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Death of Saint Benedict.

I. O. G. D.

THE LIFE AND TIMES

OF

ST. BENEDICT.

PATRIARCH OF THE MONKS OF THE WEST

ABRIDGED AND ARRANGED

BY

O. S. B.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

THE VERY REV. P. PETER LECHNER

LATE PRIOR OF THE BENEDICTINE ABBEY OF SCHEYERN IN BAVARIA

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS history of *The Life and Times of St. Benedict* has been translated with the hope that it may increase in some small degree the knowledge of a saint who in good old Catholic days held a place in the heart of nearly every Englishman. That this was so we cannot doubt, seeing that his sons brought to our land the gift of the true faith, and with it all that was noblest and best, and that Benedictine Abbeys were studded over the length and breadth of the country. When the Reformation swept away the monasteries and scattered the monks, devotion to St. Benedict gradually declined and became extinct. Now, however, when a brighter day is dawning for the Church in England, surely it is time to stir up and re-enkindle in our hearts the love of our forefathers for a saint to whom we owe so much.

The translation is a very free one, and some stories and traditions culled from old writers have been here and there inserted with a view of enhancing the interest of the book. As regards dates, many of them are the subject of controversy; but on this point it has been thought best to adhere strictly to our author.

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As formerly St. Benedict gathered some of the greatest of his saints from our English soil, so may he now reap once again a fresh and yet more fruitful harvest from a land which has so long lain fallow.

O. S. B.

BERGHOLT, 1900.

We have received the following authorisation for this translation from the present Abbot of Scheyern Abbey, the Right Rev. Dom Rupert III. :—

"God be praised that the life of St. Benedict written by our good Prior Lechner, who died on 26th July, 1874, should have been so highly appreciated by our sisters as to have been translated by them for publication. The work will doubtless prove a source of edification to many, besides causing great satisfaction to our Community at Scheyern.

"I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to send my heartfelt blessing to every member of your 'House of God,' while I beg a remembrance in your holy prayers both for myself and my Community.

"ABBEY OF OUR LADY'S ASSUMPTION
"AND THE HOLY CROSS,
"SCHEYERN, BAVARIA."

PREFACE.

St. Paul teaches us in his First Epistle to the Corinthians that "the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong: And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His sight".[1] The blessed Benedict was yet a child when, moved and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, his pure young heart grasped the full meaning of this teaching of the Apostle. Realising its truth, at the first sound of the Divine Voice calling him he left wealth and honour, even home and family, in order to find salvation and everlasting life in Him for Whose sake he renounced all earthly joys. He retired into solitude, and for three years lived in unbroken communion with his Creator, thus satisfying the one object of his desire. After this preparation God called him to be a guide and a teacher to many, though his own attraction and longing was to live hidden and unknown; and the humble youth, who

[1] 1 Cor. i. 27-29.

considered himself the last and the least of all mankind, was chosen to be the legislator whose precepts have been, and ever will be, the foundation of monastic life in the West. Weak and powerless of himself, God endowed him with the gift of miracles to such an eminent degree that the lapse of centuries has but made their fame more widespread; and Benedict, the humble disciple of Christ, has been universally recognised as a great power in the Church, a renowned character in history, an object of admiration to all, and the Patriarch of Western monks. What wonder then that St. Gregory the Great, both Pope and Doctor, considered it a privilege and a pleasure to immortalise in his *Dialogues* the life and miracles of this saint?

Possessing as we do this unparalleled biography, written by one famous alike for his sanctity and his learning, it would seem not only bold, but almost unnecessary, to attempt to bring forward a second. What could be added to the praise already bestowed by St. Gregory? Who could write with greater unction, and at the same time with greater moderation, or pretend to possess his inimitable talent of relating facts in the most comprehensive and yet concise way? Indeed, his work was regarded with such reverence that for a thousand years no one dreamt of compiling a fresh life of the saint; the only thing considered allowable and tending to Benedict's glorification was either to write commentaries on St. Gregory's life or to paraphrase and clothe it with a poetic form.

In modern times, when printing gave a fresh impetus to every branch of literature, the idea of bringing out the life of St. Benedict in a new and original form commended itself to many minds, and several biographies were published; yet, notwithstanding the talent and diligence which they evinced, they soon fell into oblivion, while St. Gregory's life not only survived, but became even more appreciated, for all felt that his work was endowed with a higher value than that bestowed by human gift or human industry. It may then be asked, with reason, why the present volume has been written, and why the author has attempted what others have tried with little success. The question is difficult to answer satisfactorily, acknowledging as I do that St. Gregory's life cannot be improved upon. The task is a hazardous one, for it seems to demand abilities which I cannot boast of; and not without alarm do I read those words of Kerz that "it would be very desirable for a man like Görres to use the remarkable gifts with which God has endowed him to undertake the portrayal of such a great and holy man as St. Benedict".

My apology then for the present volume must be that I was urged to undertake the task, not only by the entreaties of fellow-monks and the invitation of superiors, but also by men the value of whose judgment in the matter encouraged me to attempt a work of the kind; added to which, my exceeding great love for our blessed Founder made me the more anxious to place one little flower side by side

with the magnificent wreath woven by St. Gregory some thirteen centuries ago. After mature deliberation, several thoughts presented themselves which seemed to justify the undertaking, and served as guides in its execution. First, that a subject good and holy in itself cannot be too carefully considered, and that by looking at it from different points of view we are better enabled to appreciate and understand it. Take, for example, the Holy Scriptures: it would be impossible to guess the number of works written to elucidate and explain every portion of them. The same passages ever form the subjects of sermons, commentaries, books, etc., and yet they always seem fresh, they never grow old or out of date, but bring forth untold mines of riches as they are considered in some new light. Of course I am not for a moment comparing St. Gregory's *Dialogues* to the Sacred Scriptures; at the same time, it is a work in which we cannot fail to see the influence of the Holy Spirit, and to be edified by the sublime examples of the Gospel precepts. Surely then no blame is to be attached to one who endeavours to present the same truths under a new aspect; not to obscure the light already thrown by a more masterly hand, but to enhance it by looking at it from another point of view.

Again, a biographer, like a painter, may depict the same subject in various ways: one will devote the whole of his canvas to the subject of his portrait, another will make him prominent in a group, while a third prefers to place him among scenes which are

in keeping with his character or profession. St. Gregory chose to treat St. Benedict as a solitary figure, and makes scarcely any mention of his contemporaries; so much so that, if it were not for one or two names which belong to history, and which occur in connection with the saint's life, we should not even know at what period he lived. There are, however, many who would gladly hear something of his contemporaries, of the history of his time, and of those events which either directly or indirectly influenced him. It is the aim of the present volume to portray our saint as the chief figure of a group, showing the part he played in the Church and in the world, and how he was affected by the vicissitudes of the history of his day. While peace prevailed he was employed in planting and sowing the good seed, and reaping the plentiful harvest which was the result of his labours; while in times of war, famine and distress his hands were uplifted in supplication, his mortifications were redoubled in expiation, and the exceeding charity of his heart ever found means to relieve the sufferers. And now that he rejoices in Heaven surrounded by a family which no man can number—now that his visible presence is no longer with us to teach and encourage us, the bright light of his example still remains to spur us on; a light which time can never dim, and which, while the world lasts, must ever continue to increase God's glory and win souls to Him.

And lastly, it cannot be without interest to study the country to which the subject of our biography

belonged, its inhabitants, the places where he dwelt, and all those surroundings and circumstances which affected him, in order that by so doing we may learn to know and appreciate him more.

Alas, that such a task should be entrusted to one with such meagre talents! With such materials, what a marvellous picture might have been produced of a saint who, trampling under foot "the asp and the basilisk," possessed that power with which man in his primitive innocence was endowed. The author can only hope that God will mercifully accept the praise which, through this biography, he has endeavoured to render Him: that Our Lord Jesus Christ will not despise the offering, however small; and that the Holy Ghost may graciously bless both the writer and the reader, so that the day may come at last when, with St. Benedict, we may ever sing "*Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus*".

P. PETER LECHNER,
Prior of Scheyern.

January, 1857.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

NATURE AND MEANING OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Our first parents, having been expelled from the paradise of delights through their own fault, were constrained to live a life of toil, hardship and pain. Nevertheless God in His infinite mercy did not exact from them the full penalty of their guilt, but by the promise of a future Redeemer He gave them a hope of one day regaining that state of unspeakable bliss for which they had been created. Moreover, desiring that all should be saved, He sent His only-begotten Son to live and die for their redemption; and implanted in the heart of fallen man an instinctive craving after that innocence and happiness which he had lost, giving him also the means to make that longing a reality. Hence it is that we all live in the hope of something better; each soul in some degree feels that it is created for a nobler and greater end than the present life on earth. But the knowledge of what that end really is—namely, union with God—has been dimmed, nay, in too many cases totally obscured, by the prevalence of unbelief, pride and concupiscence.

There are, however, and always have been, a chosen few who recognise for what they have been created, and who, faithful to the inspiration of Divine grace, draw nearer day by day to that union with their Creator which will be perfected only in Heaven.

Love alone can attain to this end; but there are two roads by which those who love may reach the goal.

The first of these roads is trod by the majority of good Christians, and consists in an exact observance of the precepts, in good works and in self-denial. Hence, when the young man in the Gospel asked our Lord: "What good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" our Lord answered, "Keep the commandments".[1]

The second road is that of perfection: this consists in the observance not only of precepts, but also of counsels; not only of self-denial, but of self-renunciation. Those who would tread this path must ever aspire and strive after a higher state of sanctity; not content till they reach the very summit of their mountain, which can never be in this mortal life. This road of perfection forms the groundwork of religious life, because religious life is simply a means to an end; the end, as we have already pointed out, being union with God; and this union is attained most surely in a life where every rule and occupation tends to bring a

[1] Matt. xix. 16, 17.

man nearer and nearer to his Maker. A religious renounces everything: family, possessions, pleasures, even self, that by so doing he may the more effectually obtain that which alone can satisfy the cravings of his heart, and that he may be able to say with the Apostle in very truth, "our conversation is in heaven".[1]

II.

TRACES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Henoch and Abel are the first examples we meet with in the Old Testament of those chosen souls who by their fidelity to grace tread this path of perfection, leading eremetical or quasi-religious lives. Then we have "the Father of the Faithful," Abraham, whose vocation has been an incentive to countless souls who like him have been inspired to leave home and country for Christ's sake. Moses too, in one sense, may be said to have led a religious life, first for forty years as a shepherd and a hermit, and again for another forty years as leader to his people, who formed, as it were, a religious community living under a rule, or the law which God gave to them through him. In this law we find a decisive regulation for those who wished to lead more perfect lives: "When a man, or woman, shall make a vow to be sanctified, and will consecrate themselves to the Lord: They shall abstain from wine, and from every thing that may make a man

[1] Phil. iii. 20.

drunk. They shall not drink vinegar of wine, or of any other drink, nor any thing that is pressed out of the grape: nor shall they eat grapes either fresh or dried. . . . All the time of his separation no razor shall pass over his head until the day be fulfilled of his consecration to the Lord. He shall be holy, and shall let the hair of his head grow." [1]

Later on we have the pious Anna vowing her child to the service of the Temple even before his birth; a vow which Samuel himself afterwards fully ratified by his life of heroic devotion in the service of God. Again, we find examples of religious communities in the Nazarites and Rechabites. The latter were a whole tribe descended from Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses. By their rule they never touched wine nor owned fields or vineyards, but they dwelt in tents and lived by rearing cattle. God set them up as an example of conscientious fidelity to all the children of Israel, and addressed to them these words by the mouth of Jeremias the prophet: "Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and have kept all his precepts, and have done all that he commanded you: Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: There shall not be wanting a man of the race of Jonadab the son of Rechab, standing before Me for ever." [2]

The school of the prophets founded by Samuel was the most perfect model of religious life, where

[1] Num. vi. 2, 3, 5. [2] Jer. xxxv. 18, 19.

contemplation, prayer, psalmody, Divine science and sacred music were nurtured by instruction and promoted by self-sacrifice and renunciation. Among the many shining lights of sanctity and wisdom reared in this school Elias stands pre-eminent. For many years he lived the life of a hermit beside the brook of Carith, fed miraculously by a raven: a life which has been emulated by so many thousands of his followers.

That the holy prophets adhered strictly to poverty is proved by innumerable instances: suffice it to quote that of Eliseus, who refused the ten talents and costly presents offered to him by Naaman, and would not take so much as a single piece of money. Mention might also be made of the Assideans, who by their existence testified to the universal recognition of religious life; unfortunately, however, these formed a sect which later lapsed into error.

But of all the saints of the Old Law, patriarchs and prophets, priests and kings, none surpassed or even equalled the great Precursor of our Divine Lord. Sanctified in his mother's womb, he dedicated his whole life to unbroken intercourse with God. Clothed in camel's hair, feeding on locusts, he led an existence wholly supernatural, and in all things showed himself worthy of our Lord's words concerning him: "There hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist".[1]

These recluses and holy men of the Old Testament were the types and forerunners of those who were to

[1] Matt. xi. 11.

lead a life even more perfect than their own under the new dispensation.

III.

RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

When He who calls Himself the "Light of the World," Jesus Christ our Lord, came upon this earth He dispersed the darkness which prevailed. The dim light of prophecy and type, figure and parable, gave way to the splendour of Divine truth taught and expounded by the Author of all truth. That which God had implanted in the hearts of men, that which He had announced through the instrumentality of others, He now revealed in all its fulness by means of His only begotten Son.

What then was it that this Divine teacher taught concerning religious life? He taught that there is a life raised above the common level, a life led by those who strive after the heights of perfection: hence His words to the rich young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me".[1] Again He said to His Apostles: "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses: Nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff".[2] Thus poor and destitute of all they were to go forth and spiritually conquer the world.

So also, with regard to chastity, Christ says: "There are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs for

[1] Matt. xix. 21. [2] Matt. x. 9, 10.

the kingdom of heaven".[1] In the same spirit the Apostle writes: "Concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful. I think therefore that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for a man so to be," and "He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well: and he that giveth her not, doth better."[2]

And, lastly, Christ taught that virtue which surpasses in value even voluntary poverty or chastity, namely, obedience or the giving up of our own will. "He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal. If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me: and where I am, there also shall My minister be."[3] By these words Christ not only commands us to put to death our will and inclinations, but He also counsels us to renounce even the right of free-will; so that those who bind themselves by obedience in religious life can truly say: "I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me;"[4] that is, I seek the will of those to whom for Christ's sake I have subjected myself. How pregnant are St. Gregory's words on this point: "It is not very hard for a man to leave what he has; but it is exceedingly laborious for him to give up what he is".[5]

The counsels of our Divine Lord and of His holy Apostles with regard to the more perfect life sank

[1] Matt. xix. 12. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 25-26, 38. [3] John xii. 25, 26.
[4] John v. 30. [5] *Homil.* 32 *in Evang.*

deep into the hearts of the first Christians, who endeavoured to carry them out as far as the state of the Church then permitted. That little band of believers at Jerusalem, so sweetly depicted in the Acts as having "but one heart and one soul," and possessing all things in common,[1] forms a most perfect picture of what a community should be. And doubtless the same mode of life was practised by Christians in other places, for in the early ages of persecution thousands of men and women followed strictly the evangelical counsels, and were only prevented from forming themselves into communities by the stringent laws enforced against them.

The elements of religious life always existed on a small scale; thus every bishop's household was, in a sense, a religious community; so, too, virgins were everywhere to be found who, having taken the veil and vowed their virginity to God, led retired lives either in their own homes or in houses set apart. St. Cyprian says: "Virgins are the more excellent portion of Christ's flock; the renowned fruitfulness of the Church, their Mother, flourishes abundantly in them".[2] Again Tertullian writes: "These virgins, so pleasing and acceptable to God, hold nothing more dear to them than holy chastity; and love to be bound to God rather than to men. With Him they live; with Him they speak; on Him they meditate day and night, offering Him their prayers and gifts."[3] They received the consecration proper

[1] Acts iv. 32. [2] *De habitu Virg.* [3] *Ad uxor.*, lib. i.

to virgins, wore a special dress, had a place set apart for them in the assemblies of the faithful, and were maintained by the Church.

Among men there were many who, having made a vow of chastity, led holy and retired lives in the practice of penance, manual labour and good works. They are mentioned by Athenagoras, who in the reign of Marcus Aurelius published a book in defence of the Christians. In his apology he says that the ascetics drew their motive of total renunciation from the hope of a more intimate union with God. Origen and Clement of Alexandria likewise speak in highest praise of these pious men, extolling their mortification, poverty, chastity, watchings, prayers and fasts.

Many retired into the desert in order to sever themselves completely from all intercourse with their fellow-creatures; these were styled Anchorets or Hermits. It is generally supposed that St. Paul of Thebes in the third century gave the first example of this total seclusion. At the beginning of the fourth century, when the persecutions had at length ceased, the ascetic life developed in a wonderful manner; it grew and flourished in the deserts till it became a mighty tree, productive of those countless blossoms of which the world was not worthy.

St. Anthony, the Egyptian, born A.D. 251 of noble parents, who had embraced a life of solitude from his earliest youth, was chosen by God to be the great promoter of monastic life. After having spent

thirty-six years alone in the desert occupied in mortifying his passions and sanctifying his soul, urged by a Divine inspiration and by the entreaties of his friends, he once more appeared among men, and, like a second John, became a preacher in the wilderness.

"His meekness," says Count Stolberg (in his history of religion), "his wisdom, example, and all the wonders which through him God worked upon the sick, the possessed, and the diseased, and more than all the visible blessing and protection of God, drew great multitudes to him; many became his disciples and under his guidance led lives of prayer, labour and penance." The more the blessed saint strove to evade the task of leading and teaching others, so much the more eagerly did those who aspired after perfection attach themselves to him. Conscious of his own weakness and incapacity he often fled away, but always unsuccessfully, for each time his retreat was discovered and he was compelled to return to the leadership he would fain have shunned. In a few years his disciples were numbered by hundreds; they lived together divided into larger or smaller communities, and endeavoured by prayer, abstinence, labour, poverty and obedience to walk the narrow way which leads to everlasting life. Some dwelt on the banks of the Red Sea, others near the Isthmus of Suez.

Contemporary with St. Anthony were other great masters of the ascetic life: notably St. Ammon, St. Pachomius and St. Macarius.

St. Ammon lived in the desert of Nitria in Lower

Egypt. After observing virginal chastity in the marriage state, he separated from his wife; and settling in the desert he gathered round him a number of disciples who dwelt in separate cells. Later, by the advice of St. Anthony, he built a monastery; and at the end of the fourth century his disciples numbered over 5,000.

In the Thebaid, or centre of the Egyptian desert, St. Pachomius was the great light and example of religious life. Having consecrated himself to God, and after being trained in monastic discipline by St. Palemon, he received a Divine command to build at Tabenna a dwelling-place for those whom God would send him. This probably occurred in the year 325; a year immortalised by the famous Council of Nicea. The concourse of people who flocked to this holy man surpassed anything hitherto known. He founded eight monasteries, which he governed collectively as abbot; and his monks numbered about 7,000.[1] St. Pachomius was the first to write a Rule and to prescribe an exact method of living for his disciples. We find it narrated in some manuscripts relating to him that the principal points of his Rule were dictated to him by an angel.[2]

In the desert of Scete St. Macarius was the superior of many monasteries; while God made use of St. Hilarion, a disciple of St. Anthony, to found religious life in Syria. Meantime the fame of these holy solitaries spread into most distant lands; so

[1] *Pallad. hist. laus.*, chap. xxxviii. [2] *Bolland. Acta Ss.* 14 *Maj.*

that before the close of the fourth century monasteries flourished even in far off Britain. We may form some idea of the universal esteem felt for religious from these words of St. John Chrysostom: "Entering the Egyptian desert one finds a waste which deserves rather to be called a paradise, for it is studded with innumerable angels clothed with mortal bodies. A vast army of men and women peoples that waste, walking in the path of virtue, whose lives give forth a brilliant lustre; in number and in splendour they surpass even the stars of heaven."[1]

IV.

THE FIRST RULE OR FORM OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

From the very beginning there were various forms of religious life; but the first Rule written with any detail was that of St. Pachomius, and upon this all later ones were grounded. According to his Rule every monastery, or laura, was composed of twenty-four orders or choirs; each division had its own superior, and these superiors were all subject to the Abbot of Tabenna. Again, each order had its own particular office or occupation; one was employed in cooking; another in nursing the sick; a third had care of the guests; a fourth had charge of the gate; others were occupied in instructing novices and beginners, while others again had to work in the garden or bakehouse or at some trade. Each order

[1] *Hom.* 8 *in Matth.*

had a separate house, built with branches of trees or blocks of wood; these were divided into cells, and three brethren dwelt in each cell.

The abbot was in constant correspondence with the subordinate superiors; he frequently visited the monasteries, and twice a year—at Easter and in the middle of August—he held a general chapter at the principal monastery of Pabau. In these chapters all that could promote religious discipline and perfection was discussed; dissensions were pacified; fresh fervour aroused; and the link of fraternal charity strengthened and renewed.

Any one desirous of being admitted into the monastery had to wait at least ten days; during which time his petition was examined and his motive considered. If the result of the investigation proved satisfactory, the petitioner was at once clothed with a habit, his secular dress being laid aside in case he might afterwards return to the world. He was not allowed to offer any gift on entering. As a novice he was permitted to take part in the prayers and exercises of the community; but during the first year of his probation he remained under the supervision of the porter, and was employed in waiting on the guests. During the second and third years he was trained in all the duties and observances of his Rule, especially in exact and prompt obedience. All were obliged to know how to read; and each one had to learn the greater part of the Holy Scriptures by heart, particularly the Psalter and the New Testament. Those who were professed were allowed to fast or not in

proportion to their strength, and their work was measured out accordingly. The daily refection was taken in common at midday, and there was a collation in the evening. The clothing of the monks consisted of a short sleeveless tunic made of sackcloth, known as a "Lebiton," and girded at the waist with a belt; over this they wore a white sheepskin called a "Melotus," which reached from the neck to the feet; and their heads were covered with a large capuce or hood, which they never removed. At three separate times, *viz.*, in the morning, in the evening, and again at night, a trumpet sounded to call the brethren to prayer, whereupon each one laying aside his occupation hastened to the oratory. Twelve especially appointed prayers were then said, preceded by a psalm; on Saturdays and Sundays all received Holy Communion. As none of the monks were in Holy Orders, a priest from some neighbouring church usually came to offer the Holy Sacrifice. The customary food consisted of bread, cheese, olives and vegetables salted or prepared with oil and vinegar, fruit, figs and salt fish; cooked vegetables were given to the sick and to old men and children, and the sick were also allowed meat and wine. On Wednesdays and Fridays only one meal was taken and that in the evening, but this fast was dispensed in Paschal time.

The greater part of the day was employed in manual labour: some prepared the necessary food and clothing; others occupied themselves in making baskets and plaiting mats; in the East these mats supply the place of tables, seats and beds. A pro-

curator had the charge of disposing of the articles made by the brethren and of buying the provisions required. For this purpose there were two boats constantly passing up and down the Nile, between the monasteries and Alexandria.

Three times a week the head of each division gave a conference to his own particular order; and on Saturdays and Sundays the abbot or chief superior gave one to the whole community. St. Pachomius seems to have given one every evening. Silence was strictly enforced. Every monastery had its own library from which the monks received books for spiritual reading; each one had to take the greatest care of the volume lent him, and had to show it to his superior every week, and ask him to explain any passage he might not understand.

At the general chapters the brethren publicly accused themselves of their faults, asked for a penance, and begged the superior to make known to them any imperfection he might perceive. Hospitality was afforded to all; the monks washed the feet of strangers, offered them refreshment and gave them lodging in a place detached from the rest of the monastery. The female quarter was situated at some distance. A brother was occasionally permitted to visit his relatives, but under the escort of an elder and trustworthy religious. If a monk died, those of his own division passed the night praying beside his corpse. On the following day the whole community carried the body to the grave, singing hymns and reciting prayers for the

departed soul, for whom the Holy Sacrifice was also offered.

This Rule has been the admiration of all succeeding ages; so much so that its chief points have been adopted by all founders of religious orders. Pachomius enforced his precepts more by his example than by his words: his tears and prayers were unceasing; his mortifications unsurpassed; he was ever vigilant, and united the sternness of a father with the tenderness of a mother: so that all who came in contact with him felt that he was in very deed the model and ideal of a perfect monk.

V.

EXCELLENCE AND ADVANTAGES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

The dignity and excellence of religious life lie in its nature and object. By its nature it cuts a man off from all the ties which bind him to earth, and thus enables him more swiftly to attain his object, which is union with God. "When a man has detached himself from worldly cares and all the superfluities of life, and seeks no longer the things of earth, but only those of heaven, then, indeed, he may rightly be called a saint."[1]

The religious state, therefore, is a school for saints, and saints of the highest order, because, by means of a rule and vows, it fastens its members to the Cross. St. Jerome says very beautifully that "to be a martyr it is only necessary to shed one's blood once, but

[1] Origen, *Hom.* 11 *in Levit.*

that the unspotted service of a soul dedicated to God is a daily martyrdom. The crown of a martyr is wreathed of roses and violets, that of a religious of lilies."[1]

"Why," asks St. Bernard, "is the promise made to the poor the same as that made to the martyrs, unless voluntary poverty be a kind of martyrdom?" Or again: "What is a more admirable, or a more painful martyrdom than to restrain one's desires and longings?"[2] Indeed, the religious life raises those who dedicate themselves to it with fervour to the summit of apostolic sanctity. Hence it is that St. Jerome says: "To sell all and give to the poor is an apostolic state and the height of virtue, and those who embrace this state fly without any hindrance to Christ in heaven".[3] St. Bernard spoke in the same strain when, addressing his monks, he told them he esteemed them even more blessed than the Apostles, for these left all at the call of Christ, but they had renounced everything promptly at the word of Christ's servant. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."[4]

It would be impossible to enumerate all the advantages which the holy fathers ascribe to the religious state. They say it raises a man above the earth and makes him even in this life similar to the angels and saints in heaven. St. Basil writes that "he who sues for a divorce with the world must clearly

[1] *In epitaphio Paulae.*
[2] *Serm.* 1 *omn. Ss.*
[3] *Ep.* 8 *ad Demetriad.*
[4] John xx. 29.

understand that by so doing he oversteps the boundaries of human nature and undertakes to walk in the path trod by angels. The angelic nature consists specially in this, that being free from earthly fetters, and undistracted by any creature, the heavenly spirits keep their gaze fixed on their Creator."[1] And to quote St. Bernard again: "Our profession," he says, "is exceedingly excellent, it is above the heavens, it is angelic."[2] St. John Climacus also says that "the cloister is an earthly paradise, and the monastic life an angelic life led by mortal men".[3] Nay, some of the fathers affirm that the religious state surpasses even that of the angels; for example, St. Ambrose says: "The victory of a virgin is greater than that of an angel, for an angel is a pure spirit, whereas a virgin triumphs over flesh and blood".[4] Lactantius and St. Bernard are of the same opinion.

From the great excellence of the religious life we pass to the advantages it bestows and to the influence it exercises, not merely over those consecrated to it, but over the whole Church—we might say, the whole world. "That which originates from heaven, leads back to heaven." In these few words all the advantages of religious life might be summarised, but the subject is so interesting that it deserves to be treated at some length.

In the first place, those who consecrate themselves

[1] *De monach. instit.*, serm. 1. [2] *Ep. ad fratres de monte Dei*, chap. ii.
[3] *Clim. parad. grad.* 1. [4] *In 1 Cor. vii.*

to God in holy religion are freed from thousands of dangers to which souls struggling in the world are subject; they have every opportunity of learning the way to perfection; they are freed from all worldly cares; the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life are almost impossible temptations; they have before them daily examples of virtue, they are in constant communion with God, and by the path of obedience they tread the most direct, the surest and the easiest way to heaven; because to live under obedience means to lay all our responsibility on another. St. Bernard sums up the advantages of religious life in the following words: "In religion man lives in greater purity, falls less frequently, rises more quickly, walks more cautiously, enjoys more abundant graces, rests more securely, dies with greater confidence, is purified more speedily, and receives a greater reward".[1] And what does our Divine Lord and Master say of the reward He gives in compensation for the sacrifice made by those who renounce all to follow Him? They "shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."[2]

Secondly, religious not only benefit themselves, but likewise the whole Church and all those who come in contact with them. They are living examples of what they profess, and a constant reminder that men are not created for this life, but for the next. They atone for the sins of the world and avert the just

[1] *Homil. de quaer. bona margar.* [2] Matt. xix. 29.

anger of God. They labour for souls, give frequent alms, and are a sure refuge for all who are in sorrow or suffering. And, finally, the religious state has ever been the source and centre of learning from which have issued so many popes, bishops and doctors. By means of religious men and women the arts and sciences have flourished, nations have been civilised, lands have been cultivated, deserts have been made fertile. They have refuted heresies, healed schisms, and, above all, they have furnished the Church with most powerful advocates in the persons of martyrs, confessors and holy virgins.

Thirdly, the effects of religious life extend even to those dark regions whose inhabitants know not God; for both monks and nuns are ever occupied by night and by day imploring light for those who "sit in darkness and the shadow of death". Zealous missionaries daily go forth to give their life, nay even, if necessary, to shed their blood for the conversion of heathens and infidels. The greater part of Europe is indebted to the Benedictine Order for the knowledge of the true faith, and the sons of St. Francis, St. Dominic and St. Ignatius have ever laboured with a like zeal to carry the message of the Gospel to unbelievers in distant countries.

To say all that might be said on this subject would fill volumes; suffice it then to conclude with St. Theresa's words: "Woe to the world, if there were no monks".

VI.

EXTENSION AND PROPAGATION OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

We read most astonishing facts regarding the growth and increase of religious life; facts which would seem almost incredible were they not based on incontestable evidence. In 373 Ruffinus, who travelled in the East, states that there were as many monks in the desert as there were laymen in the cities. Serapion alone had 10,000 monks under his guidance. In other lands also the increase was as rapid as it was fruitful. St. Basil, Archbishop of Cæsarea, did much to promote the monastic state. Helyot says of him: "He brought religious life to the highest perfection, not only by urging his monks to take the solemn vows of their state, but also by writing a Rule for them which was, so to say, an epitome of the Gospel: a Rule which was found so holy and salutary that it was adopted by the disciples of St. Anthony, St. Pachomius and St. Macarius; hence he is called the Patriarch of Eastern Monks".

In the West monasticism received a new impulse from the life of St. Anthony written by St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria; the astonishing facts he related thrilled all hearts and converted many, encouraging them to go and do likewise. Soon numerous and flourishing monasteries sprang up in Italy, France, Spain and Britain. Rome set the example and France quickly followed. In 360 St.

Martin of Tours, being then only a priest, built a monastery near Poitiers; this was soon filled with monks, and he saw himself obliged to build another, which he called "Marmoutier," or larger monastery. When he died, we are told that no less than 4,000 monks attended his funeral.

In 409 Cassian, the renowned author of the Collations, who had himself travelled in the East for the purpose of studying monastic life, founded two monasteries near Marseilles, one for men and one for women; and in 410 St. Honoratus built his famous monastery on the island of Lerins, in which so strict and rigorous a life was led that it surpassed anything hitherto known even in the Egyptian deserts.

St. Augustine was distinguished as the author of his widespread Rule, which has been adopted so often in the Church as the groundwork of other rules. Eusebius, Caesarius and Donatus were also founders of religious houses. In Spain, at the Council of Saragossa in the year 380, monasticism was already spoken of as widespread.

In England and Ireland religious life began to flourish from the time Christianity itself was introduced, and on account of their numerous monasteries and the missionaries they sent forth were called the Islands of Saints. Thence came St. Columban and his disciples to found their celebrated house in France.

It is unnecessary to pursue the subject further; sufficient has been said to show the state of monastic life in general before the birth of St. Benedict, who,

by his example and by his Rule, exercised such a mighty influence upon its formation that he is justly styled the Patriarch of Western Monks.

VII.

THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT AND THE SPREAD OF HIS ORDER.

Formerly, the Western monks followed various Rules based on those of St. Basil and St. Pachomius, with such modifications as the difference of climate and character rendered not only justifiable, but even necessary. At the same time it is very easy to understand that, once a Rule is altered and adapted, it requires more than common wisdom to prevent either too much severity or too much laxity. Many holy and enlightened men set themselves to cope with this difficulty; notably, Abbots Paul, Stephen, Caesarius, Columban, Isidore of Seville and Fructuosus, and their efforts met everywhere with most happy results.

But it was St. Benedict who was specially chosen by God to carry out the great work of compiling a Rule for Western monks. His own intention was to furnish a method suitable for training beginners in the monastic life, a method which might attract those unable to embrace the severe austerities of the Anchorets. Hence it was that he called his Rule "the least of all Rules".[1] But this "little Rule" speedily became widespread and was everywhere adopted. St. Gregory the Great, the first of a long

[1] "*Minimam inchoationis Regulam,*"

line of Benedictine Pontiffs, solemnly approved and commended it. In his *Dialogues* he speaks of it as follows: "Among so many miracles for which he was famous in the world, the holy man of God, Benedict, was also sufficiently learned in divinity, for he wrote a Rule for his monks, both excellent for discretion and eloquent in style. Of whose life and conversation if any be curious to know further, he may in the institutions of that Rule understand all his manner of life and discipline, for that holy man could not otherwise teach than himself lived."[1]

St. Fulgentius says of it: "It contains all that is necessary; on no single point does it say too little; its words and precepts lead the observer of them to the kingdom of heaven". In less than a century this Rule had penetrated into every country, and not only new but ancient communities adopted it. At the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, 817, it was unanimously agreed that from that time all monasteries should take it as their own. Thus it came about that for many centuries all Western monks were Benedictines; and it is an historical fact that wherever monks were to be found, there Christianity, civilisation and learning flourished. So the humble man of God who had fled from the world to bury himself in solitude became that great light whose brightness has shone and continues to shine over so vast a sphere.

No one who studies the development of the various

[1] *Dialogues*, bk. ii., chap. xxxvi.

states of Europe can fail to perceive that the whole fabric of the mediæval West was founded and sustained by the monasticism of St. Benedict, and that the whole history of its origin is nothing else than a history of Benedictine monasteries and the missionaries sent forth from them. The early history of many dioceses is likewise taken chiefly from monastic annals, and even later we find it closely linked with the monasteries. The monks of those days, being mixed up with the Christian life around them, opposed a mighty weapon to the increase of moral corruption, and did much to elevate Europe to the spiritual pre-eminence which it attained over the rest of the world.

When the Benedictine Order began somewhat to decay men were raised up who awakened its dormant energy, reformed its life and extended it by new foundations. Thus began the branch orders of Camaldoli, Vallisumbrosa, Citeaux, the Cistercians, the Olivetans, the Feuillants and la Trappe. These new branches gave fresh vigour and impetus to the religious life, and produced not only an increase of virtue, but also a marked progress in science and learning. The fame of the Abbey of Cluny alone spread throughout Europe; it was renowned for its strict religious observance, whilst its abbots were consulted and honoured by Popes and Emperors.

During the last centuries many congregations in different countries have been labouring with incredible zeal to restore monastic discipline, which had again decayed, and to bring once more into prominence

the study of the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers. And so it is that, while the more modern orders of St. Dominic, St. Francis and St. Ignatius are fulfilling a new and admirable mission in the world, the Benedictine Order still flourishes; renewing its youth like the eagle, and continuing to accomplish a very considerable work. May God give it strength to carry out all that He requires from it, for the glory of Jesus Christ, for the honour of the Church, and for the salvation of mankind.

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BOOK I.

EARLY YEARS OF THE SAINT.
LIFE AT SUBIACO.

CHAPTER I.

BENEDICT'S NATIVE COUNTRY AND LINEAGE. HIS BIRTH AND INFANCY.

A.D. 480.

NORTH of the Campagna, stretching from the Tiber to the Adriatic Sea—bounded on the north by the Rubicon, and on the south by the Nera and the Esino—lies a region which from earliest times has been known as Umbria. Although crossed and broken into on all sides by the Apennines, it possesses many picturesque plains and fruitful valleys. Formerly it was inhabited by a strong and hardy race, who for many years succeeded in keeping the power of Rome at bay; but at length had to submit to its mighty sway. The principal towns of Umbria are Rimini, Pesaro, Sinigaglia, Urbino, Camerino, Jesi, Gubbio, Spoleto and Assisi, all of which date back to a very early period.

When the Emperor Augustus made his division of land, Umbria was called the sixth Italian region. Later on this region belonged partly to the Duchies of Urbino and Spoleto and partly to the Marquisate of Ancona. Christianity early penetrated into these parts; and many of the larger towns can trace the line of their bishops back to apostolic times.

In the south of Umbria, not far from Spoleto and west of the high mountains of Sipilla and Cardossa, lies the little city of Nursia, situated on the river Freddara in the province of the same name. It was once a place of importance and held in some repute by the Romans, owing to the fact that it was the birthplace of the General Sertorius. It was here too that Scipio Africanus gathered together the bravest sailors for his war against Carthage.

At the time when the Western Empire was sinking powerless under the blows of the northern barbarians, and that Odoacer, the youthful prince of the Heruli, began to reign in Rome, there lived in this province a powerful, ancient and aristocratic family, destined by God to number the blessed Benedict among its members;—for most authors agree that he was descended from the Anician family—one of the most noble of ancient Rome. St. Gregory says he was born of an "illustrious family". Cassiodorus tells us that this family of the Anicii was one of the most celebrated in the world; for in it might be found all that was glorious in regal power, all that was heroic in war, all that was grand in dignity, all that was learned in science, and all that was holy in the Church. Consuls, kings, and even emperors have sprung from it, as well as prelates, doctors and saints. The emperors who belonged to it were Constantine and Justinian; the saints—besides St. Benedict—were St. Ambrose, St. Paulinus, St. Gregory the Great, St. Cecilia and the holy Roman ladies Demetria and Proba, who

were among the first, as St. Jerome tells us, to lead a religious life in Rome in their own houses. Dom Mège even affirms that the royal families of Austria and Savoy can trace their descent from this ancient patrician race. Peter the Deacon, a monk of Cassino, says that Benedict's father was named Anicius Eutropius, and his mother was Claudia Abundantia, Countess of Nursia. It was by this marriage that Eutropius had added to his already large estates the province of Nursia, where Benedict and his twin sister Scholastica were born; Claudia being sole heiress of her family's immense fortune.

Some Benedictine biographers say that she died soon after giving birth to these two children; from which they infer that her life was no longer necessary to the world after giving it such precious fruits. The monk Adrevald, who wrote in the ninth century, tells us that the ruins of the palace of St. Benedict's parents attested its former splendour; as from the foundations which yet remain, it is clearly seen that it was magnificent in point of art, and larger than the palaces of many kings.[1]

In the principal church of Nursia, which is dedicated to St. Benedict, there is a crypt that, according to an old tradition, is built over the place of his birth; the church itself having been erected on the site of the ancient palace, which some authors say was turned into a monastery after the saint's death. An old writer quaintly remarks: "Nursia the cold

[1] *De miraculis S. Bened.*, chap. i.

gives us a youth full of glowing ardour; the mountainous country sends us the humble one; the rough country sends us the saint, who endears himself to us by his charms; and the uncultivated land produces the wise Benedict".[1]

The saint was born in the year A.D. 480, four years after the fall of Romulus Augustulus, the last of Rome's emperors,[2] when the whole world was in confusion and trouble. The once mighty Rome had been thrice plundered, and now lay humbled to the very dust; the proud patricians, overpowered and defeated, had been compelled to acknowledge the barbarians as their lords and masters, and to yield to them a third of all their possessions; probably Benedict's parents, like the rest, were somewhat reduced from their former splendour.

The birth of this son must have been like a star of hope rising in the gloom, and the very name Benedict, which they gave him at the baptismal font, expressed the feelings of gratitude which filled their hearts, and foreshadowed the blessings which they desired and prayed might come to them through him. It is a name full of rich meaning; and St. Gregory in the first line of his life shows that he well understood its worth, when he says that he was "blessed by grace and by name".[3]

[1] *Archang. Castivil. hist. Camald.*, vol. i., chap. ii.

[2] Odoacer, King of the Heruli, revolted against Romulus Augustulus, the last Emperor of Rome. He attacked him in Ravenna and took him prisoner, but spared his life. He then made himself master of Rome and was proclaimed king in 476.

[3] *Dialogues*, quart. series, bk. ii., Prologue.

We have no authentic portrait of the saint; but we may gather from what we know of him, that he was of a strong and vigorous nature, with a constitution which could withstand all the difficulties of a hard and austere life; that he had a noble and beautiful countenance, and that in stature he surpassed the ordinary height. His Holy Rule shows that he had a very retentive memory and great power of speech, as well as a clear understanding, a wonderful discretion, a tender and loving heart, a manly disposition and a heroic spirit; in short, a character which fitted him to be a leader and guide to others.

During the first years of Benedict's life political events were taking place which totally changed the existing state of the world. Rome had fallen from the pinnacle of her greatness; and the northern barbarians had forced their way into every known part of the globe, ravaging and destroying all without pity or remorse. Then God, compassionating the misery which prevailed, raised up certain chosen souls whom He destined to shine all the more brilliantly because of the darkness of the moral night surrounding them. These He appointed to be teachers to His people, and endowed them at the same time with all the gifts necessary to make them heavenly architects, who might construct for Him new and lasting dwellings in the hearts of men. Thus it was that, while the world at large presented a sad and most lamentable spectacle, the Church of God alone flourished and bore fruit in the sanctity and fervour

of thousands of her members. Eminent pontiffs sat on the chair of Peter; illustrious bishops governed their afflicted and oppressed flocks; the deserts resounded with the psalmody of both monks and nuns. Among free men and slaves, among nobles and citizens, there bloomed most wonderful examples of holiness, who were ready when needful, as we find by many instances, to tread in the steps of those martyred heroes who in former ages had shed their blood for Christ. Souls such as these gave a new character to a depraved world, and, owing to their efforts, the Kingdom of God at length obtained her position of universal esteem and influence. Not the least among the souls chosen by God for this purpose was Benedict of Nursia.

CHAPTER II.

ST. BENEDICT'S BOYHOOD.
THE AFRICAN PERSECUTION.

A.D. 477-484.

THREE things concur to form a man's character: the grace of God, external influences, and the co-operation of man's own will. These causes working together form that individual personality which gives him his position among his fellow-creatures. To the natural gifts possessed by Benedict, God superadded those of His grace in such abundance that, as his name signified, he was indeed a child of blessing. By a special grace he was preserved in innocence amidst all the pomp and luxury with which he was surrounded; for as St. Odo, Abbot of Cluny, says, "the Holy Spirit had already chosen his little heart for His dwelling".

In many councils which were held at this time, we find mention made of the Bishops of Nursia, such as of Stephen who sat in the Roman Synod in 495, also of the Bishops John, Evandus and Optatus. It is therefore most probable that these holy men, according to the custom of those days, took a watchful interest in the spiritual training of the young Benedict. In his father's palace he seems to have had

the example of every virtue, and to have had early planted in his heart the fear of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and that principle of obedience which he made afterwards the foundation of his Rule. And not only the surroundings of his own home, but the events then taking place in the Roman Empire must have influenced his opening intelligence. In his family circle public affairs, especially the troubles then distracting the world, must often have been discussed, and commented upon; and as the boy listened he would make his own observations, form his judgment, and realise the position he held in society.

At the time when Benedict was a child in his father's palace, the Vandal King Huneric was still reigning in Africa.[1] In his passionate zeal for the Arian heresy, he persecuted all who adhered to the true faith, and went so far in his cruelty that he seemed to surpass even Diocletian himself. The persecution had fallen with particular fury on the bishops and priests, so that they were almost exterminated; nuns and consecrated virgins had been put to the torture to make them confess, as it was said, their crimes: but as none knew any crime to confess, they had died under their torture. Numbers of bishops, priests and deacons with their relatives, and among them many innocent children, had been driven into the horrible deserts of Mauritania, and there left to perish. In 484, when Benedict was four

[1] Huneric was the son of Genseric and succeeded him on the throne in 478. He married Eudoxia, the sister of the Emperor Zeno.

years old, Huneric, by an edict, forbade the Catholic religion to be practised throughout Africa. The churches were closed, and the revenues taken by the king or given to the Arians. All Catholics were declared to be disgraced. The old edicts of the Roman emperors against the Christians were put in force; and hundreds of bishops were banished to Corsica, or the desert parts of Africa. Among the confessors twelve little choristers are especially noticed. On account of their clear young voices the heretics endeavoured to gain them over to sing in the Arian churches, but neither threats nor promises could move them; they were scourged and beaten with clubs, but all in vain—and for their faithful confession they are named in the Acts of the African Church the "twelve little Apostles" of Carthage. Throughout the kingdom sorrow and lamentation filled every city and every village—we might say, every house and every family. The rack, the scourge and an ignominious death awaited all those who did not possess a certificate from an Arian bishop testifying that they had received Arian baptism. The historian of this period says he could fill volumes with the acts of the martyrs of his day, and yet not exhaust all. The faithful showed a courage and constancy worthy of apostolic times, and comparatively few were guilty of apostasy. Their heroism was glorified by God with such extraordinary signs and wonders, and such convincing proofs of the truth, that only the most hardened unbelievers could have withstood them.

Before this terrible persecution broke out, a pious deacon of Carthage had seen in a vision, three times repeated, many of these calamities. He saw the Church of St. Faustus shining with brilliant splendour and illuminated by thousands of lamps, costly tapestry adorned the walls and a dense throng of worshippers clothed in white filled the sacred edifice. The celebration of Mass began, and heavenly chants floated in the air; when on a sudden all the lights were extinguished, the sweet harmonies ceased, and a horde of Ethiopians rushing in scattered the whole assembly.

Many miracles also testified to the might of God's power and the strength of His Church. Among other instances we are told of an old Carthaginian who went by the name of "blind Felix". Being commanded in a vision to go to Eugenius and receive from him his sight, he obeyed; the bishop, however, was naturally somewhat embarrassed at his request, not considering himself worthy to perform such a miracle. But at length, moved by a Divine inspiration, he prayed and made the sign of the Cross over the man, who was immediately cured. The fact was incontestable, and the whole city was moved by the news of the prodigy. Huneric alone gnashed his teeth with rage, and declared it to be the effect of witchcraft. At another time we read of Victoria, the young wife of one of the most distinguished men of Consula, who, in defence of her faith, had hung for a whole day on a gibbet until all her bones were dislocated and her body in a piteous state. Her

executioners, believing her to be dead, cut her down and threw her on the ground, when suddenly she stood up and found herself completely healed. Afterwards she related how a lady of great dignity and surpassing beauty had appeared to her, and touching her hand had restored her to life.

In Typasus, a town of Mauritania, hundreds—some authors say thousands—of the faithful underwent the torture of having their tongues cut out; yet, nevertheless, they were able to speak, and being dispersed into many lands they bore, wherever they went, a striking witness to the truth of the Catholic religion.

Though the hand of God was thus visible to all, the impious Huneric remained hardened, and continued his persecution until he was summoned before the awful judgment seat of Him Whom he had mocked and outraged in the persons of His saints. He was unexpectedly seized with a terrible sickness, the nature of which baffled the skill of his physicians; and after suffering the most awful torments, he died on 6th December, 484, having reigned seven years.

Events such as these must have made a deep impression on the child Benedict, and, like the little St. Theresa of modern times, he too probably thirsted to die a martyr for the name of Jesus.

The tender-hearted and religious nurse to whom he was entrusted in his early years[1] surely understood how to picture these moving scenes to the boy

[1] Peter the Deacon calls her Cyrilla.

in such a way as to touch his innocent heart; and she would have shown him how far more our hearts should be affected by the sufferings of Him Who left the glory of His throne in Heaven to become man for us, and Who underwent the greatest sufferings in order to deliver us from sin and damnation and make us eternally happy.

If it were permitted us to glance into the Book of Life we should doubtless be able to narrate the feelings which stirred the soul of the little Benedict, the attractions, designs and resolutions urging him to those holy deeds which he afterwards accomplished.

How pure are the sentiments and affections of children, and how heavenly their desires! "Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."[1]

[1] Matt. xviii. 3.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY EDUCATION OF THE SAINT. CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

A.D. 487-493.

We know nothing definite about the early education of this child of predilection. He, doubtless, went through the usual course of training requisite for a nobleman's son in those days, and was required to study the arts and sciences which distinguished the patrician from a common citizen; doubtless, too, he was instructed by efficient masters in the history and political events of the time, and taught how to conduct himself in a way befitting his high rank.

But the principal part of Benedict's education, and that which chiefly concerns us, was his spiritual training. He very soon learnt to realise the difference between good and evil; he was shown how noble and pleasing is virtue, and how vile and degrading is sin; and he quickly understood the necessity of checking and fighting against his passions. Child as he was at the time, one of the great events of ecclesiastical history, which occurred when he was only about seven years old, may have had an effect in showing him how much sorrow and sadness are the consequences of yielding to temptation. In the early

ages of Christianity, exterior sins were usually punished by public penances, in order to inspire men with a salutary fear. During the African persecution already spoken of several leading men had unhappily apostatised; but when under King Gundamund[1] the rage of the persecutors abated, bitter remorse filled the hearts of these unfortunate apostates. In their distress they appealed to Rome, and Pope Felix III. convened a council to decide the question. It met on 13th March, 487, in St. Peter's; fourty-four bishops and seventy-five priests assisted. This council decreed that all priests of higher orders who had denied the Faith should do penance for the remainder of their lives, not receiving Holy Communion till their death; all priests of lower orders, as well as the monks, nuns and laymen who were guilty, were to abstain from Holy Communion for twelve years; and children were to be placed among the penitents for so long a time as the circumstances of each case should decide.

A year after this council, Peter the Fuller,[2] who had usurped the patriarchal chair of Antioch, died. In a very short time Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople, followed him to the grave, Peter Mongus, Patriarch of Alexandria, surviving the latter only one year. These three had retained their sees in spite of the decrees of the council, and by their wickedness were the authors of a disastrous schism; unfortunately, there is no record of their repentance.

[1] Gundamund succeeded Huneric as King of the Vandals in 484.

[2] So called on account of his former lowly occupation.

These events saddened all good Christians; and grave and thoughtful as Benedict was, he cannot have failed to draw many practical lessons from them.

At the beginning of the year 491 the whole world was startled by the tragic end of the Emperor Zeno.[1] Suspecting that some of his subjects were pretenders to his throne, he ordered several barbarous executions; having perpetrated these foul deeds, he was seized with remorse, and on the 9th of April, as he was rising from table in an intoxicated condition, he fell violently to the ground, seized with an epileptic fit from which he never recovered. Such a death was a great lesson to all; and though Benedict was but a boy, it must have brought home to him the vanity of all human greatness. Things which would have been indifferent or incomprehensible to other children his precocious mind took seriously to heart; for, as St. Gregory says of him, "from his very childhood his mind and heart were matured".

As little is known of St. Benedict's childhood, so his growing years must equally remain a sealed book to us. But it is evident that from the beginning Christ had laid in him a deep foundation, and that he too, like his Divine Master, advanced both in "wisdom and age, and grace with God and men".[2] Hence we may conjecture that he eagerly drank in that knowledge which could bring him nearer to God and the realisation of his vocation. The Church

[1] Zeno the Isaurian, Emperor of Constantinople, reigned from 474 to 491.

[2] Luke ii. 52.

appeared to him like a vast garden in which grew and blossomed thousands of precious and beautiful plants—such as St. Eugenius of Carthage, in whom seemed to have been raised up another Athanasius; as Stephen, Patriarch of Antioch, who had lately shed his blood for the Faith; as the wonderful "Stylite," honoured by all the people and summoned by the emperor to help him in his direst distress; as Valdus, who for forty years combined the office of a missionary in France with that of a bishop, and afterwards retired into the desert, where he died rich in merit; as Epiphanius of Pavia, who boldly presented himself before the kings Odoacer and Theodoric to persuade them to spare his little flock. These, and many other holy and virtuous men, flourished and adorned the Church at that period.

Benedict must have grieved to see this garden blighted with the foul poison of heresy; that of Arius had infected whole nations, including the Vandals, the Goths and the Heruli, who had shortly before conquered Italy. Eutychianism had penetrated into Egypt and Syria; Nestorianism into Mesopotamia; while the Indians, Franks, Huns and Germans still groped in the darkness of paganism. But zealous missionaries were at work labouring to counteract these evils. Amantius of Rodez and St. Germanus carried the message of the gospel to the banks of the Moselle, to Normandy and Picardy. Albeus, a companion of St. Patrick, afterwards Bishop of Munster, converted numberless infidels by his elo-

quence, his miracles, and, above all, by his example; he also founded a monastery on the Isle of Arran, renowned for the holiness of its inmates. In 486 Eleutherius was made Bishop of Tournay, and began his work of evangelising the Franks, crowning his labours with martyrdom. At the same time St. Remigius was nominated Bishop of Rheims, though only twenty-two years old, and governed that church for seventy years. His rare gifts and qualities and his singular attractiveness did much for the conversion of the heathen, and his power over sinners made him like a second St. Paul. In Wales Prince Gunthlaus, having relinquished his crown and sceptre, withdrew into the desert, whither he was speedily followed by his son Cadoc, who, after a short reign, imitated the example of his father, that he might more surely gain an imperishable crown. He founded a monastery at Llancarfan, near Cowbridge, which gave to the Church many saints and illustrious men.

The fame of the holy solitaries of Palestine, Abbots Theodore and Sabas, had spread even into Western countries. By their wisdom they put to shame the most astute philosophers, and their advice was sought by emperors and prelates. Theodore lived as a hermit for thirty years, but afterwards he became the founder of a renowned monastery near Bethlehem, and died in 529. On account of his numerous disciples he was called "Father of monks". Sabas founded the monastery which bears his name. He died in 532.

At this period also St. Genevieve, the virgin saint, was still living and illustrating the Church by her

virtues and miracles. Her gift of prophecy was so great that, as her biographer tells us, "the future was as clear to her as the present". About the year 451, by her prayers and fasts she had deserved to obtain from Almighty God the preservation of the city of Paris, when it was threatened by the Huns under Attila. She died in 512 at the age of eighty-nine.

At the end of the fifth century Italy was being devastated by war. In 489 Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths,[1] had come with the consent of Anastasius, Emperor of Constantinople, to conquer Italy. Odoacer was his equal in valour and prudence, but discord prevailed in his army; three pitched battles were fought in 490 and 491, in each of which Theodoric was victorious; and Odoacer saw himself compelled to take refuge in the impregnable fortress of Ravenna, where he awaited his fate. Theodoric made himself master of all Italy, and at length Odoacer, constrained by famine, treated for peace through the intervention of Bishop John. His proposals were accepted by the conqueror, who agreed that they should reign conjointly over the country; their compact was sealed on 5th March, 493. A few days later Odoacer was treacherously assassinated when dining with Theodoric; he had reigned seventeen years. His death left Theodoric sole master of Italy.

Benedict, who was but just developing into manhood, witnessed these events with feelings similar to

[1] Of the royal race of the Amali. Under the name of Theodoric the Great he planted the Ostrogoth power in Italy.

those of the Wise Man, saying like him, "All is vanity except to love and serve God alone"; and there arose in his soul a great longing to humble and abase himself that he might become great in the eyes of Him Whose praise alone he sought.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ETERNAL CITY. VOCATION.

A.D. 487-493.

It was while studying at Rome that Benedict decided on the all-important matter of his vocation; a point attended with such vital results. He had been sent by his father to their house in that city for the purpose of perfecting his literary education.

The Benedictine abbot Cajetan Constantine, who lived under the pontificate of Gregory XV., gives us the following account of St. Benedict's residence in Rome. "The Church of St. Benedict in Piscinula, on the other side of the Tiber, though almost in ruins, is distinguished as the birthplace of the saint's ancestors, he being a descendant of the patrician family of the Anicii. In some old documents at Monte Cassino, to which this church belongs, it is called 'St. Benedict sub Monte Lycaonis,' because it is situated near that island in the Tiber, which takes its name from Jupiter Lycaonis. In ancient times the splendid palace of the Anicii was built on this spot, and its immense extent has been verified by recent excavations. Another circumstance strengthens this evidence, *viz.*, that the house of St. Cecilia, who belonged to the same family, is to be found close by.

According to reasonable conjecture a part of the above-mentioned palace, and probably that part reserved for the use of Benedict, was shortly after his death converted into a church and dedicated to his glorious memory. It is also a tradition that the beautiful picture of Our Lady which is in this church is the same which the boy Benedict used to venerate." Gregory XV., at the request of the abbot from whose writings we have just quoted, gave this house to the Benedictines as a hospice for monks.

When our saint arrived in Rome, the City of the Seven Hills, which had been rebuilt by Nero with so much splendour, still retained much of its former greatness; and although some buildings already showed signs of decay, and others were in ruins, yet it was easy to trace the magnificence of ancient Rome with its temples and baths, its Colosseum and Triumphal Arches; and now added to these were the modern, but withal majestic, basilicas of St. John Lateran and St. Mary Major. According to Optatus of Milves, Rome possessed forty churches even before the close of the persecutions; twenty-five were added in the fourth century and about fourteen in the fifth century.

Gelasius then occupied the chair of Peter, to which he had been elected on 1st March 492, five days after the death of his predecessor, Pope Felix III. St. Gelasius gave a new impetus to the liturgy; he had all the services and ceremonies of Holy Church carried out with the utmost solemnity, and he also founded many charitable institutions. Hence it was that,

during the seven years spent by Benedict in Rome, he had every opportunity of satisfying his devotion by assisting at the great functions in the various churches, and by visiting the catacombs, or "cemeteria" as they were then called, in which thousands of the holy martyrs who had suffered so recently were buried. He must have been deeply edified by the many examples of faith and piety, patience and brotherly love, which he saw among the Christians of Rome, especially their wonderful charity towards the poor and afflicted. The effect of all this upon his young mind was that he desired more than ever to dedicate himself to God in a state in which he could securely serve Him; and he determined to embrace such a state, however hard to nature and whatever sacrifices it might involve.

Meantime he continued his studies—the "Humanities," as St. Gregory calls them—in the public schools. At that time every student who wished to distinguish himself in the literary world had to go through a double "cursus" or course of studies: first, the "Trivium," which included grammar, rhetoric and logic; and secondly, the "Quadrivium," embracing arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. Benedict's clear mind and quick perception must soon have mastered these sciences, at least to some extent, and although St. Gregory assures us that he departed from Rome with all her evil and pagan influences "skilfully ignorant and wisely unlearned," he is not in any way depreciating human learning in itself, but re-echoing the warning that "the bewitching of

vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind".[1] And while other youths of equal talent became absorbed in these studies, and looked forward with delight to the honours and dignities they hoped to acquire in the world, "the blessed one" despised all this; and his understanding and heart felt a void which nothing earthly could fill. He sought and longed for one thing only: to please God, to become a true servant of God, and to gain merit for eternity.

Owing partly to the fact that the Empire had a barbarian master, and that the city of Rome itself had been so long the scene of bloodshed, there was everywhere licence and corruption. Whether Benedict was horrified at such a constant spectacle of violence and crime, and was shocked by the depraved morals of his fellow-students, who gave themselves unrestrainedly up to sinful pleasures; or whether he received, which is more probable, a direct call from God to leave the world, and seek Him alone; in either case we know that, after he had been seven years in Rome, and before he was yet old enough to have taken any part in worldly vanities and follies, he resolved to quit it for ever. St. Gregory says he had barely put his foot in the world when he took this resolution. It seemed to him as if he heard constantly an interior voice saying to him: "Fly, Benedict, into the desert; there thou wilt taste how sweet is the Lord to those who love Him". This

[1] Wisdom iv. 12.

interior impulse grew stronger as he daily discovered fresh proofs of the dangers which surrounded him, until at last it became irresistible. His resolution was taken: he would leave Rome and renounce his rich inheritance in order to follow his Lord in poverty and in pain. His nurse, Cyrilla, who had remained with him as was the custom in those days and had been like a second mother to him, must have perceived something unusual about her foster-child, and before long she had won his confidence. Having learnt his secret, she determined to accompany him in his flight. Thus, says his biographer, "he despised the study of the liberal arts and forsook the paternal roof; wishing only to be pleasing to God, he sought for that manner of life in which he could serve Him most perfectly. Therefore did he withdraw his foot new set in the world, fearing lest, if he but once suffered himself to taste its fruits of knowledge, he should be certain after that to throw himself headlong over its precipice into the abyss below."[1]

According to tradition, Benedict took this important step, which was the beginning of all the blessings poured out upon him, and through him upon all mankind, in the year 494, when he was fourteen years old. Baronius thinks that he was older, but, as St. Gregory expressly uses the word "puer," we cannot suppose him to have been more. St. Odo, Abbot of Cluny, says: "Tender in years but great in spirit, he braves the dreary solitude of the desert".

[1] *Dialogues*, bk. ii., Prologue.

At this very time it was being reported on all sides that Theodoric, the new king and master of Italy, intended to restore the fallen city to its former prosperity and grandeur. But the young saint, who had chosen the path which leads to eternal riches, could not be kept back by any prospect of earthly gain. On the contrary, it only incited him to be more steadfast in his resolution. He well knew that it was quite possible to live in the world without being of it, and that society required the light and salt of holy and enlightened men; yet he saw also most clearly that it would be best for him to fly from it. He felt no attraction for the toga of a Roman noble, but his heart yearned for the poor habit of a monk. Earthly wisdom was but dross in his eyes, for he had tasted that which is eternal. And so he, who had despised and forsaken the world, became by this very means fitted to be the master and leader of thousands of his fellow-creatures, to teach them how to discover new sources of wisdom and knowledge, and how to become the light of the world and the salt of the earth by their words and example.

CHAPTER V.

FLIGHT FROM ROME. ENFIDE. THE FIRST MIRACLE.

A.D. 493-494.

TURNING his back on Rome, and leaving his home and kindred and all those prospects and pleasures which had tried in vain to captivate his pure young heart, Benedict set out accompanied by Cyrilla, his faithful old nurse. They directed their steps eastwards towards the river Anio, which rises in that portion of the Sabines joining the Apennines and rushes down over a hundred cascades to pour its noisy waters into the Tiber below. St. Hildegarde tells us that Benedict was led by two angels along secret paths, to prevent his being discovered by those who were seeking him in every direction when his flight became known to them. St. Peter Damian confirms this statement, and says that he learnt the same thing from an ancient author.

It is probable that on the first evening the two fugitives only reached the foot of the mountains, where, even now, travellers are wont to take a night's rest after leaving Rome. From this spot the Holy City appears like a magnificent amphitheatre, with St. Peter's at one end, and the Lateran Church and palace at the other; and as they turned to take a

parting look at that fair scene, doubtless tears welled up in the eyes of the old nurse and her young charge. But grace triumphed over nature, and the next morning saw them again on their journey. And as of old the Romans fetched their first brides from the city of the Sabines, and astonished the world by their powerful posterity, so now Benedict hastened thither to gather those virtues by which he was enabled to give to the Church a spiritual posterity which should continue to the end of time, and be the edification and salvation of mankind, as well as its delight and admiration. On the second day the travellers passed through deep valleys, formed by mountain ranges, along a road which runs halfway up a steep slope, and in a wild romantic spot on the crest of a rising range they came upon the village of Enfide, now Affile. Benedict went straight to the church, which was dedicated to St. Peter, and prayed earnestly for guidance. Adjoining the church were some houses inhabited by devout and worthy people who pressed Cyrilla and the boy, who passed for her son, to accept hospitality from them. St. Gregory says: "Multisque honestioribus viris," which some have interpreted to mean people of noble family; and have concluded from thence that Benedict was known to them, at least by name, and was welcomed by them as a friend, possibly as a relation. But the more common opinion is that the inhabitants of Enfide were only rustics and honest peasants, who showed charity to the old nurse and her charge, as they did to every wayfarer, for the love of Christ,

Who said, "I was a stranger, and you took Me in".[1]

As Benedict did not yet know exactly the designs of God regarding his future abode, he considered the kind reception given him by these good people as a mark of the Divine will that he should remain there for the present; and therefore resolved to rest for a time and confer with God until He should deign further to manifest His will. An event, however, soon occurred which, although it proved that God was with him, equally showed him that this was not the place where he could carry out his holy aspirations. During his stay at Enfide, we are told that the sole occupation of the young pilgrim was to spend his day kneeling at the door of St. Peter's Church, rapt in prayer. One evening, as he returned home, he found Cyrilla in great distress; she had borrowed a sieve from one of the neighbours —St. Gregory calls it a "capisterium," which was an earthenware vessel for shaking corn, but without holes; this she had incautiously left on a table, and by some accident it fell and was broken in half. When Benedict returned she was crying bitterly; and the tender-hearted boy, distressed by her tears, was moved with compassion, and taking the two pieces of the broken sieve knelt down outside and began to pray over them. When he rose from his knees the sieve was repaired in such a way that no trace of the fracture was to be found, and he smilingly

[1] Matt. xxv. 35.

restored it to Cyrilla sound and whole. This miracle, though seemingly trivial, served an important purpose, for it proved that his flight from Rome had the Divine sanction, and it also evinces the progress he had already made in prayer and union with God.

This event soon came to the knowledge of the people of Enfide, and caused such admiration that the inhabitants hung up the sieve in the church, so that posterity might know what a high degree of grace God had given the young Benedict, even at the very beginning of his religious life. There it remained for many years, until in 568 Italy was invaded by the Lombards, when it was destroyed. To his dismay, Benedict now became an object of esteem, not only to the village people, but to many who came from the surrounding country to see and speak with the young Thaumaturgus. He well knew the danger of flattery, especially for a beginner in the spiritual warfare, and he trembled to see his hitherto hidden life exposed to the inquisitive gaze of men. Therefore, as St. Gregory says, "being more desirous of the miseries of the world than the praises of men, rather to be wearied with labour for God's sake than to be exalted with transitory commendation, he fled privily from his nurse,"[1] and alone, with his angel to guide him, he bent his steps towards Subiaco.

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. i.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG HERMIT.

A.D. 494.

It was Eastertide when Benedict set out on his second journey; in the springtime of the year, when all nature is fresh and fair. He hastened over Mount Carpineto towards the eastern valley of the Anio, about three miles beyond Enfide, intending to push on into the depths of the mountains. As he was thus making his way, intent on his holy purpose, he saw a monk coming towards him. Instinctively he was attracted by the appearance of the stranger, convinced that God had brought him there in answer to his prayer for guidance. Romanus had indeed come into the wilderness to meditate with greater quiet, and the Holy Ghost caused Benedict to meet him that in him he might find a guide and helper in the beginning of the new life to which he was called.[1]

He kindly inquired of the young fugitive who he was and where he was going. And Benedict openly

[1] Romanus was a monk at the monastery of Monte Calvo, not far from Subiaco; subsequently he was sent into France to make a foundation, and after a most edifying life he died in 546, leaving a great number of disciples. He is mentioned in the Roman *Martyrology* on 22nd May.

and simply communicated to him the affairs of his soul, and told him he was looking for a place where he could live hidden from the whole world. In order to try him, Romanus began by urging objections to his design; but the holy youth answered them with so much wisdom and firmness that the monk was struck with amazement and could only praise God Who had given such resolution to a mere child. Satisfied as to his vocation, Romanus hesitated as to where he should direct the boy. But his doubt was soon cleared up, for near at hand he knew of a cave on Monte Calvo, which would hide the young hermit completely from the world and give him greater security than he could find in any fortress. To discover this cavern we must follow the course of the river Anio towards the south-east where the valley becomes more and more narrow, and about three miles from Subiaco we find ourselves between two mountain walls whose summits seem to touch the sky. That on the right bank of the river belongs to Monte Calvo, that on the left to Monte Carpineto, behind which is Enfide. A thousand feet above the valley, in the steep wall of Monte Calvo, is a deep cavern, seven feet long by four broad, with a large triangular opening. This was the spot chosen by St. Romanus to be a school of perfection for his disciple. The foreground of the cave was somewhat extended, affording sufficient space for a small garden, while the path leading up to it was exceedingly steep, narrow and difficult to climb. Benedict entered

his new abode with a heart full of joy, and a feeling of sweetness which was not of earth; and kneeling down he made this prayer: "I thank Thee, O my God, because, through Thine infinite goodness, Thou hast delivered me from the world and its corruption. Grant that I may remain here alone with Thee, and that neither flesh nor blood may ever draw me away from Thee. Bless, O Lord, the design I have conceived and the resolutions I have made, for if I have left my father's house to live in this solitude, I have always confided in Thy help, and I have always believed that under Thy powerful protection I had nothing to fear. Accomplish, therefore, O my God, what Thou hast begun in me."[1]

Before leaving him St. Romanus clothed him with the habit of religion which the monks of those days were accustomed to wear. It was a long garment made of sheepskin called a "melotus," and was thrown over the body like a mantle. In the chapel which is built over the place where St. Benedict received this habit there is a large stone about five feet high on which he is said to have hung his worldly dress as the spoils of the enemy he had conquered in leaving the world. Dom Mège makes and answers four difficulties about St. Romanus giving him the habit: (1) Where did St. Romanus find this habit, as he was at some distance from his monastery? (2) How could he give away a habit without breaking his vow of poverty? (3)

[1] Dom Mège, *Vie de S. Benoist*, chap. i.

How could he give the monastic habit on his own authority, and without any ceremony? (4) Why did he not persuade St. Benedict to go to his monastery with him, instead of leaving him alone in the cave? As to the first difficulty, we can only conjecture that St. Romanus had a melotus as well as his other habit, or else that he returned to his monastery to fetch one for him. With regard to the second, it is well known that before St. Benedict wrote his Rule, monks were not obliged to such great poverty and strict dependence, and were allowed to give away their old habits to the poor. The third difficulty is a more serious one, but we must remember that the government of monasteries, and even of the Church, was not then exactly the same as it is now, and in those days the monastic habit and tonsure were given in a much more simple manner. Not only abbots and superiors could give the habit and receive to profession without the knowledge of the bishop, but even private religious, if they were priests, could do the same. It follows, therefore, that St. Romanus as a monk and a priest only acted according to the usages of the times in which he lived. As to the last objection—why St. Romanus did not persuade St. Benedict to go to his own monastery, which would seem the most natural and the most prudent course to pursue, instead of leaving him all alone in a cave, exposed to the rigour of the seasons and to the temptations of the devil—Dom Mège says that St. Romanus certainly acted contrary to the usual rules

of the spiritual life, which prescribe that those who give themselves to God shall first be tried in all the virtues of a monastic life before attempting that of the desert; nevertheless, there is no doubt that St. Romanus acted by a special inspiration when he gave the habit to St. Benedict at their first meeting, the Holy Spirit dispensing them both from the rules which His wisdom has prescribed for the generality of men.

Also the Holy Ghost willed to be Himself the only master of a saint destined to teach the most sublime perfection, in order that the great legislator of monastic life in the West might be able to say with St. Paul, that he had learnt from God and not from men that perfect life and heavenly doctrine which he afterwards taught to his children, and through them to all the nations of the earth.

On leaving the cave St. Romanus had promised to provide the holy youth with bread, to give him every necessary assistance, and, above all, he had promised faithfully to keep his secret. We may easily conjecture that he felt a fatherly tenderness and loving interest in one so young, and that he procured for him all the necessaries which he could obtain without betraying his trust. It is probable also that he lent him books, and the tools that he needed for his daily work. The monastery in which Romanus dwelt was so situated that he could not reach the cave except by a long and circuitous route though the actual distance was not great. To avoid this journey he bethought himself of letting down

the food over the edge of the rock by means of a basket attached to a rope, a little bell being fastened to the rope to serve as a signal. One day, however, it happened, says St. Gregory, "the old enemy, envying the charity of the one and the refection of the other, seeing a loaf upon a certain day let down, threw a stone and broke the bell; but for all that, Romanus gave not over to serve him by all the possible means he could".[1]

It is easy to relate facts, but who shall fathom the feelings of that generous young heart when it rested at length in its longed-for solitude? From his lofty seclusion he could, like David, bid defiance to all his enemies and sing with him, "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture."[2]

Perhaps he felt like Moses after crossing the Red Sea, or like Elias when, after escaping from the impious Jezebel, he recognised the voice of God in the soft murmur of the breeze. And Peter's words must have found an echo in his heart, "Lord, it is good for me to be here".[3] Separated from all human intercourse he communed alone with his Creator; the roaring of the torrent, the whistling of the wind, the rolling of thunder, the song of the birds were his only companions, and they served to lift his heart on high. In silence he meditated on the great mysteries of faith, and realised more and more his nearness to God. How often the stars shining out

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. i. [2] Ps. xxii. 1, 2.
[3] Matt. xvii. 4.

in the dark sky must have beheld that youthful figure, kneeling in the stillness of the night, rapt in contemplation! How his Angel Guardian must have smiled, and how tenderly the Blessed Mother must have watched over her faithful son!

Doubtless Benedict had his trials; it could not be otherwise. Indeed we marvel how such a mere boy could brook the silence, the solitude and the cramped enclosure in which he dwelt, and also the inclemency of the weather, for though summer days are bright and hot, December and January, even in Italy, are sharp and severe. So in spite of the consolations and fervour which Benedict often felt, he must necessarily have had times of sadness and suffering, of dryness and temptation. But these were seasons replete with blessings, for the seed when it remains alone cannot bear fruit, "but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit".[1]

It is generally supposed that St. Romanus gave him a rule of life in accordance with that observed in his own monastery; but it was by a higher direction that Benedict discovered the manner of life best suited to his spiritual needs, containing the germ of what he afterwards taught to so many thousands of his children. Peacefully and uneventfully the time passed for the young solitary in his cave; he had found what he sought, and in later years he might well have said with St. Theresa: "Those years were the happiest of my life".

[1] John xii. 25.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

A.D. 497.

After three years spent in his beloved solitude, God willed that the seed so long buried should spring up and bear fruit, and He Himself vouchsafed to make His servant known to men. It was Easter again, and the bright sun shone gloriously into the rocky cavern where Benedict dwelt. "At length," says St. Gregory, "when Almighty God was determined to ease Romanus of his pains, and to have Benedict's life known to the world for an example (that such a candle set upon a candlestick might shine and give light to the Church of God), Our Lord vouchsafed to appear to a certain priest dwelling a good way off, who had made ready his dinner for Easter day, and spake thus to him: 'Thou hast provided good cheer for thyself, and my servant in such a place is afflicted with hunger,' who, hearing this, forthwith rose up with such meat as he had prepared and went to the place where he sought for the man of God among the steep hills, the low valleys and the hollow pits, and at length found him in his cave, where, after they had prayed together, and sitting down had given God thanks, and had much spiritual talk, then the

priest said unto him, 'Rise up, brother, let us dine, because to-day is the feast of Easter'. To whom the man of God answered, 'I know that it is Easter with me, and a great feast, having found so much favour at God's hands as this day to enjoy your company,' for by reason of his long absence from men he knew not that it was the great solemnity of Easter; but the reverend priest did assure him saying, 'Verily, to-day is the feast of Our Lord's Resurrection, and therefore meet it is not that you should keep abstinence; besides I am sent to the end that we might eat together of such provisions as God's goodness hath sent us'. Whereupon they said grace and fell to their meat, and after they had dined and bestowed some time in talking the priest returned to his church."[1]

Benedict could no longer remain unknown, God Himself having manifested him to the priest, by whose means others sought out and found the precious jewel which had lain hidden for so long. The very fact of the good priest's seeking and inquiring for the saint must have raised the curiosity of the neighbouring shepherds as to the object of his search, for soon after they climbed up to the cave to see who its occupant might be. As they approached and saw through the bushes a figure dressed in skins, they thought it must be some animal, but, instead of a wild beast, a youth with gentle mien and winning manners came to meet and welcome them. The

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. i.

sanctity which shone on his countenance inspired them with reverential awe, while his burning words betrayed the love which absorbed his whole soul and roused the dull though well-disposed minds of those rough peasants. Instinctively they felt they had found a friend; and many and many a time afterwards they might have been seen toiling up the steep ascent to seek advice and help from one who seemed to them more like an angel than a man. And Benedict did not avoid them; he knew that God had directed their steps to him, and, generously embracing his new mission, he devoted himself to the spiritual needs of those who came to him. Very soon rumours of the youthful hermit spread all over the country. Every one spoke of him; every one wanted to see him; men and women, youths and maidens, mothers and children flocked to the cave, bringing him presents of food and bodily refreshment, and receiving in return the heavenly nourishment which he gave them out of the fulness of his heart. Sinners were converted; the lukewarm aroused; and souls desirous of serving God were encouraged to walk in the narrow path with fervour and constancy. Such a scene recalls to our mind one which happened five centuries before, when, not on the banks of the Anio, but by the river Jordan, the great Precursor taught the multitudes who sought him in the desert, and exhorted them to penance, not so much by his words as by the wonderful example of his own mortified life.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FURNACE OF TEMPTATION.

THE praise and admiration openly evinced for the servant of God, the crowds that gathered round him, and the confidence reposed in him, might have proved a dangerous snare to one still so youthful; so easily can thoughts of pride creep even into an innocent heart! But the time had come when God saw it would be good for Benedict to be proved by the fierce fire of temptation, both to test the virtue of his blessed soul and to burn away every atom of dross and alloy; for as gold in the furnace so must the heart be tried in the fire of temptation and suffering. And as of old God permitted Satan to tempt His faithful servant Job, so now he allowed him to test the fidelity of Benedict by a violent temptation of the flesh.

St. Gregory relates it as follows: "Upon a certain day, being alone, the tempter was at hand, for a little black bird began to fly about his face, and that so near as the holy man, if he would, might have taken it with his hand, but after he had blessed himself with the sign of the Cross the bird flew away, and forthwith the holy man was assaulted with such a terrible temptation of the flesh as he had never

felt the like in all his life. A certain woman there was which sometime he had seen, the memory of whom the wicked spirit put into his mind, and by the representation of her did mightily inflame with concupiscence the soul of God's servant, which did so increase that, almost overcome with pleasure, he was of a mind to have forsaken the wilderness. But suddenly assisted with God's grace he came to himself, and seeing many thick briars and nettle bushes to grow hard by, off he cast his apparel, and threw himself into the midst of them, and there wallowed so long that when he rose up all his flesh was pitifully torn, and so, by the wounds of his body, he cured those of his soul, in that he turned pleasure into pain, and by the outward burning of extreme smart quenched that fire which, being nourished before with the fuel of carnal cogitations, did inwardly burn in his soul, and by this means he overcame the sin, because he made a change of the fire. From which time forward, as he himself did afterwards report to his disciples, he found all temptation of pleasure so subdued that he never felt any such thing." [1]

Benedict's courage in this struggle and the resolution he took were truly heroic; and nowhere in the lives of the ancient fathers do we read of such a wonderful resistance and victory. Mabillon says very beautifully: "What great danger may come from one temptation! What great fruit from one

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. ii.

victory! What would have become of the salvation of Benedict and innumerable other souls if he had been conquered in the fight? But having gained this victory, he obtained his own salvation and that of thousands."

Luke Wadding, the famous Franciscan historian, relates that on one occasion St. Francis went to St. Benedict's cave. Being filled with devotion at the sight of the thorns, and at the thought of how the saint had procured help for himself through so sharp and painful a remedy, he kissed the briar, making the sign of the Cross over it, and changed it by the power of God into a beautiful rose-bush. From that time the scene of Benedict's victory was even more frequented and honoured than before; and the rose-bush, sanctified by the blessing of both saints, still brings forth flowers possessing such miraculous power that they work many cures in cases of sickness.

By this victory which the saint gained, through the grace of Him in Whom we can do all things, he made, as it were, his solemn profession of the religious state. The determination to live undividedly for God he had taken upon himself when he first entered the desert; but from this time it became a steadfast vow. Henceforth he was resolved rather to die than to give up walking in the path he had chosen. This event, therefore, was a turning point, a transition from the lower to the higher regions of the spiritual life, from the opening buds of virtue to the full and perfect blossoms. From a disciple he had developed

into a master, and from an inexperienced youth into a man of God. His call to be a teacher of perfection soon showed itself, for after this, says his biographer, "many abandoned the world and became his scholars, and being now freed from the malady of temptation, worthily and with great reason is he made master of virtue".[1]

It is difficult to ascertain exactly in what year this took place; St. Gregory very aptly compares this phase of St. Benedict's life to that of the Levites, who entered upon their service when they reached their twenty-fifth year. But it is scarcely sufficient ground on which to hazard a statement that this was his age at the time; all we know is that he was still very young when called to serve his Lord.

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. ii.

CHAPTER IX.

BENEDICT AS TEACHER AND GUIDE.

A.D. 509.

To hold an office of superiority over others requires a very special vocation. We might well say of it what God declared with regard to the priesthood, "Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was".[1] Benedict had no ambition to rule over any one but himself, and on account of this very humility God chose him to lead and teach men.

Many now came to him for guidance; and he simply and sweetly gave them whatever assistance was in his power, utterly unconscious that he was looked upon as a master in the spiritual life. Perhaps some may wonder where he learnt his discretion and circumspection, his knowledge and grasp of spiritual matters, seeing that he lived entirely alone, removed from any instructors, without any access to books. But Benedict had been taught by the Author of all knowledge; like Mary, he had sat at the feet of Jesus, and learnt the better part. By his intercourse with God, by meditation, by reading the Holy Scriptures, by crucifying his flesh, by despising himself,

[1] Heb. v. 4.

by silence and continual prayer, he had learnt that art which is called by the Master of masters the "one thing necessary".[1]

Like the prophets of old, he had sought for wisdom in the desert and found it in the heart of his God; and by it he understood how to judge himself, and those with whom he came in contact. Neither did he forget those words of Our Lord, "He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger: and he that is the leader, as he that serveth".[2] All who came to him found him a meek and humble servant of Christ; one easy of access and inviting confidence; a man who loved God and all else for His sake, a man with a mean dwelling, mean food, and meaner clothing, but great—aye, great indeed—in virtue and in grace. No wonder that he attracted all hearts. And if, as sometimes happened, contempt and derision were shown him, he gloried in the shame; for "the disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. . . . If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?"[3]

One of St. Benedict's disciples, writing seven centuries later, sums up in the second book of the *Following of Christ* the essence of the instructions which the saint gave to those who gathered round him; for as he himself knew only one science, so he taught but one—the way to Jesus. "When Jesus is present, all goes well and nothing is difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard. When

[1] Luke x. 42. [2] *Ibid.*, xxii. 26. [3] Matt. x. 24, 25.

Jesus speaks not within, our comfort is worth nothing; but if Jesus speaks but one word, we feel a great consolation. Did not Mary Magdalen arise presently from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, 'The Master is here and calls for thee'? Happy hour, when Jesus calls from tears to joy of spirit! How dry and hard art thou without Jesus! How foolish and vain, if thou desirest anything out of Jesus! Is not this a greater damage than if thou wert to lose the whole world? What can the world profit thee without Jesus? To be without Jesus is a grievous hell; to be with Jesus is a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can hurt thee. Whoever finds Jesus finds a good treasure, yea, good above all goods. And he that loseth Jesus, loseth exceedingly much, and much more than if he lost the whole world."[1]

By means of teaching such as this, Benedict led his disciples to share in that intimate familiarity with Our Lord which he himself enjoyed. At the same time he studied the Scriptures with renewed zest, he sought advice, he read the writings of St. Basil and the collations of Cassian, and daily became more proficient and capable of being a leader and ruler of monks.

His sincere attachment and loyalty to Holy Church, and his horror of any division or blemish in the seamless robe of Christ, made him the more eager to inspire his disciples with absolute submission and filial

[1] *Imitation of Christ*, bk. ii., chap. viii.

love towards their Mother, the Church, impressing upon them those words of Our Lord, "And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican,"[1] and the admonition of the apostle, "That there be no schisms among you".[2] And if it be true that example is better than precept, we may say that Benedict was a perfect model of all he taught; and with St. Paul he too might have said, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ".[3] It is impossible to ascertain whether at the beginning his disciples lived with him, or whether, which is more probable, they were dispersed in huts and caves in the surrounding country, meeting at stated times and places. Be that as it may, it is certain that Benedict's name became daily more famous and more widely known.

[1] Matt. xviii. 17. [2] 1 Cor. i. 10. [3] *Ibid.*, iv. 16.

CHAPTER X.

VICOVARO. THE POISONED CUP.

A.D. 510.

A FEW hours' journey distant from Subiaco in a north-westerly direction, but lower down the river Anio, stands the little town Vicovaro (Vicus Varronis), its very name showing its antiquity. Opposite on the left side of the Anio, and close to the bank, there is a steep ridge of rock in which may be found several spacious caves. These were soon sought out by those who craved for solitude, and a religious community was formed there. This was the origin of the monastery of Vicovaro, doubtless an excellent one, and for a time fervour was maintained and all went well. Unfortunately, however, before very long discipline began to relax, a spirit of independence crept in, silence was neglected, poverty ignored, mortification forgotten; and this, not by one or two delinquents, but apparently by the whole community. Nevertheless, in spite of their laxity, the monks could not but admire and reverence the virtues of the youthful hermit whose fame had reached them, and whom they had probably seen; perhaps, too, his example had somewhat stirred their dormant fervour. In any case, it happened that when their abbot died they

unanimously determined to elect Benedict in his place.

With this intention they sent a deputation to him in his cave, and used every argument to induce him to accept the dignity. But the saint had no such ambition, and refused even to consider their proposal. When they persisted, he, knowing something of their life, said plainly to them, "Your manners and mine do not agree". This, however, instead of rousing their indignation as one would have supposed, only increased their desire to obtain his consent, and they renewed their entreaties, assuring him that it would be for the glory of God and the good of their souls. These last reasons at length prevailed, and Benedict reluctantly yielded.[1]

Quitting his retreat which had been to him an earthly paradise, the holy man set out for his new abode, heavy at heart on account of the burden he had taken upon himself. Such a dignity must, in every case, be a responsibility, and a charge fraught with many difficulties; and Benedict found it doubly so, both on account of the rough ground he had to cultivate, and because he felt that his own young hands were unskilled in the work. But he placed all his confidence in God and set manfully to his task, determined to enforce the Rule, and to lead the brethren along the straight path. It is not known

[1] St. Gregory does not give the name of the monastery in his *Dialogues*, but there is no doubt that it was that of Vicovaro. The cave which served as a refectory is still shown to the pilgrim, and St. Benedict's cell has been converted into a chapel,

whether he gave them a new rule, or whether he adopted the one already followed.

He entered upon his office after receiving the blessing of the Bishop of Tivoli, Vicovaro being under his jurisdiction; then, with that fatherly solicitude which characterised him, Benedict began his reform. Poverty was made obligatory, independence was no longer tolerated, idle conversations were forbidden, superfluous food and clothing curtailed, and strict regularity enforced, faults had to be acknowledged and satisfaction duly made. In order to assist the monks, the abbot gave them frequent conferences and exhortations, and poured out upon them all the love and kindness of his great heart, that thereby he might temper the severity of the Rule. But all his efforts only produced the result he had foreseen. The brethren had fostered their evil habits till they had become a second nature; the new regulations seemed to them unbearable, and necessary prohibitions unlawful despotism. At first they nursed their resentment in silence, bitterly regretting their folly in choosing a superior whose yoke they could not carry; then gradually they began to murmur, and to ask one another how such a state of things could be remedied. Benedict, when he perceived this, did all in his power to allay the evil, hoping by time and patience to heal the breach; but the bad seed had sunk deep, and its fruit was already ripe. At length matters came to a crisis. The most depraved among the brethren hid their wickedness under such an appearance of regularity that their foul conspiracy

escaped the abbot's watchful eye. These impious men, having taken counsel among themselves, determined to poison their saintly master and spiritual father. They knew they could easily procure some deadly potion which they would put into the cup from which he daily drank.

Thus we see Benedict apparently on the very brink of the grave, his life hanging on a thread. The morning dawns which those ministers of Satan determine shall be his last. All is in readiness. Slowly and silently the brethren have walked into the refectory, grace has been sung, all are seated. Then the server steps forward with the poisoned cup and, offering it to the abbot, salutes him with the words "*Benedicite Pater*," and the abbot, raising his hand, blesses it in the name of Him Who knows all and can do all, whose might penetrates the bowels of the earth and can deliver from death and hell. The sign of the Cross is scarcely made, the words "*Deus benedicat*" barely pronounced, when suddenly the cup breaks into a thousand atoms as though struck by a heavy stone! The diabolical plan has failed and the gentle power of the Cross has prevailed. The guilty monks were paralysed with terror, and Benedict at once recognised the meaning of what had occurred; for he knew that must have been the drink of death which could not endure the sign of life. Therefore, rising with a calm countenance and a peaceful mind, he thus addressed the monks: "Almighty God have mercy upon you and forgive you. Why have you used me in this

manner? Did I not tell you beforehand that our manner of living could never agree together? Go your ways, and seek out some other father suitable to your own conditions, for I intend not now to stay any longer among you." Thus taking leave of them, he returned to the solitude he so much loved and dwelt alone with himself in the sight of his Creator.

St. Gregory explains very beautifully what he means by the words "dwelt alone with himself," and his explanation gives us an insight into Benedict's interior life. He says: "If the holy man had longer, contrary to his own mind, continued his government over those monks, who had all conspired against him, and were so unlike him in life and conversation, perhaps he would have diminished his own devotion, and somewhat withdrawn the eyes of his soul from the light of contemplation, and being weary daily with correcting their faults, he would have had less care of himself, and so haply it might have fallen out that he should have both lost himself without finding them, for as often as by infectious emotion we are carried too far from ourselves, we remain the same men that we were before, because we are wandering about other men's affairs, little considering and looking into the state of our own soul. For shall we say that he was with himself, who went into a far country, and after he had, as we read in the Gospel, prodigally spent that portion which he received of his father, was glad to serve a citizen to keep his hogs, and would willingly fill his hungry belly with the husks that they did eat? who not-

withstanding afterwards when he thought with himself of those goods he had lost, it is written of him, that returning into himself, he said, 'How many hired men in my father's house do abound with bread'. If then before, he were with himself, from whence did he return unto himself? And therefore I said that this venerable man did dwell with himself circumspectly and carefully in the sight of his Creator, always considering his own actions, always examining himself, never did he turn his eyes from himself to behold aught whatsoever." Here, in St. Gregory's Dialogues, his disciple, Peter, asks whether St. Benedict could in conscience abandon those monks whose government he had taken upon him? And St. Gregory answers, "In my opinion evil men may with good conscience be tolerated in that community where there be some good who may be helped. But where there be none good at all, that may receive spiritual profit, oftentimes all labour is lost that is bestowed in bringing of such to good order, especially if other occasions be offered of doing God presently better service elsewhere. And if you mark well, you shall quickly perceive that venerable Benedict forsook not so many in one place that were unwilling to be taught, as he did in sundry places raise up from the death of the soul many more that were willing to be instructed."[1]

In fact, Benedict was received back by his former disciples with a joy which is easier imagined than

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. iii.

described. His absence had taught them what they had lost, and now they attached themselves to him more closely and intimately than before, and as fallow ground produces more abundant harvests, and the pruned tree more perfect fruits, so now they pressed forward with renewed vigour, and the spiritual life grew and flourished under so skilful a master. For Benedict had himself profited by his stay at Vicovaro, where he had gathered experience, and a more thorough knowledge of men, and now he could confidently teach what he so heroically practised — forgiveness of injuries and love for enemies.

CHAPTER XI.

A GLANCE AT THE HISTORY OF THE TIMES.

A.D. 496-519.

BEFORE we enter upon the life of activity and zeal which St. Benedict is about to join to his life of solitude and prayer, we will take another glance at the history of the Church, and at the events which were then taking place around him. It has been said that a man cannot be separated from the period in which he lives, because he is a member of that society which forms the history of his time. This is especially the case with regard to Christians, who are members of one Church and are individually affected by all her acts. Thus, a Christian is born to the Church by holy baptism, nourished and reared by her sacraments and her doctrines, and sanctified by her benediction; while proportionately to the use he makes of these goods he contributes to her structure and well-being.

Benedict with ever-increasing gratitude understood and valued his position as a son of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church founded on the rock of Peter, and to contribute to her glorification was his one aim and desire. His flight, his solitude, his prayer and vigils, his zeal for souls, all tended to

this one object; hence, he regarded her destiny with keenest interest, and longed for the realisation of our Lord's prayer, that "there shall be one fold and one shepherd".[1] It will not then be irrelevant if, before pursuing his life, we take a glance at the history of the time in which he played so prominent a part.

In 496 St. Anastasius II. had, by the unanimous choice of both clergy and people, been elected to fill the chair of Peter. He was in every way worthy of the dignity bestowed upon him, and an outcome of his great heart was his intense longing to heal the schism which had separated the East from the centre of unity. For this purpose he sent two bishops to Constantinople as the bearers of a letter to the Emperor Anastasius, in which he besought him with fatherly tenderness no longer to suffer the seamless robe of Christ to be rent by impious dissensions.[2] Eagerly did he wait for an answer to his appeal; but he died before it arrived, having governed the Church only two years. Meanwhile the East remained obstinate, although Macedonius, then Patriarch of Constantinople, was estimable in many respects, and was sincerely desirous of seeking a reconciliation with Rome.

Five days after the death of St. Anastasius, Symmachus, a Sardinian, was elected to succeed him by

[1] John x. 16.

[2] The names of these legates were Cresconius and Germanus. They were to demand the removal from the diptychs of the names of Peter Mongus and Acacius, the recognition of the Council of Chalcedon, and the extinction of the schism.

a plurality of votes. He was possessed of many excellent qualities, but, unfortunately, his nomination proved an apple of contention, and Italy was thrown into confusion and alarm.

Festus, a patrician sent to the imperial court to obtain the ratification of Theodoric as King of Italy, had been bribed by the Emperor to do all in his power to procure the recognition of the Henotikon in Rome.[1] The election of a new Pope seemed to him the best moment to effect his purpose. But as Symmachus was not at all the kind of man likely to make concessions in matters of faith, Festus, assembling a large faction of Roman dignitaries, proceeded to choose as anti-pope the Archpriest Lawrence, and caused him to be consecrated on the self-same day as the true Pope. Schism was then publicly declared; the whole city was in a ferment; blood ran freely in the streets, and every species of crime was perpetrated. Theodoric, who, though an Arian, had always shown great esteem for the Church, decided that Symmachus, who had been first elected and received the majority of votes, was the lawful Pope; and he was at once recognised as such. Thus the affair seemed to have ended peaceably, but it was merely on the surface. Before long the two senators, Festus and Probinus, brought up a shameful accusation against the Pope; and matters became so critical that Theodoric determined to hasten his intended

[1] The "Henotikon," a Greek word signifying "Formula of union," was an heretical formula, or edict, drawn up by Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople, at the desire of Zeno, the Emperor of the East.

visit to Rome, that he might in person restore peace. He came in the year 500, and his arrival was attended with unparalleled rejoicings, every species of honour being heaped upon him. St. Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspa, who happened to be there at the time, relates how he saw Theodoric at a place called "Palma Aurea" seated on a magnificent throne surrounded by his court; and struck dumb with admiration, he exclaimed: "Ah! if earthly Rome is so beautiful, what must the heavenly Jerusalem be like? If in this transitory life God surrounds the partisans of vanity with such splendour, what unspeakable happiness He must have prepared for His saints in heaven?"

For a year the ecclesiastical conflict was more or less forgotten, but, in order effectually to put an end to it, Theodoric asked the Pope to convene a Council, which was held in 501. The first session in the Julian Basilica consisted merely of preliminaries; the second took place in the Basilica of Santa Croce. At this the venerable pontiff appeared in person, and his innocence of any charge was so manifest that his enemies were only the more infuriated, and fresh scenes of bloodshed ensued. The Council continued to meet; but the Pope, whose life was in danger, was unable to be present; and at length the prelates again had recourse to Theodoric. His answer might serve as a model to Christian rulers in their dealings with the Church. In his letter to the Fathers of the Council he says, "Had it fallen within the sphere of my

powers to judge this matter, I certainly could with God's help have brought it to a satisfactory close. But it is the cause of God and His ministers, and I call upon you to discuss it; for I deem it not my province to decide in ecclesiastical affairs. Pronounce then your judgment according to the dictates of your conscience, and thus restore peace to the senate, the clergy and people of Rome." The Council then met again in a third session, and declared that Symmachus was entirely innocent of the accusations brought against him; apologising, as they did so, for their decision, because as inferiors they knew they had no right to judge a superior, above all, one who was the representative of Jesus Christ on earth. All such matters concerning his person ought to have been left to the judgment of God alone.

Notwithstanding this apology, the bishops of Gaul loudly protested against the whole procedure, which they considered iniquitous; and headed by St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, they sent a protest to the Italian bishops, expressive of their sorrow and surprise at what had occurred. This protest was as just and energetic as it was mild and conciliatory. One writer says of it: "We do not remember to have found in any age a more strong or significant proof of the deep reverence of any Church towards the Holy See than this letter of St. Avitus, a bishop who on account of his learning and piety was universally esteemed, not only by the Western Church, but even by the barbarians and their Arian kings".

But as the hostile faction continued its calumnies

against both Pope and Council, Ennodius, afterwards Bishop of Pavia, was ordered to refute them, which he did so effectually that all his opponents were silenced. The fifth and last session of the Council was held at Rome in 503.[1] When it became a question of inflicting punishment on the heretics, Symmachus won over even the most obdurate by his extreme leniency; all submitted to the decrees of the Council, and thus the schism ended. It may be that Benedict's ceaseless prayers for the triumph of Holy Church had much to do with a victory in which apparently he took no part.

However, the calm which followed the storm was of very brief duration; scarcely had the last thunderclap died away in the distance when fresh clouds began to gather. Symmachus, impelled by his apostolic zeal, sent a letter to Anastasius, Emperor of Constantinople, in which he declared that he could not in conscience allow the name of Acacius to be inserted in the diptychs, seeing that he had died in schism. The only answer to this admonition was virulent abuse on the part of the emperor, who called the Pope a usurper and a Manichean; added to this, he began to persecute the monasteries in his dominions, and openly announced himself a Eutychian. The two Eutychian Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria were allowed to preach their erroneous doctrines unmolested, and at the same time their impious lives were a continual source of scandal.

[1] The fourth, called "Synodus Palmaris," had been held the year before, 502.

Gradually the greater number of the Oriental bishops were overcome by the threats and entreaties of the Emperor, and consented to condemn the Council of Chalcedon as illegal.

Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, alone resisted, with a firmness which was truly admirable; in consequence, he was hated by the Emperor and his partisans, who covered him with infamy, hired an assassin to despatch him, and when this stratagem failed sent him into exile, electing in his stead a man named Timothy, equally devoid of religion and honour. The emperor then convened a council for the purpose of anathematising the exiled patriarch; and, in his fury against the Church, he actually caused the original documents of the Council of Chalcedon to be destroyed; up to that time they had been in the keeping of Macedonius. These events happened in the year 512. Macedonius lived about four years in banishment near the Black Sea and died at Gangra in 515, where he had fled for refuge from the barbarians. It is generally supposed that he was murdered by command of Anastasius. The Greek Church numbers him among her saints.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, hitherto so closely united with Rome, was now held by one John, who had so far debased himself as to promise to anathematise the Council of Chalcedon in order to obtain the dignity. But owing to the unceasing prayers and efforts of the saintly abbots, Sabas and Theodosius, the erring Patriarch was not only led to see his sin, but even to become a champion of the faith. Thus

it came to pass that, on the day fixed for his public defence of heresy, after having celebrated Holy Mass assisted by St. Sabas and St. Theodosius, he unexpectedly pronounced a threefold anathema against Nestorius, Eutyches, Soteric of Caesarea and Severus of Antioch, whereupon the whole congregation of the faithful burst out into cries of rapturous delight.

Pope Symmachus died on 9th July, 514, in the odour of sanctity, reverenced by all as one as enlightened and zealous as he was pious and generous. Hormisdas, a deacon, succeeded him on 26th July of the same year. He did not announce his election to the Emperor; but in 515 Anastasius showed by his letters a willingness to seek for a reconciliation with the Holy See. This change was brought about by Vitalian, one of his guards, who marched against him with an immense army in order to compel him to cease his persecution of the Church. Anastasius then besought the Pope to convene a council at Heraclea; and Hormisdas sent Ennodius with several other distinguished men to Constantinople as his legates. By the express command of the Pope, they required as preliminaries that the emperor should recognise the orthodoxy of the decrees of Chalcedon and the letters of St. Leo the Great against Nestorius, Eutyches and Dioscorus, and that he should abjure the Eutychian and Monophysite heresies. This he absolutely refused to do; and the legates returned to Rome. Another embassy sent by Hormisdas in 517 was equally unsuccessful. Then, when all human means had failed, God laid His all-powerful hand on

His persecutor, and called Anastasius to his reckoning; he died quite suddenly on 9th July, 518. His death put an end to the schism, which had lasted thirty-five years. Justinian, his successor, was a loyal adherent to the faith, and did his utmost to restore peace and union.

On the 28th of March, 519, the formula of reunion sent by the Pope was solemnly accepted, and signed by the prelates. The orthodox bishops then returned to their sees, and the heretics fled. Alexandria was the only sad exception, Eutychianism having gained there such a firm footing that Justinian feared to make matters worse if he used violence; he tried what he could do by kindness and leniency, but many years passed without a change.

In Africa the Christians, after a brief interval of peace under Gundamund, were treated with the utmost severity by Thrasimund, his successor, who came to the throne in 496. This king gave free license to the Arians to persecute the Christians as cruelly as they chose. The holy bishop Faustus was attacked even in the monastery where he had taken refuge; and Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspa, was so barbarously beaten by an Arian priest that he nearly died. By order of Thrasimund all churches were closed, and it was absolutely forbidden to consecrate any new bishops; thus he hoped the Catholic religion would gradually die out, but, needless to say, new bishops were consecrated, with the result that those who had performed the ceremony were banished, to the number of sixty—some to Corsica, others to Sar-

dinia. The great Eugenius of Carthage, who had but now restored sight to the blind, was once more sent into exile; he went to France and lived in silence and retirement at Albi, where he died, 505. He was buried in the tomb of St. Amaranth, near which he had built a monastery. This monastery was still flourishing in the thirteenth century. Thrasimund reigned twenty-seven years, during which thousands suffered banishment, torture and even death for the faith they valued more than life. St. Fulgentius' biographer says that this persecution can only be compared to the earlier barbarous one under Huneric.

How often must Benedict have uplifted his hands in prayer for the suffering Church, imploring God to turn away the scourge of His wrath, and look once more with an eye of mercy on His people; and at the great day of judgment, when all hearts shall be revealed, we shall doubtless find that many of those African martyrs owed their perseverance and their crown to the young saint who made their cause his own.

CHAPTER XII.

CONTEMPORARY RULERS. FAMOUS BISHOPS.

So long as Theodoric lived uninterrupted peace reigned in Italy. He chose the best and most enlightened men for his counsellors, such men as Cassiodorus, Boetius, Symmachus, Liberius and Ovidius, and thus in ten years the country was entirely changed. Instead of being depopulated and desolate, commerce and agriculture flourished; and, though himself illiterate, Theodoric encouraged every branch of science and art. But illiterate as he was he was very politic, and while he bestowed honours and dignities on the deserving, to all he offered liberty and protection. In him the Church found a faithful defender in spite of his Arian tendencies; he always treated her ministers with respect, and vindicated her privileges as if he had been her most devoted champion. Unfortunately, before his death he became both suspicious and tyrannical.[1]

In France Clovis was extending the true faith by his repeated victories over the barbarians.[2] Pope

[1] He unjustly condemned to death the Senator Boetius, and Symmachus his father-in-law, and also cast the holy Pope John I. into prison, where he soon died. Theodoric reigned from 493 to 526.

[2] Clovis, King of the Franks, is considered as the founder of the French monarchy. The Franks were not one distinct tribe, but

Anastasius II. had written to congratulate both him and his subjects on their conversion, comparing it to the miraculous draught of fishes on Lake Genesareth. When the oppression of King Alaric had reached its height, and the Christians in his dominions were crying out for a deliverer, Clovis volunteered to declare war against him. The Franks hailed this resolution with shouts of joy, vowing not to shave their heads till they had obtained a complete victory. Previous to his departure his wife, St. Clotilde, made a promise to build a church in honour of SS. Peter and Paul if her husband were victorious. Her prayers were heard. The Visigoths were utterly routed at Poitiers, and St. Gregory of Tours says that the dead bodies lay heaped one on the other like mounds. Thereupon Clovis abolished Arianism, restored the churches to their rightful owners, and accomplished an immense work in spreading the Gospel. He was scarcely forty-five when he died in 511; his widow, St. Clotilde, spent the remainder of her life near the tomb of St. Martin of Tours, engaged in works of charity and piety.

Sigismund, a true son of holy Church, at this time

made up of several German tribes who had entered into a confederacy to preserve their independence. They had often before made incursions into Gaul and taken possession of its northern frontiers, when Clovis, young and ambitious, determined to subjugate it entirely. This was about the year 486. He became a Christian in 496, after the battle of Tolbiac. He died in 511, after a reign of thirty years, leaving his kingdom to be divided among his four sons.

reigned in Burgundy, and did all in his power to assist St. Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, in his missionary labours. He founded monasteries, built churches, insisted on the Divine service being carried out with all splendour, and was beloved by all his clergy. Unfortunately he fell into a great sin which cost the life of his son, but repentance speedily followed. St. Gregory of Tours relates that he wept and prayed day and night, and established a monastery for the perpetual celebration of the Divine Office in satisfaction for his crime. God permitted him to fall into the hands of Clodomir,[1] by whom he was executed; but before his death he had so expiated his sin that he is numbered among the saints.

The news of these events spread even into the cloister; and though Benedict lived apart from the world, yet from his proximity to Rome he must have heard of them, and together with his disciples taken part in the joys and consolations, the trials and sorrows of the Church. And if the vicissitudes of human affairs were often the subject of his thoughts and prayers, so also may he be said to have formed the model of his life on the saints who were his contemporaries; for in them his spiritualised vision saw clearly reflected the image of their Creator, and in proportion to this likeness were his admiration and his love.

Many of these saints have already been spoken of, but there are still a few whom we must not over-

[1] King of Orleans, one of the sons of Clovis.

look. In particular we would mention Caesarius, Bishop of Arles; from his earliest years he had shown signs of future sanctity, and at the tender age of ten he entered the monastery of Lerins, where, on account of his singular virtue, he was ordained priest, and in course of time was made abbot of a neighbouring monastery. On the death of Eonius, Bishop of Arles, in 501, Caesarius was forced to accept the episcopate, though he had sought refuge in flight. His zeal in his new capacity was unbounded; among other works he founded a monastery of nuns, placing them under the direction of his sister, St. Caesaria; the Rule which he compiled for them was afterwards adopted by many communities of women. He was falsely accused by Alaric, and banished to Bordeaux, where by his prayers he saved the town from being destroyed by fire. When his innocence was subsequently proved Alaric recalled him, and the inhabitants of Arles went out to meet him, carrying candles and singing psalms. Later on he was again banished and sent to King Theodoric loaded with chains. At the sight of the saint's venerable appearance the king was convinced of his innocence and said: "I trembled when I beheld him, because he seemed to me rather an angel than a man". Caesarius died in 541, having governed his see forty years.

Vedastus, Bishop of Arras, lived about the same time; solitude had made him a saint, and, recognised as such by the Bishop of Toul, he was ordained priest in 496, and deputed to instruct Clovis in the

truths of Christianity. St. Remigius consecrated him Bishop of Arras, and his labours and heroic endeavours were crowned with wonderful success. Viton, Bishop of Verdun, was his contemporary; he shone as much by the holiness of his life as by his numerous miracles, and died in 525, worn out with work and penance. At Lyons St. Viventius, a friend of St. Avitus and St. Apollinaris, was universally esteemed. St. Sylvester was Bishop of Châlons for forty-two years, and was the first instructor of the great Caesarius of Arles. After his death many sick people were laid on his bed of twisted ropes, and thus obtained their cure. St. Gregory governed the Church of Langres for thirty-three years, though he was fifty-seven years old at his consecration and had been previously married. He led a life of remarkable fervour and sanctity, and gave proof of his zeal in his immense labours among both Christians and heathens. He was succeeded in his see by his own son Tetricus, 541.

During the reign of Clovis the fame of the holy abbot Severinus had spread far and wide, as on one occasion when the king's life was despaired of, he had cured him by merely covering him with his cloak; he also cured the deaf and dumb Bishop Eulalius and healed a leper. He succeeded St. Agapitus as abbot, when the latter retired into the desert; and during the war against the Visigoths his presence was sufficient to prevent the plunder of the monastery. Even the elements obeyed his word. He died in 515.

We will conclude this list of St. Benedict's contemporaries with St. Euspicius, a priest of Verdun. Clovis built a monastery for him at Misci, near Orleans, which afterwards became very famous; his nephew, Maximus, succeeded him as abbot, and became the spiritual father of many saints. These and many other holy men, too numerous to mention, shone as bright lights in the Church, and served to point out the straight way at a period when much confusion reigned; and their example led others to walk faithfully in the path of salvation which leads to eternal life.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONASTERIES AT SUBIACO.

A.D. 511-519.

On leaving Vicovaro, Benedict's one idea was to return to his beloved solitude, there to live in unbroken communion with his Creator. But God would not leave concealed the light which He Himself had kindled; and though Benedict endeavoured to hide himself from all men, many disciples continued to gather round him, for he was already renowned, not only for his virtues, but also on account of his wonderful gift of miracles. He had no earthly ambition, yet God had decreed that he should be all things to all men, and that all eyes should turn to him as one capable of imparting the choicest of heavenly gifts. He was silent, yet his very presence seemed to speak to all who beheld him. As his disciples daily increased, they were no longer content to live scattered here and there in the surrounding country; and they desired very naturally to form a community with Benedict for their abbot and guide. Thereupon, having acquired sufficient land, and benefactors having come forward with the necessary means to defray the expenses of

building, twelve monasteries were erected in the course of a few years, *viz.*, from 510 to 519. These monasteries were all within a radius of two miles of Subiaco. If we take into consideration the difficulties of building even one monastery, especially in that mountainous country with but a scant population, we cannot fail to see how the hand of God rested visibly on Benedict and his work; a work unprecedented in the West, and which surpassed and outshone the labours of all his contemporaries. Truly, to change the Sabine Mountains, as he did, into a spiritual paradise required a man of apostolic power, of far-reaching prudence and of angelic purity.

In each of the twelve monasteries Benedict placed an abbot and twelve monks; but though each house had its superior, they were all under his own supervision. He gave them their Rule, frequently visited them, animated them with his spirit, and formed them after the model which God had shown him during his long years of solitude and intercourse with Him. The monks, who loved him as a father and venerated him as a saint, did their utmost to conform their lives to his teaching.

Around his own cave on Monte Calvo, hung as it were between earth and heaven, St. Benedict placed a few chosen disciples, such as in accordance with his own Rule (ch. i.) he deemed to be called to the solitary or eremitical life. In later ages this became the monastery of the Sacro Speco, and is the true cradle of the whole Order. The actual buildings

comprise a basement of chapels attached to the Holy Cave, the crypt of the present twelfth century church and choir. Annexed are the ancient Chapter House and Refectory and monastic offices, over which 200 years ago were built dormitories, library, etc. A tower, raised in the middle ages for purposes of defence, guards the drawbridge, once the only means of access to the Sanctuary, from which a short cloister leads to the church.

The Holy Cave itself, adorned with a handsome marble altar, is lit by a circle of lamps, each inscribed with the name of the monastery whose community desires thus to watch where St. Benedict prayed. The statue of the saint attributed to Bernini is a well-known work of art. The interior walls of the church and cloister are covered with fresco paintings. They form a consecutive record of mediæval art from the eighth to the fifteenth century. Especially interesting are those of St. Thomas of Canterbury (the earliest known picture of the saint), of Pope Innocent III., drawn during his pontificate, and of "Frater Franciscus," afterwards St. Francis of Assisi, a portrait from life, without stigmata or nimbus.

The second monastery built by the holy patriarch was that of SS. Cosmas and Damian, now dedicated to St. Scholastica, situated on a mountain half way between Subiaco and the Sacro Speco. It is not known whether it was named after the benefactor who gave it, or whether St. Benedict had a special devotion to the two holy martyrs. Later on, when

St. Scholastica was honoured in the Order as second only to her brother, this monastery was called after her. It exists even to this day, having been rebuilt in the thirteenth century. Sylvia, the mother of St. Gregory the Great, was much attached to it, and endowed it with large revenues; afterwards, when it was destroyed by the Lombards, she caused it to be restored. The Sacro Speco is now incorporated with it, and twelve religious keep watch in the Holy Cave and there sing the Divine Office. Many eminent men have come forth from the walls of St. Scholastica's, and it has always been celebrated for its regular discipline.

These two monasteries were the most famous of the twelve. The remaining ten may be enumerated as follows: St. Angelus, of which nothing remains but a little chapel in honour of St. Maurus. St. Mary's, which is thought to be the one in which Blessed Laurence the Hermit spent thirty-three years, leading a life of marvellous austerity; he was buried there, though the relics have since been translated to the Sacro Speco, and the monastery now bears his name. The fifth was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and the sixth to St. Jerome; both these were situated on high mountains, and were those for which St. Benedict caused water to flow miraculously from the rock. The miraculous spring may still be seen at St. John's. Then follow St. Clement's, St. Blaise's (later on dedicated to St. Romanus), St. Michael's, situated below the Sacro Speco, overhanging the lake, and the scene of the

miracle of the rescue of St. Placid; St. Victoria's, at the foot of Monte Porcario; and St. Andrew's, afterwards called "Vita æterna". Of these last monasteries no trace remains. In 1699 Bernard of Montfaucon writes that St. Michael's was still standing, but unfit for habitation.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUMMARY OF ST. BENEDICT'S RULE.

I.—*On the Abbot—The Virtues required in a Monk—The Divine Office.*

St. Benedict only wrote his famous Rule later on in life, though there is no doubt that its spirit and outlines were those by which he trained his disciples from the very beginning. In his Rule he describes the religious life: (1) as one of labour and difficulty, by which man regains, through obedience, that which he had formerly lost through disobedience. (2) He says that it is a military service under the standard of Christ, the monk to be clad in the strong armour of obedience. (3) He compares it to a race in the arena. (4) He depicts it as a life of spotless purity and fidelity; and lastly as a school, in which is taught and practised the most sublime of all arts, how to serve God perfectly—a school of divine service in which, to a beginner, many things appear rough and hard, but, after the first difficulties have been surmounted, all is done with the unspeakable sweetness of love. The saint acknowledges that a life of complete solitude is very excellent, but that it is open to many dangers, and can only be adopted with

security by those who have, by many and long trials in a monastery, learnt to withstand alone the enemy of their souls. For this reason he prefers religious life in community, that is, cenobitical, living under a rule and abbot. At the head of this common life is the abbot who must rule the monastery as the representative of Christ, commanding nothing but what is conformable to the Divine precepts, and teaching more by his example than by his words. He is to make no distinction among the brethren, whether noble or servile; nor may he favour or love one more than another unless one be found who surpasses the rest in obedience and good works. According to a fundamental law of good government he is to temper severity with love, reproving the disorderly with sharpness, but exhorting the meek and patient by entreaties. He must not overlook any faults lest they take root, but use all possible endeavours utterly to eradicate them. He is not to take more care of the temporal goods of the monastery than of the souls entrusted to him; nor to complain of the want of temporal means, remembering that it is written, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you".[1] If important matters have to be decided, the abbot must call the whole community to council, and listen to each one's opinion before coming to a decision. In lesser matters he is to seek advice only from the senior brethren according to that saying

[1] Matt. vi. 33.

in Holy Scripture, "Do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done".[1]

The holy patriarch takes the Gospel as the true basis of religious life; and extracting from it the most important precepts, he places them before his disciples in seventy-two short sentences, which contain all that belongs to the practice of perfection. He calls these the instruments of the spiritual art, exercised in the monastery as in a workshop of salvation and sanctification. Upon this foundation he sets the four pillars of the spiritual edifice, *viz.*, obedience, silence, humility and prayer.

Obedience, he says, is the first thing necessary for those who hold nothing more dear than Jesus Christ; and it must be obedience without delay, which signifies that the command of a superior should be so quickly accomplished by the inferior as to be like one foot following another. Neither must the command be obeyed timidly, coldly, or slowly, nor with murmuring or an answer showing unwillingness, but with a good will because "God loveth a cheerful giver,"[2] and the obedience which is given to a superior is given to God.

Benedict drew his love and appreciation for silence from the Psalmist, who says: "I will take heed to my ways: that I sin not with my tongue. I have set a guard to my mouth, . . . I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things".[3] Therefore he wills that those who seek

[1] Ecclus. xxxii. 24. [2] 2 Cor. ix. 7. [3] Ps. xxxviii. 2, 3.

after perfection shall be rarely allowed to talk; while, as for buffoonery and idle words, he will not tolerate them at all in a monastery.

Great, however, as was his esteem for silence, he valued humility even more. He considered true humility as the very height of perfection; a summit to be attained by means of twelve ascending steps, which he enumerates as follows: The first degree is the fear of God which causes the commandments to be obeyed, and the senses and inclinations to be mortified. The second degree is the voluntary submission of the will, according to that saying of Our Lord: "I came, . . . not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me".[1] The third degree is perfect obedience in imitation of Our Divine Lord, Who was obedient even unto death. In some monasteries this degree is the only portion of the Holy Rule read during the last three days of Holy Week. The fourth degree is to receive willingly, when occasion offers, not only hard and difficult commands, but even injuries and insults. The fifth degree is to confess to the abbot all evil thoughts and secret sins, according to those words of the Psalmist: "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord: and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin".[2] The sixth degree is that a monk be content with all that is poorest and meanest, and think himself a worthless servant. The seventh degree is that he really believe himself to be the lowest and

[1] John vi. 38. [2] Ps. xxxi. 5.

vilest of all, saying with the Psalmist, "I am a worm, and no man".[1] The eighth degree is that he do nothing but what the common rule and the example of his seniors teaches him. The ninth degree is that he observe silence unless questioned. The tenth degree is that he be not easily moved to laughter. The eleventh degree is that if he speaks he must do so gently, humbly, gravely, discreetly and with few words, for the Scripture says: "A wise man is known by the fewness of his words".[2] The twelfth degree is that a monk be always mindful of God's judgments, and with eyes cast on the ground think himself guilty for his sins, ever saying in his heart with the publican: "Lord, I, a sinner, am not worthy to lift up mine eyes to Heaven".[3] The holy founder then assures his disciples that, when all these degrees of humility have been attained, they will soon come to that love of God which is perfect and casteth out fear, and that then the exercise of virtue will become not only easy, but a source of delight to them.

From humility St. Benedict passes to prayer, which is the fourth pillar of religious life. He calls it the "work of God," and says that no other work may be preferred to it. He then distinguishes between the vocal prayers made in common and interior prayers uttered only in the heart. He says that vocal prayer is to be carried out in the manner prescribed by the Church; it is to be divided into night

[1] Ps. xxi. 7. [2] *Cf.* Eccl. x. [3] *Cf.* Luke xviii. 13.

watches and day hours; each week 150 psalms are to be said, interspersed with lessons from Holy Scripture and the homilies of the Fathers. About two hours after midnight the brethren are to rise and hasten to the church for the night watches. Whenever the monks hear the signal for prayer they must at once lay aside their work, and go with all speed to the service of God, yet with gravity and modesty. Once in choir, they must remember with what reverence they should stand in the sight of God and His angels, and so sing that heart and voice may accord together.

As to the second kind of prayer, St. Benedict teaches his disciples always to bear in mind that they will be heard, not on account of many words, but for their purity of heart and penitential tears; and that their prayer is to be short and pure, unless prolonged by the inspiration of Divine grace. Supported by these four pillars of obedience, silence, humility and prayer, the monks' daily life in the monastery flows gently on in beautiful order and harmony.

CHAPTER XV.

SUMMARY OF THE RULE (*continued*).

II.—*Officials and Subordinates of the Monastery—Labour—Food—Clothing, etc.*

St. Benedict then proceeds to regulate the offices of the various subordinates. Obviously, it would be impossible for the abbot to preside everywhere in person; he must, therefore, with the advice of the senior monks, appoint a prior to take his place as often as may be required. The abbot may also appoint deans, with whom he may share the burden of government; nevertheless, those so chosen must be on their guard against pride, lest they come to regard themselves as second abbots, which would cause endless scandals and dissension. One of the brethren is to be chosen as cellarer, and must care for the food and drink and other necessaries of the monastery. He must be wise, mature in manners, and abstemious, neither hasty, nor haughty, nor insolent; not slow, nor wasteful, but God-fearing, and he should act as a father to the whole community. St. Benedict specially recommends him to take particular care of the sick, the guests, the children and the poor, remembering that for all he must give an account on the day of judgment. If

the cellarer has really nothing to give to those who ask, he is at least to bestow a kind word, for it is written: "The good word is better than the gift".[1]

If there are priests among the monks, they are allowed to rank next to the abbot, to celebrate Holy Mass and to give the blessing; yet with submission and humility. Other clerics are to hold a middle rank, and all without exception must observe the Rule. If secular priests ask for admission, they may only be received after some time of trial. The porter of the monastery is to be a wise old man, capable of giving a suitable answer to those who present themselves at the gate, and one not given to idle talk. As soon as any one knocks, he must immediately answer "*Deo Gratias*," and then hasten to serve the new comer with all the fervour of charity.

The abbot is to appoint officials for the various offices, but he himself is to be elected by all the community. St. Benedict wills that the monks should choose for their abbot one who excels in virtue, learning and wisdom, even though he be the last of the brethren. If it should ever happen that the community choose one unworthy of the dignity, the bishop and neighbouring abbots are to depose him, and appoint a more worthy steward in his place, knowing that by so doing they shall deserve a great reward.

With regard to the various occupations and the division of labour, the holy Legislator regulates as

[1] Ecclus. xviii. 16.

follows: Idleness, he says, is an enemy of the soul; therefore he requires that the brethren shall so spend their time as by it to merit a happy eternity. He distinguishes two kinds of labour—spiritual and manual; the first he calls reading, the second work done with the hands. Codices were provided from the library for the monks to read; these were manuscripts, which in those days supplied the place of printed books. In summer time two hours before dinner were given to reading, the remainder of the day to manual labour. In winter the time appointed for reading was from the end of Prime till the second hour, and from None till Vespers; in Lent, from Prime till Tierce. There was also to be reading during meals, and St. Benedict especially lays down that the brethren are not to read and sing in turns, but only those are to be chosen who will edify their hearers. During the hours devoted to reading one or two seniors were appointed to see that no one gave himself up to sleep or idle talk. Sundays are to be consecrated entirely to the Divine service, meditation and spiritual reading, with the exception of a few necessary occupations.

After this careful legislation for the mind, the holy Patriarch goes on to speak of the body, which is also to be employed in labour, and thus made to carry out what God had commanded even in Paradise. He says: The brethren are to be employed at certain times in labouring with their hands. In summer he gives to this kind of work the four first and the three last hours of the day, and in winter six hours

in the middle of the day, with an extra hour in Lent. The mill, the garden and the bakehouse are all to be within the enclosure of the monastery, so that the monks may have no occasion to go out, and thus come in contact with the world; the different trades are likewise to be carried on inside the monastery. St. Benedict adds that if the situation of the place, or poverty, requires the monks to reap their own harvest, they are not to be grieved, for by so doing they are monks in very deed, living by the labour of their hands as did the Apostles and the holy Fathers. If there are artisans among the brethren, they may be allowed to exercise their crafts, provided they do so with humility.

All are to take their turn in the labours of the kitchen and refectory, entering on and ending their week's service by asking the abbot's blessing and the prayers of the community. The monks are to treat whatever things may be entrusted to their care as if they were the sacred vessels, because everything belonging to the monastery is to be considered as belonging to God Himself. For this reason, those who end their week of work in the kitchen must hand over what has been used perfectly clean and neat. The abbot must keep a list of all the goods of the monastery, and if any one uses the property of the community in a slovenly or negligent manner he is to be rebuked. The monks may not look upon anything as their own; and without leave from the abbot they may neither give nor receive anything, because they are men whose very bodies and wills

are not in their own power. Neither may they send letters, presents or "eulogiae" without express permission (these eulogiae were blessed breads, which Christians used to send to one another as tokens of love and friendship and communion of faith). St. Benedict shows the greatest dread of anything like proprietorship, because he looked upon it as a source of many evils; hence he legislates on this point with great severity, declaring that "this vice must be cut away from the Monastery by the very roots". Nevertheless, the father or cellarer is to provide the monks with all necessaries.

The daily meal is to be taken at midday in summer, in the afternoon in winter, and during Lent not till the evening. During Paschal time a supper may be provided as well as dinner. There are always to be two dishes of cooked food; and, when seasonable, fruit and young vegetables may be added as a third dish. Every one is to receive a pound of bread, which must suffice for both dinner and supper. Meat is forbidden except for the use of the sick. A certain quantity of wine is allowed, proportionate to the heat and the greater or less stress of work. Both in eating and drinking all excess must be carefully avoided, as unbecoming to Christians.

With regard to sleeping, each monk is to have a separate bed, and either the entire community are to sleep in one dormitory, or else ten by ten with their respective superiors or deans. They are to sleep clothed and girt that they may be ready to rise at once when the signal is given for the work of God.

After the evening meal all are to meet together for the reading of some holy book and for Compline, after which no word may be spoken till after Prime on the following day. It is probable that in St. Benedict's time the monks went to bed an hour after sunset, as the Collations and Compline began at sunset and lasted about an hour.

The monks' clothing is to be chosen according to the climate, and to consist of a cowl, tunic and scapular, with shoes and stockings to cover the feet; the material of these garments to be of a common kind, such as can easily be procured in the country where the monastery may be. The bedding is to consist of a mattress, a blanket, a coverlet and a pillow.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUMMARY OF THE RULE (*concluded*).

III.—*Penances—Novitiate—Profession—The Sick—Zeal and Love of God.*

ANOTHER point upon which St. Benedict insists in his Rule is the maintenance of discipline by the correction of faults. He ordains that any one who commits a fault against the Rule, or who, while labouring, has injured or destroyed anything, shall accuse himself of it before the abbot and community; and make the appointed satisfaction ; if he neglects to do this, and his negligence is made known by another, he is to be more severely punished. By this means St. Benedict would make the monks careful and attentive, remembering, as he says, that the eyes of God are always upon them, and that he who is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in that which is greater. When it is a question of a graver offence—for example, if a monk be stubborn, disobedient, proud, or murmuring—he is to be once or twice privately admonished, before proceeding to the penalty of excommunication. This excommunication is of two kinds. By the lesser, which is imposed for smaller faults, the delinquent is not allowed to intone a psalm or read a lesson in

choir, and he is to take his meal alone, after the rest of the brethren.

The greater excommunication, incurred by graver offences, causes the guilty one to be entirely cut off from the community. He may not go to the choir nor to the refectory, nor may any one speak to him or bless him as he passes. Yet the holy Patriarch here gives proof of his sweetness and mildness, for he adds that the abbot is to take the greatest care of the offending brethren, and use every means to win them to repent. He is to send them, as it were secretly, some older monks to console and encourage them to make satisfaction ; and cause all to unite in praying for them. If his efforts fail, he is to inflict corporal chastisement, and again pray with fervent charity that God, Who can do all things, would vouchsafe to cure the infirm brother. Should even this powerful remedy prove ineffectual, the abbot must, like a wise physician, use the sword of separation, lest one diseased sheep infect the whole flock. Those who are expelled from the monastery, or those who have left, may be received back three times, after which all entrance shall be denied them. This last regulation is a very beautiful evidence of the forbearance of the saint.

The children of the monastery are to be punished with stripes or fasting. As monastic discipline aims not only at satisfying for offences, but also at preventing them, it is to be enforced at the very beginning of the novitiate. Those who come to offer themselves as religious are to be kept at the

door and not admitted for some days, during which time they are to be tried by harshness. After admission they are to remain for a year under the care of a skilled master, who understands how to win souls to God. The novice master must watch the novices narrowly and carefully, to discover whether they truly seek God and are eager for the Divine service, for obedience and for humiliation; and he must lay before them all the rigour and austerity by which monks tend towards God. Three times during the year of novitiate the entire Rule must be read to them. If, after that, they promise to observe all things commanded, they are to write their vows, and, in the presence of the community, to make a promise, before God and His saints, of Stability, Conversion of manners and Obedience. The newly professed shall then sing three times the words: "Uphold me, O Lord, according to Thy word, and I shall live: and let me not be confounded in my expectation".[1] This having been thrice repeated by all, the professed shall cast themselves at the feet of the brethren, and from that time shall be considered as belonging to the community. If as novices they had any possessions, they must before profession dispose of everything, knowing that henceforth they may have nothing of their own. Their clothes, however, are to be kept, in case at any time one of them, succumbing to temptation, shall wish to leave the monastery.

[1] *Reg. S.P.B.*, c. 58.

Those monks who have to go on a journey are to commend themselves before starting to the prayers of their brethren; while absent they must carefully recite their office, and on returning they are to prostrate themselves in the choir, in order to atone for the faults committed on the journey. They must never speak of what they have heard and seen outside, because it is hurtful for monks to hear much of worldly things.

One very stringent rule is that no one may either defend another, or strike, or excommunicate another. If a monk is rebuked for the least thing, or if he see that a senior is even slightly moved against him, he is without delay to prostrate at his feet, and remain there till he receive a blessing. In order to do penance for past laxity, the monks are so to use the holy time of Lent as to repair all the delinquencies of other times; and to apply themselves with fervour to tearful prayer, spiritual reading, compunction of heart and abstinence; each one is to make some offering in the way of abstinence from food and drink, sleep or laughter, that by so doing he may await the feast of Easter with spiritual joy and desire; yet he must acquaint the abbot with what he offers, and do it with his consent and blessing.

The holy Patriarch, knowing that perfection consists in love, desires that monks shall treat all with fraternal charity, and serve, obey and prevent each other in honour. Great care is to be taken of the sick, for in them Christ is more especially

honoured. The same law of charity is to extend to guests, who are to be received as Christ Himself. The abbot and monks are to go and meet them with all reverence, and, after praying with them, are to wash their feet and give them the kiss of peace; a most loving consideration is to be shown to the poor and to pilgrims, who represent Christ in a special manner.

In these few words we have tried to give the spirit and essentials of St. Benedict's Rule; a rule by which he strove to lead his disciples to perfection. He himself esteems it but a rule for beginners, and suggests that one who has mastered it may rise to the higher paths of sanctity by means of the precepts of the holy Fathers. That it was dictated by the Holy Spirit we see clearly from the universal respect and appreciation in which it has always been held, and from the fact that it was adopted by all the Western monks and commended by many Councils.

CHAPTER XVII.

MAURUS AND PLACID.

A.D. 522.

As we have already seen, St. Benedict had now founded his first twelve monasteries and established his Rule in them. Subiaco had become transformed from a barren solitude into a delightful paradise. No longer the dwelling of wild beasts, and the terror of benighted travellers on account of its hissing serpents, it now re-echoed with the sound of God's praises. In its valleys and upon its summits the first Benedictines lived with a purity and perfection surpassed only by that of the angels and saints in heaven. Cardinal Baronius, contemplating the birth and happy beginning of the order, regards it as the aurora or dawn of one of the Church's most beautiful days. He says: "St. Benedict, the patriarch of monks, the resplendent light of the Catholic world, was still concealed in the fastnesses of the Apennines; but neither the height of the rocks nor the deep recesses of the valley could hide so great a light. It soon shed its rays all over Italy, and Rome, being enlightened by it, as mistress of the world diffused it over the whole earth. For what province was there in the empire but would love and admire one

whom Rome venerated and esteemed!" It was not, however, his personal sanctity only which then attracted the eyes of all: a father is best known through his children, and if Benedict had hitherto been honoured for his own merits, he was now esteemed for the wisdom with which he trained up disciples who reflected his humility, diligence, fervour and fidelity; whom he imbued with his own knowledge and discernment in spiritual matters; men who not only carried out the Gospel maxims in their own lives, but whom he rendered fit and capable of impressing them on the hearts and minds of others. The two hours daily spent in reading and meditating on the Holy Scripture, retirement from the world, the continual practice of self-denial, and the renunciation of their own will, together with the wonderful and saintly guidance they enjoyed, all co-operated to train them into perfect monks and true sons of holy Church. Consequently the new order began to be spoken of in every class of society; its fame was spread abroad; young men were eager to join so holy a congregation, and parents were delighted to find an asylum for their children, where they might be safe from the temptations of the world. St. Gregory tells us that many of the nobles and citizens of Rome brought their children to Benedict to be trained by him in God's service. It must have been a touching sight to see those Roman patricians offering their sons to the holy abbot that they might the more surely inherit, not the perishable goods of this world, but an eternal

kingdom in paradise. The saint wisely ordained in his Rule that when a nobleman brought his child to the monastery, he was to make an oath never afterwards to give or furnish him with anything, either by himself or any other person; this was to save the child from any temptation of returning to the world.

About the year 522 three of the leading patricians of Rome, Equitius, Tertullus and Boetius, came to visit Benedict at Subiaco. They were deeply impressed by his evident sanctity and edified by the words of heavenly wisdom which fell from his lips; while they marvelled at the admirable order established in his monasteries, and the union which prevailed among his disciples. They felt that, if they could, they would willingly have broken the chains which bound them to the world in order to embrace so angelic a life. However, being unable to do this, two of them, Equitius and Tertullus, offered Benedict their sons, Maurus and Placid, one a boy of twelve, the other a child of seven, begging him to be a father to them. The saint received these, and the other children brought to him, not so much for the purpose of secular education, but rather as given to God to become future monks, growing up from childhood, as he himself had done, in the practice of monastic life. According to the custom of those times, parents had a perfect right to decide as to the education and future career of their children; hence, if a child was offered to a monastery, it was looked upon as a voluntary pro-

fession. In later days the Church decided that the entering a religious house and the profession must depend on the free will of the individual; and the Council of Trent decreed that religious vows made before the age of sixteen can in no case be binding.

Faustus, the fellow-monk and biographer of St. Maurus, tells us that the latter was the son of a senator named Equitius, and of his wife Julia. St. Benedict loved him the most tenderly of all his monks and instructed him most carefully, training him so carefully in virtue that he surpassed the rest of his brethren in the exactness of his observance. After describing the various kinds of self-denial which he practised in sleeping, eating, etc., especially during Lent, Faustus ends by saying "that he was so devoted to silence and holy reading as to astonish even St. Benedict" (and we may suppose that it took a good deal to astonish him). Doubtless the excellent education Maurus had received, previous to his entry into the monastery, enabled him to teach the other boys, for St. Gregory says "he began to be a help to his master". As he increased in age he naturally became more useful, and by his wisdom and piety was looked upon as a second Benedict.

Of St. Placid, St. Gregory writes that he was quite a child when he came to the monastery. From an old chronicle of Leo the Marsican we learn that his father Tertullus was very rich, and gave St. Benedict eighteen farms in Sicily, a magnificent house in Rome, the whole of Monte Cassino, and other estates.

From this time the names of Maurus and Placid

are inseparably united with that of their holy Father, since they were destined by God to be, as it were, the arms by which he was to spread his Order over the world, and by strengthening and consolidating it interiorly they became two firm pillars of the monastic edifice. There is no doubt that Benedict recognised the future greatness of the two boys, for we find them constantly chosen in preference to others as his companions and assistants. Gordian, St. Placid's biographer, relates how when Tertullus, clothed in purple and precious stones and accompanied by other great lords of the empire, went to visit St. Benedict, he prostrated himself at the saint's feet and implored him with many tears to obtain for him the Divine mercy; Benedict, seeing his humility, raised him from the ground, and instructed him as to the true means of meriting eternal life. Then it was that Tertullus offered his son Placid to be educated and trained in the monastery. Both Tertullus and Equitius are thought to have been related to our saint, and like himself to have belonged to the Anician family.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MONK CURED OF WANDERING DURING THE TIME OF PRAYER.

VERY little is known of the various events which happened in the twelve monasteries of the Benedictine Order while St. Benedict presided over them. St. Gregory has handed down to us a few details which show that the holy Patriarch possessed not only miraculous power, but also supernatural wisdom for the government and direction of his disciples.

In one of these monasteries, governed by the Abbot Pompeianus, St. Gregory says that there was a certain monk who could not remain quiet at his prayers, but as soon as he saw his brethren kneel and dispose themselves for their mental prayer he would get up and wander about, thinking only of worldly and transitory things. The abbot had often rebuked him for his fault and exhorted him to amend, but evidently in vain, for the monk continued to leave the church as soon as the others began to pray. At length Pompeianus had recourse to St. Benedict, and brought to him the erring brother. The saint reproached him very severely for his inconstancy and want of devotion, and the poor monk took his words to heart, and promised to do better. But in two days he was as bad as ever, and, yielding

to his old temptation, wandered about as before while the rest of the brethren poured out their hearts in prayer. The abbot was greatly troubled, and, fearing the consequences of the bad example, he again had recourse to St. Benedict, who consented to come himself and correct the offender. He came therefore to the monastery and, after Lauds, when the monks betook themselves to their meditation, he saw a little black boy pulling the monk by the end of his sleeve. Upon this St. Benedict said to the abbot and to Maurus: "Do you not see who it is that is drawing the monk out?" They answered that they saw nothing. Then he replied: "Let us pray that you may also see what kind of leader this monk has". They prayed for two days, after which Maurus saw the little black boy, but the abbot was not able to do so. The following day, when the office and prayers were finished, Benedict left the oratory, and finding the monk he gave him the correction which, as he says in his Rule, is the best for stubborn minds, that is, he chastised him with a rod. From that day forward the monk received no further molestation from the devil, and was able to remain quietly at his prayers with the rest; so that, St. Gregory concludes, "the old enemy was so terrified that he never again dared suggest any such cogitations, as though by the blows, not the monk, but himself had been stricken".[1]

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. iv.

CHAPTER XIX.

BENEDICT DRAWS WATER FROM A ROCK.

Among the monasteries founded by St. Benedict, there were, as we have already said, three situated almost on the summit of the mountain: the monasteries dedicated to St. Jerome and to St. John, and a third, the name of which has not been handed down to us. In consequence of their position, the monks suffered much from want of water and were obliged to fetch all they needed from the lake half a mile below, the road leading there being exceedingly steep and dangerous. They therefore complained to the saint of the laboriousness of their task, and the great waste of time entailed by so much carrying; and they begged him to change the situation of their monasteries. Benedict, on hearing this, consoled them with "sweet words," and promised to see what could be done. That same night while the monks slept, calling Placid, he bade him accompany him up the mountain side. Silently in the dead of the night, the holy man and the little child wended their way to the rocks above; on arriving there they both knelt and prayed. Then Benedict arose and told Placid to place three stones on the spot where they had prayed, which being done, they returned to their

monastery. The next morning, as the brethren were preparing to go down to the lake as usual, Benedict came to them and told them to go to a certain rock which he pointed out, and to excavate at a spot where they would find three stones, and that God would supply them with the water they so much needed. Having reached the place he had indicated they found the rock already moist; and on digging a hole, a stream of clear water burst forth in such abundance that to this day it forms a brook which, rising at the top of the mountain, flows down into the valley beneath. The joy and delight of the monks at this fresh manifestation of Divine power were unbounded; and the miracle served to increase the love and veneration they had for their holy Father, by whose prayers and merits it had been wrought.

CHAPTER XX.

MIRACLE OF THE IRON SICKLE.

At this time Italy was overrun by the Goths; who formed the greater part of the army, and were practically masters of the country. King Theodoric himself was a Goth, and, together with the most of his countrymen, adhered obstinately to Arianism; nevertheless, many abjured their errors and became faithful sons of Holy Church. One of these came to St. Benedict, asking to be received into the monastery; and the saint perceiving that the poor barbarian had evidently great aptitude for the kingdom of God readily acceded to his request. St. Gregory says: "A certain Goth, poor of spirit, that gave over the world was received by the man of God".[1] Near the monastery there was a spot intended for cultivation, but covered with brushwood and brambles; and thither Benedict sent him, giving him a hatchet to clear away the thicket which overhung the lake. Obedient and willing, the poor man set to work with all his heart, chopping right and left as though he were on a battlefield cutting his way through the enemy; but his zeal was too great, for suddenly the head of the hatchet flew off and fell into the

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. vi.

deepest part of the lake, so that there was no hope of recovering it. Frightened at what he had done, he hastened to find St. Maurus, who was then prior of the monastery; and full of contrition he fell on his knees before him confessing his negligence and mishap. Maurus as soon as possible acquainted St. Benedict with what had happened, who went himself to the lake and taking the handle from the penitent brother cast it into the water. The poor Goth viewed this action with the utmost astonishment, when, lo! on a sudden the iron head rose to the surface as though attracted by a magnet and joined itself to the handle. Then Benedict restored to him the hatchet, saying: "Continue your work and grieve no more". This was indeed a repetition of the miracle which Eliseus worked for his disciples when they were building on the banks of the Jordan. One of them had the same accident as the Goth, and Eliseus repaired it in a similar way.

Leo the Marsican, in his *Cassinese Chronicle*, relates how St. Benedict repeated this miracle after his death. He says that when the monks of Monte Cassino were once building a church in honour of St. Scholastica at Gaeta, one of the workmen let the iron part of his tool fall into the sea, an accident which would have hindered the work; but the monks, trusting in the merits of their holy founder, and mindful of his former power in a like instance, went in a boat to the place where the iron had drifted, and putting the handle into the sea iron and handle were both again united.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAURUS RESCUES PLACID FROM DROWNING.

A.D. 523.

THE miracle by which Maurus saved Placid from drowning contains many points of interest, showing the loving and continual care that Benedict had for his children. It further gives us an insight into the occupations of the monks and novices in those early days; and points out the ancient custom of never leaving the enclosure without receiving a blessing from the abbot. It likewise bears witness to the high degree of sanctity attained by the two saints, and the holy contest of humility between them as to which had deserved so great a miracle.[1]

One day, when St. Benedict was in his cell reading, Placid, then about eight years of age, went to the lake to fetch water, and stooping down to fill his pitcher he lost his balance and fell in. Mabillon thinks that Benedict must have been in the monastery of SS. Cosmas and Damian, now St. Scholastica's, as from it there was a full view of the lake close at hand. St. Placid had only been offered by his father shortly before, yet, in spite of his being the son of one of the principal Roman nobles, we see him at

[1] Dom Mège, *Vie de St. Benoist*, chap. vii.

once employed in menial labour, in order that thereby he might learn to imitate his Lord and embrace for His sake all that was lowly and humble.

The lake into which Placid fell is no longer to be seen; it was an artificial one formed by turning the course of the river Anio, but the river has long since returned to its natural channel. Now there is a deep gorge in place of the lake, and a chapel has been built to commemorate the miracle over the spot where St. Placid was rescued. It is not known whether St. Benedict received a direct revelation, or whether he really saw what was passing at the lake; but hastily calling St. Maurus, he told him the child was drowning, and bade him run and save him. St. Gregory mentions that Placid was carried quite a bow-shot from the bank, so that he must have fallen in at that spot where the Anio, or some mountain torrent, flowed into the lake. Maurus, having asked and received a blessing, ran with all possible speed to execute the command of his father, having no other thought than to obey; and his obedience, triumphing over the laws of nature, caused him to walk upon the water as though it had been solid earth. St. Bernard says that this miracle was greater than the passage of the Red Sea, for the Israelites, being burdened with the spoils of Egypt, were unable to walk upon the waves, and it was necessary that God should prepare a more stable path for them; but St. Peter and St. Maurus, having left all things to follow Christ, were able without difficulty to walk upon the waters.

Having reached the sinking boy, Maurus seized him by his hair, and so drew him to the bank. Only when both were safe on land did he realise what he had done, and felt astonished and frightened. Hurrying back, the two boys related to their holy father what had occurred; and he, immediately disclaiming any share in the miracle, attributed it to the prompt obedience of his disciple. Maurus answered that he had merely acted as he was told, without knowing in the least what he was doing; and that it was impossible to ascribe to him an act of virtue which he had never intended to perform. In this manner the two carried on a holy contest of humility, neither wishing to have the honour of such a miracle; yet, as neither could be judge in a cause in which both were interested, the little Placid undertook to decide the matter; he felt he had a word to say, for he had seen something Maurus had not. "When I was drawn out of the water," he said, "I saw the melotus of our father, and it seemed to me that he drew me out." The melotus was a large cloak worn by the monks of those days, and doubtless God permitted the child to see the cowl of his beloved abbot, that he might thereby recognise to whose merits he owed his life.

This is one of the last events recorded of St. Benedict's life at Subiaco.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

A.D. 522-533.

So few facts are related with regard to St. Benedict's life of labour and prayer in that wild romantic valley of the Anio, from the time he left Vicovaro until he had permanently organised his first twelve monasteries, that we have to picture to ourselves the effect which may have been produced on the mind of the saint by the events happening in the world at large. As abbot, he was necessarily obliged to hold intercourse with many of the clergy about various affairs; and he was also called upon to entertain those guests and pilgrims who, attracted by his reputation for sanctity, came to the monastery in great numbers. By these means he became acquainted with the leading events of the day; and the vicissitudes and difficulties which beset Holy Church caused him to redouble his prayers and supplications for her, and to labour yet more zealously for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Let us see then what the events were which thus affected him.

In the year 522, when Theodoric the Ostrogoth still reigned over Italy, Boetius, of whom we have already spoken and who was related to St. Benedict,

had the joy of seeing his two sons elected consuls. On this occasion they drove through Rome in a triumphal car, accompanied by the senate, and afterwards received the congratulation of their sovereign and his people. Hitherto Boetius had possessed the greatest influence over Theodoric, but soon after these honours had been heaped upon his sons both he and his family fell into disgrace, on the charge of having held secret correspondence with the Court of Constantinople. Boetius himself was thrown into prison, and while there he wrote his famous work on the consolations of philosophy. He was a fervent Christian, and had been an intimate friend of the three Popes, St. Symmachus, St. Hormisdas and St. John I. Under their guidance he had undertaken to reconcile philosophy with the religion of Christ, and to prove that one was but the porch leading into the other. Upon this man, who has been called the Christian Socrates, Theodoric vented his barbarous rage, which seemed to revive in him in his old age, and after causing Boetius to be cruelly tortured, he had his head split open in the year 526. Not content with this infamous deed, he had Pope John I. thrown into a dungeon, where he died from the ill treatment he received. Theodoric only survived the martyr three months. His grandson Athalaric succeeded him, but in eight years Italy was again re-conquered by the Emperor of the East. Pope John was succeeded by St. Felix IV., who was unanimously elected by both clergy and people, notwithstanding Theodoric's endeavours to prevent it.

In the following year, 527, the Emperor Justin was succeeded in the East by his nephew Justinian, a great and good man, who is chiefly celebrated for the code of laws which he drew up, and which form the basis of the jurisprudence of the present day. On the feast of the Epiphany, 529, Gretes, King of the Heruli, was baptised at Constantinople with twelve of his relatives, the emperor acting as godfather. Justinian also sent missionaries to all those parts of the empire where heathenism still lingered, and ordered all pagan temples to be converted into Christian churches. He fortified the empire on every side and was victorious over all his enemies, until in the year 539 a deadly foe presented itself, with which he was utterly unable to cope. This was the plague, which ravaged the empire for five years and carried off entire populations, desolating the most flourishing cities; it was reckoned that one-third of the world's inhabitants died during this period.

In Africa the barbarous Arian persecution came to an end at the accession of the Vandal king, Hilderic, in 523. This prince had been educated as a Catholic at the Court of Constantinople, and his first act was to recall those Catholic bishops who had been banished by his Arian predecessors.

St. Felix IV. died in 529, and was succeeded by Boniface II. Previous to his death, a famous council was held at Arles, over which St. Caesarius presided, for the overthrow of the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian heresies.

Boniface only reigned three years, and John II., a

Roman, was elected in his stead, 532. During his pontificate the celebrated monk Dionysius, surnamed "Exiguus" (on account of his low stature), drew up a new calendar, its special feature being that the years date from the birth of Christ instead of from Alexander the Great or Diocletian. His mode of computation has now been universally adopted. He, likewise, was the first to collect and classify all the ecclesiastical canons, an undertaking which was hailed with enthusiastic applause by the whole Catholic world.

At the desire of the emperor, a conference was held at Constantinople for the extirpation of the Eutychian heresy; Justinian assisted with the whole senate at the last of its sessions, and exhorted the erring bishops to return to the truth, but all in vain.

Two great saints, the Abbots Theodosius and Sabas, to whom we have already alluded, were fast approaching the end of their marvellous lives. Theodosius was recalled from exile on the accession of Justinian, being then in his ninetieth year, yet none the less overflowing with fervour and zeal. Towards the close of his life he suffered much, but uttered no word of complaint; as his last hour approached, he roused himself once more to give an exhortation to his sorrowing children, and then gently and sweetly he slept in the arms of his Lord, 11th January, 529, being 105 years old.

Four years later Sabas followed him to his reward. He had been sent to the Emperor by the Patriarch of Jerusalem to justify and plead the cause of the

calumniated Catholics of his see; Justinian granted all he asked, and would have loaded him with presents for his monasteries, but all these he refused, asking only that a hospital should be built at Jerusalem, and the monks provided with some stronghold where they might take refuge from the incursions of the barbarians. Soon after his return from this mission he fell dangerously ill, and died on 5th December, 532. A few days later St. Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspa, also won his crown. When he was seized with his last illness, the doctors advised several remedies for allaying the sharp pain from which he was suffering. "What!" answered the saint, "do you wish to prevent a dying man from going to receive his reward?" And so he peacefully passed away, amidst the tears and sorrow of all around him, on 1st January, 533.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FRANKS. ST. REMIGIUS.

THE history of the Franks at this period is sad and scandalous, and somewhat intricate. Briefly, it may be stated thus: For eight years after the death of Clovis, his four sons managed to live more or less at peace with one another, partly owing to the influence of Clotilde, their saintly mother, and partly to the authority of Theodoric, the Ostrogoth King of Italy. War having broken out, Thierry, the eldest of the brothers, was victorious over the Danes, and later over Sigismund, King of Burgundy. Clodomir, the second son, continued the war against Sigismund, whom he put to death, but at last was killed in battle; he left three sons. These were tenderly cared for by their grandmother Clotilde, who hoped in time to see them in peaceful possession of their inheritance; but two of them speedily fell victims to the ambition of their uncles, Clotaire and Childebert. The third, Clodoald, having made his escape, became a hermit and died a saint, well known to posterity as St. Cloud. Clotilde, crushed by her grief, made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Martin of Tours, and there passed the remainder of her life in tears and penance for the crimes of her sons; she died in the odour of sanctity in 545.

Theodoric, King of Italy, having died in 526, Thierry seized the opportunity to invade Thuringia, accompanied by his brother Clotaire. Victorious in their enterprise, Clotaire led away among his captives the beautiful Princess Radegunde, whom he destined for his bride; but as she was still very young, he placed her in a monastery for her education, and here she soon gave proof of her eminent virtue. In 538 she was forced to marry her captor and her brother's murderer; however, not long after, having discovered that Clotaire's former wife still lived, she separated herself from him, and built a monastery at Poitiers, where she received the veil from St. Medard, and having been elected abbess, she governed the abbey till her death in 587.

Meantime Childebert reigned in Paris, and misled by a rumour of Thierry's death, he took possession of Auvergne, one of the most fruitful provinces of France. Thierry was furious at what he deemed an outrage, and, as Childebert would not make restoration, a most cruel war ensued. Thierry having laid siege to Clermont, on which he had sworn to be revenged, the bishop, an old man of ninety-two, together with all his flock, made a procession round the town singing the penitential psalms. The following night Thierry had a supernatural dream, which moved him to milder sentiments, and peace was concluded. But not for long: war ever seemed indispensable to the fierce sons of Clovis; they renewed their attack on Burgundy, took the king, Godemar, prisoner, and either murdered him or incarcerated him for the

remainder of his life; from that time he was never again seen or heard of.

It is with a sense of relief that we leave these scenes of violence and bloodshed, and turn our eyes to Holy Church, where we see a marked increase of faith and a proportionate decrease of heresy and unbelief. Saintly bishops governed the flocks committed to them; and numbers of fervent souls retired into the desert, or into monasteries, that they might serve God with undivided hearts. Churches were built and many hospitals and charitable institutions were founded. Among the famous bishops of the day we notice especially St. Medard and St. Eleutherius, friends and companions in their youth, and both successively Bishops of Tournay. St. Eleutherius won his crown first, being martyred by the Franks, whom he was trying to convert, A.D. 532. St. Medard was then Bishop of Noyon, but was elected by the acclamation of the people to succeed St. Eleutherius in the See of Tournay. He governed both dioceses until his death in 545.

Mention might also be made of Albinus, Bishop of Angers; of Nicetius, Bishop of Trèves; of Agricola, Bishop of Châlons, and of Pantagathus, Bishop of Vienne; all renowned for their sanctity and learning. In Austrasia St. Fridolinus founded many religious houses about this time; and St. Marcellus did the same in Neustria, and even in Great Britain. In 533 the great apostle of France, St. Remigius, went to his reward, being ninety-four years old. There is a well-founded tradition to the effect that St. Bene-

dict wrote him a letter on the following occasion: A certain Frankish nobleman, who lived at Toulouse, had a daughter who was possessed by the devil. Exorcisms having been used in vain, the unhappy father resolved to take her to the tomb of the Holy Apostles at Rome. However, not finding even there the cure he sought, and hearing on every side of the wonderful miracles wrought by Benedict, he carried his afflicted child to Subiaco. Benedict was then only twenty-seven years of age, and though his pity was roused by the sad state of the young girl so furiously tormented by the Evil One, yet his humility made him shrink from attempting a cure which would carry his fame beyond Italy, even into France. He therefore bethought himself to send the poor child to St. Remigius, whose holiness he knew by reputation. Thereupon he wrote a very humble and edifying letter to him and gave it to the Frank, telling him to take his daughter to the archbishop, as he himself was unworthy to obtain from God so great a grace. Haeften gives the whole letter, which began: "Dominico sacerdoti Remigio, et frater et conservus in Christo Jesu, coenobialis vitae humilis cultor Benedictus, aeternae benedictionis munus". He then goes on to say: "I rejoice and take so much interest in your progress and perfection, most holy priest of our Sovereign King, that I believe I possess, in your person, the virtues and graces which I have not in my own. I therefore send you this possessed child, that by the merits of your priesthood and sanctity you may drive away the demon, which my sins

prevent me from doing. Since then I know that you possess all virtues in their perfection, I beg that you will offer the Holy Victim to obtain the deliverance of this girl whom the old enemy holds captive, and by this victory procure for me a great joy." St. Remigius was greatly touched by the humility of this letter, coming as it did from one whose fame as a worker of miracles had already reached him; and raising his eyes to heaven, he said: "I give thanks to Thee, O most merciful Lord, for having so highly honoured this age in which I live, as to have given to it Thy servant Benedict to spread Thy glory all over the world". Then placing the letter on the altar, he offered the Holy Sacrifice, at which both father and daughter were present, after which he proceeded to the prescribed exorcisms.

At last the devil was constrained to depart; but before leaving, the proud spirit was forced to confess who had driven him out, and he cried: "Do not exalt yourself, O Remigius! for it is not your command which obliges me to go out of this girl, but Benedict's humility". This story is told by Hincmar, Flodoardus, Peter the Deacon, and most historians of the Benedictine Order.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT SUFFER PERSECUTION."

A.D. 529.

St. Benedict had now spent many years in the Sabine mountains, and the bright light of his sanctity shone with ever increasing lustre. His name was everywhere blessed; all loved him as a father, and sought him as a guide; and persons of every rank and condition flocked to him for advice. He appeared like a boundless treasure, from which all might draw what they needed. St. Gregory sums up his work when he says that his miracles and holy life, together with the virtues of his monks, enkindled the love of Jesus Christ in all hearts; and their fame being dispersed far and near, many gave over the secular life, and subdued the passions of their soul under the light yoke of our Saviour. But the merits of this holy servant of God needed one thing more to crown and complete them; seven beatitudes were already his, he was poor in spirit and meek in heart; he mourned for his own sins and those of the world; he thirsted for justice, was merciful and a true peace-maker; now he was called upon to suffer for justice's sake, and the opportunity came in the following manner: Florentius, the parish priest of a neigh-

bouring church, began to cherish a feeling of envy towards St. Benedict; and, as this increased, he tried to dissuade others from going to visit him; however, finding his efforts fruitless, he resolved to destroy the object of his hatred. He could not bear to see the numbers who constantly had recourse to him, many even embracing his way of life. Above all, he thought it intolerable that all this confidence should be placed in one who was not a priest.

The house of Florentius was so near the principal monastery at Subiaco that it was only separated from it by the lake; he had therefore continually under his eyes what was to him so great a torment, namely, the holy life of Benedict and his disciples, as well as the concourse of people daily arriving from Rome and different parts of the country. St. Gregory says that Florentius would gladly have enjoyed a like reputation though he had no mind to earn it, and so the force of envy burnt stronger and fiercer in his soul, until at length it so blinded him that he yielded to a most diabolical suggestion. As we have already said, it was customary in those days for persons to send each other "eulogia," or blessed bread, in token of spiritual friendship; and thus, hidden under the guise of a Christian act of courtesy, Florentius hoped to strike a mortal blow, for in the bread he had placed poison. Like another Judas, he played the hypocrite and feigned love and charity while his heart fostered hatred. Benedict received the loaf with thanks, although he was well aware what it contained, either by a Divine inspiration, or

by his previous knowledge of the donor's character. At dinner time when all the monks were in the refectory, a raven from a neighbouring forest came, as was its wont, to receive food from the hands of the saint; Benedict threw it the poisoned loaf, saying: "In the name of Jesus Christ take this bread, and carry it to a place where no man shall be able to find it". But the raven was in no hurry to obey; perhaps it wanted to show its horror of the indignity offered to its holy master, for St. Gregory tells us that it opened its mouth, and fluttered about, and hopped up and down around the loaf, croaking, as much as to say that it was willing to do what it was told, but had not the power. Seeing this, Benedict repeated his command, saying: "Do not be afraid to lift it up, and put it where it cannot be found". Then at last, after much ado, the raven made a supreme effort, fixed its beak into the loaf and flew away, returning after three hours to receive its accustomed meal.

Benedict, however, was deeply grieved at the animosity of the priest, not so much on his own account, as for the sake of the unhappy wretch. For a long time he had watched with sorrow his downward course. Formerly Florentius must have been a good man, or he would never have been ordained; his nephew, too, was deacon in Rome, which seems to point to the fact that he came from a worthy and respectable family, though, by giving way to envy and jealousy, he gradually fell so low that nothing was too wicked to satisfy the passion that

consumed him. From his "solarium," or balcony, he narrowly watched all the movements of his enemy, as he considered Benedict, anxiously awaiting what he thought must be the inevitable result of his gift. When he saw that, instead of Benedict being carried to his grave as he had hoped, nothing happened at all and things went on just as usual his rage knew no bounds. Far from taking to heart what had occurred, and thanking God for averting his mad crime, the frustration of one plan only made him conceive another still more hateful. Finding that he could not harm Benedict personally, he determined to ruin the souls of his children by exposing them to a vile temptation; with this intent he sent some girls to bathe in the Anio, under the very windows of the monastery, and told them to dance and sport together in sight of the monks. Hitherto no sign of anger, no word of complaint had passed the lips of the saint; he had rather sought to pacify the indignation shown by some of his monks at the infamous conduct of Florentius. So long as persecution and insult were directed only against himself he heeded not; but when danger threatened his children, he resolved to secure peace for them even at the price of leaving Subiaco, remembering those words of Our Lord: "Give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge to Me; I will repay".[1]

We cannot but be struck with the generous way in which St. Benedict treated his enemy: he, who

[1] Rom. xii. 19.

had received the gift of miracles and was venerated as the father and benefactor of the whole country around, did not hesitate to give place to a man devoid of virtue; to one who was ambitious and despicable, and who by his selfishness had alienated from himself any affection that others might have had for him. St. Gregory says that, fearing the danger for his younger monks whom Florentius had attempted to corrupt, and reflecting that it was only done to spite himself, he yielded and withdrew; first, however, he put in order all the monasteries that he had built, assigning their government to superiors whom he selected. Then, choosing a few monks as companions, he made preparations for immediate departure.

The thought of leaving his loved children caused him great sorrow; it was a very real trial to him to quit a home where he had spent thirty-six years; a home to which God Himself had brought him, and where he had received so many lights and favours; a place he had watered with his tears and often with his blood; which he had sanctified by his unceasing prayers and austerities, and which he had filled with so many bright examples of virtue in the persons of his monks.

Faustus tells us that so great was his affliction that Our Lord deigned in His compassion to console him, and appearing to him in a vision said: "Why are you sad, My son? Do you not know that if the wicked have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also? I desire you to change your abode, and to tread other paths, for I have chosen you to spread

the light of My Gospel. Arise then, and go to Monte Cassino; you will find there a people given up to the worship of idols; Satan reigns over their hearts, and they know nothing but what his malice has taught them. Strive to instruct them in the truth, and convert them to the knowledge of My name. Fear nothing; I shall be with you and will not forsake you. Be generous and constant; I will make you master of the fortress and there you will found a monastery which will immortalise your name." Comforted and encouraged by these Divine promises, Benedict prepared to depart, and assembling his sorrowing children he addressed to them his parting words, saying: "Hearken to me, my brethren and dear children, who have been my companions and who will one day share with me the glory promised by the King of Heaven. If I were to follow my own inclinations rather than the Divine ordinance, I should never separate myself from you, but should pass the remainder of my life in this solitude; as, however, my Lord Jesus Christ has commanded me to go to Monte Cassino, there to exterminate idolatry and to banish Satan from his throne, we must prefer the will of God to our own inclinations, however holy they may seem. You know, besides, the evil means taken by the priest Florentius to kill me, not only endeavouring to poison me, but seeking to destroy the souls of my disciples. For this reason I must yield, and follow the counsel of the Gospel, 'When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another'.[1] I must

[1] Matt. x. 23.

then depart, for the command of Our Lord urges me to extend charity towards the whole world and to succour all men according to the grace I have received from Him. As for you, my children, remain steadfast in the observance of the Rule I have given you, and live as though I were still among you; and be assured that your reward will be so much the greater, as you will have been the more fervent and exact in your religious exercises." Then he asked them never to forget him in their prayers, and promised ever to bear them in his heart.

At these words, the poor monks, who had had no previous warning of his departure, were struck with consternation, and while they prostrated for his blessing they could not contain their tears. The saint hastened away, anxious to put an end to the scene which was almost more than he could bear; and in a few minutes he had left the monastery, and was wending his way through the rocky precipices which surround it.

And now one of the prophecies[1] announced by an

[1] 1. Thy Order shall flourish until the end of the world.

2. In the latter ages it will be remarkable for its fidelity to the Holy Roman Church, and by its means many will be maintained in the Faith.

3. All who die in thy Order shall be saved: if any of thy children begin to live unholy lives, and are not converted, being confounded, they will either be expelled from the Order, or they will leave it of their own accord.

4. Any one who persecutes thy Order, and does not repent of his sin, shall depart this life by a terrible or premature death.

5. All who love thy Order shall make a good end.

—(*Ex Cronolog. Arnold. Wion.*)

angel to Benedict was about to be realised, *viz.*, that those who inflicted injury on his order should perish miserably. A message was brought to Florentius telling him that Benedict had been seen to leave the monastery with some monks, and that they were going to the south of Italy. This filled him with exultation, and hastening up to his balcony, from which he could view the whole country, he began to congratulate himself on what he considered the success of his efforts. He thought he had attained the object of his desires. Poor wretch! in one instant the balcony gave way, and burying him beneath its ruins, sent him thus unprepared before the awful judgment seat of Him Whose servant he had persecuted.

The news of the catastrophe soon reached the monastery, and Maurus and several others at once set off to try and overtake their beloved abbot, who had only left about three hours before. After a few miles they caught up the little party of travellers, and Maurus joyfully exclaimed: "Return, my father, for the priest who persecuted you is dead". These words struck Benedict to the heart, and he was inconsolable to think that his enemy should have been called away without time for repentance. He had left Subiaco in the hope that the poor unfortunate man would cease to offend God, and now he had died, and that suddenly. His grief seems to have been very great, for St. Gregory says, "*sese in gravioribus lamentationibus dedit*".[1] He was distressed too

[1] *Dialogues*, chap. viii.

that Maurus should rejoice, and gave him a severe penance for presuming to exult over the death of any enemy. Neither would he accede to his request to return to Subiaco, but, dismissing him, continued his journey to Monte Cassino.

BOOK II.

LIFE AT MONTE CASSINO.

CHAPTER I.

BENEDICT'S ARRIVAL AT MONTE CASSINO.

A.D. 529.

BENEDICT was now in sight of his third home, a mountain which until that time had been the abode of demons, and the scene of most abominable rites and sacrifices. St. Gregory says that everywhere around its summit groves had sprung up dedicated to the worship of devils, in which frantic crowds of heathens revelled over their sacrilegious sacrifices; soon, however, this spot was to become a holy sanctuary resounding with God's praises. As we have already seen, St. Benedict made his journey thither on foot; truly it was a holy pilgrimage, the missionary journey of a hero of faith. Gordian, the monk, avers that both Maurus and Placid accompanied their holy father; but from St. Gregory's account it is evident that Maurus only followed at some later date. Many writers also tell us that God sent two angels to conduct Benedict on his way, and that three ravens accompanied him from Subiaco to Monte Cassino. These ravens settled in the trees which surrounded the monastery, and in one of his sermons St. Peter Damian relates how their descendants were still living in his time, and daily fetched their food from the monks' table.

If angels conducted Benedict on his way, angels also came out to meet him: the guardian angels of the poor deluded inhabitants of Monte Cassino. Their joy was unbounded, for they knew that this blessed saint would drive out the spirits of darkness which had so long held possession of the hearts which God had entrusted to their keeping; and that now, once more, Christ would reign and dwell among them. It is not known what route the saint chose for his journey, though probably he went the direct way, passing through Alatri, Sora, Arpino and Atina, a distance of some fifty miles over very mountainous country. At Alatri he received hospitality in the monastery of St. Sebastian, governed at that time by the deacon Servandus, and on the following day, as he rested at the town of Veroli, he foretold that an abbey would be built there, dedicated to St. Erasmus, and traced on the ground the plan of the church; later, this proved to be one of the first foundations from Monte Cassino.

Monte Cassino is situated in the territory now known as the "Terra di Lavora," about half-way between Naples and Rome, and is one of the grandest and most beautiful spots in Italy. It rises abruptly to a height of 3,000 feet, and even in the hottest season its summit is always cool. In ancient times a colony from Rome built on its slope the city of Cassinum; but Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, when he had conquered Italy, destroyed it as a stronghold which might prove dangerous to his power. Almost from its foundation this town formed an episcopal

see; and in 483 we read that St. Severus, one of its bishops, was present at the Council of Rome. With the destruction of the city the bishopric seems also to have perished. At the foot of Monte Cassino is a very picturesque and fertile plain, known by the name of the "Campania felice"; here also may be seen the ruins of the old castle of Aquino, famous as the birthplace of St. Thomas. Thomas was only five years old when he was sent to Monte Cassino to be educated by his uncle Sinnebald, the fifty-sixth abbot.

It is easy to understand how, after the destruction of the city, the deserted groves of Monte Cassino became well fitted to afford a hiding-place for the few remaining heathens of those parts; and the ruins of ancient temples on the top of the mountain, hidden from the valley by the thick woods surrounding them, attracted a little band of pagans who took up their abode there. But they were not the only inhabitants of the mountains; there was also a saintly old hermit who, as Benedict approached, received intimation from an angel to go elsewhere and make room for a greater servant of God. St. Gregory in his third book of *Dialogues* tells us that his name was Marcius (or, as some authors call him, Martin), and that he instantly obeyed the angel's command and retired to a mountain at a little distance. Afterwards he became a disciple of St. Benedict, though he never quitted his hermitage. On one occasion he chained himself to a rock, upon which St. Benedict sent a monk to say to him: "If

you are God's servant, let the chain of Christ and not a chain of iron hold you!" The good hermit forthwith loosed his chain, but he never went farther than the chain had formerly permitted him.

As St. Benedict ascended the mountain with his little band, and saw on every side tokens of idolatry and superstition, his new home must have appeared anything but inviting; yet, glowing with holy zeal to fight the battles of our Lord, he resolved to destroy the work of the Evil One, and to erect a fortress of peace into which he would gather together a silent generation of prayers and singers who would draw down by their labours and penance, their tears and good works, the grace of God, not only upon Monte Cassino, but upon the whole world. Doubtless he already foresaw what this mountain was to become, and how the monastery he was about to found would be a nursery for saints and illustrious men, who would help to support the Church in her hour of need. Cardinal Newman, comparing the Benedictine Order to a vine, says: "As an exuberant vine with its running branches and broad leaves overspreads the massive structure of a wall, and hides all beneath with the richness of its foliage and the multitude of its clustering fruits, so was the family of St. Benedict. It seemed at one time to take possession of the visible Church; its spirit entered into the line of pontiffs, the twelve degrees of humility ascended the Holy See and sat upon the pontifical throne, and fifty pontiffs of the family of St. Benedict reigned over the Church of God."

CHAPTER II.

EXTINCTION OF IDOLATRY AROUND MONTE CASSINO.

HAVING reached his destination, Benedict did not at once begin his task of evangelising. That was not his way of setting to work, but after giving directions to his monks to build themselves huts as a temporary shelter, he retired to a place close to the temple of Apollo, the very stronghold of the enemy. There he spent forty days in fasting, solitude and prayer, like another Jacob wrestling with God to obtain grace to fight against this false divinity and to open the eyes of the deluded inhabitants. Meantime the sight of his venerable countenance and majestic figure, and the reputation which had preceded him of his miraculous powers, disposed their minds to look upon him favourably; they marvelled more and more at the mysterious life he led, and began to wish he would speak to them. Then, when Benedict felt that the harvest of souls was ripe, he came forth from his seclusion to gather it in for his Lord. His countenance shone with a heavenly light, a reflection of the fire of charity which burnt in his heart—charity towards those souls whom Christ had redeemed; and the peasants, seeing this, gathered round him and listened awestruck to his

powerful words. He spoke to them of Him Who had brought light into the world, Who was Himself the light which enlightens every one who loves not darkness. He explained to them the mysteries of the true faith, and convinced them of their errors, and this not only on one occasion, but, as St. Gregory relates, he preached continually. In a short time he had made such an impression on the people that they themselves assisted him to break their idols and to set fire to their groves; the temple itself he purified, and after removing every vestige of idolatry transformed it into a Christian church dedicated to St. Martin; and at some little distance, on the very spot where the altar of Apollo had stood, he built a chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Peter the Deacon, who was the annalist of Monte Cassino in the twelfth century, tells us that these two oratories were not enclosed within the original monastery, but later on, when the monastic buildings gradually grew and spread, they became part of the enclosure. St. Martin's stood nearest the gate; St. John the Baptist's was higher up the mountain.

St. Benedict was not content with merely pulling down the idols and destroying the groves on the mountain; he also preached in the neighbouring country, and gave himself no rest until he had uprooted the last remnant of heathenism in those parts. Only one circumstance is mentioned by his biographer with regard to his labours among the heathens; and though we would fain know more, still from this one event we may gather some idea

of the malice and spite of the enemy against whom he was contending. St. Gregory says that the devil could not endure the overthrow of his power, and appearing openly to the saint complained with loud cries of the violence that was being done to him, so that the monks could hear his words although they could not see him. This happened several times, when at last one day, as he could get no response from the saint, he was so enraged and furious that he cried out: "*Maledicte, non Benedicte!* what hast thou to do with me, why dost thou trouble me?" Afterwards Benedict told his monks that he had seen Satan with his bodily eyes, under a horrible form, as it were on fire, raging against him with flames bursting from his eyes and mouth.

However, these diabolical persecutions only served to increase the zeal and courage of God's servant; and so greatly were his efforts blessed that not only were infidels and idolators brought into the bosom of Holy Church, but many persons of rank came from afar to see and hear him, and were so affected by the wonders he performed that numbers of them, leaving their friends and possessions, begged to be admitted into the company of his disciples. Henceforth Monte Cassino and the "terra di lavora" no longer belonged to the prince of darkness, but to him who was blessed both by grace and name, and who had striven so bravely to win it for God. All regarded Benedict as their father and benefactor, and in return for what he had done for them brought him and his monks the necessaries of life and materials for the erection

of a monastery, thus confirming those words quoted in the Holy Rule, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, . . . and all these things shall be added unto you";[1] and again, "There is no want to them that fear Him".[2] The little mustard seed had now been put into the ground; before long it became a mighty tree, and the birds of heaven came and lodged in its branches.

Of the power and riches gradually attained by the Abbey of Monte Cassino we may form some idea from the following figures given by Arnold Wion. He says the monastery possessed in the thirteenth century four bishoprics, two duchies (Gaeta and Fondi), two principalities, twenty provinces, thirty-six towns, 250 castles, 440 houses, 336 farms, 320 harbours, 200 mills, 1,662 churches. Bernard Montfaucon, who visited Monte Cassino in November, 1698, found in the archives a document conceding to the abbey the following rights and privileges: (1) The abbot could confer a title on any person under his jurisdiction; (2) he might raise an army and declare war; (3) he had power to elect all the officials within his territories; (4) the bishops of the kingdom of Naples, the archbishop himself not excepted, were to act as his vicar-generals, and considered it an honour to do so. Pope Sixtus V., who lived after the Council of Trent, confirmed the rights of the abbots to call synods and found seminaries in their own territories, to give faculties to their subordinates, and confer minor orders and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

[1] Matt. vi. 33. [2] Ps. xxxiii.

It must not, however, be inferred from this marvellous list of riches enjoyed by Monte Cassino and many of the great abbeys in the Middle Ages that the individual monk was any the less poor. In some monasteries, no doubt, abuses crept in, and the poverty so strictly enjoined by St. Benedict was unfortunately ignored; but these were the exception, and such abbeys, becoming speedily corrupted, fell into decay. In the greater number the letter of the Rule was adhered to which says (chap. xxxiii.) that monks are to have *nothing whatever* of their own, for they are "men whose very bodies are not in their own power". Hence, no labour was considered too hard or too menial, so much so that in many places the monks built their own monasteries and churches, though they had ample means to employ workmen to do it. Surely, however, the greatest proof of the fervour and detachment of St. Benedict's children lies in this, that no less than 55,460 are publicly venerated as saints; and who shall count the vast number whose lives were hidden with Christ in God, and now enjoy the reward of their prayers, their penance and their love?

CHAPTER III.

THE ERECTION OF A MONASTERY.

A.D. 530.

HAVING expelled his enemies and obtained peaceable possession of the mountain, Benedict next turned his attention to the erection of a suitable monastery. Such an undertaking, however, was no light task; indeed it is almost incredible how the monks managed to dig foundations in the solid rock, or how they carried the huge stones up that steep ascent. Nevertheless, the command of their holy abbot was sufficient for them, and they set to work joyfully, labouring from early morning till late in the evening, and the poor people of the surrounding country did their best to help those whom they already esteemed as fathers and benefactors.

The natural difficulties which the monks had to cope with in raising a monastery on such a lofty eminence were very much increased by the malice of the Evil One. When he saw the monks busily employed in building a house wherein so many pure and holy souls would fight against him and destroy his empire, he determined to dispute every foot of ground with them; and if he could not make them abandon their undertaking, at least he would trouble and hinder them as much as he could in every way.

So it happened one day that, when the monks were clearing the site, they found a large stone lying in the way; this, they thought, would be useful for building, and two or three of them went to remove it; but when they tried to lift it, to their amazement it remained immovable, as though rooted to the ground; even the combined efforts of the whole community could not stir it. Then, guessing how matters stood, they sent to fetch the abbot, that by his prayers he might expel the enemy. Benedict, having reached the spot, knelt and prayed; then rising he blessed the stone, and the monks were able to carry it away with the greatest ease.

The holy man soon after returned to his prayers, but remained near the building in case the devil should continue to molest his children. Scarcely had he left them, when, as they were digging in the place where the stone had lain, they came upon a bronze figure of Venus, and, without paying much attention to it, flung it into a temporary kitchen close by. Suddenly, however, they saw that this kitchen was on fire; and hastily running to fetch water, they threw it upon the flames. Benedict, hearing the commotion, went to see what was the matter, and the monks cried out to him: "Look, father, the kitchen is burning"; but he answered that he saw no fire, and told them to make the sign of the Cross on their eyes. When they had done so they perceived that the whole thing was merely an artifice and delusion of the devil to hinder them, and, thus undeceived, they joyfully resumed their labours.

But if they were not wearied, neither was their tormentor; for, being defeated in two attempts, he plotted a third and more serious attack. The monks after toiling hard had raised the walls to such a height as to be almost ready for roofing, when, as Benedict was praying in his cell, the devil appeared to him and mockingly told him that he was going to visit his children at their work. The holy man was alarmed at this intelligence, and immediately sent a messenger to warn them to be on their guard. No sooner, however, had he arrived on the scene, than the wall which they were building suddenly gave way, crushing in its fall a young novice, called Severus, the son of a Roman senator. The monks were greatly distressed and troubled when they saw what had happened, not on account of the loss of their labour, but because of the accident which had befallen their brother. One of them quickly ran to tell the abbot, who merely bade him bring the boy to his cell; but the youth was so mangled and crushed that there was no way of carrying him, except by putting him in a sack. In this manner they brought him to the saint, and laid him on the mat where he was accustomed to prostrate himself in prayer. Then Benedict, having dismissed them all and locked the door, implored God to restore life to the bruised corpse and not to let His enemy triumph; presently the novice rose up sound and well as he had been before the accident. St. Gregory says that the holy abbot, in order to confound the devil, sent Severus back to his work that he might help to raise again

the very wall which had crushed him. Thus the very thing by which Satan hoped to dishearten the monks only served to give them fresh encouragement, and to increase the honour and authority of the saint.

In a short time the labours of the monks were crowned with success; and the monastery stood completed on Monte Cassino, a silent though eloquent invitation to all who beheld it to taste and see how sweet a thing it is to serve God. Meantime, while the monks had been engaged in building, Benedict had been occupied in putting the finishing strokes to his Holy Rule, and in adding some chapters regarding the government of the monastery, which had not been required at Subiaco when only twelve monks lived in each house.

CHAPTER IV.

ST. SCHOLASTICA.

It would be impossible to write the life of the blessed Benedict without mentioning one who was knit to him by the closest ties of kindred and natural love; one who, under his guidance, reached the very summit of perfection. Her name, Scholastica, well befits her, it so exactly describes her life, her virtue, and the wonderful gifts bestowed upon her; for she was ever striving to know God more, and to learn from Him heavenly wisdom. Venerable Bede and other writers tell us that this name was a title of honour, and as such was applied to St. Jerome, Palladius and other great men, and even to some illustrious women.

Benedict and Scholastica were twins, and it would seem the only children of their parents. As their mother died in giving them birth, they must have clung to one another with a very special love. Tradition says that, when Benedict went to study in Rome, Scholastica remained with her father; but, hearing of her brother's flight and of his consecration to God, nothing would satisfy the eager longings of her heart, except to follow his example; and her father, yielding at length to her entreaties, and more generous even than Abraham, gave to God this his

second and only remaining child. It is generally supposed that she lived with some other pious virgins until such time as she was able to found a monastery under St. Benedict's direction. Whether this be so or not, we know for certain that her whole life was dedicated to her Divine Spouse and to Him alone; that she was untouched by the poisonous breath of the world, and preserved the spotless purity of her innocence; and that, walking always in the fear of God, she ever sought after His best and most perfect gifts. St. Gregory speaks of her as a "*Sanctimonialis*," which word was only applied to consecrated virgins living in community; and this seems to confirm the tradition that she was already a nun before she followed her brother to Monte Cassino.

The harmony which existed between the souls of the brother and sister induced Scholastica, as soon as it was practicable, to settle down in the immediate vicinity of one who was not only her brother, but also her spiritual father and guide. Benedict formed and taught the little community and set it on a firm basis; but once it was solidly established, and duty no longer required it, he ceased to visit St. Mary's of Plumbariola, as the convent was called. Once only in the year did he relax this stern rule, and meeting his sister at a little house half way between the convent and the abbey, he would spend the day with her conversing on spiritual subjects. Doubtless a brother and sister so devoted as they were would gladly have met and conversed frequently, but they mutually relinquished even this sweet and innocent

gratification, in order to seek consolation and sympathy from God alone.

With the exception of the remarkable miracle which we will relate later, very little is known of St. Scholastica ; it is said that she and her nuns lived a very austere life—*valde austera*—and that they were full of the sweet odour of sanctity. St. Bertharius, an abbot of Monte Cassino who was martyred in 884, speaks of her as a "virgin of the Lord, who, together with other holy virgins, served God". The convent of Plumbariola was destroyed by the Lombards at the same time as Monte Cassino ; but when Rachis, King of the Lombards, took the habit in this monastery in the eighth century, his wife Tasia and his daughter Ratrudis rebuilt the convent, either on the old foundations or close by, and there they lived until their death, to the edification of all.

Yet, though so few facts regarding St. Scholastica have come down to us, we know that she made herself a saint, and a very great saint, simply by the exact observance of her Rule and her perfect fidelity to grace ; and notwithstanding the hiddenness and uneventfulness of her life, she has left behind her a reputation which entitles her to be called "Mother" by all the children of St. Benedict, while, as Mabillon says, she is in a special manner the leader, teacher and guiding star of Benedictine nuns.

CHAPTER V.

MONASTIC LIFE AT MONTE CASSINO. BENEDICT'S GIFT OF PROPHECY.

At Monte Cassino the monks daily increased in numbers, drawn to the monastic life by the virtue and wisdom of the holy founder, and the sanctity of his first disciples. The Rule which the saint had given them was most carefully observed, "*solicite servabatur*," as St. Gregory expresses it. Benedict himself watched with fatherly solicitude the progress of the souls entrusted to him, and prayed unceasingly for the knowledge necessary to govern them wisely. In addition to his other gifts God bestowed upon him that of prophecy, so that he was enabled to foretell the future, to perceive hidden things, to be present with his children even when they were absent, and to penetrate the secrets of their hearts.

It was one of the precepts of his Rule that when the monks were sent out on business they should never take any food outside the monastery. This regulation he enforced with no little severity, seeing that he lays down that "those who eat outside the monastery, even though invited, are to be excommunicated, unless they have the permission from the abbot so to do".[1] It happened one day that two

[1] *Rule of St. Benedict*, chap. li.

monks, being sent out on some errand, were detained longer than usual; and going to the house of a pious lady partook of the refreshment she offered them. Returning very late to the monastery, they went as usual to the saint to receive his blessing; but instead of blessing them he asked where they had taken food. They, little dreaming that he knew the real state of the case, and thinking only that he was concerned about their long fast, replied that they had not had any. Then the saint said to them: "Why do you tell an untruth? Did you not go into the house of such a lady, and eat such and such food, and drink so many glasses of wine?" specifying what they had taken. The poor monks, thus convicted, fell upon their knees confessing their guilt, covered with shame and confusion. In this case St. Benedict does not seem to have exacted the penalty from them, but to have pardoned them at once; considering that they had been sufficiently humbled for their fault, and would not be likely to attempt anything of the kind again in his absence, after having had such a striking proof of his presence with them in spirit.

In other cases, however, he showed himself more strict, as we see in the following example. Not far from the abbey there was a village in which many had been converted by Benedict's preaching from idolatry to the true faith. In this place there were also some nuns to whom the monks used sometimes to go and preach. On one occasion these good nuns pressed a monk to accept some hand-

kerchiefs as a little present; and he, taking them, hid them under his habit for his own use. When he returned to the monastery the holy abbot met him, and said very severely to him: "How comes it, brother, that sin has entered into your bosom?" The monk was much perplexed by these words, as in the interval he had forgotten all about the trifling incident at the convent. But Benedict soon recalled it to his memory, saying: "Was not I present when you took those handkerchiefs from the nuns, and hid them under your habit for your own private use?" Hearing this, the culprit prostrated at his feet, and, throwing away the handkerchiefs, did penance for his fault.

At another time it happened that Benedict, having been detained later than usual, came to the refectory when it was already dark, and it fell to the lot of the weekly servant to hold a light for him while he took his supper. The servant that week was the son of a lawyer, and, as he was standing there, he began to think how unbecoming it was for him to stand and hold a candle and have to perform such menial offices; and so he went on to murmur in his heart and to persuade himself that he was ill used. No sooner had he begun to give way to these evil thoughts than the holy abbot, turning to him, said: "Make the sign of the Cross on your heart, brother; what are you thinking of?" and, seeing that these words were not sufficient to bend the proud spirit of the young monk, he called another brother, and telling him to take the light bade the other sit down. Then

the delinquent realised that Benedict had read his thoughts and was thus punishing him for them. Afterwards the others asked him what had caused their holy father to speak to him in that manner: he told them how he had entertained thoughts of pride; and they wondered to see how even their secret thoughts were known to the saint.

This gift of discernment he possessed in such an eminent degree that he made use of it even in the case of those living outside the monastery. St. Gregory tells a story of one of the lay brothers named Exhilaratus, who, when he was young, had been servant to a nobleman living in the neighbourhood. One day he was sent by his master to carry two bottles of wine to Benedict as a present. As he was on his way he thought he would like to keep one bottle for himself, and with this intent hid it in a bush. The other he took to the saint who expressed his thanks. But just as the servant was departing and congratulating himself on having escaped detection, Benedict gave him a warning, saying: "Take care, my son, not to drink from the bottle hidden in the bush; turn it gently over and see what is in it". The youth, confused and astonished, withdrew in silence, and coming to the bush where he had concealed the wine, he turned the bottle on one side, when, to his horror, a snake wriggled out. This miracle was the cause of his conversion; and, as we have said, he subsequently became a lay brother. At the place where the event happened a chapel was built to commemorate it, and afterwards many other

miracles were wrought there through the intercession of the saint.

One more example may be given of Benedict's wonderful prophetic spirit before we leave this subject. It is the story of the brother of a monk called Valentinian, who was afterwards abbot of the Lateran Abbey in Rome, and one of the four from whom St. Gregory learnt the events of St. Benedict's life. This brother was a devout layman, who used to come every year to Monte Cassino to commend himself to the prayers of the community. That he sought only the good of his soul in this visit we know from the fact that he imposed on himself a practice of always fasting from the time he left his house until he had received the abbot's blessing on his arrival at the monastery. On one occasion, as he set out on his pious pilgrimage, he was joined by another traveller, who carried with him refreshments to eat on the way. Some think that this companion was the devil in disguise, as Benedict afterwards reproached the pilgrim for letting himself be overcome by the enemy; be that as it may, Satan certainly made use of this traveller to compass his own ends, for after they had gone some distance together the stranger said: "Come, let us refresh ourselves, lest we faint on the way"; to which the other answered: "That I cannot do, for I have always made a practice of keeping my fast until I see Abbot Benedict". At this reply the stranger said no more, and went on without taking anything himself, which seems to show that he was determined

sooner or later to make his companion eat with him; and in fact before long he made another attempt, but the pilgrim adhered to his resolution. At length, however, after they had gone a long distance and were wearied and parched with walking, they came to a pleasant meadow with shady trees and a fresh stream of clear water running through it—everything, in fact, to tempt them to rest and refresh themselves. "See," said the stranger, inviting him for the third time, "here is water and a meadow and a delightful spot, let us rest and take some food, after which we shall be better able to finish our journey." The temptation was strong and pressed him on every side; the beauty of the scene, the desire to oblige, the pangs of hunger which tormented him, all proved too strong for the pilgrim, who in the end consented to share a meal with his companion. It was late in the evening when he reached the monastery, and he went at once to St. Benedict in order to receive his blessing; but he, instead of welcoming him, began to take him to task, saying: "What is this, my son? How is it that the wicked spirit, who spoke to you through your fellow-traveller, failed the first and second time to persuade you, but succeeded the third time, and brought you to do all that he wished?" The good man was amazed to find that the saint knew all that had passed on the road, and fell at his feet, reproaching himself for his weakness and begging forgiveness. This is a striking example of the efforts the devil makes to hinder even a simple act of mortification, and shows how he studies the dispositions

of each individual, accommodating himself to each case in order to effect his evil ends. We cannot but marvel, when we read these events, at the extraordinary gift possessed by our saint; and with Peter the Deacon we may well exclaim: "The spirit of Eliseus was in the holy man, who, when absent, was also present to his disciples".[1]

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series, chap. xiii.

CHAPTER VI.

TERRACINA.

A.D. 534.

In the year 534 a good man, who possessed an estate near Terracina, was very desirous of building a monastery on his land, and for this purpose he set out for Monte Cassino, hoping to obtain from the abbot some monks for the foundation. Terracina was situated about thirty miles distant from Rome, and the journey from Monte Cassino took about a day and a half. It was not far from the Pontine Marshes, in the south of the Campagna. These marshes extend to the foot of a beautiful range of mountains, opening out upon a magnificent view; on the top of one of these mountain heights stands Terracina; it was founded in very ancient times and became a Roman colony 300 years before Christ. The town is now, as formerly, surrounded by a number of villas and estates, and it was one of these which this pious gentleman offered Benedict for the site of a new monastery. The saint having acceded to his request, chose some of his monks for the new foundation, and appointed one named Gregory to be their abbot, and his brother Speciosus to assist him as prior. As they were setting out, Benedict said to them: "Go now, and on such

a day I will come myself, and show you where to build the church, the refectory, and other necessary offices". Then, having received his blessing, the little company started on their way, and arriving at Terracina, were received with the greatest delight by their good benefactor. They prepared everything they could think of for the reception of their venerable father and impatiently awaited his arrival. However, during the night preceding the day in question, the holy man appeared to the abbot and prior while they slept and gave them minute instructions as to the position of each portion of the building.

St. Benedict seems to have possessed an intuitive knowledge of architecture, since he himself designed all his monasteries, following the style of Vitruvius, who was the great architect in Rome during the reign of Augustus. Benedict's manner of disposing the different rooms has come down by an uninterrupted tradition even to our own days, and we find in all regular monasteries the same characteristics; that is, the church forms one side of a quadrangle, and the refectory is opposite; the dormitory looks east, and the guest quarter west; the chapter-room is under the dormitory and a cloister runs all round the inside of the quadrangle, while the door of the monastery is placed near the great entrance to the church.

All this, as we have said, was described to the abbot and prior in their sleep, and when they awoke they mutually related to each other what they had seen. However, they did not like to give too much credence to a vision, and treating it merely as a

dream, they continued to expect that St. Benedict would keep his promise and come to them in person. But time passed and still he did not appear, and they were sadly disappointed as they longed to have their venerated father among them. At length they determined to go to Monte Cassino and find out the cause of his delay. When they arrived at the abbey and had found the saint they greeted him reproachfully, saying: "We expected, father, that you would have come to us as you promised, and shown us where to build!" To which he answered: "Say you so, good brethren! Did I not come to you? Did I not appear to each of you in your sleep and mark out each particular spot where you are to build? Go, therefore, and do what I then pointed out to you." Hearing this, the monks were filled with astonishment, and returning to Terracina set to work to construct a monastery according to the directions they had received in sleep.

The abbot and prior are both honoured as saints. St. Gregory tells us that they were two brothers who were very rich, but gave all they possessed to the poor and became monks at Monte Cassino. After they had been for some time at Terracina, Speciosus, the prior, was sent to Capua on business; meantime, as the abbot was at dinner with his monks, he was suddenly rapt in ecstasy and saw the soul of his brother departing out of his body. He immediately hurried off to Capua, and found on arriving that his brother had died at the very moment he saw his soul leaving his body.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST FRUITS, OR THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PLACID.

A.D. 536-537.

FROM what has been already said it is easy to understand to what a high degree of sanctity the children of St. Benedict had attained; yet, zealous as they all were, we are told that Maurus and Placid far excelled the rest. Even as mere youths they seemed to have practised the precepts of their holy father in a way which gave promise of what they would one day be. They had both renounced great riches and position for Christ's sake, and in return they received from Him the hundred-fold of spiritual treasures. Placid was the younger of the two, yet he was the first to set an example of that heroic love which is obedient unto death; and to him was assigned the privilege of being the proto-martyr of his Order. Among the lands which his father Tertullus had given to St. Benedict were eighteen estates (or farms) in Sicily, not far from Messina. At first Benedict managed these lands by means of secular procurators living on the spot; but he found this plan did not answer, as violent and ambitious neighbours tried to usurp them. He resolved there-

fore to send Placid, who as son of Tertullus would be respected, so that having reclaimed the property he might found a monastery there.

Calling the brethren to council, the abbot laid before them the necessity of sending some one to Sicily to take care of their lands, and proposed Placid as most suited for the business. This suggestion was at once acceded to by all. Benedict then turned to Placid, addressing him in most touching words which Gordian has preserved for us, and which sweetly unite paternal authority and tender love: "My son," he said, "prepare yourself generously to undertake this journey and this work, which Jesus Christ, the sovereign King who was obedient unto death, lays upon you through my ministry. Remember His own words, 'I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me'.[1] Let not the length of the way nor the difficulties which await you cause you any trouble; but bear in mind that saying of the Apostle, that 'the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come,'[2] and that through many tribulations we go to God. For those who have fought valiantly for Christ in this life will receive that eternal recompense which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him'.[3] May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, be always with you, and may He bring you to

[1] John v. 30. [2] Rom. viii. 18. [3] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

eternal life." The saint then appointed two monks, Gordian and Donatus, to accompany Placid, and told them to obey him as they obeyed himself.

Placid and his two companions left Monte Cassino on 20th May, 536, seven years before St. Benedict's death. During the journey, which they made on foot, with the exception of crossing the straits, God worked many miracles to manifest the sanctity both of Benedict, in whose name they were wrought, and of his young disciple. At Capua the travellers visited St. Germanus, who received them with the greatest joy. Arrived in Sicily, Placid put an end to the disputes about the lands, those who had claimed them at once giving them up to one belonging to such a powerful family as that of Tertullus. The monks chose for the site of their monastery a spot near Messina and close to the sea. Four years after their arrival, the church was completed and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The little community soon became known, and many postulants were attracted to the new monastery, so that in a short time there were thirty monks, all zealously striving to surpass one another in virtue—Placid ruling and instructing them more by his example than his words.

It happened about the year 540 that Flavia, St. Placid's sister, and his two brothers, Victorinus and Eutychius, came to Sicily to visit him, Divine providence so arranging it that they might have a share in his glorious martyrdom. Soon after, the pirate Manucha suddenly attacked the island with a fleet of 100 ships. He, together with his barbarians,

brutally tormented Placid and his holy companions; but finding that no torture or indignity could make them deny their Lord and Master, at length put them to death. The feast of St. Placid is kept on 5th October. In an old calendar at Monte Cassino which dates back to the eleventh or twelfth century there is an entry in letters of gold; it runs as follows: "October 5th. In Sicily, the birthday of the most blessed martyr Placid, and his companions Eutychius, Victorinus and thirty others." His name is found in many of the old litanies still kept in the Vatican, and was also in those discovered by Cardinal Bona at Monte Cassino.

The news of the martyrdom soon reached the ears of Benedict, and while his loving heart grieved for the loss of so many devoted children, and the destruction of so promising a foundation, yet he could not but rejoice in their glorious triumph; and raising his eyes to heaven he said: "I give Thee thanks, O Lord Jesus Christ, Who art the life and salvation of all men, for that Thou hast taken to everlasting glory my dear son Placid, the fruit of my tears, the child nearest my heart". Then calling the community together, he gave a beautiful discourse on the joy all ought to feel for the sublime death of their brothers. He said: "Since it is the duty of a father to rejoice in any advantage which may benefit his children, so it is the duty of children to partake in the joy of their father. For this reason I have called you together to tell you that Placid, my very dear son, has gone to Our Lord with the glory and

crown of martyrdom. Long ago I had in spirit accompanied this pure and innocent victim to heaven, as, from the time I received him from his father's hands, I knew that he would die in this manner, and I give thanks to God, for I have always desired to sacrifice to Him the most tenderly loved fruit of my heart. And I had nothing more loved, more precious than Placid. He has chosen to die for Jesus Christ, and he has received a throne on the right hand of God. For Jesus Christ died for us all, that we may not live for ourselves, but for this adorable Saviour. I give thanks then and rejoice in that I have brought up so perfect a disciple, and I must not be afflicted at his loss. It was a grace which God bestowed on me to give him to me, and it is a duty for me to return him again to the Giver. God did me a favour in allowing me to train up Placid for His service, and now it is just that He should take what belongs to Him. Placid has given to Jesus Christ a life which is common to us all, but he has received in return the crown of martyrdom which is the effect of a special grace. Why should I grieve that my son has been taken from me, when God gave up for my salvation His only begotten Son? Besides, no one is exempted from death; I will not then grieve, because I know that he has passed from death to life. And why should I weep for you, O my Placid! since you have left this world only to be nearer to us? You have not lost your former virtue, or anything that we loved in you; it has only become transformed in the glory which

enfolds you. Blessed are the labours with which I trained you, blessed the words with which I instructed you, since they have brought forth so much fruit. The love you bore to your father Tertullus was never able to separate you from me, and you persevered in the choice you had made, until you attained to a blessed and eternal life."[1]

Soon after the martyrdom of Placid and his companions, Benedict chose a fresh supply from the most fervent of his monks, and sent them to Sicily to begin the foundation anew. This foundation flourished for more than 100 years, when in 669 the island was invaded by the Saracens, and it met with a similar fate to the first. The monastery was again rebuilt by monks from the Lateran monastery, and a second time destroyed by the Saracens in 880. After this it remained empty and desolate until the Knights of St. John settled there in 1136. In 1588, their prior, on making excavations in the church, discovered the bodies of St. Placid and thirty other martyrs. Near the relics they found little phials containing their blood; some had their heads resting on their breast, others were headless, and it was evident that all had been terribly tortured and maimed. Four of the bodies, those of St. Placid, his sister and brothers, were in a grave apart, three lying facing north and one facing south. The holy relics were translated to a more suitable resting place with great honour, and the martyrs were then canonised by Sixtus V.

[1] *S. Bened., Sermo in mort. Placid.; Patr. lat.*, tom. lxvi.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE DEAF HEAR, THE LEPERS ARE CLEANSED, THE DEAD RISE AGAIN."

FROM the beginning of the world we know that God has worked wonderful miracles and signs by means of messengers whom He has sent to mankind in order to confirm their faith in Him. Our Lord Himself has told us that signs shall follow those who believe: "In My name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: They shall take up serpents: and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover."[1] Obviously this does not mean that all who believe are to work miracles, but that in all ages power is given to a chosen few to prove the truth of what they teach and believe, by performing prodigies impossible in the natural order. St. Benedict possessed this power in an eminent degree, so that his whole life seems replete with wonders; probably he was endowed with this gift of working miracles from the very fact that God had chosen him to be a guide and leader of men.

Among the many sick whom he healed there is one remarkable instance of a cure of leprosy. A certain

[1] Mark xvi. 17, 18.

nobleman had a slave named Severus, who was afflicted with the very worst form of this disease, his whole body being so terribly eaten that he was a mass of corruption. All remedies having failed, the nobleman, who seems to have been a very good Christian, felt great compassion for his slave, and resolved to have recourse to Benedict, trusting with great confidence to the power of his intercession. No sooner was the poor sufferer laid at the feet of the saint than, to his inexpressible joy, the disease instantly and completely disappeared.

On another occasion a man had been poisoned by an enemy; the poison was not sufficiently strong to kill him, yet had so changed the colour of his skin as to make him apparently like a leper. This deformity grieved him very much, and in his distress he had recourse to the saint. His faith was not in vain, for one touch from the holy abbot restored him to his former health.

Wonderful, however, as these miracles are, God bestowed on His servant a power even greater than that of healing the sick, namely, that of raising the dead. We have already seen how he exercised this power in the case of the young monk crushed by the falling wall, and we have another instance of the same when he restored life to the dead child of a poor labourer. It happened as follows: One day Benedict had accompanied the monks to the field to share with them their labours. While he was away from the monastery, a peasant came to the gate bearing in his arms the corpse of his little son. With tears and

sobs he called loudly for Father Benedict, and, hearing that he was in the fields, he laid down the lifeless body and hastened in search of him. The venerable abbot, together with his monks, was already on his way home. No sooner had the peasant caught sight of him than he began to cry out: "Give me back my son! Give me back my son!" At this Benedict stood still, and gently asked: "Have I taken your son?" to which he answered: "No, holy father, but he is dead; I beseech you for Christ's sake to restore him to life". The saint, hearing what the man asked, was troubled and distressed, and turning to his brethren, he made as though he would hurry away, saying: "Let us be gone, brothers, these are not matters for us but for the holy Apostles; why will you lay on me a burden I cannot bear?" Nevertheless, the poor father would not be rebuffed, and, in the excess of his grief, swore that he would not leave the monastery until his petition was granted. The power of the saint was so well known that the good peasant never doubted for a moment but that he could restore life to the child by merely saying one short prayer over him, and it was in some measure owing to this lively faith that the miracle was worked; for at length, touched by the man's grief, Benedict relented, and asked him: "Where is your son?" Being led to the place where the little corpse lay, he knelt down with all his monks, and raising his hands to heaven, said: "Lord, look not upon my sins, but on the faith of this man who asks the life of his child, and vouchsafe to restore to this body

the soul Thou hast taken away." Scarcely was the prayer finished, when the boy began to tremble and quiver in such a way that all noticed it. Then Benedict took him by the hand, and raising him up, returned him alive and well to his delighted father.

CHAPTER IX.

BENEDICT'S POWER OVER THE DEVIL.

BENEDICT's power of working miracles was not confined to the body alone ; we have also many instances recorded of his expelling the devil from possessed persons. Although Christ has conquered the prince of darkness, crushed his might and chained him fast in hell, yet it is evident that He has not deprived him of all his power on earth. The Apostles frequently allude to this power and to the artifices and allurements by which he tempts men to sin ; for God allows him this freedom of action in order to try our virtue and fidelity, and that he, being repeatedly defeated, may be put to shame by Him whom he attacks through His creatures. Thus, the holy name of Jesus and the sign of the saving Cross are always sufficient to put Satan to flight and disarm his strength. If we need proof of this, we have but to open the history of the Church, which contains so many examples of the efficacy of the Cross and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By these means it was that our saint obtained his numerous victories over the devil, and delivered several persons possessed by him. We are told that one day when he was going to pray in the chapel of St. John the Baptist, situated on the top of the

mountain, he met the devil disguised as a doctor, and mounted on a mule, with a horn and mortar in his hand. The devil greeted him with a mocking laugh, and told him he was going to administer medicine to the monks. However, Benedict continued his way to the oratory as he had intended, though he must have had some misgivings, for St. Gregory says he soon returned in all haste. Arrived at the monastery, he found that Satan had indeed been up to mischief, for he had entered into an old monk who was drawing water, and casting him on the ground, was grievously tormenting him. Seeing this, the holy abbot approached, and merely gave the monk a blow on the cheek, which was so effectual that the evil spirit left him and never again dared to molest him.

Another example of this kind happened, only a few years before the saint's death, in the case of a young cleric of Aquino who was possessed by the devil. The Bishop of Aquino at that time was a holy man named Constantius, of whom it is related that, when he was dying, he prophesied that he would be succeeded in his see by a muleteer, afterwards by a fuller, and that then Aquino would have no bishop at all. This prediction was verified later, for a deacon was chosen in his place, who in his youth had been a mule-driver; he was succeeded by a priest who had previously been a maker of cloth, during whose episcopate the country was so ravaged by sword and pestilence that the see was henceforth left vacant.

Constantius was a friend of Benedict, and being very much grieved at the affliction which had befallen his young cleric, after he had sent him in vain to the tombs of many martyrs, determined to try a living saint, and sent him to Benedict. St. Gregory adds that the holy martyrs would not cure the poor youth because they desired to make known Benedict's abundant graces. The cleric was led to the venerable abbot, who began earnestly to entreat our Lord to deliver him, and at the same moment the devil took his departure. Benedict, however, was not satisfied with this; and looking deeper into the soul of the man he had exorcised, he gave him some salutary admonitions and warnings, telling him never to eat meat, and as long as he lived never to aspire to Holy Orders, for if he did he would again fall under the dominion of the Evil One. The cleric went away cured, and for a long time obeyed the injunctions laid upon him. But after some years, when he saw all the younger clerics obtaining preferments, while he was left in his former position, he thought it was no longer needful to observe the commands of the saint, all the more so as he was not pledged to him by any vow of obedience. Nevertheless, though not bound by vow, he ought to have realised that the voice of the holy abbot was equally the voice of God, since, as St. Gregory says, "How should he not know the secrets of God, who kept the commandments of God, for the Scripture saith: 'He, who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit'."[1] So

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 17.

the foolish man went and received ordination; and immediately the devil recovered his former power over him, and never ceased to vex and harass him until the day of his death.

There is another remarkable instance of Benedict's power over Satan, when by his prayers he forced him so to act as to serve and help a soul in danger of being lost. We read of a monk at Monte Cassino, who, unlike his fervent brethren, was easy-going and inconstant. He did not like the restraints of religious life, and chafed because he was obliged to submit to them. The saint had often taken him to task, and warned him of the dangers of such a state of mind; but his words were of no avail, and the monk, instead of trying to overcome his discontent by humility and prayer, thought only how he could manage to leave the monastery; and, though bound by solemn vow, sought to forsake what might have been for him the very gate of Paradise. Probably the devil led him to believe that if he could get to some other monastery more suited to his tastes he would be able to serve God better. At last he became so troublesome that Benedict, wearied with his repeated importunities, in anger bade him depart. No sooner, however, was he outside the abbey, than he met an enormous dragon with its mouth open, ready to devour him. The poor monk, petrified with terror, called with all his might for help, expecting every moment to be destroyed by the monster. Hearing his cries, the monks came running to see what was the matter, and were astonished

to find their brother trembling with fright and pale as death, without any apparent cause, for the dragon had disappeared. Then they brought him to the abbot; and, falling at his feet, the penitent monk promised never again to leave the monastery, realising that through the prayers of his holy father he had been permitted to see in a visible form the enemy he was so blindly following to his doom.

CHAPTER X.

"WHATSOEVER YOU SHALL BIND UPON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND ALSO IN HEAVEN."

THE power of binding and loosing has always been exercised in a greater or less degree by those superiors of religious houses who have spiritual jurisdiction over their subjects. Benedict exercised this right in the government and direction of the monasteries under him; but his power was different from that bestowed by Holy Church: in many cases it was truly miraculous and given to him by God's special favour. We give the following instances in proof of this:—

Not far from the monastery there were two noble ladies living on their own property, although they had dedicated themselves to God. At this time pious persons were often found who lived a quasi-religious life under the guidance of the bishop, or some person delegated by him, and yet were not nuns in the strict sense of the word. A good layman rendered these ladies all the services they required, and managed such business as had to be done outside their enclosure. Now it happens sometimes, as in the present case, that nobility of birth does not engender nobility of soul, and even tends to hinder the necessary disciplining of the character; hence it came about that the poor servant of these two professedly religious ladies was often shocked by

their violent and unreligious-like speech. At length, finding it unbearable, he complained to the holy abbot of Monte Cassino of the frequent insults he had to put up with. Probably Benedict was in some way their superior, as we read that he sent them a message telling them to bridle their tongues, or he would excommunicate them, hoping by this threat and timely warning to impress them with the gravity of their fault and the necessity of amendment. However, they paid no attention to his words, and made no effort to cure their bad habit. Not long after they both died and were buried in the neighbouring church. When Mass was next offered there, the nurse of these two sisters happened to be present. To her amazement, when the deacon according to custom said: "If there be any excommunicate let them now depart," she saw their bodies rise out of their graves and leave the church. After she had witnessed this several times, and was wondering what it could possibly mean, she recalled the warning they had received, and going in great anxiety to the saint, she told him what had occurred, begging him to absolve them that they might rest in peace. Then Benedict gave her an offering of bread and wine, saying: "Go and cause this to be offered to God for them, and they shall no longer be excommunicated". From that time the two ladies were never again seen to leave the church, and we may undoubtedly believe that they had been freed by Benedict from the censure he had placed upon them.

Again God manifested His power in a similar

way in the case of a boy who had been presented to the saint by his parents. One day, overcome with home sickness, this novice ran away from the monastery without receiving the abbot's blessing. When he reached home, he fell down dead at the door. Whether this was caused by failure of the heart from running too fast, or whether by a supernatural intervention, we cannot tell; be that as it may, the sorrowing parents buried their son, but were astonished the next day to find the body cast out of the grave and lying by the side of it. They quickly buried him a second time, and again the same extraordinary phenomenon took place. Then they hurried off to Benedict and entreated him to help them. The saint gave them a consecrated host, and bade them lay it on the breast of the corpse. After this had been done, the dead boy remained quietly in his grave.

We have other examples in history of placing the Blessed Sacrament on the breast of deceased persons, especially in the case of bishops; but after a time the custom gave rise to abuses, which caused it to be no longer tolerated. These two incidents, related by St. Gregory, are touching proofs of the merciful love and charity which characterised all Benedict's dealings with his fellow-creatures, and we are struck more by the mildness and gentleness of the saint than by the power which he exercised; nay, rather we might say that it was on account of this very meekness that God chose him to be the instrument of His Divine might.

CHAPTER XI.

DESTRUCTION OF THE VANDAL RULE IN AFRICA BY BELISARIUS.

A.D. 533-534.

HE INVADES SICILY AND ITALY.

A.D. 535.

WHILE Benedict was planning the erection of new monasteries, and the extension of the order, which was already bearing such abundant fruit, the sounds of distant warfare warned him that for a time at least he must be content to perfect his work where he had begun it, and to let the bright lustre of his virtues shed its light hidden within the precincts of his own cloister. The events of the time were of such a stirring nature as to occupy the attention of the entire world; and it seemed as though each one was more or less concerned in and affected by them. Italy itself was soon to become one immense battlefield; a scene almost unparalleled in history. War first declared itself in Africa in 530, on the occasion of the unlawful dethronement of Hilderic, King of the Vandals, by his cousin, Gelimer. In vain did the Emperor Justinian endeavour to bring the usurper to a sense of his iniquity; and at

length, assured by his advisers that the war was just and pleasing to God, he made active preparations for hostilities. Belisarius, the hero of his age, was entrusted with the command of the expedition both by sea and land. One day, in the spring of 533, three hundred and ninety-two warships were drawn up in battle array on the Bosphorus, in front of the palatial gardens at Constantinople, there to be reviewed by the Emperor. Before starting the fleet was solemnly blessed by the Patriarch, after which the ships set sail amid a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm, trumpets sounding, and the crowds shouting from the bank and invoking blessings on those who were leaving.

Three months after his departure Belisarius anchored off Caputvada, a cape about five days' sail east of Carthage, and there disembarked unmolested. Gelimer had shortly before sent the bulk of his army under his brother Tzazon to Sardinia, to punish the usurper Godas; so that, even if he had expected the arrival of the Greeks, he could not have prevented their landing. The first enemy met by the invaders appeared in the shape of a great drought, but, by a providential discovery, they came upon a hidden spring which abundantly sufficed to relieve their distress. Syletta, the nearest town, surrendered without a blow, and the Greeks pressed on towards Carthage. Owing to Belisarius' strict injunctions, the army treated the country people with great humanity; and, as no pillaging or violence was allowed, the peasants came forward and themselves

provided the soldiers with what necessaries they could procure. Gelimer was at Hermione when news reached him of the landing of the invaders, upon which he ordered Hilderic, the king, and Hoamar, his nephew, to be strangled in their prison. This barbarous cruelty brought about his own destruction, since it disgusted the majority of his supporters and so proved more disastrous to him than any battle could have been. He had sent his brother Amatus to meet his enemies, but he fell in the first encounter, and then Gelimer himself attacked them. At the outset of the battle fortune seemed to favour him; it was, however, only apparent, and being seized with a sudden panic he fled into the desert. In a short time, on the feast of St. Cyprian, patron of the city, Belisarius made a triumphal entry into Carthage and was received with acclamations by the citizens. He began at once to fortify the town, and completed his work in three months.

Meantime Tzazon returned from Sardinia, and, with a formidable army of 14,000 men, prepared to regain all his brother's dominions. A great battle was fought at Tricameron, twenty miles from Carthage; Belisarius and John of Armenia worked prodigies of valour, and with 6,000 cavalry utterly routed and put to flight the Vandals. By this victory the Greeks became possessors of immense booty and riches which had accumulated for centuries by means of violence and plunder. They next advanced on Hippo, which surrendered, and

Belisarius seized the treasury and crown jewels which had been entrusted to the care of the Councillor Boniface. Gelimer had fled for refuge to what was considered the inaccessible fortress of Palma, a town situated on the top of a high mountain in Numidia. Here he was seized by the invaders, who sought to reduce the stronghold by famine; and at last, fearful of the fortress being taken by storm, the Vandal king surrendered himself, with the assurance that he should be honourably treated by Justinian. Ambassadors then began to arrive from all parts of the country, including the islands of Minorca, Majorca, Corsica and Sardinia, in order to tender their submission to Belisarius; and thus the whole kingdom was restored to the empire. Justinian gave to all the right to demand back any property of which they had been deprived by the Vandals, provided the claim was made within five years. Belisarius' conquest was complete; he therefore hastened to resign his command of the expedition, and this the more readily as he knew that success almost invariably entails much jealousy and rivalry. Justinian made him sole consul and gave him the honours of a Roman triumph. On Gelimer he bestowed an estate in Galatia, where he settled down with his family and ended his days peacefully. This conquest seems to have wiped away the Vandals from the face of the earth after their kingdom had lasted 106 years; their name does not again appear in history.

In the year 534 Amalasuntha,[1] who for eight years had peacefully governed Italy as regent, saw her son Athalaric, aged only sixteen, sink into a premature grave, dug for him by his own vices. Little as she had loved him, his loss was a great affliction to her; for she realised that with his death her own fortune must end, and she foresaw that she must become the victim of some ambitious noble. Acting on this belief, she entered into negotiations with the Emperor, suggesting to him that he should take this opportunity of reconquering those provinces in Italy which had been wrested from his predecessors. Unfortunately she repented of this step all too soon, and invited Theodatus, the unworthy nephew of Theodoric the Great, to share her throne and power. Theodatus was an unjust and avaricious man, utterly devoid of honour; he threw Amalasuntha into a dungeon, and then caused her to be strangled. The murder of the queen by this traitor, who always styled her "his most excellent lady and sister," roused universal indignation, and decided Justinian to send an expedition at once into Italy. By dividing the army he proposed to make a simultaneous attack both in Dalmatia and Sicily; the command of one army he gave to Belisarius, that of the other to Mundus.

Towards the end of the year 535 Belisarius had made himself master of Sicily without striking a

[1] Amalasuntha was the daughter of Theodoric the Great. The name of her first husband was Eutharic.

single blow; and the inhabitants of the island were only too glad to exchange the rule of the Goths for the more peaceful dominion of the empire. Mundus was equally successful in Dalmatia, and destroyed the greater part of the Gothic army. Theodatus trembled for his kingdom and his life, and, determined to make peace at any price, he offered to give up all pretentions to the throne on condition of being allowed an annual pension. In order, however, to obtain the best possible terms, he sent Pope Agapetus with five bishops to Constantinople, where they arrived on 2nd February, 536. Upon this there was a temporary truce, but Justinian would not hear of peace. While at Constantinople Agapetus called a council and deposed Anthimus the Patriarch because he had declared himself a Eutychian. In his place Mennas was chosen, the Pope himself performing the ceremony of his consecration; this election caused universal satisfaction. After a reign of scarcely eleven months Agapetus fell ill and died 22nd April, 536; his death was most keenly felt both in the East and West. He confirmed the decrees of the famous Council of Carthage, which had drawn up some important canons regarding the Church in Africa, but lately risen again from its ruins.

Mennas, the new patriarch, convened a fresh council, in which Anthimus and his followers were anathematised. When it became necessary to proceed to the election of a Pope, Theodatus, forgetting his former supplicatory attitude, sent an

arrogant message to the effect that he would not tolerate that any one should hold the dignity except a deacon named Silverius. The clergy and people, most indignant at this presumptuous command, did not hesitate to remonstrate; nevertheless, as Silverius bore an excellent character, they saw no reason against him, and elected him. But his election was not canonically recognised by a great number of the Roman clergy.

Meantime Belisarius and Mundus continued the war in Italy; the latter, however, in an unlucky engagement, lost his life. This disaster filled Theodatus with hope; but it was premature, for Belisarius was steadily advancing on Rome. Naples had already surrendered to him after twenty days' siege, during which a third of its inhabitants were killed. Theodatus, terrified and discouraged, sent Vitiges to oppose him; but as the invading army continued to advance, a rumour was set afloat to the effect that Theodatus had betrayed his nation into the hands of Justinian. A court-martial was hastily summoned, the king was deposed, and Vitiges the Goth chosen in his stead. Theodatus fled to Ravenna, where he was pursued and murdered. Vitiges had now nothing to fear, and gave out that he intended to govern as Theodoric had done before him.

A council of war was then held at Ravenna, and it was decided for the army to remain in quarters till the spring, and in the interval to muster as large a force as possible. During this time Belisarius

continued his victorious march, and having possessed himself of all the cities on the way without striking a single blow, arrived at length beneath the walls of Rome. The citizens immediately threw open the gates to him, and the Gothic garrison beat a hasty retreat. His first care was to fortify Rome as much as was feasible in so short a space of time, and provide it with a provision of corn. He also took possession of Narmis, a fortress situated on an impregnable rock near Spoleto, and here he received the submission of Pizas the Goth, who commanded a division of the army in the Samnite territory which lay on both sides of the Apennines. Whilst the fortifications at Rome were daily progressing Vitiges collected a large army round Ravenna, and towards the end of the winter he had mustered as many as 200,000 fighting men. Before beginning operations, he sent an embassy to Constantinople to negotiate for peace; but this proving fruitless he separated one-fourth of his army and sent it into Dalmatia, whilst he with the bulk of the troops marched straight for Rome. Old authors tell us that rapidly as a bird's flight he stood on the Milvian bridge scarcely two miles from the city, and, in almost less time than it takes to tell, he had possessed himself of the tower erected upon it. Rome trembled, but Belisarius remained undaunted. Not knowing that his guards had basely deserted the Milvian tower, he made a sally with a thousand horse to test the strength of the enemy. Scarcely had he left the city walls when he found himself surprised in the rear by a

large detachment of Gothic cavalry. Apparently his last hour had come. But if he had hitherto given proofs of his ability as a general, he now showed the invincible courage of a soldier. He fought so valiantly that all who approached him fell beneath his blows, while his heroism inspired his followers to renewed efforts. Soon the enemy lay dead in heaps about the field, and Vitiges, losing heart, beat a retreat. Belisarius followed him for a time, then, seeing reinforcements from the enemy's camp approaching, he was forced to retrace his steps and seek refuge once more in the city. When he reached the gates his own people delayed to open them for fear of letting in their opponents also; and now it seemed that Belisarius and his little troop must have succumbed to a superior force. It was already dark, and he and his men were utterly exhausted; nevertheless Belisarius fell once more on the foe with a coolness which convinced the enemy that relays were issuing from the city. Upon this they fled, and the general contented himself with pursuing them only a short way. As he re-entered the city he was received with acclamations by the inhabitants; and after examining the guard and giving the necessary orders for the safety of the garrison, he at length took food and rest.

The following day the enemy crossed the Tiber, and divided into six encampments on the eastern side, between the Praenestian and Flaminian gates. Here, for three weeks, they laboured at fortifications and prepared war engines and instruments

of assault. Within the walls the work was not less effectual. Directed by able leaders, the citizens gave their services and were untiring in their efforts; and, wonderful to relate, they turned a deaf ear to the bribes offered them by frequent spies from the Gothic camp. At the end of three weeks the besiegers sounded the advance, and an enormous mass of scaffolding and towers moved towards the city. The Romans then began to be discouraged, but Belisarius with his usual fearlessness coolly took aim at the commander of the first detachment, and letting fly an arrow killed him on the spot; while a second arrow put an end to the leader of the next troop. This revived the spirits of his soldiers, who regarded it as an omen of victory, and they set to work to shoot down the beasts who were drawing the engines. Vitiges, enraged at the turn affairs had taken, hastened to the other side of the city, and ordered an assault near the tomb of Adrian, where the walls could be more easily scaled. A furious contest ensued which continued until nightfall, when Vitiges sounded the recall. Taking advantage of this, Belisarius made a sally on the retreating foe, and set fire to their engines. The day's fight had cost the Goths 3,000 men, and Vitiges had no desire to renew the experience. He therefore contented himself with keeping Rome in a state of siege; but his army was constantly harassed by Belisarius with small detachments of cavalry that did incredible damage. This, added to the fact that pestilence raged in his camp, decided the Goth to come to terms, and he again

treated for peace. Belisarius agreed to a three months' armistice, during which Vitiges could negotiate with the emperor. At the beginning of the winter troops arrived from Greece, commanded by John, surnamed the Bloodthirsty, to reinforce the Romans.

When the armistice was concluded, Vitiges withdrew his garrisons from several fortified towns, which Belisarius immediately occupied; this action Vitiges deemed a breach of the armistice, and suspicion was awakened on both sides. John, with 2,000 cavalry, was sent to Picenum with orders to invade that province in the event of Vitiges breaking his promise of temporary peace. As the Goths had left their wives and all their treasures in this little strip of land, the prize proved too tempting; and without waiting for a violation of the treaty, John surprised the small Gothic garrison and took possession of Rimini, where he distributed the enormous booty he had captured.

At the same time the Milanese and all the inhabitants of Liguria sent a pressing invitation to Belisarius to come and deliver them from the Gothic yoke, which they detested. A thousand men sufficed to conquer this province, the most important of all Italy.

To add to the misfortunes of Vitiges, a man by no means destitute of a certain greatness of character, his wife, Mathasuntha, entered into an alliance with John against her husband, inviting and encouraging him to seize Ravenna. Vitiges, discouraged and

indignant at her treachery, made one more desperate attempt to take Rome, but his efforts again proved fruitless, and the Goths, having burned their tents, withdrew in the spring of 538. In one year they had lost a third of their army.

CHAPTER XII.

ST. SILVERIUS AND VIGILIUS.

BELISARIUS, though a man of genuine virtue, was weak enough to allow himself to be drawn into an infamous intrigue by his wife Antonia, a woman both wicked and crafty, and an abettor in the plots and designs of the iniquitous Empress Theodora, the wife of Justinian. Theodora had been exceedingly displeased with Pope Agapetus for deposing Anthimus, and though she did all in her power to persuade Pope Silverius, his successor, to receive the Patriarch back to communion, it was in vain. Enraged at his opposition, she sought means to compass his ruin. She fixed upon Vigilius, a deacon who had accompanied Agapetus to Constantinople, as a fitting instrument for the execution of her plans. She had not miscalculated, for he himself aspired to the papacy, and was only too ready to assist in the plot. Theodora gave him 700 pounds of gold as the price of his undertaking; she also wrote to Belisarius, urging him to get rid of the Pontiff and to have Vigilius elected in his stead. This letter placed Belisarius in a most difficult position, from which Antonia sought to save him by a disgraceful forgery. She caused a brief to be made out and sent to the Gothic king, in which the Pope was made to offer treacherous

terms of peace and friendship. This she pretended had been intercepted by an officer of the bodyguard. Belisarius perceived at once that the whole was an intrigue; nevertheless, he summoned Silverius to appear before him, and tried to induce him to accede to the Emperor's request with regard to the restoration of Anthimus. Of course, he absolutely refused to do this, and at the same time he protested his innocence of any treacherous designs. A second and a third time the Pope was summoned, with the same result; and at last Antonia, exasperated, called out to him: "What have we done to you that you should betray us all to the Goths?" Without permitting him to reply, she caused two hired deacons to tear off his pallium, and, throwing a monk's cowl over him, to carry him away to prison. The following day Belisarius, having assembled the clergy, declared Silverius deposed, and ordered them to proceed to a fresh election, recommending Vigilius as best qualified for the dignity. The desired election took place and, to the scandal of the whole of Christendom, Vigilius unlawfully ascended the chair of Peter, 22nd November, 537.

Silverius meantime was taken to Patara in Lycia. The pious and undaunted bishop of that city went immediately to the Emperor, and threatened him with God's terrible judgments for allowing the Vicar of Christ to be thus persecuted, telling him that, though there are many kings, there can be, and is, but one Pope and ruler over the Church of God. Some say that the Emperor took this warning to

heart, and sent Silverius back to Italy with an order commanding Belisarius to reinstate him, and if guilty, though still Pope, to make him reside out of Rome. Belisarius was now in a greater difficulty than before; but having taken the first downward step, he did not long hesitate to take the second. He consulted with Vigilius, and agreed to give the Pope into his keeping until the case was examined. Vigilius gave Silverius in charge to some men chosen by him, and sent him to the island of Palmaria. There the steadfast Pontiff underwent the most cruel treatment with unflinching fortitude, and finally pronounced a sentence of excommunication against the usurper of his throne. Liberatus says that he died of hunger, while Procopius believes that he was assassinated at the instigation of Antonia. He died on the 20th of June, 538, and is honoured as a saint by the Church.

Vigilius at length opened his eyes to the enormity of his crime, and wished to abdicate and do penance; but the clergy hindered him from this step, and confirmed him in the dignity which hitherto he had usurped, and thus from that time he became lawful Pope. He at once broke with the schismatics and did his utmost to atone for the past by his zealous defence of truth and faithful administration of his office.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAMINE IN ITALY. BENEDICT'S GENEROSITY AND CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

A.D. 538.

We now come to speak of the terrible famine which raged throughout Italy in the year 538, and which is intimately connected with St. Benedict's life, as the universal distress appealed irresistibly to his great and fatherly heart, and was the occasion of several miracles wrought by him.

We can hardly credit the accounts of Procopius and other historians when they tell us that in the province of Picenum alone 50,000 victims succumbed; and, still more shocking, when they relate deeds of cannibalism which excite both horror and pity. For instance, we hear of two women who kept themselves alive by killing and eating the travellers who came to their house; several were despatched in this way, when at last one came who awoke in time to avert the deadly weapon, and after hearing from the women's own lips the avowal of their crime he murdered them both. Herbs were considered the greatest luxury; often the starving wretches who sought them fell lifeless at their work and lay unburied where they fell.

This dearth naturally weighed heavily on Benedict and his monks, so that frequently they also were in want of bare necessaries; while the misery which prevailed gave them ample scope, as we have said, for exercising charity. On one occasion the monks, coming to the refectory, found there was nothing for them to eat except five small loaves, with no prospect of more. Sadly they looked at the slender meal, for "what were five loaves among so many"?[1] Benedict, seeing they were disheartened, reproached them for their want of confidence; but, compassionating their weakness, he encouraged them with the promise of a plentiful supply for the following day. And his prophecy was verified when, next morning, they discovered standing at the monastery gate 200 measures of meal in sacks, nor could they ever find out from whence the gift came. The monks, seeing this miracle, gave thanks to God, and never again distrusted His holy providence.

Nevertheless Benedict's charity and generosity at this time of sorrow and desolation often tried the less perfect faith and confidence of his spiritual sons, as we see by the following instance. All the provisions of the monastery had been given away in alms, with the exception of a little oil in a glass jar, when Agapetus, a subdeacon of the neighbourhood, came to beg for succour. Benedict, as St. Gregory tells us, was resolved to give away all upon earth that he might find all in heaven, and willingly acceding to the good man's request, ordered the little

[1] John vi. 9.

remaining oil to be given to him. The cellarer, however, was not at all willing to part with it, and delayed in executing the abbot's command. Later in the day, the saint inquired whether he had given the oil; to which he replied that he had not, because there would be none left for the monks. At this Benedict was very angry, and told him to throw the vessel out of the window, as he would not have anything in the monastery contrary to obedience. Now, outside, just under the window, was a steep precipice with sharp rocks, so that, but for a miracle, the glass jar must inevitably have been broken into a thousand pieces; yet not only was the glass uninjured by the fall, but not even a drop of the oil was spilt. The saint then sent to have it picked up and taken to Agapetus, while in presence of the whole community he severely rebuked the disobedient cellarer for his pride and want of faith. In the room where this took place there stood a large empty barrel with a cover to it, and Benedict, having administered the well-merited rebuke, knelt down by it and began to pray. All the monks joined him in his prayer, though they knew not what to expect: the monastery was destitute, and without a direct interposition of Providence, starvation stared them in the face; already they were suffering the pangs of hunger, resulting from their long fast. As they prayed, to their astonishment they saw the lid of the barrel begin to rise, and they perceived that it was full of oil, which was increasing so fast that it began to overflow on to the floor, and only ceased when the holy

abbot rose from his prayer. Benedict took occasion from this miracle to exhort again his disobedient and distrustful monk to grow in faith and humility.

We may here mention another act of kindness performed by the saint, though it is not known whether it happened during the year of famine. It is the story of a peasant who owed twelve solidi[1] to a creditor. Being pressed for payment, he was greatly troubled, and knew not where to turn for the money. In his distress he resolved to go to Benedict and seek help from him. The saint was obliged to confess that he also was penniless at the time; but he comforted the poor man with kindly words and told him to come again in two days, and that meantime he would pray for him. When the peasant returned on the third day, thirteen solidi were found lying in the corn bin; these the abbot gave to him, twelve to pay his debt, and the other for his own expenses.

These examples give us an insight into the charity and confidence of our saint, from which we gather that his whole life must have been full of similar instances of compassionate solicitude for the needs of others, with an unshaken trust that God would always provide and care for those who placed their faith in Him.

[1] The solidus weighed, according to Isidore (*Etymolog.*, lib. xvi., chap. xxiv.), one-sixth of an ounce, and therefore was also called a sextula. St. Gregory, in his *Dialogues* (lib. i., chap. ix.), gives to the same coin, which he calls "solidus," the name "aureus"; therefore it is supposed that it has the value of four florins; twelve solidi were therefore the sum of forty-eight florins.

"Solidus aureus or sextula, 12s. 0½d." (Crabbe's *Technological Dictionary*).—TRANSLATOR'S note.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROGRESS OF THE GOTHIC WAR.

A.D. 539.

THE Gothic army in spite of the severe losses it had sustained was still sufficiently numerous to be exceedingly formidable. Vitiges now tried the plan of dividing it: one half he sent to chastise the Milanese for their desertion, the other half he despatched to Rimini, which had been seized by "John the Bloodthirsty". Belisarius went to meet this last detachment, and was joined by a reinforcement of 11,000 men, commanded by Narses. Encouraging as this was to the imperial troops, it struck terror into the hearts of the Goths, and they fled as chaff before the wind; Vitiges himself hastened to take refuge in Ravenna, and the surrounding country fell into the hands of the Romans. The conquest of Italy must now have been inevitable, had not discord crept into the imperial army. Narses, who had risen by his talents from the lowly rank of a slave, instead of acting as a subordinate, or at least in conjunction with Belisarius, set himself up as his rival. The result was disastrous: all who had any complaints against Belisarius ranged themselves with

Narses; if a council of war was held, it was sufficient for Belisarius to suggest one course, and Narses would immediately adopt another; hence it happened that, when the former ordered the siege of Urbino, the latter with his army went off in the night to conquer, as he said, the Aemilian province.

This state of affairs gave the Goths breathing time. As matters stood, Belisarius was unable to send a reinforcement to his slender garrison at Milan, consisting of 300 men, who, under the brave Mundilas, had defended the city for over six months. But at length the Goths with 10,000 Burgundians having renewed the siege, and the town being a prey to all the horrors of famine, the little troop was forced to open the gates in the spring of 539. Belisarius sent what help he could, but it came too late, and Milan presented a sad scene of bloodshed and cruelty. Every man and male child was put to the sword; the priests were murdered on the altar steps; churches plundered and destroyed, and the women were carried off to be sold as slaves. Bishop Datius and his attendants managed to escape and reached Constantinople in safety. This is not the place to discuss whether or not he was justified in stirring up the Milanese to shake off the Gothic yoke; by so doing he thought to restore the country to a Catholic emperor, to whom it had formerly belonged before it had been wrested from him by a foreign conqueror.

On the fall of Milan Narses was recalled to Constantinople, and Belisarius was once more free to command his army unmolested.

The year 538 had ended with an event too important to be passed over in silence, even in the narrow limits of this sketch, namely, the consecration of the Church of Sancta Sophia, built by the Emperor Justinian and consecrated in his presence. For seven years 10,000 labourers had worked unceasingly at its erection; every kind of marble had been used to cover its walls and to form the eight colossal pillars which supported the cupola and the four and twenty which supported the galleries. The altar was of massive gold raised on six golden pillars and inlaid with precious stones. Over the altar rose a tabernacle in the shape of a tower, surmounted by a golden cupola overshadowed by twelve golden lilies. In the centre of these was the cross, set also with precious stones and weighing seventy-five pounds. With the exception of the doors, no wood was to be found in the building, and the great entrance door was of silver richly gilt. Besides the sacred vessels, which were of purest gold, there were 4,000 golden candlesticks and twenty-four missals in covers of gold, weighing nearly a hundredweight. Altogether, according to many calculations, the cost of that magnificent cathedral, together with its furniture, must have been about £40,000,000.

CHAPTER XV.

TRIUMPH OF BELISARIUS.

A.D. 540.

TROUBLES IN THE EAST. A NEW KING OF THE GOTHS.

A.D. 541.

After the fall of Milan Belisarius marched onwards towards Ravenna, thinking that if he could but obtain possession of this city the war would speedily come to an end; but Vitiges, always brave, even under defeat, had yet a large and powerful army at his disposal, and Ravenna was so strongly fortified as to appear invincible. Thence the Goth sent ambassadors to the Persians to obtain their assistance; he likewise ceded Provence and part of Rhetia to the Franks, that by so doing he might gain their goodwill and help, and thus his hopes once more revived. In the spring of 539 Theodebert arrived from Austrasia with 100,000 men, and was welcomed as an ally both by the Goths and Romans, who were equally deceived. He merely came for the sake of booty, and desolated the whole province of Liguria, burning every town and village in Aemilia. Famine and pestilence alone succeeded in checking his fury, and having lost a third of his army, he led the remainder home again.

Belisarius at length persuaded Vitiges to come to terms; hostilities ceased, and envoys were sent to Constantinople to treat for peace. Justinian decided that Vitiges should remain king on one side of the river Po, and cede the territory on the other side to the empire. These terms Belisarius considered too favourable and consequently refused to sign the treaty, alleging that the emperor's interest forbade him to obey, since Justinian, when he made the conditions, evidently did not understand the hopeless situation of the enemy. Upon this refusal the Goths held a council and determined to offer the crown to Belisarius himself, with the understanding that all property should be secured to them. Belisarius readily vouched for the safety of their property; as to accepting the crown he said that must depend on a council to be held in the city. The gates were opened, and Belisarius, at the head of his army, entered Ravenna; he treated Vitiges with every mark of respect, and kept him in honourable captivity. He then took possession of all the fortified parts of the city, the treasury, the arsenals and public granaries. The kingdom was now conquered; he, however, had no intention of accepting it for himself, and when the Goths again offered him the crown he steadfastly refused it, saying: "I am the emperor's subject, and such I will remain".

Matters were in this state when an order came to recall Belisarius to Constantinople, there to assist Justinian in some difficult transactions. He set sail without delay in the year 540, taking with him

Vitiges, his wife Mathasuntha, and many notable Goths as hostages, and the treasures and trophies he had collected. Vitiges was kindly treated by Justinian; he renounced Arianism, and was received into the communion of the Church; large possessions in Asia were assigned to him, and retiring thither, he lived quietly till his death two years later. His widow married Germanus, a cousin of the emperor, and gave birth to Germanus the younger, who united in his person the two oldest and noblest races in the world, the Anician and the Amalicean.

Notwithstanding the imperial success in Italy, the year 540 brought an accumulation of disasters to the empire. Chosroës, the Persian king, attacked the East with a mighty army, and spread terror and desolation in his way, devastating and burning everything he could not seize, until he arrived before Antioch, the chief town of the Eastern empire. Boasting of her position and the strength of her walls, Antioch defied and dared even to revile her enemy; this exasperated Chosroës and hastened his attack; he discovered a weak place in the fortifications, and, having made a breach, his soldiers burst like a torrent into the city. The inhabitants fought with desperate courage, but they were overpowered by numbers, and all who could not fly were massacred. Chosroës gave up the town to pillage, reserving the cathedral as his share of the booty; thus the pearl of oriental cities was reduced to a heap of ruins. The imperial ambassadors now eagerly treated for peace, and paid down £5,000 pounds, with

a promise of a yearly tribute of £500. With this Chosroës retraced his steps, not, however, peaceably, as the treaty required, but burning and destroying as before. This breach of treaty induced Justinian to declare war afresh.

Added to this calamity was the invasion of the Sclaves, who did incalculable damage and pressed forward even as far as Constantinople. Earthquakes, pestilence and disease likewise demanded their tribute ; and the sectarians, especially the Origenists, fostered disturbances, doing their utmost to increase the Emperor's difficulties. In Italy itself there was anything but peace. The Goths, seeing the empire pressed on every side, took the opportunity to rebel against Alexander, the new governor, who, by his avarice, had estranged the hearts of the people ; even his own soldiers detested him because he withheld their pay. The Goths chose Ildebald for their king. In 541 he gave battle to the Romans under Vitalis at Treviso in Northern Italy, and gained a decided victory. Soon after, first Ildebald and then Eraric, his successor, fell victims to jealousy and were murdered in 541.

The Goths, however, nothing daunted by their double loss, unanimously elected Baduilla, Ildebald's nephew, to fill the vacant throne. He was both young and brave, and on account of his rare qualities was surnamed Totila (the immortal). He governed with a power which eclipsed even that of the great Theodoric. Brave and enterprising as a soldier, he was no less prudent and circumspect as a leader of

his people, and won their universal esteem. Unfortunately his Arian tenets made him hard and cruel to Catholics, especially the clergy. Totila was no longer satisfied to stand on the defensive, but determined himself to renew hostilities and to attack the Romans. He opened the campaign in the spring of 542 at the head of 5,000 men. The rival armies met between Bologna and Rimini, and Totila won the day by means of a clever stratagem. He seized the trophies and baggage of his enemies and took many prisoners; these he treated with so much humanity that he won them over to his own standard. His army daily increased, while discord prevailed among the Romans, with the result that he gained victory after victory, and in a short time had pushed on as far as Naples. Justinian felt that the only resource left to him was once more to send Belisarius into the field, as the most capable general, to cope with the conqueror. The war lasted many years, causing untold misery in Italy and degradation to Rome; but the completion of its history does not belong to these pages, as it was not concluded until after the death of the saint whose life we are studying.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTEMPORARY SAINTS.

THE turmoil and disturbance created by continual warfare could not but cast a gloom over the community at Monte Cassino, yet this sorrow was not without hope, and it was with great confidence that the monks begged of God to restore peace, knowing that His Arm is not shortened and that His wonders never end. And mingled with the reports of bloodshed and crime which daily reached their ears came accounts of the heroic deeds and blessed lives of many saints who then glorified the Church. In our own country St. David, Archbishop of Caerleon in Wales,[1] was universally venerated. Trained by Paulinus, he preached to the Britons and founded twelve monasteries, which became so many schools for saints; subsequently he was elected archbishop in spite of his intense reluctance, and he held a synod at a place called Victoria, to complete the work begun by his predecessor at that of Brevy. The Church of Britain is indebted to these two synods for many wise regulations and several canons relating to her administration and discipline. David shone as a bright example of virtue to his flock, and died a good and faithful servant of his Lord and

[1] Later he transferred his see to Menevia, now called St. David's.

Master in the year 544. His soul, carried to heaven by angels, was shown to St. Kentigern in a vision.

His holy friend Bishop Sennan died the same year. For a long time he governed not only the extensive diocese of Limerick, Killaloe and Ardful, but also a monastery which he had founded on the Shannon.

St. Finian, educated in Wales with St. David, re-enkindled the fire of charity in Ireland, chiefly by the erection of monasteries and schools from which came forth Saints Kieran, Colombkille, Columba, Brendan, and others. He was chosen to occupy the See of Clonard, and laboured with unremitting zeal for the salvation of his people. The abbey he founded at Clonard flourished until the dissolution of monasteries in England. His name is one of the most famous among the saints of Ireland, after St. Patrick.

St. Firmin, sprung from a noble race in Narbonne, so distinguished himself by his prudence, learning and piety, that at the early age of twenty-two he was raised to the See of Uzes, and from thence the odour of his virtue spread all over Gaul.

Much might be said of St. Gall, Bishop of Clermont in Auvergne, who, renouncing the brilliant prospects which lay before him, consecrated himself to a religious life at Cournon, where he remained until he was made bishop in 527. He was especially remarkable for patience in bearing injuries, and his tender charity towards his persecutors transformed many from enemies into friends; he was endowed with a wonderful gift of miracles.

St. Paternus of Armorica (Brittany) withdrew from the world while still a youth, and became a monk in Wales. Here his virtue soon attracted the attention and admiration of his brethren, and he was chosen by them as superior. He accompanied St. David to Jerusalem, where the patriarch John III. consecrated him bishop. He was recalled to Brittany by King Caradoc, and there governed the See of Vannes, giving many proofs of his eminent sanctity.

One of the most striking examples of humility and mortification of this century is found in the person of St. John the Silent. Born at Nicopolis in 454, he was early left an orphan with considerable possessions. At the age of eighteen he caused a church and monastery to be built, into which he retired with ten companions. He was made Bishop of Colonian in Armenia when scarcely twenty-eight, but after nine years he fled from his see into the desert. There he lived as a simple monk in the laura of the famous Abbot Sabas, his identity being unsuspected. After seven years, the abbot, edified by his extraordinarily mortified life, determined to have him ordained priest, when God revealed to him the episcopal character of his spiritual son. After that John lived about forty years in yet greater seclusion, and died at the age of 104, having never ceased to edify others and sanctify himself.

Besides bishops, there were also at that time many abbots remarkable for their sanctity; among others we notice Kieran, an Irishman. Trained to the monastic life by St. Finian, he made such won-

derful progress in perfection as to astonish his master, who prophesied that his disciple would compose a Rule, which should be used by most of the Irish monasteries. This Rule, called "Law of Heaven," was very austere. Kieran died in 549, and is honoured as patron of Connaught.

St. Fidolus also flourished at the same period. He was a native of Auvergne, and in his youth was taken captive by Thierry, King of the Franks; St. Aventine of Champagne, however, obtained his release, and brought him up in a monastery he had founded. Fidolus surpassed his fellow monks in the austerity of his life, spending nearly the whole of Lent without food. Later the community unanimously chose him for their abbot.

Contemporary with him was St. Lifard. Having held an honourable post in the magistracy at Orleans, he forsook the world and retired into solitude, taking with him one companion named Urbicius. In a wild mountainous spot they constructed a hermitage of twisted branches, where they lived in penance and unbroken communion with God until Bishop Mark of Orleans induced Lifard to be ordained priest. He then founded a monastery on the site of his former hut, and governed it with such wisdom that he was honoured by all as a saint.

One of the most illustrious men of the time was Abbot Hilarius of Galeata. Born in Tuscany in 476, even as a child he was accustomed to study the Epistles of St. Paul and the book of the Gospels. Meditating one day on those words, "If any man come

to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple,"[1] he was much puzzled, and asked an old man what they could mean. The old man told him he was too young to trouble about such matters, but the boy would not be put off, answering that Our Lord said, "Suffer children to come to Me".[2] The old man, perceiving from this that he was a child of predilection, explained to him carefully the passage which perplexed him. Hilarius at once betook himself to a fertile spot among the Apennines, where in three years he succeeded in erecting a church, underneath which was a cavern. There he dwelt, serving God day and night by continual prayer and labour. At the age of twenty-one he delivered a heathen nobleman of Ravenna from a devil, and this miracle had the effect of converting both him and his family. Three days after, the nobleman's wife died, upon which he, with his two sons, laid all their possessions at the saint's feet and resolved never to leave him. A monastery was accordingly built at Galeata, and numbers flocked thither to learn the way of perfection under the wise direction of Hilarius. It is related that King Theodoric, wishing to erect for himself a palace near this monastery, called on the people of the surrounding country to assist him, but some ill-disposed persons spread a report that the saint would not comply with his request. Hearing this

[1] Luke xiv. 26. [2] Luke xviii. 16.

the king was very angry, and set out for Galeata to vent his rage on the holy abbot; however, before he had gone far his horse became so restive that he was unable to proceed and was obliged to send for Hilarius to come to him. Scarcely had they met when—powerful monarch though he was—he felt convinced that he was in the presence of one greater than himself and, falling at the saint's feet, begged his forgiveness. Hilarius, taking him by the hand, made him rise, and, conducting him to the monastery, so won his heart that thenceforth the king became his most staunch friend and benefactor. Hilarius died at the age of eighty-two, and, as his biographer says, "So many wonderful things are told of him, as to seem almost incredible".

One word must be said of St. Equitius, who lived in the province of Abruzzo beyond the Sabine mountains. Like St. Benedict, he had been violently tempted in his youth, and had used the same heroic means to overcome and subdue his passion. His heart was on fire with the love of God and his neighbour, and many associated themselves to him to be trained in the spiritual life. He built several monasteries, among them one for women. As he was found preaching in the country villages, being only a layman, the Pope sent a priest to inquire into the matter; but meantime God revealed to His Vicar that Equitius had received an immediate call from Himself, and from that time he continued his preaching unmolested. He died in 540. St. Gregory says of him that "he was a passing holy man, who

for his virtuous life was in great admiration with all men".

A saintly man called Bernard deserves mention as founder of the famous monastery of Noblac, in Limousin. He had begun his career as a nobleman at the court of Clovis; subsequently he retired into the Abbey of Mici under the Abbots Maximian and Laetus. After some time spent in solitude he was sent to evangelise his countrymen, and effected numerous conversions.

We cannot close this chapter without adding the name of Cassiodorus, the renowned chancellor of the Ostrogoths, who founded the monastery of Vivaria.[1] We might bring many other examples of holiness and wisdom before our readers, but sufficient has been said to show how saints abounded, even in those days of bloodshed and crime.

[1] Viviers, in Calabria.

CHAPTER XVII.

ZALLA THE GOTH.

BENEDICT'S life was now fast drawing to a close; but, as the sun seems to shine more gloriously when about to set, so the gifts with which God had adorned His chosen servant appeared rather to increase than to diminish as he drew nearer to the grave. Not long before his death an event happened which recalls that scene in the Old Testament where Samson burst the ropes which bound him as if they had been so many hairs; or that miracle of the prison at Jerusalem when the chains fell from St. Peter's hands at the touch of an angel.

The occurrence we are about to relate took place after Totila had succeeded in restoring the dominion of the Goths in Italy. He had a captain named Zalla (or, as some authors call him, Galla). This man was an Arian, and his hatred for Catholics was such that he considered no cruelty too barbarous to inflict on any he met; indeed, no cleric or priest had ever been known to escape from him with his life. We may well suppose that a man with such a temperament did not excel in other virtues; and not the least among his vices was an excessive greed for gold. One day, having set out as usual to plunder and pillage, he met a labourer, and seizing hold of

him began to ill-use him, with the hope of obtaining any small savings he might have. The poor man, terrified by the threats of his tormentor and beside himself with pain, thought to get out of the difficulty by referring the case to St. Benedict, and said that he had entrusted his earnings to the keeping of the Abbot of Monte Cassino. Upon this the barbarian ceased tormenting him, and binding him fast with a rope drove him before his horse to the abbey. Benedict was sitting at the gate reading, and so absorbed was he in his book that he did not notice the approach of his visitors. When the labourer caught sight of him he pointed him out to Zalla, saying: "That is Father Benedict of whom I spoke". The Goth, thinking to terrify the saint as he had terrified so many others, shouted in an insolent manner: "Rise, sirrah! and hand over this fellow' property which he tells me you have in your keeping". Benedict, far from being disturbed or cowed by this rough speech, merely raised his eyes from his book and looked at the ruffian and his prisoner. At the same moment the cords which bound the peasant fell from him, loosed by Divine power. On beholding this Zalla was struck with astonishment and fear; and, dismounting from his horse, he threw himself at the saint's feet, imploring his prayers. Surely this was the greater miracle of the two: that a man who had been the scourge of the country, who had faced armies unmoved, whose pride and passions were ungovernable, should thus be brought to the ground and forced to humble himself by one look from a

servant of God. Meanwhile Benedict continued his reading, as if all this commotion was an everyday occurrence; and, calling one of his monks, told him to take Zalla and give him some refreshment. The Goth, meek as a lamb, followed the brother into the monastery, and, having taken some food, he returned to the abbot. Benedict then exhorted him to change his impious mode of life, and to cease tormenting innocent victims; and, overcome by the saint's words, he retired and left the poor labourer in peace. Whether his conversion was permanent is not known, as his name does not appear again in the Monastic Chronicles.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REMARKABLE VISION GRANTED TO THE SAINT.

THERE was in Campania, not far from Monte Cassino, a monastery governed by a deacon named Servandus. This abbot had such a veneration and love for Benedict that he could not refrain from often visiting and conversing with him on spiritual subjects. St. Gregory says very beautifully that although these privileged souls could not as yet perfectly feed on the celestial food of Heaven, yet by means of sweet discourses they tasted of its joys and ineffable delights.

On one of these occasions, when it was time to go to rest, Benedict mounted to the upper room of the tower which flanked the monastery, while Servandus remained in the lower one. A staircase joined these two rooms, and near the tower was a large dormitory in which slept both the monks of Monte Cassino and those whom Servandus had brought with him. It was late, and all were buried in sleep except Benedict, who, kneeling by his window, watched and communed with his God. Suddenly a brilliant light shone from heaven, so dazzling as to change the dark night into the brightest day: then, marvellous to relate, he saw in the midst of this stream of light the whole world gathered, as it were,

within one of the sun's rays. While the holy abbot gazed on this strange vision with wonder, he saw the soul of St. Germanus, Bishop of Capua, which, in the form of a globe of fire, was being carried by angels to heaven. Desirous that others should witness so glorious a sight, he called two or three times as loud as he could to Servandus, who, aroused by the voice and alarmed at hearing a cry in a time of such solemn silence, hastened up the little staircase to ascertain the cause; looking upwards he saw only the light which still lingered in the sky, but the vision had passed away. Benedict then related to his astonished guest all that he had seen, and immediately sent for Theoprobus, one of his monks in whom he placed great confidence, and desired him to despatch a messenger to Capua to inquire after the bishop. The messenger set out without delay, but, on arriving, found that Germanus had died at the very same moment at which Benedict had beheld his soul being carried to heaven.

St. Gregory, explaining this wonderful vision, says that "though Benedict saw the whole world gathered together before his eyes, he did not by this mean to express that heaven and earth were contracted into a small compass, but that beholding the Creator his soul was thereby so enlarged as to comprehend without difficulty all things created". Our minds are so small and we meditate so little on God as the Creator and Preserver of the universe, that unconsciously we lose sight of His greatness; self forms the centre round which our thoughts revolve; our

hearts become narrow, and our notions contracted. But Benedict had spent his whole life contemplating the immensity of God and his own nothingness; he realised that he was but an atom in this vast world, and the world itself but a fraction of the universe; he knew that God holds, as it were, all creation in the palm of His hand, and in Him all creatures live and move and have their being. What wonder, then, that his bodily eyes should see in a vision the truth his soul had long since grasped, namely, that in comparison with God our Creator all things created are as though they existed not, so insignificant do they appear, and, to quote St. Gregory's words again: "To the soul which beholds the Creator, all creatures seem as nothing".

CHAPTER XIX.

BENEDICT'S PROPHECY CONCERNING MONTE CASSINO AND ROME.

After the supernatural favours recorded in the last chapter the soul of this great patriarch and saint was ready to be tried once more in the fiery ordeal of suffering. This time the blow was to be inflicted, not by the hand of man, but by the direct power of the Almighty. We many of us know well the pain of failing in some cherished plan or desire, and the more perfect and unselfish our designs have been, the more the heart naturally suffers. This was the last cross destined by the appointment of God to try the faith and love of Benedict, and to purify his soul from the least remaining particles of human attachment or complacency in his great work. He was allowed to see in prayer the fate which awaited his beloved monastery, and the events which were to happen after the lapse of forty years, with all their details and attendant circumstances. Theoprobus, coming to look for the saint one day, found him in his cell weeping bitterly and groaning with anguish. Theoprobus stood by for some time, sympathetic and awestruck at the sight of this grief on the part of one whom he thought almost above such human feelings, but, after a pause of reverent silence, ventured to ask the cause of such great sorrow. Benedict

replied: "This monastery which I have built, and all I have obtained for the brethren, are, by the judgment of God, given over to the heathens, and scarcely could I obtain from Him the lives of those who dwell therein".

The prophecy was fulfilled when, in later years, the Lombards invaded Italy. One night, while the monks slept, they attacked the abbey and, having plundered it, destroyed it, but they were not able to find or capture a single monk. Mabillon places the destruction of the monastery in the year 580, other authors somewhat later. The former opinion seems the most probable, from the fact that when St. Gregory wrote his *Dialogues* in 593 he expressly says that Valentinian had for many years presided over the Lateran monastery which came from Monte Cassino.

The monks who were thus forcibly expelled from their beloved home fled to Rome, and built themselves a monastery near the Lateran Palace. They brought with them the Rule which St. Benedict had written with his own hand, also the weight for the daily allowance of bread, the measure of wine and some precious relics in the shape of their holy father's clothing and shoes. Some of the monks from Monte Cassino went to other monasteries, as in the case of the saintly Abbot Antoninus, who governed the Abbey of Sorrento, where he became very famous for his holy life. Baronius tells us that a few lingered near the ruins of Monte Cassino, and jealously guarded the tomb where lay the body of their venerated founder. The monastery was rebuilt in 718 under the pontificate of Gregory III.

CHAPTER XX.

TOTILA VISITS ST. BENEDICT AT MONTE CASSINO.

A.D. 542.

No power can be compared with that conferred by grace; it is an interior and mysterious influence which endows its possessor with a dignity and majesty that command universal esteem. The saints having overcome themselves, likewise overcame the whole world, and as grace gained in them more and more ascendancy, so, in proportion, did they win the respect of the great ones of this earth, although the reverence in many cases was anything but voluntary on the part of those who felt forced to pay it in spite of themselves.

When Benedict was already advanced in years, and longing only for the day on which he should be set free to go to his heavenly home, God allowed the greatness of his soul so to shine exteriorly as to confound the pride of an earthly monarch. Totila, the mighty conqueror who in one short year had possessed himself of the whole of Italy, who acknowledged no lord and master but himself, felt compelled to recognise a dignity in Benedict before which he must needs bow. It happened in the year 542 that the Gothic king was in the vicinity of Monte Cassino,

and having heard much of the holy abbot's gift of prophecy and discernment, he determined to put it to the test. As we have already said, this king was an Arian and very bitter against the true Faith, so that he was only too anxious to prove that the saint was an impostor. With this end in view, he caused his sword-bearer, a man named Riggo, to array himself in the royal robes, and instructed him to act as though he were the king; to give more colour to the device, he sent his three personal attendants to wait upon him. Totila meantime followed at a distance with the rest of his retinue. Riggo, attired in his borrowed plumes and attended by his gay courtiers, rode up the mountain to the abbey gate. Benedict was sitting near the gate when the cavalcade appeared, and no sooner did he perceive their arrival than he called out to the leader: "My son, put off that apparel, for those clothes are none of thine". The soldier, who had never known fear in the thickest of the fray, was much troubled at these words; and, heartily ashamed of himself for trying to deceive so holy a man, he, together with his comrades, prostrated themselves on the ground; nor did they dare approach nearer to the saint, but returning to the king they related what had occurred.

Then Totila went in person to visit the venerable abbot, and seeing him in the distance he also was afraid to approach, and overcome with awe he fell down at his feet. Benedict bade him rise, yet still the king remained in his humble attitude, till at last the saint took him by the hand and raised him from

the ground. All who watched this scene saw that very strong emotions were conflicting in the heart of the mighty warrior, and that the recollection of his many deeds of cruelty and wrong caused him to tremble before one whom he felt could read his very thoughts. Benedict, who knew that the fate of Italy rested with Totila, would not allow the opportunity to pass, and fearlessly rebuked him for his wickedness, prophesying the evils which would in consequence befall him. He said: "You daily commit much wickedness, and have done many great crimes, but now at last amend your sinful life. You will conquer Rome, you will cross the sea, you will reign nine years, and you will die in the tenth." The prophecy was verified when Totila took Rome in 546, crossed to Sicily in 549, remained there a year, and, returning to Italy, died in August, 552.

Hearing these things, the king was terrified, and besought the saint to pray for him. From that time he was much less cruel, and on some occasions showed most unexpected magnanimity and generosity. For instance, when Naples surrendered to him after a long siege, he caused food to be distributed to the inhabitants, who were perishing from hunger, and presided in person at the distribution, to see that the people were properly treated. Even the pagan historian Procopius avows himself unable to understand the change, and relates that when, on account of the unsettled state of the weather, the Roman garrison was unable to leave Naples by sea, Totila provided them with horses, waggons, mules, food,

and a safe-conduct to Rome. And again, when one of his officers insulted a Neapolitan girl, he immediately ordered him to be executed, nor would he listen to those who begged mercy for him, saying: "An unpunished crime draws down the wrath of heaven on a whole race; choose then between the life of this criminal and the destruction of our nation, for victory is not only the outcome of strength and courage, but even more so the reward of moral virtue".

CHAPTER XXI.

ST. BENEDICT SENDS ST. MAURUS INTO FRANCE.

A.D. 543.

TOWARDS the close of the year 542 Innocent, Bishop of le Mans, having heard of the fervour and sanctity of the monks at Monte Cassino, determined, if possible, to induce them to make a foundation in his own diocese. With this intention he sent an embassy to St. Benedict, and entrusted his archdeacon, Flodegar or Odegarius, and his chief steward, Arderadus, with the request he wished to make. Arrived at Monte Cassino, they were received with the proverbial monastic hospitality, and the holy abbot, having learnt the object of their journey and prayed for guidance in the matter, acceded to their petition. He felt that the foundation would be an important one, and he resolved to sacrifice the son he loved most on earth and to send Maurus into France.

The monks, however, were inconsolable at the prospect of losing one who was to them the living portrait of their father. Benedict, seeing this, took compassion on their sorrow, and assembling them together, spoke to them as follows. (His words have been handed down to us by the monk

Faustus, who accompanied St. Maurus to France, and was subsequently canonised) : "My children," said he, "I confess that your complaints would be justifiable if the charity we should have for the salvation of our neighbour were not preferable to our own private satisfaction. No one can feel more than I do the departure of one so dear and useful to me as Maurus. My loss is certainly great, yet I am obliged to strip myself of my affection for him in order not to be wanting in charity to those who are to profit by our loss ; hence I must exhort you as a father to moderate a sorrow which through the malice of our old enemy might become hurtful to your souls. I know that the thought of my death, which cannot be far distant, is partly the cause of your affliction, but remember God will never fail you if you leave yourselves in the hands of His Divine Providence ; and when I am gone He will perhaps give you one more animated with His spirit and more capable of guiding you. Do not fear that any distance or separation can sever hearts so closely united by charity ; for the spiritual eye, formed after the image of Him Who created it, is not fettered by corporeal conditions." Then turning to Maurus and his companions he continued : "As for you, my well-beloved sons, who are going into a distant land to labour at God's work, take courage and strengthen your hearts by remembering the holy state of which you have made profession ; and be convinced that the more we suffer in this life for the glory of God and the salvation of souls,

the greater will be our reward in Paradise. As a last counsel I beseech you not to grieve when you hear of my death, because when I have left this mortal life I shall be nearer to you and more able to be useful to you than at present."[1] Thus did Benedict by his sweet words soften the affliction of his children.

Preparations for departure were soon made, and on the 10th of January, 543, the monks again assembled to bid a last farewell to Maurus and the four who had been chosen to accompany him; their names were Faustus, Simplicius, Anthony and Constantine. As the travellers prostrated at the feet of their holy father he blessed them, and raising them pressed them once more lovingly to his heart, saying: "My sons, this enterprise you are undertaking for the love of our Lord is a very important one, therefore I am confident that He Himself will give you the strength you need. If when God calls me out of this world I have any power with Him, rest assured that the help of my prayers will never fail you." Then he gave St. Maurus a copy of the Rule which he had written with his own hand and signed with the humble words, "*Codex peccatoris Benedicti*"; also the weight for the daily allowance of bread, and a small vessel which contained the measure of their drink.

Maurus and his companions, together with the French clerics who had come to fetch them, having

[1] *S. Bened. Serm. in discessu Mauri et Soc.; Patr. lat.*, tom. lxvi.

set out on their journey, spent the first night in a house belonging to the monastery; there they found everything prepared for their reception, as Benedict had sent two monks on in advance of them. The following morning two other monks came from Monte Cassino, Honoratus and Felicissimus, a cousin of St. Maurus, bringing with them a letter from the abbot, together with some relics, among others a piece of the true Cross, with which Maurus afterwards worked many miracles. The letter ran as follows: "Receive, my son, this last token of the tender love of your father, and keep what I send you as a perpetual memorial, not only as a mark of the love which unites our hearts, but as a support and protection to you and your brethren in the dangers you will have to encounter in your perilous journey. It has been revealed to me that you will receive your eternal reward after sixty years of religious life. The forty years that still remain to you will not be without trials, and you will have great difficulties in the foundation of your monastery. The devil will spare neither strength nor address in order to ruin your enterprise, because he foresees that it will be as much for his confusion as for the glory of God. But you will overcome him through the Divine mercy, which will make you triumph over his malice, by giving you a more suitable spot for your monastery than we could have hoped for. I pray God to fill you with His grace and to bless your journey and bring it to a happy end." This letter was treasured by Maurus

all his life, and at his request laid with him in his tomb after his death.

No sooner had the little colony of monks arrived in Gaul than the trials predicted by their holy father began. First they received the news of the death of Innocent, the bishop who had sent for them. This seemed like a death-blow to the young foundation, inasmuch as the new bishop was not at all eager to receive them, and could not give them any place to settle in. However, Florus, a wealthy nobleman of Theodebert's court, hearing of their arrival, undertook to build a monastery for them on his own property, where in course of time he himself became a monk. According to Benedict's prophecy Maurus governed the Abbey of Glanfeuil for nearly forty years. Two years before his death he retired into a hermitage and ended his life in the practice of heroic penance, 15th January, 583.

BOOK III.

LAST DAYS OF THE SAINT.

Last Meeting of Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica.

CHAPTER I.

BENEDICT'S LAST MEETING WITH SCHOLASTICA.

After Maurus' departure, Benedict knew that his work on earth was done and his days already numbered. He sighed yet more ardently for his heavenly home, and prayed unceasingly that he might be be dissolved and go to his Lord. Scarcely a month after the travellers had left, Benedict received a message from his sister Scholastica, begging him to come to a little house, not far from the monastery at the foot of the mountain, where once a year the brother and sister were accustomed to spend the day together conferring on spiritual matters. He went, therefore, to the place appointed, together with some of his monks, and passed the whole day with her in praising God and in holy conversation. Both Benedict and Scholastica now stood on the very brink of eternity; and their hearts dilated and overflowed with joyful expectancy when they spoke together of the delights of the Paradise which awaited them. Towards evening, as was their wont, they broke their fast, and while they supped they continued to converse of heavenly things. Scholastica was so transported with Benedict's inspired and soul-stirring words that she would fain have prolonged his stay with her; so, as evening wore on, she said: "I pray

you, brother, remain with me this night and let us continue till morning to speak of the joys of heaven". Benedict, however, would not hear of such a proposal, urging that no consideration could justify his spending the night outside the monastery. Thus, refused by him, Scholastica turned to God, and leaning her head on the table made her prayer, imploring her Divine Spouse with many tears to vouchsafe to give her the pleasure which her brother had refused her. Hitherto the sky had been so clear that no cloud was to be seen; but scarcely had she raised her head from her hands than a terrific clap of thunder rent the air, accompanied by such torrents of rain that it was absolutely impossible for any one to venture out. St. Gregory tells us that in one and the same moment as Scholastica lifted her head her petition was granted. Benedict, seeing that on account of the storm he and his monks would be unable to return home, was very much troubled at the thought of such a breach of monastic discipline; and, addressing his sister in a reproachful tone, he said: "God forgive you, sister, what have you done?" to which she sweetly answered: "I asked you and you would not hear me, I asked my Lord and He has deigned to grant my petition; now, therefore, if you can depart, in God's name return to your monastery and leave me here alone". Thus, though unwillingly, Benedict was forced to tarry, and, resuming their conversation, they watched all night and mutually edified and comforted one another.

Louis of Granada, in his treatise on the love of

God, mentions the storm obtained by St. Scholastica's prayer, and exclaims: "What a proof of the love of this holy soul! She never doubted that her Beloved would vouchsafe to grant her request, for she knew that God does the will of those who fear Him.[1]" And St. Gregory in one brief sentence pronounces her panegyric when he says that her prayers prevailed over the wishes of her brother, "because she loved the most". Truly no more sublime praise could have been bestowed. We have in the foregoing pages tried to give a faint idea of the exceeding greatness of Benedict's love for God: a love which absorbed his whole soul; therefore, to say that Scholastica's love for her Divine Spouse surpassed his proves the height of perfection to which she had risen. No wonder that this world could no longer detain a soul such as hers: already the voice of her Beloved sounded in her ears: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come!" Her weary exile was at an end. In three short days her chains would be broken, the gates of Paradise would open to receive her, and angels would come to conduct her to her everlasting home.

[1] Ps. cxliv. 19.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOVE OF THE CLOISTER FLIES TO HER HOME.

A.D. 543.

THE following day, 8th February, 543, Scholastica and Benedict parted to meet no more on earth, and returned to their respective monasteries. Scholastica, consumed by the fire of charity which burned in her heart, languished with love; and her frail body could no longer contain the soul which craved to be set free that it might fly to the object of its love. At length on the 10th of February the voice of the Bridegroom was heard calling for His spouse to celebrate with Him the heavenly nuptials.

At the hour of her death Benedict was in his cell, when, raising his eyes, he saw the soul of his sister ascending to heaven in the form of a dove. For one moment, we may believe, nature asserted itself, and a cry of anguish escaped from his lips; yet it was but a passing shadow, and the vision of her sweet innocence, added to her great glory, filled him with such inexpressible joy and thankfulness that he burst forth into hymns and psalms of praise. Then summoning his monks, he told them the glad tidings and bade them fetch the holy body from St. Mary's of Plombariola and bring it to the abbey, in order that

he might bury it in the grave prepared for himself. This custom of burying nuns in the church of the monks was very common. We read that in the desert of Scete, when a nun died, her sisters brought the body to the bank of the river which separated the two monasteries, and that the monks then crossed the river, carrying palm branches and singing psalms, and brought the body with great joy to their own church, where the burial took place.

St. Gregory ends this chapter by saying that as the souls of Benedict and Scholastica were always one in God while they lived, so their bodies continued together after death.[1] Truly no brother and sister had been more united to each other than these two. Born on the same day, their early years had been spent together, while they emulated one another in the practice of every virtue. Both had embraced a monastic life, both had lived under the same Rule; the same aspirations, the same longings had filled the hearts of both, even the manner of their death was identical, for they both died consumed with the fire of Divine love. "Lovely, and comely in their life, even in death they were not divided."[2]

The remains of the holy virgin being brought to the monastery were laid to rest in the oratory of St. John the Baptist. We may well picture to ourselves that funeral on a fresh spring morning: how the tears that welled up into the eyes of those present

[1] "Ut quorum mens una semper in Deo fuerat, eorum quoque corpora nec sepultura separet" (*Vita S. Bened.*, c. xxxiv.).

[2] 2 Kings i. 23.

were rather tears of rejoicing at the happiness of one so dear, than sorrow for her loss. Benedict's grand faith must have been inspiring and infectious as he stood by the grave, his venerable countenance aglow with celestial joy and triumph. Unmindful of his own loss he could only think and speak of the gain for one who had been joined to him by a triple tie, one who had been at once his spiritual child, his sister in Christ and in holy religion, and his twin and dear associate in virtue through life.

CHAPTER III.

"PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS."

A.D. 543.

THE earthly tie which had bound the brother and sister so closely together was now broken, but even death could not sever the link which united their souls. It seemed to Benedict that Scholastica had never been nearer to him than now, and many a time he would cry out to her, "My sister, fetch me too, that with thee I may sing the canticle of the Lamb". As the monks watched day by day his waning strength they could not but feel that their father must soon take leave of them. If Benedict had always lived with the constant thought of death before him, he now looked for it and longed for it with an ever increasing desire; and he had not long to wait. God, who had made known to him the secrets of so many hearts, revealed to him also the time of his release. In the year which was to be his last he foretold the day of his death to some of the monks of his own monastery, and also to others who were at a distance. These last are generally supposed to have been St. Maurus and his companions; indeed, the opinion is confirmed by the fact that

Faustus, in his life of St. Maurus, relates how Maurus told the day of Benedict's death to St. Romanus at Fontrouge. Benedict enjoined silence with regard to this prophecy on those monks who dwelt with him, and to whom he gave his confidence. To those who were absent he gave a token by which they should know the exact time of his release.

On the 15th of March he had his grave opened. Scarcely had this been done than he was seized by a violent fever which consumed the little life still remaining in him. Day by day his illness gained ground and he grew more feeble, until at length on the sixth day, calling his brethren, he bade them carry his wasted form to the church, there to receive for the last time the sacred Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Standing in the oratory, supported by his sorrowing children, he died as he had lived, his hands uplifted to heaven in prayer; and his great soul, unfettered and unstained, found its rest at last in the bosom of the eternal God. On the day of his most happy death two monks, one in the monastery and the other far distant, had the self-same vision concerning him. They saw a path spread with garments and shining with innumerable lamps which reached from the saint's cell in an easterly direction even up to heaven. In the far distance a man of venerable aspect was standing. He asked them if they knew who had passed that way; and when they said they did not, he replied: "This is the way by which Benedict the beloved servant of God ascended up to heaven".

The great patriarch of Western monks died on the Saturday before Passion Sunday, 21st March, 543, at nine o'clock in the morning. St. Peter Damian says: "Escorted by angel choirs singing hymns of praise, he passed into the Eternal Kingdom. Who can express or conceive the sublime welcome he received from all the heavenly citizens! What wonder that he went to the dwelling of angels since, even in this mortal life, he was worthy to hold familiar intercourse with them."[1] St. Bernard declares that Benedict's glorious death is a pledge of the glory to be attained by the whole of his Order. He says: "He who was in all things truly blessed (Benedictus) and filled with the Holy Spirit has erected for us a ladder, the top of which rests in heaven, as we know from the vision seen after his glorious death. What is this path that leads from his cell to Paradise but the Order which the holy man founded and the Rule of life which emanated from him? By this same path the beloved of God ascended, for he could not teach otherwise than he himself had lived."[2] And St. Peter Damain, already quoted, speaks in the like manner when he says: "We may piously believe that the ladder which once appeared and reached from Monte Cassino to heaven is still strewn with garments and lit with lamps; and as it was once trodden by the leader, so now the innumerable army of his followers cannot fail to follow the same path to glory after

[1] *Sermo viii. in Vig. S. Bened.*

[2] *Serm. de S. Bened.*

death, if in this exile they have walked faithfully in the footsteps of their holy founder."[1]

The monks laid their beloved father to rest beside his sister in the grave he had prepared for himself in the oratory of St. John the Baptist. This oratory stood formerly outside the precincts of the monastery church. The tomb now lies under the high altar, in a crypt which is reached by two flights of steps. On one side of the gate which closes this crypt is the inscription :—

> Quisquis es, ingredere et Benedicti corpus honora
> Corde humili, flexo poplite, mente pia.

And on the other side :—

> Aede sub hac celebri Scholastica virgo quiescit
> Quam tibi futuram solicitato prece.

[1] *Opusc.* 36, chap. xvi.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REWARD EXCEEDING GREAT.

"He who soweth in blessings, shall also reap of blessings";[1] and "then will He render to every man according to his works".[2] Who can estimate Benedict's works, or the blessings that he sowed? His whole life had been given to God; while yet a mere child he had left all that the world holds dear, and like a second John the Baptist had fled into the wilderness. He had preserved his heart unsullied amid the licence and corruption of Rome; he had fought and won a hard battle against flesh and blood, and by continual mortification had mastered his body. When called upon to be a guide and teacher to others he did not refuse this difficult vocation; and with the direction of souls he accepted the heaviest burden God could have laid upon him. He had to endure the persecutions of the wicked; but he gave place to anger, and repaid with blessings those who did him an injustice. God gave him the mission of an apostle and entrusted him with the work of uprooting the last remnants of paganism; and we have seen how he fulfilled his task. Though pressed by famine and want no word of complaint ever passed his lips, but he was ever willing to share his last morsel with

[1] 2 Cor. ix. 6. [2] Matt. xvi. 27.

the needy and to deprive himself of bare necessaries for their relief. When God's honour demanded it he did not hesitate to reprove Totila, the most dreaded monarch of his age.

These things are historical facts, and have been recorded as such. But what of those other countless deeds of virtue, seen only by the eye of God, recorded only by the angels? Yea, truly, no man could number these, no book contain their record! And now Benedict is enjoying his reward; that reward which is none other than God Himself. He gazes upon the beatific vision, and by reason of his great glory it is clearer to him than to others who, like him, have won their crown, but a crown less perfect. Around him is gathered the innumerable ring of his brethren, monks and nuns who, by means of his Holy Rule, have attained to heavenly bliss. St. Odo says: "If the multitude of his subjects form the glory of a king, what must we think of that sovereign who is surrounded by so numerous an army of monks? What king has ever ruled in so many different parts of the universe? or has ever collected around him such countless legions from every nation under heaven, as those whom Benedict rules and commands —souls of every age, race, rank and condition, who have voluntarily dedicated themselves to the militia of Christ?"[1]

To realise more fully the glory enjoyed by this great saint, we have but to read the *Revelations of*

[1] *Sermo de S. Bened.*

St. Gertrude. On his feast day, while she was assisting at Matins, she beheld in spirit Benedict, standing in the presence of the ever-peaceful Trinity radiant with glory. His countenance was full of majesty and beauty, his habit shone radiantly, while bright and living roses seemed to spring forth from his limbs, each one producing another, and these again others, the last surpassing the first in fragrance and beauty, so that the holy father, blessed by grace and by name, "*gratia et nomine Benedictus,*" being thus adorned, gave the greatest pleasure to the adorable Trinity and the heavenly court, who rejoiced with him because of his beatitude. St. Gertrude explains this vision as follows: "The roses which thus sprang forth from him signified the exercises which he had used to subjugate his flesh to the spirit, and all the holy actions he had performed, and also those of all whom he had drawn by his persuasions, or induced by his example, to leave the world and live under regular discipline, because by following him in this royal road they had attained, or will yet attain, to the port of the celestial country and to life eternal. Each of these souls is a subject of particular glory to this great patriarch, for which the saints praise God and congratulate Him continually." St. Gertrude likewise saw that St. Benedict carried a sceptre which was embellished on each side with precious stones of great brilliancy. As he held it in his hand, the side which was turned towards him emitted a glorious light, which indicated the happiness of those who embraced his Rule and amended

their lives, and on their account God overwhelmed him with inconceivable joy. On the side which was turned towards God, the Divine justice shone forth which had been magnified in the condemnation of those who had been called to his holy Order, but who had rendered themselves unworthy of it, and therefore had been condemned to eternal flames;[1] for it is just that those whom God calls to the holiest orders should be the most severely punished, if they live therein an evil life.

[1] *Revelations of St. Gertrude*, part iv., chap. xx.

CHAPTER V.

MIRACLES WROUGHT AFTER THE SAINT'S DEATH.

As in life God had endowed Benedict with the power of working miracles, so after death the saint's arm was not shortened, and many wonderful cures took place through his intercession. St. Gregory says: "He continueth even to this very time to work miracles, if the faith of those who pray to him require it". He then goes on to relate how a certain mad woman had experienced his help. She had lost the use of her reason, and day and night she wandered about among the mountains and valleys, the woods and the fields, only resting when overcome by exhaustion. It chanced one day that in her aimless wanderings she came to Benedict's cave. Without knowing where she was, or the sanctity of the spot, or any of the associations connected with it, she entered the holy sanctuary and, being tired and weary, fell asleep. When she awoke she had perfectly recovered her senses, and her cure was so effectual that she was never again affected by any symptoms of madness. St. Gregory probably mentions this miracle because it was worked spontaneously and unasked; yet we cannot but regret that he did not leave us some other examples.

Leo the Marsican relates how, in the time of Charlemagne, a certain Englishman who was both deaf and dumb made a pilgrimage with some others to the tomb of the holy Apostles. From thence they made their way to Monte Gargano, and on the road came to Monte Cassino. Entering the church they venerated the relics of St. Benedict, and then prepared to continue their pilgrimage. But the deaf and dumb man remained fixed to the spot, and, by his gestures, they understood that he saw a vision. Carried away by his feelings of devotion and confidence he cried to Benedict to assist him; and rising from his prayers he was able to speak and understand, not only his mother-tongue, but also Latin and Italian.

The same author gives us another miracle worked through the intercession of the saint in the time of the holy Abbot Bertharius, who governed the monastery of Cassino from 857-884. This abbot caused a small town to be built at the foot of the mountain, which he named Eulogumenopolis, or Benedict's town. Among those engaged in the work was a mason, who, owing to a severe illness, had lost the power of speech for seven years. It happened on one occasion that this poor man, overcome with fatigue, fell asleep behind a pillar in the church while the monks were chanting Matins. As he slept Benedict appeared to him, and touched him gently on the head with his staff, saying, "Art thou come hither to sleep? Get up, and strike the ground three times." At this the man awoke, and, having done as the saint

commanded, he suddenly recovered his speech and in a loud voice began to praise and bless God and His holy servant who had thus cured him.

Miracles continued to occur, not only in Italy, but also in other countries, especially at the Abbey of Fleury in France, which boasted of having a portion of the saint's body. An account of these miracles are given in a book written by the monk Adrevald in the year 870, and in the eleventh and twelfth centuries Aimoinus and Rudolph Tortarius, both monks of Fleury, continued to chronicle the wonders that took place; the dumb spoke, the lame walked, the blind saw, calamities were averted, and conversions were obtained.

In the eleventh century devotion to the saint received a new impetus, and many people came to Monte Cassino to visit his tomb; again miracles were multiplied, an account of them being carefully kept by Leo the Marsican, Peter the Deacon and the Abbot Desiderius. St. Henry the Emperor, being afflicted by a very painful disease, saw the saint in a vision, and obtained from him his cure. From that moment his only wish was to devote the remainder of his life to God as a monk in the Abbey of St. Vanne at Verdun; but by the advice of the holy Abbot Richard he sacrificed his desire for the good of his subjects.

CHAPTER VI.

UNIVERSAL VENERATION.

At the period of which we write there was no formal process of canonisation: the *vox populi* was looked upon as the *vox Dei*, and a saint was recognised as such by the consent of the bishop and the acclamation of the people.

Benedict was at once universally venerated as a saint, and his name inserted both in the Roman and Greek martyrologies; the Greeks, however, keep his festival on the 14th of March.

In the second book of his *Dialogues* St. Gregory gives a most perfect and finished eulogium of this blessed servant of God. He says: "Benedict was a man of venerable life, blessed by grace and name . . . one filled with the spirit of all the just . . . a bright light placed upon a candlestick . . . a teacher of virtue and a model of righteousness". Pope Zacharias (741-752) calls him "the morning star, the friend of God, a father of blessings, a wonder-worker, one raised to the height of angelic glory, and a faithful and wise administrator".

Pope Stephen III., who came to Monte Cassino with the kings Pepin and Carloman and their sons Carl and Carloman, when brought into the presence of the saint's relics, filled with holy enthusiasm,

exclaimed aloud before many bishops and a large concourse of the faithful: "Hail thou disciple of Christ! Hail thou friend of the Divine Bridegroom! Hail thou preacher of the truth and teacher of nations! Hail thou universal shepherd of monks! Pillar of the faith, I am thine! Thine also these bishops; thine the clergy; thine the people of Rome; thine these patricians; thine the Lateran basilica; thine this monastery where thou dwellest body and soul. Protect the Holy See, defend the Roman Empire and these renowned patricians who lie humbly prostrate before thee. Intercede for us all, and may we enjoy thy clemency in time and eternity."[1]

St. Bernard invokes St. Benedict as the master, leader and legislator of monks; a great and fruitful tree; a perfect model, whose holiness strengthens us and whose love instructs us; one beloved by God and men, blessing us not only by his presence, but by his continual thought of us, and feeding the flock of Christ by his life, teaching and intercession.

Our Blessed Lady appeared on one occasion to St. Bridget, and said to her: "The holy abbot Benedict increased the gift of grace which he had received, in that he despised all transient things and made his flesh subservient to the spirit, preferring nothing to Divine love. The world was dead to him, and he thought only of God."

Baronius calls St. Benedict the great patriarch of

[1] *Anastas bibliothec. in Chron. MS. Cassin.*

monks, the jewel of the Western Church, a little sapling from which forests of fruitful trees have sprung and filled the whole Church; a bright light which shone with so much lustre, even in the period of terrible darkness, as to enlighten the entire world.

And lastly, we would quote the words of Odo, the renowned abbot of Cluny. He says: "Christian piety honours a saint in proportion as he is glorified by God. Hence it is that Benedict is revered in such a very special way; and that Holy Church considers him as one raised up by God in a wonderful manner, and placed by Him amongst the most exalted of the fathers and amongst the pillars of the faith and promoters of discipline. The grace of the Holy Ghost adorned him with both virtues and miracles, and these in so high a degree as to make him in all things worthy to be the leader of a chosen band." [1]

No wonder, then, that devotion to the saint quickly spread all over Christendom. Princes and peoples, priests and laymen, learned and unlearned, all vied with one another in doing him honour; and in less than two centuries after his death there was no corner of the Western Church where his intercession was not invoked, and no Christian province which did not boast of Benedictine abbeys, from whence the *Laus perennis* arose daily as a sweet smelling incense to the throne of the Lamb.

[1] *Serm. de S. Bened.*

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

HISTORY OF THE TRANSLATION OF ST. BENEDICT'S RELICS.

PLATO declares that those who have fallen as brave champions in the fight are to be honoured as guardian spirits, and their tombs treated with respect and veneration. With far greater truth might the same be said of those who have fought and won a great battle for the faith. Holy Church has always reverenced the relics of her martyrs as most precious treasures; and we know how in the days of persecution Christians would risk their very lives in order to obtain possession of these and save them from desecration. Though at first this veneration was only shown to the bodies of the martyrs, it gradually extended itself to the remains of confessors and holy virgins, because sanctity does not consist in martyrdom, but rather in charity. This veneration was also increased by the fact that God allowed miracles to be worked at their shrines and often permitted their bodies to remain incorrupt, in many cases causing a sweet fragrance to emanate from their relics. However, it sometimes happened that, in times of war and invasion, these relics have been scattered or irretrievably lost, and it would seem that God permits this in order to show that devotion is not to be confined merely to the bodies of His saints, but that He wishes them to be equally honoured whether their relics have been pre-

served or not. If, then, a dispute has arisen as to whether the body of St. Benedict is at Monte Cassino or at Fleury, there is no reason why the controversy should lead to strife and contention. God honours Benedict not only at Monte Cassino and Fleury, but in every place where His servant is reverenced and loved. Besides, Monte Cassino, whether it possesses the holy body or not, is in itself a relic of the saint; and even if Fleury did not take away the treasure they coveted, at least we cannot but admire the zeal which prompted them to send an embassy to Monte Cassino for the purpose. As a life of the saint would be incomplete without some account of the controversy which has agitated so many minds as to where his blessed body really is, we will briefly relate both sides of the question, without however attempting to solve the difficulty.

In early days we find Adrevald supporting the claims of Fleury; Leo the Marsican and Peter the Deacon those of Monte Cassino. Later, again, we have John Bosco, Charles Saussy, Simon Millet, Hugh Menard, le Conte and Mabillon siding with Fleury; and Matthew Lauret, Abbot of San Salvador in Castile, and Angelo della Noce, Abbot of Monte Cassino, both taking the opposite view. Anthony Yepez and Arnold Wion are both of opinion that the relics were removed to Fleury, but restored again to Monte Cassino at a later date; Baronius, Henschenius and others remain undecided, and Bollandus inclines to the French side. We will first relate what the monks of Fleury say, and then give the Cassinese version.

According to Adrevald, who first wrote fully on the subject, Mummolus, Abbot of the Monastery of Fleury, which was founded in the year 644, having read St.

Gregory's life of St. Benedict, and understanding the sad plight of the monastery at Monte Cassino since its destruction by the Lombards in 580, was filled with a desire to possess himself of the precious relics buried amongst its ruins. In order to accomplish this he chose a monk named Aigulph, a man both pious and intelligent. Whilst he was making preparations for the journey, two delegates arrived at Fleury on their way to Monte Cassino to execute a commission for the Bishop of le Mans. This bishop, Borcarius, had been admonished in a vision to try to procure the relics of St. Scholastica for a convent he was founding. The cautious delegates, however, did not reveal the real object of their journey, and consented to take Aigulph as their travelling companion and fellow-pilgrim. Having reached Rome, they occupied themselves in visiting the holy places, and while so engaged Aigulph, unable to brook the delay and eager to accomplish his mission, slipped away from his companions and hurried on to Monte Cassino. Arrived there, he carefully explored the ruins, but without result. He then had recourse to prayer; and as he knelt, an old man with a venerable countenance approached him. They exchanged a few words of greeting, and Aigulph determined to make the old man his confidant, and, if possible, obtain assistance from him. The old man told him to notice the direction of a bright ray of light which he would see at dawn, saying that it would guide him to the object of his search. Aigulph followed his directions, and quickly discovered the precious tomb; at first he was somewhat perplexed, as a heavy stone closed the coffin and he had no means of lifting it; but perceiving that the sides were formed of stones joined with mortar, he patiently loosened them, and thus was enabled to obtain possession of the

two bodies he so much coveted. These he carefully laid in a basket he had brought.

He had just completed his work when his former travelling companions appeared on the scene, and seeing that he had already taken the relics they had come in search of, they were reluctantly obliged to make known to him the object of their mission. Both parties mutually agreed to leave the decision as to who should eventually keep the treasures till they reached Fleury; recognising the necessity of carrying away the bodies in all haste over the frontier, before the news of their theft reached the ears of Pope St. Martin I. This they succeeded in doing, though they were closely followed by a troop of soldiers sent by the pontiff in pursuit of them as soon as he discovered what they had done.

These holy men were so overjoyed at having the sacred relics in their possession that it never seemed to occur to them that their pious theft was, to say the least of it, very unjustifiable and contrary to the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff; however, it may be that tradition has somewhat exaggerated the true state of the case. When the travellers arrived at a village near Orleans, named Bonney, two striking miracles were wrought through the intercession of the saint: a blind man recovered his sight, and a cripple who could scarcely crawl was restored to health and strength. They reached Fleury on 11th July, and the monks, coming in procession to meet them, bore their treasure in triumph to the church amid universal rejoicing. Aigulph was loath to allow the body of St. Scholastica to be separated from that of St. Benedict; but he was at length obliged to submit to the decision of higher authorities, and St. Scholastica was taken to le Mans. Such, in short, is

the history of the translation, and though it is impossible to vouch for the details of this story, or to separate the bare truth from that which is legendary, still there is little doubt as to the truth of the main facts. The authority of Aigulph and the miracles which took place at Fleury tend to prove the identity of the relics; while Paul Warnefried, secretary to Charlemagne and subsequently a monk at Monte Cassino, adds his testimony to the translation. He says: "The Franks from le Mans, while they feigned to pass the night by the venerable body, took away the bones both of the saint and his sister, and brought them to France, where two separate monasteries were built, one in honour of St. Benedict, the other of St. Scholastica". But he adds, for his own consolation and that of his fellow-monks at Monte Cassino: "Although the bones have been taken from us, nevertheless, it is certain that the blessed mouth once overflowing with the nectar of all sweetness, and the eyes which ever gazed heavenwards, and all those portions of the sacred body which have fallen into dust remain with us". Probably after the removal of the relics the grave was examined, and it was found that many of the smaller bones, teeth and fleshy portions of the bodies had been left; at least, this seems implied by the words just quoted, which were written 120 years after the translation, and coming from a Cassinese monk they are a very important testimony.

A feast was very soon instituted to commemorate the translation of the holy relics, and in Venerable Bede's *Martyrology* we find the words, "Quinto Idus Julii: depositio S. Benedicti Abbatis". It is likewise found in Wandelbert's *Martyrology*, published in 842, and is mentioned by Pope John III. in a brief to the Abbot of Fleury.

Next we will state the theory maintained by Yepez and Arnold Wion, to the effect that the relics were restored to Monte Cassino during the pontificate either of Pope Zachary or Stephen III. This seems more than improbable, since it is not even mentioned by Paul Warnefried and others who lived after these two Popes, and wrote about the translation of the relics. If they believed that the bones had been restored they would have written in a very different strain.

Let us now return to the Cassinese side of the question. The monks of Monte Cassino, who maintain that they are still in possession of their holy founder's body, rest their conviction on the testimony of Leo the Marsican and Peter the Deacon. The former, in his Chronicle, speaks of the rebuilding of the great church at Monte Cassino, which took place under Abbot Desiderius, who ruled the monastery from 1065 till 1071; he was afterwards raised to the pontificate and took the name of Victor III. Leo relates that, as the builders were excavating, they came suddenly on the tomb of St. Benedict, and that the abbot immediately gave strict orders that no one was to touch it or take any portion of the precious relics. He then caused the tomb to be re-covered and adorned with costly stones, the whole being closed with a lid of Parian marble of exquisite workmanship. This evidence, as it stands, does not prove much; but Peter the Deacon, who wrote in 1110, many years later, gives further details as follows. He says: "At the discovery of the tomb, a wonderful perfume emanated from the relics, an earthquake shook the mountain, and two possessed persons were cured. As the monks watched all night by the tomb, Brother George, the sacristan, proposed that they should raise the stone and look into the grave; this being done, they found

in it two divisions and two bodies lying with their heads towards the choir, and their feet towards the altar of St. John the Baptist. Brother George, in spite of the abbot's prohibition, took a tooth from one of the bodies, but he was seized with such a violent pain that he was forced to restore it." Peter then relates how Abbot Desiderius invited cardinals to come and visit the relics, and showed them the entire bodies of the two saints.

The question now arises as to how far Peter's evidence may be relied on. It seems incredible that such astonishing facts, if they really happened, should not have been mentioned either by Leo the Marsican or by Abbot Desiderius himself, especially as the latter wrote two books of *Dialogues* concerning the miracles wrought in his time through the intercession of the saint. We can only assume, with Abbot Angelo della Noce, that Peter was a man of lively imagination, who wrote chiefly from hearsay; and we may well believe that during the intervening years facts had been considerably coloured. In consequence, his evidence is of little or no value. We are inclined to give more weight to Leo's account of St. Henry's vision. This emperor was staying at Monte Cassino when St. Benedict appeared to him and told him to lay aside all doubts as to his body being really there, in proof of which he promised to cure him of the painful disease from which he suffered. This promise was verified, as we have already seen. However, it does not follow, even from this, that all the relics are at Monte Cassino: no one doubts that a portion of them still remain there; and, after all, a dead body has no organised whole; it is simply an aggregate of inanimate component parts of which one portion is not of more value than another, since both flesh and bones gradually crumble into dust.

Leo also relates two other visions in which St. Benedict appeared, respectively, to Pope Urban II. and a monk named Adam, saying: "From this place both Scholastica and myself will rise again on the last day". Yet even this does not prove that some of the relics were not removed to Fleury.

The Bull of Pope Urban II. forbidding the celebration of the feast of the "Translation" would, if genuine, have been the strongest testimony, but Baronius has incontrovertibly proved it a forgery, and shows that the feast has always been celebrated, not only at Fleury, but in many other monasteries. The heat of the quarrel somewhat abated in the eleventh century, when Oderisius, Abbot of Monte Cassino, wrote a most affectionate letter to the Abbot of Fleury. Mabillon gives it as follows: "We have determined with great affection and sincere love to write in a friendly manner to your lordship, in order that our monasteries may be but one, and that we may be ever united by a spiritual and inviolable love. For there is a very special reason why our brotherhood and yours should love each other above the rest, namely, that we both rejoice in being possessors of the incomparable treasure of St. Benedict's relics; and although our possession has been proved by miracles, signs and revelations, yet, if you also have become possessed of some portions of the relics, we still remain debtors to each other by a singular and special love."

The strife began afresh towards the middle of the seventeenth century. Men of recognised authority disputed, without coming to a satisfactory conclusion on either side. About the year 1760 Angelo della Noce, Abbot of Monte Cassino, caused excavations to be made under the high altar, when a tomb was discovered con-

taining bones, but no inscription was to be found, or any sign by which to identify them as the precious relics. Angelo published these facts in order to refute Mabillon, whose sympathies were with Fleury. Still Mabillon was not convinced, owing to the absence of any inscription; and concluded that they might be the bones of some other Cassinese abbot. There the matter rests; and it seems most probable, after weighing well the argument, that the greater part of the sacred relics are at Fleury, while the dust and smaller portions remain in their original resting place.

After the first translation, the holy bones were frequently carried about for safety during the Norman invasion in the eleventh century; for a long time they remained at Orleans, but finally returned again to Fleury. On 20th March, 1107, in presence of Louis VI., then crown prince, the Bishops of Orleans and Auxerre, and a large assembly of priests, monks and laymen, the relics were removed from the copper case where they had hitherto rested, and placed in a gold and silver *châsse* adorned with precious stones. Later in the year Philip of France died, and at his own express desire, and on account of his great veneration for St. Benedict, he was buried at Fleury. During his lifetime he had made many rich offerings to the shrine.

In 1217 the relics were placed under the high altar amid great rejoicings, in presence of many distinguished prelates. In 1364 Urban V., having built a church at Montpellier in honour of Our Lady and St. Benedict, received from Fleury a portion of the saint's head and one of his arm bones for the spiritual enrichment of the same. When in 1561 Odet of Coligny, Cardinal and Abbot of Fleury, allowed himself to be blinded by the

false doctrines of Calvin, he had the audacity to carry off all the gold and precious stones from the reliquaries which contained the holy bones. These last were only preserved through the efforts of the Prior Fulbert, who placed them in a wooden chest, where they remained till 27th May, 1581, when they were transferred to a gilded reliquary by Prior Pothin. In the following century the zeal of the newly erected Congregation of St. Maur directed its energies to raising the necessary funds for procuring a more suitable shrine for the precious treasure. Gaston Bourbon, uncle to Louis XIV., was the first benefactor of the undertaking, and many followed his example; with the result that a silver tomb richly gilt was constructed, three and a half feet long, and two feet wide, the whole surmounted by a silver head containing the saint's skull. The holy relics were solemnly installed therein, 3rd May, 1653, by John, Bishop of Caen, during a general chapter of the Maurist Congregation.

Relics of the saint are also to be found in the Church of St. Denis at Paris; this church received one of the arm bones from Fleury in 1393. A bone was also given to the Valladolid Congregation in 1594 at the request of Henry III. of Castile. A part of the jawbone is kept at the monastery of St. Peter at Chartres, and a rib bone at St. Theodore's near Rheims. A bone was also sent to Monte Cassino by Abbot Medon.

APPENDIX II.

EARLY WRITERS ON THE LIFE OF ST. BENEDICT.

I. Vita S. Benedicti Abbatis—*auctore S. Gregorio Magno, Papa.*—St. Gregory wrote four books of *Dialogues* about certain men who, shortly before his time, had been famous in Italy for the holiness of their lives. The second book is filled with the life of St. Benedict. The author worked at this with a special predilection, showing thereby the preference and appreciation he had for that saint. In this book of *Dialogues* miracles are related which excite the ridicule of modern sceptics; but miracles have happened, and always will happen, to witness to the truth of the teaching and authority of Christ and His saints. St. Gregory's narrative was not taken merely from hearsay or idle rumour, but was founded on the testimony of men who were disciples of the saint, eye-witnesses of all they affirm, and the veracity of whose statements cannot be called in question. In his prologue St. Gregory says: "All the notable things and acts of his life I could not learn; but those few which I mind now to report, I had by the relation of four of his disciples, to wit, of Constantinus, a most rare and reverend man, who was next abbot after him; of Valentinus, who many years had the charge of the Lateran abbey; of Simplicius, who was the third general of his order; and, lastly, of Honoratus, who is

now abbot of that monastery in which he first began his holy life".[1]

St. Gregory's biography of the saint has a very special value which none have ever denied. It consists of a prologue and thirty-eight chapters; the style is colloquial. St. Gregory speaks, while Peter, his disciple, asks occasional questions and receives suitable explanations where the meaning might be obscure.

Pope Zacharias translated the *Dialogues* into Greek, and in 779 an Arabic edition was published. St. Gregory's life of St. Benedict has been copiously commented upon by many learned men, among whom we may mention:—

1. Matthew Lauretus, a monk of Montserrat, subsequently Abbot of San Salvador. In the year 1616 he published at Naples a book of commentaries on the Cassinese Chronicles. This book begins with a commentary on St. Gregory's life of St. Benedict.

2. Simon Millet, a monk of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris. He wrote a still more detailed work on the same subject.

3. Angelo della Noce, Abbot of Monte Cassino, and subsequently Archbishop of Rossana. He brought out a new book of commentaries on the Cassinese Chronicles, also beginning with a commentary on St. Gregory's life of the saint.

4. Angelus Quirinus, a Cassinese monk, who became Cardinal-Bishop of Brescia. He was made librarian at the Vatican, and published the text of the Greek life, carefully noting the differences found in earlier editions; to this work he added some poems, epilogues and homilies in honour of St. Benedict.

[1] *Dialogues*, quart. series. Prologue.

5. Philip James, Abbot of St. Peter's in the Black Forest. After carefully studying all the commentaries then extant, he, with great diligence and discernment, selected the best, and having added some Latin poems, published the whole in 1782.

II. Carmen de S. Benedicto—*auctore Marco, ejus discipulo.*—Unfortunately we know nothing of this author beyond the fact that, according to Paul the Deacon, he was a disciple of the saint (*de gest. Longob.*). The poem consists of thirty-three distichs, and treats chiefly of St. Benedict's journey from Subiaco to Cassino, the abolition of idolatry from the mountain, and the perfection of the monks in the monastery there erected. Speaking of himself the poet says :—

> Huc ego cum scelerum depressus fasce subissem,
> Depositum sensi pondus abesse mihi.
> Credo quod et felix vita fruar insuper illa,
> Oras pro Marco si Benedicte tuo.

III. Carmen de S. Benedicto—*auctore Paulo diacono.*—This poem consists of only fifty-six trochaics; nevertheless it contains all the principal facts of the saint's life: it might well be called "*mirabile compendium vitae S. Benedicti*".

IV. Vita S. Mauri—*auctore S. Fausto ejus aequali.*—The life in its present form is the work of Odo, Abbot of Fossé (Saint-Maure-sur-Marne), near Paris. Under this abbot, the relics of St. Maurus were translated from Glanfeuil (Saint-Maure-sur-Loire) to Fossé. Odo, in his history of the translation, relates that the monks flying from Glanfeuil for fear of the Normans, and carrying with them the relics of St. Maurus, came to the river Saône on their way to Burgundy. There they fell in by chance with some pilgrims returning from Rome, and

among these was a certain cleric, who had in his possession a very old manuscript containing lives of St. Benedict, and of his disciples Maurus, Simplicius, Honoratus, Theodorus and Valentinian. Odo bought the manuscript for a considerable sum, and set to work to transcribe the life of St. Maurus. The facts and the miracles he left unchanged, but he endeavoured to make the style somewhat more readable. He would, however, have done better if he had not changed the *incultus sermo*, as he calls it, and had given the manuscript word for word. As it is, there are several errors as to dates, and he calls the bishop who had invited St. Benedict to make a foundation in his diocese Bertigrannus instead of Innocent. Nevertheless, the publication has proved invaluable to Church history.

Ruinart proves that this manuscript was originally the work of the monk Faustus, alleging the following reasons :—

First, that the author writes of facts in a way which would have been impossible for any one not an eye-witness, and that the style is very ancient.

Second, Odo's own testimony, who, being a man of great piety, conscientiousness and discretion, calls God to witness that he has altered no facts.

Third, that Adrewald, a monk of Fleury, speaks of St. Maurus' life written by Faustus, as of a work everywhere recognised. Adrewald was Odo's contemporary.

Faustus wrote in the most simple style. In his book he mentions his own person, saying that as a child of seven years old he had been offered by his parents to St. Benedict, and had lived fourteen years at Monte Cassino with St. Maurus ; after which he had accompanied Maurus to France, where he remained with him till his death ;

he then returned to Monte Cassino in 584, and had written the life of the saint at the command of Abbot Theodore, dedicating his book to Pope Boniface. Leo the Marsican thinks this was Boniface III., who only governed the Church eight months; but Mabillon says it was Boniface IV. his successor. Besides the preface, the life only contains ten chapters.

V. Carmina de S. Benedicto—*auctore S. Berthario.*—St. Bertharius was nineteenth Abbot of Monte Cassino. He wrote both an elegy and a poem in honour of St. Benedict. His language is fluent and harmonious, his thoughts sublime, his descriptions most touching and true to life, but the poetic value of the whole necessarily suffers from the way in which he enumerates every event of the saint's life. At this period the Saracens were ravaging Italy, and destroying with fire and sword everything which came in their way. As they approached Monte Cassino, Bertharius fled with his monks to the monastery of S. Salvator at the foot of the mountain. The barbarians, after setting fire to the monastery of Cassino, followed them to S. Salvator and martyred Bertharius before the altar of St. Martin, 22nd October, 884.

VI. Historia translationis S. Benedicti et S. Scholasticae—*auctore Adrevaldo.*—The author of this work is called Adalbert by Rudolph Tortarius of Fleury, who mentions him in his poem on the miracles of St. Benedict; but Aimoinus speaks of him as Adrevald, whence both Sigebert of Gemblours and Trithemius infer that the two names belong to the same person. Mabillon is of the same opinion. Aimoinus says that Adrevald was a very eloquent man; otherwise we have few details concerning him. Of himself he writes that he was still a youth

when Louis the Pious was king. From his writings one cannot fail to perceive his evident sanctity. His history of the translation contains only three chapters, but it is important inasmuch as it is the foundation on which the monks of Fleury lay their claim to the relics of St. Benedict.

VII. Historia miraculorum S. Benedicti—*auctore Adrevaldo.*—To the history of the translation just quoted Adrevald added an account of St. Benedict's miracles written in the year 870. The book contains five chapters, and a supplement taken from the writings of the monk Adelerius, his contemporary.

VIII. Miraculorum S. Benedicti libri duo—*auctore Aimoino monacho Floriacensi.*—Aimoinus was born of noble parents at Villefranche in Périgord, 965. He became a monk at Fleury, and lived successively under the rule of the abbots Amalbert, Oibold and Abbo. Abbo was not only his spiritual father, but also his master and instructor. In 1004 he went in the suite of this abbot to Réole, where he had the sorrow of witnessing the assassination of his much loved father and guide. He only survived him four years. Besides two books concerning the miracles of St. Benedict, he wrote a history of the Franks in four books (extending from 253-654) dedicated to St. Odo. In the year 1005 he wrote the life of St. Abbo, and shortly before his death he composed a sermon for the festival of St. Benedict. To Aimoinus we owe the fullest known account of St. Benedict's miracles.

IX. Miracula S. Benedicti—*auctore Rudolpho Tortario monacho Floriacensi.*—Rudolph lived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Besides a voluminous work treating of St. Benedict's miracles, he composed a poem on the same subject.

X. Carmen de miraculis S. Benedicti — *auctore Giraldo, monacho Floriacensi.*—This poem contains 257 distichs. It was found at Rome in the library of Queen Christina of Sweden. Of the author little is known; he lived in the eleventh century. In the year 1095 we hear of him as a monk at Fleury, where he was still living in 1114.

XI. Chronica sacri monasterii Cassinensis—*auctore Leone Ostiensi, continuatore Petro diacono, monacho Cassinensi.*—Leo's chronicles embrace the period between 542 and 1078; they are in three volumes. Peter the Deacon has added a fourth. Leo is surnamed "the Marsican," after Marsia, his birthplace; this little town no longer exists, but formerly it was situated on a summit of the Apennines east of Subiaco. At fourteen years of age he became a monk at Monte Cassino, and enjoyed for some time the guidance of Abbot Desiderius, who became eventually Pope Victor III. Under Abbot Oderisius he was ordained deacon, and made librarian of the monastery. The same abbot imposed on him the task of writing the Cassinese Chronicles. Baronius says that in this work he proves himself a most reliable and trustworthy historian, and Ciaconius speaks of him as one both learned and saintly; while Angelo della Noce is loud in praise of his eloquence, sound judgment, knowledge, faith and love of truth. In 1101 Leo was created Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia. The year of his death is unknown; he was still alive in 1115, as he affixed his signature to a Bull of Pope Paschal II.

Peter the Deacon, who continued the chronicle, was the son of a Roman named Egidius, and grandson of the patrician Gregory; he was born in 1110, and was sent to Monte Cassino as an alumnus when only five years old.

In 1131 the Abbot Oderisius II. was compelled by his enemies to go into exile, where he was followed by Peter; but after the deposition of the Abbot Egidius they returned, and during the pontificate of Alexander III. Oderisius again governed the monastery. Peter's chronicle is not to be compared with Leo's, inasmuch as his lively imagination and hasty judgment often led him astray. He continues the Chronicles up to 1140. He also wrote *de viris illustribus Cassinensibus—de disciplina Cassinensi—historica relatio de corpore S. Benedicti—Acta SS. Guinizonis et Januarii—vita S. Adelmarii*, and other treatises.

XII. ACTA SS. PLACIDI ET FRATRUM EJUS EUTYCHII, VICTORINI, AC FLAVIAE SORORIS NEC NON DONATI, FIRMATI DIACONI, AC FAUSTI ET ALIORUM TRIGINTA MONACHORUM MARTYRUM—*auctore Gordiano.*—This manuscript, presumably written by a disciple of St. Benedict and a companion of St. Placid, was brought to light in the twelfth century. Peter the Deacon and Abbot Octavius Cajetan tell us that it was discovered by an aged Greek priest 110 years old, who brought it from Constantinople to Salermo, translating and writing it out in his own style. A certain Stephen Aniciensis, a man otherwise unknown, also boasted of the work as his. The many erroneous statements and contradictions render the book practically worthless, except that it proves that either an account of St. Placid's martyrdom did exist from which the above-mentioned acts were taken, or else that there must have been a well-known tradition about it current among the people. The book is very voluminous.

XIII. SOL OCCIDENTIS, MAGNUS PATER BENEDICTUS—*auctore Alphonso de S. Victore.*—Alphonsus was a Benedictine gifted with splendid talents; he was chosen by Philip IV. to fill the office of court preacher, and subse-

quently became Bishop of Zamora. The above-mentioned work consists of two volumes, and was published at Madrid in 1645.

XIV. LAUDES S. PATRIS NOSTRI BENEDICTI ABBATIS—*auctore Carol. Stengelio Abb.*—Charles Stengelus, Abbot of Anhusano, wrote very fully and with great taste. He gathered the *Laudes*, as he calls them, from Haeften's *Disquisition*, and divides his work into three volumes; it was published in 1647.

XV. VIE DE S. BENOIT, *par Bernard Planchette, Paris*, 1652.—This life is in three volumes, and dedicated to the Queen of France.

XVI. VITA S. BENEDICTI . . . *didactica—auctore Arsenio Sulger, Priore Zwifaltersi. Typis monast. S. Galli*, 1691.

XVII. VITA S. BENEDICTI . . . *moraliter exposita ab Ignatio Clavenau, monacho Admontensi. Saiisb.*, 1720.

XVIII. GLORIA SS. BENEDICTI *in terris adornata a Thoma Aquino Erhard, monacho Wessofontano*, 1719.

XIX. Besides the above-mentioned works there are also the *Annals* of Yepez, Baronius, Mabillon, Bucellin, Arnold Wion's *Lignum vitae*, and the learned *Prolegomena* of Haeften, Abbot of Afflighem.

APPENDIX III.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE MOST MEMORABLE EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING THE LIFETIME OF ST. BENEDICT.

A.D.

480. Peace is concluded between the Emperor Zeno and Huneric, King of the Vandals.

The Goths make further conquests in Gaul.

481. Clovis, a youth of fifteen, succeeds his father as King of the Franks.

Pherozes, King of the Persians, and thirty of his sons, killed in a battle against the Nephtalites.

Theodoric the Goth begins his conquests in Macedonia and Thessalia.

482. The Emperor Zeno's edict regarding the Henotikon only causes greater disturbances.

483. A conference between Catholics and Arians, under King Huneric.

484. Great persecution in Africa; more than 40,000 Christians suffer martyrdom.

485. Death of Huneric.

486. Clovis defeats Syagrius, the Roman commander, near Soissons, and makes himself master of Soissons, Rheims, Troyes, Beauvais, Amiens and the whole of Belgium.

487. Gundamund, King of the Vandals, recalls Eugenius, Bishop of Carthage, from banishment.

Boetius sole consul.

A.D.

The Emperor Zeno leaves to Theodoric the conquest of Italy.

489. The Ostrogoths advance on Italy.

490. Theodoric is victorious over Odoacer, King of Italy, both at Milan and Verona.

491. Odoacer is again defeated near the river Adda.

Death of Zeno. Anastasius I. succeeds him.

493. Clovis marries Clotilde.

Theodoric concludes a peace with Odoacer, and then treacherously murders him. Theodoric becomes sole master of Italy, and establishes the Gothic rule in that country.

494. Pope St. Gelasius writes an apology for the Catholic faith to the emperor.

495. Clovis defeats the Alemanni at Tolbiac. He is baptised with 3,000 Franks, and is surnamed "the most Christian king and eldest son of the Church".

497. Germanus of Capua and Cresconius of Todi are sent to Constantinople to put an end to the schism and restore union between the two Churches.

498. Opposition of the anti-Pope Lawrence.

The Arabs invade Palestine and Syria.

499. Gondebaud, King of Burgundy, assists at a conference between the Christians and Arians.

500. Theodoric enters Rome amid extraordinary rejoicings.

502. The Persians invade Armenia, and seize Theodosiopolis.

Clovis conquers Brittany.

503. Conquest of Amida by the Persians at the cost of 30,000 lives.

A.D.

504. War between Clovis and Alaric II., King of the Goths.

505. Thrasimund, King of the Vandals, renews the persecution in Africa, and exiles over 200 bishops

Anastasius makes peace with Persia.

506. The Emperor Anastasius causes great disorder in the Eastern Church.

507. Clovis defeats the Goths at Poitiers, and becomes king over nearly the whole of France.

508. He makes Paris the capital of his kingdom. Siege of Arles.

509. Many Christians are martyred at the siege of Agarener in Palestine.

Peace is concluded between Clovis and Theodoric.

510. Vitalian revolts against the Emperor Anastasius.

Clovis endeavours to rid himself of all dangerous rivals among his relations.

511. Death of Clovis.

Anastasius attempts to deprive the Church of her inalienable rights.

512. Rebellion at Constantinople.

The Eutychians put to death 300 Maronite monks.

513. Plague of grasshoppers and famine in Palestine.

514. Vitalian again threatens to revolt if Anastasius persists in his persecution.

Cassiodorus consul at Rome.

515. The orthodox monks of the East persecuted by Severus, leader of the Eutychians.

Macedonia invaded by Northern tribes.

518. Anastasius is killed by lightning. Justin I. succeeds him.

The decrees of the Council of Chalcedon solemnly accepted by the new emperor and his subjects.

A.D.

By an edict, heretics are excluded from civil and military service.

519. After thirty-five years of separation, the Eastern Church is once more united to Rome, on Easter Sunday, 28th March.

John, Patriarch of Constantinople, for the first time styles himself Patriarcha "oecumenicus".

Eutharic, son-in-law to Theodoric, makes a solemn entry into Rome as consul.

523. Sigismund, King of Burgundy, is defeated by one of Clovis' sons, and having been delivered over to Clodomir is murdered, together with his wife and children.

Death of Thrasimund, King of the Vandals.

The Manicheans are banished from the empire.

525. Boetius and Symmachus, his father-in-law, are murdered by Theodoric's command.

526. Pope John I. dies in prison.

Death of Theodoric. Alliance between Athalaric, his son and successor, and the Emperor Justin.

527. Death of Justin I. He is succeeded by Justinian.

528. Fearful earthquake at Antioch, Laodicea and Seleucia.

Justinian recovers the churches which had fallen into the hands of heretics.

529. Publication of the famous code of laws drawn up by Tribonian and his colleagues at the emperor's command, and called the "Justinian Code".

530. Gelimer dethrones Hilderic, King of the Vandals.

Closing of the Pagan schools at Athens.

531. Continuous war between Justinian and the Persians. Death of Cobad; conclusion of the war.

Beginning of the terrible plague which lasted fifty

A.D.

years, and spread in different forms over all the known world.

532. Dionysius publishes his famous cycle.

Rebellion at Constantinople, 30,000 lives lost.

533. Belisarius' expedition into Africa.

534. He subdues the whole country and exterminates the Vandals.

Death of King Athalaric, the Goth. Theodatus succeeds him.

Gundomar, King of Burgundy, is captured and his kingdom incorporated into that of the Franks.

Belisarius conquers Sardinia, Corsica, Ceuta, Majorca and Minorca.

535. He conquers Italy.

536. Also Naples and Rome.

Death of Theodatus. Vitiges is elected king.

537. Expulsion of Pope Silverius.

538. Belisarius and Narses are victorious in Upper Italy. Terrible famine throughout that country.

539. King Vitiges is taken by Belisarius as prisoner to Constantinople.

540. Ildebald is chosen king of the Goths.

541. Totila succeeds him and is successful against the Romans.

542. Totila reconquers all the cities taken by Belisarius.

Plague at Constantinople.

543. Totila besieges Rome.

APPENDIX IV.

PRINCIPAL COUNCILS AND SYNODS, FROM A.D. 480 TO 543.

A.D.

481. At LAODICEA, in favour of Stephen III., Patriarch of Alexandria.

484. At ROME, under Felix III., on which occasion the legates Vitalis and Misenus were excommunicated, Peter Mongus of Alexandria and Acacius of Constantinople condemned, and Zeno's "Henotikon" rejected, 28th July.

485. At ROME, for the purpose of condemning Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch.

492. At CONSTANTINOPLE, under the Patriarch Euphemius, for the ratification of the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon.

495 or 496. At CONSTANTINOPLE, when the bishops unjustly deposed the Patriarch Euphemius, and elected Macedonius at the bidding of the Emperor Anastasius.

496. At ROME, when Misenus the legate was absolved from excommunication.

496. At ROME, when a list was drawn up of the Canonical books, the Œcumenical Councils, and the Fathers of the Church beginning with St. Cyprian.

499. At ROME, 1st March, several decrees were made, to prevent abuses at the election of popes.

A.D.

500. A conference was held at LYONS, for the refutation of the Arians, at which many of the heretics were converted.

501. At ROME, to put an end to the contest between Pope Symmachus and the anti-Pope Lawrence.

502. At ROME (*synodus palmaris*), in defence of Pope Symmachus.

511. At ORLEANS, 10th July, when some points of Church discipline were settled.

518. At CONSTANTINOPLE, 15th July, when the four Œcumenical Councils were solemnly accepted, St. Leo's name placed on the diptychs, and Severus of Antioch condemned.

519. At CONSTANTINOPLE, John the Patriarch sought a reconciliation with the Pope, and Rome and Constantinople were again united.

525. At CARTHAGE, 5th February, in thanksgiving for the peace enjoyed by the Church, and for the settlement of some questions of discipline.

529. At ORANGE, against the Semi-Pelagians.

530. At VALENCE, also against the Semi-Pelagians.

531. At ROME, when Pope Boniface II. drew up a decree empowering him to appoint his own successor; this he withdrew at a subsequent council, when he understood that it was contrary to Canon Law.

533. At ORLEANS, 23rd June, against simony and other abuses.

535. At CARTHAGE, called "*de Justinianaea*," to recover from the Emperor Justinian the property stolen from the African Church. This was restored 1st August.

A.D.

536. At CONSTANTINOPLE, presided over by Pope St. Agapetus, when Anthimus was deposed and Mennas elected.

541. At GAZA, for the deposition of Paul, Patriarch of Alexandria, on account of many accusations brought against him.

542. At ANTIOCH, for the condemnation of the errors of Origen.

543. At CONSTANTINOPLE, when the emperor's edict condemning the Origenists was solemnly approved.

APPENDIX V.

TABLE OF CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS.

Taken from the "Groundwork of Christian Literature," by Dr. T. Busse.

1. EUTHALIUS—an Egyptian bishop, who published two works (490-497). The first consisted of a treatise on the life and Epistles of St. Paul; the second was a book on Catholic literature, with a biographical account of the various authors quoted; this last he dedicated to the Eutychian Patriarch, Athanasius II.
2. MALCHUS—of Philadelphia, in Syria, who wrote a Byzantine history extending from 474-480; of this work the only fragment that remains is the *Eclogae legationum.*
3. AENEAS OF GAZA—a platonic philosopher, converted to Christianity in 484, who wrote a dialogue on the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body; twenty-five of his letters are extant.
4. DENIS OF ANTIOCH—first a pagan philosopher, afterwards a Christian, who has left us forty-five letters.
5. VICTOR—a bishop in Mauritania, an ardent defender of the faith against the Arians under Genseric (429-478), who wrote, *Liber de poenitentia—Tractatus de consolatione.*

6. VIGILIUS—Bishop of Tapsus in Africa, present at the Council of Carthage, and afterwards exiled. He was in the habit of writing under an assumed name, and used his pen against the heresies of Sabellius, Photinus, Arius, Nestorius and Eutyches; he also wrote twelve books *de Trinitate.*
7. VICTOR—Bishop of Vita in Africa, exiled by Huneric in 484, who wrote a history of the Vandal persecution: a very important work.
8. TITIAN—Bishop of Trevigo, who wrote the life of Vindemialis, a holy confessor, who assisted at the Council of Carthage in 484; also the life of St. Florentius.
9. GENNADIUS—a priest at Marseilles, who continued the *Catalogus scriptorum* of St. Jerome, and wrote some other books.
10. POPE GELASIUS—who wrote *Liber sacramentorum—De duabus in Christo naturis, adv. Eutychianos et Nestorianos—Dicta adv. Pelag. haeres.*—and *Decretum contra Manichaeos.*
11. POSSESSOR—an African bishop, who sent Pope Hormisdas the *Relatio de libro Fausti Rhegiensis.*
12. EUGIPPIUS—Abbot of a monastery near Naples named Lucullanum, who wrote in the year 511 a biography of St. Severin, his spiritual guide, and apostle of Austria.
13. PASCHASIUS—a Roman deacon, who wrote an epistle to Eugippius and *Libri II. de Spiritu Sancto.*
14. MAGNUS FELIX ENNODIUS—Bishop of Pavia, 510-521, who was sent to Constantinople by Pope Hormisdas, as his legate, to put an end to the schism (515). He wrote 296 letters, a life of St. Anthony of Lerins, a eulogy of King Theodoric, an apology

for Pope Symmachus, thirty orations, twenty-one poems, 151 epigrams, and the life of his predecessor, Epiphanius.

15. Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boetius—born 455, made consul 510, imprisoned 524, and put to death 526; he wrote several theological and philosophical works, the most celebrated being *De consolatione philosophiae, libri V.*

16. Dionysius surnamed Exiguus—an abbot in Rome, who was the first to count the years from the birth of Christ instead of from Alexander the Great, as the Greeks were accustomed to do, or from the persecution of Diocletian, as the Western Christians did. His chronology is now universally adopted. He also made a collection of all the ecclesiastical canons and decrees; he compiled the Dionysian cycle, and wrote two treatises *de ratione Paschae*—also *Epistola ad Eugippium presb.*—*Vita S. Pachomii*, and a translation of the Paschal letters of Proterius Alex.

17. Adrian—who wrote *Isagoge in scripturis sanctis*, a very useful Greek work.

18. Magnesius Aurelius Cassiodorus—born 470. He became "Comes rerum privatarum, et sacrarum largitionum," under King Odoacer; in the reign of Theodoric he was made prefect and consul (514). On the accession of King Vitiges he retired from Court and built a monastery at Vivarese, near his native town, where he died in 465. He wrote a history of the world, a calculation regarding the time for celebrating Easter, an explanation of the Psalms, an instruction as to the reading of

Holy Scripture, grammatical and other treatises, and also left many letters.

19. EPIPHANIUS SCHOLASTICUS—who wrote a *Historia tripartita*, in twelve volumes, and a collection of synodical letters. Some have attributed to him the Latin translation of Flavius Josephus' Archæology.

20. THEODORE—a lector at Constantinople, who wrote *Hist. eccl. eclogae* in Greek; the work consists of two volumes.

21. RURICIUS—Bishop of Limoges, who wrote *Epistolarum libri II.*

22. SEDATUS—Bishop of Béziers; he left *Epistolarum libri III. ad Ruricium*, and a homily for the feast of the Epiphany.

23. REMIGIUS—Bishop of Rheims (461-533), Apostle of the Franks; his writings consist of *Epistolae IV.*, a *Testamentum*, and other small treatises.

24. AVITUS—Bishop of Vienne, who presided over the Council against the Arians (500); he wrote eighty-four letters, two homilies and some poems.

25. VIVENTIUS—Archbishop of Lyons (516); *Ep. ad Alcim. Avitum—Epistola tractoria*, and an oration delivered at the Council of Epaone (517).

26. FAUSTUS—a priest and disciple of St. Severin, abbot, who wrote his life (524).

27. CAESARIUS—Bishop of Arles, renowned for sanctity, learning, zeal and long-suffering; his writings are: *Homil. XL.—Homil. XIV.—Sermones CVII.—Regulae ad Monachos*, etc.

28. CYPRIAN—Bishop of Toulon and disciple of St. Caesarius, whose life he wrote in two volumes.

29. AEGIDIUS—Abbot of Narbonne, author of *Libellus pro privilegiis eccl. Arelat.*

30. TETRADIUS—of Châlons, a priest at Lerins, who wrote, in 540, *Regulae monachorum et sanctimonialium*, dictated by St. Caesarius.

31. PROCOPIUS—of Gaza, a rhetorician, who after his conversion to Christianity wrote *Commentarius in Octoteuchum—Commentarius in Isaiam—Scholia in IV. libr. Reg. et II. Chron.—Epistolas LX.*

32. HESYCHIUS—of Milet, surnamed "*vir illustris*," who under the Emperors Anastasius, Justin and Justinian wrote a history of the world in six volumes and a Greek work *de viris illustribus.*

33. AGAPETUS—the Deacon, instructor to the Emperor Justinian, who wrote in Greek *Scheda regia*, regarding the duties of Christian rulers.

34. FULGENTIUS—Bishop of Ruspa 508-533. His works are very numerous, *Liber responsionum ad X. objectiones Arianorum—Libri III. ad Trasimundum regem—Lib. III. ad Moninum—Lib. II. de remiss. pecc. ad Euthymium—Tract. de grat. et incarn.—Lib. III. de ver. praedest.—Lib. X. adv. Fabianum Arian.*

35. JOHN MAXENTIUS—defender of the refractory monks of Scete. He caused great disturbance by the sentence: "Unus ex trinitate crucifixus est". He wrote several works against the Nestorians and Pelagians, also a creed addressed to Pope Hormisdas, and the opinions of the monks of Scete.

36. FULGENTIUS FERRANDUS—a deacon at Carthage and a disciple of his namesake the Bishop of Ruspa, whose life he wrote; also the author of a work on the Three Chapters and a *Breviatio Canonum.*

37. LAURENCE THE MELLIFLUOUS—Archbishop of Milan; has left several orations.

38. Faustus—a disciple of St. Benedict. He wrote a life of St. Maurus, whom he had accompanied to Glanfeuil.

39. Aurelian—Bishop of Arles and Vicar-Apostolic of Gaul. He founded two monasteries in 547, and wrote for them *Instituta regulae ad monachos et virgines.*

40. Avator of Liguria—a poet sent as ambassador to the Emperor Theodoric in 534. He was made *Comes privatorum* at the Court of the Ostrogoth, which post he renounced to receive the sub-diaconate, and died 556. He put the Acts of the Apostles into verse.

41. Jornandes—the Goth, who after his conversion became a monk, and some affirm that he subsequently became a bishop under the Emperor Justinian. He wrote a history of the Goths, and *De regnorum et temporum successione.*

APPENDIX VI.

TABLE I.

POPES AND PATRIARCHS CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH ST. BENEDICT.

Popes.	Patriarchs.			
	Constantinople.	Alexandria.	Antioch.	Jerusalem.
St. Simplicius . 467-482	Acacius . 471-489	Timothy Solofaciol 460-482	Stephen II. . . 479-481	Martyrius 478-486
St. Felix III. . 482-492	Fravitas . 489-490	John Talaia . . 482	St. Stephen III. . 481-482	Sallust . 486-494
St. Gelasius I. . 492-496	Euphemius . 490-496	Peter Mongus . 482-490	Calendion . . 482-485	St. Elias . 494-513
St. Anastasius II. 496-498	(*died in exile* 515)	Athanasius II. . 490-496	Peter the Fuller (*the third time*) . . 485-488	(*died in exile* 518)
St. Symmachus . 498-514	Macedonius 496-511	John II. . . 496-505	Palladius . . . 488-498	John . 513-524
St. Hormisdas . 514-523	(*died in exile* 515)	John III. . . 505-517	Flavian II. . . 498-512	Peter . 524-544
St. John I. . . 523-526	Timothy . 511-517	Dioscorus II. . . 517-519	(*died in exile* 518)	
St. Felix IV. . 526-530	John II. . 517-520	Timothy III. . . 519-535	Severus, head of the Acephalians . . 512-519	
St. Boniface II. . 530-532	Epiphanius . 520-535	Gainas . . . 537	(*died in exile* 550)	
St. John II. . 532-535	Anthimus . 535-536	Theodosius . . 537-538	Paul II. . . . 519-521	
St. Agapetus . 535-536	St. Mennas . 536-552	Paul . . . 538-541	Euphrasius . . 521-526	
St. Silverius . 536-538		Zoilus . . . 541-551	Ephrem . . . 527-545	
Vigilius. . 538-555				

TABLE II.

CONTEMPORARY EMPERORS AND KINGS.

Kings of Italy.	Emperors of the East.	Visigoth Kings in Gaul and Spain.	Kings of the Franks.	Kings of Persia (Sassanides).	Kings of the Vandals (Africa).
Odoacer . 476-493	Zeno . . 474-491	Evaric . 466-483	Childeric . 456-481	Pherozes . 457-488	Huneric . 478-484
Kings of the Ostrogoths.	Anastasius . 491-518	Alaric . . 483-507	Clovis . . 481-511	Balascer . 488-491	Gundamund 484-496
Theodoric . 493-526	Justin I. . 518-527	Gesalric . 507-511	Thierry . 511-534	Cabades . 491-531	Thrasimund 496-523
Athalaric . 526-534	Justinian . 527-566	Theodoric II. 511-525	Theodebert . 534-547	Chosroes I. . 531-579	Hilderic . 523-530
Theodatus . 534-536		Amalric III. 525-531	Orleans.		Gelimir . 530-531
Vitiges . 536-540		Theudes . 531-548	Clodomir . 511-524		
Theodobald 540-541			Paris.		
Totila . . 541-553			Childebert . 511-558		
			Soissons.		
			Clotaire I. . 511-560		

TABLE III.

CONTEMPORARY SAINTS.

Martyrs.	Bishops.	Confessors.	Virgins and Holy Women.
Liberatus, Abbot, with his companions in Africa . . 483	Sidonius, Bishop of Clermont . 482	Severinus, Abbot and Apostle of Austria . . . 482	Coelina, virgin, Meaux 500
Dionysia, Dativa, Leontia, Tertius in Africa . . 484	Baldus, Bishop of Evreux . 491	Marcellus, Abbot in Constantinople . . . 485	Eutropia, widow, Auvergne . . . 500
Victorian and companions in Africa 484	Perpetuus, Bishop of Tours . 491	Daniel the Stylite . . 490	Keyna, virgin, Wales 500
Stephen, Patriarch of Antioch 489	Epiphanus, Bishop of Pavia . 497	Gunthlaus, Prince of Wales 500	Bridget, abbess, Ireland . . . 500
Germanus, Bishop in Picardy . 495	Amantius, Bishop of Rodez . 500	Marcian, Treasurer of the Church in Constantinople 500	Genevieve, virgin, Paris . . . 512
Abdias, Bishop of Cascar . 500	Principius, Bishop of Soissons 500	Cadoc, Abbot in Wales . 500	Scholastica, abbess, Italy . . . 543
Ceraunus 500	Eugenius, Bishop of Carthage 505	Enna, Abbot in Ireland . 500	Clotilde, queen of the Franks . . 545
Sigismund, King of Burgundy 523	Solemnis, Bishop of Chartres . 509	Severinus, Abbot of St. Möritz 507	Galla, widow, Rome . 550
Pope John I. 526	Dubricius, Bishop in England 512	Ursus and Leobatius, Abbots in Touraine . . . 508	Radegunde, queen of the Franks . . 587
Eleutherius, Bishop of Tournay 532	Euphrasius, Bishop of Clermont 515	Gildas, Priest in England . 512	
Silverius, Pope . . . 538	Viventius, Bishop of Lyons . 520	Augendus, Abbot of Condat 514	
Placid and his companions . 540	Ennodius, Bishop of Pavia . 521	Marentius, Abbot in Poitou 514	
	James, Bishop of Sarug . 522	Maximin, Abbot of Misci . 520	
	Albeus, Bishop in Ireland . 525	Anthony, Monk of Lerins . 525	
	Apollinaris, Bishop of Valence . 525	Theodosius, Abbot in Palestine 529	
	Avitus, Bishop of Vienne . 525	Avitus, Abbot of St. Mesmin 530	
	Viton, Bishop of Verdun . 525	Sabas, Abbot in Palestine . 532	
	Eleutherius, Bishop of Tournay 532	Thierry, Abbot of Mont d'Or, France . . . 533	
	Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspa . 533	Fridolin, Abbot in Switzerland 538	
	Remigius, Bishop of Rheims . 533	Equitius, Abbot in Italy . 540	
	Vedast, Bishop of Arras . 539		
	Germanus, Bishop of Capua . 540		
	Gregory, Bishop of Langres . 541		
	David, Bishop of Caerleon . 540		
	Caesarius, Bishop of Arles . 542		
	Lupus, Bishop of Lyons . 542		