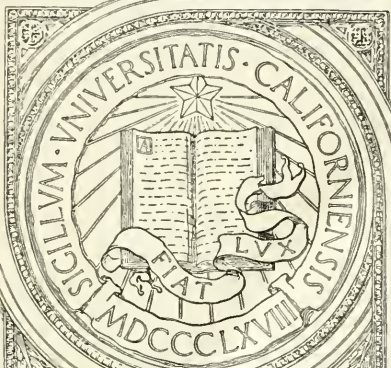




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S. Wulstan

LIVES
OF
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

St. Wulstan,
BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON :
JAMES TOOVEY, 192, PICCADILLY.
1844.

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LIFE OF

St. Wulstan,

BISHOP OF WORCESTER, CIRC. A. D. 1008-1095.

ST. WULSTAN'S history has many points of interest. He was the last Saint of the Anglo-Saxon Church. His name closed the roll of that company so excellent and numerous, which gained for England the title of the Isle of Saints. He was the link between the old English Church and hierarchy and the Norman; he saw the ruin of his people, but was spared himself. And he was a type and representative, as complete perhaps as could be found, of the religious character of the Anglo-Saxon Church; plain, homely, and simple-hearted, cherishing a popular and domestic piety, rather dwelling on the great broad truths of the gospel, than following them into their results; scrupulous and earnest in devotion; without the refinement, learning, and keen thought of the Normans, yet full of fresh and genuine feeling. Wulstan was a monk indeed, and an ascetic, but his vocation lay not in the learned school or meditative cloister, but among the people of the market-place and the village,—his rough, yet hearty and affectionate countrymen.

The following account of him pretends not to be a critical history ; it aims merely at giving the idea of St. Wulstan, which was impressed on the minds of those who had seen him and lived with him. They certainly believed that they saw in him the tokens of saintliness—more than common humbleness and faith in God—and so they pourtrayed him ; an image which moved them to greater self-control and self-devotion, and gave them courage and hope in their dark times, by assuring them that religion was still a reality.¹

Wulstan was born in the early years of the eleventh century, in the days of the second Ethelred ; the time when the greatness of Alfred and Ethelstan was ending in unspeakable desolation. They were as dreary and disastrous days as ever were seen in England. The terrible idolaters of the north could be kept off no longer, and were now working their will upon the land, rendered tenfold more merciless and savage by the massacre of St. Brice's day. Year after year the scourge continued :—before the inland country had

¹ Et veterum quidem gestis pro antiquitatis assurgunt reverentia ; sed alacriori capiuntur dulcedine, si alicujus Sancti, qui nuperrime fuit, vita producat in medium, in quâ sicut è speculo conspiciuntur, ut ita dictum sit, vivum religionis simulachrum. Accedit enim jocundæ relationi novitas ; ne aliquis desperet a se per Dei gratiam fieri posse, quod audit ab alio de proximo factum fuisse..... Quapropter benigno lectori grande paciscor commodum ; ut quamquam B. Wulstanum non minus quam priscos pro miraculorum gloria suscipiat familiaritas, tamen pro recenti ætate mores ejus æmulo exercitii pede sequi contendat.—Will. Malm. Prolog. in Vit. Wulstani. ap. Wharton, Angl. Sac. vol. ii. p. 243.

heard that "the fleet" had been descried, their grim and raging troops mounted on horses, were sweeping like wolves, over moor and hill, through plain and valley, burning town and hamlet, and leaving those who had given them hospitality, murdered on their own hearths. The visitation seemed to be too frightful to resist; there was no help for the "miserable people" in the king and his chiefs; on all sides was treachery, cowardice, or hopeless imbecility and weakness; all that the great men found to do, was to plunder also, in order to bribe the Danes; meanwhile, as long as they might, they feasted and revelled.

"Over midsummer," writes the contemporary chronicler, in 1006, "came the Danish fleet to Sandwich, and did as they were wont; they harried, and burned, and slew, as they went. Then the king called out all the people of the West Saxons and Mercians, and they lay out all the harvest in arms against the Host; but it availed nought more than it had often done before; but for all this the Host went as they themselves would; and the armed gathering did the country folk all the harm, that foeman's host from within or from abroad, could do. About midwinter, the Host went out to their ready store, through Hampshire into Berkshire, to Reading. And there they did after their old wont; they lighted their camp-beacons as they went...And at Kennet they came to battle, and put the English folk to flight, and then carried the prey of their Host to the sea. There might the Winchester folk see the proud and restless Host, as they passed by their gates to the sea, and fetched food and treasures more than fifty miles from the sea. Then was the king gone over the Thames, into Shropshire, and he took up his abode there in midwinter-tide. Then was

there so great fear of the Host, that no man might think or devise how men should drive them out of the land, or hold his land against them : for they had roughly marked every shire in the West Saxons with burning and harrying. Then began the king in earnest to consult with his Witan, what to all of them seemed the best counsel for to defend this land, before it was utterly undone. Then resolved the king and his Witan, for the behoof of all the people, though they were all loth, that they must needs pay tribute to the Host. Then the king sent to the Host, and bade tell them that he desired that there should be peace between them, and that men should give tribute and food to them : and they agreed to all these things, and men fed them throughout England.”²

Such were the reports brought year by year to the Minsters of Peterborough and Worcester, and recorded by their anxious inmates in their homely but forcible style. The sickening tale came over and over again—how navies were built at a great charge, how some of the ships were wrecked or burned, and how the king and the “Ealdormen,” and the “High Witan,” lightly deserted the rest and went home, and “let all the labour of the people perish thus lightly, and the fear was not lessened, as all England hoped,”—how “the Host” came again to the Wight, to Sussex, and Hampshire and Berkshire ;—to Kent and London—through Chiltern to Oxford ; northward to Bedford, eastward to the wild fens of the East Angles, westward to Wiltshire,—how according to their wont, they were harrying and burning for months together, “slaying both men and cattle ;”—how when the king’s army should have gone

² Saxon Chron. a. 1006.

out to meet them, they went home ; and “when they were in the East, men kept the king’s army in the West, and when in the South, our army was in the North ;”—how “whatever was advised stood not a month,”—how at length there was no chief who would collect an army, but each was flying as he could—how there was not a single shire that would stand by another :—till at last the frightful news came, that in spite of the tribute and the peace, they had beset “Canterbury, and entered therein through treachery ; for Elfman delivered the city to them, whose life Archbishop Elfege had formerly saved.”

This was the climax of horrors. The Danes “returned to their ships, and led the Archbishop with them, and they kept him with them till they martyred him.” This happened soon after. The following Easter, says the chronicle, the great men of England paid their tribute—eight and forty thousand pounds—but the Archbishop would pay nothing, for to satisfy the Danes, he must plunder his tenantry. “Then on the Saturday was the Host sore stirred against the Bishop ; because he would not promise them any fee, and forbade that any man should give any thing for him. They were also very drunken, for there was wine brought them from the South. Then took they the Bishop, and led him to their “hustings,” on the eve of the Sunday after Easter, and there they shamefully killed him. They overwhelmed him with bones and horns of oxen ; and one of them smote him with an axe-iron on the head, so that he sunk with the blow ; and his holy blood fell on the earth, and his holy soul was sent to the kingdom of God.”³

³ Saxon Chron. a. 1012.

Such were the scenes rife in England, in Wulstan's early years ; he first knew it under a cloud. The first he saw of it, showed it him as a land under the scourge of strangers ; its name was associated in his earliest impressions, not as now, with security and greatness, but with dishonour and misery ; from the first, the idea was made familiar to him, that he lived among a people under God's judgment. As he grew up, the prospect cleared for a while, but the tokens and sights of his youth returned in his old age. He lived nearly through the century ; he saw it begin with the Danish harryings, and end with the Norman conquest.

He was born at Long Itchington,⁴ a village in Warwickshire, where his family had long been settled, and where his parents, Athelstan and Wulfgeva, were probably the chief people. He was educated at the monasteries of Evesham and Peterborough, the latter one of the richest houses, and most famous schools in England. Here, in the "Golden Burgh,"⁵ with the children, the "infantes" of the convent, some of them already vowed to religion, others preparing for the world without, he enjoyed what education a Saxon monastery could give ; he was broken in to a life of hardship and self-discipline ; taught to rise before day, and to take a special part in the sacred service ; in the morning he chanted, in the afternoon he was taught to write, to illuminate and bind books, or he learnt Latin from interlinear translations, or from conning over the pages of the Psalters and Sacramentaries which were produced in the writing room of the convent. The rod which punished the offences of the grown-up brethren, was not spared to the children. "Hast thou

⁴ Icentune.

⁵ Sax. Chr. 1066.

been flogged to-day ?”⁶ asks the imaginary master, in Ælfric’s Latin and Saxon Dialogue ; to which the boy answers, as if it was an exception, “ No, for I behaved myself warily ;” but he will not answer for his companions. “ Why do you ask me ? I must not tell you our secrets. Each one knows whether he was whipt or not.” The same book, perhaps composed for Peterborough, and from which Wulstan may have learnt his Latin, gives an account how the children spent their day. “ To-day,” says the boy in the Dialogue, “ I have done many things ; this night, when I heard the knell, I arose from my bed, and went to Church, and sang night-song with the brethren ; and after that, we sang the service of All Saints, and the morning lauds ; then Prime, and the Seven Psalms with the Litanies, and the first mass ; then Tierce, and the mass of the day ; then we sang the mid-day hour ; and we ate, and drank, and went to sleep, and rose again, and sang Nones. And now we are here before thee, ready to hear what thou wilt say to us.” They were allowed to eat meat, because “ they were still children under the rod ;” they drank ale if they could get it, else water ; but wine “ they were not rich enough to buy, and besides, it was not the drink of children and foolish persons, but of old men and wise.” “ Who awakens you,” says the Master, “ to night-song ?” “ Sometimes I hear the knell, and rise, sometimes the master wakes me roughly with his rod.” School is the same at all times.

Under this discipline, Wulstan made good progress. He was thoughtful above his years ; he voluntarily submitted to exercises and self-denials from which the

⁶ In Thorpe’s *Analecta*, p. 116, 117.

children were exeused, and formed a habit of continually applying examples of excellence which were brought before him, whether living or departed, to his own improvement.

From the minster schools at Peterborough, Wulstan returned home, to live in the country, in his father's hall, a Thane's son, who might one day be a Thane himself, among his father's dependants, and friends, and enemies, with such amusements and such business as Thaness' sons followed. He was beautiful in face, and of a well-formed person ; active and dexterous, of free and engaging manners, and he entered with zest into the society and sports of his companions. The life of ease and idleness is a dangerous life at all times ; and it was especially so then. Besides the temptations of birth and rank and freedom and personal attractions, the disorders of the times left all men very much to their own ways ; yet the young Thane's son fell not.

At length came one of those events which give a turn to a man's character for life. A young woman of the neighbourhood became his temptress. Her wiles, often repeated, were in vain. But on a day, when in a crowded field, he had won the prize in some trial of speed or strength, in the excitement of victory and exertion, she approached him. He had never before felt the allurements of her presence, but now he wavered. It was a sharp struggle, but he was true, and it was a short one. He rushed from the scene of mirth and sport, and threw himself down in a solitary place, among brush-wood and furze, and there he wept over the thought of sin which he had indulged. He lay there long, and fell asleep. When he awoke, his soul was clear and fresh, and

from that time he was never again tempted. His friends said that he had spoken of a miracle—of a bright cloud descending and enveloping him, and of the dew of heaven, which quenched in him for ever the fires of sin ; and that this cloud was beheld by his companions. But whether or not they understood him aright, the trial itself, the victory and the reward, formed an epoch in his life.

Time went on ; and his father and mother, who had grown old, came down in the world. They went to Worcester ; and there, by mutual consent, they both took the religious habit, and passed the rest of their days in monasteries. Wulstan accompanied them, and entered the service of Brihtege, the Bishop, that he might devote himself to the service of the Church. The Bishop took him into favour, and soon ordained him, though against his will, to the priesthood. A. D.
1033-38.

“ A layman in his garb, a monk in his way of life”—this is the description of him while a secular priest. But having adopted the strictness, he wished also for the helps and advantages of the monastic life—the great refuge of religious minds in those days, from a state of society where it was hard to live pure and in peace. He declined, therefore, the preferment which the bishop pressed upon him, and obtained his permission to enter a monastic congregation, where he continued for above twenty-five years, rising through various offices, till he became the Prior, or as it was then called, the “ Præpositus” of the monastery. (Until
1062.)⁷

⁷ Will. Malmsb. Vit. S. Wulstani, p. 247. c. v.

They were years to him without much change or eventfulness ; years of noiseless duty, and hidden self-discipline. Wulstan, the holy monk of Worcester, was heard of, indeed, in many parts of England, and the proud Earl Harold was known on one occasion to go thirty miles out of his way, to make his confession to him, and beg his prayers.⁸ But little was seen or felt of him beyond Worcester and its neighbourhood. There, those who lived about him saw a man of kind yet blunt and homely speech, of frank and unpretending demeanour, who had a word for every one, and always the right word ; who was at every one's service, and was never wearied of his work ; a man of not much learning, but who had all that was within his reach ; who had made the Gospels his daily meditation, and knew the Psalms by heart ; whose voice, when he preached, seemed to the people to have the dignity, the sweetness, and the awfulness of an apostle's ; a man, who humble and cheerful as he was, could be stern in rebuke, and decisive in action, when sin offended him ; a man who was always in earnest, in the minutest details of life. There was no mistaking in him the man of God. In those days, indeed, character expressed itself, and was noticed, with a grotesque simplicity, at which, so that we do not sneer, we may be pardoned for smiling, for our times are different ; but we must be more blind than men were then, if in the plain rough-hewn Anglo-Saxon monk, we cannot discern, as they did, high goodness and faith, and a genuine English heart.

“The devotional duties,” says his biographer, “which we in our laziness count a great punishment, he reck-

⁸ Will. Malmsb. Vit. S. Wulstani, p. 248. c. vii.

oned among his greatest pleasures. Every day at each verse of the Seven Psalms, he bent the knee, and the same at the 119th Psalm at night. In the west porch of the Church, where was the Altar of All Saints, with the trophy of the Lord's banner, he would lock himself in, and there call upon Christ with tears and cries. His sleep was snatched as it were by stealth ; his bed was the church floor or a narrow board—a book or the altar steps, his pillow. Every day he visited the eighteen altars that were in the old Church, bowing seven times before each." Often in the evening, he used to retire from the crowd and noise of the city, and the companionship of the convent, to some solitary spot in the outskirts—the graves of the dead, or the empty silent village church, whose stillness was only broken by his chant and prayers. In these lonely hours, when other men trembled, he walked without fear ; and it was told how that the spirit of darkness had once assaulted him, while kneeling before the altar, and how Wulstan had boldly wrestled with him, and though he felt his fiery breath, had thrice overthrown him.

Day and night he served God in the temple with fasting and prayers, yet none the less did he serve his brethren. The common people especially looked upon him as their friend. He often finished his daily devotions very early in the morning, and then gave up the rest of the day till noon or evening, to the wants and business of the poor. He used to sit at the Church door, accessible to all who came ; listening to complaints, redressing wrongs, helping those who were in trouble, giving advice spiritual and temporal. In the troubles of the times, great abuses had sprung up among the rude Clergy, who served in the country

parishes ; they scarcely ever preached, and they are accused of the terrible practice of refusing baptism to the children of the poor who could not pay for it. Wulstan did his best to remedy this evil. From all parts of the neighbouring country the peasants brought their children to Wulstan to be baptized, and the same became a fashion even among the rich. He also took up the neglected work of preaching with zeal and ability. Every Sunday and great Festival, he preached to the people. "His words," says his biographer, "as he uttered them to the people from on high in the pulpit, seemed to be the voice of thunder, issuing from the shrine of a prophet or evangelist ; they lighted like bolts upon the wicked ; they fell like showers upon the elect." And speaking of a later period, he says, "All his life, he so drew the common people to him by the fame of his preaching, that ye might see them flocking together in crowds, wherever it was reported that he was to dedicate a Church. He also so chose his subjects, that he was ever sounding forth Christ's name, ever setting Christ forth to his hearers, ever, if I may so speak, drawing Christ by violence to his side." The offence which his zeal gave did not stop him ; and a story went about how a monk who was displeased with his unwonted energy, and who reproved him for taking on him a duty that did not belong to him, was punished in a vision for his interference and ill nature.

Thus did Wulstan labour on year after year, zealously and earnestly, though very likely we should be surprised if we knew all that he did and said. For he was not the religious man of a romance, but of the plain-speaking, plain-dealing eleventh century ; and we should no doubt find his religion not confining itself

to what at a distance at least looks high and great—enlightening the ignorant, comforting the unhappy, defending the unprotected—but running on into a number of subjects with which sentiment has little to do. We should find him combating pride and self-will and love of pleasure in great detail, and in a very matter-of-fact and unequivocal way. We should find, for instance, that he thought that greediness was a common fault even among grown-up men and women ;—certainly in his day they did not care to disguise from themselves that they found considerable pleasure in eating and drinking :—and that he looked on it rather seriously and severely. He was not above confessing that a savoury roast goose which was preparing for his dinner had once so taken up his thoughts, that he could not attend to the service he was performing, and that he had punished himself for it, and given up the use of meat in consequence. And the summary and practical measure which he dealt out to himself, he could extend on occasion to others. Short words and a rough buffet were all the courtesy he extended to sin and impudence, even in a woman of rank and wealth.

At length, about the year 1062, two Roman Cardinals, Hermenfred, Bishop of Sion, and another, came to Worcester, with Aldred the late Bishop, who had been made Archbishop of York, and who with some reluctance had just resigned his former charge, which had often of late been held together with York. They were entertained at the Cathedral monastery, where Wulstan was Prior, and there they spent the whole of Lent. This time was kept by Wulstan with special severity. As a courteous host, he left nothing undone which was due to his guests from English hospitality and bounty ; but he himself adhered rigorously to his

accustomed rules ; he omitted none of his prayers, and relaxed none of his abstinence. All night long he continued in prayer, even after the night Psalms were ended. Three times in the week he tasted nothing day or night, and during this time never broke silence ; the other three days his food was bread and common vegetables, and on Sunday he added some fish and wine, “ out of reverence for the Festival.” Every day he received and ministered to three poor men, supplying to them their daily bread and washing their feet. When Easter came, the Cardinals returned to King Edward’s court, and when the question arose, who was to be the new Bishop of Worcester, they mentioned with high admiration the name of the austere and hard-working Prior, of whose way of life they had lately been daily witnesses. Their recommendation was taken up and seconded by the great English Lords at Court,—Earls Harold and Elfgar, Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury, and after some hesitation between Wulstan and another, by Aldred, the late Bishop. The popular voice at Worcester itself, was allowed by king Edward to express itself, and was equally strong in his favour ; and his election being confirmed by the king, Wulstan was summoned to Court, to be invested with the Bishopric. He heard of his election with sorrow and vexation, and strongly resisted, declaring with an oath, that he would rather lose his head than be made Bishop. His friends long argued with him in vain ; but he was cowed at last by the words of an old hermit named Wulfsy, who had lived in solitude for forty years. Wulfsy rebuked him sternly for his obstinacy, and his disobedience to the will of those around him, and threatened him with God’s wrath if he still made opposition. Then he yielded. He received the pastoral staff

from the hands of the Confessor, and on the feast of St. Mary's Nativity, he was consecrated by Archbishop Aldred.⁹

September 8,
1062.

His prognostic verse, the supposed omen of his future administration, was "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" and his career as a Bishop fulfilled it. The Normans when they came in, thought him, like his Church, old fashioned, homely, and unrefined; but even they were obliged to admire, though in an Englishman, his unworldliness and activity, and the freshness and heartiness of his character; and their literature has preserved his memorial.

His life as a monk had not been, as in the case of the great strangers who were soon to take charge of the English Church, that of a man of study and thoughtful retirement. His work had always been of an active and popular kind; ministering to the common people, supplying the deficiencies of the parochial Clergy, and preaching. And his Episcopate was of the same character. His care for his diocese, and his constant personal oversight of it were the points which struck his contemporaries. His practice seems to have been to be continually visiting some part or other of it. He travelled about on horseback with his retinue of clerks and monks. As they rode along, he repeated the Psalter, the Litanies, and the office for the dead, the attendants taking up the responses, or aiding his memory when it failed. His chamberlain always had a purse ready, and "no one ever begged of Wulstan in vain." He

⁹ Stigand, the Primate, was under interdict. "But Wulstan," says Florence of Worcester, "made his Canonical profession to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stigand, not to Aldred his ordainer."

never passed a Church or Oratory, however hurried he might be, without stopping to pray there ; and when he reached his halting place for the night, before he retired to rest his first care was to go and “salute the Church.” In these progresses, he came into personal contact with all his flock, high and low—with the rude crowds, beggars and serfs, craftsmen and labourers, as well as with priests and nobles. When the Archdeacon gave notice of the Bishop’s approach, the people poured out to meet him, to look on him, to ask his aid or counsel. They confessed their sins to him, for men would open their hearts to him who would do so to no one else : they flocked to hear him preach, for no one in England so touched the hearts of the common people, and “he never sent them away without saying mass and preaching.” He pleaded the cause of the poor ; he reconciled those who were at variance, and it was believed that terrible judgments fell on those who despised his mediation.

The “chiefest” in his diocese, he made himself the “servant of all ;”—his time, his exertions, his personal presence, were denied to none who claimed them ; all who came to him he saw ; and wherever he was called he went, “so that he seemed not so much to travel as to fly from one part of his diocese to another.” But to him the most touching claim and the most sacred duty was when children came to him to be confirmed. To this every thing else gave way ; business was to be broken off—retirement, rest, devotion given up, to attend at once on Christ’s little ones ; and from sunrise to sunset, on a long summer’s day, he would go on without tasting food, giving the sacramental seal and his benediction to batch after batch, as they came and knelt before him, till his attendants and clerks were

fairly wearied out ; while he himself seemed proof against fatigue.

He was a great Church builder : he took care that on each of his own manors there should be a Church, and was very urgent with other Lords to follow his example. The Cathedral of his See, which he rebuilt, and the old ruined Church of Westbury, which he restored, and made the seat of a monastic congregation, are especially mentioned as instances of his zeal. But he cared little about ornament or beauty in his churches. The Saxons generally had no taste either in their domestic or public buildings, for that architectural grandeur of which the Normans had formed so magnificent an idea, and of which they were so passionately fond. And when the vast Cathedrals and Abbeys of the Norman Prelates were rising throughout England, those who kept up the old feelings of the days of King Edward saw little to admire in them.¹ Wulstan, who was thoroughly a man of the old English school, looked with dislike and contempt on what he considered a mere taste and fashion of the day, ministering chiefly to human pride and vain glory. When his new Cathedral was ready for use, the old one which had been built by St. Oswald, was to be demolished. Wulstan stood in the churchyard, and looked on sadly and silently, while the workmen began to unroof it. At last he burst into tears. The monks were surprised at his being downcast on such a day ; he ought, they

¹ Vid. W. Malm. de G. Pontif. p. 256, of Osbern, Bishop of Exeter, "unde in victualibus et cæteris rebus ad Anglicos mores pronior, Normannorum pompam suspiciebat, consuetudines Domini sui R. Edwardi efferens, et cum per alios exhiberentur cum assidentibus manu et gestu aggaudens. Ita pro more antiquorum præsulum veteribus contentus ædificiis," &c.

said, to rejoice, at the honour and grace which God had vouchsafed to the Church. "Nay, it is not so ;" he said, "we, poor creatures that we are, are destroying the work of Saints, and think in our pride that we improve upon it. Those blessed men knew not how to build fine churches, but they knew how to sacrifice themselves to God whatever roof might be over them, and to draw their flocks after them. But all we think of is to rear up piles of stones, while we care not for souls."

Yet with a life of pastoral activity, Wulstan still retained the devotional habits of the cloister, and its simple and severe mode of life. "Whether he lay down, or rose up, whether he were walking or sitting, a psalm was in his mouth, and Christ in his heart." His first words on awaking were a psalm ; the last words which he heard before going to sleep, were from some homily or legend, which was read to him while he was lying down to rest. He attended the same services to which he had been bound when in the monastery, and all his manor-houses had a little chapel attached to them, where he used to lock himself in, when business, or the public service, did not call him. His attendants remembered how earnest, as well as frequent, he was in prayer ; and how, when he came to a verse in the Psalter, which expressed strong feeling towards God, such as the verse, "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, and hear me, for I am poor and in misery," he would repeat it two or three times over, with up-lifted eyes. And he was very strict in requiring from his monks and those about him, an exact performance of that regular worship for which monasteries were founded. If one of the brethren was absent from the night-service, he took no notice at the

time, but when the others had retired to their beds to wait for morning, he used quietly to wake the absentee, and make him go through the appointed office, himself remaining with him, and making the responses.

His warmth and scrupulousness were not always to the taste of his attendants : his monks often thought him very tiresome. When they were chanting the Psalter with him on horseback, on their journeys, he used often to put them out, by his habit, mentioned above, of repeating over and over again, the "prayer verses," "to the weariness of his fellow chanters."¹

His biographer tells a story which shews the trials to which he used to expose his clerics' patience, and the way in which they sometimes revenged themselves. It is characteristic of both parties. "He always went to Church, to chant matins," says his biographer, "however far off it might be ; whether it was snowing or raining, through muddy roads or fog, to Church he must go ; he cared for nothing, so that he got there ; and truly he might say to Almighty God, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house.' Once, when he was staying at Marlow,² on his way to court at Christmas tide, according to his wont he told his attendants that he was going early to the Church. The Church was a long way off ; the deep mire of the road might have deterred a walker, even by daylight, and there was besides, a sleety drizzle falling. His clerics mentioned these inconveniences, but he was determined ; he would go, even if no one went with him, only would

¹ "Orationales versus, usque ad fastidium concantantis."—*De Gest. Pontif.* 280.

² Marlow was a manor of Earl Algar, afterwards given to Queen Matilda.—*Doomsday*, Bucks. lii.

they show him the way. The clerics were obliged to yield, and concealed their annoyance. But one of them, named Frewen, a hot-tempered fellow, to make matters worse, took hold of the bishop's hand, and guided him where the swamp was deepest, and the road roughest. The bishop sank up to his knees in the mud, and lost one of his shoes ; but he said nothing, for the object of the clerics had been to make the bishop give up his resolution. The day was far advanced when he returned to his lodgings, his limbs half dead with the cold, and not till then did he mention his own suffering, and the cleric's offence. Yet, he merely ordered them to go and look for the shoe ; he spoke no word of reproach to the offender, but put a cheerful face on the matter, and carried off the insult with a cheerful countenance. For the bishop was a man of great patience ; nothing put him out of temper, whether annoyance or impertinence ; for people there were, who often made game of him, even to his face. But neither these, nor other vexations of the world, disturbed him. Not that I mean to say that his spirit was never moved ; for religion cannot extinguish feelings ; it may restrain them for a time, but cannot altogether root them out."

Monks and priests were not the only persons to whom his straightforward conscientiousness made him an inconvenient companion. At king Harold's court his neighbourhood was especially dangerous to the long flowing tresses with which it was the fashion of the Anglo-Saxon gallants to adorn themselves, and to which Wulstan had taken a special dislike, as being a mark of effeminacy. Wulstan had very little notion of ceremony, where he thought that right and wrong were concerned ; and he was not without relish for a practical joke at times. "Accordingly," says his

biographer, "if any of them placed their heads within his reach, he would with his own hands crop their wanton locks. He had for this a little knife, wherewith he was wont to pare his nails, and scrape dirt off books. With this he cut off the first fruits of their curls, enjoining them on their obedience, to have the rest cut even with it. If they resisted, then he loudly chode them for their softness, and openly threatened them with evil."

But troublesome as his strictness was to those about him, they admired and loved him warmly; the poor simple Saxon monks especially, who in the desolation and shame of their race, sought comfort in the cloister, long remembered their good and noble bishop, his kindness and humbleness among them, the hearty interest he took in their welfare, how gladly he visited them, and how, when he came among them, he took his turn with them in the duties of the Choir and Chapter house; how, when in Church, he saw the boys' vestments disordered, he would bend over and smooth them down; how, when some one said to him that such condescension did not become a bishop, he silenced the objector with the words of the gospel, "He that is greatest among you, shall be your servant."

It was Wulstan's lot to see the long line of his native kings come to an end, and the "dear kingdom of England" pass to a foreign lord. He was the last Bishop who received his pastoral staff from the hands of a Saxon king; and when he died, he was the last representative on the English thrones, of the Church of Bede and Cuthbert. He was the link between it and the Church of Lanfranc and Anselm, and this gives peculiar interest to his history.

He had fallen on days when the noble Anglo-Saxon race, out of which so many Saints and heroic kings had sprung, had sunk into degeneracy and corruption ; and he was appointed to see and share their punishment. His people had become coarse, debauched, and effeminate. Their natural temper was free, and blithe, and affectionate ; delighting in home, and kindred, and companionship, ; in the loaded board, and the warm glad hearth, and the hearty, brimful, noisy merriment of the crowded hall ;—the “joy of life,”—they knew it well, and loved it too dearly. Self-indulgence, in its various forms of sloth and pleasure, overcame them. Clergy forgot their learning, and monks their rule. The morning mass was hurried over in the bed-chamber, where the great man had not yet risen from his couch ; the drinking bout of the afternoon, was prolonged through the night. The very kindness of their character was giving way. The women servants of their households, mothers of their own children, and those children yet unborn, it was their horrid custom to sell to foreign slavery, or a yet worse fate. A noble people were wasting and decaying in sluggishness, or gross and rude voluptuousness ; purpose, and conduct, and enterprise—the wise lawgiver, the loyal soldier had failed among them ; they were still brave and high-spirited, but theirs was a fitful and desultory gallantry, headstrong, and without endurance. They had lost all taste for what was great and severe, and cost exertion ; the arts in which they excelled, were those only which ministered to personal vanity—the petty skill of the embroiderer and goldsmith ; and the vein of melancholy and dreamy sentiment which ran through their character, only enfeebled it the more.

They had not been left without warning. Judgment

had followed judgment ; the Dane had fulfilled his mission, yet there was no improvement. They had seen too among them, with all the stern holiness and fiery zeal of an ancient prophet, startling and terrible as the Danes themselves, Dunstan, the Archbishop, who had dragged a king from his chamber of shame. Yet they would not rouse themselves ; the wine-cup was too sweet, the couch too soft ; the “joys of the hall,” the story, the song, the “glee-beams” of the harp, these gladdened their days ; and to these, in spite of the Danes and St. Dunstan, they clung faster and faster. The dream went on ; the lethargy became heavier.

Yet there was in many a vague feeling of uneasiness and misgiving ;³ a dim foreboding that mischief was not far off. The king had no children. What would become of England when he was gone ? Was the royal line of Alfred and Athelstan really ending ? So indeed had a vision boded, which had been seen by an English bishop before Edward was king. In a dream, he had seen Edward crowned by St. Peter ; and when Edward complained that he had no son to succeed him, the stern answer of the apostle was, “The kingdom of the English is God’s ; after thee, he has provided a king according to his own pleasure.”⁴

At last the stroke came ; more terrible in its reality than the most anxious had imagined. It was not merely a change of kings or families ; not even an invasion or ordinary conquest ; it was a rooting and tearing up, a wild overthrow of all that was established and familiar in England.

³ V. Thierry, vol. i. p. 287.

⁴ Will. Malmsb. G. R. lib. 2, p. 374.

There were seeds of good, of high and rare excellence in the Saxons ; so they were to be chastised, not destroyed. Those who saw the Norman triumph, and the steady, crushing strength of its progress, who saw English feelings, English customs, English rights, trampled on, mocked at, swept away, little thought that the Norman, the “Franeigena,” was to have no abiding name in the land of his conquest ; that his language was to be swallowed up and lost in that of the Saxon ; that it was for the glory and final exaltation of the English race, that he was commissioned to school them thus sternly. So indeed it was. But on that generation the judgment fell, as bitter as it was unexpected ; it was in their eyes vengeance unrelenting and final ; it seemed as if God had finally cast them off, and given them over without hope of respite or release, to the tormentors.

On the very verge of these days, Wulstan was made Bishop. But vengeance was stayed awhile, till the saintly spirit of the last Saxon king was ready for its crown. He built his bury-
Christmas,
1065.
 ing-place, and then departed. “About midwinter,” says the old English Chronicle, “King Edward came to Westminster, and had the Minster there consecrated, which he had himself built to the honour of God, and St. Peter and all the Saints of God. This Church-hallowing was on Childermas-day. And on the eve of Twelfth-day, he departed. And he was buried on Twelfth
Jan. 5,
1066.
 day in the same Minster.”

It was believed that in spirit he saw the evils from which he was taken. On his death-bed, he dreamed of what was to come, and prayed that if it was a true message, he might recover his speech to relate it. His

power of speech returned, and he told it. He had seen two monks, whom he had known years ago in Normandy, and who had long been dead. They brought a message—"Since the great men of England, the chiefs, the bishops, the abbots, are not the servants of God but of the devil, God hath delivered this realm after thy death, for a year and a day into the hands of the enemy, and devils shall roam over all this land." The king prayed that he might show this to his people, and they would repent like the Ninevites. The messengers answered, "Neither will they repent, nor will God ever have mercy upon them." And when he asked them when these woes should end—"Then, when the green tree shall be lopped in half, and the parts be separated by the space of three furlongs, and shall of themselves come together again, and bear blossoms and fruit—*then* shall these woes cease." Those who stood round him listened with fear;—all but Stigand the Archbishop. He laughed—it was, he said, the wandering fancy of the sick.⁵

Then came the short wild reign of Harold, with its portents and unnatural strifes, the blazing "long-haired star" in the sky, brother warring with brother to the death, and calling down on him the pirates of the North; license and riot let loose,—no longer held back by the example of the austere Confessor. Wulstan raised his voice in rebuke and warning. He had been Harold's friend, and Harold valued him; he called on the king earnestly to correct the evil; but he was not heard—the time allowed it not—Harold had to defend his realm. One victory he was allowed—he

⁵ Will. Malmsb. p. 381.

overcame and slew his brother : but it had scarcely been gained, before the Norman fleet was descried from the cliffs of Sussex, bearing with it the curse of the Church against him. In the whole of William's proceedings, from Harold's oath on the relics, up to the prayers and litanies on the eve of battle, there appeared the solemnity of a religious mission ; he was come under God's protection and visible guidance with calm and settled purpose, to do His will in England. But to the last, in the presence of the Avenger, the Saxons clung to their national sin : they awoke after a night of reckless and noisy revelry, to the day of Hastings.

How the Saxons were humbled and punished, how they fiercely rebelled against their doom and made it heavier, need not be detailed. Wulstan, the prophet who had warned them, did not escape their judgment ; yet in the overthrow of his people and Church, he found mercy, and by degrees won favour and esteem even with king William, and his stern Archbishop, little sympathy as either of them had with any thing English.

Among the native Clergy, the more impatient and daring, of whom there were many, plunged desperately into the intrigues and partizan warfare of their countrymen, and shared the dreary fate which overtook most of William's antagonists. Others among them, "discreet and wary," yielded to the time and served him. Wulstan belonged to neither of these. With the leading men in England, he acknowledged William ; and then he remained quiet in his diocese, doing what temporal duties he was bound to, and keeping aloof from the turmoil round him, despised and neglected by the Normans. Possibly he may have been once in-

duced by the fiery and resolute Abbot of St. Alban's, to join an association, which is said to have extorted from the king an oath on the relics of St. Alban's Church, to observe the old laws of England :⁶ but his general line was submission. To this his naturally unworldly temper would prompt him : and the signal and terrible way in which he saw his own forebodings and warnings realized, would both support and calm him in trouble. "It is the scourge of God that ye are suffering," was his language to his countrymen ; and when they bitterly retorted, that the Normans were far worse than ever they had been, he answered, "God is using their wickedness to punish your evil deserts, as the devil, of his own evil will, yet by God's righteous will, punishes those with whom he suffers. Do ye, when ye are angry, care what becomes of the staff with which ye strike ?"⁷

Among the stray fragments of those days, has come down to us the copy of a religious bond entered into after the Conquest, by Wulstan and the Abbots and brethren of seven monasteries, still for the most part English. The monks promise to be true to Wulstan "for God and for the world ;" and he and they together bind themselves to obedience and to unity among themselves, to be, "as if the seven minsters were one minster,"—"quasi cor unum et anima una," to obedience to their worldly Lord, king William, and the Lady Matilda ;—and besides, to various offices of mutual intercession, and charity to the poor.⁸ Dif-

⁶ Matth. Paris, Vit. Frideric. Abb. S. Alban, pp. 47, 48.

⁷ Knyghton, p. 2366.

⁸ Probably between 1074-1077. It is given in Hicckes's The-saur. vol. ii. Dissert. Epist. pp. 19, 20.

ferent men have different offices ; Wulstan's was not to reform, or build up, or resist, but amid the wild storm of passions which surrounded him, to be the witness and minister of peace.

Thus he preserved his evenness of mind in spite of the change of times. In his dealings with the Normans, in matters relating to his office, he went about his work with a kind of straightforward unconscious simplicity, as if he was still in the days of king Edward, and his position not more precarious and suspected than it had been then.

At the hostile council of Winchester,⁹ which gave such ominous warning to the Anglo-Saxon Clergy, after several of them had been deposed, Wulstan stood up among his cowed and silent colleagues, without embarrassment, as if unconscious that he was a barbarian, an "idiot,"¹ in the eyes of most around him, and in bold blunt words called upon the king, though his officers had just plundered the Church and Monastery of Worcester, to restore some lands to the See, which had been kept back from it by Archbishop Aldred, and had now on his death fallen into William's hands. When the question was put off, he prosecuted it in the same spirit. Thomas, Aldred's Norman successor, met Wulstan with a claim of jurisdiction over Worcester, and Wulstan had to plead his cause before a yet more formidable assembly than the synod of Winchester. The question now touched deeper interests than Wulstan's ; —it became one between the two parties who shared power under the Conqueror, the Church party of Lanfranc, and that of the Earl-Bishop Odo, the

⁹ After Easter, 1070. Florence of Worcester.

¹ Mat. Paris. Vit. Abb. S. Alb. p. 49.

king's half-brother—Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, who had led the Norman chivalry at Hastings, and was now the most potent Lord in England. In a court composed of all the great men of the realm, Wulstan the Saxon, with his bad French, meagre show of learning, and uncourtly ways, had to state his case against the Archbishop of York's subtlety and skill, and Odo's power. He was no more disconcerted than he had been at Winchester. The account, derived from a Norman Bishop who was present, states that he fell asleep during his opponent's argument; and spent the time given him to think over his reply, in singing the service of the hour, in spite of his companions' horror of the ridicule it would bring on them. "Know ye not," he answered, "that the Lord hath said, 'when ye stand before kings and rulers, take no thought what ye shall speak; for it shall be given in that hour what ye shall speak?' The same, our maker and Lord, Jesus Christ, who said this, can give me speech to-day, to defend my right, and overthrow their might." And he had been reading, he said, the lives of his canonized predecessors, Dunstan and Oswald, and he had seen them guarding with their prayers the cause of their Church, which would prevail without any eloquence or wisdom of his. And his statement of his case, backed no doubt by Lanfranc's influence, carried the day.²

Lanfranc is said on this occasion to have committed to him the visitation of the turbulent Diocese of Ches-

² "Hujus narrationis Colemannus testem citat Walchelinum Winton. Episcopum, in virtutibus tunc temporis Lanfranco, sed longo intervallo, proximum. Eum siquidem plusquam semel narrantem audivi, quomodo vir Sanctus pene solus tot optimatibus, et ipsis magno climatis acumine obnitentibus victor abierit."—W. Malms. Vit. S. Wulst. p. 256.

ter, which was unsafe for the Norman bishops. But Wulstan and Lanfranc were men of such different characters, that it is not surprising that it was not at once that the Archbishop really understood the genuine but homely excellence of his Saxon suffragan. The popular legend, which represented Lanfranc as wishing to depose Wulstan, on the ground of incapacity and ignorance, at all events points to something of this kind. The legend itself, a most touching and beautiful one, has become indeed the characteristic story of Wulstan's life. It was the subject of his emblem.

“Lanfranc, says the legend, who like the prophet had been set by God to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant, relying on his authority as legate, sought to recall the English Church to a new order. What called for correction he corrected; what was fit to be decreed he established; and to the clergy and the monks he laid down a more worthy rule of life. Wulstan, the man of God, was accused before him of weakness and incapacity, and with the king's consent or injunction, his deposal resolved upon, as being an ignorant and unlearned man. In a synod therefore which was held at Westminster in the king's presence, Lanfranc called upon him to deliver up his pastoral staff and ring.³ Upon this the old man rose, and holding the crosier firmly in his hand, replied, ‘Of a truth, my Lord Archbishop, of a truth I know, that I am not worthy of this dignity, nor sufficient for its duties. I knew it when the clergy elected, when the prelates compelled, when my master king Edward summoned me to the

³ Mr. Southey's translation, in his *Book of the Church*, has been used as far as it goes, with a few changes.

office. He, by authority of the Apostolic See, laid this burthen upon my shoulders, and with this staff ordered me to be invested with the episcopal degree. You now require from me the pastoral staff which you did not deliver, and take from me the office which you did not confer : and I who am not ignorant of my own insufficiency, obeying the decree of this holy synod, resign them,—not to you, but to him by whose authority I received them.’ So saying, he advanced to the tomb of king Edward, and addressed himself to the dead,—‘ Master,’ said he, ‘ thou knowest how unwillingly I took upon myself this office, forced to it by thee ! for though neither the choice of the brethren, nor the desire of the people, nor the consent of the prelates, nor the favour of the nobles was wanting, thy pleasure predominated more than all, and especially compelled me. Behold a new king, a new law, a new primate ! they decree new rights, and promulgate new statutes. Thee they accuse of error in having so commanded : me of presumption in having obeyed. Then indeed thou wast liable to error, being mortal ; but now being with God thou canst not err. Not therefore to these who require what they did not give, and who as men may deceive and be deceived, but to thee who hast given, and who art beyond the reach of error or ignorance, I render up my staff ; to thee I resign the care of those whom thou hast committed to my charge ; to thee I entrust them with confidence, whose merits I know full sure.’

“ With these words, he raised his hand a little, and drove the crosier into the stone which covered the sacred body ; “ Take this, my master,” he said, “ and deliver it to whom thou will ;” and descending from

the altar, he laid aside his pontifical dress, and took his seat, a simple monk, among the monks.

“But the staff, to the wonder of all, remained fast imbedded in the stone. They tried to draw it out, but it was immoveable. A murmur ran through the throng ; they crowded round the spot in astonishment, and you might see them in their surprise, approaching a little, then stopping, stretching out their hands and withdrawing them, now throwing themselves on the floor, to see how the spike was fastened in the stone, now rising up and gathering into groups to gaze. The news was carried to where the synod was sitting. Lanfranc sent the bishop of Rochester to the tomb, to bring the staff ; but he was unable to withdraw it. The archbishop in wonder, sent for the king, and went with him to the place ; and after having prayed, tried to move it, but in vain. The king cried out, and Lanfranc burst into tears, and going up to Wulstan, addressed him ; “Truly the Lord is righteous, and loveth righteousness ; His countenance will behold the thing that is just ; truly He walketh with the simple, and with them is His discourse. We mocked at thy righteous simplicity, my brother, but He hath made thy righteousness to shine as the light, and thy just dealing as the noon-day. We must weep for the darkness which covered us, and made us call evil good, and good evil. We have erred, we have erred, my brother, in our judgment of thee, and God has raised up His spirit in His king, to bring to nought our decree, and to show to all how acceptable thy simplicity is to God. Therefore, by the authority which we exercise, nay, rather by the divine judgment by which we are convinced, the charge of which we inconsiderately deprived thee, we again commit to thee and

lay on thee, knowing that a little that the righteous hath, is better than great riches of the ungodly ; yea, surely much better is a little learning with faith, which in simplicity works by love, than treasures of wisdom and worldly knowledge, which many abuse to the service of vanity or foul lucre. Go, therefore, my brother, go to thy master, yea, to ours ; for we believe that that holy hand which has refused the crosier to us, will freely resign it to thee." On this, the holy bishop, with his usual simplicity, obeyed the command, and approaching the altar, "Behold me, my lord Edward," he said, "here I am, who entrusted myself to thy judgment, who submitted myself to thy decision, who resigned to thee the staff which thou gavest. What is now thy pleasure and will ? Thou hast in truth guarded thy honour, and declared my innocence, and shown thy greatness ; if, therefore, thy former judgment of me stands, restore the crosier ; if it is changed, say to whom it shall be given." With these words, he tried with a gentle effort to draw out the staff ; it yielded to his hand and came forth, as if it had been planted in soft clay.

"The king and the archbishop rushed up to him, and falling at his feet, begged his forgiveness and his prayers ; but he who had learned from the Lord Jesus Christ to be meek and lowly of heart, in his turn threw himself before them, and entreated the blessing of so great a bishop. Lanfranc and Wulstan blessed each other, and hand in hand returned to the synod, amid tears and joy, all together praising God, who is wonderful in His saints."

So writes Ailred, abbot of Rievaulx, who died within a century after the conquest, about the way in which Lanfranc was reconciled to Wulstan ; reconciled he

certainly was ; and Wulstan lived to a good old age, revered by the stern strangers who so hated his countrymen ; one of the few who, in those times of anxiety and trial, was vouchsafed a life of quietness ; —quietness at least of heart,—the old, perhaps too prized blessing of his native church. For the insight into society, the keen far-reaching intelligence, which pierces through what is complicated and hidden, the discernment of evil and danger and the power to meet them, the “*instantia quotidiana*,”⁴ the daily burden of one to whom his own times are in a way committed, all that made Lanfranc’s and Anselm’s task so heavy, though so glorious, all this was spared to Wulstan. He was not meant to see what they saw, what cost them so many a bitter hour.

Still these must have been mournful days for Wulstan. He had made the best of the old English system ; he was cast in its mould ; it had all his sympathies ; and now that he was old, it was rudely broken off, its evil sternly exposed and put to shame, its ways of doing good despised. The strangers had their own feelings, which he could not share ; and in all that they valued, he was far behind them. A great and noble man was the archbishop, with his vast learning, his austere religion, his deep plans and unwearied care for the Church, yet he was not like the religious men of Wulstan’s youth and manhood. They and the Saints before them, whose memory the Anglo-Saxons cherished with such peculiar affectionateness, were out of date ; their venerated names were jeered at by the coarse and

⁴ 2 Cor. xi. 28.

rude ; held very cheaply by the best.⁵ Every thing reminded him that he was out of his place. When he went to court, around him were foreign faces, dark complexioned, and smooth shaven, and in his ears a language which he could not pronounce⁶—circumstance and ceremony, the old grave state and pomp of the English council, the old jovial mirth of the English board, all was changed.⁷ And at home he had to play the Baron, and go about with his retinue of men-at-arms, mischievous and troublesome attendants, and who, for all that they were in Wulstan's service, ate and drank and quarrelled, like their fellows, and were as grasping and extravagant. But he was obliged to maintain them, for the wise archbishop had so settled it, because the Danes were daily expected ;⁸ and Wulstan had to head his soldiers more than once, to keep the peace

⁵ V. Wharton, *Angl. Sacr.* vol. ii. p. 40 ; and the argument between Lanfranc and Anselm about S. Alphege, in Eadmer, *Vit. S. Ans.* p. 10, 11.

⁶ Vid. quotations in Thierry, p. 115, note 1. *Eng. Transl.*

⁷ “ Ipso igitur persecutionis tempore, exularunt ab Anglia nobiles tam milites quam prælati ; viri sancti, generosi ac dap-siles, (qui more orientalium, et maxime Trojanorum, barbas ac comas nutriebant)...Quibus exulantibus, pristina Regni sanc-titas ac nobilitas, irremeabiliter exulavit.”—M. Paris, *vit. Frid. Abb. S. Alb.* p. 48. “ Conculcabantur sprete ac derisi nobiles Angli, jugum servitutis a tempore Bruti nescientes, et more Normannorum barbas radere, cincinnos tondere cogeban-tur, projectis cornibus et vasis solitis, et refectionibus et dap-silitatibus novis compulsi sunt legibus subjacere.”—*Ib.* p. 46. *vid. Will. Malmsb. de G. Reg.* § 239, 245.

⁸ “ Pompam militum secum ducens, qui stipendiis annuis quotidianisque cibus immane quantum populabantur.”—*Will. Malms. de Gest. Pont.* lib. iv. 280, *de vit. S. Wulst.* lib. iii. c. 16.

of the country.⁹ It was a new position for him to hold ; a plain old Saxon monk, with no taste for show or business ; but he took it meekly and cheerily, with a sort of unconscious patience. He would not dine in private, but sate down in his public hall, with his boisterous soldiers and retainers ; nay, while they sate drinking for hours together after dinner, according to the English fashion, he would keep them company to restrain them by his presence, pledging them when it came to his turn in a little cup, which he pretended to taste, and in the midst of the din, “ ruminating to himself on the psalms.”¹ Not that he was changed himself ; he was still the blunt, unaffected, good-humoured Saxon, who avoided all show, either of austerity or pomp, who kept sturdily, in spite of persons and proprieties, to his old habits, and had his quaint repartee for those who made impertinent comments. He would say his grace before drinking, as the English always used to do, though he was dining at the royal table ;² and he would persist in coming into the company of great lords in a very ordinary dress—intruding his common lamb-skin among their rich furs. The rich and courtly Geoffrey, bishop of Coutances, once took on him, with patronizing kindness, to set the simple Englishman right ; with bland irony, he expostulated with him, on the unsuitableness, in a man of his dignity, of his usual appearance ; “ He could well afford,

⁹ In the rebellion of Roger, earl of Hereford, 1074. (Flor. of Worc.) and again, in the outbreak against William Rufus, a. 1088. Saxon Chron. and Flor. Wore.

¹ W Malms. vit. S. Wulst. p. 259, de Gest. Pont. p. 280.

² “ Benedictiones, quas Angli super potum faciebant.” W. Malms. de G. Pont. p. 280.

and really ought, to wear something more respectable ; some more costly fur, sable, or beaver, or fox-skin." But the old Englishman had some shrewd humour in him. "The skins of such shifty animals," he said, "might do for experienced men of the world, but for himself, he was a plain man, and content with lamb-skin." "Then at least," said Geoffrey, "you might wear cat-skin." But Wulstan's grotesque reply silenced him. "Crede mihi," said he, with his usual affirmation ; "believe me, my Lord, I have often heard 'Agnus Dei' sung, but never 'Cattus Dei.'"⁵

In the Norman court, however, Wulstan's voice was now become of weight. The king listened to him with respect, and his co-operation was used and valued by Lanfranc. A slave trade chiefly with Ireland had long been carried on at Bristol. The slaves were English peasants and domestic servants, the born thralls of the lords of the land, whom their owners found it convenient to get rid of. Among them were many women servants who had been debauched by their masters, and sold when pregnant. The trade was a profitable one both for the dealers and for king William's revenue. Lanfranc however and Wulstan resolved to attack it. With great difficulty, their united influence induced the king to relinquish his duties and declare against it. But king William's opposition was not the greatest obstacle they had to meet ; it was easier to bring over the iron-hearted conqueror, than the wild savage race of slave merchants who had been established at Bristol from time out of mind, and were not men to submit easily to any interference with their authorized and gainful traffic. "The love of God had little power with

⁵ Id. vit. S. Wulst. p. 259. de G. P. p. 280.

them," as little had the love or fear of king William. Wulstan however undertook the task of persuading them. He knew their fierce obstinacy ; but he was a Saxon like themselves, and they might listen in time to their countryman, and their own language. Accordingly he used to go down and stay among them for two or three months at a time, and every Sunday he preached to them in English. And he did destroy the slave trade at Bristol. He completely won the hearts and enthusiastic reverence of these wild people ; the trade was given up and proscribed ; and when they found one of their own number still determined to carry it on in spite of the Bishop, they rose in fury upon him, and having turned him out of the city, they tore out his eyes.⁴

Wulstan outlived William and Lanfranc, and was one of the consecrators of St. Anselm ; but he was then an old man, and he did not see the great struggle which was at hand. He passed his last Lent with more than usual solemnity. It was always with him a time of great devotion, in which he tempered his increased self-discipline with daily acts of overflowing charity to the poor. But this time, with the presentiment which was so remarkable a feature in his character that he was thought to have the gift of prophecy, he felt that what he did would be for the last time. The Thursday before Easter, the day of our Lord's Supper, he had always literally devoted entire to religious offices. On that day, from midnight to midnight, every thought of the world was excluded from his mind. When matins were over, he proceeded at once to an apartment, where he found a number of poor collected, and

⁴ Id. vit. St. Wulst. p. 258. Gest. Reg. Angl. § 269.

warm water prepared by his attendants. There with his own hands he washed their feet and their clothes ; with his own hand he bestowed his alms, and ministered to each the cup of "charity." Then after the briefest interval of rest, during which the servants laid out the hall, he again waited on his pensioners, supplying them, as they sate at his table, with shoes and victuals ; and the only answer he gave to the remonstrances of his attendants, who assured him that he had done enough, was—' nay, I have done but little ; I want to fulfil our Lord's command.' Then he returned to meditate in the Church, and later in the day he reconciled the penitents, who beheld in his "gracious countenance" the face of an angel of God ; and at night after supper, he washed the feet of his brethren of the convent. But this last Maunday was such as had never been seen before. In the monastery, except at the hours of prayer, all was stir and busy activity, strangely mingled with a religious silence and restraint. At its gate and in its courts was a dense multitude from the country round, poor and blind and halt and maimed, pressing in or coming out, or waiting to receive in their turn those cheap, yet to the poor, rare blessings, water clean and warm for their swollen and begrimed limbs, a change of dress, and above all, the personal attention of those above them ; to see their Bishop before them, to hear his words to them, to feel his hand. In the afternoon, the Bishop's hall was filled to the very entrance with people, standing or sitting as they could, so closely crowded as scarcely to leave room for the busy attendants who toiled and hurried about in this great company. The guests were the pauper multitude, the attendants not only the monks of the convent, but also the

young men of noble birth who were attached to the Bishop's family. In the midst sat Wulstan. On former occasions he had taken his share in waiting on his guests ; but this at last had become too much for him. Twice was the hall emptied and filled again, and still there were more applicants. Wulstan had bespoken large supplies of provisions from the bailiffs of his manors, but they began to run short. His clerks were in dismay, and urged him to shut the gates against the remaining crowd ; but Wulstan would not hear of it,—on that great day, the last occasion of the kind he should see, none should go away empty. Let the Lord's command be observed,—he was sure that God would enable him to satisfy all who came. Nor was he disappointed. News was almost immediately brought him of the arrival of some presents, which were at once turned into money, and which enabled him to accomplish the day in the style of princely beneficence with which he began it.

On Easter day he again feasted with the poor, to the great discomfiture and indignation of his steward, who had invited a party of men of consequence to keep the festival with the Bishop, and who could not understand how his master could prefer the company of a crowd of paupers, to that of a few persons of name and wealth. At Whitsuntide following, he was taken ill. His only sister had died shortly before, and though he had always believed that his life would be a long one, he had recognized in this a token that his own time was near ;—“ the plough has come at last to my furrow ;”—he said, and he now prepared for death. He made his confession to his friend, Robert, Bishop of Hereford, and received the “ discipline ;” but he lingered through the summer and autumn in a slow fever, till the first day

of the new year, when he took to his bed. He was laid so as to have a view of the altar of a chapel ; and “sitting rather than lying down,” his eyes were continually upon it, while to himself or aloud he followed the Psalms which were sung. On the 19th of January, at midnight, he departed, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, and the thirty-third A. D.
1095. of his Episcopate.

The point which struck his attendants during his last illness, was the quiet but undoubting confidence with which he looked forwards to his salvation. There was no fear, no trouble, no misgiving. With the same simplicity and boldness which he had shown in life, he spoke of his nearer presence to God after death, and comforted his friends with the promise of his prayers, more availing then, because he should be no longer in the body.

Mention has been made of Robert, bishop of Hereford, Wulstan's greatest friend among the English bishops, though a very different man from himself ; for Robert was a foreigner from Lorraine, and one of the king's judges ; an architect too, a mathematician, an astronomer, and man of science ; yet he would spend days together with Wulstan. Robert was at a distance when his friend died. Wulstan expired at midnight, and at that same hour Robert, in a dream, saw him appear, to announce his own departure, and to bid Robert come to Worcester to bury him. Robert immediately made all speed to Worcester, and arrived in time ; for contrary to the usual custom, the body, which in death had become most beautiful, had been kept till the third day, and was laid out, arrayed in the episcopal vestments and crosier, before the high altar, that the people of Worcester

might look once more on their bishop. The Sunday after his death, Robert buried him, and returned home.

On the thirtieth day after Wulstan's death, Robert in a dream, again saw his departed friend. But Wulstan now appeared to rebuke him sternly for the carelessness of his way of life, and to warn him that his stay in the flesh would be short ; but though he had not long to remain here, he might yet by increased diligence secure his crown, and share with Wulstan the heavenly banquet, in the presence of God. And within six months, Robert followed his friend.⁵

The story, as told by William of Malmsbury, sounds like an improvement on that of Florence. Wulstan, says Malmsbury, appeared to his friend, telling him that if he wished to find him alive, he must come speedily. Robert hastened to Worcester, but the night before he reached it, Wulstan again appeared to him, thanking him for his affection, but telling him that he was now too late to see him. He then announced to Robert that he was soon to follow him, and promised him a sign. "To-morrow," he said, "when thou hast buried my body, which has been for three days waiting thy coming, a present shall be given thee from me, which thou shalt know to be mine." Robert found his dream verified, and he buried Wulstan. He had taken leave of the monks, and was just mounting his horse to depart, when the prior of the convent came to him, and on his knees begged him to accept a present, as a mark of their regard, and a remembrance of his friend. It was the lamb-skin cloak which Wulstan used to wear on his journeys. Robert recognized Wulstan's token ; he took it with fear, and returning into the

⁵ Flor. Worc. a. 1095.

monastery, he summoned the monks to the Chapter house, and there, with sighs and tears, told them his dream. So having commended his approaching death to all their prayers, he departed. "Wulstan passed in the middle of January, and Robert did not outlive June."⁶

The monks of Worcester sent letters through England, earnestly entreating that if any revelation were vouchsafed concerning Wulstan's lot, it might be communicated to them; and it was reported and believed that such a revelation was made to two religious persons, who in a vision beheld him glorified. But at Worcester such assurance would be little wanted. It is well known, from the strong censures of St. Anselm and others, how the devotion and love of the Anglo-Saxons clung fondly to the tombs of those whom in life they had seen to be venerable and noble; but towards Wulstan, their countryman and townsman, known among them for more than sixty years as the best and holiest man in Worcester, known also in foreign parts, in France and Italy, and to the Pope himself,—the last bishop given them by the holy king Edward, and the last of their ancient hierarchy,—it is not strange that these feelings should have displayed themselves in the most intense degree. He was first canonized, as most were in early times, by the popular voice, by the instinctive enthusiastic faith of the multitude in goodness,—in its reward and power. "In truth," says his biographer, speaking of the miracles believed to have been wrought by him, "the ready faith of the men of old time would ere this have exalted him on high, and proclaimed him a Saint. But the slowness of be-

⁶ W. Malms. de Gest. Pont. p. 286.

lief of our day, which shields itself under the guard of caution, will put no faith in miracles, though it behold them with its eyes, and touch them with its fingers.”⁷

Those, however, who wrote his life, had not these doubts. They looked on him as a Saint, and therefore, as from one moving in a supernatural order of things, they expected miracles and they have recorded many. How far the instances mentioned were really tokens of God’s power with him ; how far his loving and admiring friends read events by their own feelings, gave them an exaggerated meaning, and invented, without intending it ; how far their accounts may have been a customary and traditional way of symbolizing, as it were, men’s persuasion that he was God’s servant ; or how far they may have been fictions, imagined and circulated under shelter of the general belief in supernatural agency for good and evil, we have now little means of ascertaining. The chief authority for them is a monk named Coleman, a friend of Wulstan’s, and for fifteen years his chaplain, whose Anglo-Saxon life of him is the groundwork of William of Malmesbury’s Latin narrative.⁸ But William, himself so much of a

⁷ W. Malmsh. de G. Pontif. p. 282.

⁸ He thus speaks of his authority—“*Colemannus, monachus vester, vir nec scientia imperitus, nec sermone patrio infacetus. Scripsit enim Anglice, ne gestorum avolaret memoria, vitam ejusdem Patris ; si attendas ad sensum, lepore gravi, si ad literam, simplicitate rudi. Dignus, cui fides non derogetur in aliquo, quippe qui noverit intime mores magistri, ut discipulus, religionem, ut XV annos Capellanus. Hujus ego, ut voluistis, insistens scriptis, nihil turbavi de rerum ordine, nihil corrupti de veritate. Sane verbis, quæ vel dicta sunt, vel in tempore dici potuerunt, enarrandis supersedi, consulens in omnibus veritati, ne videretur periclitari.*”—*Epist. ad Monach. Wigorn.*

rhetorician that he cannot bring himself to introduce Saxon names,⁹ “lest the barbarous sound of the words should wound the ears of the delicate reader,” accuses Coleman, not indeed of falsehood, but of exaggeration and unscrupulous love of ornament; of using other men’s materials to trick out his own story.¹ However it would be giving an imperfect representation of Wulstan, as he was looked upon in his own century, as one on whom God had visibly set His seal, and who had obtained more than earthly power to cheer and protect and guide his brethren, if we passed over the belief that his life was a miraculous one.

Some of these miracles have been alluded to in the preceding narrative. In most of the others there is little to distinguish them from the class of miracles usually ascribed to the holy men of the middle ages. They are exhibitions of the same character which was shown in his ordinary actions,—of the spirit of charity and mercy, issuing forth in acts of supernatural power, for the relief of the afflicted and poor. They are recorded with considerable particularity of place and person. The subjects of them belong for the most part to the class for whom he always showed such especial kindness—“the miserable people,” who were without protector or comforter in the world—mostly

⁹ Vit. S. Wulst. p. 254.

¹ —“Nec minus alta verba, declamatiunculas quasdam, quas ille ab aliorum Sanctorum gestis assumptas prona devotione inseruit. Sicut enim superius dixi, quisquis rem per se satis eminentem verbis exaltare molitur, ludit operam. Quinimo dum vult laudare, infamat potius et attenuat, quia videatur non posse niti argumento proprio, si fuleatur patrocínio alieno.”—W. Malm. de vit. S. Wulst. p. 254, vid. pp. 265 and 258, cap. xvi.

his own countrymen, whose very names would have been a temptation to the Norman soldiers to trample them like worms—the Outy Grimkelsons,² and Turstan Dubbes, and Gouse Gamelons, and Spurt Luners, of the Saxon farm-house and hamlet. A mad woman of Evesham—a poor wretch from Kent, afflicted with the king's evil, begging at his door at Kemsey—a Gloucestershire serf, possessed with an evil spirit—a foreigner lying sick by the road side—such were the persons for whom his prayers were offered and accepted. They cured hopeless sickness, they brought rest to the troubled mind, they delivered from the peril of fire, or from sudden accidents, they rescued sailors from shipwreck ; or else, still marking his kindly and social temper, they were wrought to cheer and grace the rejoicing of friends. When Egelric the Archdeacon built a Church, and gave a feast at its dedication, Wulstan provided a miraculous supply of mead for his friend's guests.

But whether he did these miracles, or they were only reported of him, so he lived, and so he died, that men readily believed them of him ; and along with the great men of old, the Apostles and first Pastors of England, was numbered also among the Saints of the Church, Wulstan, the last of the Anglo-Saxon Bishops.

² Vid. names in a Charter given in Ingulph. p. 87.



CISTERCIAN SAINTS OF ENGLAND



S. STEPHEN, ABBOT.

THE CISTERCIAN SAINTS

OF

ENGLAND.

St. Stephen, Abbot.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages were printed with the view of forming one of a series of Lives of English Saints, according to a prospectus which appeared in the course of last autumn, but which has since, for private reasons, been superseded. As it is not the only work undertaken in pursuance of the plan then in contemplation, it is probable, that, should it meet with success, other Lives, now partly written, will be published in a similar form by their respective authors on their own responsibility.

The Author wishes me to notice that since his Life of St. Stephen has been in type, he has discovered that he has partly gone over the same ground as the learned Mr. Maitland in his Papers on the Dark Ages. In consequence, as might have been expected, the same facts in many instances occur in both.

J. H. N.

LITTLEMORE,
January, 1844.

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LIFE OF
St. Stephen Harding,

ABBOT OF CITEAUX, AB. 1066—1134,

And founder of the Cistercian Order.

CHAPTER I.

ST. STEPHEN IN YOUTH.

HOLY men of old who have written the lives of Saints, universally begin by professing their unworthiness to be the historians of the marvellous deeds which the Holy Spirit has wrought in the Church. What then should we say, who in these miserable times, from the bosom of our quiet homes, or in the midst of our literary case, venture to celebrate the glories of the Saints? We have much that is amiable and domestic amongst us, but Saints, the genuine creation of the cross, with their supernatural virtues, are now to us a matter of history. Nay, we cannot give up all for Christ, if we would; and while other portions of the Church can suffer for His sake, we must find our cross in sitting still, to watch in patience the struggle which is going on about us. Yet while we wait for better days, we may comfort ourselves with the contemplation of what her sons once were, and admire their virtues, though we have not the power, even though we had the will, to imitate them. The English character has an earnest-

ness and reality about it, capable of appreciating and of following out the most perfect way. Not only was the whole island once covered with fair monasteries, but it sent forth into foreign lands men who became the light of foreign monastic orders. Thus the Saint, whose life we have undertaken to write, was one of the first founders of the Cistercian order, and the spiritual father of St. Bernard. Little as is known of the early years of St. Stephen, all his historians especially dwell on one fact, that he was an Englishman. The date and place of his birth, and the names of his parents, are alike unknown; but his name, Harding, seems to show that he was of Saxon blood, and he is said to have been of noble birth; it also seems probable that he was born rather before than after the Norman conquest. His earthly parentage, and all that he had given up for Christ's sake, is forgotten; and he first appears as a boy, brought up from his earliest years¹ in the monastery of Sherborne, in Dorsetshire. The rule of St. Benedict² allows parents to offer up children under fourteen years of age at God's altar, to serve Him to the end of their days in the cloister. In those lawless times, when temptations to acts of violence and rapine and reckless profligacy were so great, holy parents thought that they could not better protect the purity of their children than by placing them at once under the shadow of a monastery. Just as they had already in their name taken the solemn vows of baptism at the font, so they brought their children into the church of the convent, led them up into the sanctuary, and wrapping their hands in the linen cloth which covered the altar, gave them up solemnly to the service of God. At the same time, they took an oath never to endow them with any of their goods; they then

¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gest. Reg. Angl.* lib. iv.

² C. 59.

left them with perfect security in the keeping of the superior, to follow their Lord with a light step, unencumbered by worldly possessions. The discipline to which St. Stephen was thus subjected from his earliest years, was of the most careful kind. No prince could be brought up with greater care in a king's palace, than were these children offered up in the monastery, whether they were noble or low-born. The greatest pains were taken that the sight and even the knowledge of evil should be kept from them; they were instructed in reading, writing, and religious learning, but above all in music and psalmody. But the greater portion of their time was spent in the services of the Church, in which various constitutions of the order appoint them a principal part. Stephen thus spent his childhood, like Samuel, in the courts of the Lord's house, amidst the beauty and variety of the ceremonies with which the peaceful round of monastic life was diversified. About a hundred years before his time, St. Dunstan had roused anew the spirit of the Benedictines in England, which had in many places fallen into decay; and according to his constitutions the monastery of Sherborne was governed. In every part of his minute rules for the order of divine service, the part of the children brought up in the convent appears foremost; and there is a joyousness, and at the same time a sort of homeliness in some of them, which shows how much he consulted the English character. All the uproarious merriment of the nation he tames down by turning it into something ecclesiastical. Bell-ringing, for instance, is ever occurring in his rule, and in one place it directs that at mass, nocturns, and vespers, from the Feast of the Innocents till the Circumcision, all the bells should be rung, as was the custom in England; "for the honest and godly customs

of this country, which we have learnt from the wont of our ancestors, we have determined by no means to reject, but in every case to confirm them³." Processions also from church to church, when the weather was fine, were frequent; and these were often headed by the children of the monastery. Thus on Palm Sunday the whole community quitted the convent walls, and walked in procession, clad in albs, to some neighbouring church, with the children at their head. On arriving at their destination, the palms were blessed and the young choristers entoned the antiphons, and all quitted the church with palms in their hands. On returning to the church, the procession stopped before the porch, and the children, who walked first, chanted the *Gloria Laus*, after which, as the response *Ingrediente Domino* was raised by the cantor, the doors of the church were thrown open, and the whole line moved in to hear Mass. Such scenes as these must have sunk deep into a mind like Stephen's, and he might have lived and died in the peaceful monastery of Sherborne. But God had other designs for His servant, and in his youth he quitted the convent for the sake of finishing his studies. From the words of St. Benedict's rule, it seems to have been intended that children received into a monastery should be considered as having taken the vows through their parents, and as dedicated to God until their life's end. Monastic discipline was not then considered so dreadful as it is now thought to have been; nor was this world looked upon as so very sweet that it was an act of madness to quit it for God's service. Rather, they were thought happy, to whom God had given the grace of a monastic vocation, and they surely were called by Him to the happy seclusion of the cloister, who were placed there by their

³ Reg. Conc. c. 3.

parents' will ; just as now we find that the wish of a father and mother decide on the profession or state of life of their child. Besides, monastic vows are in one sense only the completion of the vows of baptism ; and it was not thought unnatural that those who, while the child was perfectly unconscious, placed him in the awful contact with the world unseen, implied by baptism, should also put him in the way of best fulfilling the vows to which they themselves had bound him in his infancy. This was probably St. Benedict's view ; but before Stephen's time, custom had in some cases relaxed the rule. St. Benedict seems not to have contemplated the case of a monk's ever leaving his monastery, except when despatched on the business of the convent. Each religious house was to be perfect in itself, and to contain, if possible, all the necessary arts of life, so that its inmates need very rarely go beyond its walls. Least of all does he seem to have thought that a monk could quit the cloister for the acquisition of learning ; the end of monastic life was to follow Christ in perfect poverty and obedience ; monks tilled the ground with their own hands, and wrought their food out of the hard soil by the sweat of their brow ; they were therefore in very many cases what we should call rude and ignorant men, unskilled in worldly learning, though well versed in the science of divine contemplation. The natural force of circumstances, however, made the cloister the rallying-point of learning, and monks often quitted their own convents in order to perfect themselves in the sciences⁴.

⁴ Instances will be found in Mabillon, *Tract. de Studiis monasticis*, c. 16. In the Cistercian order Otto of Frisingen was sent to Paris after his profession, and that from Morimond, a monastery founded by and under the control of St. Stephen. Manriquez, 1127. 2. V. also the case of St. Wilfrid ; Bede, *Eccl. Hist.* v. 20.

The active mind of Stephen longed for more than the poor monastery of Sherborne could afford him. He first travelled into Scotland, which at that time was the general refuge of all of Saxon race from the power of the Conqueror. It was governed by Malcolm III., who in 1070 married Margaret, a daughter of the English blood royal, and the grand-niece of St. Edward the Confessor. Her gentle virtues smoothed the rough manners of the nation, and the holy austerity of her life gave her such an ascendancy over them, that she banished many horrid customs which Christianity had as yet failed in uprooting. It was probably the peace which her holiness shed around her in Scotland which attracted Stephen thither; it formed a favourable contrast to the distracted state of England, which was suffering from the effects of the Conquest, and where a Saxon monastery could not be safe from the aggressions of their Norman lord. From Scotland he bent his steps to Paris.

Up to this time Stephen's life had been one of tranquillity, spent in the peace of a monastery or in the acquisition of learning. But he seems now to be entering on the rougher portion of his career; he had not yet found out his vocation, and with that untiring energy, of which his after-life showed so many proofs, was looking out for it. He was the disciple of a crucified Lord, and his brethren all through the world were fighting; how then could he rest in peace? He left Paris and undertook a pilgrimage to Rome, at that time a journey of great danger and difficulty, when the roads were not smoothed by all the contrivances of modern travelling. Forests had not been cleared nor mountains cut through; and the towns and villages were far distant from each other, so that the poor pilgrims had often to depend on the hospitality of the monks and religious houses to find

food and a night's rest after a long day's journey on foot or on horseback. A heavy rain was a most serious inconvenience, for it converted the road into a deep mass of mud⁵, flooded the rivers and broke down the bridges. Another great danger was the bands of robbers who infested the forests, and the frequent wars which devastated the lands. The castle of a lawless baron or an encounter with any of the numerous bands of soldiers which crossed the country in every direction in war time, was a most serious obstacle to the defenceless traveller; no religious character could protect him, for we find that monasteries were burnt and churches pillaged with as little scruple as if the combatants were heathen Normans instead of Christians. On one occasion all the bishops and abbots of France were attacked on their way from the council of Pisa, by some petty lord; some thrown from their mules, some detained prisoners, and all rifled and plundered, notwithstanding their sacred character. A lonely pilgrim like Stephen would not be likely to find much mercy at such hands: undeterred by the dangers of the way, he set out with but one companion, a clerk, whose name is unknown. Rome was the bourn to which the heart of all Englishmen naturally turned at that day across the wide tract of land and sea which separated them. Stephen had the thoughts of many illustrious examples before him to cheer him on his way; many a Saxon king had laid aside his crown and gone to assume the monastic habit at Rome. The venerable Bede, in relating one of these events, says, that it was only what many of the English, noble and low-born, clerks and laymen, men and women, vied with each other in doing⁶; and their enthusiastic feelings are

⁵ Petrus Ven. Ep. 6, 46.

⁶ Bede, Eccl. Hist. v. 7.

recorded in that saying which occurs so strangely in Bede's Collectanea⁷, or Common-place Book, "When the Coliseum falls, Rome shall fall; when Rome falls, the world shall fall." England had never forgotten, that whatever Rome might be to the rest of the world, it was her mother church; from the earliest times there was an English school in Rome, and some Saxon king, tradition said Ina, had built a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, which belonged to the English, and where Saxon pilgrims who died at Rome were buried. Stephen was therefore as much at home in St. Peter's when once he got to Rome, as he would have been in Westminster Abbey; recollections of his native kings would meet him wherever he went: there he might see the place where Alfred, when a boy of seven years old, was anointed king by Leo IV.; and in "the street of the Saxons," where the English pilgrims lived, stood St. Mary's church, in which was the tomb of Burrhed, the last of the Mercian princes. Stephen, on his way to Rome, never forgot that he was a monk; it was no idle curiosity which led him so far over the sea and across the Alps. It was to imitate to the letter the life of Him who came down from heaven to be a poor man, and who had not where to lay His head; he thus courted cold and hunger and nakedness, that he might follow step by step the Virgin Lamb, as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth. In these times, an Englishman in quitting his country finds, instead of the one home everywhere, altars at which he can only kneel as an alien, and travelling is therefore to us generally a source of dissipation. Stephen, however, found brethren wherever he went, from the parish church and the wayside chapel to the cathedral of the metropolitan city.

⁷ Bede, ed. Col. tom. iii. 483.

Still the bustle of moving from place to place, and a perpetual change of scene, are apt under the best circumstances to distract the mind from that state of habitual devotion in which it ought to rest. Good habits are very hard to gain, but very easy to lose; and nothing is so likely to destroy them as a mode of life in which every turn of the road develops something new. To guard against this danger, our pilgrims set themselves a rule, which none but the most ardent devotion could conceive. Throughout the whole of their long journey, whether they were in a crowded city, in the wilds of a forest, or clambering up the Alps, they recited together daily the whole of the Psalter. At the same time it is expressly said that they did not neglect the works of mercy which God gave them an opportunity of doing. Thus they went on their way chanting the praises of God, and walking with a joyful heart over the thorns and briars which obstructed their path; doing good as they went to their fellow-pilgrims, and to all sufferers, of whom in those times of violence there was no lack. The road which they travelled was not an unfrequented one; and they might have found much to distract their attention if they had chosen to detach their minds from their holy occupation. They not only met the lowly pilgrim who, like themselves, had left his home out of devotion; but many a bishop and abbot, too often with a lordly train, hastening to have his cause judged at Rome, would overtake and pass them by; or else they would meet the young clerk, high in hopes, going to seek his fortune as an adventurer at the Roman court⁸. Many a more congenial companion, however, travelled the same way;

⁸ V. Hildebertus, Ep. 3, 24, for a specimen of a letter of recommendation to the papal court.

their alternate chanting of the Psalms was at least not so singular as to be ostentatious ; at each of the hours, the monk was bound to descend from his horse, pulled off his gloves and his cowl, and, falling on his knees, made the sign of the cross ; then, after saying the Pater Noster, Deus in adjutorium, and Gloria Patri, he mounted his horse and finished the office on horseback⁹. English monks especially, when they travelled, said the usual night hours during the day, so that other voices besides those of our pilgrims were heard chanting in the open air, as they journeyed to Rome. There were pilgrims of another sort, who, unlike Stephen and his companion, had undertaken the journey to expiate some dreadful crime ; some even walked with small and cutting chains of iron round their bodies¹, in hopes of obtaining absolution from the successor of St. Peter.

There was then many an object, both good and bad, to arrest the attention of our pilgrims on the way, and to call for their sympathy. The road to Rome was an indication of what the city was itself ; it was the head of the Catholic Church, and, like the Church, had both a heavenly and an earthly aspect. In one sense it was Christ's kingdom, holding in its hands His interests, and dispensing His mysteries ; in another sense it was an earthly kingdom, with earthly interests and intrigues, the rich, powerful, and intellectual thronging its gates and endeavouring to gain the honours and the wealth which it had to dispense : and then again through this motley scene, it was Christ's kingdom working, and bringing good out of the selfishness and the avarice of men, to the wonder of the angels who look on. It was in this twofold point of view that Rome was looked upon in

⁹ Statuta Lanfranci, c. 15.

¹ Ducange, Peregrinatio.

Stephen's time ; thus, on the one hand, William of Malmesbury², a contemporary writer, speaks in bitter terms of the Romans, as "the laziest of men, bartering justice for gold, selling the rule of the canons for a price ;" and in the next page he goes on to enumerate with enthusiasm its heavenly treasures, the bodies of numberless martyrs, who rested in its bosom. If ever there was a turbulent seditious populace, it was that of Rome ; its nobles, fierce and bloody tyrants ; its cardinals, too often purpled princes ; but then too it was the principal treasure-house of Christ's blessings on earth, the centre of Catholic communion, and the rallying-point of all that was good ; and if sometimes the side of injustice, amidst the multiplicity of causes which flowed into it, triumphed, still there was a mighty energy in its good, which at length brought good out of evil ; and at all events there was ever room for the poor pilgrim to kneel at the tomb of the Apostles, from whence he went back on his way rejoicing. This was Stephen's object in going to Rome ; he thought that his prayers would be most likely to be heard if he knelt near that body the very shadow of which healed the sick, and which was often so close to our most blessed Lord ; and again at the tomb which contained that precious body which gave virtue to handkerchiefs and aprons, and which bore the marks of the Lord Jesus, and by its sufferings had filled up what was behindhand of the afflictions of our Lord for His Church's sake. How Stephen's prayers were answered, we shall soon see.

² Lib. iv. Gest. Reg. Angl.

CHAPTER II.

STEPHEN AT MOLESME.

STEPHEN was returning from his pilgrimage with his faithful companion, probably on his way back to Sherborne, when God conducted his steps to the place which was to be the scene of his labours. As he was travelling through a dark forest in the diocese of Langres in Burgundy³, he came to a poor monastery situated on the side of a sloping hill, on the right bank of the little river Leignes. It could hardly be called a monastery, for it was a collection of huts, built by the monks themselves, of the boughs of trees, which they had cut down with their own hands, surrounding a small wooden oratory. Around this little knot of huts, more like an encampment than a settled dwelling, was an open space in the forest, which the monks had cleared, and which had been given them by a neighbouring baron. The brethren had no means of subsistence but the produce of this piece of ground, which they tilled with their own hands, and they were as much dependent upon it as the poorest serf who gained his own livelihood by the sweat of his brow; yet amongst this poor brotherhood were men of noble birth and of high intellectual attainments. The monastery had only been established a short time, and was struggling with all the difficulties which beset an infant community. Its history is a curious one, as showing how the reckless fury of the times was

³ As late as Martenne's time, the road to Molesme was so intricate, that he and his companions lost their way in the wood, and only arrived at the convent-gate very late at night. Voy. Litt. part i. p. 185.

beaten down by an element of good even more energetic than the evil which it had to encounter. Two brothers of noble birth were one day riding through a solitary place in a forest not far from Molesme, called the forest of Colan ; both were armed, for they were riding to take part in a tournament,—a species of festivity, which, with all its pageantry, its flutter of pennons and glittering of armour, was soon after condemned in strong terms by the Church⁴. They were both worldly men, whose only object was honour, in the pursuit of which they feared neither God nor man. As they were journeying on, the devil, aided by the solitude and darkness of the place, suggested horrid thoughts to each of them—of murdering the other in order to obtain his inheritance, and it cost them a struggle to put the temptation down. Shortly afterwards, on returning from the tournament, they passed through the same place. The wicked thoughts which had attacked them in that spot rose to the mind of each, and each trembled secretly at the dreadful power which Satan possessed over his mind. Without revealing to each other their fears, they both hastened to the hut of a holy priest, who lived a hermit's life in the depths of the forest and separately confessed their sin. They then revealed to each other the dreadful thoughts which had crossed their minds, and recognizing that they could not serve God and Mammon, but must either be like devils in wickedness, or saints in holiness, they agreed to quit the world with all its honours, and to live in the forest under the direction of the holy hermit. The world soon heard of the conversion of these noble youths, who had quitted everything that it holds dear, to embrace a voluntary poverty, and to live a life of painful disci-

⁴ St. Bern. Ep. 376. Conc. Lat. ii. Canon 14.

pline ; and a few others were induced to follow their example. At first they lived the life rather of hermits than of cenobites ; afterwards, as their number increased to seven, they determined on adopting the rule of St. Benedict, and looked around them for some one to instruct them in it. They turned their eyes on Robert, then Abbot of St. Michel de Tonnere, a monastery near the town of Tonnere, on the borders of Champagne and Burgundy. Robert, however, was at that time unable to leave his post, and the hermits of Colan were disappointed in their hopes of obtaining him. Not long after, however, he was compelled to leave St. Michel by the incorrigibly bad lives of the monks, and to return to Celle near Troyes, his original monastery, from whence he was soon elected Prior of St. Aigulphus. At this place the hermits again sought him, and this time they applied to Rome for an order from the pope, commanding him to undertake the direction of them. Alexander II., the then reigning pontiff, pleased with their persevering zeal, granted their request, and Robert quitted St. Aigulphus to preside over this infant community. Under his guidance they gained frequent accessions to the brotherhood ; and when at last their numbers amounted to thirteen, St. Robert saw fit to remove their habitation from the forest of Colan to Molesme. The new monastery was founded in honour of the Blessed Virgin, on Sunday, the 20th of December, A.D. 1075. It was here that Stephen found the community, and he at once felt that he had reached the end of his wanderings. The place certainly had nothing tempting to common eyes. It is easy to conceive a person falling in love with what may be called the romance of monastic life : splendid architecture, a beautiful ceremonial, and, above all, religious peace and an absence of worldly

cares, are the legitimate compensations for all that monks give up for Christ's sake. But at Molesme even these attractions were wanting. The monks, like St. Paul, worked with their own hands to get their daily bread; and so poor were they, that even this was often lacking, and they were obliged at times to live wholly on vegetables. They were visibly dependent on God's providence for their daily bread; and seeking first the kingdom of God, they trusted that their scanty food and raiment would be added to them. It was their poverty which attracted Stephen; these few men serving God in the wild of the forest were the very realization of the new order of things which was brought in by the cross of Christ, by which weakness was made strength and suffering sanctified to bring joy. They were the salt of the earth, preserving it from corruption by their supernatural virtues, and averting the anger of God from the sinful world. Here he found St. Benedict's rule carried out to the letter without any of the relaxations which had crept in through the lapse of time, and this we know from every one of Stephen's subsequent actions was the state of life at which he aimed in his own person, and which he tried to establish in others. This probably was the object of his prayers at St. Peter's tomb, and now they were answered, for he had thus lighted unexpectedly upon a place where he could follow after that perfection, which he had already conceived in his heart⁵.

In thus quitting his original monastery and entering another, he was in no way violating his rule, for St. Benedict expressly allows an abbot to receive a monk of any distant monastery which was unknown to him;

⁵ Manriquez, *Ann. Cist.* Introd. c. 2, conjectures that he made a vow at Rome to embrace a more perfect mode of life.

that is, as it is interpreted, he excludes monasteries which are so near as to admit of intercourse. But there was another difficulty, which it cost Stephen a painful struggle with himself to overcome. The devil often gathers all his powers to give battle to great saints, when they are on the eve of doing some action which is to be the turning-point of their lives ; and so it was with Stephen. He felt a most bitter pang at parting from the clerk who had been the faithful companion of his pilgrimage. His affectionate heart, which from his early consecration to God's service at Sherborne, could hardly have known the love of father, mother, brethren, or sisters, had, it seems, fixed itself so firmly on his friend, that now it was with great difficulty that he could tear himself away. He, however, vanquished in the struggle, and remained behind at Molesme, while his friend passed on. For this one friend whom he gave up, he at once found two others, in Robert and Alberic, the abbot and prior of Molesme. Both of them were his companions in the more arduous struggles of his after-life ; both have been, with him, held up by the Church to the veneration of the faithful, among the Saints ; and it was their joint work which he was afterwards left on earth to complete. When, however, Stephen joined them at Molesme, they were but simple monks unknown to the world. Robert, the spiritual father of both Alberic and Stephen, was of one of the noblest families of Champagne ; he had been a monk from a very early age, and had been distinguished for his adherence to the strict rule of St. Benedict ; he had quitted the government of the abbey of St. Michel, as we have said above, and retired into a private station because of the incorrigible laxity of the monks. Alberic was one of the original seven hermits of Colan ; he is

described in the early history of Cîteaux, as "a man of learning, well skilled in things both divine and human, a lover of the rule and of the brethren⁶." These two walked hand in hand with Stephen, in all the trials in which they soon found themselves involved. The monastery at times suffered from actual want; from the loneliness of the spot and the fewness of visitors, they were quite forgotten by the world, and the alms of the faithful were turned into other channels. They continued however in cheerful faith, winning their livelihood out of the hard ground, and feeling sure that God would not desert them; and, indeed, they found that their faith was not misplaced. One day, as they were about to sit down to a scanty meal, after the hard labour of the day, the Bishop of Troyes arrived at the monastery with a considerable retinue. The poor monks felt ashamed that they could so miserably supply the needs of their illustrious visitor, but cheerfully divided with him their hard-won meal. The bishop went away from the monastery, wondering at the fervent piety of its inmates. For a long time nothing came of this visit, and the monks had probably forgotten it. Meanwhile the resources of the community became daily more straitened, till at last there were hardly provisions enough left to serve them for a few days. The brethren applied to St. Robert, and informed him of the state of the case. He bade them quietly trust in God, who would not leave his servants to perish in the solitude to which they had retired to serve Him. He ordered some of them to go to Troyes, which was much nearer to them than their own episcopal city of Langres, and bade them buy food, though he well knew that he had no money to give

⁶ Exord. Parv. Cist. c. 9.

them. The exact conformity of their lives to the very letter of Scripture, made them look upon it as a solace and a counsel in the minutest points, in a way of which we have no conception; thus the words of Isaiah rose to St. Robert's mind, "Ye who have no money, hasten, come, and buy⁷." Encouraged by the faith of their abbot, the monks set out on their apparently hopeless journey. So long had the good brethren kept away from the world, that they forgot the singularity of their appearance. They were therefore surprised on entering the city that their naked feet, coarse habit, and features so worn with toil and watching, that the fervent spirit seemed to shine through the flesh, attracted general attention. The news flew hastily round, till it reached the Bishop's palace. He ordered them to be brought to his presence, and as soon as they entered recognized his hosts of Molesme. He received them with joy, took off their tattered habits, and sent them back with his blessing, and a waggon loaded with clothes and bread for their poor brethren at home. We may fancy the joy of the community when they saw their messengers return, not empty-handed as they went, but laden with the blessings which God had given them, as it were with His own hand, to reward their faith. This seems to have been nearly the last of their struggles with poverty, "for," says the monk who has written St. Robert's life⁸, "from that day forth there never was wanting to them a man to supply them with all that was necessary for food and clothing. And as they endured with the greatest constancy in God's service, many continually were added to their number, fugitives from the world, who leaving their earthly burdens, placed their necks under the yoke of the Lord."

⁷ Isa. lv. Vulg.

⁸ V. Bollandists, April 29.

CHAPTER III.

MOLESME DEGENERATES.

THE community of Molesme seemed now to be in a fair way of becoming the head of a new and flourishing congregation of the Benedictine order. It might even have rivalled Cluny, for many abbots prayed St. Robert to grant them some of his monks, by way of introducing into their own monasteries the reform of Molesme. It would have become what Citeaux was afterwards, had not the folly of the monks frustrated the designs of God. The various steps by which the change was effected in the convent, are not marked in the scanty annals of the time. The brethren appear at first in the story as saints in perfection, and a little farther on are represented as degenerate. The change, however, took place on an increase of numbers and of wealth in the community; it does not, therefore, at all follow that the original monks degenerated; it was rather the second generation who broke in upon the strictness of the first. Again, it must be remembered, that strong expressions may be used, and rightly, about the corruption of monks, without implying the existence of gross impurity. A convent may degenerate into a lax and formal way of performing its duties, or it may be ruined by internal dissensions, without falling into vicious excesses. The most common commencement of corruption was a violation of the rule of poverty, and this seems to have been the case at Molesme. The wealth which had accrued to them from the bounty of the faithful, had done away

with the necessity of manual labour, and they refused to obey their abbot, who wished to keep it up as a portion of the discipline enjoined by the rule. Again, they insisted on keeping possession of parochial tithes, and they assumed habits of a richer and warmer sort than the rule allowed. They grounded their arguments on the general practice of monasteries about them, though it was opposed to the rule which they professed to follow. From the general state of monasticism at the period, it was quite evident that these dispensations, though sanctioned by precedent, and in themselves not incompatible with strictness of life, led in most cases in the end to laxity. On these grounds St. Robert opposed these innovations; and his opposition led to further resistance from the monks; they had first begun by despising the poverty of Christ, and they ended by disobeying their abbot. Poverty and obedience are the very soul of monasticism, and a convent which has once transgressed these two portions of the vow, is in a state next to hopeless. St. Robert saw that his presence only irritated his refractory children, and he determined on leaving them, as St. Benedict and other saints had set him the example of doing, and retired to a place called Aurum, the habitation of certain hermits⁹. This was a severe trial to Stephen; he had come to Molesme, because there he could serve Christ better than anywhere else, and he had for a time rejoiced in being able to follow the steps of his Divine Master. But he had gradually seen his brethren become worse and worse, till at last through their misconduct he was now abandoned by his spiritual guide. It is true, he did

⁹ Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* 69. 73, identifies this with a place called Hauz, where three hermits are said to have lived, and which was, in his time, a farm belonging to the monastery of Molesme.

not himself follow the laxity which he saw around him, but this, though it might set his own conscience at rest, could not restore the peace of the brotherhood. The very object of the cœnobitic life is, that all should obey the same rule, and do the same things, so that the zeal of one may kindle the other. The bond of charity was now broken, and the convent was in effect ruined. To add to his trial, he now found that a great portion of the charge of this unruly community was on his hands, for Alberic, who as prior naturally took the government of the abbey in the absence of the abbot, invested him with a portion of his authority. He therefore set about his hopeless task; but how far he succeeded we may guess, from the treatment which the monks inflicted on his colleague. They seized on Alberic, who still endeavoured to carry out Robert's principles, beat him severely, and thrust him into a dungeon. On his release, Alberic determined to quit the monastery, and he was followed by Stephen and one or two other monks. Thus was Stephen cast upon the world, deprived of all the guides which Providence had put into his way; so true is it, that we must not set our hearts, in this world, even on the good which God allows us to work. Good is to be loved, not because it is ours, but because it is to God's glory; when He wills that it should perish, we must not murmur, but keep our hearts still fixed upon Him, ready to do His will.

Stephen was now, it may be said, his own master; the authorities of his convent, by abandoning it, had released him from his vow of obedience. He, however, did not choose for himself an easy lot; he again sought the desert, and retired with Alberic and the other monks to a solitary place called Vivicus, now Vivier,

near Landreville, about four leagues from Molesme¹. God, however, did not leave His servant in this solitude. After he had been there for some time, gathering strength by prayer and fasting for the work which he was soon called upon to perform, it pleased Him to call him back from his retreat, to his old monastery. The monks soon discovered that the flower of the community was gone, and that they could not govern themselves without Robert. It is probable that they were not thoroughly bad; they did not wish to give up the strict abstinence enjoined by the rule; it was rather the poverty which scandalized them; they did not like the coarse habit and the hard manual labour, and wished to be like their neighbours. They therefore began to long for Robert's return, and knew not how to win him back from his retreat, after once driving him away by their misconduct, and then grossly ill-treating their prior in his absence. They at last determined to apply to the holy see, and succeeded in obtaining an order commanding Robert to resume the command of the monastery. The holy see appears to have been the great court of appeal of Christendom; monks good and bad, bearded hermits, and mitred abbots, all brought their causes to Rome; and if he could not afford to travel in any other way, the poor brother trudged manfully across the Alps with his wallet on his back to obtain justice from the papal court. The jurisdiction of bishops over abbots was ill-defined, as may be seen by the independent way in which superiors left their monasteries, without apparently consulting their bishop. None, therefore, but a power, which held its seat at a distance from

¹ Mabillon, Ann. Ben. 66. 100.

the scene of action, and could not be accused of selfish views, was able to step in when ordinary authority failed. A mandate from Rome Robert could not refuse to obey, and he again put himself at the head of the refractory monks. Stephen and Alberic, with the other monks who had retired to Vivier, followed the example of their abbot, and the whole brotherhood was again united within the cloister of Molesme. The monks who had before rebelled, had either grown wiser, or been frightened into submission, and were ready to obey their abbot; on the other hand, Robert had learned to deal more gently with them now that they were disposed to be submissive. The command of the pope had rendered it impossible to quit them a second time, without permission from Rome itself, or from a legate; so that it was clearly his duty to manage their unruly spirits as best he could, and by concession in some particulars to win them to keep the more essential portions of the rule. The monastery began again to flourish, and new convents were even placed under the jurisdiction of the abbot, and filled by monks of his choosing, who were to model the new community according to the reform introduced by him.

Though, however, the harmony of the convent was thus restored, and external decency preserved, yet it was far from being a place where those who aspired after perfection could rest in peace; the charm of holy poverty was gone, and many of the brethren of Molesme in secret regretted the changes which had taken place. The convent had ceased to be to them what it had been before; the alms of the faithful had enriched it, and they regretted the wooden huts and oratory, and the poverty which had obliged them to work in the heat and in the cold, as is the appointed lot of poor men. The fore-

most of their party was Stephen. Every morning the rule of St. Benedict was read in chapter, and he mourned in secret over the many departures from its holy dictates, of which the convent was guilty. To the generality of the world many of the commandments of Christ are precepts of perfection ; but to monks who have sworn to quit the world, they are precepts of obligation. In token of this, a monk in some convents was buried in his habit, with the rule of St. Benedict in his hand, to show that by that rule he was to stand or fall at the last day. For a long time, however, Stephen and his companions made no formal complaint, but bore their sorrows in silence. Much might be said against taking any steps to remedy the state of things which they saw around them. It was not by their fault that they transgressed their rule ; besides this, peace had but lately been restored to the monastery, and it was an invidious thing again to disturb the consciences of their brethren, which had so lately been set at rest. Again, each of them might think that the feelings which actuated him were merely the effect of his own restlessness, in which case it would be a far greater merit to obey in silence, than to afflict their bodies with fasting, and to walk about in coarse garments.

Gradually, however, by comparing his views with those of his neighbour, each man found that he was not singular in thus feeling acutely the misery of their situation. Stephen is said to have been the first to break the subject to Alberic² ; his abhorrence of the dispensations and indulgences which the other monks claimed,

² Cum verbum innovandæ religionis in eadem domo motum fuisset, ipse Stephanus primus inter primos ferventissimo studio laboravit ac modis omnibus institit ut locus et ordo Cisterciensis institueretur. —Exord. Mag.

may appear to be merely the restless feelings of one accustomed to live in the wild solitudes of nature, but they derive a meaning from the state of monasticism in his time. St. Benedict had in his rule left a power with the superior of altering or tempering the rule according to the circumstances of the convent. The natural course of things had led abbots to take advantage of this provision, and their alterations had in time considerably changed the monastic state. It does not at all follow that any one was to blame in this. An abbot was at first the superior of a few poor brethren, who worked for their own livelihood amongst the rocks of some wilderness, or in some hidden valley, and who only differed from common labourers in their singing psalms day and night, in their fasting every day, and praying every hour ; but the case was widely different when the same abbot was ruler over two or three hundred monks, and when the bounty of the faithful had made him the steward of the poor, by giving him wide lands and fair manors. The abbot became a temporal lord, with vassals under his command ; he had, moreover, to sit in councils, ecclesiastical and civil, besides going to Rome on the business of the abbey, and making a progress to visit his estates. Again, my lord abbot, leading a solemn service with music and chanting under the canopy of his carved stall, or blessing the people from the altar with a jewelled mitre on his head, and a ring on his finger, was a very different person from the poor lord of a few acres in a desert, ruling over a few monks with a wooden staff like a shepherd's crook. Another change in monasteries was their application to learned purposes : St. Benedict's rule implies that many of the monks did not know how to read, and

learnt the Psalter and divine office by heart³; but monasteries, naturally, became the chief seats of learning, and often contained two schools, one within the cloister for the novices, the other without it, for secular pupils. This involved a library and an establishment for copying manuscripts, so that manual labour might, in process of time, with propriety give place to literary labours. None of these changes involved a violation of the rule; the abbot often wore a hair shirt under his splendid vestments, and slept upon a hard mattress of straw, stretched by the side of the magnificent state bed in his chamber. He was often really poor amidst the great wealth of the abbey, because the whole of the revenues which could be spared from the convent were given to the poor. In this way Cluny, in St. Hugh's time, seems to have been a wonderful and stately seminary, from which proceeded the great men of the age, rulers of churches, and even of the world, through their sanctity of life. Still with its magnificent church, and great revenues, it was not what it was before, the poor and simple religious house. It would be absurd to depreciate it on this account; as well might one precious stone be blamed for not being another; still it was a fact that it was changed; there were dispensations from manual labour, and pittances in the refectory, and a stud of horses for the abbot and for the prior, even for each dean to ride away when he would, to visit his charge. Innocent as all this was, when such an abbot as St. Hugh governed Cluny, still it was a dangerous state; a dispensing power is necessarily beside the law; its limits are undefined, for it quits the broad line of

³ Reg. St. Ben. c. 8. 57, 58, with Calmet's Comment.

fact and precedent, and introduces moral questions, in which it is always difficult to determine the precise point where good begins to mix with evil. Thus the very next abbot to St. Hugh ruined Cluny for a time, and in Stephen's time very many monasteries were in a miserable state, on account of the laxity introduced by abbots under the name of dispensations. Stephen lived during the whole of the long struggle between the popes and the secular power; and we shall see proofs in the subsequent actions of his life, that in the state of perplexity and confusion which ensued during that most momentous contest, pomp and luxury had power to invade even the cloister. Many were the innovations introduced under the name of dispensations, till hardly a vestige of the monastic character remained. Simony again brought with it intercourse with princes, pride, and luxury. We must not, therefore, wonder at Stephen's hatred of the very name of dispensation.

Furthermore, we must recollect that Stephen had been a dweller in the wilderness and forest; he aspired to the highest Christian perfection, so that he would not have been contented even with Cluny. Though a man of learning, he wished to become foolish for Christ's sake; he wished to be perfectly destitute, and to depend for his daily bread, and his coarse habit, on God's providence. No record remains of any action or saying of his against the stately order of Cluny, but his vocation lay another way. God had kindled a divine love in his heart, and it was fire in his bones, and would not let him rest till he had accomplished the work which he was sent on earth to perform. God's saints are His workmanship, and the same Almighty goodness which has made the lilies, and also given its own beauty to the rose, which has created flowers, pre-

cious stones, and animals, each with a different glory, has also in the creation of His grace variously moulded the souls of his saints. Stephen's lot was to be of those who, by their utter destitution of human helps, most of all illustrate the new order of things, which our blessed Lady celebrated in the Magnificat. Out of weakness he was to be made strong; with his perfect poverty, his coarse and tattered garment, his body bowed down by labour and mortification, he was to bring in an order of men into the Church, who beat down pomp and luxury, intellect and power. His wooden staff was more powerful than the sceptre of kings, and his fragile frame was the centre, around which the whole of the saintly prelates of the Church, who fought against luxury and simony in the Church, clustered and arranged their battle; the pre-eminence which God gave to His saint in after-life, is a full vindication of his conduct in these his first years, when he was a poor despised monk, treated by his brethren as an enthusiast and fanatic.

CHAPTER IV.

REMOVAL FROM MOLESME.

THE scanty chronicles of the time give but few particulars of the history of Molesme at this period ; all that is known is, that the war of dispensations continued for some time at Molesme, and that the greater part of the brethren continued to scoff at Stephen's scruples. His energetic words had, however, made a great impression on many of the community, so that the number of those who longed for a more perfect way began to form by no means a despicable part of the monastery. Seeing then that God had touched the hearts of so many of his brethren, Stephen determined on attempting a plan, out of which afterwards sprung the order of Citeaux. He conceived the idea of a new monastery, to be governed according to the very letter of the rule of St. Benedict. The scheme was in many respects a very bold one : in the first place, it involved leaving Molesme, and retiring again to the desert or the forest ; it was in fact beginning the world afresh, and exposing himself naked and destitute to all the hardships which beset an infant community. These, however, were difficulties which he had already overcome, and which his faith would teach him to treat as light afflictions. But there was another point of view in which he was running a risk in his new undertaking. We are far too apt to look upon the middle ages as times to which ordinary rules of prudence will not apply. It is quite true that now, when all is over, we can look back and wonder

at the superhuman deeds which faith then achieved ; but we forget, that we now consider them as they are lit up by the glory which a successful result has thrown upon them. Many a man, whom we now revere as a saint, was looked upon in his day as a fanatic. Stephen had then to consider the chances of success, just as we should do now ; he must have bethought himself, whether his scheme was likely to *answer*, in modern phraseology. The difference between him and one of us is simply, that he had the faith to throw himself on a great principle, in spite of the chances of its not answering. There was a great chance that the opinion of even good men would condemn him ; he was leading a number of monks into the desert, and that from Molesme, a regular, and, in many respects, a flourishing community. In returning to the letter of the rule of St. Benedict, he was going back from the twelfth century to the sixth, a leap almost as wide as it would be in the nineteenth to go back to the twelfth. He was moreover passing over the great precedent of Cluny, then, as has been before intimated, in the height of its splendour. On the other hand, the voice of his conscience was loud within him, bidding him embrace the most perfect way : and the sad state of a great many monasteries, which had fallen into disorder from the use of dispensations, was an external voice, hardly less loud, warning him to avoid the rock on which they had split. His first care was to ascertain the will of his superiors ; he therefore and his companions applied to Robert, and stated their difficulties. Their faith in thus throwing themselves on the will of their abbot was rewarded, for he cordially entered into their schemes. With a joyful heart, they then consulted with their abbot on the best mode of effecting what they wished,

feeling now sure that God was with them in the course which they intended to pursue.

They were obliged to proceed warily, for the monks of Molesme, however unwilling themselves to follow the rule of St. Benedict in all its strictness, were still too well aware of the lustre which Robert, Alberic, and Stephen cast upon the convent, to bear to part with them easily. They did not therefore even apply to their own bishop of Langres, but went straight to Hugh, archbishop of Lyons and legate of the Holy See in France. It was early in the year 1098 that Abbot Robert set out from Molesme on his way to Lyons, accompanied by Stephen, and five other monks, Alberic, Odo, John, Lætaldus, and Peter. The prelate to whom they applied was one of the most distinguished adherents of St. Gregory VII. and had even expectations of succeeding to the popedom on his death. He was a great friend of St. Anselm, and at the time that our abbot came to Lyons with his companions, the illustrious exile had sought and obtained shelter there. Hugh was therefore a man to appreciate their difficulties. He entered into their scheme, and on their return to Molesme, sent them a letter authorizing them to quit Molesme; this document, as it distinctly states the object for which they wished to leave their monastery, shall be here subjoined at length.

“Hugo, Bishop of Lyons and legate of the Apostolic See, to Robert, Abbot of Molesme, and to the brethren with him, who desire to serve God according to the rule of St. Benedict. Be it known to all, who rejoice in the advance of our Holy Mother the Church, that you, with certain men, your sons, brethren of the convent of Molesme, have stood in our presence at Lyons, and declared that ye wished to adhere to the rule of the

blessed Benedict, which ye had up to this time kept in the said monastery in a lukewarm and negligent way, henceforth more strictly and more perfectly. Which thing, because it is evident that from many preventing causes ye cannot fulfil in the aforesaid place, we, consulting the salvation of both parties, that is, both of those who go away and those who stay, have thought it best that ye should retire to some other place, which the bounty of God shall point out to you, and there serve the Lord to your souls' greater health and quiet. To you therefore who were then present, Abbot Robert, and brethren Alberic, Odo, John, Stephen, Lætaldus, and Peter, yea and to all whom according to rule and by common counsel ye have determined to unite to yourselves, we both then gave advice to keep this holy design, and therein now bid you persevere, and through apostolic authority and by the setting of our seal confirm it for ever."

On receiving this letter, Robert solemnly gave back into the hands of the brethren who remained the vows which they had taken of obedience to himself, at the same time giving them liberty to elect a successor. Twenty-one brethren, gathered together by Stephen's energetic words, determined to take advantage of the archbishop's permission and to follow him into the desert; the others had not the courage to take this bold step. A convent is a little world in itself, and has its mixed characters and tempers, just like the world; the mass of the community in such a convent as Molesme probably consisted of men who followed the leading of others, and contented themselves with arriving at a certain standard of holiness, without rising much above or falling much below it. Let no one suppose that all is smooth in a convent life; it has temptations of its own, temptations to rising only just in time for matins, to a love of such

ease as the cloister will allow, to talking vain words at recreation time, to a low standard of devotion ; temptations at which those who live in the world, exposed to imminent danger of mortal sin, may smile ; and yet real, because they argue habitual sloth. Those then who were contented with this low state of religion, and yet were incapable of open acts of disobedience and breaches of conventual discipline, would be able to appreciate the high character of Robert and Stephen, though they could not follow them. Such men would be painfully startled at finding that they must lose brethren beside whom they had knelt at vigils, and to whose fervour in singing God's praises they had been accustomed to look as a flame whereat to kindle their own coldness. The disobedient and rebellious, on the other hand, who considered the fervour of the saints to be a reproach on their own evil tempers, were glad to be left to themselves without the restraint which the presence of the strict party imposed upon them. It was therefore with various emotions that the monks of Molesme saw their brethren set out on their expedition. As for the little band itself who thus left their convent for the wilderness, nothing could be more dreary than the prospect before them. They were in every respect adventurers, and none ever set out in quest of adventures across sea or land in a more destitute condition than did these twenty-one brethren. Robert took with him the ecclesiastical vestments and vessels necessary for celebrating the holy mysteries, and also a large breviary for the ordering of the divine office. Except this, they had nothing : two accounts are left us of their march ; one that they left the convent gates, not knowing whither they were going, and that they sought the wildest and most rugged paths, and at last arrived at Citeaux, where a voice from

heaven bade them rest. Another account says, that they had already pitched upon Citeaux, before they left Molesme, as being the most lonely and uncultivated spot that they could find. Either story gives a sufficiently dreary account of their march, for a journey, undertaken with the prospect of arriving at such a place as Citeaux is then described to have been, is no less appalling than one of which the end was altogether unknown. But however naked they appeared to the eye of the world, the heavenly enthusiasm which prompted them to enter on such a course was enough to buoy them up under their difficulties. At all events, even this nakedness was more welcome to Stephen, and such as he, than the miserable uncertainty which had hung over him ever since the degeneracy of Molesme. His conscience had been hurt by his inability to keep the rule, according to which he had sworn to live ; and no suffering can be so dreadful as a state of doubt, whether we are in the place in which God would have us be. Stephen was now sure that he was right ; God had blessed his endeavours after a more perfect way, by turning the heart of his abbot, and of the legate of the Holy See : and now his path was clear before him. He had entered in at the strait gate, and now had only to pursue the way, into which God had directed his feet. There are moments when holy men feel that their crown is won ; such must have been Stephen's thought as he left the gates of Molesme. His Saviour had with his own hand put the cross upon his shoulders, and he had now, with the same Saviour's help, only to carry it with a stout heart to his grave.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL AT CITEAUX.

TRAVELLERS are often struck with the picturesque situations of ancient abbeys. The fact is, that those parts which are now the most beautiful, were in former times the wildest and most solitary. Little nooks, which are even now so lonely that the relentless hand of civilization has left them in their primitive beauty, must have been mere wildernesses, far from human habitation, in ages when so much of the earth was uncultivated. Besides which, rocks and mountains may be very picturesque to look at, and yet very uncomfortable as dwelling-places ; and many a stream, the banks of which are now visited for the sake of a beautiful ruin, at the time when the monastery was built flowed through pathless wilds and uninhabited forests. So it was with Citeaux ; at the time when Stephen and his companions first came to dwell there, it was a very different place from what it was when the stately abbey was built, which contained the tombs of all the dukes of Burgundy. Citeaux was the name of a spot situated in the midst of a wild wood, in the diocese of Châlons and the province of Burgundy. It was only tenanted by wild beasts, who found shelter in the thickets with which the place was overgrown, and into which no one ever cared to penetrate. A small stream ran through it which took its rise from a fountain, about a league from Dijon, called Sans-fonds, because it was so deep that no one had ever found the bottom. This stream had also a strange

peculiarity connected with it, that in the time of rain it was languid and shallow, but when the heat had dried up all other rivers, it ran merrily along in a copious stream, as if it defied the power of the sun. The industry of the monks in after-ages collected its waters into three noble ponds, filled with fish ; but at the time of which we write, it was ever overflowing its banks, so that the place is said to have derived its name from an old word expressive of the flags and bulrushes which the marshy soil produced in abundance. On the borders of the wood were several scattered cottages, where dwelt the peasants who cultivated the estate of the viscount of Beaune, to whom the place belonged ; and there was also a rude and small church, for the use of this rustic population. The lord of Beaune gave them leave to take possession of this most unpromising tenement, and they forthwith began to clear away the briars and the sedge, and to cut down the trees, so as to leave an open space for their habitation. They then rudely put together the trunks of the trees which they had felled, and constructed the monastery, such as it was. The rudeness of their dwelling, however, raised for them a most unexpected friend. Odo, the then duke of Burgundy, had been originally one of the wildest of the iron nobles who infested the land. A few months, however, before their arrival at Citeaux, the majestic looks and bearing of our own Anselm had cowed the ducal robber, who had set out in full armour to seize upon what he conceived to be the rich coffers of Canterbury, as the saint passed through his dominions. The eye of the archbishop seems to have converted him, for from that moment he became an altered man. Hearing from the archbishop of Lyons that a number of holy men had come to build a monastery in his territory, he **inquired** about

them. So miserable, however, was their dwelling-place, that fearing lest they should die from the roughnesses which they had to bear in this barren and dreary spot, he sent workmen to assist them in rearing their monastery. At length all was ready for their reception, and they chose the 21st of March, 1098, for the solemn inauguration of the new abbey. A double festivity in that year fell on that day; it was not only Palm Sunday, but also the feast of St. Benedict. They canonically elected Robert as their abbot, and he received the pastoral staff at the hands of Walter, bishop of Châlons, who thus regularly erected the monastery into an abbey, under the name of *Novum Monasterium*, or New Minster, in honour of St. Mary, to whom, from this first wooden edifice, all churches of the order were afterwards dedicated. The brethren then one by one vowed to pay him obedience according to a form preserved in the *Exordium Parvum*. "That profession which I made in thy presence at the monastery of Molesme, that same profession and stability I confirm before God and his saints in thy hands, that I will keep it in this place called New Minster, in obedience to thee and to thy successors to be regularly substituted in thy room." Odo of Burgundy and Rainaldus of Beaune had before given them the allodium, or freehold estate on which the monastery was built; the serfs also who tilled the ground were given over to them, as well as the church in which they used to worship. It is characteristic of these first Cistercian fathers, that they refused to receive this church from the viscount of Beaune, as an appendage to the estate, nor would they have anything to do with it, unless it were given up entirely into their hands, by his abandoning his rights in a separate act; for "the abbot and the rest of the brethren thought it by no

means right to receive the church from his hands, because he was a layman⁴." This took place in the very heat of the contest about investitures, and thus at the very outset of their order, the Cistercians chose their side in the momentous contest, though they could as yet but show it in a small way. A few days before that Palm Sunday, St. Anselm, whom they had left at Lyons, had set out on his way to Rome, and on that very Sunday, while Cîteaux was being solemnly founded, the same saint had left his train at a small town on the road to Italy, and had gone with two monks to an unknown monastery, to celebrate the feast of St. Benedict. The simple brethren did not know who he was, and bade him beware in his journey, because the lord archbishop of Canterbury had, as was reported, been stopped on his way to Rome, by the perils of the road. Anselm and the monks of Cîteaux were at the same moment, in different parts of the world, fighting the same cause, and yet neither party knew what the other was about;

⁴ Gall. Christ. tom. iv. Instr. p. 232. It is quite evident that this act of the Cistercians was meant for a protest against lay usurpation, but its precise bearing is not so easy to discover. It seems that the Church property had in some way become a portion of the allodium or freehold estate which had come to Rainaldus through his wife. This appears from the phrase *tenere ecclesiam*, which is of the same cast as *redimere, recipere ecclesiam*, where *ecclesia* means the property belonging to a church. What the Cistercians here did, i. e. receiving back ecclesiastical property from a layman, (*suscipere ecclesiam de manu laici*), was afterwards forbidden by the third Lateran Council and the Council of London in 1200, unless the bishop consented to the arrangement. Though these canons were not passed at this time, our Cistercians felt the difficulty and refused to receive the church as a portion of the domain. They required Rainaldus to make a formal renunciation of the Church property by a separate act. V. Van Espen, *Jus Eccl.*, pt. ii. sect. 4. tit. 2. c. 5.

but true monks everywhere have a sort of instinct of what is the good and the right side ; they have no earthly interests to dim their vision of what is God's cause, and we may trust a monk for being ever in his place—for the Church against the world.

The officers of the New Monastery, thus quietly established, were now appointed ; Alberic returned to his old situation which he held at Molesme, that of prior ; Stephen was made sub-prior. In this peaceable state everything remained for a year under Robert's guidance, but he was not destined to see the full fruit of his labours. The monks of Molesme again found that they could not do without him. It required a firm hand to rule those refractory spirits who had once broken loose, and could only be kept in order by an authority which they respected. The secession also of such men as Robert, Alberic, and Stephen, from the convent had brought it into disrepute, and this could only be done away by regaining their abbot. The authority of the archbishop of Lyons, however, who had countenanced Robert's departure for Citeaux, rendered it a difficult matter to win him back. The only authority to which they could appeal was Rome, and to Rome they went, nothing daunted by the length of the way. A council was celebrated at Rome in the third week after Easter, 1099 ; it was convened by Urban II. for the condemnation of investitures, and for devising means for carrying on the crusade. Thither the monks repaired, and represented to the pope the widowed state of the church of Molesme, deprived of its first abbot and pastor. Urban seems to have suspected them : he describes in his letter to Hugh, archbishop of Lyons, the great clamour with which they entered into the council, and seems rather to have yielded to their importunity, against his own judgment. He did

not directly command Robert to return to Molesme, but he bade Hugh do his best to bring him back if it could be done ; and at all events he orders him to take care that the inhabitants of the wilderness of Citeaux (as he calls it) should be left in peace, and that the monks of Molesme be made to keep their rule. The legate held a consultation on the subject at a place near Lyons, called Pierre encise, and determined that the only way to restore peace, both to Molesme and to the New Monastery, was to give up Robert to Molesme, and to forbid the two convents to have any further communication with each other, except such as St. Benedict enjoins on houses, between which there is no connection but the common profession of religion. Gaufridus, the abbot who had been elected in the room of Robert, was willing to yield the government of the abbey, and nothing now remained but that Robert himself should quit Citeaux, and return to the post which he had so often quitted and resumed. He again gave up his own will to obey his superiors, and returned to the bishop of Châlons the pastoral staff, which he had a year and a few months before received from his hands. He then freed the monks of Citeaux from the obedience which they owed to him, and went back to his old charge at Molesme. He was indeed a perfect pattern of obedience, and suffered himself to be bandied about from one convent to another as the will of his superiors directed ; notwithstanding his aspirations for a more perfect way, he abandoned them at the command of God, knowing that no sufferings are acceptable to God, if not undertaken according to His will in charity. Doubtless he merited more in God's sight by giving up his brethren at Citeaux for his refractory subjects at Molesme, than he could have done by the most austere life. His obedience was rewarded, for Molesme ap-

pears to have flourished under his rule, if we may judge from the fact that several monasteries were founded from it. One nunnery, that of Juilly, in which St. Bernard's sister afterwards took the vows, owed its origin to St. Robert. It is probable that he still assisted Stephen and Alberic with his counsel, but his direct connection with Cîteaux ceased with his last departure for Molesme. He died about the year 1110, and was canonized by Pope Honorius III.

CHAPTER VI.

STEPHEN AS PRIOR.

ROBERT left nothing behind him at Citeaux, but the vestments and sacred vessels, which he had brought with him ; these were expressly, according to the legate's command, to belong to the New Monastery. The large Breviary also was to remain there till St. John Baptist's day, by which time the brethren were to have it copied out and then to send it to Molesme. This, and the remembrance which they kept of his virtues, was all the vestige which remained of his jurisdiction of Citeaux : he left them as free as if he had never been their abbot, or received their vows. They had therefore now to elect a successor, and their choice fell upon Alberic ; under him Stephen was naturally made prior. These two had worked hand in hand from the first commencement of Molesme, and remained together even when Robert seceded from them ; and now that he had finally left them, the eyes of the whole community were fixed upon them. Stephen had been in a manner the pupil of both, and it seemed as if the virtues of each were necessary to make up the defects of his original character. He had left Sherborne, as we have seen, from a violent thirst for knowledge, and had for some time roamed about the world almost without an object, certainly without a clear knowledge of his vocation. He had first learned obedience under Robert, and the stability of his character had been tried by the troubles which he had encountered at Molesme ; and now he had a further lesson to learn

from Alberic, that of patient prudence. "Alberic," says the Exordium, "when he had received, though much against his will, the pastoral charge, began to bethink himself, as being a man of wondrous prudence, what stormy troubles, coming to shake the house committed to him, might annoy it." And troubles enough there were about him. The post of abbot was at all times one which involved great anxiety, from the absolute powers which were vested in him. It was to him that the strict obedience which formed so large a part of the monastic rule was due, the deepest respect was paid to him, even to bowing the knee, and profound inclinations⁵. The officers of the monastery, from the prior downwards, were removable at his will⁶. At the same time he was to be in an especial way the chief spiritual guide of all the brethren, and to temper the rigour of the rule for the weak, without introducing irregularity into the convent. To him the monks revealed all their sorrows, and recurred for advice; for which there was a place called the auditorium especially set apart. Even here, however, they could not speak without his leave; on their appearance he gave them the benediction; but if after this he kept a stern silence, the brother who applied for license left the auditorium without speaking⁷. At the same time, the regulation of the habits and of the food of the monks was in his hands, so that the temporal and spiritual prosperity of the convent depended in a great measure upon him alone. No stronger proof of the great power of the abbot need be sought, than the fact that most of the later monastic reformations attack at once the power of his

⁵ Usus Cist. Notandum quia quando Monachi osculantur Abbatem, coram eo genua flectent et post osculum profunde inclinent. P. i. c. 90.

⁶ Reg. St. Ben. 65.

⁷ Reg. Magist. c. 9.

office, some even making it triennial. They may have done away with some evils, but at the same time they changed the spirit of monasticism, for there can be no perfect obedience where all may be lords in turn. At least so the Cistercians thought, and in their reform (for so it was) the abbot had all the powers which St. Benedict vested in the office. Alberic therefore had full need of the "wondrous prudence" which the old Cistercian history celebrates. The abbot of Citeaux was not then the magnificent personage who celebrated mass pontifically with the episcopal mitre, ring, and sandals, the lord of five military orders, sitting in a lofty chair, on a level with the bishop, in the parliament of Burgundy⁸. Alberic was but the head of a few monks in a marshy desert, where they had to struggle to win a hard subsistence from the barren soil: they were exposed to the oppressions of any baron who might take a fancy to molest them; and, above all, they were treated as enthusiasts and fanatics by the monasteries around them. Their calumnies might at any time alienate the favour of the duke of Burgundy, who as yet had protected them; for the saintly boldness with which they determined to keep the whole rule of St. Benedict, had irritated not only their neighbours of Molesme, but even the German convents had had news of the fanaticism and disobedience of this New Monastery.

It was well for Stephen that he was brought close to Alberic, in these trying times of the Cistercian struggles for existence: his office of prior linked him to the abbot, and gave him an opportunity of watching the calm wisdom with which Alberic warded off these difficulties.

⁸ Innocent VIII. gave the abbot of Citeaux the privilege of celebrating pontifically, in a bull dated April 9, 1489; vide also Gall. Christ. 4. 983.

The prior, according to St. Benedict's rule⁹, was to be entirely the abbot's minister; and the Cistercians kept up this first notion of a prior. "Let the prior, within and without, concerning all things and in all things, act according to the will of the abbot." They even gave less authority to the prior than was usual in other rules, as may be seen by comparing Lanfranc's decrees, c. 3, with the *Usus Cisterciensis*. The prior was thus the eye and the hand of the abbot; his office was to take the abbot's place in all the common routine of the convent when the abbot was engaged, and specially to keep up the regularity of the brethren, by giving the signal for labour and for the chapter. He also presided in the refectory, and gave the signal by a small bell, when they were to begin, and when to leave off eating; for the Cistercian abbot, as was prescribed in St. Benedict's rule, always ate with the guests who happened to come to the abbey. Stephen's principal duty, therefore, was to work conjointly with Alberic, and he profited by the office which thus threw him in contact with that holy man.

Alberic's first care was to provide for the safety of his abbey, "that it might for ever remain in quiet, safe from the oppression of all persons, ecclesiastical or secular." It appears from the archbishop of Lyons' letter to Pope Pascal, that "the brethren of the Church of Molesme, and some other neighbouring monks, did not cease to harass and disquiet them, thinking that they themselves were looked upon as vile and despicable by the world, as long as these strange and novel monks were seen to dwell among them." They endeavoured to entice away stragglers from the Cistercian brethren back to Molesme, and even used violence and guile in order to disturb the quiet of the New Monastery. Alberic's only place of refuge

⁹ Reg. St. Ben. c. 65. *Usus Cist.* p. i. 111.

was the Holy See ; and at this moment two cardinals, John and Benedict, were in France, for the purpose of devising means to punish Philip, king of France, who had divorced his own wife Bertha, and was living in adultery with Bertrada, wife of Fulke, count of Anjou. The two cardinals held a council at Poitiers, and excommunicated the king ; but amidst the press of business which this involved, they found leisure to attend to the affairs of Citeaux. It appears that the fame of the saintly inhabitants of this poor monastery had spread all over France, and reached the ears of the legates. The words which the cardinals use in their letter to the Pope might almost seem to imply that they had been in person to Citeaux : at all events, they must have seen some of the brethren, whose appearance struck them with admiration, and they willingly wrote to the holy father, begging him to take the monastery under his special protection. Alberic assembled the chapter, and with the concurrence of Stephen and the rest of the brethren, two monks, John and Ilbodus, were despatched to Rome, with letters from the cardinal legates, from Hugh, archbishop of Lyons, and from the bishop of Châlons. Pascal had been but a year elected to the papal throne, and was then in the height of his power ; his gracious demeanour and piety had conciliated all about him, and his unanimous election had brought to Rome a peace which it had not known for a long time. The moment therefore which the Cistercians chose was a fortunate one. They found that Pascal was absent from Rome, and they had to follow him as far as Troja in Apulia. The warm expressions of esteem which his letter to Alberic contains, prove that he received the brethren with open arms. Himself a monk of Cluny, and a disciple of St. Hugh, he could well enter into their troubles ; and although he afterwards showed

himself so very unable to comprehend the great cause for which his predecessors had fought, yet his character was such as to appreciate the motives which had driven the brethren of Citeaux into the wilderness. He immediately granted the request of the two envoys, and gave them a letter by which he took the New Monastery under the special protection of the Holy See. He calls them "his most dear sons in Christ, whom he longed after very much," and he concludes with a sentence of excommunication against any "archbishop or bishop, emperor or king, count or viscount, judge, or any other person ecclesiastical or civil," who, being aware of the protection granted by the Holy See, should molest the abbey. The letter is dated April 18, 1100. The old Cistercian historian, after giving an account of the protection thus extended by the Holy See, adds with a sort of melancholy feeling, that it was granted and the messengers had returned "before Pope Pascal had been taken captive by the emperor and sinned." This privilege of protection thus obtained from the Holy See was of the utmost consequence to Citeaux. It is evidently not an exemption, that is, it is not meant to exempt the abbot from episcopal jurisdiction, and to subject him immediately to the Holy See, for the canonical obedience to the see of Châlons is expressly mentioned. Its import must be understood from similar documents granted by former sovereign pontiffs. The jurisdiction of monasteries was always a difficulty in the Church; it is generally believed that they were from the first subject to the bishop; so far is this from being the case, that during the first 150 years of their existence, that is, till the council of Chalcedon, monks were no more under the bishop than other laymen. As monachism developed into a system, the bishops naturally became the ultimate authority to

which convents were subject. Still it was necessary that the abbot should have an authority next to absolute in the internal management; and according to the rule of St. Benedict, he has the power to excommunicate the monks who transgressed the rule. The bishop only appears as the abbot's assistant in punishing the brethren who were priests¹. Again, he blessed the abbot when he had been chosen by the convent, and it was from him that the abbot's authority was derived². As time went on, bishops encroached upon the convents; they required money for the benediction of the abbot, interfered with the freedom of election, and took upon them the administration of the temporalities. The poor of Christ had no refuge but the Holy See³; and several letters of Pope Gregory the Great are extant, in which he commands bishops to respect the privileges of abbeys, and takes them under the special protection of the chair of St. Peter. In one case he even withdraws the sole jurisdiction over an abbey from the bishop of the diocese, and joins with him a council of six bishops. That great pontiff knew that a monastery should be perfect in itself; the very principle of obedience required it to be subject to one head, and the authority of the bishop was only necessary to constitute that head, that the obedience might be canonical, as also to superintend, not to interfere with, his authority. They were Christ's spiritual army, ready at any time to assert the faith against heresy, however powerful, and setting up the light of heavenly purity when the profligacy of the world had well-nigh cast away religion. In order to do this, they must be a whole within themselves, and cut off from worldly influence, and from interests without the

¹ c. 62.² c. 65.³ Ep. lib. ix. Inst. 2. 111. lib. xiii. Inst. 6. 8, 9.

cloister. A bishop in most cases could not be a monk, and therefore could not govern a convent ; he could only come in at certain times as a remedy in cases beyond the rule. Subsequent pontiffs followed St. Gregory in jealously guarding the independence of monasteries ; for instance, John IV.⁴ even granted a formal exemption to two convents, and subjected them immediately to the Holy See. The primitive meaning of such extraordinary privileges was to guard against the encroachments of which bishops had been guilty, and to keep the internal government of the abbey in the hands of the abbot ; they were not, however, intended to separate monks from the canonical obedience due to the bishop. It is true that after the time of which we are writing, they came to be much abused ; and St. Bernard complains of the ambition of abbots, who endeavoured to avoid the authority of their bishop, whilst he approves of the devotion of founders of monasteries, who placed their houses under the protection of Rome. Of this nature was the letter of Pascal to Alberic ; it was not, as we have said, an exemption from episcopal authority, but it was a privilege, by which the defenceless house of Christ's poor ones was taken under the wings of the Apostolic See. Two things were especially commanded by the pope ; one, "that it should be lawful for no person whatever to change the state of their mode of life." This left them full power to live as they pleased according to the strict rule of St. Benedict ; a bishop might do his best to oblige them to keep their rule, if they broke it ; but he could not compel them to observe the same customs as most other convents around them ; to profess the rule of St. Benedict, but in effect to relax it under pretence of dispensations. Again, it left

⁴ Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* tom. i. Appendix, No. 17, 18.

them free to establish what usages they pleased ; every monastery had many traditionary practices and ceremonies peculiar to itself, in matters which the rule had left open ; and Pascal by this provision exempted the Cistercians from the usages of any other religious house, and left them free to form their own customs. Out of this permission arose the *Usus Cisterciensis*. The other special provision made by the pope was, “that none should receive the monks of your monastery called the New Minster, without a commendation according to the rule.” This was in fact a confirmation of the canonical authority committed by the bishop of Châlons to the abbot of Citeaux by the delivery of the pastoral staff ; it was the act by which he had authority over the monks, so that they could not leave the cloister without his consent. Without vows, and those made to a person vested with authority, monks are a mere collection of individuals, dissolvable at will ; the absence of a canonical vow changes the whole idea of monastic life, and none can hope for God’s blessing on the most solemn engagements which they form, unless the power in whose hands they place themselves is the representative of the Church. Otherwise they can never be sure that their obedience is not self-will. These words of Pascal, therefore, are like the recognition of a corporate body by the law ; one Christian may any day that he pleases make a vow that he will live in obedience to another ; but, unless that other is recognized by the Church, the ecclesiastical law cannot take cognizance of the transaction. Such is the explanation of this privilege given by the pope to Citeaux, which at once raised it above the calumnies of the monks, who felt their own lives to be reproved by the holiness of their neighbours.

CHAPTER VII.

CISTERCIAN USAGES.

ALBERIC, now that he had obtained the sanction of the Holy See, set forward with a bold heart in his strict following of St. Benedict's rule. In the execution of all the reforms which distinguished what afterwards became the order of Citeaux, Stephen as prior was necessarily foremost ; the whole movement indeed was but carrying into effect what he had before conceived at Molesme. The first alteration effected was the cutting off of all superfluity in the monastic habit. The Church in the beginning of the twelfth century had a hard battle to fight with pomp and luxury within the sanctuary itself. Courtly prelates, such as Wolsey in a later age, were not uncommon, and this worldly spirit had invaded even the cloister. A reformation, therefore, such as that effected by Alberic and Stephen at the outset of the century, was of the utmost consequence in deciding the struggle in favour of Christian poverty. They were not as yet conscious of the importance of what they were doing ; they were but a few poor monks, serving God in the midst of a marshy wild, in an obscure corner of Burgundy, and only aimed at securing their own salvation. But they arose in a critical time for Christendom, and just turned the scale as it was wavering. Let us hear the words of a good old monk, who wrote in another part

of the world during the first years of Citeaux¹. "How shall I begin to speak? For on all sides is the sacred end of monkish life transgressed, and hardly aught is left us, save that, as our holy father Benedict foretold, by our tonsure and habit we lie to God. We seem almost all of us prone to pride, to contention, scandal, detraction, lying, evil speaking, hurtful accusations, contumacy, wrath, bitterness, despising of others, murmuring, gluttony;" and he winds up all by saying, "we are seduced by a love of costly apparel." Bitter are the complaints that we hear of one monk² clad in rich grey or party-coloured silks, and another ambling by on a mule which cost 200 solidi. What shall we say to the proud abbot with his train of sixty horse, riding forth, not like the father of a monastery, but like an armed castellan? Or to another with his robe of costly fur, and his sideboard of gold and silver plate, though he rode but four leagues from home³? And if the abbot himself was in sober black, his secular attendants rode behind him in gay clothing of scarlet or green, the motley procession arresting the eyes of beholders along the road, whilst it frightened the porter of the poor monastery where they were to put up for the night. It was high time for the Cistercian to step in with his rough woollen stuff, and to return to St. Benedict's rule. Alberic and his brethren rejected all habits that were not mentioned in the rule⁴; they therefore

¹ Chronicon Vulturense, Muratori, Script. Rer. Ital. tom. i. p. 2. 343.

² St. Bernard, Apol. ad Guil. 10, 11. ³ Stat. Pet. Ven. 40. 70.

⁴ "Rejicientes a se quicquid regula refragabatur, froccos videlicet, et pellicias, staminias et caputia." Exord. Parv. 15. — Staminia is described by William of Malmesbury as "illud quod subtiliter textur laneum, quod nos staminium vocamus." Gest. Reg. Angl. lib. iv. § 336.

would not wear garments with ample folds, nor garments of fur, shirts, nor hoods separated from the rest of the habit. St. Benedict allows the habit to vary according to the climate; but for countries of a mean temperature, he gives it as his opinion that a garment called cuculla, a tunic, and a scapular are sufficient. At first these were only the common habits worn by the peasants of the country. The stern old Benedictine looked for nothing picturesque; he had made himself poor for his Lord's sake, and he wore the dress of the poor among whom he lived, and with whom he worked in the cold and heat, in the rain and in the sunshine. Ancient pictures are still seen of the monk in his tunic, and scanty scapular, reaching down to his knees, without sleeves, but with holes through which his arms were passed, and with a pointed cowl enveloping his head. Over this, which was his working dress, he wore in the choir, and in the house, the cuculla, which was a large mantle, not unlike a close cope, without sleeves, and enveloping the whole person⁵. There was many a step between this coarse garb, and the ample folds into which it had developed around the noble figure of St. Hugh of Cluny⁶. In the Cluniac order the scapular was called cuculla, and the upper garment was called froccus. Instead of the pointed and almost conical cowl of the primitive Benedictine, their scapular had a fair and ample cowl, and the froccus had long and pendent sleeves two feet in circumference; again, their scapular covered not only the shoulders, but it was also expanded into a covering for the arms, so that it scandalized our simple Cister-

⁵ See the cuculla of St. Remaclus, the oldest Benedictine habit, existing in Martenne's time. *Voyage Lit.* ii. 154.

⁶ Martenne, *Voyage Lit.* i. 229.

cians⁷. The froccus which Alberic and Stephen rejected was in fact the same garment as their own cuculla, as worn "with a difference" by the Cluniacs. They reverted as far as they could to St. Benedict's pattern, following the Italian rather than the French monks, for their scapular had the same form as that of Mount Cassino. With all their severity, there is a grace about the Cistercian habit, from the fond associations with which they connected it. In the black scapular worn over the white tunic, broad about the shoulders, then falling in a narrow strip to the feet, they saw the form of our Lord's cross, and thus they loved to bear it about with them even in sleep⁸. Their cuculla was compared by pope Boniface VI. to the six wings of the seraphim, for "it veils the head of the monk as it were with two wings, and the arms as it were with twain, and the body as it were with twain⁹." Another characteristic of the Cistercian habit was its white colour. The scapular, as we have said, was black, and when on a journey, they might ride booted and spurred, with a grey cuculla, so that they were called in Germany grey monks; but their proper habit was white, and much wonder it excited amongst the brethren of other orders.

⁷ That the froccus of the Cluniacs had sleeves, is plain from the answer made by the Cluniac. Martenne, *Thes. Anec.* tom. v. p. 1649, 47. Their *amplum caputium* is mentioned in St. Bernard's letter to Robert, his cousin. For the scapular, see Martenne, *ibid.* p. 1639, 25. The difference between the Cluniac froccus and Cistercian cuculla is said by Peter the Venerable, *Ep.* 27, to consist in that the latter was "*album et curtum.*" Again, the cowl was detached from the froccus, as appears from Bernard, Abbot of Cassino, quoted by Mabillon, *Acta Sanct. Ord. Ben. Sæc.* v. Preface, p. 44.

⁸ Martenne, *ibid.* 1650, 48.

⁹ *Ibid.* 1649, 46.

The black monks meeting a white monk on a journey would stop and stare, and point at the stranger, as if he were a traveller in a foreign dress¹. They reproached the Cistercians with wearing a garment fit only for a time of joy, whilst the monastic state was one of penitence². But the white monks answered, that the life of a monk was not only one of penitence, but was like that of the angels, and therefore they wore white garments, to show the spiritual joy of their hearts. And notwithstanding their coarse bread and hard beds, there was a cheerfulness about the Cistercians, which may in a great measure be traced to what we should now call a sympathy with nature. Their life lay out of doors, amongst vineyards and cornfields; their monasteries, as their names testify, were mostly situated in sequestered valleys, and were, by a law of the order, as old as the time of Alberic, never in towns, but in the country. From their constant meditation as they worked, they acquired a habit of joining their recollections of Scripture to natural objects; hence also the love for the Song of Solomon, which is evident in the earlier ascetic writers of the order. We shall see, in the course of this narrative, abundant proof that Stephen's white habit did not hide a gloomy or unfeeling heart.

The reason assigned for the change of colour in the habit is the devotion to St. Mary, observable in the order from the beginning. It was a standing law that all Cistercian monasteries should be "founded and dedicated to the memory of the queen of heaven and earth, holy Mary³;" the hours of the Blessed Virgin were also recited very early after the foundation of

¹ Pet. Ven. Ep. iv. 17.

² Martenne, Thes. Anc. tom. v. 1649, 46.

³ Nom. Cist. Inst. Cap. Gen. p. i. c. 18.

Citeaux; and the angelic salutation⁴ was one of the common acts of devotion put into the mouth of even the lay brethren of the order. The immediate cause of the adoption of the white habit is mysterious; it seems difficult to account how it should all at once appear, without the sanction of any statute of the order, especially as it was opposed to the custom if not to the rule of the primitive Benedictines. A tradition is even current in the order, that Alberic saw the blessed Virgin in a vision putting upon his shoulders the white garment; and that he changed the tawny colour of St. Mary Magdalene to the joyful colour sacred to the mother of our Lord, in consequence of the consolation which the vision afforded him in the difficulties with which he was then struggling. The vision has not much historical authority, though the tradition of the order, and the strange circumstance of the change of colour itself, are in favour of its truth. The one thing certain is, that it was assumed in honour of the spotless purity of St. Mary, the special patroness of the Cistercians; and the circumstance that she was chosen to be the peculiar saint of the rising order is in itself characteristic. One would have thought that the austerity of Alberic and Stephen would have led them to choose some martyr or some unbending confessor of the faith; but they rather raised their minds to her on whom the mind cannot rest without joy, though her own most blessed soul was pierced through with a sword. She was the spotless lily of the valleys in which the King of Heaven deigned to take up His abode; and the Cistercians thought it well that she should protect by her

⁴ The latter part of the Ave Maria was not added till the sixteenth century. Vide Mabillon, *Acta Sanc. Præf.* vol. v.

prayers their lowly houses, which were hid from the world in secluded vales, and make them also the dwelling-place of her Son.

It was not, however, only in their habit that the Cistercians imitated the primitive monks; they returned also to the scanty diet which St. Benedict prescribes. It was most of all in this particular that the abuse of dispensations crept in, for in this portion of the rule the abbot was especially to exercise his discretion⁵. A few years after the time when the Cistercian reform was effected, the Cluniacs degenerated, after St. Hugh's death under abbot Pontius; not only did they eat meat every day in the week except Friday⁶, but they ransacked earth and air for highly flavoured dainties. They kept huntsmen, who searched the forest through for venison and wild-boars; their falconers brought them the choicest birds, pheasants, partridges, and wood-pigeons. The province under the archbishopric of Lyons seems at that time to have been especially full of monasteries from which religion had disappeared, inhabited by monks, "whose cloister was the whole world, whose god was their belly⁷." Wine, well spiced, and mixed with honey, and meats highly seasoned with pepper, ginger, and cinnamon, were then to be found in the refectory of Cluny⁸, with all kinds of costly spices, brought from beyond the sea, and even from the East. Monks used also to retire to the infirmary under pretence of sickness, in order to eat meat; and strong healthy brethren might be seen walking about with the support of a staff, which was the mark of the infirm. The liberality of the faithful had also augmented the evil, as might be seen from the necrologies

⁵ Reg. St. Ben. 41.

⁶ Pet. Ven. Ep. vi. 15.

⁷ Pet. Ven. Ep. ii. 2.

⁸ St. Bern. Ep. i. 1. Stat. Pet. Ven. 11.

of monasteries, in which certain benefactors were commemorated, who left sums of money to be laid out in pittances or relaxations for the monks on certain days beyond the rule. St. Benedict gives his monks a pound of bread a day, besides two cooked dishes ; and on days when they had more than one meal, a few raw vegetables or fruits for supper. As far as the letter of the rule went, these dishes might be fish, eggs, milk, cream, cheese, roots, and vegetables of all sorts⁹; even fowls were not excluded ; but the custom of the primitive monks of the order had banished all but the plainest vegetables boiled with salt. Cluny, even in its best times, had added to these frugal rules, and it is probably against the Cluniac innovations that Alberic and Stephen's regulations were framed. The Cluniacs divided their messes into two sorts, one called *generale*, which was allowed by the rule, another was *pittantia*, and beyond it. The regular cooks had nothing to do with the pittance, which was always distributed by the cellarer, the theory being that it was benevolently allowed beside the rule ; again, it was never blessed. The general was given separately to each monk ; the pittance was in one dish between two brethren. The common food of the brethren were beans and other vegetables : minute directions are given " that the beans be stirred from the bottom with a spoon," lest they be scorched. Also they are to be boiled with grease ; and one of the cooks, it is especially provided, may taste " the water of the beans, that he may prove if they be well seasoned." On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the general consisted of beans and vegetables ; besides which there was a pittance, which might be four eggs, or cheese.

⁹ Calmet. Com. Lit. ii. 32.

On other days, the general, besides the vegetables, might be fish or five eggs. No one can accuse this diet of excess, and yet it was beyond the rule of St. Benedict; there is even a story to the effect, that St. Peter Damian was shocked at the style of the refectory at Cluny, and especially at their using grease with their vegetables; and that he expressed his dissatisfaction to St. Hugh¹. It is also quite true that amidst the marshy soil and damp woods of Citeaux, and with much more manual labour than was practised by the Cluniacs, Alberic and Stephen succeeded in establishing a much more strict system than that of Cluny. They rejected, says the Exordium, "dishes of divers kinds of food in the refectory, grease also, and whatsoever was opposed to the purity of the rule." It is known that they did not eat fish; even eggs seem to have been excluded, and milk was used only at the season of harvest, and that not as a pittance, but as one of the two dishes allowed by the rule². After half a night spent in singing the divine office, in reading and meditation, and a day spent in agricultural labour, they assembled to what was during a great part of the year their single meal, which consisted solely of what St. Benedict allowed, and that procured by the sweat of their brow. Their fare was the convent bread, and two messes of vegetables, boiled, not with the culinary accuracy of Cluny, but in the plainest way. It is instructive to observe the contrast between St. Hugh and Stephen. The abbot of Cluny himself lived a most austere life, but he was also a

¹ Bibl. Clun. 461.

² Vid. Us. Cist. 84. for the exclusion of fish and eggs, vid. Inst. Cap. Gen. 49, ap. Nomasticon Cisterciense, et Fastredi, Ep. ap. Op. St. Bern. ed. Ben.

builder of magnificent churches, and of ecclesiastical ornaments³. He also gave dispensations to weaker brethren; in one case allowing a nobleman, whose dainty flesh had worn from his birth soft silks and foreign furs, to wear for a time a less rough habit than the rest of the brethren; in another, increasing the daily portion of the younger monks beyond what the rule prescribed⁴. Stephen, on the other hand, was cast in another mould; he was made, not to bring on the weak, but to lead the strong. All that belonged to earth he looked upon as an encumbrance, even though it was hallowed by consecration on the altar. He loved coarse and scanty food, because it was a partaking of Christ's sufferings; and he clung to the rough monastic garment, because it was an imitation of Christ's poverty. It was this love of poverty which also induced them to make another regulation, widely differing from the general practice of the monasteries at that time. "And because," it is said, "neither in the rule, nor in the life of St. Benedict, did they read that that doctor of the Church possessed churches, or altars, or oblations, or burial-grounds, or tithes belonging to other men, or bakehouses, or mills, or farms, or serfs—therefore they rejected all these things." They did not by any means intend to do away with the lands or offices of the convent; on the contrary, they had already accepted a grant of land with the serfs, and all that was upon it, from the Viscount of Beaune, and we may be sure that both mills and bakehouses were already in full operation at Citeaux; for St. Benedict's rule prescribes "that all necessary things, such as water, a mill, a

³ Vit. S. Hug. ap. Bib. Clun. p. 420.

⁴ Ibid. et p. 432.

garden, a bakehouse, should if possible be contained within the monastery, and that divers arts should be exercised there⁵." Monks were to be their own millers and bakers, farmers and gardeners: and doubtless such strict observers of the rule as the brethren of Citeaux had already sunk wells and enclosed a garden. Doubtless, too, they had erected a mill, though it may be safely conjectured, that it was not so large as that of Farfa, a convent which was built after the pattern of Cluny, the mill of which was an edifice seventy feet long, and twenty broad, with a tower over it; nor had it adjoining, as at Farfa, a manufactory where goldsmiths and other artificers were at work⁶. At Cluny, the mill was an important place, where specially before Easter and Christmas a servant of the abbey ground the corn of which the altar-breads were to be made, dressed in an alb, and with a veil enveloping his head⁷. The bakehouse, too, was not left without ornament; it was adorned with boughs of walnut-trees⁸; many things connected with household affairs were at Cluny consecrated with rites of an almost oriental beauty, which reminds one of patriarchal times; thus the new bread was specially blessed in the refectory, as were the first-fruits of beans; and again, the first grapes, which were blessed at the altar during mass⁹. Our poor Cistercians were as yet struggling for existence, and the place where they baked their coarse food was not so picturesque as that of Cluny; but they did not mean by the regulations above quoted, to make use of mills and bakehouses out of the precincts of the abbey; and they expressly say, a little farther on, that "they

⁵ C. 66.

⁶ Ann. Ben. tom. iv. p. 208.

⁷ Udal. iii. 13. ap. D'Achery, Spicil. tom. i.

⁸ Calmet. Com. Lit. ii. 428.

⁹ Udal. i. 35.

will receive lands far from the dwelling-place of men, vineyards, and fields and woods, and water to make mills, but for their own use." The wood of Citeaux was, therefore, already an active scene, where the monks might be seen working in silence, broken only by the stroke of the spade, or the noise of the water turning the wheels of the mill, or the bell calling them from their labour. The meaning of the above regulation, then, was, that they were not to possess large domains, with wood and water, corn-fields and vineyards, which they did not cultivate themselves, but let out to tenants. Many were the broad lands possessed by the monks of Cluny, with vassals, and servants both men and women. For the use of the three hundred brethren, as well as of the poor and the guests of the abbey, 560 sextarii of wheat, and 500 of rye monthly, were stored up in granaries, from the various farms which were within reach¹. The possessions of the abbey were divided into districts, over each of which was a dean, appointed to take care that it sent in the proper quantity of whatever was required of it². As for those lands, which were too far from Cluny to send thither their produce, the corn and wine which grew there was sold on the spot, and paid to the *Camerarius*, who procured clothing and all necessaries for the brethren³. Italy, Spain, and England, sent the produce of their lands to clothe the brethren; one province especially, from the Rhone to the Alps and the sea, was appointed to this duty, and sent its treasures to the camera of Cluny. An English manor, given by King Stephen, usually furnished the monks with shoes and

¹ *Dispositio facta a D. Pet. Ven.*, Baluz. *Miscel.* tom. iii. p. 72.

² *Udal* iii. 5.

³ *Ib.* iii. 11.

stockings⁴. Such was Cluny, and that not in a time of degeneracy, but under St. Hugh, and afterwards under Peter the Venerable, when the monks fasted and prayed, and rose in the night to sing psalms; when its vast revenues were not misspent, but daily fed a large number of poor. It was a vast kingdom where Christ reigned, where its saints rested in peace, and which raised an image of peace in a world of strife and bloodshed. Happy were the vassals transferred from a secular lord to the rule of the abbot of Cluny; instead of being robbed and harried two or three times a year, by exactions over and above their rent, and bought and sold like the cattle on the estate, they were treated as brethren and sisters⁵. A castle given to the Cluniacs, instead of a den of thieves, became an oratory. If the brethren sold the produce of the estates at a distance from the abbey, their dealings were marked with a fairness and a generosity, which showed that they trafficked not for gain, but for their own support and to feed the poor⁶.

Still, with all this, what our Cistercians said was quite true; Cluny had, we will not say degenerated from, but changed, St. Benedict's institution. The possessors of these wide domains, though they lived a life of more than ordinary strictness, never touching animal food, and mortifying the flesh with watchings and fasts, yet could not be said to be Christ's poor ones, in the same sense as men who had nothing to depend upon but their own manual labour. It may be said that Cluny was an ancient abbey, enriched by the bounty of kings and bishops, and that Citeaux was but a poor monastery, struggling into existence; but it is also certain, that a

⁴ Disp. facta, &c. ubi sup.

⁵ Pet. Ven. Ep. 28.

⁶ Udal. iii. 11.

stricter profession of poverty was the very distinction between Citeaux and other abbeys : if ever, therefore, it became rich, it was because it broke through its original institution, whilst the riches of Cluny were not necessarily a mark of decline, but a legitimate development. The idea of the monastic state in Stephen's mind was quite different from that conceived by Peter the Venerable.

We have purposely put off the first part of Alberic and Stephen's regulation as to the possessions of the convent, because it forms the most striking contrast with the spirit of Cluny. They would not possess any of the property which had originally belonged to the parochial clergy. The Church, about the end of the eleventh century, was endeavouring to win back the tithes and the revenues of livings from the hands of their lay possessors ; but the iron gauntlet of the feudal noble was found to retain as tight a hold as the dead hand of the Church. The tithes had probably first come into the possession of laymen by the gift of the bishops themselves, in times of danger ; the system of feudalism was extended even to Church property, and the parish churches were put as fiefs into laymen's hands, on condition that they would defend the Church. Though they were never meant to be a perpetual gift, yet the nobles who had them in possession would not give them up ; they had won them by their good sword, and keep them they would. Other nobles had simply seized upon the tithes by violence, principally in the lax times of the Carlovingian dynasty ; and the same injustice which had at first robbed the Church, afterwards resisted it. In vain did St. Gregory VII. and Urban II. order the restitution of tithes, the nobles in very many cases would not disgorge the spoil. The

supreme pontiffs acted with the greatest moderation in not pronouncing, though they often threatened the sentence of excommunication. In the meanwhile, a middle course was found ; laymen possessing tithes were allowed to give them up to monasteries, or to found religious houses with them, if the consent of the bishop of the diocese was first obtained. In this way tithes first got into the hands of monasteries ; and though this was not the best possible course, as was afterwards proved, yet it was at the time a remedy for a glaring evil. Bishops, who at one time vehemently opposed this transfer, were led to sanction it by the necessity of the case. In other instances, bishops themselves, with the sanction of their chapter, gave parish churches into the hands of abbeys, thinking that they would exercise their patronage with the greatest wisdom. The feeling which induced the Cistercians to rule that their monastery should possess no tithes, was probably rather a zeal for poverty, than a notion that the thing was wrong in itself. A monk, according to the Cistercian idea, was not to administer the holy Sacraments nor to teach, but he was to remain within his cloister, in prayer and contemplation, in poverty and mortification. In the regulation quoted above, tithes and church property in general are classed with mills, and bakehouses and lands ; all come under the same head, as being possessions, and therefore opposed to poverty. Stephen himself, when abbot of Citeaux, as will be seen by and by, was present at the council of Troyes, where the Templars were allowed to possess tithes, if the bishop consented ; and St. Bernard, his disciple, himself wrote to an archbishop, to exhort him to consent to the gift of tithes, presented by a layman to a monastery⁷. Their argument, therefore, was not that monks, as being lay-

⁷ Ep. 316.

men, cannot under any circumstances possess tithes, but that, as cultivating lands of their own, they do not come under the old distribution of Church property, one-third to the bishop, another to the clergy, and the rest to the poor, who have no means of earning their own living. Their principal reason then was, that monks must till their ground with their own hands, instead of living upon property which belongs to the clergy. Very different were the maxims of Cluny; one bishop alone gave sixty parish churches to different priories of the Cluniac order⁸. Exclusive of the parish churches in and about Cluny itself, more than 150 churches were at one time in the gift of the abbot⁹. It is easy from this fact, to frame an idea of the almost pontifical power of the ruler of this vast abbey; and the whole of the affairs of the house were conducted on a scale of corresponding grandeur. It was not in the person of the brethren that this magnificence was seen, at least not in the good times of Cluny, for the price which their habit was to cost was fixed¹, and they were not above menial arts, such as taking their turn in the kitchen as cooks; but the Church and the buildings of the abbey were in a style which befitted its importance. So far, then, were they from giving up tithes and church lands, in order to depend on their own labour for daily bread, that manual labour was very little practised at all. Udalric, the compiler of their customs, says that he must ingenuously confess, that their manual labour was confined to shelling beans, weeding the garden, and sometimes baking bread. Their time was occupied in long and splendid services in the Church, in reading, praying, and meditation, and in the usual routine of the abbey. They were even allowed

⁸ Pet. Ven. de Miraculis, l. 23.

⁹ Bibl. Clun. col. 1753.

¹ Udal. l. 30.

to write after vespers, when all were sitting in the cloister in silence, provided the pen slipped so noiselessly over the parchment, that no sound broke the perfect stillness². How is it possible, says Peter the Venerable, for monks fed on poor vegetable diet, when even that scanty fare is often cut off by fasts, to work like common labourers in the burning heat, in showers of rain and snow, and in the bitter cold? Besides, it was indecent that monks, which are the fine linen of the sanctuary, should be begrimed with dirt, and bent down with rustic labours³. The good part of Mary must not thus yield to that of Martha. And yet Stephen and his companions found it possible to do all this. Their poor worn-out bodies did not sink under their heavy burdens, nor were the garments of their souls less white because they were thus exposed to suffer from the inclemency of the season. It was, indeed, inexplicable, even to their contemporaries, how they thus could live; but the secret lay in the fervency of the spirit, which kept up the lagging flesh and blood; their lives were above nature, and because, for Christ's sake, they gave up church-lands and tithes, in order to be poor, He bore them up, so that they did not faint under their labours. Besides, they were not the less like the lowly Mary sitting at the Lord's feet, because they worked in the fields; suffering is not incompatible with the better part. The order which produced St. Bernard cannot be accused of not being contemplative. While their bodies were bent in agricultural labours their souls were raised to heaven. Again, they had an expedient by which they were enabled to remain within a short distance of the cloister, however scattered their farms might be, and thus no time was lost in journey

² Udal. 2. 24.

³ Pet. Ven. Ep. 1. 28.

to and from the place of their labour, and they could always return to the duties of the choir, and be within the monastery at the times set apart for meditation. Alberic at once felt the difficulty of keeping up the choir service, when the monks might be obliged to sleep in the farm-houses, or, as they were called, granges of the monastery, and he determined on obviating it by turning to account the institution of lay brethren, which had subsisted for a long time in the Benedictine order. It arose from the nature of things, and not by a regular distinction into choir and lay brethren, at the time of the taking of the vow, as it was afterwards to be. Amongst a great number of monks, many could neither read nor write, and had not faculties for learning the choir services; it was natural that these should be employed in the many menial offices which a large monastery would require. Hence arose the institution of lay brethren; it however appears to have taken its most systematic shape at the very beginning of the Cistercian order. Some of them dwelt in the abbey itself, others in the scattered and lonely granges around it; they kept the flocks and herds of the community, and were its tailors, shoemakers, and blacksmiths. Those who were in the granges were excused from the fasts of the order, except in Advent, and on the Fridays from the 14th of September to Lent⁴. Whenever the bell of the abbey rang for a canonical hour they fell on their knees, and in heart joined the brethren who sang the office in the abbey church. There were thus in every Cistercian abbey "two monasteries, one of the lay brethren, another of the clerics⁵." The choir brethren were thus enabled always to work within a short distance of the

⁴ Nomasticon, Inst. Cap. Gen. 1. 14.

⁵ Dial. inter Clun. et Cist. 3. 43.

abbey, and were strictly forbidden to remain a whole night in any of the granges, without pressing necessity. The relations between the choir and lay brethren were of the closest kind ; instead of being treated as slaves, as they were by their feudal lords, these poor children of the soil, and artizans, were looked upon as brothers, and were by a special law of the order to partake in all spiritual advantages as though they were monks, which in fact they were, in all but the name, for they made their vows in the presence of the abbot, like the other brethren. Politicians, who love equality and liberty, may thank the monks for placing on a level the nobleman and the villain, and for ennobling the cultivator of the soil by stooping down to his lowliness, and partaking of his labours. The world may thank Alberic for this scheme, by which the choir brother imparted his spiritual goods to the poor lay brother, who in turn by his labour gave him time for singing the praises of God during the night, and for meditating on his glories continually. The disciples of Alberic and Stephen in after time followed their steps ; and Alanus, one of the greatest of the schoolmen, finished his life in the rough and lowly labours of a lay brother of Citeaux, and was represented in a recumbent figure on his tomb, in their habit, holding a rosary in his hand. There are few more touching pictures in the annals of Citeaux, than the story⁶ of the poor lay brother sitting to watch by night in the lonely grange, thinking of his brethren in the abbey, while they celebrated the feast of the Assumption, and repeating over and over again the angelic salutation with such devotion, that the angels brought news of it to St. Bernard, then preaching on the subject of the feast-day at Clairvaux.

⁶ Manriquez in ann. 1129, c. 6.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TIMES OF ALBERIC.

THE customs of Citeaux have been thus minutely contrasted with the customs of other places, that the reader might know with whom he had to do, what Cistercians were, and why they were not Cluniacs, or Carthusians, or simply Benedictines, though they so strictly professed St. Benedict's rule. They are not an order yet, but only a monastery, and that a very poor one; it was left to Stephen afterwards to constitute them an order; they were not even yet Cistercians, but only the poor brethren of New Minster in the wood of Citeaux, and we have called them Cistercians by anticipation. Alberic's rules were very well kept by his brethren; so that the fervour of the monastery began to be noised abroad. Their old patron, the Duke of Burgundy, was astonished at them; while some other monks put themselves in the way of receiving the alms of the faithful, these brethren hid themselves from the world. It seemed wonderful how they could subsist in such a damp, out-of-the-way hole as that in which they had seated themselves. Nothing was heard of them, except that day and night went their bells, first the bells for matins, then the great bell tolling out for the lay brethren to get up, and all day long for the hours, and for vespers in the evening, and compline at night-fall. Nobody knew how they lived, except that their white habits were seen in the fields, as they worked; and yet

they asked for nothing. There they were, a wonderful fact in the way of all irreligion and wickedness, men, whose faith was not an abstraction, but who evidently believed that Christ had come down from heaven to die, since such was their love for Him, that they chose to be like Him in all things, even in suffering. And there was the prior Stephen, leading them out to work with his sweet smiling face, notwithstanding all this suffering¹. His spirit had continued unbroken through all his trials, and well might he now be joyful in the Lord, since God had so blessed him in them; he had borne the cross when it entered into his soul, and he now tasted the joy which it always brings with it. Truly "wisdom is justified of her children," and so thought Odo of Burgundy, for he loved the poor monks, and the forest of Citeaux, and he built him near the abbey a lodge, which in after times was still called the palace even in its ruins. At most of the principal festivals he would come there with his court; he would not celebrate them in the cathedral of Châlons, or in the monastery of St. Benignus of Dijon, but he loved better the brethren of the new monastery, for they sang the praises of God so sweetly, and with such joy, that his heart was touched, and caught fire at their devotion. He found, in the same year as Alberic made the above rules, an opportunity of assisting the monks². It will

¹ Guil. Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. iv.

² The Cistercian annalist places this gift in the year 1102, when it could not have happened, for Duke Odo set out for Jerusalem in 1101. The charter preserved in Du Chesne, *Histoire Généalogique des Ducs de Bourgogne*, says, that it was "post biennium," that is, in the third year after the foundation of Citeaux, in March 1098. It would thus come into the year 1101. This charter also proves that the author of *l'Art de vérifier les Dates* is wrong in making him leave Burgundy in 1097.

be remembered, that only a portion of Citeaux had been given by the Viscount of Beaune; the rest had been given them by Odo of Burgundy, who agreed to pay the lord of Beaune twenty solidi a year for the hire of the land. The collectors of the revenues of the lord of Beaune, however, found it a much easier matter to get the money from the monks, who would bear patiently to be oppressed, than from the people of the duke of Burgundy. They therefore applied to the monastery for the twenty shillings, instead of applying to the treasury of the duke. The monks paid the demand in silence, though they could ill afford it out of the poor returns which their lands yielded. At length, Odo heard of the exaction, and determined to free them from it for ever, by assigning a portion of his own ground to the lord of Beaune, out of the produce of which he was to help himself to his twenty shillings; and the viscount, in return, freed the monks for ever from all claims which he himself, or his heirs, might have upon them. This was indeed the last service which the good duke rendered them, for he set out for the Holy Land that very year in which he conferred this benefit on the monastery. Jerusalem had not long been taken by the crusaders, and Christendom was now arming in support of Godfrey's new kingdom, which was hemmed in on all sides by infidels. The crusaders had obtained possession of the holy sepulchre; but as if to show that the keeping of this precious treasure depended on the good behaviour of Christians, God never permitted them to hold it by a firm tenure. Its honoured guardians had to defend it at the point of the sword; the harness was hardly ever off their back, and no crown could be less easy than that of Jerusalem. Odo of Burgundy never reached the Holy Land; he

died in 1102, almost as soon as he had reached the army of the crusaders. On his death-bed the sweet song of the Cistercian choir rung in his ears, and he desired that his body should not lie in a foreign land, but should be carried across sea and land to be buried at Citeaux. So his followers obeyed his dying request, and brought his remains back to Burgundy. In dying he gave the last proof of affection for the brethren of Citeaux, by wishing to be buried among them. He might have been buried beneath the walls of many a cathedral or abbey church, better befitting the high and puissant duke of Burgundy, but he chose to lie where his faithful monks would watch around his body, and say a prayer for his soul as they passed his tomb. Times were indeed changed with the old wood of Citeaux, which had a few years before been the habitation of wild beasts; and now the funeral procession of a prince might be seen moving through it; and it was a strange meeting, that of the banners and coronet, and the armour of the deceased duke, with the white habit of the monks, who had renounced the world and its honours. They had given up pomp and grandeur, and now one of the highest princes in Christendom was come to lie down at their feet, that they by their intervention might assist his soul before the tribunal of Christ. Truly many men would wish to live in a king's court, but most would rather in death be with the monks. It is not known in what part of the first Church of Citeaux Duke Odo was buried; indeed it is doubtful whether his body did not lie in the cemetery among the monks. In the magnificent Church afterwards built at Citeaux, his tomb was under the porch of the Church, in a place called the Chapel of the Dukes, where his two sons were buried with him.

To be the burial-place of the princes of the earth was not, however, enough for Citeaux; and however regular and admirable was his abbey, yet Alberic had one care which pressed upon his soul. It seemed as if the very existence of the convent was likely to pass away with the present generation, for no novices arrived to fill up the ranks of those who died. If matters did not mend, Citeaux would return again to its former possessors, wolves and wild-boars. Alberic's patience was sorely tried; it was not only that their name would perish from the earth, which would be but a light evil, but the failure of Citeaux would be a proof to the world that the monks of Molesme were right, and that St. Benedict's rule could not now be observed to the letter. It was too much for mortal man to bear, it might be said; and God had shown His disapproval of this over-strictness, by depriving the monastery of spiritual children. They passed many a long day in expectation of an increase of numbers, but the monks who joined them were far too few to give hope of the ultimate continuance of the monastery. Alberic however persevered, feeling sure that at all events it was God's will that he should continue in his present position, and he left the future in God's hands. Stephen and he had seen worse days than this, when they were compelled to leave Molesme, and to betake themselves to the solitude of Hauz, and it might please God to reward them with the sight of an increase of their spiritual children before they died. Alberic certainly did die long before Citeaux became what it afterwards was; but our Lord is said to have given him a supernatural intimation that his order would one day flourish beyond his expectations. The vision is mentioned by no contemporary writer, but we give it, because nothing can be said against the truth of it, in

itself, and because it contains some remarkable circumstances. Considering the influence that Citeaux afterwards had upon the fortune of the Church, there is no improbability in the supposition that our blessed Lord might, in his condescension, be pleased to console the abbot, when his courage was flagging, by extraordinary means. It is said, that one day, the community was surprised by the entrance of a clerk, who offered himself as a novice. The porch of the monastery at which the new-comer knocked was not an inviting one; it was not an imposing archway with a large gate, with bolts and bars; it was a poor door of wicker work, at which hung a huge iron knocker, at the sound of which a porter appeared with his usual salutation of *Deo gratias*, as if he would say, Thanks be to God that He has sent us a stranger to feed and entertain. This time, however, the new-comer seemed to be no stranger; he seemed to recognize the porter, though the monk could not recollect ever to have seen him before. When brought to the abbot, he appeared to know him also, as well as the prior Stephen, and all the brethren. At length he solved the mystery, by relating his history. He was a clerk, who, when a student of the schools of Lyons, saw in a vision a valley, stretched at the foot of a mountain, and on the mountain was a city of surpassing beauty, on which none could gaze without joy, as its radiant towers crowned the eminence on which it was built. The beholder felt a strange and irresistible desire to enter its gates and dwell there. Around the base of the mountain, however, was a broad river, the waters of which flowed about it, and were too deep for the traveller to ford. As he roamed about in quest of a place where he might cross it, he saw upon the bank, twelve or fourteen poor men washing their garments in the stream. Amongst them was one clad in a

white garment of dazzling brightness, and his countenance and form were very different from the rest ; he went about helping the poor men to wash the spots off their clothes ; when he had helped one, he went to help another. The clerk went up to this august person and said, "What men are ye?" And he answered, "These poor men are doing penance, and washing themselves from their sins ; I am the Son of God, Jesus Christ, without whose aid neither they nor any one else can do good. This beautiful city which thou seest is Paradise, where I dwell ; he who has washed his clothes white, that is, done penance for his sins, shall enter into it. Thou thyself hast been searching long enough for the way to enter into it, but there is no other way, but this one, which leads to it." After these words the sleeper awoke, and pondered over the vision. Soon after he returned home from the schools, and related to the bishop of Châlons, with whom he was intimate, what he had seen in sleep. The bishop advised him to quit the world for the cloister, and above others recommended the new monastery at Cîteaux. Thither the clerk went, and he found everything unpromising enough ; the place was barren and desolate, and the brethren dwelling "with the wild beasts." The gate of the monastery did not look a whit more inviting, but what was his astonishment when he saw the porter who answered to the sound of the rude knocker ; he immediately saw that he was one of the men whom he had seen washing their clothes white in the stream. On seeing the abbot and the other brethren, he observed the same thing, and he at once fell on his knees at the feet of Alberic, and begged to be received as a novice. He afterwards became a good monk, and succeeded Stephen as prior.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF ALBERIC.

FROM the time of the admission of this monk, which took place in the year 1104, there is a great gap in the Cistercian annals. The greater portion of those chapters in the greater and smaller Exordium of Citeaux which relate to the abbacy of Alberic have been lost; and nothing more is heard of Stephen till the year 1109, when Alberic died. The Exordium simply mentions his death in the following few words, "Now the man of God, Alberic, after having exercised himself in the school of Christ by the discipline of the rule, for nine years and a half, departed to the Lord, a man glorious in faith and virtue, and therefore to be blessed by God in life everlasting for his merit." He died on the 26th of January. St. Alberic has been canonized by the veneration of the faithful, and many miracles are said to have taken place at his tomb. Certainly, if any one deserved well of the Church, it was St. Alberic. The regulations which he passed into laws may be called the first statutes of the order, and they first gave to Citeaux a tangible form by which it was distinguished from other monasteries. He worked on in faith, without seeing the fruits of his labours, and he was called away from it when the infant community was in great perplexity. It seemed dying away as its members successively died, and bade fair not to outlast its first generation. His death was therefore a most painful trial to Stephen, who was

thus deprived of his friend and companion, whom he had found at Molesme, when he first came there, and who had shared with him all his hardships ; now he was left alone when he most needed counsel and support. Stephen's spirit seems, however, to have risen with the thought that his dear friend already possessed his crown, and might help him with his prayers even more than he had done with his counsels when alive. He had as prior to incense and sprinkle with holy water the body of his friend, and to throw earth upon it, when it lay in the grave ; and then the procession returned in inverse order, the lay brethren and the convent first, and himself last, with the cross borne before him¹. They then repaired to the chapter, where he addressed them a discourse which has been preserved. "All of us have alike a share in this great loss, and I am but a poor comforter, who myself need comfort. Ye have lost a venerable father and ruler of your souls ; I have lost, not only a father and ruler, but a friend, a fellow-soldier and a chief warrior in the battles of the Lord, whom our venerable father Robert, from the very cradle of our monastic institute had brought up in one and the same convent, in admirable learning and piety. He is gone from us, but not from God, and if not from God, then not from us ; for this is the right and property of saints, that when they quit this life they leave their body to their friends, and carry away their friends with them in their mind. We have amongst us this dear body and singular pledge of our beloved father, and he himself has carried us all away with him in his mind with an affectionate love ; yea, if he himself is borne up to God, and joined with Him in undivided love, he has joined us too, who are in

¹ *Usus Cist.* p. i. 98.

him, to God. What room is there for grief? Blessed is the lot, more blessed he to whom that lot has fallen, most blessed we to be carried up to such a presence, for nothing can be more joyful for the soldiers of Christ, than to leave this garment of flesh, and to fly away to Him for love of whom they have borne so many toils. The warrior has got his reward, the runner has grasped his prize, the conqueror has won his crown, he who has taken possession, prays for a palm for us. Why then should we grieve? Why mourn for him who is in joy? Why be cast down for him who is glad? Why do we throw ourselves before God with murmurs and mournful words, when he, who has been borne up to the stars, is pained at our grief, if the blessed can feel pain; he who by an earnest longing prays that we may have a like consummation. Let us not mourn for the soldier who is at rest; let us mourn for ourselves, who are placed in the front of battle, and let us turn our sad and mournful words into prayers, begging our father who is in triumph, not to suffer the roaring lion and savage enemy to triumph over us." Such were Stephen's words when he had just parted with his dearest friend; as usual he seems to rise with his difficulties. Indeed he had full need of this bold spirit, for he was about to succeed the sainted Alberic in his most painful dignity. The monks unanimously elected him their abbot, and he found himself with the whole weight of the spiritual and temporal direction of the new convent on his shoulders. William of Malmesbury says that he was absent at the time that he was elected, and some suppose that he withdrew from Citeaux for fear of being elected. It does not, however, appear how his absence could have prevented his election, unless he intended to leave Citeaux altogether, of which there is no record whatever. Saints fly from dignities,

which bring with them rank and splendour ; but the poor abbey of Citeaux had nothing to recommend it but hardship and labour, and these were a species of distinction from which Stephen was not the man to shrink. It is therefore most probable that some other motive occasioned his absence, though it does not appear what it was. He elected Robert, the monk who saw the vision which we have related, prior in his room.

CHAPTER X.

STEPHEN AS ABBOT.

STEPHEN found himself heir to all St. Alberic's difficulties, as well as to his dignity. He received from him a convent perfect in its internal arrangement, but one which men seemed rather disposed to admire at a distance, than to enter. The new abbot, however, felt certain that the principle on which Citeaux had been founded was right; it was one which must in time catch all the ardent spirits in the Church, who wished to be monks in order to crucify the flesh, and not merely to seek for peace. Hatred of poverty had been the great bane of monasteries, and his aim was to restore the primitive discipline of St. Benedict, which had well nigh been forgotten. In order to do this, he must not only exhibit it in his own person, but he must create, so to speak, a monastery in full operation, one to which novices crowded, and which was to last to the end of the world, a school of Christian discipline. He took what would appear a strange expedient to entice novices to Citeaux. His first act was, to all appearance, the cutting off all earthly support from the monastery. Hugo, the successor of Odo, the duke of Burgundy, who was buried at Citeaux, followed his father's example in frequenting the church of the monastery on all great festivals. He brought with him a large train of nobles, whose splendid appointments were but an ill match for the simplicity and poverty of the church. The presence of this

brilliant array seemed to Stephen ill-suited to the place; the jangling of steel spurs, and the varied colours of the dress of the courtiers, were a poor accompaniment to the grave chaunt and the poor habit of the brethren. Every one knows that the sight of a king's court is pleasing, and men go a great way to see it; now the echo of earthly pleasure and the presence of earthly joy are inconsistent with the profession of a monk, whose conversation ought to be in heaven. Men may say what they will about ideal perfection, but it is a sure fact, that saints are very much nearer perfection than we may think. Human frailties are on the long run unavoidable; but, at all events, the frailty of liking the vicinity of princes and nobles in not one of these, for Stephen did avoid it. He declared that no prince should henceforth hold his court in the church of Cîteaux. Apparently this act was at once cutting himself off from all earthly protection; the presence of a ducal court was no empty show, it was a guarantee that swords would be drawn and lances put in rest to defend Cîteaux. All this Stephen, as it seemed, threw away; he knew that God specially guarded the destitute, and he preferred the guardianship of saints and angels to that of an earthly prince. God rewarded his faith, for he did not ultimately lose the favour of Hugo, who after his death rested side by side with his father in the chapel under the porch of the abbey church. Before that time, however, the community had suffered many a hardship, which might have been averted had the powerful duke of Burgundy been as good a friend to the convent as heretofore. Stephen's next step was one with which modern notions of monasticism are still more inconsistent. He forbade that, says the *Exordium*, "in the house of God, in which they wished to serve God devoutly day and night

any thing should be found which savoured of pride and excess, or can in any way corrupt poverty, that guardian of virtue which they had chosen of their own accord." According to this, no crucifixes of gold or silver were to be used; one candlestick alone was to light up the church, and that not branching with elaborate ornaments, and studded with precious stones, but of iron; censers were to be of brass; chasubles, not of gold and silver tissue, or of rich silk, but of common stuff; albs and amices of linen; copes, tunics, and dalmatics were inexorably excluded. Even the chalices were not to be of gold, but silver gilt, as was also to be the pipe through which they received the blessed Blood of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist. This was indeed a strange way of attracting novices: the monastic churches were frequented by men on account of the splendour of the services, for sacred vessels, and altars adorned with gold and gems, for the number of ecclesiastics in splendid vestments passing to and fro before their eyes in seemly order. But by this act Stephen proclaimed to the world that they did not wish their church to be crowded with visitors; they wished to remain known only to God, in the heart of their marshy forest; but he knew that there must be many in the Church who longed to serve God in poverty and oblivion, and he reckoned upon receiving them into Citeaux. The novice who came there must come from the pure love of God, since he even gave up what was considered the heritage of monks, and the compensation for their toils, a striking ceremonial, and solemn rites. This is indeed very different from the notion which our fancy frames of monks, men of warm imaginations, who retired to a cloister to wear a picturesque habit, and to be free from toils; and it reads a salutary lesson to those whose Catholicism consists in a

love of "æsthetic" religion. Stephen did not at all, by rejecting these means of external devotion, intend to pronounce against the consecration of the riches of the world to the service of the sanctuary ; he was a monk, and had to do with monks alone ; it was quite certain that St. Benedict intended poverty to be an essential feature of the cloister, and Stephen was determined to prove that St. Benedict's rule might be kept in the twelfth century as it had been in the sixth. The Church was not in her dotage, and her children could do then what they had done before. Another reason for the rejection of splendour of worship was, because it interfered with meditation, properly so called, the contemplation of heavenly things without the aid of the senses. Not only were splendid vestments excluded from Citeaux, but, as we learn from its early statutes¹, sculptures and pictures were not allowed in the church, "because, while the attention is given to such things, the profit of godly meditation and the discipline of religious gravity are often neglected." Without determining which of the two is the better, it will at once be seen, that the devotion which floats to heaven on the sounds of beautiful music, and is kept alive by a splendid religious scene, is very different from that which, with closed eyes, and senses shut up, sings the praises of God, and at the same time is fixed on the heavenly mysteries without any intermediate channel. This latter species of devotion can only exist without danger in the Catholic church, whose creed is fixed and her faith unchangeable, while she herself is an external body, the image of her Lord. Stephen, therefore, could securely reject, to a certain extent, the aid of external religion ; for his mind, trained

¹ Inst. Cap. Gen. i. 20.

in the Catholic faith, had a definite object to rest upon, the Holy Trinity, with the inexhaustible and incomprehensible treasures of contemplation therein contained. Though the chalice was not of gold, he knew what was in it, even his blessed Lord ; and he could think upon the saints, with their palms and crowns in heaven, though their images were not sculptured about him. Again, though sculptures and paintings were not allowed, yet one image is expressly excepted ; crucifixes of wood, painted to the life, were placed in the church, and these must, from the colouring and material, have been much more real than golden or silver figures, however well sculptured, could have been. It should also be observed, that architecture is not excluded from this list of prohibitions ; the old church of Citeaux, built in Stephen's time, still existed when Martenne² came to visit the monastery ; it stood in all its simplicity beside the vast and splendid edifice, a strange relic of the ancient times of Citeaux ; yet, notwithstanding the contrast, its beauty is praised by the Benedictine. The line which Stephen marked out for himself was therefore definite ; costliness, pomp, and unnecessary ornaments were excluded, but beauty of shape was kept. He would not have a misshapen chasuble, though he eschewed cloth of gold, nor would he have an unsightly church, though he loved simplicity. It is scarcely possible to conceive a better type of Citeaux than a great Norman church, such as is seen in the abbeys of Caen, with its vast round arches and simple

² Voy. Lit. i. 223. Martenne there incidentally says, that this church was consecrated in 1106 ; if so, it must have been a different church from that built by the duke of Burgundy. This event is not recorded by the Cistercian historians ; no notice has been taken of it in the text, because the Benedictine gives no authority for the assertion, though it is exceedingly likely in itself.

shafts clustering round a massive pier ; even its austere capitals, looking like an imitation of the architecture of the Roman empire, might come in as the counterpart of Stephen's notion of going back to St. Benedict as his model.

These new regulations of the abbot of Citeaux were the more bold, because they were directly opposed to what may be called the leading religious men of the day. St. Hugh of Cluny died the very year that they were put in force, and the state of things which he had introduced at Cluny of course acquired a new sanctity from the saintly memory which he had left behind him. Differing as they did in other respects, nothing can shew the difference of his spirit and that of Stephen, more than the contrast between them in this particular. St. Hugh had a great fondness for ecclesiastical ornaments. "He said within himself," writes his biographer, "with the Prophet: 'Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thine honour dwelleth ;' and whatsoever the devotion of the faithful gave, he entirely consecrated to adorning the church or to the expenses of the poor³." The vast church which he built at Cluny, (as it is said, by the Divine command conveyed in a vision,) was reckoned the most beautiful of his time ; it contained stalls in the choir for 220 monks. It had two side aisles and two transepts, and two vast lanterns gave light to the whole. At the upper end was a beautiful apse supported by eight marble columns, each of which could hardly be embraced by two men. All the precious things of the world were consecrated to the adornment of this splendid basilica : one beautiful corona of lights,

³ Hildebert ap. Bibl. Clun. 420.

the gift of Matilda, queen of England, made after the pattern mentioned in Exodus⁴, especially caught the eye of beholders, as it hung before the high altar: it was made of gold and silver, and its delicate branches blazed with crystals and beryls interspersed among its beautifully wrought lilies⁵. Even the immense hall, which was the refectory of the convent, had its own religious ornaments; it was painted all round with figures of saints of the Old and New Testament, and of the founders and benefactors of Cluny: but the principal object was a large figure of our Lord, with a representation of the terrible day of judgment. All the ceremonies in the church were most solemn and imposing, seen by the dim light of its narrow windows⁶ cut through the thick wall, or with the sun shining through the ample lanterns; or again with its blaze of lights, and specially the seven before the holy Cross on the night of our Lord's nativity, when the church was adorned with rich hangings, and all the bells rang out, and the brethren walked in procession round the cloisters, their hearts burning with the words of good St. Hugh, spoken the evening before in the chapter⁷. Who could blame the holy abbot for enlisting the senses in the service of religion? he could not be accused of pomp or pride, who in his simplicity took his turn in washing the beans in the kitchen⁸; his heart, in the beauties of the sanctuary saw but an image of the worship in the courts of heaven, and was not entangled or brought down to earth by the blaze of splendour around him. Still all this, as we have said before, was a development upon St. Benedict's rule and does not seem to have

⁴ Exod. xxv. 31—39.

⁵ Bibl. Clun. 1640.

⁶ Ann. Ben. tom. v. p. 252.

⁷ Udal. l. 11. 46. Bibl. Clun. 1273.

⁸ Udal. l. 46.

been contemplated by him : if he had walked in a Cluniac cloister, and had seen its grotesque ornaments, with the apes and centaurs peeping out from the rich foliage, the huntsmen with horns and hounds, and the knights fighting together on the walls⁹, he would hardly have known where he was. Stephen's doubtless was the original conception of monasticism, which time had altered, if it had not corrupted. St. Hugh would have the church all glorious within, and her clothing without of wrought gold ; but Stephen wished her to be like her Lord, in whom was found no comeliness that men should desire Him ; but Stephen's pastoral staff was a crooked stick such as an old man might carry ; St. Hugh's was overlaid with foliage wrought in silver, mixed with ivory¹: yet the souls of both were the workmanship of that One blessed Spirit, who divideth to every man severally as He will. Though the abbot of Cluny took advantage of all the treasures of art and nature, and turned them to the service of God, while on the other hand Stephen in many cases rejected the help of external religion, yet both could find a place in the Catholic Church, whose worship is not carnal, nor yet so falsely spiritual as to cease to be the body of the Lord.

⁹ St. Bern. Apol. ad Guil.

¹ Voy. Lit. i. 226.

CHAPTER XI.

STEPHEN IN TIMES OF WANT.

THE consequence of Stephen's thus boldly casting off the protection of the duke of Burgundy, and all that could attract the world into the solitude of Citeaux, soon began to be visible. In the year 1110 it was discovered that the world was inclined to forget those who had forgotten it; for either from the failure of crops, or from some other unknown cause, the convent was reduced to a state not only of poverty but of beggary, and no one was found to relieve it. Stephen's was but a poor abbacy; he had now been scarcely a year in his new dignity, and he found himself lord of a starving community; but he had already counted the cost, and he knew that his Lord would not leave his servants to die of want in the depths of their forest. His countenance was therefore not a whit less smiling on account of his difficulties, and he cheered up his brethren by his earnest words. At length the extremity of want came upon the monastery, and one day the brother cellarer came to the abbot and informed him that there was not enough for one day's provision in the house. "Saddle me two asses," was Stephen's only answer: when they were ready, the abbot himself mounted one, and bade a lay-brother mount the other. He then ordered his companion to beg bread from door to door in a certain village; while he himself went to beg in another, and he appointed a place where they should meet after

making their rounds. To a passing stranger the holy man must have looked very like one of those Sarabaitæ or wandering monks, of whom St. Benedict speaks, on a voyage in quest of gain, so strange must have been his figure, mounted as he was on the ignoble beast, in his white habit, and his rough cowl over his shaven head ; but his face was radiant with joy, for never was he more like his blessed Lord, than when he was thus reduced to beggary. After having gone through the village, begging as he went, he met this lay-brother returning from his task ; on comparing notes the brother's wallet was found to be very much more full than his superior's. "Where hast thou been begging?" said the abbot, with a smile ; "I see thou hast been gleaning in thicker stubble than I. Where, prithee, hast thou been glean- ing?" The lay-brother answered, "The priest whom you know full well filled my wallet," and he mentioned the priest's name. The abbot at once recognized the priest to be one who had obtained his benefice by simony. It was then in the thick of the contest about investitures, and Stephen shuddered at receiving aught from hands stained with such a sin ; and he groaned aloud and said, "Alas ! for thee ; why didst thou receive aught there ? thou didst not know, then, that that priest had been simoniacally ordained ; and what he has accepted is leprosy and rapine. As the Lord liveth, of all that he has given us, we will taste nothing. God forbid that we should eat of his sin, and that it be turned into the substance of our bodies !" He then called some shepherds, who were near the spot, and emptied all the contents of the wallet into their laps. This is but one instance, which has been preserved almost by chance, of the difficulties under which the convent laboured, and of Stephen's unworldly way of meeting them ; the par-

ticulars of their daily life in these trying times have been forgotten. Many other facts of the same sort doubtless were handed down and told by the monks in after-times, as this which we have mentioned was related by Master Peter, surnamed Cantor ; but the convent traditions have died away, and the chronicles have not recorded more, till we come to the last acts which closed these times of difficulty. It was by what would be called a strange coincidence that the wants of the brethren were at last relieved. The monks called it a miracle wrought by God at Stephen's prayers ; and if the truth be told, we think they were right. It seems to be but scriptural to believe that it happened, as our Lord has promised, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father¹." However, the reader shall judge for himself. It was a long dreary season, the time of this downright beggary of Citeaux. It was of no great consequence during Lent ; but Lent passed away, and Easter came without alleviation. Still the monks, buoyed up by the cheerfulness of their abbot, did not allow their spirits to flag, and only rejoiced the more because they suffered for Christ's sake. At length Pentecost came, and it was found that there was hardly bread in the house to last out the day ; nevertheless the brethren prepared for the mass of that great day with ecstasies of joy. They began to chaunt the solemn service with overflowing hearts, and before the mass was over God rewarded their faith, for succours arrived at the gate of the monastery from an unexpected source. "In these and the like events," says the old monk who relates it, "the man of God, Stephen, weighing within himself how true are those

¹ John xiv. 12.

words of Scripture, 'They who fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good,' looked with wonder on the bounty and mercy of God on himself and his brethren: more and more did he progress in holy religion, and gloried in the straits of blessed poverty, as in all manner of riches." At length the crisis came; even after the mercy of God on Whitsunday their sufferings were not over, nay, they were at their height, and with them proportionately rose the abbot's faith. He called to him one of the brethren, and, as says the same historian, "speaking to him in the Spirit of God, said to him, 'Thou seest, dearest brother, that we are brought into a great strait by want; nay, well nigh are our brethren's lives brought into peril by hunger, cold, and other sufferings. Go then to the market of Vezelay, which is very soon coming on, and buy there three waggons, and for each waggon three horses, strong and fit for draught, of which we are very much in need for carrying our burdens. And when thou hast laden the waggons with clothes and food and other necessaries, thou shalt bring them with thee, and come back to us in joy and prosperity.'" The poor brother was astonished at the good abbot's command, and it probably crossed him that he was sent on a fool's errand; however, in the spirit of holy obedience he said, "I am ready, my lord and father, to obey thy commands, if thou wilt but give me money to buy these necessaries." The abbot, however, had no such intentions; he felt quite sure in his royal heart that the crisis was come, and that God was now going to help them. As a physician can see deeper into a disease when it is at its height than the bystanders, so can the spiritual man see into God's providence further than other men. He issued, therefore, his orders with a quiet tone, as if the wealth of Peru was at his com-

mand. Regardless of the monk's astonishment, he said, "Be it known to thee, brother, that when, in care and anxiety, I searched for means for relieving the wants of our brethren, I found but three pence in the whole house. Take them, if thou wilt. As for the rest, whatever is wanting, the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ will provide it. Go then without fear, for the Lord will send his angel with thee, and will prosper thy way." It is not on record whether the monk took the three pence with him ; but it is certain, whether he did or no, that they would not help him much on his mission. However, he started for the town which the abbot had mentioned. When he got there, he went to the house of a friend, and told him of his difficulties. Now it happened that a rich neighbour of this friend was on his deathbed, distributing alms to the poor. Thither then the man went, and related in what straits were the monks of Citeaux, whose holiness was well known all over the country ; the dying man on hearing this, sent for the monk, and gave him as much money as would suffice to buy all that the abbot had ordered. Away then he went, and bought his three waggons and nine horses, and all the articles of which the brethren stood in need, and then started merrily for Citeaux. When he got near the monastery he sent word to the abbot that he was coming, and how accompanied. Stephen, in the holy rapture of his heart, assembled the chapter and said, "The God of mercy, the Lord God of mercy has frankly and bountifully dealt with us. Yea, nobly indeed, generously indeed, hast Thou done, Thou who providest for us, our Shepherd, opening Thine hand and filling our poverty with plenteousnes." Then the abbot put on his sacred vestments, and took his pastoral staff in his hand, and with the whole convent

in procession, the cross and holy water solemnly borne before him, went to meet the brother and his convoy at the abbey gate. This was the last of the trials which Stephen had to undergo from the failure of the temporalities of his convent. The alms of the faithful flowed in apace, and the cellarer had never again to report an empty granary to the abbot.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MORTALITY AT CITEAUX.

ALL, however, was not over yet ; the sorest trial of all was yet to come, far worse than the obstinacy of the monks of Molesme, or the penury of Citeaux. In the year 1111 and 1112, a mortality broke out amongst the brethren ; and Stephen saw several of his spiritual children dying off one by one before his eyes. In that year the whole Church was sick, for it was then that pope Pascal was held in captivity by the emperor Henry V., and what was worse, gave up the right of granting investitures. Then some bishops spoke harsh words against the sovereign pontiff, that he should be deposed, and the hearts of all men were failing them for fear. But the repentance of Pascal and the firmness of the bishops, and specially of Guido, archbishop of Vienne, saved the Church after a season. It was during this time of confusion for all Christendom, that Citeaux was in mourning. First one brother went, and then another ; independently of all other considerations, the loss of men who had borne with him the burden and heat of the day, must have been most painful to Stephen. The ties which bound one member of a religious community to another, in death as well as in life, were of the closest kind. As in life they had helped one another on in the painful task of crucifying the flesh, so in death they who remained behind on earth helped their brother, who was passing away before them from this world, by their

prayers and by their presence. Though monks all their lives through looked death in the face in frequent meditations, yet they did not consider that they could ever be too well prepared for that dreadful moment. It is dreadful, not only because the soul is about to appear before its God, but also because it is an hour of actual conflict with the devil, who then often marshals all his powers for a last effort, and endeavours to shake the faith of the dying man. It was therefore the rule in a convent, that all the brethren should come unto the death-bed of a dying monk to help him against his spiritual enemy. The death of a brother was thus a subject of personal interest to each member of a convent, and in this point of view alone, the successive deaths of his friends must have been a bitter trial to Stephen. As abbot, it was his lot to go, at the head of the brethren, clad in alb, stole, and maniple, and with his pastoral staff in his hand, to the chamber of the dying man, to administer to him extreme unction, and to give him the holy rood to kiss¹. Again and again during those two painful years he was summoned to the bedside of the brother, to anoint his limbs before his soul passed away from his body. And how often when the last agony was actually come, did the harsh strokes of the wooden mallet² which usually called the convent together, resound through the cloister, together with the tolling of the bell, to summon the community to the death-bed of a brother! Then all labour was hastily given up, and even the divine office was broken off, and all went to the dying man's room, repeating aloud the words of the Creed. There they found him lying on ashes sprinkled on the floor in the form of a cross, for that was the pos-

¹ Usus Ord. Cist. i. 93.

² Tabula.

ture in which monks died ; and then they commended his soul to God with Litanies and the Penitential Psalms. In all these mournful ceremonies, and in all those which took place around the corpse before and at the burial, Stephen as abbot had the chief place ; the crosses and the graves silently multiplied before him in the church-yard, and still no novices arrived to fill the empty stalls of those who were dead. The cause of the mortality is not known ; it may have been that the marshy soil of the wood had not been properly drained, and that the brethren sunk under the damp air, to which, from their long abstinence, their bodies were peculiarly sensitive. It could not have been the austerity of their life alone, for thousands afterwards followed their steps, and died of a good old age ; still it was certain that the world would put it down to that cause, and even the monks of the day would look upon the convent as one cursed by God on account of the fanatical austerities of its inmates. Stephen's cares thus multiplied upon him, and he found no consolation from them except in the time of the divine office. It is recorded of him, that after the evening collation was read, as he entered into the church he used to pause at the entrance with his hand pressing on the door. One of the brethren, whom he especially loved, frequently observed this silent gesture as he went into church, and ventured to ask him what it meant. "The holy father," says the Exordium, "answered, 'I am forced during the day to give free course to many thoughts for the ordering of the house ; all these I bid to remain outside the door, and I tell them not to venture in, and to wait till the morrow, when I find them all ready for me after Prime has been said.'" However the abbot might manage to drive away distressing thoughts during the quiet hours of the night,

while the monks were chaunting the office in church, yet they recurred with tenfold force during the day, when all the cares of the house came upon him, while his spiritual children were dying about him. At times even his faith all but failed; it crossed his mind that the monks who scoffed at Citeaux might after all be right. The Cistercian manner of life might be displeasing to God, and the frequent deaths of the brethren and the barrenness of the monastery might be a punishment for their presumption in attempting to go beyond what God allowed. Pain in itself is not pleasing to God, and an austere life, unless it be joined by charity to Christ's sufferings, becomes simple pain, for His merits alone convert our sufferings into something sacramental, and make them meritorious in the eyes of God. He might therefore have been leading his poor brethren into the wilderness, and have made them there perish with hunger, and their blood would be required at his hands. These melancholy thoughts tormented him, and at last they broke out into words, when with the whole convent he was summoned to attend the deathbed of another brother who was about to follow the many inmates of Citeaux who had already died. All the brethren wondered, as he spoke the words, at the calm faith with which he pronounced them, notwithstanding the deep anxiety which they displayed. Thus then in the presence of all he addressed the dying man. "Thou seest, dearest brother, in what great weariness and failing of heart we are, for we have done our best to enter upon the strait and narrow way which our most blessed father Benedict has proposed in his rule, and yet we are not well assured whether this our way of life is pleasing to God; especially since by all the monks of our neighbourhood we have long been looked upon as devisers of novelty, and

as men who kindle scandal and schism. But more than all, I have a most piercing grief which cuts me through to the heart like a spear, and that is, the fewness of our members; for one by one, and day after day, death comes in and hurries us away. Thus I very much fear this our new religious institute will perish with ourselves, for God has not thought fit, up to this time, to associate with us any zealous persons, who love the lowliness of holy poverty, through whom we could hand down to posterity the model of this our rule of life. Wherefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whose love we have entered upon the strait and narrow way which He proposes to His followers in the Gospel, and by virtue of thine obedience, I command thee, at whatever time and in whatever way the grace of the same our Lord may determine, that thou return to us, and give us information touching this our state, as far as His mercy will allow." He spoke these words with a quiet confidence, which looked beyond the grave, so that he appalled the brethren; but the dying monk, with a bright smile lighting up his features, said, "Willingly will I do, my lord and father, what thou commandest, if only I, through the help of thy prayers, shall be allowed to fulfil thy command." The result of this strange dialogue, held on the confines of life and death, was not long in appearing. The brother died, and a few days after he had passed away, the abbot was in the fields working with the brethren. At the usual time he gave the signal for rest, and they laid aside their labour for a while. He himself withdrew a little way from the rest, and with his head buried in his cowl, sat down to pray. As he was in this position, lo! the departed monk appeared before him, surrounded by a blaze of glory, and, as it seemed, rather buoyed up in

air, than standing on the ground. Stephen asked him how he fared. "Well, good father abbot," he answered, "well is it with me, and well be it with thee, for by thy teaching and care I have merited to obtain that never-ending joy, that unknown peace of God, which passeth all understanding, to gain which I patiently and humbly bore the hard toils of our new order. And now according to thy bidding I have returned to bring news of the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to thee, father, and to thy brethren; you bade me certify you of your state, and I say unto you, Lay aside all doubt, and hold it for certain that your life and conversation is holy and pleasing to God. Moreover, the grief at thy want of children to leave behind thee, which gnaws deep into thy heart, shall very soon disappear and turn to joy and triumph; for even yet the children, which thou who wast childless shalt have, shall cry in thine ears, 'The place is too strait for us, give place to us that we may dwell¹.' For behold, from this time forth, the Lord hath done great things for you, in sending many men unto you, and among them very many of noble birth and learned. Yea, and like bees swarming in haste and flowing over the hive, they shall fly away and spread themselves through many parts of the world; and out of that seed of the Lord, which by His grace has been heaped together here, they shall lay up in the heavenly granaries many sheaves of holy souls, gathered from all parts of the world." On hearing these words the abbot sat wrapt in joy at the favour which the Lord had shown to him. Though the heavenly messenger had finished his task, he still lingered and remained visible to Stephen; he had undertaken the mission while on earth, in obedience

¹ Isaiah xlix. 20

to his superior, and he must not go without the leave of him who had imposed the task upon him ; just as he would have done had he been still a living monk, speaking to his abbot in the little parlour at Citeaux, the glorified spirit waited for the benediction of the father. At length he said to Stephen, " It is now time, lord abbot, that I return to Him who sent me ; I pray thee dismiss me in the strength of thy blessing." Stephen shrank back at the thought of assuming authority over that blessed soul, and at last broke silence : " What is it that thou sayest ? Thou hast passed from corruption to incorruption, from vanity to reality, from darkness to light, from death to life, and thou wouldest be blessed by me, who am still groaning under all these miseries ? This is against all just right and reason ; I ought rather to be blessed by thee, and therefore I pray thee to bless me." But the glorified brother answered : " Not so, father, for the Lord hath given to thee the power of blessing, for He has placed thee on a pinnacle of dignity and of spiritual rule. But me, thy disciple, who by thy healthful doctrine have escaped the stains of the world, it befits to receive thy blessing ; nor will I go hence till I have received it." Stephen, though confused and filled with wonder, did not dare to refuse, and lifting his hand, he blessed him, and the happy soul immediately disappeared, leaving him in a transport of wonder at the favour which our Lord had accorded to him. It required a holy daring at first to seek for this mysterious meeting ; and none but one who, like Stephen, had from dwelling alone with the Lord, in the wilderness and forest, realized the unseen world, could have behaved with calmness and presence of mind, when that world was so suddenly opened upon him. A modern philosopher has in mere wantonness sported

on the brink of the grave, and made such an agreement as Stephen made with his dying disciple ; but this boldness arose from infidelity, Stephen's from strong faith, and God punished the infidel for thus tempting Him by leaving him in his error, while He rewarded the holy abbot by a vision². Let no one venture into the world unseen, who does not live above the world of sense. Stephen, however, was now rewarded for all his trials, and for his confidence in God, who never forsakes those that trust in Him. He passed at once from the dreadful state of uncertainty which had harassed him, to one of assurance ; he had still a long and dreary journey before him, and his crown was not yet won,—nay it might still be lost ; but at all events, he now felt sure that the path on which he had entered was the very narrow way of the Lord, and not one which he had chosen for himself in self-will.

² “Osborne went to the West Indies, where he became an eminent lawyer, and made money, but died young. He and I had made a serious agreement, that the one who happened first to die, should, if possible, make a friendly visit to the other, and acquaint him how he found things in that separate state. But he never fulfilled his promise.”—Franklin's Life, vol. i. p. 57.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE NOVICES.

THE vision not only assured Stephen that the Cistercian way of life was acceptable to God, but seemed also to prophesy a speedy increase of numbers in the monastery. Shortly afterwards another event occurred, which the monks interpreted as pointing the same way. Another of the brethren was dying, and on his death-bed he told the abbot that he had dreamed that he saw a vast multitude of men washing their clothes in a fountain of most pure water near the church of Citeaux, and that he heard a voice saying that the name of the fountain was Ænon. This it will be remembered was the name of the place where the austere St. John baptized a multitude of men with the baptism of repentance. The dream then was taken to mean that a multitude would come to Citeaux to wash their stained garments white by penance. Whatever the vision portended, it is certain that the days of mourning for Citeaux were nearly over. Fourteen years of widowhood and barrenness had now passed away since its first foundation, and the fifteenth at last was to bring consolation with it. In the year 1113, the iron hammer which hung at the lowly gate of the monastery sounded, and a large number of men entered the cloister, which was hardly ever visited except by some traveller who had been benighted in the forest of Citeaux. Thirty men entered, and coming to Stephen, begged to be admitted as novices. There

were amongst them men of middle age, who had shone in the councils of princes, and who had hitherto worn nothing less than the furred mantle or the steel hauberk, which they now came to exchange for the poor cowl of St. Benedict ; but the greater part were young men of noble features and deportment, and well might they, for they were of the noblest houses in Burgundy. The whole troop was led by one young man of about twenty-three years of age, and of exceeding beauty¹. He was rather tall in stature ; his neck was long and delicate, and his whole frame very thin, like that of a man in weak health. His hair was of a light colour, and his complexion was fair ; but with all its paleness, there was a virgin bloom spread over the thin skin of his cheek. His face was such as had attracted the looks of many high-born ladies²; but an angelic purity and a dovelike simplicity shone forth in his eyes, which shewed at once the serene chasteness of his soul. This young man was he who was afterwards St. Bernard, and who now came to be the disciple of Stephen, bringing with him four brothers and a number of young noblemen, to fill the empty cells of the novices of Citeaux. Well was it worth toiling all the cold dreary night of expectation, if such was to be the ultimate result of the fishing. “On that day,” says an old monk, “the whole house seemed to have heard the Holy Spirit responding to them in these words, ‘Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child, for more are the children of the desolate than the children

¹ Vid. Description of St. Bernard’s person by Gaufridus, intimate friend and secretary of the Saint, and afterwards abbot of Clairvaux. St. Bern. Vit. i. lib. iii. 1. Ed. Ben.

² Guil. i. 3.

of the married wife.'” Stephen’s expectations were fulfilled to the letter; those regulations which appeared so little likely to attract novices to the convent, had brought St. Bernard to its gates. If he had wished to attract the lukewarm and indifferent, he would have made rules of another kind; so true is it that the children of wisdom have a policy of their own, though it be different from that of the world. St. Bernard would have been received with open arms by the monks of any order,—nay, he might have created an order for himself; but he preferred finding out the poorest and most hidden monastery in the world, and he found that it was Citeaux, just following the train of reasoning which Stephen knew would be that of a saint-like mind. During the whole time of the desolation of Citeaux, and the internal conflicts of its abbot, the Holy Spirit had been silently leading Bernard, and preserving him from the world, that he might come pure and undefiled to this poor abbey. All that concerns him is of such vital importance to a clear understanding of the work which Stephen was sent upon earth to perform, that the history would be incomplete without an account of the steps which brought him to sit at the feet of our abbot. It was not without a painful struggle that he had been brought there, as indeed such is God’s way; all great saints have had great trials, for there can be no crucifixion without pain. After the death of his mother, whom he loved tenderly, and to whom God entrusted the forming of his holy mind, he began to think seriously of becoming a monk. Though she died in his youth, yet her sacred memory haunted him even in manhood, and she is even said to have appeared to him to beckon him on to the cloister. The beauty of his person and the corrupt manners of the age, more than

once at this critical time put his purity in danger, and though through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he walked through the midst of the burning fire even without feeling it, yet he determined to shun a world where wickedness so abounded. His noble birth would have opened his way to the highest dignities of the Church ; “but,” says his historian, “he deliberated in what way he could most perfectly leave the world, and began to search and to trace out where he could most safely and most purely find rest for his soul under the yoke of Christ. The place which occurred to him in his search was the new plantation of Citeaux, where monastic discipline was brought anew to what it had been at first. There the harvest was plenty but the labourers were few, on account of the exceeding severity of the life and of its poverty, at a time when the fervour of the monks at their first conversion was hardly at all on the decline.” Bernard had no intention of becoming a monk, with a mitre and pastoral staff in reversion ; his object was that his life should be hid with Christ in God, and that his conversation should be in heaven. His first step was, however, comparatively easy ; but much remained to be done before Stephen received his illustrious disciple within the walls of Citeaux. Bernard had gained a victory over the concupiscence of the flesh, and over the pride of high-birth ; military glory, which was the passion of all his brothers, had no attractions for him, but he had still a weak side on which the tempter could assail him, and this was the pride of intellect. No one can read his writings without seeing the wonderful genius which they show : the same burning eloquence which made him a Christian preacher, if it had been heard in kings’ courts would have carried all before it ; and the acuteness with which

he at once sees deep into metaphysical questions, would have put him at the head of philosophical schools. And was all this to go too? Was his tongue to remain silent in Cistercian dreariness? and his acuteness to be buried with rude and unlearned monks? Yes, so it was; all was to be sacrificed, beauty of form, noble birth, quickness and depth of thought, brilliant eloquence; all were to be nailed to the cross, and he was to become a common labourer, planter, reaper, ploughman, and if so be, hedger and ditcher, wrapped in a coarse cowl, with low-born men for his fellows. We have not yet spoken of one tie, perhaps the strongest of all, and the one which cost the most pain to break, and that was the love of friends and relations. The slightest acquaintance with his life will show the painful struggle of his affections, even when he was abbot of Clairvaux; how he mourns with passionate grief over the death of his brother, or still more over the spiritual death of any one whom he knew. Besides his kinsmen, his brilliant and amiable qualities had endeared him to all the flower of the nobles of Burgundy. As soon as the slightest hint was known of Bernard's intention, all these were up in arms; there were his sister Humbeline, a noble and beautiful young lady, his eldest brother Guido, already a married man, and a good soldier of the duke of Burgundy; Gerard too, the accomplished knight, the enthusiastic soldier, and the prudent leader, beloved for his sweet disposition, and his friend Hugh, the lord of Mácon, all thinking his project absurd, and himself half mad. Was he to throw himself at the feet of a fanatic, like Stephen, and to bury himself in the corner of an old wood? The thing must not be. Impossible indeed it was with man; but very possible with God. This was one of the wonders of the cross, going on

about them, which was in time to shake the whole of France,—nay, the whole world. Even they themselves discovered that it was possible; it was a dangerous thing to come across Bernard in his vocation, as they soon found to their cost. However, though they could not move, yet they could cause much pain to Bernard. As he acknowledged afterwards, his steps were well nigh turned back, and the struggle was most painful. If it had not been for his mother's memory he would have fallen, but her sweet lessons were evermore recurring to his mind and urging him on. One day, he was on his way to see his brothers, who were then with the army of the duke besieging the castle of Grancey; these thoughts burst so forcibly on his mind that he entered into a church which was open by the wayside, and prayed with a torrent of tears, stretching his hands to heaven, and pouring out his heart like water before the Lord his God. From that hour the purpose of his heart was fixed, and he set his face stedfastly to go to Citeaux. "It was not, however," pursues his historian, "with a deaf ear, that he heard the voice of one saying, 'Let him that heareth say, Come.' Truly, from that hour, like a flame which burneth the wood, and a fire consuming the mountains, here and there, first seizing on all about it, then going forth to things farther away, thus the fire which the Lord had sent into the heart of his servant, and had willed that it should burn, first attacks his brothers, all but the youngest, who could not yet go into religion, and who was left to comfort his old father, then his kinsmen, fellows, and friends, and all of whose conversion there could be any hope." First came his uncle Galdricus, a puissant noble and a valiant knight, well known for feats of arms; he quitted his good castle of Touillon, his vassals and his riches, and

gave in to the burning words of his nephew. Then the heavenly fire kindled his young brother Bartholomew; his heart gave way easily, for he had not yet been made a knight, having still his spurs to win. Then came Andrew, the fourth brother; it was a sore trial to him to give up the world, for he had just received his knightly sword from the altar, at the hands of a bishop, and had seen his first field; but at last he yielded, for he saw in a vision his sainted mother smiling upon him, and he cried out to Bernard "I see my mother," and at once gave in. But the trial was still sorer when it came to the turn of Guy, the eldest of the brothers; he was a married man, and his young wife loved him tenderly, besides which he had more than one daughter, with whom it was hard indeed to part in the age of their childhood; and even after he had yielded to his brother's persuasions, and had broken through all these ties, a greater difficulty than all remained behind. It was a law of the Church, that neither of a married pair could enter a cloister without the consent of the other; and how was it possible that a delicate and high-born woman could consent to part with her husband and enter into a monastery? Bernard, however, declared to Guy, that if she did not consent, God would smite her with a deadly disease; and so it turned out; she soon after fell ill, and "finding," says William of St. Thierry, "that it was hard for her to kick against the pricks, she sent for Bernard" and gave her consent. None, however, clung to the world with such deep-rooted affection as Gerard, the second brother: as we said before, he was a frank and high-spirited soldier, yet, withal, sage in counsel, and he had won all about him by his kind-heartedness. The world was all open before him; his talents were sure to raise him to high rank and honour; and he was

ardently fond of feats of chivalrous daring. To him the conduct of his brothers seemed to be mere folly, and he abruptly repelled Bernard's advice. But the fire of charity was still more powerful than the young knight's ardour; "I know, I know," said Bernard, "that pain alone will give wisdom to thine ears," and laying his hands upon Gerard's side, he continued, "A day will come, and that soon, when a lance, piercing this side, will tear a way to thy heart for this counsel of thy salvation which thou dost despise; and thou shalt be in fear, but shalt not die." A few days after this, Gerard had, in the heat of the battle, charged into the midst of the enemy; there he was unhorsed, wounded with a lance in the very place where Bernard had laid his finger, and dragged along the ground. His brother's words rose before him, and he cried out, "I am a monk, a monk of Citeaux." Little did Stephen think, in the midst of his perplexities, that the name of his poor monastery had been heard in the thick of a deadly fight, and that a nobleman had chosen that strange place to make his profession, with swords pointed at his breast, and lances and pennons flying about him. Notwithstanding Gerard's exclamations, he was taken captive, and lodged in a dungeon within the castle of his enemies; he, however, soon after made his escape from prison in a way which seemed perfectly miraculous, and joined his brother Bernard. Now the whole band of brothers had been won over; but Bernard was not yet satisfied; the fields were white for the harvest, and he went about collecting his sheaves, that he might lay them all up in the garners of Citeaux. Hugh, the lord of Mâcon, was also to be brought to Stephen's feet; the young nobles drew together into knots in self-defence, whenever Bernard passed by, for fear of being carried

away by his powerful word ; mothers hid their sons, lest in the flower of youth they should hide themselves in a cloister. All, however, was in vain ; “as many,” says the abbot of St. Thierry, “as were so pre-ordained by the grace of God working in them, and the word of his strength, and through the prayer and the earnestness of His servant, first hesitated, then were pierced to the heart ; one after another they believed and gave in.” Thirty men of the most noble blood in Burgundy were thus collected together ; as many of them were married men, their wives also had to give up the world ; all these arrangements required time, and for six months they put off their conversion till their affairs could be arranged. The females retired to the Benedictine monastery of Juilly, whence afterwards it is supposed that many were transferred to the first Cistercian nunnery, the abbey of Tard, near Dijon. When the time for proceeding to Citeaux was come, Bernard and his four brothers went to the castle of Fountains, which was their family place, to take leave of their father and sister. This was their last glimpse of the world ; they then left all and followed Christ. The little Nivard was playing about with other boys as they passed. Guy, the eldest brother, stopped his childish glee for a moment, to tell him that all the broad lands of Fountains, and many a fair portion of the earth, were to be for him. “What,” said the boy, “earth for me, heaven for you ! the bargain is not a fair one.” Probably he knew not then what he said, but as soon as he could he followed his brothers. Thus the old father was left to sit alone in his deserted halls with his daughter Humbeline ; he was now a barren trunk, with the choice boughs lopped off ; his noble line was to come to an end, and when he dropped into the grave, the

castle of his fathers was to pass into the hands of strangers.

Now, it may be asked, that Stephen has housed his thirty novices, what has he or any one else gained by it? what equivalent is gained for all these domestic ties rudely rent, for all these bleeding hearts torn asunder, and carrying their wounds unhealed into the cloister? Would not rustics suit Stephen's purpose well, if he would cultivate a marsh in an old wood, without desolating the hearths of the noblest houses of Burgundy? Human feeling revolts when high nobles with their steel helmets, shining hauberks, and painted surcoats, are levelled with the commonest tillers of the soil; and even feelings of pity arise when high-born dames, clad in miniver, and blazing with jewels, cast all aside for the rough sackcloth and the poor serge of St. Benedict; what shall we say, when young mothers quit their husbands and their families to bury themselves in a cloister? There are here no painted windows and golden candlesticks, with chasubles of white and gold to help out the illusion; feeling an imagination, all are shocked alike, and every faculty of the natural man is jarred at once at the thought. Such words might have been spoken even in Stephen's time, but "wisdom is justified of her children." One word suffices to silence all these murmurers; *Ecce Homo*, Behold the Man. The wonders of the incarnation are an answer to all cavils. Why, it may as well be asked, did our blessed Lord choose to be a poor man, instead of being clothed in purple and fine linen? why was His mother a poor virgin? why was he born in an inn, and laid in a manger? why did He leave His blessed mother, and almost repulse her, when she would speak to Him? why was that mother's soul pierced with agony at the sufferings of her divine Son? why, when one drop of

His precious blood would have healed the whole creation, did He pour it all out for us? in a word, why, when He might have died (if it be not wrong to say so) what the world calls a glorious death, did He choose out the most shameful, besides heaping to Himself every form of insult, and pain of body and soul? He did all this to show us, that suffering was now to be the natural state of the new man, just as pleasure is the natural state of the old. Suffering and humiliation are the proper weapons of the Christian, precisely in the same way that independence, unbounded dominion and power, are the instruments of the greatness of the world. No one can see how all this acts to bring about the final triumph of good over evil; it requires faith, but so does the spectacle of our blessed Lord, naked on the cross, with St. Mary and St. John weeping on each side. After casting our eyes on the holy rood, does it never occur to us to wonder how it can be possible to be saved in the midst of the endearments of a family, and the joys of domestic life? God forbid that any one should deny the possibility! but does it not at first sight require proof that heaven can be won by a life spent in this quiet way? Again, let us consider the dreadful nature of sin, even of what are called the least sins, and would not any one wish to cast in his lot with Stephen, and wash them away by continual penance? Now if what has been said is not enough to reconcile the reader's mind to their leaving their father in a body, which looks like quitting a positive duty, it should be considered that they believed themselves to be acting under the special direction of God. Miracles were really wrought to beckon them on; at least they were firmly convinced of the truth of those miracles, which is enough for our purpose, and they would have disobeyed

what they conceived to be God's guidance, if they had remained in the world. Miracles, indeed, cannot be pleaded to the reversing of commands of the Decalogue ; but persons leave their parents for causes which do not involve religion at all, as to follow some profession in a distant quarter of the globe, or to marry ; and we may surely excuse St. Bernard and his brothers for conduct which was so amply justified by the event. One word more ; every one will allow, that he who is continually meditating on heaven and heavenly things, and ever has his conversation in heaven, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, is more perfect than he who is always thinking on worldly affairs. Let no one say that this perfection is ideal, for it is a mere fact that it has been attained. Stephen and Bernard, and ten thousand other saints, have won this perfection, and it may be and is won now, for the Church verily is not dead, nor have the gates of hell prevailed against her. All cannot attain to such a high state on earth, for it is not the vocation of all. It was, however, plainly God's will that all Bernard's convertites should be so called, from the fact of their having attained to that state of perfection. They were happy, for to them it was given not to fear those words of our Lord, " Whosoever loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ;" or again, that terrible saying, spoken to one who asked to go and bury his father, " Let the dead bury their dead." Moreover, they knew that blessing, " Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world

to come eternal life." Bernard did receive back both father and sister, for his father died in his arms a monk at Clairvaux, and his sister also in time retired to a cloister. Let any one read St. Bernard's sermons on the Song of Solomon, and he will not doubt that monks have joys of their own, which none but those who have felt them can comprehend.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WORLD EDIFIED BY THE BRETHERN OF CITEAUX.

THE times of refreshing from the Lord had indeed come to the forlorn monastery ; the unheard-of conversion of so many noble youths filled the world with wonder. It was a proof that the Church was not only not dead, but not even asleep. At the beginning of the eleventh century, the heart of Christendom seemed to have failed, and all men thought that the world was coming to an end ; throughout the whole of the century the Church was either preparing for, or actually engaged in a deadly struggle with the civil power, and in that miserable confusion men seemed to have lost their landmarks, and not to know what was to come of all the perplexity which they saw about them. Meanwhile, the Church herself felt the deteriorating effects of the struggle ; men saw the strange spectacle of courtier-bishops, acting as the ministers of kings, and behaving in all respects like the wild nobles, from whom they were only distinguished by wearing a mitre, and carrying a crozier. Let any one think how bishops behaved in the contest between St. Anselm and the king, or again in Germany, how many of them sided with the emperor against the pope, and he will see how the feudal system had worked upon the Church. In the beginning of the twelfth century, the struggle seemed as doubtful as ever, when the emperor Henry V., like a loving son of the Church that he was, took Pope Pascal

prisoner in the very Basilica of St. Peter, and would not let him go till he had given him a blessing ; that is, till he had given up the question of investiture, and acknowledged himself vanquished by crowning his tyrant¹. This, however, was the last act of the great struggle : three years after Bernard's entrance into Citeaux, the Church resumed her former attitude, when, in the Lateran council, the pope acknowledged his error, and allowed the bishops to excommunicate the emperor. The time of the triumph of the Church was at hand ; but though she might conquer the powers of the world, how was she to expel luxury from her own bosom ? Enough has been said in these pages to show, that the cloister itself was deeply infected by a spirit of worldly pomp. What was worst of all, even Cluny, the nurse of holy prelates and of great popes, was degenerating : in St. Hugh's time, its vast riches had been used in the service of God ; but now that he was dead, it became evident in how precarious a situation is a rich monastery. One bad abbot is enough to spoil the whole, and St. Hugh's successor, Pontius, was utterly unequal to the task of governing this vast abbey. He was a young, ambitious man, high in favour with popes, emperors, and all great men, the go-between of high personages in important matters, and withal specially neglectful of the business of the monastery. For three years he went on well enough ; but just about the time of the rising prosperity of Citeaux, he began to vex the monks by his haughty conduct. To finish a melancholy story, after ten years of bickering he threw up his abbey in disgust. After various acts of turbulence, this accomplished and high-spirited man, who might have

¹ Baronius, in Ann. 1111.

been one of the greatest personages of his day, died in a prison, excommunicated. Out of reverence for Cluny, he was allowed to be buried in consecrated ground, and long afterwards his tomb was shown in the church, on which lay is effigy, represented with a cord round his hands and feet. His mismanagement ruined Cluny for a time, and threw the whole of its dependent priories into disorder. When the monastic state was thus on the wane, how could any improvement be expected in the bishops, who were mostly supplied from the monks? The Church might shake off the feudal yoke, but how was the leprosy of pomp and luxury to be shaken out of her own bosom, if her own rulers were tainted? At this juncture, the voice of one crying in the wilderness is heard, calling to repentance those who dwelt in kings' houses, clothed in soft raiment. Stephen's burning love of poverty astonished the world, especially when God set His seal upon His servant's work, by bringing to his feet such a disciple as Bernard, with a train of noble followers. It was a movement in favour of holy poverty, which vibrated over the whole of Christendom. Robert, Alberic, and Stephen had thus created a new idea in the Church; not that there ever were wanting men who would be poor for Christ's sake, but the Cistercian monk in his white habit, and his train of lay-brethren working for him, that he might have time for contemplation, is a personage the precise likeness of whom has never been seen brought out in a regular system before. The institution of lay-brethren had always existed, as we have said before, but it was more systematized in the Cistercians, and had a more distinct object. The lay-brethren took charge of the granges, which were often at some little distance from the monastery. The choir-brethren were thus enabled always to remain within the

cloister, and had an uninterrupted time for spiritual reading and prayer. Meditation had thus a marked place in the system ; and it is more observable, because the length and intricacy of the splendid services of Cluny took up a very great part of the time of the monks. The result of this system was, what may be called a new school of ascetic writers, of whom St. Bernard is the chief, followed by Gilbert of Hoyland, abbot of Swineshead in England, Ælred of Rievaulx, and William of St. Thierry. The science of the interior man thus began to be more especially developed by the Cistercian reform. Again, Stephen and his disciples were destined to exercise a more direct influence on the world than the old Benedictines ; from the fact of there being a reform in the particular direction of a revival of poverty, they occupied, so to speak, a more militant position than the monks before them. They found themselves at once opposed not only to monasteries, but to all luxurious prelates, and secular churchmen who were the favourites of kings, and so, indirectly, to kings. We shall soon see, that all the reforms in the Church naturally connected themselves with Citeaux, as their centre.

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY AT CITEAUX.

ST. ROBERT and St. Alberic had both a share in the establishment of the new monastery; it was Stephen, however, exclusively, who framed the order of the Cistercians. Before his time it was only a single convent; but under him it grew into the head of a vast monastic federacy, extending through every country in Europe. He was the author of the internal arrangement of this large body; and let no one suppose, that legislating for many thousands of monks is at all an easier task than settling the constitution of an equal number of citizens. Before, however, proceeding to consider Citeaux in this dignified capacity, as the queen and mother of an order, it will be well to go through the daily exercises of a Cistercian convent, that the reader may know what it is that is growing up before him. Suppose the monks all lying on their beds of straw, ranged in order along the dormitory, the abbot in the midst. Each of them lay full dressed, with his cowl drawn over his head, with his cuculla and tunic, and even with stockings on his feet¹. His scapular alone was dispensed with. Doubtless no one complained of heat, for the bed-clothes were scanty, consisting of a rough wollen cloth between their limbs and the straw, and a sort of woollen rug over them². The long dormitory had no fire, and

¹ Us. Cist. 82.

² Calmet on c. 55 of St. Ben. Reg.

currents of air had full room to play under the unceiled roof, left in the native rudeness of its beams. A lamp lighted up the apartment, and burned all night long. At the proper hour the clock awoke the sacristan, who slept, not in the dormitory, but near the church. He was the timekeeper of the whole community, and regulated the clock,² which seems to have been something of an alarm³, for he used to set it at the right hour over-night. His was an important charge, for he had to calculate the time, and if he was more wakeful than usual, or if his clock went wrong, the whole convent was robbed of a part of its scanty rest, and the last lesson had to be lengthened that the hour of lauds might come right again. The time for rising varied with these strict observers of the ancient rule. St. Benedict commands that his monks should get up at the eighth hour of the night during the winter. In his time, however, the length of the hours varied in summer and winter. Day and night were each divided into twelve hours ; but as the day dawns earlier in some parts of the year than in others, the twelve hours of night would then be distributed over a less space of time at one period than at another, and would therefore be shorter. The eighth hour of the night would thus, though always two hours after midnight, be sometimes closer to it than at others. It, however, always fell about two o'clock, according to our mode of reckoning⁴. In summer, the hour of matins was so fixed, that they should be over a short time before lauds, which were always at day-break. The sacristan, as soon as he was up, trimmed the church lamp, and that of the dormitory, and rang the great bell ; in a moment, the whole of this

² Us. Cist. 114.

⁴ Bona, Div. Psal. c. iv. 3.

little world was alive ; the sole things which a minute ago looked as if they were watching were the two solitary lamps burning all night long, one in the dormitory, the other in the church, as if they were ready trimmed with oil for the coming of the Lord ; but now every eye is awake, and every hand is making the sign of the cross. Most men find it hard to leave even a bed of straw, and the seven hours in winter and six in summer were but just enough for bodies wearied out with hard work, and always hungering ; doubtless the poor novice often stretched himself, before the tones of the bell which had broken his slumbers fully roused him to consciousness ; but starting from bed, and putting himself at once into the presence of his Lord, was but the work of a moment for the older monk. The prayer which they were to say in rising is not prescribed in the rule ; it is probable, however, that after crossing themselves in the name of the Holy Trinity, they repeated the psalm, *Deus in adiutorium meum intende*⁵, and then walked towards the church. One by one these white figures glided along noiselessly through the cloister, keeping modestly close to the walls, and leaving the middle space free, where none but the abbot walked⁶. Their cowls were drawn over their heads, which were slightly bent down ; their eyes were fixed on the ground, and their hands hung down motionless by their sides, wrapt in the sleeves of the cuculla. The old Cistercian church, after the model of which was built even the stately church which afterwards contained all the brethren in the flourishing times of Citeaux⁷, was remarkable in its arrangement. It was intended for

⁵ Martenne, de Antiq. Mon. Rit. lib. i. 1. 27.

⁶ Rit. Cist. 1. 5.

⁷ Rit. Cist. 1. 3.

monks alone ; few entered it but those guests who happened to come to the abbey, and they were not always allowed to be present⁸. It was divided into four parts ; at the upper end was the high altar, standing apart from the wall : the sole object which Cistercian simplicity allowed upon it was a crucifix of painted wood ; and over it was suspended a pix, in which the Holy Sacrament was reserved, with great honour, in a linen cloth⁹, with a lamp burning before it day and night¹. There do not appear to have been even candlesticks upon the altar, though two large lights burned during the time of mass immediately before it². The part in front of this most sacred place was called the presbyterium, and there the priest, deacon, and sub-deacon, sat on chairs placed for them when the holy sacrifice was to be celebrated. Next came the choir itself, where the brethren sat in simple stalls, ranged on each side of the church. In front of the stalls of the monks were the novices, kneeling on the pavement³, and sitting on low seats. The stall of the abbot was on the right hand, in the lower part of the choir, and the prior's place was on the opposite side, just where the head of a college and his deputy sit in one of our own collegiate chapels. Beyond this was the retro-chorus,

⁸ *Us. Cist.* 17. 21. 55.

⁹ *Ib.* 21.

¹ *V. c.* 82, in the collection of statutes of the general chapters before his time, made by Stephen's successor. The words, "et potest," show, that it was in a place not accessible to all. The lamp is mentioned again in a later collection of statutes, *Nom.* p. 277. Those who know the reverence of St. Stephen's age for the Holy Sacrament will be at no loss to know where the lamp was placed, though it is not expressly mentioned. For a contemporary instance of a light before the high altar, *vid. Matt. Par. Vit. Pauli Abb. Sti Alb.*

² *Us. Cist.* 55.

³ Fosbroke, *Monachism*, p. 203.

which was not the Lady Chapel, but was at the other end of the church nearest the nave, and was the place marked out for those in weak health, but still well enough to leave the infirmary⁴. Last of all came the nave, which was smaller than the rest of the church⁵, unlike the long and stately naves of our cathedral churches. Into this church, called by the modest name of oratory, the first fathers of Citeaux entered nightly to sing the praises of God, and to pray for the world, which was lying asleep beyond the borders of their forest. It had many separate entrances, by which different portions of the convent flocked in with a quick step to rouse themselves from sleep; but all in perfect silence: by one side entrance the brethren came in between the presbytery and the stalls⁶, while the abbot and prior, and those about him, entered at the lower end; there was also a door leading into the cloister⁷, through which processions passed. Each brother as he came in threw back his cowl, and bowed to each altar that he passed, and then to the high altar. They then, except on Sundays and some feast days, knelt in their stalls with their hands clasped upon their breasts, and their feet close together, and said the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. In this position they remained till the *Deus in adjutorium* had been said, when they rose and remained standing during the rest of the service, except where it was otherwise especially marked. Matins lasted for about two hours, during which they chanted psalms, interspersed with anthems; the glimmering light of the lamp was not intended to do more than pierce through the gloom of the church, for the greater part of the service was recited by heart, and a candle was placed just in

⁴ Us. Cist. 101. Rit. Cist. 1. 3.

⁵ Voy. Lit. i. 224.

⁶ Us. Cist. 68. Rit. Cist. 1. 5.

⁷ Us. Cist. 7. 21.

that part where the lesson was to be read⁸; if it were not that their lips moved, they might have been taken for so many white statues, for their arms were placed motionless upon their bosoms in the form of a cross⁹, and every movement was regulated so as to be as tranquil as possible¹. The sweet chanting of the early Cistercians struck some of their contemporaries as something supernatural. "With such solemnity and devotion do they celebrate the divine office," says Stephen of Tournay, "that you might fancy that angels' voices were heard in their concert; by their psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, they draw men to praise God, and they imitate the angels²." Yet this effect was simply produced by common Gregorian chants, sung in unison; as in the other parts of divine worship, the Cistercians were reformers in church music. They sent, in their simplicity, all the way to Metz to procure the antiphonary of that church, as being the most likely to be pure from innovation, probably because Amalarius, a deacon of Metz, was a celebrated liturgical writer in the time of the son of Charlemagne; but they soon found that many ages had passed over the Church since the time of the great emperor of the West. The book was very defective, and was filled with innovations, and they immediately set about correcting it³. Monastic music had suffered, as well as other portions of St. Benedict's rule; and our Cistercians speak with contempt of womanish counter-tenor voices⁴, which they inexorably banished from their churches. Their chanting was especially suited for contemplation: they dwelt on each

⁸ Us. Cist. 68.

⁹ Rit. Cist. 1. 8.

¹ Ib. 1. 6.

² Bona de Div. Psal. 13. 5.

³ Tract. de Cantu. in St. Bernard's works.

⁴ St. Bern. in Cant. 47. Inst. Cap. Gen. 71. ap. Nomasticon.

syllable, and sucked in the honied sense of the Psalms as they pronounced the words. It is not wonderful if the men of that time believed that devils trembled, and angels noted down in letters of gold⁵ the words which dropped from their lips, as these grave and masculine voices chanted through the darkness of the night the triumph of good over evil, and the glories of the Lord and of His Church. Few, indeed, are worthy to chant the Psalms: who can repeat, for instance, the 119th Psalm as he should? But Stephen and his brethren might pronounce those burning words of the Spirit without shame, for they had indeed given up the world. "Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer, et servus dilexit illud."

After matins were over they never returned to sleep, but were permitted either to pray in the church, or to sit in the cloister. In summer, when the day dawned upon the convent almost as soon as matins were over, the time thus allowed was very short, for lauds followed close on the first glimmer of morning light. In winter there was a considerable interval between lauds and matins, and it was during this part of the day that the monk was left most to himself. This was the time allotted to mental prayer, and many a monk might then be seen kneeling in his stall, occupied in that meditation which, according to St. Bernard, "gathers itself up into itself, and by Divine help, separates itself from earthly things, to contemplate God⁶." It was one of the rules of the order that they were not to prostrate themselves full length on the ground in church⁷, but should keep their souls in quiet before God, without violent action. Others

⁵ Exord. Mag. 2. 3.

⁶ De Con. 5. 2.

⁷ Inst. Cap. Gen. 86.

again remained in the cloister, which, with all its strictness and tranquillity, was a busy scene. Let no one think of the cloister as it is now, in a state of desertion, about our cathedrals, cold and comfortless, with all the glass taken out of its windows ; its religious silence has given place to the silence of the churchyard. It was formerly the very paradise of the monk, from which all the rest of the convent was named⁸ ; it shut him out from the world “with its royal rampart of discipline,” and was an image of the rest of heaven. It was the passage by which every part of the convent buildings were connected, and around which on Palm Sunday they walked in procession, with green palms in their hands. At the east end of the church, at right angles with it, was the dormitory, opposite the church was the refectory, and adjoining the church was the chapter-house⁹; in the centre was a cross. After matins, then those of the brethren who were not in the church were all together in the cloister. In one part was the cantor marking out the lessons, and hearing some brother repeat them in a low suppressed tone ; or else a novice would be learning to recite the psalter by heart. In another part, ranged on seats, the brethren would sit in unbroken silence reading, with their cowls so disposed

⁸ St. Bern. Serm. de Div. 42.

⁹ Calmet, Règle de St. Benoît. ch. 66. The order observed in processions falls in with Calmet’s opinion, v. Us. Cist. 17. It is there implied that the deacon, who went first, had at the last station of the procession his face to the east and his back to the brethren. The whole convent, therefore, after having made the round of the cloister, and finished at the point where they began, looked to the east ; they must, therefore, at first starting from the church, have moved towards the east. And this fixes the position of their first station, which is known to have been the dormitory, at the east end of the church.

about their heads, that it might be seen that they were not asleep. It was here that St. Bernard gained his wonderful knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, meditating upon them before the morning light. In another corner of the cloister, the boys of the monastery would be at school, under the master of the novices. The library, from which the monks took the books in which they read, was between the church and the chapter-house, and was under the care of the sacristan: and let no one despise the library of a Cistercian convent. St. Augustine seems to have been a favourite author with them¹, and Cîteaux itself had no lack of expositions of Scripture by the Fathers². Shall we not be surprised to find a copy of the Koran in the armarium of Clairvaux? and yet there it was, the gift of Peter the Venerable, who had ordered it to be translated carefully³. Cîteaux had its scriptorium as well as its library, where manuscripts were copied by the brethren. It is true that the antiquary would despise the handiwork of the Cistercians, for no illuminated figures of saints, elaborate capital letters, or flowers in arabesque creeping up the margin, were allowed; jewelled covers and gold clasps were also forbidden⁴; but instead of this, religious silence was strictly observed, and the scriptorium was a place for meditation as much as the cloister itself⁵. Their labours did not consist in simply copying the manuscripts; they took pains to discover various readings, and to compare editions. It might have been supposed, that the cold winds of the forest, with the burning sun and drenching rain, must have

¹ Mabillon de Mon. Stud. App. Art. 24. St. Bern. de Bapt.

² St. Bern. Vit. Guillel. i. 24. ap. Ben.

³ Pet. Ven. Ep. 4. 17.

⁴ Inst. Cap. Gen. 13. 81.

⁵ Inst. Cap. Gen. 87.

fairly bleached out of Stephen's mind all the learning which he had gathered in the schools of Paris. But he left behind him a work, which proved that he kept under his Cistercian habit the same heart which had urged him to leave his old cloister of Sherborne to study in Scotland and in France. A manuscript edition of the Bible, written under the eye of our abbot himself, was preserved with great reverence at Citeaux up to the time of the French Revolution. Not content with consulting Latin manuscripts, he even had recourse to the Rabbins, in order to settle the readings of the Old Testament. In this way there could never be a lack of books for the brethren to read in the cloister, since there was at home a power of multiplying them as long as there were friendly monasteries to lend them new manuscripts to copy, when the original stock of the library had failed.

As the Cistercians followed the natural divisions of the day, the hours in winter and in summer differed considerably, as has been already mentioned; again, the ecclesiastical divisions of the year altered their mode of living to a great degree. From Easter to Holy Cross day, that is the 14th of September, they broke their fast after sext, and had a second meal after vespers, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, which were fast-days: during the rest of the year, from Holy Cross day to Easter, they never had but one meal a day, and that after nones, up to Ash Wednesday, but during Lent not till after vespers. It will be necessary, therefore, to give a sketch of their mode of living, first in summer and then in winter. Lauds, as has been said before, followed matins very soon in summer, after which an interval was allowed, during which the brethren might go to the dormitory to wash themselves, and change portions

of the dress in which they had slept. As soon as the day had fully dawned, prime was sung, and then they went into the chapter. If ever there was a scene revolting to human pride, it was the chapter; more than any other part of the monastic life, it shows that a convent was not a place where men walked about in clothes of a peculiar cut, and spent their time in formal actions, but a school of humiliation, where the very last roots of self-love were plucked up, and the charity of the Gospel planted in its stead. Humility was the very soul of the cloister, and a great part of St. Benedict's rule is taken up with an analysis of the twelve degrees of humility, which form the steps of a Jacob's ladder, leading up to perfect love, which casteth out fear⁶. Our Cistercians had studied this part of the rule well, and St. Bernard's earliest work is a sort of a comment upon it. The chapter-house was the place where this mingled humility and love was most of all exercised. Around it were ranged seats, one above another; the novices sitting on the lowest row, or rather on the footstools attached to the seats; in the midst was the abbot's chair⁷. The chapter opened with the martyrology, and with those parts of the service now attached to the office of prime. Then followed the commemoration of the faithful departed, and, in some cases, a sermon; after which a portion of St. Benedict's rule was read. Then each brother, who had in the slightest way transgressed the rule, came forward and confessed it aloud before the whole convent. He rose from his seat and threw back his cowl that all might see his face, then he muffled up his face and head, and threw himself full length on the low stool of the lectern, without speaking a word. At length the abbot spoke, and asked him, "What sayest

⁶ Reg. c. 7.

⁷ Rit. Cist. 3. 3.

thou ?” The brother answered, “*Meâ culpâ*,” “It was by my fault ;” then he was bidden to rise in the name of the Lord, and he again uncovered his features, and confessed his faults, and after receiving a penance, if it were necessary, he went back to his seat at the bidding of his superior. When all had confessed their own sins, then a still more extraordinary scene followed : each monk accused his brother if he had seen or heard anything amiss in him. He rose, and mentioning his name, said, “Our dear brother has committed such a fault.” Happy they who could thus bear to hear their faults proclaimed in the face of day, without being angry. The angels are blessed because they cannot sin ; next to them in happiness are those who are not wrathful when rebuked. But what shall we say to the punishments for greater offences against the rule ? The monk who had grievously offended stripped himself to his waist, and on his knees received the discipline at the hands of a brother in the face of the convent. Blessed again are they who thus are willing to suffer shame on earth, if by any means they may escape shame at the dreadful day of judgment. It was not, however, only in public that they confessed their sins ; any mortal sins against the rule were to be confessed over again to a priest for the benefit of absolution, though they had already been proclaimed in the chapter ; and during all the intervals of work, before they had broken their fast, the brethren might confess their sins in private in the chapter. An instance is incidentally related, in which a novice, on entering into Clairvaux, made a general confession of the sins of his whole life⁸, and this was probably a common practice, though not enjoined

⁸ Vit. St. Bern. 7. 22.

by the rule ; at least it had become common at the end of the century in which Stephen lived⁹. After the chapter was over, the brethren went out to manual labour ; this was one of the peculiarities which distinguished Citeaux from Cluny. Their labour was good hard work by which they gained their livelihood, and with the help of their lay-brethren supported themselves, and gave abundant alms to the poor. Few things are more remarkable than this mixture of all the details of spades and forks, ploughing, haymaking, and reaping, with the meditation and constant prayer of the Cistercians. During the harvest-time, the daily mass was, if the abbot so willed, attended only by the sick and all who were too weak to work, for the whole convent was in the fields. And when mass was said, the priest put off chasuble and stole, and with his assistants followed the brethren who had gone before to work¹. St. Bernard put off the finishing of one of his wonderful sermons on the Canticles, because the brethren must go to the work which their rule and their poverty required². It was a peculiarity of the Cistercians, that they did not sing psalms, but meditated while they worked ; again, no one was allowed to take a book with him into the fields. This last regulation was probably made by Stephen himself, for it is recorded of St. Alberic that he took the psalter with him when he worked. Field-work was not, however, it may be said by the way, the only labour of the Cistercian ; he took his turn to be cook, which office went the round of the convent, and was changed weekly. Again, he might be cellarer, infirmarian, master of the novices, or porter,

⁹ Vid. Adam, abbot of a Cistercian monastery, quoted by Calmet on c. 58 of the Rule.

¹ Us. Cist. 84.

² Serm. i.

with a variety of other offices, which would give him employment enough. The cellarer, especially, was an officer of considerable dignity in the community: he had the whole of the victualling department under his care; cooks and lay-brethren especially referred to him in all matters which came under his jurisdiction, and he had to weigh out the proper quantity of food for each of the monks. Prudence and experience were not, therefore, qualities thrown away in a convent, which, as has been said, was a little world in itself, and even, in its way, a busy world. But each servile occupation was hallowed by obedience and religious silence, in which the Lord spoke to the heart.

The brethren left the fields as soon as the first stroke of the bell for tierce was heard. The early Benedictines said tierce in the fields, and continued working till near 10 o'clock, thus giving two hours and a half to manual labour. The reason why the Cistercians worked for a shorter time was, because mass followed immediately upon tierce. In St. Benedict's time there was no daily mass³, but since then a change had taken place in the discipline of the Church, and the holy sacrifice was offered up every day at Citeaux. At this mass any one might communicate who had not communicated on the Sunday, which was the day on which the whole convent received the Body and Blood of our most blessed Lord, who was at that time given to the faithful under both kinds. After the celebration of these adorable mysteries, the brethren again retired into the cloister to read, or went into the church for meditation. At about half-past eleven the bell rang for sext, after which the convent assembled in the refectory, for the first and principal

³ Martenne, de Ant. Mon. Rit. 2—4.

meal of the day, except on the Wednesdays and Fridays out of the Paschal time, on which days, as has been said before, they had only one meal, and that after nones. The Cistercian dinner, or breakfast, as it might be called, needed the seasoning of early rising and hard labour to make it palatable. It consisted of a pound of the coarsest bread (one-third of which was reserved for supper if there was one), and two dishes of different sorts of vegetables boiled without grease. Their drink was the sour wine of the country, well diluted with water, or else thin beer⁴ or a decoction of herbs called sapa⁵, which seems to have been more like vegetable soup than any other beverage. Even fish and eggs, which had always been considered to be legitimate diet for monks, were excluded. Their contemporaries wondered at their austerity; how, weak and delicate bodies, worn out by hard labour and by night-watching, could possibly subsist on such coarse food: but St. Bernard tells us what made it palatable. "Thou fearest watchings, fasts, and manual labour," he says to a runaway Cistercian, "but these are light to one who thinks on the eternal fire. The remembrance of the outer-darkness takes away all horror from solitude. Think on the strict sifting of thine idle words which is to come, and then silence will not be so very unpleasing. Place before thine eyes the everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth, and the mat or the down pillow will be the same to thee." And yet theirs was not a service of gloom or fear. Christ rewarded the holy boldness of these noble athletes, who thus afflicted their bodies for His sake, by filling their souls with the joys of devotion.

⁴ Sicera is mentioned, Us. Cis. 117.

⁵ Sapa occurs Vit. St. Bern, 2—1.

“Oh! that by God’s mercy,” says St. Bernard to one whom he was persuading to quit the world, “I could have thee as my fellow in that school where Jesus is the master! Oh! that I could place thy bosom, if it were but once pure, in the place where it might be a vase to catch that unction which teacheth us of all things—Thinkest thou not that thou wouldest suck honey from the rock, and oil from the rugged stone?” Every action was sanctified to the monks, even at their meals a strict silence was observed, and one of the brethren read aloud some religious book, during the time that they were in the refectory. After it was over, according to the custom of hot climates, and in order to make up for the shortness of the night in summer, they went into the dormitory to sleep. After about an hour’s rest the bell rang to rouse them up, and in the interval between nones, they washed themselves, and either sat in the cloister or repaired to the church. Nones were said at half-past two, after which they were allowed a draught of water in the refectory before they returned to manual labour, which lasted till half-past five, when they sang vespers⁶. The vesper-hour was especially the monk’s season of quiet, when the day was over with all its work, and the shades of evening were closing about him. St. Bernard interprets the evening in Scripture to mean the time of quiet⁷, and Cistercian writers, even in late times, are fond of collecting together all the mystical import of the time of vespers⁸. They went into the refectory after returning from their work, and partook of a slight repast, consisting of the remainder of their pound of bread, with a few raw fruits, such as

⁶ Calmet, c. 48.

⁷ In Cant. Serm. 57.

⁸ Bona de Div. Psal. 10.

radishes, lettuces, or apples furnished by the abbey gardens.

Before we close the day with compline, it will be necessary to mark the difference between the summer and winter rule. Their seasons followed the ecclesiastical division of the year; summer was reckoned from Easter to the middle of September, and the rest of the year was called winter. The Church in winter sits in expectation of her Lord's coming, and the Cistercians redoubled their austerities during this long period of the gloom of the year. They arose in all the cold and snow of winter, in the dark and dreary night, to watch for the coming of the Lord, and to pray for the world which was lying without in the darkness and shadow of death. As the world is engaged in turning day into night, in order to have its fill of pleasure, so they multiplied time for devotion, by stealing from the hours when men are asleep. On Christmas night a fire burned merrily in the calefactory, and all with glad hearts might cluster around it; but at other times no fire is mentioned during the night hours, and it was in cold and hunger that they waited for the nativity of the Lord, and thought upon the cold cave at Bethlehem, where the Blessed Virgin waited for the time when He, who is the only joy of the faithful, came forth from her to save the world. He was the centre of all their exercises, and His holy fire burning in their hearts, gave them heat and light in the dreariness of their watching. Winter brought its compensation with it at Citeaux, as well as to the rest of the world. It was then that they had most time for meditation and prayer in the cloister, or in the church after matins; for lauds were never said till the early dawn, which would of course be then much later than in summer. Prime followed

immediately upon lauds, and would generally begin about seven o'clock. Then came the mass, tierce, and the chapter, so that they did not begin to work till after the time prescribed by St. Benedict, which was after tierce, or about half-past nine or ten. The chapter is not here noticed, nor indeed is it mentioned systematically anywhere in his rule; it probably became a system, and the hour for it was fixed, after St. Benedict's time⁹. From the time that they went into the fields after the chapter, till nones, which were said between two and three, they worked on without breaking their fast till after the hour was said, that is between half-past two and three¹. After the meal was over, they walked into the church two and two, chaunting the Miserere, and there said grace. Vespers followed soon after; for it seems probable that they were said about sunset, but before the twilight had so far faded away as to require candles. Such is Cardinal Bona's opinion, himself a Cistercian, and the lighting of lamps for vespers is not mentioned among the duties of the servant of the church, as he was called². In summer, when a slight repast was allowed in the evening, the quiet of the twilight hour was necessarily interrupted; but in winter, when nothing was permitted after their one meal, but a draught of water, nothing broke the repose of the monks after vespers were said. The most breathless stillness reigned in the convent. The brethren sat reading in the cloister, and even signs were forbidden except on special occasions³. The evening twilight between vespers and compline was the monks' sabbath. They were forbid-

⁹ Reg. St. Ben. 46.

¹ Calmet, c. 41.

² Bona de Div. Psal. 10. Us. Cist. 105.

³ Us. Cist. 79.

den expressly to get into knots and talk together, and almost the only sign allowed was when one brother motioned to another to take care of his book, if anything called him out of the cloister. Strange accidents happened to books in those ages, which might have made this precaution necessary, as when a bear swallowed or at least sadly mangled the manuscript of St. Augustine's Epistles at Cluny⁴; though it is true such visitors would hardly enter a cloister full of monks. During Lent, as their bodily labours were greater, so a longer time was allowed them for meditation and reading. As they did not break their fast till about five o'clock in the evening⁵, they said sext and nones in the fields, or at least they returned to their work as soon as they had said them, and continued working till four o'clock⁶. But a longer time was allowed for reading in the morning, and additional mental prayer is especially enjoined at this season⁷. The only reading allowed seems to have been the Holy Scriptures; and on the first Sunday in Lent, the cantor distributed a portion of the bible to each brother, which he was to receive reverently, and stretching out both hands "for joy at the Holy Scriptures." No greater proof of their austere penitence in the time of Lent can be found, than the way in which St. Bernard speaks of it. Sweetly, and with the tenderness of a mother, does he always speak to the brethren at that time. "Not without a great touch of pity, brethren," he once said, "do I look upon you. I cast about for some alleviation to give you, and bodily alleviation comes before my mind; but if your penance be lightened by a cruel pity, then is

⁴ Pet. Ven. Ep. 1. 24.

⁵ Calmet, c. 48.

⁶ "Usque ad decimam horam," St. Ben. Reg. 48.

⁷ Us. Cist. 15.

your crown by degrees stripped of its gems. What can I do? Ye are killed all day long with many fasts, in labours oft, in watchings over much, besides your inward trials, the contrition of heart, and a multitude of temptations. Yea, ye are killed; but it is for His sake who died for you. But if your tribulation abounds for Him, your consolation shall abound through Him. For is it not certain, that your sufferings are above human strength, beyond nature, against habit? Another then doth bear them for you, even He doubtless, who, as saith the Apostle, beareth up all things by the word of His power⁸."

Two things alone remain to be noticed, which throughout the whole year were the last events of a Cistercian day, and those are the collation or the reading of the collations of Cassian, and compline. At Citeaux these collations, which were a collection of the lives of the early monks, or else some of the books of saints' lives, was read aloud in the cloister. On the finishing of the reading, all turned their faces to the east, and the abbot said, "Our help is in the name of the Lord;" the convent responded, "Who hath made heaven and earth;" and then they proceeded into the church to sing compline, which was the last office of the day. The time for compline varied according to the hour when they retired to rest, which in winter would be about seven, and in summer about eight⁹. As their motions were regulated according to the duration of the light, an approximation only can be made as to their hours of going to bed and rising. After compline the abbot rose and sprinkled with holy water each brother as they went out in order. They then pulled their cowls over their heads and walked into

⁸ Serm. in Psalm. xc. Preface.

⁹ Cabinet, c. 8.

the dormitory. Such was the Cistercian life in its first fervour, as it was under Stephen and St. Bernard. Put down upon paper it appears but a dead letter of outward observances; the spirit of obedience, humility, and charity which animated the whole cannot be described in words. The angelical countenances and noiseless regulated motions of the monks, which had a certain monastic grace of their own, are all missing to light up the whole. The presence again of such an abbot as Stephen must be taken into account, before a correct idea can be obtained of Citeaux. He could modify the rule to the weak, and direct the energies of the strong; he could call the faint-hearted into his presence in the parlour, and give them words of holy counsel. Many things are scattered up and down St. Bernard's writings, which show that a rule without the living tradition is not fully intelligible. For instance, from scattered hints it appears, that the monks had sometimes a certain time allowed them for conversing together, though that is not mentioned at all in St. Benedict's rule. The fact is, that silence was the general order of the day, but the abbot might allow those whom he judged fit to converse together¹. In after ages, and not so long after Stephen's time, these conversations were systematized, and placed at set hours; but before then they seem to have been at the discretion of the abbot. How naked and dead are the words of a rule without the living abbot to dispense them, to couple together the strong and the weak, that

¹ V. Calmet, c. 6. St. Bern. Serm. de diversis, 17, and Benedictine note; also de Grad. Superbiæ, 13. Also Speculum Monachorum, in the Benedictine St. Bernard, written by Arnulfus, a monk of Bohéries, who flourished in the latter part of the twelfth century. The master of the novices held frequent conversations with them, vid. Adam of Perseigne, in Baluzius Misc. vol. ii. 236.

the sturdy warrior might help on the trembling soldier, and to mingle the roughness of discipline with the tender hand which dropped oil and wine on the wounded heart. Stephen, though God had removed the pains which had so long afflicted him, had now an anxious charge upon his hands, no less than the training up of St. Bernard.

CHAPTER XVI.

STEPHEN AND BERNARD.

THE poor house of Citeaux was now, as we have seen, perfect ; it had not only a strict rule, and a ruler to teach it, but it had also novices to whom it was to be taught. It had now become too small for its inmates, and the despised convent, which but lately was looked upon with fear rather than admiration, had now the choice of all the fair fields of France, and by and by of Europe, at its command. Many were the children of her that was called barren, and every year, band after band of monks were sent out from the now teeming house to form new monasteries, and these again increased and multiplied, till every kingdom of Europe was filled with the daughters of Citeaux. Soon after the arrival of St. Bernard and his companions at the convent, Stephen was summoned away from home for the purpose of founding the new monastery of La Ferté in the diocese of Châlons. Walter, bishop of Châlons, and two noblemen of the country, on hearing that Citeaux was too full, had immediately looked out for a place where they might house the new colony, and proposed to Stephen to found a convent on their ground. He gladly accepted the offer, and himself accompanied the brethren whom he destined for this service to their new abode. In a few days he returned to his abbey of Citeaux. The charge which God had intrusted to him, was the more anxious, because St. Bernard's state of health was exceedingly precarious. The thinness of his slightly-built

frame¹ showed in what a frail earthen vessel that precious soul was contained. His neck especially was very long and delicate, so that when he threw back his cowl, none could help remarking it, and the monks praised its snowy whiteness and its elegance, like that of a swan². His life was even endangered by the narrowness of his throat ; but his most troublesome infirmity was the weakness of his stomach, which rejected a great portion of the food which he had swallowed. With all these ailments he had entered the strictest order of the day, and now that he had thus put his hand to the plough, he was determined not to look back. He had entered the abbey of Citeaux in order to bury himself from the world, to become a poor man and a rustic, not simply to hide under a white cuculla an ambitious heart, nor even to give himself time to exercise a fine imagination on holy subjects. Every day therefore he used to excite himself forward, by repeating to himself, " Bernard, Bernard, wherefore art thou here ?" He earnestly set himself to work on the rough occupations in which the Cistercians passed their day. His attenuated frame was bent down with the rude labours of the field, and his delicate skin worn with holding the spade and the hoe. Nor did he work listlessly like a man who takes up a fork and makes hay on a fine sunshiny day, but he laboured with a will in downright earnestness, as if it had been the business of his life. His weak body often sunk under these labours ; and often the awkwardness of his hands, which were used to far other work than digging and mowing, and such like toils, obliged his superiors to separate him from his brethren at the hours of manual

¹ " Corpus tenuissimum, statura mediocritatis honestæ, longitudini tamen vicinior apparebat." Gauffridi Vita, c. 1.

² Exord. Mag. 7. 17.

labour. He was, however, never happy on those occasions, and if he could not work with the convent, he immediately began cutting wood or carrying burdens on his shoulders³. Stephen seems to have been especially careful of him in this respect ; during the harvest he had made many attempts at reaping, but was too weak and too little accustomed to such work to succeed ; he was therefore ordered to lie by, and sit by himself, while, as says William of St. Thierry, the brethren were reaping with fervour and joy in the Holy Ghost. This was a sore trouble to him, and in the simplicity of his heart he began to weep ; he then prayed to God to give him grace, so that he might be able to join his brethren in their labours. From that day forward he became a most expert reaper, and the same William, his personal friend, asserts, that even up to the period when he was writing his account, St. Bernard was wont to say with self-gratulation, and a sort of joyous triumph, that he was the best reaper of them all. This hard work, to which he subjected himself in order to carry out his rule, was the more remarkable in him, not only because of his extreme weakness, but from the exceeding austerity with which he lived. His very existence was a miracle, for he hardly seemed to eat, drink, or sleep, and his friends wondered how he could live. In after times he himself severely taxed his own austerity, which according to his own account had made him useless to the church. It is not on record that Stephen checked him in his mortification of the flesh ; he probably looked upon his youthful novice with a saintly wonder, as one whom God's Holy Spirit was leading according to His own blessed will, and with whom he must not interfere. Indeed so much had this severe way of life become the

³ Guil. Vit. 1. 4.

habit of both body and soul, that he hardly could have increased his diet if he would⁴. St. Bernard is indeed one who cannot be judged by ordinary rules. God has set His seal upon His saint, by the wonderful things which He wrought through him, and none must rudely venture to blame his actions. He, in his white Cistercian dress, was raised up, for the needs of the Church, just as was John the Baptist in his garment of camel's hair; and when he came forth from his monastery, and the world streamed forth to view him, and kiss the hem of his poor monkish habit, it was then seen that his weak frame, with the spirit of love and supernatural energy shining through it, and the flaming words of divine eloquence bursting from his lips, could serve God and His church to good purpose indeed. But this is not the place to speak of him as the companion of kings, the setter up of popes, and the real governor of the Church; it is only as a Cistercian monk that he appears here, and in this capacity his wonderful way of life was not thrown away. It subdued his body to his spirit to such a degree, that he seemed to live the life of an angel upon earth. His soul was wrapped up in a ceaseless contemplation of God, and he realized the crucifixion of the flesh of which St. Paul speaks, and all things which belong to the Spirit grew and flourished in him. His senses, from the abstraction of his soul, seemed to be dead within him. He did not know whether the ceiling of the novices' cell was arched or flat, though he passed there every day of his life. Again, the choir of the church of Citeaux had three windows, but to the last he fancied it had only one. So little conscious was he of the sense of taste, that he more than once drank oil instead of water,

⁴ Guil. i. 4.

without perceiving it. It was this deadness to earth, which made him see so far into heavenly things as he did. Earnest as he was in working at the lowest manual labour, this habit of praying always never forsook him. It was this habit, which he acquired at Citeaux under Stephen's discipline, which was the source of all his power. The Holy Spirit filled him with rapturous joys which only crucified souls can know; and this unction which anointed him from above, he poured back upon the Church, and thus enabled her to resist the dry and cold rationalistic heresies which then threatened to overwhelm her with the maxims of worldly science. It was this education, too, in the cloister of Citeaux, before the morning light, and at the feet of Stephen in the auditorium, which made him the great founder of the science of the interior life of the Christian. He has been called the last of the Fathers, and he thus stands on the confines of the system of the early Church, which contemplated God as He is in Himself, and that of the later ages, in which the mysterious dealings of God with the soul of the individual Christian were minutely analyzed. It is not to be supposed that he was so abstracted from the world, as to be either singular in his demeanour or dead to earthly affection. He cast off a hair shirt which he had constantly worn next to his skin, lest in a monastery where all things were done in common it should be observed. Though his habit was of coarse and poor materials, yet it was always scrupulously clean. He used to say that dirt was the mark of a careless mind, or of one that cherished a fond idea of its own virtue, or loved the silly praise of men. His motions were ever regulated, and bore humility on the face of them, and a sweet fragrance of piety was shed around his person and his actions, so that all looked upon his countenance

with joy⁵. His voice was singularly clear, notwithstanding the weakness of his body, and in after times, its very tones won even those who did not understand the language which he spoke. In conversation, the spirit of charity shone through all his words; and he always spoke of what most interested his companion, making inquiries about his trade or profession, as if he had especially studied it all his life. Stephen did not prevent his seeing and conversing with his relations when they came to Citeaux; and on these occasions his courtesy was such, that his exceedingly tender conscience would sometimes prick him as though he had spoken idle words. On one occasion, he devised a strange expedient; when summoned to see some of his friends, who had come to visit him, he stopped his ears with tow, so that his deafness might give him an air of stupidity. Loud laughter in a monk was an object of his special aversion, and he has recorded it in one place of his writings, by a graphic picture of the light-minded monk laughing to himself. He describes him covering his face with his hands, compressing his lips, clenching his teeth, and laughing as though he would not laugh, till at length the suppressed mirth burst out through his nostrils⁶. With all this hatred of levity which thus appears in the almost ludicrous vividness of his description, he would on occasion even force himself to smile. Another characteristic of Bernard's soul, was the wonderful strength of his affections. Though he had torn himself thus rudely from all earthly affections, yet the wounds which he had suffered in the conflict did not close over a hardened heart, but he carried them with him all bleeding to the cloister. Even long after his novitiate was over, nay, to his last day, the

⁵ Gauf. 2.

⁶ De Grad. Hum. et Sup. 12.

tenderness of this maternal heart cost him many a pang; chiefly if any one of his brethren went wrong, he mourned over him with a passionate grief, with which he in vain struggled, as though it were an imperfection. On occasion of his brother Gerard's death, he endeavoured to preach one of his sermons on the Canticles without alluding to it, but it was too much for him: in the midst of the sermon, his grief bursts forth, and down fall the bitter tears which he had pent up so long, and he breaks out into expressions of the most vehement and impassioned sorrow. He kept to the very last the most vivid recollection of his mother; he carried it with him into Citeaux, and every day before he went to bed, he recited the seven penitential psalms for the repose of her soul. This practice is connected with the only time on record when Stephen reproved his illustrious disciple. One night he went to bed without having repeated his psalms: in some way it came to Stephen's knowledge that it was his practice thus to pray for his mother, and that night he knew that his novice had left that duty unfulfilled. It may be that God revealed to him the whole matter, or else by the strange spiritual instinct which those intimately connected with others possess, he read in his face that something had been left undone overnight. Mothers possess this instinct, and why should not the abbot, who watched over his young disciple with a mother's love? However it came into his mind, at all events he did know it, and that in some uncommon way. Next morning he called Bernard to him, and said, Brother Bernard, where, I pray you, hast thou dropped those psalms of thine yesterday, and to whose good keeping hast thou committed them? Bernard, being shy, as says the history, blushed, and marvelled much within himself how the abbot knew that of which he

alone possessed the secret. He perceived that he stood in the presence of a spiritual man, and fell at Stephen's feet, begging pardon for his negligence, which, as we may suppose, he was not long in obtaining. Such is one of the few specimens of Stephen's way of guiding his novice, which time has spared. The other circumstances of the intercourse between these two elect souls are known only to God and His angels. Historians mention but slightly even the solemn ceremony by which St. Bernard knelt at the feet of Stephen to take his vows on quitting the novitiate, the year after his entering the convent. This was the culminating point of the abbot's life; his great work was the training of St. Bernard; henceforth the materials for his history become scanty, for he appears only the administrator of his order, the history of which is merged in St. Bernard. He had passed the great trials of his life, and he now lived in comparative peace, founding new abbeys every year, and quietly watching the growth of the mighty tree into which his grain of mustard seed had grown. Doubtless he who had so often tried to hide his head in the depths of a forest, did not now regret that his light had waned before his illustrious disciple. And let no one suppose that he is doing nothing, because his name occurs but seldom; every new monastery founded year by year is his work, and he is gradually becoming the head of a vast federacy of which he is the legislator, as well as abbot of his own convent of Citeaux. While St. Bernard is astonishing the world by his supernatural power over the minds of men, every now and then, from Citeaux, the central point in which these vast rays of glory converge, some new act of monastic policy issues, which is owing to its abbot.

CHAPTER XVII.

STEPHEN CREATES AN ORDER.

MEANWHILE, the Cistercian order was silently growing up about him ; in 1114, Hugh, once lord of Mâcon, St. Bernard's friend, was sent to Pontigny with a colony of monks from Citeaux ; in 1115, Morimond and Clairvaux were founded. And who was to be abbot of Clairvaux ? Surely some brother of mature age, and of tough sinews, and hardy frame, for the other three abbeys were founded by special invitation of some bishop, nobleman, or other holy person, but the colony which peopled Clairvaux set out like knight-errants on an adventure, not knowing whither they went. Yet to the surprise of all, Stephen fixes on St. Bernard, though he was hardly out of his novitiate, and was just twenty-five years of age ; and though his weak frame was but ill able to bear the exercises of Citeaux, far less apparently to set out on a voyage of discovery, to find out the most lonely forest, vale, or mountain-side, that the diocese of Langres could produce. Twelve monks were sent with this youthful abbot, to represent the twelve Apostles ; he himself was to be to them in the place of Christ. The usual form with which such an expedition set out was characteristic. Stephen delivered to him who was to be the new abbot a crucifix in the Church of Citeaux, and then in perfect silence he set out, his twelve monks following him through the cloister. The

abbey gates opened and closed upon them, and the great world which they had not seen for many a day lay before them. Forward they went, over hill and down dale, St. Bernard going first with the holy rood, and the twelve following, till they came to a deep glen between two mountains, whose sides were clothed with a forest of oaks, beeches, and limes ; between them flowed the clear waters of the river Aube. The place was called, for some unknown reason, the Valley of Wormwood, and had been the haunt of robbers. In St. Bernard's hands it became Clairvaux, or the Vale of Glory. Here, then, with the assistance of the peasants round they established themselves, and Stephen soon had the consolation to hear, that the daughter of Citeaux was rivalling her mother. These first four abbeys founded by him, La Ferté, Pontigny, Clairvaux, and Morimond, were the heads of what were afterwards called the four filiations of Citeaux ; from each of them sprang a whole line of monasteries. Stephen foresaw that this would be the case ; in fact it could not be otherwise ; the only thing which in those ages of faith was required to found a monastery was men, and those he had with him already. There was no need of money, or of leave from king, privy council, or parliament. All that was wanted was an old wood or a wild waste, which the owner, if there was one, would be glad enough to give up to any one who chose to expel the wild beasts, and break it up for tillage. The spiritual children of Citeaux were therefore sure to increase, now that four flourishing abbeys had already sprung from it. The question, however, was, how these were to be bound to the parent monastery. In after ages, as soon as the first generation had past away, they would become simply Benedictines, with a white habit, and there was no guarantee what-

ever that they would keep to the peculiar institutions of Citeaux. Stephen's first step to remedy this evil was the institution of the general chapter; every year all the abbots of monasteries descended from Citeaux were to meet there on Holy Cross day, to confer on the affairs of the order; and their first meeting took place in the year 1116. Though only four abbots were present at this assembly, it is an important event in the history, not only of the Cistercian, but of every other order. In the institution of the general chapter, Stephen had devised an expedient, which went far to remedy the great defect of the early monasteries—the want of a proper jurisdiction. His idea was as yet imperfectly developed; it was but the first germ of the government which was to bind the Cistercian order together: but it was a hint by which all Christendom profited; for so beneficially was it found to work, that Cluniacs, Dominicans, Franciscans, and the various congregations of the Benedictine order, adopted it. Innocent III. seems to have been struck with the profound wisdom of Stephen's plan, for in the celebrated fourth Lateran council, where he presided, it was the system brought in to revive the monastic discipline, which in many places had been ruined; and the general chapters of Citeaux are expressly taken as a model.

This assembly at Citeaux was remarkable also in another respect; it has been said that only four abbots were present at it. Where then was my lord of Clairvaux? Alas! it is not hard to know what has become of him. In the midst of the holy conference, an unexpected visitor comes into the chapter-house in the dress of a bishop. The abbots ought to have risen to beg the blessing of this prince of the Church, thus suddenly appearing among them. Instead of this, he prostrated

himself on the ground in the presence of Stephen and his brethren. This was no other than the celebrated William of Champeaux, once the great doctor of the schools, now bishop of Chalons; in that lowly posture he informed the abbot of Citeaux that Bernard was hard at death's door, and would certainly die if he were allowed to continue administering the affairs of his abbey. On his knees, therefore, the venerable Bishop begged of Stephen to transfer his authority over St. Bernard to himself for the space of a year. The abbot of course willingly acceded to his request, backed as it was by the humble guise of William; and St. Bernard was accordingly, by virtue of his vow of obedience, compelled to give himself up entirely into his hands. For the space of a year, therefore, he was removed to a habitation built for him outside the walls of Clairvaux, and was put under the hands of a physician, whom he was ordered implicitly to obey.

Stephen began about this time to enter into relation with another illustrious personage, whose friendship was afterwards of great use to the order. William of Champeaux was not the only bishop who came to Citeaux; in the year 1117 it received within its walls Guido, archbishop of Vienne, then apostolical legate in France, and afterwards destined, as Pope Calixtus II., to close the great struggle which Gregory VII. began. He had been to Dijon to celebrate a council, to which it is probable that Stephen himself was summoned. When the council was over he repaired to Citeaux as Stephen's guest, and there conceived an attachment to the rising order, which he carried with him to the papal throne. However different was the lot to which Guido and Stephen had been called, one shut up in a cloister, the other a powerful archbishop, and leader of a great

party in the Church, yet there was something not uncongenial in their characters. The untiring and patient energy with which Stephen had struggled through his difficulties, and was now in fact reviving monastic discipline throughout France, was not unlike the quiet firmness with which Guido was awaiting the conclusion of the contest between Church and State. When Pascal committed the unhappy fault which embarrassed the cause of the Church, the archbishop of Vienne, as legate of the Holy See, immediately excommunicated the emperor, and then, though he did not join in the impetuous zeal of those who would have deposed the pope, he waited patiently, without for a moment quitting the position which he had taken up, till Pascal, the year before this visit to Citeaux, confirmed the sentence which he had pronounced. Before he left the abbey, he begged of Stephen to send a colony of monks into his own diocese of Vienne, promising to provide them with all that was necessary. To this request Stephen willingly acceded, and went thither in person to found the abbey of Bonneval.

These few years which followed St. Bernard's entrance into the abbey, are quite a specimen of the general tenour of Stephen's life. In 1118, the year that Bonneval was founded, two more abbeys were also peopled with Cistercian colonies,—Prouilly in the diocese of Sens, and La Cour-Dieu in that of Orleans. At the same time, two more monasteries were founded from Clairvaux. Nine abbeys, therefore, had sprung from Citeaux, in the short space of five years, and it now became needful to provide a constitution for the rising order. This was effected by Stephen at the general chapter, in 1119; and the means which he took to effect this great object have a sagacity about them which

shows how deeply he had studied the wants of the monastic body. They entitle him to rank amongst the most illustrious of the many founders of orders, who have in different ways given a new direction to the enthusiasm of Christians, as the needs of the Church required. He filled up a want which St. Benedict's rule did not, and indeed was not intended to supply, and that was the internal arrangement of a body of monasteries connected with each other. St. Benedict legislated for a monastery, Stephen for an order. The idea of the great patriarch of western monks was, that each monastery was to be a monarchy under its abbot; no abbey, as far as the rule of St. Benedict goes, is in any way connected with another. In one extraordinary case the abbots of neighbouring monasteries may be called in to interfere in the election of an abbot¹; but in general each monastery was an independent community. This rude and imperfect system of government was the ruin of monastic institutions; the jurisdiction of bishops was utterly inadequate to keep refractory monks in order, or to preserve monastic discipline in its purity. So entirely had the rule of St. Benedict at one time disappeared from France, that its very existence before the time of St. Odo of Cluny has been questioned. In some monasteries lay abbots might be found quietly established, with their wives and children; and the tramp of soldiers, the neighing of horses, and baying of hounds, made the cloister more like a knight's castle, than a place dedicated to God's service.² A specimen of the way in which bishops were treated when they undertook to reform abbeys, may be found in the conduct of the monks of Fleury, on the

¹ Reg. c. 64.

² Mabillon. Pref. in Sec. 5.

Loire, when St. Odo was introduced into the abbey to tame them. Two bishops, and two counts, accompanied the abbot, but the monks minded them, says the story, no more than pagans and barbarians; they fairly buckled on the sword, posted themselves at the gates, got a plentiful supply of stones and missiles on the roof, and declared that they would rather die than receive an abbot of another order within their walls. The bishops might have remained outside the walls for ever, had not the intrepid abbot mounted his ass, and quietly ridden alone into the abbey, to the astonishment of the monks, who were too much struck with his courage to oppose him. Two general reformations of monastic institutions were effected before Stephen's time, and both were directed at the evil which we have mentioned; St. Benedict of Aniane, by his personal influence, united all the abbeys of the Carlovingian empire into one congregation; but after his death, they relapsed into their former state. The other reform was much more permanent; it was effected by the celebrated congregation of Cluny. When monasteries were in a state of the lowest degradation, still there was vitality enough in this mass of corruption to give birth to a line of saints, such as that of the first abbots of Cluny. By the sole power of their holiness they bound into one a vast number of abbeys, all dependent upon their own. This great congregation appears not to have been fully systematized till the time of St. Hugh; before him, abbeys seem in some cases to have become again independent, when the abbot of Cluny died who had reformed them. He, however, required it as a previous condition of a monastery which joined itself to the congregation, that it should become a priory, dependent on Cluny, and that its superior should be appointed by himself and his

successors.³ A noble and a stately kingdom was that of Cluny; 314 monasteries and churches were its subjects⁴; its lord was a temporal prince, and in spirituals subject to none but the Holy See; he coined money in his own territory of Cluny, as the king of France in his royal city of Paris, and the broad pieces of the convent went as far as the fleurs-de-lis of the Louvre. This spiritual kingdom extended to Constantinople, and even to the Holy Land. Great indeed it was; too great for any man to possess, who was not as noble-minded as St. Hugh, and as free from selfish feelings as the graceful and loving soul of Peter the Venerable. At the time when Stephen completed the Cistercian order, Cluny was in the hands of one who ruled it between the time of St. Hugh and Peter, Abbot Pontius, who spoilt the whole. He must needs be called by the proud name of Abbot of Abbots, and assume a haughty superiority over the abbot of Mount Cassino, the most ancient Benedictine abbey. This was the fault of the system; one bad abbot ruined all; Pontius left to his successor a house loaded with debt, with 300 monks to support on revenues which were barely sufficient to maintain 100, besides a rabble of guests and paupers, who infested the gates of the abbey. With these disorders before his eyes, Stephen determined on instituting a system of reciprocal visitation between the abbeys of his order. He might, as abbot of Citeaux, have constituted himself the head of this increasing congregation; but his object was not to lord it over Christ's heritage, but to establish between the Cistercian abbeys a lasting bond of love. The body of statutes which he presented

³ Mabillon. *Sac.* v. Pref. 56.

⁴ Thomassin, *de Nov. et Vet.* Disc. 1. 368.

to his brethren in the general chapter of 1119, was called the Chart of Charity. In its provisions, the whole order is looked upon as one family, united by ties of blood; Citeaux is the common ancestor of the whole, and the four first abbeys founded from it, La Ferté, Pontigny, Clairvaux, and Morimond, as its four eldest daughters, respectively governed the abbeys sprung from them. The abbot of Citeaux was called *Pater universalis ordinis*; he visited any monastery that he pleased, and wherever he went the abbot gave up his place to him. On the other hand, the abbots of the four filiations, as they were termed, visited Citeaux, besides which each abbot went every year to inspect the abbeys which had sprung from his own. Every year a general chapter was held at Citeaux, which all the abbots in the order, without exception, were obliged to attend under heavy penalties. The chief abbot of each filiation could, with the advice of other abbots, depose any one of his subordinate abbots, who after admonition continued to violate the rule; and even the head of the whole order might be deposed by the four abbots, though not without a general chapter, or in case of urgent necessity, in an assembly of abbots of the filiation of Citeaux. Each abbey was to receive with joy any of the brethren of other Cistercian abbeys, and to treat him as though he were at home. Thus the most perfect union was to be preserved amongst the whole body; and if any discord arose in the general chapter, the abbot of Citeaux might, with the help of other abbots, called in by himself, settle the question in dispute. This is but a faint outline of the famous Chart of Charity, which was copied by many other orders, and in part even by that of Cluny. This rigid system of mutual visitation might seem to have precluded the

visitation of the bishop, and so in fact the order became in time exempt from episcopal superintendence; but Stephen by no means intended that such should be the case. Exemptions from the jurisdiction of the Vicar of Christ, as St. Bernard calls the bishop of the diocese⁵, formed one of the special grievances against which the early Cistercian writers most loudly declaim. It was a portion of the ambition of abbots of the day, and was therefore classed by them with the assumption of the pontifical mitre and sandals, which was such a scandal in Cistercian eyes. Exemptions, however, which were not gained at the suit of the abbot, but conceded by the Holy See to the piety of founders of monasteries, are excepted from the censure of St. Bernard; and, notwithstanding Stephen's submission to diocesan authority, he took care to secure his order against the influence of secular bishops. Even from the time of Hugh, the second abbot elected by Stephen, the words, "salvo ordine nostro," were added to the oath of canonical obedience, taken by every abbot on receiving the benediction from the bishop. Another important step was taken by him to secure his order, and its new constitution, from undue interference. He determined to apply to the Apostolic See for a confirmation of the *Charta Charitatis*; without this sanction it was a mere private compact between the then ruling Cistercian abbots, but with the papal sanction it became in some way a law of the Church. Stephen was not obliged to send all the way to Rome to obtain this confirmation from the pope; great things had been doing in Christendom all this while that Citeaux had been flourishing. Pascal II. had died, and, after one short year, Gelasius too had

⁵ De Off. Episc. 9.

died, not at Rome in his own palace, but an exile at Cluny. Into that year were crowded troubles, as great as had ever befallen the successor of St. Peter since the days of martyrdom. A troubled life, indeed, had been the life of Gelasius, ever since he had left his peaceful studies at Mount Cassino, and been made Chancellor of Rome, to amend the latinity of the papal court, where, as says Pandulf, "the ancient style of elegance and grace was almost lost⁶." Rougher tasks he found than this, for he shared in all the troubles of the popes during that long struggle, and at last he himself from Cardinal John Cajetan was made Pope Gelasius II. In the very ceremony of his enthronement, he was thrown from his seat by the emperor's party, dragged by the hair out of the Church, and at its very door stamped upon, so that the rowels of the spurs of his persecutors were stained with his blood. Then he fled from Rome by water, amidst a tempest of thunder and wind, and what was worse, amidst the curses of the Germans, who stood on the shore ready to seize him if they could; and so they would, if it had not been for the fearful night, and for Cardinal Hugo, who, when they landed, carried the holy father on his back to a safe castle. In exile he remained the rest of his life, with but one short interval, when he ventured to return to Rome, and again the impious nobles rose, and swords were drawn about him, till at last he said, "Let us fly this city, this Sodom, this new Babylon!" and all cried, "Amen!" and so he left Rome for ever, and came to France, the general refuge of popes in those dreadful times. His successor was chosen in France, and this was no other than Guido, archbishop of Vienne of the

⁶ Muratori, Scrip. iii. part i. p. 378.

noble house of Burgundy, and the friend of Stephen and of Citeaux, who now was called Pope Calixtus II. He it was to whom God gave grace to finish the struggle between the Church and the emperor, and to receive the submission of Henry V. But this was not to be till afterwards. During the year when the Chart of Charity was framed, which was also the first of his ruling the Church of Christ, he remained in France, and held a council at Rheims, where he excommunicated the emperor. In December Stephen's messenger found him at Sedelocum, a place supposed to be Saulieu, in Auvergne, and with the consent of the bishops of the dioceses in which the Cistercian abbeys were situated, he fully confirmed all the measures which Stephen had, with the consent of his brethren, determined upon for the preservation of peace in his order. The Chart of Charity was not a dead letter; if the Spirit of God had not been in that house, it would have been but so much parchment. But that blessed Spirit was there in effect; else how could so many men of different age, temper, rank of life, and country, have lived together in peace? It is easy at times to make great sacrifices; but it is hard to keep up the intercourse of every day life without jars and rents, and still harder, while the body is suffering from fatigue and mortification, to preserve the graceful and noiseless considerateness, which attends without effort to a brother's little wants. The very chapter where the Chart was passed presents an instance of the sort. It appears, that on occasion of the general chapter, to mark the joy of Citeaux at the presence of its sons, the stranger abbots were regaled with a pittance, or addition to their frugal meal. But the fathers saw, that in consequence of this additional mess, every thing went wrong in the abbey; the poor cooks were put out

by the unwonted feast, and then when all was over, the dishes had to be washed, and the servants had to get their dinner, and so vespers were late⁷, and the poor monks robbed of a portion of their scanty sleep. The abbots were unwilling that their arrival should give so much trouble, and they begged of Stephen that the pittance should no more be given ; and he, with the consent of the brethren, acceded to their request.

⁷ Us. Cist. 108. 77.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ABBOT SUGER.

THE administration of his order was quite enough to occupy Stephen's time ; year after year new abbeys were founded, and Cistercian monasteries rose up on all sides to the astonishment of the world. He had often to undertake long journeys for the foundation of some new community ; and besides these toils, the actual government of such a large body of men required no ordinary attention. It is not to be supposed that there were no dangers in the way of monks, or that signal falls, even in his most promising disciples, did not at times happen to grieve his heart. For instance, in the year 1125, Arnold, whom he had made abbot of Morimond, one of the four governing abbeys of the order, suddenly grew disgusted with his charge, and while Stephen was absent in Flanders, suddenly left the cloister, carrying away with him several of the brethren. His pretence was a pilgrimage ; but he never returned to his abbey, and died soon after at Cologne, a runaway monk. While, however, Stephen was thus busied in managing his own abbeys, a reform was silently going on in another, and a most important quarter, from the mere increasing weight of the Cistercian order. It might have been supposed that the Cistercian, occupied in digging the soil, in draining marshes, and reducing waste lands into cultivation, would certainly be a great comfort

to the poor amongst whom he laboured, and whose life he imitated ; but it could hardly be expected that their influence could reach higher ; and yet so it was. The bishop's palace and the king's court, unhappily at this time too much allied, both began to feel the influence of the bold stand in favour of Christian poverty which Stephen was making. About the year 1124, Peter, abbot of La Ferté, had been chosen archbishop of Tarantaise, and with the consent of Stephen and the general chapter, had accepted it. Cistercian bishops were still bound to keep the rules of the order ; they did not wear the fur garments, with sleeves lined of a blood-red colour¹, which scandalized St. Bernard, but they kept the abbot of the order covered with only a poor mantle lined with sheep-skin². In the two following years France was astonished by the conversion of three of the most powerful prelates of the country. Henry, archbishop of Sens, Stephen, bishop of Paris, and the celebrated Suger, abbot of St. Denis. By conversion it is not meant that these men led vicious or immoral lives ; on the contrary, they were men whom it was impossible not to admire for the noble way in which they led what was then the better party in the state ; but they were ambitious and courtly men, half soldier or statesman, and the rest churchman. It was the time when the French royalty was, with the help of the Church, rousing itself ; the king of France had been but a king in name, often pious and devout, but seldom great or intellectual. In England our Norman lords were the real heads of a feudal sovereignty ; they ruled by right of conquest, and the barons were kept under by common fear of the Saxons. But the poor king of

¹ St. Bern. de Off. Epis. 2.

² Inst. Cap. Gen. 59.

France, in his royal city of Paris, was hemmed in on all sides by dukes of Normandy, and counts of Anjou, Blois, and Flanders, a mere shadow of Charlemagne, very different from his wily, unscrupulous, powerful majesty of England, the fine clerk who held his brilliant court at Westminster. In Louis VI.'s time, however, the French monarchy began to develope itself; he was an energetic, and in many respects an estimable prince, brought up in his youth in the abbey of St. Denis, and even at one time inclined to become a monk. He made common cause with the Church against the nobles, who were wholesale robbers of Church lands, and respected neither his royal crown nor the bishop's mitre. But what had monarchy to do with Stephen, or Stephen with monarchy, that his poor order should be brought into the affairs of the kingdom? And yet, strange to say, it came across King Louis's plans by converting his minister. The very head of the political movement was won, when Suger's heart was touched by St. Bernard's burning words, and when the royal abbey of St. Denis was reformed by the example of the Cistercians. A noble heart was Suger's, even while the world had too great a share in it. Nothing low or mean ever entered into it; all, as even St. Bernard allows, that stained it, was too great a love of show and of worldly grandeur³. Who but that man of little stature, of piercing eye, and sagacious and withal upright heart, had, when provost of Toury, broken the power of Hugh of Puiset, that thorn in the side of the Church, who put lance in rest against the king himself? In his monkish cowl he rode into the town of Toury, even through the enemies who besieged it, and saved it for the king. No busi-

³ St. Bern. Ep. 78.

ness was safe unless Suger was in it ; his abbot Adam, and the king, both loved him, and sent him more than once even across the Alps ; and no wonder, for his eloquence and learning was so great, that not only could he quote the Fathers, but even would repeat two or three hundred lines together of Horace by heart. He had once just quitted Pope Calixtus on one of these expeditions, and was on his way back to France at an inn, and had said matins at night, and had lain him down again to sleep, when he dreamed a dream—that he was at sea in a little boat tossed about by the waves, but was rescued by the help of the blessed martyr St. Denis. Then he went on his journey, and was pondering what it all meant, when he saw coming towards him a brother of the abbey, with a face of mingled sorrow and joy ; and the brother told that Abbot Adam was dead, that the monks had chosen him abbot of St. Denis, even without waiting for the king's leave, and that the king was very angry, and had put in prison some of the brethren. At this news Suger's heart was sad ; he loved his abbot dearly, and besides his brethren were in prison for his sake, and worst of all, he foresaw a contest between the king his master and the pope, about the liberty of election. However, the blessed martyr's prayers helped him through all, and the king confirmed the choice of the monks, and he was installed abbot of the first abbey in France. Then what a life was his when he was thus raised on high ! If a turbulent noble was to be put down, Suger was to be there ; on one occasion, when he was riding at the head of a body of soldiers to Orleans after his lord the king, he fell in with an officer of Hugh of Puiset, whom he took captive, and put securely into the abbey prison. Rome saw him in 1123 at the Lateran council ; next year the

Church of St. Denis showed a memorable scene. The emperor, stung with the excommunication pronounced against him at the council of Rheims, invaded France, the constant ally of the Church. Then the royalty of France plucked up heart, and the men of the country gathered round the king, and all together went to St. Denis, where Louis received the Oriflamme from the hands of Suger at the high altar, with all the chivalry of France standing around him. The cause of God's Church prevailed, and the emperor took himself back to Germany, without waiting to see the Oriflamme unfurled. This was all very well; Suger was on the right side; his policy was the best for France, which was thus slowly finding a bond of union in the king, and getting rid of the petty tyrants which disturbed it. Again, he was on the side of the Church, for these nobles were its intolerable oppressors; but still something was wanting to the abbot of St. Denis. The concerns of his soul were not prospering amidst this perpetual tumult. Its wear and tear fretted his body down, and "Abbot Suger," says a monk, "did not get fat as other abbots did⁴." The prayers of the Cistercians, however, were at work, and St. Bernard's words pricked his conscience. Indeed, an honest mind like his, could not be long in seeing that he looked very little like a churchman and a monk, as he rode at the head of troops, or moved in the brilliant train of a court. Besides, his own abbey was in a most miserable state: without believing the calumnies of Abelard, it is evident that it was as unlike a monastery as it could well be. It was thoroughly secularized; this ancient sanctuary, once the very soul of the devotion of France, and the burial place of its kings, was now the centre of the business of the whole realm.

⁴ Vit. Sug. 2, 3. ap. Du Chesne.

“Deftly and faithfully did Cæsar get his own there ; but as for the things of God, they were not paid so faithfully to God⁵.” Posts came rushing in from all quarters ; the cloister was often filled with armed men ; monks might be seen lounging about, idly talking with strangers, and even women were sometimes admitted within its precincts. No wonder that this scene raised Cistercian indignation ; but it was not long to continue so. Suger’s was an honest heart ; he had been entangled by the force of circumstances, even from his youth, in secular affairs, and the hurry of business had prevented his looking about him. Now, however, that the fearful responsibility of the government of the abbey was upon him, it made him shudder. The Cistercian reform was spreading with a wildfire speed about him ; it was a declaration from heaven against his own most criminal neglect of the important charge which God had committed into his hands. His long troop of armed retainers, and his sumptuous habits, formed but a poor contrast to Stephen’s paltry equipage, as he travelled about in his coarse white garment, with a monk or two and a lay-brother in his train. The soul of Suger sinks within him at the thought of his danger, and he determines to reform both himself and his abbey. If Citeaux had never done more than turn to God this noble heart, its labour would not have been thrown away. By thus suggesting the reform of St. Denis, it was conquering the very stronghold of worldliness ; it was purging the Church from the thorough secularization which a long mixture with the world had brought on. Oh ! how must Stephen’s heart have leaped within him, when he thus saw his order doing his work. He

⁵ St. Bernard, Ep. 78.

would most cordially have joined in the devout gush of quiet joy with which Suger thanked God. "Amidst the recovery of the ancient lands of the Church, and the acquirement of new, the spread of this Church all around, the restoration or construction of its buildings, this is the chief, the most grateful, yea, the highest privilege which God in His mercy has given me, that He has fully reformed the holy order, the state of this holy Church, to His own honour and that of His saints in the same place, and has settled in peace the end and object of holy religion, by which man attains to the enjoyment of God, without causing scandal or trouble among the brethren, though they were all unaccustomed to it⁶." The conversion of Suger is in itself the justification of Stephen, in the rigid rules of poverty which he adopted at Citeaux; it was the best way of gaining an upright heart, like that of the abbot of St. Denis, to put before him a clear and unquestionable example of holy poverty, which must reach him even in the whirl of secular business. France afterwards called him the father of his country, and it is to the influence of the Cistercian reform that he owed that single-hearted conscientiousness, and that habit of devotion, which kept him up, when he was afterwards regent of the whole realm.

It is true, that in one particular he was not a disciple of Stephen; he could not bear poverty in the adornment of churches; it was not in his nature, and could not be helped. He even seems evidently to aim at his good friends at Citeaux, when he says, "Every man may have his own opinion; I confess that what pleases

⁶ Vit. Lud. Grossi ap. Du Chesne, tom. iv. 311.

me best is, that if there be anything more precious than another, yea most precious of all, it should serve to the ministration of the blessed Eucharist above all things." This difference between St. Denis and Citeaux was in after days curiously illustrated; for Abbot Suger was pondering within himself how to get gems to adorn a magnificent crucifix on the high altar of the abbey church, when in came three abbots, among whom were my lord of Citeaux (probably Stephen's successor) and another Cistercian abbot, with such a store of jewels as he had never seen before. Thibault, count of Champagne, another disciple of Citeaux, had out of love for holy poverty broken up two magnificent gold vases, and given them as alms to these abbots, and they came at once to St. Denis, knowing that they should be sure to find a market for them. Unlike the simple choir of Citeaux, the sanctuary of the royal abbey blazed with gold and jewels, with painting and sculpture; there was the cross worked by Eligius the goldsmith-saint, and there were the jasper, the ruby, the sapphire, the emerald, and the topaz, "yea," says Suger, "all the precious stones of old Tyre were its covering, save the carbuncle." All the crowns of the kings of France were there deposited after their death, on the shrine of the martyrs. Yet the abbot's delight in thus adorning the shrine of his Lord was utterly unmixed with selfish feeling, "for," he says, "it is most meet and right that with all things universally we should minister to our Redeemer, who in all things without exception has mercifully deigned to provide for us, who has united our nature to His own in one admirable never to be divided Person, who, placing us in His right hand, has promised us that we shall verily possess His kingdom;

our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, One God for ever and ever. Amen⁷." It is instructive to see how the Cistercian influence extended to persons whose minds were of a texture so different from that of the abbot of Citeaux. However Stephen might have been scandalized with the unmonastic appearance of the high altar of St. Denis, he would have found a kindred spirit in its noble-minded abbot, a very Cistercian in simplicity, amidst all this splendour, "This man shames us all," said of Suger a certain abbot of Cluny, "he does not build for himself as we do, but for God only." With all his love for architecture, he built but one thing for himself, and that was a cell ten feet broad and fifteen long. Here was his little bed of straw, hid in the day time by handsome covering, but during the few hours that he lay there at night, it had nothing on it but the rough Cistercian lœna or woollen rug, which St. Alberic substituted for the many coverings of the Cluniac dormitory. Thus he lived, one of the most noble conquests of Citeaux, and through whom, as he afterwards, when regent, had in his hands the appointment of every bishop in the realm, Stephen's love of poverty influenced most materially the whole Church of France.

And what said King Louis, when this strange influence appeared in his own palace? He was doing his best for the Church, and was the alliance between Church and State to be broken up, and his ecclesiastical friends to be taken from his very side, for the sake of a monk like Stephen? The king had patronized the Cistercians, and, as appears from a letter written at this time⁸, had at some former period joined himself in a fraternity

⁷ Adm. Sug. c. 32.

⁸ St. Bern. Ep. 45.

of prayers with them ; but now that Henry of Sens, and Stephen of Paris, left his court to govern their flocks like good pastors, he began to think that Cistercian prayers were very well in their way, provided they did not convert his ministers. Annoyed by the conduct of the bishops, he took occasion of some cabal in the diocese of Paris, to seize upon the temporalities of the see ; and when the archbishop of Sens, as metropolitan of Paris, took the part of the bishop, he began also to persecute him. It appears that the king had partizans amongst the cardinals, and it was doubtful how the matter would turn out ; the poor bishop knew not where to find help, but he bethought himself that there was then sitting an assembly of fearless men who had nothing to expect from the world. He applied to the chapter of Citeaux for letters to the pope to recommend his cause. The abbots judged it best to write first to the king himself, and St. Bernard composed a letter in the name of the abbot of Citeaux, and his brethren assembled at their annual meeting. Here then was Stephen in direct opposition to kings and cardinals. Strange is the style of the opening of this bold epistle. "To the noble king of the Franks Louis, Stephen, abbot of Citeaux, and the whole assembly of Cistercian abbots and brethren, health, safety, and peace in Christ Jesus." The wooden crozier of Citeaux against the gold sceptre of the Louvre ! the match seems most unequal ; but the wooden crozier won the day at last. The cardinals hung back, and there came a decision from Rome in favour of the king, and all seemed to be prospering on his side. But there was still a party unsatisfied, which had sprung up silently and imperceptibly around the king, and whose influence now began to be felt across the Alps. Its wishes must henceforth

form an item in the consultation of popes and kings. St. Bernard and Hugh of Pontigny cry aloud to the pope himself in spite of the murmers of some of the cardinals, who loved not such importunate partizans of justice. At last the Holy See interfered in the bishop's favour, at or about the time of the council of Troyes, 1128, at which Stephen and St. Bernard were both present⁹. Shortly afterwards, Stephen, with the abbots of Clairvaux and Pontigny, wrote to the pope in favour of the archbishop of Sens, whom King Louis was still persecuting. They were an uncompromising set of men, whom nothing could satisfy, till the oppressed was delivered from the tyranny of his oppressor; these Cistercian frogs would croak out of their marshes¹⁰, and would not hold their peace, for all the bitter complaints of the cardinals, whose rest was sadly disturbed by their noise. They must needs be at the bottom of every movement in the Church, with their importunate poverty. Even the warlike Templars felt its influence, and clothed themselves in their white cloaks "without arrogance or superfluity," and in plain armour, with horse-trappings unadorned with gold and silver. They were first made an order at the council of Troyes, in the presence of Stephen, and each provincial master of the Temple took an oath, that he would defend all religious, but, above all, Cistercian monks and their abbots, as being their brethren and fellows.

⁹ Mabillon's notes on St. Bernard, Ep. 45.

¹⁰ St. Bern. Ep. 48.

CHAPTER XIX.

TROUBLES IN THE CHURCH.

THE Cistercian influence had, however, not reached its height even at the council of Troyes : two years after occurred the schism of Anacletus, the decision of which in favour of Innocent II. was, under God, entirely owing to St. Bernard. The question did not originate in a mere quarrel between two parties amongst the cardinals. The election of Innocent II. was a bold innovation, by which the turbulent people of Rome were excluded from any share in choosing the supreme pontiff¹. There were many wild and unscrupulous barons in Europe, but a Frangipani, a Collonna, or a count of Tusculum could match them all. The very last election of Honorius II. had been brought about by a notorious trick of a Frangipani ; and a short time before, Gelasius, in leaving Rome, had said solemnly, that if so be, he had rather fall into the hands of one emperor than of so many. The cardinals, who in this case had elected pope Innocent, met together without the knowledge not only of the Roman clergy and people, but even of a very large part of the sacred college. This they did, says Suger, for fear of the turbulent Romans. Hence, not only the election of Petrus Leonis the antipope, but even of the real successor of St. Peter was informal ; it required the subsequent voice of Christendom to constitute Innocent the rightful pope. The impression left on the mind by Suger's clear, statesman-like view of the

¹ Lupus, tom. v. p. 69.

transaction is, that of the two elections that of Peter was the more formal; and he adds that the council of Etampes in its decision inquired more about the character than the election of the candidates. The cardinals of Innocent's party had, however, another and a cogent reason for proceeding thus surreptitiously in the election. "They elected Innocent," says an old chronicler, "with too great haste, as some think, in order to exclude Peter, who seemed to aim at the popedom on secular grounds²." They were the religious party amongst the cardinals, and they dreaded the election of Peter, who "placed not God for his help, but trusted in the multitude of his riches, in the power of his relations, and in the strength of his fortifications." He was the head of the secular party in the Church, and at a time when the struggle with the emperor on the subject of investitures was but just over, and when the pride and luxury which a long sojourn in kings' courts had introduced were rampant in the very sanctuary, his elevation might have been productive of the worst results. He had at one time been a monk of Cluny, but had been recalled to Rome by Pascal II., who made him a cardinal. From that time he had been actively employed as a legate by the papal court, and in this occupation had added enormous wealth to the already large property of his family, originally of Jewish extraction. He was one of those purple "satraps, lovers of majesty rather than lovers of truth," whom St. Bernard calls "wolves;" companions not of the "successors of St. Peter, but of Constantine," followers of the pope in the time of triumph, when he rode on a white horse, adorned with gems and gold, not of "the vicar of Christ, the hammer of tyrants and the refuge of the oppressed³." The cause of Innocent was

² Chron. Maurin. ap. Du Chesne.

³ De Consid. lib. iv.

therefore that of holy poverty, and it was taken up by all the new monastic orders which sprang up about this time to the edification of the Church, as also by the most flourishing of the ancient convents. "The Camaldolese," says St. Bernard, "they of Vallombrosa, the Carthusians, Cluniacs, and they of the Great Monastery, my own Cistercians too, the monks of Caen, of Tiron, and Savigny, in a word, all together and with one heart, the brethren, whether monks or clerks, who lead a regular life and are of approved conversation, all following the bishops as sheep their pastors, adhere firmly to Innocent." St. Bernard does not here say whom the pastors themselves followed, but it was plain to every one else that he himself led the Catholic world. All the bishops of France, with king Louis, were assembled at Etampes, to decide on this question of vital importance, even to the existence of the Catholic Church; but the abbot of Clairvaux was not there, and nothing could be done without him. He came at their bidding, trembling, and with a heart beating with fear; but God reassured his servant in a dream, showing him a vast Church with one accord praising God. When he arrived, the whole assembly with one voice declared that Bernard should decide. Calmly, but still with trembling, the servant of God examined the manner of the election, the merits of the electors, and the life and character of the candidates, and then with a royal heart, trusting in the help of God, he pronounced aloud that Innocent was pope; and the whole assembly received his decision without any doubt, believing that he spoke by the Holy Ghost. It does not come within our subject to say how St. Bernard went about, and by his very presence and energetic words turned the hearts of all the kings of Europe to Innocent, the wily Beau Clerc Henry, the

hesitating Lothaire, even at last the wild boar of Aquitaine,—how he bowed the soul of Christendom, as the soul of one man, and placed the successor of St. Peter in his rightful chair, in the teeth of Roger of Sicily, with his new crown, and all his Normans. Stephen of course followed his illustrious disciple ; the success of Innocent was the consummation of the triumph of holy poverty, in which he had led the way ; and he cheerfully and gladly now gave up the cause into the hands of St. Bernard. While the saint was travelling over land and sea for the peace of the Church, and to his regret was obliged to leave his beloved Clairvaux, Stephen remained quietly in his own abbey, continuing to rule his order. Innocent, however, did not confine his love for Cistercians to St. Bernard. He addressed to Stephen a letter, in which he calls him “his dear son in the Lord⁴,” and grants to him and to his successors for ever two important privileges. They appear from the terms of the grant to have been given at Stephen’s own request, and both are certainly the result of the action of his own principles. His notion of a monastery was a place devoted

⁴ This document is found in Manriquez, An. 1132. l. 5 ; it is dated Cluny, February 10 ; another, dated Lyons on the 17th of the same month, is found among St. Bernard’s works. They were given by innocent on his way from France back into Italy. It is singular that these two documents are dated according to two different modes of calculation. The privilege granted to St. Stephen, though it was prior to the other, is dated 1132, whilst that granted to St. Bernard is dated 1131 ; the reason is, because in the latter the year is reckoned to begin on the 25th of March, in the former, on the 1st of January. Mabillon, overlooking this, has given 1131 instead of 1132 as the date of the privilege given to St. Bernard ; as Innocent dated his years from his election, the 15th of February, 1130, a document signed on the 17th of February, in his third year, must be referred to 1132, according to our calculation.

to contemplation, where the noise and the cares of the world could not penetrate. He wished his monks to know nothing of the bickerings, and the lawsuits, and the selfishness, which were all going on beyond the cloister ; a short time before he had himself been drawn away from Citeaux, to settle a quarrel between the abbeys of St. Seine and of St. Stephen of Dijon. One privilege therefore, granted to all Cistercian abbots, was concluded in these terms, "And because, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, that ye may be able with the greater freedom to follow out the service of God, and with the clear vision of the soul to dwell at peace in contemplation, we forbid that any bishop or archbishop should compel thee, or thy successors, or any abbot of the Cistercian order, to come to a council or synod, save on account of the faith." Stephen, however, not only wished his monks to be out of the way of the quarrels of their neighbours, but also to be independent of worldly cares. The intention of St. Benedict was, that a monk should be a poor man, living on the labour of his own hands ; he did not, however, wish him to be in abject penury ; the monastery was to possess all necessaries within its walls, so that nothing need be sought for out of the cloister. Stephen had more than once been himself reduced to a state of real want, and had stoutly braved it out, with a few energetic spirits about him. Now, however, that Citeaux was a large community, and the head of a flourishing order, the case was widely different ; there are, comparatively, many who can live on coarse bread and vegetables, but very few have the heroic patience necessary to struggle under the pressure of want. The soul of conventual life is regularity, which must disappear when the brethren are obliged to make shifts to obtain absolute necessaries.

Though Citeaux was not now in danger of so sad a plight, it was a hard matter for the brother cellarer to make both ends meet. The Cistercians had renounced most of the sources of revenue by which other convents were maintained. There was nothing to attract seculars into their churches; no public masses, no shrines of gold and silver. Their property consisted entirely in land, of which they sold the produce; before, however, it could be brought into cultivation, granges were to be erected, and live stock to be bought, and much hard labour to be expended. Thus the more land was given to them, the more their expenses increased; and after all there came round the tithe collector, claiming so much for the parish priest or for the brethren, of a certain monastery, to whom the tithes of the parish belonged. It should be remembered that they had themselves renounced all tithes and ecclesiastical property, which was the chief source of revenue in many monasteries, where the brethren never worked with their own hands; besides which, the lands which were given to them were often waste and uncultivated, covered with a rank growth of entangled wood, or else mere marshy pools, the haunts of the heron and the bittern, and which consequently had never paid tithes at all. Considering the poverty of the Cistercians, Innocent freed them from the payment of all tithes. This was no new privilege; all the monasteries of Thuringia, and amongst them the great abbey of Fulda, were at one time exempt from tithes; and the archbishop of Metz, though he claimed tithes from them, allowed that such privileges were granted to rising monasteries. A short time before the rise of Citeaux, the same favour was accorded to the Knights Hospitallers in consideration of their poverty. Again, Peter of Blois, strongly as he reprobated the

continuance of the privilege when the order had grown powerful, and had been placed above all the difficulties which its very fecundity, astonishing as it was, at first entailed upon it, allowed that at first it was necessary. Reasonable, however, as was Innocent's grant it raised a tempest about Stephen and his poor Cistercians, which it took many a long year to allay. Enough has been said to show that the Cistercian movement, being in all respects a reformation, would be most likely to meet with opposition from the older monastic institutions. There had long been heart-burnings between Cluny and Cîteaux; an ancient and flourishing order like that of Cluny, with all its imposing dignity, and its religious magnificence, could not but stand reprov'd before the elastic spirit and young life which were developing from the obscure convent of Cîteaux. It might be venerable and beautiful, but there was a vigour in the uncompromising fervour of the new order, and an unencumbered grace in its holy poverty, which was sure to attract all the ardent spirits in the Church. Hence many a promising monk passed over to the Cistercians, and left sore displeasure behind him among his brethren, to whom his fervour seemed to be a reproach. Around the ancient monasteries there arose everywhere new institutions, not hallowed by time and adorned by the piety of kings, but carrying with them the hearts of the people by the sanctity of their inmates. This new privilege granted by Innocent caused all this smothered flame to burst out; a Cluniac monastery, that of Gigny in Champagne, refused to allow its neighbour, the house of Miroir, to take advantage of the privilege, and still exacted the tithes in the teeth of the authority of the Holy See. It was for this contumacy put under an interdict, in consequence of which the whole

Cluniac order was up in arms. It was fortunate that Pontius had ceased to be abbot of Cluny, and that Peter the Venerable now ruled over the order. From his position Peter was obliged to support the vast body of which he was the ruler; he therefore addressed a letter of sharp remonstrance to the chapter of Citeaux, and did his best to get the privilege reversed at the papal court; he however never for a moment lost the unbounded love which he felt for the great men who were at the head of this new movement in the Church. The next year, fearing lest his former letter should have been too severe, he wrote to the assembled chapter, to protest that he had the real interests of peace in his heart, when he wrote that letter, and concludes with saying, "I rest in peace and I will rest on you. I rejoice and I will rejoice in you, yea, though injured, I will not depart from you." From the really Christian spirit of this noble minded man, a real love was maintained among the higher authorities of the two orders; among the inferior members there was, it must be confessed, on the Cistercian side often a Puritanical adhesion to the letter of the rule, and, on the Cluniac, a most unchristian tone of jealousy and mistrust. But the most perfect harmony prevailed between the abbot of Cluny and the ruling body of Citeaux, with Stephen at their head. It was not that Peter did not feel a most filial affection for the noble monastery in which he had learned to know Christ, and over which he now ruled; nor did he fail to be really and acutely pained when the force of circumstances necessarily placed him in collision with the Cistercians. But notwithstanding the blows which he thus received in his most tender affections, he ever maintained an unbounded reverence for this new institution which God, through Stephen's means, had raised in the Church. He

was content that his light should wane while Stephen, whom the world would call his rival, increased in power and influence every day. Above all, he rejoiced with enthusiasm in St Bernard's sanctity, and even kissed his letters when they appeared, to gladden his heart; he seems to repose in perfect confidence, as it were on the bosom of a friend, when he writes to the saint; he exercises his playful and polished wit on these occasions, professing that he feels quite secure, in thus giving loose to his cheerfulness in his letters to his dear friend; and St. Bernard in return compliments him by saying, that he at least could indulge his wit without sin. He strenuously set about reforming his order; and so far from being angered by St. Bernard's indignant remonstrances in his Apology, his new statutes adopt, as far as possible, all the suggestions contained in that celebrated treatise. Some of his reforms are evidently taken from Cistercian regulations, and especially from those made by Stephen himself. Crucifixes of wood were ordered to be used instead of the precious metals, when the holy rood was applied to the lips of a dying monk⁵; it was not a cross of gold or silver, but a cross of wood which redeemed the world. Again the magnificent candlestick of Cluny, which scandalized Cistercian simplicity, was not to be lighted up except on the great festivals; at other times iron candlesticks were to be used⁶. Thus did Stephen's influence extend even to Cluny, notwithstanding the angry monks. The quarrels on the subject of tithes lasted many years even after Stephen's death, but it never destroyed the harmony which prevailed between Peter the Venerable and his friends of the chapter of Citeaux.

⁵ Stat. 62.

⁶ Stat. 52.

CHAPTER XX.

DEATH OF STEPHEN.

SINCE the admission of St. Bernard into Citeaux, the life of Stephen has been that of his order. History only speaks of him occasionally as a monastic legislator, or as the founder of some new convent. The lord abbot of Citeaux appears sometimes amongst the signatures attached to a council, or to some document which the labour of the Benedictines has brought from the chartulary of a convent. It is well that it should be so, for the great order of Citeaux was Stephen's structure, and on that his noble work his claims to the veneration of the faithful rest. We now, however, come to a part where he is put forward exclusively; his long and laborious life is now drawing to a close. It comes suddenly upon the reader of the Cistercian Annalist, and takes him by surprise to find that the chapter to which Peter the Venerable's letter was addressed was the last held by Stephen. No data are given in his history to ascertain his age; so that his years go on silently, numbered by those of Citeaux, and it seems strange that all at once, when his order is in the height of prosperity, his life, which was the moving principle of the whole, should come to an end. Yet so it is even with the greatest saints; man goeth to his labour until the evening, and then leaves it unfinished, and goes home to rest in the grave. At the chapter of 1133, the year after the privilege was granted to the Cistercians by Innocent, when, says the Exordium.

“our blessed father, Stephen, had stoutly administered the office committed to him, according to the true rule of humility given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, when he was worn out with old age, and his eyes were blind, so that he could not see, he laid aside his pastoral charge, wishing to think in peace on God, and on himself through the sweet taste of holy contemplation.” This is the first word that is said of Stephen’s old age, and up to this time we might have fancied him as vigorous as ever, with his eyesight clear, and his faculties unimpaired. But although his eyes had failed, and his body was in darkness, yet the vision of his soul was as bright as ever ; he was still to the last the Cistercian contemplative, who had fled to the forest, and to the desert, to dwell with God alone. Before, however, his soul was freed from its earthly tabernacle, Stephen had still a trial to undergo ; God willed that his saint should die with his arms in his hands. The electors to whose task it fell to choose a successor, on Stephen’s resignation, pitched upon a man who was utterly unworthy to succeed him. Wido, abbot of Three Fountains, had by some means deceived men into an opinion of his sanctity, and though, as the Exordium calls him, he was but a whited sepulchre, the abbots pitched upon him to govern the abbey and the whole order. Stephen knew what sort of a man he was ; it is even said, that God specially revealed to him the wickedness of this new abbot. By that wonderful inward vision which God sometimes grants his saints, he could see his successor receiving the profession of the monks, though his outward eye was blind ; when lo ! God showed him the evil spirit entering in at his mouth, as he sat on high amidst the brethren, coming one by one to do him reverence. Stephen, however, remained still ; he felt sure that God would not abandon the rising

order, and he did not choose to take upon him again a government which he had just laid down, by interfering with the free choice of the monks. St. Bernard was absent in Italy, and therefore he could not apply to him ; in full trust therefore upon God, he waited till the designs of Providence should manifest themselves. With this dreadful secret on his mind he held his peace. He had not long to wait, for “scarcely had one month passed away, when by the revelation of the Lord his uncleanness was laid bare, and this bastard plant which the heavenly Father had not planted was rooted out of Paradise.” What was the sin of Wido is not known, and his name does not even occur in the common catalogue of Cistercian abbots ; the brethren seem to have tried to sink his memory in oblivion. He was succeeded by Rainaldus, a monk of Clairvaux, and a man in whose hands Stephen rejoiced to leave his order. His work was now done upon earth, and his strength was fast sinking ; he did not live many months after Rainaldus was elected. It is not known whether his illness was short or lingering, but the Exordium gives the following account of the death-bed of the man of God. “As the time approached when the old man lying on his bed, was, after his labours were over, to be brought into the joy of the Lord, and from the lowest room of poverty, which he had chosen in the world, according to the counsel of our Saviour, was about to mount up to the banquet of the Father of the family on high, there met together, besides others, certain brethren, abbots of his order, to accompany, by their most dutiful services and prayers, their faithful friend and most lowly Father, thus on his way to his home. And when he was in his last agony and was near death, the brethren began to talk together, and to call him blessed : being a man of such

merit, they said that he could go securely to God, who had in his time brought so much fruit to the Church of God. He heard this, and gathering together his breath as he could, said with a half-reproachful voice, What is it that ye are saying? Verily, I say to you, that I am going to God as trembling and anxious as if I had never done any good. For if there has been any good in me, and if any fruit has come forth through my littleness, it was through the help of the grace of God, and I fear and tremble much, lest perchance I have kept that grace less worthily and less humbly than I ought. Beneath this shield of the perfect lowliness which sounded on his lips, and grew deep in his heart, he put off the old man, and putting aside in his might all the most wicked darts of the enemy, fiery and sulphurous though they were, he passed with ease the airy region of storms, and mounted up and was crowned at the gate of Paradise." It was on the 28th of March, 1134, that Stephen quitted this weary life to join St. Robert and St. Alberic, whom he had so long survived. The 17th of April, on which his name occurs in the Martyrology, and which was his festival, was probably the day of his canonization. His day is not now remembered amongst us; many will not even have heard of his name, and those who have heard of him, may possibly be surprised to find that he was an Englishman. He eyes were probably never gladdened with a sight of the green fields of merry England, ever since he quitted his monastery of Sherborne to study at Paris. Yet his country may be proud to own this great saint. He was the spiritual father of St. Bernard, and was, it may be said, the principal founder of the *Order* of Cistercians. Before he died he had founded twenty monasteries of the line of Citeaux; the number of houses of the whole order was upwards of ninety.

St. Stephen was in character a very Englishman ; his life has that strange mixture of repose and of action which characterises England. Contemplative and ascetic as he was, he was still in his way a man of action ; he had the head to plan, and the calm, unbending energy to execute a great work. His very countenance, if we may trust his contemporary the monk of Malmesbury, was English ; he was courteous in speech, blithe in countenance, with a soul ever joyful in the Lord¹. His order seems to have thriven in St. Stephen's native air ; most of our great abbeys, Tintern, Rievaulx, Fountains, Furness, and Netley, which are now known by their beautiful ruins, were Cistercian. The Order took to itself all the quiet nooks and valleys, and all the pleasant streams of old England, and gladdened the soul of the labourer by its constant bells. Its agricultural character was peculiarly suited to the country, though it took its birth beyond the seas. Doubtless St. Stephen, when he was working under the hot sun of France, often thought of the harvest moon and the ripe corn-fields of his native land. May his prayers now be heard before the throne of grace, for that dear country now lying under the wrath of God for the sins of its children. " Pray ye for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee." Oh ! Lord, our " eyes long sore for Thy word ; oh ! when wilt Thou comfort " us ! " Comfort us again now after the time that Thou hast plagued us, and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity." " Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, even our own God, shall give us his blessing."

¹ Gesta Reg. Angl. lib. 4.

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S. GILBERT

LIVES
OF
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

St. Gilbert,

PRIOR OF SEMPRINGHAM.

MANSUETI HEREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON :
JAMES TOOVEY, 192, PICCADILLY.

1844.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of the following pages is taken from the life of St. Gilbert, published in the recent Edition of Dugdale's Monasticon, from a manuscript in the British Museum. The name of the author is unknown ; it appears however incidentally that he was of the order of Sempringham, and knew St. Gilbert personally in his last days. Portions of the life have been put together from contemporary sources, as, for instance, the well known story of the nuns of Watton, taken from St. Aelred's narrative published in Twysden's Collection. On that story itself, it may be well to say a few words. The time is now past, when it was necessary to prove that monasteries were not nests of wickedness. Indeed it is high time that it should be so, for to any one who looks into the evidence for such an assertion, it is wonderful that it should ever have been made. The case is made out simply by raking together all the isolated facts, related by

historians from the fourth century to the Reformation, and bringing them to bear against monastic institutions, without distinction of order, age or country. In one popular book, for instance, the customs of Catholic monks and Manichæan heretics, of monks in their first fervour, and of Orders in a relaxed state, are put side by side. There we may learn that monks were in the habit of fasting on Sundays, of neglecting the fasts of the church, and of abstaining from meat, because the Creation was evil ;¹ and all this, because the council of Gangra condemned certain heretics for such malpractices. What would be said if the same sort of evidence was applied to any other history ? No one denies that at some periods monasteries required reform, that is, that in the intervals of their long services, monks conversed together instead of keeping silence and employing themselves in manual labour or study ; nay, that in process of time, and in some monasteries, instances of flagrant wickedness might be found. But the unfairness of heaping all instances together, without attempting to classify or arrange them historically, will be evident to any one who thinks at all seriously on the subject. And indeed so materially have old prejudices been weakened within the last few years, that few persons will be found who consider such stories, as the

¹ Fosbroke, *British Monachism*, c. 2. p. 11.

one above mentioned, to be really specimens of the age in which they occurred. Still, however, as they ever leave vague and indefinite suspicions upon the mind, it may be well to quote a sentence from the very work to which we have alluded, as especially unfair to the monastic orders. In Fosbroke's *British Monachism*, the following passage occurs: "It is singular that notwithstanding the story of the poor nun in Alfred of Revesby and Bale, Nigel Wireker says nothing of this order but what observation of the rule implies; but it was yet young when he wrote."¹ This Nigel was a satirist, who details in verse the faults of the monastic orders of his day. Cave makes him to have flourished about the year 1200, full seventy years after the first institution of the Nuns of Sempringham.

It only remains to add that in writing the following pages, use has been made of a manuscript life of St. Gilbert, kindly lent by its author, William Lockhart, Esq., now a brother of the Institute of Charity established at Loughborough.

¹ Fosbroke, *British Monachism*, c. 6. p. 78.

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LIFE OF

St. Gilbert,

PRIOR OF SEMPRINGHAM, CIRC. A. D. 1085-1189.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

IT was a sad and dreary time for England when first Norman William mounted the throne which he inherited from the blameless Edward. The nobles were wandering about among the woods and forests of the land, and living like robbers among the impassable marshes of the country ; while Edgar, England's darling, was an exile in Scotland.¹ Her pleasant homes were turned into military fastnesses, for each man fortified his dwelling ; and as he closed door and window at night, the head of the family said Benedicite, and the household responded Dominus, not knowing whether their homestead might not be burned over their heads at night.² Who can tell the horrors inflicted on those of English blood by Odo, the bishop of Bayeux, and William Fitz-Osborne ?³ Noble English virgins and matrons were the victims of the brutal Norman sol-

¹ Matt. Paris, 1001.

² Matt. Paris, p. 999.

³ Orderic 507-523.

diers ; monasteries were stripped of their lands, and many a Saxon expelled from his possessions to make room for a foreigner.¹ Geoffrey, the mail-clad bishop of Coutances, alone had 280 manors for his share of the spoil.² A love of hunting seems to be the darling sin of our Norman monarchs, and to this William sacrificed whole villages, with their churches and inhabitants. He had a summary way of increasing his forest-lands ; no need of planting trees, or waiting for the slow growth of oaks and beeches. There were then many woods in merry England, and he simply swept away the homes of the villagers who dwelt amongst and near them, so that the lands returned to their natural state of wilderness, and the stag couched undisturbed on the hearth of the peasants or in the long fern where once was the altar of the village church. But the greatest blot on William's fair fame is the terrible depopulation of the north of England. In the depth of winter the Conqueror went forth to his fearful revenge ; he stalked on boldly over mountains covered with snow and frozen rivers ; the horses dropped down dead with fatigue under his knights, but still he pressed on. The aged archbishop of York died of grief at the approach of these miseries, and the bishop of Durham with the relics of St. Cuthbert fled before him. Behind him was famine and pestilence, and a hundred thousand men are said to have perished. He left not a village standing between York and Durham.³

And yet, relentless and ambitious as he was, Norman William was one of the best monarchs of his age

¹ Orderic, 523.

² Orderic, 523.

³ Simeon. Dunelm. in ann. 1069.

and race. If he was stern, it was with a calm and majestic sternness, very different from the bestial fury of his son the Red King. On his death-bed he declared that it was on principle that he had put in prison innocent men, because they were dangerous.¹ In the beginning of his reign England had a prospect of peace, when he went back to Normandy and displayed to his noble visitors the beauty of the long-haired sons of England and its gold-tipped drinking horns, and congratulated himself on his easy conquest. His policy in the first years of his reign tended to effect a quiet and gradual amalgamation of the Norman and Saxon races. He married Saxon maidens to his nobles, and though he gave the lands of Englishmen to his followers, yet on the other hand he transplanted Englishmen to the continent and endowed them with Norman fiefs. His administration of the law, though stern, was rigidly just, and it was said that a girl laden with gold might pass through England unharmed. He did not oppress the poor ; it was rather the noble who felt his iron yoke, and probably the Saxon serf was not worse off under his Norman lord than under the Saxon Thane. The Englishmen had already begun to clip their long hair and to adopt Norman fashions, when the rising under earl Morecar took place, and the beautiful and generous Edwin treacherously perished, to the universal grief of England. The Conqueror shed some tears over him, but from that moment he seems to have been convinced that a gentle hand could not rule England, and his inexorable policy began. Again, it should not be forgotten that in his exercise of Church patronage, he was free from simony, the besetting sin of

¹ Orderic, 660. William of Poitiers, 211.

his successors. He seems to have had a quick perception of character ; and, with the same acuteness by which on his death he foretold that his wily Henry would outstrip his brethren, he fixed upon great churchmen to rule the English sees. It was perhaps fortunate for the Conqueror that his interest coincided with his duty, but it is true that the English church was very much improved by the conquest. It may be that he was desirous of weakening the native courts, and breaking up the old organization which kept up an English feeling ;¹ but however this be, he certainly gave a great boon to the church when he restored her internal jurisdiction instead of subjecting her to the civil tribunal of the Hundred courts. Whatever motives influenced him to remove the Saxon Abbots from Saxon monasteries, it is certain that generally religious houses flourished under the Norman successors whom he appointed. The Saxon clergy were too often in a state of rude ignorance and jovial indulgence. The great Abbey of Abingdon was well rid of its abbot, Sparhafoc, the cunning craftsman, who absconded with the gold with which he had been intrusted to make a new crown for the Confessor.² A general reform took place throughout England on the model of St. Alban's, which became a school of holy discipline under Paul its first Norman abbot. The poor monks may have grumbled at his uncouth Norman fish-pie,³ which he introduced into the infirmary instead of the savoury meat, which was too apt to invite the brethren to put themselves on the sick list ; but they could not help acknowledging the vast advancement of religion under

¹ Wilkins' Concilia, i. 368.

² Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Constitution, p. 175.

³ Matt. Paris, vit. Abb. St. Alb.

his rule. The fine old Saxon character was every where greatly impaired, and no where more so than in the church ; a set of hunting and hawking abbots, men who loved hippocras and mead sat in the seat of the ancient saints of the land. On the whole, Abbot Paul may not have been far wrong when he looked down on his predecessors, though of the noblest blood in England, as somewhat thick-witted and ignorant. An intellectual and active element was introduced into the English church which it had not before ; and though the Saxon historian declares that England took no part in the dispute between Pope and Antipope, yet William, by his appointment of Lanfranc, prepared the way for breaking down the mischievous nationality which, even more than our tossing sea, was beginning to cut us off from the rest of Christendom.¹

All these however are but the bright parts in a dark picture ; the sins of Saxon England were to be punished, and tremendous was the amount of physical suffering which the poor country had to endure. The fusion between the rival races could only be effected by a red hot furnace of suffering. Such was the hatred which existed between them, that even the ties of religion failed at first to bind them together. When for instance a Norman abbot came with his Norman chants to Glastonbury, the monks rebelled, and declared that they would not change their beloved Gregorian tones ; then abbot Turstin introduced an armed band into the church, and two monks were slain, one at the very altar, the other at its foot. The monks defended themselves as they best could with the forms, and candlesticks of the choir, at last the monk's frock got the better of the coat of mail, and the soldiers were driven

¹ Matt. Paris, ubi sup.

out, but not till the church had been stained with blood, and the crucifixes and images of the Saints transfixed with arrows.¹ In St. Alban's too, Abbot Frederic was the head of the Saxon interest in the south of England, and the two hostile parties lasted in the abbey, through the time of the next abbot up to the election of his successor. If these quarrels raged in the sanctuary itself, it is easy to imagine that the world without was not in a state of peace.² There was again another cause which increased the sufferings of poor England, as well under the reign of the Conqueror as of his successors; and this was the quarrel of the Norman barons with their kings. In France feudalism was much more systematized than in England. William, when in Normandy, was but the head of a feudal state, the first among his peers.³ He asked leave of his barons before he invaded England, and when the field of Hastings had been won, and William fairly seated on his throne, the Norman nobles began to think that their work was done, and returned home to their manors in Normandy. William saw that he could not count on a feudal army, and henceforth employed mercenaries.⁴ When his authority was strengthened in England he was much more absolute across the channel than on the continent. He held his English crown by a very different tenure from that by which he wore his ducal coronet in Normandy. There he was a feudal baron of the king of France, but England he held by right of conquest; and this told even more on his own followers than on the English. To the Sax-

¹ Simeon Dunelm, in ann. 1082.

² Matt. Paris, vitæ, abb. St. Alb. 1005. ³ Orderic, 493.

⁴ Orderic, 512.

ons he was the representative of Edward the Confessor, whose laws he had sworn to observe, but the Normans who followed him to England, when once on English soil, lost their Norman, without distinctly acquiring Saxon rights. Hence the feudal system was at first much less defined in England than in France ; and hence the bloody wars which the English kings had to wage against their nobles. Bitterly do the barons complain of the Red King at Henry's accession, and fairly does the monarch promise improvement ; but the wily Beaulere only waits his time till he feels his throne firm beneath him. It is true that these quarrels made the English necessary to their Norman monarchs ; loyally did they serve the Conqueror on the continent, and Normandy saw her fair fields ravaged by her own Duke, leading a Saxon army. Again his son William owed his throne to his Saxon subjects, who, by the persuasion of their archbishop Lanfranc, assisted him against his disaffected barons. Ultimately the English gained by it, but during this period of transition they were miserably ground down between the opposing parties. Neither king nor baron cared much for the poor Saxon, and Magna Charta has much more about baronial than about popular rights.

Alas ! for England in this dreadful time. All countries have had their day of probation, but few have passed through such a fiery trial as our own. Scarcely had England recovered from the Dane, when the Norman came, and Dane-land, March-land, and Saxon-land, with the remnants of the old Cymri, in Cumbria, all alike felt his yoke ; and if it was an iron yoke under the Conqueror, what was it under his successors ? The Conqueror had a rough justice of his own,

his long arm reached from one end of England to the other, and he knew every hide of land within it ; he even several times endeavoured to learn the language of his new subjects, that he might judge their complaints himself, and would have done so, if he had not been too old to begin grammar anew.¹ But under the reign of his foul successor, "riot was the rule" of England. He was a man almost ludicrous in his knavish wickedness, who blasphemed and robbed with a jest, and grinned over his captive when he had him in his power.² He introduced into England a class of men even worse than the robber-soldier ; his companions were effeminate youths, stained with terrible crimes ; and far worse were they in their silken robes and long hair, parted in the middle, like that of women, and their feet clad in peaked shoes of fantastic shape, than the lawless soldier, with his conical cap of iron, and his corslet of steel rings, albeit he ruthlessly wasted the stock of the husbandman. The foul lust of this man cried aloud to heaven for vengeance, and before he fell like a beast of the field, in the New Forest, men felt a strange presentiment that the wrath of God was coming upon him, and holy monks, even in their dreams, prayed to our Lord ; O Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of mankind, for whom Thou hast shed Thy precious blood on the cross, look in mercy upon Thy people, groaning in misery, under the yoke of William.

Our blessed Lord, however, did not leave his people without consolation in this dreadful time ; the Church was still up in arms against the world ; though a contest was going on in her own bosom, and such a man as Ralph Flambard sat on the throne of Durham, yet

¹ Orderic, 520.

² Will. Malms. Gesta Reg. lib. 4.

she had inexhaustible resources in the Saints whom the Lord raised up within her. St. Anselm was a match for the Red King, with all his satellites, whether soldiers or prelates. Even his father, inflexible as he was, was foiled by the crosier of St. Wulstan ; and the simple monk, Guitmund, refused to hold either bishopric or abbacy in England, bidding the king beware lest the fate of unjust conquerors should await him ; and so he left him, and went back across the sea to his quiet monastery of St. Leuffroy of the Cross, in Normandy, a monk as poor as he came. So also, at the time when foul and lawless wickedness was raging in England, under William Rufus, the Lord was nurturing in secret in His church, a man to whose angelic purity it was afterwards given to create the only wholly English order, one destined to provide a refuge for holy virgins from the snares of the world ; and it is the life of this man that, by God's blessing, we hope now to show truthfully to the reader.

Gilbert in the Schools.

It was about the close of the reign of our first William, that Gilbert was born, though the exact year is not known.¹ His father, Sir Joceline, was a Norman knight, and a good soldier, whose services had been rewarded by many gifts of land in Lincolnshire, and especially with the lordship of Sempringham in that county. He was probably one of the vavassors, or inferior nobility

¹ He was above a hundred years old when he died, in 1189.

of the realm.¹ His mother was a Saxon lady, the daughter of a Thane, and of the same rank as her husband. He is thus an early instance of the blending of Norman and Saxon blood, and though, as will be seen by and bye, his character partook more of the homeliness of his mother's race, yet certain adventurous journeyings on the Continent, showed that he had also some of the spirit of his kinsmen, who went forth from home to gain England, the south of Italy and Sicily. But little is known of his parents, and they soon disappear from the history, so that they most probably died before he had attained the age of manhood. All that appears from his chronicles is, that they lived on their estate, "in the midst of their people." A little before his birth, it is said that his mother dreamt that the moon had come down from the sky, to rest upon her bosom; and his fanciful disciple sees in it a pre-sage that his childhood, pale, wan, and sickly as the crescent of the new moon, was destined by the grace

¹ The Bollandists have conjectured that Gilbert was connected with Gilbert de Gant, a great baron who came over with William the Conqueror, whose wife's cousin he was. They, however, have no reason to give for their opinion, except that he was called Gilbert, and that the family of Ghent, or Gant, held the barony of Folkingham, near Sempringham. It will afterwards appear, that Joceline was not a tenant *in capite*, and therefore not one of the great nobility of the realm, and that he held the lands of Sempringham of this very Gilbert. He is here called *miles*, and not *comes*, and it is observable that in one place, the Latin life of Gilbert in Dugdale, says, that Gilbert was "*de plebe electus.*"—Vit. S. Gil. ap. Mon. Angl. vol. 6, p. 2, p. 14. The Conqueror was not by any means particular as to the nobility of the men whom he employed, nor, indeed, were his successors, as his son Henry, who is said to have been fond of low company.

of the Sun of righteousness, to expand into a full orb of brightness. At all events, it is certain that, as a child, he was no favourite with those about him. His recollections of childhood, as he used afterwards, in extreme old age, to tell his canons, were very painful. He was puny, plain, and shy ; his father saw in him no qualities, either of mind or body, to make a soldier. He was therefore, "by divine providence, in his tender age," destined to be a clerk ; had it not been for his childish ailments, he might have been all his days a thick-witted baron, spending all his time in the saddle, with harness on his back. Even here, however, he did not seem at first to have found his element ; like most children, he disliked his book, and for a long time he seems to have been allowed to run wild as he would. His features were plain, and nothing is said in his history about his mother's love. He was looked upon as half an idiot, and he used to tell of himself that the very servants would hardly sit at table with him, so much was he neglected and despised. Thus did God shield him from the deceitfulness of riches, for it is expressly said that his father was a rich man. He was nursed up in the school of poverty and humiliation, and the shadow cast from his sickly and unamiable childhood rested upon him throughout his life, tempering the burning heat of prosperity.

As is often the case with dull children, the reproaches of his friends, or the natural expansion of his mind, produced a sudden re-action, and he began to apply himself to study. His parents seeing him take this turn, determined to send him to Paris :¹

¹ He is said to have gone in Gallias, which probably implies Paris. It could not be Normandy, for which the author of

thither then in early youth he went, as to the principal seat of learning in Europe. Our own Oxford, though more ancient as a seat of learning than Paris, had not yet attained its subsequent celebrity. It was a strong and fair city, with its castle rising high in the midst of the streams which all but surrounded it,¹ but it was then rather too warlike to be a great seat of learning, and had to stand many a siege before it attained to its eminence. Nor, indeed, was Oxford ever the intellectual centre of *Europe*, as was Paris; as the archbishop of Canterbury was "the Pope of the farther world," so had Oxford a world of its own, with intellects as active and as penetrating as any which ruled the schools on the continent. But Paris had, even in Gilbert's time, its four nations, one of which included even the far east.² To Paris then, and not to Oxford, came Gilbert; and he might, had it pleased him, have found food enough for his curiosity, for the quarrels between Realists and Nominalists had begun already to be heard in the schools of Paris. Roscelinus, the opponent of St. Anselm, had taught in Paris; and there was a person then in France whose name has spread wider than that of the heretical head of the Nominalists. Peter Abelard was still a young man, though probably about ten years older than Gilbert. The career of the two youths was, however, to be very different; the terms of the schools are banished from the life of Gilbert; it is not known who was his master, whether Bernard of Chartres, or William of Champeaux, or Abelard himself. Not but that he was, in after times, a distinguished

Gilbert's life uses Neustria. John of Salisbury, when he relates his going abroad to study, says that he went in Gallias, and it only appears incidentally that he means Paris.—*Metalog.* i. 10.

¹ *Gesta Stephani.* p. 958.

² *Bulæus,* vol. ii. 666.

teacher in England, but it was not God's will that intellect should be the most prominent part of his character. All that is said of his studies at the school of Paris is, that he made up by his diligence for the waste of his early years, and "received an abundant talent of learning." But it proved to be a good school of discipline for him, and a marked change took place in his character; he had to struggle with poverty, for his father, notwithstanding all his riches, gave but a poor maintenance to the son who had disappointed him. Again, amidst all the dangers which surrounded him, by a severe purity, he offered up his body as a sacrifice to the Lord, and thus the grace of God trained him for that work which he was destined to perform in the Church.

It is not known how long he remained at Paris, but he came back to England with the degree of master and license to teach.¹ He was not of those who remained on the mountain of St. Genevieve, disputing over and over again on the old questions, who were to be found by their friends after many a long year not a whit advanced from the point where they started. Nor did he repair, as did many scholars in those days to Salerno, to exercise afterwards the more profitable art of medicine. Nor again did he seek the courts of king or prelate to make his fortune. He did not even seek the cloister, much less there, as saith the² quiet satirist of the schools, carry his proud heart under the hood of St. Benedict and exempt himself from conventual discipline, by keeping his old profession. He went back to England, to his old home in his father's house, and opened a school, or, to give him his proper title, he became a regent master.

¹ John of Salisbury, ii. 10.

² Ibid. *Metalog.* i. 4.

At this time, a schoolmaster was a man of great importance; his person was as inviolable as that of a clerk,¹ and he was considered as a half ecclesiastical personage. This office was a passport to the favour of kings and to ecclesiastical dignity. Two rulers of the schools of Bec, at this time successively sat on the throne of Canterbury; Geoffrey, the schoolmaster of St. Katherine's, became Abbot of St. Alban's, where a² large library had lately been laid up in the painted cupboards by Paul, the first Norman Abbot, and a whole manor set apart for its maintenance. The education of the country was then carried on by the old schools which had been connected with the monasteries and the cathedrals and other churches.³ No one could teach without a license, and this was to be obtained from any master who himself was the ruler of a school.⁴ Sometimes a secular ruled the school of the monks, and a monk might rule a secular school,⁵ but all were under the control and patronage of the church, as the decrees for their protection testify, and it was considered almost simony to exact money for a

¹ Laws of Edw. the Conf. ap Wilkins, vol. 1. p. 310.

² Matt. Paris, pp. 1007 and 1036.

³ The decree of the council of Lateran, mentions other churches besides the cathedrals. Saxon cathedral schools are mentioned at the end of the tenth century.—Wilkins i. 265.

⁴ It does not seem that at first any master whatever could give a license, at least in France, for it seems likely from a rescript of Alexander III., that the masters of the cathedral schools claimed the privilege of granting licenses, and the cause mentioned by John of Salisbury, letter 19, implies a monopoly within a certain district. The chancellor of the university of Paris is expressly allowed by Alexander to exact a fee, which also seems to give him a monopoly.

⁵ Matt. Par. pp. 1007, 1039. St. Anselm, Ep. i. 30.

presentation to a school, and no one could even let his school to another master. The universities were continually sending forth masters, who set up unendowed schools for themselves ; and the church soon after this, in Pope Alexander III's. time, strengthened the hands of the old schools, by ordaining that each cathedral chapter should set apart a benefice for the master of the school, "because the church of God, as a pious mother, is bound to provide for the poor, lest the opportunity of reading and improving themselves be taken away from them." At the same time, the same pope¹ encourages to the utmost the establishment of new schools, where the masters would necessarily be paid by the scholars, by forbidding under an anathema any cathedral dignitary from exacting money for a license, from any one who wished to set up a school, provided he were only competent.

Such was the situation in which Gilbert was now placed ; he had found his way back to the home of his youth, where he had lived neglected and despised, but he was now a much more important person than when he left it, and was considered by his father as a degenerate son. Now the whole country round, from a great distance, came to hear the new doctor from Paris. Not only boys were put under his charge and young men became his hearers, but girls and maidens also came to be instructed by him. Females were not behindhand in the intellectual enthusiasm of the period. Learning was a romantic quest, an unknown land, in which even females might go forth and make discoveries. The well known Heloise

¹ Council of London A. D. 1138.

² Rescript p. 2. c. 18. ap. Mansi.

will occur to every body, and the daughters of Mane-gold a schoolman, celebrated in his day, taught philosophy to those of their own sex. Here then Gilbert found himself in a situation of great responsibility. The obscure township of Sempringham had suddenly, through his means, sprung up into an extensive school. His father no longer looked upon him as an unworthy scion, and found that he might be usefully and even honourably employed without breaking bones at tournaments, or hunting and hawking over his lands. He therefore, instead of leaving him to glean a precarious subsistence from his pupils, supported him out of his possessions, and this enabled Gilbert to assume an authority over his scholars, which he could not otherwise have maintained. He walked about in a dress becoming the son of the lord of Sempringham, but all the while he was in heart a monk, and he began immediately to form his pupils into an association, which might save them from the dangers to which their situation exposed them. Not content with teaching them the trivium and quadrivium, he became their spiritual guide, and subjected them to a species of monastic discipline. Knowing how a breath may spoil the beautiful innocence of childhood, and yet how easily holy discipline may shut out the knowledge of evil till the soul is strong enough to fight against it, he taught them to consecrate the whole day to God. The male children slept altogether in a dormitory, where all might be controlled; he taught them reverence at church, and at certain times and places, a religious silence was observed, and they had stated times for study and prayer. He was now happier than he had ever been before, beloved and honoured in his own

home, and the guide of happy children and of a band of youths and maidens, who praised the Lord under his direction.

CHAPTER II.

The Rectory.

HE was not long however to enjoy this peace ; two new churches were founded in his father's lands at Sempringham and Tirington. It does not appear whether Sir Joceline was himself the founder of them, at all events he conceived that the right of presentation belonged to him, and he nominated his son to the vacant churches. It was much against his will that he accepted the charge ; he knew that it would probably be disputed, and a lawsuit was of all things the most opposed to his character. On the other hand, he thought it his duty to defend his father's rights, and as the cause would come before an ecclesiastical tribunal and under the cognizance of the bishop, he could have no scruple in accepting the benefice, if it were given in his favour. A long lawsuit followed, as he had expected. If ever there was a system in confusion it was the parochial system of England at the Conquest. It had been introduced amongst us later than in any other of the existing kingdoms in Europe, and traces existed even after the conquest of the old division of church property by the bishop himself among his clergy : Lanfranc for instance, and William of St. Carilefe, bishop of Durham, were the first in their respective sees to separate the bishop's lands from those of the monks of the cathedral, who originally performed the functions

of the parish priests. Thus the parishes in England were in that most dangerous of states, a state of transition ; at first, matters are generally clear and simple, and then comes an intermediate state, when questions arise and everything is vague and floating, till evils and abuses compel authority to step in. At first all was in the hands of the bishop, and then the nobleman must have a private chapel, or oratory, as it was called, and nothing was more natural than that he should appoint his own chaplain, subject to the bishop's approval. Afterwards, he began to find it too much to pay both chaplain and parish-priest, and a law was necessary to force him to pay tithes to the mother church.¹ Out of these chapels often arose parish churches where there were none, and so the chapelry became a benefice, and the nobleman the patron. Or else the lord of a manor founded or endowed a church, and then the grateful church gave him the patronage, which became hereditary in his family or attached to the land. But a far different sort of patronage soon sprung up ; church property was too tempting, and lay too much at the mercy of a strong hand, not to be exposed to the rapacity of an unscrupulous noble. The defenceless church was ever a convenient fund whence earl and baron drew money, whether a fortification was to be constructed, or a body of armed men fitted out.² Sometimes a portion of the church lands were made over on a long lease to some powerful baron, who, with his good sword, was to clear them of a nest of robbers, lurking in the woods, or to defend the church in times of danger.³ These lands but too often never came back to

¹ *Leges Eccl. Canuti. Wilkins Concil. p. 302.*

² *III. Lat. council, canon 19.*

³ *Matt. Paris, 998.*

the church. In other cases some benefactor or his descendant repented of his or his ancestor's liberality, and resumed what had been solemnly given over to the service of God. In the time of the Danes almost all the parish churches north of the Thames¹ had been destroyed, and when the foot-prints of the invader had passed away, the nobles took possession of the lands and kept them in their own hands. Church lands were thus passed on from father to son, like any other manor belonging to the lord, and were given as a dowry on the marriage of a daughter, and of course the right of presentation passed on with the possession.² A miserable pittance out of the tithes and produce was paid to some priest who was appointed to serve the church, and the rest belonged to the lord. The clergy themselves were by no means exempt from blame; the servile chaplain would come into the lord and lady's chamber and profane the most holy mysteries by saying mass to them in their bed. Sometimes the clergy themselves were the spoilers of the church; most of the Saxon priests were married, and livings often became a family inheritance, enjoyed in a direct line by the son after the father. Even in later times, in Normandy, mere children were sometimes put in possession of ecclesiastical benefices.³ The right of presentation was sold like any other right belonging to the land, and that with the connivance of bishops.⁴ Such was the miserable state of England before the conquest, and the very improvement of affairs brought with it its own

¹ Palgrave's Anglo-Saxon Const. p. 167.

² For an instance of the *advocatio* or presentation passing on with an unjust possession, v. Matt. of Paris, p. 1016.

³ Council of Avranches, 1172.

⁴ John of Salisbury, *de Nug. Cur.* 7. 17.

troubles. Parish churches sprung up every where,¹ and men, women, and children, might often be seen winding up the little pathway through the fields, to the sound of the merry bells, where never church had been before. But then first, the rights of the old parish were to be respected, and it was ordered that on some high festival, the priests of the new churches should go every year in procession, with cross and banner, to the mother church. Again, the rights of patrons were to be settled; and it is said, that in England and Sweden these matters were in greater confusion than any where else. Certain it is, that when, in the third Lateran council, the church stepped in to settle the law of patronage, more rescripts on the subject were addressed by Pope Alexander III. to England, than to any other country.

It is not surprising then, that Sir Joceline of Sempringham should have had a lawsuit about the right of patronage. Even in those turbulent days men had recourse to law as well as now; and quibbles too about seals and charters were common, as when the Lincoln men objected to the Abbot of St. Alban's that the charters of the abbey had no seal,² and it was answered that in good king Offa's time, a golden cross was used instead of the pendant seal which the Confessor introduced. It does not however appear, what was the objection made to Gilbert's father. It appears likely from the terms used by Gilbert when he instituted the priory, that the church lands belonged to him not only as rector, but as lord of the manor, inherited from his father, and this may have been the grounds on which

¹ *Leges Regis Edwardi ap. Wilkins.*

² *Matt. Paris, 1026.*

his father's right was questioned. A change had taken place in Sempringham since the Domesday survey, for it was now in the hundred of Alveton, and belonged to Gilbert of Ghent, who held it free of taxes of the king, which does not seem to have been the case at the time when the survey was taken. Of this nobleman, Sir Joceline held it as the mesne lord,¹ and it may be that it was doubted whether the presentation belonged to him or to Gilbert of Ghent.² Or else, it may be, that the title of these new comers to the lands themselves appeared to be rather of might than right. However this be, the lawsuit was decided in Gilbert's favour, and he was accordingly canonically instituted by the bishop of Lincoln, as rector of the parishes of Sempringham and Tirington. He was not in orders at the time when he became possessed of these livings; he therefore appointed a chaplain to serve the church in his room, and there was nothing irregular in this proceeding, for a license was allowed to students to hold ecclesiastical benefices without being as yet ordained.³

¹ This appears from the fact, that Gilbert of Ghent gave the land to St. Gilbert to found his priory, and is said in the charter to have been a tenant *in capite*. The dominium of the land, is said indeed to have belonged to Sir Joceline, but it appears that "domain" was applied to the manor of a mesne lord, v. Ellis's Index to Domesday, i. 230. The under-tenants of a nobleman were sometimes called barones.—Orderic, p. 589.

² A somewhat similar cause is decided in a rescript of Alexander III. in which it appears that a controversy had arisen between the nunnery of Wilton, and a knight who had a lease of a part of the lands, concerning the right of presentation to a church situated on the land.

³ In rescript of Alexander III. p. xv. c. l., non-residence is allowed *studio literarum*. As late as council of Rouen, 1231, the alternative is allowed to clerks possessing benefices, either

It was a beautiful sight, the parish of Sempringham under the rule of its youthful rector. His was a gentle rule, for he was himself under obedience, and such men are ever calm and disciplined in their manners, and meek in heart. He subjected himself in all things to his chaplain, who was his confessor and spiritual guide. Being master of the school, the education of his parishioners came naturally under his controul, and he catechised and taught them with unwearied diligence. He taught them the holy mysteries of religion through the external rites of the church; he knew well how the sweet service of the church soothes and softens down the rough hearts of rustics; he taught them early to reverence the house of God as the abode of angels, and above all the temple, on the altar of which was reserved the adorable sacrament. He humanized the minds of the simple peasantry by this teaching, and filled them with a religious awe, so that it is said that a parishioner of Sempringham could at once be known from any other by his reverential air on entering a church. At first he lived among his parishioners in the village itself of Sempringham. He, with his chaplain, had a lodging in the house where dwelt the father of a family¹ with his wife and children. The

of being ordained or betaking themselves to the study of theology. Vicarii or curates (otherwise called capellani) are recognized by Alexander III., and the rights of the rectors, to whom they were bound by oath, protected against them.—v. Rescripts, p xxxix. Even a lay-rector is protected against his curate, though he is ordered to be ordained. See also councils of Tours and of London, 1163, and 1175. A great laxity had been tolerated previous to the Lateran council, and Alexander allowed a person who had been instituted before the age of fifteen, to keep his benefice on that ground.—Rescript, p. xxiii. 5.

¹ Paterfamilias, the House-bonde.—v. Palgrave, p. 16.

chaplain must have found himself in a new situation, for it was not often that the poor Anglo-Saxon priest was thus treated by the lay-rector of the living ; and the son of the lord of the manor did not often abase himself to dwell in the house of the churl. Gilbert however found here more happiness than he had done in his father's hall ; he was now in his vocation winning souls to God, working among the poor of the earth. The daughter of the householder with whom he dwelt was a holy and devout maiden, whose modest graces endeared her to the hearts of all the villagers. She was Gilbert's scholar, and was growing up beneath his eye in simplicity and holiness. God however did not allow him to dwell long beneath this peaceful roof. One night he dreamed that he had laid his hand upon the maiden's bosom, and was prevented by some strange power from again withdrawing it. On awaking he trembled, for he feared lest God had warned him by this dream that he was on the verge of evil. He was utterly unconscious of the danger, but he revealed the temptation and the dream to his confessor, and asked him his opinion. The priest, in return, confessed that the same feeling had come over him ; the result was, that they resolved to quit the neighbourhood of what might become danger. Gilbert had never wittingly connected evil with the pure and holy being before him ; but his heart misgave him, and he went away. He knew that chastity was too bright and glorious a jewel to risk the loss of it ; no man may think himself secure ; an evil look or thought indulged in, have sometimes made the first all at once to become the last ; therefore the greatest saints have placed strictest guard upon the slightest thought, word, and action. Even the spotless and ever-virgin Mary

trembled when she saw the angel enter her chamber.¹ And He, who was infinitely more than sinless by grace, even by nature impeccable, because He was the Lord from heaven, He has allowed it to be recorded that his disciples wondered that he talked with a woman. All the actions of our blessed Lord are most real, for He had taken upon Himself the very reality of our flesh of the substance of the Virgin Mary ; but each action is also most highly significant and symbolical, so that, though all conduce to our great glory, yet all may be a warning to us in our greatest shame. Thus, though it would be unutterable blasphemy to connect with Him the possibility of sin, yet by this little act He has been graciously pleased to leave us an example, that as we should keep a dove-like purity of eye and thought, we should also, for the love of God, brave the scandal of evil tongues. And Gilbert imitated his blessed Lord, for though he fled from the very thought of danger, he still continued to guide her by his counsel ; she does not disappear from the history, and by and bye we shall see that the dream might have another meaning. After he left this house, he dwelt in a chamber constructed over the porch of the parish-church of St. Andrew, at Sempringham. He scarcely ever left this holy place, but was either occupied in prayer in the church itself, or teaching his school, or catechizing his parishioners. His scholars, though still seculars, continued to live all but as monks under his guidance ; and the care which he took in forming their minds and in ruling his parish, left him but little time to himself. He was not an idle ruler, nor did his sweetness of manner prevent his exertion of his authority wherever it was necessary. None know how

¹ St. Ambr. in Luc.

to be angry but those who can be angry with calmness, as our Lord when He made a whip of cords and drove out them that sold doves, and overturned the tables of the money-changers. On one occasion, one of his parishioners, when he had reaped his land, laid all the rich corn in his barn, without giving thanks to God, and separating the tenth part for the church. He was chuckling over his fraud, and thinking that the rector was much too simple to find it out, and much too spiritual to care for it, if he did. But he was mistaken, for not only did the rector find out the fraud, but he made him take all the corn out of his barn and count it before him sheaf by sheaf ; and then he collected together the tenth part, and heaping it up in the midst of the village, burnt it all in open day, in the sight of the wondering rustics. They then learned to know Gilbert better, and found, that though he cared but little about his own rights, he would not allow the church of God, which he represented, to lose a tittle of her dues.

CHAPTER III.

The Bishop's Palace.

A PARISIAN doctor was, however, too great a personage to be left in the little village of Sempringham ; he was not destined to remain long in peace with his scholars and parishioners. Robert Bloet, his diocesan, the bishop of Lincoln, sent for him, made him a clerk, by conferring on him one of the minor orders, and bade him live in his household. What sort of life he was likely to lead at this time, and why he was sent for, may be guessed at, because it is known what sort of a man the bishop himself was. It is to be hoped that he

was a sadder and a wiser man than he had been, when he sent for Gilbert. He had been chancellor of England under William Rufus, by whom he was made bishop of Lincoln, and under Henry I. High Justiciar; he was a man whose exterior was formed to win all hearts, and whose eloquent tongue and talents for business had enabled him to gain the favour of the wild and stormy William, as well as the smooth and unscrupulous Henry. His career runs parallel with St. Anselm's, for both were appointed by William Rufus, in that good mood which sickness brought upon him, but the career of the two prelates soon separated. It would be needless to follow them; suffice it to say that Robert found to his cost that it was easier to rule the Red King, when the wild fit was on him, than to escape the more dangerous anger of Henry. The king had been beaten by the saint, and probably loved not those ministers who had helped him to his defeat. He turned round on the bishop of Lincoln, and contrived to find a charge against him by which he was stripped of much of his wealth. Then when his knights were dismissed and his glittering train of noble pages gone, and his gold and silver vessels broken up, he looked round on his almost empty halls, on the shaven crowns and sober dresses of his clerks, and rough sheep-skin dresses of his serving-men, and burst into tears. Bitterly then must he have repented of his cowardice, when, with the other three bishops, he said to the bold Saint, that his holiness was above them, and that he must go on his way alone, for the love of kindred and of the world had wound round their hearts too tightly to allow them to follow.¹ Bitterly must he have wept over the time when he consecrated the abbots, who

¹ Eadmer ap Anselm. ed. Ben. pp. 4, 7, 65.

had received investiture from Henry's hand. It was at this time, probably, that he sent for Gilbert, that his gentle hand might soothe him in his desolation and penitence. The close of the prelate's busy life was at hand ; one day some one wished to comfort him by repeating some words of praise, with which the king had honoured him in his absence. But he knew the crafty king too well to trust him, and said with a sigh : the king praises none of his servants but those whom he would utterly smite down.¹ A few days after he went to Woodstock, where Henry was holding high festival with a number of nobles, and the curious beasts which he had collected from foreign lands ; as the prelate was walking with the king and the bishop of Salisbury, he fell down in a fit of apoplexy and never spoke more.

Gilbert's mission at the episcopal palace of Lincoln did not, however, stop here, and he had probably a harder part to play with Alexander, who succeeded to the bishopric, than with his broken-hearted predecessor. He was the nephew of the greatest prelate in England, that Roger of Salisbury, whom Henry I., when his fortunes were at the lowest, took into his service, as a poor priest, at Caen. Henry, when he became king of England, did not forget his old companion in poverty, and it was a fine thing to be the nephew of Roger, for he had at his disposal whatever he chose to ask for. Alexander was brought up in his palace, and unhappily imbibed a taste for splendour and for architecture. Had he stopped when he re-built his cathedral, and vaulted it with stone, it had been well ; but, unfortunately, he loved military architecture as well as

¹ Henry of Huntingdon, ap. Wharton. p. ii. p. 695.

ecclesiastical. At Newark, a stately castle was built by him on a hill, which stretched its green and flowery slope above the river Trent ;¹ at Sleaford and Banbury, two more castles kept watch over his extensive diocese. This might have been allowed during Henry's reign ; he would much rather have seen castles in the hands of his bishops than of the nobles, whom the policy of his whole reign tended to humble. He knew well that the lance was a much safer weapon in a bishop's hands, than the pastoral staff. Stephen, his successor, was not so politic ; kings loved to reduce their prelates to the state of feudal barons, but there was rather too much feudality in three good castles of stone, besides that of Devizes, said to be the finest of Europe, belonging to Alexander's uncle of Salisbury. He determined to take the castles into his own custody, and the bishops soon gave him an opportunity. They would ride about with armed retainers, and men with arms in their hands will quarrel, so when in 1139 they came to Oxford, to a council held by the king, the soldiers of the bishops fought with those of Alan of Brittany, about the lodgings assigned to their masters. Much blood was shed, and one soldier killed, but at last the bishops won the day, and the earl was beaten. Stephen seized upon this pretext, and bade the bishops give up their castles, as a hostage for their good behaviour. On their refusal, he seized the prelates, and kept them in custody. Soon after, he took Alexander with him to Newark, and, as he had done before to Roger, he declared that till the castle was surrendered, no food should pass the bishop's lips. With tears did Alexan-

¹ Vernantissimum florida compositione Henric. Huntin. lib. 8, p. 389.

der implore his own garrison to yield his fair castle, and with no less wretchedness, did he see the king's soldiers marching up the green slope, and entering the gate of his stronghold, and before he had turned his back upon it, the royal standard of England floated on its walls. The issue of the preceding contest, about investitures, had taught men that the office of the bishop was totally distinct from that of the temporal lord : as a lord, he might do homage, but the ring and the staff could not come from an earthly king. If, therefore, English prelates would now sink the bishop in the baron, they must pay the penalty. Stephen afterwards pleaded in council, that he had starved Roger, not as bishop, but as his own servant.

We have here somewhat anticipated the history, in order to show this Bishop's character ; Alexander was taught a severe lesson, and meddled no more with military matters. As, however, Gilbert had ceased to be an inmate in the bishop's palace before his misfortunes, he must have dwelt in the bishop's court at Lincoln, in the height of its magnificence. His eyes must have been dazzled with the glittering of burnished armour, mixing in the splendid pageant with the cope of the ecclesiastic, while the cross preceded the bishop and the lance brought up the rear ; his ears were bewildered with the clang of trumpets and the ringing of steel. What was he to do in the midst of such a court ? And yet, strange to say, he was in high favour with both Robert and Alexander. Evil is mixed up with good in Christ's church, like the cross, and the weapons of the world, in Alexander's retinue. Gilbert, going about this splendid house in his plain clerical apparel, was the representative of the cross. Such was his intimacy with the bishop, that he slept in the

same chamber with him. Where could have been his vigils and his fasts at the sumptuous tables and in the magnificent bedchamber of Alexander? He managed to contrive both; he said himself, with a reproachful tone, after he became a monk, that when he was in the bishop's palace he used to tame his flesh by more fasts, prayers, and spiritual exercises, than he ever could compass afterwards. Sometimes the inmates of the palace found that he was too good to suit them, as for instance, the clerk, who after once reciting the office with him, found that he lengthened the service so much by frequently bowing his knees to the ground, that, says Gilbert's biographer, "he swore that he would never pray with him again." One day a prelate came on a visit to the episcopal palace at Lincoln, and shared the chamber where the bishop, and Gilbert of Sempringham, slept. The strange bishop tossed upon his couch and could not sleep; his eye wandered about the darkened room, enlightened only by the glimmering of a taper. All on a sudden, he saw a shadow moving quickly up and down on the opposite wall. He gazed on it in fear for some time, but at last mustering courage, he rose and stealthily approached. He found to his surprise Gilbert awake and in prayer, sometimes standing, sometimes on his knees, raising his hands to heaven in earnest supplication. The bishop shrunk back to his couch, and next morning he smilingly accused his brother of Lincoln of having a mountebank in his room to dance to him at night. Strange is the approximation of good and evil in those days of faith; perhaps it was then more frequent than it is now, or rather from the greatness of the good the evil came out in greater contrast and in an exaggerated form. Gilbert and Alexander of Lincoln lying side by side!

And yet, stranger perhaps is the mixture of good and evil in the same heart. In the pages of history various personages float before us and appear as the types of certain principles; yet, when by chance we can look upon them close, we find them not so bad. Thus Alexander to us is the mere worldly prelate; he appears, as he was called in the Roman court, only as the magnificent Alexander. Yet there was a struggle in his heart too, and Gilbert was to him as his good angel. He insisted on his being ordained priest, and almost by force the awful power of the priesthood was conferred on Gilbert. The bishop's next step showed his just appreciation of his powers and turn of mind. The din of Nominalism and Realism had sounded about Gilbert in vain, without producing any impression; abstract questions could not awaken his mind; but put before him a case of conscience or of spiritual direction, he would grapple with it at once. The bishop accordingly made him, as far as we can make out the vague terms of his biographer, a sort of penitentiary¹ of the diocese. At times, Alexander himself, with all his worldliness, knelt at his feet in the confessional. A man who seeks a severe confessor, cannot be wholly bad, and though Gilbert, as we shall see, left him still in the midst of his grandeur, there is proof that in the day of adversity, he had not forgotten the church of St. Andrew at Sempringham, or its holy rector.

Gilbert's work now lay among the sins and wickednesses of mankind; the worst and most horrid forms

¹ The first general institution of a penitentiary, was at the fourth Lateran council, 1215, but it appears from Thomassin, that particular dioceses in earlier times had their penitentiaries. Vet. et. nov. disc. i. 2. c. 10.

of sin came under his cognizance, for of this nature were those reserved for the jurisdiction of the bishop, whose representative he was. To him also the clergy of the diocese referred all cases of difficulty, which occurred in the practice of the confessional. This required both learning and experience; instead of his little churches of Sempringham and Tirington, he had the whole diocese of Lincoln for his parish. To decide the cases which came before him, in his day, probably was more difficult than it would have been in the next century. He lived only on the verge of the age of systems. Canon law had not been compiled by Gratian; no one had as yet professed it at Paris, nor had master Vacarius lectured at Oxford;¹ appeals to Rome were but just in England taking the legal and precise form,² finally fixed by Alexander III. And yet canons are as old as the first council of Jerusalem, recorded in the Acts, and appeals to Rome have been since Athanasius threw himself and his cause on Pope Julius; so too, the germs of casuistry existed in the old penitentials, though Christian morals had not yet been moulded into a science by St. Thomas. Gilbert had only the more difficult task to fulfil; the tremendous power of the keys was chiefly delegated to him by the bishop, and he had so much the less to guide him in its exercise. What are the difficulties in casuistry, it is hard for those to tell to whom its existence is unknown. All appears smooth to him who hardly knows that he has a conscience, so little does he exercise it; so also, the difficulties of the con-

¹ Gerv. Act. Pont. Cant. ap Twysden, p. 1665. Chron. Norm. ap Duchesne, p. 983.

² Ibid. and Henr. Huntin. lib. viii. p. 226. Script. post. Bed.

fessional can only be known to him who is practised in it. Gilbert had to frame for himself, the rules of that art created by Christianity, which has sin for its subject matter, with all the sickening details of the wickedness of the human soul, that wonderful art which is founded on Christ's divine command, Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted. Christian morals has, from its very nobleness, many difficulties in practice ; this, however, is an imperfection incident to the highest human sciences, and their professors cannot consistently urge it as an objection against this one, which is divine. It has to do with subjects to which language is inadequate, and which thought can hardly compass, and yet it is a real science, which can be taken to pieces and viewed on all sides, and drawn out at length, and be systematized, and made consistent. It has its definitions and its axioms, its premises and its deductions. But though to define a venial sin may be easy, yet to tell it in practice from one that is mortal, may be difficult. The broken language of a penitent is hard to interpret ; and all the dark labyrinths of a wicked heart hard to disentangle. Cases are infinitely varied in practice, for the hideous forms of guilt are infinite, and many of them may come across theories, however clearly drawn out. If it be hard to tell how to rectify a complicated disease of the body, what must it be when, by external symptoms, men try to judge of the complex motives of a human heart, jostling and crossing each other in every direction ? Christianity, while it has exalted, has rendered the science of morals more complex. As Christ, on the mount, delivered a new code, so the Church has created new virtues and new crimes, possible only in Christianity, as, for instance, simony and heresy. This may help us to understand Gilbert's functions, all but

the highest that could be on earth. His eye had to look curiously into the putrid sores of the human soul, and his heart must have often sunk within him ; yet he had the power to cleanse them. He was a physician, as well as a judge. Truly it is the order of priesthood which makes Christian history to differ from Pagan. The history of Christendom is a terrible scene ; in reading its records of wholesale simony and petty jobbing, of bold crime and coward virtue, we are tempted to say, “in what respect is the world changed ?” But looking for a moment on Christian times, even with the cold eye of an historian, they have this remarkable difference from those which preceded them, that all through, there exists a body of men, the ministers of a kingdom, standing beside the kingdoms of the earth, with laws of its own, and resting entirely on invisible sanctions, the meanest of them claiming in his own sphere to be above an earthly king, and at whose feet kings may kneel. These men, again, are not an hereditary caste ; they are cut off from earthly ties ; they have only the usufruct of their property, and a stranger possesses it after them. These are the men who constitute Christianity, as far as it is a visible system ; take away the independence of its jurisdiction, and the power of its priests, to all external appearance at least, Christendom, is merged in the world. It was this compact system which Gilbert had now in a great measure to wield in the diocese of Lincoln, as the bishop’s representative. This is priestcraft proper, and a gentle craft it is. It can keep the soul of the child pure from sin, or crush it in the bud ; preserve the young man chaste as a maiden, and heal the wounds in the soul of a hardened sinner.

CHAPTER IV.

The Nunnery.

WHAT all this while has become of Gilbert's two parishes of Sempringham and Tirington? Was his school broken up, and were his scholars dispersed? His chronicler says nothing about it, but, as will appear in the sequel, he certainly kept up his communication with his favourite pupils. The whole of the revenues of Tirington he gave up, absolutely out of his hands; and out of those of Sempringham, he took but what was really necessary, bestowing the rest entirely upon the poor. Though the bishop's command and the office which he held, must have taken away all scruple from his mind as to non-residence, still he was too poor in spirit to derive more from his benefice than the mere necessaries of life. His heart was not at rest in Alexander's palace; the baron and the bishop were far too much identified to suit him. The trumpet of the cavalier ever and anon broke in sharply, on the cathedral chant and the song of the choir. Besides, in any bishop's palace he would not have been in his element. He was a true parish priest, and the rude rafters of his own little church, suited him far better than the stone vault of the cathedral. His heart was with the rustics whom he had taught, and whose minds he had refined by his instructions; he loved the wild fens, where the poor Saxon still lurked, better than the episcopal city. His plans had all been broken up when the bishop's command had called him away from Sempringham, and he had only submitted to leave it, in obedience to the will of God. His heart yearned for the youths and maid-

ens, whom he had taught in his school, and for his village children, and the rude husbandmen and housewives whose souls he had raised from the dust, to which many a long year of toil had well-nigh bound them. In addition to this, he seems to have felt a growing conviction that with such a bishop as Alexander, he could do nothing where he was. The secular clergy had never yet recovered from the wretched state in which the Norman invasion had found them; and however gradual and merciful had been the introduction of the law of celibacy among them, still the canons of the councils at the time show plainly that the new state of things sat uneasily upon them. They still wanted their hereditary benefices, and that continual progress towards the secularization of church property, to which the Saxon church had been tending. The grave and august idea of a body of unmarried clergy, is with difficulty grasped by those on whom it is binding, hard as it is to eradicate it, when once it has taken root. Flagrant disorders had therefore broken out among the clergy, which required new and stringent laws to repress them. Alexander was present at the council which met to reform the church in 1127, but a splendid and a military prelate was not the man to enforce the strict provisions of such an assembly. Gilbert seems to have felt this bitterly. One of the seven archdeaconries of Lincoln was offered to him by Alexander, probably soon after this very council of London. Its sixth canon had solemnly conjured all archdeacons to assist in enforcing celibacy, as was their duty, and Gilbert felt that this high office was one which his shoulders could not bear. The archdeacons of Lincoln were great men; and one of them is said by Henry of Huntingdon, to be "the richest of all the

archdeacons now in England." But Gilbert loved poverty too well to be a princely churchman, and he refused the office, saying, at the same time, that he knew no quicker way to perdition. He felt himself totally unfit to rule so many ; his path, he thought, lay among the poor of the earth, among simple rustics and children ; but he trembled at the thought of being set on high among the clergy, with power to chastise. The Bishop seeing him so much in earnest, gave up the point.

It appears to have been not long after this, and about the year 1130, that he left the bishop's palace altogether.¹ The immediate cause of his departure is not known. That the step did not alienate Alexander from him is evident from the uniform support which he ever after received from the bishop. He went back to his parish with the greatest joy ; he found much alteration in his old friends. The young girl whom he had left in her father's house, was now a grown-up maiden. He himself was changed also : he went away a layman, but he was now a priest, and his parishioners were now properly his flock, whom he could feed with his own hand, and not by another's. Besides this, he had many years' experience in the confessional, and the guidance of souls. The habits of purity and austerity which he had ever practised, had now become invigorated by years, and his character for sanctity had been spread abroad by his high station, so as to be well-nigh above

¹ It appears that he left it in the reign of Henry I., for his biographer says that the nunnery was founded by him in that reign. As Henry died in 1135, he probably quitted Lincoln a few years before that time. The Derby annals bring it nearer, by fixing the date of the nunnery at 1131. It probably was between 1127 and 1131.

the reach of scandal. It should also be observed, that from the fact which he himself states, of the large patrimony which had fallen to his lot, his father must have died between his return from Paris, and the time of which we are now writing. He was, therefore, lord of the manor of Sempringham, and a rich man. From the terms which he uses,¹ it also appears that the power which he had over his parish churches was very great. It may be, that the church lands were in the hands of his family ; at all events, he was the patron, as well as the incumbent of the living. Possessed, as he was, also, of the favour of one of the most powerful prelates in England, what might he not hope to do, with wealth and power in his hands ? He had long made up his mind to give up all for Christ's sake ; the only question was, how it was to be done. Father and mother were dead, and he was alone in the world ; for it does not appear that he had either brother or sister. His whole thoughts were concentrated in his spiritual children ; and they were to him father and mother, and brethren and sisters. For their use, he intended to give up his patrimony, and to restore the churches of Sempringham and Tirington, absolutely into the hands of the church, which, during his father's life, he could not do. His intimacy with the bishop left him very much the choice of the mode of so doing, and he waited quietly God's time, till he could see how it could best be done. He certainly had no deep views on the subject ; and the foundation of an order appears never to have entered his head. With all its deep self-devotion, his mind was of a quiet and a homely cast. Indeed, his was, in all respects, if we may so say, a homely lot ; his parish

¹ He says that he wishes " *mancipare divino cultui ecclesias,*" which he possessed " *libera possessione.*"

was the home of his childhood, and his parishioners were those whose familiar faces he had known, even when, a neglected boy in his father's house, he was so little like the heir to the lands and the manor; the youths and the maidens whom he was now guiding, were the first favourite pupils of his school. His character, therefore, is a specimen of one which seldom appears in the history of the times, and which yet must be taken into the account, if we would understand them. It is quite true, that they were times of romance; the history of most monasteries would probably be what is called romantic. As, in the world, rapine and violence, and clever fraud, were the order of the day, so also, in religion, the great and mighty good by which God overthrew wickedness, was often done, as it were, by fits and starts, by a holy violence, which took heaven and earth by force. The whole structure of society was framed on a notion of law, partially restraining physical force, and yet legalizing it, by bringing it under its cognizance. Thus the legal trial by battle, which, be it remembered, sometimes decided ecclesiastical causes,¹ was but the law interposing, to regulate what would be sure to have taken place, without its interposition. So again, the monastic rule was the regulation of the self-devotion with which God inspired holy men and women, who thirsted for a more perfect way. Hence, side by side with the charter of the monastery, would often be its history, telling how there once dwelt in the greenwood an outlaw, and as he slept on a grassy knoll, among his merry men, under the trees, in the summer time, God, in his mercy, sent him a vision, and he left his followers and became a hermit,

¹ Matt. Par. p. 1053.

in the place where, afterwards, the abbey was built.¹ And these stories were very often the real truth, though at other times they were legends—that is, truth, mixed with falsehood. At the same time, it should always be remembered, that as, besides the romantic side of things, there were law and custom, and deep policy in the affairs of the world, so also, the Church was a compact and an orderly body, with its rules of holy obedience, its laws and canons. It had its quiet parish-priests, and to this class, to all appearance, Gilbert was to the end of life to belong. England had, it is true, its secluded nooks and its vast forests, where earl or baron,² as he rode through its depths, winding his horn in the merry chace, would light on a holy hermit, clad in skins, serving God in the hole of the rock ; but it had besides, its green meadows and noiseless streams, with the willows on their banks, and the miller's pool, and all the tame scenery which meets us now-a-days. Gilbert's lot seemed likely to be cast in with those whose good deeds are confined to one little spot ; but the quiet brook often widens into the broad river, and our Lord willed that this lowly tree, planted by the water side, should bear fruit an hundred-fold.

His first thought was to establish a monastery in the parish, and to connect it with the parish church. It was to be the head-quarters of religion at Sempringham, and the visible centre, round which all religious associations would cling. In this way alone, could the wild and untamed vices of the rude people be cured ; human nature can hardly believe that its strong passions can be restrained at all, till they have seen men

¹ Dugdale Mon. Angl. 6, 893.

² Dugdale Ibid.

within whom all human desires are actually dead. Gilbert first intended that his future convent was to be inhabited by monks ; he watched diligently the spiritual progress of the most promising among the men of his flock, but they were bowed down with the cares of this world. If he could keep them from open sin, he thought himself happy. Monks and nuns are not commodities to be found everywhere, and to be moulded for the nonce whenever they are wanted. Funds may be found, and buildings raised, and vestments manufactured, but it requires a special vocation from God to make man or woman renounce the world. And God at this time favoured Gilbert, for He had, in his goodness, determined that amidst the wickedness of the land, Sempringham should be the abode of holy virgins, whose purity would rise up before Him as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. From the early habits which he had acquired in his school, Gilbert had ever loved children ; probably the remembrance of his own wayward childhood might have risen up before him, and inspired him with a desire of guiding them to keep their souls in their first unsullied brightness. He had thus acquired a natural influence over the children of the place which he had never lost, and when he came back from Lincoln, a priest of high reputation, none welcomed him more gladly than the maidens, who were but children when he left them. The world had not sullied them in the meanwhile, and he found that the good seed which he had sown in their hearts, had sprung up and borne fruit. And now that his plan of founding a community of monks had failed, he turned his thoughts towards them. The strict habits of religious seclusion in which he had been cherished, indisposed him greatly to attempt the establishment of a

nunnery. How could he, who had quitted the house in which he lodged on account of a dream, now undertake the government of a female community? It is true, that the intercourse between the sisters and their director was so reduced to rule, that however familiar, it was one of ceremony, like the ordinary customs of society; yet from his innate mistrust of self, he shrunk from the responsibility. It is probable, that some time elapsed before he could make up his mind to take the final step. At length he could not resist such evident marks of God's will; the quiet and calm resolution of the maidens to dedicate themselves for ever, showed that it was not the sentimentalism of a moment, but a real vocation from above. He went to the bishop of Lincoln to consult him on the subject; Alexander received him with the utmost cordiality, and entering warmly into his views, sent him back with all the necessary powers. The holy virgins were filled with joy at the news. None can estimate the greatness of the joy of a woman's heart when the love of Christ has fully seized upon it. Terrible as it is in its strength when fixed upon an earthly object, its intensity is increased tenfold when it rests upon the heavenly spouse. How wonderful has been the self-devotion of women from the first dawn of Christianity! None can think upon the wonders of the Incarnation, without thinking upon the mother of the Lord; and none can tell the wellspring of joy in that heart on which lay the Saviour of the world, for a favour was granted to her, which not the highest archangel can estimate. Ever since that time, some portions of the same joy must in a measure have inundated the heart of every virgin who has become the spouse of the Lord. What must have been the gush of joy in the heart of the Magdalene, when the ever-

blessed Lord said "Mary," and she turned and saw Him the everlasting source of all joy? Such in its measure must have been the happiness of the seven virgins for whom Gilbert, with the bishop's leave, now built a cloister adjoining the north wall of the church of Sempringham. Among them, the maiden whom Gilbert left in her father's house, shut up her beauty for ever from the eyes of men. These seven virgins, chanting the praises of God in the dead of night around the altar of that little church, doubtless averted the anger of God from the land, with all its terrible pollutions. Such souls as these, who sit in quiet, with mortified bodies and chastened hearts ever fixed on heaven, have their own place in the christian scheme. If any one doubts it, let him think on the time when the Lord dwelt with His virgin mother in the house at Nazareth. No one will say that any part of our Lord's sojourn on earth was useless; and yet the world knows nothing of what was going on during these many years, except that in that poor cottage were obedience, and daily tasks and contemplation.

Before, however, going on to notice the important result to which these small beginnings of the order of Sempringham afterwards grew, we should cast our eyes across the channel to France, where a parallel movement had taken place rather earlier in the century. It is seldom that any movement occurs in any corner of the church, without being felt elsewhere; nothing stops with itself in the body of Christ, it at once vibrates in some other part, sometimes close, and sometimes distant. Thus, about the year 1100, the blessed Robert of Arbrissel, had founded the abbey of Fontevraud, which agrees remarkably with what the priory of Sempringham, as we shall see, soon became. Like

Gilbert, Robert was a Parisian doctor, and like him had been summoned from a school to be the chief adviser of the bishop of his diocese, and the reformer of the clergy. On the death of this prelate, Silvester, bishop of Rennes, the rage of those who loved not his reforms, drove him away. Henceforth, his life presents a marked contrast to that of Gilbert ; he became a hermit, and sought the depths of a wild forest near Anjou. The savage wilderness did not however sour his heart ; he learned to converse with God, and when soon after his solitude was discovered, the sweetness which shone on his emaciated features, won all beholders ; and when he spoke, the fervour of his words gained the hearts of his hearers. Crowds streamed into the wilderness, to hear this new preacher of righteousness, and many left the world on the spot, to join him in his forest. Urban II., in his voyage to France, heard of Robert's fame, and sent for him ; he bade him preach before the council of Anjou, and the burning words of this hermit, thus fresh from the wilderness, and re-appearing among men, seemed to him so striking, that he called him the Sower of the word, and bade him henceforth go about as an Apostolic preacher. Robert obeyed the supreme pontiff, and went forth as a missionary. He went about the neighbouring dioceses, penetrating into the wildest villages, and preaching in streets and market-places. The effect was electric ; crowds of men and women followed him everywhere, and everywhere some souls were converted to Christ, from a life of wickedness. He walked barefoot, fasted continually, and often spent the whole night in prayer. Pope Urban was right ; this was just the apostle to despatch among a population where fearful licentiousness is said to have reigned. Women, especially, were touched by

his words, and it is expressly said, that while two of his companions assisted him in directing men, he had the exclusive direction of females. We know that our most blessed Lord, to whom the sight of sin must have been an inconceivable pain, suffered a foul adulteress to be near Him, and said to her, Go, and sin no more ; Mary Magdalene came still nearer to Him, and washed His feet with her tears. And Robert, following the steps of his Lord, was especially known as the converter of the most miserable outcasts of society. One day, at Rouen, he entered into a haunt of sin ; some unhappy wretches clustered about him, and he spoke to them of the mercy of Christ. They looked on, in stupid wonder, till one of them said, “ Who art thou that speakest thus ? For twenty years have I been in this house, and no one has spoken to me of God, or bade me not despair of mercy.” The poor creatures followed him out of the house, and afterwards led a life of penitence. But it was not only such miserable victims, that Robert, by God’s grace, saved from inveterate sin ; Bertrada de Montfort, who in the very cathedral of Tours on the eve of Whitsunday, seduced the heart of king Philip of France, and planned to fly from her lord, the Count of Anjou—the dangerous and scheming beauty, the witchery of whose talents had well nigh won her a crown—Bertrada, the scandal of the age, whom a Pope in council had excommunicated with her guilty paramour, was converted by Robert, and ended her days in the most rude penances, a nun of Fontevraud. It was there, in the midst of waste and uncultivated lands, covered with a wild thicket of brushwood, that Robert collected all those whom he had won from the world for Christ. His first monastery was but a collection of rude huts, separated into two divisions,

with two separate oratories, one for the brethren, the other for the sisters. Around that part in which the females dwelt, was a rough enclosure, which was nothing but a high hedge of thorns.¹ The nuns were all day long engaged in prayer and psalmody, while the monks laboured with their hands to support them, and struggled with the stubborn thorn and the tangled weeds, the growth of centuries around their habitation. Even in the life-time of Robert, Fontevraud had grown into a large monastery. Within its enclosure there were, in fact, three monasteries, one for holy virgins, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, another for penitent women, called after St. Mary Magdalene, and a third was a lazaret-house for the sick and the lepers. The reform spread throughout France, and in many parts of the country lands were given to Robert, where he founded new houses, where those un-

¹ Mr. Michelet, in his history of France, has repeated a story against the blessed Robert which even Bayle, though he indulged his foul wit on the subject, acknowledged to be false. The story is founded on two letters, one of Geoffrey of Vendôme, and another of Marbodus, bishop of Rennes. Mr. Michelet should have recollected that both Geoffrey and Marbodus profess to speak merely on hearsay, and Geoffrey is known to have changed his opinion, while it may be presumed that Marbodus did so too, from the fact, that his friend Hildebert, of Mans, was one of Robert's greatest patrons. Besides which, there is great reason to believe, that the letter ascribed to Marbodus, is really by the heretic, Roscelinus. It is a great pity that Mr. Michelet's inveterate habit of generalizing should lead him to prefer general, to particular truth. We do not charge him with dishonesty; on his theory, all history is a myth, and therefore, an opinion is just as valuable as a fact. When we have myths, we must make the best of them; but let not good personages of flesh and blood be treated like Romulus and Remus, if facts can be had.

happy women, whom the world had soiled, might find a refuge, where they might chastise by rude penances those bodies, the temples of the Holy Ghost, which they had stained. But the peculiarity of the order was, that the abbess every where held jurisdiction over the monks as well as the nuns; the men were there only to labour for the sisters, as St. John ministered to the Blessed Virgin. Robert's work did not die with him, and many a daughter of the blood royal of France became famous for her piety as abbess of Fontevraud. Here our own Henry Plantagenet and Richard Cœur de lion were buried: and here Eleanor too, Henry's queen, the beautiful and guilty daughter of William of Aquitaine, who transferred herself with Guienne and Poitou, and all her lands, to the English crown, she too, after her long and restless life, bequeathed her body to Fontevraud, that it might lie by the side of her husband and her son.

Any one will see at once the correspondence of the rise of this order on the continent with that of the nunnery of Sempringham, and a great conformity between the two will soon be apparent, as Sempringham develops; and yet there at once also appears a great contrast between them. The movement in the two countries appears to have been different. While in France the queens of the time are the scandal of the age; those of England and Scotland appear as reformers of the corrupt court of their husbands. The beautiful sorceress Bertrada, placed the king of France under the ban of the church of Rome, ever the great defender of the purity of marriage. Queen Eleanor, with her licentious train, had the merit of ruining the crusade, which St. Bernard preached; she too must needs go to the Holy Land, the daughter of the sunny

south, the land of the gay science and of heresy, she whose character had far more to do with the burning East than became a Christian queen. But on our side of the channel, were Matilda and St. Margaret, the reformers of Scotland, who banished from the kingdom many foul relics of Paganism which still infected it ; and in England, was Matilda, the wife of Henry I., the "good queen Maude," whom the English hailed as the daughter of their ancient kings, and whose marriage tended to amalgamate the Norman and the Saxon races. Terrible as was the licentiousness in England, the nobles seem every where to have been the guilty parties. The monasteries were filled with virgins who had fled thither to preserve themselves from the dangers to which they were exposed. Matilda herself was taken out of a convent whither she had fled for that purpose, and was for that reason adjudged by St. Anselm not to have really taken the veil, and to be still competent to become Henry's wife. The wicked nobles, whom the gentle majesty of her virtue kept in awe, nicknamed the king and queen, Godric and Godiva,¹ and laughed at Henry's domestic life with his quiet Saxon queen. They still remembered the terrible license of the Red King's wicked court. Corresponding to this difference between the two countries, was the contrast in the characters of Gilbert and of Robert. The wild energy of the hermit of Arbrissel was necessary to bear down the torrent of vice which opposed him ; could any one but a barefooted hermit speak to hearts spoiled by inveterate sin, and cleanse

¹ The wit seems to consist in the names being Saxon. Godiva comes, probably, from the old story of the Saxon queen who saved the people from taxation.

bosoms encrusted with a leprosy of guilt ? Gilbert had to do with untainted lilies fit for the garden of the Lord, he therefore had but to build his cloister adjoining to the quiet parish church of Sempringham, while the rough thorn-hedge, and the rougher discipline of Robert were necessary for Fontevraud. While Robert roams through France by the Apostolic mandate, preaching every where a crusade of penitence, Gilbert returns to the home of his childhood, and places his seven holy virgins in the church where he had first learned to worship God, and where, in all probability, he had been baptized. The church of Christ could find room enough for both, just as around the cross, there was room for the ever-virgin Mary, and St. Mary Magdalene. Holy virginity is no less a portion of Christianity than holy penitence, and the denial of the virtue of the one most certainly impairs the full belief in the other, for the Communion of Saints and the Forgiveness of sins lie close together in the creed. Nor is holy virginity the creation of an age of romance ; Gilbert, when he built the cloister at Sempringham, thought but little, as we shall soon see, of picturesque processions and flowing robes of white ; he only thought of the blessed Virgin, and of St. John, and of the white robed choir in heaven, who have followed the Virgin Lamb wherever He hath gone. Still less did he think about the usefulness of what he was doing ; as well might he have thought about the uses of chastity, for virginity is only chastity carried to a supernatural degree. Our blessed Lord has exalted human nature ; He hath made it the partaker of His own Divinity ; and we have virtues which were never possible before the coming of the Lord, because their formal cause was wanting, even the Holy Spirit.

Faith, Hope, and Charity have their foundation in the will and in the intellect, yet they are supernatural, because of the new powers which the adorable Incarnation has infused into our nature. It is not then to be wondered at, if their outward acts should sometimes take a form which seemed beyond the powers of a human body and a human soul, voluntary poverty, and holy obedience, and a chaste virginity. The cross of Christ has stretched itself over a vast field, of which heathen morality never dreamed, and they who deny the merit of virginity leave out a portion of Christian morals. They who can believe that no real righteousness is infused into the Saint, will, of course, see no beauty in the virgin soul, though she be all glorious within, with the intense fire of love, which the Holy Spirit has poured into her. The Cross has a philosophy of its own, which thwarts in unexpected directions the philosophy of the world. If Gilbert had ever heard of a certain Jovinian, he might have known that he was half a stoic, as well as wholly heretic; because he could see no degrees in saintliness, neither could he discern that one vice was worse than another.¹ Again the deep philosopher who has set the bounds of the human intellect, which it cannot pass, he too has imagined a mysterious bound to the human will, and denies in his system the merit of holy virginity. So be it, but Christ has illumined the intellect with faith, and the will with charity, and there will ever be holy virgins in the Church in spite of transcendental philosophy. The seven nuns of Sempringham doubtless knew nothing of this philosophy; but they knew of our blessed Lord's words, promising eternal life to those who should give

¹ St. Aug. de Hær. 82. see the connexion in St. Thomas Aq. contra gen. lib. iii. 189.

up father and mother, brethren and sisters, or wife, for his sake. The church, by regulating monastic vows, only pointed out one way of doing what Christ prescribed in the general, and furnished her children with the means of gaining this blessing. The bible says nothing about monks and nuns, but it says a great deal about prayer, and about taking up the cross. It is quite true that the cross has sanctified domestic affections, by raising marriage to a dignity which it never possessed before. And yet human affections are terrible things ; love is as strong and insatiable as death,¹ and how hard is it to love, as though we loved not, and to weep, as though we wept not, and to laugh, as though we laughed not. Happy are they to whom human affections are not all joy ; the mother has her cross as well as the nun, and it will be blessed to her. Happy they who have to tend the sick bed of a parent or a friend ; they need seek no further, they have their cross. Yet, happiest of all is she, who is marked out for ever from the world, whose slightest action assumes the character of adoration, because she is bound by a vow to her heavenly spouse, as an earthly bride is bound by the nuptial vow to her earthly lord. Vows should only be made under the protection of a strong religious system, but when they can be taken, they whom God by His providence calls, as He often does, to lead a single life, are far happier in the peaceful cloister than in the world. Even though some may have mistaken their vocation, and it had been better to marry, yet their vows are a protection, and every Christian can, by God's grace, in any case live a virgin life. Terrible cases have occurred, as we may by and bye see, of fallen nuns, but have fearful passions never broken out in the world ?

¹ Cant. viii.

CHAPTER V.

The spread of the Institute.

WHEN the cloister was finished, and Alexander of Lincoln had blessed it, and received the profession of the nuns, Gilbert had done a great work. He had gained an object on which to spend his patrimony, and had saved seven souls from the troubles and dangers of the world. But he was still far from having done his work ; the institute of his nuns was still rude and unformed, and it does not yet appear what rule they followed. It was about the year 1131, when first they quitted the world, and it was many years before the order was fully formed, and the steps by which it grew, are but scantily related by the chronicler of his life. First, it was a difficulty with him how his convent was to be supplied with necessaries. The sisters could not go out themselves, and butchers and bakers could not go to them. He first employed women who lived in the world, to transmit to them what they wanted for their daily food. This was however but a clumsy contrivance, and contrary to the first rule of monastic discipline, that a convent should be perfect in itself, and entirely independent of the world around. The echoes of worldly news could not fail to find their way into the nun's cell, and to call up images, which ought to be banished from her heart. Earthly cares must often call to earth the mind of her who rules her husband's house, though these too are meritorious, if done to the glory of God ; but the nun is continually to have her conversation in heaven, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. To effect this, the

world must be diligently kept out of her heart ; and the girls who went backwards and forwards, between market and the convent, were but too willing retailers of news. This was for a long time a difficulty with Gilbert ; at length, one day, William, the first abbot of Rievaulx, passed through Sempringham, and paid its rector a visit. Gilbert had very probably never seen the white habit before, for the Cistercian reform had not long been introduced into England. From that moment he conceived a respect for the Cistercians, which never quitted him. He consulted William on his difficulties, and was advised by him to institute an order of lay-sisters who were to help the choir-nuns, and to perform menial offices for them ; in other words, they were to correspond to the lay-brethren of Cîteaux. Gilbert took this advice, but he was too patient, and too much accustomed to wait on the providence of God, to introduce the change violently. The poor peasant girls whom he employed, were too much accustomed to hard labour and coarse fare to find even conventual discipline hard, but there were habits of humility, obedience, and strict purity to be acquired, which could not be learned in a day. He called them before him, and explained to them what he required of them, without abating a jot of the rigour of the discipline. The poor girls at first shrunk from the trial, but when he spoke to them from time to time of contempt of the world, of the giving up of their own will, and of the rewards of heaven, they first listened to him attentively, and then by degrees their hearts began to yield. It was far better for them to live in a convent, though they were under restraint, and they could not go out when they would, than to work all day long in the fields of a merciless taskmaster, and not be sure of

earning a livelihood after all. The sound of the convent-bell would sweeten their toil, and kind and holy words console their hearts ; besides, what was not least, they would be sure of being fed and clothed, and at last they determined to close with their pastor's proposal, and to give up the world. This however did not satisfy Gilbert, and he waited another year before he received their profession. He clothed them like the nuns, except that, instead of the ample cuculla and seapular of the nuns, the lay sisters wore a black cloak, lined with white lamb's wool ; the broad hood of their garment was made large enough to cover the shoulders, and to envelope the throat and bosom like the seapular of the nuns. The simple occupations of these poor peasant-girls shows more than any thing else, how monastic discipline is only Christianity in its perfection, hallowing and taking up into itself the meanest relations of life. The lay-sister was to take the hard work in brewing and baking, in spinning and washing ; if the nuns were otherwise engaged and did not come to help them, they were not to wait, but to begin without them. They mended clothes and prepared the washing-tubs, and some of them ever attended in the kitchen, to chop up the vegetables, and to hand utensils to the nun who was cook for the week. In these offices, intermingled with psalmody and other spiritual exercises at stated hours, they passed their lives, and for the temporal things which they ministered, the good nuns instructed them in the science of the cross, and Gilbert himself assiduously trained them up, that their earthly toil might bring fruit in heaven.

But though women can help each other to bake and brew, they cannot plough and dig ; and Gilbert soon

found that he must needs procure labourers, for the grounds attached to the nunnery. A convent of monks can support itself, but nuns, though they can do much alone, require men to labour for them. Again, in this difficulty, his friends of Citeaux helped him. He was in a greater strait than before ; lay-sisters were comparatively easy to manage, especially in what was a nunnery already, but the rude rustic was a much more unmanageable creature, and most unpromising to reduce to monastic rule. But while he was deliberating, some monks of the Cistercian order rode into his habitation, accompanied, as usual, by some lay-brethren. The whole equipage struck Gilbert, who had been used to the splendid train of Alexander of Lincoln. He at once seized the idea of the lay-brethren of the order, and determined thus to imitate the Cistercians, by turning every farm-house on his estates into something like a monastery, where, throughout all the appurtenances of cow-houses, stables, and barns, all should be subject to religious discipline. He had already done a vast service to Sempringham ; for how many poor women, whom poverty, and their defenceless condition, exposed to danger, had he safely housed in a religious house ? He now was to do the same for the men ; and in this case, his mercy was extended even to a lower and more degraded class. Some whom he took, were the churls from his own land, who were born on his demesne, and whom he had known and supported from their infancy ; but others were of the lowest class in the land, runaway serfs,¹ whom now he freed, by

¹ *A dominis suis transfugos, quos nomen religionis mancipavit.* These may have been churls, and not serfs, but they were most probably the latter, for he seems to contrast them with his own famuli.

taking them into religion ; others again, were wayside beggars. From these poor creatures he made up his lay-brethren ; he clothed them in the same rough garb as the Cistercian brethren, only that, besides the white tunic, they wore, under the outer cloak, of hodden grey, a short mantle, lined with skins, reaching to the middle of the thigh, which, as it does not occur in the rule of Citeaux, was probably an English garment, better adapted to our inclement sky ; over the head was drawn the Cistercian hood, covering the shoulders and the chest. These poor men were not taught to read, but they were taught humility, obedience, and the strictest purity, and were treated with a tenderness to which they had been utter strangers in the world. Instead of being ground down to the earth by a secular lord, they were under the gentle rule of the Church, and their temporal and eternal welfare was cared for. They had a chapter of their own, like monks, and services proportioned to their condition in life, and their spiritual director guided them in the narrow way which leads to everlasting life. Especially were they warned to beware of the Saxon vice of intoxication ; and above all, were they forbidden to set up the place “which, in Teutonic tongue, is called the tap.”¹

It is impossible to calculate how far the influence of such a community might spread among the peasantry throughout England, when there was established among them, and before their eyes, such an institute, where, for the love of God, brethren, who had been rude peasants like themselves, were serving religious women whom they had never seen, except in church, with their veils over their faces, though they had heard their voices mingling in the chant. On the

¹ Vid. Gilbertine rule ap. Dugdale, vol. vi. p. 2. p. 65.

accession of the lay-brethren to his family, Gilbert's nunnery might be said to be now complete ; all were hard at work in the community ; in the granges around it, the lay-brethren were distributed, each at work at his own occupation ; in one corner, was the blacksmith at his forge, in his black rochet, or scanty coat without sleeves ;¹ and here was the carter,² with his horses shorn of the flowing honours of the mane and tail, that they might accord with monastic simplicity ; in another place, was the brother who had the charge of the whole grange, with the keys at his girdle, diligently searching for eggs, and storing up the honey, that all may be sent to the refectory of the nunnery.³ And this peaceful family went on in the stormy times when Stephen was battling for the crown, when, in the self-same county, Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, was shorn of his three castles. Alarms of war were sounding about them ; for it was near Lincoln that Stephen fought the battle where he was taken prisoner ; and the great baron Gilbert of Ghent, of whom was held the manor of Sempringham, shared the king's captivity.⁴ Abbeys and monasteries were burning about them, and the church, all over England, was in trouble ; the see of York was vacant ; Durham was in the hands of Comyn, and the archbishop of Canterbury was in little favour with the king ; and when he threatened to cross over the Alps, and appeal to the Pope, Stephen declared that he might find it no such easy matter to return. And yet, in the midst of all this trouble, the convent of Sempringham was holding its even course ; in the darkest times there are ever some little nooks in the Church, where there is peace.

¹ Reg. Gilb. De frat. 1.

² Ibid 19.

³ Ibid 17.

⁴ John of Hexham, in ann. 1142.

Even Alexander, of Lincoln, found comfort in thinking on the parish church of Sempringham, and all that was going on about it. The death of his uncle, Roger, bishop of Salisbury, apparently, by chagrin at the fall of his power, seems to have deeply affected him, and he determined to give to the nuns of Sempringham an island, called Haverholm, formed by some marshy ground, and the waters of a little river near Sleaford, the site of one of his unfortunate castles.¹ He had before offered the ground to a colony of Cistercians, from Fountains, but even they, apparently, found it too wet, and removed to Louth Park. The bishop gave it to the nuns, "for the soul of King Henry, and my uncle Roger, some time bishop of Salisbury."² The charter which contains Alexander's gift, makes it plain that by this time the nuns had adopted a modified Cistercian rule; for it says of them, that they follow, "a strict life, a holy life; the life of the monks of Cistercian order, as far as the weakness of their sex allows." This probably means that they adopted the unmitigated rule of St. Benedict. Their rules were afterwards drawn out definitely, and when this is noticed, it will appear more clearly what this meant. So much

¹ Roger died in 1139, Hoveden, Script. post Bed. p. 277, and the foundation of Haverholm must have been about this time.

² In the year 1131, where we have placed the foundation of the nunnery, there were very few Cistercian abbeys in France; indeed, the abbey of Tard, in the diocese of Langres, is the only one of which the foundation is certainly previous to that time. Juilly, it appears certain, was a Benedictine dependency on Molesme. It is, therefore, very unlikely that St. Gilbert should have begun so early to imitate the Cistercians. The idea must have struck him from his increasing intercourse with Cistercians.

of the Cistercian rule consisted in manual labours, quite inapplicable to females, that the conformity of the life of Gilbert's nuns to the brethren of Citeaux, must have been the austerity of their mode of life, and the use of meditation. The sisters of Sempringham, though they washed and spun, and brewed, yet, having been Gilbert's scholars, were learned maidens, in their way, for when their numbers increased, it was found necessary to prohibit the speaking Latin amongst each other, which would, in fact, have divided the convent into the learned and unlearned sisters. They had, therefore, more facilities for spiritual reading, and for meditation, than were common ; but for all that, it was a bold thing to apply the rule of St. Benedict to delicate females, in all the strictness in which St. Scholastica had learned it from the lips of her brother. Nunneries had degenerated both in England and France ; in England, they had not long ago been censured for their splendid robes and secular apparel ;¹ and a very few years later, the council of Rheims complained of the nuns, who lived irregularly, each on her own property, without even keeping within the precincts of the cloister.² In this respect, the good nuns, though they little suspected it, were reformers, when they were transported to their little island of St. Mary, of Haverholm, where they had nothing to look upon but their own green meadows and cultivated land, and beyond, the little river, running between its low banks, and the sluggish waters of the marsh, shutting them out from the world.

¹ Council of London, 1139. ² Geroch. ap. Baluz. vol. i. 204.

CHAPTER VI.

Gilbert in France.

IT has taken but a short chapter to tell how, from 1131 to 1139, the order, or rather the convent, of Sempringham was increasing, and that it had sent out a colony of nuns to Haverholm ; and it takes but a few words to say, that from the foundation of Haverholm, to 1148, the fame of the sanctity of the nuns spread far and wide, and that their numbers still further increased, so that many noblemen gave lands to Gilbert, wishing to have a convent built near their own homes.¹ Many things may have occurred in these years of which we know nothing ; at all events, Gilbert was growing old all the while ; near twenty years are added to his life in that time. Many things must have happened to him and to his institute, but we need not regret the loss of them. The less that monks and nuns are heard of the better. They are the under-current in church history ; they need not appear on the surface, though their action in the deep waters purifies the

¹ It does not appear what convents were founded at this time. Bullington is founded for nuns and clerks, and, therefore, was not built till after Gilbert's return from France. Catteley, which is placed by Dugdale in Stephen's time, as appears from the chart of foundation, was not founded till Henry II's reign. Ormesby and Sixhill, the dates of which are unknown, may have been founded then, but the fact most probably is, that the lands were given, but the monasteries not founded, till after Gilbert had been to Clairvaux.

whole. They are, so to speak, the moving element in the church, whose doctrine and hierarchy is one, and immoveable ; thus, they vary themselves, as the wants of the church vary. They are the reformers of the church, that is, of her children, when faith waxes cold ; the pliant and elastic element, which takes a different shape, according to the Proteus-form of sin, which it opposes. In the first fervour of their conversion, they work some great work ; they may afterwards degenerate, but the work is done, and by the time that they require reform, so, too, may the church. But all their work is done in secret, by contemplation and prayer and penance ; and whenever they make their appearance on the surface of society, they portend a storm. It was a schism in the Church which called forth St. Bernard from his monastery, and now that Gilbert goes to visit the great abbot of Clairvaux, the stormy part of his life is to begin. But what takes him so far from his home when, for so many years, he had remained in quiet at Sempringham ? He must have been aroused indeed, to undertake it. And so he was ; what he had simply begun, for the sake of seven maidens, whose hearts God had filled with heavenly love, had now sprung up into an institute, which he could no longer manage alone. The very soul of the institute was spiritual guidance, and the sisters were now so numerous, that he could not bear the burden by himself. His friends, the Cistercians, had stood him in good stead, and he determined to apply to them, and to beg of them to take the institution into their hands. Events were taking place at Cîteaux which made the year 1148 a favourable one for his request ; and we will precede him, to take a glimpse of the state of things on the Continent.

And first, where has St. Bernard been all this while? he has had other work to do, since by God's grace, he restored unity to the church and placed Innocent II. on the papal throne. Many events had taken place at Rome since that time; the turbulent nobles seem then to have been broken, and a republican element now appears to stir up that ever restless race. The cities of northern Italy were aroused, and the dark storm from the Apennines rolled its way on to Rome; and this time it was guided by a man well fitted by his talents and his boldness to be the author of mischief. Arnold of Brescia rapidly saw the theory which would symbolize the new interests which thus stepped into the conflict, and he had a fiery enthusiasm and eloquence which fitted him to be its herald. He saw that the power of the bishops was irksome to the citizens. All will recollect the part which Milan took against its archbishop, Landulfus, in the middle of the eleventh century, and how often the same scenes were renewed in that turbulent city. Arnold took up this feeling, and attacked the prelates, many of whom, as was the case so often in the empire, were secular princes as well as bishops. Not that, he said, the churches of these bishops are not the house of God, but the prelates themselves are not bishops, and the people should not obey them.¹ He inveighed in strong terms against the secularity of the clergy, which was but too palpable, and thus he was looked upon as a reformer. He asserted that the spiritual and secular power are so totally distinct, that they cannot possibly by any means be joined. This doctrine is very like the great truth, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, that is,

¹ Geroch ap. Gretser. vol. 12. Otto Frising. de Gest. Fred. ii. 21.

that the church of Christ has a power of her own, totally independent of, and above any earthly jurisdiction ; and it has deceived many since Arnold's time. He appealed to the ancient feelings of the Italian republics, and made them fiercer by giving them a seemingly religious direction. His doctrines spread southward ; and though he himself was obliged to fly to France, yet they raised a sedition in Rome, and Innocent's last days were embittered by the news that the Romans had re-established the senate and revolted from his authority. In the time of Celestine, his successor, they deposed the prefect of the city, an officer virtually appointed by the Pope, though nominally also by the emperor : and established an officer whom they called a patrician, probably from some notion which they had of the connexion of the title with the time of the Eastern empire. A more terrible event soon followed ; Lucius, the successor of Celestine, died from a wound received in attempting to quell an insurrection, and thus the blood of a successor of St. Peter, lay at the door of this infatuated and degraded people. It was at this time, that the mock senate of Rome determined to claim the right of assenting to the nomination of the supreme pontiff, in other words, as the representative of the people, it wished to restore the election to what it was before Innocent II's. time.¹ The cardinals were aware of this, and suddenly and hastily they met to elect the successor of St. Peter. The choice which they made astonished Christendom, when it was announced that they had elected Bernard, abbot of Saint Anastasius, a Cistercian convent near Rome, a man of blameless life and gentle manners, but apparently of little talents,

¹ Vid. Life of St. Stephen, p. 174.

and above all, not a member of the college of cardinals. They seem, in their alarm at the dreadful event which had just happened, to have determined on electing one not of their own body, for it was the rule of an ecclesiastical aristocracy that the Romans hated, and they pitched in their fright on the first eligible person of whom they could think. The finger of God was not the less observable in the whole transaction, for Eugenius III. had been a monk of Clairvaux, and St. Bernard's influence began at once to be felt in the church. The pontificate of Eugenius was an epoch in the church; he came just before the age of rescripts, and appeals, and canonists;¹ and the broad principles laid down by St. Bernard, of course influenced the practice of the papal courts, and, therefore, tended to modify the doctrine concerning appeals as laid down by Alexander III. Again, secular prelates soon began to feel a new influence in the court of Rome, proof against riches and magnificence.² The cardinals themselves were not slow in complaining of Gallican influence, and had it not been for St. Bernard's meekness, a schism might have separated France from Italy.³ His election, however, was unanimous; out of his abbey they fetched this lowly and shamefaced monk, who had washed the dishes at Clairvaux; they took the spade and the reap-

¹ On the law of rescripts, see appendix to the third Lateran council ap. Mansi, p. xxxi. As to appeals, *ibid.* p. x. and compare. St. Bern. de Cons. lib. iii. c. 2. The canon law is said to have been compiled by Gratian, about A. D. 1150.

² John of Salisbury bears witness to the purity of Eugenius's administration.—Vid. Ciacconi. Vit. Eug. III.

³ St. Bernard's letter to the cardinals on Eugenius's election, shows a doubt how far they would support him. For the discontent of the cardinals, v. Otto Frisii. de Gest. Frid. i, 57.

ing-hook out of his hand, and put the scarlet mantle over his white Cistercian habit, and in solemn procession enthroned him in the Lateran. All at once, a change came over this simple monk ; an unflinching firmness appeared in the sweet mannered brother, who, not long before, had found his abbey of St. Anastasius too much for his sick soul, and had longed for the forest and the cavern ; he even showed a talent for business, which none had seen before his mysterious elevation. This too, was totally apart from the influence of the abbot of Clairvaux. St. Bernard's soul sunk within him at the news. " God forgive you, what have ye done," he writes to the cardinals. " Had ye no wise and practical men among you that ye have elevated a man in a pauper's garb ? It is either an absurdity or a miracle." He knew well the poor brother of Clairvaux, and thought him totally unfit to sit in St. Peter's chair. He, therefore, did not even write to him till urged to do so by his friends. Eugenius had need of all the qualities which now appeared in him ; Arnold of Brescia was in Rome, now clad in monkish garb and fresh from the lessons of Abelard ; seditions were raised and cardinals' palaces burnt, not now by the nobles, for the Frangipani¹ were now on the Pope's side, but by the populace. The fiery monk had dazzled them with visions of old Rome, and they had dreams of the senate, the equestrian order, and the Capitol. Here was the old secular empire springing up in a grotesque form ; a wild mixture of the Gracchi, Julius Cæsar, and Constantine.² Added to this, the germs of those miserable revolutions of

¹ Otto Frisin. de Gest. Frid. i. 28.

² Vid. Letter of the Roman people to Conrad.—Otto Frisin. Ibid.

which the emperor Frederic afterwards took advantage, were desolating the north of Italy ; and an impatience of ecclesiastical rule had sprung up, which now broke out in the open maltreatment of bishops and archbishops in the north, just as the cardinals had suffered at Rome.¹ Eugenius pacified the north of Italy, but Rome was as yet beyond his power ; he was ultimately obliged to cross the Alps.

It was during this journey that Gilbert saw his holiness, and was brought in contact with a series of events which would look like romance, if history did not assure us of their truth. They are the outbursts of the young life of a christian people, before scepticism had touched the purity of their faith ; while at the same time, there come across us outbursts of wickedness at times almost ludicrous in its waywardness, and at other times terrible from its marring the good which God had prepared for Christendom. But most wonderful of all are they from the predominant influence of St. Bernard, whom God had raised up to guide his church amidst the dangers which surrounded her. It is refreshing to see a man, in a poor habit, riding at the side of kings and emperors, and guiding all things, simply because he is Christ's servant. At the time that Eugenius entered France, Louis was about to set out on the crusade which had been undertaken on the alarming news of the taking of Edessa. A great parliament² had been held at Etampes to elect the regent during the king's absence ; St. Bernard was in the midst of the circle of bishops and barons, and when their deliberations were over, he came forward at the head of them, and said to the king, Behold, here are

¹ Pet. Ven. Ep. iv. 37.

² Magnum colloquium.

thy two swords. The one was the great Suger, the other the count of Nevers. Both refused the office ; the count fled away and took the vows in a Carthusian monastery, but Suger was persuaded by St. Bernard to accept the charge. This event alone tended more than any other to consolidate the French monarchy, and prepare the way for Philip Augustus and St. Louis. This was on Septuagesima Sunday ; a little before Easter, Louis went to meet Eugenius at Dijon. When the royal procession approached, those around Eugenius cried out, The king, the king ; but Eugenius sat unmoved, and when Louis came near with his train of nobles, he leaped off his horse and kissed the pope's foot with tears of joy, thus doing homage to Christ in the person of his earthly representative. Then Eugenius raised him up and embraced him. Strange times were these, when religion was thus honoured, and St. Mary's prophecy had come to pass, and the strong things of the world had fallen down before the weak. It was this that passed through the mind of Eugenius when he embraced Louis, and remembered his own lowly origin, and said, that God indeed had raised the simple out of the mire, reminding the king also, that he, a monk of Clairvaux, had worked in the kitchen with Henry of France, Louis's brother. And yet, the times had their strange caprices too, for not long after, when the pope went to celebrate in solemn procession at St. Genevieve, the attendants of the canons quarrelled with those of the pope, and they fought with their fists with such fury, that even king Louis, in attempting to separate the combatants, suffered in the fray.¹ On Easter

¹ Baronius in ann. 1147.

day, in the abbey of St. Denis, in the presence of Eugenius, Louis received the Oriflamme from the altar ; all the great barons of the realm were about him, and all the chivalry of France, with the knight-templars in their white cloaks, and all wore the cross to show that they were on their way to rescue the Holy Sepulchre. This was a day of joy, but alas ! how few of that brilliant array ever saw again the shores of France. By the side of Louis sat his lovely and fascinating queen, with all her damsels around her ; it had been well if she had been left behind, for God, on account of the sins of the host, would not allow them to rescue the Holy City. This, however, none could foresee on that happy Easter day.

After their departure, St. Bernard had other work to do ; and let not the reader be impatient to meet Gilbert at Citeaux. The delay will enable him the better to understand the course of events. That sect which afterwards became the Albigenses, and in that form threatened to undermine the whole church, had attracted the vigilant eye of Eugenius. As it first appears to us, it takes the simple shape of an inveterate hatred of all mystery, with an especial dislike of churchmen, and church authority. Its apostle was a runaway monk called Henry, a sort of impure and inferior Arnold of Breseia. Peter¹ the venerable, considered the heresy to have come from among the wild and ignorant inhabitants of the Alpine valleys ; but he soon found to his wonder that it had spread into the fair plains of Provence. There, in this luxurious and half Moorish country, it met another element, a subtle Manicheism, and this compound of vice, disobedience, and error, was the Albigen-

¹ Pet. Ven. contr. Petrob. bibl. Clun. p. 1122.

sian heresy.¹ The licentious soldiery² cared but little for theological disputes, but understood too well the value of license not to profess themselves Henricians ; and the infatuated people burned crucifixes, profaned the churches, flogged priests, and imprisoned monks, or compelled them to marry. The only way in which this terrible and spreading evil could be met, was by sending missionaries to preach in this centre itself of heresy. St. Bernard himself was sent with Alberic, cardinal bishop of Ostia. The cardinal preceded him, and arrived at Albi, the stronghold of the heretics, two days before him ; but the people had but little reverence for cardinals and legates of the Holy See ; a short distance from the city, Alberic was met by a quaint procession of men mounted on asses, and women playing on cymbals ; and when the bells of the church rung for mass, not thirty of the faithful attended. When St. Bernard arrived, the city poured out of the gates to meet him ; the countenance and figure of the saint struck them at once, and the fickle people received him with shouts of joy. But St. Bernard looked upon them sternly, and they saw no more of him that day. The morrow was the feast of St. Peter, and the great church was crowded with people, so that some of them were compelled to stand outside the porch. St. Bernard looked around on the upturned visages beneath, and said, I had come to sow good seed, but I find the ground already sown with

¹ St. Bernard In Cant. Serm. 66, connects a similar set of heretics with the Manichees from the similarity of their doctrines, though ignorant of their historical origin. Evervinus, in his letter to the saint, distinguishes two sets of heretics, one much more doctrinal than the other.—Vid. St. Bern. Ed. Ben. vol. i. 1489.

² Ep. Goffr. ap. S. Bernardi op. ed. Ben. vol. ii. p. 1195.

corrupt seed. But now will I detail to you each kind of seed, see ye which ye will have. He then drew out the catholic faith side by side with that of Henry. There was no need of premise and conclusion ; arguments would have been thrown away on the people of Albi. The juxta-position was enough ; a thrill ran through the whole assembly, and when St. Bernard asked them which seed they would choose, the hearts of the people were already won back to the church. Do penance then, said the holy abbot, as many of you as are polluted, and return to the unity of the church of Christ : and he bade them hold up their hands in token of catholic unity ; and all with joy raised up their right hands to heaven. And this, says the faithful monk, who was an eye-witness of this scene, in his letter written to Clairvaux, is to be preferred to all his other miracles. He went every where from place to place preaching the word of God, and before he had left the country, heresy had every where fled before his face. He afterwards addressed them letters full of tenderness, and the remembrance of his visit for some time kept heresy under. If this corrupt people had continued to remember the good abbot who had ventured among them in their wildest mood, how much blood and misery would have been spared ; but at all events, St. Bernard stopped for a time this miserable evil, which afterwards threatened the very existence of Christendom. Alas ! a few favourable circumstances, a corrupt court and a corrupt clergy, and the old and mysterious Manicheism of the country, produced an open heresy in the south of France, but there were all over Europe, men who hated the church because she came across their plans or their vices, and who took advantage of the cowardice or worldliness of churchmen to oppress her ; and so it

ever will be till the end of time. But God raises up His saints to the help of His bride, and it is pleasing amidst the melancholy picture, to follow the steps of such a man as St. Bernard.

We are now fast approaching Citeaux, where we are again to meet Gilbert, and where he is to meet St. Bernard and Pope Eugenius. St. Bernard probably left the south of France in the autumn of 1147 ; soon after which Eugenius determined to visit again the scenes in which he had passed the happiest days of life. The general chapter of Citeaux took place as usual on the 14th of September. Hither also came Gilbert, after so many years, in which he hardly crossed the bounds of the parish of Sempringham ; he now found himself in the midst of the most august assembly in Christendom, in the company of the first men of the day.¹ More than three hundred abbots of the Cistercian order were sitting around, with the head of Christendom in the midst. St. Stephen had long since been gathered to his rest, and his successor, Rainaldus, presided over the chapter. St. Bernard was there now in the decline of life, with an enfeebled body and an untired soul, the centre of the affairs not only of the order, but of the

¹ There seems every reason to suppose that this chapter at Citeaux was in 1147. It appears from a document quoted in Pagi's notes to Baronius, Tom. xix. p. 4, that he was there on the 18th of that month ; and he could not have been there again next year, as Pagi and Muratori suppose, because he had left France in June, and the chapter was always in September. Again, Goffridus, in his life of St. Bernard, seems to imply, that it was in the same year that he entered France, *eum introiset Gallias—eodem anno apud Cistercium affuit. Vit. S. Bern. iv. 7.* His visit to Clairvaux however took place next year, for it is expressly stated to have been after the council of Rheims. *Ibid. ii. 8.*

whole of the Christian world. He indeed was unconscious, except when at times it came across him that men did think a great deal of him, and it puzzled him much, "for how could so many great men be wrong?" and yet it was true that he was an unprofitable servant.¹ Thus he spoke to his friends in private, and there he was with all eyes upon him, yet too much intent on God to know it. Gilbert was not the only stranger who came with his petition; for another comes with a similar request. He is a man of quaint figure and uncommonly features: his stature is short, and his plain face is furrowed every where with deep wrinkles.² When he smiles, he twists his body and raises his shoulders up to his head in a strange way; but his eyes are piercing, and seem to look through those who speak with him; and altogether his face was not unpleasing, for, though emaciated and hard-featured from exposure to the air, the countenance had a strange mixture of sweetness and sternness. This was Stephen, who had lately established a double monastery at Obazina, in the diocese of Limoges, not far from Tulle. It was a wild glen, through which ran a small stream, and all around it was a thick wood, and high rocks, through which flowed a larger stream, called Courreze; the monastery itself was built on a jutting rock, round the base of which rolled the clear waters of the rapid river. It was a rough place, and yet the abbot externally was as rough a man. His discipline was stern; if one of the novices but dropped his book, he received a box on the ear, which sounded through the church. One Saturday evening, the monks who had

¹ Vit. St. Bern. v. 12.

² Baluz. Misc. vol. i. p. 169.

had charge of the bakehouse, after compline, when all were in bed, felt so happy that their week was over, that they became unusually merry. They were tilting at each other with sticks, and amusing themselves, when all of a sudden they espied the dark figure of the abbot, who had come up unawares, and had been watching their proceedings. The poor monks immediately took to flight, knowing well what a severe punishment would ensue, and next day they took care to accuse themselves of this fault before another rose to be beforehand with them, and Stephen seeing their fright by their pale faces and haggard countenances, saw that they had already suffered enough, and excused them. And yet Stephen had a gentle heart; he wept with those whom he saw were frightened at his severe discipline, and would not allow them to pine away. The nobles of the country were cruel and tyrannical, men who oppressed the poor, and before these steel-clad ruffians would Stephen stand in his coarse black habit, in behalf of the wretched. Once a whole country side was desolated by a baron, because another noble, to whom the ground belonged, had made away with a favourite hawk; Stephen goes to the baron, and promises to find the hawk if he will but go away in peace. Then Stephen set out in the depth of winter, on foot, to the nobleman's castle, and when he got there, was refused admittance, as might have been expected; then he trudged back in the snow, discouraged, but not in despair. He soon set out again on the same quest, and by God's help, he was at this time successful, and he came back with the beautiful hawk upon his wrist, and restored it to its owner. At another time when a fearful insurrection of the peasantry against their lords left the fields uncultivated, and a famine ensued, he fed

thousands at the gates of the abbey. He now came to put his monastery under the Cistercian rule ; his fame had come before him, and Pope Eugenius himself presented him to the lord Abbot of Citeaux, and Rainaldus in turn presented him to the chapter, with an eulogium, which was very complimentary to his piety, but by no means so to his personal appearance. He took him by the hand, and said, See my lords and brethren, here is an abbot, little in body, short in stature, contemptible in garb, ugly in face ; but, whatever there is of him, be assured is full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith. He then named his request, and the Pope's recommendation to the abbots ; at first they murmured, for it was against the rule of the order to receive a community of women. But when Rainaldus promised that this should be remedied, they could not refuse a request, backed by the Pope's authority, and the monastery of Obazina was received into the filiation of Citeaux. The Cistercians were right in accepting the rule of this monastery, for they improved it by their government. It partook of the rude and almost humourous simplicity of Stephen himself. The poor nuns in their simplicity, when they looked on their glen and the rocky mountains which bounded it, believed that all the world with its cities and magnificent towns lay just outside the woody mountain tops. Boys under five years old were brought up in the convent of the nuns, and were then removed into that of the monks. As one little boy was crossing, under the guidance of a monk, the steep path between the two monasteries, the brother asked him how he liked the women with whom he had been living. Women ! said the child ; I have never seen any women. Those with whom I have been living were called sisters.

And this child was a type of the rude simplicity and unreasoning purity of the monasteries now delivered into the hands of Citeaux.

So far Gilbert's mission seemed to prosper ; a double monastery had been received into the order of Citeaux. He had an audience of Pope Eugenius, and laid his case before him. The Pope was much interested in him ; he wanted news from England, for the church was in a miserable state in a country torn with civil war, in which churches and abbeys were turned into fortresses, and the clergy were mercilessly laid under contributions. What was worse the bishops themselves had but too often turned soldiers, and with their armed bands harried the poor peasants, and plundered the fruit of their lands. The bishop of Hereford alone is praised as being a courageous defender of the church's rites. Besides all this, the conduct of Stephen gave Eugenius much cause for alarm. He and his uncle, Henry of Winchester, were in no good odour at Rome, since the new order of things under the rule of Eugenius.¹ The Pope had therefore deprived Henry of the legatine office, and had transferred it to Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury. St. Bernard was evidently aiming at purifying the English church of secular prelates. But a short time before, at Paris, he had procured the deposition from the see of York of Stephen's nephew and nominee, the same to whom God afterwards gave grace to become St. William. All this made the presence of Gilbert most interesting to Eugenius, and he soon learned to love his simplicity and quiet energy. When, however, Gilbert talked to him about giving up the conduct of his order to the Cis-

¹ John of Hexham, in ann. 1147.

tercians, he found him and the chapter decidedly averse to it. The order would not undertake the government of a female convent. In the case of Obazina, it was possible to separate them, but at Sempringham, the very object of the institute, was the spiritual direction of nunneries, and the one could not exist without the other. The chapter therefore altogether declined Gilbert's offer. This was a sad disappointment to him, for the anxious charge was still upon his shoulders, and he knew not how to bear it. The only thing to be done was to associate other priests with him in the government of the nunnery. He did not yet go back to Sempringham ; the events of this year of his life are obscurely told, but it appears incidentally that he remained in France the greater part of the year 1148.¹ His charge was now becoming more anxious than ever, and he probably remained behind to learn the rule of the canons of St. Augustine, for he now determined to join to each convent of his order a certain number of canons, who were to be the spiritual guides of the nuns.² At this time in Burgundy, in the same province as Citeaux, the canons of St. Maurice had been reformed ; again, instead of the turbulent secular canons of St. Genevieve, those of St. Victor were gradually substituted ; and the year before, in his journey to Toulouse, St. Bernard had, by his burning words, converted the unruly clerks of the cathedral of Bordeaux, who for seven years had undergone the sentence of excommunication rather

¹ He was at the general chapter of Citeaux, in September, 1147, and he was also at Clairvaux, when St. Malachi arrived four or five days before St. Luke's day, 1148. He may indeed have gone back to England, and made another journey to France, but his biographer only mentions one journey.

² Geroch ap. Baluz Misc. ii. 207.

than become canons regular.¹ And much need had the cathedrals of reform, for in many places the old discipline had gone out, and the canons were living as they pleased, in houses of their own, having entirely given up the old monastic principle : and they boldly maintained that the rule of Aix-la-Chapelle had tacitly allowed this disorder.² But a general feeling was growing up against this practice, and Eugenius therefore warmly approved of Gilbert's plan. These were happy days for Gilbert, which he spent with St. Bernard, who loved him well. Eugenius too loved him, and said, that if he had but known him before, he would have nominated him to the see of York. This was a fortunate escape for Gilbert, for often must Henry Murdach have regretted the cloister of Fountains, after he had been consecrated by the hands of the Pope himself at Treves. His pallium hung heavy about his neck, when he found himself opposed to Stephen and his son Eustace, petulant, so thought cardinal Gregory,³ as the goat, without the nobleness of the lion. Gilbert found that he had weight enough to bear in the rule of his own order, for which he was now preparing, and which Pope Eugenius formally conferred upon him before he left France. Probably Gilbert was at Clairvaux, when Eugenius, on his way back to turbulent Italy, came to take a last look at that place where he had first known peace, and had spent so many happy days. He must needs see St. Bernard and Clairvaux, before he again crossed the Alps, never to see them more. As he wound along with his suite,

¹ Goff. Epist. vit. St. Bern. lib. vi. ad fin.

² Geroch. p. 223. This must be what the author means by the rule of King Louis.

³ St. Thomas, Ep. 4. 14.

the narrowing valley, where he had so often borne the heat and cold as a common labourer, the great bell of the abbey rung, and all the brethren assembled in the choir ; then the whole convent came out to meet him, St. Bernard first, with his pastoral staff, and the novices last, two and two. Then when he came to the abbey gates, all knelt before him, and when they rose, St. Bernard gave him holy water, and kissed his hand, and then with chanting, all passed into the abbey. Eugenius wept abundantly, and when he spoke to the monks, telling them that he was their fellow and brother, his words were broken by sobs. He wore the white cuculla day and night, as the rule prescribed, and under the rich purple hangings and embroidered coverlet of his bed, was the common straw pallet of the order. His suite was too large to allow him to remain long at Clairvaux, and with a sad heart he set out again to cross the Alps.

Before he left Clairvaux, Gilbert saw another illustrious personage. This was St. Malachi ; he came all the way from the north of Ireland, hoping to see Eugenius at Clairvaux, but when he arrived, five days before the feast of St. Luke, he found that the pope had gone away, and was even then not far from Rome. King Stephen had detained him, with his usual obstinacy ; he was afraid of Rome, and would not suffer any bishop to cross the sea to the council of Rheims. The archbishop of Canterbury alone contrived to cross the channel in a crazy vessel, but when he returned from France, Stephen drove him into exile, and could only be brought to reason by laying an interdict on his lands. It was a part of this quarrel which prevented St. Malachi from reaching Clairvaux in time to see the pope, then on the point of leaving France. His

had been a long and a weary life, for he had been the reformer of the Irish church. With a handful of brethren he had renewed the old monastery of Benchor, and had built up a church of wood, which St. Bernard calls "a work of the Scots, and handsome enough." He had had hard work among wild Irish chieftains and their clans; once he narrowly escaped martyrdom; their savage eyes glared at him for a moment, but his presence disarmed them, and he, who was to give the signal, durst not do it. His was the most unruly diocese in Christendom; it had been for nine generations an appanage of a chieftain's family; eight had successively borne the title and swayed the power of the metropolitan see, being all the while no more than laymen. The last archbishop was a married man, but he was really consecrated, and on his death-bed, by his wife, he sent his crosier to St. Malachi. He left him an heritage of toil; on foot, with a few clerks, he braved the bitter cold, the deep bogs, and the rough roads of his country; and what was far worse, he battled with his half-heathen countrymen. He had to put down savage customs, unbridled concubinage, and lawless men chafing sorely at an ecclesiastical yoke. The first stone church which the saint built, raised an outburst of barbarian fury; they said that their bishop had turned Frenchman, and had ceased to be a true-hearted Scot, with his new-fangled architecture.¹ At length he had seen the fruits of his toilsome life; church and state had been reformed by him; the civil law had taken the place of savage customs; churches were rebuilt, and priests ordained; confirmation was administered, and matrimony enforced. Innocent II. had

¹ Gallus non Scotus. St. Bern. Vit. St. Malachie. St. Bernard calls him only Bishop, because he had not received the pallium.

delayed giving him the pall of an archbishop on account of some informality ; but to make amends, he took his mitre off his own head and put it upon the head of St. Malachi. He had now come to Clairvaux to receive the pall from the hands of Eugenius. Some of his clergy had accompanied him down to the sea-shore, and made him promise to come back to Ireland, and had watched him with straining eyes embark on board his vessel. He did fulfil his promise, for contrary winds drove him back to Ireland, but they never saw his face again. He had always wished to die at Clairvaux, in the arms of his friend St. Bernard, and now he was to have his wish, for the days in which Gilbert was with him were the last that he spent upon earth. St. Bernard vividly describes the joy of this intercourse. "How joyous a holiday dawned upon us when he came into Clairvaux. With how quick and bounding a step, did I, though infirm and trembling, run to meet him ! With what joy did I rush to kiss him ! With what joyful arms did I embrace this grace sent me from heaven ! And then what joyful days did I pass with him, and yet how few !" It was in these last days that Gilbert saw him, and he was admitted to a familiar intercourse with these great saints. He was not however present at the closing scene of the life of St. Malachi. It was now high time that he should return home ; and at the latter end of October, he set out to go back to Sempringham. Both St. Bernard and St. Malachi loved him well ;¹ each of them gave him his staff, that he might take a memorial of them back to England ; and St. Bernard

¹ Gilbert's biographer says, that he alone was present when the two saints, by their prayers, worked a miracle, but what it was is unknown.

gave him a stole and a maniple. He went on his way to the work which had been appointed for him ; there was still a great deal for him to do on earth ; but on the second of November, All Souls' day, St. Malachi died, and was buried in St. Mary's chapel at Clairvaux.

CHAPTER VII.

The Canons of Sempringham.

THERE were many persons ready to welcome Gilbert when he got back to England ; all, who before he went to France were anxious to give portions of ground to endow a monastery of his institute, were more than ever disposed to assist him now that St. Bernard's name was added to his own.¹ In the two years after his return, he must have been wholly occupied in founding houses of his order ; Alexander of Lincoln died before he left England, but Robert de Chesney, his successor, was blamed by his historian, for injuring the revenues of his diocese by his liberality to the order of Sempringham, so much did he love Gilbert and his institute.² Nay, when Chicksand had been founded by the countess of Albemarle for the Gilbertines, and she was living there with her nuns, news were brought her that her son was dead, and that his kinsmen, without consulting her, were bearing his body to Walden priory. In her frantic grief, she ordered a band of armed men to bring the body by force to her, at Chicksand, that it might lie in

¹ Innocent III., in a bull of Confirmation addressed to the priory of Alvingham, says, that the order was instituted by "the holy Gilbert and the blessed Bernard." *Monast. Angl.* vii. 961.

² Wharton *Ang. Sac.* ii. 417.

the church of the nuns ; and had not the knights who accompanied the body ridden by the side of the coffin with drawn swords, it would have been carried away. The enthusiasm for the Gilbertine order spread beyond Lincolnshire, and the immediate neighbourhood of Sempringham, into Yorkshire, where two houses were founded in 1150, Watton and Malton. The first priory founded, was that of Sempringham itself ; and Gilbert of Ghent gave the land on which the house was built.¹

“ The nobles of England, says his biographer, earls and barons, seeing and approving the work of the Lord, gave to the holy father Gilbert, many lands and possessions ; first in so doing, was Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, and lastly, king Henry II.” Many of these monasteries were situated in Lincolnshire, in solitary islands formed by rivers, and among the reeds and willows of the marshy grounds. Gilbert’s name was known all over England ; he appears in the chronicles of the time, side by side with kings and princes. William of Newbridge mentions him as a man “ really wonderful, and of singular skill in the direction of females, conscious of his own purity, and relying on grace from on high,” and his name was mentioned with reverence in the holiest cloisters. St. Aelred preached of him to his monks, and called him “ the holy father Gilbert, a man venerable and to be mentioned with the highest honour.”² The contemporaries of Gilbert must have been conscious of some substantial benefit derived from him, who was to all appearance only a retiring and simple parish priest ; for many years after he

¹ Gilbert did not give the land free of service ; his descendant, another Gilbert, gave it in *eleemosynam*, i. e. free ecclesiastical tenure. For an explanation of the term, see *Constitutions of Clarendon*, c. 9. where it is opposed to *laicus feudus*.

² St. Aelred, *Sermon 2.* in *Isaiæ cap. xiv.*

came back from France, he was not even a monk, and had not received the habit at the time of which we are writing. And this reverence is the more remarkable, because it continued after his death, soon after which his order degenerated : nay, it showed the germs of this degeneracy even in his life-time. Now that the institute has, by the addition of the canons, attained its perfection, it will be right to give a more minute account of it. We shall then see what was the benefit which the world owed to Gilbert, notwithstanding the partial failure of his work.

The peculiarity of the order consisted in the institution of a certain number of canons to be the spiritual guides of nuns. Among the Premonstrants, there were nuns as well as canons, but then the nuns were an after-thought ; while in the case of the White Gilbertines, as they were called, the original institute began with the religious women, and all the rest grew up around them, and were established for their use. In Gilbert's original intention, every house of nuns was to have seven canons connected with it, who were to be the directors of the nuns ; so that every Gilbertine priory consisted in fact of three monasteries, one for nuns, another of canons, and a third of lay-brethren. This mode of government had, in a manner, been forced upon him since the Cistercians refused to help him. The great problem in monastic government, was the jurisdiction to which they were to submit. This was met, as has been said elsewhere, by the formation of congregations, first the Cluniac, and then the Cistercian.¹ If this was necessary in the case of monks, it was much more indispensable in nunneries. A convent of women is necessarily dependent on men for the administration of

¹ Life of St. Stephen, p. 155.

the sacraments ; they must, therefore, necessarily be under external direction ; and in the choice of it should not be left to their own caprice. The want of external discipline had ruined many a nunnery. A number of houses were to be found, the inmates of which, calling themselves Canonesses, could give very little account of themselves, and were really relaxed nuns of the order of St. Benedict.¹ As late as the twelfth century, councils were forced to take notice of nuns who wore rich furs, of sables, martins, and ermine, whose fingers were covered with rings of gold, and their long tresses curled or platted ; another speaks of disorderly nuns, who, while they ought to sleep and take their meals together in a dormitory and refectory, lived each in her own house without any restraint, and receiving whom she would.² Such nunneries as these were really nothing more than alms-houses for unmarried women. The idea of the Gilbertine order was to obviate this difficulty, by joining to the nunneries an order of canons for the spiritual direction of the nuns.

Females require direction in a different way from men. It is the unruly intellect of man which leads him into error, while a woman errs from disorganized affections and untamed feelings ; and, what is most pitiable to think upon, often those who aim highest, have the most terrible and signal fall. She who moves along the beaten path of life without being either very good or very bad, is in little danger of fanaticism ; while she who is placed above ordinary ties and affections, and strives to fix her desires on God alone, finds at once a class of temptations of which others have no concep-

¹ Helyot, *Ordres Mon.* vol. ii. p. 58.

² Council of London, 1139, 2nd Lateran council. Vid. Geroch. quoted above, p. 59, and council of Rheims.

tion. The devil placed before our Lord temptations so subtle, that we can hardly tell the meaning of them, or discover how it would have been sin to yield to them. Again, in the unfathomable mystery of those words, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? spoken upon the cross by Him who was Very God, it is possible to gather that the soul, most closely united to God, may be deprived of the consciousness of His presence in an incomprehensible way. All these are temptations, pressing upon the highest souls, of a kind quite different from those which beset the path of commonplace christians. And to withstand these, it requires an implicit faith, and an utter resignation of the will, which very few possess. Hence, the wild and terrible forms of fanaticism which have appeared from time to time in persons, who, with proper guidance, might have been Sisters of Charity or contemplative nuns. On the other hand, by the sweet and gentle ways of holy obedience, a character is formed of a nature distinct from any other, and which no austerities can alone bestow. Of course, God in His mercy can guide peaceful and holy souls through any difficulties even without these aids, but it is dangerous to be without them, for who can stand in the hour of trial when it comes across the soul that after all she may be contemplating herself instead of God, and all her feelings may be illusion? A gentle voice is needed to bid the soul wait in darkness till God give her light, as He assuredly will do, sooner or later.

On the other hand, corresponding to these trials, there are joys in contemplation which ordinary souls cannot know. They are described by those who have felt them with a substantive clearness, which shows even to those who have never felt them, that there

is a deep philosophy in the cross which simple and crucified souls can know, but which is beyond the reach of the mere student, however learned he may be. We are so tied down to things of sense, that we can only aim at immaterial and invisible things through sensible objects ; spiritual things can only be discerned by spirit, and therefore can but be understood by us indirectly, till our bodies, after the blessed resurrection, become spiritual. But it is possible to conceive that there is a way of seeing the invisible, analogous to, and yet totally distinct in kind from, the perceptions of sense ; and for a short time, and in a small degree, God has vouchsafed such an opening of the invisible world to His saints on earth. Few, indeed, there are to whom such a grace is given, but there are many states short of this to which more ordinary souls may attain, remembering, all the while, that of the highest, as well as the lowest, charity is the essence, and that which alone gives them value. Obedience to authority, which comes to us in the place of God, and humility, are the steps by which the Holy Spirit thus exalts souls dead to the world and to themselves. It was to produce in the soul these virtues that the Gilbertine canons were instituted, and what were the general results of the system may be gathered from one case which is confessedly an extraordinary one. “ In one of the monasteries, says St. Aelred, which, under the venerable father Gilbert, are daily sending up to heaven plentiful fruits of chastity, there was once, and perhaps may be still, a holy virgin, and she had so expelled from her breast all love of the world and carnal affections, all care for bodily wants and outward anxiety, that with a burning soul she loathed earthly things, and longed after heavenly. And sometimes it happened, that when her

mind was occupied in her wonted prayer, a mysterious and wondrous sweetness would come over her and put an end to all the movements of the soul, to all quick-coming thoughts, nay, even all those spiritual thoughts which concerned her friends. Then her soul, in a manner bidding adieu to all worldly burdens, would be rapt above itself : it would be caught up by a strange ineffable and incomprehensible light, so that it saw nothing else but That which is, and which is the being of all. Nor was this a bodily light or any likeness of a bodily thing ; it was not extended nor shed abroad, so that it could be seen everywhere ; without being contained itself, it contained all things, and that in a wonderful and ineffable manner, just as Being contains all that is, and truth whatever is true. When, therefore, this light was shed around her, then she began to know Christ no longer after the flesh, for the breath of her nostrils, Christ Jesus had led her into the truth itself. After lying a considerable time in this trance, the sisters could only with difficulty bring her back to her bodily senses, by shaking her. This happened several times, and they entreated her to explain what took place in these trances. Then began the others to long to attain to the height of this vision : wherefore, they strove to withdraw their minds from all worldly cares and anxieties ; and by tears and continued prayers many obtained the same grace, so that among the sisters, many were, even against their will, plunged into this light. There was there in the convent a nun of consummate good sense, and she, knowing that it is not right to trust to every spirit, thought that this state was to be attributed to disease or fantastic illusions, and as much as she could, tried to dissuade the sisters from having these visions frequently. One day she asked

the Superioress why no such thing happened to herself, and she received for answer, Because thou dost not believe us, nor love in others that virtue which thou hast not thyself. Then the nun answered, Do thou pray to God for me, that if this be from Him, the same thing may happen to me. And when they had prayed for some days to no purpose, she asked the same question of the Superioress, who answered, Thou must renounce all the things of this world, and affections for every mortal, and employ thyself in thinking about God alone. What, said she, am I not to pray for my friends and benefactors? Then, answered the Superioress, when thou wouldest ascend by contemplation to the higher powers of thy soul, thou must commend and entrust to God all whom thou lovest; and as though thou wert quitting this world, bidding adieu to every creature, raise up thy soul to the sight of Him whom thou lovest. She, however, still believed not, but begged of her to pray yet more, that if these things came from God, she should receive what she desired. Still she said, I would not have my soul so rapt from the body and raised on high, that the remembrance of all things, and above all, of my friends, should be wiped away from my mind; I shall be satisfied to know whether these things be of God. Now, on the day of Pentecost, when she was tossing about with anxious thoughts, the light of which we have spoken was shed upon her, so that she was wafted up into it in an unspeakable manner, and was raised on high. Then unable to bear with her weak vision that inaccessible light which was beaming upon her, she prayed that her soul should be recalled, as far as it might, to the contemplation of the passion of the Lord. Then, though she had before seen in a rapid glance that which is very being, she was

suffered to descend from this lofty vision to a lower one, and was transferred in spirit to that vision of the Passion, and saw in the spirit Jesus hanging on the cross, pierced with the nails, smitten through with the lance, and the blood flowing through the five wounds, and Him looking on herself with a most tender look. Then bursting into tears, and repenting, she begged pardon of her sisters, and declared herself unworthy of this light." There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and we might have learned this from him who was carried up into the third heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not, and heard things which human words could no more express than the eye can hear, or the ear see.

And who were these in whom God showed forth these wonders? They were not persons sitting with their hands across all day following the fancy or the feeling of the moment; their vestments were not long and flowing, nor their veils elegantly disposed about their foreheads; their churches were not magnificent, nor did beautiful strains of devotional music float from the pealing organ through their long-drawn cloisters. They were simply little, quiet looking nuns of St. Benedict; the wimple which enveloped their head and throat was plain and coarse, and so was their veil; and even the ample cuculla or long white¹ mantle which they wore in choir was not to sweep along the ground,² "for they who delight in this or in beauty of apparel without doubt are rejected of God."³ For the winter they had a tippet of rough sheep-skin, and a cap lined with white lamb's wool, for it was very cold when they

¹ Cuculla alba, Reg. ap. Dugdale vii. p. lxxix. 18.

² Panni quibus capita eorum involvuntur nigri erunt et grossi, v. Reg. p. 79. 17.

³ Ibid.

rose in the night and went into the church, when the wind blew across the fens of Lincolnshire, or the chill mist rose from the waters of the river which surrounded their little islands. Instead of being idle, during all the hours when in the Benedictine or Cistercian rule the monks were working in the fields, they were preparing the wool from their own sheep, baking¹ or washing, or cutting out the clothes of the canons for the work of the lay-sisters, or cooking for themselves and the whole community. At other times they all sat together in the cloister, some of them reading learned books in a learned language, for there were literate ladies among them ; but all, whether poring over homely English or majestic Latin, sat in perfect silence, and it was especially enjoined that there were to be no cross looks, but all were to have a cheerful and sweet countenance as became sisters. Even on the great feast-days, when ordinarily exempt from work, if the poor lay-sisters were over-burdened, the nuns were to quit their books, or even their prayers, and to help them. No music was allowed in their churches, but only grave and simple chaunts, like the Cistercians, except that they could not of course, as in the Cistercian rule, forbid womanish voices ; and the chaunts proceeding in the stillness of the night from so many female voices must have been most sweet and beautiful. No great quantity of wax lights were allowed in the church, and altogether the same Cistercian simplicity was observed in all the details of the service. In one instance only this simplicity was relaxed to condescend to the lay sisters ; in a Cistercian church, instead of elaborate sculpture and canopied niches, no image was

¹ *Moniales de pistrino, Reg. p. lxxviii. 16.*

allowed but the one crucifix on the altar. But if an image of the "blessed Virgin Mary" were given to the convent, it might be given to the altar of the sisters, to remind them of her perpetual virginity, which they were to emulate. And even when the canons and the nuns made processions round the cloister, on the greatest days in the year, so little was picturesque effect aimed at, that curtains were hung round on the columns of the arches, lest the brethren and the nuns should catch glimpses of each other as the procession with cross and banner wound round the corners of the choir, or might be seen through the interstices of the windows. Meditation was the soul of the order; the nuns rose about two o'clock in the morning, like the Cistercians, and when matins were over, all who chose remained behind in the church, or glided in afterwards from the cloister; and as day dawned, the first light of morning saw them still upon their knees pouring out their hearts before God, and meditating on the adorable mysteries of the faith, or interceding for the world without, and for the friends whom they had left there. At all times, day or night, when they were not at work or in the office, they might go into the church and pray. Even those who could not read or join in the office could meditate, and though they were set to work while the others were reading, yet they were allowed to enter the church if they would.¹ If to all this we join the austerity of the Cistercian rule, that is, the unmitigated rule of St. Benedict, there will be but little room left for romance or sentiment. Unmurmuring

¹ This seems to have been the distinction between the nuns who could not read and the lay-sisters. The rule calls these nuns *sanctimoniales laicæ*, while what we call lay-sisters are there called *sorores* in opposition to the *sanctimoniales*.

obedience to superiors, whether the prioress or the canon, as spiritual director, and a perfect resignation of the will were the necessary conditions of being a nun at all.

The canons who had the spiritual care of the nuns, were very different from the old Benedictine or from the Cistercian monks ; the monk was not by any means necessarily a learned man ; on the contrary, his business was to labour with his own hands to get his living, so that he had much more to do with gardening and digging than with books. But the canon was necessarily a clerk and a student ; Gilbert's first canons were taken from among his scholars, whom he had instructed in all the learning of Paris. Canons in the middle of the eleventh century were by no means always reputable personages : the old reform of St. Chrodegang, and the regulations of Aix-la-Chapelle had died away, and the canons were in many instances in a most corrupt state. The vehement remonstrances of St. Peter Damian had their effect, and the attention of the supreme pontiffs were drawn to this enormous evil, so that after the second Lateran council, reforms were continually made in the old canons, and new congregations set up. The institution of monks instead of the canons in several of our cathedrals was a portion of this movement ; and the canons of St. Victor of Paris and the Premonstrants were all connected with it. The second Lateran council ordered all canons to take St. Augustine's rule, and from this time they were called Augustinian. This rule consists of an adaptation of St. Augustine's 109th letter¹ to the condition of can-

¹ It is a question whether this letter (the 211th in the Benedictine edition) or the two sermons de moribus clericorum, is the rule pointed out in the Lateran council. But the letter is what is probably meant by Gilbert.

ons instead of nuns. This letter is what is meant when the rule of St. Augustine is mentioned in Gilbert's rule ; it is however so very general in its regulations that canons were not necessarily under a discipline so severe as that of monks. The chief regulation consisted in living together and giving up property ; but besides this in particular places a stricter discipline was in force. Thus Gilbert filled up St. Augustine's outline from other sources, but principally from the Cistercian rule. They were of the new order of monks of the twelfth century, who scandalized¹ the ancient Benedictines, Cluniacs and canons, by wearing white instead of the old sober black of the monastic orders. And in this they were followers of the Cistercians and Premonstrants ; they were, like them, the growth of the age of St. Bernard, and had more subjective religion, so to speak, than appeared on the surface in the older monasteries. This of course is but a question of degree, for the Christian, in every case, looks beyond himself at Him who is the object of his faith ; but yet it is true that the Gilbertines, like the Cistercians, preferred the "usefulness of wholesome meditation,"² to beautiful paintings and sculptures. In their habit they had more of the canon than of the monk, though indeed the white scapular for labour had something monastic in it ; but the tippet of rough sheep-skin over the black tunic looks like the original aumuce of the canon, and they wore a white pallium or mantle, lined with lamb's wool, instead of the monk's cuculla. At mass and on feast days, they laid aside the coarse mantle, and wore a white cope of linen, like the cuculla of the monk, ex-

¹ Vid. Orderic Vit. lib. iii. p. 711.

² Reg. p. l. 15.

cept that it had no sleeves ; in this cope they were buried, for it was the proper habit of canons. In the relations between the canons and the nuns, Gilbert had an eye to his old office in Alexander of Lincoln's court. As it was the theory that all the priest's power in hearing confessions emanated from the Bishop, so the prior of Sempringham, as master of the whole order, gave license to hear confessions ;¹ and as the diocese had a penitentiary, so there was a sacerdos confessionis, who confessed the nuns generally. Besides this, the intention was, that every convent of nuns should have at least seven canons attached to it, who said mass and had the ordinary spiritual direction of the nuns, under the authority of the prior.² The whole of these regulations were so managed, that the canons and the nuns never saw each other, except when a nun was at the point of death, and the priest entered to administer extreme unction, and to commend her soul into the hands of God. The nuns were unseen when they made their confessions, or received the Holy Sacrament, for which purposes a grating was constructed. The time of death alone brought the canons and nuns together. There were two separate churches, and across that of the nuns was built a screen ; when a choir-sister died, her body, dressed in her habit, was laid before the altar, so that the canons might come and chaunt the service for the

¹ Priores ordinis nostri de licentia magistri generalem habent auctoritatem omnium canonicorum confessiones audiendi, Reg. p. xxxii. 5.

² This does not appear so much from the Gilbertine rule itself, as from the confirmation of the rule by Innocent III. Adjacimus ut unicuique domui vestri ordinis sanctimonialium canonici præponantur quibus animarum cura, pro dispositione prioris imminet.

dead about her.¹ The whole convent in procession, accompanied any one of its members to the grave, whether canon or nun, lay-brother or sister.

We have now got the whole of Gilbert's institute complete, as far as regards each individual convent, but there is another and most important portion, and that is the jurisdiction of the monasteries among themselves. In this respect, it must be confessed that the rule was defective. Gilbert was at great disadvantage; when the Cistercians refused to take the institute into their hands, he was forced to construct for himself a complicated system out of the rules of various monastic orders. The Cistercians again were said to have two houses in every one of their monasteries, one of monks, the other of lay-brethren; Gilbert had four, one of canons, another of nuns, a third of lay-brethren, and a fourth of lay-sisters. Part of these rules he gathered from the Cistercians, and part seems to come from the Premonstrants, who had just been established in England.² The result of the whole is an intricate system, which leaves a feeling of indistinctness on the mind of the reader. The principal difficulty in the order is evidently the management of the lay-brethren. In the Cistercian order, the monks worked so much them-

¹ P. 91. 1.—There is some obscurity in the way in which these churches are mentioned, but the church of the nuns is distinctly named, Reg. p. l. 17. and that of the canons, xlix. 14. It would seem that the church of Sempringham had been turned into a conventual church, while that of Tirington remained a parish church. At least the latter is not mentioned in the list of the possessions of the order, in Innocent's confirmation.

² The *Circatores* of the Gilbertines seem to be derived from the order of the Premonstrants, the provinces of which were called *Circariæ*.

selves, and were so numerous, that the lay-brethren had comparatively a light office. But the Gilbertine canons were few, and were students, so that the brethren had nearly the whole work to perform for all four communities. Besides which it should be remembered that the canons were an after-thought, and an unexpected addition to the labour of the brethren. In a future chapter, it will be found that this was a most serious evil; the practical working of the whole will then come before us, and the reader will be better able to judge of the defects of this portion of the institute.

CHAPTER VIII.

Gilbert and St. Thomas.

WHEN in the year 1150, Gilbert founded so many houses of his order, he might fairly have considered himself as an old soldier, who had won a title to rest. He was then between sixty and seventy years old; but he had yet many years of life to go through, and they were to be the least peaceful of all. He had hitherto remained in quiet at Sempringham, but now another hand was to bind him and lead him in his old age whither it would. From the first time that he set sail on the channel, and touched the shores of France, he was to have trouble and vexation, and tedious journeys to and fro. He was at peace when he was the parish priest of Sempringham, with only seven holy virgins to rule, all of whom he had known from their childhood. But now the Pope had made him the head of his order; he was now a great man, and had property under his controul, houses and churches, mea-

dows and corn-fields, islands and fisheries. He found to his cost that property involved care ; he was now in danger of becoming the mere man of business. He had to be on horseback, and to ride about from convent to convent, attended by his chaplains and a lay-brother. Nay, he found what was worse than all, that possessions involved law-suits ; he had to renew his acquaintance with the palaces of bishops, and come into the courts of chancellors and high justiciars. And when the king was in Normandy, to and fro, he had to sail across the seas, to have his cause decided. He had often to bear cold looks and sneers of contempt, nay, in defending the rights of his church, he was ill-treated by some powerful tyrant, and even beaten. He was now in a good school for humility, and he rejoiced in the humiliation which God had sent him to make him like his Lord. What these law-suits were about, the scanty notice of his biographer does not tell us, but there was another anxiety upon him which we can easily imagine for ourselves, and that was the care of so many churches, and so many souls. What he had begun in simple faith as a part of the government of his parish, had now grown into an order, and before he died, nine houses of nuns and canons together, and four of canons alone, had been founded, so that he had under his direction fifteen hundred nuns, and seven hundred canons. In the rule of this large body he had to preserve his soul from partiality to particular persons or places, lest it should withdraw his mind from the attention due to the whole. In order to keep his mind fixed upon God alone, he lived a life of greater austerity than seemed possible for his now aged body. He followed the usual exercises of the convent, and was therefore always in the refectory with the canons.

but his meals were so slender as to be a continued mortification. By his side he ever had a platter, which he called the Lord's dish, and into this he threw the greater part of what was set before him, that it might be given to the poor. At night, when compline was over, and the whole convent at rest, he remained in prayer, interceding for all his brethren and sisters, for prelates and kings, for the dead, and for the living. All night long he continued sitting on his bed, without laying his head on a pillow, and in this posture he slept, his head resting on his chest. God so rewarded his servant, that whatever he did, his soul was ever fixed on God in prayer ; to assist himself he made a sort of rosary of his fingers, reciting some prayer on each of the joints. He loved the sweet voice of the church in her chaunts, and tears ran down his cheeks when he was singing hymns and canticles in the choir.¹ But his tears were not always those of devotion and joy, he wept with those who wept, and especially bemoaned with tears over the impenitent, who would not weep for themselves. In the direction of so many souls he met with many forms of the tempter's wiles, and many sins ; and in the difficult management of such cases, he tempered severity with kindness. "We have seen him," says his disciple, "when any one had sinned even to deserve excommunication, and then repented, at first appear hard-hearted, and almost inexorable, in order to try the contrition of the penitent ; but, when he saw that the penitence was true and sincere, he shed tears in the presence of all, and called together his friends and brethren, and made all rejoice with him over the once lost sheep. Thus afflicting himself, and

¹ *Sauve sonantis vocibus ecclesiæ illectus. Vita St. Gilb. p. 16.*

suffering with the afflicted, he followed Jesus with his cross."¹ For some time he would not formally enter his own order ; he probably wished to be more able to give up his charge before he died, but at last he was persuaded to do so, lest the royal authority should take occasion to appoint his successor, and make of Sempringham a sort of commendatory priory. He therefore at Bullington priory received the habit at the hands of Roger, prior of Malton, one of his original canons, whom he made in every thing his chief adviser.

He continued in this mode of life till the year 1164, when it might seem that his life was now drawing to a close ; he had outlived all the saints of his day, St. Norbert and St. Malachi had long been at rest, and now St. Bernard was gone too, and Pope Eugenius. He had seen the last days of the Conqueror, and had lived through the days of the Red King, and of Henry, and in the troublous times of Stephen, he had dwelt at peace, and had peacefully founded his monasteries, and ruled his nuns ; and now a new king was on the throne, powerful as the Conqueror, passionate as his successor, and withal wily and clever as Henry Beauclerc. Gilbert had in his youth seen St. Anselm's struggle with the secular power, and now a more deadly battle was awaiting the church, in which he too was to take his share.² The battle had begun, and the church had gained her point in Stephen's time ; Henry Murdach had been made archbishop of York, in the king's teeth, and the liberty of election vindicated. Gervase, Stephen's son, had been degraded from the

¹ Ibid.

² John of Hexham, in ann. 1154.

abbacy of Westminster, the revenues of which he had wasted ; and Theobald, after vindicating an archbishop's right to cross the channel in obedience to the mandate of the Holy See, had returned in triumph, having laid the royal domain under an interdict ; finally in 1151, a council, held in London, had asserted the privileges of the ecclesiastical courts against the pleas of the barons. But Henry Plantagenet was a very different man from Stephen, who was only a chivalrous asserter of a disputed crown ; he was a reformer, and the ecclesiastical courts must needs square with his reforms ; they must not come in the way of circuits and justices in eyre, and the king's lieges must not be excommunicated without his leave, though they have transgressed ecclesiastical law, and parish churches must be given away according to the decisions of the courts of my lord the king ; and to clench the whole, England must be separated from the head of the church, for no appeals to Rome must interfere with the king's justice.

Henry knew not what he had done, when he called Thomas his chancellor, and said to him, "It is my will that thou be archbishop of Canterbury." Nay, the noble-minded chancellor knew not the meaning of his own words, when he pointed to his gay dress and said with a smile, "Truly a religious man and a holy thou wouldst place in this holy seat, over so holy and famous a convent of monks : know well, that if by God's will it should be so, thou wilt very soon turn thy soul away from me, and the good-will which there is now between us will be turned into the most savage hatred. I know well that thou wouldst make exactions, yea, that thou dost now dare much in church matters, which I could not bear." It was a good

stroke of policy in Henry ; the Pope wished it, and the bishops, and the clergy wished it ; it would cement so firmly the good feeling between church and state. But Thomas knew Henry better ; and he knew too what an archbishop of Canterbury could do if he would. However Henry had his will, and to the joy of all but himself, Thomas was consecrated archbishop. But a very few years after, the scene was much changed ; the king's famous constitutions, his scheme of church reform, had been brought forward. Thomas opposed it, for he saw through the meaning of them. He was deserted by the bishops ; some could not, others would not see : they saw that Henry's eyes looked fiery, and they gave up the church's liberty. Thomas yielded for a moment ; he received the constitutions, but asked for more time to consider them before he put his seal to them. The seal was never put ; the inferior ecclesiastics in general, the smaller abbeys, and sisterhoods of nuns, and the parish priests, as a body, all felt a strong and almost instinctive sympathy all through the contest, with the archbishop, and now his momentary weakness filled the hearts of those about him with dread. As they were going home from the council, his attendants whispered among each other sad words about the fortunes of the church, and one, the cross-bearer, who rode before him, murmured something about a victory won over the general, and now it was useless for others to fight. The archbishop heard his words and said, " Why sayest thou this, my son ; " when the cross-bearer spoke his mind openly, then that noble heart was well nigh broken, and he sighed deeply, for he saw his error. " No wonder," he thought ; " the church may well become a servant through my means. I came to rule her, not from the

school of Christ, not from the cloister, but from the king's court, a courtier proud and vain. I, the leader of buffoons, the master of hounds, the nurturer of hawks. I, to be the shepherd of so many souls." Then tears in abundance broke forth, and he sobbed aloud. However the battle was not yet lost, and so the king felt, as soon as it was known that the archbishop had repented. Henry's temper was none of the best, and much less would have been enough to try it. That his chancellor, the man of his creation, the warlike archdeacon, who loved the noise of battle so well, that he gratuitously plunged into it, the gay courtier in the ermine cloak, the acute diplomatist, learned in the law, that he should turn against him and set up for a saint ! It was too much, and he vowed vengeance. It was his own fault ; he did not know what a heart beat under that ermine cloak, what a hatred of impurity and an unsullied chastity were there, even in its most worldly times. There was stuff to make a martyr of in that noble heart, now that God's grace had touched it, and Thomas listened like a little child to his own cross-bearer, to John of Salisbury, or any friend who reproved him. But whoever was to blame, it was now too late, and the archbishop must be got rid of. In 1164, articles of impeachment were framed against him, grounded on his conduct as chancellor ; this was coming near the question at issue, whether an ecclesiastic was amenable to a civil tribunal. The bishops deserted him ; one or two secretly assisted him, among whom, it must be said, was Henry of Winchester, who, from an instinctive liking for what was great, or because his visit to Cluny had improved him, took his part. As a body however, the bishops left him to the tender mercies of the king.

The proceedings of the court are obscure, but it appears that on the first days of the trial, heavy and ruinous fines were imposed on the archbishop; the cowardice of the bishops apparently encouraged the king, and it was intimated to Thomas, that on the last day he should have to defend himself on a criminal charge of perjury and treason. From Thomas's indignant words to the bishops, it seems that he made a distinction between a civil and a criminal action, and refused to be amenable to the royal tribunal in the latter case. The former accusations respected his conduct when chancellor; this one called him in question for what he had done as archbishop. Frightful rumours were afloat that the archbishop was to be murdered in the court. At this terrible time, when all shrunk from his side, one unknown monk, the representative of many a poor brother and sister who were praying for him, bade him the next day celebrate a mass in honour of the blessed first martyr, Stephen, and so he should escape his enemies. Thomas trembled, after having so lately lived a secular life, he thought himself unfit to wear the crown of martyrdom; yet not for one moment did his heart shrink from what he had to do.¹ The next day, though it was no holy-day, in full pontificals, with the mitre on his head, and the pallium round his neck, he celebrated the mass in honour of St. Stephen. Some of the king's attendants who were in the church, wondered what it meant, but they wondered still more when, fresh from the sacrifice in which he had offered up himself with the immaculate Lamb, he took the

¹ Et adhuc conjicio ex his quæ dicitis vos non solum in civili sed in criminali causa, in foro sæculari, judicare me paratos. *Quadril. i. 29.*

cross from the hand of his attendant, and in the sacred vestments he made his way towards the king's court. All shrunk back before him. The bishops stood aghast ; it was a proclamation of open war ; it stripped the question of all legal form, and made it start up in all its naked awfulness ; the archbishop must die, or the constitutions be accepted. By God's grace neither happened. The king and the barons did not await him ; it was bringing the question to an issue a little too soon, and they retired to an inner room. It was a pale and trembling troop which they left behind, the bishops of England cowering around the majestic figure of the archbishop. Quietly he sat, with a young clerk, his attendant at his feet ; and when some of the officials from the king's chamber came down and glared fiercely on him, he only bent his head, and spoke words of comfort to the poor youth. At length judgment was pronounced that the archbishop was a traitor and a perjured man. Then in came Robert, earl of Leicester, with a troop of barons, and bade him come to the king, to answer the impeachment, or hear his sentence at once. Sentence ! said the archbishop, and with the cross still in his hand, he rose up and continued, "Nay, Lord earl, my son, hear thou first ;" and he refused this impeachment before a civil tribunal, and then appealed to the pope. His last words were, "And thus, by authority of the church and the apostolic see, I go hence." Then he quietly walked down the hall, and the nobles and courtiers followed him all the way with outcries and abuse, but none durst stop an archbishop so habited, and with such a weapon. The door was locked, the keys were hanging against the wall, and one of the archbishop's attendants took them down, and trying one after another, he found the right one,

and the archbishop passed forth from the hall from which he never thought to have come alive.

During this contest, and indeed throughout the whole of the momentous struggle, it was evident who were on the archbishop's side, and who were against him. All in authority shrunk from him ;¹ but while the bishops were afraid to support him, the clerks, who attended them, openly expressed their sympathy ; thus, when Roger, archbishop of York, was withdrawing from the court for fear of what was coming, he met two of his clerks and bade them follow him. But one of them, master Robert, said : " I will not go from hence till I have seen what God's will comes of these matters ; if my lord of Canterbury fight for God and for His justice even unto blood, he cannot end his life more nobly." And, as was afterwards proved, this held good with the monastic orders ; the heads of the Cistercian order in England shrunk from the storm when Henry threatened to drive every white monk out of his realm, if they continued to shelter the archbishop ; but the abbot of Circumpanum² was not afraid of Henry's anger, and entering into his very presence, delivered a message from the archbishop ; and many a poor English monk ventured his white habit among Henry's armed retainers for the same purpose, till the barons advised the king to extirpate the order, and Henry wrote a letter of complaint

¹ Reliqui vero fere omnes in inferioribus gradibus constituti personam vestram sinceræ charitatis brachiis amplexantur altis sed in silentio suspiriis implorantes ut Sponsus Ecclesia ad glorium sui nominis felici vota vestra secundet eventu.—St. Thomas Ep. i. 85. ap. Lup. op. Tom. x. p. 110.

² Ep. ii. 84. There may be some mistake in the name of this Abbey, which can no where be found, but the fact is certain.

to the abbot of Cîteaux.¹ But it was not only the Cistercian authorities, but those of the Carthusians and of the order of Grandmont, that Henry duped.² There was, however, an order which steadily, and from the first, took part with the archbishop, and that was the Gilbertine. When, after the council of Northampton, Thomas determined to fly from England, and rose at night from his bed in the church of the Cluniac convent of St. Andrew, we find a poor brother of the order of Sempringham at his side, to guide him through the wild swamps of the country, to the city of Lincoln. From thence, he went down the river for the space of forty miles, and the little boat threaded its way among the watery wastes and fens of Lincolnshire, till they landed on a lonely spot, surrounded on all sides by water, a hermitage belonging to the order of Sempringham.³ Here he remained in security for three days, for no one would have dreamed of meeting his lordship of Canterbury in that dreary place. But he was glad of this solitary island with its little chapel in the wilderness, for he here recruited his wasted strength before he crossed the sea. He lived on the coarse food of the monks, and when the brother who was attending on him saw him sitting alone at a table, eating vegetables, he burst into tears, and left the room to hide them.

¹ Ep. xxxiv. b. 2. v. also Ep. i. 92.

² Ep. v. 12. where Mr. Froude, apparently by reading *adimplerent* for *adimpleret*, has given a turn to the sentence still more unfavourable to the monastic orders.

³ This is probably "*pastura cum mansura, Johannis quondam heremitæ in marisco de Hoiland,*" mentioned in the confirmation of the possessions of the order by Innocent III. noticed above. The place is still shown not far from Tattershall and Coningsby.

His next stage was again a dependency of Sempringham called Haverolot;¹ after this he came out of the intricate wilderness of fens, the little out-of-the-way world of the Gilbertines, into the civilized path of the great world which lay beyond, and he durst not any longer travel by day. He lay hid at Estray, a manor belonging to St. Trinity of Canterbury, till All Souls' day, when a vessel was provided to take him over to France.

Here, in an obscure cove on the coast, was put ashore the archbishop of Canterbury; still he was not out of danger, for when he was chancellor he had opposed the wicked marriage of the earl of Boulogne with an abbess, and the earl would certainly have given him up to Henry. So he put on the white habit of a Cistercian monk, and the rough monkish cloak upon his shoulders, and calling himself brother Christian, trudged on foot through the mire and the rain. He was indeed very little like himself in such a guise as this, but he could not hide himself, and two or three times he was all but discovered. Two men were seen hawking as the party passed along the road, and for a moment Thomas forgot his troubles to fix his eyes upon a beautiful hawk on the sportsman's wrist. Ha! said one of the men, if I mistake not, we have here the archbishop of Canterbury. Fool, said his fellow, what need has the archbishop to walk in

¹ A place called St. Botolph's, is mentioned on the way between the hermitage and Haverolot; it appears likely that this is the villa quæ dicitur Sanctus Botulfus, named in the confirmation; perhaps Haverolot may be the house of the order said to be there. Camden mentions a place called Botolfstoune, near Boston, and the order had lands at Tilney, near the same place. Haverolot was therefore probably in the neighbourhood of Boston.

such gear as this? He had not gone far before his strength failed him and he sunk down, declaring that he could go no further, and that they must carry him or get him a horse; so they went and bought him a horse for a few shillings, with a straw bridle into the bargain. As he rode on, equipped in this sorry way, some armed men came up and asked him if he were the archbishop of Canterbury. What! is it the wont of Canterbury to ride in such trappings as these? was his answer, and the argument was conclusive, for they looked at the figure besmirched with mud on the sorry steed, and thought it could not be he, who when chancellor, rode at the head of twelve hundred knights. In this guise, about evening, he came into Gravelines, and went to a poor inn to rest for the night. But mine host looked at brother Christian and bethought himself he had seldom seen so majestic a Cistercian before, and when he looked again, he thought that that ample forehead, and long melancholy face, and those delicate hands, could only belong to the archbishop of Canterbury; and so he told the peasant girl who waited on the guest. And the poor maiden brought him nuts, and cheese, and all she could, to do him honour; the host too threw himself at his feet, and, notwithstanding his attempts to disguise the truth, he could not but acknowledge who he was. A few days after, he was riding in a very different accoutrement from that in which he entered Gravelines; when once he got into the territories of the king of France, he was again received as became an archbishop, and rode into St. Bertin attended by a train of the gallant chivalry of France, and Louis received him with open arms.

Meanwhile, Pope Alexander and the cardinals were sadly perplexed; they had already the emperor and an

antipope to deal with, and that was quite enough without quarrelling with Henry to boot. Besides which, English gold and promises had done its work even in the sacred college; and prudent men began to think that these were not times to enforce antiquated pretensions: the archbishop was a chivalrous and high-minded man, but chimerical schemes must not for all that trouble the peace of the kingdom. But all these, the usual excuses of cold hearted men, disappeared when at Soissons the archbishop met the Pope and with simple earnestness laid before him the constitutions of Clarendon. Alexander saw at once what was the question at issue, and none of the cardinals durst propose that these new royal customs should be introduced. But all became breathless with surprise when Thomas took the ring from his finger with which he had been married to his church, and put it into the hands of his Holiness. No wonder, he said, things had gone wrong with him; he had been placed on the throne of Canterbury, not by the will of God, but by the will of the king; and now the church of Christ was suffering for his sins. He would not resign to the king, for that would have been a betrayal of the cause of the church, but, "into thy hands, father, I resign the archbishopric of Canterbury." At these words of a noble-minded man, daily advancing in self-knowledge and humility, many shed tears: but then in came the prudent men, and they thought the opportunity was a good one: it was the very thing which was wanted to make things smooth: it would restore the proper harmony between church and state. But this was a doctrine too ungenerous and cowardly for the Holy See to adopt: and Alexander restored the ring to Thomas, and refused to accept his resignation. And then he said, Up to this time thou hast abounded in

the good things of this life, but now, in order that thou mayest learn how to be the comforter of the poor, thou must take religious poverty for thy mother, and learn of her. I commend thee, therefore, to the poor ones of Christ ; I mean to this man, he said, pointing to the abbot of Pontigny, who was present. And so Thomas went to the holy abbey of Pontigny, in the broad and rich vale, through which flow the clear waters of the Serain on its way to join the Yonne ; and here, with the good Cistercian monks, he remained in peace. He now, perhaps, for the first time in his life, could sit in solitude and silence and look upon himself ; he would read and meditate on the mighty mysteries of theology, and study the Holy Scriptures, which he used to look upon with an awful wonder when he read them with master Herbert of Lombardy, and used to sigh that he had no more leisure. He had leisure enough now ; and in a course of long and bitter years, he was training up to be a martyr.

Scarcely had Thomas reached Pontigny, when a persecution commenced against his friends in England. Gilbert has his cross too, and we will come to him in time ; but who are all these that crowd around the gates of Pontigny ? Cold, hunger, and nakedness, are evidently playing sad havoc among them. Alas ! they are the friends of Thomas, all who have lifted up a voice or a finger for him, whom now Henry in his rage has expelled from their homes and made them swear to go across the sea to Pontigny, to show the Archbishop what sufferings are endured because he is obstinate. Henry sought out all the kinsfolk of Thomas, all whom he loved best, and all in any way connected with him, and bound them by this terrible oath to present themselves at the Abbey-gates. Delicate females

with infants in their arms fainted by the way in Flanders, and could not come, for it was midwinter ; but Thomas heard of them all from those who could reach him, and they were all names which he had known familiarly. This was the greatest cross of all ; it was in its measure like the pain of our blessed Lord when he from the cross saw His mother suffering with Him. All this might be spared if Thomas would but say a little word, if he would but quit a high-souled dream, and be like other bishops. Then all these could go back to their pleasant homes, to dear England, and be happy again. But Thomas did not shrink for a moment ; this would be coming down from the cross where he was hanging with his Lord, and giving up the bride of Christ, not to the beloved disciple, but to the Roman governor. He wrote to the kings and nobles on the continent who favoured his cause, and the poor exiles were distributed among them. But there were still troubles in England which the Archbishop could not heal ; and Gilbert had his full share in these. He seems to have understood the Archbishop, and the interests which were at stake, better than any one of those who were not his immediate friends. Who indeed understood him thoroughly ? Not certainly that bold cross bearer who amused his indulgent master by asking him how his robe behind came to be so puffed out, and knew not that under his pontifical vestments he wore a shirt of hair ; and who was disposed to smile again when he found that the cowl of the monkish habit which the Pope had sent the Archbishop, was all too short. Nor did the Abbot of Pontigny understand him, when the Archbishop talked of having dreamed that he should be martyred, and the good Abbot with conventual prejudice smiled.

and asked, What has a man who eats and drinks to do with martyrdom? None of them, though they came closest to him, knew what was in him. But Gilbert understood well what he was fighting for, and showed that he was prepared to suffer for the cause. The share which Gilbert's order had had in the escape of the Archbishop out of the kingdom, exposed its head to suspicion. At this time the king was in great dread of the sentence of an interdict proceeding from the Archbishop upon the whole kingdom, and the most savage orders had been issued against any clerk or other person who should bring the sentence into the kingdom. Loss of eyes and burning were a portion of the provisions of this sanguinary enactment. This might be a specimen for Gilbert of what the king was capable of in his wrath. When therefore with all the priors of his order he was summoned to Westminster to clear himself of this suspicion, he knew not what might happen to him. When he arrived in London, he found that he was accused of having sent supplies of money to the Archbishop. This was high treason; but the judges (it was most probably in the court of the earl of Leicester, high justiciar of England) were disposed to be lenient, and to respect his grey hairs and his character for sanctity. They only required of him to take an oath that he had not sent supplies to the Archbishop. This seemed a very simple mode of terminating the affair; but Gilbert bethought himself, that though it was quite true that he had not sent any money, all the world would suppose, if he took the oath, that he thought it wrong to assist the noble exile in his struggle for the rights of the Church. He therefore quietly refused to take the oath. The judges threatened exile; his priors thought it chimerical to

refuse the safety which was offered to him by Providence ; they thought it wrong, and a violation of their vow, to expose themselves to be forced away from their cloisters for a doubtful point of honour. But Gilbert had made up his mind ; he knew how much was at stake, and he thought it worth the risk ; he rejoiced and thanked God that in his old age, after a life of peace, God should now give him grace to bear the reproach of Christ, and to be a confessor for His church. It is a temptation peculiar to monks, to convert their cloister too much into a home, and to set their hearts upon it ; and so it was with the Gilbertine priors, and with other monastic authorities in those days too ; they had given up one home for Christ's sake, and never expected to have to give up another, with which all their religious associations were connected. The great world beyond their cloister was nothing to them, and why should they give up the scene of their duties, to which they were bound by a solemn vow, for any of its turmoils ? And it might have been thought that Gilbert's many years of cloistral life would have made him identify Sempringham with the Church ; but he was now ready to risk the breaking up of his order, and to join the Archbishop in his exile. The judges were sorely puzzled ; they knew not what was to be done with a man who would not take the mercy which they offered him. They were however unwilling to condemn him, so they sent over to Normandy, to know what was the king's pleasure, for Henry was then on the continent.¹ Meanwhile Gilbert and his priors were detained in London, to the sore annoyance of the latter ;

¹ This makes it probable that these events happened in 1164, when Henry was in Normandy.

they might any day be sent at once into exile, as had happened to so many, in a state of destitution into a foreign land. Gilbert had enough to do to keep them in order ; many of them were ready at once to take the oath, and to go back to their convents. He took care to keep up the services just as if they were at Sempringham, and their sweet chaunts were heard by the populace outside : it was a novel thing to hear in London the voices of a set of canons fresh from the fens of Lincolnshire. While all about him were in trembling expectation of the king's sentence, he was unusually gay. It was the instinctive joy of a heart feeling sure that God was for it, because the world was against it. In the very court of Westminster, while all his canons were sitting with long faces about him, he bought some trinkets of a boy who was hawking them about, simply to try to amuse his downcast companions. At length, when all were expecting the very worst, when Gilbert himself had made up his mind to die in France, far away from Sempringham, an order came from Henry, reserving the cause for his special judgment, and ordering the Gilbertines meanwhile to be dismissed. Whether Henry thought that there would be something absurd in thus, in the eyes of all England, banishing a few religious who lived in a swamp, as disaffected and dangerous persons ; or whether, to give him his due, he really admired the unbending character of Gilbert, whom it is expressly said that he revered ; or whether both together be true, at all events so it was, the prior of Sempringham beat king Henry and his justiciars to boot. Then, and not till then, he, without any oath, simply informed the judges that he had not sent any supplies to the Archbishop. This was not an official act at all, and therefore was quite

different from what had been required of him, and he went back to Sempringham, thanking God that he had escaped the snares which had been prepared for him.

CHAPTER IX.

The Rebellion.

GILBERT's trials are not over yet ; one still awaits him, and that perhaps the worst of all. Some men die young, and do a great work before they die ; others die in middle age, when their powers are first brought into play, and their work beginning to thrive ; others again are spared to become old men, and find their bitterest cross at the last. And so it was with Gilbert ; he had all his life long enjoyed the love and esteem of all about him, and the greatest saints of the age had been his friends ; but now he had to endure the suspicions and the coldness of the good, the shame of evil report, and the ingratitude of those whom he had nurtured. It has been said before that the most imperfect part of the order was the management of the lay-brethren ; and at this time, two instances of most flagrant disorders occurred among them. One of them is an isolated fact, which would be inexplicable if it were not connected with the licentious spirit which appeared about this time among this portion of the order. It does not appear certain whether Gilbert ever knew it at all, for it only occurs in a letter of St. Aelred to one of his private friends ; and from the desperate and wicked efforts made to hush it up, and from the fact that the prior applied to St. Aelred, and not to him, it seems probable that it never reached his ears. Its sickening

details might therefore perhaps have been spared the reader, and yet they are instructive from the deep feeling of humiliation which they leave, or ought to leave, upon the mind. A monastery had been founded, as has been said before, in Yorkshire, in a place so dreary and lonely, and so surrounded with water, that it was called Watton, or the Wet-town. To this house a little girl of four years old had been sent by Henry, Archbishop of York, to be brought up by the nuns. The poor child had always been unruly, and the nuns had never been able to do any thing with her ; and when she grew up, though she wore the veil, she never had the heart of a nun.¹ One day, the lay-brethren² came into the monastery to do some work ; the unhappy maiden lingered near, and watched them intently ; at length her eyes met those of one of them. It is useless to go through the steps which led her to crime ; suffice it that she fell. By and bye her shame could no longer be concealed, and her partner in wickedness fled away. The nuns perceived what had taken place, and now comes the most miserable part of a miserable tale. Instead of taking the fall of one of the inmates of the

¹ The expression is "suscipitur nutrienda." It does not appear from St. Aelred's narrative that she was offered by the Archbishop as a nun, and thus, according to St. Benedict's rule, obliged irrevocably to take the veil. Her wearing the habit does not prove it. Not long before this time, Matilda, who had lived from her infancy in the monastery of Wilton, and had been obliged by her aunt to wear the black veil and habit, had been allowed by St. Anselm to marry Henry I. Nor again can it be made out from St. Aelred's expressions that she had made her profession at all. He certainly does not say that she had.

² Frater in the Gilbertine rule always means *lay-brother*, and not *monk*.

house as matter of humiliation, some of the nuns grew frantic with rage ; they had been proud of their chastity, as giving them honour in the sight of men, and now they began to imagine that the finger of scorn would be pointed at them. Instead of rejoicing that by the dispensation of God without their fault, they were despised by men as sinners, as had happened to our blessed Lord, they murmured against God. A party of them cruelly beat and loaded with chains the wretched girl ; their rule obliged them to confine her, but they might have comforted her in her prison, and tried to win her back to Christ. Their next act was to get by stratagem the partner of her guilt into their power, and to execute upon him a sanguinary and horrible vengeance. Instead of trusting that their own purity would be asserted by him who saved St. Agnes from the place of shame, they devised a scheme of fraud in order to conceal the event altogether. It is needless to go into the details of their wickedness ; it is enough that they imposed on St. Aelred, and persuaded him that the girl had repented, and had been miraculously delivered, and that the chains had dropped from her hands. It is remarkable that they did not send for Gilbert to be witness to the miracle, instead of St. Aelred ; they probably thought that they could not impose upon him. But however this be, so runs the tale, and a miserable tale it is, which may make any one tremble who is disposed to pride himself upon his austerities or his purity, forgetting that without charity they are nothing worth. These nuns of Watton were firm and zealous rather for their own honour than for the Lord, and were betrayed into a terrible system of deceit, which now rises up in judgment against them with posterity.

As far as the history of the order is concerned, this

falls in with the account given of the rebellion of the lay-brethren in Gilbert's old age. It was a hard matter to keep in order so many strong and hardy peasants. It required the entire Cistercian system to do so, where every monk was in his way a farmer, and it could not be effected by a few canons, who were literary men. Accordingly it was found that Hodge, the smith, and Gerard, the weaver, had organized a conspiracy among the lay-brethren, to procure a mitigation of the rule. They began to think that after all, a little more eating and drinking, and a little less austerity and psalm-singing, would make life more easy and pleasant. It was soon discovered that they were not the chief promoters of the disobedience of the brethren. Hodge and Gerard were among the lowest of the number ; the former had been taken from the road side, by Gilbert, when a beggar-boy, with his father and brothers, and had been taught the trade of a smith. Their defection would therefore not have been dangerous, but mention is made of two others, to whom Gilbert had entrusted the chief care of the lay-brethren, and these appear to have secretly taken advantage of the vagabond propensities of the smith and the weaver to obtain a mitigation of the rule. Several of the brethren, headed by these two worthies, the weaver and the smith, refused to work, and went about spreading calumnies against the canons of the order. Gilbert, in order to stop the growing disaffection, excommunicated the chief offenders, and required of the rest an oath that they should in future keep to what they had vowed in their profession.¹ There must

¹ This is gathered from St. Thomas of Canterbury's letter, Ep. ii. 69, and also from the letter of the Bishop of Norwich, quoted in Dugdale, after the Gilbertine rule. The whole ac-

have been some clever men among these lay-brethren ; it was an unusual thing to make the profession over again, unless there was reason to suppose that the first profession was invalid. An abbot could not exact it, and Gilbert seems to have overstept his powers¹ in requiring what was equivalent to a second profession. The lay-brethren knew this, and while some of them left the monastery and went all over England maligning the canons, these two, Hodge and Gerard, were sent to Rome to demand justice in the name of the rest. Strange that two runaway brethren, a smith and a weaver, should have the power of obtaining an audience from the supreme pontiff ! but it suits well the Head of the Church to hear the complaint of the poor as well as the great. Not only did they apply for redress, but they obtained an order in their favour, and returned in triumph to Sempringham. Technically they may have been right, but Gilbert, in a few words, quoted from him by his biographer calls it “ a cruel mandate,” and so it was ; all authority was of course at once broken up in the order, and now the lay-brethren were prepared to go all lengths in their attempts to obtain their demands. Gilbert, distressed as he was at the verdict given by his holiness, obeyed it in every point. It was a trying time ; mortified pride, a just indignation at ingratitude, his sense of what was best for the order, which he had raised, and all that complicated feeling, so well expressed by “ being hurt,” would have prompted him to treat the offenders

count is very confused, and all that can be done is to put it together in the best way of which it is capable.

¹ *Quod nulla, sicut audivimus, religionis institutio exigere consuevit.—St. Thomas ubi sup.*

harshly. But he obeyed the Pope, and took them back into the order.

The brethren now in a body demanded a mitigation of the rule ; but here they found him inflexible. He did not consider whether the rule was too strict or not ; it appears afterwards that he did think it too severe ; but that was not the question then, the brethren asked for it in a wrong way, and they must submit before any thing could be done. His old enemies, Hodge and Gerard, elated by their victory at Rome, now broke all bounds ; they pilfered the community, and with the spoils bought two fine horses, on which they rode about the country, going where they would, and publishing every where the most atrocious falsehoods against the canons. At the same time the rest of the lay-brethren prosecuted their cause with vigour ; Gilbert, in his old age, had to drag his worn-out body from tribunal to tribunal to hear the cause judged. Here he had the right side of the question ; he was their prior, and he alone could release them from the professions which they had made to him ; the Pope indeed who had confirmed the order, might revoke his confirmation, but, till then, no bishop could make him alter the rule ; he could only make him observe it. Many bishops tried to persuade him to mitigate the rule, but he was inflexible ; they must first submit to him. But it was a dreadful trial for Gilbert to have the consciousness that vague reports were afloat in the world against the reputation of his canons. The order was of such a nature that the world was sure to receive with willing ears whatever was said against it. The bitterest cross however to Gilbert must have been the displeasure of the exiled archbishop of Canterbury, of him whom he so loved, for

whom he had risked so much. St. Thomas could only hear vague reports across the sea ; again the former verdict obtained at Rome, was a fact against the Prior, and the subsequent conduct of the lay-brethren looked as if they had never been received back at all into the community, since the Pope's mandate. He therefore wrote to Gilbert a letter of grave rebuke. His affection for him is evident throughout ; " God knoweth," he says, " that we love thee with sincere charity in Christ ;" and he calls the order " the fruits of our labour," as though he identified himself with Gilbert. But he commands him strictly to do his best to call back the brethren who are scattered abroad, and accuses him of disobeying the apostolic see ; and he advises him to mitigate the rule, lest after his days his work should perish.

Poor Gilbert ! good and bad were against him. He could not ride abroad without feeling that the finger of scorn might be pointed at him and his train, in consequence of the calumnies of the false brethren. But, unlike the nuns of Watton, he took it all patiently, because it had come upon him in the way of God's providence. He humbled himself and acknowledged that he deserved it all, and thanked God for the affliction, for it taught him to love none on earth too well. He was now on the verge of the grave ; all his life long he had been honoured, and it would now do him good to be despised. At the same time he felt sure that God would clear up the innocence of his canons ; and so it was ; Hodge and Gerard, in the course of their wanderings on the backs of their high-mettled palfreys, fell into grievous immoralities, and their flagrant licentiousness turned all men against them. There was immediately a re-action

in favour of the canons, as there always is sooner or later in favour of those who have been unjustly treated. There is a retributive justice in public opinion, which, on the long run, rights itself, and repairs its own mischief. Men opened their eyes to the holiness of the order, and soon after, Gilbert had the satisfaction of seeing the unruly brethren submit themselves unconditionally, all except friend Hodge, who persisted in his vices to the end. The brethren only humbly begged of Gilbert to mitigate the rule as he thought fit. Then, and not till then, after he had given the kiss of peace to the penitent, he promised that "in tempering whatever was too rigorous, and in correcting the statutes, he should in all things be guided by the authority of his lordship the pope, and the counsel of religious men." Gilbert was now rewarded for his patience; it often happens that men step forward at the end of a contest, who, if they had only shown themselves at the beginning, might have saved a great deal of trouble, and it may be, that God so wills it for the perfecting of His saints. So it happened in this case; many of the English bishops, especially those who lived near the seats of the order, now wrote to the Pope in favour of Gilbert. One of these letters, that of the bishop of Norwich, has been preserved, and is so striking a testimony in favour of the order, that it will be well to quote it at length.

"To the most holy father and sovereign pontiff Alexander, William, bishop of Norwich, the servant of his Holiness, sendeth greeting, and obedience . . . Gilbert, of Sempringham, both from his near neighbourhood to me, as well as from the renown of his sanctity, for which he is so eminent, cannot be unknown to me. His soul is the dwelling of wisdom, and he draws from

the fountains of the Holy Spirit those waters which he knows so well how to pour into the ears of others. In winning and retaining souls for God, he is so zealous and successful, that when I compare myself with him, I am ashamed of my own slothfulness, and it seems as if the prophet Esaias were chiding such as I am, when he says, 'Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.' Among his nuns, of whom he hath gathered for God a multitude greater than I can number, there burn such a fervid zeal for religion, and careful love of chastity, and so faithfully do they keep apart from seeing or conversing with men, that they realize that scripture which saith, 'My beloved is for me, and I for him, who feedeth among the lilies.' Of his canons, whose innocence I hear has been calumniated to your clemency, I call God and mine own soul to witness, I never remember to have heard a single word of ill fame, and I could not but have heard it from their near neighbourhood to me, and from the multitude of persons who come to me on business. All access to the nuns is so entirely forbidden, that not even the prior has general license to see or speak to any of them, and in the reception of the Holy Eucharist, neither priest nor recipient know one another. Each portion of the community has its own house, its own cloister and church, its own houses for sleeping, meditation and prayer. From his lay-brethren he only requires that they keep inviolate that mode of life, which they have professed, and this in my presence they have promised with much devotion to do. He does not presume to change what has been confirmed by your authority and that of my predecessors, and what they, after long trial, have promised and vowed to observe; lest if he changed it, he might be open to the charge of laxity and presumption.

All I wish, is, that this law-suit, which certain lukewarm men, of cold charity have entered against him, should be referred to the judgment and witness of men who have a zeal for God according to knowledge, that they may discover the truth by inspecting the privileges granted by the apostolic see, and by the clear examination of facts, men who have known and experienced what it is to observe a rule without tiring of the religious life, or looking back after putting their hands to the plough. A man worn out by age and more full of virtues than of days, ought not to be treated so, that through discouragement he should swerve from his purpose to the detriment of many souls, but be rather encouraged and treated with gentleness, that he may persevere to keep alive the salvation which God has worked by him in our land. Daily does the wheat grow thin in the garner of the Lord, and the chaff is multiplied. May God preserve your holiness in safety for His church. Farewell."

Besides these bishops, Gilbert found a more extraordinary advocate, and that was Henry II. At one period of the contest with the archbishop, it was his policy to conciliate the monastic orders; their names were useful to him in his desperate struggle.¹ Another reason why he liked the Gilbertine order was, that it was purely English. Henry, like all our kings, loved not the spiritual jurisdiction of any foreign prelate, abbot or potentate. For this reason he disliked the Cistercians; in the latter part of this contest, it suited his purpose to cajole them, but when the archbishop was sheltered at Pontigny, he wrote to authorities abroad and threatened to turn every Cistercian out of England. The

¹ Ep. iii. 29. iv. 38.

Gilbertines, therefore, were an order that did not interfere with his purposes. Besides this, however, it appears that he had a real reverence and regard for Gilbert. Henry Plantagenet had his good moments, and under good guidance he might have been other than he was. He at one time patronized the Carthusians, and procured the appointment of St. Hugh to the diocese of Lincoln. In the same way he could not help admiring the unworldliness of Gilbert. He therefore wrote to the pope and threatened to resume whatever he himself or his nobles had given to the order, if the institute was changed by the machinations of the rustics, as he called them, who were the bondmen of the soil. Henry was imperious even when he did good; however Alexander could not resist so many testimonies in favour of the Gilbertines, and sent a mandate to Gilbert forbidding any one to attempt to alter the institute without his consent, and empowering him and his successors, the priors of Sempringham, to correct and amend the statutes with the help of the other priors of the order. Alexander added also various privileges to the order, and confirmed all that his predecessors had granted.

CHAPTER X.

The death of Gilbert.

THE gaps left in his narrative by Gilbert's biographer, have made the various chapters of his life more like detached scenes than a continuous history; or rather it would be more true to say, that his life was ordinarily one of peace and harmony, passed in the calmness of

the convent, so that for many years he was hidden with God, and history has nothing to do with him. Sometimes he is called forth for some special purpose and he plays his part before the world and all men gaze upon him, and then he goes back to his cloister and is no longer heard of. It is all like a sweet and low chaunt which cannot be heard outside the walls of the church, except when sometimes it swells into bolder and more majestic music. We are now however come to the last scene of all. Gilbert, as we have seen, outlived one generation of saints ; but before he died, another with whom he had been connected had now passed away. St. Thomas of Canterbury had won his crown nineteen years before Gilbert's death ; and he was at least eighty years old when the saint was martyred. After all his troubles, he spent these last days in peace ; when the ear heard him, then it blessed him, when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him. He was revered all over England ; and we have seen, says his biographer, bishops on their knees begging for his blessing, yea, and bishops from foreign lands, which the echoes of his fame had reached, coming to beg for a portion of his garments to carry back with them to their own lands as relics. But the strangest homage which he received was, when king Henry would not allow him to come to his court on the business of the order, but went himself to his lodgings with his peers, and humbly begged for his benediction. The scourge of the monks of Canterbury must have done its work when Henry bowed so low. Eleanor too, his unhappy queen, loved to bring to him her princely boys, that they might kneel down and be blessed by him. Henry seems to have had an almost superstitious reverence for him ; when his sons revolted against him, and his queen was imprisoned by

him for her crimes, when poor Henry's heart was broken and the sins of his life all came upon him, then a messenger came to tell him that Gilbert was dead. The king groaned deeply, and said, "Well do I know that he has passed away from the earth, for that is the reason that all these misfortunes have found me out." A man who had lived through the whole of the twelfth century from its very beginning, could not but be an object of reverence. It was a wonderful sight to see this old man with his body bent with age, his bones scarce cleaving to his flesh, and his whole frame pallid and wasted, yet still capable of managing the affairs of his order, and going about with his eye undimmed, and his mind as vigorous as ever. At length, however, his sight failed him and he became quite blind before he died. Then he sent for Roger, prior of Malton, and put the whole management of the order into his hands. Still, however, the spirit rose above the body ; he could not ride, but he was borne in a litter from place to place. His brethren were very anxious that he should take his meals in his bed-room, for the refectory was a long way off, and there were some steps to be mounted at the entrance. He, however, never would consent to this arrangement, and said : Gilbert will never set an example to his successors of eating good things in his room. So every day he was carried by some of the brethren into the refectory. Even in this extreme old age, when his limbs hardly held together, he kept his old practice of watching at night, and would rise when all were asleep and kneel by the side of his bed ; and when once he was discovered in this posture by his brethren, he half chid them as though they had not made his bed comfortably the evening before, to account for his being found in this strange posture. When his

external sense had failed him, the eye of his soul was the more fixed upon God, and tears often ran down his cheeks, as he thought upon his Saviour and His infinite mercies. He would often speak on spiritual things with the brethren, but his words were few and short, and he soon relapsed into silence, which was often broken by strong prayers and ejaculations which burst from him, "How long, Lord, wilt thou forget me for ever?" "Woe is me, for the time of my sojourning is prolonged!" And if he ever thought that he had spoken more than he ought, he would at once kneel down and repeat the confession of the church, humbly begging to be absolved. In this way he lived on, hardly holding to earth either by body or soul, till he was more than a hundred years old; at length, early in the year 1189, he felt his end to be approaching, and he sent letters to all his priories to beg that prayers should be offered for him, leaving his blessing behind him, and absolving all from their sins against the rule, at the same time solemnly warning all those who should quarrel with their brethren and break the peace of the order, that this absolution would profit them nothing. He was then at Cadney, one of the lonely island-monasteries of the order, and so near his end was he thought to be, that he received extreme unction, and the last rites of the church. But he rallied, and the dying saint still crossed the waters which surrounded the island, and his chaplains bore their precious burden to Sempringham, through lonely places, lest they should be forcibly detained by any one who might wish Gilbert's bones to lie in his church. All the priors of the order had time to assemble and come to him. Here he was lying as was thought in a sort of stupor on his bed, and no one was with him, but the canon who eventually suc-

ceeded him as prior. He was conscious of no one's presence, when he was heard murmuring low to himself the Antiphone in the service for a confessor, "He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor." Then, he continued in the same low tone, as though he were expounding it in the church, "Yes, he hath dispersed to many persons ; he gave, he did not sell ; it was to the poor too, not to the rich." And then he subjoined as if to the canon who was with him, "It is thy place to do so now." He continued in this half unconscious state through the night, till, as the morning dawned, and the convent was singing the lauds for Saturday, and the reader's voice repeated, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," the eternal morning dawned on the blessed saint, and his soul passed into the hands of its Creator.

This was on Saturday, the fourth of February, 1189. Twelve years after, on the Eve of Holy Cross-day, 1202, a vast concourse assembled at Sempringham, to witness the translation of his relics to a more honourable place in the church of the priory. He had wrought no miracles in his lifetime, but when he was dead God was pleased, through his intercession, to heal many who came to kneel at his tomb. In the beginning of the year, Innocent III. had canonized him, after a judicial enquiry into his merits and the miracles wrought by his body ; and now the archbishop of Canterbury, with other bishops, and many an abbot, came to translate his relics. Then the body of St. Gilbert was raised on the shoulders of England's chief nobles, and in solemn procession was borne to the place which it was to occupy. Truly, God doth bring down the mighty from their seat, and exalt the humble and meek.

Now that we have gone through St. Gilbert's life,

for so we may now call him, it seems hard to us to realize that such a person ever existed. We who live in the world, whose eye glances from one object of affection to another, and is taken by all, whose ears are tickled with praise and pained by blame, who set up for intellect and talent, if we have it, and fancy that we have it, if we have it not, whose highest austerity consists in temperance, and highest charity in good humour, we can hardly do more than gaze on a character like Gilbert's, and wonder if after all it be true. Those of us who rise above this standard, in as far as they rise above it, may enter into the notion of a saint. But to us, common-place christians, it is only a beautiful dream of something which is past long ago, and which is nothing to us. And this sort of feeling is a dangerous one and likely to increase, when lives of saints take the place of romances and fairy tales. To deny or not to realize the existence of Christian Saints, is apt to make a wide gap in christian faith. They who consider the saints in a dreamy way, will hardly be able to do more than dream that there has been upon earth One, who was and is Man-God, for the lives of saints are shadows of His, and help to interpret His actions who is incomprehensible. They who look upon the saints as mere personages in religious romance, will be apt to look on christianity as a beautiful philosophy. St. Gilbert was a real being of flesh and blood, the parish priest of Sempringham ; his institute is a fact in the history of the English church ; it was raised up by God as an opponent of the lust, which was the especial wickedness of the day. It saved a great many souls which might otherwise have perished ; it raised many others to an extraordinary degree of sanctity. It is, therefore, a fact which stares us in the face and of which we must make

the best we can ; a vast number of persons, amounting to fifteen hundred, did give up all the joys of home, and refuse to give place in their hearts to the strong affections, which entwine round the hearts of those who are married, in order to live in poverty a hard and austere life. In this case too all allowances are made ; the defects of the order are exposed ; the temptations peculiar to monastic life are seen clearly ; some of the nuns of Watton, it is true, did become savage old maids instead of virgins of Christ ; the order did not spread much after the death of the founder, and, unlike the great monastic institutions of the continent, never out of the country which gave it birth ; finally, it appears in after times to have degenerated. Yet, with all these drawbacks, it is true that St. Gilbert did a great work, and one at which kings and queens stopped to look, for it forced itself upon their notice. Even the impure Eleanor loved to think of the institute of holy virgins, and the tyrant Henry bowed before its founder. And all this was affected by a man, not so unlike externally to one of ourselves. He went to Paris as we might go to Oxford or Cambridge, and he came back and took a family living, and was ordained upon it. His character too, as we have said before, was not one of what is called romance. He was distinguished by a quiet waiting upon the will of God, and a most energetic and unbending execution of it, when he had once ascertained it. He remained in the Bishop of Lincoln's palace much longer than he wished, because, though utterly uncongenial to his tastes and habits, he would not break away from where God had placed him. At length the archdeaconry was offered him ; this was too much, and he went away. All the vast good which he effected, was the result of natural circumstances. The institution of his order was for

the sake of seven maidens, whom Providence put into his way, and to whom God gave grace to desire perfection under his guidance, in his parish. His application to St. Bernard, and the appointment of canons, arose naturally out of the increase of the monasteries. Enthusiasm such as his, is seldom found connected with such quiet waiting upon God. And this part of his character all may imitate. Not every man is called upon to found a monastic order and govern it; nor to take the part of a holy archbishop like St. Thomas, under peril of a king's anger; but all must quietly wait upon God in times of darkness, and keep their souls free from inordinate affection, and be ready to follow the gentle leading of God's will, wherever it may lead them, even to the most painful sacrifice. Very few of us can be monks and nuns; but all are called upon to live above the world, and by daily self-sacrifice to train themselves to give up, at a moment's notice, whatever is most dear. And they especially, who have apparently least duties, unmarried persons should wait calmly on the Providence of God, willing to accept that lot in life which He has prepared for them, wishing for nothing, and hoping for nothing but what He wills. Meanwhile, they have more time than others for frequent prayer and for long and steady contemplation of our blessed Lord, in the great mysteries of the faith. Then, as the wonders of heaven, by God's grace, grow upon them, they will see the excellence of the good part of Mary, to sit at the Lord's feet and to hear the words which He speaks to the soul. And in proportion as they realize the Incarnation of the Lord, they will love more and more to contemplate the saints, and especially St. Mary, for a reverence for her is inseparable from that right faith in the Humanity of the Son of God, which

we must all believe and confess. They will learn that the high honour, in which the church has ever held holy virginity, is a necessary portion of christian doctrine, and not a rhapsody peculiar to any age. It is a feeling which has seized on minds of every stamp, from the most matter-of-fact to the most imaginative, if only illuminated by God's grace. St. Gilbert's character could not come under either of these classes ; besides the all-enduring energy of the homely Saxon, he had a dash of the adventurous Norman ; and the Holy Spirit had blended both these discordant elements into one, as He would in his mercy again blend the spiritual character of the English nation, if it were not a stiff-necked people.

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