimus illibatam.*”

For the Monticelli folk thus—

“*In primis sequidem statuantes ut ordo monasticus, qui secundum Dominum et Beati Benedicti Regulam, quam profitemini, in eodem loco institutus esse dignoscitur, perpetuis ibidem temporibus inviolabiliter observetur. Observantias nihilominus regulares, quas juxta ordinem Dominarum Sanctae Mariae de Sancto Damiano de Assisio praeter generalem B. Benedicti regulam vobis voluntarie indixistis, ratas habemus et eas perpetuis temporibus manere decernimus illibatas.*”

Moreover, in the Monticelli Privilege and in the Perugia Privilege it is ordained that in the election of the abbess the regulations set down in the Benedictine rule should be strictly adhered to, but this clause is wanting in the other Privileges.

Lastly, all four communities are forbidden to inter outsiders in their burial grounds, and they are all of them confirmed in the possession of such property as they canonically held. In the case of the Monticelli nuns the formula of confirmation is as follows—

“*Praeterea locum vestrum et ea quae in ipsius circuitu juste ac canonice possidetis, vobis, et per vos eis quae vobis canonice successerint, confirmamus.*” In the case of the three other convents the wording differs slightly, but the signification is the same: “*locum vestrum cum omnibus pertinentiis suis et omnia quae juste et canonice possidetis vobis, et per vos eis quae vobis canonice successerint, confirmantes.*”

Nor are we left in the dark as to the nature of the property in question or as to how it had been acquired, and there can be no doubt whatever that we have here nothing more than the land referred to by Honorius III in his letter to Ugolino of August 27,

1218, as having been offered to that prelate as the representative of the Roman Church by certain persons in order that he might hold it in trust for the Poor Ladies, and which the Sovereign Pontiff, in the same letter, at their request had authorized him to accept.

From what Ugolino says in his letters of exemption, and from what Honorius says in the several bulls by which he presently confirmed those letters, we learn the following details. The Monticelli holding consisted of a piece of land at Santo Sepolcro at Monticelli in the diocese of Florence, with the buildings thereon and all that appertained to them. This property was the gift of a lady of Florence, one Advengnente, who somewhere about the year 1218 had established at Monticelli—in her own dwelling-house, seemingly—a community of Poor Ladies, over whom she was presiding as abbess when Ugolino took possession of the place “in the name of Blessed Peter.”<sup>1</sup> Her reign, however, was not a long one: before the 9th of December, 1219, she had resigned office, for on that day Pope Honorius addressed a letter to the Abbess of Monticelli, but without specifying her name, in which he refers to the foundress of the community as “Advengnente, a nun of your house.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lucca estate is described by Ugolino as “a wood in the place called Gattaiola in the diocese of Lucca with the buildings therein and all its belongings.” The donor in this case was a citizen of Lucca of the name of Rolandino Volpelli, and the Bishop of Lucca, we are expressly told, was a consenting party to the gift.<sup>3</sup>

The nuns of Siena occupied the old hospital and chapel of Saint

<sup>1</sup> Ea propter, dilecta in Domino filia Advengnente, tuis justis postulationibus grato concurrentes affectu, fundum quem habebas ad sanctum Sepulcrum in Monticello in dioecesi Florentina, cum omnibus aedificiis, et pertinentiis suis nobis nomine ecclesiae Romanae a te pia liberalitate collatum in quo monasterium ad honorem Dei et Virginis gloriosae Genitricis ejusdem desideras dedicare . . . in jus et proprietatem B. Petri et Ecclesiae Romanae suscepimus.

<sup>2</sup> “. . . ab Advengnente moniali monasterii vestri, antequam se ad religionem transferret, fundum quemdam quem habebat in loco qui Sanctum Sepulcrum de Monticello dicitur cum omnibus pertinentiis suis,” etc. *Sacrosancta Romana Ecclesia*.

<sup>3</sup> “Ea propter dilectae in Domino filiae, vestris justis postulationibus grato concurrentes assensu, silvam quam dilectus filius Rolandinus Vulpelli Lucanus civis habebat in loco qui dicitur Gattajola in dioec. Lucana, cum omnibus pertinentiis et aedificiis suis nobis nomine Romanae ecclesiae ab eo pia liberalitate collatam de assensu bonae memoriae . . . Lucan. Episcopi in jus et proprietatem B. Petri et ecclesiae romanae suscepimus.”

Petronilla, which had been granted to them by the cathedral chapter of Siena, with the bishop's consent, and a certain piece of land with its possessions and all its appurtenances, the gift of one Vitale di Donicato, a citizen of the same town. Ugolino describes this tenement as situate without the gate called Camollia,<sup>1</sup> and Honorius adds, "juxta stratam Romaeam." Neither of them give any indication as to the whereabouts of the hospital buildings, but it is certain that they stood either on Donicato's land or else on land adjoining it, for in later documents the home of the Poor Ladies of Siena is sometimes described as the convent of Saint Mary by the Camollian Gate and sometimes as the convent of Saint Petronilla. The explanation is that, though the Clares of Siena, as Ugolino informs us, like those of Perugia and Lucca and Florence and, indeed, as was the wont of all the first communities of the order, had dedicated their convent "to God and to the glorious Mother of God," for years afterwards the old dedication clung to it.

The description of the Perugia property is sufficiently vague—a piece of land, says Ugolino, at the place called Monte Luce by Perugia, which was formerly held by our beloved son Glotto Monaldi, a nobleman and citizen of the same town, and which he offered to us as the representative of the Holy See.<sup>2</sup> So, too, Honorius in his bull of ratification and almost in the same terms.

The exemption granted to the Monticelli nuns was confirmed by the Holy See before the end of the year (December 9, 1219), but for some reason or other those granted to the other convents were not confirmed till the month of September 1222. All four letters of confirmation are drawn up in identical terms, and in every case Honorius declared that his legate had acted in accordance with his instructions: "*prout mandaveramus eidem.*" It would seem from Ugolino's letter to Abbess Advengnente that the Monticelli house was already standing when he set pen to paper, and from his letters to the Lucca, Perugia and Siena folk that they had not yet begun to build when they obtained their privileges: possibly this last fact had something to do with Honorius's delay in confirming

<sup>1</sup> ". . . Capellam S. Petronillae cum hospitali a capitulo Senensi de assensu episcopi senensis et fundum quemdam situm extra portam senensem de Camullia cum possessionibus et omnibus pertinentiis suis a Vitali de Donicato cive senensi nobis nomine romane ecclesiae pie liberalitate collatam," etc. (This is from Ugolino's letter.)

<sup>2</sup> ". . . fundum, quem dilectus filius Glottus Monaldi nobilis Perusinus et civis habebat in Monte Lucio in Perusinae civitatis suburbio," etc.

them: it is certain that the monasteries in question were finished when he at last issued his letters of confirmation. Be this as it may, it is clear from Ugolino's letters and Honorius's letters above quoted that all four convents were observing evangelical poverty, as Saint Clare understood it, when they obtained their privileges. Moreover, if corroborative evidence be required, we have it in the case of two of them: on the 1st of May, 1230, Ugolino, now Pope Gregory IX, granted an indulgence of forty days to all the faithful in the diocese of Florence who should assist the nuns of Monticelli, "seeing," he says, "that they wholly depend on alms for their daily bread";<sup>1</sup> and on the 16th of June, 1229, he granted a Privilege of Poverty to the Perugia folk, in which he bears witness that they, too, were at this time without endowments. If, then, these two convents owned property in excess of the limits prescribed by Saint Clare when they obtained their exemptions, it follows that they must have got rid of some of it before Pope Gregory's letters above referred to were written. Now, not only is there no evidence whatever to make us even so much as suspect that either of them had alienated anything during the periods in question, but there is irrefutable evidence to show that the Monticelli nuns had actually increased their holding: on the 20th of November, 1228, Gregory IX ratified a donation of land which had been made to them by one "F. Villicuzo," a citizen of Florence. This property, we learn from the deed of ratification,<sup>2</sup> surrounded, or at all events adjoined, the nuns' premises, and Villicuzo foresaw that if at any time it should fall into the hands of a stranger, injury and annoyance to the nuns would be likely to arise; and he thought, too, that it would prove serviceable to them on account of their many necessities.

Curiously enough, Sbaralea, who is usually so clear-headed, troubled about the tribute of gold and bewildered by Wadding, suggests that these very convents, of whose poverty there is double proof, were endowed when they obtained their privileges, and that Lucca and Siena were not: the tribute of gold, he thinks, was in their case imposed in error, and afterwards, when the mistake was discovered, commuted for one of wax.

Sabatier, on the other hand, is of opinion that Florence alone

<sup>1</sup> "Cum igitur dilectae in Christo filiae pauperes moniales inclusae monasterii Sanctae Mariae de Monticello Florentinae dioecesis sufficientiam suam in paupertate posuerint, ita quod fidelium tantum elemosynis sustentantur," etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Sbaralea*, vol. i, Letter 32: "Piae mentis est."

of these four convents was poor, and that it was on this account that their privilege was confirmed immediately after it was granted, whilst Lempp, having carefully examined his documents through Wadding's glasses, is quite sure that these nuns had to pay the tax till the 21st of December, 1229, because from the first until this date they had undoubtedly held property: "Jusqu'au 21 déc. 1229, les Clarisses de ce couvent durent donner annuellement à la curie romaine un écu d'or pour leur exemption parce qu'elles possédaient des biens. Ce n'est que le 1<sup>er</sup> mai 1230 que le pape, cédant aux instances des soeurs, leur concéda le droit de prononcer comme celles d'Assise le vœu d'absolue pauvreté."<sup>1</sup> What in reality happened on the 1st of May, 1230, was this: Gregory granted an indulgence to all the faithful in the diocese of Florence who should contribute to the support of the nuns of Monticelli, as we have seen.

Of the inaccuracies of the great Franciscan annalist the reader has already been warned: if the illustrious writers above mentioned had been more wary of his spectacles I cannot help thinking that they would have seen things in a far clearer light.

As to this tribute of gold concerning which so much has been made, in reality it in no way touches the question of Ugolino's alleged duplicity, even if it be conceded that the nuns who had to pay it were in every case rich, for their more fortunate sisters who escaped were sometimes very far from being poor. As a matter of fact, the only convents thus mulcted were the convents of Lucca, Perugia, Siena, Florence and Prague. It was no doubt thought when the tax was imposed that the nuns would find no difficulty in paying it: they were not able to do so, and in consequence the Holy See commuted it in each case for a pound of wax. The first Franciscans were all enthusiasts who saw things through rose-coloured glasses, and when Saint Clare founded her order, all the world was Franciscan. These sanguine folk, alas, were doomed to be disappointed: the very success of the Franciscan ideal proved fatal to the full realization of it for any length of time in Saint Francis's own family. Indeed, the Poor Ladies were, for the most part, forced within a very few years of his death, not by popes and cardinals but by the untoward course of events, to abandon even the milder form of observance that the Seraphic Mother had prescribed for her children: the way of Sublime Poverty had become so crowded that there was no room

<sup>1</sup> See Lempp, *Élie de Cortone*, p. 109, note.

for them to walk in it, and though Gregory, to do him justice, did his best to keep the path clear for them—as, too, did his successors—their efforts were unavailing, and save in a few isolated cases they were simply crushed out.

For consider: the times were evil; there was war in the land, and famine and pestilence; men of substance were rare, and those who had enrolled themselves under the ragged standard of poverty were many. Foremost were the Friars Minor (who always begged for themselves, and sometimes, too, for the Poor Ladies), and their name was Legion; there were the members, too, of the Third Order, some of them, women as well as men; and the sons and the daughters of Saint Dominic, a host in themselves. These together formed what may be called the reputable wing of the army: highly respectable mendicants, well known to the authorities as such, and formally licensed by them to ply their trade. After them, or before them, or hustling alongside of them, and sometimes casting them down and trampling them under their feet came the rabble: solitaries of all sorts—hermits of Saint William, hermits of Blessed John, of Faváli, of Britti, of Jambonitáni; the land teemed with them.<sup>1</sup> Irregular confraternities, unauthorized congregations of each sex and of both sexes, just within the pale of the Church some of them, and some well outside: wandering nuns who would wander in spite of popes and bishops; vagabond women arrayed as Clares with ropes round their waists and barefooted, who carried bulls of approbation surreptitiously obtained, and called themselves Damianites sometimes and sometimes Minoresses, to the no small disgust of genuine Minorites male and female, who averred that by their scandalous conduct these impostors made the great Seraphic Religion to stink in men's nostrils. Vagabond friars like the Brethren of the Sack, whom the sons of Saint Francis contemptuously called "the wild men," and who, herding at night like beasts in caves or holes or hollow trees in woods and waste places, in the daytime frequented cities and the highways of the countryside, "where they prayed, preached, confessed, and gathered alms too, with such vigour that they left nothing for us but the crumbs," says an old Franciscan scribe. Itinerant associations, which embraced not only adults of both sexes but also children, like that strange society of mystics of which Salimbene says that "they called themselves apostles and were not apostles, but rather of the synagogue of Sathan,"<sup>1</sup> that they

<sup>1</sup> Salimbene, edition Holder-Egger, pp. 254-5 and elsewhere.

neither worked nor prayed, but lived and lived well on other men's labour and sweat, and gathered more alms in the good town of Parma than did our folk and the Dominicans put together."

The story of these free-lances, whose aims and ideals at first so nearly resembled the aims and ideals of the first Franciscans, who enjoyed for a while the favour of prelates, and in an incredibly short time spread all over Italy, who were later on suppressed because of their heretical tendencies, and at last became an heretical sect whose teaching was altogether subversive of Christian dogma and Christian morality, is a sufficiently curious and interesting one. It is known to us from several contemporary documents: one of the decretals of the Council of Lyons, which was published on the 27th of November, 1274; an encyclical of Honorius IV of the 11th of April, 1286, and the *Chronicles* of Fra Salimbene, and also from some later works: the *Seven Tribulations of Angelo Clareno*, the *Chronicles of Parma*,<sup>1</sup> *Historia Dulcini*,<sup>1</sup> *Additamentum ad Historiam Dulcini*,<sup>1</sup> and others. It is important to the present study because it helps us to realize what a heavy burthen Saint Clare had imposed on her daughters when she bade them observe evangelical poverty; because it suggests the motive or, rather, one of the motives which inspired Pope Gregory IX to place on their shoulders another and no less irksome burthen—the observance of perpetual enclosure; and, lastly, because it enables us to see how wise he was when he set his face against the exaggerated ideals of the spiritual brethren.

The founder of the Order of Apostles was a fellow-citizen of Salimbene's, and one with whom he had some acquaintance, Ghirardino di Segallelo, or Segarello, of Parma. He was sincere, devout, endowed by nature seemingly with good, perhaps brilliant abilities, and, too, with the gift, in his case fatal, of drawing men to himself, for he was a dreamer of dreams, neurotic, a man who acted on impulse, and whose impulses were not always healthy.

When he was still a youth, in the fall of the year 1260, the same year in which the Flagellants first appeared, a time, then, of intense religious excitement, he had been refused the Franciscan habit by the friars of his native city, seemingly at the instance of Salimbene, who at this time was stationed there.

Disappointed and cast down at the rebuff, he consoled himself as best he could by haunting the friars' chapel, and praying and

<sup>1</sup> These three works are incorporated in the ninth volume of Muratori's *Rerum italicarum Scriptores*, as also is Honorius's encyclical above referred to.

weeping there every day, it presently entered his poor bewildered brain to found an order himself, whose members, arrayed in the flowing garments of the apostles depicted on the cover of a great lantern that hung in the sanctuary, should model their lives in all things on the lives of the first disciples of Jesus Christ and in all things carry out literally the sayings of their Divine Master.

Having disposed of what little property he had, and poured out the price in the market-place, saying: "Whosoever will, let him take it," he nourished his hair and his beard, caused himself to be circumcised, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and suckled by a certain foolish woman, says Salimbene, thinking by so doing to liken himself to the Son of God; and presently, in order to test his power of resistance, he deliberately courted temptation, prompted thereto, as he said, by a heavenly voice; and strangely enough, or if he were in good faith, perhaps not strangely, he seems to have passed through the fire unscathed. Before, in his folly, he did this thing (according to Muratori), "If by God's grace," he had said, "if by God's grace I succeed in putting the Old Enemy to shame, I shall have worked a greater miracle than though I had raised one from the dead." Having thus prepared himself for his mission, he went forth to preach repentance. He was a man of humble origin, had no book learning nor culture of any kind, but he had a keen wit, was endowed by nature with a rude sort of eloquence, above all, he believed in himself. Soon his disciples numbered some three hundred souls, and presently he gave them a rule which, he said, he had written under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They took no vows, had no superior, no novitiate, at first no fixed place of abode, but, wandering about the country, sometimes singly, sometimes in couples—two brethren or a brother and a sister—and praying and preaching wherever they went; where night found them, there they lay down to rest.

According to Muratori their favourite prayers were the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria*, their favourite canticles the *Gloria Patri* and the *Salve Regina*, and their sermons consisted of these words only: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."

Later on they obtained a house in Parma which they made their headquarters. Brother Robert, the founder's first disciple, once a Franciscan tertiary in the service of the Minors of Parma, now became their procurator; but they were still without a chief, and when the brethren besought Ghirardino to rule over them he

refused, dreading the responsibility, and, too, because it was not in accordance with his plan that his order should have any ruler but Christ. "Every man," he said, "shall account to God for his own actions; every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour, each one of us must bear his own burthen."

But some of them were not convinced that a religious order could exist without some kind of ruler, and by the advice of Master Albert of Parma, one of the seven notaries of the Roman Court, they took counsel with the Cistercian Abbot of Fontána-viva, who gave them this strange piece of advice: "Do," he said, "as you did at first. Have no continuing city, but be content to be strangers and wayfarers on the face of the earth, and beg a night's lodging from any man that hath a house." So each one went his own way and followed his own devices, and the result was disorder, until presently a strong man was raised up amongst them—one Guido Putagius. "He was a fellow-citizen of mine," says Salimbene, "a knight before he entered religion, and in those days we were friends and comrades; his sister the Lady Tripia likewise joined the apostles, and his brother the Lord Roland is Podestá of Bologna.<sup>1</sup> Now when Brother Ghirardino could by no means be induced to undertake the dominion, my friend manfully assumed command himself, and the apostles obeyed him for many years; but at last he walked too pompously, had a great train of servants and expended as much money on banquets as if he had been a cardinal or a legate of the papal court; and these things were not to the liking of some of them, and they elected another chief, a certain Brother Matthew of the March of Ancona. But Brother Guido Putagius refused to resign, 'for,' said he, 'what saith Solomon? : Si spiritus potestatem habentis ascenderit super te, locum tuum ne dimiseris: quia curatio faciet cessare peccata maxima,' (Eccles. x. 4), and thus it came about that the apostles were divided." Most of them clung to Brother Matthew, and the rest withdrew to a little convent near Faenza in the lands of the Albrighetti and the Accharisii—two noteworthy Faenza families; but they were not suffered to remain there for long in peace. For though Brother Guido had only very few followers he had this advantage over his rival—Brother Ghirardino was with him. Brother Matthew then determined to carry Ghirardino off, and when, with the help of his friends, he endeavoured to effect his purpose, strife ensued and bloodshed. "A pretty example, this,

<sup>1</sup> Roland Putagius was appointed governor of Bologna after June 2, 1274.

for religious men to give to seculars. I chanced to be there at the time, and can vouch for the truth of these things. That night Brother Guido came to our convent secretly, and flinging his arms about my knees implored me for the sake of our old friendship to have pity on him, 'for,' said he, 'the men of Faenza are angered with me because the false tongues of my enemies have made them believe that the strife at the monastery was of my making, and besides, they know that my brother Roland is about to lay siege to their town, and I doubt not that if I remain here I shall end my days in a dungeon. Help me, then, to get clear of the place, and I promise you this: if only I escape with a whole skin I will forthwith join the Order of Knights Templars; for, alas, I have just heard that the Apostles have been brought to naught by the Pope and the Council of Lyons.' With my assistance he did escape, and he did not forget his promise."

The Order of Apostles was suppressed on the 17th of July, 1274; the men of Bologna sat down before Faenza in the month of September ensuing: hence we know approximately when the above conversation took place.

Though Ghirardino's apostles had been formally suppressed, the decree of suppression was not at first very strictly enforced, and for years they found a safe refuge in the diocese of Parma; for the bishop,<sup>1</sup> "though he had his secular clergy well under the crook, because of his great love for men in frocks and cowls was apt to be a little blind to their shortcomings, and he was not aware of the true character of these apostles until some of them had been sent to the gallows by the city magistrates of Bologna on account of their manifest crimes; then he bestirred himself manfully, and drove the whole brood out of his diocese."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps his eyes would have been opened a little sooner if it had not been for his friendship for Brother Ghirardino, in whose quaint sayings and foolish tales he took great delight, for this bishop, I warrant you, was half a soldier, nay, he was all things to all men: a monk with monks, with clerks a clerk, a knight with knights, with barons a baron, and, though Salimbene does not say so, he seems to have been likewise with fools a fool; "he was a man of letters too, an expert in canon law and also in things liturgical, and he

<sup>1</sup> Opizzone I, of Lavagna, a nephew of Innocent IV. He was appointed Bishop of Parma in the days of Alexander IV, in 1258, and reigned for thirty-seven years.

<sup>2</sup> According to Salimbene in 1286. Perhaps a slip for 1284; at all events in that year, he tells us, the Bishop set Ghirardino in prison. See next page.

knew how to play chess. He was a most magnificent spender—large, liberal, lordly, a marvellous lover of friars, especially Franciscans, a valiant defender of our Order, and he did much good in his diocese: the men of Parma held him in very high esteem.” At last, in spite of his love for him, he deemed it his duty to put an end to Brother Ghirardino’s vagaries. For as he grew older his folly increased, and the infatuation of his disciples waxed rather than waned: folk from all parts were wont to come and visit him, and once, when above a hundred of them were present, kneeling round him in a circle and chanting “Pater, Pater, Pater,” as though he had been a god, on a sudden he cried out: “He that would follow the poor Christ must divest himself of all that he hath, even to his very clothes.” Saying which, he flung off his garments and bade his disciples do likewise, and there in the midst of them all stood up naked.

Later on Salimbene gives a somewhat different version of this incident. On p. 563 he says: “In the year 1284 there came to Parma by the high road from Modena and Regio seventy-two men and youths of them that call themselves apostles and are not; they desired to see Brother Ghirardino Segalello, the founder of the order, to be expropriated by him and blessed, and to obtain his licence to wander throughout the world. He led them to a little church, stripped them all, re-clothed them, received them into the order, gave them his blessing, and bade them go whither they would. A few days afterwards there came to Parma by the same road twelve maidens with mantles wrapt about their shoulders, and they said that they were the *Sorores apostolicas* of the afore-said men, and that they had come hither to see Brother Ghirardino for a like purpose.”

From this account it is clear that Ghirardino’s visitors were neophytes, and that the stripping above referred to was part of the ceremony of initiation. The cast-off clothes were their secular garments, and they were re-clad with the habit of the order. It is noteworthy that at the close of his first account Salimbene says that the cast-off garments were given to the poor, and adds: “when Brother Ghirardino had re-clothed them, he bade them go forth and show themselves to the world; and some of them,” he continues, “set out for the sanctuary of Saint James at Compostella, others for the Church of Saint Michael on Mount Gargano, others again crossed the sea, and a little band set out for the Court of Rome,” perhaps to petition the Pope to re-establish the order; but Ghirardino

himself remained in Parma, and having cast aside his religious habit, he put on gloves and boots and a robe of coarse white cloth made full and long and without sleeves; and thus arrayed, he looked more like a mountebank than a man of God. Wherefore, and on account of his folly, and because of the vain, scurrilous, and ribald things he used to say, and for lodging at night in the houses of dissolute women, in order, as he said, to see if he could withstand temptation: by reason of these and suchlike things and the scandal that they gave rise to, the Bishop of Parma was at last compelled to put his friend in a dungeon, and in chains, and to nourish him for a while with the water of anguish and the bread of tribulation. But presently the bowels of his compassion were moved towards him, and he drew him forth and made him to dwell in his own palace and to sit at meat with him at a lower table along with the other members of his household. But Brother Ghirardino was not content with his rations, and he used to cry out in a loud voice so that all could hear: "Let me partake of the Bishop's meat and drink of his special bottle." Whereat the Bishop was wont to send him a goodly portion from his own dish and a great brimming goblet of his own generous wine. And when he had taken his fill of this toothsome fare his tongue was unloosed, and he uttered vain words; and the Lord Bishop, instead of rebuking him, used to laugh at the foolish things he did and said, for a little thing moved him to laughter, and he looked upon this friar not as a man of God, but as a buffoon.

We next hear of Brother Ghirardino in 1286, when he seems to have altogether abandoned the rôle of religious teacher: writing of him in this year Salimbene says: "He has now arrived at such a pitch of madness that he has become a jester, that is to say a common fool, and he struts about in cap and bells and wastes his time in fooling in the streets and in the market-place of this town. He fears neither God nor man, for his heart is set on vanity. He seeketh vain things, and he will find them."

Salimbene did not live to see his prophecy fulfilled: he went the way of all flesh somewhere about the year 1289. In the records of his native town we find this entry—

"A. 1300 jul. 18 Gerardus  
Segalellus haereticus Parmae  
combustus est."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Opizzone was translated to Ravenna in 1295. If he had remained in Parma, doubtless he would have been able to find some way or other of protecting

Of this poor tinsel saint, the victim not of vice but rather of untoward circumstances and a disordered brain, and who at one time seems to have been very near to the Kingdom of God, this much may be aptly said : His life was a horrible travesty of the life of the Seraphic Father, his society a hideous burlesque of the great Seraphic Religion : what, perhaps, it might have degenerated into, if it had not been for the tact and the foresight of Cardinal Ugolino, for the common sense and the iron will of Brother Elias of Cortona, and above all, and in the first place, for the sublime humility of Saint Francis.

"Nowadays," notes Fra Salimbene, "one has only to slip on a cowl to be fully equipped to found a mendicant order," and he adds in his cynical way : "It was we and the Dominicans who first taught all these folk to beg, to the no small irk of seculars."

With so many sturdy beggars in the field, it is not surprising, then, that the Poor Ladies, who were not suffered to gather alms in person, but had to beg through agents or be content with unsolicited offerings, very soon found that they "had placed their sufficiency" not in poverty but in starvation. Even in the early days when mendicancy was less fashionable they were often hardly able to keep the wolf from the door; for in those days they were for the most part entirely dependent on alms for their daily bread, not having been able to obtain as yet the parcel of land for cultivation that their rule permitted them to hold. Even the prestige of the foundress, her reputation for sanctity, her fame as a worker of miracles, sometimes failed to attract to Saint Damian's alms in sufficient quantity for the maintenance of the sisters. They often had to endure hunger, and in winter time cold. Alexander IV, Celano and Saint Clare herself bear witness to these things. Amongst many other proofs the first two writers tell us that upon a certain occasion the community was reduced to such straits that when "the time of hunger and the hour for eating had come there was only half a loaf in the house for the refecton of fifty women, and that most of them on that day would not have been able to break their fast had not 'He who giveth food to the hungry and who is Himself the Bread of Life.' multiplied their bread at Blessed Clare's intercession in the hands of her that distributed it,

his old friend. Ghirardino fell into the hands of Master Manfred the Dominican, who at that time was acting as inquisitor in those parts : he was tried for heresy and found guilty, renounced his errors and was released, and afterwards he relapsed. Again arrested, Master Manfred, having taken counsel with sundry wise men, came to the conclusion that there was nothing for it but to burn him.

so that every one of the sisters was able to eat thereof and take her fill.”<sup>1</sup>

Though almost all Clare convents were at this time in the grip of want, alas, they were not all blessed with an abbess who could work miracles. Now amongst the first to learn how bitter it is to live from hand to mouth were the communities which Ugolino had founded at Siena and Perugia and Florence—three, that is, of the five communities that had to pay the gold tax; and there is abundant evidence to show that when, in the year 1223, Pope Gregory IX commuted it for a nominal tribute of wax, they were not only feeling the pinch of poverty, but that their affairs were rapidly approaching a crisis; nor can there be any reasonable doubt that he forgave them the debt because they had not the wherewithal to discharge it. As to the nuns of Lucca who were relieved of the impost in the same year, although we have no direct evidence as to the state of their finances, I think it may be taken for granted that Gregory took pity on them because they, too, were in low water: it is certain that almost all the Clare houses of whose affairs we have any knowledge were at this time on the verge of bankruptcy.

We next come to the question which is perhaps the most important of all: Did Cardinal Ugolino make the privileges of exemption which he granted in virtue of the bull *Litterae tuae* conditional upon the observance of corporate poverty? Those who think that he did not have apparently only read the second portion of the Pope's letter. Now, whatever protection Honorius gave to the Lady Poverty—a very real and efficacious protection, as we shall see—was primarily due to the passage at the commencement of his letter wherein he records Ugolino's testimony as to the kind of poverty that the first Poor Ladies desired to observe—viz. to live without any possessions on earth but the houses wherein they dwelt and the churches in which they prayed, and his (Ugolino's) approval of it, contained in the statement that they were inspired thereto by the Holy Ghost—“by the Spirit who breatheth where he listeth”; for herein we have nothing less than a gloss to the vague preface of the Ugolino Rule, a gloss indited by the author himself, published and hence approved by the Supreme Pontiff, set forth in language so clear that it is impossible to mistake its meaning: henceforth it could never be alleged that

<sup>1</sup> See *Legenda S. Claras*, Chap. XV, p. 23 (edition Pennacchi), and also the bull of canonization.

what Ugolino meant in his preface by "a poor life" was a life of individual poverty, and not of corporate poverty as well.

I know that some modern writers maintain that under the Ugolino Rule the observance of corporate poverty was not of obligation, but Pope Innocent IV thought otherwise: on the 4th of June, 1246, he issued a circular letter—*Cum sicut ex parte vestra*—to fourteen Clare convents all observing the Ugolino Rule, and in this letter we find the following clause—

"Ad haec liceat vobis redditus et possessiones recipere, ac ea libere retinere; non obstantibus contraria consuetudine seu statuto vestri Ordinis confirmatione Sedis Apostolicae, aut quacumque firmitate alia roborato."

Now if the ecclesiastical authorities had been of opinion that the holding of property in common was permitted under the Ugolino Rule, there would have been no need for the insertion of the above-quoted passage in Pope Innocent's circular letter.

I take it, then, that as long as the Ugolino Rule was in force this discipline was held to be the normal discipline of the order, and that any deviation therefrom required to make it legal a special dispensation from the Holy See.

Hence it follows that when Cardinal Ugolino stipulated in the exemptions which he granted in virtue of the brief *Litterae tuae*, that the Ugolino Rule should always be observed, he to all intents and purposes stipulated that corporate poverty should always be observed, and that so far from disregarding Honorius's instructions he was carrying them out most loyally.

## CHAPTER VI

Of the text of the Ugolino Rule. Two copies have come down to us : one written by Ugolino himself in 1239, the other promulgated by Innocent IV in 1245. These versions differ slightly, and probably neither of them is identical with the original version, which seems to have been more rigid. Of Ugolino's alleged declaration that the Poor Ladies were not bound to observe the Benedictine rule, save only so far as concerned Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Wherein the version of 1239 differs from the version of 1245. A brief summary of the articles of the Ugolino statutes. Some notes concerning them and some quotations.

Two copies of the Ugolino Rule have come down to us, and, save in two points, only one of which is of moment, they do not differ materially from one another. The first copy is contained in a letter which Gregory IX addressed to the nuns of Ascoli Piceno on the 24th of May, 1239, and the second is appended to the encyclical *Solet annuere sedes apostolica* by which Innocent IV confirmed the rule for the whole order on November 12, 1245.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Ascoli version is described by Gregory in his prologue as the form of life which he had given to the nuns in the days before he was pope, and although the version of 1245 is referred to by Innocent IV in his letter which precedes it as the rule and form of life which his predecessor of happy memory, Pope Gregory IX, had conceded to the order by apostolic authority at the time when he was Bishop of Ostia, it is by no means certain that the text of either of them corresponds exactly with the text of the original version; there is reason to think, from Pope Innocent's letter to the sisters of Zamora of August 17, 1243, that the original version prescribed more fasts on bread and water than either of these prescribed; and from Gregory's own letters to the sisters of Prague of the 9th of April, 1237, and of the 5th of May, 1238, that, unlike the documents before us, it contained no clause exempting the sick from penitential austerities. Moreover, whereas the Ascoli version and the version of 1245 alike set forth in precise terms exactly to what extent it was intended that the

<sup>1</sup> Sbaralea gives the text of each of these documents, and Eubel, in the supplement to his *Epitome*, likewise gives the complete text of the first, No. IX.

Benedictine Rule should be observed—namely, when it was not in contradiction with the constitutions, the clause which dealt with this matter in the original version can hardly have been so clearly drafted, for a considerable number of Clare communities at the opening of the reign of Pope Innocent IV, when everywhere seemingly, save at Ascoli, it was still in force, believed or affected to believe, that all the articles of the Benedictine rule and all the articles of the constitutions were alike binding on conscience, and professing themselves to be grievously troubled on this account, petitioned the Holy See to relieve them of the embarrassment of two contradictory rules.

One cannot help thinking that this petition was not altogether the outcome of scrupulosity, and that perhaps there was a little more in it of the wisdom of the serpent than of the simplicity of the dove. Ugolino, it is true, sometimes indulged in slovenly composition, and it is likely that the wording of the clause complained of lent itself to the interpretation that the Poor Ladies gave to it, but it is most unlikely that they really believed that the meaning they put on his words was the meaning which he himself had attached to them, for not a few of the nuns had been intimately acquainted with him, and must have known very well that Pope Gregory IX was no fool; and, too, that he was not at all the kind of man, as his nephew, Cardinal Rainaldo, reminded some of them upon another occasion, to lay cunningly devised snares for devout women. Also, if their consciences had been in reality as grievously afflicted as they alleged, they would have hardly waited twenty years before making any attempt to rid themselves of a burthen so intolerable.

For some time past there seems to have been a very widespread feeling not only in the order itself, but in the minds of all persons connected with it, that the Ugolino Rule was a rule impossible to carry out. The efforts which Blessed Agnes had made, and was making, to change it for her own house, what Saint Clare was doing at Assisi with a like end in view, Pope Gregory's own tinkering for Ascoli Piceno: so many straws these which show in what direction the current of opinion was flowing. But though Gregory was not blind to the imperfections of the rule, and did what he could to remedy them by means of dispensations and verbal explanations, he was steadfastly determined that as long as he lived no radical change should be made in the official text. Perhaps the aged pontiff remembered how in days too long gone

by he himself, and self-willed Clare, and dear dead Saint Francis, had worked at it, and wept over it, and battled about it together; and seeing that he had not to conform his own life to its enactments, had a sort of sentimental affection for the letter of this strange piece of lawgiving, the child of their conflicting emotions. But the chief cause of his determination to hold fast at all costs to the text of the old rule was because he knew that his beloved daughters, though at one in desiring a change, were very far from being agreed as to what should take its place, and because he felt that it was beyond the wit of man, or, at all events, of a man who was nearly a hundred years old, even to outline a form of life which would prove acceptable to all of them.

These women, dead to the world, had sufficient worldly wisdom to know that new popes, like other new men, not unfrequently sniff at the policy of their predecessors, and in order to encourage Pope Innocent to do so when at last he was seated in Peter's chair, they deemed it expedient to call his attention to the unsatisfactory character of Pope Gregory's policy in their regard, and to make the most of the hardship which that policy entailed. This seems to be the explanation of their appeal to the Holy See in the matter of Benedictine observance.

The new Pope was not yet prepared to cast the old rule into the melting-pot. He did so later on, and with results which, as we shall see, can hardly have been displeasing to the shade of his cynical predecessor. Meanwhile, he made haste to send the Poor Ladies a little letter of condolence,<sup>1</sup> and by way of soothing their consciences vouchsafed a declaration and a piece of news at the reading of which, I suspect, they were as much astonished as we are. "I therefore," he said, "hereby declare what my predecessor, Pope Gregory IX, of pious memory, declared in the presence and hearing of my venerable Brother Rainaldo, Bishop of Ostia—namely, that the aforesaid rule of Saint Benedict only binds you so far as it concerns poverty, chastity and obedience." This statement of the Supreme Pontiff's is confirmed by Rainaldo himself, who dispatched a copy of the letter containing it to the Clares of Siena, and probably also to every other house of the order, under cover of a letter of his own, which runs thus:—

"Rainaldus miseratione divina Ostiensis et Velletrensis episcopus, Dilectis in Christo filiabus de ordine Sancti Damiani presentes litteras inspecturis, Salutem in Dominó.

<sup>1</sup> *Cum universitati vestrae.*

"Devotioni vestre tenore presentium facimus manifestum, quod dominus papa nuper vestro ordini concessit litteras in hac forma quas sigilli nostri munimine duximus roborandas." Here follows the text of Innocent's letter above referred to (*Cum universitati vestrae*). It is dated from the Lateran on the 17th from the Kalends of May (April 15), in the first year of our pontificate (1244), but Rainaldo's letter is undated. The original parchment on which these epistles are inscribed is at present laid up in the State archives at Siena. I have not had an opportunity of examining this document, but Father Olivarius Oligier, in his recent pamphlet—*De origine regularum ordinis S. Clarae*, says that it measures 155 centimetres by 180, and that the seal of wax is still attached to it. In the same work he gives the text of Rainaldo's letter, which had never been printed before, and he has kindly allowed me to reproduce it in this book. He does not give the text of Innocent's letter, but says that, save the date, it is word for word the same as the letter *Cum universitati vestrae* which that pontiff addressed to all the Poor Ladies on the 21st of August, 1244. Sbaralea gives the text of this letter from the original copy, which is still in the possession of the convent of Santa Chiara at Assisi.

What Pope Innocent says in these letters is sufficiently strange, but what he says in his letter on the same subject to Blessed Agnes and her sisters, of November 13, 1243, is more extraordinary still. In this epistle he told them that the note concerning the Benedictine rule had been placed at the head of their statutes to give them weight, seeing that it was of most venerable origin, and had been over and over again approved by the Holy See; but that it would be a mistake to think that on that account they were in reality bound to observe it, for Pope Gregory had declared in the presence and hearing of his nephew, the Bishop of Ostia, that such was not the case, save only so far as concerned poverty, chastity and obedience, and that this statement of his venerable predecessor's he hereby made his own.

The reader will remember that it had been ordained by the Lateran Council of 1215 that henceforth all new religious communities should adopt some old and approved form of religious life.<sup>1</sup> If, then, Innocent's tale be true, Cardinal Ugolino took care

<sup>1</sup> The decree referred to runs thus: "Ne nimia religionum diversitas gravem in ecclesia Dei confusionem inducat, firmiter prohibemus, ne quis de cetero novam religionem inveniat: sed quicumque voluerit ad religionem converti, unam de

to comply with the Lateran decree very exactly on paper, albeit it was not in his mind that the Poor Ladies should carry it out in their manner of living.

In considering this matter it is important to keep the following facts in mind—

(1) Pope Innocent does not say when or where or under what circumstances his predecessor, Pope Gregory IX, had made the statement which Rainaldo put in his mouth; but since Gregory died on the 22nd of August, 1241, it must have been two years at least before the time when Rainaldo first repeated it, and for all we know it may have been twenty.

(2) Pope Innocent does not tell us that Gregory said this thing directly to Rainaldo himself, but to some other person or persons when Rainaldo was standing by, and was near enough to overhear the conversation.

(3) Rainaldo was a very honest man, but somewhat muddle-headed, and at times he seems to have had a way of talking wildly.

(4) The Ugolino statutes alone are very far from constituting an adequate rule of life.

That Gregory at some time said something to some one in his nephew's hearing as to the measure of observance to be given to the Benedictine rule, of this there can be no doubt, and I think it may be taken for granted that what he said was in substance the same as his written statement to the nuns of Ascoli Piceno. Cardinal Rainaldo's memory, when he told the tale to Pope Innocent, seems to have played him false; but presently, on thinking the matter over, he discovered his mistake, and did his utmost to rectify it. On the 13th of November, 1245, Pope Innocent, as we have seen, confirmed the Ugolino Rule for the whole order, and to make it quite clear what rule he had confirmed he added to his deed of confirmation the text of the rule, word for word as Ugolino had written it—at least so he says: "*Ea propter, dilectae in Domino filiae, vestris precibus inclinati ordinis vestri regulam et formam vivendi a felicitis recordationis Gregorio Papa praedecessore nostro, tunc Ostiense episcopo, vobis auctoritate apostolica traditam, annotatam praesentibus vobis eadem auctoritate confirmamus et praesentis scripti patrocinio communimus quae talis est.*"

Now the version which follows, though it differs slightly from approbatis assumat. Similiter qui voluerit religiosum domum fundare de novo, regulam et institutionem accipiat de religionibus approbatis."

the Ascoli version, contains the same instructions concerning the Benedictine Rule: "Regulam Beatissimi Benedicti in qua virtutum perfectio et summa discretio noscitur instituta, quae et a sanctis patribus a principio devote suscepta est et ab ecclesia Romana venerabiliter approbata, vobis tradimus<sup>1</sup> observandam in omnibus, in quibus eadem vivendi formula vobis a nobis tradita, secundum quam specialiter vivere decrevistis, contraria minime comprobatur."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, then, that if the rule and the constitutions clashed, the constitutions were to be obeyed; and that when Ugolino was silent, which was often the case, recourse was to be had to Saint Benedict.

Although the constitutions are here referred to as "a form of life," they are in reality simply a collection of rough notes on certain phases of the religious life; and although Ugolino informs us that they were drafted with great care, they seem to have been hastily jotted down without any attempt at order or any sense of proportion: the obvious is emphasized, trifles are underlined, superfluous details spun out and insisted on at length, whilst matters of grave moment are disposed of in a single sentence, which is sometimes so confused and vague as to be almost unintelligible.

The text is divided into nine paragraphs or chapters, as Ugolino calls them in one of his letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague. The first concerns enclosure and the reception of neophytes; the second, the divine office and silence; the third, fasting and diet, the care of the sick, apparel, beds and bedding; the fourth treats at length of the admission of strangers, and, curiously enough, there is a note in parenthesis about the cardinal-protector; the fifth concerns the chaplain, the administration of the dying and the burial of the dead: the sixth, the grille preachers and preaching, and extraneous priests for communities without private chaplains; the seventh, the visitor, his faculties and authority, and the manner of his visitation; the eighth, the doorkeeper, the deputy doorkeeper, the door itself and the keys, and it contains, too, a long supplementary note concerning the admission of strangers; the ninth ordains that all the articles of the constitutions should be fully carried out by all the houses of the order, and that such dispensations as from time to time should be granted by the Holy See to

<sup>1</sup> The Ascoli version has *concedimus* for *tradimus*.

<sup>2</sup> The last clause of the Ascoli version runs thus: "in quibus eidem vivendi formulae vobis a nobis traditae, cum adhuc essemus in minori officio constituti, contraria minime comprobatur."

individual communities must not be considered applicable to any other communities.

In some of these notes Ugolino repeats what Saint Benedict has already said, and said much better; and in some of them he ordains new things not always incompatible with things Benedictine, but more often altogether out of harmony with the spirit as well as the letter of the old monastic rule.

Of this we have a noteworthy example in the last clause of the opening chapter—the clause concerning the reception of neophytes. For such Saint Benedict ordains a novitiate of twelve months, during which time, he says, let the novices be watched over with care by one who hath the art of winning souls, and who, scrutinizing them very curiously, shall strive with all solicitude to know whether in sooth they be seeking God, and are eager for the “work of God,” for discipline, and for humiliation.

This leisurely method of recruitment did not commend itself seemingly to the enthusiasm of Ugolino’s colleagues: I suspect there was a sharp tussle over it, and that the old cardinal was at last overcome by the tears and entreaties of his determined daughter; at all events, in the passage referred to he reduces the novitiate to a few days for all save children who had not yet arrived at years of discernment. There can be no mistake as to his meaning: the wording in this case is perfectly clear. After insisting that the hardship of the rule must be carefully explained to all who desire to join the order, and that no postulant must be admitted who on account of old age or mental or physical weakness would not be able to endure them, he says: “*Omnes vero ex more intra claustrum receptae, si aetatis intelligibilis fuerint, citius deponant habitum saecularem et infra paucos dies professionem faciant in manu abbatissae; quod etiam de servientibus firmiter observetur.*”

This clause is the more remarkable because under the Ugolino Rule vows were taken and vows for life, not the ordinary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but the old Benedictine vows concerning obedience, amendments of manners and—mark this—stability. Now what Saint Benedict means by stability he himself tells us: “Let those,” he says, “who shall be received into the congregation be made to understand clearly that henceforth it shall not be lawful for them to shake their necks free from the yoke of the rule, or to forsake the home of their profession.”

In that strangely pathetic and strangely incoherent document

which the Seraphic Father gave to the world when the hand of Death was upon him, and of which he says: "This is a memorial, a warning, an exhortation, the last will and testament of me, Brother Francis," we find these words: "And when Our Lord vouchsafed to give me some brethren no man showed me what to do, but God Himself showed me that we should live according to the Gospel, and so I caused a form of life to be written in a few words and simply, and the Lord Pope confirmed it." This was the first rule of the Friars Minor, the rule that Innocent III confirmed by word of mouth; it prescribed, as we have already seen, neither vows nor novitiate, and when the Ugolino constitutions were compiled it was still in force, and still working well. Saint Francis, naturally enough, desired that the discipline of his first and second orders should be alike in this respect. But the long-headed Lord of Ostia objected: the old Benedictine plan, he said, savoured more of discretion—vows after a novitiate, and presently a compromise was arrived at: vows without a novitiate. That, or something like it, was probably the origin of this extraordinary clause. But why, when a change was made in the case of the friars, the old discipline was still maintained for the Poor Ladies it is hard to say. Perhaps it was only maintained on paper: it is possible that the original formula was inserted in Pope Gregory's letter of 1239 through the carelessness of the scribe who engrossed it, or through Gregory's own inadvertence.

Be this as it may, in the corresponding formula of the version published by Innocent IV in 1242, a single word was changed: *statutos* was substituted for *paucos*, and the observance of the old Benedictine discipline concerning the reception of novices was thereby rendered obligatory. Pope Innocent's formula runs thus: "Et infra *statutos* dies" (clearly the twelve months prescribed by Saint Benedict) "*professionem faciant in manu abbatissæ.*"

This is the one point of moment in which the rule of 1245 differs from the rule of 1239, for although in several passages the reading is not quite the same, in no case save the above is the sense of the text altered. There is, indeed, an addition, albeit of trifling account, in the chapter concerning clothing: a short clause is added to enable the nuns to wear aprons when engaged in manual labour.

Not only in respect to the receptions of neophytes, but in several other respects the constitutions of Cardinal Ugolino clash with the Benedictine rule.

In the passage above quoted concerning the reception of postulants and also elsewhere, Cardinal Ugolino makes mention of two classes of nuns, whom he calls respectively ladies (*dominae*) and servants (*servientes*). Saint Benedict makes no such distinction, though in all probability at the time we are now considering there were likewise in Benedictine convents lay sisters and choir sisters.

Again, Saint Benedict ordains that all his children should take part in "the work of God"; Ugolino, that only such as could read should recite the Divine Office, and that the rest should say the Lord's Prayer at the appointed Hours instead; he adds, however, that the illiterate might be instructed, adults as well as children, provided they were humble and intelligent and the abbess should deem it fitting, "and in that case," he says, "let a discreet teacher be found for them."

Moreover, owing to Ugolino's stringent regulations concerning enclosure and the admittance of strangers, it was impossible for the Poor Ladies to observe the Benedictine precept of hospitality; for when once they had been professed they were never suffered to go forth save only for the purpose of founding new settlements, and no outsiders could cross their threshold, save cardinals of the Roman court and labourers whose services were required for some work of necessity, unless they had first obtained the authorization of the Pope or of the cardinal-protector.

What a godsend it must have been for these poor women when some stray prince of the Church chanced to be in their neighbourhood, and condescended to pay them a visit. But even so, he was not permitted to enter their dwelling with a great train of followers, but with only one or two of his more reputable companions—"Cum uno vel duobus honestioribus quidem sociis." "And if peradventure at any time," Ugolino goes on to say, "any prelate of less degree should obtain the requisite authorization to visit any of your monasteries, let him content himself with one attendant, and that a godly man of irreproachable morals."

It would seem that these strict rules concerning the admission of strangers were not always complied with, for on the 22nd of November, 1236, Pope Gregory deemed it expedient to address an encyclical (*Etsi omnium illa cura*) to all Christian folk, wherein he insists on their exact observance under penalty of excommunication; and four months later (March 25, 1237) he republished it, adding this clause: "If any man, therefore, shall rashly presume

to infringe this our commandment let him know that he will thereby incur the indignation of God and of His Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul."

The puritanical sourness of these constitutions obtrudes itself in no less marked fashion in the note concerning meat and drink: "Jejunandi autem," says Ugolino, "haec observantia teneatur: ut omni tempore jejunent quotidie, quarta quidem et sexta feria extra quadragesimam a pulmento et vino pariter abstinentes, nisi praecipuum festum alicujus sancti in eis occurrerit celebrandum; in quibus diebus, quarta scilicet et sexta feria, si poma aut fructus vel herbae crudae adfuerint, reficiendis sororibus apponantur.

"In quadragesima vero majori quatuor diebus, in quadragesima autem S. Martini tribus diebus in hebdomada in pane et aqua jejunent, et omnibus vigiliis solemnibus, si de earum fuerit voluntate."

That the nuns were to fast throughout the year, no exception being made in favour of Sundays or festivals, or even Christmas Day; that is to say, that they were to have only one full meal in the course of the twenty-four hours, and that this on four days a week in Lent and on three days a week in the Lent of Saint Martin (from November 11 to December 24) was to consist only of bread and water, these things are perfectly clear. It is not easy, however, to determine what Ugolino had in his mind when he bade the nuns abstain alike from wine and *pulmentum* on the Wednesdays and Fridays out of Lent, unless some great festival should happen to fall on one of these days.

What does he mean by *pulmentum*? Salimbene, a compatriot who wrote in the same century, uses this word once and, I think, only once, but in such a way as to leave no doubt as to the signification he attached to it. He tells us a story in praise of one of his friends—Brother Nicholas of Montefeltro—who, by the power of prayer restored to its pristine beauty a breviary that had been by accident boiled. The prayer-book had slipped into a cauldron of soup that was simmering on the hearth from the hand or the pocket, or perhaps the sleeve of the brother who was tending it. The regular cook was absent, and the guardian of the place had begged this man for the love of God to prepare for the brethren a mess of what Salimbene calls "cucinam," and he explains: "Id est potagium sive pulmentum." Moreover, in the Vulgate this word almost always signifies soup<sup>1</sup> of some kind. Albeit Du Cange says that *pulmentum* was a name given in mediæval times

<sup>1</sup> See Gen. xxv. 29; xxvi. 4, 17; iv. Reg. and iv. 38; Dan. xi. 32.

to any kind of food eaten with bread, and that it often signifies fish or any kind of made dish.

Now on the 10th of April, 1233, we find Ugolino, at this time Pope Gregory IX, addressing a circular letter<sup>1</sup> to all Clare convents in the duchy of Spoleto, and in Lombardy, and in Tuscia, wherein he begs them to temper their daily fast with at least a glass of light wine and a mouthful of *pulmentum*. There is no reason to think that the nuns in question neglected this advice, and in all probability by the year 1238 the custom of taking a little refreshment in the course of the morning had become pretty general throughout the order. I think, then, it is most likely that in the versions of the Ugolino statutes of 1238 and 1245 the injunction to abstain from *pulmentum* and wine on the Wednesdays and Fridays out of Lent regarded, not the dinner, but only the morning collation.

It seems strange at first sight that a more liberal *régime* should have been permitted at lunch on the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent than on ordinary Wednesdays and Fridays. This anomaly was doubtless on account of the frequent bread-and-water dinners prescribed for that season.

These harsh regulations concerning diet are in striking contrast and, in some respects, in direct contradiction with the corresponding clauses of Saint Benedict's benign rule. After intimating in Chapter XXXVIII that the monk should always begin his dinner with a basin of good soup, the saint continues in his chatty genial way: "It seems to me that it should be sufficient for daily refectation at all seasons of the year, whether the day be a feast-day or whether it be a fast, if two hot dishes be always set on the table, on account of the infirmities of divers folk, so that he who listeth not to eat of the one may regale himself from the other. Let, therefore, the brethren be content with two hot dishes, and when fruit or green stuff is in season, let such also be set before them." As regards bread Saint Benedict desired that every man should be provided daily, as well on fasts as on feasts, with a loaf of a pound weight, and, he adds: "If the brethren's labour be unusually hard let the abbot add to their ration whatever he deem fit, but let him be very wary of anything like surfeiting, lest peradventure his monks be afflicted with indigestion, and let all of them remember this: there is nothing so unbecoming to a Christian man as gluttony."

<sup>1</sup> "Quia et Apostolus."

What his sentiments were concerning wine we have already seen.

The reader will note that in the fasting clause above quoted of the Ugolino constitutions nothing is said about abstinence from meat or any other kind of animal food at any time of the year, save by implication on the bread-and-water days therein referred to; moreover, the Benedictine rule, though it forbids all but the sick and weakly to partake of the flesh of four-footed beasts, has no prohibition against the eating of eggs, milk, butter, cheese, poultry or any kind of birds. Albeit on the 5th of May, 1238, Pope Gregory wrote to the Poor Ladies of Prague authorizing them to partake of milk foods, on account of the coldness of their climate on all Sundays and Thursdays, and that, he says, notwithstanding the fact that according to your rule you ought to fast every day on Lenten fare. This letter<sup>1</sup> contains many other dispensations. The passage referred to runs thus:—

“Vobis itaque praesentium auctoritate concedibus, ut non obstante, quod omni tempore secundum eamdem Regulam in cibo quadragesimali jejunare debetis, diebus Dominicis et quinta feria bis comedere et laticiniis refici valeatis.”

It would seem, then, that the original fasting clause was stricter to this extent than those that have come down to us.

As has been already stated, the Ascoli version of the constitutions and the version which Pope Innocent published in 1245 alike provide that the penitential rigours of the rule should not be imposed on the sick. Invalids and children, it is expressly stated, should not be suffered to practise them; and the sick, it is added, must be provided with every kind of nourishment and all other things of which they may stand in need; amongst the other things are specified feather pillows and feather beds, warm slippers and woollen stockings. Indeed, the regulations concerning the sick are, all things considered, most humane; but there was one consolation which was not allowed to them, and from the deprivation of which they suffered much—a little confidential gossip, for the stringent regulations concerning silence bound not only the sound, but the sick. No unnecessary talk was allowed without the special authorization of the abbess, and such authorization was in no case to be given to two persons desiring to converse alone.

And here again, in this matter of conversation, the constitutions are far sterner than the Benedictine rule: St. Benedict, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *Pia meditatione pensantes.*

was no lover of idle words, but he deemed it sufficient to enjoin his disciples to refrain from unnecessary conversation after Compline at night until after Tierce the next morning, and at all times in the dormitory, the cloister, the refectory and the chapel.

As to government, the constitutions provide that the whole order should be submitted to the jurisdiction of a Protector to be appointed by the Pope from among the cardinals or bishops of the Roman Church. This person, who was to hold office for life, was in his turn to name a Visitor—a man whose behaviour was beyond suspicion—to visit the various communities from time to time, and if need be correct them, in head and members. The convent chaplains likewise were submitted to his jurisdiction, and if at any time they should show themselves refractory the Visitor had power to dismiss them; curiously enough, Ugolino does not say by whom they were to be appointed. These chaplains were to be godly men of good reputation, not too young, but of suitable age, and they were never to presume to enter the cloister unless their services were required for the administration of the sick or the burial of the dead: the chapel where they celebrated Divine Service was always separated from the rest of the monastery by an iron grille.

The only other officials whom Ugolino mentions are the door-keeper and the deputy doorkeeper: they were to be godfearing sisters of befitting years and irreproachable behaviour: women who at the same time were diligent and discreet, and such as would not be likely to lose their keys.

## CHAPTER VII

Of the relations between the friars and the Poor Ladies in Ugolino's day. Celano's testimony and Saint Clare's, and the testimony of official papers. Of Brother Philip of Adria, the first Visitor-General. Of Saint Clare's love of sermons. A most important footnote.

ALTHOUGH there is nothing in the Ugolino Rule to suggest that the women who were supposed to observe it had anything whatever to do with the "Seraphic Religion," we know from other sources that the Order of Friars Minor and what was later on called the Order of Saint Clare were in the beginning linked together by certain well-defined ties.

Saint Francis desired it, Saint Clare desired it, and if Ugolino wished otherwise he submitted his will to theirs, and in spite of opposition, for almost from the first there was opposition on the part of some of the brethren, as long as he lived he took care that the bonds which united the two orders were neither severed nor loosened. These things are certain, if there is anything certain in this tangle of uncertainties.

First as to what, in this matter, Saint Francis wished for, and what was the will of Saint Clare—

Celano, in his *Legenda Secunda*, Part II, Chapter CLV, bears the following testimony: "When the man of God had tested them and knew by manifest signs that the Lady Clare and her sisters were ready for Christ's sake to suffer the loss of all things and to work with their hands, and to incline always to Christ's holy commandments, to them and to all other women professing poverty in like fashion he promised the help and counsel of himself and his brethren for ever. This promise as long as he lived he faithfully carried out, and when the hand of death was upon him he bade his disciples do likewise; for, said he, "we and these poor little women have been led from the world by the same spirit. . . . If we had not called them we should have done them no wrong; but were we now to neglect them where would be our charity? . . . It is not my will that any man should visit them at his own will and pleasure, but this commandment I give unto you: let spiritual men be appointed, men who by their worthy lives have long proved

themselves worthy, men who have no hankering for this sort of service.”<sup>1</sup>

By way of illustrating his point Celano adds three stories; the two first, I venture to think, breathe rather the spirit of Celano than the spirit of St. Francis; but the third, in which he tells us “how St. Francis preached a sermon without words,” is altogether Franciscan: “When the Poor Ladies had assembled, eager for the Word of God and no less eager to look on their father’s face, the blessed man raised his eyes to heaven, where his heart ever was, and kneeling down on the pavement began to converse with Christ, and presently he ordered ashes to be brought, and with some of them he made a circle about him, and the rest he sprinkled on his head, and the Poor Ladies, who expected a sermon, were astounded that he remained silent kneeling in the midst of his ashes. On a sudden he rose up and in a loud voice recited the ‘Miserere,’ and then he straightway departed, and the women began to weep, for they knew what he wished to teach: to esteem themselves what they were in his eyes—ashes. Such was his conversation with these holy women, such his manner of visiting them, and he desired that all his brethren should follow his example—that whilst serving Christ’s handmaids for love of Him, like birds they should ever beware of the snares of the fowler.”

Celano’s testimony is confirmed by the more explicit testimony of Saint Clare, who in the sixth chapter of her rule has preserved for us the exact words of Saint Francis’s promise: “Seeing that by divine inspiration you have become the daughters and handmaids of the Most High Sovereign Prince our Heavenly Father, and because you have espoused yourselves to the Paraclete by choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy gospel, I will and

<sup>1</sup> The complete passage runs thus: “Nam, cum per plura summae perfectionis argumenta probatas, sanctus eas cognoverit omnem pro Christo paratas sustinere jacturam et subire laborem, nec a sanctis mandatis velle aliquando declinare, promisit eis, et aliis paupertatem in simili conversatione profitentibus firmiter suum et fratrum suorum auxilium et consilium perpetuo exhibere. Haec semper, dum vixit, diligenter exsolvit, et fieri semper, cum morti proximus esset, non negligenter mandavit. Unum atque eundem spiritum, dicens, fratres et dominas illas pauperculas de hoc saeculo eduxisse. Mirantibus quandoque fratribus quod tam sanctas Christi famulas sua praesentia corporali non saepius visitaret, dicebat: Non credatis, carissimi, quod eas perfecte non diligam. Si enim crimen esset eas in Christo fovere, nonne maius fuisset eas Christo junxisse? Et quidem non eas vocasse nulla fuisset injuria; non curare vocatas summa est inclementia. Sed exemplum do vobis, ut quemadmodum ego facio ita et vos faciatis. Nolo quod aliquis ad visitandum eas spontaneum se offerat; sed invitos et plurimum renitentes jubeo ipsarum servitiis deputari, spirituales dumtaxat viros, digna et longaeva conversatione probatos.”

I hereby promise on behalf of myself and my successors ever to have for you the same diligent care and special solicitude as for the brethren."<sup>1</sup> And Saint Clare adds: "and that promise until the day of his death he most diligently fulfilled, and he desired, too, that his brethren should keep it to the end."<sup>2</sup>

Also in the same document we find these words, which indicate very clearly by what kind of ties the Seraphic Mother desired the two orders to be united:—

"Clare, the unworthy handmaid of Christ and the little plant of the most Blessed Father Francis, doth promise obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent<sup>3</sup> and his successors canonically elected and to the Roman Church. And as in the beginning of her religious life she promised together with her sisters obedience to Blessed Francis, so doth she now promise to observe the same inviolably to his successors. And let the other sisters be always bound to render obedience to the successors of Blessed Francis, and likewise to Sister Clare and to the abbesses canonically elected who shall succeed her."<sup>4</sup>

"Let our Visitor be always of the order of the Friars Minor according to the will and commandment of our Cardinal."<sup>5</sup>

"Moreover, we beg the aforesaid order of Friars Minor to grant us as a favour for the love of God and Blessed Francis, a chaplain of tried discretion and a clerk to serve him of good repute, and likewise two lay brethren, lovers of virtue and men of holy conversation, to help us in our poverty, even as we have always had through the compassion of the same order."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Quia divina inspiratione fecistis vos filias et ancillas altissimi summi Regis Patris coelestis, et Spiritui sancto vos desponsastis eligendo vivere secundum perfectionem sancti Evangelii: volo et promitto per me et Fratres meos semper habere de vobis tanquam de ipsis curam diligentem, et sollicitudinem specialem."

<sup>2</sup> "Quod dum vixit diligenter implevit, et a fratribus voluit semper implendum."

<sup>3</sup> Innocent IV.

<sup>4</sup> "Clara indigna ancilla Christi et plantula beatissimi Patris Francisci promittit obedientiam et reverentiam domino papae Innocentio et successoribus ejus canonice intransitibus, et ecclesiae Romanae."

<sup>5</sup> "Et sicut in principio conversionis suae una cum sororibus suis promisit obedientiam beato Francisco, ita eandem promittit inviolabiliter servare successoribus suis."

<sup>6</sup> "Et aliae sorores teneantur semper successoribus beati Francisci, et Sorori Clarae, et aliis Abbatissis canonice electis ei succedentibus obedire."

*Regula S. Clarae, caput primum.*

<sup>5</sup> "Visitor noster sit semper de Ordine Fratrum Minorum secundum voluntatem et mandatum nostri Cardinalis." (Cap. xii.)

<sup>6</sup> "Capellanum etiam cum uno socio clerico bonae famae, discretionis providae, et duos fratres laicos sanctae conversationis et honestatis amatores, in subsidium paupertatis nostrae, sicut misericorditer a praedicto Ordine Fratrum Minorum

"Moreover, let the sisters be always bound to have for governor, protector and corrector that cardinal of the Holy Roman Church whom the Lord Pope shall have deputed to minister to the Friars Minor."<sup>1</sup>

The reader will note that though Saint Clare here asks for the spiritual and temporal assistance of the friars as a favour, she also takes care to remind them that it was a favour which they had hitherto always granted, and which they were not at liberty to refuse, unless they were prepared to disclaim the written bond of their founder, a copy of which, for greater security, she inserts in the sixth chapter of her rule.

The first Clare Visitor whose name has come down to us, probably the first appointed, was one Brother Philip. This man, according to Jordan of Giano, was "zelator of the Poor Ladies" when Saint Francis was in the East; and contrary to the wishes of Saint Francis, who always preferred that adversaries should be overcome by humility rather than by the arm of the law, he obtained letters from the Apostolic See enabling him to defend the aforesaid ladies by excommunicating their persecutors. When Saint Francis had returned to Italy he straightway laid the matter before "the Lord of Ostia, his Pope" (Ugolino), and through his good offices the letters in question were cancelled. The Vatican Register, however, contains no record of either the issuing or the revocation of these letters, nor have we any other trace of them, though, of course, this is no proof that Jordan's statement is inaccurate: so many letters have disappeared, and the papal registers of this period were not kept with very great care.

Professor Boehmer, who has gone into the matter at length, is of opinion that Jordan was a man of absolute integrity: "On ne pourra donc guère," he says, "le soupçonner de travestir sciemment la vérité"; but he adds: "Mais l'image du passé n'a-t-elle pas pu se modifier dans sa mémoire sans qu'il s'en soit lui-même douté, c'est ce que nous ne pouvons plus déterminer."<sup>2</sup> Jordan wrote his *Memoires*, we must not forget, some forty years after the occurrence of the event which he here recalls.

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semper habuimus, intuitu pietatis Dei et Beati Francisci ab eodem Ordine de gratia postulamus." (Cap. xii.)

<sup>1</sup> "Ad hoc, Sorores firmiter teneantur semper habere illum de sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalibus pro nostro Gubernatore, Protectore et Correctore, qui fuerit a Domino Papa Fratribus Minoribus deputatus." (Cap. xii.)

<sup>2</sup> Boehmer. *Chronica Fratris Jordani*. Introduction, p. lxxi. Paris, Fischbacher, 1908.

We next hear of Brother Philip on the 31st of January, 1233, on which day Pope Gregory IX wrote a letter to the Cistercian Abbot of Saint Galgano in the diocese of Volterra,<sup>1</sup> wherein he told him amongst other things that he had given instructions to "Brother Philip<sup>2</sup> of the order of Friars Minor and Visitor of the monasteries of the Poor Cloistered Women," to find homes in their convents for the wives and daughters of certain noblemen who desired to don the Cistercian habit.

Only one other papal letter has come down to us in which Brother Philip's name is mentioned: a brief which Innocent IV addressed to Abbess Omelia and Sisters Marina and Philippa of the Clare convent at Castro Ferentino in the diocese of Volterra on the 27th of June, 1254.<sup>3</sup> In this document the Pope refers to him as Brother Philip, formerly visitor of the monasteries of the Order of Saint Damian: "Fratrī Philippo quondam visitatori monasteriorum Ordinis Sancti Damiani."

Celano tells us in the *Legenda prima* (Chapter X) that the seventh disciple of Saint Francis was "Brother Philip, whose tongue the Lord had touched with the pebble of purity, so that he spake sweet things concerning Him, and that there dropped from his lips sweetness, as it were, from an honeycomb, and," he adds, "understanding and interpreting the sacred Scriptures, although he was not learned; verily this man became a worthy imitator of them of whom the rulers of the synagogue said that they were ignorant and without letters."

The same writer says in his *Life of St. Clare* that among the devout preachers through whom the Seraphic Mother bestowed on her spiritual children the food of God's Word was Brother Philip of Adria,<sup>4</sup> and that once whilst he was preaching the virgin of Christ was marvellously consoled throughout the greater part of his sermon by the vision of a most beautiful child. It would seem that Celano had this tale from a sister who was present at Philip's preaching, and who had herself witnessed the apparition, for he

<sup>1</sup> *Ad grande salutis exordium.*

<sup>2</sup> "Fratrī Philippo de Ordine Fratrum Minorum, visitatori monasteriorum pauperum inclusarum."

<sup>3</sup> *Cum a nobis petitur.* Sbaralea gives the text of this letter (No. 553, vol. i), which he dates May 28, 1254. Eubel, in his *Bul. Fran. Epitome* (p. 70, No. 718), notes that the correct date is June 27, 1254.

<sup>4</sup> Most likely Antria, in the neighbourhood of Perugia, as Papini and Lipsin note on the margin of the Assisi codex, and Papini in his *Storia di S. Francesco*, vol. i. p. 197, gives his reasons for thinking so.

adds, "She who was deemed worthy to behold this thing concerning her mother was filled thereat with ineffable sweetness." What follows is significant: "Although Blessed Clare was not herself learned, she delighted in the discourses of learned men, for she knew that beneath the husk of their speech a choice kernel lay hid, and the difficulty she had in discovering it added zest to the savour thereof.<sup>1</sup> Albeit she was able to derive profit from the sermons of all kinds of folk, and she used to think that it was sometimes as prudent to pluck roses from a hedge briar as to eat of the fruit of a noble tree. Was Brother Philip of Adria one of Saint Clare's sweetbriars? It would seem so. That he and the honey-tongued illiterate of Celano's first legend were one and the same individual is, I think, certain; and that this man was identical with Jordan's zelator of the Poor Ladies and with Pope Gregory's and Pope Innocent's Visitor of the poor enclosed nuns, who can doubt?

Brother Philip was the only man of whom it can at present be said with certainty that he was official Visitor of the Poor Ladies at any time in Ugolino's day, but it is most unlikely that he was their only Visitor during this period. Before Ugolino died the order had already spread into France, Spain, Germany, Bohemia, Poland and other distant lands, and one man can hardly have been able to visit all the convents.

NOTE.—Since this chapter was written—now several years ago—a most important document has been brought to light: a circular letter from Cardinal Rainaldo to the sisters of Saint Damian's and twenty-two other Clare communities, wherein he informs them that Pope Gregory IX had recently named him Protector of their order, and that their Visitor, Brother Pacificus, having sent in his resignation, finding the burthen too heavy for him, he (Rainaldo) had accepted it, and appointed in his stead by the Pope's express command that devout and Godfearing man, Brother Philip, who in days of yore had endured in their behalf so many trials and labours—"qui pro vobis tot subiit angustias et labores." This document is dated Perugia, August 18, 1228. It is at present in the State Archives at Siena, and Fr. Oliger gives the complete text of it in an appendix to his recent Clare pamphlet above referred to, with some most instructive notes. It would seem, then, that Brother Philip was Visitor during two periods, and that he received his second appointment to this office in the month of August, 1228.

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<sup>1</sup> If the letters attributed to her be genuine, Saint Clare at least had a fluent pen. Perhaps Brother Thomas meant to say that she was not so experienced a punster as he was. If anything she surpassed him in the art of obscure writing.

## CHAPTER VIII

An extraordinary anecdote of Celano's touching the question dealt with in the last chapter. Reasons for thinking that he heard it from Saint Clare herself, but did not note it down exactly as she related it. Of the quarrel between the sisters and the brethren in the days of several popes.

IN the same chapter in which Celano tells us of the vision by which Saint Clare was consoled whilst Brother Philip was preaching, he relates another and, in its way, no less extraordinary tale—a tale of which much has been made by those writers who maintain that it was the fixed policy of Pope Gregory IX to sever the ties which originally united the Order of Friars Minor and the Order of Poor Ladies, and that, notwithstanding the wishes, clearly expressed both by word of mouth and in writing, of the Seraphic Father himself. This story in the original runs thus—

“Cum semel dominus Papa Gregorius prohibuisset, ne aliquis frater ad monasteria dominarum sine sua licentia pergeret, dolens pia mater cibum sacrae doctrinae rarius habituras Sorores, cum gemitu dixit: Omnes nobis auferat de cetero Fratres, postquam vitalis nutrimenti nobis abstulit praebitores. Et statim omnes Frateres ad Ministerium remisit, nolens habere eleemosynarios qui panem corporalem acquirerent, postquam panis spiritualis eleemosynarios non haberent. Quod cum audiret Papa Gregorius statim prohibitum illud in generalis Ministri manibus relaxavit.

Briefly, then, and in plain English, Celano says—

“Now it came to pass when the Lord Pope Gregory forbade the friars to visit the houses of the Poor Ladies without his special licence, that this gentle mother was grieved thereat, because she feared that her children would be able the less frequently to partake of the food of their holy doctrine, and groaning a little, she said: ‘Now that he hath deprived us of our spiritual almoners, let him take also them that minister to our temporal needs,’ and without delay she dismissed every one of the friars attached to her service. And when Pope Gregory heard what had happened, forthwith he relaxed his prohibition, and committed the matter to the hands of the minister-general (John Parenti).”

This anecdote rests on the authority of Celano alone. Pope

Gregory's brief therein referred to was issued on the 28th of September, 1230, nor is it the only official paper that has come down to us in this connection: there is a whole series of them, of which the first is dated November 20, 1223, and the last May 31, 1241. Now in these letters we find Gregory consistently doing his utmost not to sever, but to strengthen the bonds which united the two orders. Hence the question arises, from whom did Celano learn the above-quoted anecdote? and it is not one, I think, impossible to reply to, for we know something of his movements when the things which he recounts must have taken place (if they ever did take place); something, too, of the position which he then held in the order, thanks to a friend of his who knew him well and had worked under him in the mission-field—honest old Jordan.

These men seem to have met for the first time at the general chapter held at Assisi at Whitsuntide in the year 1221—that famous chapter at which were present some three thousand friars, the last chapter, in all probability, over which Saint Francis presided, and the beginning of their friendship came about in this fashion: when all the business was finished, and the brethren were preparing to disperse, it suddenly flashed across the founder's mind that no provision had been made for building up the order in "Theutonia," where missionaries had already been sent who had made no headway. But though he lingered on for some years longer Sister Death was now sitting close to Brother Francis. He had sung the gospel at the opening Mass, he had preached the opening sermon, to the people likewise he had discoursed at length; he had presided over the meetings of the friars for nine days in succession, and it was now altogether beyond him to tell them what was in his heart: he sank down by Elias's side, and plucking him by the sleeve bade him be his spokesman; and Elias, bending over the sick man, listened to what he whispered in his ear; and then, drawing himself upright, repeated it in a loud voice to the others, and so he delivered the whole discourse, sentence by sentence, and before each sentence he cried out: "Brethren, thus saith the Brother," for, for every one of them, Blessed Francis was the brother *per excellentiam*.

"There is a region," Elias said, "called Theutonia, where dwell Christian men and devout. We often see them in our parts on their way to the threshold of the saints, with long staves in their hands and great candles, singing the praises of God as they

go and sweating in the noonday sun. Albeit hitherto our folk have been so evilly entreated in their land that they have been forced to come home again without having accomplished anything. Wherefore, the brother saith, he is loth to compel any man to go there; but to such as desire from love of God and zeal for souls to undertake this mission, he will give the same letters of obedience as to them that go over sea, aye, and in ampler form." Whereat some ninety brethren, eager for the crown of martyrdom, offered themselves for death; of these twelve clerks were elected, and fifteen lay brothers, and towards the close of September the little band set out under the leadership of Cæsar of Spires. Among the clerks who accompanied him was our old friend John di Piano Carpine, "and Brother Jordan the deacon, and Brother Thomas of Zelano."

Armed with letters of recommendation as the friars now were, they were received with open arms by the rulers of the Church in Germany, and it was not very long before the German mission became a success.

All these things are noted down by Jordan of Giano, but he makes no further entry in his journal of his friend Thomas till early in the year 1223, when he tells us, without specifying the exact date, that brother Thomas of Zelano was appointed warden of Worms, Meintz, Cologne and Spires, and he adds—

"Shortly afterwards Brother Cæsar set out for Assisi to attend the general chapter which was to be held there at Pentecost, and to see Saint Francis and his vicar Brother Elias, and before he set out he gave Brother Thomas of Zelano, who at this time was the only warden in the province of Germany, ample faculties to act for him in all things during his absence."

Brother Cæsar, however, did not return to Germany: for some reason or other—perhaps on account of the Zelanti tendencies which he seems at this time to have developed—he was divested of office by the general chapter, and Albert of Pisa was appointed to succeed him. The new provincial reached the scene of his future labours before the 8th of September in the same year, on which date he presided over a chapter of the senior brethren which was held at Spires in the old leper-house outside the city wall. Amongst the brethren who were present was "Brother John of Piano Carpine and Brother Thomas the vicar"—evidently Celano—and Jordan adds with manifest satisfaction that he himself, who had been ordained priest a few months earlier and was now guardian

of Spires, sang the opening Mass. In this chapter, Jordan also tells us, Celano was deprived of his wardenship of Worms, which was given to Brother Angelo, and on the 15th of August of the following year Brother John di Piano Carpine obtained the wardenship of Cologne.

The reason why Celano was at first given four wardenships was doubtless on account of the fewness of the brethren in Germany at that time, and the reason that he afterwards lost two of them is not far to seek: their numbers had ere this increased—many recruits had joined the order, and the new provincial had brought with him from Italy not a few “honest and learned men.”

We hear nothing more of Thomas of Celano for something like six years, when Jordan, who, in the fall of 1230, had set out for his native land to see John Parenti on business of the order, discovered him at the Porziuncola, or perhaps at Rivo Torto, in any case at Assisi: his old friend, he says, was delighted to see him again, and gave him some relics of Saint Francis—to wit, some of his old clothes and a lock of his hair—to take back with him to Theutonia. Jordan does not specify the date of this meeting, but from other dates which he mentions it is evident that it took place somewhere about the spring of 1231.

Celano, then, who had previously held high office in the German province, now occupied a position of trust (for otherwise he would not have been able to give away such valuable treasures as relics) in the province of Tuscia, and was actually residing at Assisi. Hence, these questions arise: When did he take up his abode there? At what date did he obtain his new appointment? Sabatier says that he must have been at Assisi in 1228, on the 16th of July, for his account of Francis's canonization which then took place is that of an eye-witness. Albeit men are sometimes able to make others see what they have not seen themselves, and Celano was gifted in this respect—witness his account of the death of Saint Clare, at which it is almost certain he was not present; but for all that I am inclined to think that he was present at the canonization of St. Francis. We know that he wrote his first legend by order of Gregory IX, who ascended the pontifical throne on the 19th of March, 1227; according to a note in the Paris codex the work was finished in the month of February 1229,<sup>1</sup> and if this note be correct Celano must have begun it very soon after Ugolino

<sup>1</sup> See d'Alençon's prologue to his edition of Celano's *Saint Francis*, p. xvii.

put on the tiara. Now Assisi, the birthplace of the Seraphic Father, the town where he was best known and in which he had spent the greater part of his life, was assuredly the most fitting place in which to write his biography; and there will be no great risk in assuming that Celano took up his abode there as soon as he received Gregory's commission, and in all probability he reached the Seraphic City before the close of the year 1227. He can hardly have had leisure, as long as this work was in hand, to occupy himself with any other business; but a man of his ability would not be left idle for long, and as soon as his book was finished he probably obtained the appointment which Jordan found him holding.

I think, then, it may be safely said that Celano resided at Assisi from the close of 1227 until, at all events, the spring of 1231, and that he was a man in authority there from the spring of 1229. If such were the case, he must have been thoroughly acquainted with the happenings which were at this time vexing the order, and it is not at all unlikely that he had the story of Saint Clare's resistance from Saint Clare herself.

Now, although, like most other writers, he often wrote for effect, and always, being of prudent complexion, wished to stand well with superiors, and was wise enough to hold his tongue when silence was expedient and when he was convinced of error to revise his opinions, Celano was held by his contemporaries, and rightly held, to be an exceedingly honest man. In what he says, then, concerning this business we probably have the truth, perhaps nothing but the truth, but I doubt if he deemed it expedient to set down the whole truth. Nor have we, on this account, any right to grumble at him, for in his preface he acknowledges that he has not committed to writing all that he knew of Saint Clare. His object was to chronicle her mighty deeds for the edification of virgins, and such of her characteristics as seemed to him worthy of mention. Amongst these, himself a preacher, he naturally thought her marvellous love of sermons deserved especial notice; he wanted a striking anecdote to emphasize this trait, and rummaging in the storehouse of his recollections, he presently came across something adaptable; like a true artist he adapted it. If he had not done so, if he had burthened himself with details, if he had told the whole truth, his story would have been less impressive; for though the vials of Saint Clare's wrath were indeed poured on the triple crown, the man who merited her indignation

was in reality John Parenti, and it was only with Pope Gregory's aid that she was at last able to vanquish him.

Before we examine the official documents which suggest this version of Celano's tale, it will be necessary to call the reader's attention to the following facts, because without some knowledge of them it will be impossible to grasp the full significance of these most important papers.

In the days of several popes there was strife between the sons of Saint Francis and the daughters of Saint Clare. Maybe they first fell out in the reign of Honorius III, maybe in Gregory's reign: they were certainly at loggerheads in the reign of Innocent IV. As time went on the trouble increased, and at last came to a climax during the generalship of Saint Bonaventure, and then for a while smouldered, and then, after more than a hundred and fifty years, flared up again. But although there is no explicit evidence as to when this quarrel began, we know how it came about: the Poor Ladies maintained that in spiritual things and in temporal things the friars were bound to serve them, and the friars denied with emphasis that they were under any such obligation. Not perhaps to be wondered at: to keep the consciences of nuns, often scrupulous, sometimes hysterical, is no light burthen—at least so it is said by those who have experienced the weight of it; and how could the brethren provide their sisters with meat and drink when they were hardly able to gather enough for their own stomachs? Moreover, the rule was silent concerning these things; nay, it expressly forbade them to visit the houses of nuns unless they had first obtained the authorization of the Pope. Why, then, should they take the thorn out of Saint Clare's side and put it into the side of Saint Francis?

But if there was much to be said on behalf of the men, to the women it was almost a matter of life and death: shut up, as they were, in their convents, without funds to purchase outside help, they were altogether dependent on the good-will of the brethren, and they foresaw that if at any time this should fail them, spiritual and temporal starvation would be staring them in the face. It was the fear of this, and I think also in not a few cases the realization of this fear, that at last determined so many Clare houses to accept endowments. These things, in this regard, are significant:—On the 18th of October, 1263, Pope Urban IV, at the instance of Saint Bonaventure, gave the Clares a new rule which permitted them to hold property of all kinds without any

restrictions whatever. There was considerable difficulty in inducing them to adopt it, but in the end most houses conformed, and henceforth we hear nothing more of this time-honoured quarrel until the preaching of Saint Bernardino<sup>1</sup> in Italy, and further afield the crusade of Saint Colette<sup>2</sup> had made the cultus of sublime poverty once more fashionable. Then not a few Clare convents divested themselves of all that they had: some of their own free will, some thereto constrained—for in those days there were folk highly placed, alike in Church and State, who were very eager to serve Saint Francis's bride by proxy—and being thus reduced to live on alms, these women, naturally enough, revived their old claim against the friars, who were no more ready to acknowledge it than their predecessors had been when first it was made.

Such, in outline, is the story of this long and complicated quarrel; it will be necessary to speak of it again later on, in the chapter on the Rule of Innocent IV, which seems to have been an attempt—unfortunately an ineffectual attempt—to put an end to it. A more detailed account would be out of place in a book which professes to treat only of the first days of the order; for, as we have seen, the situation did not become acute until some years after Saint Clare's death, but it was necessary to set down the bare facts above related, and they will be sufficient for our present purpose. Read, in the light of them, the documents which we are now about to examine, show: that the quarrel began soon after Saint Francis died, that the friars who first opposed the Poor Ladies' pretensions were not of Elias's party, and that the best friend they had in this affair was Ugolino.

<sup>1</sup> Born Sept. 8, 1380; began to preach 1417; died May 20, 1444

<sup>2</sup> Born Jan. 13, 1381; died March 6, 1447.

## CHAPTER IX

Of certain diplomatic documents which throw light on Celano's strange story concerning Saint Clare's dismissal of the friars attached to her service—namely, Honorius's letter to Brother Francis and the other brethren of the Order of Minors of November 29, 1223; Gregory's letter to the minister-general and the provincial ministers of September 28, 1230; Pope Innocent's letter to the same of November 14, 1245; Gregory's letter to John Parenti of December 14, 1227; an undated letter from the same pontiff to the Abbess Clare and her nuns at Saint Damian's by Assisi; Pope Gregory's letters to all abbesses and sisters of the Order of Saint Damian of February 9, 1237, and May 31, 1241.

ON the 29th of November, in the year twelve hundred and twenty-three, Honorius III confirmed the rule of the Friars Minor. The original deed of confirmation with the text of the rule appended is still preserved in the Sacro Convento at Assisi, and the Vatican Registers contain a duplicate copy of the same date.<sup>1</sup> The eleventh chapter of this rule is headed: *Quod fratres non ingrediantur monasteria monacharum*, and it contains this clause—*Et ne ingrediantur (fratres) monasteria monacharum praeter illos, quibus a sede Apostolica concessa est licentia specialis*.

It is clear, then, that Pope Gregory's injunction of September 28, 1230,<sup>2</sup> to which Celano refers, and the issuing of which he says was the immediate cause of Saint Clare's dismissal of the brethren who served her, was not a new injunction, but only a re-statement—it is true in ampler form—of what Saint Francis had already said several years before.

From the preamble to the letter which contains this re-statement, his famous letter *Quo elongati*, we learn under what circumstances Pope Gregory was moved to write it.

There had been a general impression in the order during Saint Francis's lifetime that his prohibition concerning monasteries was

<sup>1</sup> "Honorius episcopus servus servorum Dei. Dilectus filiis fratri Francisco et aliis fratribus de ordine fratrum Minorum," etc.

*Solet annuere Sedes Apostolica.* Datum Laterani tertio kalendas Decembris pontificatus nostri anno octavo.

<sup>2</sup> "Gregorius episcopus servus servorum Dei. Dilectis filiis Generali et Provincialibus Ministris ac custodibus ceterisque fratribus ordinis Minorum."

*Quo elongati a saeculo.* Datum Anagninae IV kal. octobris, pontificatus nostri anno quarto.

only intended to apply to the monasteries of the Poor Enclosed Nuns of the Order of Saint Damian, and the brethren believed that some such declaration had been made by the ministers-provincial assembled in general chapter at the time of the promulgation of the rule.

Shortly after Saint Francis's death (October 4, 1226) a document was put forth purporting to be his will, and this document contained the following clause: "I place all my brethren under obedience, clerks as well as lay folk, not to put glosses on the rule or on these words [the words of the will] saying: thus ought they to be understood; but as the Lord gave me to speak and to write these words and the words of the rule simply and purely, so simply and purely without gloss ought you to understand them and observe them with holy operation for ever."<sup>1</sup>

The publication of this will was a cause of perplexity to not a few of the brethren, for two questions forthwith arose not easy to reply to: Was the will to be considered binding? and, if so, what of the rule, which, so far from being clear, was in reality sown with obscurities—*dubia et obscura*, as Gregory has it? These questions were debated at length and with vehemence at a general chapter which met at Assisi, in the spring of the year 1230 seemingly, and when at last the brethren discovered that there was no hope of agreement, they sent a deputation to the Pope, headed by John Parenti, who at this time was general, to beg him to settle the business for them, seeing that from his long intimacy with the founder, and from the fact that he had helped him to make the rule, he would be likely to have some inkling as to what was at the back of Blessed Francis's mind when he set down these ambiguous sayings.

Of the divers obscure passages which the Pope was requested to explain, only one concerns us, the passage wherein Saint Francis forbids his disciples to enter the houses of nuns: they wished to know if he intended to forbid them to enter all convents or only the convents of the Poor Cloister Ladies. Though Gregory's answer is characteristically incoherent, there can be no doubt as to its meaning. He said in effect that the prohibition was meant to apply to the enclosed parts of all convents, and, in the case of

<sup>1</sup> "Et omnibus Fratribus mei Clericis et Laicis praecepto firmiter per obedientiam, ut non mittant glossas in Regula, nec in istis verbis, dicendo: Ita volunt intelligi. Sed sicut dedit mihi Dominus simpliciter et pure dicere et scribere Regulam, et ista verba, ita simpliciter et pure sine glossa intelligatis, et cum sancta operatione observetis usque in finem."

Clare convents to the unenclosed parts as well.<sup>1</sup> It was this sting in the tail of it that rendered the Pope's decision odious in the eyes of Saint Clare, and a grievance not to be endured. For, though the brethren had always known that the cloister was forbidden ground to them, in the old days they had not thought that what was outside the cloister was likewise forbidden ground. Gregory, it is true, does not say so, nor, so far as I am aware, does any other contemporary witness; but such was the case surely, for how else can we account for the Seraphic Mother's distress? If the Pope's explanation left her in exactly the same position with regard to the friars as she was before, what cause had she for complaint? Also, what happened a little later on points to this conclusion. In the year 1245 that famous jurisconsult, Pope Innocent IV, was in his turn requested to decipher those dark sayings of Saint Francis's Rule, which, as he says in the letter of explanation which in due course he indited,<sup>2</sup> his predecessor of happy memory had only half explained.

Now, according to Pope Innocent IV, Gregory had altogether failed to grasp what the founder had in his mind when he forbade his disciples to enter the houses of religious women: the prohibition, so far from being intended to include all convents indiscriminately, was only meant to apply to the enclosed parts of the convents of the Order of Saint Damian—to wit, the cells, the cloisters, and the interior offices of these establishments.<sup>3</sup>

How did Pope Innocent arrive at this conclusion? Not from

<sup>1</sup> "Nos itaque generaliter esse prohibitum de quarumlibet coenobiis monialium respondemus; et nomine monasterii volumus claustrum, domos et officinas interiores intelligi, pro eo quod ad alia loca, ubi etiam homines saeculares conveniunt, possunt fratres illi causa praedicationis vel eleemosynae petendae accedere, quibus id a superioribus suis pro sua fuerit maturitate vel idoneitate concessum; exceptis semper praedictorum monasteriorum inclusarum locis, ad quae nulli datur accedendi facultas sine licentia sedis Apostolicæ speciali."

<sup>2</sup> "Innocentius episcopus servus servorum Dei. Dilectis filiis generalis et provincialibus ac custodibus ceterisque fratribus ordinis fratrum Minorum."

*Ordinem vestrum.* Datum Lugduni XVIII kal. decembris, anno tertio. (1245, Nov. 14.)

<sup>3</sup> "Per id autem, quod fratres non ingrediantur monasteria monacharum praeter illos, quibus a sede Apostolica concessa fuerit licentia specialis, dicimus, ingressum in monasteria tantummodo monialium inclusarum Ordinis S. Damiani prohibitum fore ipsis, ad quae nemini licet ingredi, nisi cui a sede Apostolica facultas super hoc specialiter tribuatur; et nomine monasterii claustrum, domos et officinas interiores volumus comprehendere. Ad aliarum vero coenobia monialium possunt, sicut et alii religiosi, fratres illi ad praedicandum vel petendum eleemosynam aut pro aliis honestis et rationabilibus causis accedere ac intrare, quibus id a superioribus suis pro sua fuerit maturitate vel idoneitate concessum."

any personal knowledge he could have had of the intention of the legislator, for he was not acquainted with Saint Francis. I think he must have obtained the information on which he based his judgment from one or more of the surviving provincials of 1223. Perhaps from our old friend John di Piano Carpinì, with whom, we know, he was intimate. At all events, what Gregory says incidentally of their explanation of the debated clause leads one to infer that it differed in no way from Pope Innocent's.

A very distinguished French critic of our own day, Monsieur Paul Sabatier, is no less firmly convinced than was Pope Innocent IV of the inaccuracy of Pope Gregory's interpretation, albeit he is very far from sharing the former pontiff's opinion as to the signification which Saint Francis attached to the words of the eleventh chapter of his rule: he thinks—nay, he is quite sure—that Saint Francis did not intend to forbid his followers to enter the monasteries of the Poor Ladies; his prohibition was only meant to apply to the monasteries of Benedictine Ladies.

Now Monsieur Sabatier is a writer whom no student of things Franciscan can afford to ignore, and what he says on the subject we are now considering is so remarkable, that, although the passage referred to is a long one, it will be necessary to quote the whole of it and to examine it very carefully, sentence by sentence.

Commenting, then, on that paragraph of the bull *Quo elongati*, in which Pope Gregory IX explains the eleventh chapter of Saint Francis's Rule, and wherein he quotes the debated clause of the same chapter inaccurately, substituting for the word *monacharum* the synonym *monialium*, Monsieur Sabatier remarks<sup>1</sup>—

“On ne voit nulle part ni Saint François ni ses premiers frères appeler les Clarisses *monachæ*.”

Accurate verbally and, at the same time, misleading. Of Saint Francis's writings only two refer to the Poor Ladies: his famous promise and a fragment of a letter written shortly before his death, each of which Saint Clare has preserved for us by inserting it in her rule. In the promise Saint Francis uses neither the word *monachæ* nor any other distinctive form of address: “Since by Divine inspiration,” he says, “you have made yourselves daughters and handmaids of the Most High Sovereign King . . . I will and I promise to have for you,” etc. In the letter he is more

<sup>1</sup> Collection de Documents pour l'histoire religieuse et littéraire du Moyen âge (*Speculum Perfectionis*, t. i, p. 320). Paris, Fischbacher, 1898.

explicit, in the second clause we find these words: "And I beseech you all, my Ladies, *et rogo vos omnes Dominas meas.*" A man of Saint Francis's courtesy would hardly, in a case of this kind, have called the women *monachas*, but he might with perfect propriety have said "sisters." He preferred, however, to address them by a title which was in those days and is still the usual title employed in addressing Benedictine nuns.

As to the *premiers frères de Saint François*, it is true that early Franciscan writers seldom, if ever, use the word *monachæ* to signify *Clarisses*, and it is likewise true that they seldom, if ever, use it to signify any other kind of religious women. It is a word which was hardly current in the language of the day. I do not think it occurs once in any of Celano's lives, nor in Jordan nor Bonaventure, nor the *Speculum Perfectionis*, which some attribute to Brother Leo, and some to a writer of later date. Salimbene uses it once, and, unless I am mistaken, once only. He tells us a gossiping story of a certain *monacha*, who was so enraptured by the heavenly voice of his singing-master, Brother Vita of Lucca—though in sooth his style was better suited to a drawing-room than a choir—that she leapt out of window to run after him, and in so doing broke her leg. Salimbene does not say to what order this unfortunate *monacha* belonged, but folk do not, as a rule, have recourse to the window when they are free to go out at the door, and in those days Clares were almost the only religious women bound to strict enclosure.

"La plupart des documents disent *Pauperes Dominæ*. Voir, par exemple: Spec. perf., p. 165, 17; 180, 24. Autographe de frère Léon, p. 176, 13. Jordani Chronica 13 (An. fr. I, p. 5); Vita S. Antonii Pad. Mon., Port. hist. SS., t. I, p. 121; 1 Cel. 18 et 116 (I, VIII; II, X); XXIV, Gener. An. fr. III, p. 8, 23." Very true, and the term *Pauperes Dominæ* mostly aptly describes what the first *Clarisses* undoubtedly were: members of a congregation of Benedictine nuns (*monachæ*), who, in addition to the personal poverty which Saint Benedict prescribed, had undertaken to observe collective poverty as well.

"Mais c'est là une appellation honorifique, et les Clarisses s'intitulaient tout simplement *Pauperes Sorores*, Spec. perf., 214, 5. V. Test. B. Claræ dans Wadding Ann. 1253, 5 (t. III, p. 301) et dans A. SS. Aug., t. I, p. 748." In this case the choice of documents is hardly a happy one: neither of them are above suspicion, and in the passage to which we are referred in the

*Speculum Perfectionis*, the speaker is not a *Clarisse*, but the author of the *Speculum*.

"De même dans la règle que François leur avait donnée, elles sont appelées *Pauperes Sorores*, ce qui correspond exactement au nom de *Pauperes Fratres* que François, à l'origine, avait voulu donner à son ordre (V. ci-dessus, p. 38, 30)." When he wrote the first part of this sentence the learned professor's memory must have been playing him tricks: we have only a fragment of the rule which Saint Francis gave to the *Clarisses*, and in that fragment they are called not *pauperes sorores*, but *filiæ et ancillas altissimi summi Regis*.

"Dans le langage franciscain, le mot *monachæ* désigne toujours d'autres religieuses que les Clarisses, en général des Bénédictines: XXIV, Gener. An. fr. III, p. 9, 1." Early Franciscan literature is a large field to traverse, but I doubt not that Monsieur Sabatier has made himself acquainted with the whole of it, for otherwise he would not have ventured on so definite a statement; albeit it is matter for regret that he is so chary of references: he only vouchsafes one, and, to say the least, it is not discreetly selected, for on looking it out we find that, instead of confirming, it tends rather to confute his statement; but let the reader judge for himself: "In the year 1212 the same general, Blessed Francis, founded the Order of Poor Ladies . . . of which the first little flower was the most holy virgin Clare, whom, tonsured at night in the church of Saint Mary of Porziuncola and clothed in the habit of religion, he placed for safety in the monastery of Saint Paul of the Black nuns: *in monasterio Sancti Pauli monacharum nigrarum*." There can be no doubt whatever that Saint Paul's was a Benedictine house, and hence the above quotation would have admirably suited Monsieur Sabatier's purpose if it had not been for that unfortunate word *nigrarum*, and it is strange that one so keen-sighted as he should have altogether failed to observe it. Nor is it possible to think that our friend had before his eyes some version in which the word *nigrarum* is omitted, because, with his usual consideration for his readers, he carefully points out the edition to which he would have them refer—*Analecta Franciscana*, vol. iii, p. 9, line 1.

"La curie semble avoir pris soin d'éviter les deux appellations de *Pauperes Dominæ* et *Pauperes Sorores*,—[I can recall no instance of either of these combinations in papal documents, but there is no reason to think that the Roman Curia objected to them; the

synonymous combination *Pauperes moniales* is of common occurrence; so, too, *pauperes inclusæ*, *sorores* alone is often used, especially by Gregory IX, and *Dominæ* alone is also found, but not frequently]—et dans les bulles pontificales on voit employer tour à tour toute une série de désignations différentes : *Ordo Dominarum S. Mariæ de S. Damiano de Assisio*, *Moniales inclusæ*, *Moniales reclusæ*, *Pauperes moniales reclusæ* ou *inclusæ*, *Moniales inclusæ Sancti Damiani Assisiatis*, *Pauperes moniales inclusæ ordinis S. Damiani*. *Ordo monasticus qui secundum Deum et B. Benedicti regulam atque institutionem Monialium inclusarum S. Damiani Assis. institutus esse dignoscitur*, *Ordo S. Damiani*, *Sorores Minores*. Jamais que je sache, on ne trouve l'appellation *monachæ*." The word *monacha* is not often used in pontifical documents of the period in any sense whatsoever: the clerks of the Curia seem to have preferred the synonymous word *monialis*, which they frequently employ not only to designate Benedictine and Augustinian nuns, but likewise Poor Clares. *Monacha*, however, is occasionally found: Innocent IV, for example, has it in a letter to the Clares of Bordeaux of July 5, 1246; so, too, Alexander IV, in a letter to the Clares of Spello of March 15, 1259, and in each case the substantive in question is used in the sense of a Poor Clare. For the rest, if we exclude *Sorores Minores*, Monsieur Sabatier's catalogue, though not complete, is correct. But to what end this long list of designations, picked out haphazard from Sbaralea's *Bullarium* between 1219 and 1262, and set down without any attempt at chronological order? It is impressive, perhaps, as bearing witness to his industry, but it hardly helps us to determine what sense Saint Francis attached to the word *monarcharum*. If Monsieur Sabatier had confined himself to the letters issued prior to the promulgation of the bull *Quo elongati* (Sep. 28, 1230) he might perhaps have been able to throw a little light on the matter. Now it is evident that of these letters the most important for our purpose are those which were written immediately before and shortly after Saint Francis drew up his rule. Only eight of these have come down to us, and, I think, it is significant that in seven of them the *Clarisses* are called, not, indeed, *monachæ*, but *moniales*: a word which, according to Du Cange, has the same signification as *monachæ*; five times it occurs alone, and twice the words *pauperes inclusæ* are added to it.

From what he has stated above Monsieur Sabatier comes to the following conclusions: "Il est donc bien évident qu'en défendant

à ses frères l'entrée des *monasteria monacharum*, François ne voulait pas désigner les monastères de Clarisses qu'il aurait appelées *Pauperes Dominæ*, mais conformément à ses habitudes de langage et à celles de son temps, les couvents de Bénédictines."

This statement agrees so ill with the evidence of his own witnesses that one cannot help thinking Monsieur Paul Sabatier was *un peu distrait* when he set it down. Was he under the impression that he was writing some such sentence as this?—

"Il est donc bien évident qu'en défendant à ses frères l'entrée des *monasteria monacharum* François ne voulait pas désigner seulement les couvents de Bénédictines qu'en ce cas il aurait appelés *monasteria monacharum nigrarum*, mais conformément aux habitudes de langage de son temps les couvents de toutes sortes de religieuses y compris ceux des Clarisses."

Be this as it may, the learned writer continues thus—

"Ce chapitre interdisait si peu l'entrée des monastères de Clarisses que les frères les plus zelés pour l'observation de la règle sont précisément ceux que nous voyons sans cesse en rapport avec Sainte Claire." Alas, it is impossible to accept our author's statement, because it is in contradiction with the evidence of contemporary witnesses of unimpeachable veracity, as in due course we shall see. But even if it were not so, even if he could prove that the brethren of strict observance were precisely those who most frequented the society of the Seraphic Mother, of what service would it be to him? Saint Francis's prohibition was not absolute: Monsieur Sabatier seems to forget the terms in which it was drafted: "Et ne ingrediantur monasteria monacharum *præter illos, quibus a Sede Apostolica concessa est licencia specialis*."

"Grégoire IX, en lisant *moniales* au lieu de *monachæ*, semble donc avoir vu dans ce passage ce qu'il voulait y voir." That is to say, he deliberately misquoted the text of a document to men who, as he knew very well, had the original under their eyes. If Pope Gregory acted thus, his conduct is as incomprehensible as that of the learned professor himself, who, as we have seen, in order to make good the premise from which he deduces the above conclusion refers his readers to a text which, instead of confirming, confutes it. "Lorsque sainte Claire apprit cette interprétation, elle ne put contenir son émotion" (A. SS. Aug., t. II, p. 762). It is always pleasant to be able to shake hands with Monsieur Sabatier: the Seraphic Mother, upon the occasion he refers to, was undoubtedly much moved.

“Ce paragraphe de la Declaratio regulæ constitue donc, en somme, un des efforts de la curie pour enlever aux frères Mineurs la direction des Clarisses et se l’attribuer.” Albeit, whilst there is nothing to show that the Curia ever sought to prevent the fulfilment of Saint Francis’s promise, papers have come down to us which indicate in no uncertain fashion that more than once when his successors were loath to carry it out the Curia took effectual means to overcome their reluctance; and how can Pope Gregory in 1231 have attempted to do what he had already accomplished once for all in 1218? Although, be it noted, the papal direction, to which from this date the Poor Ladies were submitted, was in no way incompatible with the direction of the friars: it was not an instrument of separation, but rather a bond of union between the first and the second order, for the delegate through whom the Pope had dealings with the women was likewise, as Saint Francis himself has it, “the Governor and Corrector and Director of the men.”

But although it is certain that Pope Gregory IX never at any time had it in his mind to withdraw the Poor Ladies from the spiritual direction of the Franciscans, I think it is more than likely when the bull *Quo elongati* reached him, and he had read the chapter on nunneries, that John Parenti honestly believed that such was the Pope’s intention, and if so, there can be no doubt that the wish was father to the thought. Consider the man and his antecedents, what happened before and what happened after the issuing of this famous letter.

There is no indication that the Poor Ladies suffered any inconvenience from Saint Francis’s prohibition, which Honorius confirmed on the 29th of November, 1223, until the opening days of John Parenti’s generalship. The founder, as we have seen, kept faith with them to the end, and when he was dead, and Elias for a little while held the reins of government, perhaps they fared even better. Of this man’s friendship with these women there is abundant proof: It was at his urgent and reiterated request that Saint Francis, lodging at Saint Damian’s without the knowledge of the sisters—in one of the questor’s huts most likely, beyond bounds—and in spite of increasing sickness going forth daily to beg for them, at last consented to reveal himself. It was upon this occasion that he preached his famous sermon without words. Again the Provincial’s interpretation of the clause concerning convents was undoubtedly an immense boon to the Poor Ladies, a boon for

which they were in reality indebted to Elias, who at this time was vicar-general and the leading spirit of the order. So great was his solicitude for these women that later on, after his fall, and when he was lying low at Cortona, he did not hesitate to visit the "places of the Poor Ladies," although he had neither obtained nor sought the new general's leave; and this was the cause, according to Eccleston, of his final break with Gregory.<sup>1</sup>

Once more, it was for Elias that Saint Agnes asked, when sent to an alien convent against her will and sick with grief at parting from her sister, Saint Clare: "Bid Brother Elias come to comfort me in Jesus Christ—often, very often." The Seraphic Mother herself regarded him as a father and a friend, one whose counsel could always be relied on; a man so wise that his words were to be esteemed more precious than any other kind of earthly gift; and yet they were hardly kindred spirits, Elias and Saint Clare, and he must have been a little puzzled at her inordinate love of sermons. "But after all," we can almost hear him saying, "but after all, these poor little women, dead to the world and buried with Christ in the cloister, have no other kind of distraction: if the Abbess of Assisi desire it, great shall be the company of her preachers," and I think he added under his breath: "Thank God, I shall not have to sit under them."

Who, then, can doubt that in those days Saint Clare had as many "wild roses" as she wished for, and as much "hot-house fruit"?

Elias was a man of large views; he was not hampered by scruples; there was nothing petty about him, nor mean, but his poor wizened body; firmly convinced that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, he never worried others, nor suffered himself to be worried about little things.

A man of this stamp, however capable, was not likely to win the good opinion of the spiritual brethren, and when the time came

<sup>1</sup> "Post hoc frater Helias, electo ad morandum loco de Cortona, contra generalem prohibitionem generalis Ministri sine licentia accessit ad loca pauperum dominarum; unde sententiam latam a Domino Papa videbatur incurrisse. Mandavit autem ei Frater Albertus, ut veniret ad eum gratia absolutionis obtinendae, vel saltem occurreret ei apud aliquem locum medium. Quod cum facere dedignaretur; pervenit verbum ad Papam; et cum Papam perpenderet velle ut generali Ministro, sicut alius quilibet frater, obediret, non ferens ipse humiliationem suam, quippe qui obedire non didicerat, ad partes Frederici se transtulit. Unde non immerito a Papa publice excommunicatus est."

Thomas of Eccleston. "De adventu Minorum in Angliam." *Analecta Franciscana*, Tom. I, p. 243. Quaracchi.

for choosing a new chief, they had sufficient influence in chapter to secure Parenti's election; albeit they acted thus, I think, less from love of Parenti than from hatred of his rival.

Blessed John Parenti was a Tuscan of Carmignano; in the world he had practised law, and when he became a Franciscan he was already in middle life, and a married man seemingly or else a widower: at all events he had a grown-up son, who joined the order with him, and in the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals* we are told this story concerning their conversion:—

"In the days when Friar John was judge at Civita Castellana, it chanced upon a certain occasion that, on looking out of the casement, he saw a swineherd endeavouring to herd his swine, but they were not of his opinion, and with one accord refused to be herded until, by the advice of a friend, he had sung to them this ditty—

‘Hogs, hogs, haste to home,  
As lawyers haste to Hell.’

Whereat, without further murmuring, they fell in with their master's proposal. When lawyer John heard and saw these things he began to tremble, stricken with holy terror, and straightway he girded himself with the cord of Saint Francis, and his son, too, did likewise."

A man who for half a hundred years had jostled with the world, had lived in the bonds of wedlock, was the father of a son, who for long had been a lawyer and a judge, and was naturally, as we know, of shrewd complexion, cannot have failed to have picked up in the course of his career a very considerable knowledge of human nature; and from his professional calling in the world I think it may be safely said that Brother John was the better acquainted with the feeble side of her. Who, then, can doubt that he held very staunchly to this opinion: that it behoves men who, for Christ's sake, have pledged themselves to continence to be very wary in their conversation with women of all sorts, as well devout as profane, and that the less they have to do with them the better it will be for the women and the better, too, for themselves; or that when he became general he deemed it his duty to limit the intercourse of his Order with the Order of Poor Ladies to the performance of those services that the brethren were legally bound to perform, if any such there were?

In a previous chapter we have already seen that Brother John Parenti was a zealous defender of the Rule, and that he held very

firmly that every word of it was binding, including, of course, the words concerning nuns and nunneries. We have also seen that, as regards the will, he shared Pope Gregory's opinion, namely, that it was not binding.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it would be more exact to say that the Pope shared his opinion: it was John Parenti, we know, who headed the deputation resulting in the "*Declaratio regulæ*," and we know, too, that Gregory IX held him in high esteem; more than once he employed him on diplomatic errands of delicacy, and in a letter to the governor and the people of Florence of December the 3rd, 1230, he says that Friar John, minister-major of the Order of Friars Minor, was not only a man of God, but a man of much sense, one whose sincerity and discretion could be thoroughly relied on.

Now Parenti's attitude in respect to the will affords us a sure indication of the point of view from which he regarded Saint Francis's promise to the Poor Ladies: one who held, as he must have held, that the will was not binding because Saint Francis had no power to bind his successors, can hardly have thought otherwise concerning the promise.

It is clear, then, that Parenti believed not only that the brethren were in no way bound to serve their sisters in religion, but that they were strictly forbidden to do so by their Rule, unless they had first obtained the authorization of the Holy See.

We learn from the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals* that Brother John Parenti was endowed with the gift of tears: indeed, he seems at times to have suffered from hysteria. What happened at the chapter of 1232 points in this direction: when the brethren called upon him to resign, "I know I am not worthy," he said, "to rule over this religion," and flinging off his garments, threw himself upon the ground in a paroxysm of tears and humility. He was soon able, however, to master his emotion, and having put on his habit, he walked quietly out of the room.

For the rest, if Père d'Alençon be right in ascribing to him the authorship of the *Sacrum commercium*, he was a poet of no mean

<sup>1</sup> Gregory's exact words in the bull *Quo elongati* run thus: "Sane quamvis praedictum Christi confessorem (Franciscum) piam intentionem in praedicto mandato (testamento) habuisse credamus, et vos justis votis eius et desiderijs sanctis affectatis omnimode conformari: Nos tamen attendentes animarum periculum et difficultates, quas propter haec possetis incurrere, dubietatem de vestris cordibus amovendo, ad mandatum illud vos dicimus non teneri, quod sine consensu fratrum maxime ministrorum, quos universos tangebatur, obligare nequivit, nec successorum suum quomodolibet obligavit, cum non habeat imperium par in parem."

order; towards the close of his life he obtained renown as a worker of miracles, and he died in the odour of sanctity.

Such was the manner of man who, on the Feast of Pentecost, 1227, stepped into Saint Francis's sandals; and when the news of his election reached the nuns of Saint Damian's I do not think they considered it good news.

When Pope Gregory IX deemed it his duty to annoy his friends with instructions, which he knew would be to them as gall and wormwood, it sometimes seemed good to him to roll up the nauseous stuff into a minute globule, and to prepare the way for it with a large spoonful of sugar.

Thus he treated poor John Parenti within a few months of his election, obliging him, under penalty of mortal sin, to have for the Poor Enclosed Nuns such care and solicitude as a good shepherd hath for his sheep, moved thereto seemingly by the tears and entreaties of the Seraphic Mother, grievously afflicted at the new general's conscientious neglect. At all events, about this time Pope Gregory addressed to "the Abbess Clare and the convent of Enclosed Nuns at Saint Damian's by Assisi" a little undated letter of sympathy and encouragement. It is clear from what he says that the sisters were in great trouble, and his words suggest that this trouble was in some way or other connected with the strictness of their rule. It is true that this letter is without date, but therein Gregory informs the nuns that he himself was overwhelmed with difficulties and set in the midst of dire perils, and bids them lift their hands to heaven in his behalf that God would vouchsafe to give him strength to fulfil the office which had been entrusted to him worthily. These things point, I think, to the opening days of his pontificate, which were disturbed by the lawless conduct of the Roman people—always a fierce and seditious race—who "raged against their neighbours according to their wont, and rashly presumed to put forth their hands against holy things."<sup>1</sup>

Ugolino obtained the tiara on the 19th of March, 1227; but, to return to John Parenti: on the 14th of December, as we have seen, the new pontiff addressed a letter to that unfortunate individual.<sup>2</sup> He began by saying that he felt quite sure that Satan, that old and unhappy enemy of the human race, filled with spleen

<sup>1</sup> See Celano: *Legenda prima B. Francisci*, p. 130. Edition d'Alençon Rome 1906.

<sup>2</sup> "Quoties cordis oculus." Dat. Laterani XIX, kal. januarii, anno primo.

at the sight of the happiness of the Poor Cloistered Women whom he saw attempting to fly on the wings of meditation to those sublime heights from which he had been thrust down, would do his utmost to thwart them, and that hence it behoved the Vicar of Christ to find a suitable guardian to watch over the aforesaid nuns and tend them with sedulous care, one who would be able to heal such as were sick amongst them, to strengthen the weak, to bind up what he saw to be broken, and to exalt what was cast down. "Wherefore," he continues, "seeing that the order of Friars Minor is most pleasing and acceptable to Almighty God, I commit the charge of these women to yourself and to your successors for ever. Take heed that you bestow on them such care and solicitude as doth a good shepherd on the lambs of the flock, and this commandment we place you under strict obedience to carry out to the letter."

When, then, Pope Gregory tacked on those words which were the cause of Saint Clare's distress to his explanation of Saint Francis's prohibition concerning nuns and nunneries: *exceptis semper praedictorum monasteriorum inclusarum locis, ad quae nulli datur accedendi facultas sine licentia sedis apostolicae speciali*—it never entered his head that the Poor Ladies would suffer any inconvenience in consequence. Had he not already invested John Parenti with ample powers to authorize any or if need be all of his brethren to visit them? Parenti himself regarded this matter from a different point of view: he knew to his cost that the Pope had burthened him with the charge of these troublesome women, on the 14th of December, 1227; but it seemed to him, as a man of the law, that the Rescript of the 28th of September, 1230, relieved him of this most obnoxious burthen, and he acted accordingly. What afterwards happened we have already seen: Saint Clare forthwith dismissed every one of the friars attached to her service, and when the news was brought to Gregory's ears, "he immediately mitigated his prohibition, leaving the matter in the hands of the minister-general," which, I suppose, is Celano's way of saying that the Pope informed poor Brother John that the bull *Quoties cordis* was still in force and must be carried out to the letter.

Two other documents of Gregory's reign are noteworthy in this connection: the first is dated February 9, 1237,<sup>1</sup> the second May 31, 1241,<sup>2</sup> and each of them is addressed to all Abbesses and sisters of the Order of Saint Damian. In the earlier Brief the Pope

<sup>1</sup> "Licet velut ignis impietate succensa."

<sup>2</sup> "Vestris piis supplicationibus inclinati."

forbids any brother or sister to eat flesh meat save in case of sickness. What does Gregory here mean by the word brother?—a brother of the First Order attached to a Clare house as Chaplain or Questor? Eubel thinks so,<sup>1</sup> and maybe he is right, but it is certain that later on, the Poor Ladies sometimes employed brethren of the Third Order as out-door servants. In the letter of 1241 the Pope informed his beloved daughters that he had given faculties to the lay friars attached to their convents to enter the enclosed parts of the same in case of fire or to defend them from thieves or for the purpose of performing manual labour, and to the clerks whenever their services were required for administering spiritual consolation to the sick or for burying the dead.

<sup>1</sup> He thus epitomizes the letter in question: “febr. 9, *Universis abbatissis et sororibus ord. S. Dam. inhibet, ne ullus unquam frater (Minor ad earum servitium deputatus) aut soror praeter infirmos, debiles et puellas, quae regularem non possunt servare rigorem, intra septa monasteriorum earum carnes edat neve extra alicui carnes ministrentur.*”

## CHAPTER X

Of the death and burial of Gregory IX and the tardy election of Innocent IV in the stronghold of Anagni. Some notes concerning this Pontiff, and his kindly and intimate relations with the children of Saint Francis. Of his visits to the Seraphic Mother, and how he attended her funeral. Of his vain endeavours to heal their disputes, and of the difficulties which he encountered in his no less futile efforts to disentangle the complicated affairs of the Poor Enclosed Ladies.

"BE the day never so long, at length cometh Evensong," and at length, when the span of his life had compassed well nigh a hundred years, that indefatigable old servant of the servants of God, Pope Gregory IX, sang his "Nunc Dimittis." He died in harness, at the Lateran, on the 22nd of August, 1241; they carried his body across Tiber and laid it to rest in the crypt of Saint Peter's, and Pope Celestine IV reigned in his stead for sixteen days from the time of his election; then, on the 10th of November in the same year, he too went the way of all flesh, and Peter's sheep were left without a shepherd for nineteen months: "*quia et cardinales discordes erant et dispersi, et Fridericus vias clauserat usque adeo, ut multi caperentur: timebat enim, ne aliquis transiret qui Papa fieret,*" notes Salimbene. At length some of them succeeded in reaching Anagni—a little town in the hill country between Rome and Naples, and a stronghold famous in the annals of the Church. This place was one of the fiefs of the great house of Conti: here Innocent III was born, and Gregory IX, and Alexander IV; it was the scene, later on, of the discomfiture of Boniface VIII, and of what touches us more closely, the canonization of Saint Clare. In this famous town, then, a conclave was held in the early summer of 1243, and on the 25th of June the cardinals' choice fell on Sinibaldo Fieschi, a Lombard of the Counts of Lavagna, and a canonist of note; he was crowned a few days afterwards, and took the title of Innocent IV. This man, whom Gregory IX had created Cardinal Priest of San Lorenzo in Lucina, had for years past had in his employment as secretary, chaplain and confessor one of Saint Francis's most noteworthy disciples, Fra Niccoló di Carbio, whose acquaintance we have already made. Continuing in Fieschi's

service after he had put on the triple crown, and acting in the same capacity as heretofore, throughout his pontificate of over eleven years, Fra Niccoló, as he himself informs us, was constantly at his master's side. Nor was this the only tie by which the new pope was united to the Franciscans: in their ranks were some of his own kinsfolk, and Innocent IV "was a marvellous lover of his kinsfolk: he built up the walls of Jerusalem," says Salimbene, "with his own flesh and blood." It was the only kind of cement, in those days, which had any chance of withstanding the wear and tear of the weather.

Now Salimbene takes care to tell us that he was himself connected, through his sister's marriage, with the house of Lavagna, and at one time he seems to have hoped for "a bishopric or some other dignity" in consequence. If his expectation had been realized, would our outspoken friend have remarked, as he did upon a certain occasion, when Innocent awarded a mitre to one of his nephews, that the Pope had made the appointment because flesh and blood had revealed it to him? Maybe, for this man of God was a strange mixture of cynicism and simplicity; but in that case he would have certainly added that his kinsman's choice was a good one; and the same, I think, may be justly said of all Pope Innocent's appointments in favour of his relations: these men proved themselves in the issue by no means unprofitable servants. But despite his caustic sayings it is evident that this friar held his great kinsman in very high esteem, that he was exceedingly proud of his distant connection with the Counts of Lavagna, and very grateful for the little favours which the Supreme Pontiff bestowed on him. "Pope Innocent IV," he says, "was an exceedingly liberal man, as we know from the way in which he expounded the rule, and from many other things which he did. He always took care to have in his household not a few brethren of our religion; he built us a beautiful convent and church at Lavagna, where his property lay, and meant to provide it with books and all other necessities; but the Friars Minor refused this gift, and he bestowed it on another order. When I chanced to be at Lyons in the year 1247 he treated me with no little courtesy, received me in his private closet, gave me faculties to preach, and absolved me from all my sins, to say nothing of other favours."

Throughout his reign Pope Innocent showed himself a staunch friend to the Poor Ladies. He had a niece in the order, to whom

he seems to have been much attached: Cecilia, the daughter of his sister Margaret and her husband, the Lord Guarino di San Vitale, who was first cousin to Salimbene's brother-in-law. "I remember," says that eccentric person, "when I was at Lyons<sup>1</sup> during Pope Innocent's sojourn there, that certain Friars Minor arrived with news that the Poor Ladies of Bordeaux had chosen his niece Cecilia for their abbess. The Pope gave them letters of confirmation, and bade them go to Parma to fetch her. But the Bishop of Parma, who was his nephew and Cecilia's brother, happened also to be at Lyons at the time; he got wind of this business, sought out his uncle, and at last persuaded him to change his mind, and Sister Cecilia remained at Parma for many years: according to Salimbene she ended her days as abbess of the great Clare convent which Cardinal Guglielmo Fieschi, another of Pope Innocent's nephews, founded at Chiavari in Liguria shortly after that pontiff's death.

Salimbene himself had a niece in the monastery of the Poor Ladies of Parma—one Sister Agnes, the daughter of his elder brother Guido, and it was for this young woman's edification that he wrote his gossiping chronicle: "*Ego quoque scribendo diversas cronicas simplici et intelligibili stilo usus sum, ut neptis mea, cui scribebam, posset intelligere quod legebat; nec fuit michi cure de verborum ornatu, sed tantum de veritate historie conscribende. Neptis autem mea soror Agnes est, filia fratris mei, que cum pervenit ad bivium pythagorice littere, monasterium Parmense ingressa est ordinis Sancte Clare, et usque in hodiernum diem perseverat in servitio Jesu Christi anno Domini M<sup>o</sup>CC<sup>o</sup>LXXXIII<sup>o</sup>, quo scribimus ista.*"

When Frederick II heard that Cardinal Sinibaldo Fieschi had been set in Peter's chair: "Hitherto," he said, "this man hath been my friend; henceforth I shall have in him a dangerous enemy. Was ever Pope a Ghibeline?" But the new Pope's dearest wish was to effect a reconciliation between the Holy See and the Empire, and the first thing he did was to inform his friend that he was prepared to relieve him from the ban of the Church upon very easy terms. Frederick feigned to reciprocate these conciliatory sentiments, negotiations were opened, dragged on, were broken off; the Emperor, now encamped at Terni, led his forces against Viterbo, and compelled after ten weeks to raise the siege, at last, somewhere about Easter 1244, sent envoys to Rome with

<sup>1</sup> Salimbene visited Lyons three times: in 1247, in 1248, and in 1249.

proposals for peace. But Innocent, mistrusting him, would say neither yea nor nay, and presently fled to Lyons and summoned a general council, which in due course assembled, and on the 17th of July, 1245, the Emperor was excommunicated and deposed.

From Niccoló di Carbio, who accompanied him, and from some of his own letters, we learn the following details concerning Innocent's flight. Having made up his mind to go to France, where he hoped to be free from Frederick's machinations, on Tuesday, the 7th of June, 1244, the Pope set out from Rome, where he had been residing since the fall of the leaf, for Civita Castellana, a strongly fortified town some nine leagues north of the Eternal City, with his whole court. He reached this place the same night and forthwith dispatched Brother Buio, one of the five Franciscans attached to his service—a very discreet and wily fellow, and a kinsman to boot—to Genoa, his (Pope Innocent's) native place, instructing him to beg the Lord Opizone, who was the Pope's brother, and the Lord Filippo, Viscount of Piacenza, who at that time was Podestà of Genoa, and several other notable citizens of his kinsfolk or friends, to send him ships with all speed to Civita Vecchia or else to Corneto, from one of which ports he desired to embark: for all this part of the country was in Frederick's hands and he had decided to go as far as Genoa by sea.

It is characteristic of the man that during his short stay at Civita Castellana, not quite three weeks, and notwithstanding that it was a time of intense excitement and anxiety, Pope Innocent managed to write and dispatch at least six letters to his friends the Franciscans, and not about his own business, but concerning the affairs of the order.

In the last week of the month of June news came from Civita Vecchia that the galleys from Genoa were in port, and on Monday the 27th of June the Pope set out on his travels. That night he reached Sutri, midway between Civita Castellana and Civita Vecchia, and on the morrow he gave orders that all should be prepared with becoming splendour, as though intending to make the journey to the sea in state; for he feared that Frederick, who had spies everywhere, would attempt to capture him. At the first hour of the night, therefore, he stole away secretly with his nephew Cardinal Guglielmo Fieschi, Brother Niccoló di Carbio and one or two attendants, and keeping clear of the main

roads, and labouring in the darkness by bridle ways over mountains and through dense woods, "under Christ's guidance he reached the sea in safety, but half dead with fatigue, for he had been more than twelve hours in the saddle, about noon on Saint Peter's Day; and the same day towards sunset he set sail for Genoa." On the morrow five cardinals arrived at Civita Vecchia safe and sound, and they too set sail for Genoa. They were all of them of Innocent's creation and all of them honest men; amongst them note yet another kinsman, though not a very near one, Giovanni Gaetano Orsini, Deacon of S. Nicola in Carcere Tuliano and later on Pope Nicholas III. This man was the son of the famous Franciscan tertiary, Matteo Orsini, who had dedicated him in his childhood to Saint Francis; he succeeded Rainaldo as Cardinal Protector of the whole Franciscan Order, and was the author of the rule which Pope Urban IV gave to the Poor Ladies.

Ten other cardinals had accompanied Innocent to Civita Castellana. It was decided that six of these should make the journey to Lyons by land, presumably because there was not sufficient accommodation for them on board ship, and that the rest should remain in Italy as the Pope's representatives. Amongst these last was Cardinal Rainaldo, the nephew of Gregory IX. He was not a *persona grata* to the new pontiff, or rather the new pontiff was not a *persona grata* to him, and I suspect Innocent felt that his room would be better than his company.

Pope Innocent and his fellow-travellers were more than a week at sea: it was not until the 7th of July that their ships touched Genoa, and at Genoa they remained for more than three months: the Supreme Pontiff, grievously sick, was not sufficiently recovered to endure the wear and tear of the road until the 24th of October. On that day they set out for Lyons and, travelling by easy stages, on the 12th of November reached Susa and Mont Cenis, where they found the six cardinals, who had travelled all the way from Civita Castellana by land, and two other members of the Sacred College who had just arrived from France, and whose acquaintance we have already made: Hugo of Santo Caro and Odo of Santa Sabina. How long they halted at Susa, Fra Niccoló does not say. Notwithstanding the lateness of the season, the whole party crossed the Alps without accident, and in due course came to the great Cistercian Abbey of Hautecombe on the Rhone, where another halt was made. The rest of the journey was accomplished by boat, and they reached Lyons in safety, but not seemingly without

perilous adventures, on the 2nd day of December. Fra Niccoló says :—

“Et sic periculis maris, periculis fluminum, periculis viarum, periculis hostium et periculis diversarum infirmitatum, aequanimiter perperissis, secunda die Decembris in festo sanctae Bibianae virginis, Christo duce, Lugdunum pervenit; ubi cum gaudio valde magno et exultatione indicibili, gentibus per terram et aquam undique occurrentibus, tam a clero quam universo populo religiosorum et saecularium susceptus fuit honorificentia multa nimis.”

Though the war dragged on for several years, for Frederick the sentence of Lyons was the beginning of the end. Misfortune faced him at every turn: the great feudatories of Germany threw off their allegiance, the imperial cities of Central Italy slipped through his fingers one by one; from north to south the Ghibeline nobles fell away from him, almost all of them, and every fresh disaster was followed by fresh desertions; he knew not whom he could trust: traitors, he thought, were in his own household; and, striking out blindly on all sides, cut down some of his staunchest friends. At last he heard that his son Enzo was a captive in the hands of the enemy. That was the last straw. Stricken with fever, he took to his bed, and then the finger of God touched him: he sent for his friend the Bishop of Palermo, confessed himself and was absolved, and died peacefully in the arms of his favourite son Manfred. “On his death-bed,” writes this youth to his half-brother, Conrad, king of the Romans, “on his death-bed our father, full of contrition, humbly submitted himself like a good Catholic to his mother the Sacrosanct Church of Rome.”

Frederick of Hohenstaufen died on the 13th of December, 1250, and in the following spring Pope Innocent IV returned from exile. The homeward journey was a veritable triumphal progress: in all the cities through which he passed he was welcomed with fêtes and enthusiasm, and the rest of his days were spent in comparative tranquillity. But, fair weather or foul, there was one little worry—and little worries are sometimes more trying to the patience than big ones—from which he was never free: the Poor Ladies he had always with him; he was always striving, and striving vainly, to disentangle their complicated and irritating affairs. When he was not writing private letters to one or other of their abbesses, or drafting lengthy epistles to all of them collectively, he was busy with dispatches to the cardinal-protector or

to the minister-general of the Friars Minor, or to some other ecclesiastical or lay personage concerning these devout women.<sup>1</sup>

The chief object of his solicitude was to provide for their temporal needs, for the observance of sublime poverty was, from the force of circumstances, becoming daily almost everywhere more and more impracticable, and the task of doing so was rendered the more difficult by the Poor Ladies themselves.

The reader will call to mind what happened at Prague, and in the conduct of the nuns of Perugia we have a still more striking instance of scrupulosity and vacillation. Founded somewhere about the year 1218, or perhaps at an earlier date, this community was one of the first to learn how hard a thing it sometimes is to live from hand to mouth. As time went on their difficulties increased, and at last Pope Gregory felt himself bound to come to their assistance; wherefore he made over to them "all the books which formerly belonged to Brother Angelo deceased, also his portable altar and everything else he had, save only his book of hours." "This man," notes Eubel, "seems to have been a priest of the order of Minors and the nuns' chaplain." Maybe, but if he were a Franciscan, how came he to hold property? The deed of gift is dated from the Lateran on the 3rd of January, 1228.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of the following spring Pope Gregory went to Perugia, where he sojourned nearly two years, and it was doubtless the near view which he then obtained of their wretchedness which moved him to offer the nuns a small endowment; they, however, were loath to accept it, and at last succeeded in persuading the Pope to give them a Privilege of Poverty instead. This document is dated June 18th, 1229; it is addressed to "Agnes and the other handmaids of Christ in the Church of Saint Mary of Monte Luce in the diocese of Perugia," and it is a facsimile of Saint Clare's famous Privilege of Poverty of the year before.<sup>3</sup> It is worthy of note that Parenti was at this time minister-general;

<sup>1</sup> Pope Innocent IV reigned less than twelve years. Eubel, in his *Epitome and Supplement*, gives 424 of his letters concerning things Franciscan; more than half of them refer to the affairs of the Poor Ladies, and Eubel's list is by no means complete.

<sup>2</sup> *Abbatissae et sororibus monasterii S. Mariae de Montelucio.*

"*Indigentiam monasterii vestri.*" Dat. Laterani III nonas januarii, anno primo.

<sup>3</sup> *Agneti et aliis ancillis Christi in ecclesia S. Mariae Montis Lucii episcopatus Perusin. congregatis.*

"*Sicut manifestum est.*" Dat. Perusii XVI kal. julii, anno tertio.

maybe his influence had something to do with the Monte Luce folk's decision. For two years longer they continued to live, or rather to starve, on charity, and then, when things, instead of becoming better, were daily growing worse, Pope Gregory again took pity on them, and this time they were glad to accept his help: on the 18th of July, 1231, he presented them with a little estate which he had recently purchased in the neighbourhood of Perugia: sundry fields, vineyards, olive-grounds, orchards, gardens, a water-mill and other things, as it is described in the deed of gift,<sup>1</sup> with all the rights, privileges, immunities and jurisdictions appertaining thereto.

Maybe the new holding was less extensive than the above description of it suggests; maybe the soil was poor, or ill cultivated, or burthened with obligations; maybe, again, my lady abbess had an unusually large number of mouths to fill: in any case her entire income still fell short of her expenses, and on the 7th of March, 1235, we find Pope Gregory making a pathetic appeal to all Christians on behalf of "these women, weighed down by so great a burthen of penury that it was impossible for them to live unless some charitable folk should stretch out their hands to help them, and to all such he granted an indulgence of forty days."<sup>2</sup> Presently he bethought himself of another expedient for attracting coin to the empty coffers of his beloved daughters in Christ: in the course of the summer he instituted an annual pilgrimage to their chapel, and granted to all who should take part in it an indulgence of twelve months.<sup>3</sup> On March 30th, 1237, he conceded to the nuns, on account, he says, of their indigence, the Church of Saint Mary in Presso in the diocese of Perugia with all its belongings<sup>4</sup>—this was seemingly an allocation of tithe—and six weeks later (May 24, 1237) he exempted them from the payment of tithe on all the cultivated lands he had bestowed on them.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Abbatissae et conventui sororum inclusarum monasterii S. Mariae de Monte Lucio.*

"Ad faciendam vobis gratiam." Dat. Reate XV kal. augusti, anno quinto.

<sup>2</sup> *Universis Christifidelibus.*

"Quoniam ut ait Apostolus." Dat. Perusii nonis martii, anno octavo.

<sup>3</sup> *Abbatissae et sororibus inclusis mon. S. Mariae de Monte Lucio.*

"Si quibuslibet piis locis." Dat. Perusii, kal. septembris, anno nono.

<sup>4</sup> *Abbatissae et conventui Mon. S. Mariae de Monte Lucio.*

"Attendentes sicut convenit." Dat. Viterbii III kal. aprilis, anno undecimo.

<sup>5</sup> *Abbatissae et conventui Mon. S. Mariae de Monte Lucio Perusii ord. S. Dam.*

"Monasterium vestrum." Dat. Viterbii IX kal. junii, anno undecimo.

Thanks to these measures of relief the Poor Ladies of Perugia were now fairly comfortably off. They soon forgot the evil days through which they had passed; and perhaps because they had nothing else to worry about, began to distress themselves with qualms of conscience, and to wonder whether, after all, they had acted wisely, from a spiritual point of view, in accepting the Pope's property. At last they made up their minds to rid themselves of the accursed thing or, if this should prove to be impossible, to let the land lie fallow.

When Gregory heard that these foolish virgins were seriously thinking of divesting themselves of the little provision which with such difficulty he had managed to scrape together for them, he sent them a characteristic note<sup>1</sup>: it was his wish, he said, that the state of their monastery should so proceed from good to better that he might rest assured that the nuns were able to fulfil their spiritual obligations in satisfactory fashion; and how could this wish be realized if the little they had were made less through negligence or presumption? He therefore enjoined them strictly, and that under pain of anathema, not to give away, lend, sell, let out on hire, mortgage, exchange, or by any other means whatsoever alienate any of the property they at present held, or which by God's grace they should hold in future, unless they had first obtained the authorization of the Apostolic See. It is clear that Gregory was by no means confident that his beloved daughters would vouchsafe to obey him, for he takes care to add: "If anything of the kind be attempted, know that the transaction will be null and void, and that all parties concerned in it will undoubtedly incur the indignation of God Almighty and of His Blessed Apostle Peter."

Sbaralea has this note at the foot of p. 259 (vol. i), marked (*d*): "Petrus de Alva in Indiculo Bullar. Seraph. hanc Gregorii bullam datam scribit *idibus Martii*, et incipere *Statum Monasterii etc.* nulli monasterio nominatim, sed uti generaliter; forsan speciatim primo, deinde generatim emisit Pontifex litteras; . . ." If so, it was, perhaps, in view of the renewed activity of the Zelanti, who, now that Brother Elias had foes in his own household, were beginning to hold up their heads; perhaps because Pope Gregory feared that his acquiescence of the previous year (April 15, 1238), in the case of the nuns of Prague, would lead other communities to think

<sup>1</sup> Abbatissae et conventui mon. S. Mariae de Monte lucio.

"Statum monasterii vestri." Dat. Laterani III idus martii anno duodecimo.

that they, too, were free to divest themselves of their possessions. It is unlikely that in these lean years there was any widespread feeling in the order in favour of the alienation of property: most of the convents had as yet nothing to alienate but their bits of waste ground and their gardens, and though in the unendowed monasteries there may have been zealots here and there who desired a stricter observance of sublime poverty than that which St. Clare had ordained, they can hardly have been sufficiently numerous in any one house to influence the conduct of affairs. As to the endowed houses, they were, for the most part, of Benedictine origin, and it is difficult to believe that many of their members would have suddenly grown scrupulous about the non-observance of a counsel which, I think there can be no doubt, they had never undertaken to follow.

Albeit there was certainly a very widespread feeling of discontent in the order about this time, and a considerable number of dissatisfied sisters seem to have deserted their monasteries, hoping to found new monasteries wherein they would be able to carry out their own ideas and inclinations, and they seem to have been wandering about the country without any fixed place of abode for something like twenty years.

This, I take it, is the explanation of the following letters which Eubel thus epitomizes—

(i) 1241, febr. 21. *Greg. IX, Archiepiscopis et episcopis, ad quos litterae istae pervenerint, mandat, ut, cum nonnullae mulieres asserentes se esse de S. Damiani ordine, discalceate incedant, habitum et cingulum monialium ejusdem ordinis, quae tamen perpetuo sunt inclusae, deferentes et Discalceatae seu Cordulariae vel minoretæ appellatae, mulieres ipsas ad abiiciendum cum eisdem cingulis et cordulis habitum illum per censuram eccles. compellant.*

*Ad audientiam nostram.*

*Dat. Laterani IX kal. martii, anno decimo quarto.*

(ii) 1246, oct. 5. *Innoc. IV, Abbataissae et conventui monasterii S. Gratiae Pampilonen. ord. S. Dam. ad Romanam ecclesiam nullo medio pertinentis indulget, ut conversas sui mon., quae post professionem in eo factam ipsum exeunt et ad alia loca se transferunt vel per mundam evagantur, per visitatorem suum adhibita ab eo excommunic. sententia possint revocare.*

*Ex parte vestra.*

*Dat. Lugduni III nonas octobris, anno quarto.*

R

(iii) 1250, apri. 20. *Innoc. IV, Archiepiscopis et episcopis per Lombardiae, marchiae Tervisinae et Romaniolae provincias constitutis iniungit, ne, cum quaedam mulierculae monasteria ord. S. Dam. se velle construere profitentes super ipsorum fundatione ab ipso S. P. litteras (subreptitiae) impetrarint, permittant in suis civitatibus vel dioecesium monasterium vel habitaculum inchoari seu inchoatum construi, nisi de ministrorum provincialium ord. fratrum Min. provinciarum Lombardiae, Marchiae Tervissinae et Romaniolae consilio pariter et consensu.*

Cum harum rector Sathanas tenebrarum.

Dat. Lugduni XII kal. maii, anno septimo.

(iv) 1250, sept. 30. *Innoc. IV, Episcopo Salmantin. (Salamanca in Hispania) mandat, ut, cum, sicut abbatissa et sorores mon. S. Mariae Salmantin. ord. S. Dam. coram ipso proposuerunt, quaedam mulieres per civ. et dioec. Salmantin. discurrentes se esse ipsius ordinis mentiantur et etiam discalceatae vadant, habitum et cingulum vel cordulas monialium eiusdem ordinis portantes, super hoc officii sui debitum exequatur.*

Ex parte dilectarum.

Dat. Lugduni II kal. octobris, anno octavo.

(v) 1257, jan. 8. *Alexander IV, Archiepiscopis et episcopis per Vasconiam et Aquitaniam constitutis mandat, ne, cum quaedam mulierculae suspectae, quae se velle monasteria ord. S. Damiani, cujus primus cultor et plantator S. Franciscus extitit, construere profitentur, litteras apost. super hoc impetrent et interdum nomen sororum Minorum, quod ne sororibus quidem ord. S. Damiani ex regula vel juris forma competit, in praedictum fratrum Min. sibi usurpent, eas ullum monasterium sub nomine S. Damiani in suis civ. et dioeces. inchoari seu inchoatum construi permittant nisi de consilio et assensu ministri provincialis fratrum Min. in Vasconia et Aquitania.*

Cum harum rector Sathanas tenebrarum.

Dat. Laterani VI idus januarii, anno tertio.

(vi) 1261, mart. 14. *Alex. IV, Archiepiscopis et episcopis universis per Alemaniam constitutis, ad quos istae litterae pervenerint, mandat, ne per sorores aut moniales ord. S. Dam. praetextu aliquarum litterarum apost., nisi etc., sine ministri provincialis ord. Min. consensu nova monasteria construi permittant.*

Licet pia mentis sit.

Dat. Laterani II idus martii, anno septimo.

Be these things as they may, it is certain that the bull *Statum Monasterii vestrii* was sent to the nuns of Spoleto on the 17th of February, 1238, to the nuns of Spello on the 10th of March in the same year, and to our friends of Perugia three days afterwards; and the last-mentioned community was the only one of the three that was rash enough to disregard it.

We do not know the exact date when these devout women indulged in this flagrant piece of disobedience, but in all probability it was during the interval between Pope Celestine's death and Pope Innocent IV's election. It is not likely that they would have dared to do such a thing whilst Gregory was still alive, but the evil days when the Church was without a head afforded a favourable opportunity. In any case, on the 20th of May, 1244, a few days before he set out from Rome on his memorable journey to Lyons, we find Pope Innocent IV writing to the Bishop of Perugia to bid him to recover for his beloved daughters the abbess and nuns of Monte Luce certain possessions which they had alienated to the no small hurt of their monastery, and that, notwithstanding the prohibition of his predecessor of happy memory, Pope Gregory IX.<sup>1</sup>

Considering the threat of anathema with which Gregory's injunction had been sanctioned, the Abbess of Monte Luce and her folk seem to have been treated by Pope Innocent with very considerable mildness: he simply bids the bishop to enjoin them, in his name, not to attempt like deeds in future. Whether the bishop succeeded in recovering the property for them there is no evidence to show; but some six years later they were still poor, for on the 10th of December, 1250, Pope Innocent granted an indulgence of forty days to all who should give alms to the Damianites of Monte Luce, "who are in sore need of temporal things"; and on the same day he wrote to the Bishop of Perugia, bidding him "to visit and console them" several times a year, as his predecessor had done, and in his kindness to commend them to the charity of his flock because they were in great distress, and further to see to it that the goods of citizen Maffio Vallani of Perugia, defunct, be delivered to his daughter Isabella, a nun of the aforesaid monastery.

Pope Innocent IV became personally acquainted with Saint Clare shortly before her death: Niccoló di Carbio informs us,

<sup>1</sup> Episcopo Perusino.

"Cum sicut accepimus." Dat. Laterani XIII kal. junii, anno primo.

as we have already seen, that twice like a kind and tender father he visited her in her last sickness. Thomas of Celano has a short account of one of these visits. "Now it came to pass," he says, "when Blessed Clare's most holy body, worn out by long sickness, was attacked by a fresh affliction which betokened that Christ would soon take her to the place of perpetual health, that the Lord Pope Innocent of holy memory made haste to visit her with his cardinals: for he deemed it befitting thus to honour the death of one whom he held to be the most valiant woman of her day.

"Having entered the chamber wherein she was lying he gave her his hand to kiss: she kissed it with much devotion, and very humbly besought him to suffer her likewise to kiss his foot. Whereat a little stool was brought whereon he mounted, and having extended his foot to the Seraphic Woman she kissed it most reverently on the instep and on the sole. Then with an angelic countenance she begged him to shrieve her. He did so saying: 'Would to God that I myself had as little need of shrieving,' and having imparted a most ample benediction he bade her farewell. Then said Blessed Clare, who that day had received her God at the hands of the Minister-provincial, 'Bless the Lord, beloved daughters, for on this most blessed day both Jesus Christ and his Vicar have vouchsafed to pay me a visit.'"

From Celano we also learn that Innocent IV was present at Saint Clare's funeral. "When the Friars," he says, "began to chant the Office for the Dead, suddenly the Supreme Pontiff interrupted them: 'Not so,' he cried, 'not so, but rather let us jubilate the Office of Holy Virgins.' But the most eminent Lord of Ostia (Rainaldo) demurred, and Innocent not insisting, the Friars went on with their dirge."

Saint Clare died on the 11th of August, 1253. On the 18th of October in the same year the Pope addressed a letter (*Gloriosus Deus in sanctis suis*) to his beloved brother the Bishop of Spoleto (Bartholomew Accorombani), charging him to make diligent inquiry as to the life, conversion, conversation and miracles of the virgin Clare of holy recollection, erstwhile Abbess of the Poor Cloistered Nuns of the Order of Saint Damian at Assisi with a view to her canonization. Before the bishop had completed his investigations Innocent himself had gone the way of all flesh (December 7, 1254), and it was reserved to his successor, Alexander IV, to enrol the Seraphic Mother in the Catalogue of the Saints: she was canonized at Anagni, as Salimbene and

Celano alike bear witness, and the latter writer adds, "in the Cathedral Church in the year of our Lord's incarnation 1255." There is no direct evidence as to the exact date, but there can be little doubt that the canonization took place towards the close of the summer, most likely on the 11th of August, the second anniversary of St. Clare's death, or else on the 12th of August, the second anniversary of her funeral—this is the day assigned to her feast in the Bull of Canonization—the famous Bull *Clara claris praeclara* so often quoted in these pages. Unfortunately no original copy of this document has as yet been discovered. It seems to have been dispatched to all the Churches of Western Christendom, but not on the same day. At all events Sbaralea's copy, which is addressed to all Archbishops and Bishops in the kingdom of France, is dated October 19, 1255, and Eubel mentions a copy dated September 26th in the same year, but he does not say to whom it is addressed, nor in what collection it is to be found.

The strife between the sons and the daughters of Saint Francis was a source of trouble and vexation to Pope Innocent IV throughout the whole of his reign. From such of his letters as have come down to us touching this affair it is evident that the men were constantly pestering him to relieve them of that burthen which Gregory IX and the Seraphic Father had placed on their most reluctant shoulders—the spiritual and temporal care of their sisters in religion, or at all events to lighten it; and that the women, in their turn, were no less assiduous in petitioning the Pope to bind it more firmly than ever to the brawny backs of the friars who, they alleged, with an ounce of good-will could very easily perform the little services they required of them.

On the 17th of July, 1245, Pope Innocent informed the minister-general (Crescentius of Jesi) that he was only bound to supply resident chaplains to such Clare houses as had been thus favoured in the days of Gregory IX<sup>1</sup>—those houses, doubtless, that were too far distant from any friary to be served by brethren who dwelt at home.

Did these men imagine that the Pope intended by this letter to exonerate them from the charge of all other Clare houses, and in consequence refuse to help them? It would seem so, and, too, that the aggrieved sisters lost no time in bringing the matter to

<sup>1</sup> Generali Ministro et fratribus ord. min.

"Paci et tranquillitati vestrae." Dat. Lugduni XVI Kal. aug., anno tertio.

the ears of the Pope, for on the 16th of October ensuing he formally committed the care and regimen of all the houses of the Poor Enclosed Nuns of the Order of Saint Damian to his beloved sons the minister-general and the provincial ministers of the Order of Friars Minor, at the same time giving them explicit directions as to how they were to carry out this charge,<sup>1</sup> and five days later, on the 21st of October, he gave faculties to all Clare abbesses to admit the brethren to their cloisters for certain specified purposes.<sup>2</sup>

These letters are perfectly clear, but somehow or other the friars seem to have failed to grasp their meaning, for on the 2nd of June, 1246, we find Pope Innocent writing to the Abbess of Ascoli Piceno, and to thirteen other abbesses in various parts of Italy, France and Spain,<sup>3</sup> informing them that in compliance with their request he had just committed their houses by name to the minister-general of the Franciscans,<sup>4</sup> and on the same day he wrote to Crescentius, formally investing him with the charge of all the houses in question. Moreover, on the 5th of July, 1247, he committed all Clare houses in the kingdom of France to the care of the Friars Minor,<sup>4</sup> and on the 24th of the same month the convent of Ulm in Germany.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, Pope Innocent earnestly desired to elucidate the obscurity and to temper the harshness of the Ugolino constitutions. At first he followed his predecessor's policy of dispensations and explanations to individual communities—there are so many that it is impossible to give even a list of them—but this tinkering proving ineffectual, he determined to make a new rule, and at last succeeded in drafting a code which was a model of clearness and precision, and which he tried to persuade himself to believe would prove to the liking of all the sisters; and yet he knew that he had to deal with a vast congregation of cloistered women of divers races, ideals, temperaments, who were tormented by scruples often, and whose sentiments were sometimes as unstable as the vanes on their church steeples.

<sup>1</sup> Generali et universis provincialibus ministris ord. fratr. Min.

"Paci et saluti." Dat. Lugduni XVII Kal. nov., anno tertio.

<sup>2</sup> Universis, abbatissis monasteriorum ord. S. Dam.

"Vestris piis supplicationibus." Dat. Lugduni XII Kal. novembris, anno tertio.

<sup>3</sup> Cum sicut et parte vestra." Dat. Lugduni IV nonas junii, anno tertio.

<sup>4</sup> Generali et provincialibus ord. fratrum Min. in regno Franciae ministris.

"Paci et saluti," etc. Dat. Lugduni III nonas julii, anno quinto.

<sup>5</sup> Generali ordinis et provinciali fratrum Min. Alemaniae.

"Cum sicut ex parte." Dat. Lugduni IX Kal. agusti, anno quinto.

## CHAPTER XI

A description of the Rule of Pope Innocent IV, with some quotations from and notes on the text. How it came about that the Poor Ladies for the most part refused to observe it.

THE Form of Life which Pope Innocent IV gave to the Poor Ladies on the 6th of August, 1247,<sup>1</sup> like the form of life which his predecessor had given them "in the days when he held a less exalted place," was composed of a rule already approved by the Apostolic See and special constitutions, but whereas Ugolino built on the old Benedictine rule, the foundation of Innocent's form of life was the rule of Blessed Francis: "Quapropter, dilectae in Domino filiae, quia Divina vobis gratia inspirante per arduam viam et arctam, quae ad vitam ducit, incedere et vitam pauperem ducere pro aeternis lucrandis divitiis elegistis; vestris piis precibus inclinati beati Francisci<sup>2</sup> regulam quantum ad tria tantum videlicet obedientiam, abdicationem proprii in speciali et perpetuam castitatem; nec non formam vivendi praesentibus annotatam, secundum, quam specialiter vivere decrevistis; vobis et iis, quae vobis successerint, concedimus observandam; auctoritate Apostolica statuentes, ut in singulis monasteriis vestri Ordinis perpetuis temporibus observetur, quae talis est<sup>3</sup>:" then follow the constitutions. They are drafted much on the same lines as Ugolino's, the same sort of phrases are used, sometimes almost the same words; but they

<sup>1</sup> Universis Abbatissis et monialibus inclusis Ordinis S. Damiani.

"Cum omnis vera Religio." Dat. Lugduni VIII idus augusti. anno quinto.

<sup>2</sup> Lempp and some other writers on things Franciscan are of opinion that the word *Francisci* in the above-quoted passage is a misreading for *Benedicti*. Eubel, for example, remarks: Sic quidem legitur in registro Innoc. IV. l.c.; dubium vere non esse potest, quin loco "*Francisci*" scribendum fuerit "*Benedicti*."

It is true that Alexander IV, in a letter to the Clares of Ferrara of Feb. 5, 1256, thus refers to this piece of legislation: "vivendi formulam de regula S. *Benedicti* ad mandatum fel. record. Innoc. IV. per viros religiosos et litteratos ord. fratrum Minorum . . . excerptam"—but it is evident that the word *Benedicti* in this passage is a misreading for *Francisci*; the error is in Alexander's letter, not in the Vatican register version of Pope Innocent's; for if Innocent had intended to prescribe the observance of the Benedictine rule he would not have added the words *in speciali* after *abdicationem proprii*: they would have been altogether superfluous, seeing that, unlike Saint Francis, Saint Benedict does not forbid the possession of property in common.

<sup>3</sup> See Prologue to Innocent's rule.

are clearer and more precise, the penitential clauses are milder, and here and elsewhere certain changes are made, additions, omissions, which render this piece of legislation, in all respects save one, more in harmony with the friars' rule than was the Rule of Ugolino.

Thus, for example, wherever Ugolino uses the word *domina*, Innocent has *soror*; for Ugolino's novitiate of a few days he substitutes the Franciscan novitiate of twelve months,<sup>1</sup> adding what Ugolino omits, a formula of profession: "I, Sister N., promise to God, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to Blessed Francis and to all the saints, to observe perpetual obedience according to the rule and form of life delivered to our Order by the Apostolic See, and to pass the whole of my days without possessions and in chastity."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he adds to the chapter on the Divine Office a short clause ordaining that the sisters, during certain hours of the day, shall occupy themselves with some honourable and useful handicraft: "Sorores vero, horis statutis, prout ordinatum fuerit, utilibus et honestis laboribus occupentur." Again, Ugolino begins his constitutions thus: "Omnes itaque, quae saeculi vanitate relicta *pariter et contempta* religionem vestram assumere voluerint et tenere, hanc eas legem vitae et disciplinae *ferenter* oportet et convenit observare." Innocent leaves out the words in italics and adds the following words from the opening clause of the friars' rule: "vivendo in obedientia, sine proprio et in castitate."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, though Innocent says in the prologue, as we have seen, that the rule of Blessed Francis was to be observed only so far

<sup>1</sup> Ugolino's words run thus—

"Omnes vero ex more intra claustrum receptae . . . citius deponant habitum saecularem et infra paucos dies professionem faciant in manu abbatissae."

Innocent's thus—

"Omnes vero ex more intra claustrum receptae . . . citius deponant habitum saecularem et intra paucos dies habitum regularem suscipiant: quibus deputetur magistra, quae ipsas informet regularibus disciplinis; et completo unius anni spatio professionem faciant in hunc modum: "Ego talis soror promitto Deo et b. Mariae semper virgini, beato Francisco et omnibus sanctis servare perpetuam obedientiam secundum regulam et formam vivendi a sede apostolica ordini nostro traditam, vivendo toto tempore vitae meae sine proprio et in castitate."

<sup>2</sup> "Ego talis soror promitto Deo et b. Mariae semper Virgini, beato Francisco et omnibus sanctis servare perpetuam obedientiam secundum regulam et formam vivendi a sede Apostolica Ordini nostro traditam, vivendo toto tempore vitae meae sine proprio et in castitate."

<sup>3</sup> "Regula et vita minorum fratrum haec est, scilicet Domini nostri Jesu Christi sanctum evangelium observare, *vivendo in obedientia, sine proprio, et in castitate.*"

as concerned individual poverty, perpetual chastity, and obedience, which might mean very little or very much, it is clear from the text of the constitutions that he desired the nuns to observe it to a far larger extent; and this is not surprising, for we learn from a letter which Alexander IV addressed to the Clares of Santo Stefano di Rotta in the diocese of Ferrara, on the 5th of February, 1256,<sup>1</sup> that Pope Innocent's rule was drawn up by certain devout and learned men of the Order of Friars Minor. One naturally thinks of Niccoló di Carbio, kinsman Buiolo, Fra Lorenzo, afterwards Bishop of Antivari: three of the five brethren attached to Innocent's household, and who, we know, accompanied him to Lyons.

One of the most interesting features of the rule we are now considering is its mitigation of the stringent discipline concerning enclosure which had hitherto been in force. Indeed, for the lay sisters—the servants, as Innocent calls them—the discipline now prescribed was to all intents and purposes the old Benedictine discipline. Henceforth such of these women as were of ripe age and not frivolous were to be suffered to go forth in couples on the business of the house, provided they had first obtained their abbess's authorization, and they could even take their meals abroad and, if need be, also pass the night, but to do these things required my Lady Abbess's "special licence." They are warned not to enter suspicious places nor hold conversation with persons of ill repute; under no pretext whatsoever were they to set foot in the chaplain's house or in the house of the lay brethren attached to the monastery as outdoor servants, and if they should presume to transgress this command severe punishment was to be meted out to them.

As to the choir sisters, under ordinary circumstances they were to remain enclosed in the house of their profession, as heretofore, but for good and sufficient cause from time to time they could be transferred to other houses, provided they had first obtained the authorization of the minister-general of the Franciscans or of the provincial minister of the district in which their monastery was situated.

The discipline concerning the admission of strangers was likewise relaxed. Under the Ugolino Rule, as the reader will call to mind, only cardinals and labourers were free to enter a Clare

<sup>1</sup> "Solet annuere," etc.

monastery without a licence from the Holy See. This privilege was now extended to physicians and surgeons in the exercise of their profession; to priests when their services were required for the administration of the sick or the burial of the dead; and to all persons whatsoever in case of thieves or fire or any other emergency, and at all times to all who had obtained permission to enter from the minister-general of the Friars Minor, or from the provincial minister of the district in which the monastery to be visited lay. But under no circumstances whatsoever was any outsider of either sex to be suffered to eat or drink or sleep under the nuns' roof.

The strict regulations concerning silence were likewise mitigated. Henceforth in the infirmary they were not to be observed at all, neither by the sick nor their attendants, and the abbess was no longer forbidden to give leave to two sisters to converse together alone. So, too, the rigid discipline concerning fasting and abstinence: instead of every day, as Ugolino had enjoined, the nuns were now directed to fast from the 14th of September to the Feast of the Lord's Resurrection, save on Sundays, Michaelmas Day, Saint Francis's Day (Oct. 3rd), All Saints' Day, Christmas Day and the two days following, and on the Festivals of the Epiphany and of the Purification. Throughout the rest of the year they were only bound to fast on Fridays and on the ordinary fasts of the Church. As to abstinence, Ugolino's bread-and-water days were altogether abolished, fish and wine were allowed throughout the year; and eggs, milk, butter, cheese and other milk stuffs on all days when these articles of diet were not proscribed by the ordinary law of the Church. Moreover, the abbess was invested with faculties to dispense at her discretion the lay sisters from the observance of all the fasts peculiar to the order and, as had been the case under the Ugolino Rule, the sick, the aged and children were altogether exempted from fasting and abstinence.

Pope Innocent's sleeping arrangements, too, left little to be desired: he ordained that every sister should be provided with a bed to herself complete with good straw mattress, a pillow stuffed with hay or flock, or feathers if preferred, a pillow-case of linen and a sufficiency of woollen blankets, if such could be procured; if not, quilts well stuffed with flock or feathers.

The chapter concerning the Divine Office is most interesting. Ugolino had ordained, as we have seen, that the rite observed should be the old Benedictine Rite<sup>1</sup>; but Innocent decrees that

<sup>1</sup> See p. 130.

the Poor Ladies, in praising God as well by night as by day, shall chant their hours according to the use of the order of Friars Minor: "De divino officio tam in die quam in nocte Dolmino persolvendo taliter observetur, quod eae, quae legere et canere noverint, secundum consuetudinem ordinis fratrum minorum, cum gravitate tamen et modestia, officium debeant celebrare."

This was not an innovation on the part of Pope Innocent IV: some years earlier, when Gregory IX gave Blessed Agnes of Prague the Ugolino Rule, he had added a clause ordaining that the Divine Office should be celebrated *juxta morem Romanae ecclesiae excepto psalterio quod secundum consuetudinem gallicanam dici possit*—in other words, according to the use of the Friars Minor.<sup>1</sup>

It should be borne in mind that the Ugolino constitutions were drawn up in 1218 or earlier, and that at this time the friars had no special rite of their own. The Rule of 1221 simply ordains that they shall say the Divine Office according to the custom of clerks—*secundum consuetudinem clericorum*, but the corresponding passage in the Rule of 1223 runs thus: "Clerici faciant divinum officium secundum ordinem sanctae Romanae ecclesiae excepto psalterio, ex quo habere poterunt breviaria." That what was here meant by the rite of the Roman Church was not the old Roman rite which, it seems, was still observed in the great Roman basilicas, but the shortened form of office used in the papal chapel, is clear from the last words of the above-quoted passage, "as soon as they can have breviaries." The breviary was a little book containing an abbreviated form of office for the convenience of wayfarers; it seems to have first come into use at the opening of the eleven hundreds, and before the close of the reign of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) the clerks of the Roman Curia, always moving from place to place, seem to have made this rite their own. At all events Ralph de Rivo says:—*Clerici capelares . . . officium romanum semper breviabant et saepe alterabant prout domino papae et cardinalibus congruebat observandum, et hujus*

<sup>1</sup> Agneti sorori regis Bohemiae.

"Sincerum animi tui fervorem." Dat. Spoleti III kal. septembris, anno octavo.

Abbatissae mon. b. S. Francisci Pragen.

"Prudentibus virginibus religiosam vitam eligentibus." Dat. Perusii VIII kal. augusti, anno nono.

officii ordinarium vidi Romæ a tempore Innocentii III recollectum . . . et illud officium brevium secuti sunt Fratres Minores, inde est quod breviaria eorum et libros officii intitulant secundum consuetudinem romanæ curiæ.” The reason that the friars adopted this use is not far to seek; they, too, like the clerks of the papal chapel were always travelling, and it was in order to save time.

There can be no doubt that the edition of the psalter used by the friars was the Gallican edition; the instructions to Agnes of Bohemia are significant in this regard, but why was the Gallican psalter prescribed instead of the version used in Rome? Probably because this version was now obsolete elsewhere. And why does Innocent IV substitute *secundum consuetudinem Ordinis fratrum minorum* for *secundum ordinem sanctæ Romanæ ecclesiæ*? Because the friars at this time had a special “use” of their own, which Gregory IX had redacted for them a few weeks before his death with the assistance of Haymon of Faversham: it consisted of a revised and, probably, curtailed version of the rite of the Roman Curia with the Gallican psalter. These things we learn from a brief which Gregory addressed to the minister-general of the Friars Minor on the 6th of June, 1241,<sup>1</sup> and from a circular letter which John of Parma addressed to his brethren in 1249. It will be interesting to note that later on the Franciscan rite became the official rite of the Holy Roman Church. But to return to Pope Innocent IV and his *Formula Vitæ*. The reader will call to mind that Ugolino had submitted the Poor Ladies to the immediate jurisdiction of a cardinal or bishop of the Roman Church to be named by the Supreme Pontiff at their request, and that in his constitutions he altogether ignores the order of Friars Minor. Innocent, on the contrary, ignores the cardinal protector, and commits the sisters in all things alike spiritual and temporal to the care and government of his beloved sons, the minister-general and the provincial ministers of the Franciscans, for ever, investing them with ample faculties for carrying out this charge, and with all the patronage and authority which had hitherto been exercised by the cardinal protector.<sup>2</sup> They had power, as we

<sup>1</sup> “Pio vestro collegio,” etc.

<sup>2</sup> “Verum ne ab observatione præsentis formulæ breviter suprascriptæ, quam uniformiter ubique ab omnibus volumus et mandamus diligentius observari, pro defectu certi regiminis imposterum recedere vos contingat aut sub diversorum magisterio vivendi modos incurrere differentes, dilectis filiis generali et provincialibus ministris ordinis fratrum minorum curam vestri et omnium monasteriorum

have seen, to dispense individual sisters from time to time from the strict observance of the law of perpetual enclosure, and, at their discretion, to unlock the cloister door for outsiders. The sisters of every convent were, indeed, free to choose their own superior, but before the abbess-elect could assume office, her election must first be confirmed by the minister-general or by the provincial minister of the place in which her monastery lay, and these men, too, were able, if need be, to depose her. Theirs was the office of visitation, or, if they were unable to perform it themselves, of deputing some other friars, "not too young, but of suitable age," to act for them according to instructions. "And let these men," Pope Innocent continues (the ministers above mentioned) addressing himself to the sisters, "and let these men hear your confessions and administer to you the other sacraments; but since the brethren of the order of Saint Francis are not bound to reside continually in your convents, lest peradventure for lack of a priest danger should at any time threaten you, let them appoint other discreet and provident chaplains to shrive and housel in case of necessity, and to celebrate Divine Service for you in your oratories. And let no new convent be founded without the consent and licence of the general chapter of the order of Friars Minor."

The last clause is very curious—there is nothing like it in the Ugolino Rule; the following is the gist of it: "Let the chaplains and the lay brethren (*conversi*), according to the disposition of the Visitor, promise obedience to the Abbess, pledging themselves to stability of place, and to live always without property and in chastity. Albeit it shall be lawful for the Visitor, in case of need, to shift them, and likewise the lay sisters, from one monastery to another. They must keep the same fasts as the sisters, unless at any time it shall seem good to the Abbess to dispense them from the observance of the same for any reasonable cause. Let them wear tunics of some common stuff as befittheth their indigence, with narrow sleeves and without hoods. For girdle let them have a decent strap with a knife thrust in it. Let them wear capes over their tunics, and the chaplain, if it please him, may have also a decent cloak. Moreover, they shall wear shoes and hose and breeches. The lay brethren shall say the office noted above for the lay sisters, save that they shall not be bound to the Lady

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vestri ordinis plene in omnibus præsentium auctoritate committimus: statuentes, ut sub eorum et aliorum, qui pro tempore ministri fuerint, obedientia, regimine et doctrina debeatis de cetero permanere, quibus teneamini firmiter obedire."

Office. Let them be submitted to the Visitor for instruction and correction, and take heed to it that they obey him."

There is another clause in this rule which is not to be found in any shape or form in the rule of Ugolino, a clause which enabled, but did not compel, the sisters to hold property of all kinds in common in their own names, and without any restriction whatever as to amount, to wit—

"Ad haec liceat vobis in communi redditus et possessiones recipere et habere ac ea libere retinere, pro quibus possessionibus modo dicto pertractandis procurator unus prudens pariter et fidelis in singulis monasteriis vestri ordinis habeatur, quandocumque expedire videbitur, qui per visitatorem constitui et amoveri debeat, sicut viderit expedire. Hic vero taliter constitutus de omnibus sibi commissis, receptis pariter et expensis, Abbatissae et tribus aliis sororibus ad hoc specialiter assignatis et visitatori, cum voluerit, rationem reddere teneatur; et nihil omnino de rebus monasterii vendere, commutare, obligare vel alienare quoquo modo valeat, nisi de licentia abbatissae pariter et conventus; et quidquid contra hoc fuerit attentatum, irritum decernimus et inane. Possit tamen de mobilibus parum valentibus aliqua parva ex causa licita interdum aliis elargiri."

On the 13th of November, 1245, as we have seen in a preceding chapter, Pope Innocent IV had confirmed the Ugolino Rule for the Poor Ladies at their special request.<sup>1</sup> On the 6th of August, 1247, he confirmed for them a new rule which he himself had redacted, or caused to be redacted, and again, at their special request;<sup>2</sup> on the 23rd of August, 1247, he dispatched a copy of this rule to every house of the order, and with it a circular letter ordaining that henceforth it was to be observed everywhere.<sup>3</sup> On the 17th of June, 1248, he wrote to Cardinal Rainaldo,<sup>4</sup> saying that it had come to his ears that he had withdrawn his solicitude and protection from the Poor Enclosed Nuns under pretext that in virtue of their new rule they were now confided to the care of the provincial ministers of the Franciscans, and that as it was not his wish that these women should be deprived of Rainaldo's most useful patronage, he hereby reinvested him with all the faculties in their regard which his predecessor of pleasant recollection, Pope Gregory IX, had conferred on him,

<sup>1</sup> "Solet annuere sedes apostolica."

<sup>2</sup> "Quoties a nobis."

<sup>3</sup> "Cum omnis vera religio."

<sup>4</sup> "Cum dilectis filiis."

N.B.—Eubel gives the text of this letter in his Supplement, No. XVI, p. 247.

and that, notwithstanding aught to the contrary in the new rule aforesaid.

On the 6th of June, 1250, the Pope again wrote to "his venerable Brother Rainaldo, Bishop of Ostia," saying that although he had given the sisters of the Order of Saint Damian a new rule of life, it was not his wish that it should be forced on any community unwilling to profess it.<sup>1</sup>

Whence the objection to Innocent's rule, and why?

Rainaldo opposed it surely, and, I suspect, from spleen: he had had no hand in the making of it. The friars, too, opposed it: it soldered to their backs a burthen which they by no means desired to carry. The Poor Ladies, for reasons which did them more credit, were for the most part likewise recalcitrant.

The houses of Benedictine origin bewailed the effacement of the name of Saint Benedict and the franciscanization of their statutes: the obligation to recite the Franciscan office instead of the old monastic use must have been in itself to those long-suffering nuns a constant source of annoyance. Albeit the Benedictine houses were few, some ten or twelve, I think, at most, all told; but if the new rule was distasteful to these communities, for different reasons it was no less irksome to the other houses of the order, or at all events, in each house, to not a few individuals. For Saint Francis's daughters at this time were as sharply divided as were his sons: there were sisters amongst them of strict observance and sisters of large observance, and some who, like Saint Clare herself, favoured a middle course. For the zealots of poverty and penance this new rule, which permitted the holding of property in common and mitigated all the penitential clauses, was a stumbling-block and a reproach; it had been given to them, indeed, by the vicar of Christ, but Satan himself had drafted it, and they were not to be lured to destruction by the bait of Saint Francis's name and Saint Francis's breviary.

As for the women who wished for a form of life less rigid, what, after all, had they gained by the Supreme Pontiff's changes? All that the new rule gave them in respect to mitigation of discipline they already had by means of private dispensations, and perhaps more; at all events they had the kind of dispensations they wanted, and Innocent had foreshadowed in the text of the rule and in the letter by which he promulgated it a new policy:

<sup>1</sup> "Inter personas alias." Eubel likewise gives the text of this letter. See Sup. No. XXI, p. 249.

henceforth he meant to be very sparing in the matter of dispensations; he wanted uniformity of observance, and to this end he had given the sisters a rule which all of them, in his opinion, could easily carry out; albeit it seemed to some of them that it contained some hard sayings. I do not think that Saint Clare found the new rule too harsh, but in her eyes it contained a blemish which more than counterbalanced all the benefits which it conferred: that unrestricted authorization to hold property of all kinds in common; if this clause were allowed to stand, she felt, sooner or later surely the life of the order would be crushed out by an accumulation of riches. And perhaps, too, she was a little hurt that she, the foundress, had not been consulted about the making of the new rule: her friend Ugolino in the old days and Blessed Father Francis had treated her with more consideration.

It is not surprising, then, that most of the convents availed themselves of the liberty which the Pope had conferred on them in his letter to Rainaldo above referred to, of the 6th of June, 1250, and that such was the case is evident from the information contained in the document we are now about to consider.

On the 24th of April, 1254, Rainaldo, altogether ignoring the rule of Innocent IV, and taking it for granted that the Ugolino Rule was still the official rule of the order, sent circular letters to all Clare abbesses, wherein he gave sundry explanations as to the way in which Ugolino had desired his statutes to be carried out, mitigated very considerably all the penitential clauses, and declared that none of them were binding under penalty of mortal sin.

If Pope Innocent confirmed this circular letter no record of it has come down to us; but on the 26th of June, 1254, he confirmed a similar letter which Rainaldo had addressed to the Abbess of Brixen on the 22nd of June in the same year.<sup>1</sup> Rainaldo's Brixen letter is almost, word for word, the same as his circular letter, but it grants larger mitigations.

Albeit a few monasteries adopted the rule of Innocent IV, witness his letter to the nuns of Pfullingen of October 21, 1252, Alexander's letter to the nuns of Strassburg of January 18, 1255,

<sup>1</sup> Innoc. IV. *Abbatissae et soribus monasterii S. Elizabeth de Briscina ordinis S. Damiani. Haberi percepimus, etc. Dat. Anagniae VI kal. julii, anno undecimo.*

Eubel gives the text of this letter (p. 257), and the text of Rainaldo's letter is appended to it.

and his letter to the nuns of Ferrara, above referred to, of February 5, 1256.

Moreover, according to the author of the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*, most of the convents of Provence and Aquitaine were observing the Rule of Innocent IV when that work was written—somewhere about the year 1370. The passage referred to runs thus—

“In eodem anno dominus Innocentius Papa IV pontificatus sui anno V modificando primam regulam sanctae Clarae, agente domino Raynaldo Cardinali et Ordinis Protectore,<sup>1</sup> dedit sororibus Ordinis sancti Damiani aliam regulam laxiorem, sub qua adhuc vivunt monasteria provinciae Acquitaniae et provinciae Provinciae pro maiori parte et alia in diversis aliis provinciis, quae gubernationi Ordinis immediate ex regula sunt subjecta.”

If Arnold of Serano, as some have thought, were indeed the author of the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals*, this testimony is of the first importance, for Arnold was Provincial of Aquitaine, and hence he can hardly have been mistaken as to the rule observed by the Clares of his own province.

<sup>1</sup> This is manifestly a mistake. Rainaldo, as we have seen, had nothing whatever to do with the making of Innocent's Rule.

## CHAPTER XII

Of Saint Clare's attitude in respect to the Rule of Innocent IV, and some notes concerning her so-called "Privileges of Poverty."

DID Saint Clare accept the rule of Innocent IV? Fr. Livarius Oliger, the latest, the best-informed and, without doubt, amongst the least prejudiced of those who have hitherto treated of the thorny subject of Seraphic Legislation, is quite sure that she did nothing of the kind. "*Certo certius*," he says, *S. Clara non accepit R<sup>1</sup>*.<sup>1</sup> *Cum enim haec maxima ex parte nihil esset nisi codificatio dispensationum in singulis monasteriis obtentorum, in eaque possessiones concederentur, S. Clara vero nullas dispensationes petierat, imo paupertatis obtinuerat privilegium, vi cujus ipsa a nullo constringi ad possessiones recipiendas potuit, huicque privilegio fideliter semper adhaeserat, nullo modo Sancta ad R<sup>2</sup> accipiendam adstricta erat.*" The Rule of Pope Innocent IV was certainly, as we have seen, much milder than the Ugolino Rule, and its penitential clauses may be not inaptly described as a codification of the various dispensations granted from time to time to individual houses of the order; but is there any evidence to show that the Seraphic Mother had never asked to be dispensed from the observance of Ugolino's austerities? It is true that no letters of dispensation addressed to herself have come down to us, but is there not reason to think that she not only asked for, but obtained, dispensations in the matter of fasting and abstinence? At all events, the discipline observed at Saint Damian's in this respect as described by herself in one of her letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague, which was written seemingly somewhere about the year 1238, is considerably milder than the discipline prescribed in the Ugolino Rule.<sup>2</sup>

That the Seraphic Mother considered Pope Innocent's property clause too large, no one who knows anything of this ardent lover of poverty will deny, but that she, who presently wrote at the head of her own rule—"Clare, the unprofitable servant of Christ and the humble disciple of Blessed Francis, doth promise obedience and

<sup>1</sup> Oliger, as he explains on p. 5 of his pamphlet, uses the abbreviation R<sup>1</sup> to signify the Ugolino Rule; R<sup>2</sup>, the Rule of Innocent IV; R<sup>3</sup>, the Rule of Saint Clare; R<sup>4</sup>, the Rule of Urban IV.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 135.

vation to the Lord Pope Innocent IV and his successors, canonically elected, and to the Roman Church"—that this athlete who, if she had not yet touched the goal of heroic sanctity, had certainly run very far in the way of perfection, and who showed herself throughout her life a no less loyal servant of the Lady Obedience than of the Lady Poverty—twin sisters so intimately united that it is impossible to wound the one without at the same time wounding the other—should have presumed to raise her hand against the Vicar of Christ, to reject a rule which he, in the legitimate exercise of his authority, had placed the whole order under strict obedience to accept, because, forsooth, it conceded a little more liberty in the matter of holding possessions in common than she deemed prudent, is, to my mind, inconceivable.

Fr. Olier, of course, as the reader will have noted, is not of opinion that Saint Clare was guilty of rebellion in rejecting Innocent's Rule; but, if she did so, it seems to me that such must have been the case, for I cannot think with him that her Privilege of Poverty, which guaranteed to the Seraphic Mother and her children at Saint Damian's that they should not at any time be forced to receive endowments, afforded her a legitimate excuse for refusing to accept a rule which did not compel but simply permitted those who professed it, if they desired to do so, to hold property under certain conditions.

For the rest, there is no direct evidence to show what course the Seraphic Mother adopted at this crisis; but it is certain that some five years later, on the 9th of August, 1253, and two days before she died, Pope Innocent IV confirmed, not as is sometimes said for the whole order, but for the community at Saint Damian's only, a rule which she herself had written. Now the original copy of this rule has come down to us, and though it is very differently worded, in substance it differs hardly at all from the rule of Innocent IV: the penitential clauses and the poverty clause are somewhat stricter, the clause concerning silence a trifle larger, in some things it gives a little more power to the abbess, and in others a little less. In its main outlines, then, Saint Clare approved of the rule of Innocent IV.

Wherefore, and from what we know of the character of this discreet woman of iron will and heroic humility, this much, I think, may be safely said: she submitted to Pope Innocent's wishes in respect to his rule as soon as they were made known to her, and at the same time, although, as Celano bears witness, she was now

so seriously ill that her sisters believed she had already entered the valley of the shadow of Death, made up her mind to write a new rule with her own pen, and not to die until the Supreme Pontiff should have placed herself and her own community under obedience to profess it.

Before proceeding to examine this interesting piece of legislation which the Seraphic Mother redacted from the writings and from the verbal instructions of Blessed Francis, and in which, it would seem, his sentiments are reflected more accurately than in the rule which Honorius III confirmed for the friars in 1223, it will be well to add some further notes on Saint Clare's Privilege of Poverty, which in these days of loose writing and hurried reading is not unfrequently confused with her Rule.

Our first witness shall be Celano; the primary cause of this confusion. His testimony, though far from being accurate, and not very happily expressed, is most important: in the chapter in his *Life of Saint Clare* concerning her "True and Holy Poverty," he relates the following anecdote—

"Now Blessed Clare, desiring that her religion should be enrolled under the title of poverty, petitioned Pope Innocent III, of pleasant recollection for a privilege of poverty. Whereat the Supreme Pontiff, congratulating the virgin on her great zeal, declared that what she had asked for was, in sooth, a singular thing, seeing that never before had a like petition been made to the Apostolic See. And in order to emphasize a request so remarkable by a favour no less extraordinary, with his own hand this glorious man engrossed the initial letter of the privilege which Blessed Clare had demanded—and he laughed not a little the while.

"The Lord Pope Gregory IX, of happy memory, a man most worthy of Peter's chair, and meet, by reason of his merits to be held in high esteem, loved this holy maiden with fatherly affection. Wherefore he sought to persuade her, on account of the hardness of the times and the dangers of the age, to accept certain endowments which he himself most liberally offered. But Blessed Clare, resisting with steadfast resolution, and altogether refusing to acquiesce: 'If you fear your vow,' quoth he, 'from that vow I release you.' Whereat the Saint: 'Holy Father, it is not my wish to be released in anywise from following in Christ's footsteps.'"

Alexander IV likewise informs us that Saint Clare refused certain possessions which Gregory IX desired to bestow on her monastery, and he adds that the annual revenue arising therefrom was

sufficient to provide for all the needs of the sisters. The passage referred to occurs in the bull of canonization : it runs thus—

“ Amatrix vero praecipua, et colona sedula paupertatis, sic illam suo affixit animo, sic eam in suis desideriis alligavit, quod semper in ipsius dilectione, firmiter et ardentior in amplexu, a districta et delectabili ejus copula, pro nulla unquam necessitate discessit; nec aliquibus prorsus potuit induci suasibus ad consentiendum, quod suum monasterium proprias possessiones haberet : quamquam felices recordationis Gregorius Papa praedecessor noster, de multa indulgentia ipsius monasterii pie cogitans, libenter illi voluerit, *pro sororum ejus sustentatione possessiones sufficientes et congruas deputare.*”

In the chapter concerning his heroine’s “infirmities and long sickness” (*De infirmitatibus ejus et languore diutino*), Celano again refers to her Privilege of Poverty : describing what took place during a visit which Cardinal Rainaldo paid to Saint Clare shortly after the arrival of the Papal Court at Perugia from Lyons (November 5th, 1251) he says:—“And above all things she besought him to obtain for her from the Lord Pope (Innocent IV) and the cardinals the confirmation of her privilege of poverty, which thing this most faithful upholder of religion undertook to do, and he kept his promise. “Verum illud super omnia rogat, ut privilegium paupertatis a Domino Papa et cardinalibus sibi impetret confirmari : quod fidelis ille religionis adiutor sicut verbo promisit, sic opere adimplevit.”

There is no official record that any privilege of poverty was ever confirmed by Innocent IV, either for Saint Clare or any one else; but we know, for the original document has come down to us, that he confirmed her Rule for her two days before her death, and hence it would seem that this was what Celano had in his mind when he made the above assertion.

As to his statement that Pope Innocent III granted her a privilege of poverty, it finds no support in the writings of any of his contemporaries; the privilege, if it ever existed, has not come down to us; in the Vatican registers there is no record of it nor of any letter whatsoever addressed by Innocent III to Saint Clare or to any other person whomsoever concerning her affairs. The earliest pontifical letter we have touching the Poor Ladies is the brief which Honorius III directed to Cardinal Ugolino, on the 27th of August, 1218,<sup>1</sup> and from the text it is perfectly clear that

<sup>1</sup> Litterae tuae.

this was the first letter concerning them issued by the Holy See. Moreover, it is most unlikely that the Pope would have conferred such a privilege unless he had previously, or at the same time, confirmed the rule which Saint Clare and her ladies were at this time observing, in other words, the Primitive Rule. Now Gregory IX, in his letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, of the 9th of May, 1238,<sup>1</sup> declares emphatically that this rule had never been confirmed by the Apostolic See.

On the other hand, it is certain that when Saint Clare and her sisters at Assisi were about to exchange the Primitive Rule, which, as we have seen, had never received apostolic authorization, for the Ugolino Rule, which had then just been sealed with the seal of Peter's authority: that is to say, when their order was for the first time obtaining the official recognition of the Curia, somewhere about the close of the year 1218, Honorius III conceded to them, through the good offices of Cardinal Ugolino, as he himself informs us, a privilege of exemption from episcopal control for so long as they should continue to live without possessions—in other words, a privilege of poverty. Also, it is no less certain, for the original document has come down to us, that some ten years later, when Ugolino himself was seated in Peter's chair, on the 17th of September, 1228, he granted these same sisters another kind of privilege of poverty, a privilege which guaranteed to them that they should never at any time be compelled to hold possessions.

Which of these privileges of poverty was Thomas of Celano thinking of when he noted down the anecdote above quoted? Both, in a hazy and confused way, for Brother Thomas was at this time a very old man, and the things which the sisters had told him had got mixed up in his mind, and he was unable to disentangle them. When he wrote the first sentence he was thinking of the first privilege, the privilege of Honorius III. That this was so the opening words leave no room for doubt, for when Honorius's privilege was asked for, the order of Poor Ladies had not yet received, but was just about to receive, a definite legal status, as we have already seen, and Celano says: "*Volens enim*" (Beata Clara) "*religionem suam intitulari titulo paupertatis a bono memoriae Innocentio tertio*" (a slip of the pen for Honorio tertio) "*paupertatis privilegium postulavit.*" But when he set down the second sentence he was thinking of the second privilege: his mind had wandered away from the simple and kindly old saint whom

<sup>1</sup> Angelis gaudium.

men called Pope Honorius to the magnificent mystic who succeeded him: that stalwart veteran, Pope Gregory IX, with his lordly presence, his beautiful face, his famous beard, whose arm at eighty had not lost its strength, nor his right hand its cunning, and the lamp of whose brilliant intellect was burning as brightly as ever, and with whom, we must not forget, Celano had been personally acquainted. But the reader shall judge for himself: the passage referred to runs thus—

“Qui vir magnificus tanto virginis fervori congratulans, singulare dicit esse propositum, quod nunquam tale privilegium a Sede Apostolica fuerit postulatum. Et ut insolitae petitioni favor insolitus arderet, pontifex ipse cum hilaritate magna petiti privilegii sua manu conscripsit primam notulam.”

Who can doubt that the caustic speech which our friend here placed in the mouth of meek Honorius in reality came from the cynical lips of his sharp-tongued successor?

In other words, Celano, who knew of both of these privileges, had it in his mind to give a categorical account of the granting of each of them. He began by relating how Saint Clare petitioned Honorius III, whom he calls inadvertently Innocent III, for a privilege of exemption from episcopal control made conditional on the exact observance of sublime poverty; and this privilege he not inaptly describes as a privilege of poverty. But instead of going on to relate how Honorius acceded to her request, owing to a lapse of memory he tacked on to this part of his narrative what Pope Gregory said and did, when some ten years afterwards he, in his turn, was petitioned by the Seraphic Mother for a privilege which, though not indeed of the same nature as the privilege which Honorius had granted, can be no less aptly described as a privilege of poverty, and having related at length what led up to this petition—Gregory's offer to endow Saint Damian's, and Saint Clare's refusal of it—he forgot to say anything whatever about the actual making of the petition or the granting of the same, which, under the circumstances, I think, is not surprising, seeing that he had already related Pope Gregory's words and actions upon this occasion, fathering them on Pope Honorius.

“This memorable interview,” says Father Paschal,<sup>1</sup> “seems to have taken place in May or June 1228, when Gregory IX, who had come to Assisi for the preliminaries of the canonization of

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of St. Clare*, ascribed to Thomas of Celano. Appendix II, note 116, p. 143.

Saint Francis, visited Saint Clare at Saint Damian's (*See I, Cel. II, § 122, p. 131*)," and this is the general view. Albeit Celano does not say in the passage referred to that Gregory visited the Saint Damian's folk upon this occasion, but that he broke his journey from Rieti to Assisi at Spoleto, where he rested for a few days, and that during his sojourn there "he paid a kind visit to the handmaids of Christ, dead and buried to the world." Now Saint Damian's is, at least, six hours' journey from Spoleto, but just on the outskirts of the city there was at this time an ancient community of Benedictine nuns dedicated to Saint Paul, in which Gregory was much interested. These were the handmaids of Christ, I suspect, whom Celano had in his mind when he wrote the passage above quoted, and he is quite right in describing them as dead and buried to the world in the spring of 1228: for in the preceding year they had adopted strict enclosure, and the Ugolino constitutions, at Gregory's instigation, induced thereto seemingly by the promise of a privilege of exemption from episcopal control; at all events, on the 4th of August, 1227, the Pope had exempted them, and in the deed of exemption he explains, not without a touch of irony, the motive which had prompted him to grant it: "Seeing that these women had increased in religion, namely by pledging themselves henceforth to keep close house, it seemed to him to be not incongruous that their liberty should be likewise increased." It will be interesting to note that these nuns did not resign their possessions when they adopted the Ugolino Rule. Indeed they increased them very considerably a few years later when a wealthy member of the Third Order, a knight of Monte Falco, made over to them the whole of his vast estate, rich in serfs and manorial dues, on condition that throughout the rest of his life they should provide for his temporal necessities. Albeit they were not able to habituate themselves to Saint Clare's cord and frock, and when an opportune moment arrived they were very glad to resume their old black habits. Monsignor Faloci Pulignani, vicar-general of Spoleto, has some interesting notes in his *Miscellanea Franciscana* on this time-honoured community, which is still walking in the way of peace under the banner of Saint Benedict.

But this is a digression; let us return to the Seraphic Mother and her second Privilege of Poverty. It is impossible to fix the precise date of her dramatic interview with Pope Gregory IX, during which she exacted from him a promise to concede to her the privilege in question, let it suffice to say that the meeting took

place in the summer of 1228, after Gregory's arrival at Assisi from Spoleto and before the 17th of September, the day on which the privilege was drafted. The tenor of this most important document may be rendered in English thus—

“Gregory, Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved daughters in Christ, Clare and the other handmaids of Christ, residing in the church of Saint Damian, in the diocese of Assisi: Health and Apostolic Benediction.

“Desiring to serve God alone, as it is manifest, you have trampled on the world and the covetousness thereof. Wherefore, having sold all that you have and distributed the price of it to the needy, you are resolved henceforth to live without any kind of possessions, and to follow in all things the footsteps of Him who, for our sake, became poor, and who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

“Nor doth the prospect of want affright you from this resolution, for the left hand of the Heavenly Bridegroom is under your head to sustain the infirmity of the flesh, which, as charity ordaineth, you have made subject to the law of the spirit. And surely He who feedeth the birds of the air and who clotheth the lilies of the field, will in nowise suffer you to lack either food or raiment, until at length in eternity He shall reveal Himself to you and embracing you with the right hand of His spiritual consolation envelop you with the plenitude of the Beatific Vision.

“Therefore, beloved daughters in Christ, in accordance with your request, we hereby confirm with apostolic favour your resolution concerning sublime poverty, and by the authority of these presents ordain that no man shall henceforth compel you to accept possessions. Let no man, therefore, whosoever infringe this our commandment or venture to contradict it in rash audacity; and if any attempt of this kind be made let them that make it know that they will incur the indignation of Almighty God and His Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

“Given at Perugia on the 15th day from the Kalends of October, in the second year of our Pontificate.”

In the long list of extraordinary and perplexing letters concerning the affairs of the first Poor Ladies this is perhaps the most extraordinary and the most perplexing, nor can we disembarass ourselves of the difficulty which it presents by alleging that we

have before us a forged document, or that the text as we know it is not Gregory's text. The original parchment has come down to us, its genuineness is beyond suspicion, and the beautiful Gothic characters with which it is inscribed are as legible as if they had been written yesterday; there is only one word in the whole letter which is not perfectly clear, and as it occurs in a quotation from the Bible there can be no doubt as to what is intended—*agri*: “qui pascit aves coeli et lilia vestit *agri*,” etc.

For the rest the parchment is nearly square: it measures thirty-seven centimetres (about fifteen inches) by thirty-five. On the back, in a thirteenth-century hand, are written these words: “*Privilegium Gregorii Pape IX quo non possunt cogi recipere possessiones ab aliqua persona*,” and underneath them in handwriting of the seventeen hundreds: “*lettera di Papa Grigorio mandata a Santa Chiara*.” Attached to it by a riband of red and yellow silk is Pope Gregory's seal in lead, which is thus inscribed—



This most precious relic, which at present hangs in a frame under glass in the nuns' choir of the church of Santa Chiara at Assisi, has been photographed twice: in 1894, and again in 1909, this time by Father Paschal Robinson, who was kind enough to give me a copy of it as soon as the prints were ready. Thus much for the description of this ancient letter; now for the signification of it.

We learn from the first paragraph that shortly before it was written, that is to say shortly before the 17th of October, 1228—at most a few weeks, perhaps only a few days, as we have seen—the Seraphic Mother and her sisters at Assisi had determined, subject to the Pope's approval, to sell all that they had and henceforth to live without possessions.

On the other hand we know, for there is evidence in abundance to prove it, that Saint Clare herself at the time of her profession, that is to say on the night of Palm Sunday in the year 1211, had already divested herself of everything that she had, and that every

one of her sisters at the time of their several professions had done likewise.

Moreover, Saint Clare herself tells us in her Rule, which was written after the year 1245 and before the year 1251, that she and her sisters (at Saint Damian's) had always been solicitous to observe that holy poverty which they had promised to the Lord God and to Blessed Francis.

It is evident, then, that the measure of poverty which these women proposed to themselves to practise in 1228 was something over and above that which they had hitherto practised, and that the possessions which at this time they desired to sell were not individual possessions but possessions held in common.

It will be interesting to note in this connection what Father Paschal says touching his search for Seraphic documents at Assisi in 1909. After having recounted the result of his investigations at the convent of Santa Chiara he thus continues:—

“It may be added that, thanks to the courtesy of Mgr. Tini, Vicar-General of Assisi, I was able to make sure that no early MSS. regarding Saint Clare lie lurking in any cobwebbed corner of the archive of S. Rufino, either. The chief object of my search at the latter place was an instrument, executed on June 8, 1238, by St. Clare and the fifty sisters who were then with her at S. Damiano by which they appointed a procurator to make over a piece of land near Bastia to the chapter of S. Rufino. When Wadding wrote,<sup>1</sup> the original document was in the possession of the Dean of the Cathedral of S. Rufino at Assisi, D. Cillenio Benignotoli, but the waters of Lethe had apparently closed over this precious parchment before 1795. At least there is no mention of it in the very complete Inventory of the archive of S. Rufino (963–1646), made in that year by Frondini. This Inventory,<sup>2</sup> which is still in MS., was kindly placed at my disposal by Mgr. Tini. Nor is there any trace at S. Damiano of the early copy which Wadding saw there.”<sup>3</sup>

One asks oneself whether the great Franciscan annalist noted down the date of this document correctly. Was 1238 a slip of the pen for 1228? Be this as it may, in the year 1228 Saint Clare

<sup>1</sup> See *Annales*, ad. an. 1238, nn. XIV–XV (t. III, p. 13).

<sup>2</sup> *Instrumenti e Bolle ecc. dall' anno 963 sino al 1646 copiate dall' archivio della Cattedrale di S. Rufino dal Cav. Francesc' Antonio Frondini (1795).*

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Saint Clare*, ascribed to Thomas of Celano, translated by Fr. Paschal Robinson, Philadelphia, 1910. Introduction, pp. xix–xx.

and her sisters at Saint Damian's were not content with the comparatively mild discipline in respect to the observance of poverty which the Seraphic Father had given them in the early days of the order: they wished to adopt the stringent discipline which, towards the close of his life and under the influence, apparently, of Brother Leo, he had prescribed for the brethren. Whether they ever realized this wish is another question; if so, they soon reverted to their former manner of life, convinced by a short experience that the old plan was better; but for the time being it is certain that they were exceedingly eager to change it. Not matter, I think, for wonderment under the circumstances.

In the year 1228 the brethren themselves were not at one as to the weight of the burthen which the founder had wished them to carry; Elias, the wisest man in the order, was more or less under a cloud, and Peter had not yet spoken. In the year 1228 Rainaldo was cardinal-protector, Parenti minister-general, Fra Pacifico, a converted troubador, visitor of the Second Order—excellent men all of them, poets, mystics, enthusiasts, endowed with every virtue save discretion. With spiritual pastors and masters of this stamp anything might take place. Moreover, Saint Clare and her sisters had seen very little of Saint Francis during the latter years of his life. When he was lying sick in the bishop's house at Assisi he wished to bid them farewell; but he was too ill to visit them, and they were not able to come to him. So he sent them a letter instead, one paragraph of which Saint Clare has preserved for us by inserting it in her rule. She calls it his last wish: "I, Brother Francis, least of men, wish to follow the life and poverty of the Most High Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Most Holy Mother, and to persevere therein to the end, and I counsel you all, my Ladies, and conjure you to do likewise." A few days afterwards the gentle saint of Assisi touched the goal of his high calling; he died at the Porziuncola, and they decided to bury him in his native town, and "when they came to the place where he himself had planted the Order of Poor Ladies, and had laid him in the church of Saint Damian where these women dwell, a little window was opened through which they are wont to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Body, and the coffin, too, was opened; and lo, the Lady Clare, the mother of them all and the first flower of this holy religion, came with her daughters to look on the father that spake not to them and would not return to them, for he was hastening to another place."

But though the Seraphic Mother had persuaded herself, or had

been persuaded, that it was the founder's wish that his daughters should pay to the Lady Poverty the same tribute as his sons, it was not in her mind to make any change in the discipline of her community until she had first obtained the Supreme Pontiff's approval. Wherefore, when in the course of the summer her old friend came to Saint Damian's, she laid her project before him, and besought him to sanction and bless it. But Gregory had other views: he had felt from the first that it was not a seemly thing that women whom God had blessed with means—for the early Clares were almost all of them recruited from the upper classes—should divest themselves of all that they had and expect to live on other folks' sweat and labour; from the first, too, he had foreseen that the plan would prove impracticable, in the case of cloistered women—that if the nuns escaped starvation it would be the utmost that could be hoped for; and his consent to it had been wrung from him, in spite of his better judgment, by the all-compelling influence of the Seraphic Mother's will; the experience of the last ten years had more than justified his forebodings, and Pope Gregory IX had come down to Saint Damian's firmly determined to make amends for Cardinal Ugolino's weakness. He meant to offer these headstrong women an endowment sufficiently large to render them altogether independent of the alms of the faithful and, if need be, by ecclesiastical censure to compel them to accept it. Alas for his resolution! When Saint Clare met him with a proposal which, if it were carried out, he knew very well would only aggravate the ill, the Supreme Pontiff proved himself as pliant in her hands as he had been in the day when he held a less exalted post. He returned to Perugia discomfited, but the little prose-poem which, in due course, he addressed to the sisters, in accordance with a promise which the Seraphic Mother had exacted from him, afforded him, I doubt not, some measure of relief, for Pope Gregory IX knew how to write this sort of thing—

*“Gregorius Episcopus Servus servorum Dei. Dilectis in Christo Filiabus Claræ ac aliis Ancillis Christi in Ecclesia Sancti Damiani Episcopatus Assisii congregatis: Salutem et apostolicam benedictionem.*

*“Sicut manifestum est, cupientes soli Domino dedicari abdicastis rerum temporalium appetitum; propter quod venditis omnibus et pauperibus erogatis, nullas omnino possessiones habere proponitis, illius vestigiis per omnia inhaerentes, qui pro nobis factus est pauper,*

via, veritas, atque vita; nec ab huiusmodi proposito vos rerum terret inopia, nam laeva Sponsi coelestis est sub capite vestro ad sustentandum infirma corporis vestri, quae legi mentis ordinata charitate stravistis.

“Denique qui pascit aves coeli et lilia vestit agri vobis non deerit ad victum pariter et vestitum donec seipsum vobis transiens in aeternitate ministret, cum scilicet eius dextera vos felicius amplexabitur in suae plenitudine visionis.

“Sicut igitur supplicastis, altissimae paupertatis propositum vestrum favore apostolico roboramus, auctoritate vobis praesentium indulgentes ut recipere possessiones a nullo compelli possitis.

“Nulli ergo omnino hominum liceat hanc paginam nostrae concessionis infringere vel ei ausu temerario contraire.

“Si quis autem hoc attentare praesumpserit, indignationem omnipotentis Dei et beatorum Petri et Pauli apostolorum eius se noverit incursurum.

“Datum Perusii XV kalendas octobris, Pontificatus nostri anno secundo.”

Some writers of things Franciscan take a different view of this affair: they think that Pope Gregory IX was not in reality the author of the bull *Sicut manifestum est*. They do not, indeed, deny the authenticity of the venerable relic which hangs in the Clares' choir at Assisi: they maintain that our old friend copied the text—the whole of it save the sanctioning clause—from an earlier document which his uncle, Pope Innocent III, had written many years before. In other words, these learned writers are of opinion that Pope Gregory's Privilege of Poverty of the 17th of September, 1228, must not be regarded as a fresh concession, but rather as a confirmation and reiteration of a privilege which Pope Innocent III had granted to the Seraphic Mother and her disciples at Saint Damian's in the early days of their religious life.

Albeit, all the letters of confirmation that have come down to us of this period, episcopal as well as pontifical, are worded in such fashion as to leave no room for doubt that the favours confirmed in virtue of them were not new favours but favours which had been already granted: in every case the date of the original concession is quoted with the name of the individual who had conceded it, and not unfrequently also, for greater security, the complete text as well.

The writers who maintain that Gregory's privilege is only a

confirmation of an earlier privilege granted by Innocent III are not ignorant of these things: they hold that the case in question is an exception to the general rule, and for the following reasons—

(i) Because Celano, who is often found to be in contradiction with contemporary official papers of undoubted authenticity, and who sometimes contradicts himself, informs us in the *Legenda Sanctæ Clare*—if, indeed, he wrote it—that a privilege of poverty was granted to Saint Clare by Pope Innocent III.

(ii) Because in the so-called will of Saint Clare, which no modern historian will venture to pronounce to be genuine, and which some very respectable critics are convinced is a fifteenth-century forgery, we learn, not indeed that Innocent III granted Saint Clare a privilege of poverty, but that she asked him to do so.

(iii) Because in the Paris edition of 1512 of the *Firmamentum trium Ordinum Beati Francisci*, a sixteenth-century compilation which contains some wheat and much cockle, the text of Pope Gregory's privilege appears under the name of Innocent III, but without date and with certain strange additions, and in place of the usual sanctioning clause a formula which stigmatizes this so-called privilege of Innocent III as a spurious document drawn up by one who was not acquainted with the ways of the Roman Curia.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OF THE RULE OF SAINT CLARE

THOUGH Saint Clare had the pen of a ready writer and probably made frequent use of it, the list of writings attributed to her is not a long one, and such of them as are certainly genuine can be counted on the fingers of one hand. This list includes a will, which is probably spurious; a last blessing and one or two devotional exercises which she may have written; a short letter to Sister Ermentrude of Bruges, which is probably genuine; four long and most interesting letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague which, although the originals have not come down to us, the best critics affirm to be undoubtedly genuine; and, most important of all because it is the best authenticated of all, the remarkable piece of legislation which forms the subject of this chapter: "The Rule of Saint Clare," or, as she herself calls it: "The Form of Life of the Order of Poor Sisters" (*Forma Vitae Ordinis Sororum Pauperum*).

In drawing up her rule the Seraphic Mother borrowed largely from the rule of Innocent IV, and almost as largely from the rule of the Friars Minor of 1223, and in each case not only the substance but also the phraseology: sometimes she quotes the very words of Pope Innocent and of Saint Francis, and sometimes she adapts the passages quoted, elaborating, curtailing, changing as it seems good to her. She borrowed, likewise, but to a less extent, from Saint Benedict and from Ugolino. Albeit her rule is something more than a mere collection of extracts from the works of earlier writers: interspersed throughout are not a few sympathetic touches from Saint Clare's own pen, and they compare by no means unfavourably with the beautiful Franciscan and Benedictine work in which they are embedded. Moreover, the quotations are happily chosen and very skilfully arranged, and all this heterogeneous material is welded into a piece of literature which is profoundly impressed with the personality of the valiant woman who produced it.

The rule of Saint Clare was confirmed by Cardinal Rainaldo, but for the community at Saint Damian's only, on the 16th of September, 1252, and from that day to this these nuns have never

ceased to observe it. In the fall of the following year Pope Innocent IV, by his famous bull *Solet annuere sedes apostolica*, solemnly confirmed the cardinal-protector's confirmation, and Clement IV likewise confirmed it when the Saint Damian's folk removed to the monastery of Santa Chiara in Assisi, where they still reside. Clement's bull is dated December 31, 1266. There is no evidence to show that any other community adopted the Rule of Saint Clare until 1343, when Clement VI granted it to several houses which Queen Sancia of Naples—the wife of Robert II—was at this time founding in Calabria and in Sicily, and about the same time, or a little later, a few Umbrian houses adopted it. These and the mother house at Assisi are the only Clare houses at the present day that observe the Rule of Saint Clare pure and simple. True, it is nominally the rule of the Colletine congregation, to which I suppose more than half the present day Clares belong; but Saint Colette explained the rule, and added thereto so many new regulations as to render it to all intents and purposes an entirely new rule, and in respect to penitential observances it is far stricter than the rule of the Seraphic Mother.

The original copy of the bull *Solet annuere*, by which Innocent IV confirmed the rule in 1253, two days before Saint Clare's death, was discovered some twenty years ago by the late Abbess Matilda Rossi, who at that time was Superior of the mother house at Assisi: she found this precious document, which contains the text of the rule in full, and which had been lost sight of for years, wrapped in the folds of an old habit which once belonged to the Seraphic Mother. It had no doubt been placed there for the sake of security and afterwards forgotten. "For more than once within the last hundred years the religious (of Santa Chiara) have been suddenly expelled without being allowed time to take anything with them, whilst their monastery was pillaged and turned over to the soldiers as a barracks, or the cells were let out as lodgings."

The Abbess Rossi took care to have Pope Innocent's bull photographed and to provide every Clare house in Christendom with a copy of it. It has since been very carefully edited and printed by the Franciscan fathers of Quaracchi, and the original, framed and glazed, is now carefully treasured in the church of Santa Chiara at Assisi. It has been examined by experts again and again, and there can be no doubt whatever as to its authenticity. It measures fifty-five centimetres in length and sixty-nine in width;

the writing throughout is legible, but a few words near the margin are not very easy to decipher, for the parchment, which is not of so good a quality as that on which Pope Gregory's privilege of poverty is written, is worn and perforated in places, especially round the edges. Also the writing is smaller than Gregory's writing, and, unlike his, the capitals are not ornamented. On the reverse side is written in a contemporary hand: *Bulla confirmationis regule Sancte Clare per Dominum Innocentium IIII*, and also: *Hanc beata Clara tetigit et osculata est pro devotione pluribus et pluribus vicibus*. Blessed Clare held this parchment in her hands and kissed it from devotion many, many times. In the left-hand corner of the upper margin, on the face side, we find this inscription in very small characters: *Ad instar fiat S.*, and immediately underneath them: *Ex causis manifestis michi et protectori monasterii fiat ad instar*, "which words," says Fr. Oliger, "were written by Pope Innocent IV himself; there can be no doubt whatever about it": "Quae verba certo certius ab ipso Pontifice scripta sunt," and in an interesting and most instructive footnote he gives his reasons for thinking so. To my mind they are sufficiently convincing. This is what he says—

"Verba enim relata sunt formulae quibus Pontifices *Supplicas* pro bullarum confectione a Datario porrectas subscribere solent. Qua in subscriptione unusquisque Pontifex littera initiali proprii nominis baptismalis utitur. Legendum est igitur supra: *Fiat ad instar S(inibaldus)*; Innocentio enim nomen erat Sinibaldus. Supplica vero in formam redacta et deinde a Pontifice dicto modo subscripta juxta stylum Curiae necessario praecedere debuit bullae; quod autem stylus Curiae hac occasione servatus non sit, imo vero similis nulla supplica scripta porrecta sed gratia vivae vocis oraculo concessa sit, et proinde ut suppleret defectum Pontifex in ipsa originali bulla concessionis vim juris apposuerit, circumstantias concessionis extraordinarias et magnam expeditionis promptitudinem optime ostendit."

Pope Innocent's letter of confirmation—which contains the text of Rainaldo's confirmation and also the text of the rule itself—may be rendered in English thus:—

Innocent, Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved daughters in Christ Clare, Abbess, and the other Sisters in the Monastery of Saint Damian by Assisi: Health and Apostolic Benediction.

It is the wont of the Apostolic See to welcome devout aspira-

tions and to incline a benevolent ear to the righteous requests of petitioners. A humble petition hath been presented to Us by you, dear children in Jesus Christ, concerning the form of life which Blessed Francis gave you, and you of your own free will accepted, and according to which you ought to lead a life in common, in unity of spirit and in the bond of sublime poverty. It hath seemed good to our Venerable Brother the Bishop of Ostia and Velletri to sanction this form of life, as he himself declareth in a letter addressed to yourselves; and it is now your wish that We should vouchsafe to confirm the same with apostolic authority.

Inclining, therefore, Beloved, to the prayer of your devotion, We ratify what hath been done in this matter by the Bishop above said, and set on his letter of approbation the seal of apostolic authority, and fortify and confirm it by virtue of these presents, inscribing therein at length the text of the same letter word for word as he wrote it: to wit—

“Rainaldo, by Divine Compassion Bishop of Ostia and Velletri, to his very dear Mother and Daughter in Christ, the Lady Clare, Abbess of Saint Damian’s in the diocese of Assisi, and likewise to her sisters present and to come: Health and Paternal Benediction.

“Since you, Beloved Children in God, have contemned the world with its pomps and pleasures, and following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother have elected to serve the Most High in abject poverty and pent up as to your bodies, in order that, your souls being free, you may be the better able to minister to Him, we, for our part, rejoicing in your praiseworthy resolve, with paternal affection most willingly accord our benevolent favour to the wishes and holy desires which you have made known to us.

“Wherefore, dear children, acceding to your pious request, by the authority of the Lord Pope and in virtue of our own authority by these presents, we confirm and ratify for you all, and for all who shall come after you in the Monastery of Saint Damian for ever, the Form of Life and method of observing Holy Unity and Sublime Poverty which your Blessed Father Saint Francis taught you in his writings and by word of mouth. It runneth thus:—

“This is the form of life of the order founded by Blessed Francis called the Order of Poor Sisters, viz. To observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living under obedience and without property and in chastity.

“Clare, the unprofitable servant of Christ and the little plant of the most Blessed Father Francis doth promise obedience and worship to the Lord Pope Innocent and his successors canonically chosen, and to the Roman Church. And as, together with her sisters, in the beginning of her religious life she promised obedience to Blessed Francis, so doth she now most faithfully promise obedience to his successors. And let the other sisters be always bound to obey the successors of Blessed Francis, and they must likewise be obedient to Sister Clare and to the other abbesses canonically elected who shall come after her.

“Should any one seek by Divine inspiration to embrace this form of life, the abbess is bound to consult the wishes of every one of the sisters, and if most of them be willing, such an one may be received, provided the Lord Cardinal, our protector, shall have accorded the requisite licence. But the abbess shall first examine the postulant, or cause her to be examined, and that with diligent care, concerning the Catholic Faith and the sacraments of the Church, and if she believe all these things, and be willing to confess them faithfully and be steadfastly minded to practise the same to the end of her days; and if she have no husband, or even if she have a husband and he hath already entered religion and vowed himself to continence with the licence of his bishop; and if there be no impediment to her observance of this form of life by reason of old age or mental or physical weakness—then let the tenor of it be diligently expounded to her, and if she be deemed worthy, let these words of the Holy Gospel be said unto her: *Go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor.* But if she shall not be able to do so, her good-will shall suffice.

“Let the abbess and sisters take heed not to be in any way solicitous concerning her temporal affairs, to the end that the postulant may be entirely free to dispose of her property as the Lord shall inspire her. But if she ask for advice let them send her to discreet and God-fearing men, in order that in accordance with their counsel her goods may be given to the poor. Afterwards let her hair be cut off all round her head, let her be stript of her secular garments and let three tunics and a mantle be given to her; and thenceforth she shall not be suffered to go outside the monastery save for some useful, reasonable, manifest and praiseworthy purpose; and after a year of probation let her be received to obedience, and promise to observe our rule of life and form of poverty. In no case shall a novice be veiled until she shall have

completed her year's novitiate. The sisters, if they please, may wear scapulars to save their clothes in their service and labour, and as for their other garments let the abbess discreetly provide for each one of them what necessity seemeth to demand, according to their individual requirements, the varying seasons of the year, and the climate of the place in which her house is situated.

“Let children, received before they have attained the canonical age for profession, be tonsured around like the rest, and let them put off their worldly clothes, and be clad in such religious garb as the abbess shall deem fitting. But when they shall have reached the canonical age they shall be arrayed in the livery of the Order, and then let them make their profession. And for these children and likewise for the other novices let the abbess take heed to choose from the wisest women in the monastery a suitable mistress to instruct them with diligence in good manners and holy conversation as becometh our form of life.

“In the examination and reception of the sisters who serve outside the monastery, let the aforesaid form be observed; and these women may go shod. Let no woman make her abode in the monastery unless she shall have been first received according to the form of our profession. And for the love of that most holy and delectable Child, who was wrapt in mean swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger, and, too, for His Most Holy Mother's sake, I exhort, beseech, conjure you, all my sisters, always to array yourselves in vile garments.

“The sisters who know how to read shall recite the Divine Office, but without music; and let them follow the use of the Friars Minor so soon as they can obtain breviaries; and they are likewise bound to recite the Office of the Dead. As for the sisters ignorant of letters, let them say twenty-four ‘Paters’ for Matins, five for Lauds, seven for each of the following hours, namely Prime, Tierce, Sext and None, twelve for Vespers and for Compline seven. Moreover, in lieu of the Office for the Dead they shall say seven ‘Pater noster’ for Vespers with *Requiem æternam*, and twelve in like manner at Matins, and at the death of every sister they shall say for her soul's rest fifty ‘Pater noster.’ If any of the sisters who know how to read be at any time hindered from saying their hours by any reasonable cause, then let them say ‘Pater noster’ instead, as ordained for the illiterate sisters.

“Let all the sisters fast at all times save on the Feast of the Lord's Nativity, when they may refresh themselves with two

meals on whatever day of the week it fall. Albeit the young and the feeble and them that serve outside shall be mercifully dispensed from the observance of this discipline, either wholly or in part, as it shall seem good to the abbess; and in time of manifest necessity let none of the sisters be compelled to corporal fasting.

“Twelve times a year at least let all the sisters confess themselves, having first obtained the abbess’s licence to do so, and in making their confessions let them be very careful not to say anything but what appertaineth to their sins or to their soul’s salvation. Seven times a year they shall approach the Lord’s Table, to wit—on Christmas Day, on Maundy Thursday, on Easter Sunday, on Whit Sunday, on the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, on Saint Francis’s Day, and on All Saints’ Day. And note, it shall be lawful for the chaplain to celebrate Mass within the precincts of the monastery for the purpose of communicating the sound and likewise when it may be necessary to give Communion to the sick.

2. “In the election of the abbess the sisters are bound to observe the form prescribed by canon law, and as soon as may be before the election let them summon the minister-general of the Order of Friars Minor, or else the provincial minister of the place in which their monastery is situated, to the end that he may dispose them by the word of God to peace and to choose a superior profitable to the common weal. None but a professed sister is eligible for the superiorship, and if it should at any time come to pass that a non-professed sister should be elected or otherwise appointed thereto, then shall the sisters not obey her until she have pledged herself to observe our form of poverty; and at her death let them take heed to choose her successor from among the professed sisters, and moreover, if at any time it should seem to all the sisters that the non-professed abbess aforesaid doth not suffice for their service and is unprofitable to the community, then shall they elect with all speed another abbess and mother, and in doing so let them be very careful to comply with the regulations above laid down.

“Let the sister elected consider of what sort is the burthen with which she hath been charged and unto whom she must render account of the flock committed to her keeping; let her strive to rule her sheep rather by means of the veneration which a virtuous life begetteth than by reason of the awe inspired by the dignity of her office, in order that, moved thereto by her holy example, the sisters may render obedience from love rather than fear. Let her

be free from particular friendships, lest whilst lavishing too much affection on one she give scandal to all. Let her console the afflicted, let her be the last refuge of them that be in disgrace, for if she neglect to dispense the medicine of consolation peradventure the weak will be swallowed up by the sickness of despair. Let her always and in all things observe the common life: in vesture, at choir, at table, in the dormitory and in the infirmary; and let her vicar do likewise.

“Once a week at least let the abbess assemble her sisters in chapter to the end that they may humble themselves, and she herself also, by confessing their public faults and negligences, and in order to confer with all her sisters—for often the Lord revealeth what is best to the least—concerning the business of the monastery and the good fame thereof. Let no heavy debt be incurred save with the consent of all the sisters and for some pressing necessity, and in such case let the business be carried through by means of a procurator. Let the abbess and her sisters beware of receiving any deposit in their monastery, for condescension of this kind is wont to give rise to scandal and strife. In order to preserve the bond of peace and mutual charity let all the officers of the house be chosen by the common consent of all the sisters, and in like manner let eight sisters at least be appointed from among the more discreet, and with them shall the abbess always take counsel touching all those things which our form of life requireth. Moreover, the sisters may from time to time, and shall, when they deem it useful and expedient, remove the aforesaid officials and the members of the abbess’s council and appoint others in their place.

“Let all the sisters keep silence, save them that serve without, from the hour of Compline until the hour of Tierce, and let them always refrain from unnecessary conversation in the dormitory, in church and at table, unless perchance they happen to take their meals in the infirmary, when they may always speak with discretion for the recreation and encouragement of the sick, and they may at all times and in all places say what necessity demandeth, provided they speak briefly and in a low voice.

“It is not lawful for any sister to hold converse with anyone in the parlour or at the grille, save with the special licence of the abbess or her vicar, and even so, let her not presume to address any one in the parlour save in the presence and in the hearing of two other sisters, nor venture to approach the grille unless she be

accompanied by at least three sisters appointed by the abbess or her vicar from among the wise women who form her council.

“Let the abbess herself conform to these rules of conversation, and her vicar shall do likewise. Very seldom shall any one speak at the grille—at the door, never.

3- “Within the grille let a curtain be hung, which shall be only raised when the Word of God is preached, or when some sister shall have obtained permission to speak to any one without. Let there be likewise shutters of wood well furnished with bars and bolts and with two iron locks of divers fashion in order that they may be locked, especially at night, with two keys, whereof the abbess shall hold one and the sacristan the other, and let these shutters remain closed save during Divine Service and when it may be necessary to open them for the purposes above mentioned. It is not lawful for any sister to have speech at the grille before sunrise or after sundown. Let a curtain likewise hang in the parlour and never let it be raised, and let no sister speak in this apartment in the Lent of Saint Martin or in the Greater Lent, save to a priest for the sake of confession or concerning something which the abbess or her vicar in their wisdom shall deem to be a matter of pressing necessity.

“When the Most High Heavenly Father vouchsafed to enlighten my heart by His grace to do penance according to the example and doctrine of our most blessed father, Saint Francis, shortly after his own conversion, my sisters and I, of our own free will, bound ourselves to obey him. And when our blessed father had seen that we feared neither want nor toil, nor sorrow nor ignominy, nor the world's scorn, but rather rejoiced in these things, the bowels of his compassion were moved towards us, and he wrote for us a form of life, which beginneth in this wise:—

“*Because by Divine inspiration you have made yourselves the daughters and handmaids of the Most High Sovereign King our Father who dwelleth in Heaven, and have espoused yourselves to the Paraclete by electing to live according to the perfection of the Holy Gospel, I will, and I promise in my own name and the names of my successors, ever to have for you the same diligent care and special solicitude which I have for the Brethren.*

“That promise to the day of his death he most loyally fulfilled, and it was his wish that the brethren should keep it for ever. Also to the end that neither we ourselves nor they that should come after us should in anywise ever decline from that most holy

poverty with which we had begun; not long before he died he sent us another letter, and in this letter he made known to us his last wishes, to wit:—

*“I, Brother Francis, least of men, desire to imitate the life and poverty of the Most High Lord Jesus Christ and of His Most Holy Mother. And I counsel and entreat you, my Ladies: do you, too, always live in this most holy life and poverty, and keep watch over yourselves lest by the advice and teaching of any man ye ever decline in anywise from it.*

“And as we have been always solicitous, myself and my sisters, to observe that holy poverty which we promised to the Lord God and to Blessed Francis, so let the abbesses who shall come after me and their sisters be in like manner solicitous to observe it inviolably to the end; that is to say: they shall neither receive nor hold possessions, nor have any rights of property, or what might be reasonably considered such, in anything whatsoever, either directly themselves or indirectly by means of an interposed person. Albeit it is lawful to hold as much land as necessity demandeth for the decency and seclusion of the monastery, but such land shall not be cultivated save as a garden for the sisters' own needs.

“Let the sisters to whom the Lord hath given the grace to labour busy themselves with some honest handicraft conducive to the common weal after the hour of Tierce, faithfully and devotedly; but in such wise that, whilst banishing indolence, the enemy of the soul, they quench not the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things should be subservient. To such let the abbess or her vicar assign their several tasks in the presence of the whole community assembled in chapter. In chapter, too, let assignment be made of all gifts received for the relief of the sisters' necessities, to the end that prayer may be offered in common for the bestowers of such gifts; and the abbess or her vicar shall distribute them for the common good, acting under the advice of the council of wise women.

“Let not the sisters appropriate anything to themselves, but as strangers and wayfarers on the face of the earth let them gather alms with confidence, and be content to serve the Lord in poverty and humility. Nor ought they to be ashamed of living thus, for Jesus Christ for our sake made Himself poor in the world. This is the height, beloved sisters, of that Sublime Poverty which hath purchased for you a royal heritage, even the Kingdom of Heaven,

and which rendering you poor in material things hath enriched you with spiritual treasures.

“Let that be your portion on earth which leadeth to the land of the living; cleave to it with all your strength and never wish to possess aught else under the sun, for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, dear sisters, and for love of His Most Holy Mother.

“Let not any sister presume to receive letters or anything else, or to send anything out of the monastery without the licence of the abbess, or to hold anything whatsoever but what the abbess shall have given to her, or shall have authorized her to hold.

“If a present in kind be sent to a sister by her kinsfolk or friends the abbess is bound to deliver it to her, and let the sister keep it if she need it, and if not in her charity transfer to some sister who hath need of it; but if the gift be in coin the abbess shall not deliver it to her, but with the advice of her wise women purchase therewith something which the sister may require.

41 “As to them that be sick, let the abbess with all solicitude diligently strive to learn, alike by personal observation and by questioning her sisters as well, what things they stand in need of for the relief of their infirmities, whether it be medicine, nourishing diet, medical counsel or what not; and for whatever be needed she is bound in conscience to make provision, so far as her resources permit, charitably and compassionately. And, in sooth, all the sisters are bound to cherish and to serve them that be sick amongst them, even as they themselves would wish to be cherished, and to be served should any infirmity befall them. With confidence, therefore, make known your necessities to one another. And if an earthly mother do cherish her children according to the flesh, how much the more should a spiritual sister cherish her sisters in religion!

42 “Let the sick lie on sacks stuffed with straw and have feather pillows under their heads, and such as need them may likewise have woollen blankets to cover their feet, and quilted counterpanes.

43 “The sick sisters are always free to make answer briefly to such good words as may be spoken to them by any friend or friends who peradventure shall enter the monastery to visit them; but with such folk let not the other sisters presume in any wise to speak, unless they have first obtained the requisite authorization, and then only in the presence and hearing of two discreet sisters appointed by the abbess or her vicar to listen. And the abbess herself and her vicar must likewise observe this rule.

“If peradventure any sister, at the instigation of the enemy, commit a grievous sin against the form of our profession, and if, having been admonished twice or thrice by the abbess or the other sisters, she refuse to make amendment, then shall her diet be bread-and-water for as many days as she continue obstinate, and let her be made to partake of the same on the pavement of the refectory in the presence of all the sisters, and, if it seem good to the abbess more grievous punishment shall be inflicted on her. But let all the sisters beseech the Lord to enlighten her heart to do penance.

“Let the abbess and her sisters take heed not to be angry or anxious on account of the sin of the offending sister, for anger and perturbation will not promote charity either in themselves or in her.

“If perchance at any time, which God forbid, scandal or strife arise betwixt sister and sister on account of saucy speech or sign or any other thing, then let the offending sister straightway before she offer the sacrifice of prayer not only humbly ask the forgiveness of the other, and that prone at her feet, but likewise beseech her in all simplicity to intercede with the Lord for her, that He, too, may show her mercy. And then shall the offended sister, mindful of His saying—*If ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses*—freely forgive the other for all the wrong she may have done unto her.

“The sisters who serve without the monastery shall not stay long without, unless some cause of manifest necessity demand it. Let their gait be sober and their words few, that they may become a source of edification to them that they meet by the way. Let them be very wary of all encounters and confabulations with men, lest folk should wag their tongues, and let them never consent to become the sponsors of children of either sex lest by reason thereof gossip or troubles arise. Moreover, they are firmly bound not to relate within the monastery the tittle-tattle of the world, and not to whisper without anything said or done therein that would be likely to generate scandal. And if any sister should set at naught either of these prohibitions, the abbess shall impose on the delinquent, if her fault be the outcome of folly, such penance tempered with mildness as her own prudence shall dictate; but if it proceed from vicious habit, then let her devise with the aid of her council some chastisement not incommensurate with the heinousness of the sin.

“Let the abbess admonish and visit her sisters, and correct them

with meekness and charity, not ordering them to act against their consciences nor to do anything contrary to the form of our profession. Let the sisters who are subject to her recollect that for God's sake they have renounced their own wills. Wherefore they are strictly bound to submit themselves to their superiors in respect to all those things which they have vowed to the Lord to observe, and in all things not against the soul or against our rule of life. Let the abbess always have for her sisters such familiarity that they may not be afraid to speak to her, and to act towards her as mistresses to a servant; for the abbess should be the servant of all the sisters.

“O my sisters, I admonish and exhort ye in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, covetousness, care and solicitude for earthly things; and utterly eschewing all backbiting, murmuring, enmity, strife, do ye strive always to preserve amongst yourselves that unity of spirit which is the bond of peace. Let not them that be without letters be solicitous to learn, but rather let them consider that they ought to desire above all things to possess the Spirit of the Lord which worketh all wisdom. Be humble, prayerful, pure in heart, patient in time of sickness and adversity. Love them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, for the Lord saith: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And again, *You shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake;* but he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.

“Let the portress be a wise woman of suitable age and mature manners. Let her dwell in the daytime in a hutch without a door, set hard by the entry, and let a worthy companion be given her to replace her in all things in case of need. Let the monastery door be furnished with bars and bolts and two iron locks of diverse pattern in order that it may be locked, especially at night, with two keys, whereof the abbess shall hold one and the doorkeeper the other. In the daytime let it be always guarded and securely fastened with one key. Let the portress and her companion be very careful never to open the door more widely than necessity require, and only to open it entirely for them that have obtained permission to enter from the Supreme Pontiff or from our Lord Cardinal. The sisters shall not suffer any one to enter the monastery before sunrise or to remain therein after sundown, unless some manifest, reasonable and inevitable cause require it.

“If any Bishop should obtain authorization to celebrate Mass within the Monastery for the purpose of blessing an abbess or consecrating a sister or what not, let him be content to enter with as small a retinue as may be, very carefully chosen from among his most virtuous attendants.

“When the services of workmen are required for some necessary labour let the abbess take heed to place some suitable sister at the door, lest peradventure some unauthorized person presume to enter with them; and upon such occasion let all the sisters beware lest peradventure they be seen by the workmen aforesaid.

“Let our Visitor be always of the Order of Friars Minor, and let him be appointed by our Cardinal. He must be a man of such fair fame that his virtue and integrity can never be called in question. His office shall be to correct alike in head and members any excesses committed against our form of living. In exercising this office he shall stand in a public place so that he can be seen of all, and let him address his observations to all of the sisters collectively or to any one of them individually according as it shall seem good to him.

“For the love of God and Blessed Francis we beg the brethren of the Order of Friars Minor to give us of their grace a chaplain with one companion—a clerk of good fame and tried discretion, and two honest lay brethren of holy life to help us in our poverty, even as we have always had through the courtesy of the said brethren.

“Let not the chaplain be suffered to enter the monastery unless he be accompanied by his companion, and when once they have entered let them remain together in a public place so that they may be continually seen of one another and of others.

“It shall be lawful for them to enter the monastery to confess such of the sick as be too feeble to betake themselves to the parlour, and likewise to communicate them also, when their services are required, and for Extreme Unction or for the recommendation of a passing soul.

“Moreover, for funerals, for solemn masses for the dead, for the digging of graves, and for the opening or preparing of vaults, the abbess may always admit as many outsiders as she deem necessary, provided they be honest and capable.

“Lastly, let the sisters always have for governor, protector and director that Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church whom the Lord Pope shall have deputed to act in like capacity for the Order of

6" Friars Minor. To the end that, ever stable in the Catholic Faith, ever submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church, we may imitate always the poverty and humility of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, and may always faithfully carry out the words of His Holy Gospel, even as we have promised. Amen.'

"Given at Perugia on the sixteenth day from the Kalends of October in the tenth year of the pontificate of the Lord Pope Innocent IV."

Let no man, therefore, infringe this letter of confirmation or venture to contravene it with rash audacity, and if any attempt of this kind be made, let them that make it know that they will incur the indignation of Almighty God and of His Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Assisi on the fifth day from the Ides of August in the eleventh year of our pontificate.